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Applicability of the Lean Startup methodology to entrepreneurship in China

The case of Startup Weekend PolyU, Hong Kong

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Acknowledgments

This thesis does not represent only the pages that follow the acknowledgments, it has been a milestone in my life and illustrates knowledge that has been accumulated over years of hard work. While I take great pride in my entrepreneurial journey outside academia, my Master studies taught me that the moment you think, you know it all, is the moment you start learning.

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Abstract

Purpose: this thesis provides an overview of the startup eco-systems of Mainland China and Hong Kong, through the lens of an American organization called Startup Weekend. Afterwards, it narrows down potential factors behind the success of Startup Weekend Hong Kong, as well as factors that might have caused the slow growth of Startup Weekend in Mainland China. The total number of events is considered as a critical success factor because the main product of Startup Weekend is events, the more events the higher the demand for their services, thus, its applicability to the local market. After an extensive discussion of critical success factors relevant to Startup Weekend in China, the scope of the thesis has been narrowed towards the extent to which Lean Startup Methodology applies to entrepreneurship in People's Republic of China. Here, it is important to mention that Startup Weekend is based on Lean Startup Methodology, therefore, it can be argued that its success, in any market is dependent on the applicability of this particular framework.

Design/Methodology: this thesis adopts Action Theory, the Psychological Actions and Entrepreneurial Success developed by M. Frese as a theoretical framework. Pragmatism has been chosen as paradigm for this research in order to establish methodological congruence between research design and theory. The fit between the two is important for the overall quality of the research and its subsequent conclusions. Pragmatism as a paradigm often relies on *abductive* reasoning that makes use of elements from both induction and deduction logic. Next, the method behind this study is *qualitative multi method*, hence semi-structured interviews and observations have been employed in order to collect primary data. The strategy is a single case study and it targets Startup Weekend Hong Kong and in particular the event that took place on 01 – 03 of April 2016 at Polytechnic University Hong Kong. With regards to *"Time Horizon"* this thesis is considered as a cross-sectional because of its focus on a particular event at a given point of time. Last but not least, secondary data has been triangulated against primary data in order to test the validity of all findings.

Findings: it appears that the startup eco-system of Hong Kong has gained momentum due to the efforts of local government and to some extent because of the wide adoption of the Lean Startup Methodology. On the other hand, Mainland China's long history and unique culture has developed a divergent form of startup eco-system that rarely follows western methods

such as Lean Startup and Design Thinking. Furthermore, empirical findings discovered that some Chinese entrepreneurs are reluctant in sharing their ideas because of concerns regarding intellectual property theft, therefore, poor product (Lean Startup Methodology) market (China and its culture) fit, becomes evident.

Research limitations: perhaps the main limitation behind this study is the lack of resources, with regards to time and funds. As a result, the scope of the thesis has been narrowed to a single case study with focus on Startup Weekend Hong Kong, instead of a more extensive research that would cover several entrepreneurship hubs in People's Republic of China e.g. Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong.

Practical implications: the paper provides an overview of the startup eco-systems of Mainland China and Hong Kong, followed by reasons behind the success/failure of Startup Weekend China. Consequently, this study is of relevance to first of all, Startup Weekend China and second to scholars who are researching the relationship between Action Theory and entrepreneurship in China.

Originality/Value: while the academic literature on entrepreneurship in China is clearly vast, no one has evaluated it through the lens of Startup Weekend, at least to my knowledge. Hence, the relation between entrepreneurship, Action Theory, Lean Startup Methodology and China has not been addressed until now.

Key Words: startups, entrepreneurship, startup eco-system, Startup Weekend, ICT sector, Action Theory, Lean Startup Methodology, China and Hong Kong.

Introduction

As the most populated country and second largest economy the development of China will have remarkable impact on the world. The economic reforms that took place during the past 35 years supported the establishment of many new ventures and resulted in a major difference when it comes to human welfare in China (Economist, Burgeoning bourgeoisie: A special report on the new middle classes in emerging, 2009).

According to Liao and Sohmen, entrepreneurship in China undertook three different forms. Two of them will be of further relevance to this thesis. The first, implies starting with small-scale activities in sectors such as retail and services e.g. street vendors also known in Chinese as *getihu*. Therefore, often people who started similar businesses were referred as *"self-employed"* rather than *"entrepreneurs",* the motivation behind those people was mainly their exclusion of the state system. This phase occurred before the reforms and continued during the 80`s (Sohmen, 2001). The next phase became evident in the late 1980`s, those involved were better educated, often engineers or state owned enterprises managers (SOE). In Chinese these ventures are called *staying qiye*, and target various sectors from hospitality to transportation and manufacturing. (Sohmen, 2001). The third phase consists of entrepreneurs who possess a degree from a foreign university, therefore Chinese returning to China for the purpose of starting a new venture. This type of businesses are most evident in the Internet sector (Sohmen, 2001). Furthermore, this thesis focuses on Chinese entrepreneurs, part of the second e.g. highly educated individuals, engineers etc. and third phase e.g. foreign-educated but returned to China entrepreneurs.

The ICT sector

Since entrepreneurship is broad concept that may cover a series of sectors, the report will narrow down the scope to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) being the major driving force of the New Economy (Li, 2002). ICT as a term has been used in academia since the 1980`s, the United Nations International Telecommunication Union defines it as: *" ...equipment and services related to broadcasting, computing, and telecommunications, all of which capture and display information electronically."* (Report of the International Telecommunication Union on Information and Communication Technologies statistics, 2004)

It is interesting to note that several studies argue how the ICT industry has helped to a great extent the overall economic growth of developed countries (Kraemer, 2001) (Jalava, 2002). As mentioned previously, China being the most populated country and the second largest economy will have a major role in the New Economy of the world (Li, 2002). To illustrate this point we can look at the telecommunications, in less than 20 years China`s

telecommunications industry has become the largest market of mobile phone and internet in the world (Levy). Additionally, according to a report by KMPG titled China Outlook 2015, the service sector consisting of ICT, Financial services and Tourism accounts for 48.2% of China`s economic output in 2014 (Fung, 2015). It can be debated that this is the result of the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011 – 2015) launched by the Chinese Government, where Services received strategic priority (China Services Sector Analysis).
Nevertheless, since the ICT sector covers a wide range of products and services, *Figure 1* aims to illustrate the four-primary sectors part of ICT.

ICT Sub-sectors			
Telecommunications	**Hardware**	**Software**	**IT services**
• Basic service and value-added services • Telecommunications equipment • OTT • Mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs)	• Computers • IT network equipment • Storage devices • Consumer electronics • Wearable devices • Smart phones • Data centers	• Software products • System integration and support • Embedded software • Software-related IT consulting • Design and development • Big data and cloud • Analytics	• Network services • System integration • IT outsourcing services • Maintenance and support services • IT consulting services • Education and training services • E-commerce

Figure 1: ICT Sub-Sectors (Secor Report, the ICT Market in China, 2015)

The International Data Corporation (IDC), forecasted that China`s ICT industry will perform strong growth in 2015. The IT services sector is expected to reach USD 211.8 billion, while the telecom service will hit USD 253.8 billion (Jessica Quiao, 2015). This does not come as a surprise considering that in 2014 alone, 400 million mobile phones were sold in China. Moreover, 92% of all mobile phones were smart phones (White Paper on China's smart phone industry, 2014). Considering these data, it can be argued that the ICT sector in China plays vital role in the development of Chinese economy. On the other hand, even broken-down to those four sub-sectors, ICT represents an industry covering many areas, therefore, this report will focus primarily on Software as a sub sector. However, it has to be considered that some trending aspects of ICT such as Internet of Things[1] and Big Data[2] do not fit in the categories represented by the table above, they contain elements from several sub-sectors. For instance, "cross-sector" concepts such as Internet of Things (consists of sensors and integration, therefore, the sensors represent hardware while the integration IT services or Software) are too large for any of the primary sectors part of ICT, hence they are separated. The case of Big

[1] Internet of Things (IoT) – in this report is defined as the interconnection via the Internet of computing devices embedded in everyday objects, enabling them to send and receive data **Invalid source specified.**
[2] Big Data – in this paper is defined as extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions. **Invalid source specified.**

Data is similar, consisting of IT services and Software (Sector Report, the ICT market in China , 2015).

Based on this overview it can be concluded that the ICT sector is becoming more important and the benefits from ICT might outweigh those from manufacturing (Kraemer, 2001). Hence, some authors claim that China is shifting from low value-added manufacturing to innovation-based economy (Nardi, 2012). However, in order to build an environment where it is possible for entrepreneurs to start ventures within the ICT industry, it is important to create an eco-system of economic, social, cultural and material resources that make innovation feasible (Tuomi, 2006).

Startup Weekend

This paper focuses on Startup Weekend events in China, and Hong Kong in particular, where entrepreneurs form groups, work on products, and launch mainly tech-type of startups over a weekend. Startup Weekend is a great example of efforts to build and sustain innovation-based start-up culture in China.

Startup Weekend is a non-profit organization and currently the world's largest community of passionate entrepreneurs, created in 2007 with the vision:

"to provide the world`s premier experiential education for entrepreneurs ".

Ever since it was founded in 2007, Startup Weekend has undergone several transformations, starting as a Limited Liability Company (LLC) and then converting to a non-profit in 2009. In 2010 Kauffman Foundation invested 400.000 USD in the form of a grant and shortly afterwards launched the StartUp Foundation. In 2011 Startup Weekend has organized more than 400 events in about 200 cities around the world. (Nardi, 2012). Recently the organization got acquired by UP NEXT and then once again by Techstars. Nowadays, Startup Weekend has organized more than 2.900 events, in 150 countries which resulted in more than 23.000 formed teams and alumni community of 193.000 members (Startup Weekend by the numbers , 2016) (Nager, 2011).

Basically, Startup Weekend encourages local organizers to create events around the world where a trained person facilitates the event, moreover, many mentors and IT infrastructure is present in order to ensure a great environment for development of tech-startups. On average 50 people attend an event by Startup Weekend, mainly with profiles in design, business and computer science. The name Startup Weekend comes from the timespan of each event being 54 hours (Nardi, 2012).

Figure 2, illustrates the process of each event, i.e. from first to last steps during a Startup Weekend:

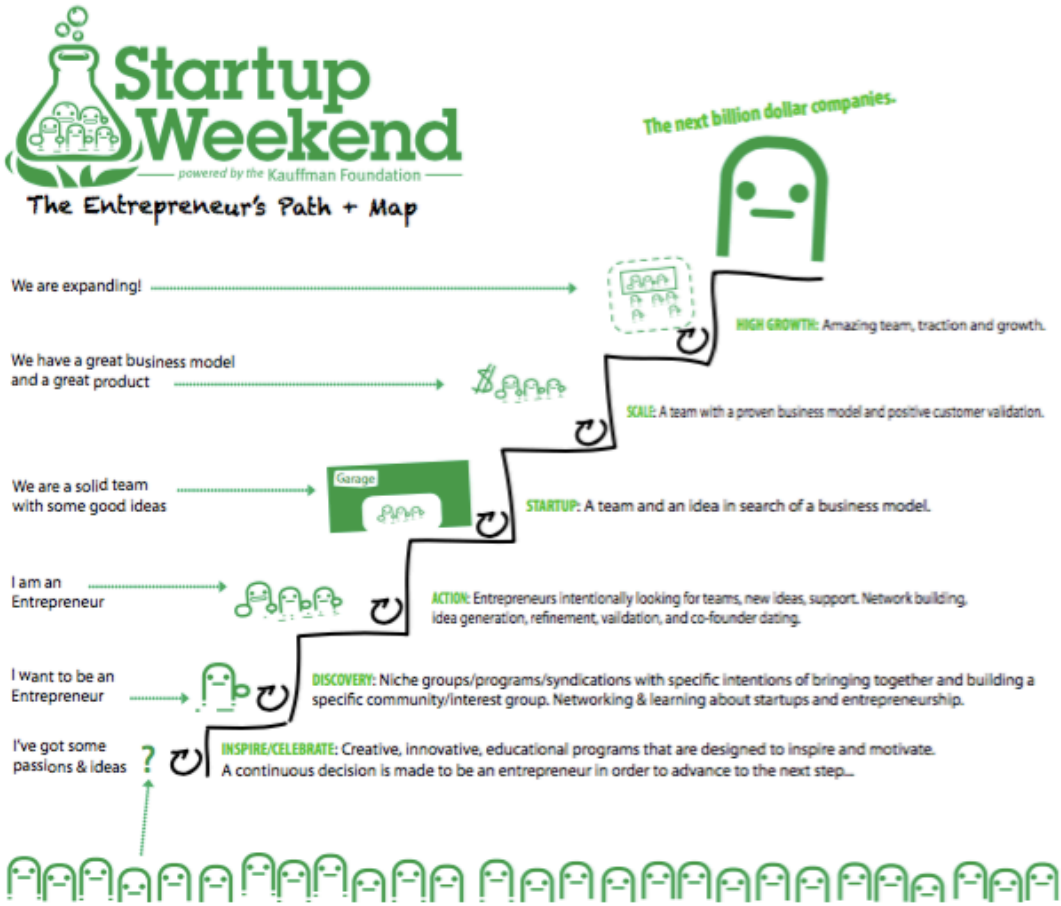


Figure 2: "The entrepreneur's path and map during a Startup Weekend" (Nager, 2011)

Startup Weekend penetrated the Chinese market in 2014 with a total of 14 events, in 2015 the number of events grew to 23 and 30 workshops, reaching a total of 53 events. It is interesting to note that 71% of those events were held in well-developed start-up hubs: Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei and Hangzhou (Koester, 2016). Therefore, this paper will focus on Startup Weekend Hong Kong as a success case. The total number of events is considered as a critical success factor because the main product of Startup Weekend is to organize events. Therefore, there is a co-relation between the total number of events and the success of Startup weekend as organization i.e. more events would imply higher demand for their services, thus, Startup Weekend's concept is more applicable to the local market.

Figure 3 presents current Road Map of Startup Weekend Hong for 2016. Based on this graph it can be concluded that at this point of time six events are expected to take place in 2016. However, looking at Startup Weekend Hong Kong's history it can be argued that on average three events are taking place every season (e.g. last spring: 01- 03 April at *PolyU*, *Startup Weekend HK #10* 15 – 18 April and 27 – 29 of May on the topic of *Finance and Real Estate*

(STARTUP WEEKEND HONG KONG EVENTS, 2016)), hence in 2016 Hong Kong is expected to host an average of 10 – 12 events, in comparison Mainland China hosted a total of 23, during 2015. Hence it becomes clear that Startup Weekend Hong Kong is launching a large proportion of all events that are happening in People's Republic of China.

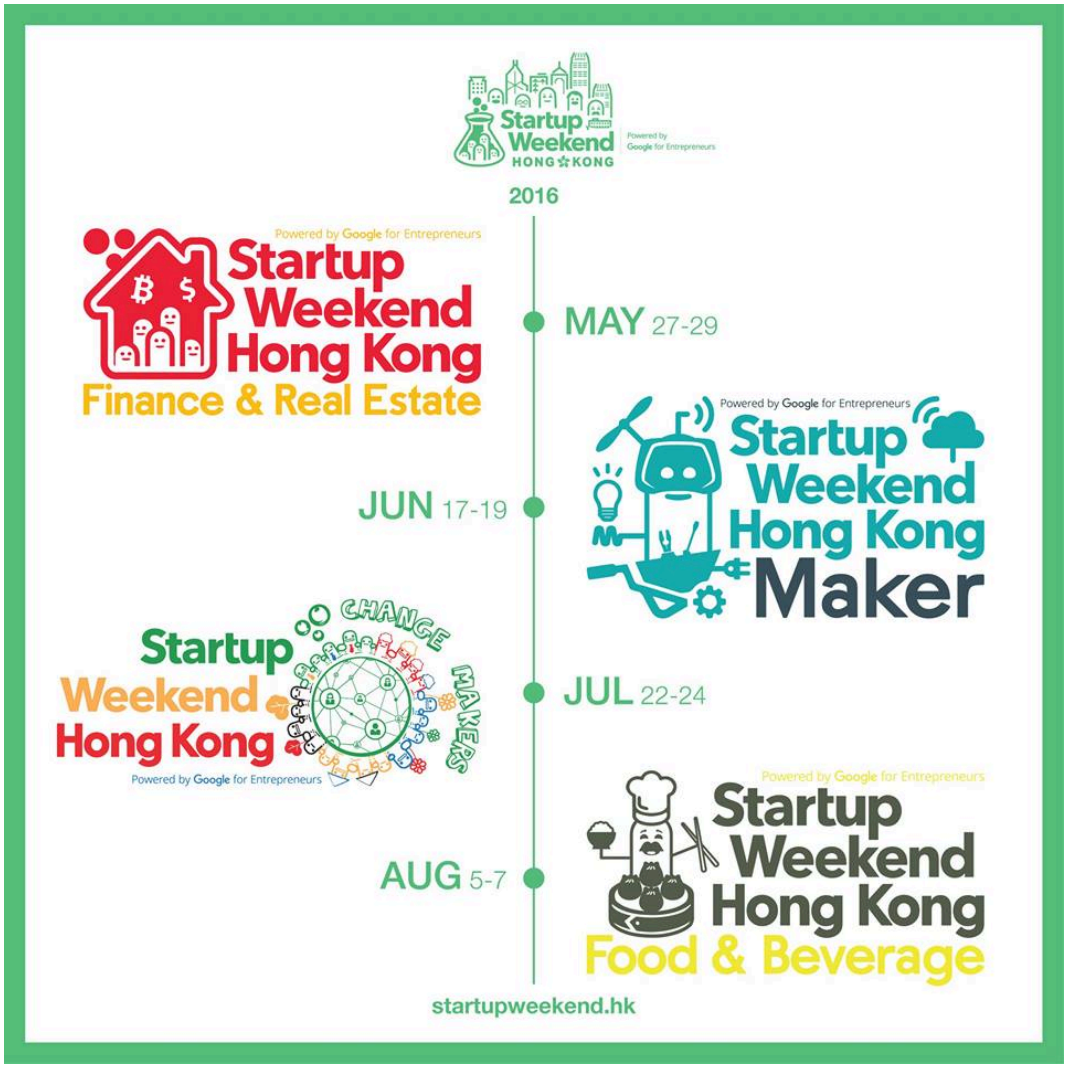


Figure 3: Startup Weekend Hong Kong Road Map 2016

Literature Review and Concepts

Entrepreneurship and Innovation in China

Reviewing the literature provides the basis on which this research has been built. Therefore, it helps both the researcher and reader of this paper to gain insights in relevant literature and trends that have emerged. Moreover, such a review, outlines research possibilities that have been considered implicitly. Therefore, such process helps avoiding repeating studies that have been done already (M. Saunders, 2009).

In this particular thesis, the literature review has been divided into several sub-sections aiming to point out at all important topics part of this paper.

It is important to clarify what is meant by *"entrepreneurship"*, for this purpose, a definition widely used at Harvard Business School and developed by professor Howard Stevenson has been chosen:

"Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled."

In this definition, three key phrases become evident, *pursuit, opportunity* and *beyond resources controlled*. By "*pursuit***"** is meant that entrepreneurs often aim to seize an opportunity, hence, it is required of them to demonstrate tangible progress in order to attract all necessary resources. *"Opportunity"* stands for offering a novel product or service in one of the following ways, here it must be specified that it could be a combination of few. 1) Developing a truly innovative product/service, 2) unique business model, 3) developing a better or cheaper version of an existing solution or 4) selling an existing product to new sets of customers. *"Beyond resources controlled"* refers to scarce resources. Hence, often entrepreneurs bootstrap, meaning that, expenses are kept to an absolute minimum while investing a lot of time and when necessary, personal funds. Most of the time, entrepreneurs bootstrap until the point when they receive external funding in exchange for equity, however, there are some cases when the business becomes self-sustaining (Eisenmann, 2013).

Another term that requires clarification is a *"startup"* for this purpose, a definition developed by Steve Blank the author of the Four Steps to the Epiphany:

"A startup is an organization formed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model." (2014)

Additionally, it is important to define what is meant by a *"tech startup"*. In this paper, tech startup is understood as *a "startup that involves technology in its business model or concept e.g. software, hardware or combination of both (IoT)."*

In this thesis, the following literature on entrepreneurship has been reviewed:

- *"Entrepreneurship in China: An overview"* by David Ahlstrom and Zhujun Ding (2015). This paper provides an overview of entrepreneurship in China. It covers, an evaluation of recent research on startups, attributed of Chinese entrepreneurs and challenges they face.
- *"The Environment for Entrepreneurship in China"* by Stanford Graduate School of Business (2002). Here the focus is on political and economic context, relevant to entrepreneurs in China, with focus on financing of new ventures.
- *"The Development of Modern Entrepreneurship in China"* by Debbie Liao and Philip Sohmen (2001). D. Liao and P. Sohmen, study Chinese entrepreneurs in China as well as problems they face when starting a new business. The paper starts with a brief analysis regarding history ever since Mao. Afterwards, prevailing theories with regards to Chinese culture and to what extent does it support capitalist behaviour.
- *"The Financing Challenges of Startups in China"* by ZHANG Chong and ZHANG Luyue (2014). This research has the objective to identify the challenges that financing startups in China face. Furthermore, main difficulties faced by startups in China are first of all explored and then discussed, in order to figure out countermeasures for Chinese startup development.
- *"Entrepreneurship and Economic Development: Theory, Evidence and Policy"* by Wim Naudé (2013). The book provides an overview of the relation between development economics and entrepreneurship. The focus is primary on intersection of entrepreneurship and development studies but also on empirical evidence of that relationship.
- *"China Bubble-Up Innovation"* by Peter, Geib; James, Swenson (2015). This paper addresses the problem of sustainable innovation in China. It is interesting to note, how this study goes against traditional approaches e.g. follow an MBA strategy (competitive strategy) or Blue Ocean market opportunity, instead it suggests that the team is what matters most.
- *"Innovation Lessons From China"* by Edward S. Steinfeld and Troels Beltoft (2014). The study suggests how people should stop judging Chin with regards to not fair practices and instead learn how innovation is applied in a such dynamic context.
- *"A case study on adoptive management innovation in China"* by Lin, Haifen; Su, Jingqin (2014). Here, the objective is to address how management practices adopted

somewhere else have been applied to Chinese firms, hence, effectively implemented. Furthermore, it investigates how adoptive management innovation occurs in Chinese context.

Entrepreneurship reports

- *"The Global Startup Eco-System Ranking 2015"* by Compass.co (formerly Startup Genome) with the support of Crunchbase (2015). The second edition of the Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking part of Startup Ecosystem Report Series illustrates the Global Ecosystem Index. The Index ranks the top 20 startup ecosystems around the world on the bases of: *performance, funding, talent, market reach and startup experience.*

Overall, the literature review on entrepreneurship began as an overview of entrepreneurship in China. On top of that, one book *"Entrepreneurship and Economic Development: Theory, Evidence and Policy"* by Wim Naudé (2013), analyzed how China and similar countries in terms of economic development, perceive entrepreneurship nowadays. When it became more clear what is the current situation in China (with regards to entrepreneurship), studies on the topic of innovation have been considered. Nowadays, entrepreneurship methodologies such as Lean Startup and Design Thinking (described later on in the theories section) focus on fostering innovation, therefore, the concept of innovation in China is of great relevance to this study. Last but not least, a report on the global startup ecosystem ranking has been utilized in the analyses section in order to triangulate primary with secondary data.

ICT sector

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a term has been used in academia since the 1980`s, the United Nations International Telecommunication Union defines it as: *" ...equipment and services related to broadcasting, computing, and telecommunications, all of which capture and display information electronically."* (Report of the International Telecommunication Union on Information and Communication Technologies statistics, 2004) The following academic papers on the topic of ICT in China have been reviewed before proceeding with writing this thesis:

- "A Comparative Analysis of China ICT Regulation Effectiveness Based on an IEP Framework" by HUANG Xiuqing, XUE Jing, LIANG Xiongjian (2014).

China's ICT regulation effectiveness has been analyzed by comparing the difference between China and other countries. In order to do so, this paper developed an assessment framework titled IEP, consisting of three assessment directions: regulation institution/enforcement and industry performance. Based on this comparative analysis the paper provides suggestions for improvement of the ICT regulations in China.

- "China's ICT standards policy after the WTO accession: techno-national versus techno-globalism" by Heejin Lee, Shirley Chan and Sangjo Oh (2009). This study aims to clarify how the admission of China to the WTO in 2001, resulted many standards for protection and promotion of domestic industries within the ICT sector. Furthermore, the purpose is to identify motivations and strategies when it comes to China's standards-setting attempts within ICT.
- "ICT production and diffusion in Asia Digital dividends or digital divide?" by Poh-Kam Wong (2002). The study compares Asian and non-Asian countries with regards to adoption of ICT. Therefore, the purpose is to identify if Asian countries have been laggard in the adoption of ICT.
- *"New Economy and ICT development in China"* by Qingxuan Menga and Mingzhi Li (2002). The study follows China's ICT sector development in recent years and how this particular sector is becoming the most dynamic industry in China's economy. Furthermore, the focus is on China's New Economy and its astonishing pace of progress.

ICT reports

- *"Sector Report: ICT Industry in China"* by Switzerland Global Enterprise. The report is designed so that it provides a comprehensive understanding for Swiss companies within the ICT sector that are considering expansion in Mainland China. Furthermore, it contains market insights from ICT and sub-sectors followed by interviews with local experts and entrepreneurs on the topic.
- *"Sector Report The ICT Market in China"* by EU SME Centre and China-Britain Business Council (2015). This report, provides an overview of the ICT sector in China with focus on opportunities for SMEs in the area of mobile gaming, 5G, the Internet of Things and IT outsourcing.

The academic papers on the topic of ICT shed more light on how China is transforming towards services based economy, hence towards economy that utilizes the ICT sector.

Therefore, most studies describe the process as well as consequences of developing the ICT sector. The reports on the other hand, shed more light on current development of ICT from quantitative perspective as well as implications for existing or upcoming businesses.

Theories and models

Action Theory

- *"The Psychological Actions and Entrepreneurial Success: An Action Theory Approach"* by M. Frese. The paper discusses extensively Action Theory for entrepreneurship and its implications. Therefore, it has been suggested that entrepreneurial performance must be evaluated from three perspectives: sequence, structure, and regulatory focus. The purpose of this article is to provide an integrative framework, that helps to pinpoint which aspect of performance scholars study in detail.
- *"Action and Action-Regulation in Entrepreneurship: Evaluating a Student Training for Promoting Entrepreneurship"* by Michael Frese et. al.
  Here Action Theory is considered through the lens of entrepreneurship education for the purpose of developing an action-based entrepreneurship training.
- *"Toward a Psychology of Entrepreneurship — An Action Theory Perspective"* by Michael Frese (2009). In this paper, M. Frese discusses how psychological approach is necessary to gain better understanding of entrepreneurship, followed by the statement that any theory addressing entrepreneurship must use active actions as a starting point. Afterwards, it discusses Action Theory in order to understand entrepreneurial success better.

Literature on models that resemble Action Theory

- *"DESIGN THINKING VS. LEAN STARTUP: A COMPARISON OF TWO USER-DRIVEN INNOVATION STRATEGIES"* by Roland Mueller and Katja Thoring (2012). This study analyzes Lean Startup VS Design Thinking, both approaches are similar with regards to methodology and process design to large extent. However, there are also some significant differences in both strategies. The result of the paper is a modification of both models that aims to foster innovative concepts.
- *"The Four Steps to the Epiphany"* by Steven G. Blank (2006). The book targets entrepreneurs who wish to bring a new product to market and it provides a step-by-step guide of how to successfully do that. Furthermore, the book offers insights on

what it makes some startups successful and others not. Moreover, the book presents the Customer Development model that is the foundation of Lean Startup model, developed a couple of years later by Steve Blank and Eric Ries.

Situational Theories

- *"SITUATIONAL THEORIES"* by Stephen Smallbone & Jesse Cale. This chapter, considers the development, current status and implications of Situational Theories. It reviews the debate about situational cross-consistency versus situational human behavior. Afterwards, it concludes how situational factors are theoretically and practically crucial, but often neglected.
- *"SITUATIONISM IN PSYCHOLOGY: AN ANALYSIS AND A CRITIQUE"* by Kenneth Bowers (1973). This paper evaluates how human behavior is understood in terms of the situation in which it occurs. Furthermore, while it acknowledges how behaviour is more situation specific than trait theory gives it credit for, it is argued how situations are more person specific than is commonly recognized.

The theory section of this paper discusses how all evaluated theories are compared in order to choose the most appropriate one, thus achieve methodological fit between paradigm and theory. What is interesting to note, is how Lean Startup and Design Thinking have been compared by with each other and applied over Action Theory.

Startup Weekend

- *"Building a Mexican Startup Culture Over the Weekend"* by Ruy Cervantes and Bonnie Nardi (2012). In this paper the authors look at how people who traveled to Silicon Valley and back to Mexico utilized Startup Weekend in order to introduce new innovation practices in their homeland.
- *"Official Startup Weekend Report 2011"* – report presenting the progress of Startup Weekend up to 2011, including current stats, operations, impact and forecasts for the near future.
- Journals by Mark Koester - Community Development Manager for China at Techstars with the following titles:

1) *"Techstars in China in 2015: the promise and the progress"*
2) *"China's startup scene, Circa 2015: some lessons learned"*
3) *"2015 Annual Review"*

At first, discovering data on Startup Weekend proved challenging, however, the local organization in Aalborg provided valuable insights and tips which helped to obtain the necessary data. Therefore, the literature on Startup Weekend covers primary journals and reports but also an academic paper analyzing Startup Weekend in Mexico, which to some extent resembles this particular thesis.

Problem Formulation

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to', said the Cat.

'I don't much care where', said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you walk', said the Cat.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in (Carroll, 1989)

As described in the Introduction section the Chinese economy has demonstrated a great progress towards successful modernization and marketization, however, there are a lot of challenges that are still present (Lorentzen, 2002). Therefore, despite the economic growth and shift towards the private sector, Chinese entrepreneurs have to overcome many barriers when it comes to starting a new venture, to name a few, access to finance, legal regulations, ease of doing business and lack of talent (Li, 2002) (Sohmen, 2001). On the other hand, entrepreneurship in China has resulted in significant economic growth as well as new job opportunities (Huang, 2008). Only during the past 35 years, entrepreneurship has reached an incredible but conservative estimate from almost zero to more than six million businesses (Chen, 2006). Furthermore, Huang argues that businesses that are not majority owned by the state generate half of the total industrial output (Huang, 2008), hence, such ventures are contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP) at an increasing rate of about 70% (Economist, Entrepreneurship in China: Let a million flowers bloom, 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that while entrepreneurship in China faces several major challenges, the outcome of such activity is clearly positive, especially in relation to factors such as economic growth and job creation.

Nevertheless, as mentioned in the Introduction section, entrepreneurship is too broad concept, therefore, the report has narrowed down to entrepreneurship within the ICT sector, which plays a crucial role in the so-called New Economy (Li, 2002). The rapid technological development has allowed entrepreneurs to develop internet products over relatively short periods of time. Simultaneously, Ries created the concept of "*Lean startup"* to help entrepreneurs utilize those technologies. The *"Lean Startup"* concept argues that rapid creation of startups is possible because of the low cost of the Internet and Software products e.g. "*cloud"* platforms and web development frameworks (more on Lean Startup in sections Theories and Analyses) (Ries, 2011). Agile software development methodologies complemented *"Lean Startup"* and ensure that the development of software will happen in rapid iterations (Beck, 2001) as well as in a customer-focused process, hence turning Software

development in a relatively affordable and fast prototype-centered process (Blank S. , The Four Steps to the Epiphany, 2005). The outcome of all those factors gave birth to Startup Weekend as a concept. Although, Startup Weekend can be considered as a successful organization currently being present in 150 countries and with a total of more than 2.900 events so far, apparently the Chinese market proves as difficult (Startup Weekend by the numbers, 2016). On the other hand, the organization managed to establish strong presence in several locations within People`s Republic of China, to name a few, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Therefore, this report will focus on Startup Weekend Hong Kong as a success case. The reasons behind this choice stem from several factors amongst which, access to knowledge and data as well as the fact that in early 2016, Hong Kong is the only region that has organized several Startup Weekends.

To sum up, China is currently shifting from low value-added manufacturing to innovation-based economy (Nardi, 2012) as well as from rural and agricultural society to an urban one (Li, 2002). Furthermore, the ICT sector is bringing many new opportunities but also challenges. For the purpose of developing a strong ICT sector issues such as financing, brain drain, liberalization of the ICT industry and intellectual property must be addressed. At the same time, Startup Weekend an organization which exists for the purpose of accelerating the creation of tech type of startups, struggles to establish itself in Mainland China. Therefore, this thesis started with the assumption that governmental regulations over the ICT sector constrains the development of Startup Weekend China, consequently over tech startups in general. Furthermore, the following research question was established prior to the field research of this dissertation:

Why does the ICT sector`s current development constrain the growth of Startup Weekend in China?

Therefore, the research started by applying deductive reasoning, thus by applying the following hypothesis:

The government of Mainland China developed regulations that constrain the development of organizations such as Startup Weekend that seek to encourage the development of tech startups (within ICT).

Consequently, having a deductive approach in mind, Action Theory has been used when conducting the field-research in Hong Kong, during Startup Weekend PolyU, that took place on 01 – 03 of April 2016. On the other hand, Saunders argues that while the researcher often makes a conscious choice about whether to use inductive or deductive reasoning, in practice most often there are elements of both (2009). Having this in mind, the interview was designed

as semi-structured in order to explore the situation in an inductive manner, and in particular to identify if the firstly assumed hypothesis is valid or not. Shortly after the field research started it became evident that regulations do not constrain Startup Weekend China but a series of other complex factors. The research's objectives pivoted from the assumption that Startup Weekend is constrained by regulations of the ICT sector towards, what are the implications of pragmatic approach in applied entrepreneurship in the context of China. Moreover, since Startup Weekend has been chosen as a point of departure and study case of this dissertation, the research question is tackled through the lens of this organization. To sum up, the abductive reasoning of this paper allowed for pivot in the research question, which further developed into the following statement:

To what extent could the Lean Startup methodology be applied to entrepreneurship in China?

The question is phrased as ***"to what extent could the Lean Startup methodology be applied"*** because Startup Weekend already applies this methodology in China but it does not seem to be successful in terms of total number of events, or at least at first glance.

Sub questions:

- *What are the differences between the startup eco-systems in China and Hong Kong?*
- *What are the major factors that constrain the development of Startup Weekend China?*
- *Why a pragmatic approach to applied entrepreneurship in a startup community increases the chances of success in the Chinese context?*

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

As Dr. Marilyn Simon argues any research is critically restricted, from the availability of resources to the researcher's own reasoning as a human. However, what truly matters is to recognize, those *assumptions, limitations and delimitations*, then justify them as *"probably"* true in order for the study to progress (Simon, 2011).

Assumptions

Assumptions are out of the researcher's control but inevitable for any study, as otherwise the study becomes irrelevant (Simon, 2011). The very first assumptions part of this study, lay in the research question. First of all, the assumption that Lean Startup is of importance to entrepreneurship in China. Second, entrepreneurship is, in general important.

1) Lean Startup is of importance to entrepreneurship – it is true that Lean Startup has gained a lot of popularity in the recent years. However, existing literature on the topic cannot determine if Lean Startup methodology actually guarantees success (Blank S. , 2013), at least not to my knowledge. The benefits of Lean Startup are that the model is in itself a scientific approach to entrepreneurship based on hypothesis. Furthermore, while it cannot guarantee success, it helps to reduce the number of failures in comparison to traditional methods (Blank S. , 2013). Last but not least, Lean Startup is quite recent methodology that builds on many previous methods/theories such as: Action Theory, Design Thinking, Agile methodology etc.
2) Entrepreneurship is of importance – while it seems that this assumption has an easy answer and it is generally accepted that entrepreneurship is good for any country. The reasons being that entrepreneurs create new businesses, new businesses provide new jobs, competition increases, hence price decreases, while quality increases. Therefore, high degree of entrepreneurship equals economic growth (Acs, 2007). At the same time, some scholars argue that the same circumstances may correlate with slow economic growth (Acs, 2007). According to a book titled *"Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (Studies in Development Economics and Policy)"* by W. Naudé, entrepreneurship is and will continue to be important because of the following three reasons (2011): 1) There is a transition in the West from reliance on big businesses and mass production to the so-called entrepreneurial economy, 2) Emerging countries such as China which demonstrated impressive growth, needs to sustain its growth through sustainable access to resources, knowledge, markets and

low-carbon industrialization 3) Finally, the least developed countries currently rely on aid, however, donors are shifting their help towards private sector development. Therefore, it can be argued how entrepreneurship plays an important in any economy, no matter if well or least developed.

Another assumption worth mentioning is that all participants of the interview will answer honestly. Later on, section Research Ethics describes in detail how it is ensured that this study covers obligations towards interview participants such as right of confidentiality (actually one participant of the interview did request his name to be replaced as he is concerned about his reputation). Therefore, research ethics have been considered and applied, thus it can be argued that allowing people to withdraw at any point of the study or simply the right to request confidentiality increases their honesty.

Limitations

Limitations refer to weaknesses of this thesis that are out of my control. For instance, the *time* when this study takes place along with the duration are limitation on its own. Therefore, in section Research Design is argued how this study is defined as Cross-sectional, hence it is a snapshot dependent on conditions occurring during that time.

Another limitation is the availability of resources. On the one hand, it is requirement of my study program to focus the thesis towards issues related to China. On the other hand, studies relying on primary data might prove expensive in terms of travelling, accommodation and visa expenses. Furthermore, in order to deliver a thesis that covers the requirements of the study board and is affordable enough so that it can be concluded in time, some compromises have been made. To illustrate this point, a study that covers several entrepreneurship hubs in People's Republic of China (PRC) (e.g. Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen etc.) would most probably result in higher validity than when the study is focused on one particular i.e. Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong (HK) has been chosen because of several reasons:

- HK appears to be the most successful location for Startup Weekend China.
- It does not require visa.
- It is located in close proximity to Mainland China, which resulted in a sample consisting of few residents from other provinces part of PRC.
- It has been assumed (correctly) that residents of Hong Kong have better proficiency of English language, hence language barriers have been avoided.

Delimitations

The delimitations are within my control as a researcher, however they still limit the scope and define the boundaries of the thesis. Delimitations cover the study objective (already covered in section Problem Formulation), Theoretical Perspective (covered in section Theory) and methodology (covered in Research Design). Therefore, arguments regarding why those choices have been taken will not be repeated in here again.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note, how the choice of conducting the field research in HK could be considered both limitation and delimitation. Limitation due to the lack of resources for a study on a larger scale and delimitation because after all it has been my choice to execute the field research there.

Research Design

For the purpose of structuring appropriate research design, the Research Onion Model (Mark Saunders, 2008) has been employed. Its name has been inspired by the fact that before proceeding to the central point, which represents data collection techniques and analysis, all other layers must be peeled away in the order, the figure below illustrates. In this way, explicit consideration of each layer will be applied in order for this research to offer adequate and coherent research design.

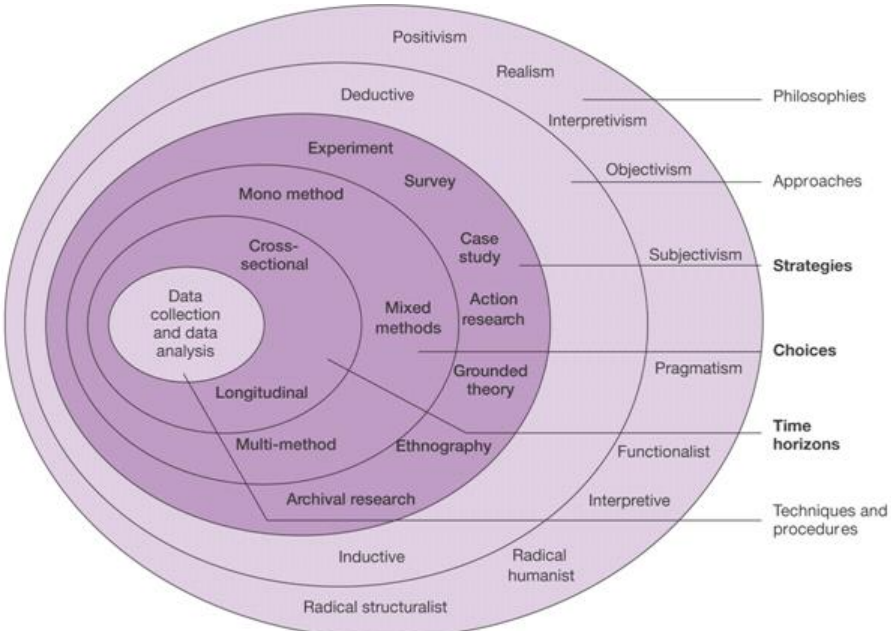


Figure 4: The research 'onion' - source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill (2008)

Paradigm - The very first step in designing a research is to choose the research philosophy, also referred sometimes as paradigm (the outer layer of the research onion), because it provides the intent, motivation and expectations for this study (Knipe, 2006). Nowadays, there are plenty of definitions of the term `paradigm`, however, as Guba argues: *`it is important to leave the term in such a problematic limbo, because it is then possible to reshape it as our understanding of its many implications improves.`* Moreover, because of his belief that this term does not need a universally recognized definition, Guba uses a common and generic definition that will be also applied by this research: *`a basic set of beliefs that guides action….`* (Guba, 1999)

On the other hand, a common problem for novice researches is often the excessive number of methodologies, which leads to difficulties in choosing the appropriate research design (Groenewald, 2004).

Before everything else this research is qualitative in nature, which is often associated with interpretivism, however, as Goldkuhl points out alternatives do exist (2012). M. Forsell and K. Paloniemi suggest critical realism for entrepreneurship research (2010). Here, critical realism is understood as:

"... a philosophical approach to sciences that criticises the study of the social domain as a 'closed' system, typical of positivist approaches in the social sciences. At the same time, it opposes the idea that reality can simply be reduced to our interpretation of it, as has been argued in different forms in the past by idealist and conventionalist scholars." (Castellacci, 2006)

A simplified definition is provided by Easterby-Smith et al. where they refer to critical realism as a middle ground between positivism and interpretivism:

"bridging between the two extreme viewpoints" (Easterby-Smith M, 1991)

Critical realism is considered as an appropriate philosophy for studies revolving around entrepreneurship because of the interaction between the entrepreneur, business opportunities and the environment. On the one hand, the combination of the above mentioned factors calls for strict objectivist approach. On the other hand, pure objectivism neglects the outcomes of human activities, when creating an invention or spotting business opportunities (G., 1979). Therefore, in Critical realism both natural and social reality are existing, the social reality is created by people of the past, however, people of the present are able to interpret and change it. To conclude, in Critical realism social reality falls under intepretivism while the natural reality exists independently of our knowledge, it can exist without being observed or constructed (Fleetwood, 2005).

Having said that, this thesis adopts Action Theory, the Psychological Actions and Entrepreneurial Success developed by M. Frese. Therefore, for the purpose of establishing methodological fit between research design and theory, thus increase the quality of this study, pragmatism has been considered and then chosen as a paradigm of this thesis.

Some scholars argue that at the very core, of pragmatism could be placed the words: *actions and change*, hence, actions are pivotal in pragmatism (Goldkuhl, 2012). As Dewey (1931) argues knowledge is created so that it helps change and improvement. Furthermore, the knowledge within pragmatism is not restricted to explanations as in positivist studies, nor to understanding as in the case of interpretivism. In pragmatism other form of knowledge are common such as: *prescriptive* e.g. guidelines or *normative* where it exhibits values and even *prospective*, meaning that it might suggest possibilities (Goldkuhl, 2012). On the other hand, since pragmatism is a broad research paradigm that covers several different areas (Rescher,

2000) some scholars divide pragmatism in three types: functional, referential and methodological (Goldkuhl, 2012). This particular study employs referential pragmatism, meaning that actors, actions, activities and practices become the primary studied objects (knowledge about actions) (Blumer, 1969). To sum up, this research is based on pragmatism as a paradigm and aims to study "*actors*" - **entrepreneurs attending or organizing Startup Weekend Hong Kong**, along with *"actions and practices"* – **1) the degree of applicability of Lean Startup Methodology in China, 2) differences in the startup eco-systems of China and Hong Kong.**

Epistemology and Ontology - As Lombard (1987) and Reber (1995) argue both, epistemology and ontology are the foundation realm of philosophy and support each other. While epistemology deals with nature of human knowledge (Reber, 1995) ontology is this part of philosophy that works with the nature of being and what is the reality (Lombardo, 1987) (Reber, 1995). To clarify, ontology deals with *`What exits?* ` While epistemology addresses *`How we come to know about?* ` (what exists) (Barab, 1999): (Jonassen, 1991). Since this research adopts the philosophy of pragmatism, it is interesting to note that some scholars argue (Rorty, 1991) that pragmatists do not require ontology nor epistemology. Because, pragmatists perceive the truth as *`what is good for us to believe`*. Basically such authors claim that truth or knowledge are the result of the consequences arising from interactions, thus key words here are the appropriateness of the truth (Reber, 1995). However, scholars such as Dewey (1931) and Goles & Hirschheim (2000) have different opinions with regards to what is pragmatist **ontology**. In Dewey`s opinion, pragmatism is based on two different perspectives *realist* and *idealist.* Meaning that, pragmatist` (Reber, 1995) ontology embraces `*things and events as existing independent of any observer*` (realist), while reason and thought are the originators of aspects in the external world (idealist). At the same time Goles & Hirschheim argue that pragmatism takes dual position or is in between positivist and interpretivist ontologies. Here, it can be debated that both Critical Realism and Pragmatism are somehow placed between positivist and interpretivist ontologies, hence, this argument strengthens the reasoning behind my choice of paradigm.

However, in relation to this paper my point of view is a mixture of what Goles & Hirscheim and Dewey argue as pragmatist ontology, meaning that pragmatism could be positioned between interpretivist and realist and even positivist ontology. Hence, reality might have multiple perspectives (interpretivism) with elements of realism, events, actors and actions object of this study exist independent of any observer. When it comes to **epistemology**, pragmatists such as Rorty (Rorty, 1991) and Dewey (1931) object to perceiving knowledge as

a `copy` of reality. Furthermore, they argue that within this paradigm the knowledge is *constructed.* As described in the previous section, knowledge is not restricted to explanation (positivism) nor to understand (interpretivism) (Dewey, 1931). On the other hand, it is my belief that the understanding of knowledge (epistemology) within pragmatism adjusts to the purpose of the research. Meaning that, while it could be considered that the knowledge is constructed, in this particular case, one can argue that it serves explorative purposes because of the nature of the research question.

Research Approach and Methodical Choice - Next it follows the research approach layer, however, because of their inter-dependency another layer has been covered, (earlier than presented at the research onion model) within this section – **methodical choice**. As Morgan (2011) argues it is a common practice at educational institutions to set a clear line between purely *deductive* or *inductive* approach, hence to distinguish a research as strictly quantitative or qualitative. Pragmatism as a paradigm relies on *abductive* reasoning that makes use of elements from both induction and deduction. On the other hand, this study inclines more towards inductive reasoning because of the following reasons:

- Usually for studies of a small sample inductive approach is more appropriate (M. Saunders, 2009). The sample of this study consists of 11 people (more information regarding the sample later-on in this section)
- The structure of the inductive reasoning allows for changes of research emphasis as the research progresses (M. Saunders, 2009). The research question of this study has been changed based on the field-research.

Nevertheless, the concept of research approach requires explicit description of the methodical choice applied by this study. Hence, if the research adopts mono (single data collection), multi (more than one qualitative or quantitative data collection) or mixed method (combination of qualitative and quantitative data techniques) (M. Saunders, 2009). Furthermore, this thesis adopts multi-method qualitative design, here, it's important to mention that Saunders argues how qualitative methods are a good fit for inductive reasoning (2009). On the other hand, he warns that while the researcher often makes a conscious choice about whether to use inductive or deductive reasoning, in practice most often there are elements of both (2009).

As mentioned previously, the methodological choice of this study is multi-method qualitative. The following methods have been utilized in order to gain relevant information to the research question:

- Semi-structured interviews – hence, instead of asking pre-defined questions, several themes have been established in accordance with Action Theory. Meaning that, interviewees have been asked to elaborate on their views regarding several topics. As a result, sometimes the interviews differed from each other to some extent, as the interviewer adapted to the context and tried to get as much relevant information as the opportunity allowed. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner. There are several benefits of face-to-face interviews over online or phone interviews. Perhaps the most important one is `synchronous communication in time and place`. Social cues such as voice, intonation, body language etc. can provide the interviewer with a lot of insights that can be included to the verbal answers of interviewees. Moreover, the answers are more spontaneous without an extended reflection (Opdenakker, 2006).
- Non-participant unstructured observations – the observation has been conducted in a completely unstructured way without involving the researcher in what unfolds before him (Knobel, 2004). The reasons behind this choice of data collection method are as it follows:
    a) Startup Weekend is a very intense event running 54 hours, therefore, any divergence from the schedule might result in disagreements with the organizers or participants. Hence, it would be difficult to apply other-type of observation.
    b) Some of the semi-structured interviews took place during the event, therefore, there are several hours when the researcher could not attend the event because of his immersion in the interview process. Unfortunately, it was not possible to schedule the interviews for another day, thus unstructured observation was the only alternative.

It has to be taken into consideration, that the observation did not happen throughout the whole event, as some parts of the event were more relevant i.e. the finals, than others.
To sum up, this research employs *abductive reasoning* because of its relevance to the research question, sample and research design. Furthermore, multi-qualitative method has been employed in the form of semi-structured interviews and non-participant unstructured observations. The figure below describes how abductive reasoning has been applied to this thesis:

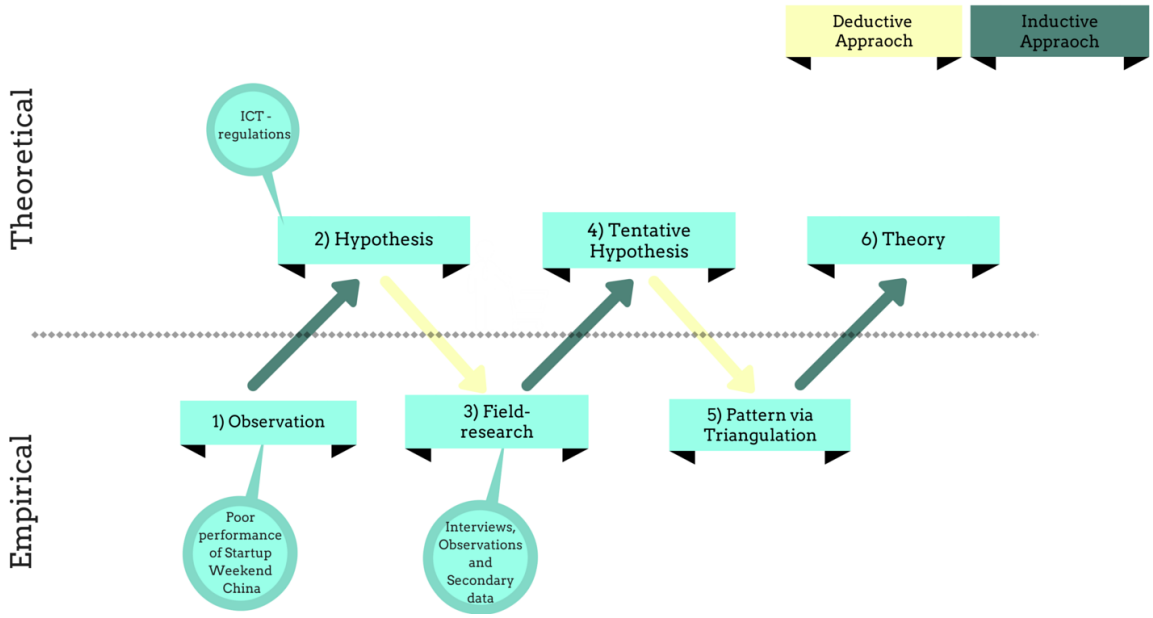


Figure 5: Abductive Reasoning applied by this study. Inspired by The Abductive Research Process (Kovacs, 2005)

Strategy - Peeling away the research approach and methods reveals the next layer: research strategy(ies). According to Saunders (2009) the researcher can choose between one or few research strategies in order to answer the research question. After careful consideration, an embedded case study has been established as the only strategy of this research. According to Robson a case study strategy is defined in the following way:

"a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence." (Robson, 2002)

The reasons behind choosing this particular strategy are:

- Relevant approach for studies that aim to gain rich insights of the context of the research as well as the process being enacted (Wood, 1991)
- A good fit for "why" type of research questions (M. Saunders, 2009)
- Case studies usually employ multi-method qualitative choice (M. Saunders, 2009)
- A single case is usually used when the study represents a critical, unique or extreme case, in this particular context Hong Kong as one of the most successful hubs for Startup Weekend China (M. Saunders, 2009).

Additionally, embedded case study implies that while the focus is on Startup Weekend China, Hong Kong has been chosen as a success case, therefore, the field-research took place during a Startup Weekend in HK. Last but not least, triangulation has been employed in order to ensure validity of the research findings.

Time Horizon - The final layer before the core of the Research Onion model is time horizon, basically this layer sheds more light on the period of time over which the study would be/has been conducted. Saunders (et. al. 2012, p. 155) have identified two time horizons, snapshot - also known as cross sectional and diary i.e. longitudinal. Overall, time horizons are independent of the research strategy or choice of methods. On the other hand, the question of time horizon is dependent on other factors such as limitations and delimitations of this study, however, the main criteria of deciding on time horizon is the research question (Saunders et. al., 2012; p. 155). For instance, as Bouma and Atkinson (1995) argue, longitudinal studies the main question is: `*Has there been any change over a period of time?* ` Furthermore, this study could be characterized as a cross-sectional because it aims to explore phenomenon – *applicability of Lean Startup methodology to entrepreneurship in China*, at a particular time – 2016.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

When it comes to Data Collection, this thesis has been divided in two major steps. First of all, secondary data has been gathered and analysed for the purpose of triangulation of findings based on other data. Therefore, the secondary data utilized by this study is classified as Multiple source (M. Saunders, 2009) and covers the following type of sources:

- Reports (by Startup Weekend or Techstars)
- Industry statistics and reports (by institutions studying entrepreneurship)
- Journals by Mark Koester - Community Development Manager for China at Techstars (the mother company behind Startup Weekend)
- Academic papers

The second step of Data Collection consists of collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews and non-participant unstructured observations methods. The figure below visualizes the data collection methods employed by this study as well as their relationship.

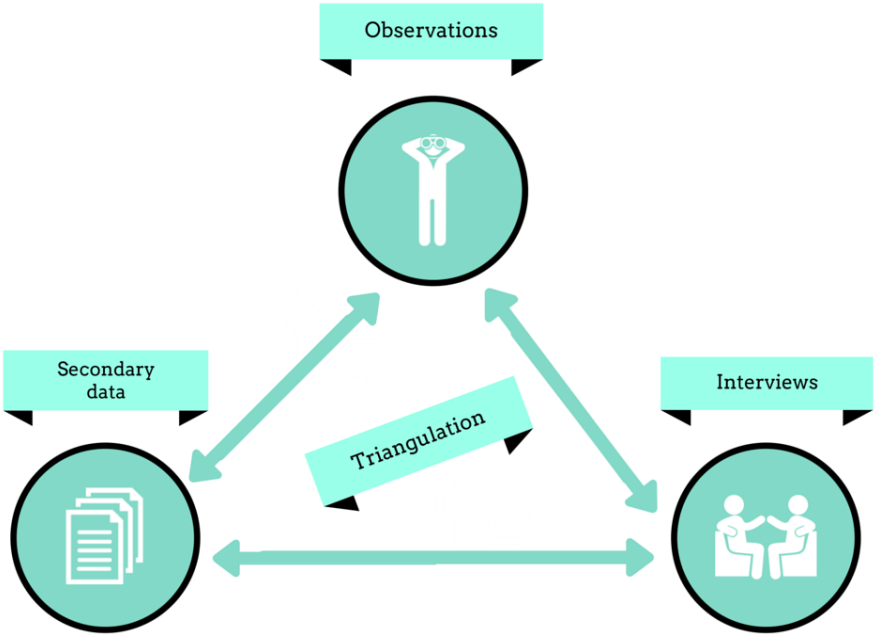


Figure 6: Data collection methods and triangulation applied by this research.

The very first sphere represents the first step of the data collecting process, i.e. secondary data. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhil (2012; p. 256-259) state secondary data is data that already been collected for different purposes and might be both quantitative and qualitative. Moreover, it could be categorized as raw data (little or no processing) or complied data (some summarizing), in this particulate case compiled secondary data has been analysed (Kervin, 1999).

On the other hand, this study does not rely only on secondary data, as *Figure 10* above shows, the next step would be to obtain primary data via observations and interviews. The reasons behind choosing semi-structured interviews and non-participant unstructured observations have been described in Research Approach and Methodical Choice.

However, here it is important to mention that due to the inductive elements of this thesis, it can be argued that the researcher is encouraged to start with collecting, exploring data and then setting themes to follow up or focus (Strauss, 1967).

Sampling – due to restrictions with regards to time (i.e. it has been impracticable to interview ca. 50 people in one week), money (i.e. the budget for this study did not allow a trip to Mainland China) and access (i.e. Startup Weekend is a very decentralized organization, making it hard to approach different branches), a series of sampling strategies have been considered. Afterwards a non-probability sampling has been employed as it provides a range of techniques that are appropriate for qualitative study, thus subjective judgment (M. Saunders, 2009).

Usually, the sample size is dependent on the research question, objectives of the study and available resources (Patton, 2002). Therefore, purpose or also called judgmental sampling has been adopted. Basically, in this type of sampling the researcher selects people that will enable

him/her to answer the research question. Next, Heterogeneous (also called maximum variation) strategy has been chosen as a strategy for purposive sampling. Meaning that, while most people that took part in this study share common traits i.e. entrepreneurs, some of them were organizers of Startup Weekend Hong Kong (5), one had higher position within Startup Weekend's hierarchy (1), several were participants in the event (4) and one (1) was an observer that came from Mainland China to seek inspiration with regards to Entrepreneurship. Therefore, the total size of the sample was 11 people, considering that the whole attendance of Startup Weekend PolyU, Hong Kong (01 – 03 of April 2016) was ca. 50 people, the sample is considered as representative.

On the other hand, utilizing purposive heterogeneous sampling might lead to contradictions, however, Patton (2002) argues that this is in fact strength. Because, any of the emerged patterns could be of particular interest and value, representing key themes.

To conclude, the sample has been chosen based on relevance, and it consists of:

- Community Development Manager for China at Techstars – on the one hand, this participant had access to a lot of relevant information concerning entrepreneurship in China. On the other hand, he was new to this position, hence, he did not gain all necessary insights yet.
- Organizers of Startup Weekend Hong Kong – most of them were entrepreneurs, on top of that they have a good overview of HK's startup community as they are active participants in that community. Consequently, as they are often more experienced than the participants (described below), organizers have valuable perspective regarding Mainland China's startup eco-system and Startup Weekend as organization.
- Participants – most are upcoming entrepreneurs, while others have been working within entrepreneurship in the past. Their fresh perspective on the startup community of Hong Kong, and opportunities for expanding to China provide interesting findings.
- Observers – only one person attended the event as observer. He is considered as one of the most relevant participants because of his past and current involvement in entrepreneurship in China and abroad (i.e. serial entrepreneur and managing director of an incubator in China).

When it comes to nationalities, the sample was composed of, seven residents of Hong Kong, one Taiwanese/Chinese (currently residing in Mainland China), two French and one American.

Figure 12, illustrates the sample behind this study:

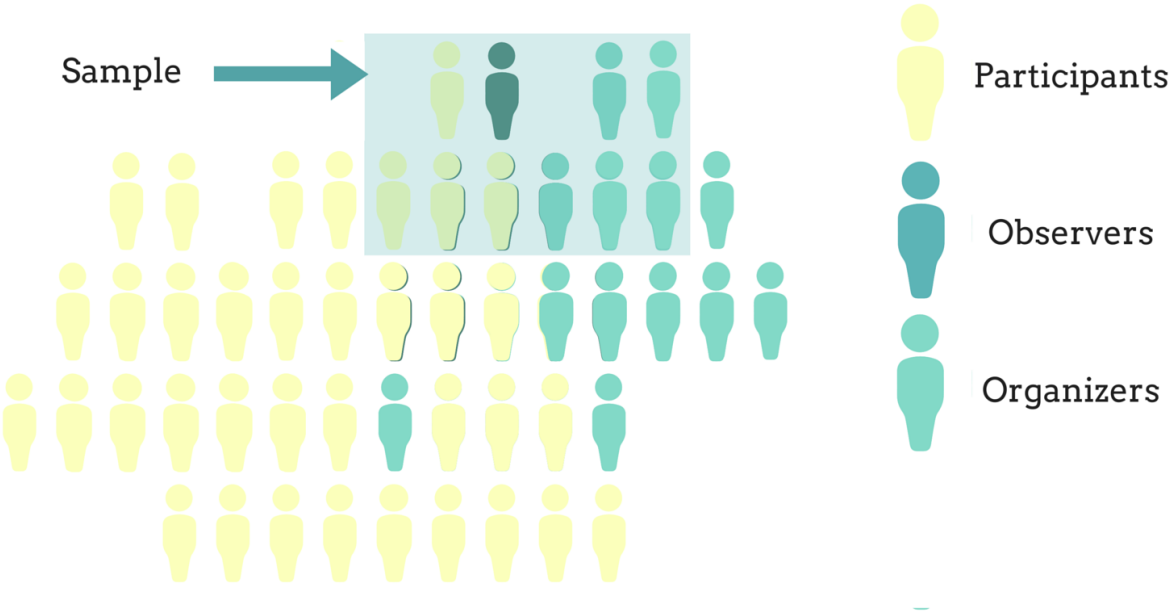


Figure 7: Illustration of the sample out of the total attendance of Startup Weekend PolyU 2016.

Data Quality

Overall there are few main issues when it comes to data quality: reliability - forms of bias and validity.

Reliability – when applying semi-structured interviews, the lack of standardization may bring some concerns regarding the reliability of the data i.e. if alternative researcher will discover similar findings (Easterby-Smith, 2008). On the other hand, the outcome of this thesis is not intended to be repeatable, due to its reflection of reality at the time when the field research was conducted (Rossman, 2006). Because the circumstances that are supposed to be explored are complex and dynamic. In contrast, applying triangulation increases the reliability of the data as the findings are compared to other collected data both primary and secondary. Last but not least, semi-structured interviews provide more flexibility, which helps to explore the complexity of the topic (Mark Saunders, 2008).

Additionally, the reliability issues may relate to bias concerns. First of all, the **interviewer bias** is an important aspect that has to be considered. This refers to comments, tone and body language of the interviewer and how they create bias regarding the way each interviewee responds to the questions being asked. Easterby-Smith et al. warns that the researcher might impose its own beliefs through the asked questions (2008). Understanding the interviewer bias impacted the way all interviews that took place in Hong Kong have been designed.

Second it follows the issue of **response bias**, usually caused by perceptions about the interviewer in terms of credibility. As it will be presented in the next section Research Ethics, for the purpose of gaining access and ensuring that the desired group of people will be willing to take part in interviews, the management of Startup Weekend China has been approached. Therefore, once the management of the organization granted access the effect that follows resembles a snowball, meaning that, it was easier to establish credibility in front of both participants and organizers.

Validity – refers to attempts to identify whether the outcome is about what it seems to be about (Mark Saunders, 2008). When it comes to validity the most important concern is the extent to which the outcome of this thesis is applicable to other similar settings i.e. if the results are generalizable. On the one hand, scholars argue that findings from single case studies are often not generalizable (Mark Saunders, 2008). On the other hand, other argue that a study case provides access to a wide variety of people and activities, especially in large organizations such as Startup Weekend (Bryman, 1988). Last but not least, Saunders argues that in his view, validity in qualitative study refers to the degree to which the researcher receives access to the desired sample with regards to their experience and knowledge. Once this is achieved, the validity would be dependent on the ability of the researcher to infer meaning from the participants, intended by them (2008). Therefore, understanding those issues, helps the researcher to be more concerned with the topic of validity, as a result, a case study strategy in such international organization ensures more valid results. Consequently, by applying the research ethic strategy presented in the next section, access to Startup Weekend has been granted. Hence, as mentioned previously, in qualitative studies the access of the researcher to the desired sample, thus to their experience and knowledge provides better validity. Especially, when the researcher guarantees that his/hers study would not result in negative consequences towards the employees of Startup Weekend.
The figure below, sums up the data quality considerations and strategies applied to ensure more valid and reliable outcome:

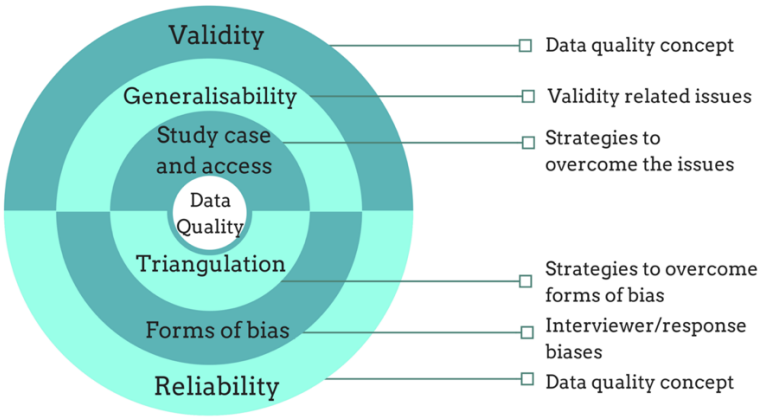
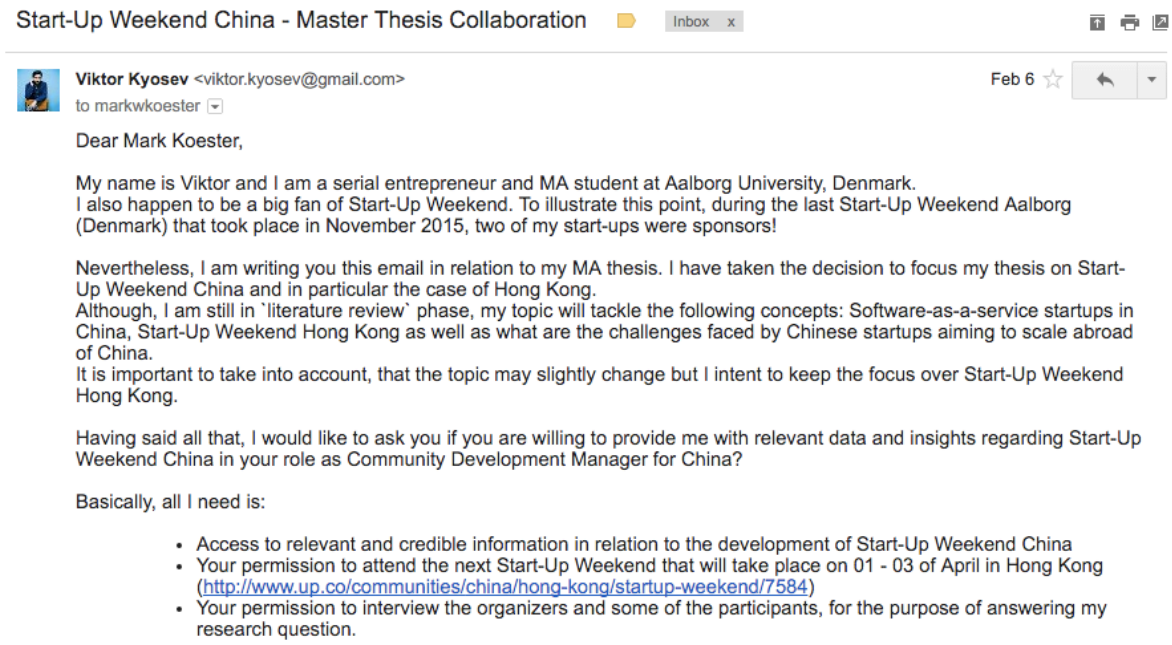


Figure 8: Data quality considerations.

Research Ethics – another topic of significant importance is the - research ethics. Furthermore, the very first step would be to figure out how to gain access to Startup Weekend China and Startup Weekend Hong Kong in particular. Moreover, it is important to get access to a representative sample while meeting the objectives of the research question in an unbiased way, hence produce reliable and valid data – **cognitive access** (Saunders, 2012, p. 170). There are several strategies that could help a researcher to access the desired organization/s in this case `Goethe-institutes` or `GAES`. Starting with ` *`sufficient time`*, and then `*possible benefits to the organization*`.

1) *Sufficient time* – it is well known fact that sometimes researchers are politely refused or not even replied when they approach certain organizations. Thus, it is important for the researcher to have the necessary time to study and then approach the right people at relevant organizations.

For the purpose of addressing this issue, the first contact with Startup Weekend China was established on 06th of February 2016.



Start-Up Weekend China - Master Thesis Collaboration Inbox x

Viktor Kyosev <viktor.kyosev@gmail.com> Feb 6

to markwkoester

Dear Mark Koester,

My name is Viktor and I am a serial entrepreneur and MA student at Aalborg University, Denmark.
I also happen to be a big fan of Start-Up Weekend. To illustrate this point, during the last Start-Up Weekend Aalborg (Denmark) that took place in November 2015, two of my start-ups were sponsors!

Nevertheless, I am writing you this email in relation to my MA thesis. I have taken the decision to focus my thesis on Start-Up Weekend China and in particular the case of Hong Kong.
Although, I am still in `literature review` phase, my topic will tackle the following concepts: Software-as-a-service startups in China, Start-Up Weekend Hong Kong as well as what are the challenges faced by Chinese startups aiming to scale abroad of China.
It is important to take into account, that the topic may slightly change but I intent to keep the focus over Start-Up Weekend Hong Kong.

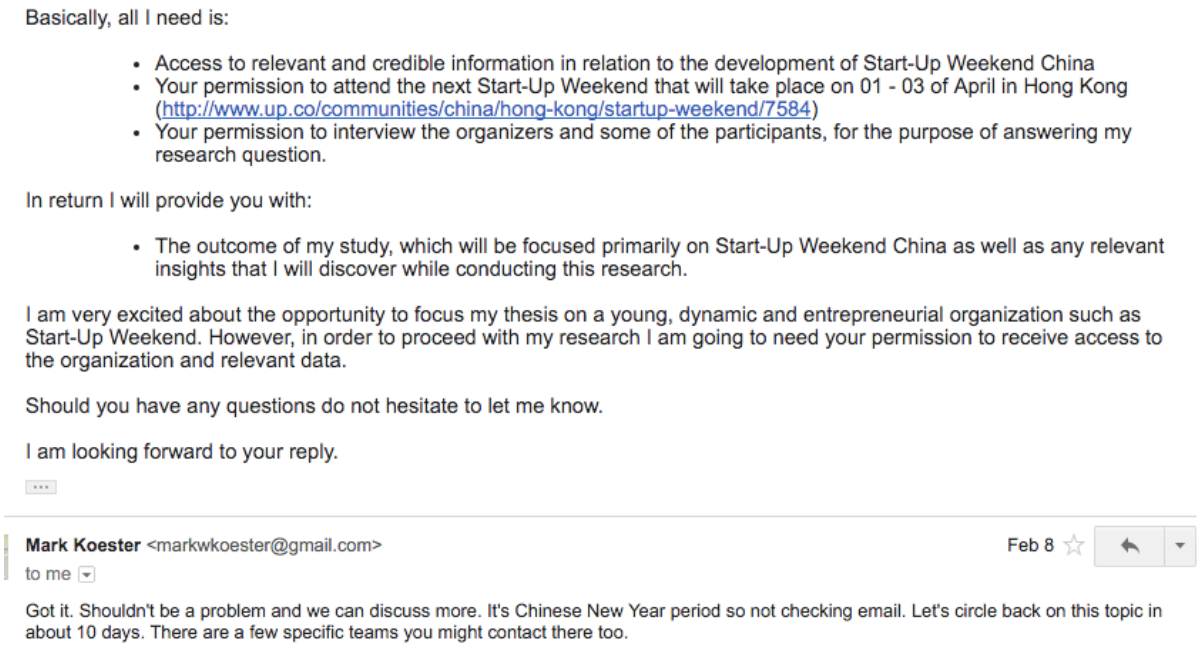
Having said all that, I would like to ask you if you are willing to provide me with relevant data and insights regarding Start-Up Weekend China in your role as Community Development Manager for China?

Basically, all I need is:

- Access to relevant and credible information in relation to the development of Start-Up Weekend China
- Your permission to attend the next Start-Up Weekend that will take place on 01 - 03 of April in Hong Kong (http://www.up.co/communities/china/hong-kong/startup-weekend/7584)
- Your permission to interview the organizers and some of the participants, for the purpose of answering my research question.

Pictures 1: Screenshot from first email sent to Mark Koester – Community Development Manager Startup Weekend China

2) *Possible benefits to the organization* – the value proposition of this potential study must be clearly summarized, as well as applicable implications of the research. As Johnson (1975) argues it is important to provide access of the findings to those who allow the researcher access.



Basically, all I need is:

- Access to relevant and credible information in relation to the development of Start-Up Weekend China
- Your permission to attend the next Start-Up Weekend that will take place on 01 - 03 of April in Hong Kong (http://www.up.co/communities/china/hong-kong/startup-weekend/7584)
- Your permission to interview the organizers and some of the participants, for the purpose of answering my research question.

In return I will provide you with:

- The outcome of my study, which will be focused primarily on Start-Up Weekend China as well as any relevant insights that I will discover while conducting this research.

I am very excited about the opportunity to focus my thesis on a young, dynamic and entrepreneurial organization such as Start-Up Weekend. However, in order to proceed with my research I am going to need your permission to receive access to the organization and relevant data.

Should you have any questions do not hesitate to let me know.

I am looking forward to your reply.

...

Mark Koester <markwkoester@gmail.com> Feb 8

to me

Got it. Shouldn't be a problem and we can discuss more. It's Chinese New Year period so not checking email. Let's circle back on this topic in about 10 days. There are a few specific teams you might contact there too.

Pictures 2: Screenshot from first email sent to Mark Koester – Community Development Manager Startup Weekend China .

To conclude, the strategy for gaining access consists of, approaching the person with highest authority in relation to Startup Weekend China as soon as possible i.e. 6th of February 2016.

Followed by, offering him the relevant findings of this research and guaranteeing that the research will not interfere with the event in any way.

Once the strategy for gaining access is established, it is natural to consider research ethics. Saunders (2012, p. 181) defines research ethics as *`how we formulate and clarify our research topic, design our research and gain access, collect data, process and store our data, analyse data and write up our research findings in a moral and responsible way`*. Furthermore, this study derives its code of ethics from the Social Research Association`s Ethical guidelines.[3] Therefore, this research must cover few obligations that are of importance: to society, funders/employers, and subjects. All of these obligations address issues such as legislation, confidentiality, privacy, conflict of interests, avoidance of embarrassment, stress or discomfort, and objectivity of me as researcher. On the other hand, some scholars argue that different stages of a research require different ethical considerations (Saunders et. al., 2007, p. 187). Therefore, the model below illustrates a summary of the major ethical principles taken into consideration when conducting this research.

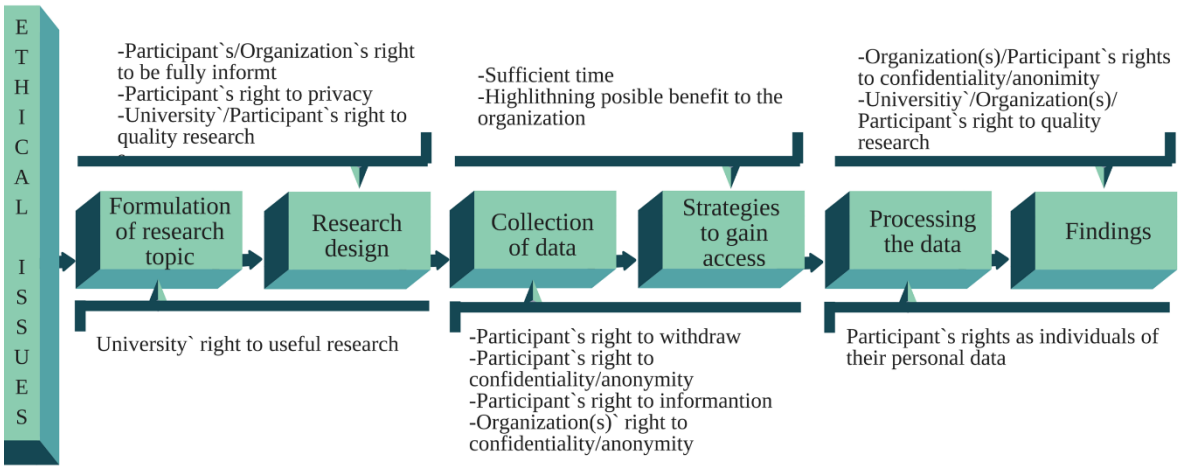


Figure 9: The model is an adjusted version of `Ethical issues at different stages of research` published at `Research methods for business students (2012)`, fifth edition, by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhil.

To conclude, all ethical issues mention in the model above will be applied to this research, meaning that, both participants (people attending Startup Weekend) as well as organizers (of the event) will have the following rights: being anonyms (if they wish so), confidentiality, privacy, personal data information (regarding the objective and design of this research),

[3] Social Research Association`s Ethical guidelines, available at: http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ethics03.pdf, Accessed on 16th of April 2016

personnel data and withdraw. While at the same time the university as a main sponsor behind this study have the right of useful and quality study.

Action Theory

The theoretical framework has fundamental importance for this dissertation, and in general to any research process. As Grant and Osanloo argue, a theory is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed, hence the theory`s importance is difficult to be stressed enough (Osanloo, 2014). While there is no perfect theory for this or any other research, certain theoretical frameworks seem as a more appropriate choice than others. As a starting point, two disciplines have been considered: Situational and Entrepreneurial theories. Situational theory because the problem formulation, behind this study tackles the issue of, to what extent could the Lean Startup methodology be applied to entrepreneurship in China. Therefore, the situation in China both from external i.e. regulations and internal i.e. culture perspectives has been considered as a major obstacle/benefactor for the applicability of Lean Startup.

On the other hand, the study revolves primarily around entrepreneurship, hence theories describing human behaviour in relation to starting a new venture have been considered.

When looking at situational theory it is important to mention that during the past 40 years there has been a debate about what has more importance in shaping human behaviour: stable dispositions or the situation itself (Cale, 1990). While, the debate remains to this day, most situational theories have been developed in the field of Criminology. Therefore, adjusting Situational theory to Entrepreneurship might prove challenging, as it has been designed to describe crime behaviour which is of little relevance to startups.

On the other hand, Action theory and in particular the psychological actions and entrepreneurial success developed by Michael Frese seems as a better choice. At the very core of this theory Michael Frese place the strong assumption that:

"Entrepreneurs` actions are important and should be a starting point for theorizing in entrepreneurship." (Frese, 2009).

Moreover, as described previously, this study adopts pragmatism as a paradigm, some scholars argue that at the very core, of this way, of perceiving the world could be placed the words: *actions and change*, hence, actions are pivotal in pragmatism (Goldkuhl, 2012, p. 7). Therefore, it can be argued that there is a methodological fit between research design and theory, which often results in high quality field research in organizations (MCMANUS, 2007).

Basically, Action Theory for Entrepreneurship is a psychological theory of action regulation applied to entrepreneurship. Hence, it has been based on Action Regulation Theory (Zapf., 1994) (Sabini, 1985). In brief, Action Theory is a meta-theory aiming to shed more light on

how people regulate their actions in order to achieve objectives actively, in both routine and novel situations. Additionally, this theory is of relevance to this dissertation because it applies more to early stage entrepreneurs/startups where entrepreneurs have influence to large extent on their companies (Frese, 2009).

Last but not least, Frese claims that changing economies e.g. Asia and Africa, often provide many opportunities and in a way it becomes a necessity to become an entrepreneur (Frese, 2009). As a result, many scholars argue that entrepreneurship is an important factor supporting economic development in transitional economies (Mead, 1998) (Reynolds, 2004). Therefore, applying Action Theory to entrepreneurs, part of Startup Weekend China provides foundation for methodological fit necessary for quality field research.

Action Theory consists of three major building blocks: Sequence, Structure and Focus. Frese argues that every action could be decomposed into these concepts (2009).

Sequence

This phase addresses how actions unfold, thus, it involves the following steps: goal setting, mapping of the environment, planning, monitoring of the execution and feedback processing (Zapf., 1994), (Dörner, 1994) (Norman, 1986). Figure 3, illustrates the Sequence phase.

Figure 10: The Action Sequence (Frese, 2009)

Later on, each sequence phase will be described explicitly, however, here it`s important to understand how they interact with each other. It is argued that the first step is to set a goal, hence, in this particular case, the goal would be to found a company or to attend an even such as Startup Weekend which will result in starting a company. Next, it follows mapping the environment i.e. what is trendy at the moment (e.g. ICT sector offering scalable

opportunities), or what is relevant to the future entrepreneur in terms of background. Afterwards, planning occurs, during this phase the entrepreneur/s would prepare some kind of a plan, such as a business plan, action plan validation board, customer development etc. Once the plan has been composed, the focus would shift towards monitoring and feedback. In my point of view, planning, monitoring of execution and feedback could be grouped as they they utilize techniques aiming to discover how the startup/product/service will/is performing. Here, two processes have been mentioned that require further clarification, as they have been mentioned several times throughout the thesis: Lean Methodology and Design Thinking. It is important to shed more light on those concepts because they blend together Plans, Monitoring of Execution and Feedback and provide day to day framework of how to turn novel ideas into products (Blank S. G., 2006).

Lean Startup and Design Thinking

Lean principle refers to making the production process more efficient while reducing any sort of waste in the process, such as, human resources or needless activities e.g. reduction of storage space (Thoring, 2012). Nowadays, lean principles have become important to many areas, especially to startups. For instance, Lean Startup was developed by E. Rise in 2011 as a method tailored to startups, assuming that the most efficient innovation is an actual demand by users (Ries, The lean startup: how today`s entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses, 2011). The concept evolved from *"customer development"* method (Blank S. G., 2006), the idea being, that the process of product development requires a process of customer development aiming to understand potential customers, hence, it is a user cantered approach that adapts to customer needs. To sum up, Lean Startup strives to build a continuous feedback loop with potential customers/users during the product development cycles (Maurya, 2012).

Design Thinking is another user driven innovation method, it has been developed by the design consultancy IDEO during the late 90s (Kelley, 2001). The focus of design thinking is not lean principles but rather to identify user needs and as a result create appropriate solutions. Therefore, both concepts are similar when it comes to focus on users or customers. Design thinking utilizes extensive user research, feedback loops and iteration cycles (Thoring, 2012).

For the purpose of clarifying both concepts, thus, identifying the differences between Lean Startup and Design Thinking, Mueller and Thoring developed the following table:

What	Design thinking	Lean Startup
Goal	Innovations	Innovations
Scope, Focus	General innovations	High-tech innovations for Startups
Approach	User-centered	Customer-oriented
Uncertainty	Solve wicked problems	Unclear customer problem
Testing	Fail early to succeed sooner	Pivoting is at the heart of the 'fail fast' concept. The sooner you realize a hypothesis is wrong, the faster you can update it and retest it.
Iteration	Yes ("Iteration")	Yes ("Pivoting")
Ideation	Ideation is part of the process, solutions are generated in the process	Ideation is not part of the process, product vision is initially provided by company founders
Qualitative Methods	Strong focus: elaborated ethnographic methods, user research, observations, etc.	Not a focus
Quantitative Methods	Not a focus	Strong focus: metric-based analysis; provides matrices, and testing
Business Model	Not a focus	Focus
Adaption of deployments	Not a focus	Five Whys Method
Typical Methods	Shadowing, Qualitative Interview, Paper Prototyping, Brainstorming (with specific rules), Synthesis, etc.	Qualitative Interview, Smoke Test, Paper Prototyping, Innovative Accounting, Split (A/B) Tests, Cohort Analysis, Funnel Metrics, Business Model Canvas, Five Whys, etc.
Hypothesis Testing	Not a focus	Focus
Prototype Testing	Yes	Yes
Rapid iteration	Yes	Yes
Target Group	Users (usually end users, sometimes other stakeholders)	Customers (distinguished between Users, Influencers, Recommenders, Economic Buyers, Decision Makers)

Emphasizes major differences between the models

Figure 11: Comparison of important aspects of design thinking and Lean Startup (Thoring, 2012)

Since both Lean Startup and Design Thinking have been defined, the thesis will proceed with further clarification of relevant concepts part of Sequence phase such as: Goal, Mapping the environment and Planning.

Goals – Before everything else, action is a goal-oriented behavior, hence goals are of crucial importance for actions (Locke, 1990). Basically, goals are actions that in the case of this study, entrepreneurs anticipate to happen in future. It is important to take into consideration, that goals pull action, thus the higher the goal the higher the pull, as a result, this often leads to higher performance (Locke, 1990). Moreover, visualizing the goal can produce motivation (e.g. to close first sale). On the other hand, in order for a given goal to lead to motivation for performance, it needs regulatory power over the action (Frese, 2009). According to Heckhausen and Kuhl (1985) ineffective goals are called wishes and its defined as something that person wants to achieve, but doesn't do anything about it. As Figure 10, presents in the cases of both Lean Startup and Design Thinking the goal would be to create innovation.

Mapping the environment – it is important for entrepreneurs to know the environment or obtain knowledge of the environment where they operate. For instance, Taylor argues that people are more motivated and persistent if they are more optimistic than objectively would require (Taylore, 1989). On the other hand, other authors argue that being overoptimistic, may

lead to wrong decisions and negative consequences (Vancouver, 2001). Action Theory assumes that only action-oriented knowledge is useful to entrepreneurs. Therefore, mapping is often the result of action (experimentation), thus entrepreneurs have to act on the environment in order to gain knowledge.

Plans – according to G. A. Miller (1960) plans are the bridges between thoughts and actions, therefore, plans convert a goal into executable sequences of operations. Action theory advocates that planning helps business owners to be successful, because plans help entrepreneurs to stay focused while ensuring that the goal is not forgotten (Frese, 2009). Moreover, as Tripoli argues, planning results in better knowledge of contingency conditions and time allocation to tasks, hence it leads to a clearer focus on priorities (Tripoli, 1998).

Monitoring of the execution – execution is the bridge between cognition and action (Pribram, 1960). In execution speed, flexibility, coordination and time management are of crucial importance (Frese, 2009).

Feedback – many studies claim that without feedback an entrepreneur would not know where he/she stands with regard to his/hers goal (Locke, 1990) (Pribram, 1960) (Erez, 1977) (Erez, 1977). Perhaps the most important metrics when it comes to feedback. are process vs. outcome feedback, thus degree of realism vs. self-serving interpretations (Dörner, 1994). Action theory suggests that feedback increases the level of learning, but it has to be considered that negative feedback tend to be more useful because it points that the goal has not been achieved. Meanwhile, positive feedback might evoke motivation but little learning occurs (Frese, 2009).

As described earlier, nowadays several models have been developed in order to guide entrepreneurs when starting a new venture, some of the most popular ones are: Design thinking and Lean Startup. Both approaches involve all relevant stakeholders (i.e. users, customers, partners) in the development process of a startup. Although those approaches are designed with different purposes, they share several similarities in methodology and process design relevant to entrepreneurship and that is why they have been described explicitly. Furthermore, Action Theory has been developed earlier than both Design thinking and Lean startup, as a result some concepts part of Action Theory overlap with the above mentioned models i.e. Mapping the Environment, Planning, Monitoring of Execution and Feedback. Hence, Figure 11 aims to illustrate how certain parts of the Sequence phase can be translated in Design thinking and Lean Startup.

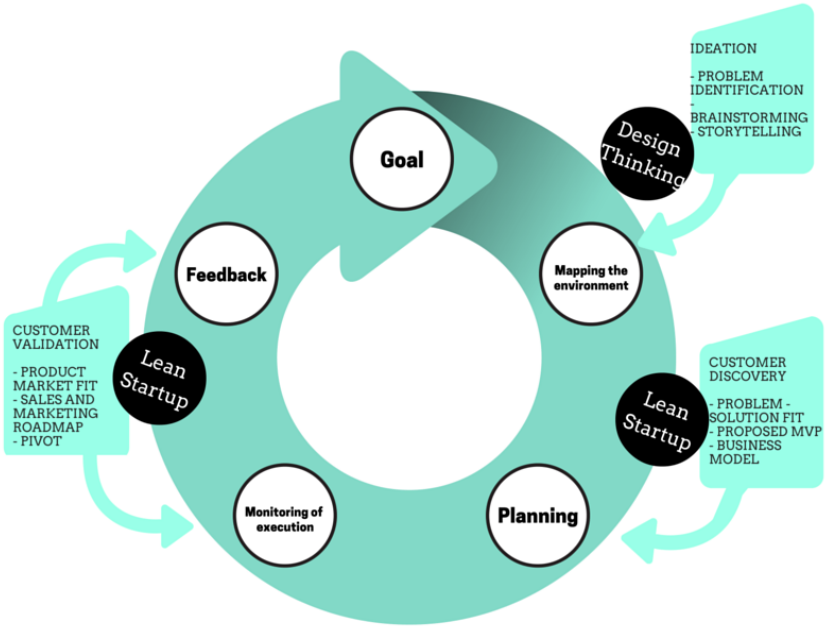


Figure 12: Action Theory meets Lean Startup and Design Thinking, inspired by (Frese, 2009)

Structure

The purpose of the second building block behind Action Theory is to lay the "grammar: for action. Hence, the structure addresses the hierarchical cognitive regulation of behaviour. Furthermore, the structure phase introduces four levels of regulations attempting to describe human behaviour and way of thinking with regards to entrepreneurship (Frese, 2009).

The Skill Level of Regulation: covers automatized or routinized skills, usually this level is preferred by people because it is effortless (Frese, 2009). Skill Level of Regulation includes basic and automated skills, thus actions that do not require nearly any mental assistance.

Level of Flexible Action Patterns: the simplest way to describe this level of regulation is by using the term mindlessness (O'Connor, 2003), because well-trained schematic action patterns dominate in this level. Basically, those are already developed action programs in people's memory that could be used and adjusted to the situation when necessary.

Conscious Level (also called: knowledge based, controlled, cognitive, intellectual level or system 2 reasoning): while in conscious phase entrepreneurs are aware of how they approach certain action. Therefore, such process requires effort, thus it's slower than the previous levels because it is constrained by limited memory (Frese, 2009). When entrepreneurs are approaching a new problem or uncertainty, conscious level would be often required.

Level of Metacognitive Heuristics: here it is argued that people do not have only conscious strategies to deal with the world but also knowledge on how to use these strategies. Hence, the ability to self-reflect when doing certain action. (Frese, 2009) Basically, heuristics can be considered as cognitive shortcuts that help us to make quicker decisions without feeling

overtaxed and at the limits of our cognitive apparatus. On the other hand, heuristics is a broad term which indicates that people are using general approaches, hence they might result in cognitive biases. (Polya, 1945). Examples of heuristics are stereotypes and rule of thumb, while the metalevel addresses life goals and moral issues.

At first glance, Structure phase of Action theory is of no relevance to this particular study. However, understanding how entrepreneurs take decisions, interpret feedback, tackle uncertainties etc. is of relevance when conducting a research on the topic. To illustrate this point, from the Structure phase follow a number of interesting implications, Action Theory argues that cognitive ability is of higher importance for entrepreneurs than to other occupations. This happens because new tasks appear often, hence entrepreneurs have to use a large reservoir of cognitive resources (Ackerman, 1988). Moreover, entrepreneurs often work under high cognitive load, as a result many errors in the planning or feedback phases occur. Action Theory advocates that the above mentioned factors cause entrepreneurs to delegate regulations to lower, less conscious levels, therefore, wrong actions might take place. Another interesting implication is that serial entrepreneurs tend to recognize new opportunities easier, because other things are shifted to a lower level of regulation (Frese, 2009). Nevertheless, the figure below sums up each level of regulation with a simple example of what tasks are regulated by each level.

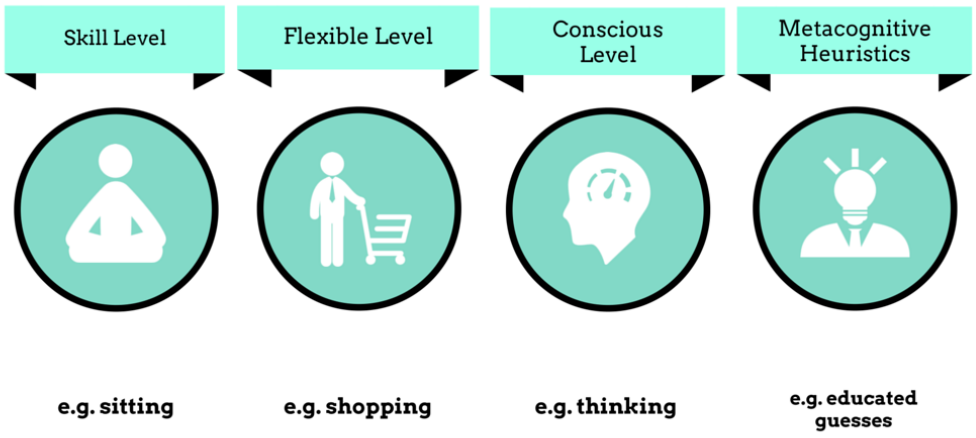


Figure 13: Action Structure, inspired by (Frese, 2009)

The Focus

Until now Action theory has been addressing mainly the thought process of entrepreneurs from individual point of view. However, the focus building block aims to shed more light on what happens when the startup grows and most activities become collective. Some authors argue that high firm performance is dependent on how well the social and organizational contexts are regulated (Motowidlo, 1993) (D., 1988).

Hence, The Focus building block is composed of three concepts: the task, social context and the self.

The task - is of obvious importance, diversion from the task might lead to lower success. While studies prove that experts and non-experts alike may divert from the task, experts usually shift their focus quicker back to the task (Sonnentag, 1998).

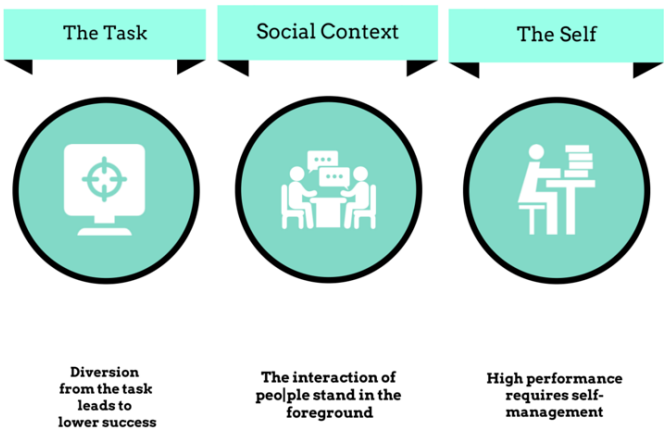
Social context - starting a business is a social endeavour because other people are usually involved. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to be aware, and able to regulate the social context of task performance. Furthermore, entrepreneurs have to maintain smooth operations, support employees, improve existing methods and the company's objective needs to be transparent and supported by everyone (D., 1988).

Here, it's important to clarify that the sequence and structure phases are relevant here as well. The only difference is that the social context is mainly based on interactions, hence, other people are acting back, making people stand in the foreground (Frese, 2009).

The Self – for the purpose of achieving high performance, entrepreneurs have to regulate themselves effectively. Meaning that, one is aware of his/hers weaknesses and works consciously against them. Self efficacy is another important element of the self which implies that entrepreneurs must believe in their ability to tackle a given task. To conclude, the self addresses issues such as thinking about whether the entrepreneur is doing well. Hence, it happens mainly at metacognitive level of thinking (Frese, 2009).

The figure below sums up the final block of Action Theory in a more visual way:

Figure 14: Action Focus, inspired by (Frese, 2009)



In general Action Theory for Entrepreneurship is useful because it contains three building blocks covering wide range of relevant concepts to entrepreneurship. For instance, the sequence phase provides a good overview of pragmatic approach to starting a new venture, while structure sheds more light on how people i.e. entrepreneurs think. Last but not least, the focus, adds several more elements that are of crucial importance to the success of entrepreneurs.

Nevertheless, Action Theory has been compared with two contemporary models for starting a new company: Lean Startup and Design Thinking. Furthermore, it became obvious that the Structure block of Action Theory has many similar phases that are present in both Design Thinking and Lean Startup. This finding further strengthens the validity as well as the suitability of the theoretical framework chosen for this study.

Analyses

Semi-structured interviews

Since this paper employs abductive reasoning, both deductive and inductive approaches are adopted when analyzing the findings of this research. Deductive, because this paper seeks to use existing theory i.e. Action Theory, when formulating the research objectives and framework to organize/direct the data analysis (Yin, 2003). Advantages of this approach include (M. Saunders, 2009):

- Link to existing body of literature on the topic of entrepreneurship
- Initial analytical framework

Inductive approach because it helps the researcher to explore themes or issues, thereby narrow the research scope. As mentioned previously, this study is abductive in nature, therefore, instead of relying completely on explorative approach, theoretical framework has been applied. On the other hand, the primary data and the interviews in particular, have been conducted in a semi-structured way, in order to identify relationships between the collected data and develop questions and hypothesis used to pivot the research question.
Nevertheless, the first technique used when analysing the findings of this paper is "*summarizing data*" (M. Saunders, 2009). Summarizing, therefore, involves a summary of key findings, discovered via interviews or observations. Hence, large amount of text has been interpreted and compressed into fewer words (Kvale, 1996). As a result, many principal themes emerged. Afterwards, "*categorizing data*" technique has been applied, meaning that, based on the Action theory several categories have been applied. Last but not least, meaningful chunks of data have been attached to each category respectively i.e. unitizing data (M. Saunders, 2009).
Next, patterns within the data as well as relationships between categories have been tested via triangulation of primary data (i.e. interviews) compared to observations or secondary data (i.e. interviews/observations) compared with relevant academic studies or reports.
It is important to note that some of the data has been quantified in order to emphasize the frequency of certain opinions and to assess their impact. This has been done by applying data display. Therefore, all data has been organized and assembled into summary diagrams. Each summary diagram has been designed as a network data display, hence, as a collection of circles linked together by lines indicating relationships or sequences (Huberman, 1994). The reasons for adopting this particular type of approach are as it follows (Huberman, 1994):

- Better alternative to extended text

- Relatively easy to generate
- The models are developed to fit the findings of this study specifically
- Provide analytical mind-set as the researcher as several iterations are taking place before the data could be represented well

For the purpose of clarifying the logic behind each network data display the following legend has been established:

Figure 15: Legend of each Data Displays presented in the Analyses section.

Therefore, depending on how many people have argued over certain concept/s the pattern has been represented in accordance with the graph above i.e. the smallest pin represents the opinion of one person, the largest consensus between five or more.

Sequence

As described in section theory, the very first building block of Action Theory is *Sequence*. In this paper, *Sequence* has been split into Goals, Mapping the Environment and Feedback (Feedback combines Plans, Monitoring of Execution and Feedback). The graph below illustrates how all interviewed people attending Startup Weekend perceive "Goals" with regards to entrepreneurship:

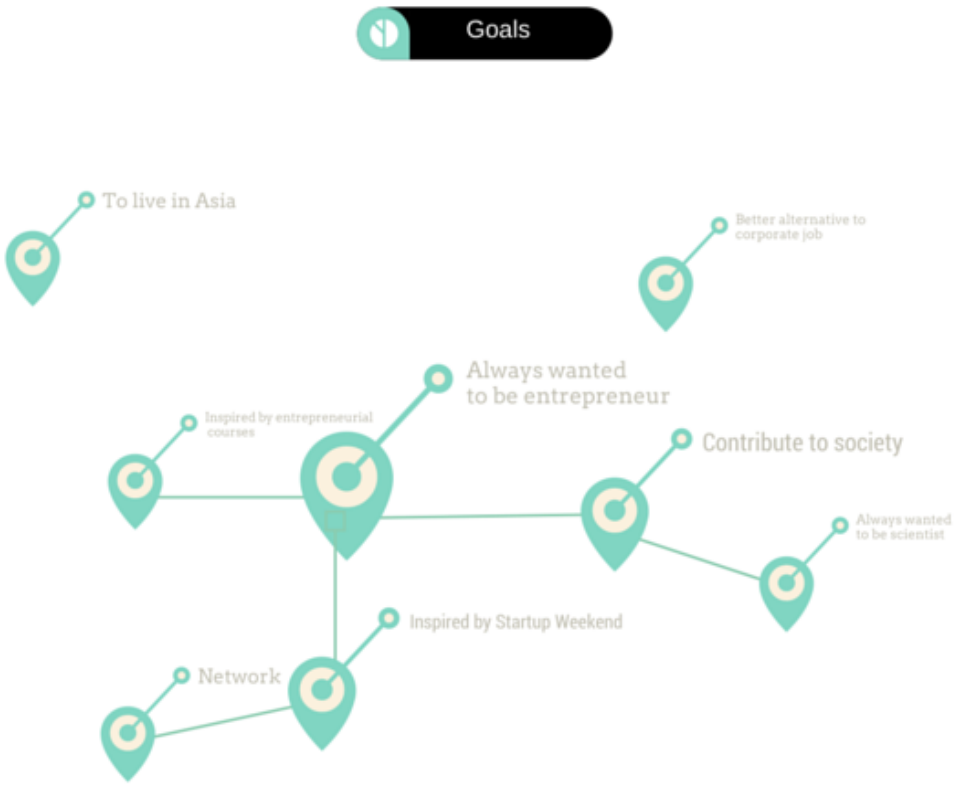


Figure 16: Data Display of primary data with regards to how entrepreneurs set Goals.

The following patterns emerge with regards to this topic:

- Majority of people attending/organizing Startup Weekend always had the dream to become entrepreneurs.
- "Contribute to society" and "Inspired by Startup Weekend" (i.e. inspired to become entrepreneurs) are the second most common answers.

Those findings are interesting because of two perspectives:

1) It proves that the sample is relevant as most people are/want to be entrepreneurs, which is a core topic of this research.
2) Action Theory argues that Action is a goal oriented behaviour, higher action is followed by better performance (Locke, 1990). According to Heckhausen and Kuhl

(1985) ineffective goals are called wishes and its defined as something that a person wants to achieve, but does not do anything about it. On the other hand, in this case, every single attendee has done the effort to attend Startup Weekend, thus, turned their wishes into more feasible objectives.

The next concept is Mapping the Environment and it is represented by the graph below:

Figure 17: Data Display of primary data with regards to how entrepreneurs Map the environment.

When entrepreneurs residing in Hong Kong are considering what new venture to start they would usually take into account the following concepts:

- Background – it refers to their education or work-experience.
- Market needs – what needs does the market have? This aspect is often combined with the strive to solve a problem that the entrepreneur is experiencing.
- Tech startups – technology provides many opportunities and entrepreneurs are eager to cease them.

Those findings go hand-in-hand with Action theory, as Frese argues, only action-oriented behaviour is of importance to entrepreneurs. Hence, Mapping the Environment is often the result of experimentation, in the above mentioned cases experimentation is understood in the following way:

Background – applying studies into practice.

Market needs – exploring new sectors.

Teach startups – utilizing the fast peace of technology development, even if it is not familiar at first glance.

After the environment has been mapped, plans, execution and feedback follow, as mentioned previously all those concepts are positioned under the umbrella of "*feedback*". Feedback is the core concept behind Lean Startup or Design thinking models, and it revolves around the following sequence: forming hypothesis (planning), testing them (execution) and collecting feedback (feedback).

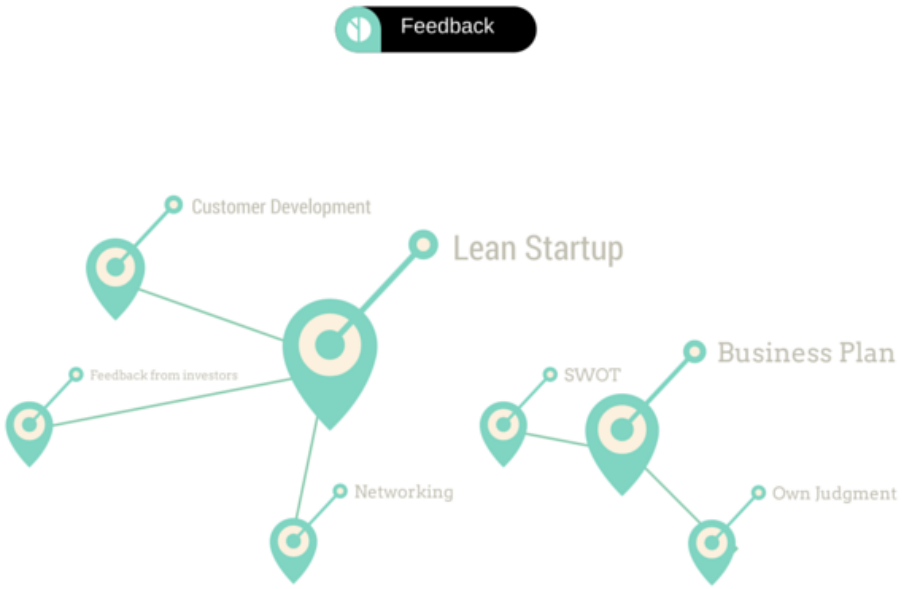


Figure 18: Data Display of primary data with regards to how entrepreneurs plan, execute and collect feedback.

It is clear that Lean Startup plays crucial role in the lifecycle of startups that have been represented at Startup Weekend Hong Kong PolyU. The next most popular approach is writing a business plan.

Those patterns can be explained in the following way. Startup Weekend encourages the appliance of Lean Startup, hence the majority of participants and especially organizers are inclined to think so. On the other hand, while Business Plans are considered as out-dated and not efficient in comparison to Lean Startup, considerable number of people are relying on them (Blank S. , Why the Lean Start-Up Changes Everything, 2013). It is interesting to note, that people who answered that Business Plan in an important step towards reaching success were usually people based in China (Rickey, Observer, Managing Director at an Incubator in Mainland China) or people who operate there (George, organizer of Startup Weekend, serial entrepreneur).

Applied Sequence

Since all concepts have been presented individually the next paragraph aims to explore how they interact with each other, in order to get a clear idea of how Action Theory applies to the context of this study.

Therefore, the sample of this study applies the following sequence:

Figure 19: Data Display of primary data with regards to how Sequence applies to this dissertation.

Goals:

- Always wanted to be entrepreneurs – hence see Startup Weekend as a good opportunity to deliver on their goal.
- Contribute to society or solve a problem – have a clear idea of what they want to do but feel uncertain about entrepreneurship as a direction, therefore, utilize Startup Weekend to explore the process of starting a new venture.

Mapping the Environment:

- Background – is utilized most of the time, as it is easier to build on something rather than starting in a new sector.
- Market needs – seek problems and try to come up with relevant solutions.

- Hot trends – observe what technology is trendy at the time and attempt to make use of it.

Feedback:

- Lean Startup – aims for rapid feedback collection, prototyping and iteration until a pattern is discovered. As a result, the concept might pivot, consequently setting new, more concrete, and feasible objectives. Hence, creating a loop in the *Sequence phase* of Action Theory.
- Business Plans – more traditional approach aiming to sum up the considerations for future development of the new venture. The likelihood of entering a new loop is smaller in the case of Business Plans, especially when compared to Lean Startup.

Focus

Since the Sequence phase has been examined, the next step is to evaluate interviewees' opinions with regards to the Focus phase. Due to the fact that Sequence covers to a large extent the way entrepreneurs set Tasks, Social context is the next explored concept. For this purpose, all participants in the interview process have been asked to provide their opinion on the external environment with regards to running a business in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The results are represented by the graphs below:

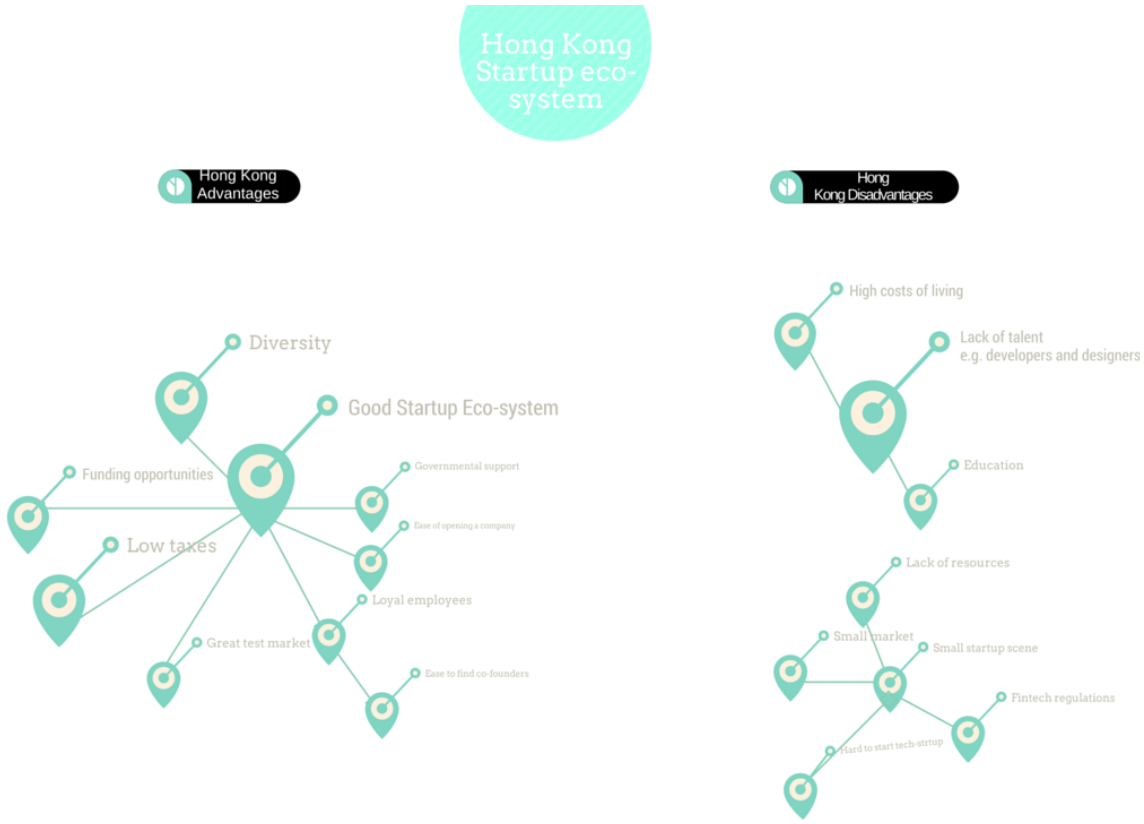


Figure 20: Data Display of primary data with regards to the Social context i.e. Hong Kong as a startup eco-system.

The first comparison covers Hong Kong and has been summarized to Advantages and Disadvantages of its startup eco-system.

Overall, the respondents consider HK as a good startup hub because of the following reasons: *low taxes, funding opportunities, diversity of its population, loyal people, great testing opportunities* (i.e. small territory but large population, as well as proximity to ASEAN and Mainland China) *and evident governmental support towards entrepreneurship.*

On the other hand, consensus has been established with regards to Hong Kong's *lack of talent* (e.g. developers and designers) and *poor conditions for such talent to grow* (i.e. educational system).

For the purpose of proving the validity of this comparison a report by Compass, a San Francisco based research firm has been considered, titled: The Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking 2015 (GSER) (Compass, 2015). According to that report, Hong Kong ranked among the top five fastest growing startup ecosystems as well as one of the world's top 25 hubs for entrepreneurship.

The findings of GSER are in agreement with the findings of this paper when it comes to (Compass, 2015):

Lack of talent – While Hong Kong has some world class universities, attracting technical talent is challenging because of the risk-averse culture and large companies competing for the same talent.

Great market for testing – proximity to Mainland China and ASEAN markets.

Diversity – many years of international trade along with the presence of expats and western educated locals provides excellent conditions for scaling abroad.

Policy – the government of Hong Kong recognizes the importance of startups and their development.

On the other hand, the report disagrees with:

Funding – according to GSER there is considerably lower access to venture investment than in top 20 startup hubs. Moreover, despite the fact there is no shortage of capital, high net worth individuals prefer traditional investments over startup funding.

To conclude, by triangulating the data with a report on the topic of entrepreneurship it has been discovered that most of the findings are valid in this particular context. On the other

hand, it is interesting to note how participants of Startup Weekend argued that Hong Kong provides many funding opportunities, while GSER disagrees with this statement.
The next comparison addressed Mainland China as potential market for scaling, the image below represents people's views on the topic.

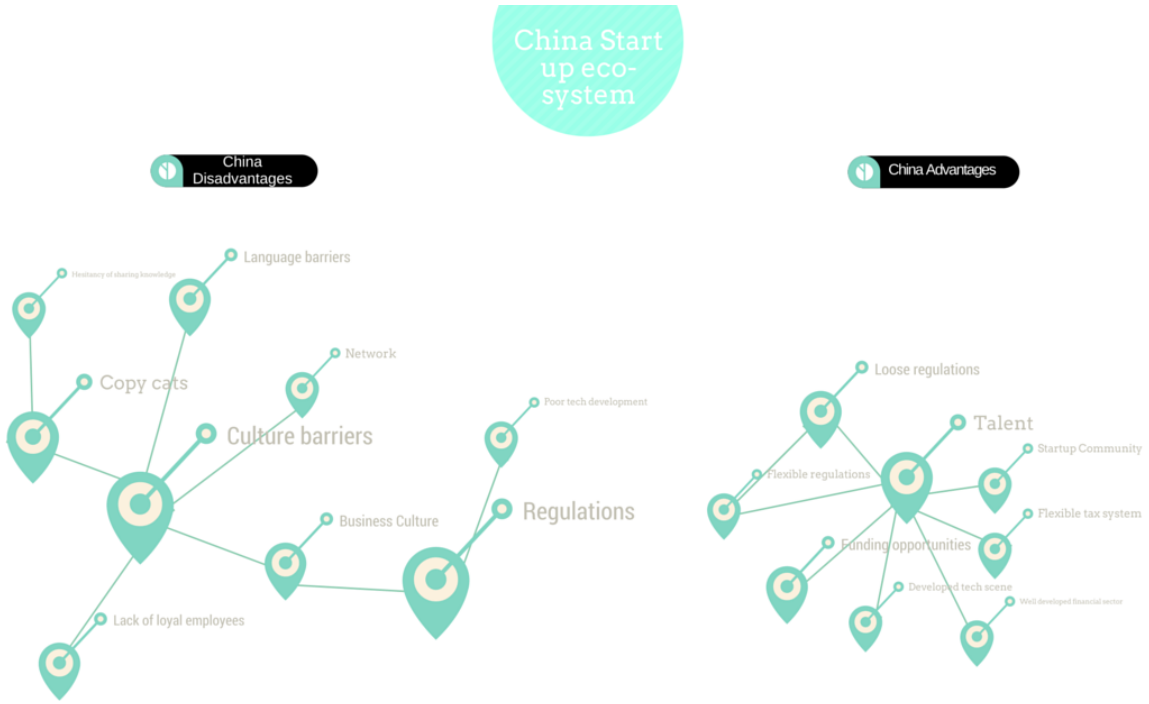


Figure 21: Data Display of primary data with regards to the Social context i.e. Mainland China as a startup eco-system.

The advantages of China as a good market for entrepreneurship are narrowed down to the following concepts: *access to talent, flexible taxes and regulations, funding opportunities and well developed Startup eco-system.*
When it comes to disadvantages the following issues have been raised: *culture complexity, copy rights issues, not clear regulations, language, hesitancy to share ideas and lack of loyalty*.
Unfortunately, GSER does not cover Mainland China due to its complexity, instead, a report by the Community Development Manager for China at Techstars (the mother company of Startup Weekend) has been applied in order to triangulate the data (Koester, Minding the Borderlands , 2015). Furthermore, secondary data i.e. reports by Startup Weekend and primary data i.e. interviews conducted in Hong Kong, share cohesive opinions with regards to the following concepts:
Talent – M. Koester supports the argument that one of China's major advantage is talent.

Startup eco-system – during the past several years Startup Weekend observed a significant increase of concepts, events and the degree of importance that startups play in China, resulting in a very active startup scene.
Culture complexity: the large territory and population of China makes people in different parts of China to speak, act and think differently. Startup Weekend argues that there is no such thing as *"one China",* assuming otherwise may lead to unforeseen and often negative consequences.
Hesitancy to share ideas – according to M. Koester historically and contemporaneously Chinese share little trust between themselves. Furthermore, any company or brand in China faces issues with legitimacy and trust.
Copy rights and loyalty – the following quotes by M. Koester emphasize Startup Weekend's view on those problems:
"… in 2015, we were greeted by a huge increase of copycat and imitation Startup Weekend programs…" (Koester, Minding the Borderlands , 2015)
"I didn't expect that copycats and broken community would have been such a problem when I started this year (2015). I knew enough about China to know its challenges, but I didn't expect to have so many of our volunteers take our model, connections, and, in some cases, our sponsors and run copycat events. This hurt our growth and momentum early in the year." (Koester, Minding the Borderlands , 2015)
Business Culture and Network – another interesting consensus between the primary and secondary data is how entrepreneurs operating in China face challenges with regards to the business culture and network. To name a few, Startup Weekend usually involves mentors in their events in order to help young and aspiring entrepreneurs to reach their objectives faster. However, it seems like successful entrepreneurs rarely come back and help the next generation of talent, as a consequence, there is lack of knowledge sharing in the startup eco-system. It is interesting to note, that Rickey (observer of Startup Weekend Hong Kong Poly U) mentioned several times the difference between the mind-set of mentors in Hong Kong and China, in particular:
"…mentors in Hong Kong ask questions, while mentors in China talk about their success and do not pay much attention to the problems that entrepreneurs might have…"

On the other hand, Startup Weekend does not provide any data with regards to regulations or governmental support (e.g. tax incentives, funding opportunities etc.) in China. At the same

time, many entrepreneurs, especially locals of Hong Kong, expressed concerns regarding the rigidity or clarity of regulations for tech startups.

The final concept part of Action Theory represents what entrepreneurs do in order to improve themselves i.e. the Self. Hence, Action Theory advocates that high performance is often caused by regulates oneself effectively. Furthermore, this concept refers to reflections on performance and steps taken to overcome weaknesses.

Figure 22: Data Display of primary data with regards to the Self i.e. Active approach to learning.

Most common patterns include: reading of books, self-teaching oneself and networking. It is interesting to note that despite different backgrounds, cultures or languages most entrepreneurs utilize the same techniques in order to improve their performance and chances of success.

Critics to the interviews

Nevertheless, one last data display has been designed in relation to all interviews, for the purpose to map different segments of the sample by relevance and involvement in Startup Weekend. Therefore, it strives to discover:

- Potential biases towards China/Hong Kong
- Emerging patterns
- Discrepancies

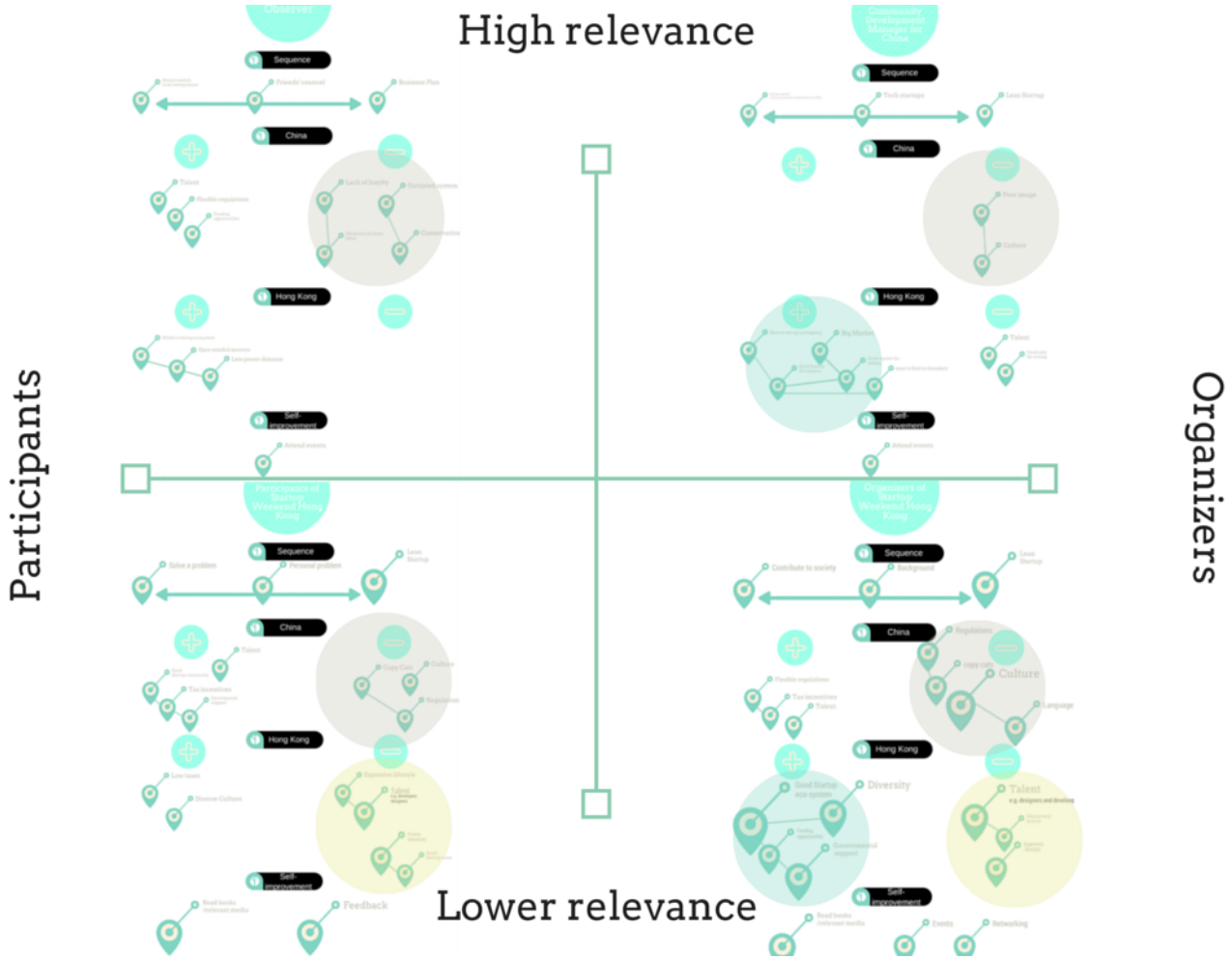


Figure 23: Overview of Data Display of different sampling segments.

Green circle - On the other hand, there is considerable discrepancy between the answers of Organizers of Startup Weekend against participants and observers regarding the advantages of Hong Kong as external environment.

Yellow circle - It is interesting to note that there is a pattern in the answers of both Organizers of Startup Weekend and Participants with regards to the disadvantages of their current external environment e.g. Hong Kong. Hence, local residents share the same opinion regarding their startup eco-system.

In my view, two reasons might be causing this pattern:

1) Organizers of Startup Weekend have better understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape due to their immersion in the topic i.e. organize events, run startups and follow entrepreneurship courses at local universities.
2) Bias towards Hong Kong because of the amount of efforts they have put in supporting entrepreneurship.

Beige circle - The vast majority of people who took part in this study were critical towards China as potential market for entrepreneurship. Most critics were raised by organizers of Startup Weekend Hong Kong and least by participants of the event.

Observations

When it comes to observations, similar techniques as in the interview analysis, have been employed. Therefore, the data has been summarized and unitized into several concepts, presented below:

Lean Startup VS Design Thinking

As described in the theory section, both Lean Startup and Design Thinking are popular models that adopt action and feedback as core concepts and seek to help people to develop solution that is tailored to the needs of potential customers and users. As it got validated via most interviews, Lean Startup is adopted by many entrepreneurs in both Hong Kong and China. According to my observations, residents of Hong Kong are more familiar with this method in comparison to residents of Mainland China. Another interesting observation is that Design Thinking has not been utilized by anyone attending Startup Weekend, making it less popular model than Lean Startup.

Hong Kong VS Mainland China

While the previous section discussed extensively the pros and cons of both Mainland China and HK with regards to entrepreneurship, there are several interesting observations that are of relevance to this study.

- Biases - residents of Hong Kong or China showed clear bias towards their home states. Meaning that, Organizers of Startup Weekend were very positive regarding the development of Hong Kong and negative towards China. On the other hand, some residents of Mainland China were critical towards Hong Kong and positive regarding their home state.
- Misunderstandings – several people pointed at regulations as a major obstacle when considering Mainland China as potential market. However, in my view, the issue did not stem from their knowledge of many regulations, but rather the cause was the lack of clarity on the topic. Most people did not know to what extent the ICT sector is regulated and how to deal with that, therefore, they concluded that it is not worth the effort.

- China as a second market – an interesting observation occurred during the finals of Startup Weekend Hong Kong PolyU. During the presentations of each startup entrepreneurs shared their considerations with regards to primary and secondary markets relevant to their startups. Out of 10 pitching entrepreneurs, only two considered Mainland China as potential market, when scaling their startups. Instead the majority argued that Singapore, Malaysia or Indonesia are better alternatives as secondary markets.
- Lean Startup vs China – people who actually managed to scale their operations to China argued that Lean Startup is not necessary, instead they prefer Business Plans or simply networking with the right people (e.g. investors).

To sum up, by triangulating the data, discovered through observations along with the interviews findings it can be argued that the following findings appear valid in this context:

- Lean Startup is the major model utilized by entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. Consequently, Design thinking is not popular approach for early stage startups.
- Biases – residents of Hong Kong and Mainland China demonstrated considerable bias towards their homes states.
- China as a second market – few entrepreneurs consider China as a second market due to its complexity in terms of culture, regulations and copy rights issues.
- Chinese entrepreneurs are not strong supporters of Lean Startup, at the same time, they are aware of it but prefer more conservative methods such as business plans.

Pictures 3: Finals of Startup Weekend Hong Kong PolyU (Kyosev, 2016)

Analyses conclusion

The analysis of the thesis proceeded in four stages. Systematic and iterative comparison of primary data collected by applying the theoretical framework of Action Theory (Frese, 2009) with existing literature helped the development of cohesive constructs. First of all, after collecting the primary data via interviews and observations the data was collected, analyzed, unitized and represented through data displays. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of information, consequently they offered most information about how to proceed with the research objectives. Second of all, observations expanded my understanding of the problem and current situation, thus reinforced the findings of the interviews. Furthermore, the primary data (interviews and observations) was triangulated in sequential order for the purpose of testing the validity of all collected data. During the third phase, primary data was triangulated with secondary data i.e. reports, for the sake of testing if consensus would be established between existing literature and primary data. As a result, certain findings were confirmed while others were pointed out as contradictions. In the final phase, triangulated findings are compared with academic literature in order to refute or reinforce my findings, the model below illustrates the process.

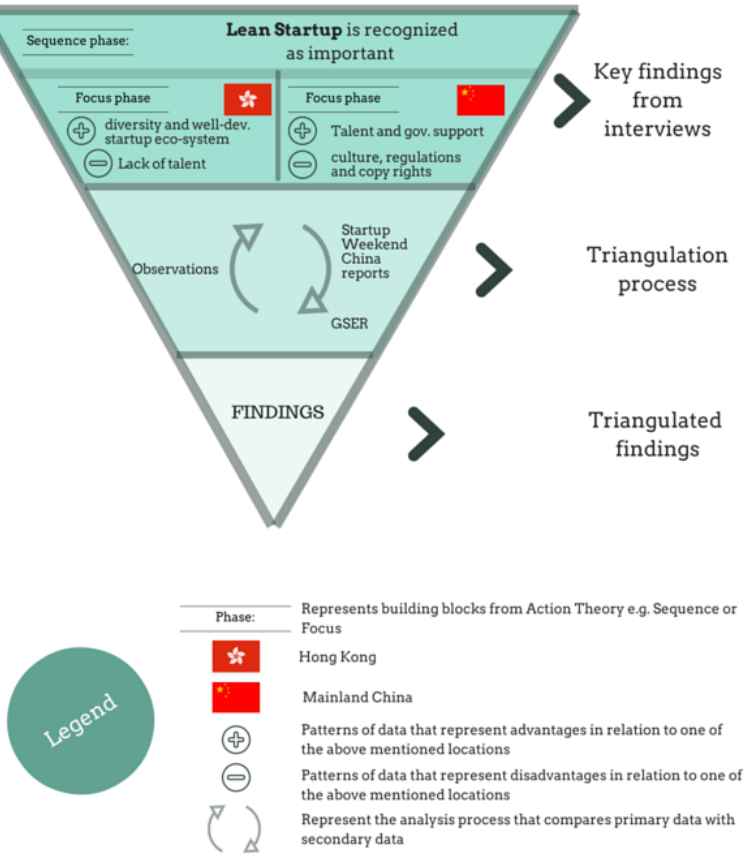


Figure 24: Overview of the analysis of Primary and Secondary data.

The results of those analyses form the following findings:

Major factors constraining the development of Startup Weekend in Mainland China are *copy rights issues*, consequently, *hesitancy to share ideas and seek feedback* (i.e. lack of Lean Startup method), *complexity of the market, conservative system, loyalty of employees towards employers and complex business culture*. At the same time, China appears to be strong with regards to *access to talent and favorable conditions for running a startup*, thus, China is on its way to developing viable startup eco-system.

On the other hand, Startup Weekend Hong Kong has gained momentum because of the developing startup eco-system, backed by the efforts of local government in terms of tax incentives, diverse population, proximity to other markets (ASEAN and Mainland China) and acknowledgment of Lean Startup methods. However, it has to be considered that the lack of tech talent is a major obstacle for the future development of HK's startup scene.

To sum up, the differences between Hong Kong and Mainland China, through the lens of Startup Weekend, are understood as:

Hong Kong is a modern community, open to pragmatic approaches based on feedback. The diverse population representing a mixture of expats and western educated locals provides the appropriate mindset for entrepreneurs who are actively seeking feedback and adjusting to the environment. The local government's efforts in supporting startups are also recognized by the sample of this study.

On the other hand, Mainland China's long history and unique culture has developed a divergent form of startup eco-system that rarely follows western methods such as Lean Startup and Design Thinking. Hence, local entrepreneurs strive to utilize other techniques such as networking and business plans. Moreover, support from the government along with access to talent has resulted in favorite conditions for running a business for locals.

Unfortunately, it seems that residents of Hong Kong are not aware of the benefits that Mainland China offers, instead the poor image of doing business in China has shifted their focus on disadvantages, hence Hong Kong based startups prefer to scale to the ASEAN market, rather than China.

Nevertheless, since factors constraining the development of Startup Weekend China along with differences between the startup eco-systems of Hong Kong and Mainland China, have been identified, the final step of this research will be to address the issue of applying pragmatic approach to entrepreneurship in Chinese context.

The primary data confirmed that Lean Startup is a popular model in Hong Kong in contrast to Mainland China. Based on my findings, the reason behind avoiding models such as Lean Startup or Design Thinking, is the problem of copycatting, thus violation of intellectual property rights, by more established local companies on the Chinese market. Entrepreneurs are afraid to seek feedback as this implies that at some point their concepts will be presented to potential customers, users or partners, for the purpose of testing if there is a product-market-fit or not. Moreover, it is difficult to prove that violation of intellectual property rights actually happens, because during "*ideation*" phase (first phase in the development of a startup) one cannot obtain any rights over his/hers idea, at the same time, during this particular stage it is crucial to discover what potential stakeholders think of your solution. Consequently, events such as Startup Weekend that are based on Lean Startup face challenges from several directions e.g. 1) other events copying Startup Weekend as a concept, 2) Startup Weekend attempt to promote a mind-set that goes against local practices.

A research paper titled *"China: Bubble-Up Innovation"* by P. Geib and J. Swenson more than 350 interviews were conducted with influencers from Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore etc. over a period of 22 years (1988 – 2014) argues how China embraces *"horizontal innovation"* which refers to:

"…taking a product or service that works somewhere and expanding it so that it can work everywhere… The Chinese have been straight forwardly copying everything that has worked in the developed world…" (Peter & James, 2015)

Moreover, a report by McKinsey titled *"Gauging the strength of Chinese innovation"* defines China as *"innovation sponge",* as it absorbs and adapts existing technology and knowledge from all over the world (Erik Roth, 2015).

However, it is debatable if the harsh market conditions actually diminish the applicability of Action Theory. While, both primary data findings and existing literature concludes that many entrepreneurs see unfair competitive practices and intellectual property theft in Mainland China. A study titled *"Innovation Lessons From China"* by E. Steinfeld and T. Beltoft conducted more than 150 semi-structured interviews with senior managers, design engineers and product developers in China-based companies and discovered something interesting. According to E. Steinfeld and T. Beltoft, Chinese competitors do not utilize models or practices designed by Western scholars or companies, instead, Chinese shape their own paths in unique ways (Beltoft, 2014). The authors argue how new ideas often play small role in the equation and how China's ecosystem excels in transforming the new into the profitable.

"… even the most groundbreaking ideas are devoid of commercial value unless they can be delivered as products in a manner, at a price point and within a period of time that suits the preferences of an existing customer base." (Beltoft, 2014)

Therefore, one can argue that, it does not matter if horizontal – *"innovation sponge"* (Erik Roth, 2015) or vertical innovation – *"innovation catalyst"* is applied, because converting an idea into a viable product is to a large extent at the core of innovation, the fulcrum upon which value creation rests. Furthermore, Modern China has become the global leader of this kind of knowledge (Beltoft, 2014). Consequently, E. Steinfeld and T. Beltoft developed a four-step model that sums up the process behind innovation in China.

1) *Capabilities for rapid tempo operations and speed to market* – the first step advocates how new products must reach the market as fast as possible as it is inevitable to be copied by competitors. What matters here, is to capture increased margins during a short period of time and then proceed with a new round of incremental product innovation.
2) *Accommodation of unique customer preferences* – the previous step emphasizes the importance of speed while this one argues how products must fit the needs of particular kind of customer found in China. Both steps are related as Chinese would often be satisfied with not fully matured product as long as it is cheap and provides immediate service when bugs occur. The downside here is that customers would often have little brand loyalty, anticipating the next product, delivered by the competition.
3) *World-leading capabilities* – due to the pressure that follows from the previous two steps Chinese entrepreneurs tend to be very lean. Meaning that, designing existing products at a lower cost by removing all forms of waste.
4) *Capabilities for new forms of networked production* – the final step relies on quickly identifying what entrepreneurs/companies can produce in-house and what has to be outsourced. As a result, Chinese companies would often operate in a complex production networks.

It is interesting to note, how the model resembles the Sequence phase part of Action Theory. Chinese entrepreneurs would map the environment seeking for a problem to solve or a product to copy (Mapping the environment). Afterwards, a plan will be established outlining how to proceed with the execution (Planning). The execution would consist of rapid prototype development before other competitor can copy their product (Execution). At the same time, the execution will focus on lean principles avoiding waste while seeking appropriate market

segment that is willing to consume the product at such an early stage of its development (Feedback).

Therefore, while adopted to fit the complexity of the market, a pragmatic approach resembling to some extent Action Theory is evident in Chinese context. Instead of following strictly Lean Startup or Design Thinking, Chinese entrepreneurs borrow elements from both models when necessary. As a result, the sequence of such models is not taken into consideration but rather adjusted to their needs. Hence, focus on tests via rapid prototyping, lean manufacturing and adjustment to customer preferences are vital when it comes to entrepreneurship in China. Therefore, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship in Chinese context relies on a dynamic pragmatism due to unfair competitive practices and intellectual property theft.

Conclusion

This thesis was set out to explore the applicability of pragmatic approach, namely the Lean Startup Methodology to China, through the lens of Startup Weekend. Hence, the extent to which Lean Startup applies to entrepreneurship in China as well as the case of Startup Weekend Hong Kong. The thesis has also sought to discover the differences between the startup eco-system of China and Hong Kong, once again through the perspective of attendees and organizers of Startup Weekend Hong Kong. Once this topic was addressed, it became evident that Startup Weekend Hong Kong is performing better with regards to total number of events held in Hong Kong. Not only in 2016 but ever since Startup Weekend penetrated People's Republic of China as a new market. Therefore, the next sub question attempted to discover what major factors are constraining the development of Startup Weekends in Mainland China.

In my knowledge, the general literature on the topic of Action Theory, Lean Startup or entrepreneurship in China has not discussed in detail how all those concepts interact with each other. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following research question:

> ***To what extent could the Lean Startup methodology be applied to entrepreneurship in China?***

The findings from the field-research are summarized within the respective sections i.e. Analyses. The conclusion will attempt to synthesize primary along with secondary data in order to answer all mentioned questions earlier.

As it has been identified earlier, it appears that **the startup eco-system of Hong Kong has gained momentum** due to the efforts of local government in terms of tax incentives, diverse population, proximity to other markets and to some extent because of the wide adoption of the Lean Startup Methodology. The findings have been supported by secondary data on the topic, namely *"The Global Startup Ecosystem Ranking 2015"* (Compass, 2015).

Having said that, Hong Kong has a room for improvement as it has not been able to make it to the top 20 of the world's best places to run a startup (currently at number 25 according to Compass's ranking). The major obstacle being lack of talent, mainly with regards to tech talent, e.g. designers, developers and engineers.

On the other hand, while Mainland China has not been included in the report by Compass, due to its size and complexity, my findings point at how **China's startup eco-system has been developed in a divergent way**. Meaning that, its long history and unique culture have resulted in an approach that does not rely on western methods such as Lean Startup or Design

Thinking. Instead, local entrepreneurs would rather adopt other strategies such as networking i.e. *guanxi* or simply following a business plan. At the same time, the government's support with regards to tax incentives and funding along with the large pool of talent has resulted in favorable conditions for running a business. However, even residents of Hong Kong who live in close proximity to Mainland China, are either uncertain about the benefits presented above or China's poor image outweighs those benefits in their eyes.

Based on those findings it has been concluded that the reasons behind the slow growth of Startup Weekends in Mainland China are violation of intellectual property rights, thus, entrepreneurs are afraid to seek feedback. Startup Weekend preaches Lean Startup as a methodology that all participants must follow throughout the event. Lean Startup encourages entrepreneurs to list their assumptions, group them as hypothesis and go talk to potential stakeholders in order to validate or invalidate them. Since Chinese entrepreneurs are reluctant in sharing their ideas because of concerns regarding intellectual property theft, **poor product (Lean Startup Methodology) market (China and its culture) fit becomes evident**. Not only attendees of Startup Weekend find it difficult to adopt such approach to their market but also the organization itself, faces a lot of challenges due to other companies copying their model e.g. *Startup Salad* (Koester, 2016).

Having said that, it is debatable whether the harsh market conditions diminish the applicability of Action Theory. In this thesis, it has been argued how Lean Startup and Design Thinking overlap to large extent with Action Theory. At the same time, at the very core of Action Theory stands the statement that *"actions are important and should be a starting point for theorizing in entrepreneurship"* (Frese, 2009). Hence, it can be argued that Action Theory still applies to China, however, the sequence of how it applies is different in Mainland China than in Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong, Lean Startup is widely utilized in its original form, **China requires an adopted version that takes into consideration the complexity of its culture and market.**

Furthermore, authors such as E. Steinfeld and T. Beltoft (2014) developed their own model, summing up the process of how innovation occurs in China. Here, it is important to clarify that the overall objective of Lean Startup is innovation and that is why such models that aim to break-down the process of innovation in China, are of relevance. By comparing the model developed by Steinfeld and Beltoft of *"horizontal innovation"* to Action Theory it becomes evident that several concepts of Action Theory, thus Lean Startup, are present in Chinese entrepreneurship. The difference, however, is how the sequence has not been followed but rather adjusted to their needs.

Therefore, the thesis has used **empirical findings along with secondary data to illustrate how Lean Startup, in its complete form is not making the anticipated impact in Chinese context**. On the other hand, Action Theory which in a way is the foundation of Lean Startup is adopted but adjusted to the needs of the market. Hence, **theoretical arguments along with empirical findings suggest the need for a tailored to the complexity of China model of pragmatic entrepreneurship**, based on recognized theoretical framework i.e. Action Theory. However, in order to design such a model in an easy to understand and apply manner, it has to resemble Lean Startup. Meaning that, it has to be simplified and visualized for the purpose of empowering Chinese entrepreneurs to adopt it, without unnecessary complications.

On the other hand, the scale of this debate is extensive and complex. For the purpose of further validating the findings of this thesis with regards to applicability of Lean Startup to China, there is need for more case studies from Mainland China to allow further assessment of entrepreneurship in PRC.

This thesis has offered an evaluative perspective of entrepreneurship in Hong Kong and Mainland China through the lens of Startup Weekend, hence it was conducted as a single study case targeting Startup Weekend Hong Kong. As a consequence of this research design, the thesis encountered a number of delimitations and limitations, which need to be considered. In spite of how Lean Startup has gained popularity across academia, entrepreneurship and even corporations, entrepreneurship in China in practice has developed a divergent form, that rarely follows thorough Lean Startup. Therefore, this thesis is a stepping stone towards critical evaluation of Lean Startup Methodology in Chinese context. More studies covering a wider range of cases would be able to either strengthen the benefits of designing a new and tailored model of entrepreneurship or invalidate the sustainability of such model in the long term.

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Appendices

1.1 Overview of Interviews

Participant	Position	Length of interviews	Discussed Topics	Theoretical framework behind the topics
Rickey Lin	Observer during Startup Weekend and Vice CEO at an incubator based in Dongguan, Guangdong	41:48	1) **Goals** - Action Theory/Lean Startup 2) **Mapping the Environment** - Action Theory/Design Thinking 3) **Feedback -** Action Theory/Lean Startup/Design Thinking 4) **Social Context (HK vs Mainland China) –** Action Theory 5) **Self-improvement** - Action Theory	
Matthieu Bodin	Regional Manager of Techstars Startup Program in Greater China	20:22		
Felix Wong	Organizer Startup Weekend Hong Kong	22:51		
Keith Ng	Organizer Startup Weekend Hong Kong	25:01		
George Ng	Organizer Startup Weekend Hong Kong	15:04		
Yeung Ho Lok	Organizer Startup Weekend Hong Kong	21:32		
Léa Moonnette	Organizer Startup Weekend Hong Kong	12:57		
Lin ShanRu	Participant Startup Weekend Hong Kong	09:16		
Logan Dirkx	Participant Startup Weekend Hong Kong	17:08		
Freeman Pang	Participant Startup Weekend Hong Kong	17:08		
Anson Yau	Participant Startup Weekend Hong Kong	09:21		

Table 1: Overview of Interviews

1.2 Interview Summaries

The interviews below are transcribed as resumes based on audio files and notes in order to provide a summary of the data that has been collected. Recordings are available upon request.

Rickey Lin

Background

Originally from Taiwan, but studied abroad in the US then continued living there for a total of 20 years. He is a serial entrepreneur co-founding four startups within ICT e.g. ATUS Technology LLC and Sunny Tech Solutions.
At the moment, he co-runs an incubator in Dongguan, Guangdong province. Rickey is attending Startup Weekend Hong Kong, Poly U because he needs *"more international flavor"* and different perspective for his incubator.

Goals

It has always been his dream to be an entrepreneur, his father used to be one as well. However, before starting his own business he worked at two places. His first tech company started when a friend of him approached him in the US and proposed him to have a company that operates in the US but outsources in China.
His first venture failed because he *"did not have the right elements",* for instance the economy boom of China started to slow and he did not understand the market good enough. On top of that, he did not have a clear idea of what a startup is all about.

Mapping the Environment

When he was about to start his first tech startup he did not make an extensive research, as a result he did not know what the market needed, instead he relied on friend's intuition.

His very first startup was in Taiwan and within luxury goods, it became quite successful due to the booming economy (as he puts it himself).

Afterwards Rickey and his American friend started building websites and CRM (customer relation management) for the US market while outsourcing the work to china. At first, the startup was performing well but at some point they realized that it was not going anywhere as the US economy slowed. Because of the economic recession in the US, he decided to pivot and work with software and targeted data-loss-prevention as potential problem (Sunny Tech Solutions). Instead of targeting the US market they pivoted towards operating completely in China, Rickey's hopes were that the market will have "gigantic need" for such solution. Unfortunately, they secured only one sale.

Currently, he is primary involved with running an incubator in Dongguan, Guangdong province, Mainland China.

When looking back at his entrepreneurial journey, Rickey concluded that when mapping the environment, he would often rely on friend's advices.

Feedback

When it comes to collecting planning the development of his startups or validating his solutions, Rickey would usually write a Business plan and SWOT analyses, such approach helps him to get a better perspective on the business.

He would not seek feedback from potential customers but rather act on an opportunity. Therefore, he did not have a clear idea about the market and how stakeholders would perceive him.

Social environment

In China, Rickey experienced lack of loyalty from people he hired, at the same time, while there are plenty of developers in China, their language skills are not well developed. Meaning that they speak poorly English and this proves as an obstacle. Him and his team put a lot of efforts to educate developers so that they become more efficient.

When it comes to regulations, in Rickey's view the government of China is happy with ICT kind of companies, hence it is not hard to obtain a license and the regulations are not very strict.
In his experience, the government did not interfere with his ICT startups.
On the other hand, in his view many Chinese companies are trying to evade taxes, not in a very illegal way so to some extent it is a common practice. However, when he was working with cloud computing, Rickey had access to such information and he did not like the idea of keeping it hidden. At some point, the government applied new regulations, thus it requested all external information to become public.

Rickey's observations about how Chinese entrepreneurship functions boil down to the following factors: conservative system and mentors. On the other hand, organizations like accelerators or events ran by Techstars (e.g. Startup Weekend) provide an unconventional perspective in people's minds. Therefore, he concluded that the western model is missing in china. For instance, a mentor in China would spend few hours talking about his experience instead of trying to understand better the startup he/she is mentoring.

On the other hand, Rickey was impressed how mentors in Hong Kong would constantly ask questions in order to make their mentees think and question their assumptions. In his view, mentors are of fundamental importance, especially their approach, to a startup.
Another interesting observation of his is how founders in China insist on being completely in charge and do not listen to involve their employees in decision making. Additionally, entrepreneurs in China are hesitant to share their ideas internally and externally.
On the other hand, in Hong Kong founders empower their team-mates and listen to their views.

Nevertheless, when it comes to funding Mainland China provides more opportunities than HK and Taiwan. On the other hand, you need to know somebody in order to obtain governmental funding.

Self-improvement

Attend events like Startup Weekend, observe and take notes.

Matthieu

Background

A day before the beginning of Startup Weekend Hong Kong Poly U, Matthieu got promoted as Regional Manager of Techstars Startup Program in Greater China.
Originally he is coming from France but he got his high school diploma in Beijing and ever since developed a passion for Asia (spent 4 years and half in HK alone).

Prior to his involvement with Techstars he has been working for a HK platform called Whub.io with helping entrepreneurs connect with each other for the purpose of recruitment and raising funds.

He is also co-founding Annecdot.co which is an online platform where they curate about 20 well designed products that they sell abroad, however, at the moment Annecdot is pivoting into a system that helps small brands sell online in a much better way.
At the same time, he is one of the three coordinators for a French tech hub, which is a new movement pushed by the French government encourage French entrepreneurs to go abroad while foreign entrepreneurs go to France and create local communities wherever the hubs are located.
On top of that, he is helping a global initiative called “Drink Entrepreneurs” which is a monthly event for entrepreneurs in Hong Kong.
Last but not least, he is working on a small app called Juke app which is basically juke box for Spotify.

During Startup Weekend Poly U, Hong Kong, Matthieu is involved as a facilitator of the event.

Goals

As he developed passion for Asia during his high school studies in Beijing, Matthieu decided to move to Hong Kong as it is easier to secure long term visa and the level of English proficiency is higher.

Afterwards he attended the first Startup Weekend in Hong Kong where his team got an award. This experience inclined him towards working with tech startups and ever since he always had a tech startup on a side.

Feedback >

When it comes to planning, executing and collecting feedback Matthieu has always been utilizing either Customer Development or Lean Startup.
At the same time, Startup Weekend is trying to convince residents of China or HK that the traditional way of running a business might not be the most applicable when starting a tech-startup.
In his view, most people attending the event stick with Lean Startup Methodology, hence Startup Weekend helps. On the other hand, there is a lack of awareness with regards to Lean Startup in Hong Kong and Mainland China, at least not as popular as in Europe or the US.

Social Environment

In Matthieu's view HK is the best place to set up a company as it is easy to find a co-founder, the market is big enough, while the city is small enough so that you can attend many different events, to top it all it provides the necessary resources for starting a business.
In his view, first time entrepreneurs in HK do not treat nicely designers or developers, furthermore, that is why it is a problem for them to recruit this type of talent.
On the other hand, once the startup starts growing HK would not be able to sustain it but it's easy to scale abroad. Usually China would not be considered as a secondary market but rather 3rd or 4th due to its complexity.
Chinese Culture is very difficult and the also has a poor image, hence it is not very attractive for Hong Kong entrepreneurs.
Last but not least, Hong Kong has a well developed community that creates a special vibe when it comes to entrepreneurship.

Self-improvement

For the purpose of improving himself as an entrepreneur Matthieu does the following activities:

- Develops “yes attitude”
- Reads business books
- Networking
- Works within two different sectors in order to get a better perspective
- Thinks under the shower.

Felix

Background

Felix got his start as business consultant within ICT but did not like the corporate world, hence he decided to develop a career as an entrepreneur. He started back in 2014 during a Startup Weekend Hong Kong. Nowdays he has a startup called “Advwhere” which is a social media analytics platform.

Goal

Several reasons pushed Felix in starting a career as entrepreneur:

- Self-satisfaction
- In comparison to startups he did not like working for big companies
- At the moment, Hong Kong has great startup eco-system consisting of many entrepreneurial programs. Therefore, as he said *“it is the right time to run a business”*.

Mapping the environment

When choosing what kind of new venture to start he considers the market needs and his background.

Feedback

His process of running a startup include Bootstrapping, Lean Startup Methodology and last but not least growth hacking strategies.

Social Environment

In Hong Kong there is a problem when it comes to access to tech talent e.g. developers or designers. On the other hand, the taxes are low, the government invests in startups, the startup eco-system is strong consisting of strong community, partners, co-working spaces and incubators. Comparing two years ago and now Felix recognizes great improvements with regards to conditions to run a business sin Hong Kong.
At the same time, Felix believes that the educational system is not good enough to support entrepreneurship in Hong Kong.

He does not consider to scale to China despite acknowledging the large market, instead he would like to focus on ASEAN e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore etc. because of the English proficiency of those markets, culture and use of social media.

In Felix's view the Chinese regulation system is quite different and there is mafia i.e. large corporations controlling the market or copying high-potential startups. He even provides few examples of copycat cases. Therefore, he sees China as "not attractive in any way"

Self-improvement

His strategies of improving himself cover:

- Reading books
- Learning to program
- Get to know investors

- Networking
- Pitching sessions
- Competitions

Keith

Background

Keith is an entrepreneur since age of 18, he traveled around the world and attended numerous Startup Weekends in different countries. When he came back to Hong Kong he got involved with Startup Weekend Hong Kong and opened a new edition “PolyU”.
At the moment, he is studying Industrial Engineering at HK Polytechnic University.

Goal

When he was younger his dream was to be an inventor and that is why he used to play a lot with electronics. Afterwards he developed a need to contribute to the society, therefore, the reasons behind him choosing entrepreneurship as a career are: childhood dream to be inventor combined with a desire to contribute to the society.

Mapping the environment

Whenever Keith is considering in what sector to focus his new startup he evaluates two main things, the team and the available resources, based on that he makes his choice.

Feedback

In his view, at first was a bit challenging to make participants of Startup Weekend HK to apply Customer Development or Lean Startup, however, nowadays it seems that more and more people are open to those methodologies.

Social Environment

Keith listed the disadvantages of Hong Kong in the following order:

- FinTech (financial technology) startups are too regulated in HK.
- Not too many people can afford to study in college because of the tuition fees
- Hong Kong is expensive

On the other hand, advantages in his view cover:

- Great development of startup eco-system
- Hong Kong is a very diverse place
- Great test market

When it comes to China, Keith considers it very different than Hong Kong with regards to culture and language.

Self-improvement

With regards to self-improvement Keith does the following activites:

- Works on his time-management
- Networking
- Fun
- Read books (at the moment Lean Startup)
- Attend online courses

George

Background

His background covers a 3D printing manufacturing company that operates in Hong Kong and China and a PhD in physics and a minor in finance.
On a side he is an organizer of Startup Weekend Hong Kong.

Goal

His dream has always been to become a scientist, unfortunately he could not find a job within research and that's why he became an entrepreneur. In his view, entrepreneurship is similar to research as you have to validate your idea and obtain funding.

Mapping the environment

When he took the decision to become an entrepreneur he listed three potential directions:

Internet of Things – did not work because internet is not accessible enough yet.
3D printing – because he finds it fascinating how something is built out of almost nothing.
3D printing within biotechnology – when he started working with 3D printing the technology was not developed enough yet, nowadays he considers to try again.

Feedback

Whenever, George is starting a new business he would rather write a business plan than using Lean Startup or similar methodology.

Social Environment

In his opinion, Hong Kong's government has put a lot of resources to help the ICT field, however, the problem is not the resources but the lack of talent. Therefore, a lot of money have been invested in ICT but not in developing talent.

On the other hand, China is much better market as there are many funding opportunities for the ICT sector, especially Internet of Things and smart materials. While in Hong Kong the funding is generic, not tailored to certain niche sector.
At the same time, the regulations in Hong Kong are quite clear in contrast with China where it depends on the province and it's difficult to figure them out. It is interesting to note how in George's view even though regulations in China are tricky, the government might change them if you prove enough traction e.g. the case of AliPay (it was not allowed at first, but because of the large user base the government changed its rules)

Last but not least, China as little bit higher taxes than in Hong Kong, but at the same time it has a lot of talent. Another interesting observation is how Chinese are less loyal than residents of Hong Kong to their employers.

Overall he finds Hong Kong a little bit better market for entrepreneurship than Mainland China.

Self improvement

In order to continuously improve himself George likes to try new things e.g. combining biotechnology and 3D printing, in this way he is also improving the quality of life of other people, which brings him satisfaction. Also, organizing Startup Weekend Hong Kong.

Lok

Background

Degree in Marketing and Computer Science as well as passion for entreprneurship. His first startup is a matchmaking platform for part-time jobs and students within the service industry. Next he developed a local community news platform that connects people nearby.
On a side he is involved in Startup Weekend as an organizer.

Goal

His entrepreneurial career has been inspired by similar to Startup Weekend events.

Mapping the environment

Usually his ideas come from own experience and a problem he experienced.

Feedback

Once the idea has been established he follows the Lean Startup, but adjusts it to the environment and relies on his own judgment.

Social Environment

The major problem in Hong Kong when it comes to entrepreneurship is lack of tech talent, because engineers would rather work for large corporations.
As secondary markets Lok considers Singapore or Taiwan as they have well developed business environment for startups. In his view, most startups from Hong Kong would use the same markets.

On the other hand, China seems to be very different in his view, for instance, Lok does not considers contracts as fixed. Meaning that, they can be changed in the middle of a partnership by the Chinese party, which is the opposite of Hong Kong.
Moreover, in China, if you do not have a good network and someone to support you, large corporations might target you and replicate your concept.

Overall, while there is a room for improvement in Hong Kong, the startup eco-system has been developing very well during the past few years.

Self improvement

Lok does the following activities in order to improve himself:

- Collects feedback from friends and colleagues
- Reads books
- Follows relevant media, especially from the US
- Study tours e.g. recently one to Israel

Lea

Background

Lea is originally from France but she is taking a semester abroad in Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong she developed passion for entrepreneurship. At the moment, she is one of the organizers at Startup Weekend and follows one class on entrepreneurship at her university. She got recruited by Startup Weekend in order to bring more international participants to the event.

Goals

At the moment, Lea would like to explore the Startup world e.g. how to find investment. In her view, international students in Hong Kong have a clear idea of starting a business in comparison with locals.

Mapping the Environment

In her view, when she feels ready to start her own venture the choice of sector will be related to her own studies.

Feedback

In her view, many people attending Startup Weekend at first do not want to share their ideas but after the event they seem more inclined in sharing, hence, seeking feedback. Therefore, Startup Weekend has a positive impact on first time participants.
Another interesting observation of hers is the approach of mentors attending the event. Instead of guiding strongly the entrepreneurs in certain direction they would rather ask questions and listen to the participants.

Social Environment

Overall in her experience there are many startups in Hong Kong, many of them are ran by expats, considerable part being French or other parts of Europe. Moreover, many women are trying to start a business as well.
Furthermore, Hong Kong provides a good environment and community for starting a business.

Self-improvement

When it comes to self-improvement Lea does the following activities:

- Attends events
- Networking
- Volunteering e.g. TEDx, Startup Weekend

Shan Ru

Background

While Shan Ru is from Mainland China she spent the past seven years living in Hong Kong, where she got her education within Finance management. At the moment she is considering to start a startup within FinTech.

Goal

Her goal has always been to be an entrepreneur.

Mapping the Environment

In her view, finance is the most obvious choice as it is a very hot topic in the startup world and her background is aligned to it.

Feedback

Usually she would not use Lean Startup but rather a business plan or simply networking, especially with venture capital investors.

Social Environment

In her view, China is much better environment for FinTech as costs in Hong Kong are very high in terms of salaries and rent costs. At the same time, China offers many subsidies, there is more tech talent, community is better and the regulations are loose. While the only advantage in her view of Hong Kong was the low taxes.

Self Improvement

When it comes to self-improvement Shan Ru likes to:

- Read a lot
- Attend seminars and courses
- Network

Logan

Background

Logan is an exchange student from the US within Industrial Engineering and Product Management.

Goal

According to Logan, his goal is not to build a company or create a startup but rather to solve a problem.

Mapping the Environment

Usually he would choose a personal problem as it is easier, however, he is also mapping the external environment for relevant trends or market needs.

Feedback

Overall, Logan considers himself extremely lean and likes to validate all of his assumptions, in his view business model or a product are useless if you do not have a solid foundation of validated assumptions.

Social Environment

In Logan's point of view Hong Kong is a massive city but the startup scene is fairly niche in comparison to San Francisco. Moreover, while the community is growing the resources are not as much as in the US. Another problem is the lack of experienced tech talent.

Self Improvement

In order to improve himself Logan does the following activates:

- Networking
- Follows relevant blogs online
- Read books

Freeman

Background

Freeman is a business management student with major in HR management

Goal

Freeman got inspired from entrepreneurial lectures at his university and decided that entrepreneurship is a better alternative of getting a regular job.

Mapping the Environment

Usually he would choose a domain that is a mix between his background studies and interests. On the other hand, he likes to observe people on a daily basis and seek problems.

Feedback

Usually he would use Lean Startup and quickly build a business model, at the same time, he recognizes the importance of being critical to yourself.

Social Environment

In Freeman's view Hong Kong is better in comparison to China as the culture of Hong Kong is more diverse. On the other hand, people of Hong Kong are reluctant to share their ideas and this must change in his opinion.
He would not consider China as the first place to scale his startup, in his view technology in China is not developed enough in terms of technology and the culture is challenging.
Moreover, the Great Firewall of China blocks the internet users, therefore, there are many restrictions to tech companies.
Last but not least, there is a danger of intellectual property theft.

Self Improvement

Freeman puts efforts in the following areas in order to improve himself as an entrepreneur

- English communication
- Technology
- Fund-raising

Anson

Background

Anson is in his 2nd year of BA studies at Hong Kong Polytechnic University with major in Engineering Physics.

Goal

Attending Startup Weekend his goal was to network rather than start a business. However, shortly afterwards he discovered that *"startups are not that difficult"* and decided to develop a concept based on virtual reality called Vroom.

Mapping the environment

Usually he is interested in upcoming trends, for instance, his passion for virtual reality was caused by watching relevant YouTube channels.

Feedback

Anson believes in Lean Startup methodology and likes to validate his assumptions.

Social Environment

In his point of view, conditions for starting a business in Hong Kong are not very good, especially if it's a tech-startup. On the other hand, he admitted that taxes are low but the majority of people residing in Hong Kong are not entrepreneurial minded.

When it comes to China, he heard of many regulations but was not sure how is actually the situation in there.

Self-Improvement

For the purpose of improving himself Anson does the following activities:

- Watches TV shows or documentary
- Reads the biographies of successful people
- Networks

1.3 List of Figures

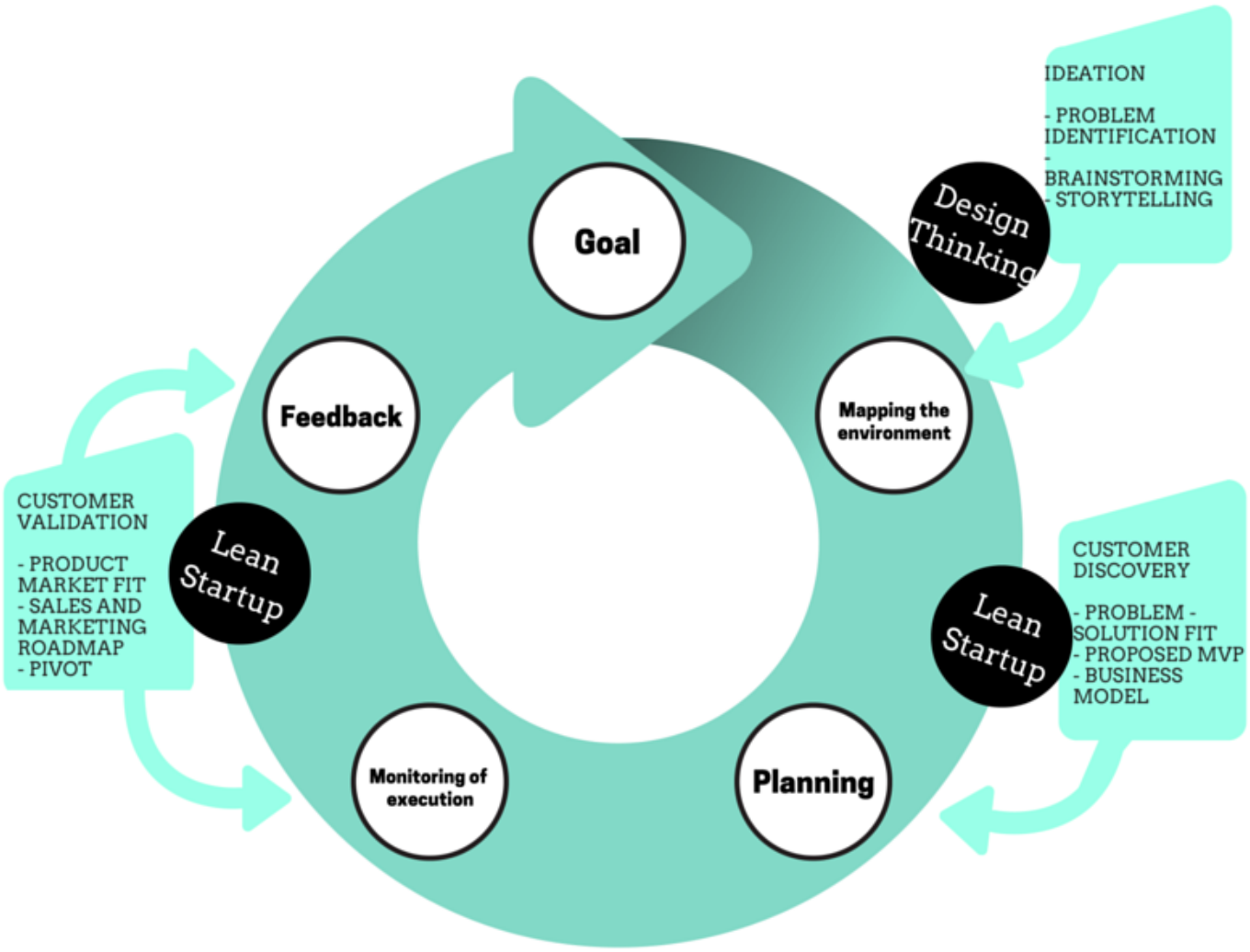
The purpose of this section is to list the figures that could not be enlarged within the thesis in order to allow potential readers to evaluate different figures used throughout the study with a better quality.

Lean Startup VS Design Thinking

What	Design thinking	Lean Startup
Goal	Innovations	Innovations
Scope, Focus	General innovations	High-tech innovations for Startups
Approach	User-centered	Customer-oriented
Uncertainty	Solve wicked problems	Unclear customer problem
Testing	Fail early to succeed sooner	Pivoting is at the heart of the 'fail fast' concept. The sooner you realize a hypothesis is wrong, the faster you can update it and retest it.
Iteration	Yes ("Iteration")	Yes ("Pivoting")
Ideation	Ideation is part of the process, solutions are generated in the process	Ideation is not part of the process, product vision is initially provided by company founders
Qualitative Methods	Strong focus: elaborated ethnographic methods, user research, observations, etc.	Not a focus
Quantitative Methods	Not a focus	Strong focus: metric-based analysis; provides matrices, and testing
Business Model	Not a focus	Focus
Adaption of deployments	Not a focus	Five Whys Method
Typical Methods	Shadowing, Qualitative Interview, Paper Prototyping, Brainstorming (with specific rules), Synthesis, etc.	Qualitative Interview, Smoke Test, Paper Prototyping, Innovative Accounting, Split (A/B) Tests, Cohort Analysis, Funnel Metrics, Business Model Canvas, Five Whys, etc.
Hypothesis Testing	Not a focus	Focus
Prototype Testing	Yes	Yes
Rapid iteration	Yes	Yes
Target Group	Users (usually end users, sometimes other stakeholders)	Customers (distinguished between Users, Influencers, Recommenders, Economic Buyers, Decision Makers)

Emphasizes major differences between the models

Action Theory meets Lean Startup and Design Thinking



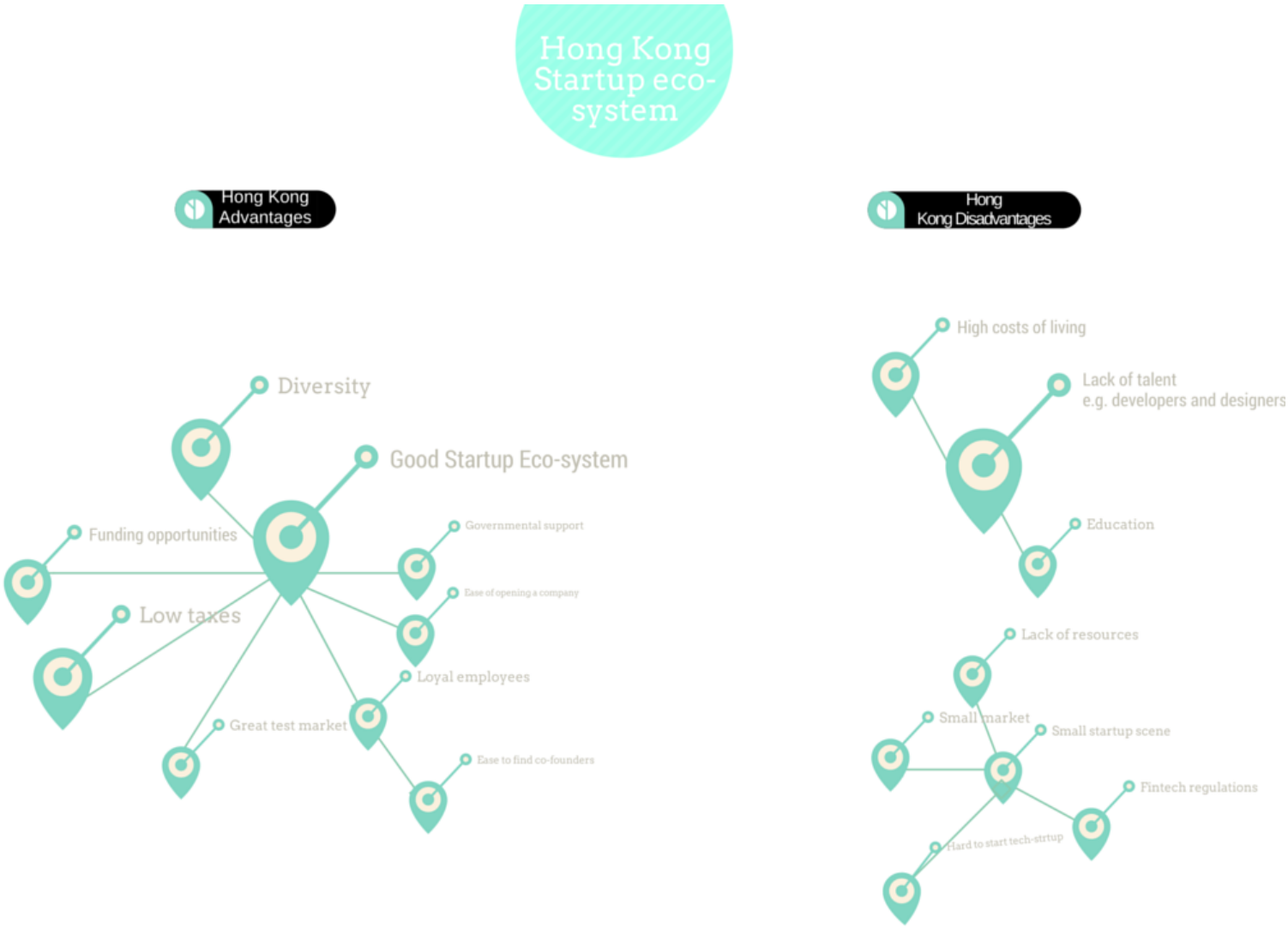
Goals – Data Display

Mapping the Environment – Data Display

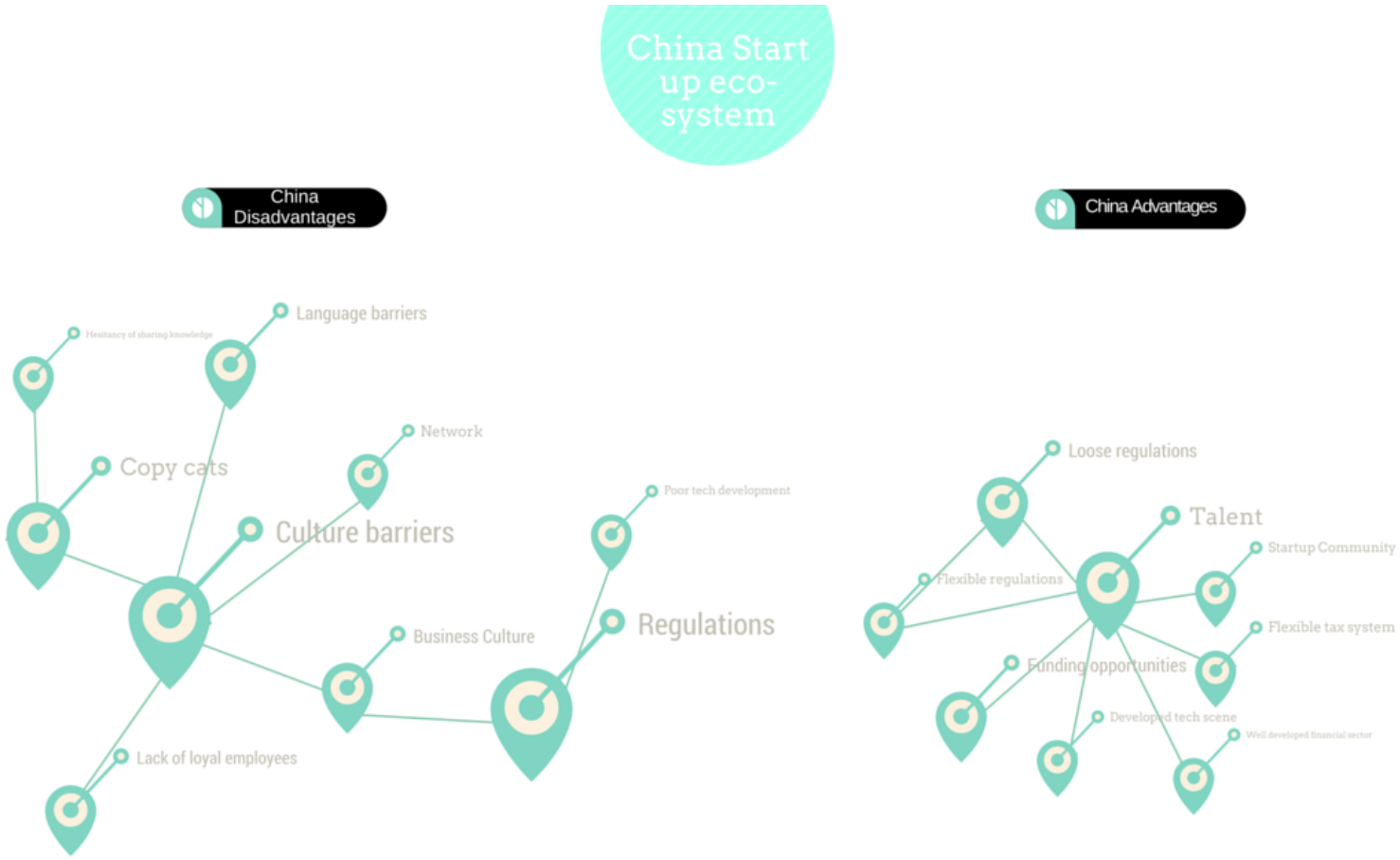
Feedback – Data Display

Applied Sequence – Data Display

Social Context Hong Kong – Data Display

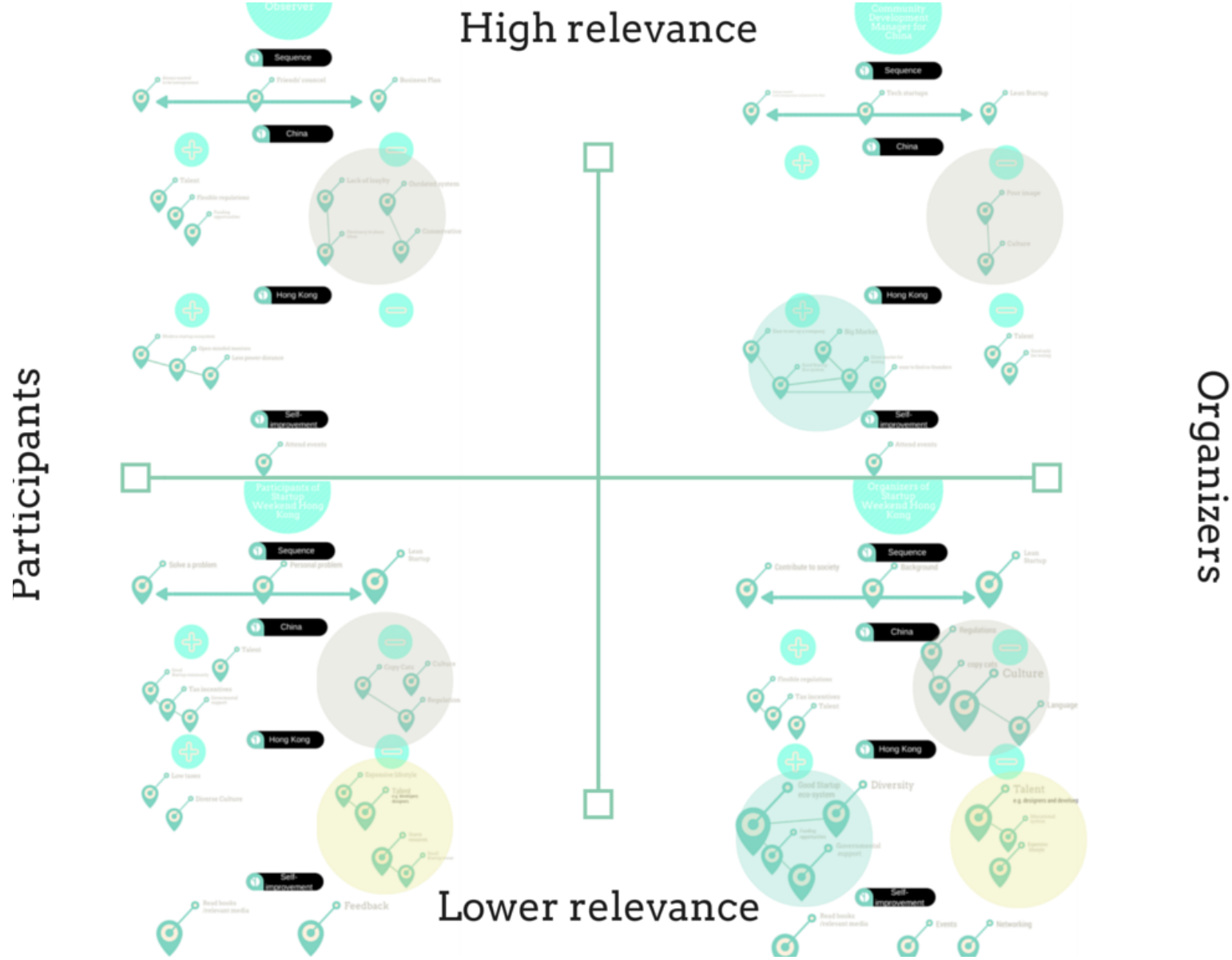


Social Context China – Data Display

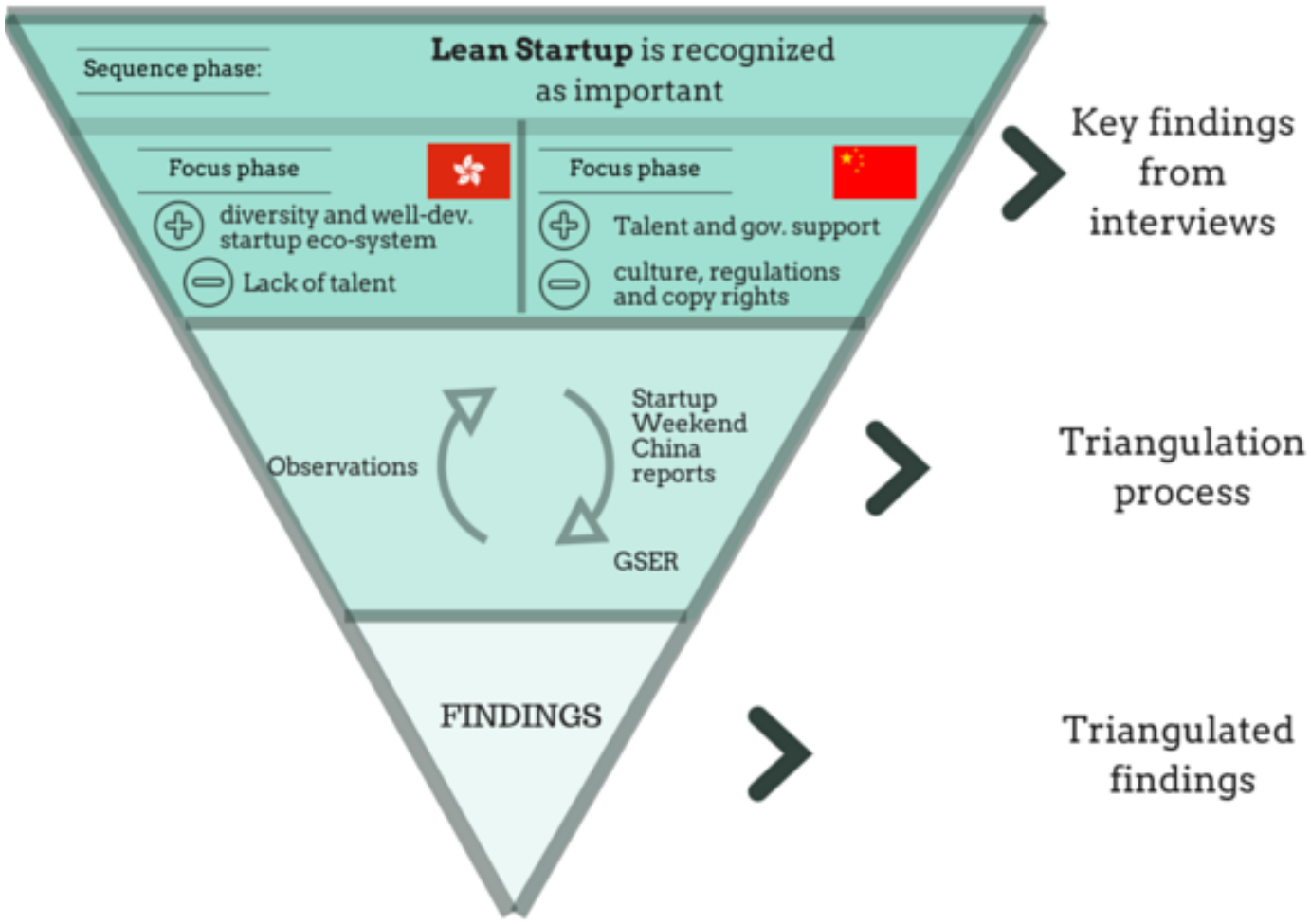


The Self – Data Display

Sample analysis



Overview of analyses



Phase: Represents building blocks from Action Theory e.g. Sequence or Focus

Hong Kong

Mainland China

Patterns of data that represent advantages in relation to one of the above mentioned locations

Patterns of data that represent disadvantages in relation to one of the above mentioned locations

Represent the analysis process that compares primary data with secondary data

1.4 Pictures from Startup Weekend PolyU (01 – 03 of April 2016)


Result
OR
Result
OR
DREAMER LOSE!
Our company will get 15% of commission on the winner: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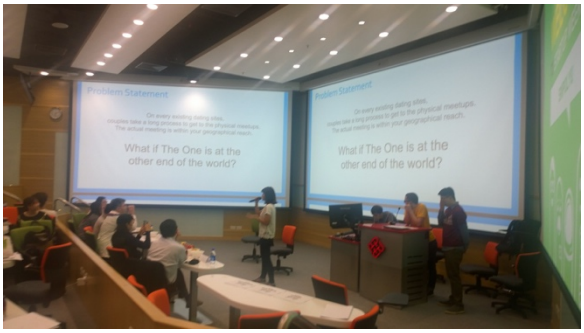
Market Research
INVALID
Market Research
INVALID


SnackThy
SnackThy


Problem Statement
What if The One is at the other end of the world?
Problem Statement
What if The One is at the other end of the world?


Situation:
Doing assignment or research
Academic problems→
How to solve it?
Ask professors?
Wechat or Whatsapp?
Study group?
Then... search online?
Situation:
Doing assignment or research
Academic problems→
How to solve it?
Ask professors?
Wechat or Whatsapp?
Study group?
Then... search


So What's Next
So What's Next


WELCOME