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# **Toward a Clearer Understanding of Strategic Awareness**

A Conceptual and Empirical Exploration

School of Management  
Master's Thesis in Economics and  
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Strategic Business Development

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**ABSTRACT:**

Businesses are constantly faced with challenges caused by the turbulent and unpredictable environment, and they need to work hard in order to stay competitive. As a result, businesses are desperate to find new ways to manage the challenges that are thrown at them. Strategic awareness have gained attention in light of the turbulent environment as a management tool for survival. However, while strategic awareness is considered crucial for businesses survival, the concept of strategic awareness is still overlooked by many and lack a unified understanding. Due to the limited research on strategic awareness and the scattered views on the concept.

This study explores what strategic awareness is and how it can be applied in practise and aims to create a clarified understanding of strategic awareness and its practise. It's examined through a comprehensive literature review of the existing literature, comparing author's perspectives on the concept, which is synthesized into a conceptual framework. A qualitative study is conducted based on the conceptual framework, with the aim of gaining meaningful insights of strategic awareness and its application in practise in a real-life setting. The data was collected through four semi-structured interviews of individuals with experience in strategic decision making. The data was thematically analysed, and the empirical findings were compared to the conceptual framework developed based on the literature review.

A clarified understanding of strategic awareness was found, and key dimensions and elements of the concept was identified. A conceptual framework was developed which reflects both theoretically grounded and empirically informed perspectives, which provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of strategic awareness and how it can be applied in practise. A key finding of the research was that alignment of views on pursued strategy had a greater part and importance, than understood in the literature review. Suggesting alignment of views to be a key dimension of strategic awareness, along with internal and external environmental awareness. It was found strategic awareness to be essential for businesses to stay competitive and for making informed decision, as well as for a successful implementation of strategy. As strategic awareness was found to help guide actions and decisions of individuals within a business.

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**KEYWORDS:** Strategic Awareness, External Environmental Awareness, Internal Environmental Awareness, Shared Understanding, Change Impact

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**TIIVISTELMÄ:**

Yritykset kohtaavat jatkuvasti haasteita, jotka johtuvat epävakaasta ja ennakoimattomasta ympäristöstä, ja yritysten on tehtävä kovasti töitä pysyäkseen kilpailukykyisinä. Tämän seurauksena yritykset etsivät jatkuvasti uusia tapoja kohdata edellä mainitut haasteet. Strateginen tietoisuus on noussut huomioon selviytymisen työkaluna epävakaassa ympäristössä. Vaikka strategista tietoisuutta pidetään yritysten selviytymisen kannalta ratkaisevana tekijänä, moni yritys sivuttaa strategisen tietoisuuden työkaluna, eikä käsitteestä ole selkeää yhtenäistä ymmärrystä. Sillä strategista tietoisuutta koskeva tutkimus on vähäistä, ja käsitteestä on esitetty hajanaisia näkemyksiä

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, mitä strateginen tietoisuus on ja miten sitä voidaan soveltaa käytännössä. Tavoitteena on luoda selkeä käsitys strategisesta tietoisuudesta ja sen soveltamisesta. Aihetta tarkastellaan kattavan kirjallisuuskatsauksen avulla, jossa verrataan eri kirjoittajien näkemyksiä käsitteestä ja yhdistetään ne käsitteelliseksi viitekehyyksi. Käsitteellisen viitekehyyksen pohjalta toteutetaan laadullinen tutkimus, jonka tavoitteena on saada merkityksellisiä oivalluksia strategisesta tietoisuudesta ja sen soveltamisesta käytännössä todellisessa ympäristössä. Aineisto kerättiin neljän puolistrukturoidun haastattelun avulla, joihin osallistui strategisen päätöksenteon kokemusta omaavia henkilöitä. Aineisto analysoitiin temaattisesti, ja empiirisiä havaintoja verrattiin kirjallisuuskatsauksen perusteella kehitettyyn käsitteelliseen viitekehyykseen.

Strategisen tietoisuuden käsitteestä saatiin selkeä kokonaiskuva, ja sen keskeiset ulottuvuudet ja elementit tunnistettiin. Tutkimuksessa kehitettiin käsitteellinen viitekehys, joka heijastaa sekä teoreettisesti perusteltuja että empiirisesti todistettuja näkökulmia ja tarjoaa kattavan ymmärryksen strategisen tietoisuuden käsitteestä ja sen soveltamisesta käytännössä. Keskeinen löydös tutkimuksessa oli, että yhteinen ymmärrys strategiasta oli merkittävämpää kuin kirjallisuuskatsauksessa oli ymmärretty. Tämä antaa ymmärtää, että yhteinen ymmärrys strategiasta on strategisen tietoisuuden keskeinen ulottuvuus sisäisen ja ulkoisen ympäristötietoisuuden ohella. Lisäksi tutkimus osoitti, että strateginen tietoisuus on tärkeää onnistuneen strategian jalkauttamisessa, yritysten kilpailukykyyn säilyttämisessä sekä tietoon perustuvassa päätöksenteossa. Sillä strateginen tietoisuus ohjaa yrityksen yksilöiden toimintaa ja päätöksentekoa.

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**AVAINSANAT:** Strateginen tietoisuus, Sisäinen ympäristötietoisuus, Ulkoinen ympäristötietoisuus, Yhteinen ymmärrys, Muutoksen vaikutukset

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## 1 Introduction

Despite strategic awareness being recognized as an essential management tool for businesses to survive in a turbulent and uncertain business environment (Kataa & Saaed, 2024), it is still overlooked by far too many business leaders (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025). While strategic awareness can be referred to as awareness of the environment the business operates in (Hannon & Atherton, 1998) and as the ability to make informed decision based on the information gained from the environment (Al-Haraisa, 2022) it is not the only definition there is of the concept. The concept of strategic awareness lacks clarity and a unified understanding, as there is no clear definition of strategic awareness, due to the variety of perspectives by authors on the concept (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Kazeem et al., 2022.; Mammadov et al., 2024). For theory to develop and be applicable in practise, it is critical for concepts to have a clear definition (Suddaby, 2010). Which suggest strategic awareness is not being practised despite its importance, as a consequence due to the lack of clarity and unified understanding of strategic awareness.

Amid growing environmental turbulence and uncertainty businesses and its leaders are confronted with an increasing number of challenges in managing their business operation, while simultaneously trying to keep up with changes happening in the external environment (Atanassova et al., 2025). The turbulent and uncertain business environment requires businesses to be agile and quick to respond to changes, in order to stay competitive (Atanassova et al., 2025). As a result, businesses are in desperate need of finding new ways and tools to help them manage the challenges the external environment generates (Ahmed, 2023). Strategic awareness has gained strong attraction as a strategic solution to confront the challenges that businesses are exposed to in the business environment (Kataa & Saaed, 2024). As strategic awareness guide leaders through the complexities in the environment, as it creates the ability for businesses to operate in a volatile environment and transform crises into opportunities and changes into growth (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025). Through the ability to understand the impact of change and deep

understanding of the internal and external environment, which highlights the immense need for and importance of strategic awareness (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025).

Current research on the concept of strategic awareness is still limited (Salih & Nesereddin, 2023) and previous studies address the concept through multiple perspectives (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025). For instance, Gibb & Scott (1985) views strategic awareness, as the capability to understand the impact of change. While Davis et al., (2012) refers to strategic awareness as the alignment of lower-level employees views with top-managements strategic priorities. Due to the huge differences in perspectives by authors, the concept of strategic awareness lack clarity, and the academic literature is scattered (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Kazeem et al., 2022.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Conceptual ambiguity and lack of consistency between definition has shown to limit common understanding of how the concept can be applied in practise (Mills et al, 2020). Moreover, authors have expressed the need for further research on the concept of strategic awareness, in order to better understand how it is developed and applied into practise (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). As well as continuous research as strategic awareness has been suggested, as it is a tool for surviving a turbulent environment, the research on strategic awareness also needs to be ongoing to go hand in hand with the changes in the environment (Pencarelli et al., 2009). This indicated a significant gap in the academic literature on strategic awareness, particularly regarding the clarity of the concept and how it can be applied into practise, that needs to be addressed.

To address this research gap, the aim of the thesis is to clarify the concept of strategic awareness and explore how the concept can be applied into practise. Which is carried out through a literature review, by examining the various perspective authors have on strategic awareness. Investigating the perspectives, similarities and differences and identifying its key elements and implementation practices. By synthesising the perspectives in the existing literature, a conceptual framework will be created to gain a clearer understanding of the concept. To achieve the aim of this thesis, was guided by the following research questions:

What is strategic awareness?

How can strategic awareness be applied in practice?

In order to answer the research questions and validate the synthesized findings in the literature review, an empirical research was conducted. A qualitative research design was chosen for conducting this research, specifically a mono-method qualitative study. The qualitative methodological approach was chosen due to the exploratory nature of the study, as the aim of the research questions are to clarify the concept of strategic awareness. In order to gain clarity on the concept of strategic awareness, thematic semi-structured interviews was conducted through multiple case studies to allow for replication. The case studies were chosen based on a set criteria that the participant needed to fulfil in order to participate in the study. The set criteria was that the participant needs to have experience working with strategic decision-making. This approach of conducting semi-structured interviews with a set criteria was chosen in order to gain new insights from real work-life experience with strategic awareness. To extend the literature by either strengthening existing claims on strategic awareness or by bringing new perspectives to the concept. Additionally, by conducting the interviews, the hope was to gain practical insights into application of the concept. The collected data was analysed and compared to the existing literature, in order to validate the synthesis of the literature review and to gain new insight to achieve clarity on the concept of strategic awareness.

The thesis comprises six chapters, which includes the introduction. The chapter following the introduction is the literature review. Which starts with an introduction to the research topic, its background and a comparison of its various definitions, a synthesized definition of the concept is given as well. The following part of the literature review consist of an examination of the concept's importance, elements and dimensions, answering the research question, "*What is strategic awareness?*". The literature review chapter follows a review of existing literature on how to strategic awareness can be applied in practice, based on authors recommendation, to answer the second research question.

The last part of the literature review will consist of a conceptual framework of strategic awareness, which has been conducted based on the existing literature. The literature review is to give a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on the concept of strategic awareness and to answer the research question based on existing literature.

The following chapter of the thesis consist of a description of chosen methodological tools used. Which will include the explanation of chosen research philosophy and approach, as well as the chosen research design. Additionally, how the case studies were selected, how the data was collected and how the data was analysed is described. The fourth chapter of the thesis presents the empirical findings. While the fifth chapter of the thesis compares the empirical findings with the findings of the literature review. In the end of chapter five, a conceptual framework on strategic awareness is presented, where the empirical findings and literature review is synthesized into a coherent understanding of the concept. The last chapter of the thesis is the conclusions, which consist of key findings of the research, the limitations of the research and suggestions for further research.

## 2 Conceptual Perspectives on Strategic Awareness

Strategic awareness as a concept appeared in the eighties and has developed throughout the years, with different perspectives and dimensions (Hambrick, 1981). The concept of strategic awareness emerged due to the need to understand the business environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). While the need to understand the business environment is due to the business environment changing at a more rapid rate and can be characterised to be turbulent, dynamic, unpredictable and complex (Salih & Nesereddin, 2023). Especially, the technological advancements during the digital revolution have had a huge influence on characterizing the business environment as mentioned above. Which has raised the immense need for understanding the environment and staying ahead of changes and developments. (Ahmed, 2023).

In the 1970s researchers started to question the effectiveness of a business plan and started to shift the focus and emphasis on the process of planning instead of the written business plan (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). Researchers stated that a written business plan does not help businesses with the constant changes happening in turbulent environments (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). That there should be an ongoing planning process, which would allow businesses to be more adaptive and responsive when changes occur in the environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). Similarly, the nature of strategy has changed from characteristics of stable and static towards a shifting and changing phenomena due to the changing environment (Hambrick, 1981). Which emphasises the need for businesses to be more aware of their environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). Today, the business environment is even more complex and unpredictable, which has led to businesses needing new tools to manage the constant changes and developments in the environment, in order to stay competitive and survive (Ahmed, 2023). Which had led to the development of strategic awareness (Ahmed, 2023).

While strategic awareness is seen as a critical capability for a business's survival (Gibb & Scott, 1985), and although the concept has gained popularity and is used by many businesses, it is still overlooked and lacks a clear definition (Salih & Nesereddin 2023). Several

authors agree and state that the academic literature among researchers on strategic awareness includes many definitions that vary between each author, which has contributed to the lack of knowledge and clear understanding of the concept of strategic awareness (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Kazeem et al., 2022.; Mammadov et al., 2024).

Furthermore, there are only a few authors that have defined strategic awareness solely based on their own research and assumptions. However there are authors that have defined strategic awareness based on other authors' definitions on strategic awareness. Through continuing researching the topic of strategic awareness from different perspectives and strengthening previous claims on the concepts importance. However, there still is a limited number of authors that even define strategic awareness in their work, especially scarce are definitions where authors will contribute their own perspective or view to the definition of strategic awareness.

Given the variety of ways strategic awareness has been defined, it is beneficial to compare the definitions by different researchers to understand how the concept has been understood across studies, in order to gain clarity of the concept. Table 1. summarizes the key definitions found in the literature.

**Table 1.** Authors Definitions on the Concept of Strategic Awareness.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Definition of Strategic Awareness</b>
Hambrick (1981)	The alignment of top-management view of realized strategy.
Gibb & Scott (1985)	Capability to understand the full impact of change or development.
Hannon & Atherton (1998)	Understanding the conditions the company operates in and awareness of one's own and competitors pursued strategy.

Thompson (2005)	Managements understanding of their own and competitors' strategy.
Pencarelli et al. (2009)	Capacity to understand and recognize their company's position and identifying future strategic choices and their implications.
Davis et al. (2012)	The alignment of boundary personnel's view of top-management strategic priorities.
Al-Badayneh (2021)	Ability of decision maker to be completely aware of everything related to the company
Alabdaly & Almayali (2021)	The degree of decision-makers knowledge and awareness of the internal and external condition of the company.
Al-Haraisa (2022)	Ability to exploit recourses efficiently based on available infrastructure and the ability to scan the environment and use it for one's own advantage in rational decision making.
Ahmed (2023)	The degree of managements awareness of pursued strategies within the company as well as of competitors' pursued strategies.
Mammadov et al. (2024)	Capacity of decision-maker to have complete awareness of all aspects related to their company and external surroundings.

In Table 1. we can see that there isn't one clear definition of strategic awareness. The definitions of the concept all differentiate between author's, all having their own perspectives and views on the concept. Additionally, their definition of strategic awareness is quite vague, using language that labels the concept without really describing what it encompasses and how it can be implemented. However, when further exploring the definitions, there are similarities to be found in the definitions.

The most agreed upon element of strategic awareness in the authors definitions, is awareness of the external environment. However, the extent of understanding the external environment varies between authors. Some authors mention strategic awareness to be the process of continuous analysis of the external environment and understanding how the businesses is positioned in it (Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Pencarelli et al., 2009; Thompson, 2005). Through the assessment of how external factors such as competitive, social, political and economic factors of the environment influence them (Pencarelli et al., 2009). While simultaneously assessing threats and opportunities in the environment and identifying future strategic paths and their implications for the business (Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Pencarelli et al., 2009; Thompson, 2005). Similarly, Gibb & Scott (1985) mention that it is not just about being aware and reacting to the external environment, but about planning ahead thoughtfully, aligning actions with long-term goals and adapting to opportunities and threats. Other authors, mentions that environmental awareness is specifically about the awareness of competitors pursued strategies (Ahmed, 2023; Thompson, 2005). While Al-Haraisa (2022) means it about scanning the environment in order to use it as leverage and as an advantage in rational decision making. However, other authors only suggest, that there needs to be complete awareness of the external environment, without describing what it would indicate (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024).

Similarly to the awareness of the external environment, awareness of the internal environment of the company is mentioned in several definitions. Both Al-Badayneh (2021) and Mammadov et al., (2024) mention that there needs to be awareness of the internal environment, in terms of knowledge and understanding of the possessed human resources. While some specified it to be the ability to exploit their resources and capabilities efficiently (Al-Haraisa, 2021.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998). However, several of the author's simply suggest internal environmental awareness to be awareness of resources and capabilities possessed and the company's strengths and weaknesses (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024.; Pencarelli et al., 2009.; Thompson, 2005).

Gibb & Scott (1985) have a unique definition of strategic awareness, as it mainly encompasses the capability to understand the full impact of change. They explain strategic awareness to be the ability to understand, anticipate and assess not only the short-term effects, but also the long-term implication of a development or change in the company (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Including understanding how the changes will affect the company resources, structure, market position and future potential, and the ability to use this information to make better future-oriented decisions (Gibb & Scott, 1985). While, no other author's definition only include understanding the impact of change, it is included as one aspect of strategic awareness by several authors. However, the focus on the changes happening are in the external environment and not so the impact of changes in the internal environment. Several authors agree with Gibb & Scott (1985) definition but do not go into such detail, only referring to the topic of change as the ability to anticipate changes happening in the external environment and understand what the implications of the said changes could be (Ahmed, 2023.; Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Pencarelli et al. 2009). Thompson (2005) however mentions change in the context of understanding how suitable their strategy is for opportunities of change.

Only a couple of authors definitions of strategic awareness refers to it as the alignment of views of pursued strategy. Meaning how an individual's view of the strategy or strategic priorities are aligned with the reality of them (Davis et al., 2012.; Hambrick, 1981). However, what position the individual has in the company, whose alignment of views is measured, varies between the authors. Hambrick (1981) for instance refers to the top managements level of awareness of the organization's realized strategy. While Davis et al., (2012), refers to the degree to which the organization's lower-level employees are aware of the top management strategic priorities.

Based on the comparison of definitions of strategic awareness by several authors and the found similarities between them, the concept of strategic awareness can be defined as the following:

*Awareness of pursued strategy and alignment of views across hierarchical levels.*  
*Awareness of the internal and external environment the company operates in.*  
*Ability to interpret changes occurring in the environments and ability to anticipate shifts and events happening based on the information gained from the environment. Understanding the environments influence on operations and impact of changes occurring in them. The ability to respond proactively to changes happening in the environment.*

The following chapters will further review the existing literature on the topic of strategic awareness. By reviewing multiple authors' work on strategic awareness, with the aim of creating a coherent and clear understanding of strategic awareness. Answering the research questions based on the literature. By exploring the concepts dimensions and elements, its importance and how it can be applied in practice. Which will be conducted through reviewing multiple authors' perspectives on the concept of strategic awareness and connecting them through their similarities and look out for their differences.

## **2.1 What is Strategic Awareness**

Strategic awareness is described to be a behaviour, a series of mind tools that help companies to cope with crises generated by misunderstanding, misinformation and ignorance (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). A mindset that is open for change and learning from the environment (Pencarelli et al., 2009). A behaviour of having the finger on the pulse and continuously improve how one identifies, recognize and interpret events, to be able to make appropriate decisions and take action (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). A management tool to manage interaction between the company and the environment that allows for a sensitive reading of its limitations and strengths (Hannon & Atherton, 1998).

Strategic awareness has also been described as the management compass. It has been stated that strategic awareness is equivalent to a compass while a business plan is equivalent to a map (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). The comparisons are meant to explain the

functions and differences of each concept. The map tells clearly how to get from A to B, where the route is identified, which is great when traveling through a well-defined and laid out territory. However, when the environment is uncertain and changes quickly the compass is more useful, as it still points to the correct direction even if the environment changes. Implicating that strategic awareness is about having a business plan while simultaneously recognising and responding to the internal and external environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998) Therefore, it is claimed strategic awareness is an essential tool, as it helps companies to stay on route, even if there is uncertainty (Hannon & Atherton, 1998).

### **2.1.1 Importance of Strategic Awareness**

Strategic awareness was developed due to the need to understand and survive the uncertain and complex business environment (Salih & Neseruddin, 2023). Therefore, the importance of strategic awareness is mostly agreed upon by authors, as many claim the importance of strategic awareness is due to the rapidly changing environment (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). However, all author's have their own perspectives on how strategic awareness ensures the company's survival in the uncertain business environment. Which is why this chapter will go over the different perspectives on the importance of strategic awareness in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concept's importance.

Strategic awareness is claimed to be crucial for effective strategy implementation, from the perspective of strategic awareness being defined as employee's alignment of views with the pursued strategy (Davis et al., 2012.; Hambrick, 1981). This is as it is believed the implementation of strategy relies heavily on the actions of lower-level organizational members (Davis et al., 2012.; Hambrick, 1981). Therefore, it is important for lower-level employees to understand the strategic priorities of the organization, in order to execute their task aligned with the strategy (Davis et al., 2012). It is claimed that the alignment of views will reduce the gaps between top management plans and what is realized at the operational level (Davis et al., 2012). That a lack of shared understanding or alignment with the organization's strategy and its priorities could therefore hinder the

implementation of the intended strategy (Davis et al. 2012). Strategic awareness is told to ensure that all organizational levels understand and are aligned with the organization's strategic priorities (Hambrick, 1981), and with this shared understanding through clear and frequent communications from middle and top management the organization can achieve effective strategy implementation, organizational success and enhanced performance (Davis et al., 2012).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, it is claimed that strategic awareness is a critical skill for an entrepreneur in a small company to possess (Pencarelli et al., 2009). This is as it helps the entrepreneur in the decision-making process, as it is often strongly guided by the owners' personal goals by sensitivity, creativity and intuition, instead of systematic analysis or planning (Pencarelli et al. 2009). Additionally, it is said that strategic awareness helps the entrepreneur to formulate strategies and to identify the most suitable strategic paths for the company, as small enterprises often lack formal planning and strategic awareness helps to balance out the lack of planning (Panarelli et al., 2009). Strategic awareness also aids the entrepreneur in assessing the effectiveness of the chosen strategy and the validity of emergent ones (Pencarelli et al., 2009). Which facilitates for a better integration of the entrepreneurs' subjective goals with the corporate goals (Pencarelli et al., 2009).

Strategic awareness is also claimed to be essential for a company's survival, as a company cannot survive without being able to cope with change (Gibb & Scott, 1985). In a study done by Gibb & Scott (1985) it became apparent that strategic awareness is of critical importance for a company to successfully cope with change. Hence why strategic awareness is essential for a company's survival, especially in today's business environment where change is rapid and continuous (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Additionally, it is claimed strategic awareness to be more important than formal planning and a written business plan as strategies are emergent in an uncertain environment, and therefore a formal and written plan are quickly outdated and difficult to maintain, which reduces ability to respond to changes (Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998).

It is stated that strategic awareness plays a vital role in goal achievement and the translation of strategic plans to practical reality as well as increasing the organization ability to be ready for change (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). This is as strategic awareness is claimed to enable decision makers to know and understand their organization's surrounding conditions, both in the internal and external environment (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Also, as strategic awareness makes decision makers aware of the importance of using information and past experiences to solve their problems they face, with the help of reflection, reframing, systems thinking and orientation learning (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Which makes them able to better anticipate the impact of future change, taking proactive necessary measures and adapt to environmental conditions (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021).

Strategic awareness is considered to be one of the most valuable assets an organization can have, as it has the greatest merit in improving the reality of an organization (Ahmed, 2023). According to Ahmed (2023) by being strategically aware the organization enhances organizational performance and ensures sustainability and therefore survival in a turbulent business environment. This is as he explains strategic awareness contributes to the formulation of strategic goals and in making the organizations strengths more capable of capturing available opportunities. Additionally, as strategic awareness helps the organization to respond quickly to the environmental changes through flexible control of its resources. By reshaping their internal environment to fit with the external environment, by transferring their resources and direct their capabilities to the appropriate places where it is needed (Ahmed, 2023).

Strategic awareness is claimed to be an essential tool for a company as it creates competitive advantage by the result of achieving growth and development with the help of strategic awareness (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025). This is as strategic awareness is claimed to help companies to overcome their traditional methods by enabling managers to think beyond their typical cognitive limitations (Jabbar & Hamid 2025). Which allows for a

deeper understanding and new perspectives on the information gained from the external environment (Jabbar & Hamid 2025). This is said to support and enhance confidence in decision-making, while also making the company quicker to integrate ideas and options, such as reshaping their organizational structure to fit the environment and allocate resources efficiently (Jabbar & Hamid 2025).

According to Jamal & Hamad (2025) strategic awareness is essential to the success of the organization and highlight the importance of strategic awareness as it improves the decision-making ability, pursuit of excellence and enhances employee's commitment and motivation. The authors mean that the decision-making ability is improved as strategic awareness enables organizations to make informed decisions based on accurate information as they have a comprehensive understanding of the environment. They claim pursuit of excellence is based on strategic awareness improving the ability to identify opportunities and threats, which helps the company to gain a competitive advantage. While enhanced commitment and motivation is due to strategic awareness fostering a shared connection between individuals and motivate employees to work towards a shared vision (Jamal & Hamad, 2025).

Strategic awareness is considered to be crucial for achieving superior performance, improve competitive positioning and to ensure organizational survival and continuity (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024). As strategic awareness plays an important role in helping organizations to understand their internal and external environment, strengths and weaknesses, which helps them to exploit opportunities, minimize the impact of threats and enhances decision-making (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Lastly, strategic awareness is seen as essential to outperform competition, as without strategic awareness opportunities are missed and lead to slow reactions and responses to threats and problems that arise in their internal and external environments (Thompson, 2005).

### **2.1.2 Elements and Dimensions of Strategic Awareness**

Strategic awareness is considered to be an internal quality of the company that embodies the elements of time, resources and environmental awareness (Gibb & Scott, 1985). As well as the ability to be aware of the issues and questions that need to be addressed (Thompson, 2005). It is the ability to assess the total impact of any change and its long-term implications, as well as the ability to understand what current decisions and actions implications are for the future (Gibb & Scott, 1985). As well as the ability to strategically and holistically understanding the past, present and future, while maintaining awareness of changes in the environment and understanding what it implicates (Thompson, 2005). Which conditions for flexibility, adaptation and reflection, facilitating better decision-making, alignment and quicker responses to challenges (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Creating an approach of anticipation and proactivity, which leads to less issues, as pitfalls can be avoided beforehand, instead of running into issues as they arise (Gibb & Scott, 1985).

Strategic awareness is described to be a combination of a processes that look at, understand, and learn from the uncertain external environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). A process of assessing, examining and understanding the external environment the company operates in and how it is positioned in it and understanding its strengths and weaknesses (Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Jamal & Hamad, 2025.; Mammadov et al., 2024). As well as the ability to identify threats and capturing opportunities arising from the environment (Jamal & Hamad, 2025.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Which requires an assessment of the internal environment and its attributes to understanding its fit to the external environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). It is about acquiring crucial information from the external environment and staying updated on developments, such as technology and customer demands and the ability to anticipate shifts through utilizing management information systems and leveraging necessary tools to enhance their knowledge resources (Mammadov et al., 2024). Which allows for more considered decision-making, more effective positioning of the firm in the environment and effective and faster responses to opportunities and threats (Hannon & Atherton, 1998).

Strategic awareness is said to be about constantly improving the fit between the environment and the organization's resources as they change (Thompson, 2005). By making informed decisions based on gathered information from the external environment and analysis made of the internal environment in order to co-ordinate both environments (Thompson, 2005). Additionally, the need to be open-minded is highlighted when analysing and assessing the organization and its environment, in order to reach more objective, informed and environmentally aware decisions (Thompson, 2005).

According to some authors strategic awareness has four dimensions which are external strategic awareness, internal strategic awareness, current strategic awareness and prospective strategic awareness (Al-Haraisa, 2022.; Pencarelli et al., 2009). While the authors agree on the dimension of strategic awareness, their definition of each dimension is differentiated. However, some authors only use the dimensions of internal and external awareness and instead of current and prospective awareness uses strategic goals as a third dimension for strategic awareness which is somewhat similar to prospective strategic awareness (Al-Badayneh, 2021).

External strategic awareness refers to awareness of competitive, social, political and economical factors and their impact on the organization (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Al-Haraisa, 2022.; Pencarelli et al, 2009). As well as awareness of one's customers, suppliers and employees (Al-Badayneh, 2021), and awareness of populational statistics (Al-Haraisa, 2022) and their influence on the organization. Internal strategic awareness however refers to the organization awareness of its resources and knowledge of what their purpose and goals are (Pencarelli et al., 2009). Internal strategic awareness is also referred to as awareness of all internal functions and activity, organizational objectives, financial resources, administrative skills and their strengths and weaknesses (Al-Badayneh, 2021). As well as the organizations' ability to meet customer demands and needs by utilizing one's resources, skills and knowledge effectively to gain competitive advantage (Al-Haraisa, 2022).

Current awareness refers to the ability of the organization to understand where they are and what their position is (Pencarelli et al., 2009). It is also referred to be the regular conduction of market research and collection feedback and reaction from customers to ensure high quality products or services (Al-Haraisa, 2022). Whereas prospective strategic awareness refers to the organizations ability to plan and prepare for the future by developing different strategic scenarios and by allocating financial resources for future goals (Al-Haraisa, 2022). As well as knowing where the organization want to go and can go, considering what strategic paths to take and how to get there, while also taking into account the environmental restrictions and internal resources possessed (Pencarelli et al., 2009).

With the dimension of strategic goals, it's referred to the organization's awareness of its mission, strategic goals and what they seek to achieve in the long term, medium term and short term (Al-Badayneh, 2021). By measuring the level of performance and results that the organization seeks to achieve (Al-Badayneh, 2021).

The most commonly used dimensions for strategic awareness are reframing, systems thinking, orientation learning and reflection. Which are claimed to be needed abilities of companies in order to achieve the benefits of strategic awareness (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Several authors use these four dimensions for strategic awareness (Ahmed, 2023.; Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Jabbar & Hamid, 2025), however there are authors who only use a few of the dimensions out of the four (Jamal & Hamad, 2025).

Turkay et al. (2011) connected the four dimensions to strategic awareness (Al-Hamadani & Mahdi, 2025). He described it to be is a cultural framework to develop a working environment which would be more strategic and one that would allow for strategic management practices. However, Pisapia et al., (2005) is the one that created the leadership framework for developing a strategic mindset through use of the cognitive processes, of reframing, systems thinking and reflection. According to Pisapia et al. (2011) when practicing the leadership framework, it will help the leader to create a strategic mindset that

has the ability to make sense of complexities, as well as it enables the leader to identify, predict, respond and adopt non-linear change opportunities and challenges.

Reframing is a cognitive skill that refers to the ability see and evaluate situations and facts through different perspectives (Turkay et al., 2012). It is a process of examining the same situation from multiple perspectives while suspending judgement until having a more comprehensive view of the situation, allowing to generate new insight and options for action (Pisapia et al., 2005). It allows to abandon old concepts and envision new roles, which broaden one's horizons as well as enhances the ability to act, while better understanding opportunities and challenges especially in times of crisis (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). It's important when practicing reframing to be patient and flexible while also allocating enough time to find out exactly what is going on, in order to reach a clear understanding to be able to then use the gained insight to make appropriate decision of action (Ahmed, 2023).

Reflection is also a cognitive skill that involves careful examination of any belief or practice in terms of personal experience, previous success, hopes, preferences, desired outcomes and strengths and weaknesses (Pisapia et al., 2005). Reflection is about not being hindered by one's own personal beliefs and views by taking a step back to consider through multiple perspectives and solutions (Pisapia et al., 2005). From this reflection of one's own beliefs and views, it is to be applied to examine past experiences and decisions to understand why some succeeded and why others failed (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). The new gained insight and information is to then be applied to new situations and facts in order to make better judgements and decisions for action (Turkay et al., 2012). Additionally, the gained insight is to then be created into a framework to guide future decisions, by helping them connect scattered information into a clearer picture (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). This will allow organizations to anticipate future challenges and creating alternative responses, without having all the information or facts (Pisapia et al., 2005).

Systems thinking refers to the ability to understand the organization as whole and as an integrated unit instead of focusing on individual events, actions or parts of the organization (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Jabbar & Hamid (2025) explained it as seeing the forest instead of the trees, where the forest represents the whole organizations while trees represent individual details or small situations. Systems thinking is about identifying structures, forces and patterns that shape organizational behaviours, it's the ability to understand how different components interact and influence each other, which helps one to identify the root causes that makes certain types of events more likely (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). By focusing and viewing the organization as a whole integrated unit and understanding how a decision or change in one department or sub system of the organization will affect the whole organization, creates the ability to anticipate how events, changes and decisions impact on the whole organization, which makes the organization more adaptable to the environment (Pisapia et al., 2005).

Learning orientation refers to the extent of interest and dedication the organisation put towards learning, development of skills and abilities (Ahmed, 2023). Learning orientation includes the factors, which are commitment to learning, open-mindedness and shared vision (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Commitment to learning refers to the extent the organization place value of learning (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Open-mindedness refers to the extent organization are ready to constantly question its assumptions, procedures and beliefs (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). While shared vision refers to the extent organizations creates and maintain a clear and understood vision that everyone in the organizations recognizes (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Which creates enthusiasm, purpose and direction within the organization (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Learning orientation enhances the organization ability to make informed decisions (Jamal & Hamad, 2025) and develop an organizational culture of participation, flexibility (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025), and problem solving (Ahmed, 2023).

By applying reframing, reflection, systems thinking and learning orientation into practice, it enhances the benefits of strategic awareness as it allows for a deeper understanding

of each element of strategic awareness and enhances the implementation of the concept (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021).

After reviewing the existing literature on the elements and dimensions of strategic awareness, the question “What is strategic awareness?” would be answered the following way:

*Strategic awareness is about understanding one’s own environment and how one is positioned in it, both internally as well as externally. It involves constant analysis of the environment, and the ability to identify and interpret events in it and to understand what they imply for oneself without presumption and through multiple perspectives. It is about learning to anticipate what the events in the environment might imply for the future and to react to them proactively. It is about knowing one’s own strengths and weaknesses, resources and capabilities and the ability to assess them without biases. About knowing where one wants to go with understanding of what is possible and sharing information of strategic intention to create alignment of views. It’s the ability to use the acquired information from both the internal and external environment to make informed decisions taking every aspect into account and utilize resources, knowledge and skills to fit the environment. It’s about having an open mind to learning and challenging one owns beliefs and processes for new perspectives to gain a deeper understanding.*

## **2.2 How Strategic Awareness can be Applied in Practice**

Few studies on the concept of strategic awareness include practical in-depth steps on how to implement strategic awareness in practice. However, many authors do give recommendation for implementations, but they are often quite vague and do not include descriptive step by step instructions for implementation of strategic awareness. Additionally, the authors recommendations differentiate between each other.

In this chapter of the thesis, I will review the existing literature of the recommendations and frameworks by different authors on how to increase or implement strategic awareness into organizations. With the aim of gaining an understanding of how strategic awareness can be applied into practice.

### **2.2.1 Recommendations for Applications Found in the Literature**

Several authors recommend training, consulting and education for increasing strategic awareness within an organisation. The training, counselling or education should be focused on the company's weaknesses, development process or change they are going through (Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Mammadov et al., 2024.; Pencarelli et al., 2009). This is as the outside help can help companies to reflect on their decisions, consider consequences more deeply and build a mental framework for better judgement (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Which can be especially helpful in situation when there is a limited amount of time for reacting to change or in situations where a company lacks strategic awareness and are too busy to stop and reflect (Gibb & Scott, 1985). It is recommended to take advantage of local institutions that provide these services, especially for smaller companies as it will help them understand their strengths and weaknesses and with identifying gaps between their current position and their goals (Pencarelli et al., 2009). Which will help companies to create awareness of their environments, goals and resources (Pencarelli et al., 2009).

In order to foster strategic awareness, it's said there needs to be an openness for change and managerial innovations that should start from the inside (Pencarelli et al., 2009). It's highly recommended to start with focusing on organizing, systematizing and institutionalizing the data and information they already have, as it is often scattered across different people and stored in non-user-friendly databases (Pencarelli et al., 2009). To create and integrate a management information system that captures environmental data and competitors' strategies to support decision-making (Mammadov et al., 2024). Which starts with the creating access to relevant information about markets, resources, opportunities, policies and the economy (Pencarelli et al., 2009).

It has also been suggested that strategic awareness can be achieved through strategic alertness, strategic scenario and by keeping up with global developments (Jamal & Hamad, 2025). Strategic alertness refers to continuously monitor and analyse both the internal and external environments in order to have timely information of the changes, opportunities and threats in the environments (Jamal & Hamad, 2025). Which will enhance the ability to react and adapt to rapid changes and help companies to predict changes before they affect their performance (Jamal & Hamad, 2025). Strategic scenario refers to the process of analysing multiple possible scenarios that may impact the organizations strategy (Jamal & Hamad, 2025). Which will help leaders to make decisions based on multiple options instead of only one (Jamal & Hamid, 2025). By implementing these objectives of strategic awareness into the organization they will achieve their goals and enhance their competitiveness, which will lead to long-term strategic success (Jamal & Hamad, 2025).

In Jabbar & Hamid. (2025) study it became evident that strategic awareness could be increased by using accurate analysis and integrated data to determine strategic priorities, as well as by motivating individuals to make informed, knowledge-based decisions. Systems thinking refers to where each decision is viewed as a part of a wider organizational structure and understanding how that impacts the overall performance of the organization. Which had shown to contribute to a rising level of individual awareness among employees as well as in creating an environment that encourages critical analysis and the use of the acquired knowledge (Jabbar & Hamid, 2025). Additionally, Jabbar & Hamid (2025) found that by reviewing past experiences, identifying the errors and then working to correct them, contributed to improved performance and risk mitigation associated with administrative decisions.

According to Davis et al., (2012), it is crucial for lower-level organizational members to receive frequent and useful messages about the content of the pursued strategy. They suggest that it is the manager's task to make sure the employees' view of the strategy is

aligned with the top managers strategic priorities. In their study they found that top managers messaging was essential to achieve strategic awareness if the middle management messaging was weak in achieving strategic awareness (Davis et al., 2012). However, if the middle management messaging was good the results of strategic awareness were higher, drawing the conclusion that lower-level organizational employees prefer information from more accessible sources like middle management (Davis et al., 2012). However, for middle managements messaging to be good it entails that top-managements messaging to middle-management should be effective (Davis et al., 2012).

Davis et al. (2012) suggest effective distribution of messages of strategic priorities based on sensegiving theory to foster strategic awareness. Sensegiving theory is the process of how leaders actively influence and shape perceptions and interpretations of others to align with the leaders desired perspectives (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Additionally, Davis et al. (2012) imply strategic awareness can be achieved through implementing different structural arrangements, which could include the formalization of rules and procedures, centralization of authority and application of coordinative mechanisms. Hambrick (1981) however mention that the degree of strategic awareness can be increased through ongoing awareness raising through formal processes, training and retreats that should continue even after the strategy has been developed and implemented in order to keep the views of strategy aligned.

According to Longo & Rotolo (2015) who researched how strategic awareness can be promoted in the public sector, specifically Municipality of Milan focusing on the department of welfare, found that strategic awareness could be implemented through six different ways. The first approach to implement strategic awareness according to Longo & Rotolo (2015) is to include everyone who has an important role in the organization when creating a strategy. The second suggestion is to have full transparency, sharing openly all information and intentions such as performance metrics, challenges and goals, to the whole organization with the aim to increase commitment and awareness (Longo & Rotolo, 2015). The third suggestion by the authors is to organize public hearings, working

groups and peer-review workshops regarding the strategy with the whole organization to increase awareness and identify challenges, needs and improvements. The fourth suggestion is that each department in the organization shares their view of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, problems and needs. Which the organization then takes into consideration and investigates further to confirm or correct these perceptions (Longo & Rotolo, 2015). The fifth suggestion is assessment and innovation proposals by those who will be implementing the strategy (Longo & Rotolo, 2015). The last suggestion by the authors is to do cross-organizational analysis, working with groups that are mixed across different departments (Longo & Rotolo, 2015).

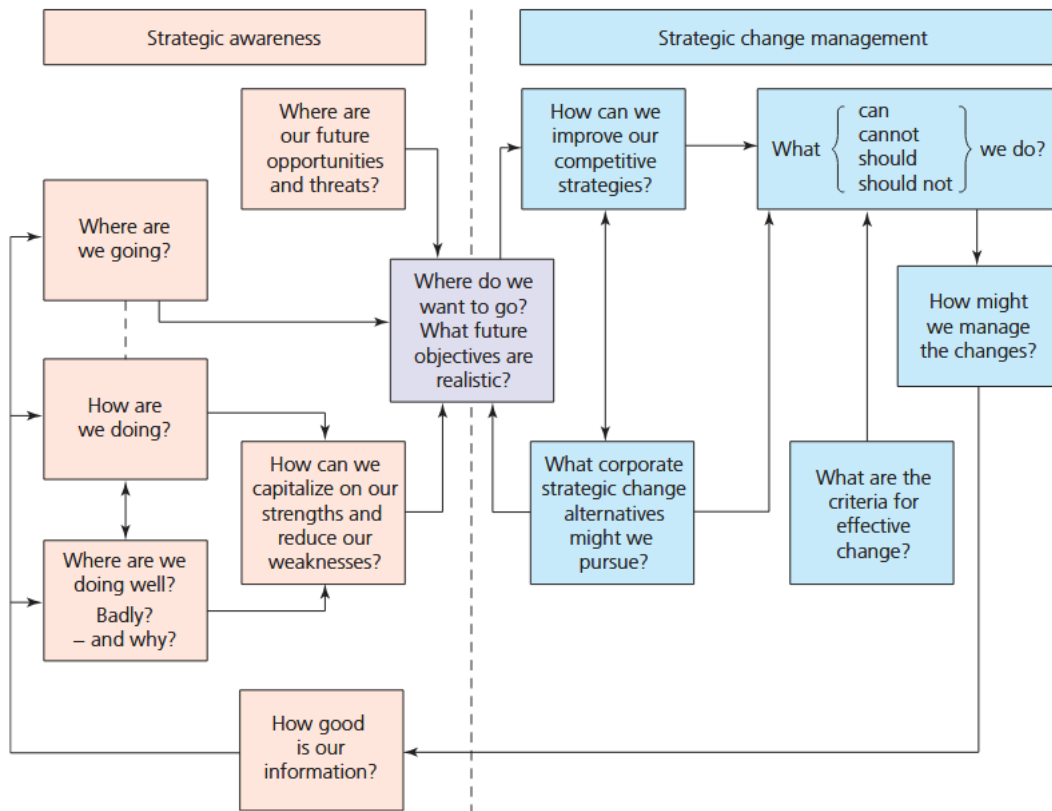
Similarly to Longo & Rotolo (2015) recommendations of intensive training programs that are aimed at enhancing the employee's ability to carrying out a broader range of tasks than they already do, has been suggested for increasing strategic awareness (Ahmed, 2023). With this it's not meant to teach the employees in the training program something totally new, but to strengthen and widen their abilities in the area of work they already are responsible for (Ahmed, 2023). Which could also be done by changing work tasks between employees, if possible and necessary (Ahmed, 2023). The aim is to implement flexibility in the workforce as well as increase knowledge and perspectives of how other departments and task's function and what they need to consider when working, which increases strategic awareness across the organisation (Ahmed, 2023).

Lastly it has been recommended to network with other companies of similar sizes and from different sectors in order to increase strategic awareness. This is as it will warrant benchmarking, problem-sharing and co-learning which will create a community of practice where knowledge emerges through relationships. (Pencarelli et al. 2009).

### **2.2.2 Existing Frameworks for Implementation**

According to Thompson (2005) the use of the strategic management framework showcased in figure 1. will increase strategic awareness, as it helps the organizations to understand where they are, evaluate their opportunities and threats and answer the

questions “Where do we want to go?” and “What future objectives are realistic?” before choosing which strategy to pursue. The framework can be used to increase strategic awareness, for helping to choose a strategy or for strategic decision-making (Thompson, 2005, p. 25-26).



**Figure 1.** A Strategic Management Framework (Thompson, 2005, p. 26).

According to Thompson (2005) the framework portrayed in Figure 1. represent the components of strategy, which are formulated into questions that concerns strategic awareness and strategic change. It’s recommended to move from left to right when answering the questions (Thompson, 2005, p. 25). To increase strategic awareness managers should address these questions continuously, especially when operating in a turbulent environments (Thompson, 2005, p. 25). However, the question needs to be asked in a clear framework to ensure that when issues arise, they can be placed into context so that

changes can be proposed and assessed based on their impact on other components within the framework (Thompson, 2005, p. 25).

According to Gibb & Scott (1985) for companies to achieve strategic awareness companies need to assess their existing performance, analyse their base potential for development and understand the internal and external factors that will influence their potential for development and/or change.

With the existing performance Gibb & Scott (1985) means exploring how the business has been doing, by analysing the company's performance outputs over the past few years to get an overview and profile of their performance and their position in the business environment. They suggest asking and answering the following questions: "*How well is the company performing in their marketplace*" by considering and analysing their product mix, customer mix, marketing mix, distribution channels, geographical scope and sales structure, as well as assessing their performance. The second question is "*How well is the company producing their product or service*" by considering utilization, efficiency, quality and wastage (Gibb & Scott, 1985). The last question to answer, to get a full overview of one's existing performance is "*How does the performance in the marketplace and production reflect on the overall financial and operating performance?*" (Gibb & Scott, 1985). This is done by looking into numbers such as net worth, net profit, current ratio, quick ratio, debt-to-equity ratio and value added (Gibb & Scott, 1985).

The base potential for development analysis which Gibb & Scott (1985) created for their research, will help companies to understand their strengths while also understanding factors that will influence their potential to change or grow. It is divided into five main categories them being, the resource base, the accumulated experience base, the control base, the leadership base and the ideas base (Gibb & Scott, 1985). This assessment of the company can be done at any particular point in time, and functions as a position audit (Gibb & Scott 1985).

The resource base dictates how easily the company can move forward from their existing position. According to Gibb & Scott (1985) there is five key factors that the company need to consider and analyse in order to understand how easily they can move forward from their existing position. The first factor is assessing the liquidity of the company, meaning how much cash is available for future changes (Gibb & Scott, 1985). The second factor is to consider how up to date the company is with technology (Gibb & Scott, 1985). The third being assessment of what their physical assets are, considering if their existing assets can support expansions (Gibb & Scott, 1985). The fourth factor is to assess the workforces' capability, skill, flexibility and ability to adapt (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Lastly, it is needed to assess the product base, considering if their products are still relevant and competitive (Gibb & Scott, 1985).

The accumulated experience base are factors that outsiders assessing the company will consider, for example those considering financing the company (Gibb & Scott, 1985). These factors tell outsiders how adaptable the company is, by looking at their experience in different kinds of markets and customers (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Experiences to consider when analysing the accumulated experience base is their product development experience, such as how much time is needed to develop new services or products to a level where customers are satisfied (Gibb & Scott, 1985). As well as the company's experience in raising capital, such as do they have experience of negotiating and how able are they of putting together needed reports and budgets (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Lastly what the company's experience is working with external agents and its ability to learn from the wider environment needs to be considered when assessing the accumulated experience base (Gibb & Scott 1985).

The control base indicates how in control the company is of its own business, which can be evaluated through four key areas, their control system, decision-making process, organizational structure and planning (Gibb & Scott, 1985). The company's control system can be measured by answering the question "*How does the business know how well or badly it is doing?*" as well as considering if it is appropriate and enough for them (Gibb

& Scott, 1985). A company's decision-making process can be assessed by taking into account the speed and clarity of the decisions taken (Gibb & Scott, 1985). A company's organizational structure can be assessed by considering how well their structure can accommodate changes (Gibb & Scott, 1985). With planning Gibb & Scott means the degree of formalizations of the planning process the company have in terms of having targets and schedules.

The leadership base which Gibb & Scott (1985) considers to be of most importance when considering the company's capability of change, is an analysis of the managers personal objectives, that can and will guide the business strategy. Things to identify and assess are the managers task structure, such as what they consider important to focus on (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Managers personal capability of skillsets and experience and managements attitude towards change, especially the degree of positivity and proactiveness towards change (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Additionally, the assessment of the leadership style, need to be considered as it has a great importance on how changes are orientated in the company (Gibb & Scott, 1985).

The idea base gives an indication of what future growth might look like, it is claimed that without inventory of ideas a company will have little growth potential (Gibb & Scott, 1985). This can be measured by identifying the number of ideas there are for development of existing products or services and the number of ideas for new products or ideas for market expansion or new markets (Gibb & Scott, 1985). Additionally, it can be measured by analysing the stage of the development of these ideas and how many of the ideas have a clear plan to be executed (Gibb & Scott 1985).

After assessing and analysing the existing performance and the base potential for development, the next step is to identify key internal and external influences affecting their existing base potential for development. As well as assess their weaknesses and strengths (Gibb & Scott 1985).

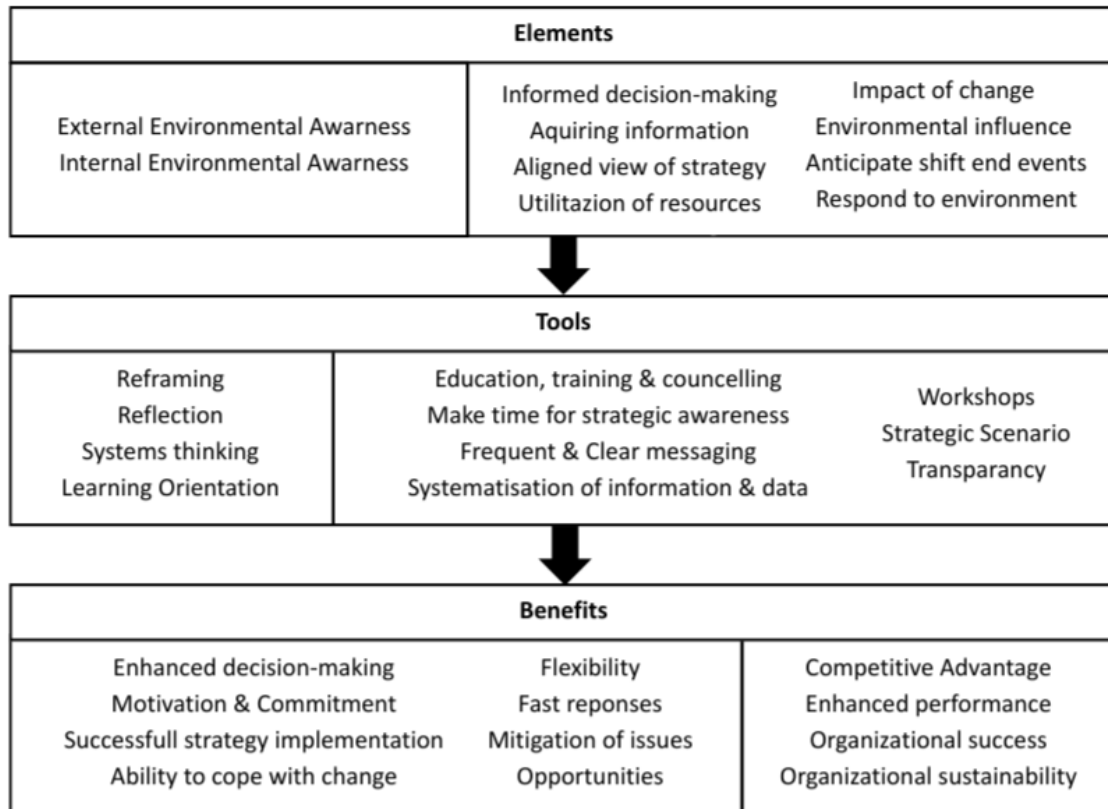
By analysing the company's existing performance and their base potential for development as well as the internal and external factors that influence the company, one can become more strategically aware (Gibb & Scott, 1985). By being aware of these measures, the company gains a comprehensive profile of the company, making them able to make well informed decision and altering their path and plans (Gibb & Scott, 1985).

### **2.3 Synthesis of Literature on the Concept of Strategic Awareness**

The preceding chapters which have reviewed the existing literature by several authors on strategic awareness, have shown that the concept lacks a unified understanding on the concept. While the literature offers many valuable perspectives from various authors, it remains fragmented and lack conceptual clarity. However, similarities between definitions and perspectives can be found, which can be drawn into a general understanding and themes of the concept of strategic awareness.

This chapter will bring together the main findings and insight from the literature review and arrange them into a conceptual framework, in order to gain a more clear and unified understanding of strategic awareness. Answering both research questions: What is strategic awareness and how can strategic awareness be applied into practise. The conceptual framework shown in figure 2. consist of several author's views on strategic awareness and is solely constructed based on existing literature on the concept, which have been compounded together into a framework. The conceptual framework does not introduce new theoretical perspectives. However the framework shown in figure 2. serves as the foundation and guide for the empirical research of this thesis.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 2. contain the core elements of strategic awareness, tools and practises that support its development and application and the benefits associated when strategic awareness is practiced by organizations. The framework provides a structured understanding of strategic awareness, answering what strategic awareness is and how it can be applied in practice.



**Figure 2.** A Conceptual Framework of Strategic Awareness based on Existing Literature

The two dimensions of strategic awareness are external and internal environmental awareness, as its the most agreed upon elements of strategic awareness by authors. Additionally, all other elements of strategic awareness that are shown in Figure 2. falls under either internal environmental awareness or external environmental awareness, which suggest they are the main two dimensions of strategic awareness. The element of alignment of views on pursued strategy within the organization and utilization of resources falls under the dimension of internal environmental awareness. While anticipation of shifts or events and responding to the environment falls under the dimension of external environment awareness. However, the other elements of strategic awareness falls under both the internal and external environment of the organization. As the element of understanding the impact of change and the influence of the environment, involves awareness of the external environment and understanding how it will impact the

internal environment of the organization. Similarly, the element of acquiring information and the element of making informed decisions consist of gather and assessing information from both the external and internal environment.

Through the practise of reframing, reflection, systems thinking and learning orientation organizations gain a deeper understanding and insights of the elements of strategic awareness (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). Which will lead to better results and benefits from applying strategic awareness into practice within the organization. In order to become strategically aware training, counselling and education is recommended, as it can help businesses to gain new insights from an outsider's perspective (Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Mammadov et al., 2024.; Pencarelli et al., 2009). However, making time for practicing strategic awareness is required in order to become more strategically aware (Ahmed, 2023.; Gibb & Scott, 2985). As without time for reflection and assessing, one cannot become aware. The systematisation of information and data is recommended as the first step when applying strategic awareness into practise (Pencarelli, et al., 2009). While in order to align the views of the strategy across the organization clear and frequent messaging is required (Davis et al., 2012). Alignment of views as well as an increase of strategic awareness within the organization can be achieved through strategy workshops, transparency of strategic information (Longo & Rotolo, 2025), and practice of strategic scenario (Al-Haraisa, 2022.; Jamal & Hamad, 2025).

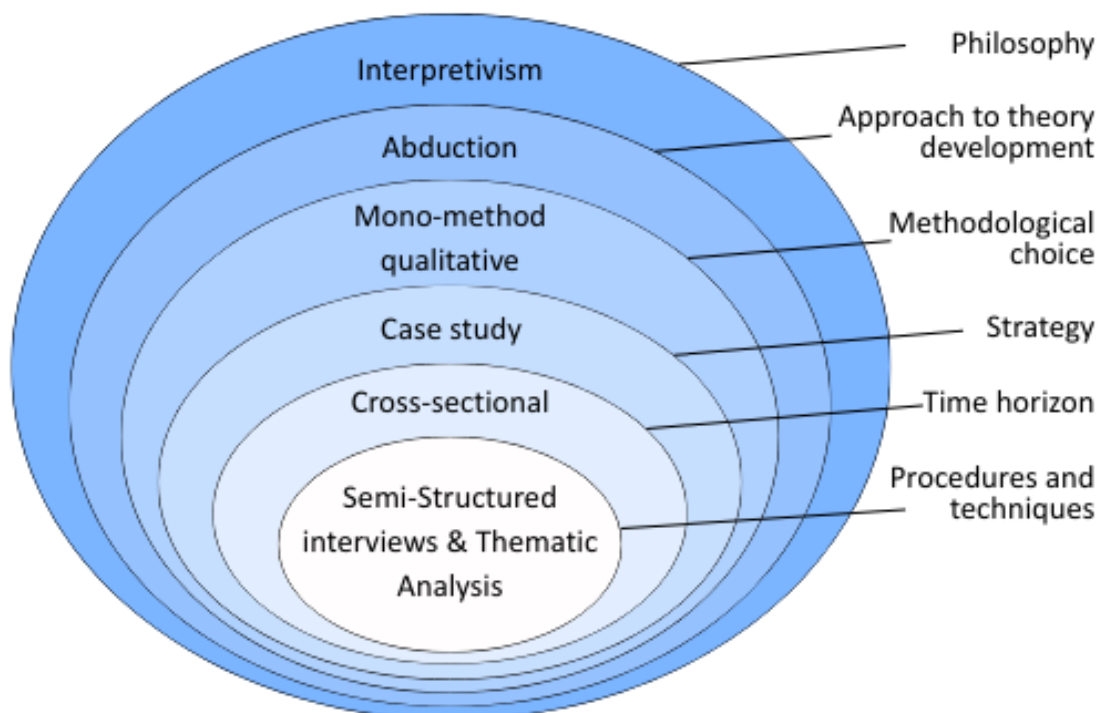
In figure 2. are also the benefits of strategic awareness and hence the importance of the concept according to the literature shown. According to the existing literature strategic awareness enhances decision making as the leaders have more information to base their decision on, as they are aware of their external and internal environments (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Which also leads to faster responses to the environment and therefore mitigation of threats and exploitation of opportunities (Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Thompson, 2005). Additionally, it is claimed strategic awareness leads to an enhanced ability to understand the impact of change (Gibb & Scott, 1985), flexibility, motivation and commitment (Jamal & Hamad), and successful strategy implementation

(Davis et al., 2012). These benefits of strategic awareness create competitive advantage (Jamal & Hamad, 2025), enhanced performance, organisational success and sustainability (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024).

### 3 Research Methodology

In this chapter the research methodology selected for conducting the research of this thesis will be presented and justified. The selected research philosophy and approach will be described, as well as the research design, which includes methodological choice, research strategy and time horizon. This chapter will also explain how the case studies were chosen, and how data collection and analysis was conducted. Lastly the research reliability and validity will be discussed.

Saunders (2023) research onion which is a methodological framework, was used as a guide for planning the methodological choices for this research. The framework was chosen due to its widespread use in business and management research. The selected methodological methods for this thesis are presented in figure 3. which is an adaptation from Saunders' (2023) research onion.



**Figure 3.** The 'research onion' (Adapted from, Saunders, 2023, p. 130).

### 3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The most outer layer of the research onion refers to the research philosophy, which in hand refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about how knowledge is developed (Saunders, 2023, p.131). The choice of research philosophy will tell the reader in which world view the research is conducted, which is important to be aware of as assumptions of the world view shapes how one understands the research question, the methods that are used and how one interprets the findings (Saunders, 2023, p.131-132).

The research philosophy of this thesis is interpretivism. Interpretivism aim is to create new and deeper understandings and interpretations of social environments and their contexts (Saunders, 2023, p. 150-151). Interpretivism focus on complexity, multiple interpretations and sensemaking (Saunders, 2023, p. 150-151). According to Saunders (2023) interpretivism assumptions of the nature of the reality can be characterized as complex and rich, which is socially constructed through culture and language, that are considered through multiple meanings, interpretations, realities, processes, experiences and practices. Interpretivisms typical methods are according to Saunders (2023) often small samples which are in-depth investigations using qualitative methods of analysis. As the aim of the research is to understand and clarify a theoretical concept which lacks a unified understanding, the concept must be approached and researched by considering multiple perspectives and situations. Therefore interpretivism was selected as the research philosophy, as it is a suitable philosophy when conducting qualitative research that concerns topics that are complex and are dependent on the circumstances and interactions among the individuals that are involved (Saunders, 2023).

The research approach, which is the second layer of the research onion, refers to the approach used for theory development, and it determines how theory testing or theory building is involved in answering the research questions (Saunders, 2023, p. 154). The selected research approach for the study is abductive. The abductive research approach is, when the data is collected to explore and test a phenomenon, trying to identify themes and to explain patterns to be able to generate new theory or modify existing

theory (Saunders, 2023, p. 155). The abductive research approach combines the deduction and induction approach and moves between the data and theory by making comparisons and interpretation between the collected data and the pre-existing theories, in order to identify and interpret patterns (Saunders, 2023, p. 158).

The abduction approach is therefore the most appropriate research approach for this study as the aim is to explore the concept of strategic awareness, by making comparison and interpretation using both data and existing literature to generate new insights. However, while the research approach is abduction, it leans more towards the induction approach, as new insight of theory is created after the collection and analysis of data. With the induction approach the theory is formulated after the collection and analysis of data, instead of formulating a theory first and then testing its validity through data collection which refers to the deduction approach (Saunders, 2023, p. 156-157).

### **3.2 Research Design**

The next three layers of the research onion makes up the research design, which includes the methodological choice, research strategy and time horizon (Saunders, 2023, p. 177). The research design refers to the plan for the research project, the tactics used, how data is collected and analysed to answer the research questions and to achieve the aim of the research. (Saunders, 2023, p.177-178). This research is an exploratory study, as the research questions aim is to clarify of a phenomenon. According to Saunders (2023, p. 179) an exploratory study's aim is to explore or clarify understanding of an issue, problem or phenomenon, the research question often starting with what or why.

The research uses a qualitative research design, specifically a mono method qualitative study was conducted. Qualitative research refers to data collection procedures and analysis techniques that generate or use non numerical data, where meanings are taken from words and images instead of numbers (Saunders, 2023, p. 181, 185). Qualitative research designs are often used when researchers are seeking to make sense of subjective and socially constructed meanings, with the aim to develop a conceptual framework and

provide theoretical contribution (Saunders, 2023, p. 185). A qualitative research design can use a single data collection technique, which is called a mono method qualitative study, (Saunders, 2023, p. 186) which was selected for this study. The time horizon of the research is cross-sectional, as the research was conducted at a one particular time (Saunders, 2023, p. 2012).

The research strategy is the methodological connection between the research philosophy and the choice of methods for collecting and analyse data (Saunders, 2023, p. 191). This thesis research strategy can be characterized as a case study. A case-study is described as an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomena within its real-life setting, which has the capacity to generate new insights, which can lead to rich empirical descriptions and development of theory (Saunders, 2023, p. 206-207). This thesis research is conducted through a multiple case study, to allow for replication, and it can be described as an emergent case. This is, as the research environment has been chosen beforehand and the focus will be on the research to emerge through different stages of data collection and analysis while incorporating relevant literature (Saunders, 2023, p. 208).

### **3.3 Case Selection & Data Collection Process**

Interviews were selected as the data collection method for conducting the research, specifically the format of thematic semi-structured interviews. The method of semi-structured interview's is used to gather qualitative data, which is often analysed qualitatively (Saunders, 2023, p. 446). The degree of structure in a semi-structured interview can vary depending on the pre-set questions the interview follows and if the questions will vary in the order they are asked (Saunders, 2023, p. 443). A thematic format semi-structured interviews uses a list of pre-determined themes and initial questions to guide each interview, to stay focused on the theory's different aspects, but allowing for flexibility in the structure of the interview (Saunders, 2023, p. 443). As this thesis research approach is interpretivist the approach for the interviews are flexible and dependent on what each participant says. According to Saunders (2023, p. 444) an interpretivist interviewer will

ask the questions depending on the flow of the conversation and the data they share, which may lead to exclusion or modification of questions during the interviews.

The selection of participants for this study was guided by the thesis objective of clarifying and better understanding strategic awareness in a real-life setting. With the aim of answering the research questions. The participants for data collection of semi-structured interviews was selected based on a predefined criteria. The participant should have experience working with strategic decision-making and have a position of influence within the company. Additionally, the selected participants needed to include individuals with experience from the public sector and individuals with experience from the private sector, in order to gain insights into how strategic awareness is practiced in different kinds of organizations. The participants were identified through professional networks and available organizational information on the internet and potential participants was contacted via email. The individual's participation was voluntary and all four of the selected participants fulfil the set criteria, including participants from both the private and public sector.

The interviews were guided by three themes, which was external environmental awareness, internal environmental awareness and alignment of views on pursued strategy. The themes were chosen based on the conceptual framework and research questions. Additionally, premeditated questions for each themes was set, to guide the interview. The semi-structured interview approach, allowed for variation in the structure of the interviews and flexibility of asked questions. However, it was ensured that all premeditated themes was discussed during the interviews. The aim of the interviews was to get insight into the participants view of the concept of strategic awareness, and how important the themes and elements of strategic awareness is according to their experience. Additionally, practical implementation processes and tools for each theme were discussed. Every interview was ended with the possibility for the interviewee to openly share something about the discussed topics, to add something that was not yet discussed.

The interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings or via the Microsoft Teams Software application, based on possibility of the participant. The interviews took place during the time frame of August 2025 to September 2025. All interviews were either transcribed with the consent of the participants or comprehensive notes were taken during the interview. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, as it was the native language of all participants. The interviewees and the organization they currently work in is anonymous, which was stated to the participant both during the contacting of the participant and at the beginning of the interview. The anonymity was to ensure that participants felt they could discuss the topic as honestly and openly as possible. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 50 minutes, the scheduled time for the interviews was set to 60 minutes. The overview of the participants and the held interviews are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Overview of Interviews.

Interview no.	Title	Sector	Interview length	Interview date
Interviewee 1	Chairman of the board	Private	40 min	12.08.2025
Interviewee 2	Strategic manager	Public	47 min	21.08.2025
Interviewee 3	President	Private	50 min	09.09.2025
Interviewee 4	Strategic manager	Public	40 min	12.09.2025

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis technique that was used to analyse the collected data for the research was the thematic analysis technique. The thematic analysis is considered a general analytic approach for qualitative analysis, with the purpose of finding themes or patterns that can be found across the data (Saunders, 2023, p. 664). It is said to be a systematic way of analysis, as it provides an orderly and logical way to analyse qualitative data, which leads to rich description, explanations and theorising (Saunders, 2023, p. 664).

The analysis of the collected data began after each conducted interview, by reviewing the held interview by comparing what was discussed with the existing literature, considering what strengthens the claims of existing literature and what new insights was presented of the topic. After all interviews were conducted, the interview data was familiarised with and further analysed by reading the interview transcriptions multiple times in order to gain an overall understanding of all the collected data. Additionally, the transcriptions and notes were refined into a new document in order to be more readable while fully preserving their content.

A thematic analysis involves coding of the qualitative data with the purpose of identifying themes or patterns related to the research questions (Saunders, 2023, 664). As the research philosophy of this study is interpretivism, the data is analysed for different interpretations of a phenomenon (Saunders, 2023, 665), which is in this research is the concept of strategic awareness.

The collected interview data was first categorized into the three themes discussed during the interviews, external environmental awareness, internal environmental awareness and alignment of views, in order to gain some understanding of the main perspectives of the participants. The data was then coded into 147 codes, which was then categorized into smaller themes within the three categories and rearranged accordingly. In order to conduct an analysis from an abductive approach the codes were additionally categorized into two categories. One category for codes that strengthens the existing literature and one for codes that include new insights.

## **4 Empirical Findings**

In this chapter the empirical findings, that was conducted from the data collected through the semi-structured interviews will be presented. The aim of the interviews was to gain insight into how the participant with experience of strategic decision-making, view strategic awareness and its elements, and how it is practised in a real-life setting. With the hope to gain meaningful insights into how the concept is applied in practice.

The data was analysed through a thematic analysis and was coded and categorised. Additionally, the data was compared to the existing literature on strategic awareness and new insights on the concept was gained. The empirical findings will be presented in this chapter, first discussing the participants views on strategic awareness and its key elements, environmental awareness and alignment of views. After which findings of how strategic awareness is practiced is presented. How the findings correlates to the existing literature and what new insights were found will be discussed in Chapter 5.

### **4.1 Views on Strategic Awareness**

It is known that many individuals and organizations engage in practices without them acknowledging they are practicing a certain concept or knowing what the underlying theory behind the practice is (Tshoukas, 2002). As the knowledge on strategic awareness is still limited (Salih & Nesereddin, 2023) and does not have one clear understanding on the concept (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Kazeem et al., 2022.; Mammadov et al., 2024), it is reasonable to assume that many organizations are practicing strategic awareness without being aware of it. Hence the criteria of knowing what the concept of strategic awareness is, was not a criteria for participation in the qualitative research.

In order to gain an understanding of the participants knowledge on strategic awareness each interview started with asking if the term strategic awareness is familiar to them, to help guide how the interview should be continued. When asked the question if the term

strategic awareness is familiar all participants admitted the term itself is not familiar, but they all had some idea of what the concept is. The participants answers suggest that the term strategic awareness is somewhat descriptive, connecting the term to strategy and to awareness of said strategy. However, what part of awareness of the strategy, refers to differentiates between the participants answers.

*As a term no, but it sounds interesting and I believe in terms of its content it is familiar and used in our organization, but we are not using the term strategic awareness. (Interviewee 2)*

*Not the term strategic awareness, but I have used the word context to represent a similar thing. That you have to know your surroundings and understand the context you are operating in and understanding how it operates. (Interviewee 3)*

*Not really as such, but I believe it is the building of common understanding. Without knowing more about the concept of strategic awareness, I see that it entails making strategy relevant. On an individual level, understanding how you are relevant to the strategy and on an organization level it is about creating common understanding. (Interviewee 4)*

*I am not sure, but I believe it's the understanding of what strategy is and what it implicates and the related analysis of different factors, such as one's own position in the market. It is about having a clear strategy in mind and vision on how to drive the organization forward and how that future is created. (Interviewee 1)*

The participants also shared their views on strategy in general to justify their perspectives, views and choice of practises in their organizations. Many of which were similar to one another and aligned with the literature reviews findings on strategy. Two perspectives the majority of the participants shared was that they believe too much planning is bad and that strategy is continuous.

*In a rapidly changing environment and society, I believe it can be unnecessary to put too much time on planning or at least I believe the time you need to put on planning a detailed strategy, does not compare to its given value. As often it is only 10% of planned strategy that comes true, while 90% of strategy is emergent. (Interviewee 4)*

*Too much planning is bad, the strategy should only work as a guide. Too much planning can lead to your downfall, as you become restricted, as there is then no room for flexibility. When changes are happening and new opportunities arise, with too much planning you become blind to them. (Interviewee 3)*

This suggest that the rise of rapid change and turbulence in the business environment, do not allow for strategy to be too detailed as it causes restrictions in time of change, and that strategy work needs to be continuous in order to be able to seize opportunities.

## **4.2 Found Elements of Strategic Awareness**

While discussing the concept of strategic awareness through the themes of internal and external environmental awareness and alignment of views, as well as discussing what it's like to work in a turbulent and uncertain business environment, with the participants a clearer picture of what strategic awareness is and what its elements are, was developed.

A clear mindset and approach an organization need when working in a turbulent and uncertain business environment was found. Suggesting strategic awareness is not just about applying different practises into practise, but a specific mindset is needed when working with changes and uncertainty.

*You need to have the ability to endure uncertainty, and you cannot think everything will go well. For growth, resilience is important as surprises happens all the time, new competitors and threats arise constantly. (Interviewee 1)*

*The only thing you can do is pursue with courage with a good team behind you, where everyone knows one's own tasks. To prepare as much as possible by acquiring information available and assessing what it means for oneself and by being able to adapt when changes happen. (Interviewee 1)*

*You need the right attitude, be open to learn and challenges one's own views, have the ability to take risks and make priorities, continuously search for validation and to never settle, to always strive to become better. (Interviewee 3)*

*It's about having the finger on the pulse, and to understand where you stand and to not remain static. (Interviewee 2)*

*By facing the challenges that are in front of you, you also learn from them. You need courage and be open to learn. (Interviewee 1)*

#### **4.2.1 The Different Elements of Environmental Awareness**

Largely discussed in strategic awareness literature is the topic of change, which was discussed with the participants during the interviews. All participants agreed that you need to understand the impact of changes happening in the environment.

*For us, we need to analyse the impact of change through our customers eyes, how does the changes impact and mean for our customers. How will the trends influence the customer. What threats and opportunities do these changes bring with them. After analysing through our customers perspectives do we consider and analyse how the changes will impact us, and what action needs to be taken. (Interviewee 1)*

*You need to be proactive and react to new information and changes in the environment, and analyse their impact on oneself, making decisions if action need to be taken based on the changes happening. (Interviewee 3)*

*We strive to be flexible and be able to adopt to changes in real time as fast as we notice them and try to anticipate when possible. (Interviewee 4)*

The findings suggest, that when it comes to changes in the environment, there needs to be proactivity and an assessment of what the change means has to be made from multiple perspectives, such as customers, stakeholders, and internally. Even if the change initially does not impact oneself, an assessment should be made and a decision of action taken, even if it is to not do anything.

Anticipation, which was found to be an element of strategic awareness in the literature review, and it was discussed with the participants. However, mainly the challenges with anticipation were highlighted. However, it became clear that anticipation is an important part of strategic awareness, and something that should be practise, even if it is challenging and creates uncertainty.

*It is extremely difficult to anticipate in what time frame the changes will pick up pace in development. For example, AI, will it take one year or ten years before AI is developed to a point where it is apart of every operational unit. (Interviewee 1)*

*We have a separate team for anticipating changes and preparing for them. We have created clear protocols for action if something unpredictable happens that could not be anticipated, as it is challenging to anticipate when the environment is so turbulent and unpredictable. (Interviewee 2)*

Awareness of the external environment was discussed with each participant and was asked what it entails for them. All participants agreed that awareness of the external environment is important and that in order to become aware it requires analysis of the environment. The findings suggest that the external environmental awareness involves an assessment of the situational picture of the environment and how the organization is positioned in it. As well as continuous analysis of the environment for changes, that could influence and change the situational picture.

*We put effort into understanding our external environment, by analysing the external operational environment using the strategic tool PESTEL. We look into the megatrends, trying to identify threats and opportunities. We try to identify weak signals that might prove to cause a big change if it was to happen, and judge how likely they are to become true or evolve. We do this kind of work constantly. (Interviewee 4)*

*You have to know and understand the industry and environment you are operating in, you have to be aware what competitors are doing, and search for opportunities. Which requires continuous scanning and analysis of the environment. (Interviewee 3)*

Awareness of the internal environment was also discussed with the participants, as it was found to be an important element of strategic awareness in the literature review. All participants agreed that understanding your own strengths and weaknesses is important, and the most commonly used tool to assess the internal environment is the SWOT-analysis. However, it was found that not only understanding your internal environment is enough, but that there should be a deeper understanding of the factors that makes the strengths and weaknesses such. This is, as it was suggested that when you understand the factors behind the strengths and weaknesses, you are more capable of leveraging the strengths and overcome the weaknesses.

*It is important to understand why our weaknesses exist and to create a comprehensive plan on how they will be improved. Additionally, we have found it to be important to understand what the consequences are if the weakness is not dealt with, as it raises the understanding of why it is important to improve the weaknesses. (Interviewee 2)*

*You need to strengthen your strengths and cover your weaknesses. Additionally, it's important to understand the difference between what makes you competitive and what is your competitive advantage. And it is important to choose your path, for example with AI, will you make it into a competitive advantage or approach it from the perspective to remain competitive. (Interviewee 1)*

*It is important to understand what your competitive advantage and why that is, so you can play into your strengths. (Interviewee 2)*

*In the public sector you need to have the ability to prioritise as resources are limited, making the strategic choices of what is most essential and what needs to put most effort into. As the customer needs are endless and the resources would never be enough for every service to be perfect, you have to have the courage to prioritize and let some services remain at minimal functioning level. (Interviewee 4)*

#### **4.2.2 The Importance of Alignment of Views with Pursued Strategy**

While the element of alignment of views on pursued strategy is not agreed upon in the existing literature, as only a couple of the authors view strategic awareness to be the alignment of views on pursued strategy, it was still one of the themes to be discussed during the semi-structured interviews. The theme was included as one of the themes to be discussed in the interviews, to explore its relevance in a practical real-life settings and it showed to be more relevant than assumed.

Participants were asked if they view the alignment of views on pursued strategy an important part of strategy work, it was highly agreed upon by all participants, and its importance was highlighted for its impact on successful implementation of strategy. However, it was also mentioned that the purpose of aligning the views on pursued strategy, is for the strategy to guide decisions and actions, especially in times of change and uncertainty.

*It's certainly important, and it has become clear to us that it is important that we have a shared understanding of the strategy across the organization. As we have so many sectors and our employees' skills and competencies is very broad, it's clear that in some sectors the strategy is more known than in others. However, it should absolutely be known by everyone. (Interviewee 2)*

*The alignment of views on pursued strategy is important for strategy implementation to be successful. (Interviewee 1)*

*There needs to be alignment of views on strategy and how it will be pursued, for it to be successfully implemented. (Interviewee 3)*

*Our goal is for the strategy to guide our decision-making and actions, which is why the alignment of views on strategy is so crucial, especially when the environment is so turbulent. (Interviewee 2)*

*We try to involve employees to participate in the strategy work to ensure that they take measures and actions that are align with the strategy. (Interviewee 4)*

When discussing the topic of alignment of views some challenges were brought up, by several of the participants. The main challenge when trying to create alignment of views being opposing views and perspectives. However, it became clear that opposing views and perspectives should be dealt with, as they can cause problems in the future.

*The most difficult part is to get everyone aligned, people always have their own opinions and individuals in different roles have different perspectives. So it's important to consider how to get everyone aligned and figure out how to get contrarians to commit to the new strategy. If an individual cannot commit to the new strategy they should be let, go. (Interviewee 1)*

*Our professional's pride and identity is very high, and as they have the right to choose how they practise, it's very challenging to get them aligned and to act according to a new operating model. (Interviewee 4)*

*The most challenging part within a large organizations is how to make the strategy collective and to get everyone to participate. (Interviewee 4)*

It was found and agreed upon by participants, that messages of strategy are not enough to create alignment. It requires participation from individuals, and an environment where dialogue moves between departments.

*I believe messaging of strategy is not enough, people need to participate in strategy formulation and have the possibility to influence it. This way you do not separately have to make the strategy known and implemented as people see the strategy as their own already. (Interviewee 4)*

The degree of awareness of strategy across the organization divided views between participants. It was agreed that every employee should have knowledge of the key aspects of the strategy. However, selected participants viewed that to be enough, while others consider there should be deeper knowledge of the strategy from all employees.

*All employees do not have to have knowledge of the whole strategy, but what is relevant to them needs to be known, which is why it needs to be ensured all*

*departments within the organizations are aligned and have the same level of awareness of strategy. (Interviewee 1)*

Every participant agreed that there needs to be alignment of views on strategy for strategy to be implemented. The following was said about implementation of strategy, which highlights the importance of alignment of views on strategy.

*The implementation of strategy is the most important part as well as the most difficult part of strategy as 10% of strategy is its formulation while 90% is its implementation. (Interviewee 1)*

*How strategy is implemented needs to be understood and it needs to be implemented in a straightforward way. Additionally, you need to understand what needs to be developed in order for strategy to be implemented and it requires a lot of people to be involved. (Interviewee 1)*

### **4.3 Findings on Strategic Awareness in Practice**

The semi-structured interviews provided great insights into how the different elements of strategic awareness is practiced within their organizations. Different practises and tools used for application were found on each discussed theme.

One potentially controversial practise discussed, with one of the participants, which represent the hard decisions that needs to be made in order to stay up with the changes happening within the organizations is personnel changes.

*With new strategic changes, there also need to be changes made in the executive team. As the knowledge and skills of the executive team need to correspond the new strategy. (Interviewee 1)*

The use of consultant was recommended by two of the participants. They explained how they have used outside help when facing a huge decisions or disagreements with opposing views of strategy. Outside help has also been used by one of the participants for assessment of one's own position in the market. Both explained that outside help, gives new perspectives to consider, and have the expertise to assess a situation neutrally and from multiple perspectives.

#### **4.3.1 Environmental Awareness in Practise**

For the participants, it was clear whose responsibility it is to stay aware of both the internal and external environment. However, it became evident, that there is not a specific role or team for specifically staying aware of the internal and external environment within their organization. This highlights the importance of each individual's role in the organizations, however this suggest there should be dialogue between colleagues and departments for the information to spread across the organizations.

*It is the executive's responsibility to stay aware of what's happening in the environment. I have found it to be challenging to ensure every executive have the same awareness level of what is happening in the interna and external environment. (Interviewee 1)*

*Everyone has their own range of responsibilities, and it is their own responsibility to follow what is happening in that responsibility area. (Interviewee 4)*

*Every public official has their own responsibility area, and they are responsible to stay aware what is happening in the environment of that area. (Interviewee 2)*

*Its critical for someone to work on staying aware, to make time in the calendar to work with strategic awareness, it is the only way to stay up to date. (Interviewee 1)*

Participants from organizations in the public sectors, highlighted the importance of how the information acquired from the environment is formulated and presented for the decision makers. That the information should be presented in a way, that the decision-maker understand the impact and consequences of their decision, or lack there of.

*Within our organization it is essential for us to put the information we acquire from the environment in a clear and straight forward way for the decision-makers, to ensure they understand what the implications are of the new information. (Interviewee 4)*

*We provide material, tools, education and support for the decision-makers to stay aware of what is happening in the environment, to guide decision-making. (Interviewee 2)*

It was found that leveraging internal information from employees is an essential part of become aware of the environment. It was said to be the only way to get a full overview of the internal environment within the organization. However, there needs to be trust, in order to get accurate and insightful information. There also needs to be communication streams provided for information to flow throughout the organization.

*It's important to build an environment where perspectives are listened to and discussed in a constructive way. (Interviewee 3)*

*Internal information is important to be exploited and by creating trust through dialogue across hierarchical levels and making sure everyone is heard you will get valuable information from both the internal and external environment. (Interviewee 4)*

*We ask for feedback and perspectives of our services from all hierarchical levels in order to get an insightful picture of the internal environment. (Interviewee 2)*

Within one of the organizations a practise of weekly meetings was implemented for staying continuously aware of the internal environment, as well as the external environment. The practise showed to be an important tool for staying strategically aware.

*We implemented weekly meetings with top-management, middle-management and essential experts to go over the operational picture each week, while everyone in the organization has the possibility to listen to the meeting. This have proven to be an important tool and has improved trust within the organization. Additionally, top management stays aware of what is going on and react quickly to the changes happening across the organization. This has created flexibility and fast responses even at an everyday level which has made employees trust the strategy and management. (Interviewee 4)*

This practise implements several of the elements of strategic awareness. It creates awareness of the internal environment and gives the opportunity to address changes happening in the external environment on a weekly basis. It allows for comprehensive assessment and fast reactions to changes and challenges. It creates alignment of views on strategic priorities and allows for dialogue to flow between departments and hierarchical levels.

Acquiring information of the external environment, can also be done from within the organization. One of the participants organizations operating in the public sector, operates in a broad range of industries, which allows them access to insightful information from each industry, which gives them almost a total view of what is happening in the entire business environment.

*As we are such a large organization operating in a broad range of industries, we acquire great information from the external environment from within the*

*organization from these different industry sectors and departments. This is treasure for us which we leverage in day-to-day operations. (Interviewee 2)*

Staying aware of what competitors are doing and challenges they are facing, have proven to be important. As you can learn from their mistakes and adopt successful practices.

*We look at other organizations in the public sectors like what is happening in their environments and assess it will be something that could someday affect to us as well and create scenarios in order to anticipate what that would imply for us. We also assess what other are doing well and not so well and adopt practices that have proven to be successful. (interviewee 2)*

In order to ensure the strategy do not stagnate and strategy work stays continuous, one of the participants ask the same question each meeting.

*In every board meeting I ask the board members pivot or preserve, it allows us to consider if we should make changes in strategy or stay with the current one. This has ensured we stay on top of things. (Interviewee 1)*

Networking was recommended by three of the participants and all claimed it to provide great insight into what is happening in the external environment. Additionally, it was said networking provides new perspectives to consider. Participation in different kind of events was recommended, such as events of success and failure stories, and the Nordic Business Forum event. One of the participants recommended to discuss interdisciplinary to get input, and to meet with peers which is according to the participant a safe space to discuss challenges and information.

#### **4.3.2 Creation of Alignment of Views on Pursued Strategy**

The alignment of views on pursued strategy was something all participants considered important, while also challenging. Suggestions were made that there should be a clear

plan for how it will be achieved. Some of the participants have a clear understanding on whose role it is to spread the information of strategy, while other participants have a totally different approach for spreading awareness of the pursued strategy.

*It is the responsibility of the executives to communicate to their own team the strategy and how their team can influence the strategy to be executed. It is then the responsibility of the manager to make sure the message is received. (Interviewee 1)*

*The department managers role is very important in this, as it is their task to spread awareness of the strategy and get people motivated for it. (Interviewee 2)*

*Every department creates their own action plan for how the strategy will be implemented within their unit. We follow the process of implementation through quarterly meetings and annual reports, to stay updated and to ensure information does not only move from up down, but that we have dialogue across sectors and departments. (Interviewee 4)*

Individuals' participation in strategy formulation was highlighted multiple times during the interviews as an important part of alignment of views. As it is to create commitment and motivation towards the strategy and its implementation.

*We ensure alignment of strategy with stakeholders by giving them the chance to participate in strategy formulation through strategy workshops. (Interviewee 4)*

*Through strategy workshops we try to get people involved in strategy formulation, which have shown to increase awareness and alignment. (Interviewee 2)*

*Motivation and commitment towards strategy is increased when employees have the possibility to influence it or be apart of its formulation. (Interviewee 3)*

Additionally, participants told they provide different kind of materials for employees to familiarise themselves with, in order to spread awareness of the strategy and create alignment of views.

*We have town-hall meetings held by the CEO. Additionally, information of the key aspects of the strategy can be found on our intranet. We also ensure our stakeholders and customers are informed of our strategy through a stakeholder magazine and customer announcements. (Interviewee 1)*

*We have created videos of our strategy for the employees to watch so they can familiarise themselves with the strategy, at any time. (Interviewee 2)*

## 5 Discussion

The purpose of the research was to examine how strategic awareness is viewed and practiced within organizations, by gathering insight and perspectives from a real-life setting. The aim was to clarify the concept of strategic awareness through the conducted and analysed data. The empirical findings contribute clarity to the existing literature on the concept and meaningful answers to each research questions.

This chapter of the thesis will compare the empirical findings to the existing literature and conceptual framework created (Figure 2.), based on the literature review. While discussing what new insights and practical recommendations for implementation of strategic awareness was found during the analysis. A new conceptual framework (Figure 3.) is developed which integrates the conceptual framework (Figure 2) based on the existing literature with the empirical findings of the conducted study.

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The term strategic awareness itself was not familiar to the participants, however they all had an idea of what the concept is centered around. Suggesting the term strategic awareness is somewhat descriptive. Similar to the existing literature on strategic awareness, the participants all had different views and descriptions of the concept, however when further discussing the elements of strategic awareness, it became clear the concept of strategic awareness was practised to some degree in each organization. Which correlates to the claim by Tshoukas (2002), that a theory or concept can be practised without being aware of it. Furthermore, this suggests that the claim by Jabbar & Hamid (2025) that strategic awareness is overlooked by many, is not as strong as believed, but instead that strategic awareness is practised, but not to its fullest potential.

In the literature strategic awareness is described to be a behaviour, a mindset to help businesses to cope with the challenges, the turbulent and uncertain environment creates (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). A behaviour of learning from the environment, being

open to change and having the finger on the pulse (Pencarelli et al., 2009). A tool to manage the interactions between the business and its environment (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). The empirical findings support this claim, as it was suggested that strategic awareness is about having the finger on the pulse and understanding what changes means for oneself. An attitude which is open to learn and challenge one's own views, able to endure uncertainty and have resilience and courage when facing changes. Suggesting that a mindset has to be created and attitudes changed, that strategic awareness is not something that can just be implemented step by step, but something that is developed.

Strategic awareness has also been referred to as the management compass, as it guides businesses towards the right direction, even if the environment is turbulent and uncertain (Hannon & Atherton, 1998). Which is supported by the empirical findings, as it was found that the purpose for creating awareness, is for strategy to guide decision-making and actions, when new information comes to light. Furthermore, the empirical findings support the perspectives of Hambrick (1981) and Hannon & Atherton (1998) that as the environment is uncertain and new information of changes comes to light continuously, strategy should not involve too much planning and strategy work should be continuous as well. As a too detailed strategy is restrictive and has no room for flexibility in times of rapid changes in the environment.

Based on the literature review the two main dimensions of strategic awareness was found to be internal environmental awareness and external environmental awareness, which the other elements of strategic awareness falls under (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Al-Haraisa, 2022.; Pencarelli et al., 2009). The empirical findings support, that internal and external environmental awareness are the two dimensions of strategic awareness. However, it was found that alignment of views of pursued strategy have a greater part and importance in the strategic awareness than understood in the literature review. As in the literature review the element of alignment of views on pursued strategy was interpreted to be of less importance, when practising strategic awareness. This is as only two of the authors views strategic awareness to be the alignment of views (Davis et al., 2012.;

Hambrick, 1981). Thus, the empirical findings suggest that alignment of views on pursued strategy is one of three dimensions of strategic awareness, alongside internal and external environmental awareness and includes its own elements, such as creating alignment and create awareness of strategy. The other elements of strategic awareness found in the literature review, showcased in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.) is agreed upon and supported by the empirical findings.

The empirical findings support that the dimension of external environmental awareness refers to the process of assessing, examining and understanding the external environment the business operates in, as well as how it is positioned in it (Hannon & Atherton, 1998., Jamal & Hamad, 2025.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Which refers to the element of current awareness (Pencarelli et al., 2009). As it was stated by the participants, that they put effort into understanding their environment, by using different tools such as the PESTEL-analysis, as well as understanding what their position in the environment is and how they compare to competitors. External environmental awareness also encompasses the acquiring of information from the external environment such as technology developments, as well as the ability to identify threats and capturing opportunities arising from the environment (Jamal & Hamad, 2025.; Mammadov et al., 2024). Which the empirical findings support, as it was stated that the practise of identifying threats and opportunities is part of continuous strategy work.

Associated with the assessment of the external environment and acquiring information from the environment, anticipation and identification of weak signals from the external environment and their assessment was also found to be an important part of external environmental awareness in the empirical data. Which is partly aligned with what was found in the literature review. As authors state that strategic awareness is the ability to anticipate (Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Mammadov et al., 2024), except identification of weak signal is not mentioned in the literature. However, there is inconsistency found in the literature, as some authors state that strategic awareness creates the ability to anticipate (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Pisapia et al., 2005). Considering, what was found in the

empirical data, that anticipation is challenging, it suggests that strategic awareness creates the ability to anticipate, through the practice of the elements of strategic awareness, but anticipation is not an element of strategic awareness.

Based on the literature review, understanding the impact of change is a main element of strategic awareness (Ahmed, 2023.; Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021.; Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Jabbar & Hamid, 2025), which is supported by the empirical findings. The empirical findings show, it's an important part of strategic awareness as the changes happen all the time and you need the ability to cope with change in order to stay competitive. It's suggested that when changes occur, it needs to be assessed through both customers perspectives as well as, how it impacts one's own operations. There should be an assessment made of opportunities and threats the change generates, and a decision of action has to be made of how to respond. Such as will you respond to the change as a threat and take needed action to stay competitive or will you respond to the change as an opportunity, by developing the change into a competitive advantage.

The empirical findings suggest internal environmental awareness is awareness of one's own resources and capabilities, as well as weaknesses and strengths, which is aligned with what was found in the literature review (Al-Badayneh, 2021.; Mammadov et al., 2024.; Pencarelli et al., 2009.; Thompson, 2005). However, the empirical findings suggested that internal awareness also involves the understanding of why strengths and weaknesses are such and what the consequences are if weaknesses are not dealt with. As it was suggested that when you understand the factors behind the strengths and weaknesses, you are more capable of leveraging the strengths and overcome the weaknesses. The empirical findings also highlighted the importance of understanding one's own competitive advantage, as well as what are the factors that allows for the business to remain competitive, which was not mentioned in the literature.

The existing literature mentions the element of prospective awareness which refers to the organizations ability to plan and prepare for the future by developing different

strategic scenarios (Al-Haraisa, 2022), which falls under the dimension of internal environmental awareness. This is supported by the empirical findings, as it was mentioned, that strategic awareness is about having a clear vision for the future, and how that vision is created.

Additionally, it was found in the empirical data, that internal environmental awareness involves staying aware of what is happening within the organization, such as challenges in different departments, which is partly agreed upon in the literature of strategic awareness. This is as in the literature review, it was found that that internal environmental awareness refers to awareness of all internal functions and activity (Al-Badayneh, 2021), however awareness of challenges was not mentioned. One of the participants in the empirical study suggested weekly meetings with top management, middle management and essential experts, that the whole organization could listen too. The meetings agenda being the situational operational picture. This practice incorporates several of the elements of strategic awareness. It creates awareness of the internal environment as the middle-management report what the situation is in their teams. It gives the opportunity to address changes happening in the external environment on a weekly basis. It allows for comprehensive assessment of the internal and external environment, as individuals from multiple departments and hierarchical levels participate and can provide their perspective and allows for fast reactions to changes and challenges. Additionally, it creates alignment of views on strategic priorities and allows for dialogue to flow between departments and hierarchical levels. Furthermore, the participant told it has shown to increase trust from lower-level employees towards top-management. This practice of weekly meeting of situational picture is aligned with Longo & Rotolo (2015) recommendations for implementing strategic awareness. As they recommended to have transparency of strategic information and challenges that are happening within the organization.

The literature claim the alignment of views of pursued strategy is crucial for effective strategy implementation, as it is believed the implementation of strategy relies heavily on the actions of lower-level organizational members (Davis et al., 2012.; Hambrick,

1981). Which is why, it is important for employees to understand the strategic priorities of the organization, in order to execute their task aligned with the strategy (Davis et al., 2012). This is fully supported by the empirical findings, and its importance was found to be crucial, one participant highlighting the fact that strategy is 10% its formulation, while 90% is its implementation. The literature review suggested that alignment of views on strategy is created through frequent messaging from top-management and middle management (Davis et al., 2012). While this is supported by the empirical findings, it was found that merely messaging of strategy is not enough and other practical applications were found and should be implemented. One of them was including employees in strategy formulation and giving them the chance to be heard and influence the strategy. This is aligned with the recommendation of including essential individuals into strategy formulation by Longo & Rotolo (2015). The second suggestion was to have each department create an action plan for how the strategy will be implemented in that department, which creates awareness and alignment.

Furthermore, other recommendations for implementation of strategic awareness that was found in the literature review are supported by the empirical data. Longo & Rotolo (2015) recommended the organization of public hearings, strategy workshops and workshops for feedback, which was all mentioned during the interviews. The recommendation to use consultants in order to gain new perspectives and deeper understanding was also agreed upon between the findings in the literature review and empirical data (Gibb & Scott, 1985.; Hannon & Atherton, 1998.; Mammadov et al., 2024.; Pencarelli et al., 2009)

According to existing literature through the practise of reframing, reflection, systems thinking and learning orientation organizations gain a deeper understanding and insights of the elements of strategic awareness (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). While the empirical findings did not include reframing, reflection, systems thinking and learning orientation, there was found other claims that can be referred to these terms. Reframing refers to the ability to see and evaluate situations and facts through different perspectives (Turkey

et al., 2012), and reflection refers to the examination of one's own beliefs and practices in order to not be hindered by them (Pisapia et al., 2005). While not addressed with said terms the empirical findings suggest other actions for gaining new perspectives and examination of one's own beliefs and practices. Such as the use consultants, networking, participation in events and talking interdisciplinary, as well as asking for feedback on practices, which suggest reframing and reflection is something to be sought after.

Systems thinking refers to the ability to understand the organization as whole and view it as an integrated unit, instead of individual events, actions and parts of the organization (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). The empirical findings suggest that, when changes happen or when a decision is made, an assessment should be made, considering how it will impact the whole organization. Which suggest that systems thinking is already practiced and something that have been found to be important. Learning orientation refers to commitment towards learning, open-mindedness and shared vision (Alabdaly & Almayali, 2021). The empirical findings suggest businesses should be open to learn from the environment, from past experiences and from competitors and alignment of views considered to be of high importance. This suggest that also learning orientation is something that should be practised.

## **5.2 Conceptual Framework of Strategic Awareness**

Based on the empirical findings and literature review and their comparisons with each other, a conceptual framework was developed (Table 3.). The conceptual framework answers the research questions of what strategic awareness is and how it can be applied into practise. The conceptual framework was developed by systematically integrating insights from the existing literature with the empirical findings of the study that was conducted. The framework provides a clear understanding of what strategic awareness is and how it can be applied into practise, by showcasing its dimensions, elements and practises. The conceptual framework can be used to gain an understanding of strategic awareness, as well as a tool to become strategically aware and practised within their organizations.

**Table 3.** Strategic Awareness, A Conceptual Framework

Dimension	Element	Practise
External Environmental Awareness	Acquire information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Networking</li> <li>- Participation in business events</li> <li>- Discuss interdisciplinary</li> <li>- Meet with peers</li> <li>- Acquire information of the environment through dialogue between departments and hierarchical levels</li> </ul>
	Current Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of existing performance (Gibb &amp; Scott, 1985)</li> <li>- PESTEL-Analysis</li> </ul>
	Anticipation & Impact of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Scenario</li> <li>- Assess competitors' practices</li> <li>- Analyse what challenges competitors are facing</li> </ul>
Internal Environmental Awareness	Informed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formulate information in an understanding way</li> <li>- Provide material, tools, education and support</li> <li>- Use of consultants</li> </ul>
	Prospective Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Management Framework (Thomson, 2005, p. 26)</li> </ul>
	Awareness of Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular meetings on situational picture with top-management, middle-management and essential experts which are available to the whole organization to follow</li> </ul>
	Situational awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of base potential for development (Gibb &amp; Scott, 1985)</li> <li>- Ask for feedback and perspectives of services by employees</li> </ul>
Alignment of views on pursued strategy	Spread awareness of strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Town-Hall Meetings</li> <li>- Information on intranet</li> <li>- Customer announcements</li> <li>- Video of strategy</li> <li>- Clear and frequent messaging</li> </ul>
	Create Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation in strategy creation</li> <li>- Strategy Workshops</li> <li>- Dialogue</li> <li>- Department action plan of how strategy will be implemented</li> <li>- Streams for communication between hierarchical levels</li> <li>- Each team are informed of how they can influence the execution of strategy</li> </ul>
Develop a strategic mindset through the practices of Reframing, Reflection, Systems Thinking & Orientation to enhance the benefits of Strategic Awareness.		

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to clarify the concept of strategic awareness and examine how it can be applied in practise. As there is a lack of clarity and a unified understanding of the concept of strategic awareness, due to scattered views on the concepts. The examination of the existing literature on strategic awareness proved this to be true. However, similarities between views and main themes of the concept was found in the literature review, and a conceptual framework (Figure 2.) was developed that provide an understanding of how the concept is understood in the academic literature. The conduction of a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews, allowed for the conceptual framework to be explored in a real-life setting. The empirical findings of the conducted research contribute to the existing literature by supporting certain perspectives found in the literature review and introduces new insights to strategic awareness. The central finding of the conducted research was a clarified and refined understanding of the concept of strategic awareness and its application into practice. A conceptual framework (Table 3.) was developed, which reflects both theoretically grounded and empirically informed perspectives, which provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of strategic awareness and how it can be applied in practise.

Based on the findings, strategic awareness can be understood as a management tool, that assist businesses manage the interactions between the business and its environment, by guiding decision making and actions through changes and uncertainty. Strategic awareness is an ongoing process of staying aware of one's own environment and creating alignment, through assessment and dialogue. It's a behaviour of courage, resilience and open mindedness towards change and learning. The dimensions of strategic awareness was found to be internal environmental awareness, external environmental awareness and alignment of views on pursued strategy that should be practised with a strategic mindset of reframing, reflection, systems thinking and learning orientation.

Key dimensions and elements of strategic awareness were identified and new practises for implementation was found. A key finding of the conducted research was that

alignment of views on pursued strategy had a greater part and importance in strategic awareness, than understood in the literature review. Suggesting alignment of views to be a key dimension of strategic awareness, along with internal and external environmental awareness. Additionally, it was found the purpose of creating alignment of views on pursued strategy is for strategy to guide decisions and actions of individuals within the business. Another, key finding was the importance for practising strategic awareness. It was found strategic awareness, is essential for staying competitive in a turbulent and uncertain environment, for making informed decision, as well as for a successful implementation of strategy.

How strategic awareness can be applied into practised is shown in Table 3. Where each element of strategic awareness have recommendations for practice. However, there are aspect that businesses should be aware of when seeking to develop strategic awareness within their business. It should be known that strategic awareness is something that is developed and enhanced over time, and that the work is continuous. It is something that needs to be prioritised and time and effort needs to be made for it to be developed. It requires openness to challenge one's own views and creation of a business environment that promote dialogue between hierarchical levels, where perspectives are listened to and considered.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the literature by clarifying the concept of strategic awareness. The conceptual framework developed based on findings in the literature review and empirical data offers a structured way to understand strategic awareness, which can be used to apply strategic awareness into practise.

## **6.1 Limitations of the Study**

While this thesis offers valuable insight into the concept of strategic awareness and how it can be applied into practise, there still are some limitations. Firstly, it should be recognised that the interpretation of the existing literature and of the collected qualitative data, is based on the writers' own beliefs and views of the topic, which can influence the

findings and their validity. The sample size and geographical scope is also a limitation. As the sample size is small, and the participants chosen for the qualitative study are all actors working in Finland, the findings cannot be generalized. As Finland is a highly regulated country with its own limitations and possibilities, compared to other countries in the world, practises might not be adaptable in every organisation. Additionally, the empirical data was collected through only one data collection method, which weakens the validity of the research. Research conducted, through a more comprehensive data collection, using multiple data collection methods, with more participants with a broader geographical scope, could have led to more nuanced findings.

## **6.2 Suggestion for Future Research**

The concept of strategic awareness still lack comprehensive research (Salih & Nesereddin, 2023) and is a concept that should be more recognized by leaders, due to its importance when working in a turbulent and uncertain environment (Kataa & Saaed, 2024). While clarity of the concept of strategic awareness was found during this research and a conceptual framework was created, it was not applied into practice and tested in a real-life setting. It would be beneficial to further research on the created conceptual framework in order to test its reliability and validity.

Practical application of the concept of strategic awareness is limited in the academic literature, and as shown in this research, data from a real-life setting have given multiple insightful recommendations for application of strategic awareness. With more time and resources for further research on how strategic awareness can be applied into practise, further practical recommendations for application of strategic awareness could be found. Which could clear and satisfactory frameworks of strategic awareness and be practised more broadly and effectively by organizations.

In the existing literature on strategic awareness the alignment of views of strategy was only one perspective of many. However in this research it became apparent it is a larger part of strategic awareness than anticipated. Hence, further research specifically of this

aspect of strategic awareness should be done, to gain deeper understanding of this element of strategic awareness. Furthermore, this research was conducted from the perspectives of individuals higher in the organization's hierarchical levels. As the empirical findings suggest strategic awareness concerns and involves the whole organizations, research should be conducted from the perspective of lower-level employees. This could give rich insights and perspectives into the concept.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Semi-Structured interview questions, Private sector

1. Is the term strategic awareness familiar to you?
2. Do you consider it important for the management and employees to have aligned views of the pursued strategy?
3. What measures have you used to ensure alignment of views across the organization?
4. How do you observe the external environment, and do you consider it an important part of strategy?
5. Do you have something you consider specifically important to observe in the external environment?
6. What measures or tools have been used to map changes in the environment?
7. Do you consider it important to be aware of your own resources and capabilities? Their strengths and weaknesses? If so, why?
8. What measures or tools have been used to map strengths and weaknesses?
9. What has been done if weaknesses have been noticed?
10. To what extent do the above-mentioned things influence decision-making?
11. How have you ensured that threats and opportunities are identified in time?
12. What processes or practices do you do to stay ahead of competitors/competitive?
13. What are the most important things to be aware of or consider before making a strategic decision?
14. Is anticipation possible and if so, do you consider it as an advantage?

## Appendix 2. Semi-Structured interview questions, Public Sector

1. Is the term strategic awareness familiar to you?
2. Do you consider it important for the management and employees to have aligned views of the pursued strategy?
3. What measures have you used to ensure alignment of views across the organization?
4. How do you observe the external environment, and do you consider it an important part of strategy?
5. Do you have something you consider specifically important to observe in the external environment?
6. What are the differences when operating in the public sector, what external factors need to be considered, that the private sector do not?
7. What measures or tools have been used to identify changes in the environment?
8. Do you consider it important to be aware of your own resources and capabilities? Their strengths and weaknesses? If so, why?
9. What measures or tools have been used to map strengths and weaknesses?
10. What has been done if weaknesses have been noticed?
11. To what extent do the above-mentioned things influence decision-making?
12. How have you ensured that threats and opportunities are identified in time?
13. What processes or practices do you do to stay ahead of competitors/competitive?
14. How does your competitors differentiate compared to the private sector?
15. How important do you consider that stakeholders and suppliers are aligned with the strategy and participate in its creation?
16. How do you consider the populations needs and changing demand in strategy work?
17. Is there any specific pitfalls or risks when it comes to strategy in the public sector?
18. Is anticipation possible and if so, do you consider it as an advantage?