Delivering Competitiveness across Management Consulting Firm and Client Firm Boundaries

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Originality Statement

To the best of belief and knowledge, work presented in this thesis is originally mine, except where acknowledged herein. No attempt has been made to present contributions from other researchers as my own, and all sources used in this research are given appropriate citation(s). Material in this research has not been submitted, in part or whole for another degree at this university or any other university.

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Rohit Ramanujam

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty,

Sri Lakshmi Ranganatha Swamy,

my Guru Sri Annan Swamy,

my Father Sri M. Ramanujam,

and in memory of my late mother Smt. Yeshoda

Acknowledgements

Statement of the Contribution of Others

This study is a result of team-based collaboration between Rohit Ramanujam, Professor John Hamilton, Dr Singwhat Tee and Dr Michael Underdown. Professor Hamilton and Dr Tee spent considerable time in formulating my writing style. Here, the focus was on academic style of writing with short sentences and with a focus on every word. Paragraph framing and inter-linking between sentences and paragraphs were detailed.

Professor Hamilton and Dr Tee guided me through topic definition, model formulation, ethics approval, confirmation of candidature, publication, grant application, research design, research analysis, and thesis write-up. Professor Hamilton's strategic thought process combined with Dr Tee's statistical ways of thinking showed me how to be operationally strategic in research.

Abstract

This study builds Management Consulting Firm-to-Client Firm (MCF-to-CF) sustainable competitive business positioning relationship pathways across management consultants. It details three serial sections: competencies, capabilities, and competitiveness and investigates how MCF competencies affect CF sustainable competitive intelligent business positioning through capabilities in the Indian context. It uses a mixed methods (quantitative: structural equation modelling and qualitative: word-cloud and word-trees) strategy which studies 232 management consultants.

The study builds a MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework. Here, two propositions are identified across this framework and the path relationships within this framework.

In this shared relational CF environment, the MCF relationally assists or relationally advises the CF as to which MCF-to-CF deliverables can strategically change and/or complement the CF's existing capabilities suite. The CF's resultant combined capabilities are also generally framed towards developing a CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning. Thus, a strategic management and strategic change research paradigm is available for this MCF-CF study.

This framework, in conjunction with mixed methods triangulation analysis, confirmatory factor reduction analysed goodness-of-fit indices, comparison measurements, NVivo word-cloud and word-trees validate the research question: Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF? This results in relational workings of MCF competencies with CF capabilities to deliver strategic MCF-CF pathways, thus enhancing CFs' competitiveness.

The Institute of Management Consultants of India digitally distributed my SurveyMonkey questionnaire. MCF responses were spread across India, and especially around India's consulting hubs. The MCF respondents have advanced degrees and are mostly male. The results show that MCFs can influence contracted CFs to enhance their CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning.

Further, this study proposes a management consulting process detailed as an inter-firm, relational, sequential, strategic management, consultancy, and multi-systems process. It also triangulates and validates the propositions through literature, the MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System model, and a qualitative study.

Thus, both MCFs and CFs can utilize the model to explore even newer ways of relational collaboration, and to deliver enhanced CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning. It is also likely that the Indian government can use the study's model to build further government support networks. This government support approach is achievable through the detailed understanding of the underlying constructs within the study's model - including the necessary intelligent, innovative, knowledge creation digital infrastructures. These supports can then further facilitate MCF-CF teamed approaches towards new intelligently-mapped, enhanced sustainable (competitive) business positioning within the global business market place.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Many governments measure their country's gross national product (GNP) (Nallareddy & Ogneva, 2016). Normally, the GNP measures the output produced by a country's businesses (Huang et al., 2016). In the past, 'the management consulting market has grown worldwide significantly faster than GNP' (Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003). According to Mazareanu (2019), consulting revenues have risen from about US$3 billion in 1980, to US$240 billion in 2014, to reach US$296 billion in 2020.

Brandon-Jones, Lewis, Verma, and Walsman (2016) describe management consultant firms (MCFs) as a professional services entity consisting of team-oriented, problem solvers, working with corporates and/or governments to investigate problems, to identify appropriate solutions and to seek to advance the ongoing firm performance and business outcomes. More recently, management consulting is viewed by many contracting client firms (CFs) as part of their change management processes (Burke, 2017), and as incorporating the MCF's changes into the CF's business strategy, into modifying its IT systems or into changing its organizational design and structure - with the CF change methods also based on applied behavioural science and psychology (Burke, 2017).

Thus, management consulting, which is typically delivered under contract through an MCF, is a strategic change process that is strategically managed by the MCF and the CF to ultimately deliver changes and benefits to the contracting CF. For example, the MCF's knowledge creation competencies may be useful in helping to deliver increased CF profitability (Li et al., 2002; Palvia et al., 2010). In addition, MCF competencies, applied with guidance to a contracting CF, can also deliver it further financial capabilities (Becerra et al., 2008; Cheung et al., 2011).

MCF-to-CF can apply to government. For example, Tony Blair appointed McKinsey & Co. to restructure the British Cabinet Office, and Barack Obama appointed three McKinsey & Co. alumni as the US Chief Performance Officer, the US Director National Economic Council and the US Head Small Business Administration (Weiss, 2019).

Management consulting can sometimes present in unusual forms. For example, consider Rio Tinto's 'mine-of-the future' which is building suites of competencies including its intellectual capital, its new knowledge creation, new innovations and its existing capacities. As a CF, Rio Tinto is migrating these; along with specific latest technological solutions from its numerous lead collaborating (MCF) corporates into a new advanced capabilities system. This CF-MCFs relationship can deliver Rio Tinto the world's first 'intelligent' mine - with all its capabilities/assets digitally driven and returning smart networked decisions 'in a microsecond'. This unusual version of the MCF-CF relationship is delivering Rio Tinto world-leading mine performance, whilst also delivering cost reductions in excess of fifteen per cent (Rio Tinto, 2020). Thus, the same MCF-to-CF process arises – 'competencies to capabilities to competitiveness'.

Where groups of intellectually-astute individuals (like management consultants) combine their talents, such as through an MCF; and then work contractually with a CF in specific cases they can enhance the CF's performance capabilities (Woolley et al., 2010). They can also motivate the CF workforce towards change and can enhance the CF's qualities and servicing capabilities (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008; Yee et al., 2008), and the MCF can often derive revenue in exchange for delivering their contracted contemporary (and researched) latest business practices to CFs (Bergh & Gibbons, 2011; Hughes et al., 2011). Thus, MCFs can bring additional business capabilities to the contracting CF and they can also derive benefit.

Some literature lists management consulting as a professional by-product of operations management (Heller et al., 2019; Ramani & Srinivasan, 2019). MCFs through their management consultants enlist relevant competencies as professional service tools that can bring certain capabilities points of business uniqueness to the CF - including proficiency, ideation, information, intelligence and reaction (Grewal et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2019). Empirical research highlights that MCFs typically offer expertise across services, qualities, performance, and profit/loss re-engineering (De Boeck et al., 2019; Loureiro et al., 2020; McGivern et al., 2018). Other researchers reason that MCFs offer the behavioural 'mental grit' to deliver CF motivation, cognition, and emotion progression (Cho & Linderman, 2019; Johnsen et al., 2019; Levine et al., 2017; Pluut et al., 2018). Within the CF these intelligences and capabilities can contribute towards making a CF competitively sustainable.

1.2 Motivation

The last century has witnessed the increasing use of the phrase '*management consulting*' - both in academia and in industry. Management consulting is a form of strategic management describing where an MCF builds a relationship with a CF. Several strategic management approaches can build a CF's competitive advantage, and a variety of approaches are possible including: (1) the 'industry-structure' (external) view yielding superior returns for the CF (Duschek, 2004; Ormanidhi & Stringa, 2008; Michael E Porter, 1980), (2) the 'resource-based' (internal) view offering superior returns with firm heterogeneity (Barney, 1991; Duschek, 2004; Rumelt, 1991), (3) the 'competence-based' (efficient uses) view of resources (Freiling, 2004), (4) the 'knowledge-based' (knowledge holding) view offering a special status as a key productive resource (Grant, 2002), and (5) the 'relational' view encompassing and extending the above alternate approaches by cooperative strategy placements, by the interplay of networks/dyads, and by the building of inter-organisational competitive advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998). This relational view of the firm involves delivering strategic change, whilst also encapsulating the environmental business or industry dynamism that is sometimes encountered (Teece et al., 1997).

The 'relational' view of the firm is the strategic management approach that fits around this MCF-CF study, and this approach fits within the strategic management paradigm. It can be described as where an MCF uses its views of its competencies and offers CF changes to its existing capabilities. In a shared relational CF environment it relationally assists or relationally advises the CF which of the MCF-to-CF deliverables can strategically change and/or complement the CF's existing capabilities suite. It assists or advises the CF with MCF-to-CF deliverables that can strategically change and/or complement the CF's existing capabilities suite. The CF's resultant combined capabilities are also generally framed towards developing a CF sustainable (competitive) business

positioning. Thus, a strategic management and strategic change research paradigm is available for this MCF-CF study.

Christensen (2013) suggests the MCF operating model has remained static for decades. Intriguingly, the literature still does not formally point to a definitive 'theory of management consulting'. For example, Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes (2004) suggest a relationship may exist between organizational theory and organizational practice, and they also suggest via such links MCFs can create new positional forms for CF. However, they do not prove, nor test their propositions. Burke (2017) adds that the consulting process is a CF strategic change management process that also encompasses applied behavioural science and psychology, but Burke (2017) does not provide a theoretical framework.

Clegg et al. (2004) suggest the consulting process, which normally occurs through the MCF, can predict future CF realities, can create concepts, can deliver proposed actions, can improve economic worth and can create both new CF possible realities and real CF possibilities. Rodenhauser (2018) views MCF-to-CF assisted changes as a shift from an MCF brainy-body-shop to a CF indigenous-product development, where contracting CFs can build new cutting-edge artificial intelligences and big data technologies, and then 'surprise' competitors and consumers with their new innovative offerings. These, and many other studies, provide little research data support.

Today much consulting information emanates from the MCF industry itself. For example, the global management consulting firm McKinsey continually updates and complements its corporate culture by adding new diversified digital competencies that can articulate into further CF business capabilities offerings (Bogdanich & Forsythe, 2018). Hence, an external independent study is warranted.

With little current literature linkages between management consulting theory and practice, and only occasional systematic approaches even attempting to link MCF activities to management theories, or to CF business processes or CF business sustainability, this study sees an opportunity for research. The opportunity exists to further clarify the current static business model, to contribute towards management consulting theory and to reduce the current literature knowledge gap.

The current literature offers little towards exploring the direct knowledge transfer connection(s) between a MCF and a contracting CF. A MCF has acquired a raft of business competencies and capabilities to support its management consulting and contracting practices. A contracting CF typically only seeks a selection of these MCF offerings. Hence, a CF often misses-out on acquiring its best and potential broad mix of knowledge transfer capabilities from a MCF management consultancy.

By studying the knowledge transference modelling developed and presented in this thesis, a CF may strategically recognize further useful knowledge gap pathways, and to help in its business development, a CF may seek additional knowledge transference processes from a MCF. This in-turn, hopefully benefits this CF. This knowledge transference approach can also help a CF achieve an enhanced business competitiveness positioning. Hence, this thesis seeks to reduce this knowledge gap in the literature by capturing, and modelling the knowledge

transference processes that arise between a MCF and a CF when they are involved in a MCF-to-CF contracted management consulting process.

1.3 Research Setting

Today, CFs can contractually-engage MCFs worldwide (Deloitte, 2020; Ernst & Young, 2020; L.E.K. Consulting, 2020; Vault.com Inc., 2020), but to have research clarity, this study specifically focuses on the Indian management consulting industry. The reasons for this approach are as follows:

1) The peak management consulting body throughout India, the 'Institute of Management Consultants of India', is fully supporting this research study, and has six times emailed each of this study's on-line SurveyMonkey requests and follow-up reminders to its full data-base of members (see Appendix B).
2) To date, there is little information (nationwide or globally) as to how Indian MCFs enlist their competencies in-relation-to delivering further CF capabilities deliverables.
3) To date, Indian MCFs have only weakly addressed their competencies (as individual management consulting intelligences constructs) in relation to how they may link to enhancing CF client capabilities.
4) To date Indian MCFs, and global MCFs, do not appear to have addressed whether their competencies (as an integrated management consulting intelligences system) can seamlessly combine with the CF and its new MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables to build an enhancing CF competitiveness positioning.
5) A country specific study likely reduces the limitations of this study. This one national study offers an ongoing constant, and helps frame the perspectives of all the MCF management consultant responses.

Hence this research seeks to understand and develop an MCF framework that links theory to practice, which may engage the MCF's competencies as capacities, innovations, technological creativities, intellectual capitals, and may be able to relationally magnify the CF's deliverables across its qualities, performance, economic-worth, servicing, risk avoidance, client satisfaction and competitive intelligences capabilities via a strategic change process - thereby ultimately clarifying pathways capable of enhancing the CF's competitiveness - measured as its changed sustainable (competitive) business positioning.

1.4 Management Consulting Firms

MCFs, represented by their internal management consultants, who enact their MCF competencies, provide their MCF's 'expert' advice across strategic knowledge transference pathways (Pratap & Saha, 2018; Whittington, 2006). MCFs are often engaged to target moving CFs towards a new competitive business positioning (Srinivasan, 2014; Whittington, 2006). Here, management consultants evolve their individual and collective capacities to deliver within their competencies boundaries and through their MCF, then aid the CF in its deliverance of changed capabilities. These MCF-to-CF changes are directed towards changing and improving the CFs' business positioning or competitiveness. This competitiveness change is gauged through the CFs' ability to sustainably meet its ongoing and emerging global business challenges (Jensen et al., 2010; McMakin & Fletcher, 2018; Noe et al., 2017; Srinivasan, 2014). Thus, MCFs work to build competitiveness, measured as an ongoing CF sustainable competitive business positioning and as the changed competitive intelligences now available to advance the CF.

Management consultants within MCFs show varying degrees of behavioural integration within their teams, and this can affect the diverse CF solutions they situationally deliver (Kisfalvi et al., 2016; von Briel et al., 2019). Such consultancy solutions may relationally co-create changes to existing capabilities deliverance processes (Breidbach & Maglio, 2016) across the time-lined MCF-to-CF consultancy change relationship.

The MCF-to-CF relationship also involves an asymmetric exchange of knowledge and information with the CF (Leiby, 2018). This can bring new competencies to the CF, and so deliver respect towards the MCF (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). The MCF is likely accountable to the CF's management (Fincham, 2002) as it works to deliver ongoing competitive business improvements to the CF. However, this process eventually leaves the CF competitively accountable for its own ongoing business performances.

The MCF aims at bringing positive intentions, whilst building good relations, and trust with the CF (Nikolova et al., 2015; Palmatier et al., 2006; White, 2005). This active MCF-to-CF engagement boundary also varies according to an MCF's deliverance expertise, its formal project responsibilities, and its personal reputation - along with the stage-reached within the specific MCF's consultancy project (Sturdy & Wright, 2011).

Leiby (2018) suggests MCFs justify, recommend, and help deliver suitable CF business enhancement choices, and CF measurement systems. Thus, MCFs likely incorporate a prospective theoretical approach (Tversky & Kahneman, 1979) along with an attributions-focused, theoretical approach (Kelley & Michela, 1980).

Institutional theory adds that a CF can also draw on coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures from its surrounding competitive environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercive pressures capture formal/ informal competitive influences. Mimetic pressures bring externalities including industry memberships, consultancies or government impediments. Normative pressures add competitiveness and best practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

MCFs are also likely to consider risks avoidance mitigation processes (Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003; Starr et al., 2003) new technologies and innovation assessments, competitive analysis, and the actual MCF–to-CF deliverance modelling approach (R. Ramanujam et al., 2019). Thus, the role of MCFs and their MCs remain complex, engaging, theoretically-framed, and CF relationship intensive.

1.5 MCF Research Agenda

Today, MCFs strategize and use their acquired intellectual capital to knowledge-survey new market opportunities (Irwin et al., 2018). They use these uniquely acquired competencies as engagers that can competitively assist in the improvement of their CFs (Rangan & Dhanapal, 2016). For example, MCFs in India focus external/internal big data sources towards complex, scanned, cognitive, competitive strategies; innovation; and knowledge creation (Srinivasan, 2014), whilst many Australian firms still pursue incremental rather than innovative business improvements (Innovation and Science Australia, 2016). Thus, in different countries MCFs may differ in their initial CF approaches (Australian Information Industry Association, 2017; Simon & Kumar, 2001).

Today, businesses are benefiting from digitally transforming global markets (The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2017). MCFs are also more digitally-attuned and are focusing towards generating digital leadership for their CF (Hamilton et al., 2016; Prince, 2019). This process involves transforming the business operations towards an integrated, digital, intelligent uniquely-competitive corporate entity (The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2017). Such developments can reduce transactional costs and improve market access. Results show such digitally creative business areas typically perform and grow above the general business deliverables of the economy as a whole (Clun, 2017).

MCF-to-CF deliverance approaches can also differ. They can be applied as higher-order meta-cognitive competitive intelligence solutions (Srinivasan, 2014) and/or as capabilities solutions, including qualities, performance and economic utilitarian capabilities (Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Jones et al., 2006). These two MCF-to-CF deliverables modes deliver new scalable operational business solutions to the CF.

MCFs and CFs are continually migrating, their current business models and applications towards consumer demand solutions (Clun, 2017). Hence, they pursue a sustainable competitive business positioning (Cavaleri & Shabana, 2018; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Jednak & Kragulj, 2015; Stefanikova et al., 2015).

Therefore, this study's research question asks:

> *Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally-assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?*

Hence, this research enlists management consultants and uses their survey responses to develop and test a framework of MCF competencies factors that likely influence MCF-to-CF deliverables factors, and in turn it model-evaluates if these MCF competencies can collectively then establish a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the CF.

1.6 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 articulates the research motivations and objectives. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical foundations upon which the research is developed. It then presents the research model and highlights a number of empirically testable propositions. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. The chapter starts with a brief review of the research design. It then discusses the site selection, the research plan and the data collection procedures. Chapter 4 summarises the analysis and results of the research. Chapter 5 examines the contributions of this research, acknowledges its limitations, discusses the implications of the research for theory and practice and offers suggestions for future research.

1.7 Chapter One Summary

Chapter 1 of this study examines how MCF competencies affect CF sustainable competitive intelligent business positioning through capabilities in the Indian context. It sets the research background, frames the study's motivation, introduces management consulting and MCFs, and sets the MCF research agenda.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Management and Management Consulting

In strategic management of the firm there are various resource perspectives. This study in part follows the resource-based view of the firm as it argues that the CF's sustainable competitive advantage (or its ongoing competitiveness) is built through its reliance on its valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). However, these resources can be enhanced when an MCF relationally shares from its competencies suite, and links these relevant competencies to provide an actionable suite of MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables to its engaged CF with this suite designed to improve the CF's sustainable (competitive) business positioning. It should be noted that a CF sustainable business positioning likely occurs over time and within a competitive business world encompassing other firms, who may operate at a local, national and/or global level. Here, the CF seeks to continually grow, and to remain in a solid ongoing competitiveness position. Hence, the CF is likely better-termed as a firm continually pursuing an ongoing 'sustainable (competitive) business positioning'. This management consulting approach draws the MCF's focus to its own resources and then to how these identified resources can be applied to a CF's internal (and sometimes external) resources as MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables that have the potential to deliver a superior CF competitiveness.

This resource-based view process begins with the MCF. The MCF first creates the necessary input resources (competencies). Second, when contracted by a CF, the MCF then applies a chosen selection of appropriate MCF-to-CF resources (capabilities deliverables) to the chosen engaged CF suite of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable CF resources. Third, the MCF and the CF relationally facilitate the creation of outcomes linkages and these ultimately allow a contracting CF to exploit and/or acquire a sustainable (competitive) business positioning, along with additional competitive intelligences with regard to its rival competitors.

Four prime strategic management approaches to building a firm's competitive advantage are: (1) the 'industry-structure' view – such as Porter's 5 forces model, that aims for superior returns for the firm within an industry with specific structural characteristics (Duschek, 2004; Ormanidhi & Stringa, 2008; Michael E Porter, 1980), (2) the 'resource-based' view that pursues superior returns with firm heterogeneity (Barney, 1991; Barney et al. 2001; Duschek, 2004; Rumelt, 1991), (3) the 'competence-based' view – explaining that the efficient usage of resources can bring competitive advantage (Freiling, 2004), and (4) the 'knowledge-based' view where knowledge-holding is an important individual key productive resource (Grant, 2002). However, each does not quite match the required framework for an MCF and CF relationship.

Dyer and Singh (1998) and Lavie (2006) developed a strategic management 'relational' view of the firm. This approach offers an extension to the above three approaches. Here, cooperative strategies and sources of inter-organisational competitive advantage present the strategic management of the CF as a relational view theory. This includes the interplay of networks and dyads as systems operating between the MCF and the CF. Such networks and dyads are utilized as key analysis units in delivering superior individual CF (and hopefully also MCF) outcomes – ones specifically competitively relevant against other rival firms within the particular industry web of networks and dyads.

This relational view supplements the above, and the following existing views. It adds that distinctive inter-firm linkages that can offer a source of 'super-normal' profits - jointly generated in an active inter-firm exchange relationship and with outcomes that cannot be generated by either firm (MCF or CF) in isolation. These outcomes can only be created through the joint distinctive contributions of the specific 'alliance partners' (Dyer & Singh, 1998) when applied across their relevant/relational assets, across their knowledge sharing processes, across their complementary resources/capabilities deliverables and across their effective overall governance.

Thus, this study follows a relational view of strategic management as it focuses on strategic resources, but in a way that is complementary to the other above-mentioned theoretical strategic views of the firm. The relational view builds firm strategies for achieving sustainable profits and it recognizes that the sustainable inter-organisational arrangements of blocks of resources (or inter-firm networks) can provide a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Duschek, 2004). This approach can also offer a process of capabilities generation, an understanding of how these capabilities arise and an ongoing evolution of resources that then allows advantageous sustainable (competitive) business positioning. Thus, this study seeks to add capability to the existing theory of resource-oriented modelling within an inter-firm strategic management framework.

The literature around inter-firm strategic management frameworks and management consulting offers some incomplete theoretical support, and information available tends to be provided by management consulting professionals. Thus, there is currently little linkage between theory and practice, and scant systematic frameworks actually attempting to describe and/or portray the application of management theories, the business processes and business sustainability that directly apply to management consulting services. Hence, management consulting is by definition a strategic management tool (Cobbold & Lawrie, 2002; Dunford, 2000; Hitt et al., 2012). An aim of this research study is to pursue an MCF framework that is, by necessity, of a strategic management and inter-firm nature, and so seek to link the strategic management paradigm to a practical management consulting process.

2.2 Management Consulting Activities

Each MCF offers its CFs selections from their unique suites of developed engagement competencies – ones their MCs believe are likely to enable and/or add competitiveness and capabilities to the CF's existing business operations. This approach can engender new detail, new meaning and further competitiveness for the CF (Gubler & Cooper, 2019; Mason et al., 2019). However, MCF engagement strategies, including managerial and customization capacities, knowledge, innovation and intellectual capital, each need tailoring towards advancing the CF's operational business position (Brandon-Jones et al., 2016; Desyllas et al., 2018). Thus, the left link of Figure 2.1 is proposed as the MCF's pre-management consulting engagement competencies, ones available to support the deliverance of an MCF-to-CF operational business solution.

Luu et al., (2016) show improved capabilities deliverance capabilities can deliver loyal, ongoing, sustainable business outcomes. Sánchez and Mitchell (2017) suggest MCF-to-CF deliverance processes do improve the CF's capabilities, and arguably can then contribute to a CF's sustainable competitive business positioning.

CF sustainable competitive business positioning is also achievable under the right learning conditions. Sasaki et al., (2020) find internal cultures, structures and behaviours all influence learning. Learning is a competitive intelligence acquisition process. Thus, CFs with incentive to learn from different sources, including external sources such as MCFs, likely does acquire useful competitive intelligence knowledge (Chen et al., 2019). This learning can also be targeted towards delivering a sustainable competitive business positioning. Thus, the CF likely relies on the availability of accurate and complete competitive information, the existence of deliberative assessment and deliverance forums, and suitable general procedural certainty (Aversa et al., 2019; Uribe et al., in press).

This suggests that MCF competencies constructs are the left-side initiator linkage of Figure 2.1. An MCF shares these competencies with its contracting CF. It enlists them in combination to help build additional CF deliverables into the CF's current capabilities resources (the centre linkage of Figure 2.1). These MCF-to-CF operational deliverables solutions are also likely to change the CFs' ongoing competitiveness, measured as ongoing sustainable (competitive) business positioning, and additional ongoing competitive intelligences. This is displayed as the right linkage of Figure 2.1.

Prahalad (1993) suggests the core competencies residing in the firm can be strategically-stretched and not just leveraged. This presents value-adding capabilities, and their deliverables build additional business development and business growth. Wahl and Prause (2013) view the understanding of resources, competencies, and capabilities as a business model generation approach that offers sources of competitive advantage in strategic firm management. Resources are firm's accumulated assets. Its competencies offer cross-functional integration and their beneficial coordination of business capabilities. Capabilities are where the exploitation of the available assets happens and this model also generates ongoing growth for stakeholders. Thus both Prahalad (1993) and Wahl and Prause (2013) recognise the linkages between competencies influencing capabilities. As discussed above in the management consulting context, Werr and Styhre (2002), Werr and Stjernberg (2003), Ordanini and Parasuraman (2011), Bello et al., (2016), Lee and Jung (2018), Liang et al., (2019), and Xu et al., (2019) all similarly recognize this competencies to capabilities relationship. Hence this study relationally proposes P1 or proposition 1 - that '*MCF competencies influence MCF-to-CF capabilities*.' P1 is shown as the first relational pathway linkage of Figure 2.1.

Yee and Eze (2012) consider capabilities of quality, marketing (servicing) and knowledge in delivering business competitiveness. Zapata-Cantu, Delgado and Gonzalez, (2016) consider capabilities and their dynamic deliverables can deliver business excellence and so enhance business competitiveness. Similarly, as discussed above in the MCF-CF context, Burgelman (1991), Simons (1994), Arjaliès and Mundy (2013), Bronnenmayer et al., (2016), and Cavaleri and Shabana, (2018) all recognize that as capabilities enhance, they provide further deliverables that likely improve business competitiveness. Thus, this study relationally proposes P2 or proposition 2 - that '*MCF-to-CF capabilities influence CF acquired intelligent competitiveness*.' P2 is shown as the second relational pathway linkage of Figure 2.1.

These two propositions (P1 and P2) and Figure 2.1 offer support for the study's investigation of the research question '*Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities, relationally-assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?*'

Figure 2.1: MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Pathway

2.3 Management Consulting Firms Deliverance Framework

MCFs offer potential to combine their competencies toolkit into a more pervasive data analytics and relational system – encompassing both MCF-to-CF delivered capabilities resources and deliverables, along with ongoing competitive intelligences (Chase & Murtha, 2019; Mees-Buss & Welch, 2019) - especially when these are designed to enhance the CF's competitiveness.

The above discussion suggests an MCF-to-CF engagement likely consists of a unique MCF capacities set, an innovations offering, a knowledge creation capacity, and an intellectual capital offering. Ma et al., (2019) also note MCFs share new knowledge and intellectual capital (or new information). Mehta and Mehta (2018) investigate the effect of an MCF's knowledge creation integration, and link it to the delivery of team (MCF-CF) capabilities (qualities, performance).

These four pre-engagement competencies can then be applied to frame a management consulting deliverance solution into the CF's operations. These four MCF competencies can support the repositioning of the CF's existing utilitarian values capabilities (qualities, performance and economic-worth) (Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2006). These new MCF-to-CF capabilities, along with the hedonic values capability of 'servicing' (Nenonen et al., 2019; Roggeveen et al., 2015), with its proactive interests (such as knowledge-servicing and growth acceleration), bring new capabilities to the CF's operations. The MCF can also present the CF with a deliverable set of additional MCF-to-CF competitive intelligences capabilities.

Additionally, MCFs can augment CF risk avoidance management capability to further govern parameters such as cost, time, and qualities. Other risk avoidance considerations can include externalities such as the business environment, its networks and its positional presentation, along with its 3rd party contributors, and its long-term business strategic positioning perspectives (Gefen et al., 2008; Hajmohammad & Vachon, 2016; Kumar et al., 2009; Lipson & Fisher, 1999).

In ongoing MCF-to-CF relationships, the MCF's pre-engagement competencies, plus the CF introduced MCF-to-CF engaged capabilities resources and associated operational deliverables analytics, can together help frame the development of a changed sustainable competitive business positioning (Mikalef et al., 2019). Cavaleri and Shabana (2018) add that sustainability also captures ongoing competitive advantage, modelled from intellectual capital, innovation (radical, incremental or imitation), capabilities deliverance, and applied competitive intelligences. Here, high levels of consumer-servicing qualities and capabilities familiarity (risk avoidance) can

lead to higher levels of contractual satisfaction (Yiu et al., in press) and to a sustainable competitive business positioning (Wu & Jia, 2018).

Once the CF deliverance stage provides positive consumer-centric capabilities and competitive intelligences solutions, then a level of positive CF recognition of the management consulting process may arise (Rangan & Dhanapal, 2016). Rangan and Dhanapal (2016) suggest MCFs which consistently deliver credible, technically-competent CF solutions across their connectivity's channels, then likely earn the CF's contractual satisfaction and/or its recognition concerning its changed CF sustainable competitive business positioning. Dyllick and Muff (2016) add sustainable competitive business positioning is delivered when internal business challenges are effectively and efficiently performance-solved.

The above discussion, and Figure 2.1's proposed MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship pathway, suggests when consulting with a CF, the MCF's engagement competencies and its deliverance capacities interplay to deliver a sustainable (competitive) business positioning solution. This is presented visually as the MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 shows the MCF behaves as an initial action-engager (Creplet et al., 2001) with the CF. It draws on its existing, embedded and developing management consulting engagement competencies to assess, plan and implement its MCF-to-CF competitive solution (Hughes & White, 2010). Such initial pre-management consulting engagers then frame an MCF's utilitarian and hedonic values capabilities offering (Hamilton et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2006) and its competitive intelligences offering (Bose, 2008; Sewdass, 2009). These, in turn, offer a means to acquire a management-consulting-supported CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning (Werth et al., 2016). To operationalize Figure 2.2, the measures to each of its literature-supported 11 constructs are now developed and presented later (along with their relevant measurements) in Table 2.1.
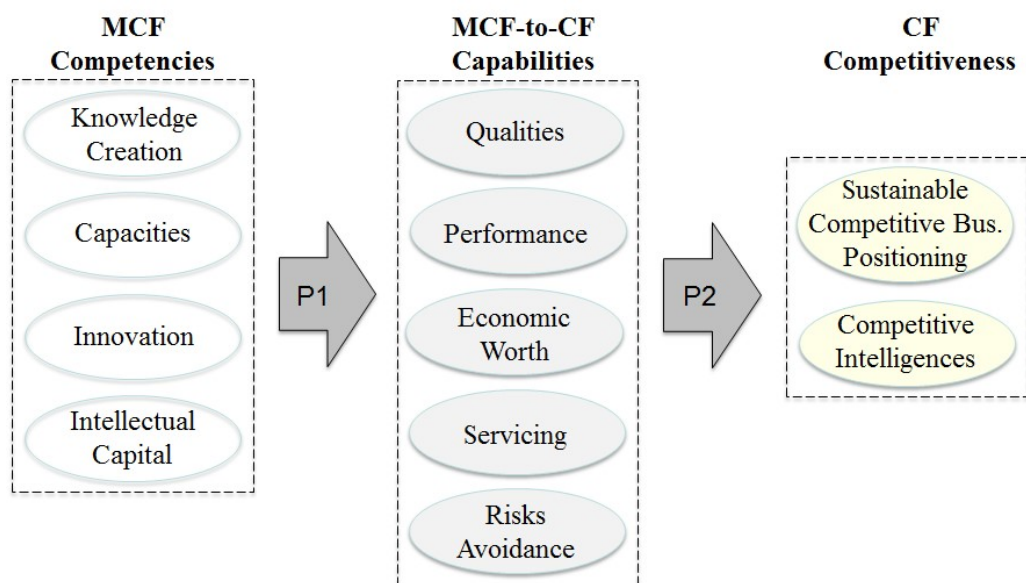
Figure 2.2: MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework

2.4 MCF Competencies

2.4.1 Knowledge creation

Creating knowledge is a continuous process of combining, transferring, and analysis of different kinds of knowledge. Its inter-connectivity links across explicit and tacit knowledge, whilst framing new notions and concepts. Knowledge creation is collaborative (Bronnenmayer et al., 2016), entrepreneurial, and performance-related (S. Wang et al., 2019). Knowledge creation is also strategic and can encompass strategic intelligence gathering, analysis, interpretation and dissemination, along with the development of scenarios and future worlds (Gebhardt et al., 2019; Vallaster et al., 2019).

Knowledge creation also shapes an MCF's strategy (c-suite, social engagement and communicative sourcing) (Rydén & El Sawy, 2019). It also develops its resources towards strategic goals (internal developments, external sourcing, purchase actions, inter-firm combinations, alliances or acquisitions) (Goedhart et al., 2015), strategic item pricing (price structure advantage, promotions, affordable products, unbundled services, premium products, price portioning and lower priced versions) (Dobusch et al., 2019), and strategic management systems (strategy diversification, internal and external capital markets, premium brand and pricing, cooperative and competitive supplier relationship, continuous improved, and applied R&D) (Cabiddu et al., 2019; Frynas et al., 2018). Lee and Jung (2018) see MCF knowledge creation as a precursor to the deliverance of the utilitarian MCF's capabilities dimension of qualities. Thus, an MCF's knowledge creation is an engaged competencies set designed to deliver a considered, entrepreneurial and strategic advancement (or change) for a contracting CF, and as a significant additional capabilities driver that incorporated the management consulting qualities capabilities dimension.

2.4.2 Capacities

Capacities are another set of competencies an MCF may bring to the CF when assimilating its relevant business information (capacity, materials, expertise, functions and prices) as resource toolkits to help deliver planned changes to a contracting CF (Degener et al., 2018; Zollo et al., 2018). Capacities are planned activities that provide actionable information regarding a CF's rivals (Suddaby et al., 2020). This competencies approach may involve data collection, data investigation, and data diffusion. Hence, the MCF's engaged capacities offer multiple outcomes, including better CF performance, better planning, and new servicing successes across existing/new markets (Teo & Choo, 2001).

This study enlists Petroni's (2000) and Teo and Choo's (2001) capacities view that through a competencies approach the MCF can then potentially assist the CF to provide high quality products/services at competitive prices, whilst delivering high ROIs. Lee and Jung (2018) see MCF capacities as significant drivers of the MCF's qualities construct (Figure 2.2). Thus, the MCF may view its capacities as encompassing high quality product/servicing linkages that include capability-for-money, leading-edge knowledge and potential market leadership settings, whilst also being a significant management consulting capabilities deliverance precursor.

2.4.3 Innovation

As a third competency, innovation brings the generation of new ideas, creative thoughts, new imaginations, new applications or new effective services (Molner et al., 2019; O'Reilly & Binns, 2019). Innovation targets achieving something new, such as: delivering a new requirement or extending a market or meeting an unarticulated need. Innovation may be a response to a product/servicing failure. Innovation typically encompasses new approaches, new technologies exploration, servicing innovation, visionary ideas, new ventures, and innovative attention/emphasis/measurement (Bouncken et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2019).

Liang, Shu, & Farh (2019) approach innovation as innovative ideas, innovation attention and innovation emphasis, whilst Xu et al., 2019 see innovation as R&D intensity, R&D spending, sales and revenue. Ordanini & Parasuraman (2011) use innovation as creative ideas, ill-founded ideas, innovation acceptance, and innovation risks avoidance. Bello et al., (2016) measure innovation as a comparison against competitors and as delivering unique benefits, providing radical difference from competitors, replacing an inferior solution with a highly innovative approach, and delivering higher qualities servicing solutions.

In this study, an MCF engages innovation as servicing the CF with ideas. Hence it aligns towards the Ordanini & Parasuraman's (2011) approach, using innovation as the collaboration of knowledge and competences applied to generate MCF-to-CF dynamic resources capabilities into the CF. It also incorporates the Liang et al., (2019) and Xu et al., (2019) views that innovation encapsulates novel ideas, new technologies exploration, R&D intensity and innovation measurement, and the Bello et al., (2016) competitor comparison views.

2.4.4 Intellectual capital

Intellectual capital is a fourth MCF competencies addition. This MCF research infrastructure requirement aims at enhancing big data information procurement (Zhan et al., 2018). Lee & Jung (2018) see management consulting intellectual capital as encompassing a problem-solving dimension. Across management consulting this encapsulates enabling collaborative product development processes across supply and capability chains, and it is sometimes viewed as a knowledge acquisition practice. Kache & Seuring (2017) suggest the current CF infrastructure is generally incapable of capturing today's required real-time process information across and throughout the firm's existing digital environments. This information is gathered internally, externally or via the client, and it can be implicit or explicit. Liu et al., (2016) link flexible MCF infrastructure capacities to a CF's assimilation, management, and financial goals.

The MCF typically attempts to build its relevant research infrastructure competencies into the CF's operations. This approach aims at positively impacting financial targets, adding further CF capabilities deliverables and establishing modern capabilities, such as connective 'internet-of-everything' capabilities. Thus, intellectual capital encapsulates the MCF's intangible capabilities, including its engaged workforce, its information supply chain, its competitive capabilities competencies, and its engagement competencies. Here, Liu et al., (2006) suggest socio-technical dimensions can enhance intellectual capital delivery through impacts on CF practices, including deep infrastructure knowledge, utilization of practical infrastructure knowhow for client benefit and boosting of client competencies through state-of-the-art practices.

In considering the model framework of Figure 2.2, Lee and Jung (2018) show MCF capacities, knowledge creation and intellectual capital as significant precursor drivers of MCF-to-CF qualities. Bello et al., (2016) also find a mix of MCF drivers across knowledge creation, intellectual capital and workforce capacities jointly contribute towards the management consulting innovation driver and that shared innovation effects may then relationally contribute towards the CF's performance and economic-worth. These add model support and suggest four MCF model drivers may co-vary and jointly contribute in their deliverance of performance and economic worth. Further, MCF's intellectual capital and its knowledge creation offer CF benefits when they are targeted towards providing competitive intelligences (see below). Thus, it is likely that Figure 2.2's MCF engagers do co-vary and that these construct do contribute towards the framework model's MCF-to-CF capabilities and competitive intelligences enhancing intermediaries.

2.4.5 Competencies summary

The above MCF knowledge system consists of four interacting competencies. These are built around: (1) the MCF's tools, methods, knowledge and capacities, (2) its knowledge acquisition (creation and innovation) processes, and (3) its available intellectual capital (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003). Here, the MCF translates and disseminates its relevant knowledge system competencies towards its specifically-engaged CF consulting projects. Thus, an MCF articulates its knowledge system as competencies that can specifically generate additional: (1) CF learning modes, (2) CF complementary structures, and (3) CF-specific individual new knowledge (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003). These four MCF knowledge system transfers each represent the MCF's competencies change agent. These can then be engaged as MCF-to-CF capabilities additions that can then help bring further capabilities deliverables into the contracting CF (Werr & Styhre, 2002).

2.5 MCF-to-CF Capabilities

2.5.1 Delivering Business Capabilities

MCF–to-CF capabilities are affected by many factors, particularly: (1) deliverable characteristics of the CF, (2) competencies of the MCF, and (3) consultation approach employed (Jang & Lee, 1998). To ensure a successful MCF process, first, the MCF can apply its key competencies (its MCF knowledge system performers and its latest relevant research). Second, the CF needs to bring the commitment of its workforce to participate and fulfil necessary MCF-to-CF procedural commonalities. Third, the CF needs clarity of direction (Jang & Lee, 1998). Here, the CF offers its capabilities suite as a means to present its set of existing deliverables as one that currently combines and moves their net alignment towards preferences of its likely (targeted) consumers.

This CF approach is a capabilities deliverance approach. Here, the MCF can enlist its competencies suite and utilize these as an MCF-to-CF engagement across the CF's existing capabilities resources to produce further deliverables. This resultant modified CF capabilities suite is also aimed towards further improving the CF's capabilities deliverables and its net competitiveness solutions.

Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991b) offer four business capabilities dimensions – as differing values deliverables these also include an emotive dimension. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) subdivide consumer capabilities into four differing values deliverables and as hedonic (emotional, social) and/or utilitarian (qualities, price) groupings.

Basole and Rouse (2008) see capabilities as five different, networked values deliverables (three utilitarian - performance, qualities, economic worth, and two hedonic - servicing, emotions) (Roig et al., 2006).

Capabilities networks draw together businesses (such as MCFs, and CFs), and consumers groups. Hamilton and Tee (2015) measure five networked values deliverables (three utilitarian - performance, qualities, economic worth, and two hedonic - servicing, emotive satisfiers) as a combined behavioural multi-pathways capabilities deliverables solution. Oyedele and Simpson (2018) support these same five capabilities as a multi-pathways development approach, but they enlist different capabilities descriptor terms. Such capabilities-enhancement (values) deliverables offer multi-pathways through which the MCF can work to assist its CF's business solutions.

Basole & Rouse (2008) use behavioural motives as pre-cursors to their capabilities deliverance (measured as performance, quality, economic and consumer servicing). Hamilton & Tee (2016) add usefulness and ease-of-use variation and in social media environments offer motive pre-cursors: (1) experience (like MCF intellectual capital) - where there is some understanding of an item and its usefulness, (2) attitude (like MCF knowledge creation) - where an item is expected to meet required basic needs, (3) normality (like MFC capacities) - where an item is gauged against normal expectations or desires, and (4) capability- additions (like MCF innovations) where additional benefits are built into an item) as their motives precursor suite. These pre-cursor motives are all similar to the business competencies suite the MCF brings to its CF relationship. Further, Basole & Rouse (2008), Hamilton & Tee (2016) and Oyedele & Simpson's (2018) capabilities (values) deliverance measures are all similar to the deliverables generated across the MCF-to-CF capabilities suite.

In business environments too, capabilities may be utilitarian (tangible) or hedonic (intangible) (Jones et al., 2006). Considering the MCF-CF business relationship environment, the MCF uses its competencies as motive initiators aimed towards improving the CF's capabilities deliverables and thereby improving the CF's capabilities.

Capabilities can also provide a user-gratification pathway (Chen & Park, 2005; Korhan & Ersoy, 2016; Shin, 2011) towards contractual satisfaction, loyalty and sustainability (McMurrian & Matulich, 2016; Trasorras et al., 2009). Further, an MCF strategic management approach, applied to a CF utilitarian capabilities situation, can then assist in generation of consumer contractual satisfaction whilst also pushing towards an enhanced sustainable competitive business positioning, supported by an improved competitive intelligence (or competitiveness) position (Kaltcheva et al., 2013). Relationships between competencies, capabilities, and sustainability have further literature and theoretical support.

2.5.2 Supporting Theory towards MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework Model Structure

There is little definitive management consulting theory in the literature and it remains inconsistent. This is in part because management consulting can encompass a diversity of activities. Management consulting is a strategic management process that is usually applied via an MCF contracting with a CF.

Management consulting theory also encompasses the 'resource-based view' of the firm, with theoretical extensions into encompassing business expert systems, knowledge development/utilization capabilities and

delivering sustainable (competitive) business advantage (Lado & Zhang, 1998). It also brings strategies (Tallman, 1991), competencies (Lado et al., 1992), business innovation (Sundbo, 1996), economic worth (Navon, 1995), product development (Verona, 1999), and research implications (Schulze, 1992) into this resource-based view theoretical framework.

However, several other strategic management approaches beyond the resource based (internal) view and its superior heterogeneous firm returns (Barney, 1991; Duschek, 2004; Rumelt, 1991) may also exist, including: (1) the 'industry-structure' (external) view focused on superior returns for the CF (Duschek, 2004; Ormanidhi & Stringa, 2008; M.E. Porter, 1980), (2) the 'competence-based' (efficient uses) view of resources (Freiling, 2004), (3) the 'knowledge-based' (knowledge holding) view offering knowledge special status as a key productive resource (Grant, 2002), and (4) the 'relational' view encompassing and extending the above alternate approaches by cooperative strategy placements, by the interplay of networks/dyads and by the building of inter-organisational competitive advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Of these strategic management approaches the 'relational' view of the firm also allows for dynamism that is sometimes encountered across business or industry environments (Teece et al., 1997) and it is most applicable to the MCF and its management consulting domain.

Management consulting also fits within institutional theory, as talent-resourced MCFs enlist their management consultants to support the social engagement structure that arises between the MCF and its contracting CF. Here; both parties relationally pursue a business solution within the surrounding competitive environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Luhmann (2005; 2007) conceptualizes that MCFs and CFs as two 'autopoietic' communication systems, operating according to 'idiosyncratic' logic yet structurally-coupled through their MCF-to-CF connectivities systems. Thus, management consultants are seen as relationally work-organizing themselves into MCF institutions. Further, when the MCF contracts with a CF, it uses its management consultants to strategically perform the required CF consultancy tasks. Here, the two differing MCF and CF connectivities systems relationally fuse with a view to delivering CF competitive solutions.

Thus, MCFs can combine their competencies and MCF-to-CF relationally contribute their pervasive data analytics into a relational system designed to deliver capabilities resources and deliverables, along with ongoing competitive intelligences (Chase & Murtha, 2019; Mees-Buss & Welch, 2019), especially when these are designed to bring improved economic performance (Clegg et al., 2004) and enhance the CF's competitiveness.

Transaction cost theory also supports that the notion that the MCF, as an independent management consulting institution, does organize its management consultants to then relationally offer contracted CF assistance (Canbäck, 1998). As this process is also one of relational engagement between the MCF and the CF, transaction cost economics theory, social capital theory and organizational learning theory also apply - as these help to build business solutions within the surrounding competitive environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

However, management consulting even extends into behavioural theory. Here, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), motivation theories (Garske & Arkes, 1981), consumption theory (Sheth et al., 1991a) and users-gratification theory (Katz et al., 1973) can also help the MCF to build consumer-targeted solutions that ultimately

contribute to a CF's competitiveness. These behavioural theories support the position and time-line relational sequential flow of Figure 2.2's three behaviourally-linked 'MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework' blocks - the MCF competencies block (a consultancy motivator), the MCF-to-CF capabilities block (a consultancy consumption incorporation), and the CF competitiveness block (a consultancy user (CF)-gratifications outcome). These are exemplified further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

This study models across the MCF-to-CF resource transference relationship. This modelling occurs relationally, sequentially, and over-time. Hence it is causal, from competencies to capabilities to competitiveness. As a causal structure it can enlist construct items, measured against a Likert 1-to-5 scale framework. The model's causal flows both within (and between) the constructs (and their item measures), and its relationally-mapped causality is mapped against Hume's theory-of-causation and Aristotle's 4-step theory-of-causation (Falcon, 2011) as follows:

1) Material-cause: Each construct is literature-defined and captures its relevant literature-supported measurement items.
2) Formal-cause: All measurement items are construct-linked and compared through typologically-collated groupings.
3) Efficient-cause: Data capturing relevant measurement items are collected and factor-reduction compared to deliver a 'best' representation of the specific construct of interest.
4) Final-cause: The constructs are jointly modelled into a statistically relevant business solution, and the remaining non-used measurement items are re-considered as possible future inclusion components, to possibly strengthen existing model constructs (or to possibly create other relevant constructs). In this study, this final cause stage is unable to deliver any new construct measurement item for the final Chapter 5.

Thus, management consulting collectively encompasses a broad spectrum of theories. But is does fit within the strategic management relational view of the firm and consequently fits within the strategic management paradigm.

The above section also sets the theoretical framework for the build of a strategic MCF-to-CF relationship model, one that is likely adept at delivering dynamic, inter-firm competitive advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Teece et al., 1997). This is in line with this study's modelling approach.

From the above competencies and the above broad strategic management relational perspectives, the CF's capabilities suite is now investigated to determine the suitability of existing measures within a business relational context. The three utilitarian business capabilities dimensions of quality, performance, economic-worth and the hedonic business capability dimension of servicing are now considered individually. Jones et al., (2006) include such utilitarian and hedonic retail capabilities as pathways towards loyalty and/or sustainability. This study enlists Kaltcheva et al.,'s (2013) capabilities definition as it 'path links a CF's strategically measured degrees of utilitarian fulfilment of MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables - whilst remaining sustainable and economically competitive.'

2.5.3 Qualities

Qualities for interactive operations can be gauged as the five dimensions of service qualities namely -reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles (Zeithaml et al., 1990; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991). These fit within a capability domain subset of quality (Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; McLachlin, 2000). In the MCF context, reliability remains a CF service quality imperative, as it assists the CF when pursuing agreed targets (McLachlin, 2000). Similarly, responsiveness is a vital MCF-to-CF deliverable that must bring with it assurance and empathy along with a CF tangible results suite. Thus, the MCF and the CF are likely to each pursue heightened levels of service qualities deliverables throughout their consultation processes and so conjointly deliver added capabilities measurements to the CF and its operations.

2.5.4 Performance

The MCF also presents the CF with improvement options that seek to add to the existing performance capabilities across the workplace's culture (McLachlin, 2000). Cannon et al., (2010) models the CF's performance capabilities against its inputs and against its outcomes. Others attempt to quantify performance (cost, speed, dependability, quality and flexibility) against lean business operational measurement groupings (just-in-time, automation, kaizen, total productive maintenance, capability stream mapping) (Belekoukias et al., 2014). This MCF-to-CF study deploys the four most broadly adopted performance deliverables (efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and flexibility) (de Leeuw & van den Berg, 2011; Karwan & Markland, 2006) as its CF capabilities measurements.

It is also noted that Cannon et al., (2010), Yrjölä et al., (2019) and Zhang et al., (in press) show the outcomes first link from qualities and performance to economic, functional, emotional and symbolic (curiosity) capabilities, and these then further link into contractual satisfaction and sustainable business measures.

2.5.5 Economic Worth

In the MCF context, CF economically worthwhile deliverables provide different capabilities. Spanos & Lioukas (2001) approach economic-worth construct from an external firm (in this study's case a CF) capabilities perspective, whilst Bronnenmayer et al., (2016) do this from a budgeting accomplishments (sales volume, growth-in-sales, market share, and growth) deliverables approach. Others include internal firm economically deliverable 'rents' – derived from specific strategic profitability activities (ROA, profit, ROI, ROE, net profit) (Bronnenmayer et al., 2016; Geletkanycz & Boyd, 2011; Sobol & Klein, 2009) - as their economically worthwhile capabilities measurements. These MCF-to-CF economically worthwhile deliverables also offer capabilities measurement pathways towards a CF's sustainable competitive business positioning (Hamilton, 2006; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Jabłoński, 2016).

2.5.6 Servicing

Servicing across a firm, and directed towards the firm's consumer market, is an hedonic capability that a consumer is acquiring when conceptualized against this individual's ongoing firm deliverables or servicing experiences requirements (Babin et al., 1994). It is consumer-perceived and it is also associated with senses, pleasures, feelings and/or emotions (Cheng, 2014). It encompasses the extent to which the deliverables of a

servicing capability arouses emotions and creates pleasant experiences (Jahromi & Zhang, 2020). Thus, servicing is an emotive, consumer-related hedonic capability experience. It should also be noted that the emotive feelings capabilities are also psychologically-based, and these are captured within the MCF-to-CF relationship context, and so are not individually considered to be within a separate construct within this study's MC-to-CF data capture capabilities.

Servicing normally includes a consumer's connection of their perceived capability, relationship, services and needs (Rogg et al., 2001). It may extend to recommendations, returns, service-degrees, priorities, and standards (Arenas et al., 2019). Sum et al., (2002) see servicing as awareness, problems, complaints, and feedback. Johnson and Ashforth (2008) categorize servicing as consumer needs, consumer goals, consumer-orientation behaviour, and sales-orientation-orientation behaviour. Thus, servicing is not well defined because it varies depending on circumstances.

Four servicing dimensions offer some consumer consistency: relationship, needs, goals, and sales-to-consumer orientation behaviour (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008; Rogg et al., 2001). However, the relative importance of these servicing dimensions can fluctuate. For example, sometimes an improved consumer relationship can negatively impact an aspect of the consumer's goals. Moreover, different human resources within a firm frame can have different servicing necessities and consumer interests. Hence, this research follows Johnson and Ashforth's (2008) definition of servicing as 'servicing capability is a firm's response towards satisfying consumers' hedonic needs in ways better than the existing competition.'

2.5.7 Risks Avoidance

Changing business environments often drive economic pressures in firms. One of the ways to tackle costs is by enhancing business capabilities. To change a business by including an MCF-to-CF capabilities process remains a risky proposition and risks avoidance also correlates with firm capabilities (Dotzel & Shankar, 2019). Some see economic downturns as resulting from performance paralysis, measurable via resource utilization analysis. An intentional shift in resource utilization remains risky, and possibly links to firm's performance (de Oliveira et al., 2020). Adding new technologies is also risky, as is customer servicing changes, measured as service-efficiencies and innovative practices. Thus, risk avoidance also links to firm servicing (Snihur & Wiklund, 2019). Hence, risks avoidance should be included in MCF-to-CF capabilities suites.

2.5.8 Contractual Satisfaction

The concept of contractual satisfaction as a business outcome inclusion in Figure 2.2 is assumed across the MCF-CF relationship and so this measure is included in this study, as it may help drive re-consumption (Brown & Chin, 2004; Porter et al., 2020; Schepker et al., 2014). Contractual satisfaction in this context is assumed as a personalized MCF-CF relationship which can lead to an improved (ongoing) competitive advantage (Pick & Eisend, 2014). Contractual satisfaction from a psychological perspective appraises MCF-to-CF activities, tasks undertaken and feelings of accomplishment derived (McKinlay & Starkey, 1988).

Consumer contractual satisfaction reflects on the idea, desired, predicted and normative customer expectations (García-Canal, 1996), and it is sometimes influenced by net improved qualities or financial performance

(Dobrzykowski & McFadden, 2020; Polo & Sese, 2013). High levels of servicing-qualities and capabilities familiarity can also lead to higher levels of contractual satisfaction (Lai et al., 2013; Poppo & Zhou, 2014). But, contractual satisfaction is also risks-related and the CF may consider its business from many perspectives, including linear-change, cyclical-change, major socio-economic change, political-change, social-change, forecast workforce growth/decline, technological changes and external factors (Luo, 2002; Marinova & Singh, 2014).

Thus, contractual satisfaction likely experiences pre-cursor contributions from several constructs of the Figure 2.2 model, and so is also considered in this study. Contractual satisfaction is also linked towards generating a sustainable competitive business positioning (Van der Heijden et al., 2013). Contractual satisfaction is therefore deemed a necessary MCF-to-CF relationship deliverable when developing both the CF's sustainable competitive business positioning and its competitive intelligence outcomes. Hence, it is added to Figure 2.2's constructs as an intermediary construct, as shown below in Figure 2.3's final MCF-CF proposed MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework.

2.6 CF Acquired Intelligent Competitiveness

Porter (2004) notes a firm's competitiveness is 'a marathon, not a sprint' process towards improved economic growth and social welfare. Competitiveness offers a firm the ability to: (1) compete within a specific market, (2) increase market share, (3) enter expanding (international) markets, and (4) achieve sustainable business growth and profitability. Sapienza et al., (2006) adds firm-growth or firm competitiveness as linked to a firm achieving an ongoing sustainable competitive business positioning. Thus, firm competitiveness is deliverable - first, via suitable input resources (human/financial/technology, innovation and intellectual design based resources), second, via internal operational/managerial deliverable capabilities (process systems, leadership and astute strategies), and third, by intelligent competitive and sustainable business outcomes measures (Cetindamar & Kilitcioglu, 2013).

Chang et al., (2017) suggest sustainability contributes towards competitiveness when sustainable competitive business positioning practices deliver a more efficient process, higher productivity and enhanced global market opportunities (Zhang et al., 2011). However, sustainable competitive business positioning may necessitate additional investment, latest technologies uncertainties and/or new operation risks (Van der Borgh & Schepers, 2018; S. L. Wang et al.; 2019).

Sustainable competitive business positioning can contribute to firm competitiveness via less resource usage (Zhang et al., 2011), improved energy efficiencies (Häkkinen & Belloni, 2011; Kolk & Pinkse, 2005), legislative incentives (Marx et al., 2015), consumer preferences (Schrettle et al., 2014) and/or positive firm imaging (Chang & Rhee, 2011). Chang et al., (2017) add that sustainability can absorb risks associated with new: (1) initiatives/designs, (2) operational materials, (3) technologies (Häkkinen & Belloni, 2011; Heffernan, 2012), (4) deliverables capabilities practices (Beske et al., 2014), and (5) innovations exposure (Häkkinen & Belloni, 2011).

A firm's long-term success links to its economic and to its sustainable business performance. Peng et al., and Q. Zhang et al., (in press; in press) suggest performance that relates to growth in economic worth can drive a firm's sustainable competitive business positioning. Sustainability also relates to competitiveness via targeted business optimizing processes - ones specifically linked to growing market opportunities (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2017). Here, being 'first-movers' in new technologies and innovations offers competitive intelligence that contributes to acquired competitiveness (Haanes & Fjeldstad, 2000; Mellahi & Johnson, 2000; Veliyath & Fitzgerald, 2000). Thus, competitiveness can be derived as two constructs: (1) a sustainable competitive business positioning, and (2) a competitive intelligences positioning.

2.6.1 Sustainable competitive business positioning

Firms exist in perpetuity, and by definition are 'sustainable entities'. Their ongoing presence encapsulates their economic, social, corporate and environmental perspectives within an ever-changing business and global environment. Porter (1980) describes this as competitive strategy, where a firm finds a position within its industry, its competitive forces can balance and produce the most structural good, whilst creating the least harm to the firm. Thus, competitive strategy may either influence the balance of a firm's existing forces or it may exploit a change in its capabilities before rivals recognize it. This suggests a firm's sustainable (competitive) business positioning can be strategically enhanced.

Hence, in a changing business world, both MCFs and CFs seek to retain their ongoing, individual, sustainable competitive business positioning. This requires a capacity to positively engage across their resources, including workforce, financials, processes, systems, technologies, innovations and connectivities, and to seek ongoing, externally-competitive and beneficial firm pathways, designed to meet current and aspiration needs (Auh et al., 2019; Hilken et al., 2017). Thus, a sustainable competitive business positioning involves a system of ongoing, directed, monitored, and change-related management controls.

Dyllick and Muff (2016) conclude today's truly sustainable firms seek competitive business solutions that increase their sustainable business impact, ease financial conflicts, ease societal needs, innovate processes, and reach of their activity aims. They suggest collaborative partnerships (such as MCF-CF relationships) can increase the impact of their sustainable competitive business positioning approach strategies. Hence, a positive MCF and CF relationship that delivers suitable MCF-to-CF management control systems, can deliver a sustainable competitive business positioning outcome for the CF - and possibly in some aspects for the MCF also! This is most likely where a trusting MCF-CF relationship with shared strategic directions delivers benefits by reducing transactional costs and by developing inter-firm connectivities, ones that likely enhance competitive advantage (Srinivasan, 2014; Zhang et al., 2011).

Gond et al., (2012) suggest seven competitive and capabilities management control systems link into deliverance of a sustainable competitive business positioning within a firm's operationalized strategy. They also note these management control systems interactively and diagnostically apply across past business studies. Bruining et al., (2004), Widener (2007) and Mundy (2010) also note these can collectively contribute towards successful strategic sustainable business pursuits.

Arjaliès and Mundy (2013) show in France's largest listed companies business management control systems can contribute to a sustainable competitive business positioning through processes enabling innovation, communication, reporting, plus assessing threats, and opportunities. MCF-CF relational processes likely behave in a similar manner. Hence, this study follows the relationship view of Gond et al., (2012) and Arjaliès and Mundy (2013) that MCF-to-CF deployed, integrated suite of management control system can deliver CF sustainable competitive business positioning, provided the approach is collectively integrated, and not engaged as isolated autonomous strategic tools (Burgelman, 1991; Simons, 1994).

Cavaleri and Shabana (2018) conceptually frame the operational initiatives driving a competitive and capabilities-enhancing business solution as management control systems delivering sustainable competitive business positioning. Their input measurement domains model initiatives relating to competitive cost leadership, competitive differentiation, levels of innovation and levels of imitation/innovation concepts are similar to, but less specific than, this empirical study's Figure 2.2 MCF input competencies.

Cavaleri and Shabana (2018) suggest intermediaries derive benefits or capabilities, along with competitive business and relational repositioning. This conceptual approach is aligned towards, but less specific than, this study's joint MCF-to-CF capabilities and competitive intelligences deliverance approach. They also suggest sustainable, competitive, financially-rewarding business advantage is likely to be generated. The above studies suggest this study include CF sustainable competitive business positioning as a model outcomes driver.

Bronnenmayer et al., (2016) also measure MCF success in delivering CF sustainable competitive business positioning outcome as budget/scheduling deliverance, targets achieved, profitability, expansion-to-existing, and as extension-to-existing schemes. This, and above studies, suggest a CF sustainable business position remains a desirable and measurable relationship outcome. Hence, this study models the MCF-CF relationship as one delivering sustainable competitive business positioning - where the MCF adds/delivers all their CF contracted services, highest capability-for-money CF solutions, improved CF qualities/performances and promotes competitive/accelerated CF business growth.

Retail traders illustrate dimensions of sustainable competitive business positioning as problem solving, contractual service delivery, continuous improvement, competitive business solutions, planning and goal setting, in-time and on-time strategic solutions, development processes, capability for money, future expectations, quality performance, changing needs, strong partnership, business information exchange, client business growth, compatible communication, and recurring consultancies (Banerjee & Mishra, 2017; Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017; Inman & Nikolova, 2017).

Belenzon & Tsolmon and Klein et al., (2016; 2007) define sustainable competitive business positioning dimensions as contractual service delivery and competitive business solutions. Wolter and Cronin (2016) use organizational identification theory and customer-company identification theory to structure sustainable competitive business positioning as four retailing dimensions (in-time and on-time strategic solutions, capability-for-money, quality performance and strong relationships), whilst Back et al., and Kashyap and Murtha's (2014; 2017) four marketing dimensions approach enlists strategic solutions along with contractually binding services, client business growth, and recurring consultancies. Thus, there exists an array of sustainable

competitive business positioning dimensions, but these may have different applications. For example, sustainable competitive business positioning measures such as capability-for-money and quality performance may generally be relevant in most contexts, whereas strong relationships or compatible communications may have more limited application.

This study follows Sarvary's (1999) definition of sustainable competitive business positioning where:

> a *sustainable firm (CF) can strengthen its competitive advantage through consumer retention and business growth, and so achieve the firm's (CF's) ongoing strategic objectives.*

Broadly used, a CF's sustainable competitive business positioning is where contractual service deliveries, competitive business solutions, in-time and on-time strategic solutions, capability-for money, quality performances, strong relational partnerships, client (CF) business growth, and recurring (MCF) consultancies may all exist (S. Wang et al., 2019).

In summary the current literature offers little towards exploring the direct knowledge transfer connection(s) between a MCF and a contracting CF. A MCF has over-time acquired a raft of business competencies and capabilities to support its ongoing management consulting and CF contracting practices. A contracting CF typically only seeks or requires a selection of these MCF offerings. Hence, a CF often misses-out on acquiring its best and potential broad mix of knowledge transfer capabilities from a MCF management consultancy.

By investigating the MCF-to-CF knowledge transference processes, a CF may find ways to strategically recognize further useful knowledge gap pathways, and these may help it in its business development. A MCF contracting with a CF may enlist aspects of its knowledge transference approaches and so help a CF to achieve an enhanced business competitiveness positioning. Hence, this thesis seeks to reduce this knowledge gap in the literature by capturing, and modelling the knowledge transference processes that arise between a MCF and a CF when they are involved in a MCF-to-CF contracted management consulting process.

2.6.2 Competitive Intelligence

Competitive intelligences are comparable to an intelligent network of collected human capital interconnected through knowledge creation, networks, and intellectual capital communications (Heylighen, 2005; Ramanujam, 2012). Competitive intelligences offer a CF pathway change that promotes its coherence in a permanent way. This suggests a CF knowledge evolution is ensuing along with its enhancing learning intelligences (Garrido, 2009).

Competitive intelligences embrace both business intelligences, which analyse business systems (Brooks et al., 2015; Larson & Chang, 2016) and collective intelligences, which gather and collate relevant external data into useful formats (Gruber, 2008). Competitive intelligences can assist in business strategic planning, competitor evaluation, and risks avoidance analysis (Stefanikova et al., 2015).

Competitive intelligences are where firms gather multi-sourced, but partial knowledge, about global markets, and their competition (Fleisher & Blenkhorn, 2003). These firms then strategically apply it to actionable information aimed at improving their performance and to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Štefániková & Masàrovà, 2014). Thus, a pathway into performance capabilities dimension may also exist.

Bronnenmayer et al., (2016) add that competitive intelligence requires resourcing and the competitive support of top management (including the CEO). Competitive intelligences may include an additional reflexive, anticipatory, cognitive, competency, capacities-suite designed to strongly mould a CF's individual thought processes (Alonso et al., 2019). Laursen and Andersen (2016) and Umasuthan et al., (2017) suggest competitive intelligences can be considered as a perceived mental state, where the CF, through its top management, is in general alignment with the MCF's motives.

Yan et al., (2016) suggest meta-cognitive competitive intelligences approaches offer further learning via consumptive performance recognitions. Tan and Agnew (2016) add interdependence theory and build pathways into sustainable competitive business positioning relationships. Alexandra (2018) engages contact theory and meta-cognitive behaviour across culturally divergent environments. Thus, literature suggests recognition, collection and rendering of competitive intelligences into CFs likely occurs across behavioural cognitive and meta-cognitive dimensions.

Competitive intelligences and behavioural capabilities connections capture a CF's practical/operational skills, where business-specific operational knowledge and intelligent competency skills-sets can be triggered in pursuit of effective CF sustainable business outcomes.

Thus, this study provides its final Figure 2.3 proposed MCF-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework as the basis of its testable acquired competitiveness research model.
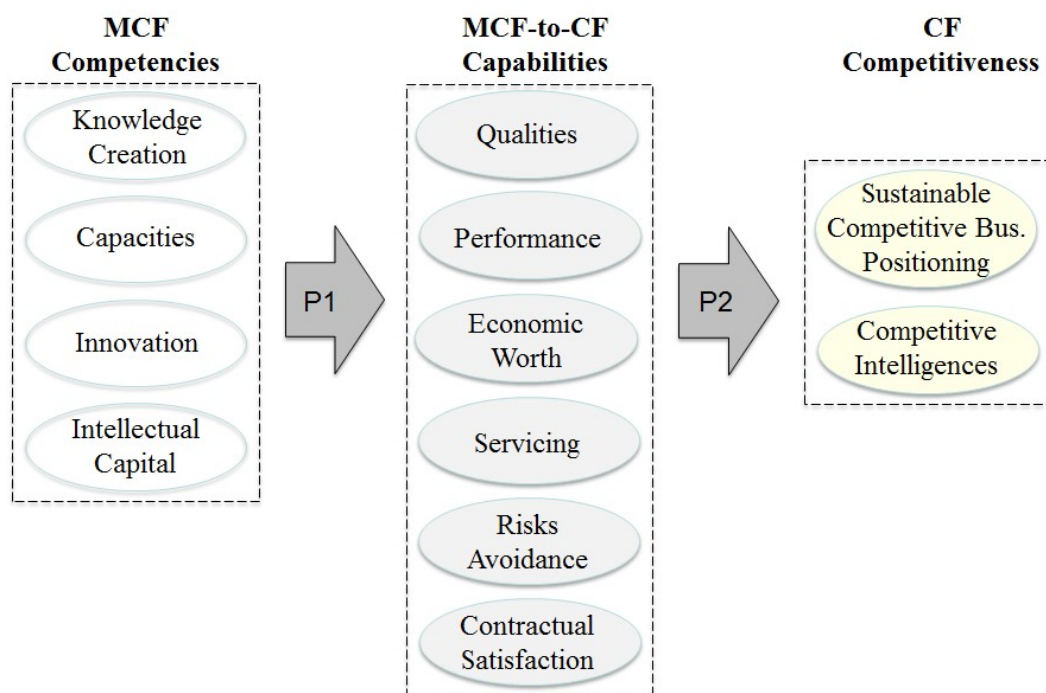
Figure 2.3: Proposed MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework

2.6.3 Measurement Model

To operationalize Figure 2.3 as proposed, 12 constructs and 88 items are enlisted. These operational item definitions, established against literature (Tables 2.1 to 2.4), are each recorded against their proposed constructs. Table 2.1 operationally defines management consulting constructs used in this study, along with their supporting literature. The construct measurement items are allocated as shown in Table 2.2. Direct hypothesized structural equation modelling (SEM) paths between this study's constructs are tabulated in Table 2.3. Possible indirect paths sourced within literature also support indirect pathway fits within this study's SEM model paths. These indirect contributors are tabulated in Table 2.4.

Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 along with Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 visually summarize into Figure 2.4. To operationally measure the items residing on each of the 12 constructs a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire approach is adopted - with measures ranging from '1 = Strongly Disagree' to '5 = Strongly Agree', and with a neutral response described as 'Neither Disagree nor Agree'.

Table 2.1: Operationalization of Management Consulting Constructs

Construct	Operational Definition	Construct Literature Refs
Capacities	Practices assist MCFs attain, preserve, enhance competencies	Collins & Butler, 2020; Malodia et al., in press
Innovation	Process where servicing takes root initially in simple applications at bottom of market, then relentlessly innovates, moves up-market, eventually displaces established competitors	Hohenberg & Homburg, 2019; Suddaby et al., 2020; Zuzul & Tripsas, 2019
Knowledge Creation	Process of idea formulation through new MCF information integrations	Debaere et al., 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2019
Intellectual Capital	MCF's capability proposition in relation to its physical and financial resources.	Larsson et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019
Qualities	Deliverance of MCF qualities (as servicing): tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, servicing assurance, empathy	Blut & Wang, 2019; Kelleher et al., 2019
Performance	Performance of MCF capability chaining actions: competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, consumer understanding	Gebhardt et al., 2019; Gill et al., 2019
Eco Worth	Capability MCF provides for monies, time, efforts being expended	Dutta et al., 2019; Villena & Gioia, 2018
Servicing	Deliverance of knowledge-servicing, cost objectives, timelines	Cabiddu et al., 2019; Wang & Yim, 2019
Competitive Intelligence	System of collation, investigation, reporting environmental information	Konlechner & Ambrosini, 2019; Smith & Besharov, 2019
Risks Avoidance	Process of enhancing capabilities through qualities services	De Cock et al., 2019; Mees & Smith, 2019
Sustainability	Strategic ongoing capability deliverance as qualities performance system	Ebner et al., 2019; Soderstrom & Weber, 2019

Contractual Satisfaction	Superior contractually enhancing servicing delivery	Alavi et al., 2019; Song et al., 2017

Table 2.2 lists constructs and their proposed survey measurement items used in this study, along with their primary support literature references. These concisely worded measurement items are subsequently confirmatory factor analysis reduced to those actually SEM modelled in Table 4.1.

Table 2.2: Measurement Items

Construct	Measurement Items	Key Item Literature Refs
Capacities	(i) offers clear CF capability for money (ii) offers clear CF product focusing (iii) offers high qualities CF products (iv) offers new knowledge transfers (v) offers support to change our CF's business (vi) delivers excellent transactional capability strategies (vii) delivers authentic & enduring CF organizational leadership approaches	Felipe et al., 2019; Zepeda et al., 2019, as modified by researcher
Innovation	(i) delivers unique benefits to our CF results (ii) provides MCF latest specifically-targeted ideas (iii) shares MCF latest innovation knowledge with CF (iv) encourages MCFs to innovate while solving CF problems (v) provides solutions to tomorrow's unknown problems (vi) uses innovation to solve CF requests	Lokuge et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2019, as modified by researcher
Knowledge Creation	(i) brings latest consulting knowledge to assist CF (ii) looks for new CF opportunities & new markets (iii) delivers knowledge-based CF infrastructure practices (iv) adds MCF experienced-based knowledge to CF infrastructure practices (v) adds MCF expert knowledge to CF infrastructure practices (vi) targets adding IoT capabilities into CF infrastructure practices (vii) provides further knowledge capabilities for CF	Côrte-Real et al., 2019; Yao & Chang, 2017, as modified by researcher
Intellectual Capital	(i) shows-up in MCF effective fieldwork procedure deliverables to CF (ii) provides intellectual problem solving consulting expertise (iii) uses MCF intellectual capital to improve CF's social capital (iv) uses MCF intellectual capital to make CF's performance world-class	Ataseven et al., 2018; Yayavaram et al., 2018, as modified by researcher

	(v) uses MCF collaborative approach to make CF's performance world-class	
	(vi) improves & exchanges new insights with CF	
	(vii) uses MCF intellectual resources to complete CF assignment	
Qualities	(i) MCFs consistently deliver qualities results to CF's request	Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Parasuraman, 1997, as modified by researcher
	(ii) safe, secure qualities solutions for CF's workforce	
	(iii) MCFs consistently respectfully in assisting CF	
	(iv) consulting actions consistently look 'skilled' to CF shareholders	
	(v) consulting changes recognized as improving qualities of CF's business opportunities	
	(vi) consulting processes highlighting where CF can best excel	
	(vii) advice consistently improves qualities across CF's business	
Performance	(i) optimized CF performances against selected MCF solutions engaged	Asgari et al., 2018; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Im et al., 2019, as modified by researcher
	(ii) high levels of optimized CF business outcomes	
	(iii) optimal MCF-CF relationships	
	(iv) collaborative MCF-CF relationships	
Economic Worth	(i) deliver pricings designed to win further CF competitive market share	Gong et al., 2019; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Sihag & Rijsdijk, 2019, as modified by researcher
	(ii) improve CF rewards for money invested	
	(iii) worthwhile CF outcomes for worthwhile investment outcomes	
	(iv) more capability added CF products	
	(v) profitable consumer services from CF monies invested	
Servicing	(i) always accomplishing what MCF contracted	Guo et al., 2017; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Oldroyd et al., 2019, as modified by researcher
	(ii) always sharing MCF-to-CF expertise	
	(iii) providing MCF cutting-edge innovative solutions	
	(iv) delivering MCF efficient cost-effective solutions to CF	
	(v) completing all MCF-to-CF services as planned	
Competitive Intelligences	(i) builds on-going strategically competitive position for CF	Eldor, 2019; Tang & Marinova, 2019, as modified by researcher
	(ii) improves CF's competitive advantage	
	(iii) applies new intelligences to help build CF's business success	
	(iv) engages MCF intelligences to assist CF	
	(v) builds competitive intelligences for CF	
Risks Avoidance	(i) MCF change(s) improve CF's business capabilities	Alavi et al., 2019; Kumar & Park, 2019, as modified by researcher
	(ii) MCF change(s) influence CF's use-of-resources	
	(iii) MCF services CF requires within agreed timelines	

	(iv) CF risks avoidance-assessed services that include latest technologies inclusions	
	(v) MCFs consistently deliver quality results to CF request	
Sustainable competitive business positioning	(i) all their contracted MCF-to-CF services delivered	Banerjee & Mishra, 2017; Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017, as modified by researcher
	(ii) MCF-to-CF business solutions deliver a competitive-difference	
	(iii) agreed specific strategic MCF-to-CF solutions in-time & on-time	
	(iv) MCF-to-CF highest capability for money solutions delivered	
	(v) MCF-to-CF responsibility for CF high level performance	
	(vi) a strong positive MCF-to-CF partnership	
	(vii) accelerated CF business growth	
	(viii) pathways towards repeated MCF engagement	
	(ix) always accomplishing what MCF contracted to CF	
Contractual satisfaction	(i) MCF consulting on budget	Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016, as modified by researcher
	(ii) MCF consulting on time	
	(iii) MCF effective cooperation with CF	
	(iv) MCF agreed recommendation	
	(v) MCF effective implementation for CF	

Table 2.3 shows proposed model construct pathways and their supporting references. Table 2.3 is integrated into Figure 2.3, and these are summarized in Figure 2.4 as the study's Proposed Path Relationships within MCF-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework. Figure 2.4 is then proposed as the structural model framework for the study's quantitative SEM MCF-CF investigation.

Table 2.3: Construct direct pathways supported within Figure 2.3's proposed MCF-to-CF Sustainable competitive business positioning Relationship Framework

Construct	Construct Pathways Supported	Supporting References
Competencies -> Deliverables	Competencies -> Capabilities (P1.1-P1.7)	Konlechner & Ambrosini, 2019; Lam et al., 2017
Knowledge creation -> Deliverables	Knowledge creation -> Economic Worth (P1.1)	Im et al., 2019; Warner & Wäger, 2019
Capacities -> Deliverables	Capacities -> Economic Worth (P1.2)	Ahammad et al., 2017; Alfoldi et al., 2017
	Capacities -> Performance (P1.3)	Hartmann et al., 2018; Molner et al., 2019
	Capacities -> Risks (P1.4)	Chang & Webster, 2018; Kougiannou et al., 2019

	Capacities -> Servicing (P1.5)	Davenport et al., 2019; Tomás-Miquel et al., 2018
Innovation -> Deliverables	Innovation -> Qualities (P1.6)	Bahemia et al., 2017; Mazouz & Zhao, 2018
	Intellectual Capital -> Qualities (P1.7)	Lounsbury et al., 2019; Pick et al., 2016
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Qualities -> Performance (I1)	Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2019; Guest, 2019; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Roig et al., 2006; Valentine, 2018; Westphal & Zhu, 2019
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Qualities -> Risks (I2)	Bednarek et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2019
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Performance -> Economic Worth (I3)	Akhtar et al., 2019; Sood & Kumar, 2017
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Performance -> Contractual Satisfaction (I7)	Blut et al., 2015; Kashyap & Murtha, 2017
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Servicing -> Contractual Satisfaction (I8)	Schaefers & Schamari, 2016; Díaz, 2017
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Economic Worth -> Contractual Satisfaction (I9)	Haenel et al., 2019
Risks Deliverables -> Capabilities	Risks -> Servicing (I4)	Katsikeas et al., 2018; Looney et al., 2008
Capabilities Deliverables -> Contractual satisfaction	Capabilities (Risks) -> Contractual satisfaction (I5)	Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Petriglieri et al., 2019; Roig et al., 2006; Stoyanov, 2018; Valentine, 2018

Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Economic Worth -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (P2.1)	Chng et al., 2015, Huang et al., 2015
Contractual satisfaction Deliverables -> Sustainable Position	Contractual satisfaction -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (P2.2)	Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018
Capabilities Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Positioning	Servicing -> Business Positioning (P2.3)	Auh et al., 2019; Fortwengel & Sydow, 2018
Capabilities Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Positioning	Servicing -> Competitive Intelligences (P2.4)	Gillespie et al., 2016; Hamilton et al., 2017
Capabilities Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Positioning	Qualities -> Competitive Intelligences (P2.5)	Macdonald et al., 2016
Competitive Intelligence Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Competitive Intelligence -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (P2.6)	Crilly, 2017; Fu et al., 2020

This study uses the above tabulated information, and Figures 2.1, 2.1 and 2.3 to build the Figure 2.4 model approach. Using this MCF-CF model and its proposed path relationships the left side of the model shows P1.1 to P1.7 pathways supported above as MCF-CF model proposition 1 pathways. In the MCF-CF model middle section, the above I1-I7 supported intermediate pathways are shown. These link by proposition 2 pathways (P2.1-P2.6) into right side outcomes of the model. This MCF-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework is then used to frame, explain and later test the research question *'do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?'*

Further, by adopting this model approach this study attempts to expose internal path structures that can likely add understanding regarding how a MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System is best solved when pursuing an enhanced competitiveness positioning captured as a sustainable (competitive business positioning and an overall enhanced intelligent competitiveness for the CF).
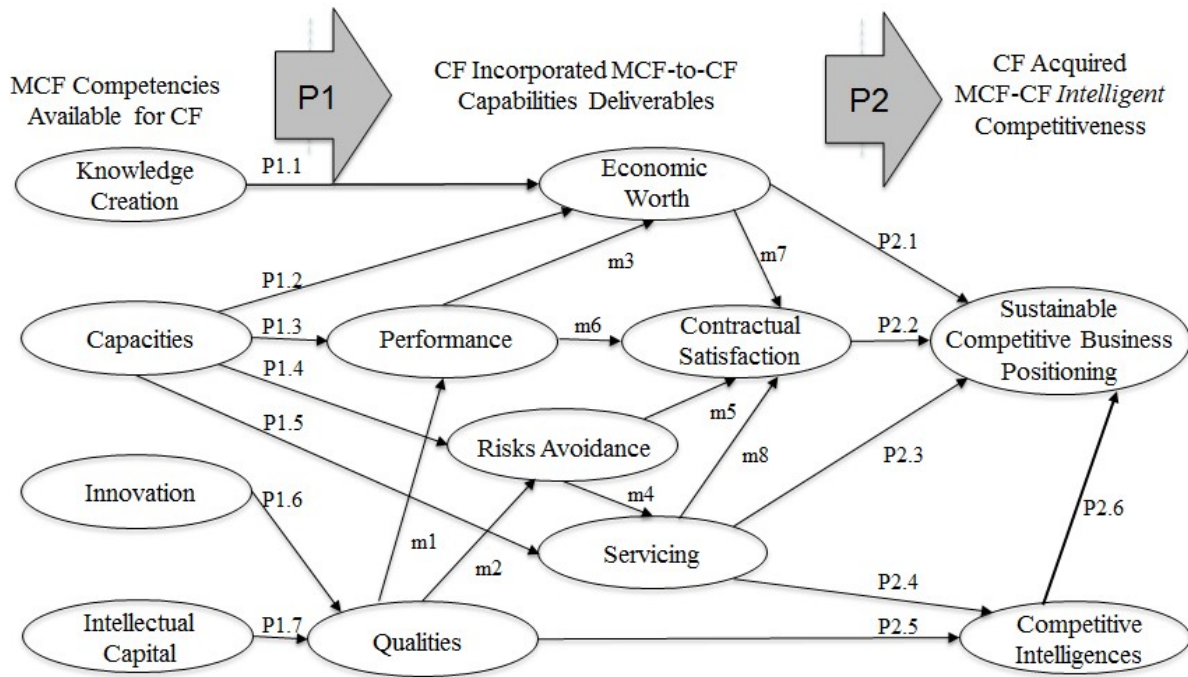
Figure 2.4: Proposed Path Relationships within MCF-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework (Note: P1.1 to P1.7 = proposition 1 pathways, I1 to I7 = intermediate pathways, P2.1 to P2.6 = proposition 2 pathways)

In addition to Table 2.2's integration into Figure 2.3, and summary in Figure 2.4, this study notes that there are also literature-supported indirect pathways that likely exist within the Figure 2.4 Relationship Framework. These underlying pathways are tabulated in Table 2.3 and discussed later against Table 4.7. This Chapter 4 table presents and explains the study's MCF-to-CF 'standardized total effects' and how a progressive set of relative construct pathway effect relationships ultimately deliver their total relational effects to the CF's sustainable competitive business positioning. It also shows that internal pathways structures as suggested in Table 2.3 do exist, and that they also add further understanding around how an MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System can be best solved when pursuing an enhanced sustainable competitive business positioning – one that brings an overall enhanced intelligent competitiveness for its relationally-engaged CF. This is discussed later across the study's Implications Sections.

Table 2.4: Construct indirect pathways supported within Figure 2.3's proposed MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework

Construct	Construct Pathways	Supporting References
Capacities -> Deliverables	Capacities -> Qualities (Hi1)	Maklan et al., 2017; Salignac et al., 2018
	Capacities -> Competitive Intelligences (Hi2)	Catanzaro et al., 2018; Dion & Borraz, 2017
Innovation -> Deliverables	Innovation ->Performance (Hi3)	Gronum et al., 2016; Tse et al., 2017
	Innovation -> Economic Worth (Hi4)	Ngo et al., 2019; Weber & Heidenreich, 2018
	Innovation -> Servicing (Hi5)	Abecassis-Moedas et al., 2016; Daniel et al., 2018

	Innovation -> Competitive Intelligences (Hi6)	Daniel et al., 2018; Garbuio & Lin, 2019
	Innovation -> Risks (Hi7)	Brock & Von Wangenheim, 2019; Meulman et al., 2018
Knowledge creation -> Deliverables	Knowledge creation -> Qualities (Hi8)	Caldwell et al., 2017; Petter et al., 2019
	Knowledge creation -> Performance (Hi9)	Butt et al., 2018; Chang & Taylor, 2016
	Knowledge creation -> Servicing (Hi10)	Chen et al., 2020; Storey & Larbig, 2018
	Knowledge creation -> Competitive Intelligences (Hi11)	Kumar et al., 2016; Muñoz et al., in press
	Knowledge creation -> Risks (Hi12)	Bremer & Linnenluecke, 2017; Saha et al., 2016
Intellectual Capital -> Deliverables	Intellectual capital ->Performance (Hi13)	Nifadkar, 2018; Sibony et al., 2017
	Intellectual capital -> Economic Worth (Hi14)	Kohler, 2018;
	Intellectual capital -> Servicing (Hi15)	Apte & Davis, 2019; Menguc et al., 2016
	Intellectual capital -> Competitive Intelligences (Hi16)	Bettis, 2017; O'Reilly & Binns, 2019
	Intellectual capital -> Risks (Hi17)	Bodrožić & Adler, 2018; Silver & Jansen, 2017
Capabilities Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Positioning	Qualities -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (Hi18)	Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Payne et al., 2017
	Performance -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (Hi19)	Homburg et al., 2017; Scholz et al., 2019
	Economic Worth -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (Hi20)	Caza et al., 2018; M'zungu et al., 2019
Capabilities Internal Deliverables -> Sustainable Bus Position	Qualities -> Economic Worth (Hi21)	Belderbos et al., 2017; Ramírez & Tarziján, 2018
	Qualities -> Servicing (Hi22)	Manning et al., 2018; Tenhiälä et al., 2018
	Performance -> Servicing (Hi23)	Slangen et al., 2017; Yao & Chang, 2017
	Economic Worth -> Servicing (Hi24)	Huang & Rust, 2018; Vermeulen, 2018
Capabilities Deliverables -> Contractual satisfaction	Capabilities -> Contractual satisfaction (Hi25)	Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2019; Hamilton et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2016; Roig et al., 2006; Valentine, 2018

Risks Deliverables > Sustainable Bus Position	Risks -> Sustainable competitive business positioning (Hi26)	Bower, 2017; Castaldi & Giarratana, 2018
	Risks -> Servicing and Sustainable competitive business positioning (Hi27)	Hajmohammad & Vachon, 2016; Mihalache & Mihalache, 2016
Competitive Intelligence Deliverables -> Capabilities Deliverables	Competitive Intelligence –> Qualities (Hi28)	Hatfield et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2018
	Competitive Intelligence –> Performance (Hi29)	Hughes-Morgan & Ferrier, 2017; Tenhiälä & Laamanen, 2018
	Competitive Intelligence –> Economic Worth (Hi30)	Carnes et al., 2019; Mullins et al., in press
	Competitive Intelligence –> Servicing (Hi31)	Alan et al., 2017; Eldor, 2019

2.7 Chapter Two Summary

This chapter builds an MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship pathway (see Figure 2.1), MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework (see Figure 2.2) and Proposed MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework (Figure 2.3). This framework provides further thesis direction. Here, the framework enlists three serial sections: competencies, capabilities and competitiveness. It shows how MCF competencies can drive MCF-CF capabilities towards CF acquired competitiveness. Figure 2.4 uses current literature support and previous Chapter 2 Figures to extend Figure 2.3 into this study's 'Proposed Path Relationships within MCF-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework'.

Thus, chapter two suggests this study's approach to test the Proposed MCF-to-CF sustainable competitive business positioning relationship framework is achievable. Chapter three discusses pertinent methodologies towards model execution that build around this MCF-to-CF strategic consulting relationship.

MCFs may pursue traditional project-based CF model. But, overtime as CFs encounter insufficiency in capabilities delivery (the gap between the current and the TO-BE) this conventional design may often not promote a sustainable (competitive) business positioning. Thus, this research suggests a relationally assisting outcomes-based process and backs it with confirmative empirical data findings.

Several research methodologies were discussed: survey-based, case-based, purely qualitative, only quantitative, different combinations of quantitative and qualitative studies. But, as this is a breakthrough in MCF-CF relational relationship research, the research team not only wanted to process the findings but also confirm the findings. Hence, triangulation was the answer. Now, different researchers conduct triangulation through different means. This study chose the quantitative followed-by qualitative pathway as the model needs the

thought process of MCs about the literature generated 12 constructs. Research suggests that a survey (quantitative methodology) with different measurements items can provide direction. At this juncture, a pilot study with 182 MC respondents confirms this strategic MCF-CF orientation. Thus, research proceeds with the quantitative survey study, and to validate the quantitative results, it administers a qualitative NVivo based-interview sequence. Finally, to overcome intrinsic single method bias, triangulation here applies to confirm this research model.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Setting and Design

3.1.1 Site Selection

India is the location of this MCF study for a number of reasons. First, India is a developing economy, home to about 1.36 billion people and housing 17.74% of the world's population (Helmers et al., 2015; The United Nations, 2018). Heinberg et al., (2018) see India as one of today's dominant emerging global economies. India remains a solid business location to investigate MFC and CF emerging nation relationships because it commands myriads of diverse business and global conglomerates (Lin, 2016; Ramaswamy et al., 2017), plus it offers an environment and a launch-pad reminiscent of other emerging economies (Elango et al., 2016; von Delft et al., 2019).

Second, India's Gross Domestic Product is slated to grow at an increasing rate into the near future (Behera et al., 2017; Rath, 2018). By 2030, India is projected to overtake the United States and become the world's second largest economy (Curran, 2019). India's sovereign, Westminster-style, national and business framework provides its individual States with certain degrees of administrative independence (Aamodt & Stensdal, 2017; Kumar et al., 2018). This freedom enables the various Indian States to individually lure business financing. This is enabling clusters of industrial expansions across the country, particularly around its major cities (Alkon, 2018; Mukherjee et al., 2018). Thus, India is likely to be a vital future driver of global fiscal growth (Prabu et al., 2016).

Third, over the last few years India has overseen significant reforms (Bahal et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2018), including: (1) policy reforms, such as an increase in Foreign Direct Investment limits in different areas (Chidambaran et al., 2018; Xiao & Park, 2018), (2) national trade reforms, such as Make-in-India and Start-Up India (Mudambi et al., 2017), (3) process reforms, such as a Goods and Servicing Tax, and abolishing red-tape, and (4) infrastructure reforms, such as smart cities and freight hubs (Mital et al., 2018). These measures have already moved India to a higher rank (now ranked 77 - formerly 54) in the World Bank's Ease-of-Doing-Business Ranking (World Bank Group, 2019).

Fourth, India has engaged in many administrative reforms. For example, in banking India is conducting a national campaign towards financial inclusion (Kochar, 2018). In business, a contemporary Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code is being implemented (Branch & Khizer, 2016). In healthcare, India has introduced a modern heath protection scheme for its general populace. In agriculture, there is now a quarterly social security-net for farmers. In connectivity, 'Digital India,' through the launch of low-cost internet services, now connects the majority of the population (Gupta & Bose, 2018; Haenssgen, 2018).

Fifth, India in 2014 introduced urban development schemes. Its 'Clean India Mission' is also a spiritual destination (Jain et al., 2019). In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 June as the 'International Day-of-Yoga.' Yoga has its spiritual, psychological and physical roots in India. Such factors help

India present a positive international image as a place to do business. Further, on the basis of International Tourist Arrivals, India's tourism ranking has jumped 12 spots from 36 in 2015 to 24 in 2017. In addition, India's business, administrative and policy reforms, whilst enhancing its image overseas, also positively impact both its citizens and their livelihood by: (1) reducing poverty (Hoffmann, 2018), (2) broadening the middle-income segment (Javalgi & Grossman, 2016; Punjabi & Johnson, 2019), and (3) breaching the urban-rural divide. Together, these all lead towards a higher consumption story (Dholakia et al., 2018; Roychowdhury, 2019).

To summarize, India is at the cusp of a major business and economic transformation (Li, 2017; Sharma & Pal, 2018) and many multinational firms are establishing operations in India and taking advantage of India's relevant and emergent opportunities (Elia et al., 2017; Fuller et al., 2017). These multinational firms, and many existing local firms, from time to time may contract MCFs to assist them (as CFs) in improving their business's connectivity (Singh & Delios, 2017).

MCFs can assist with strategy, but they can also assist in CF business execution, and on request they can offer streamlining resource options to exiting CF business operations, and so can offer positive capability-adding opportunities. Hence, this study sees relevance in investigating Figure 2.3 as an Indian causal network model of MCF competencies, potential MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables and CF competitiveness enhancements.

3.1.2 The Management Consulting Industry of India

India is home to an array of MCFs, including: (1) home grown Indian firms like TATA Consultancy Services, Infosys (Ransbotham et al., 2017), (2) international strategy and operations firms with subsidiaries operating in India, such as McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group (Lorenzo & Reeves, 2018; Venkatesh et al., 2017), (3) the 'Big 4' international accounting firms, with subsidiaries operating in India (such as Deloitte and Ernst & Young) (Chouhan & Naghshbandi, 2015; Nishant et al., 2016), (4) offshore business entities, such as Avanade, Block Development Office (BDO) (Pongelli et al., 2018; Thakur-Wernz & Bruyaka, 2017), and (5) specialized firms with segment market targets, such as Erehwon Innovation Consulting, Pittiglio, Robin, Todd and McGrath PRTM, a PricewaterhouseCoopers management consulting subsidiary (Ntabe et al., 2015). Consequently, Indian MCFs categorized as (1) to (5) above are competing for management consulting work in India as well, and are also growing at ~6.75% per annum. By 2022 these Indian MCFs are projected to generate $2.5B in revenue. About 30% of MCF CF resides within the banking, financial-services and insurance domains.

Internationally, International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI) is the professional body representing management consultants globally. It represents and promotes the management consulting profession, sets and maintains internationally recognised standards and helps develop members. Clients (or CFs) demand the utmost in professional competency and as a result seek out ICMCI management consultants. Upon joining ICMCI, members agree to abide by its Code of Professional Conduct.

The ICMCI is the global awarding body for the Certified Management Consultant designation. The Certified Management Consultant designation is recognised internationally. ICMCI members are part of an international network of 54,600 professionals and 3450 corporates. There are more than thirty member Institutes of the

ICMCI, and membership of the Institute of Management Consultants of India (IMCI) allows reciprocity of benefits with each member country without the need for further assessment or examination.

The IMCI is the peak body of management consulting professionals in India. It is the only registered institute of established management consultancy firms and their practicing individuals in India. Within the IMCI, MCF membership can be one of several categories: Individual Member, Affiliate Member, Associate Member, Member of the College of Consulting Firms, Industry Affiliate or Industry Member. It is a requirement of the IMCI that all of its members (MCFs) must be experienced management consultants and each must be attached to an operational MCF in India. (http://www.imcindia.co.in/). The total 2019-2020 IMCI membership across its four Chapters is currently between 550 and 600 members and these IMCI members are the ones surveyed by this study.

The IMCI's four chapters are: (1) Northern Region: Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Chandigarh, (2) Western Region: Mumbai (formerly Bombay), Pune, Ahmedabad, Daman Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, (3) Southern Region: Hyderabad, Chennai (formerly Madras), Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Lakshadweep, and (4) Eastern Region: Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Utkal, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Management Consulting Industry across India is currently growing at 6% per annum. It exceeds the growth rates of the industry in the UK (5%), and Germany (1%) (Mazareanu E., 2019). Some of the IMCI MCF member firms are now seeing exponential growth. For example, in 2017-18 McKinsey (India) showed double digit growth, while Bain is adding 2 new Indian workplaces per year and BCG (India) (with about 20% of its total workforce in India) is now recording the fastest growth rate among all India-based consulting firms (Consultancy India, 2018). Thus, IMCI's growth rate is projected to continue to grow, and consulting work for MCFs in India is likely to maintain an expansionary growth trajectory.

To meet such growth requirements the MCFs in India are mostly hiring only from top business schools in: India and/or from top international business institutions (Khanna, 2018). For example, India's top business school reports that in 2018, 31% of the class were hired by MCFs (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, 2019). Substantive MCF recruiters include BCG, Deloitte, A T Kearney, Accenture Strategy, Bain and McKinsey. These global MCFs consult across a variety of business functions and industries. They integrate and develop their MCs' unique perspectives, build capacities/resources and institute new competencies to assist their client firms. Some of the MCF's business functions include: (1) strategy, (2) corporate finance, (3) analytics, (4) digital, and (5) operations (Conboy et al., 2020). These MCFs also offer SME solutions for each industry. Financial Services, Media & Entertainment, Oil & Gas, and Retail are some of their key industry practice domains.

These MCF SME business solutions serve CFs in a number of ways. First, they shape winning CF strategies. Both MCFs and CFs have to abide by the Indian Government's rules and regulations. They also have to create a unique market for a CF's products/services (Irwin et al., 2018). Here, an MCF can assist its CFs in meeting

Governmental policies and in strategy formulation (Munjal et al., 2018). They can help define India-specific boundaries, entry-and-exit modes and assess supply versus demand to best formulate competitive offerings. Sometimes CFs look for new growth ways. Here, MCFs use their intellectual capital to scan and scope the CF's environment. MCFs also seek answers as to what can further motivate a CF firm to perform better and to deliver an ongoing competitiveness.

Second, these MCFs help prepare their CFs for change. The World Economic Forum (WEF) in its 2019 report examines the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on India. The WEF predicts a seismic change in production, distribution, and consumption systems. Further, by 2030 it sees the Indian consumer market as a $6T business transformation opportunity. To take advantage of such transformation opportunities, CFs will likely need expert MCF advice around India-specific, in-depth knowledge, supported by analytical cloud data (Chauhan et al., 2016; Purkayastha et al., 2018).

McKinsey (since 1999) and Bain & Co (since 2006) have maintained operations in India (Bain & Company, 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2019). Such MCFs often have specialized business liaisons from the CF all the way through to the general Indian public. These MCFs often have some capacity to: (1) stimulate innovation, (2) facilitate disruption, and (3) aid the human resource collaborations that can then help deliver added degrees of consumer trust (Pratap & Saha, 2018).

Third, these India-based MCFs promote client firm project and/or business executions. India's workforce is relatively young - with a median age of 28 years (Curtis et al., 2017). Into the future, these millennials are likely to add to the nation's consumption demand. However, the consumption models are most likely to be digitally driven (Peerally et al., 2019). To thrive in this digital environment, MCFs (and their CFs) are likely to be able to deliver on both strategy (Chauhan & Kumar, 2017) and on execution (Qaiyum & Wang, 2018). These firms should be able to be: (1) agile to forecast capability migration (Krishnamoorthi & Mathew, 2018), (2) scalable to cater to their 1B-plus targeted market population (Landau et al., 2016), and (3) entrepreneurial in their decision making so they cater for the cultural diversities of their targeted market population (Howell et al., 2018; Mason & Chakrabarti, 2017).

MCFs can partner CFs in their journey from inception through to final execution (Levenson, 2018; Neeley & Leonardi, 2018). Here, the MCF can over time help to: (1) improve their CF's infrastructure, (2) enhance CF performance and CF servicing, and (3) streamline the CF qualities dynamics. Thus, future Indian firms are likely to become highly customer-centric, innovative, digital businesses, ones that can continually leverage their appropriate India MCFs by continually building on their MCF competencies such as capacities, innovation, knowledge creation, and intellectual capital. Where this MCF and CF exchange is appropriately directed (and supported) by a relevant suite of CF competitive intelligences, then an optimizable CF sustainable competitive business positioning may also be achievable for the CF (Gefen et al., 2008; Hajmohammad & Vachon, 2016; Kumar et al., 2009; Lipson & Fisher, 1999; Mikalef et al., 2019).

3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis Strategy

3.2.1 Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), Path Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SPSS (ML/Rotation/Oblim) factor reduction is used to deliver 12 confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) constructs. CFA tests the research question and its hypotheses through each constructs' validity (Cunningham, 2008), with (1) no cross-loadings above 0.25, (2) all correlations and commonalities above 0.6, (3) all item loads acceptable at 0.6 or above for applied experimental research (Byrne, 1994; Hair et al., 2014), (4) all residuals under 0.05, (5) all confirmatory factor construct Cronbach alphas above 0.7, and with (6) suitable means, (7) small SDs, and (8) each construct average variance extracted above 0.5.

AMOS 25.0 is used to first establish a 12 confirmatory factor construct path (or measurement) model (Byrne, 1994). Path analysis estimates a system of equations in which all the constructs are measureable (hence a measurement model). It assumes perfect construct measurement and only structural relationships between the constructs are modelled. This approach allows for a construct(s) that may mediate the relationship between two other constructs (mediation models). It offers construct error estimation of otherwise unrelated dependent constructs to be correlated and a models relationship between constructs that may vary across groups (multiple group models). Here, path analysis successfully delivers regression style path model results, and the focus remains on the outcomes interpretations. Whilst path modelling enables pathways to be tested, it is limited in several ways including: (1) only multiple dependent constructs display errors and these errors may add potential difficulties to the models' interpretation, (2) each independent (or predictor) construct is assumed to be a measurement without error, (3) each construct does represent the observed correlation among its measurement items, with the correlation among its measurement items equalling 1.0 (no errors), and (4) multi-co-linearity may hinder result interpretation (Hair et al., 2014; Hamilton, 2006).

Next AMOS 25.0 is used to build the final structural equation models. SEM uses latent variables to account for measurement error. Each latent variable is a hypothetical construct that is invoked to explain observed covariation in behaviour within the model. These constructs represent multiple item measure indicators, which are naturally handled with a structural equation model (but in a path model these multiple indicators can cause collinearity problems and account for only small increments in variance). Here SEM is used in an exploratory manner using CFA defined constructs to find a suitable model. The inclusion of measurement error enables unbiased estimates of the relationships between constructs. Where both the model implied exploratory covariance matrix and the confirmatory covariance matrix are plausible, and supported by suitable fit indices, then a valid SEM model is a likely accepted result (Hair et al, 2014). Thus this study follows SEM as it seeks a model precision that is more rigorous than path analysis.

3.2.2 Quantitative Path and SEM Fit Indices

Fit indices explain if the AMOS 25.0 models developed are statistically of an excellent fit for this relatively small but suitably sized final data set of 232 respondent cases.

3.2.2.1 Goodness-of-Fit

The goodness of fit (GoF) test shows if the dataset fits the normal distribution. GoF measures the relative amount of variance and covariance. Produced during estimations, it checks if the model proposed fits with the dataset. Chi-square can be a method to determine GoF (Cunningham, 2008).

3.2.2.2 Chi-Square (χ2)

χ2 compares expectations to actual model results. One of the criteria is that the data must be randomly and mutually exclusively drawn from categorical variables in a significant dataset. Technically, the X^2 statistic is all that is needed to assess model fit in SEM (Sörbom, 2001) but it is good to test additional measures.

Here, χ2 assesses GoF between theoretically predicted and examined datasets. It assesses categorical differences between matrices of implicit covariance and variance of matrix of experimental sampling covariance and variances (Kenny & McCoach, 2003). A model is treated as valid if chi-square is insignificant. Additionally, Kenny & McCoach (2003) enlist sensitivity as high towards dataset size and model complexity. Here, if a dataset size is large, with little or no difference, χ² tests display significantly distinct data based on alternative measures (Gulliksen & Tukey, 1958). One of the alternative measures is degrees of freedom (DF), or normed χ², or relative chi-squared. Relative chi-square is χ² per DF and model parsimony index (McQuitty, 2004). Relative chi-square accords lesser sensitivity to dataset size. It is valued at χ² normed >1 and <2, which indicates a greater model fit (Byrne, 1994; Hair et al., 2014). The acceptance range criterion varies from <2 (Ullman, 2006) to <3 (Kline, 2011).

Further sections list measures of absolute fit indices, which evaluate the degree to which the model reproduces a dataset. Researchers, including Cunningham, (2008) and Hair et al., (2014) suggest the Root-Mean-Square Residual, Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation, Goodness-of-fit Index, Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index, Tucker Lewis Index, Comparative Fit Index, Bollen-Stine bootstrap p and Single Indicator as pertinent measures. These are summarized in Table 3.1.

3.2.2.3 The Root-Mean-Square Residual (RMR)

RMR measures the average of residuals - elemental difference between implied and sample variance covariance matrix. Normally, this measure presents a 'small' capability, but is also dependent on the variable magnitudes. Thus, <0.05 is a close fit and <0.08 is acceptable (Weaver & Wuensch, 2013).

3.2.2.4 The Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

RMSEA shows the confidence interval; this provides precision of estimate of fit. This requires measures such as X^2, degrees of freedom (DF), and model dataset. Browne & Cudeck (1992) suggest models with RMSEA capability of about 0.05 or less are a close fit, 0.05-0.08 is of reasonable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998; Steiger, 1990) while <0.10 can be acceptable (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). Normally, RMSEA suits well with distribution and dataset size. AMOS produces RMSEA confidence level capabilities of about 90% and dictates its use in this research.

3.2.2.5 Goodness-of-fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI)

GFI measures degree of variance and covariance in the model correlation matrix (Mathieu & Button, 1992).

AGFI is GFI tailored towards model DF in relation with the variable count (Schumacher & Lomax, 1996). Normally, dataset fits a model if GFI, AGFI is in range greater than 0.95 and less than 1 (Byrne, 1994; Hu & Bentler, 1998).

Incremental fit indices – comparing uncorrelated observed variables between target model and baseline model to measure the fit enhancement. The next measures correspond to this fit.

3.2.2.6 The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)

Proposed by Tucker & Lewis (1973), TLI measures average enhancement over DF of target model over an independence model. Normally, TLI satisfactory fit ranges between 0.95 and 1.0 and can sometimes exceed 1.0.

3.2.2.7 The Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

Proposed by Bentler (1990), CFI measures target model enhancement towards an independence model. CFI satisfactory fit ranges between 0.95-1.

3.2.2.8 Bollen-Stine bootstrap p (BSP)

BSP adjusts to chi-square statistic, to report multivariate normality violation towards maximum likelihood estimates. Here, model fit is tested by adjusting model distributional misspecification through bootstrapping routines (1000-2000). This process now lists a critical chi-square capability and is differenced with the first chi-square capability to output a new p-capability. A model is invalid if this p-capability is less than 0.05 (Cunningham, 2008).

3.2.2.9 Single Indicator Composites

Single indicator composites equally weigh and group the items attached to a construct. This is particularly valuable in SEM studies, especially where concepts are frequently multifaceted, where interaction effects require minimization and where the influence of suites of constructs is of interest (Grace & Bollen, 2008). As the single indicator composite acts as convenient summary device, some say it does not make sense to consider including the covariates among a set of composite indicators (Bollen & Bauldry, 2011). But many others, including Cunningham, 2008; Hair et al., 2014; Hamilton & Tee, 2010 accept, depending on circumstances (such as minimizing between items/constructs interaction effects, literature/theoretical comparisons, influences across suites-of-constructs and where specific item influences are not the focus) in SEM, that all constructs can be treated as single indicators.

Table 3.1: Goodness-of-fit indices: Assessing measurement & structural models

Fit Indices	Description	Cut-offs (model fit)	Reference(s)
χ^2	Indicates discrepancy between proposition model & data; tests null hypothesis estimates covariance-variance deviates from sample covariance-variance matrix due to sampling error.	p>0.05	Kenny & McCoach, (2003)
χ^2/DF	Chi-square test, sensitive sample size & only meaningful when considering degrees of freedom. Its value is divided by degrees of freedom.	2-1 or 3-1	Kline, (2011), Ullman, 2006
RMSEA	How model fits population covariance matrix. Considers degrees of freedom.	<0.05 good fit; <0.08 acceptable fit.	Browne & Cudeck, (1992) Hu & Bentler, (1998) Steiger, (1990)
GFI	Squared residuals from prediction with actual data. Not adjusted for degrees of freedom.	>0.90	Byrne, (1994)
AGFI	GFI adjusts for degrees of freedom.	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1998)
TLI	Indicates model fit compared with a baseline model, normally null model adjusted for degrees of freedom (can take a value greater than one)	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1998)
CFI	Indicates how a model fits compared with baseline model, normally null model adjusted for degrees of freedom.	>0.90	Byrne, (1994) Hu & Bentler, (1998)

3.3 The Quantitative Study

3.3.1 Questionnaire Administration

Measurement items from past management consulting studies in the literature are typologically re-classified into relevant construct groups. These construct measurement items are then Likert scaled 1-to-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) and relationally/transitionally mapped against Hume's theory-of-causation and Aristotle's 4-step theory-of-causation (section 2.5.2) to account for causal flows both within and between constructs. Aristotle's 4-step theory-of-causation (material-cause, formal-cause, efficient-cause and final cause) (Falcon, 2011) is built into and across the Figure 4.3 model. Planned behaviour, motivation, consumption and users gratification theories are also employed in this process (section 2.5.2).

The framing of the questionnaire used in this study follows the phases recommended by Netemeyer et al., (2003) and Öberseder et al., (2014). These stages are displayed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Questionnaire and Scale Development Phases (adapted from Netemeyer et al., (2003) and Öberseder et al., (2014)

Survey Development Stage	Survey Process Involved
Stage 1: Item Generation	Literature Review: Strategy & operations management literature
Stage 2: Item Generation	Construct Definition: Strategy & operations management literature: total pilot items: 9 constructs & 72 items
Pilot Survey Conducted	
Stage 3: Item Generation	Open-ended questionnaire with 3 Professors: total survey items after 3 generation stages: 12 constructs & 95 items
Stage 4: Content Validity Judgement & Refinement	7 questions dropped and some rephrased: total survey items: 12 constructs & 88 final items
Final Survey Conducted	

This research follows traditional scale development norms (Churchill Jr, 1979; Netemeyer et al., 2003; Öberseder et al., 2014). Stage 1 trawls the strategy, operations and behavioural management literature to source around 6 to 8 relevant pre-tested items per construct. Stage 2 considers relevance of the available theory, the constructs, specific item indicators, construct dimensionality aspects and model structure (Netemeyer et al., 2003). Here, this research enlists reflective indicator measures for nine MCF-CF model constructs.

The three stage process sees three professors discuss the selected questions with the researcher. A further three constructs and their items are developed and added (as per Figure 2.3). In addition, further item rationalization/pooling is conducted with item relationships measures re-checked and qualitative triangulation questions developed (Hair et al., 2014). This develops a strong questionnaire with strong constructs, with indicator items based on literature and presumptive assessment checks. The 5-point Likert indicator measurements are variance tested with university students for a likely respondent full range of possible (1-5) scores (DeVellis, 2016; Netemeyer et al., 2003). A pool of 95 items remains.

Stage 4 sees questionnaire word refinement, suitable demographics and supporting open-ended questions to confirm the construct's fit in relation to the model (Figure 2.3) checked for content validity and refinement (Netemeyer et al., (2003). Items not meeting these criteria are either deleted, or if deemed important, modified somewhat. In this research, the IMCI agreed to send the study's final SurveyMonkey on-line survey, and its five follow-up reminders, to its Indian MCF Chapters and their member database.

3.3.2 Pilot Survey

After Ethics approval, the initial pilot SurveyMonkey instrument deploying only three intermediaries (utilitarian capabilities) is transformed into the secure online survey platform 'SurveyMonkey.'

SurveyMonkey remains an effective, stable and resilient tool to carry out surveys (Bregman et al., 2015; Burns et al., 2018). This study's April 2017 pilot survey approached LinkedIn business acquaintances, with some respondents replying from outside India, but many working around the management consulting domain. This LinkedIn approach to pilot study is in line with a prior PhD student from Germany who sent his questionnaire on 'quality' via LinkedIn. This pilot study followed Dillman's (2015) reminders approach and achieved 182 case responses. However, after missing-values analysis removed items with greater than 20% missing at random cases, and then used missing values replacement, a complete data set of 114 cases remained. The 114 usable cases (modelled using AMOS 25.0) demonstrated a nine-construct causal path model existed in line with Figure 2.1's proposed structure. Further refinement to 112 cases eliminated two outliers. Details of this pilot study's findings are available in the 19th International Conference on Electronic Business paper by R Ramanujam et al., (2019). This pilot study path model suggested a larger more comprehensive full structural equation modelling (SEM) study was likely achievable in this thesis.

The above pilot survey showed many on-line surveys were submitted incomplete, possibly due to: (1) survey-length, (2) too detailed questions, (3) sometimes a poor question wording, (4) a format design with inconsistent format headings, and (5) no qualitative clarification questions. All these flaws were rectified prior to the main study's survey. Further, as the pilot survey captured some LinkedIn persons who may not be experienced management consultants, the final study survey opted to use an entirely different and much more precise management consulting database, namely the MCF members of the IMCI. Hence, the study refined the pilot study questionnaire to better capture the desired and more comprehensive 12 construct model as presented in Figure 2.3, and to incorporate qualitative support questions (see below).

3.3.3 Final Survey

Again, similar to the above 4 stage procedure, ethics is re-informed and survey re-approval is obtained. The 16 August 2019 to 30 October 2019 final India MCF SurveyMonkey quantitative data collection involved IMCI management consultant respondents working for MCFs across India. The IMCI's four Indian Chapters currently have around 575 Indian Government registered members.

The India peak management consulting body, the IMCI, supports this study's research. This is an India-wide management consulting research study. Only members of the IMCI from across its four Chapters (see section 3.1) are MCF respondent persons providing all of the study's survey case responses. The uniqueness of each respondent is correlated/ checked against each respondent's unique computer IP address, which is captured in their SurveyMonkey response data. This study thanks IMCI for their assistance across the survey part of this research (Appendix B shows the IMCI letter of support for this research and Appendix C shows the IMCI email covering their current membership).

Hence, these IMCI professional management consultant respondents likely understand their MCF, its competencies, its resourcing, its consulting activities, and its industry competitiveness. Therefore, they likely provide astute MCF questionnaire responses.

Data collection followed Dillman's (1978) total design method, but used five (not seven) email reminders in line with Dillman's (2015) on-line surveying approach (Figure 3.1). It was administered with bi-weekly reminders and these were log detailed in Table 3.3. Each reminder was slightly different to eliminate viewer fatigue and was sent out through The Institute of Management Consultants of India. After five reminders, each including the SurveyMonkey link, a response rate approaching 67% (Dillman, 2015) was expected.
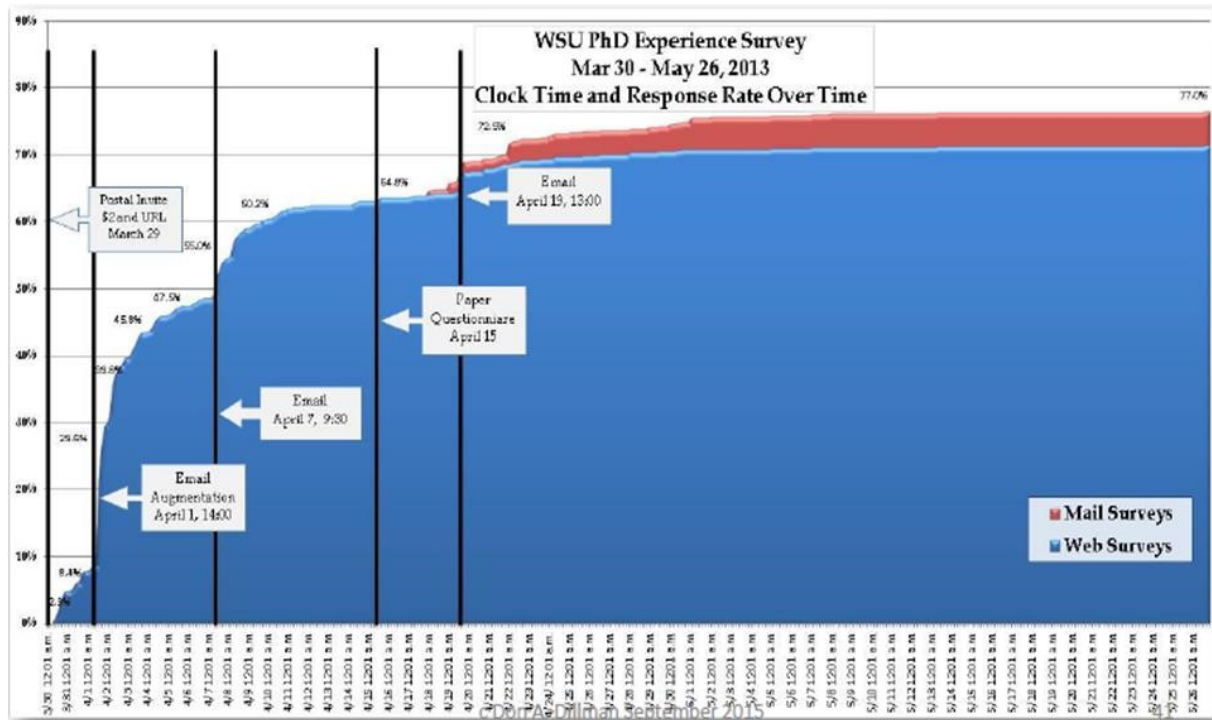
Figure 3.1: Online Survey and Reminder Approach (from Dillman, 2015)

Dillman remains a leader in the researching of both mail and of online surveying techniques. He shows a response rate of up to 77% is possible with incentives, paper surveys, and augmented differentiated reminders added to online surveys. To achieve high response rates this study learned from past online studies, and ensured it secured a very well targeted, and MCF lead professional body. This study's survey received an excellent 54% response rate. In contrast, most mail-out surveys achieve around 8% response rates, and most online surveys generally achieve 20-40% response rates.

Dillman (2015) lists factors affecting web surveys which may not impact this research: (1) individual internet connection affecting less educated – most survey respondent's have an advanced business degree, (2) lack of trust concerning survey sponsor, misrepresentation of purpose and likely use – IMCI acts as a doorway, and (3) survey questionnaire format on different devices (desktop, laptop, pad, mobile) – SurveyMonkey adjusts accordingly.

Dillman (2015) then suggests seven workings: (1) adopt web-push methodology - this study delivers web only surveys with constant bi-weekly reminders, (2) token cash - this study did not offer money considering management consultants are highly paid, (3) multiple response modes - web approach only study, (4) mail response follow-up - as management consultants travel frequently, and are highly educated, web reminders are sent, (5) email augmentation - this study follows this approach, (6) unified mode construction - this survey uses similar question structure, wording, and visual layout for the questionnaire, and (7) multiple contact modes -

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IMCI acts as bridge between respondents and researcher. Thus, for this study, Dillman's (2015) approach delivered a 54% survey response rate.

Additionally, SurveyMonkey provides an MCF respondent uniqueness check. Each MCF survey respondent has a unique 16 number, 4 block individual computer IP address (such as: 198.51.101.12). To avoid repeat entries by one MCF survey respondent, only unique computer IP addresses are accepted. Further, the last two IP blocks also offer a check to ensure that each MCF survey respondent is from a different MCF network site. It should also be noted that India is currently migrating to the IPv6 protocol where IP addresses (e.g. 2001:db8:1f70:999:de8:7648:3a49:6e8) are eight blocks of four hexadecimal digits, but all SurveyMonkey MCF survey respondent IP addresses are in the IPv4 notation.

Table 3.3: Dillman (2015; 1978) Approach - Survey Reminder Log

Date	Task
16-Aug-19	Survey – Live
30-Aug-19	Survey – 1 Reminder
13-Sep-19	Survey – 2 Reminder
27-Sep-19	Survey – 3 Reminder
11-Oct-19	Survey – 4 Reminder
25-Oct-19	Survey – 5 Reminder
31-Oct-19	Survey – Close

The quantitative data collection occurs between 16 August 2019 and 31 October 2019 across India. IP addresses showed only one valid survey per IP address. Oxford Economics suggests the top 10 growing cities in the world (by GDP) are in India (Wood, 2018). It ranks Bengaluru (capital of Karnataka) in the top 3 and predicts it to power ahead at 8.5% year-on-year and by 2035 to contribute USD 283.5 billion out of the current USD 70.8 billion. This study's response rate matches with the statistics and the region of Karnataka provided the largest response rate of (40%). Figure 3.2 shows a map of India (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019) along with this study's major respondent cities areas and response rates.

Studies indicate MCFs travel to CFs to forge partnerships and to learn CF intricacies (Chatterjee, 2017; Kane & Levina, 2017). In this study, 28% of MCF respondents were of non-Indian nationality, but currently working for an MCF within India. These overseas MCF respondents came from countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America. Other MCF Indian-nationality respondents work in locations including Maharashtra (7%), New Delhi (6%), Haryana (5%), Tamil Nadu (4%), Uttar Pradesh (3%), Telangana (3%), Gujarat (2%), West Bengal (1%), Kerala (1%), and Chhattisgarh (0.43%). Thus, the final survey has a wide distribution of respondents, and as expected, these align to the key business regions in India.
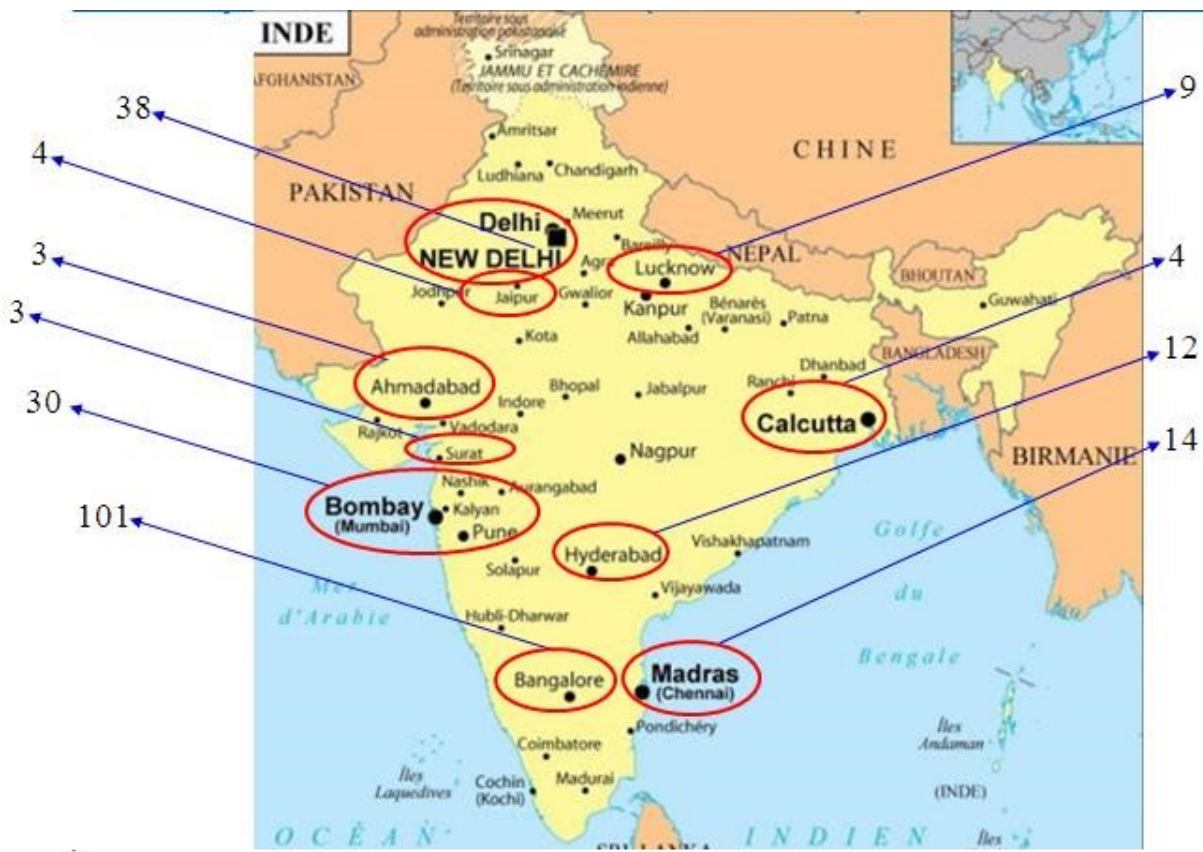
Figure 3.2: MCF Survey Respondent City Areas and Response Rates (adapted from (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019), image: https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/404057397811244630 /)

3.3.4 Demographics

To understand the nature of MCF respondents, their ability to provide 'expert' information, and their MCF experience this study's demographics captures gender, age group, education level, MCF size, consultancy experience (as projects undertaken), plus the multiple types of management consulting projects in which the respondent participated. Such demographic data capture also allows for cross-tabs analysis, and other within-category demographic group comparisons.

3.4 The Qualitative Study

Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as a structured multi-method approach to field data collection, inductive analysis and thematic results. Qualitative research triangulates quantitative investigation findings. The research design, protocols formulation, sampling approach and data analysis follow.

3.4.1 NVivo

This study utilises NVivo as its qualitative assessment tool. NVivo allows the analysis of text and non-numerical data (Richards, 1999). In this study it interprets the very rich, text-based respondent feedback for content analysis, and thematic analysis, and for multi-level linkage analysis, using word-cloud and word-tree analysis.

NVivo 12 Plus (Version 12.5) screens qualitative open-ended descriptive data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Qualitative data being subjective, rich and comprehensive text style information is pursued for relationships between categories and themes. It seeks to enhance the understanding of this study and its phenomena (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Here, for example, category word frequency helps determine unique themes. Subsequently, these

unique themes define outcomes though divergent situational settings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) from which relationships can be delivered (Prince, 2019). This qualitative approach seeks to deliver confirmation and validation support of this study's Chapter 4 quantitative MCF-to-CF SEM analysis.

3.4.2 Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative data is collected through the survey's open-ended questions. This qualitative information captures data that complements the quantitatively-measured Likert scale data and demographics. The qualitative data offers further support to research measurement modelling and also builds an additional research knowledge profile around management consulting.

Four open-ended qualitative questions (see section 4.5) ask respondents' opinions on MCF's impact on CFs. Here, four questions each ask for three impressions around management consulting: (1) competencies, (2) performance, (3) sustainable positioning, and (4) competitive intelligence.

NVivo 12 Plus software analyses these 3 impressions across all 4 open-ended questions. Here, NVivo builds themes (nodes) that support the quantitative constructs used in research model. NVivo uses text word or phrase enquiries and searches for text/phrase linkage results using word-clouds and word-trees. This sheds light on the relevance of the quantitative survey question measures used.

3.4.3 NVivo Study Implementation

Following steps assist in NVivo data analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013):

1) For questionnaire: a folder is setup under Sources/Internals

2) For open ended questions: a folder is setup under Nodes

3) A classification under classifications/node classifications/new classification called case profiles is setup

4) Navigate to Sources->Internals & right click on Internals folder to make a new subfolder called questionnaire

5) Set up a folder under nodes for open ended questions

6) Navigate to nodes & create a new folder

7) Import the excel spreadsheet: navigate to: Sources->Internals->Questionnaire folder. In the data tab, select dataset

8) Name the questionnaire. Click finish to import the excel questionnaire

9) Conduct auto coding to: code open ended questions, create case nodes, & link quantitative data to the case

10) Auto-code open ended questions: close the questionnaire & right click on the questionnaire & select the auto code option

11) Case nodes are created in the cases folder

12) Link the quantitative data to the cases: database is now set up correctly

13) Create a word frequency query: In the display words box, specify the number of words displayed in the results, in the minimum word length box, type the number of characters of the smallest word, select grouping option, click run

14) Create a text search query: in the search for box, type a word or phrase, select a finding matches option, click run query.

The qualitative NVivo study supports the quantitative MCF SEM model approach. It seeks to build and to further understand the MCF-CF unique, sequenced, capabilities sub-system improvements and proximity relationships.

In this study, NVivo word-cloud and word-tree associates individual MCF respondent interpretations to four key study-area questions (as detailed in section 4.5). These MCF respondent interpretations are likeness clustered associated. Cluster and strength associations help validate relative expertise of MCF respondents, link (versus literature and quantitative findings) current MCF respondent beliefs concerning extent of targeted MCF perceived competencies additions into relationally-planned MCF-to CF enhancing business systems and triangulation of this study's findings.

3.5 Chapter Three Summary

This chapter details the research setting with a data analysis approach. Here, quantitative, demographic and qualitative measurement procedures and a literature-based pathways model are established as a triangulation approach to investigate this study's research question. Additionally, fit index measures, along with goodness-of-fit indices, are presented. Chapter four follows next, where analytics and path model measurement results are presented and assessed for excellence against AMOS 25.0 SEM model goodness-of-fit comparison measurements. MCF respondent NVivo word-clouds and word-trees clustering summaries are also introduced as ways to support the study's AMOS 25.0 SEM path modelling.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Data Collection

Multiple methods can be utilized synchronously in a single study (Ahmed & Sil, 2012; Campbell & Fiske, 1959). This approach offers less built-in errors and is preferable to single method research (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). Thus, this study enlists a multi-methodology approach. Specifically, it utilizes a mixed-methods research strategy.

Bryman (2011) argues mixed-methods research enriches primary research technique by adding further, very different, technique(s), innovating: the conceptual framework through triangulation, cultivating context definitive instruments, combining inductive, deductive cognition and contemplation and by reducing researcher personal bias to deliver comprehensive analysis of phenomena.

Thus, mixed-methods research often provides distinct perspectives. These 'pragmatic' viewpoints focus on research effect and utilize multiple methods for data collection. This archetype has its ontology in single and multiple phenomena. Here, researchers test hypotheses and present applicable results. The epistemology of hypotheses exists on method feasibility. This paradigm compiles and combines both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The epistemological foundation establishes mixed-methods research as a discrete proposition. Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) define mixed-methods research as an anti-dualistic, merging philosophy which combines at least one quantitative and one qualitative component. Here, the research question drives a mixed-methods research strategy. This approach combines quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis and interpretation techniques. First, design compiles and evaluates quantitative data. Subsequently, study analyses and interprets qualitative data. This mixed-methods research sequence aids in superior quantitative data insight (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

This study seeks answers to the research question:

> *'Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally-assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?'*

This research question is framed in the Indian and in the MCF-to-CF context. In this study, quantitative data analysis, qualitative text information and literature/theory is employed to collect and interpret understanding and thus build new knowledge around this MCF-CF competitiveness topic. This study uses SEM to quantitatively research the competitiveness transference outcomes acquired between the MCF's competencies suite and the MCF-to-CF deliverance of CF capabilities as contributor systems towards a likely sustainable (competitive) business positioning. It uses NVivo to qualitatively triangulate the survey open-ended text/phrase findings and so creates supplementary confirmation.

Thus, this mixed-methods research study collects, analyses and interprets quantitative and qualitative data to investigate business competitiveness phenomena (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) and so better understand its

research question (or problem) (Cameron et al., 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This study also incorporates 'explanatory sequential design' within its mixed-methods research and combines quantitative data compilation and reasoning, and qualitative evidence, to further investigate the research question and to show how MCFs use their competencies, develop a set of MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables and how these then build a new ongoing competitiveness (sustainable (competitive) business positioning, supported by new degrees of CF competitive intelligence) for the CF at the point-in-time when the survey is active.
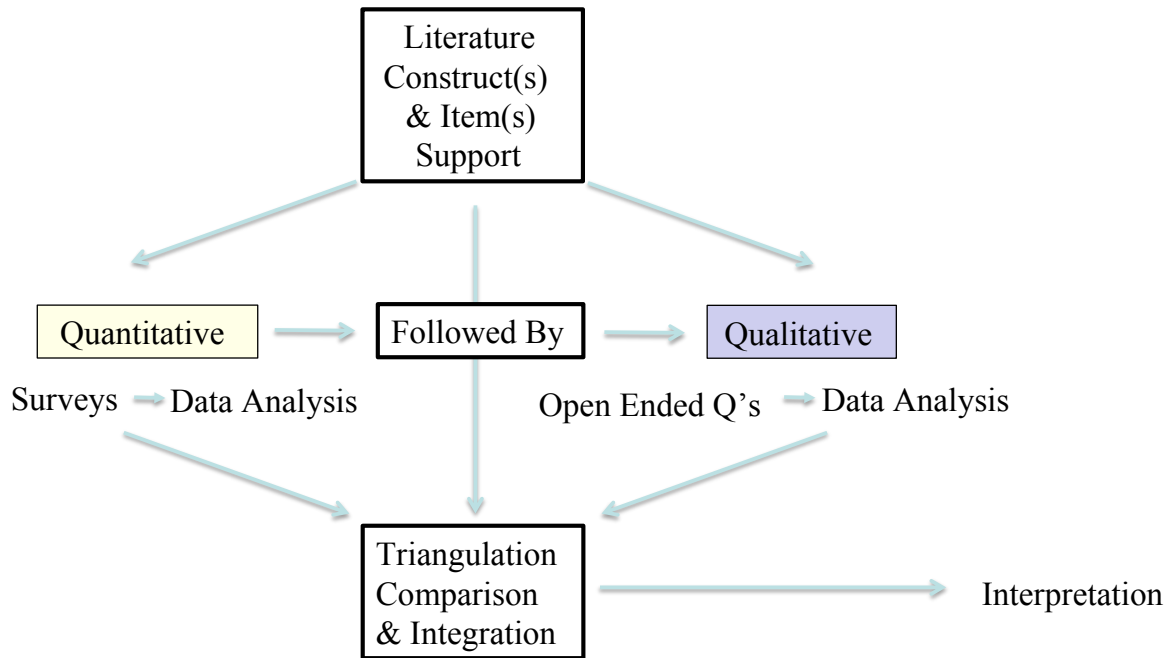
Figure 4.1: Mixed Method Research. (Adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2011))

4.2 Surveying

The Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 literature-developed constructs, concepts and proposed relationships (Table 3.2) are expanded across Tables 2.1 to 2.4 and Figure 2.4. This literature frames the constructs, the likely measurement items, the likely construct model pathways and the likely indirect construct model pathways.

Table 3.2 summarizes two focus groups providing separate refining to Table 2.2's measurement items. Then a substantive, final, usable 112 respondents pilot model analysis (R Ramanujam et al., 2019) provides further Table 3.2 guidelines towards final study model refinements.

Dillman (1991) suggests surveys with good response rates produce precise results. Dillman (2015) (refer section 3.3.3) shows four fortnightly email augmentations can result in experimental response rates of about 67%. Mail surveying (Dillman, 1978) suggests seven reminders should be used. This study's IMCI MCF respondent data collection encapsulated both Dillman's (1978) total design (mail) method and Dillman's (2015) on-line approaches.

The quantitative data used a five-point, strongly-disagree (1) to strongly-agree (5) Likert scale measurement item approach to gauge relationships between the study's twelve constructs. Demographics and qualitative responses were also captured.

The IMCI provided its 550-600 members (The Institute of Management Consultants of India, 2020) with six time-spaced SurveyMonkey related emails, including five fortnightly augmenting reminders, each equally time-spaced across the study's 3 month data capture period and also slightly different to eliminate viewer-fatigue, to maintain immediacy relevance and to re-expose the SurveyMonkey link (Dillman, 2015; Dillman, 1978, 1991; Dillman et al., 1976). The response rate of 54% was below Dillman's (2015) suggested 70%.

Callegaro and DiSogra (2008) show online response rates approximate telephone surveys, provided all controls are suitably implemented. Nulty, Richardson (2008; 2005) suggest 50% response rates and Baruch (1999) reports response rates of 55.6%. These researchers offer support to Dillman's (2015) survey response figures and to this study's response rate.

This study's IMCI MCF final 54% response rate (313 MCF respondent cases from around 575 IMCI MCF members) required cleaning. Some MCF respondent cases required removal due to general non-completion issues, such as not giving demographics or stopping after completing a small percentage of the questionnaire. A few more MCF respondent cases were also eliminated due to 'not-missing-at-random' item response patterns, typically because of section or block non-completions across the online questionnaire, possibly indicating a degree of respondent fatigue or some other issue. Five further MCF respondent cases were also eliminated due to random but a small block of blank responses, possibly indicating a lack of knowledge around certain questionnaire items. Of the remaining 234 MCF respondent cases only ten surveys exhibited missing values of between 1 and 10.

This 234 data set was cleaned using missing value analysis and replacement. EM algorithm convergence in 25 iterations and Little's Missing Completely at Random MCAR test ($\chi 2 = 3397$, $p < 0.000$) showed that the final 234 cleaned data set, with missing values replaced and containing no missing values, was now suitable for subsequent statistical analysis (Cunningham, 2008; Hair et al., 2014).

This data cleaning process lost approximately 25% of the study's SurveyMonkey data set. Similar results have been reported across another open-access online survey questionnaire. Thus, the final cleaned data set of 234 IMCI MCF respondent cases was deemed an acceptable result.

For SEM analysis a data size of 20 cases per construct is desired. Hence, this study, with 12 constructs and almost 240 MCF respondent cases (actually 234 respondent cases), is also suitable for subsequent structural path modelling analysis (Cunningham, 2008; Hair et al., 2014). During the final structural path modelling, two additional outliers were removed, leaving a final MCF respondent data set of 232 cases available to build AMOS 25.0 structural path modelling and analysis.

A further check of the uniqueness of each IMCI MCF respondent involved checking that each respondent used a different computer. Here, their computer's IP address was utilized. No repeat IP addresses were found – indicating all final 232 MCF respondent cases actually represented a unique IMCI MCF respondent.

As expected, major and globally-focused businesses are typically concentrated around larger cities. These multi-million population centres include India's biggest cities (Mumbai (12M), Delhi (11M), Bangalore (8M),

Hyderabad (7M), Ahmedabad (6M), Chennai (5M), Kolkata (5M), Surat (5M), Pune (3M), Jaipur (3M) and Lucknow (3M)), plus many other smaller cities where specific competitive business perspectives like shipping, coal or energy production may reside. This study's survey IP addresses also indicate that over 90% of IMCI management consulting respondents reside around such larger cities (refer Figure 3.2), with the remaining 10% of respondents residing throughout India.

Thus, from the above section 4.2 discussion this study believes its MCF respondent data set offers sound, representative, India-wide, knowledgeable, business/management consultant perspectives.

4.3 MCF Survey Respondent Demographic Profile

Appendix A shows respondent demographic profiles. First, it details respondent's gender, second age, third highest education, fourth firms' employee count, fifth consulting experience, and, sixth firm location. Here: (1) consulting experience compares with gender, age, (2) firm size compares with consulting experience, gender, and (3) highest education compares with consulting experience, gender.

Appendix A (Table A) presents the MCF respondents' combined demographic characteristics. Most respondents are male (87.1%) and are in the age bracket of 30-45 years (46%). The majority hold a Master's degree (74.4%), with 4.5% having a Doctoral degree. These education statistics suggest respondents are intellectually astute survey participants with a strong grasp of their MCF's business strategy. Further, 21.6% of these respondents work in large firms (workforce between 1001 and 5000), with 29.5% having been involved in over 15 x CF projects for their MCF.

Eighty-six per cent of MCF respondents indicated they were of Indian extraction. This suggests the workforce of most MCFs in India is predominantly from India. This aligns with Deloitte's report which sees strong local demand for MCF services and capabilities and values the Indian management consulting market at USD 5.4 billion for 2018 (Confederation of Indian Industry & Deloitte India, 2017).

Chua et al., (2015) research cultural tightness. Here, India ranks in the top three tight world cultures. In tight cultures there are few female leaders. The emphasis is on traditional practices with male directives. This study correlates with Chua et al.,'s (2015) findings showing women in Indian MCFs are predominantly less than 45 years of age, with the majority being under 30. Further, Bhattacharyya & Dave (2016) from *The Economic Times*, report: in India the top MCFs, such as McKinsey, BCG, Bain, Ernst & Young, Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and KPMG, have less than 8% of women partners.

The older age bracket (46-60) of MCF respondents is male dominated, but the bulk of the males (204 of the 232 respondents) are in the 30-45 age bracket. This is in line with expectations as the Indian management consulting industry has grown substantially over the past decade. According to KPMG, from 2010-14 the management consulting industry experienced a 9.6% compound annual growth rate, with turnover estimated at about USD 3.5 billion (as of 2014). Males have been employed in the industry for decades, and consequently they dominate the industry.

Unlike males, females in India have not enjoyed a substantive numerical position in the management consulting industry. Most female respondents have been involved in less than 10 x MCF projects. This is in line with Oliver Wyman's report, which states that in a developed continent such as Europe, female executives represent 20% of the financial industry, and this proportion has roughly doubled over the last 16 years (Jenkins, 2019). Further, male participation in consulting projects is spread evenly across ages. Both males and females do work in relatively large MCFs. As the MCF corporate-size increases, males are spread across corporate sizes. In contrast, female spread is mostly limited to MCFs with a workforce below 5000 people.

MCF male Bachelor degree holders are spread across consulting project bands. Female Bachelor degree holders are concentrated in the less experienced (under 10 projects) domain. This is in line with the Indian MCF industry, where the majority of females are typically fairly recent MCF entrants. Male Masters degree holders are spread across the MCF consulting bands, while female Masters holders are again concentrated in the fewer than 10 x MCF projects category. Sahi et al., (2017) study the Indian service industry and banking sector in particular. Here there was a sample size which reduced from 208 to 173 complete responses, with 94% of the respondents being male, of whom 64% were postgraduates. This statistic can be a yardstick for other Indian service sectors, including the management consulting industry. This study's demographic profiling also resembles Sahi et al.,'s (2017) findings, and hence is support-validated to a degree.

Interestingly, in this study MCF respondents with doctorates were male, experienced and had undertaken many projects (mostly over 15). This is in line with the current industry profile expectations. Thus, MCFs strongly prefer a bright, intelligent workforce and employ those with high education levels (masters/doctorate degrees), and in India they still favour employing males. According to the World Economic Forum (2019), executive committees in India have only a 19% female representation, and this is after an 8% growth in female representation between 2016 and 2019. Hence, this research's findings of a comparatively lower female representation in MCFs seem in line with current Indian industry settings.

As expected, as experience grows so do the number of completed MCF projects. Forty-nine per cent of those less than 30 years had carried out less than 5 x MCF projects, 41% of those aged 30-45 years had undertaken over 15 x MCF projects and 53% of those above 45 years had completed more than 15 x MCF projects. Most of the MCF respondents were aged below 45 years. This is in line with secondary source estimates. The Indian management consulting workforce increased from 152,620 in 2009 to 213,260 in 2014. In fact, from being a net-importer of management consulting services in 2011-12, India became a net-exporter of management consulting services from 2013, with management consulting services exports amounting to USD 14.4 billion, in 2015 (Confederation of Indian Industry & KPMG India, 2016).

Interestingly, 48.6% of the MCF respondents work in MCFs with a workforce of fewer than 5000 employees. Here, 44.4% of respondents work in MCFs with 1001-5000 employees, with 51.4% being from MCFs with 5000 plus employees (and some of these respondents come from MCFs with over 100,000 employees).

Thus, MCF respondents likely do understand their industry and its management consulting activities and therefore each of the 234 MCF respondent cases making up the final data set is likely to consist of astute MCF responses as presented from an Indian-based strategic business context.

4.4 Research Study Quantitative Pilot Study

The pilot study is detailed in the paper R Ramanujam et al., (2019). Survey data collected from LinkedIn delivered 112 usable responses. 1-5 point Likert scale measurement items were compiled into the data table provided as Table 4.1, which compares the pilot model fit indices with standards. Each construct's high Cronbach alpha confirms the reliability of the construct as a suitable grouping of its measurement items.

Table 4.1: Pilot Model MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Measurement Data

Literature Engaged	Survey Response Items (N = 112)	Load	Alpha	AVE	Mean	SD
	MCF SKILLS-SETS		0.89	0.63	3.69	0.94
Weick, 1993; Petroni, 2000; Teo & Choo, 2001; Baker et al., 2003; Fisher, 2012; Perkmann & Spicer, 2014; Visscher et al., (2018)	offers CF value for money	0.84				
	offers CF product focusing	0.77				
	offers high quality CF products	0.86				
	delivers excellent transactional value strategies	0.78				
	delivers authentic and enduring CF organizational leadership	0.71				
Vogus & Welbourne, 2003; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2009; Halme, et al., 2012; Eisingerich, et al. 2009; Ettlie & Rosenthal, 2011; Hsieh et al., 2011; Bello Trim & Lee, 2008; Li et al., 2009; Duymedjian & R̈uling, 2010; Khanna et al., 2011; Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011; Mohammed, 2011; Bronnemayer et al., 2016; Goedhart et al., 2017; Stoyanov et al., 2018; Visscher et al., 2018	MCF INNOVATION ADDITIONS		0.84	0.67	3.49	1.05
	encourages us to innovate while solving CF problems	0.91				
	provides solutions to tomorrow's unknown problems	0.71				
	uses innovation to solve CF requests	0.82				
	MCF KNOWLEDGE CREATION		0.87	0.59	3.72	0.88
	looks for new CF opportunities and new markets	0.69				
	delivers knowledge-based CF infrastructure practices	0.81				
	adds our experienced-based knowledge to CF infrastructure practices	0.86				
	adds our expert-based knowledge to CF infrastructure practices	0.82				
	targets adding IoT capabilities to CF infrastructure practices	0.64				
Baker et al., 2003; Fisher, 2012; Liu et al., 2016; Kache & Seuring, 2017; Lee and Jung, 2018; Visscher et al., 2018; Zhan et al., 2018	MCF INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL		0.90	0.63	3.66	0.9
	shows-up in effective fieldwork procedure deliverables to CF	0.72				
	provides the social capital teamwork to make CF consulting world-class	0.83				
	uses personal intellectual capital to make CF consulting world-class	0.87				
	uses teams to make CF consulting world-class	0.78				
	makes each MCF quickly source, learn, transmit new knowledge to CF	0.76				
	ensures each MCF always quick to contemplate a CF assignment	0.72				
Garrido, 2009; Tomek & Vavrova, 2011; Chen et al 2014; Brooks, et al, 2015; Stefanikova et al., 2015; Larson & Chang, 2016; Lopes-Robles et al, 2019	MCF-to-CF COMPETITVE INTELLIGENCES		0.82	0.61	3.71	0.9
	recognizes competitive intelligences as a necessity for CF's bus. success	0.79				
	collects CF information from many sources	0.78				
	communicates collected intelligences to the CF	0.78				
Zeithaml et al., 1990; Sheth et al., 1991; McLachlin, 2000; Roig et al., 2006; Basole & Rouse, 2008; Kaltcheva et al., 2012; Hamilton et al., 2014	MCF-to-CF QUALITIES		0.89	0.63	3.89	0.83
	sees MCs consistently delivering quality results to a request	0.76				
	sees MCs consistently respectful in assisting CFs	0.79				
	sees MCs consistently bringing new skilling into the CF's workforce	0.84				
	sees MCs changes as improving qualities of CF's business opportunities	0.91				
	sees MCs changes highlighting where CF's can reliably excel against competitors	0.66				
Karwan & Markland, 2006; Cannon et al., 2010; Kaltcheva et al., 2012; Belekoukias, 2014; De Leeuw & Van den Berg, 2011	MCF-to-CF PERFORMANCE		0.90	0.70	3.77	0.96
	sees high levels of optimized business outcomes	0.75				
	sees high performing MCF-CF shared relationships	1.00				
	sees secure, comforting, MCF-CF-workforce environments	0.74				
Spanos & Lioukas, 2001; Sobol & Klein, 2009; Geletkanycz & Boyd, 2011; Kaltcheva et al., 2012; Bronnemayer et al., 2016	MCF-to-CF ECONOMIC WORTH		0.86	0.75	3.56	1.07
	sees outcomes are worthwhile for monies being invested	0.78				
	sees profitable consumer items from the monies invested	0.85				
	sees financially rewarding consumer services from the monies invested	0.97				
Bruining, 2004, Widener, 2007, Mundy, 2010; Hill et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2011; Gond et al., 2012; Kaltcheva et al., 2012; Srinivasan, 2014; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Cavaleri & Shabana, 2018	CF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS POSITIONING		0.87	0.65	3.68	0.99
	sees all the contracted services delivered	0.80				
	sees highest value for money delivered	0.75				
	sees all CF firm qualities/performances responsibly delivered	0.94				
	sees accelerated competitive CF firm business growth delivered	0.72				

The pilot path model developed via AMOS 25.0 from Table 4.1 is shown below as Figure 4.2. Its path strengths are tabulated in Table 4.2 as path standardized β Weights and their significance. The excellent model fit indices are tabulated as Table 4.3. The Bollen-Stine bootstrap p value confirms the excellence standard of the pilot model. Other statistical parameters further support the excellence of the fit of the pilot study's model.

Table 4.4's standardized total effects show intellectual capital, knowledge creation qualities, economic worth and competitive intelligences all need to be optimized to deliver a strong sustainable business positioning for the CF.
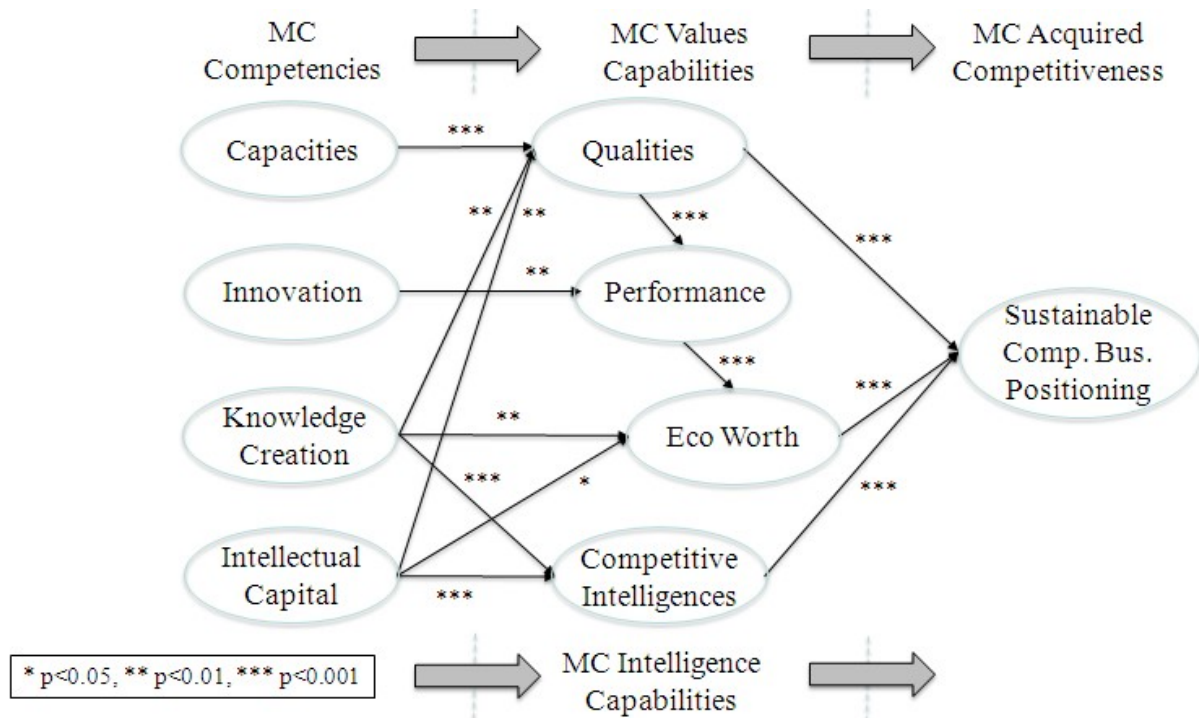
Figure 4.2: MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Pilot Model

Table 4.2: Pilot Model MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Model Standardized β Weights

Path Between Constructs			β EST.	S.E.	C.R.	p
Qualities	<--	Skills-Sets	0.30	0.09	3.43	***
Qualities	<--	Knowledge Creation	0.23	0.08	2.81	0.005
Qualities	<--	Intellectual Capital	0.26	0.09	2.91	0.004
Performance	<--	Qualities	0.81	0.08	10.07	***
Performance	<--	Innovation Additions	0.16	0.06	2.56	0.01
Competitive Intelligences	<--	Knowledge Creation	0.39	0.09	4.33	***
Competitive Intelligences	<--	Intellectual Capital	0.42	0.09	4.74	***
Eco Worth	<--	Knowledge Creation	0.29	0.11	2.72	0.007
Eco Worth	<--	Intellectual Capital	0.26	0.11	2.43	0.015
Eco Worth	<--	Performance	0.47	0.09	5.20	***
Sustainable Bus. Positioning	<--	Competitive Intelligences	0.30	0.08	3.86	***
Sustainable Bus. Positioning	<--	Qualities	0.46	0.10	4.77	***
Sustainable Bus. Positioning	<--	Eco Worth	0.25	0.07	3.41	***

Table 4.3: MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Pilot Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	P	Bollen-Stine Bootstrap	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Study Values	28.82	17.00	1.70	0.04	0.26 (149/200 FITS)	0.96	0.92	0.99	0.97	0.98	0.08
Ex. Fit Stds	-	-	≥1; ≤3	>0.05	>0.05	≥0.95	≥0.90	≥0.95	≥0.95	≥0.95	≤0.08

Table 4.4: Pilot Model MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Model Standardized Total Effects

Total Effects	Intellectual Capital	Skills-Sets	Knowledge Creation	Innovation Additions	Qualities	Performance	Eco Worth	Competitive Intelligences
Qualities	0.28	0.33	0.25	-	-	-	-	-
Performance	0.20	0.23	0.17	0.18	0.70	-	-	-
Eco Worth	0.30	0.10	0.31	0.08	0.29	0.42	-	-
Competitive Intelligences	0.42	-	0.38	-	-	-	-	-
Sustainable Bus. Positioning	0.31	0.16	0.28	0.02	0.47	0.11	0.27	0.28

Figure 4.2 shows the MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Pilot Model. Here, construct pathways between the MCF and CF engage towards new sustainable business positioning. There are 3 stages. Stage 1 is where the CF contracts with an MCF when seeking its expert advice and assistance to solve its CF business problems. The MCF then dives into its competencies and applies relevant ones in an attempt to satisfy the CF's contract requirements.

Stage 2 is the MCF-to-CF handshake and sharing processes where the MCF delves deep into the CF's capabilities to first understand its business operations. Here, the MCF uses its relevant competencies skill-sets to modify the CF's operations and to deliver new additional capabilities deliverables and additional competitive intelligence capabilities.

Stage 3 shows the MCF-CF engagement outcomes as an enhanced CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning. Thus, the pilot MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Model helps an MCF to streamline the CF's strategic business operations with a view to thus deliver an enhanced CF sustainability (competitive) business positioning. Normally, this MCF-CF relationship/association is maintained over the term of the consultancy. For this, the MCF must continuously reinvigorate its competencies to competitively meet the CF's contractual requirements.

Initially, this structural path analysis approach studies and reviews the Pilot MCF-to-CF Sustainable Business Positioning Model. This structural path model pilot study is re-scoped and broadened to include CF risk avoidance and CF contractual satisfaction.

Full Study

4.4.1 CFA to Quantitative Modelling Measures Development

Each Figure 2.3 construct and measurement item is literature developed, captured by questionnaire and analysed. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach was employed. Under CFA, maximum likelihood, 200 x

oblimin rotations factor reduction, every construct's factor reduction underwent elimination of any cross-load items < 0.25. Each construct's final factor reduction showed a KMO > 0.6, a Bartlett p < 0.05, and all remaining measurement items displayed residuals < 0.05 (Cunningham, 2008). Table 4.5 presents the Likert strongly-disagree (1) to strongly-agree (5) scale cumulative construct and measurement item stats breakdowns.

Each construct's congeneric shape was internally checked. Final construct measurement item loads, construct means, standard deviations (SDs) and AVE offered further statistical checks. Munck's (1979) equations (deployed as construct load and error columns of Table 4.5) were used to build each construct's single indicator composite (Grace & Bollen, 2008). This approach was adopted to minimize any unobserved item interaction effects and to best clearly expose the actual SEM path relationships (Cunningham, 2008; Grace & Bollen, 2008). The MCF-to-CF change systems were structurally path modelled, using 200 bootstraps to further validate the resultant modelling as presented in Figure 4.3.

4.4.2 Table 4.1 Measurements

Table 4.5 shows that each of the twelve constructs is gauged by its suitability measures. The twelve constructs and final factor reduction construct items are first shown against their questionnaire number and individual item loads. For reference, the starting (pre-CFA factor reduction) survey items per construct are tabulated in Table 2.1. The last six columns then show the twelve constructs' specific details. The mean and SD show all constructs are suitably 'normal', and so can be used in structural path modelling and under the ML approach. This means no PAF non-normal SPSS/AMOS normality adjustment is required (Cunningham, 2008). The Cronbach alpha measures indicate all constructs are strongly represented by their item measures (Hair et al., 2014). The calculated construct load, and error measures enlist Munck's (1979) equations (Cunningham, 2008) to generate the necessary SEM single indicator construct measures (Grace & Bollen, 2008). These measures are all in the acceptable use range and with loads all exceeding 0.6, and small acceptable (fewer than 10%) errors (Grace & Bollen, 2008).

The last column average variance extracted (AVE) is provided to show that the amount of variance captured by the construct. In AMOS structural modelling, and for discriminant validity, this should consistently exceed 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). Valentini and Damasio (2016) add that AVE can be used as a reliability coefficient, instead of another convergent validity index. Thus, this study's quantitative data treatment meets all statistical requirements for structural path modelling and analysis.

4.4.3 Table 4.1 Analysis and Discussion

Across Table 4.5 each construct item loading (Table 4.5, Column 3) shows all bar eight item loads exceeded 0.70. Only one measurement item (0.58) is under (Hair et al., 2014) the empirical research minimum of 0.6. This 0.58 loading measurement item was necessarily retained as a factor reduction fifth construct item, with all five items displaying residuals below 0.05. Further, in one intellectual capital construct item, a 0.89 loading occurred. All measurement item loads are acceptable empirical research loads and sufficiently within (Hair et al., 2014) guidelines of 0.6-to-0.95.

All twelve constructs have means between 3.93 and 4.13 (each with an acceptable SD), Cronbach alpha's exceeding 0.82 and construct AVE's exceeding 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, this study's twelve constructs and their respective measurement items are considered suitable for testing under a quantitative structural path modelling approach.

To explain the above process, the MCF construct 'knowledge creation' is captured from two literature studies and six items. It reduces under CFA to a four-item construct (all residuals < 0.05) with measures: knowledge-based CF infrastructure/practices, MCF experienced-based knowledge to CF infrastructure/practices, MCF expert knowledge to CF infrastructure/practices and further knowledge capabilities for the CF. These four items all load onto the construct at above 0.66, and deliver an average variance explained (AVE) of 0.61. This indicates a strong construct with suitable measurement items is delivered. The mean of 3.96 and standard deviation (SD) of 0.75 both indicate near normality and construct suitability. The Cronbach alpha of 0.86 indicates the construct has strong internal consistency across its measurement items. Thus, this solid strong construct is possibly suitable in AMOS 25.0 structural path modelling, if it provides significant beta pathway model components.

4.4.4 Structural Path Modelling Solutions

AMOS 25.0 structural path modelling draws together Figure 2.3 and 2.4 plus Table 2.3 and Figure 3.1's survey approach into a literature-supported pathways model. Structural path modelling offers multivariate statistical analysis techniques to analyse structural relationships. It combines factor analysis and multiple regressions to assess the structural relationships between constructs and their item measures (Hair et al., 2014).

The final structural path modelling produces an excellent fit path model. This is shown as Figure 4.3 Research model. The research model displays the key Goodness-of-Fit measures for small data sets (200-400 cases) and unidirectional reflective item modelling. Table 4.7 shows the required Goodness-of-Fit measures against excellent fits standards. Here, the research model shows significant and complete excellent fit when bootstrap-validated 200 times.

Table 4.5: Management Consulting System Constructs, Item Measures, and Calculated Measures

MEASUREMENT ITEM - 234 data set	ITEM CODE	ITEM LOAD	MEAN	STD DEV (SD)	CROBACH ALPHA (α)	LOAD (SD*√α)	ERROR (SD₂*(1-α))	AVE
KNOWLEDGE CREATION			3.96	0.75	0.86	0.70	0.08	0.61
delivers knowledge-based CF infrastructure/practices	Q16	0.76						
adds MCF experienced-based knowledge to CF infrastructure/practice	Q17	0.84						
adds MCF expert knowledge to CF infrastructure/practices	Q18	0.85						
provides further knowledge capabilities for our CF	Q20	0.66						
CAPACITIES			4.06	0.68	0.84	0.63	0.07	0.52
offers clear CF value for money	Q1	0.68						
offers clear CF product focusing	Q2	0.75						
offers high quality to CF products	Q3	0.83						
offers support to change our CF's business	Q5	0.64						
delivers authentic & enduring CF org'al leadership approaches	Q7	0.69						
INNOVATION			3.93	0.81	0.85	0.75	0.10	0.60
delivers unique benefits to our CF results	Q8	0.67						
encourages MCFs to innovate while solving CF problems	Q11	0.77						
provides solutions to tomorrow's unknown problems	Q12	0.77						
uses innovation to solve CF requests	Q13	0.87						
INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL			4.06	0.71	0.87	0.67	0.07	0.58
provides intellectual problem solving consulting expertise	Q28	0.71						

Item	Q	Loading					
uses MCF intellectual capital to improve CF firm's social capital	Q29	0.74					
uses MCF intellectual capital to make CF performance world-class	Q30	0.89					
uses MCF collaborations to make CF performance world-class	Q31	0.77					
uses MCF intellectual resources to complete CF assignment	Q33	0.69					
QUALITIES			4.08	0.68	0.89	0.64	0.05	0.62
MCFs are consistently respectful in assisting them	Q51	0.73					
consulting actions consistently look 'skilled' to CF shareholders	Q52	0.75					
consulting changes seen as improving qualities of CF opportunities	Q53	0.84					
consulting processes highlighting where CF can best excel	Q54	0.82					
advice that consistently improves qualities across CF business	Q55	0.79					
PERFORMANCE			4.13	0.71	0.87	0.66	0.06	0.64
high levels of optimized CF business outcomes	Q62	0.84					
optimal MCF-CF relationships	Q63	0.85					
collaborative MCF-CF relationships	Q64	0.85					
MCF improves all the CF's contracted services	Q65	0.65					
ECONOMIC WORTH			4.05	0.74	0.88	0.69	0.06	0.65
improve CF rewards for money invested	Q57	0.82					
worthwhile CF outcomes for worthwhile investment outcomes	Q58	0.88					
profitable consumer services from the CF monies invested	Q60	0.73					
optimized CF performances against selected MCF solutions engaged	Q61	0.80					
RISKS AVOIDANCE			4.03	0.72	0.83	0.66	0.09	0.56
MCF change(s) that influence CF's use-of-resources	Q45	0.85					
MCF services our CF requires within agreed timelines	Q46	0.71					
risk-assessed services that include latest technologies inclusions	Q47	0.72					
MCFs that consistently deliver quality results to a CF request	Q49	0.72					
SERVICING			4.10	0.70	0.87	0.66	0.06	0.63
always sharing MCF-to-CF expertise	Q74	0.77					
providing cutting-edge MCF innovative solutions to CF	Q75	0.82					
delivering MCF efficient cost effective solutions to CF	Q76	0.82					
completing all MCF-to-CF services as planned	Q77	0.77					
SATISFACTION			4.03	0.73	0.82	0.66	0.09	0.50
MCF consulting on budget	Q39	0.58					
MCF consulting on time	Q40	0.69					
MCF agreed recommendation	Q42	0.76					
MCF effective implementations for CF	Q43	0.75					
MCF change(s) that improve CF business capabilities	Q44	0.75					
COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE			4.13	0.72	0.91	0.69	0.05	0.72
improves the CF's competitive advantage	Q35	0.79					
applies new intelligences to help build CF's business success	Q36	0.83					
engages our intelligences to assist the CF	Q37	0.90					
builds competitive intelligences for the CF	Q38	0.87					
SUSTAINABILITY			4.08	0.76	0.92	0.73	0.04	0.67
MCF-to-CF business solutions that deliver-a-competitive-difference	Q66	0.84					
MCF-to-CF highest value for money solutions delivered	Q68	0.78					
MCF-to-CF responsibility for CF quality performance	Q69	0.84					
a strong positive MCF-to-CF partnership	Q70	0.84					
accelerated CF business growth	Q71	0.83					
always accomplishing what MCF contracted for CF	Q73	0.77					

The single indicator construct model approach (with each measure development requiring more stages of mathematical calculation) is adopted. It minimizes any interaction effects between construct measures and better exposes the pathways and their relative significance within the model (Grace & Bollen, 2008).

Table 4.6: MCF-to-CF Sustainable (competitive) business positioning Research model Correlations

CORRELATIONS	Contractual Satisfaction	Risks Avoidance	Sustainable Comp Bus Positioning	Economic Worth	Competitive Intelligences	Servicing	Performance	Qualities	Intellectual Capital	Knowledge Creation	Capacities	Innovation
Contractual Satisfaction	1.00											
Risks Avoidance	0.78	1.00										
Sustainable Comp Bus Positioning	0.79	0.81	1.00									
Economic Worth	0.74	0.79	0.83	1.00								
Competitive Intelligences	0.72	0.76	0.79	0.76	1.00							
Servicing	0.75	0.79	0.84	0.78	0.79	1.00						
Performance	0.72	0.77	0.78	0.84	0.75	0.73	1.00					
Qualities	0.75	0.80	0.79	0.81	0.79	0.75	0.83	1.00				
Intellectual Capital	0.69	0.74	0.76	0.78	0.71	0.73	0.73	0.76	1.00			
Knowledge Creation	0.66	0.69	0.73	0.77	0.67	0.70	0.67	0.68	0.74	1.00		
Capacities	0.71	0.75	0.79	0.78	0.72	0.79	0.71	0.70	0.74	0.73	1.00	
Innovation	0.68	0.72	0.74	0.74	0.69	0.72	0.70	0.72	0.69	0.68	0.74	1.00

To further support validity of the structural path model Table 4.6 shows all construct single indicator measurement items do significantly and strongly correlate (Cunningham, 2008; Hair et al., 2014). Further, all ten pre-outcome constructs strongly correlate with the resultant CF outcome constructs (sustainable competitive business positioning and competitive intelligences). This again supports the fact that each factor reduction construct holds discriminant validity, and so each construct is deemed suitable for AMOS 25.0 structural equation modelling. This structural path model shows unidirectional information flows from left (competencies) to right (competitiveness).

This indicates that the 10 pre-competitiveness constructs act collegially as an interacting system of overlapping, interconnecting, pathways sub-systems, strategically sequenced to assist in producing an enhanced CF competitiveness over time. For example, the MCF's intellectual capital and its innovation competencies can drive a subsystem that enhances the CF's qualities systems and these can directly enhance the CF's competitive intelligences.

In contrast, a CF values deliverance sub-system (qualities-to-performance-to-economic worth) is enacted sequentially. This enlists different MCF competencies combinations into different intermediary constructs along this sequentially-linked values process. A risks sub-system is also in operation. Table 4.7 provides further indications that the model is a superior-fit model as the model's measures, such as CMIN/DF = 1.25, and the p value of 0.13, shows it is an excellent fit model.
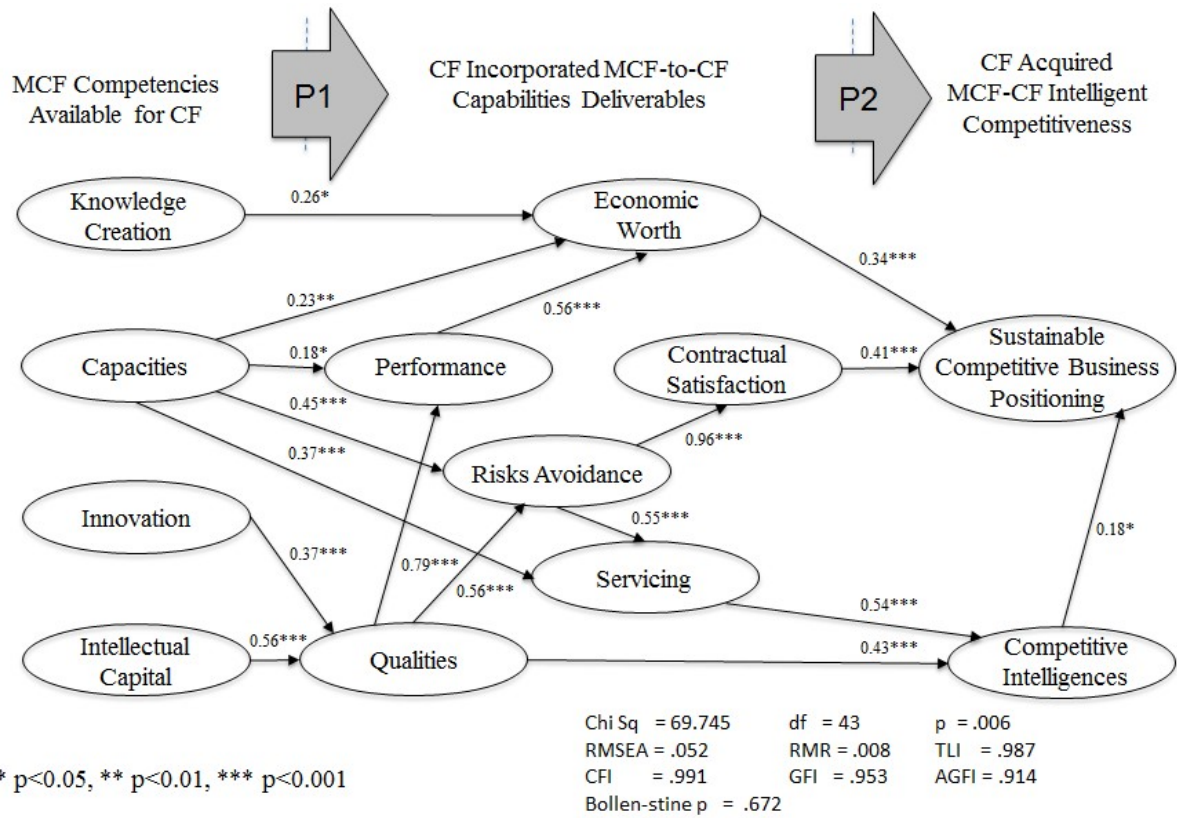
Figure 4.3: Research Model: MCF Business Competiveness Deliverance System

Table 4.7: MCF-to-CF Model Fit Indices

FIT INDEX	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	P	Bollen-Stine Bootstrap **	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1	69.75	43.00	1.62	0.01	0..67	0.95	0.91	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.05
Ex. Fit Std	-	-	≥1; ≤3	>0.05	>0.05	≥0.95	≥0.90	≥0.95	≥0.95	≥0.95	≤0.05

** Bootstrapping by 200 times

The direct pathways between constructs are measured as beta weights and significance. The p values show all beta weight pathway estimates are statistically significant at better than 0.05. All pathways also show small standard errors (SE) and acceptable critical ratios (CR). This information is tabulated in Table 4.8. These direct beta weight pathways are also literature hypothesis supported as shown previously in Table 2.3 and as depicted in Figure 2.3.

Table 4.8: MCF-to-CF Path Regression Weights Research model

Path Regression			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
Qualities	<-	Intellectual Capital	0.562	0.091	6.18	***
Qualities	<-	Innovation	0.379	0.091	4.158	***
Risks Avoidance	<-	Capacities	0.198	0.087	2.274	0.023
Risks Avoidance	<-	Qualities	0.776	0.078	9.891	***
Performance	<-	Capacities	0.467	0.081	5.736	***
Performance	<-	Qualities	0.591	0.073	8.1	***
Economic Worth	<-	Capacities	0.218	0.104	2.088	0.037
Economic Worth	<-	Performance	0.587	0.071	8.287	***
Economic Worth	<-	Knowledge Creation	0.271	0.083	3.253	0.001
Contractual Satisfaction	<-	Risks Avoidance	0.912	0.047	19.557	***
Servicing	<-	Capacities	0.443	0.127	3.493	***
Servicing	<-	Risks Avoidance	0.57	0.114	5.015	***
Competitive Intelligences	<-	Qualities	0.464	0.09	5.165	***
Competitive Intelligences	<-	Servicing	0.487	0.09	5.428	***
Sustainable Bus Positioning	<-	Economic Worth	0.273	0.092	2.976	0.003
Sustainable Bus Positioning	<-	Contractual Satisfaction	0.26	0.109	2.398	0.017
Sustainable Bus Positioning	<-	Servicing	0.466	0.101	4.608	***

4.5 Research Study Qualitative

Qualitative data is collected simultaneously with the quantitative data collection against the following four open-ended questions – each allowing up to three separate comments:

1) What MCF competencies are of value to the client firm?

2) What are the main impacts of MCF on the client firm's performance?

3) What MCF value processes help grow client firm sustainable positioning?

4) What MCF competitive intelligence's help grow client firm sustainable positioning?

This study's qualitative methodology uses NVivo 12 Plus to relate text/phrase responses to the above questions and to identify/recognize construct connectivity relationships, as well as to develop further unique observations. There are 12 open-ended response qualitative questions, and these provided the total input data for all the NVivo word trees and word clouds studies. Forty per cent (92/232) of respondents provided detailed qualitative written responses. These responses helped set research context and to also validate the preceding quantitative questions.

MCF respondent data capture is compiled into Excel spreadsheets and imported into this study's NVivo 12 Plus project. This MCF respondent data is then sorted and coded into twelve 'thematic nodes' - twelve aligned to the constructs of Figure 4.3 SEM MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System Model. This nodal data is then used to assess MCF respondent open-ended opinions.

The twelve constructs are coded as 'child nodes' and grouped under 'parent nodes' corresponding with the Competencies, Capabilities and Competitiveness block areas of Figure 2.1's MCF-to-CF Sustainable (competitive) business positioning Relationship Pathway and as developed in the Figure 4.3 model. Once the respondent data is suitably coded it is analysed against 'text-coding' queries.

4.5.1 Word Cloud Qualitative Analysis

An NVivo Word-Cloud (Figure 4.4) is built from a 'frequency-of-coded-words'. The largest sized text is closely associated with other close proximity large size words, and an overall proximity relationship is also incorporated. These largest sized term associations from the centre outwards represent strongest relative associations.

Figure 4.4: Word Cloud for Entire MCF Business Competiveness Deliverance System

Figure 4.4 displays this study's most frequently used respondent words. These arise from its open-ended questions. The size and intensity of the word indicates differences in its frequency of use, and so it's relative importance. The words 'business, strategy, knowledge, market and value' are the strongest in the cloud, followed by 'technology, implementation, processes, solutions, cost, client, innovation, expertise, industry, growth, competitive and management.' Collectively these 'action' words substantively group the commonly used MCF respondent's responses. They indicate these MCF respondents are attuned to providing their and their MCF's perspectives concerning the business, its competencies and its deliverable functions, rather than the CF's solution outcomes. Thus, this word-cloud signals the MCF respondents' key considerations when considering engaging in a strategic consultancy with a CF.

Through this study's IMCI-offered survey, the Word-Cloud's clustering blocks indicate how MCF respondents group their perceptive viewpoints. For example, around the word 'market' is expertise. Expertise is associated with business, cost, client, innovation, new, best analysis, best transformation, best agility, best collaboration,

best solving and delivery advantage thinking'. Thus, the MCs responding to this study's survey do associate such word clusters into groups of immediate and deliverable business capabilities, and in this example, especially against the deliverables of business, market and expertise. Therefore, in this example MCF respondents likely see themselves as first targeting the CF's 'business, markets and expertise, and linking these into those aspects of its CF capabilities and into those aspects its CF business deliverables.'

The Word-Cloud's small words such as transformation, external, sustainable, innovation, implementation and relationship also suggest the IMCI MCF respondents recognise, but are not necessarily focused on, these more distant and complex business solution processes. Hence, this is a zone where an Indian MCF could likely create an additional 'point-of-difference' from its MCF competitors, and potentially could create new competitiveness business options for its contracting CF.

This also suggests different Indian MCFs can adopt differing approaches when engaging with a CF. For example, another MCF could focus on efficiency, revenue and competitiveness, and further enlist words clustering around these terms as its secondary CF deliverables focal points. Interestingly, MCF respondents do not consider 'value' as a key CF theme, and this study notes it only occurs as a mid-level third-tier word-cloud business theme. Hence into the future, an MCF-to-CF values capabilities approach can also be researched. And if deemed as a competitive addition, its useful values perspectives can be incorporated into aspects of the MCF's suite of competencies.

Thus, the Word-Cloud offers specific, or broad comprehensive options against which an Indian MCF can target the extent of its business approaches when consulting with a CF. Further, in line with Figure 2.1's MCF-to-CF Sustainable (competitive) Business Positioning Relationship Pathway, through to the Figure 4.3 SEM MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System Model, and then enlisting relevant Word-Cloud cluster associations, it appears that the MCF likely offers its contracting CF a full nearly comprehensive competitiveness business outcomes solution. However, it should be noted that the MCF could also be contracted to just offer a specific, detailed, operational deliverables business solution.

4.5.2 Word Trees Qualitative Analysis

The Word-Cloud can be sifted further against its most used words to determine further optimal linkages. This enlists a 'Word-Tree' approach. A Word-Tree associates related phrases against a most used (or chosen) word, with most frequently used phrases having a larger-sized text presence and the closest linked terms residing next to the key word of the Word-Tree. This study first considers the word 'business' (Figure 4.5) so it may gain a general understanding of the MCF respondents and to assess if they hold sufficient understanding to provide strong questionnaire answer capabilities. The P1 arrow represents the MCF respondent business aspects of proposition 1 of Figure 2.1, and its subsequent model development figures, through to the research model (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.5: MCF Respondent Word Tree for Term 'Business'

4.5.2.1 Word Tree MCF Respondents' 'Business' Inputs Associations

Figure 4.5's first block of left input associated terms to the word-tree term 'business' shows that the MCF respondents recognize that business draws on digitization (with capabilities, logistics, strategy, competence, organizational excellence). From their MCF perspective, it also enlists restructuring (with transformation), plus cost optimization (with automation, change execution). Other inputs to clarify the MCF respondents' views of 'business' include better collaboration, efficient operations, high action-bias, innovation, teamwork, objectivity, mobilization of technology, and business understanding. This first block of input associated terms show the MCF respondents have a clear understanding that they see the MCF's business as encompassing a change and an improved environment.

They also see business inputs as encompassing innovation, market growth, understanding clients, data driven, competitive, changing, externally focused, new solutions, client market expansion, knowledge enhancement, finding critical answers, holding expertise, optimizing the workforce, optimizing management, digital strategy related and using best insights. Thus, the MCF respondents do understand the business environment and its MCF-related input requirements.

4.5.2.2 Word Tree MCF Respondents' 'Business' Outputs Associations

From an output perspective, the term 'business'; first leads into IT alignment (with electrical, advice, strategy). The second cluster block of 'business' output terms links 'business' into: actionable growth recommendations/insights, financial/workforce/social development, transformation (through cross geography expertise), cross industry ideas pollination, growth with domain expertise, innovation solutions, and reduced logistics (best) spends. This cluster block of output associated terms shows the MCF respondents have a clear

understanding of this aspect of the term 'business'. They see 'business' as leading into an actioning zone that broadly assesses change, and as one leading into making 'expert' and astute improvement decisions.

MCF respondents also recognize 'business' as delivering/developing motivational (entrepreneurial) models, knowledge, domain expertise, market insights, expertise around issues, metrics improvement, technological model innovation, long-term innovation, needs value deliverance, operations improvement, sustainable outcomes growth, performance optimization at lower costs, process optimization and lower risk, leveraging past knowledge, risk management, technologies adoption, transformational cross geography expert strategy and vertical continuous improvement. Again, MCF respondents broadly understand what their consultancy work can do in respect of the term 'business'.

4.5.2.3 Exact Match of 'Business' Text/Phrase References

Further individual word-tree linkages within the 'business' association domain offer specific MCF respondent connections. For example, extracted from Figure 4.5 are Figures 4.6 and 4.7. These show how to build consulting understanding around business and end solutions understanding for the client concerning business the MCF must meet the CF needs, deliver values and technologies and in this business domain offer growth and domain expertise. Thus, the word-tree linkage associations consistently show the MCF respondent is indeed providing knowledgeable MCF business understanding that can be equated to a substantive degree of 'expert' MCF assessment across their questionnaire responses.

These word-tree sections show knowledge creation, capacities, innovation and intellectual capital as LHS tree contributors, and these offer the CF enhancements to its qualities, performance, economic value capabilities, and so likely improve its overall competitiveness. These interpretations again support and validate Figure 2.1 and its propositions - particularly P1.
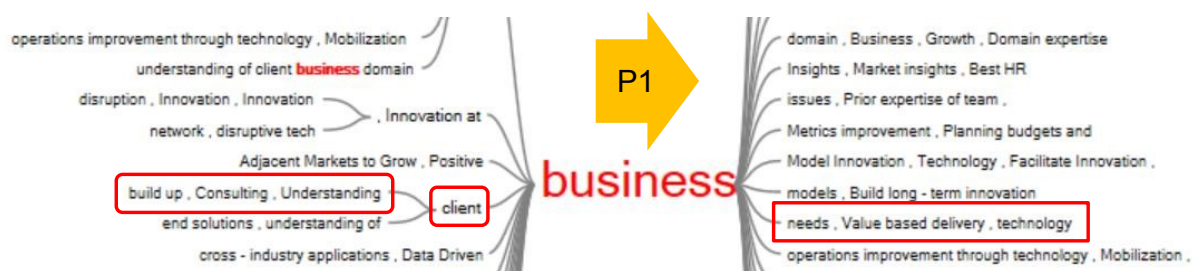
Figure 4.6: Word-Tree Business Subset Relationship 1
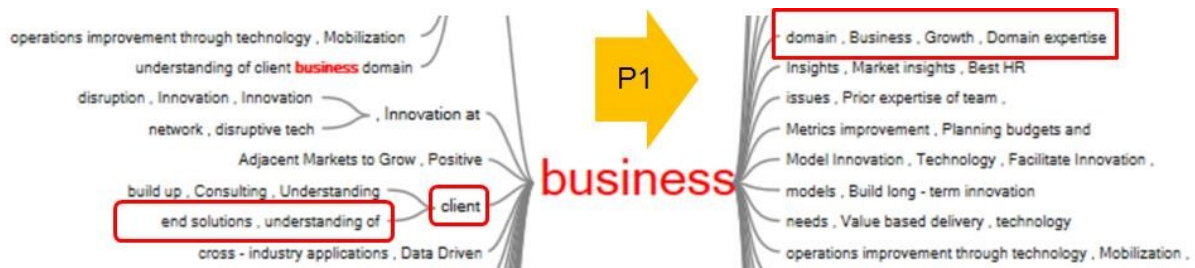
Figure 4.7: Word-Tree Business Subset Relationship 2

4.5.2.4 Word-Tree MCF Respondents' 'Expertise' Inputs Associations

Next, as MCFs need to provide expertise in their domain management consulting, this study enlists a word-tree for 'expertise' (Figure 4.8) to assess the MCF respondents' understanding across this term. The input terms loosely fit under the four MCF model constructs as follows: knowledge creation (diverse knowledge market knowledge technology knowledge), capacities (experience external procurement, best practices, analytical strategy), innovation (dynamic decisions, business transformation), and intellectual capital (industry expertise, business growth, industry project delivery).

Thus, these word-tree inputs clearly show MCF respondents understand what leads to the conveyance of management consulting expertise to a CF. Here, time, broad knowledge, strategic thinking, specific expertise, technological capabilities, pricing, know-how, transformation, growth, analysis, industry best practices, operations, background, external market knowledge and stakeholder support are provided to the CF. Thus, through their MCF these respondent management consultants likely provide solid understanding across these domains, and this word-tree shows that there is an expertise transference from the MCF (competencies) to the CF (capabilities). This word-tree supports, and so offers validation to proposition 1 (P1) as introduced in Chapter 2.

4.5.2.5 Word Tree MCF Respondent 'Strategy' and 'Expertise' Outputs Associations

Similarly, for the expertise output terms (words or phrases) strategy in management consulting can deliver analytical expertise, decision making, digital-alignment, growth-transformations, machine-learning, value chaining, new competencies and the like. Thus, strategies are largely (but not entirely) an MCF contribution. In contrast, management consulting expertise can be actioned as sectoral, strategic, benchmarks, stakeholder outcomes, data sharing, technical education, management design thinking, services, customer centric, financial optimization, long-term engineering, analytics, expert-knowledge, and executable know-how. Thus, the 'strategy' word-tree (Figure 4.9) shows MCF respondents understand their working consulting domain, and they can likely interpret its deliverance requirements to the contracting CF. Again, as for expertise, this word-tree suggests the study's proposed (P1) MCF (competencies) to the CF (capabilities) transference does exist in the case of strategies. Hence, this word-tree also supports, and so offers validation to proposition 1 (P1) as introduced in Chapter 2. This also supports, and validates the P1 relationships across Figure 2.1's MCF-to-CF Sustainable (competitive) Business Positioning Relationship Pathway, and the Figure 4.3 SEM MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System Model.
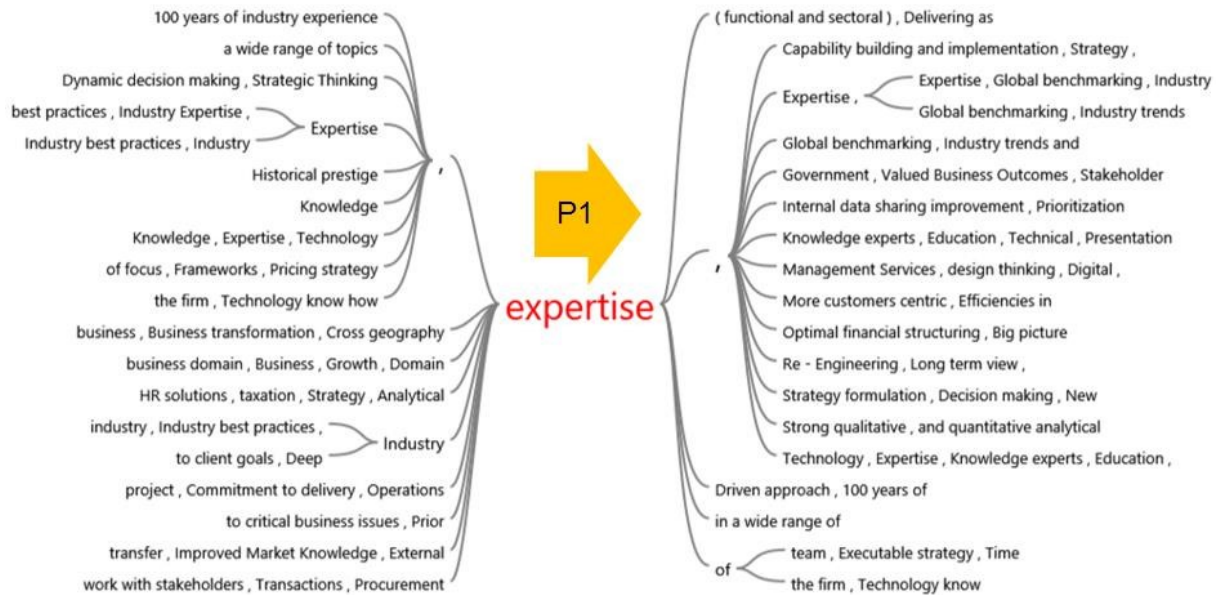
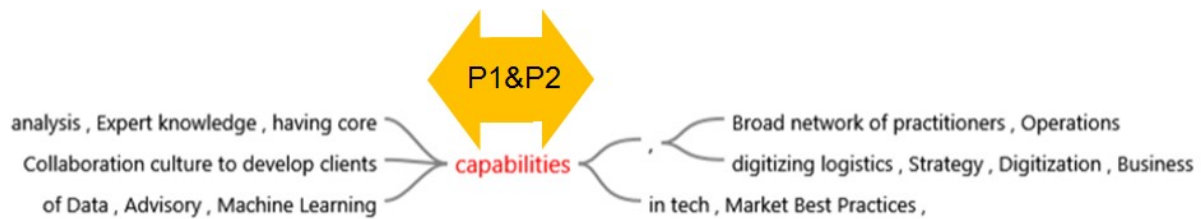**Figure 4.8:** MCF Respondent Word Tree for Term 'Expertise'

Figure 4.9: MCF Respondent Word Tree for Term 'Strategy'

4.5.2.6 Word Tree MCF Respondent 'Capabilities' Inputs-Outputs Associations

The term 'capabilities' is less used by MCF respondents, and so the word is smaller. Capabilities reside as the middle relational component block of Figure 2.1. Figure 4.10 shows there is a clear linkage seen by MCF respondents between their LHS inputs of analysis, expert knowledge, capacities (core abilities), their ability to collaborate with CFs, their data provisions, advice and intellectual capital (machine learning). When applied to CF capabilities, the RHS outputs capabilities include its networks and operations, its digital logistics, its strategies and its business operations. Other capabilities include its technologies and its market best practices. In short, MCF respondents recognise that only with MCF competencies can the management consultant deliver further capabilities to the CF, and these capabilities deliverables likely then contribute towards the CF's

competitiveness. Thus, the linkages across Figure 2.1 and P1 and P2 are again partially validated and so support the structures across the Figure 4.3 model.

Figure 4.10: MCF Respondent Word Tree for Term 'Capabilities'

4.5.2.7 Exact Match of 'Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning' Text/Phrase References

Nine MCF respondents specifically provided feedback concerning the description of a 'sustainable competitive business positioning' as providing:

- capabilities, digitizing logistics, Strategy, Digitization, Business - IT Alignment, Electrical, Advisory, Strategy
- external objective viewpoint on their business, Business transformation, Cross geography expertise
- objective viewpoint on their business, Business transformation, Cross geography expertise, Strategy
- the client corporate strategy, Digital business, reduced logistics spend, Best in class
- making, Competence, Organizational Excellence, Digitization, Business strategy, Technology adoption, and transformation
- adoption and transformation, restructuring processes, Business Metrics improvement, Planning budget, and profit strategies
- build-up of capacities, Consulting, Understanding client business needs, Value based delivery, technology
- answers to critical business issues, Prior expertise of team
- entrepreneurship, Stable infrastructure services, Changing Business and Monetization Models, and Entrepreneur Mindset

Another six MCF respondents provided feedback on Sustainable Business Positioning as providing:

- on topics, Expertise, Government, Valued Business Outcomes, Stakeholder Engagement, Fast delivery
- end solutions, understanding of client business domain, Business, Growth, Domain expertise
- understanding of client business domain, Business, Growth, Domain expertise (functional and digital)
- adjacent Markets to Grow, Positive Business Outcome, Sustainable, Market reputation, Growth
- to Grow, Positive Business Outcome, Sustainable, and Market reputation
- in client base, Expansion of business, Actionable recommendations and insights, Growth

The above terms are also captured within the Table 2.2 measures literature assigned to 'sustainable (competitive) business positioning'. These again add weight to the relevance of past research and to the current relevance of final (literature-framed) Table 4.1 measurement items used in this study.

NVivo also shows fourteen other MCF respondents provided sustainable competitive business positioning linkages relating to:

- Cross-industry applications (e.g. MCF-CF), Data Driven Business Insights, Market insights, Best HR
- Competitive Intelligences - as Data management, Competitive assessment, Competition's business processes, Market Research, Leveraging past
- Innovation - as (1) innovative solution, Innovation, Technology, Innovation, Business Model Innovation, Technology, Facilitate Innovation; (2) Innovation, Provide innovative solutions, New business models, Build long-term innovation; (3) disruption, Innovation, Innovation, Innovation at business, innovative solutions, Help innovate, New; (4) network, disruptive tech, Innovation at business, Cross industry pollination of ideas;
- Intellectual Capital - as utilization, Better insights of one's business, Building Financial, Human and Social
- Knowledge creation as - Market trends, Good experienced team, Business development, Knowledge, Faster time to; sharing, Related knowledge, Knowledge of Business vertical, Continuous improvement
- Performance - as (1) collaboration, KPI improvements, Better Collaboration, Business performance improvements, Streamlining Operations, Optimisation; (2) Optimisation of human resource, Improved business performance, Decreased operating costs, Operational; (3) culture, Manpower optimization, Efficient operations, Business operations improvement through technology, Mobilization; operations improvement through technology, Mobilization, Business process optimization, Process map, detailed; (4) employee productivity, High action bias, Business process optimization, Brainstorming, Market performance
- Risk Avoidance - as (1) Automation, Change Execution, Cost Optimization, Business Process Optimization, Improved risk management; (2) Optimization, Improved risk management, Managing Business Risks, Process optimization, Risk Management

Thus, as expected, a sustainable competitive business positioning is derived from multiple business sources, including MCF source capacities, innovation, intellectual capital, knowledge creation, performance (also capturing decreased operating costs), risks avoidance and competitive intelligences. Hence, a strategic MCF-to-CF model showing pathway flows, such as represented in the quantitative model (Figure 4.3), is again predominantly supported through NVivo's qualitative data capture. This is further displayed through Figures 4.11 and 4.12 word-tree text search queries of sustainable competitive business positioning mapped to include the synonyms competitive, competitiveness and business. Considering these two Figures 4.11 and 4.12 together it is again clear that MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables offer improvements, further consumer engagement,

competitive advantage better market knowledge and assessment, greater intelligence, insights, enhancements, unique products, added value and smart pricing. These capabilities then bring competitiveness components and result in benchmarking, faster production, advantage, assessment, edge, intelligence, pricing, and market standards. Thus, competitiveness outcomes encompass a sustainable competitive business positioning and a competitive intelligence component. Again, this supports and helps validate the study's Figure 2.1 to 2.3 approaches and its Figure 4.3 structural path modelling approach.
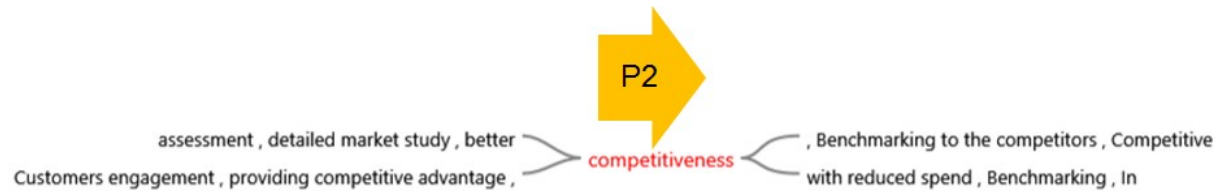
**Figure 4.11:** MCF Respondent Word Tree Concerning Synonyms for Term 'Competitiveness'
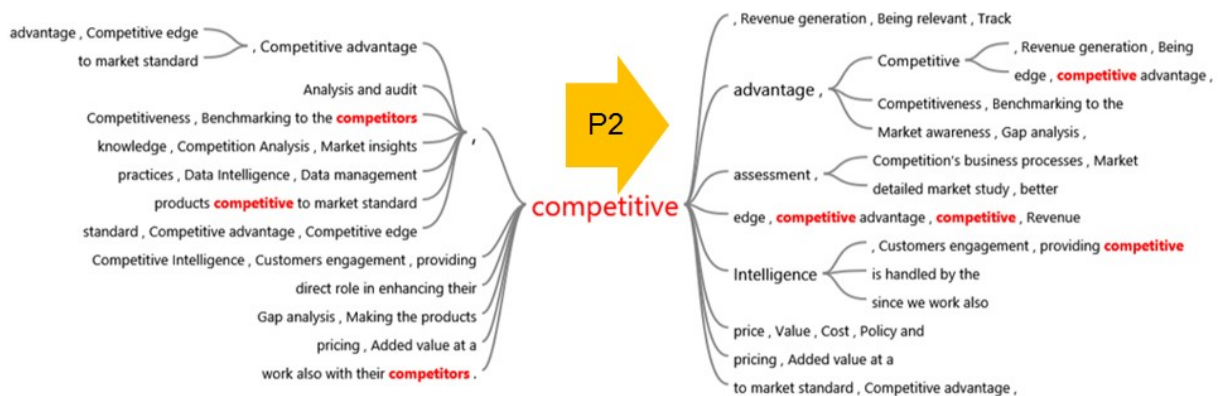
Figure 4.12: MCF Respondent Word Tree Concerning Synonyms for Term 'Competitive'

4.5.3 Word Trees Qualitative Analysis Summary

Figures 4.5 to 4.12 collectively support and validate the propositions of Figure 2.1 and their subsequent developments into the Figure 4.3 research model. P1 is validated via the Competencies-to-Capabilities word-tree associations. P1 and P2 are linked and validated by the capabilities forward and backwards linkages. P2 is validated by the competitive and competitiveness word-tree associations. Thus, this study's research and its validation approach may be summarized as Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13 shows that the literature contributes to both the quantitative and qualitative research. Then the literature, the (validated) quantitative study and the qualitative study all contribute to the study's triangulation. Therefore, this study's research model findings are narrowed towards a positive and specific MCF-CF solution.
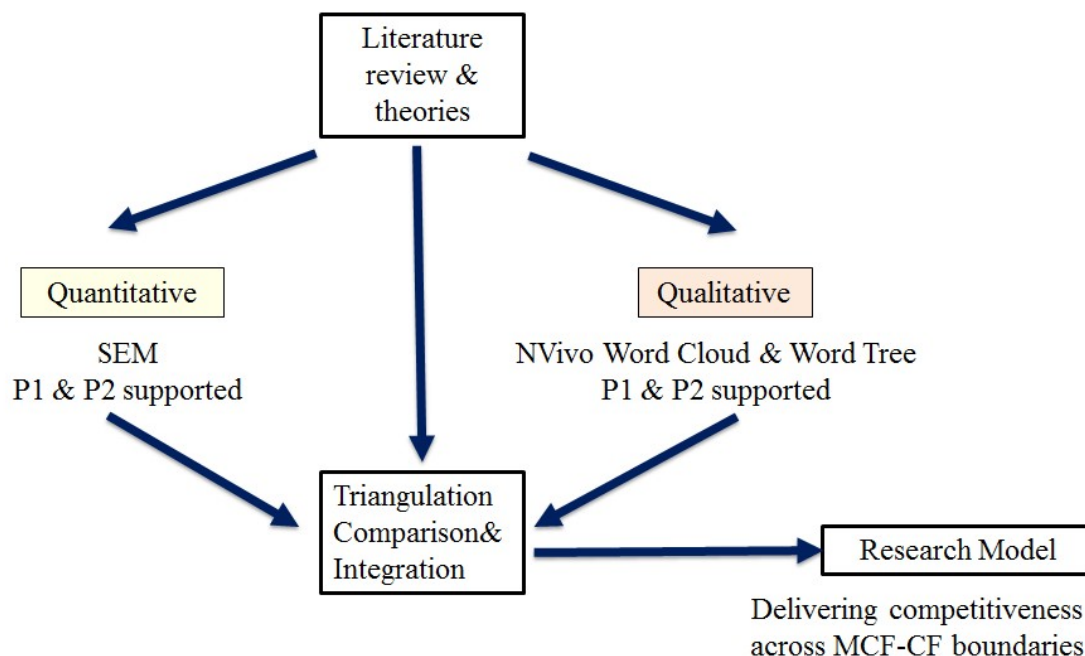
Figure 4.13: Research Triangulation Summary

4.6 Chapter 4 Summary

Quantitative structural path modelling applying confirmatory factor reduction analysis is used to verify construct measurement item structures and to test an MCF business competitiveness deliverance system and its propositions. It shows MCF competencies can relationally work with a contracting CF to initiate strategic changes to the CF's business capabilities systems and its capabilities sub-systems. Over time these changes can provide strategic MCF-CF pathways designed to enhance the CF's competitiveness.

This IMCI-supported study shows MCF respondents come from across India, but primarily from India's major industrial/business cities. These MCF respondents are typically well-qualified, experienced business advisors, predominantly male (and of middle age), and from across the spectrum of management consulting firm sizes and project area bands. Results show that by applying the research model it is possible for MCFs to assist in the delivery of an enhanced CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning.

NVivo qualitative word-cloud and word-tree assessments support the view that MCF respondents are knowledgeable across the management consulting domain. They understand their MCF management consulting role. They recognize that they can provide business strategic expertise that can (over time) move the CF towards an enhanced sustainable competitive business positioning. The qualitative MCF respondent contextual commentary assessment data also shows that the propositions proposed in Figures 2.1 to 2.4 (and based on the literature) are also supported. This raft of supporting NVivo word-trees   in   turn   adds validation to the SEM modelled pathways between the MCF and its contracting CF. Thus, this NVivo approach helps triangulate both the quantitative research and the alternate path model.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study develops a new measurable approach to the management consulting deliverables provided to CF. It models sequentially-interconnected processes and systems involved across this MCF-to-CF resource transference relationship as competencies, capabilities and competitiveness inter-chained blocks. This study's strategic management and strategic change research paradigm enlists four prime strategic management approaches into building a firm's competitive advantage. In this study, Porter's 5 forces 'industry-structure' view for superior returns, the 'resource-based' view of superior competitiveness, the 'competence-based' view of efficient resources usage and the 'knowledge-based' view of knowledge creation as key productive resources are collectively extended into building a unique MCF and CF relational assistance approach.

In answer to the research question '*Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally-assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?*' this study first concludes with a general discussion of the key chapter research outcomes and how the MCF-to-CF processes work towards an ongoing CF competitiveness positioning (Sarvary, 1999; Wang & Yim, 2019), where CF sustainable competitive business positioning and latest CF competitive intelligences offer CF strategic business growth.

This study's MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System, developed in India using its peak management consulting body, shows that MCFs, in an India context, can astutely deploy their latest business intelligence competences, along with their MCF-to-CF knowledge mechanisms, into a CF systems transference, and so can further build MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables systems. This MCF-to-CF consulting assistance process then moves the CF towards an enhanced business competitiveness positioning (measured as a competitive intelligences suite, and an enhanced CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning). Thus, the research question is positively answered. This study also makes:

1) theoretical contributions: offering a new (digitally-relevant) Management Consulting Process approach, and further support to Table 2.3 and 2.4 hypothesised direct and indirect pathways.
2) empirical contributions: in developing a MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System model approach with measurable constructs and unique combinations of systematic pathways to attain ongoing sustainable (competitive) business positioning.
3) real world contributions: in highlighting the build of a system of measurable interconnected combinations of MCF competencies that can enable a measurable consultancy process that can add further CF deliverables capabilities systems and that can develop a CF into one possessing ongoing measurable competitiveness effects. These sequenced measurement contributions also possess model optimization possibilities, and into the future could be modified (or bring additional constructs) to include the incorporation of further MCF and CF digitization inclusions across some or all constructs.
4) limitation(s) assessments: across eight constricting areas.
5) recommendations: for future research - including a near-real-time integrated MCF-to-CF software platform solution capable of capturing the MCFs' digital age neural networks, external cloud data

mining and AI-discovered item additions, and incorporating these rapidly into the CF's operational business systems.

5.1 General Discussion

5.1.1 Chapter 1

As discussed in chapter 1, current management consulting studies are generally either subjective based surveys or experimental design or content analysis, and in some instance a combination of one or more approaches. These approaches are limited in their assessment of MCF-to-CF studies as they usually do not follow full path model approaches. MCF-CF approaches are often unique, time-consuming, delivery-specific and analysis-specific. Further, there is limited agreement on what should be measured, how measures should be grouped and how the consultancy should be conducted.

Hence, the aim of this Institute of Management Consultants of India supported online survey-based research is to build a theoretically-supported, objective, MCF-to-CF approach by consolidating measurement items into meaningful constructs, thus allowing pathway systems to be optimized towards CF competitiveness positioning outcomes.

5.1.2 Chapter 2

Here this study identifies different MCF approaches across recent literature. It groups relevant MCF-related literature measurement items into one of twelve literature-supported constructs, each with a CF business focus. It then develops an MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Pathway (Figure 2.1), literature-frames all the embedded MCF-to-CF constructs, and builds these within their framework blocks into the Proposed MCF-to-CF Sustainable Competitive Business Positioning Relationship Framework (Figure 2.3).

Chapter 2 then literature-frames the survey and its processes across Tables 2.1 to 2.4 and offers literature supported questions and hypothesised pathways that may reside between the 12 constructs deployed (Figure 2.4). Data collection captures quantitative and qualitative data and so is a mixed-methods approach. This epistemological foundation: enriches the primary quantitative research technique and innovates the conceptual chapter 2 framework through qualitative inquiries triangulating the quantitative questionnaire study. It combines inductive and deductive cognition/contemplation and reduces researcher personal bias to deliver a comprehensive MCF-to-CF analysis.

5.1.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 introduces the methodology; it first assesses the Indian business environment, the Indian MCF and its growth, concluding that India is probably on the cusp of a major business and economic transformation. Here MCFs can assist CFs with strategy, streamlining and enhancing current business options and offering positive value-adding opportunities. Hence, this study likely holds relevance in investigating different MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables options, and these then lead towards enhancing CF competitiveness and towards creating a CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning.

As an MCF partners a CF across its journey from inception through to final execution, it can over time help to: (1) improve the CF's infrastructure, (2) enhance CF performance and CF servicing, and (3) streamline the CF qualities dynamics. Thus, future Indian CFs are likely to become highly customer-centric, innovative (and also digital) businesses, ones that likely continue to leverage and optimize their business systems against the capabilities, innovation, knowledge creation and intellectual capital ideas provided by their Indian MCFs.

This main research study, of 232 MCF survey respondents, seeks answers to the research question: 'Do MCF competencies and MCF-to-CF capabilities relationally-assist in promoting a sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the contracting CF?'

This study lies within the Indian and MCF-to-CF context, with 86% of MCF respondents indicating their Indian extraction. It is noted that the MCF competencies engaged can help develop a set of MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables, and these can then conjointly combine towards a new ongoing competitiveness for the CF.

Data collection follows Dillman's suggested approach to online surveys, but follow-up notifications were delivered every two weeks (as agreed with the IMCI), whereas Dillman (2015) used shorter between-notification time intervals. This approach delivers (without incentives) a strong response rate of 54%. Further, this study follows SEM as it seeks an MCF-to-CF model precision that is more rigorous than that provided by regression path analysis. The qualitative analysis uses NVivo and screens the verbiage into unique themes via word-cloud and word-trees. These build triangulations with the quantitative study.

5.1.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 first builds the study's quantitative data analysis as part of the triangulation process. It begins by concluding the survey responses captured are in line with what is to be projected across online SurveyMonkey studies. It also concludes that 232 complete (under 10 missing values across only 20 surveys) from 313 surveys collected over 10 weeks is also acceptable. The 232 surveys provide around 20 cases per construct as required for strong SEM interpretation/validation (Hair et al., 2014), and the IP address of each respondent is different, indicating 232 unique respondents are in the final data set. CFA factor reduction delivers 12 literature supported constructs with each indicator item residual below 0.05.

Using Munck's (1979) equations and Grace & Bollen (2008) single indicator approach to minimize any unobserved item interaction effects and to best clearly expose the actual SEM path relationships (Cunningham, 2008; Grace & Bollen, 2008) an excellent fit SEM Model (Figure 4.3) is delivered, and is 200 times bootstrap validated. The model (Figure 4.3) is termed the research model.

Thus, via NVivo and as part of the Figure 4.13 research triangulation consisting of literature and theory, quantitative modelling and qualitative assessments, the Figure 2.1 to 2.4 framework modelling is validated qualitatively. Text relations generated in NVivo also support the general construct and measurement item relationships built from the literature, but in this Indian IMCI data sourcing context.

5.2 Theoretical Thesis Contributions

This research establishes literature supported theoretical pathways showing within the Indian context: (1) direct association between the MCF competencies suite, and the MCF-to-CF deliverables capabilities suite of CF utilitarian and hedonic values along with risks avoidance and contractual satisfaction, and that (2) these CF operational blocks combine along several sequential alternate paths and help build their indirect pathways systems into the CF's competitiveness outcomes of sustainable competitive business positioning and competitive intelligences.

This applied research is constructed around publication supported, relevant strategic management theories, institutional theory, transaction cost theory, transaction cost economics theory, social capital theory, and organizational learning theory and consumer behavioural theories. It builds a causal model that aligns with Hume's theory of causation and Aristotle's 4-step theory of causation, and so relationally models as Figure 4.3 the MCF-to-CF management consulting relational pathways of influence that may enhance a CF's competitiveness.

This study significantly expands the management consulting knowledge domain when considered against prior available MCF-to-CF methodologies. It deploys twelve specific, time-lined and pathway-sequenced MCF-to-CF constructs as one 'systems model,' and so clarifies how the MCF-to-CF knowledge transfer systems combine and flow along pathways, to deliver further competitiveness aspects into the contracting CF. Hence, this thesis reduces the knowledge gap in the literature by directly capturing, modelling and visually presenting the knowledge transference processes that arise between a MCF and a CF when they are involved in a MCF-to-CF contracted management consulting process.

The NVivo mappings (Figures 4.6 to 4.13) again support the quantitative model (Figure 4.3) relationships (P1 and/or P2) of Figure 2.1, and these word-trees and relational links provided by MCF respondents are similar to many of the measurement items framed from past literature (and theory). They also support the existence of the left-to-right causal model structure between competencies, capabilities and competitiveness.

> This adds strong support towards management consulting being a complex, strategic management, relational system-of-systems approach. This also has theoretical implications in respect of a definitive 'Management Consulting Process'. Therefore this study suggests that its theoretical, literature-framed research may actually move past 'Management Consulting Process' definitions into a sequential, management consultancy systems process, which may now be described as follows:
>
> *Management Consulting is an inter-firm, relational, sequential, strategic management, consultancy and multi-systems process. The Management Consulting Process first assesses the MCF's suites of available competencies to determine their suitability to assist the contracted CF. Second, these competencies are conjointly enlisted to frame and influence the build of intermediary MCF-to-CF business capabilities systems (business values, risks*

avoidance and competitive intelligences) deliverables for the contracting CF. Third, each of these three intermediary MCF-to-CF systems must be measurable and also optimizable. Fourth, when suitably focused, each of the contracting CF's engaged, intermediary MCF-to-CF systems delivers a combination-suite that collectively influences the promotion of an ongoing CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning. Fifth, each ongoing CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning should remain adaptive and responsive to the CF's latest, business-relevant competitive intelligences acquisitions.

Thus, this study offers a substantive clarification contribution to the complexities of management consulting and its theoretical approaches by presenting a clear theoretically supported systems pathway model that successfully explains the Management Consulting Process. This claim is also supported by recognising the Table 2.3 and Table 2.4 literature-hypothesised direct (and indirect) pathways also fit across this study's Figure 4.3 new and validated MCF Business Competitiveness Deliverance System modelling approach.

This study proposes that management consulting theory is actually a management consulting process that fuses the relational exchanges between the MCF, its competencies and its management consultants into a contracted suite of business drivers that can positively add to the CF's existing capabilities systems and over-time produce a net-positive influence on the CF's competitiveness.

5.3 Thesis Practical Considerations

Model 4.3 of the MCFs Business Competitiveness Deliverance System for its engaged CF shows a transition from: (1) the MCF and its available competencies to (2) the MCF-to-CF deliverables capabilities and through to (3) the CF's competitiveness re-positioning solution. A management consultancy relationship is formed over time between the MCF and the CF, and this management consultancy relationship should bring a futures-focused sustainable (competitive) business solution to the CF.

5.3.1 Impact on MCFs

Model 4.3 of the MCFs Business Competiveness Deliverance System for an MCF engaging with a CF shows how MCFs may best focus their competencies developments as they seek to build competitiveness deliverance systems that can be engaged when working with a CF. Here, the model solution likely has industry-specific and country-specific aspects that also need to be considered.

5.3.2 Impact on CFs

From a CF perspective, the MCFs Business Competiveness Deliverance System Model (Figure 4.3) shows how CF managers and CF leaders may each strategically move their workforce towards helping develop the best possible ongoing competitiveness positioning solution as the CF moves forward into the future. Here, managers and leaders likely first pursue solutions that are internally (self-contained) deployed, readily business-usable, technologically applicable, data/results-driven (in near-real time) and cost effective.

5.3.3 Practical Relationships Impacts on Businesses

This research study can influence MCFs and CFs from a relational business perspective by:

1) Highlighting how consultancies can build a modelling system of measurable interconnected combinations of sequenced MCF competencies inputs, MCF-to-CF capabilities deliverables and CF competitiveness outcomes that can be sequentially measured, and possibly optimized or modified using incorporating additional constructs (such as digital-world inclusions).

2) Recognising that the MCF-CF consultancy is an integral, dynamic, shared and positive relationship across the entire CF corporate system, its workforce and its associated business operational systems.

3) Showing how the MCF should focus its internal business consulting modelling towards maximizing its potential engagement competencies. This means it should be continually building further MCF consulting-related competencies so it can successfully work with any potential CF. Here, it should continually consider whether its existing MCF-to-CF business options can be made more effective. For example, as the CF businesses of today are trending into multiple online domains, they may require further means to assess and reframe their existing MCF-to-CF business deliverables capabilities into more intelligent connectivity and communicative systems. Such new MCF-to-CF deliverables capabilities systems requirements draw upon the MCF's competencies suite and this may require the enhancement of the MCF competencies across its existing capacities, intellectual capital, technology creations and innovations. Hence, to keep ahead of the existing competitive business environment, the MCF must be continually optimizing its competencies.

4) Focusing its MCF-to-CF options directed towards improved qualities, better operational performances and greater economic worth can likely form an optimizable system that can contribute towards the CF's business outcomes solution. This likely involves an expansion of the CF's intellectual capabilities greater big-data capture, intelligent data collation and analysis software capacities. The MCF can likely provide these outcomes solutions.

5) Recognising it needs to continually harvest latest business innovation discoveries into its suite of competencies systems. Potentially this can offer the MCF new ways to work with a CF and to develop enhanced MCF-to-CF deliverables capabilities for the CF.

6) Building further research and development particularly in the incorporation of new emergent technologies into its competencies suite.

7) Recognising the MCF should combine all four MCF competencies into an applied MCF consultancy system that can then assist it in delivering an enhancing MCF-to-CF business capabilities suite to the contracting CF. This also focuses on enhancing the CF's different values system components, its risks avoidance system components and its competitive intelligence deliverance system components.

8) Using Figure 4.3 pathways to exploit and maximize their collective effectiveness in delivering optimal sustainable (competitive) business positioning for the CF.

5.4 Thesis Real World Contributions

This research study can influence businesses from a real-world perspective by being used as a single business solution. This study suggests any business can follow this model and its pathways and focus on

changing its capabilities so it can progress further towards a desired sustainable (competitive) business positioning.

For example, in developed market economies such as the United States, this research model can be used by an MCF (such as the Boston Consulting Group) when contracting to a CF (such as the consumer value store CVS Pharmacy). CVS Pharmacy operated over 9,967 US chain outlets in 2018. It sold online and via CVS Pharmacy and Longs Drugs stores. Sales included prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, beauty products, cosmetics, imaging finishing, general seasonal merchandise, greeting cards, plus some convenience foods. It offers healthcare services via 1,100 plus MinuteClinic medical clinics plus Diabetes Care Centres. This complex business remains in competition with other US pharmacy suppliers such as Walgreens.

The study's research model, if driven by an MCF (like Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Co or Bain & Co), can help CSV pharmacy to push across boundaries. For example, today MCF innovation offers new ways to pervasively interact with consumers. MCF knowledge creation also offers new cloud summarized information, TelePharmacyHealth and dashboard assessment options for managers. MCF intellectual capital allows precision tracking of products, consumers and logistics which can be optimized across block chain supply chains and timelines. MCF capacities today offer new innovation driven qualities comparisons, performance enhancements and revenue controls, with each gauged against risks. Thus, the study's research model can quickly show where and how an MCF can leverage its competencies, create improved CVS pharmacy capabilities and likely deliver an enhanced competitiveness business positioning for CVS pharmacy. Using this research model all approaches could be followed, or only some approaches may be leveraged, but it is likely that some positive movement towards competitiveness is an eventual outcome.

Alternatively, in the developing economy of Brazil pharmacies are growing in number, competition is increasing and the product mix is changing. The product range is diversifying as international pharmacy chains are challenging for a Brazilian market share position. Pharmacy store numbers now approach 500. The two biggest pharmacy chains Raia Drogasil and Pague Menos are experiencing international competition from Wal-Mart, with Walgreens, BOOTS and CVS (owner of Drogaria Onofre pharmacy chain) creating further new entrant models.

Hence the local pharmacy chains Raia Drogasil and Pague Menos could contract for MCF assistance, and they could follow this study's research model approach. For example, the MCF could likely provide outlet and business model innovations like introducing marketing media to mobile connected locals. They could add knowledge creation with interlinked smart databases, drug use tracking, robotic drug picking for prescription clients, and TelePharmacy advice services. MCF intellectual capital additions could draw on precision optimization of product ordering, consumer upselling and logistical improvements. MCF capacities can bring new efficiencies across the CF capabilities, and a more effective digitally managed business model. Thus, the study's research model again offers multiple recognizable pathways towards improved local pharmacy capabilities and towards enhanced competitiveness.

As a less developed nation, Egypt is strategically positioned between Africa, Asia and Europe. Its pharmacies offer a confluence of local and global medicine and compounding practices. Egyptian pharmacies today number around sixty thousand, medicines are price controlled and any drugs containing opioid analgesics are restricted. Egyptian pharmacies also sell beauty products and a small selection of approved food items. Many pharmacies are lacking in active drug preparation, in quality consulting and many lack powerful on-line facilities. Novartis and GSK are the biggest Egyptian pharmacy chains, and they also compete with other internationals like Bayer, Pfizer and Merck.

These local Egyptian pharmacies may need MCF assistance. For example, a latest proposal for Egypt's 12,000 registered medicines is to introduce a pharmacy block chain approach, aimed at controlling drug-scaling and over-dispensing against a doctor's prescription. This government desired approach mathematically ensures a cyber security solution for identifying use (and misuse) of digital data and intelligent devices, while providing transparency and reliability to government, all pharmacies and related supply-chain firms. Thus, it is likely the study's research model has application when local pharmacy chains seek to maintain or grow their competitive positioning.

Therefore, different MCFs and contracting CFs, across different industries, and in different global markets in different countries, can likely utilize the study's research model to help streamline the CF capabilities and thereby move towards an enhanced sustainable (competitive) business positioning. It follows that this study's research model is possibly the basis whereby a business developed/developing/less developed country can consider how it can strategically remodel. Hence, the research model may have wider and general business applications when pursuing improved competitiveness. For example, it is also likely that the Indian government can use the study's model to build further government support networks. This government support approach is achievable through the detailed understanding of the underlying constructs within the study's model, including the necessary intelligent, innovative, knowledge creation digital infrastructures. These supports can then further facilitate MCF-CF teamed approaches towards new intelligently-mapped, enhanced sustainable (competitive) business positionings within the global business market place.

5.5 Study Constraining Limitations

1) This is a point-in-time study. Hence, solutions and findings apply only against this August-October 2019 data capture time-frame.

2) This MCF-to-CF study is empirical and it pursues answers to the study's research question. This research has not been previously attempted and only scant existing attempts at management consulting theory are available. Hence, this study, through its findings, has attempted to clarify and expand management consulting theory, but definitive conclusions are still subject to further testing.

3) This study models against theory and hypothesized path relationships. It seeks knowledge through indirect observation against information provided by experienced management consultant respondents. The survey approach employs causal and demographic response considerations. These are then examined both quantitatively via SEM and qualitatively via NVivo, and predictions are model tested.

4) This study only involves twelve key constructs, yet many other constructs may apply, such as additional competencies, such as the 'effectiveness' of the MCF in providing assistance. There may also be two competitive intelligences sets, one directly linked to assisting/supporting the sustainable competitive business positioning and the other a new competitive intelligences set that 'scans, assesses, and enlists' where relevant new business intelligences into the CF.

5) This empirical study is conducted only in India. Hence all findings are Indian MCF-specific and inferences as to applicability in other countries first needs to be empirically tested. Hence, other countries need to replicate this work, and compare findings against this Indian MCF study to see if the Figure 4.3 SEM Model does indeed expand beyond India (as this researcher expects).

6) This study is supported by global members of the Institute of Management Consultants of India. This is the only globally-recognised institutional body representing MCFs in India. It does not include all the management consultants within India, but it does include the vast majority of Indian Tier-1 and Tier-2 MCFs.

7) This study's research is built against data provided by a relatively small group of management consultants and was placed into the consulting domain as a web survey. Hence some less informed MCFs may have missed it and so have not responded.

8) This study's SEM repeatability is Bollen-stine bootstrap validated. This is acceptable (Cunningham, 2008; Hair et al., 2014), but another separate study (or studies) would definitely offer an even better model validation.

5.6 Study Recommendations

This study successfully pilots, and then triangulates, its second and major data set, delivering the full-data research model (Figure 4.3) in an MCF-to-CF consultancy approach that offers measurable structural pathways that conjointly deliver both a CF sustainable (competitive) business positioning and an ongoing CF competitive intelligence. Different MCFs and CFs across markets, and industries, can apply the model to deliver an enhanced competitive CF business positioning.

The study's research model offers a strategic business repositioning mechanism and competitiveness adjustment mechanism that MCFs can utilize in their management consulting endeavours with contracting CFs. The study's research model enables the CF to understand its capabilities and to optimize the pathways systems that combine to deliver competitiveness. This study should be duplicated at two levels, first by MCFs in their normal consulting CF relationships, and second by individual CFs in specific industries such as pharmacies, or in manufacturing, or in production, or in services, or in health, and this should be extended to other countries including developed nations, developing nations, and third world nations.

Further, the research model likely has general business application. Hence, it should be research trialled across different industry segments such as automotive, pharmaceuticals, consumer products, education, hi-tech, mining and retail, and with different CF capabilities such as big data & analytics, marketing & sales, and restructuring to test its applicability as a general approach when targeting ongoing business competitiveness.

5.7 Future Research Avenues

Researchers are now invited to test this study's three stage/Management Consulting Process/approach, and to deepen and/or extend its pathways modelling approach as an improved structural equation model, one which may then be able to further refine the Management Consulting Process proposed herein. It is also likely this study's Management Consulting Process would also operate if applied to the digital business domain.

Further, as MCF-to-CF values are likely time, time-line, and place conditional, a longitudinal study is likely of use to display trends and to project future point-in-time (or progressive) rectifications.

As the MCF and the CF likely display different expectations, a gap analysis run before, during and after the consultation may expose how an MCF may best further re-align the MCF-to-CF systems towards further benefiting the CF.

Further, as MCF-to-CF relational assistance processes develop over time, the MCF extends its own competencies and its own capabilities to deliver further competitiveness options, whilst the CF also backwards extends and grows its existing competencies into better-supporting its new combined (MCF and CF) capabilities towards creating its new competitiveness positioning. Thus, in MCF-to-CF transference relationship, both the MCF and the CF are likely to individually benefit. This is another comparative study area available for future research.

This thesis follows a MCF respondent perspective and it uses aspects of MCF competencies and capabilities to assist the CF. The CF is also assumed to already know what it wants, or needs, and what the MCF may be able to offer. If it deems the relationship beneficial, only then is it likely to contract the MCF, and so can then enlist the MCF's help to advance its CF competitiveness. However, as each CF requires different components of assistance and likely needs a different approach and this usually occurs on a 'one-off' relational basis, then backward chaining may not deliver the high relevance as it may in a pure RBV situation. However, it may offer new measures that could warrant further model investigation.

Into the future, as the knowledge across competencies, capabilities and competitiveness grows, and then a suggested future research approach could be to conduct a similar study, in a first-world and leading industrialized country. This new dual research study could be conducted from first a MCF respondent perspective, and second from CF respondent basis. This approach uses matching projects and matching surveys, and then seeks SEM model comparisons. Such dual research study comparisons can then possibly expose further gaps in the MCF assistance perspectives versus the CF desired results perspectives.

Finally, where a MCF's developed competencies (knowledge) systems remain intelligently-active within their neural networks; real-time artificial intelligence (AI) responses to a CF's consultancy request can possibly be generated. Thus, MCFs with digital, real-time AI response competencies can likely further out-compete rival, less-digital, and non-real-time MCF solution providers.

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Appendix A

Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Table A: Characteristics of management consultant's (N=232)

Dimensions	Categories/Range	Numbers (%)
Respondent's gender	Female	12.9
	Male	87.1
Respondent's age	<30	45.5
	30-45	46.0
	46-60	5.4
	>60	3.1
Respondent's education	Bachelor	21.1
	Masters	74.4
	Doctorate	4.5
Firm's number of employees	>100	10.4
	101-1000	16.7
	1001-5000	21.6
	5001-10000	9.9
	10001-20000	8.1
	20001-50000	9.0
	50001-100000	5.9
	>100000	18.5
Respondent's length of experience in consulting	1-5	27.2
	6-10	26.8
	11-15	16.5
	>15	29.5
Firm's location	Only India	86.0
	India and Overseas	14.0

Corporation Size	Male Age				Female Age			
	<30	30-45	46-60	>60	<30	30-45	46-60	>60
>100	3	7	7	5	0	1	0	0
101-1000	15	15	1	0	4	2	0	0
1001-5000	17	23	2	0	5	1	0	0
5001-10000	13	6	1	0	1	1	0	0
10001-20000	7	5	0	0	4	2	0	0
20001-50000	8	8	0	1	1	2	0	0
50001-100000	4	8	1	0	0	0	0	0
>100000	15	21	0	0	4	1	0	0

Age			
<30	30-45	46-60	>60
102	103	12	7

Gender	
Male	Female
196	29

No: of consulting projects	Gender	
	Male	Female
1-5	49	12
6-10	54	6
11-15	33	4
>15	59	7

No: of consulting projects undertaken	Age			
	<30	30-45	46-60	>60
1-5	50	10	0	1
6-10	22	32	3	3
11-15	17	18	2	0
>15	13	43	7	3

Corporation Size	
<100	23
101-1000	37
1001-5000	48
5001-10000	22
10001-20000	18
20001-50000	20
50001-100000	13
>100000	41

Consulting Experience	
1-5	61
6-10	60
11-15	37
>15	66

Firm Location	
National	191
International	31

Corporation Size	No: of Consulting Projects	Gender	
		Male	Female
>100	1-5	5	0
	6-10	5	0
	11-15	2	0
	>15	10	1
101-1000	1-5	10	3
	6-10	6	0
	11-15	7	1
	>15	8	2
1001-5000	1-5	7	5
	6-10	14	1
	11-15	9	0
	>15	12	0
5001-10000	1-5	8	0
	6-10	5	1
	11-15	5	0
	>15	2	1
10001-20000	1-5	3	2
	6-10	5	4
	11-15	1	0

	>15	3	0
20001-50000	1-5	4	1
	6-10	5	0
	11-15	4	2
	>15	4	0
50001-100000	1-5	5	0
	6-10	5	0
	11-15	0	0
	>15	3	0
>100000	1-5	6	1
	6-10	8	0
	11-15	5	1
	>15	17	3

Highest Education	No: of Consulting Projects	Gender	
		Male	Female
Bachelor	1-5	9	5
	6-10	10	3
	11-15	8	1
	>15	10	1
Masters	1-5	40	7
	6-10	41	3
	11-15	25	3
	>15	41	6
Doctorate	1-5	0	0
	6-10	3	0
	11-15	0	0
	>15	7	0

Appendix B

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Appendix C

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Appendix D

The following statements relate to the feelings about your management consulting (MC) firm. PLEASE MARK YOUR RESPONSES LIKE THIS →⬤ (**fill in only one circle per row**) to indicate the extent (disagreement or agreement) to which you believe your MC firm provides the feature described in the statement.

Statements for Respondent to Consider	Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree
My MC firm's work with our client ALWAYS:					
1. offers clear client value for money	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. offers clear client product focusing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. offers high quality client products	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. offers new knowledge transfers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. offers support to change our client's business	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. delivers excellent transactional value strategies	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. delivers authentic and enduring client organizational leadership approaches	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. delivers unique benefits to our client results	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. provides our latest specifically-targeted ideas	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. shares our latest innovation knowledge with the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. encourages us to innovate while solving client problems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. provides solutions to tomorrow's unknown problems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
13. uses innovation to solve client requests	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
14. brings latest consulting knowledge that can assist the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
15. looks for new client opportunities and new markets	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
16. delivers knowledge-based client infrastructure practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
17. adds our experienced-based knowledge to client infrastructure practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
18. adds our expert knowledge to client infrastructure practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
19. targets adding IoT capabilities to client infrastructure practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
20. provides further knowledge capabilities for our client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
21. does not effectively uses our MC expertise	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
22. does not effectively reflect our past MC practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
23. does not effectively reflect our client's particular needs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
24. offers little effective MC offerings to the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
25. does not effectively support our client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
26. does not effectively commit towards building quality across our client's business	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
27. shows-up in our effective fieldwork procedure deliverables to the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
28. provides intellectual problem solving consulting expertise	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
29. uses our intellectual capital to improve the client firm's social capital	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
30. uses our intellectual capital to make our client performance world-class	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
31. uses our collaborative approach to make our client performance world-class	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
32. improves and exchanges new insights with our client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

33. uses our intellectual resources to complete client assignment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
34. builds an ongoing strategically competitive position for the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
35. improves the client's competitive advantage	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
36. applies new intelligences to help build client's business success	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
37. engages our intelligences to assist the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
38. builds competitive intelligences for the client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

OUR MCF WORKS WITH THE CLIENT FIRM TO DELIVER:

39. consulting on budget	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
40. consulting on time	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
41. effective cooperation with client	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
42. agreed recommendation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
43. effective implementation for the client firm	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

OUR CLIENT SHOWS TRUE INTEREST BY ENSURING OUR MC FIRM IS ALWAYS DELIVERING:

44. change(s) that improve their business capabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
45. change(s) that influence theirs use-of-resources	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
46. the services our client requires within agreed timelines	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
47. risk-assessed services that include latest technologies inclusions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
48. correct high-quality client-servicing solutions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
49. consultants that consistently deliver quality results to a request	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
50. safe, secure quality solutions for their workforce	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
51. consultants are consistently respectfully in assisting them	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
52. consulting actions that consistently look 'skilled' to their shareholders	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
53. consulting changes recognized as improving the quality of its business opportunities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
54. consulting processes highlighting where they can best excel	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
55. advice that consistently improves qualities across their business	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
56. deliver pricings designed to win further competitive market share	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
57. improve client rewards for money invested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
58. worthwhile outcomes for worthwhile investment outcomes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
59. more value added client products	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
60. profitable consumer services from the monies invested	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
61. optimized performances against the selected MC solutions engaged	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
62. high levels of optimized business outcomes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
63. optimal consultant-client relationships	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
64. collaborative consultant-client relationships	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENT INDICATES THAT OUR MC FIRM ALWAYS DELIVERED:

65. all their contracted services	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
66. business solutions that deliver-a-competitive-difference	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
67. agreed specific strategic solutions in-time and on-time	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
68. highest value for money	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
69. on their responsibility for quality performance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
70. a strong positive partnership	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

71. accelerated client business growth	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
72. pathways towards repeated consultancies	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

OUR CONSULTING WORK WITH OUR CLIENTS IS:

73. always accomplishing what was contracted	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
74. always sharing our expertise	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
75. providing cutting-edge innovative solutions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
76. delivering our efficient cost effective solutions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
77. completing all our client services as planned	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please tell us a little about yourself as a MC firm member:

78. Are you? Male ◯ Female ◯

79. Please indicate your age: Under 30 ◯ 30-45 ◯ 46-60 ◯ Over 60 ◯

80. Highest formal education: Bachelor ◯ Masters ◯ Doctorate ◯ Other(s) ◯

81. Your corporation size: under 100 ◯ 101-1000 ◯ 1001-5000 ◯ 5001-10000 ◯

10001-20000 ◯ 20000-50000 ◯ 50001-99999 ◯ Over 100000 ◯

82. How many consulting projects have you undertaken 1-5 ◯ 6-10 ◯ 11-15 ◯ Over15 ◯

83. What different types of management consulting are provided by your corporation

Information Technology ◯ Retail ◯ Financial Services ◯ Healthcare ◯

Strategy ◯ HR ◯ Telecom ◯ Consumer Goods ◯

Government ◯ Website business consulting ◯ Social media consulting ◯ thers (please specify) ◯

84. My MCF is multinational (includes Indian firms with branches overseas) Yes ◯ No ◯

85. What MCF competencies are of value to the client firm?
(a)
(b)
(c)

86. What are the main impacts of MCF on the client firm's performance?
(a)
(b)
(c)

87. What MCF value processes help grow client firm sustainable positioning?
(a)
(b)
(c)

88. What MCF competitive intelligence's help grow
(a)
(b)
(c)

client firm sustainable positioning?

Appendix E

List of Related Publications

Ramanujam, R., Hamilton, J.R., & Tee S. (2016). Management Consulting: delivering competitive business value within information technology firms in India. 20th International Conference on ISO & TQM, Baraimi, Oman, 26-28 Sept, 20(4-3) 1-14. (Best Paper Industrial & Service Excellence)

Ramanujam, R., Hamilton, J.R., & Ciccotosto, S. (2019). Pathway to Management Consulting Sustainability. 23rd International Conference ISO & TQM, BNU/HKBU-UIC, Zhuhai, China, 13-15 May, 23(4-4), 1-17.

Ramanujam, R., Hamilton, J.R., Tee, S., & Underdown, M. (2019). Modelling Management Consulting in India: Towards Management Consulting Theory. 19th International Conference on Electronic Business, Newcastle on Tyne, UK, 2-6 Dec, 285-299.