

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Understanding of value delivery in consulting
for competitiveness in China: from sensemaking perspective

(Document five)

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explain a development of a new value delivery path which can help improve the consulting service and provide better quality service to their clients in order to achieve enhancing their competitiveness. To be able to deliver the client value expected by clients, consulting as a service provider has to understand the client's needs from the client's perspective through gaining insight into how clients understand client value and how those client value understanding impacts on their value delivery in consulting. This thesis intends to provide better understanding of value delivery from the perspectives of both consulting and client through the lens of sensemaking. More importantly the thesis presents application of sensemaking theory of Weick (1995) in a new field.

This research applies sensemaking theory as a vehicle for new understanding of the consulting framework and drive a more efficient approach to deliver client value and enhance client competitiveness through interpreting the meaning understanding between client and consultants in the consulting value delivery process. Case study is used in this research and semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve leaders of an enterprise in China. The interviews collected information about their experiences involved in consulting and the researcher makes sense of their response in the interviews and demonstrates how sensemaking can provide more efficient practical help to consulting services in order to deliver client value. Competitiveness is seen as an outcome of value delivery in this research.

The outcomes emerging from this research through the view of sensemaking perspective include, firstly, unlike traditional client value delivery, that there are limited understanding conflicts of the meaning of client value between consultants and their clients. Secondly, client value delivery has two significant different processes. One is that the consultant needs a deeper understanding of two driving processes of different client values—which are ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’ and ‘client-driven understanding of client value’. Thirdly, value delivery in consulting involves client’s value understanding, and sensemaking can help the client to make better sense of the situation of competitiveness, with the help of sensemaking, consulting and clients can go beyond the difference in value understanding and can achieve their own competitiveness through value delivery.

The research shows that consulting can provide better services for their clients when consulting engages with clients more in understanding client value as a part of the value delivery process and allows clients to understand value through applying the sensemaking theory with consultant’s help. Therefore, theoretically the research makes contribution to the literature of sensemaking in consulting, practically, the research offers a new path to consulting to deliver client value better.

Key Words: client, client involvement, client perceived value, client understanding, client value understanding, client value, competitiveness enhancement, consultant, consulting, process consulting, sensemaking, value delivery.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

As enterprises in China become more and more involved in the global market, they face uncertain external competition leading to the need for them to continually change internally in order to become more competitive themselves (Han, 2010). Against this competitive backdrop, there is a growing demand for management consulting as enterprises look to external expertise to help to enhance their competitiveness. Consulting services need to recognize that, as China retains a unique form of socio-economic context, clients as enterprise organizations need to be more adaptive and flexible, with client-driven competition strategies that can immediately respond to clients' wants through organizational competitiveness enhancement (Redding and Witt, 2009).

After forty years of rapid growth, competitiveness in clients has gradually changed from being resource-driven, where a consulting service is used to achieve improved competitive outcomes based on what resources are available for consulting to use, to being value-driven, where the focus is on client value delivery based on what is valuable to the client as well as being competitively advantageous. Consulting in China needs to recognize that clients' needs have changed from relying on traditional consulting services to establishing value-oriented competitiveness enhancement through a long-term close cooperative relationship with client.

Since client-centred competition has become the norm, helping clients to enhance their competitiveness to meet client needs has become one of the main focuses of consulting in China. Client value as a core means to measure the competitive of enterprises for what value is for the client, means broader benefits to the client than simply meeting needs in consulting. When consulting and client are equal and share the same meaning understanding of client value in consulting, the client can then better recognise how valuable consulting can be for them, particularly if they also associate client value with competitiveness enhancement.

What are the facts of this? The previous research findings in Document Three revealed a misalignment between consulting and client in the meaning of client value understanding. Furthermore, the research findings in Document Four showed that, from the client's perspective, sometimes the consulting service, distinct from product, relationship and resource, has a negative effect on client perceived value, especially when the client does not understand what they have been told by the consulting about client value. In this situation, how the client perceives client value is regarded as key during the value delivery process in consulting because, by understanding what is valuable to the client, consulting can help the client understand the meaning of client value and lead to a significant positive impact on client value delivery process in consulting.

In China, value delivery in consulting often has to strike a balance between the professional outcomes-focused interpretation of client value and meeting the client's expectations and needs. During the value delivery process, the consulting is

often asked to become deeply involved in the client's business and bring more ideas to improve organizational competitiveness. It is a big challenge for consulting to implement a process which promotes competitiveness enhancement through client value delivery, by involving clients more and ensuring the outcome of value delivery is in accord with the understanding of client value.

Usually, clients understand client value based only on what value they feel is important to them and what their perceptions based on previous value experience told them they were gaining (Brown et al., 2015), whereas sensemaking enables client to pay more attention to the process rather than their strong feelings or perceptions (Brown et al., 2015). Sensemaking is a theoretical paradigm for a meaning frame of client value which establishes a understanding process through which clients and consulting in which people 'are able to understand ambiguous events' (Weick, 1995, p.77).

There is a huge gap in client value delivery: the aim of traditional consulting practices is to tell clients what they should do (Czerniawska, 2006), whereas sensemaking in consulting is much more concerned with involving clients in order to meet their expectations and to empower them to help themselves more in future. In this research it is believed that in sensemaking value delivery in consulting is rooted in working together with the client; by developing an effective client value understanding, consulting is enabling clients to achieve value delivery by themselves. This situation suggests a need for the application of sensemaking in consulting for a best practice example of value delivery for competitiveness

enhancement in China. It is this which has inspired the research to find a new path for value delivery in consulting, particularly in the Chinese context, and to make sense of competitiveness from both the client and the consulting perspective.

This research aims to find a new path for consulting in China using sensemaking theory to improve the service results of value delivery through better understanding of client value. This research focuses on how sensemaking helps consulting deliver a high level of client value to support the client's competitiveness, and how sensemaking facilitates client perceived value and the need for client value understanding to participate in the value delivery process in order to achieve optimum value delivery outcomes in consulting, then to achieve competitiveness enhancement at same time.

Applying sensemaking makes a meaningful rich dialogue depending on people's interpretation rather than strong emotional feeling of outcomes (Weick, 1995) in consulting. This research highlights how the more the client is involved in the client value delivery process, the more meaningful the understanding to client the more meaningful the client value understanding. Furthermore, the greater the client understanding in the process consulting, the greater their client value perception in consulting. When value delivery outcomes in consulting are fully aligned with client value understanding, competitiveness is enhanced for both client and consulting. This is a key reason for the focus of this research being on client value understanding of the value delivery process.

Consulting and client differ in their perception of client value. This research aims to promote client value delivery from consulting to client by making sense of how client understanding is involved in the consulting value delivery process, and illustrating how the consulting can facilitate this from a sensemaking perspective. This research helps researchers know more about how client's value understanding is involved in the consulting value delivery process and how that value understanding finally impacts the outcome of value delivery from the sensemaking perspective. This research will also demonstrate how consulting and client both benefit from competitive enhancement as a result of the realignment of the meaning of client value during the value delivery process.

The main research method in this research will be the use of a case study to clarify how sensemaking can help consulting in the Chinese context to better achieve value delivery. Using sensemaking theory, this research seeks to find a value delivery model which can help consulting provide higher quality services to their clients by interpreting everything that happens in the value delivery process. Rather than simply delivering consulting results that will benefit the client's competitiveness, sensemaking allows consultants to involve their clients in the consulting process so that they can better understand its possible effects on both value delivery and competitiveness enhancement.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The purpose of this research is to study the value delivery process using the

sensemaking theory in consulting. Unlike in traditional consulting in value delivery, client value understanding is taken into consideration and the client is involved in the value delivery process. This has been found to enhance organisational competitiveness in China, and this research seeks to understand it in a consulting context in China. Because of the fact that consulting and client have different perceptions of client value, the research will demonstrate alignment understanding in the meaning of client value as the consultant identifies the client's problems and their aspirations and then sets about trying to resolve these problems by client themselves and finally meet the client's expectations.

The key research question in this research is: does sensemaking make sense in the consulting value delivery process? In keeping with the key research question, there are secondary research questions which need to be answered: how does sensemaking work in the consulting context in China? how does sensemaking improve the understanding of client value? and how does sensemaking help consulting achieve better client value delivery?

This research has three objectives for client value delivery from the sensemaking perspective: the first is to help consulting understand a better way to achieve client value through the better value delivery process. Although traditional consulting delivery emphasizes the importance of client value, it lacks effective research on the value delivery process, which makes the results of client value delivery need to be truly understood after the end of the consulting project. This study makes client value not only a client's expectation, but also an effective application in the

consulting process with the help of the research of sensemaking theory. The second is to promote change in the way consultants work in order to enhance the value of consulting work. The case study used in this research shows how, by paying more attention to client value understanding and by involving clients in the consulting value delivery process, client value delivery results are improved and competitiveness is enhanced. It is this change in approach and understanding of client value that turns an ordinary consultant into a specialist. The third objective is to promote alignment in understanding between consulting and client in the meaning of client value on a competitiveness level.

In this research, client is described as an organisation or manager who has certain experience of competition but who sometimes needs the help of a consultant. 'Consulting' refers to the process or service which helps the client achieve value delivery for enhanced competitiveness. 'Competitiveness' is a positive outcome for both client and consulting, and represents a measure to assess the effectiveness of consulting for client value delivery. 'Sensemaking' is a theory used for organisational management which helps explain competitiveness and client value delivery in consulting. 'Value delivery' refers to the whole consulting process from initial phase to the concluding phase. 'Client value' is the term used to describe the value that both client and consulting seek to achieve from the value delivery process; this research demonstrates how a consensus or alignment in client value achieved from sensemaking is very important to both client and consulting for competitiveness.

This research consists of five parts. The first part introduces the research and states why it is needed together with its objectives. This is followed by a literature review related to key issues such as sensemaking, client value between consulting and client, and improving client value understanding by involving the client in the value delivery process. All key issues will be carefully defined in the research and then, using an incremental approach to building understanding, will be joined together with the research design to produce a conceptual framework. The third part is an introduction about the research methodology and ethical issues. The analysis and discussion can be seen in the fourth part. The fifth part is the research conclusion which includes the limitations of this research and the potential for further research to be undertaken.

2.0 Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1 Competitiveness

2.1.1 Understanding of competitiveness

What is meant by competitiveness? A common approach to understanding competitiveness at organisational level is based around the conception of Porter's (1985, 1987, 1990) competitive advantage theory, which defined competitiveness as the ability to meet client needs more effectively than one's competitors. This definition laid the foundation for modern competitiveness theory (Barney, 1991; Clark and Guy, 1998; King and Fowler et al. 2001).

Following Porter's (1985) competitive advantage theory, Hall (1993) categorized competitive advantage as either tangible, such as capital or production capability, or intangible, such as enterprise culture or employee know-how. Wemerfelt (1984, 1993) and Grant (1991) regarded this as resources-based competitiveness that can be summarized in three categories as organization ability (Drucker, 1994), core competence (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994) and process ability (Hammer and Champy, 1993). In 1997, Porter (1987) defined enterprise-level competitiveness as achievable through three basic strategies: low cost, differentiation and focus.

From 1995, the research of enterprise competitiveness mainly focuses on influence factors (Feurer and Chahaibaghi, 1995). Feurer and Chahaibaghi (1995) point to clients as key influence factors for enterprise competitiveness. Cai (2002) and Tseng and Lin (2011) assume that adaptability and suitability are key influence factors for enterprise competitiveness because they tend to increase efficiencies in operations, while also improving service to clients to satisfy client needs (Desouza and Awazu, 2006). These researchers all testify to the necessity for client-centred competitiveness.

Then, due to a rapid transition in the competitive environment, researchers began to look at the impact of value on competitiveness (Israel and Vandekraak, 2005), paying more attention to the competitive position of enterprise in the value chain (Porter, 1990). Wesumperuma, Ginige and Gunawardana (2018) argue that this theory is static; attention should be paid to the dynamics of competitiveness, where the dynamics reflect that the core competitiveness of enterprise is variable and is

continuously cultivated and developed in the long-term business practice in an enterprise.

During the development process, the competitiveness of enterprises continues to evolve dynamically with changes in the environment, and its internal factors may develop dynamically, which in turn contributes to the transition or disappearance of the competitiveness of enterprises. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) propose that the specific value category should take place from the value chain perspective. Harker and Egan (2006) think that in order to provide value to the client, it is necessary to build a relationship with the client for value generation, distribution, transition and use. Those researches firmly believe that enterprises can rebuild competitiveness value through building new client relationships.

Following client-centred research, organizational competences are crucial for enterprise competitiveness (Bruce and Tajar, 2008), because organizational competences constitute one of the pillars that enable enterprises to be competitive (Murray and Chapman, 2003). The challenges imposed by business changes require the continuous development of organizational competitive competences (Kululanga, 2009). From then on, how enterprises can have core competences for competitiveness receives growing attention.

This research follows those aspects above, seeking to make a contribution to enhance competitiveness through better client value delivery in consulting with client's value understanding involved in the value delivery process. The value

delivery process in consulting relates to two subjects: one is consulting and the other is the client. Thus, in this research, competitiveness is defined as the inevitable results of consulting service are that the clients get higher competitive competency themselves due to their better value understanding and involvement in the value delivery process in consulting, and the consultant gets a loyal client through achieving client value delivery.

2.1.2 Meaning of value in competitiveness

Since Porter (1985) put forward the competitive advantage theory, earlier researchers illustrated enterprises' competitive advantage mainly from the value chain perspective. Later research proves that those earlier theories tended to be confined to the internal enterprise. The enterprise would not establish a real competitive advantage unless the advantage was recognized by external clients (Bai, 2001). Enterprise competitiveness has experienced a transformation from the internal to the external: client-oriented was a key to an enterprise holding a competitive advantage (Kotler, 2002), and from then on, the value perspective for enterprise competitiveness has received the attention of the researchers.

There have been some researches on enterprise competitiveness from the value perspective. Barney (1991) defines value as enabling an enterprise to be competitive in ways that lead to high sales, low costs or in other ways add to the financial results of the business. The view is supported by Amit and Shoemaker (1993). Persson and Stirna (2001) note that value is an available resource to shape

the potential profits of the enterprise. These arguments are all trying to give an explanation of why value is very important for enterprise competitiveness. To understand this, it is necessary to look at explanations of value.

Dewey (1998) gives the term value two very different meanings. On the one hand, it refers to the attitude of cherishing a thing and feeling that the thing itself is valuable. Value is a rich or complete experience. On the other hand, it also refers to a characteristic rational behaviour: an action of comparison and judgement to measure the value of things. According to such an understanding of value, Dewey (1998) distinguishes between intrinsic value and instrumental value. Intrinsic value is not the object of judgement, cannot be compared with other intrinsic value, nor can we say which is bigger, which is smaller, which is better and which is worse. The value of a tool is not from the point of view of the thing itself, but refers to the role of that thing in achieving another goal, for example, instrumental value. Therefore, the value of the tool is the result of comparison. However, Dewey (1998) also pointed out that internal value is the basis of external value; if the internal value of a thing is not realized, it is difficult to realize its external value.

The difference of value understanding comes basically from the different value definitions. When one kind of thing can satisfy a need of another thing, we call it value (Li, 2007). In a broad sense, value contains two interrelated aspects: one is the function of a thing's existence and the other is evaluation of the thing by people (Li, 2018). Ramsay (2005) argues that value is neither the reality of the physical, nor the reality of the psychological; the essence of the value depends on its

meaningfulness, not on what it is. Li (2007) points out that different value definitions reflect the different understandings of value and way of thinking.

When value is a key to competitiveness (Day et al, 2003), and client is a relationship element of an enterprise's competitiveness (Yung and Chan, 2003), there is a necessary connection between client and value. Prahalad and Hammer (1990) see the contributed value of client as the only criterion to test the competitiveness of enterprises. Wei (2008) firmly believes that client value is the core of enterprise competitiveness. An enterprise can reduce costs by providing clients with more attractive value to meet their demands, so that enterprises get more initiatives in market competition.

When the value evaluated by the client acts as the core of competitiveness, building a client service system based on the value that meets clients' needs will directly change the enterprise's competitive ways. The consulting service that acts as a provider of value, in the face of an increasingly high-level need from clients, has to focus on what is a value competitive advantage based on the experience of the client, instead of on dictating what value for clients is. The former point of view takes clients as the centre of value for competitiveness, while the latter takes consulting's own understanding of value as the competitiveness centre. There are essential differences between the two.

Value-based competitiveness makes it possible to build competitive advantage through clients' involvement in consulting; meanwhile, it also challenges the

client-focused value of consulting. Once value is the key to competitiveness, competitiveness must make a critical contribution to the value that clients think highly of, and can provide a fundamental benefit or utility for the client (Wei, 2008). How to achieve client-centred value competition is gradually becoming the research focus for the enhancement of competitiveness.

2.1.3 Competitiveness enhancement

In the dynamic competitive environment, enterprises need to develop continuous competition to ensure their sustainable competitiveness. Just as enterprise competition requires a strong sense of purpose, the competitiveness of an enterprise also requires a clear reference point (Allee and Schwabe, 2015). How to enhance competitiveness is the first issue in continuous competition.

Resources are the most important base for achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Pettigrew et al., 2001). From a resource-based perspective, an enterprise develops skills and resources to be competitively viable (Chang and Singh, 1999). From then on, the sequential development of an enterprise's resources with competitive capabilities over time is a core issue in the research of competitiveness enhancement. The resource-based perspective must incorporate the evolution over time of an enterprise's competitiveness (Hoopes, Madsen and Walker, 2003). These competition capabilities enable the enterprise to reconfigure its resource base and adapt to changing market conditions in order to achieve new competitive advantage (Zahra and George, 2002). As work on the resource-based perspective has

progressed, it has become clear that the resource-based view can be extended not only to the assets of an enterprise but also to its competitive capabilities (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003). The resource-based competitiveness viewpoint has been linked to more current research in dynamic competitive capabilities (Helfat et al., 2007).

Those researchers mainly look at the internal perspective of resources and capabilities and the competitive analysis of the external competitors as three aspects to achieve competitiveness enhancement. Peteraf (1993) believes that resources provide both the brake and the accelerator for competitiveness enhancement. While there are many ways an enterprise can enhance competitiveness, one of the most important in dynamic markets is keeping competitive flexibility (Zott, 2002). To achieve this, the enterprise needs to continually replace previously defined sources of competitive advantage with new sources of advantage to provide for continuous growth (Helfat, 2000).

However, with the increasingly complex external competition environment, the internal resources and capabilities cannot be changed in a short time; as well as the difficulty in obtaining true information about external market competitors, the client-oriented value competition gradually becomes the research focus to improve the competitiveness. Continuous alignment of the resource base to the client provides the enterprise with a dynamic competitiveness for generating new bases of competitive advantage (Powell, 1992; Hall, 1993). From the external markets to enhance competitiveness means enterprises will have to be able to understand how clients' needs change and how competitors enhance their competitiveness to meet

those client needs (Pettus, 2015).

Emergent research sees competitiveness reflecting sensemaking and client matching as a better way, by placing less emphasis on the constraints of the enterprise (Bharadwaj, Clark and Kulviwat, 2005). From the interpretive perspective, traditional competitiveness enhancement is presented as uncomplicated, only focusing on key issues, offering a structure for analysis for competition (Gunn and Williams, 2007). Enterprises need to understand what competitiveness values are necessary for competitive environmental adaptation (Garg, Walters and Priem, 2003). Barney and Hesterly (2006) believe that, by offering greater competitive value from the client's perspective, enterprises will be more successful than competitors.

These differing ways to achieve competitiveness enhancement appear in the literature. Returning to this current research, consulting as resource-based outsourcing is often used by a client to help enhancing the enterprise's competitiveness. Unfortunately, consultancy ideas can be resisted by the enterprise's managers. The reason might be a lack of organization stability (Jurisch et al., 2012), conflict in the organization (Trkman, 2010), poor communication, lack of perceived benefits, fear of losing power and weak project involvement (Taher and Krotov, 2016).

In these situations, how value emerges that enhances enterprise competitiveness over time is of interest to both consulting and client. This research aims to

understand how value understanding is involved in value delivery of competitiveness from the sensemaking perspective. This research tries to build a path for how competitiveness can be enhanced over time from the sensemaking perspective. In this research, an approach has been devised to better understand competitiveness enhancement as a series of steps in which client is involved in the value delivery process in consulting. It is necessary to research value delivery by developing apposite consulting practices for competitiveness enhancement. This research captures key components such as client value understanding being involved in the consulting process for value delivery.

2.2 Understanding of consulting

2.2.1 The value of consulting

There have been many definitions of consulting, mostly from the perspective of the consulting business as a resource (Kubr, 1996; Markham, 2006), consultant perspective in consulting (Block, 1981; Schein, 1988; Berry and Oakley, 1993; McLarty and Robinson, 1998; Pellegrinelli, 2002; Massey, 2003) or value exploration from the consulting service perspective (Collis and Montgomery 1995; Sarshar and Pitt, 2009).

Greiner and Metzger (1983) provide a definition of consulting as an advisory service contracted by and provided to a client, to analyse problems, recommend solutions to these problems and help when requested in the implementation of solutions. Barney (1991) states that consulting as resources are valuable when they

enable a client in ways which lead to high sales, low costs. Markham (2006) defines consulting as the strategic consulting focus on the enterprise future strategic development; functional consulting deals with an enterprise's process improvement.

Some researchers explain consulting from the perspective of its impact. Collis and Montgomery (1995) take the concept of market competitive needs orientation to understand the consulting value and this viewpoint is supported by Bogner and Thomas (1994). Collis and Montgomery (1995) further suggest that consulting must contribute to something the client wants at a price that the client is willing to pay. Peteraf and Bergen (2003) assert that the consulting is derived from its application in the markets and the consulting traces back to the ultimate satisfaction of the client's needs. Morris, Schindehutte and Weiss (2005) synthesize those perspectives and regard the client interaction with consultant partners as key components of the consulting definition.

Researchers who interpret consulting through the perspective of the consultant role believe what consultants do is what consulting is. Block (1981) points out that consultant act as the expert, the assistant and the partner. Schein (1988) thinks a consultant needs to play a role as an expert who gives suggestions to the client, or as an instructor who leads the client to solve problems for themselves in consulting. Berry and Oakley (1993) considers the consultant as a bridge between knowledge and practice for client problem solving. Pellegrinelli (2002) and Massey (2003) note that consultants assist enterprises in selecting appropriate strategies from available competitive choices.

There are several value perspectives of consulting. One perspective is from the angle of value of contract (Schein, 1999); consulting links the client with a consulting contract. Chen and Wang (2005) point out that the consulting value is mainly about professional division, cost reduction, problem solving and internal reform. Markham (2006) asserts that the consulting value can be divided into three layers: the first focuses on the future strategic development of the enterprise, the second is functional and deals with the operational process for the enterprise's improvement, and the third is technical and focuses on the operation of the enterprise. Liu and Li (2013) suggest that the consulting value mainly contains aspects of communication and suggestions on execution.

In some sense, the consulting value can be seen as the result of consulting service (Block, 2001). Some researchers believe that the consulting value includes not only the service but also the value of consultant and client (Czerniawska,2002). When the client joins in the process of consulting and interacts with the consultant, the value of the consultant and the client need to be considered together within the perspective of the consulting (Liu and Li,2013).

Another viewpoint on consulting value found in the research above is that there are two types of consulting value: one is value driven consulting (Czerniawska,2002; Block, 2003) while the other is process consulting (Schein, 1999). Many researchers believe that most consulting value can be included in the two parts.

Those definitions of consulting expand the understanding of consulting value but

those studies are all conducted on the basis of consulting and clients as independent individuals. Venkatraman (2004) states that the consulting value has moved from what a consulting service is and how to carry it out to the issue of how consulting can involve clients in the consulting process so they can take actions themselves. The consulting service and the client are the main bodies for coordination in the same process, whether the value provided by the consulting is the value understood by the client or not, and there is still need for further research on the consulting value understanding of competitiveness from the perspective of both consulting and client.

To better understand what is meant by consulting, it can be defined here as: following the needs of the client, consulting is the whole service process which brings its professional knowledge, experience, technology and a wide range of information channels, and accepting the trust of the client, to undertake special investigation, analysis and reasoning, and then to provide feasibility suggestions and instructions for the valuable action.

2.2.2 Complexity and uncertainty in consulting

Client needs often change as the competitive environment changes outside, which makes consulting value delivery often complex and uncertain (Liu and Li, 2013). In a consulting service, client perception of value is not constant; it changes over time and the requirements at the different levels are different. Senior managers identify what is the core value for their enterprise and set value strategies to respond to

competition needs; middle managers match the operational processes with the core value. Therefore, it is important for the consulting to engage with different levels of managers, in order to capture a holistic set of client requirements. When clients are allowed to join in the consulting process, unforeseeable market changes also lead to changes in clients expected needs, and those changes are often involved in the consulting value delivery process.

Changing expectations make the consulting process more important than the solution for value delivery. Schein (1988) suggests that the client continues to participate in the consulting project process for a solution; involvement of the client ensures that the practical issues of implementation are addressed. Ormerod (1995) views consulting as a process in which a consultant provides a service to a client for the purpose of meeting the client's need, and a consulting must be able to satisfy its clients and to operate consulting efficiently. In this view, the true client value of the consulting results from the competitiveness that can be generated by the interaction of the resources and the processes (Sussland,2004).

To meet changes in client needs, as agents of those changes the consulting must adapt to the specific needs of their client (Crucini and Kipping, 2001). With the rapid development of Chinese consulting, early consulting has been mainly top executives of corporations in China or professors in Chinese research institutes; they both possess rich management experience and knowledge of advanced management theory. Therefore, many clients hope to discuss competitiveness issues with them. Although those 'consultants' possess rich management experience, their

experiences are difficult to simply ‘copy’ in a new competitive environment. In addition, due to the influence of different cultural backgrounds and knowledge, there are some risks of rejection from clients in the application of these experiences. Therefore, many clients begin to doubt the true application value of the consulting service. Because they cannot keep up with the changes in clients’ new expectations, many consultants still have a dilemma in the process of consulting value delivery, it will be difficult for consultants to maintain client relationships in the long term.

The often-changing expectations of clients, together with the complex external competition status, makes clients uncertain of consulting needs. Based on the current situation, there is higher need from clients for consulting for competition (Wu, Zhang, 2000). An enterprise’s specific competition status determines its consulting needs; the leaders prefer to use a consulting approach to solve internal management problems, while, at the same time, they also hope to gain a better social comprehensive influence from consulting service. Most managers pay attention to the leaders’ viewpoints, with managers more willing to perform in a consulting process rather than expressing constructive opinions; either consciously or unconsciously, managers would like to make consulting for introducing new ways of solving problem and avoid individual responsibility (Wu and Zhang, 2000).

To deal with complex and uncertain situations in consulting, there are many discussions about how to enhance competitiveness through consulting value delivery. Most the research discussions focus on statements of factors or widespread thinking for competitiveness, and focus less on the consulting process

or delivery process (Wang, 2004). Many consulting suggestions of competitiveness in China remain at the concept level, and the consulting practice for competitiveness needs further development.

2.2.3 The work of the consultant in the consulting process

What should the consultant do in the process of consulting? Schein (1988) suggests the consultant is a promoter joining in the consulting process. Block (2010) defines a consultant as someone who has influence on the client but no direct authority to execute changes. Mirela and Elena (2001) note that both consultant and client are, meant to solve a certain problem and to introduce the desired changes. The value of using experts as consultants is that they have knowledge which is not available in the client organisation (Stroh and Johnson, 2008).

In these researches that focus on what a consultant is like without specifically interpreting what a consultant should do, the consultant is not restricted to solving problems; rather, the consultant helps the client to understand what the issues really are and encourages the client to take ownership of the solution (Schein,1988). Similarly, Ajmal, Nordstrom and Helo (2009) suggest the consultant enables clients to perceive and understand the problem with a view to the client solving the problem by themselves (Kedia and Lahiri,2007). In the process of consulting, it is the way of the consultants or to the client true understanding of problem that may be the key of the matter (Block, 2010).

Schein (1988) notes the consultant should solve a certain problem and introduce desired value within the client. From most literature, it is obvious that consulting as a key of value is perceived as a way of problem solving (Miozzo and Grimshaw, 2005). But, in fact, most clients do not know what the problem is. Kilmann, Ian and Mitroff (1979) point out that the consultant undoubtedly knows they are trying to solve problems but the consultant often assumes the client knows what the problem is and then problem solving is based on the consultant's specialized area.

When effective dialogue with clients is the main task for a consultant in the process of consulting, what does a consultant do in the process of value delivery? The purposes of consulting are to help a client reduce uncertainties from a competitive environment. The consultant should assist the client with this understanding in the process of consulting, sensemaking a visible sequence of the existing interactions and producing meaningful results (Weick, 1995).

In a complex environment, consultants should help the clients to build dynamic competition ability in an uncertain environment in the future (Dervin, 1998). Building meaning is one of the priorities of people who serve a common objective (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Dervin (1998) proposes sensemaking, which can help consultants break through the old consulting action; sensemaking emphasizes research and development methods oriented in a consulting dialogue process (Chi, 2006). In the continuous interactive consulting process, with the help of sensemaking, consultants through dialogue can understand the opinions of different members in the Chinese enterprise and by understanding their value understanding

on how to make both sense of competition in different value contexts, explore the appropriate competitiveness in enterprise.

Thus, producing an appropriate code of conduct of consulting practice in a Chinese context is an urgent and important task for a consulting service. In this research, the consultant is defined as follows: the consultant, through effective dialogue with the client, helps the client to identify the problem and to solve the problem themselves, while also helping the client to build dynamic competitiveness in an uncertain environment in the future.

2.2.4 Schein's work in consulting

The interaction between consultant and client can draw on three types from Schein's (1988) work: (1) the Purchase Model in which the client purchases a particular expertise or skill that the client knows is currently lacking in its organization; (2) the Doctor–Patient Model in which the client is uncertain of the problem and the role of consultant is to diagnose the problem and prescribe a solution that alleviates the pain being experienced by the client; and (3) the Process Consulting Model, which involves the client and enables clients to perceive and understand the problem with a view to the client solving the problem by themselves (Ajmal, Nordstrom and Helo, 2009).

In the Purchase Model or the Doctor–Patient Model, consulting professional action consists of solving concrete client problems with the help of scientific theories and

techniques (Schon, 1983). Consultants are seen as experts who have access to the knowledge base of a particular practice area and are able to develop solutions to problems. Thus, the general, abstract consulting knowledge of the consultant is superior to the specific, context-dependent knowledge of the client (O'Farrell and Moffat, 1991). The role of client is reduced to that of being an information supplier during problem diagnosis; the consultant's is to adapt their abstract knowledge to the specific client situation in order to generate an adequate problem solution (Nikolova, Reihlen and Schlapfner).

Supporters of this view of consulting stress that consulting professional knowledge is a specific language, a language for representing mutually acceptable ways of knowing and defining and talking about management (Clark and Salaman, 1998). Accordingly, consulting is regarded as systems of persuasion that communicate with clients via a series of success narratives that act as substitutes for vague knowledge base. Such narratives define the consulting managerial role and create organisational myths (Clark and Salaman, 1998).

Most research shows that clients share the centre stage with the consulting and are active players in the diagnosis and problem-solving process: in the Process Consulting Model (Schon,1983; Schein,1999). In seeking to enhance competitiveness, it is essential that the consulting break away from the traditional adversarial approach and attempt to work cooperatively to enhance understanding and built competitiveness throughout the delivery process (Davis and Love, 2011).

The Process Consulting Model believes there is no knowledge out there to be brought into the client, which is understandable and usable by the client (Schein, 1988). Moreover, Schein (1999) emphasizes that clients and consultants often speak different languages and have difficulties in dialogue with each other, it is therefore necessary to develop a common set of assumptions and some common language (Schein, 1999), in a process of reflection in action (Schon, 1983) or dialogue (Schein, 1999), clients and consulting share and control the dialogue meaning (Nikolova, Reihlen and Schlapfner, 2009).

The most important contribution of Schein's work in consulting is that process consulting is not only a clear interpretation of the problems that may exist in the consulting process. It involves the clients, and the basic purpose is to build the client's relationship, establish a better interactive relationship with the client in the consulting process so as to promote the procedural method description for the client self-identification and self-solving of client's problems (Schein,1999). It also indicates the direction for future consulting development.

2.3 Client value

2.3.1 Client and client value

What is meant by client? Most of the literature discussions on clients use the word 'customer' in studies. In fact, there is a significant difference between a customer and a client. According to Chen and Wang (2005), a customer is defined as the demand subject that the supplier will face in a variety of trading relationships.

Donnelly, Berry and Thompson (1985) point out that a customer could be anyone, while a client is a specified individual for the supplier. Here, more emphasis is on the client concept rather than customer. In the current research, the client is defined as an individual or a group which needs a consultant to help, as well as an organization or an enterprise which needs a consulting service. Furthermore, the client generally refers to the specific enterprise served by the consulting. In terms of this research, the client refers more to the enterprise managers interviewed in the case study.

What, then, is the meaning of client value? Some researchers talk about client value based on clients themselves, while others define client value based on the expectations of clients. Drucker (1994) suggests that what clients think they are buying is what value is. Smith and Wheeler (2002) believe value is when clients are looking for a service that goes beyond the basics to meet their unique needs and expectations. Chesbrough and Rosenbloom (2006) define client value as how consulting intends to have value in the marketplace for client. Sarshar and Pitt (2009) suggest that client value is one of the key elements to reinforce the fact that the service must be based on clients' value perceptions.

Some researchers try to form a double perspective either of enterprise and client to link client value, but sometimes, the client value is dynamic and changing with the times (Woodruff, 1997; Day and Crask,2000). It is also hard to find a common paradigm that can be recognised by researchers to enhance the enterprise competitiveness through the view of the client value.

In general, the client value can be carried out from three perspectives, namely, the perspective of the client (Zeithaml, 1988; Anderson, 1993; Gupta et al. 2004), the perspective of the enterprise (Day, 1990; Gale, 1994; Rust and Zeithaml, 2004), and the perspective of interaction between enterprise and client (Woodruff, 1997; Wu and Fan, 2005).

Some researchers argue that, whether it is client perception from the client or the client value proposition from the enterprise, the client value is parallel to the situational process of client purchasing and enterprise delivery (Slater and Narver, 1994), and client value is always in a state of change in the process of practice (Schumann and Burns, 1994). Ye (2009) points out that client perceived value is the core of client value, which itself is a key to enterprise competitiveness enhancement.

Similar debates occur between researchers in the consulting sector. Consulting wants to deliver client value to the client when a client purchases a consulting service; they believe the value of the product or service that consulting provides can meet client needs. Then, during the consulting process, the client weighs the perceived gains or losses of the consulting. The result is that the client perceived value may not necessarily be the value that consulting provides to the client; also, it may not be what the consultant hopes the client perceives as value.

The fundamental purpose of correctly understanding client value is to allow the consulting to put forward competitive positioning and appropriate client value

based on the client perceived value, to better meet the needs of clients. In this research, the client value is defined thus: the client, by participating in the value delivery in line with the client's expectations, can gain more competitiveness and an enhanced experience. At the same time, the client is confident that it can get consulting help, and is willing to be loyal to the value provided by the consultant, regardless of the temptation of other consulting competitors.

2.3.2 Views on client value from the client perspective

There are two relevant studies for client value when taking the client as the centre. One is the perspective from the client, which is named client perceived value; the other is the client value proposition, which emphasises what enterprises provide for the client.

Zeithaml (1988) proposes the client value from the perspective of clients. Day et al (2003) define client value as the ratio of perceived benefits to perceived cost. Anderson (1993) regards client perceived value from the perspective of product and price, and Gale (1994) from the perspective of quality. On this basis accordingly, Webster (2002) argues that the client value proposition is one of the most important aspects of a client. Lanning (1998) believes that the client value proposition is a way to perceive client value. The client value proposition can be interpreted from the perspective of professional resource (Block, 1981), product (Miozzo and Grimshaw, 2011), service (Christopher, 1982) and relationship with client (Edvardsson, 1990). Vargo and Lusch (2004) believe the client value proposition is

the basic hypothesis which enterprise provides for the client.

Clients pay little attention to the value proposition of consulting services; they are more concerned about the consulting services they purchase and the services outcomes. Therefore, client value in the field of consulting services should be studied from the perspective of both clients and consultants. This perspective can be seen in the research by Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Zeithaml and Bitner (2000). They both establish that a client's views of value depend primarily on what the consulting actually delivers and what is actually expected by the client. Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Zeithaml (1988) further point out that the consulting result is determined by the client not by the consultant, and the consulting service can be enhanced by meeting clients' expectations.

It appears that there is a big gap between consulting and client regarding client value, and even the views of client-perceived value or client value proposition. Earlier research found that there was a big problem in terms of client value being misaligned between consultant and clients. This misalignment means that the consultant engages with the client in a consulting project but takes different action from the value point of view based on their different client value perceptions. For both the consultant and the client, the understanding of the client value is incomplete. Lacking good knowledge about client value makes it a challenge for the consultant to deliver client value that client thinks is client value (Chang, 2012).

It can be easily understood that different people have different interpretations about

the same thing. The problem is that when the different value understanding is set on a specific task, it will make decision making slow. Thus, it seems possible for the different understanding of value to be regarded as a reason why the enterprise costs are higher and it is inefficient: because the enterprise needs to spend more resources in unifying the difference. Conversely, the value differences also decide whether the value is really consistent from the beginning to the end in a consulting project and it directly impacts the understanding client value and coordination between the consultant and the client.

From early research results, the different understanding of client value causes misalignment between the clients and consultant. This difference makes the consultant believe they do invaluable things in the process of consulting but the client pays money to buy something unknown (Bai, 2016). How to eliminate the impact of different understanding of client value in the consulting is another challenge for consultants. The consulting requires a high level of client participation, because as the client is the key link for value delivery, value understanding is important, which suggests that it may be more meaningful than client value in the process of consulting. From this point of view, views on client's value understanding from the client perspective should be the direction for future research in consulting.

2.3.3 Client perceived value

Porter (1985) first proposed that the value provided by the supplier to the client

must be perceived by the client. Then, around the client value (Parasuraman, 1988, and Sarshar and Pitt, 2009), more scholars believed that the essence of client value was the ‘client perception’ (Porter, 1988; Monroe, 1991; Anderson, 1993), namely the subjective perception of the process and result of client interaction with enterprise, including the comparison and balance between client perception of its gains and of its losses.

Earlier research scholars put more emphasis on the client-perceived value determined by the client rather than the supplier. Zeithaml (1988), who first proposed the theory of client-perceived value, pointed out that the client perception of gains or losses would vary with the client itself. Parasuraman (1997) clearly pointed out that the client-perceived value was one of the important methods to measure the service competitive advantage.

Some of the scholars divide the client-perceived value into rationality and irrationality, where the client-perceived value pays more attention to the rational parts, the core idea of this view is to emphasize the client perception to the gains and losses when buying product or service (Valarie and Zeithaml, 1994). Douglas and Kumar (1998) question the so-called rational value of client-perceived value; fundamentally a relative value has more impact on the client perception on the weighing of gains and losses. Similarly, Naumann (1995) points out that from the perspective of competition, when the competitive choice increased, the client would expect to gain more value from purchase, and the rational value would become irrational.

Some scholars believe that the driving factors of client-perceived value is the source of the client-perceived value, where these values are mainly determined by the quality and relative price (Flint, Woodruff and Gardia, 1996; Ulaga and Chacour, 2001). Gronroos and Raval (1997) argue that the client relationship is an important driving factor of client-perceived value. Woodruff (1997) further points out that, in the driving factors of client perceived value, in addition to the objective factors such as product/service quality and price as well as the client's own subjective factors, the competitive situation is also essential. Parasuraman (2000) adds the service quality factors onto the product quality and currency price, with the quality of service being hard to be imitated by other enterprises when compared with quality and value factors. Subsequently, through practice survey, Liao (2005) summarizes the driving factors of client-perceived value as three aspects: professional service, marketing efficiency and effective communication.

Christensen and Cook (2005) define the client-perceived value as having three dimensions of function value, social value and emotional value. Sweeny and Soutar (2001) explain that function value is a client perception of the basic function of product, and the product provided by the enterprise must meet client wants and expectations; the social value refers to the self-concept by social promotion of product to bring client self-efficacy; the emotional value is defined as the client emotional feeling in utility consumption.

From the author's past research results, with great perception of the consulting meeting the client's needs, the client is more satisfied with the consulting, and the

client will hope to establish a long-term relationship with the consultants. The function value of consulting is effectively delivered to the client's perception of individual emotional value perception. At the same time, its participation in the consulting interaction process, will enhance the client perception of social value by the achievement of self-awareness of emotional value. In the field of consulting, achieving more understanding of client value from client perceived value, consulting is easier to find out the balance in client value between consulting and client with respect to the client's dynamic subjective perception.

In this research, the client-perceived value refers to the client's general subjective evaluation of the consulting value delivery, which reflects the client's specific perception of the client value provided by the consulting service. This is different from the objective value of the consulting service product or service in the general sense, and is the result of the client's subjective perception from the emotional experience of the client value.

2.4 Sensemaking

2.4.1 Theory of sensemaking

Dervin (1983) was the first to introduce sensemaking theory. She believes knowledge is constructed information by the individual, and that information seeking is subjective, and a series of interaction and problem solving. Sensemaking is a process-oriented approach; it is a method of listening to and understanding the user to interpret the current situation, past experiences and the future situation, and

how to construct sense and make meaning of the situation (Dervin, 1998).

When uncertainty and complexity join together, people try ongoing retrospective development of plausible information images that rationalize what people are doing (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking means active agents construct sensible events (Huber and Daft, 1987), and people structure the unknown (Waterman, 1990). When people put sensible information into frameworks, this enables them to comprehend, understand, explain, extrapolate and predict (Waterman, 1990). Louis (1980) views sensemaking as a thinking process that uses the retrospective information to explain surprise, the surprise as an output of the sensemaking process, rather than the perception of differences.

Also, sensemaking is viewed as an issue of language, talk and understanding (Weick, 2005). Feldman (1989) talks about sensemaking as an interpretive process that is necessary for organizational members to understand and to share understanding about features of the organization, such as what it is about, what problems it faces, and how it should resolve them. Feldman (1989) insists that sensemaking may result in a dialogue that understands that action should be taken or that better understanding of the event or situation is needed.

Commonly, sensemaking is understood as a process in which individuals or groups attempt to interpret ambiguous situations (Weick, 1995). Ring and Rands (1989) define sensemaking as a process in which individuals develop cognitive maps of their environment. Sackmann (1991) says sensemaking will include the standards

and rules for perceiving, interpreting, believing and acting that are typically used in a given setting. Thomas, Clark and Gioia (1993) describe sensemaking as the interaction of information seeking, meaning ascription and action which means that interpretation, and associated responses are included.

Weick (1995) considers that sensemaking consists of three elements: situation, gap and use. Situation means time and space; gap often refers to the understanding gap caused by information discontinuity. Most researchers call it an information problem (Weick, 2005). Use refers to the meaning of information to an individual (Weick, 2005). Weick (2005) sees sensemaking as a process in four phases. In the first phase, members identify a key question or part of the complexity they see and ask: what is this about? In the second phase, words and phrases are tried out by group members and repeated in a scene that may contribute to understanding those key questions. In the third phase, group members embrace a plausible or approximate story that addresses those questions. And in the fourth and final stage, the plausible story creates a path for and moves the group member toward action (Weick, 2005).

There are three angles about sensemaking which can be understood as a process: from an individual perspective (Weick, 1995); from a group perspective (Weick, 1995; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Maitlis,2005); and from an organizational perspective (Weick, 2005, 2011; Stigliani and Ravast, 2012). Researchers generally agree that individual and group sensemaking processes are related, in that individual interpretive efforts feed group ones (Weick,2005). Weick, Sutcliffe and

Obstfeld (2005) point out that group sensemaking occurs as individuals exchange provisional understandings and try to agree on consensual interpretations and a course of action.

In order to distinguish sensemaking from other explanatory process such as understanding and interpretation, Weick (1995) sums up seven characteristics of the sensemaking process: grounded in identity construction; retrospective; enactment of the environment in dialogues and narratives; social; ongoing; built on extracted cues apprehended from sense and perception; driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.

In this research, sensemaking is defined as a vehicle to interpret how client value understanding is involved in value delivery process in consulting. From the sensemaking perspective, it helps consultants and clients build an effective dialogue for value delivery, to achieve the client value of competitiveness enhancement for both consulting and client.

2.4.2 Sensemaking application

Ongoing activities in relationships between consulting and client, similar to general organizational activities, can be viewed as dialogue orders for ambiguous work that is enacted among the organizational partners involvement (Weick et al., 2005). Building on process (Bakken and Hernes,2006) and using the sensemaking approach, it helps analyses the process of interactions and interpretations in an

attempt to make sense of the surrounding world (Gephart, 1993).

Introducing sensemaking into the consulting process looks very simple, but in fact, the context of process in consulting often produces conflicts of understanding. In an internal context, actors, both consultant and client, operate within the client organisation structure, with the objective of client value; however, although consultant and client are both involved in the sensemaking process during the consulting, their cooperation takes place with a different understanding of client value.

In addition, significant cultural distances and location (Batt and Purchase, 2004) have important implications in the sensemaking process, such as observe asymmetry between actors who come from different cultural backgrounds (Rollins et al., 2014). Lewicki et al. (2006) point out that distance also makes it difficult to engage a client in face-to-face interactions that are important for trust development and knowledge sharing in the consulting business.

Klein, Moon and Hoffman (2006) consider sensemaking as a continuous effort to understand any connections there may be among people and events in order to anticipate their trajectories and operate effectively. With this thinking, understanding has been conceptualized as an inter-subjective phenomenon that is constitutive of human sensemaking (Salvatore and Venuleo, 2008). Following this line, sensemaking should be considered as a process of making the ever-new moments of experience familiar, understandable and even predictable (Maitlis and

Christianson) to achieve client value delivery within consulting in this research.

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) through the perspectives of sensemaking at the individual level and meaning understanding between groups, in order to facilitate the understanding of the different characteristics of the initial stage in the process of strategic change in a large public university, constructed a new framework, and they point out that the emergence of sensemaking is the key to understanding the role of leaders in initiating change. On the other hand, this research studies the changes of the sensemaking produced process model of middle managers in the process of organizational reorganization from the perspective of middle managers. The results show that in different change processes, the sensemaking of middle managers is changed from the meaning produce of cluster to the sharing of sensemaking with difference. Thomas, Clark and Gioia (1993) divides the process of sensemaking into three steps: scanning, interpretation and action.

Maitlis (2005) breaks the research down to the individual level, but combines the interpretation of leaders with the sensemaking of stakeholders, and studies the socialization process of sensemaking at the organizational level. The process and result of the combination of the meaning of the leader and the meaning of the stakeholders to form the sensemaking of the organization, finally results in different forms of sensemaking of the organization. Basu and Palazzo (2008) further explore the sensemaking of organizations in explaining corporate social responsibility from the cognitive, linguistic and intentional perspectives and establish a model of sensemaking.

The current research drew on regular dialogue between consultant and client in the consulting process, to reconcile the twin constraints on, and enablement of, consulting intervention. Moreover, continual dialogue allowed implemented solution from text to action, which means the solution had been transferred from consultant to client. In particular, dialogue between consultant and client always includes multiple properties, each one irreducible to the other but unavoidably interdependent, and this system of relations and its dynamics constitutes the focus of dialogical analysis (Salgado and Clegg, 2011). Indeed, consultant and client are often responsive to some previous event, and they anticipate those previous possible in the dialogue (Ritella and Ligoio, 2016). Not only is the consultant formed in the value understanding of what has already been spoken, clients are also oriented towards what has not yet been said (Bakhtin, 1981).

In addition, client value is interdependent with context in terms of concrete competitive situations, and business background knowledge between consultant and client. Client value in a present interaction is also related to previous dialogues, including conversations and files, which in the long term constitute understanding that may be used as resources in the consulting process by both consultant and client. When that understanding is introduced in present situations, it makes a bridge of dialogue between consultant and client about the client value of competitiveness enhancement. As result, when the consultant is working together with the client, they both seem to have one objective of client value for competitiveness but value understanding.

This research draws upon Schein's (1995) consulting process and Weick's (1969, 2001) theory of sensemaking. The combination of these two theories in practice is particularly useful in considering sensemaking not as an individual, autonomous application (Weick, 1995), but as often involving the interdependence of client value understanding of competitiveness context between consultant and client. This research highlights the need for sensemaking in high common understanding situations in which tightly knit groups of actors operate in close interaction (Weick, 1995). It is relevant in understanding client value for competitiveness where distantly operating actors, including consultant and client, work as a team to achieve common objectives for client value of competitiveness enhancement.

Consulting is typically dynamic and complex with high interdependence between consultant and client. Research into the client understanding process based on enhancement of competitiveness can help the researcher to understand more specifically what and how client value has happened during the value delivery process in consulting, and those processes lead to sensemaking dominating how consulting and client can cooperate to achieve competitiveness enhancement with client value independence.

With the help of better understanding of client value and effective participation in the value delivery process in consulting, any consulting service uncertainty which is caused by the opposition of the client is greatly reduced, and the consulting service realizes the effective delivery of client value and obtains client satisfaction. With the improvement of competitiveness, the client can better adapt to the complex

competitive environment. In this sense, sensemaking helps consulting and clients move from competitive uncertainty to mutual understanding and cooperation.

2.4.3 Sensemaking in the consulting process

In applying sensemaking as an approach to achieve understanding (Weick, 1995), firstly one needs to know how sensemaking works (Dervin et al.,2008). Weick et al. (2005) point out that relational sensemaking springs into operation when discrepancies interrupt normal work and trigger sensemaking.

This research, based on consideration of the context of client understanding relevant in consulting process, maintains each practical application of sensemaking is flexible to be used in each consulting phase.

Sensemaking in the initial phase in consulting

This research proposes that consulting should be structured as a sensemaking involving problem identification and problem solving of client understanding together with client involvement, which presupposes that enterprise managers are willing to join the consulting process for value delivery. Weick (1995) notes that sensemaking is actively applied by individuals and organizations to grapple with the challenges of understanding, interpreting and reinterpreting the ongoing changes in the surrounding environment. At the initial phase, the introduction of the consultant in the client organization is the first chance for conversation with the client (Weick, 2005). The consultant needs to think about which managers should

be involved in this conversation, and how.

In this phase, the consultant interacts with clients to build a common understanding of the goal of the project and, in particular of how to interpret the client's business competition (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012) together with client expectations (Schein, 1990). Furthermore, Kubr (1996) points out that being proactive in consulting implies that the consultant thinks even of those needs and requirements of which a client has not been aware, and helps the clients to realise all their possibilities and needs.

How does a consultant interpret client needs and decide which and how managers should be involved and build a common understanding of the goal for the client in the initial phase? Explicit efforts at sensemaking tend to occur when the current situation is perceived to be different from the expected state, or when there is no obvious way to engage the situations (Weick, 1995). In such situations, there is a shift from the experience of immersion in a project to a sense that the flow of action has become unintelligible in some way (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). To make sense of it, let people look first for reasons, which are pulled from frameworks such as organizational plans and expectations from predecessors. Here, using reason finding meaning of value replace a plausible choice or a decision of judgement for good or bad, as Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) suggest using sensemaking to interplay action rather than on choice. Sensemaking here can act as a conceptual tool to explain the relationship during dialogue and seek for an understanding path and logic process from client needs (Dervin, 1998).

When sensemaking is applied in the initial phase in consulting, it enables the manager at the beginning of project to ask what the problem is here (Weick, 2001) and is far away from the initially senseless such as good or bad evaluation (Snook, 2001). A consultant entering an organization for the first time is confronted with many unfamiliar ways of doing things (Gundry and Rousseau, 1994). Sensemaking is an alternative approach to studying how individuals understand or assign self-understanding to experiences (Kramer, 2010). Sensemaking generally involves experiencing something and retrospectively assigning meaning to it (Weick, 2001).

Ito and Inohara (2015) point out that the individual puts most reasonable meaning on experiences; at first, the individual meets an event and that leads to a certain outcome. A consultant, a new incomer, to capture sensemaking based on the process of self-understanding from experience, needs to ask the managers what is the event or experience, how it turned out for understanding certain outcomes and, based on the outcomes to ask the managers how do they make sense (Ito and Inohara,2015). Through understanding the process by which the individual puts most reasonable meaning on experiences, the incomer understands why and how client understanding is instructed in experiences through sensemaking.

A consultant, in the consulting initial phase, in focusing on making sense of client expectations and needs, must be careful and treat client needs carefully from the client's point of view, rather than first assuming knowledge of what the client wants. From the sensemaking perspective, this means a consultant should be continually asking 'what is this about?' to understand the client viewpoint, asking key questions

from the client's perspective rather than, like most consultants, being too eager to elicit the answers the consultant expects.

Sensemaking in the diagnosis phase in consulting

In the diagnosis phase in consulting, the consultant identifies the problem and suggests an appropriate problem-solving solution (Schein,1999). Smith (1988) notes that the term problem usually refers to some kind of gap, the difference between the way things are and the way one wants them to be. Sometimes, a problem reflects understanding when the goals evolve and change during action (Weick, 1995). The literature suggests that clients often experience difficulties in grasping the problem their organizations are facing and understanding its causes and consequences (Schein, 1995). This research proposes that consultants act as experts well trained in the problem detection and adequate representation as well as the ability to structure it in a way conducive to finding problem solving solutions (Chi, 2006). In contrast, clients may be content experts in terms of their experience and knowledge of a specific area segment as well as their business but not experts in the area of problem detection and identification.

For a consultant, the dynamics of developing a relevant diagnosis of the problem may differ from one project to another. Consultants usually do not know what will contribute the most to problem identification (Chi, 2006). The key insight into problem identification could come from outside, or from operational reasons in the organization. Hence, both consultant and client must carefully organize the quest to

understand the identity of the problem. A client manager sometimes may hit upon the right set of data that contain a clue to understanding a problem but fail to see its importance due to a lack of consulting experience, and the consultant needs to draw it out. Since a problem is an undesirable situation (Weick, 1995), thus the problems are conceptual entities that are designed rather than discovered (Smith, 1988).

In this situation, to capture and understand those problems both consultant and client are important at the diagnosis phase. Commonly, clients look at the steps in solving problem identity as a 'list of instructions to follow rather than as individual elements that contribute to overall understanding and a coherent problem solution' (Martinuk and Ives, 2012). Literature has shown that experts typically apply looking forward as they begin with data analysis and then gradually progress to result which need to be represented (Khanin and Teckchandani,2016). Martinuk and Ives (2012) pointed expert and novice significant difference in how categorize problems, plan solutions, and check their work.

In identifying problems, traditionally there are two aspects of the problem-solving process; one is research on problem representation that examine how people understand the problem at hand (Duncker, 1945); the other is research on how people generate the problem solution (Newell and Simon, 1972). More recently, research is on the perception of how people represent problems and search for problem solutions; Bassok and Novick (2012) interpret problem as a model in which the solver summarizes his or her understanding of problem components from the beginning to the goal and the possible solution.

Fligstein(2001) suggests that, from the sensemaking perspective, the client needs to pay more attention to what facts frame a new understanding of problem in the context of rapidly changing market conditions. Similarly, when the problem begins with an analysis, it is best described as a developing set of ideas with possibility, rather than as a body of knowledge of what the problems are (Weick, 2005).

Sensemaking can be seen as continuous step taking; thus, every sensemaking instance is seen as arising from a past into the present and moving towards the future (Weick, 1995; Savolainer,2006). Following the sensemaking process of situation, gap and user, Deivin(1998) suggests sensemaking as bridging the gap, letting people face the gap, sharing information and integrating resources from group dialogue to understand how to step over the individual perception barrier. Retrospective help finds the future from the past (Weick, 1995) to solve the problem, where the user turns into a helper during the problem solving. This method implies that the problem identification and solving is not necessarily linear but occasionally the actors may turn back in order to draw on previously achieved understanding (Savolainer,2006).

Sensemaking in the implementation phase in consulting

In the implementation phase, the consultant needs to put effort into dialogue with the most experienced managers acting as experts; consultant and manager groups work together to enhance their understanding of implementation and creative shared value. As a result, client managers involved in the consulting

implementation process may attain greater mindfulness to what people should do (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012).

In certain situations, implementation can be understood as team activity according to objectives from the sensemaking perspective (Vivacqua and Garcia, 2009). Most literature defines implementation as how to create knowledge and understanding (Brownson, Colditz and Proctor, 2012) and aiming to describe the complexity of processes to identify key influences to help individuals better understanding implementation and guide their work (Cantore and Paul, 2014). There is often inconsistency between consulting and client at the implementation stage, and in order to support group sensemaking of implementation process in consulting, it is necessary to understand the cooperation boundaries between group members and how it affects the implemented activity (Zhe et al., 2017) from the sensemaking perspective.

From the sensemaking perspective, conceptualized implementation is a picture that will help manager to deal with the complexity of the context, guide their actions and subsequent outcomes (Colville, et al. 2013). For example, Guiette and Vandembemt (2013) focus on how individual cognitive process aggregate into a collective lever for implementation; they use sensemaking both as a method of inquiry and as an object of inquiry (Blatt, et al., 2006), they found that people are a process agency on the collective level in relation to the strategy implementation, then underlying interpretation process determines team dynamics during the strategic implementation.

Adapting implementation as team activities (Weick, 2005; Vivacqua,2009), Weick (1995) acknowledges managers do make decisions that lead to purposeful action, but they only do this occasionally. Gephart (2012) regard team activities as a movement and productivity text. As text, discourse is a manifestation of human sensemaking (Weick, 1995), and plausible discourse creates a story as a path to move the team member towards action (Weick, 2005).

Sensemaking in the concluding phase in consulting

In the concluding phase in consulting, a consultant needs to evaluate the interventions performed by the consultant and let the client managers be involved in value delivery themselves through raised understanding. As Chang (2012) claims, an operational value delivery is to maximize the service value delivered to client and realize the profit of member which obtained by participation in value creation, and outcomes at the concluding phase can shave two parts: one is for consulting, the other is for client. Thus, here are two issues raised: how does a consulting know the outcomes has been delivered and, how does client perceive the outcomes have been gained.

Needs and price of the outcomes are the main factors to weigh whether a value is possessed in competition or not (Chang,2012). To check whether the needs are satisfied or competitiveness is enhanced is a suitable method to evaluate outcomes of value delivery. Metzger, Kraemer and Terzidis (2015) suggest value delivery as modelling languages enable value exchange on a strategic level, and from the

sensemaking perspective, find network for value creation and facilitating an enhanced understanding enables the movement of an unambiguous and unbiased view on value delivery.

Weick (1995) and Gioia (2006) reference a process in which interaction is not driven primarily by sense; instead, sense is guided by interaction and an understanding of that interaction. As sensemaking makes organizing possible (Weick, 2001), from the process of interaction between consultant and client, it enables shared understanding of client value in the context of consultant and client dialogue for competitiveness enhancement. As such, the concept of sensemaking in the consulting process is realized through common understandings during the dialogue and interaction, interpretations and understanding-shaping interactions in the consulting process between consultant and client in sequences that connect actions to outcomes (Giddens, 1984).

A paradigmatic example of sensemaking in consulting is, when the consulting is regarded as a service process (Johansson,2003; Block,2010), which is collaborative, organized and developed by professional people working together with enterprise managers, to deliver value for the client. In this situation, people includes consultant and manager with different professional backgrounds and different views, who need to discuss the different perspectives associated with value for the client in order to interpret the client's gain from the sensemaking perspective.

This research maintains that sensemaking is always a polyphonic process involving

multiple understanding between consulting and client. Moreover, this research considers cooperation activities between consultant and client in consulting as prompting a special type of sensemaking practical application, because it involves not only a shared understanding of each other's value meaning, but also a priority needs to develop a collective action, finalized in the construction of shared client value understanding for value delivery.

2.5 Value delivery

2.5.1 Meaning of value delivery

The research focuses on client involvement in the context of the value delivery process rather than in the context of consulting service. Thus, what is the meaning of value delivery? There is common agreement among many researchers on what value delivery is. They maintain that value delivery includes activities, deeds or processes and interactions (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000) where the client often plays the complex role of both consumer and producer (Normann, 1984).

Some researchers regard client satisfaction as value delivery. Oliver (2014) believes client satisfaction will enable service providers to be better satisfied clients from service delivery. Patterson and Spreng (1997) suggests that the value of service is mediated through client satisfaction, satisfaction means the result which client expectation. Cheng (2007) supports the use of satisfaction as a measure of value with the client, the value delivery with client is meant to let the client feel satisfaction.

Several classifications of value delivery have been made by the earlier researchers. One is high vs. low contact (Dadfar and Brege, 2012), which is based upon the extent to which the client is part of the value delivery. Throughout the delivery of the consulting process, depending on the type of project, the clients' participation varies from low to very high according to the client's value understanding. In high contact consulting, the client acts as co-producer of the value delivery. The client works actively to co-produce the value delivery and the consulting service cannot be created without it (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007). Therefore, the type of consulting is a determinant for the level of client involvement in consulting and value delivery process.

Service delivery logic sees service as making use of integrated resources for the benefit of another actor, and exchanging this service is the reason for interaction between actors (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Service delivery logic shifts the view of value from being understood as simple added value and value-in-exchange to the view of value as value-in-use and value-in-context (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). In this view, value is a 'benefit, an increase in the well-being of a particular actor' (Lusch and Vargo, 2014, p.57). Furthermore, value is subjective and contextual (Allee and Schwabe, 2015), which makes it unique and experiential rather than just tied into a certain service or resource (Lusch and Vargo, 2014).

Value delivery has been defined as 'any group of people or organizations creating social and economic good through complex dynamic exchanges of tangible and intangible value (Allee, 2008). A group or organization may exchange value via

deliverables, the actual things moving from one person to another (Allee and Schwabe, 2015). Those deliverables may be either traditional contract-based and tangible for example of revenues or informal and intangible like skills or ideas (Allee, 2008), because the perceived gains are predominantly intangible, then, value delivery is realized only when other people in the exchanges accept it (Allee, 2002).

As client's perception of value often happens at the same time as the interaction between consulting and client, it is difficult to obtain feedback directly from a client about value delivery in advance. The fact that much consulting in China today is technically intensive and embedded in relationships with client value makes it more complex. Furthermore, the nature of professional services of consulting clearly adds to the complexity of value delivery.

For consulting, value delivery means that the result of the service provided by the consulting is recognized by the client, or that the client is willing to maintain a cooperative relationship with the consultant through this consulting service. To maintain long-term relations with a client, requires consulting from contact, to value delivery and follow-up to a package of client needs, to ensure that the consulting process gives continuing perceived value for the client. Thus, value delivery in consulting is not only an outcome of competitiveness enhancement, it is also a consulting process. Consulting should not only accord with client requirements and provide valuable help, it should also always focus on the change of client's expectation in the process of consulting, to make the client feel valuable in the consulting. To ensure the client perceives the value, consulting needs to

consider the client's value understanding as a process of value delivery to establish close relations with client.

In this research, value delivery is defined as a consulting process and result which is meaningful to both the consultant and the client. From the perspective of the client, value delivery is a kind of consulting process; the client finally understands and realizes competitiveness enhancement through more participation in the consulting process. From a consulting perspective, value delivery is a result of a consulting service with more client involvement.

2.5.2 Process of value delivery

From this research, value delivery is a kind of consulting process and result which is meaningful to both the consulting and the client. Thus, Schein's (1999) three models can be seen as explaining the value delivery process in consulting. In these models, the process of consulting can be differentiated through the clients, contents and consulting role as well as the type of operation between consulting and client in the process. These three different modes determine the differences in the value delivery process.

In the Purchase Model, usually the leader thinks that the enterprise cannot meet their needs in terms of resources and time (Schein, 1988). They will look for consulting and get the information and services needed by the enterprise from the consulting. In the Purchase Model, usually 'the clients know what they need, and

know what the consulting can provided. The client transfers them rights to the consulting so as to obtain professional services' (Schein, 1988). Once the task is given, the client can only rely on the consulting performance. At this time, the consultant will tell all he knows to the client, even if there may be some misdirection to the client. In contrast, the Process Consulting Model is focused on asking clients to work with the consultant to diagnose and clarify issues before starting, at the beginning, 'the consultant believes that enterprise manager does not understand the real needs of the enterprise' (Schein, 1988). The initial caution about the project lays the foundation for subsequent joint analysis of problems and producing action schemes. From this point of view, process consulting is necessary in the initial stages of any helping process. The consultant must be able to 'perceive his own deficiencies, and achieve the ultimate delivery of client value by actively outward knowledge search' (Schein, 1999).

In the Doctor–Patient Model, the client wishes the consultant to find the knot of the matter and then propose a data solution like a doctor. In this model, the consultant is given more power by the client, from diagnosing the problem, to proposing the solution and implementing the solution, which are all the consultant's responsibility. The client not only gives up the right to diagnose the problem, but he is therefore more dependent on the consultant (Schein, 1988). At this point, through professional tools and interviews with managers, the consultant proposes solutions after identifying and defining the client's problems, and then continues to help in implementing the solution. In this model, it may be that the consultant's many opinions are not related to the actual problem, or the consultant's suggestions are

not recognized by the client, or the client is unable to change even if the consultant proposes an effective solution.

In the Process Consulting Model, the client does not need know what the problems are. and ‘the problems are always the client’s problems, the client does not know what help the consulting can provide for them’ (Block, 1998). The consultant can provide problem solutions through frequent enterprise surveys; the consultant also needs to work with the client to complete the problem definition and solution design; through self-problem analysis and thinking solutions, the client promotes the real solving of consulting problems (Schein, 1988). In the Process Consulting Model, the problems are always the client’s, whether it is the problem definition or the problem solving, the final decision is always in the client’s hands. Ultimately, the consultant achieves the ultimate delivery of client value by helping the client understand the methods of diagnosing problems and the effective intervention of processes.

In the above value delivery processes, the Purchase and Doctor–Patient models are aimed at remedying the problem, and Process Consulting aims to prevent problems by having clients find the real reason and deliver the solution themselves (Schein, 1999). Thus, the Doctor-Patient Model is more like a single-circle adaptive meaning learning process, while the process consulting will include the client to form a double-loop production generative meaning learning process (Wei and Li, 2016). Therefore, Schein (1999) defines Process Consulting as the behaviour of allowing the client to perceive and understand the events in the internal and

external environment, and take corresponding action to improving the client's defined organization competition by establishing an assisting relationship with the client. In short, in this research, the value delivery process means a process in which, in the premise of self-perception and self-value understanding, the client enhances self-competitiveness with the help of consulting.

2.5.3 Client's understanding involved in value delivery

If value is a key for competitiveness, the value of the client must be recognized and reinforced throughout the process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003). In this context, the meaningful involvement of the client at every touch-point of the value delivery process can bring new client value understanding to the client. Furthermore, the greater the attention paid to and involvement made by the client, the greater will be client retention and delight (Fournier and Mick, 1999). This leads to greater cooperation for competitiveness enhancement (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2003). Moreover, value transfer through a consulting project to the clients often forms an important part of value delivery process. Many clients look for advice from a consultant; this is because very often they are not fully understanding about the professional knowledge and are in need of getting help from the consulting process to perform well during the co-operation (Schein, 1988).

Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) believe that client involvement varies from passive participation to a very high level of client as user integration as a part of the service process. Some researchers stress that client involvement is essential to consulting

success, when clients help to develop superior and new services when their value is used (Ulwick, 2002). Some researchers believe that the client is always a co-producer (Vargo and Lusch, 2004); the service provider cannot effectively deliver the value of service results without the client's co-operation (Chervonnaya, 2003).

However, client involvement in service delivery and co-operation has its own drawbacks, too. For example, researchers have shown that clients can cause one-third of all service value delivery problems (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007), and some consultants are not able to let their client have effective participation in the value delivery process. Therefore, these unprofessional clients may slow down the consulting process, decrease service quality, leading to client dissatisfaction (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Moreover, when clients fail to perform their required tasks, the consultant may find it hard or even impossible to deliver desired value outcomes and suffer emotionally (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Some researchers argue that client participation may raise uncertainty in the service organizations (Bitner et al., 1997).

It seems that the concept of client involvement is a fuzzy one, as it encompasses many different meanings (Rodie and Kleine, 2000; Solomon, 2002). It becomes even more complex when used as an umbrella conception for many similar but different words (Huang, 2006; Wei, 2012). This could be due to different perspectives adopted by researchers in the past (Alam, 2006). The literature shows diverse words with slightly different meanings, such as: client involvement (Alam,

2002), client participation (Martin and Horne, 1995; Oliver,2006), user involvement (Bettencourt, 1997; Kaulio, 1998), client integration (Zins, 2001), client engagement (Good, 1990) and more.

It is a highly interactive process between consultants and clients, and these interactions form the continuity in the client's understanding of the contents of the consultation. As Macbeth (2008) states, consultants often ask clients the question to which they know the answer, and how the client answers become unimportant. This problem is rarely stated in the research literature, especially in the consulting field. If the consultant asks the client a question already knowing the answer, this means that the consultant will continue to ask the client along the direction of the problem he understands, while whether the client's answer is the client's understanding or the consultant's known understanding is not so important, because the problem-oriented consulting project will quickly enter the next step. At this time, the client involvement is still based on the specific need concerns of the consulting service, the client's specific understanding and why there is such understanding is missed in the consulting process.

A large number of neglected client understandings exist in the value delivery process of traditional consulting methods, which will lead to two problems: one is that the consultant and the client no longer try to seek common understanding; the other is that the client's understanding is continually ignored, the client's inner problems are shelved by the consultant, and meanwhile the client's perception of client value also decreases.

What should the consultant should do for client understanding? Schein (1999) assumes that the value delivery in the consulting process is a complex information system, and the complexity of the process is mainly due to the fact that the process is a system in which ‘information gathering, information processing and forward-looking management system are integrated together’. The consultant can understand what the client’s understanding is by observation, exploring more their emotional feelings and reaction, and then making sense of the client’s understanding (Weick, 1995).

In this research, client understanding involvement referred to by Wei (2008) as client involvement is the participation perceived by the client to be required to engage in a particular activity or service, accordingly, client involvement understanding is dependent on the client’s needs and is determined by client value perception which client desires to get within the service process (Wei, 2008). From conception, the client has been in mind and the author believe a comprehensive understanding of client involvement in value delivery should include both consulting and client, and especially there is a need know more about how the client understands the interactions and client value in consulting. Therefore, in this research, client involvement refers to client involvement in the value delivery process including the active involvement in client requirements and the passive involvement in the consulting projects.

2.5.4 Understanding client's understanding

Clients can interact with and be involved with the value delivery consulting process in a variety of ways. One is through the client's understanding involvement. Understanding means knowing how to proceed, knowing how to use, knowing how to behave, knowing what is to happen, and any number of a vast variety of things (Coulter, 1979). Macbeth (2008) defines understanding as a pervasive task and actual achievement of everyday life.

Garfinkel (2002) shifts the discussion into the domain of the social, concerned with how someone observing A and B in concerted activity could substantiate a claim that A understands B? The answer is that the observer sees in A's actions that A has detected an orderliness' in the signs given by B, an orderliness with regard to sequence and meanings. As Coulter (1979) explains, 'understand is not a process-verb like play, but an achievement like win: to say of oneself, 'I understand,' or of others, 'You understand' is generally to mark out a success-claim, and never to be describing a temporally-extended course of action'. Coulter (1979) further points out that the criteria for understanding, having understood, cannot be experiential states or process, but must be scenic, the criteria of scenic criteria are situation-bound. Here, the people criteria for understanding are circumstantially bound and not restricted to some coded set of associated behaviours or experiences, as if these could be listed as a fixed of conditions; people must exercise situated judgments, must analyse contexts for what could count as criteria for proper ascription in those specific cases (Coulter and Drew, 1980).

From the above, it is not difficult to find that in terms of understanding, there exists a difference between understanding the meaning of the thing itself and giving the meaning to the thing understanding (Li, 2018). The former is more like the understanding definition of Coulter (1980), while the latter is more like the explanation of understanding in the sense of the speaker behind the understanding. These two senses of understanding are difficult to achieve in the same scene only by semantic literal meanings. In consulting, there is a lot of dialogue between the consultant and the client. When a consultant judges that the client has understood, it is most likely that the consultant himself thinks the client has understood; but, in fact, the client may have another meaning, the consultant just has no way to truly understand. This might be the reason behind what Schein (1999) describes as the wrong consulting dialogue, when the consultant and the client are simply having a dialogue.

If understanding itself is hard to understand, then what forms get participants in talking to do the work of understanding the talk of others? And what are the understandings which those forms secure? Schein (1997) advises securing the understanding as a phenomenon, in sighting common understanding, understanding as a profoundly organizational form to rewrite the term of understanding, then analysis and description on the work of repair in dialogue. Macbeth (2011) suggests taking a turn is evidence of understanding. And as every turn at talking displays an understanding of what went before, this is where the researcher finds understanding as an ordinary organizational object, whenever the parties to an interaction can go on, and several implications follow (Macbeth, 2011).

Understanding shows itself as an enactment, organized throughout in co-orientations to topic, task, identities, ways of speaking, and practical purposes, understanding then shows an essential logic; it takes shape and substance in and through sequential, interaction fields (Drew and Coulter, 1979). From these foundations it further follows that if researchers go looking for understanding's filaments, they will find them as ordinary organizational things on actual occasions, understanding of dialogue as in the production of answers to classroom questions, the teacher hears what they want to hear (Wang, 2015).

Researchers' misunderstandings happen all the time (Weick, 1995). For this reason, in consulting, most consultants perhaps fail to know the most failure fact is the most of their had known which is also the most unfamiliar that unknown (Liu and Li ,2013). The consultant needs to know more about the client understanding.

This study is conducted with the aim of exploring the client understanding involvement in consulting and its effects on the results of value delivery. Following this, there is still a need to know clearly about the forms of client understanding throughout the value delivery in consulting, to explore the impacts of client understanding involvement on consulting, and to understand what may be promotion in value delivery for consulting from client understanding perspective.

In this research, client understanding is defined thus: during the consulting dialogue, the client provides the meaning interpretation including text, language and meaning according to the process changes; those interpretations of meaning appear as the basic evidence for the explanation of its self-understanding. Client's understanding

includes their own understanding, as well as their understanding after being influenced by external factors such as consultants.

2.6 Conceptual framework

By using a single case study, this research aims to show how the client value understanding resulting from their involvement in the consulting value delivery process can impact the client value results and lead to competitive enhancement in China. This research aims to encourage clients to become involved in the value delivery process in order to increase their client value understanding. By understanding about the clients' feelings and needs, the consultant can demonstrate client value to the client in a more meaningful way. This research uses the sense-making theory, and the micro-moment time-line deeper interview method, in order to gain a deeper understanding about how sense-making can help consulting achieve client value delivery.

Devin (1983) believes that, for interpretation and understanding, sensemaking is a conceptual tool that builds a link between information and its significance. For example, by entering a meaningful dialogue with the client, the consulting will elicit certain information about what is important to the client and will be able to use this greater understanding of the client's perspective of value to improve the value delivery results and enhance competitiveness. Devin (1983) regards knowledge as a process of subjective construct. The consulting value delivery process is a series knowledge of interactions between consulting and clients, as well

as a sensemaking process. During the client value delivery process, meaning will emerge from the context of the interactions, thus forming the necessary understanding of client value so that the differences between the client's perspective of client value and that of the consulting become clear. According to Weick (2005), sensemaking of information research should be emphasized by the source emphasis user, and the information seeking and use shall function as an understanding practice. This broader sense of client value provides purposive support for competitive enhancement as it helps consulting and clients better understand how client value understanding improves the value delivery process.

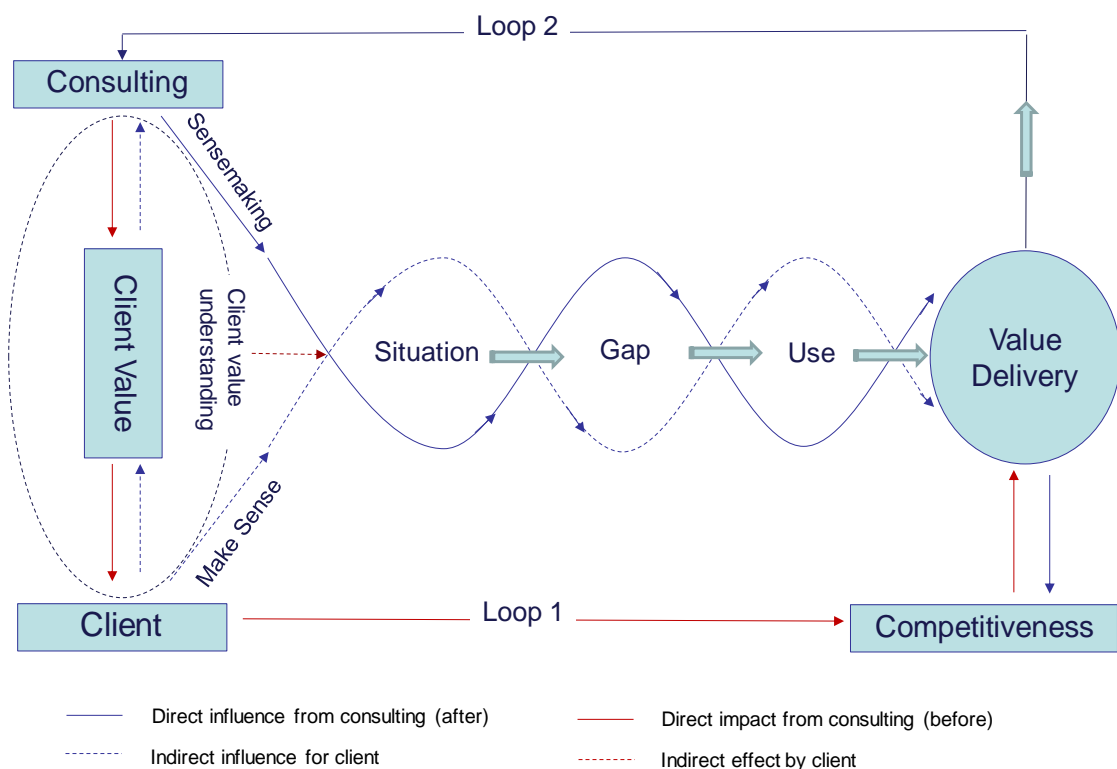
Sensemaking also illustrates the diachronic process of aligning two different perspectives of client value between consulting and client. It creates a new path for consulting value delivery which recognises the importance of gaining an early understanding of the client's needs in order to better interpret and understand the client's situation, their experience and the potential knowledge for enhancing competitiveness. It also helps clients to understand their own competition situation, by exploring the meaning of client value through the client's own value understanding, consulting can achieve a better value delivery outcome.

In this research, consulting and client can be seen as two subjects who enhance the competitiveness for the client value delivery. Competitiveness as a research result is achieved because various internal and external factors are taken into consideration which can influence the outcome. Among them, as a value delivery and core gap point, client value understanding provides a breakthrough point for the research, so

that sensemaking can better help consulting understand client perceived value and adjust their service to meet the client's newly understood needs.

Figure 1 below, shows two mutually supportive research processes in operation. As an interpretation tool, sensemaking shows how clients enhance competitiveness for both themselves and consulting through their own involvement in value delivery; it is through sense-making that consulting and clients gain a better understanding of each other's perception of client value. The benefits to clients have already been stated, but one of the benefits for consulting is that client expectations of the value delivery process are realistic.

Figure 1: Understanding of value delivery in consulting for competitiveness



Loop 1 illustrates the traditional consulting process where the consulting perception of client value is the only valid meaning, and it is assumed that competitiveness will result from client value and that value delivery will in turn be achieved. It is a very straight-forward process, as shown by the red lines in the diagram. Loop 2 shows an entirely different and more complex process using the sensemaking theory. Tracing the blue lines on the diagram, it can be seen that the aim of consulting is to achieve value delivery which will then lead to competitiveness. Whereas with Loop 1 it is the consulting perception of client value that prevails, with Loop 2 the client's value understanding involvement in the value delivery process means that client value understanding is a key aspect of the value delivery process. Both Loop 1 and Loop 2 follow the same four consulting value delivery phases, namely entrance, diagnosis, implementation and concluding.

The middle of the diagram shows how sensemaking is used by consulting, and its effect on the client. It involves three key meaning: situation, gap and use. Situation describes the current situation of the client which involves looking at what has happened in the past in order to understand the present. Gap relates to understanding, particularly the client's lack of understanding of the value delivery process. Use is the final sensemaking stage which follows the client's involvement in the value delivery process. Once the client can make sense of the value delivery process that the consulting follows, client themselves will be in a position to follow, or 'use' the same process towards action to achieve what they should do. In this way, client value is empowered by sensemaking to help consulting and clients themselves achieve their own competitiveness in the future. The three-key meaning

of sensemaking do not have to follow the sequence order of consulting process but may be accessed from different meaning points by consulting and or client.

The transformation of value delivery from Loop 1 to Loop 2 is not only the process of generating meaning for client value from the perspective of sensemaking, the value delivery meaning based on client value from the perspective of sensemaking, but also the process of generating mutual competitive enhancement, with the help of sensemaking, consulting and clients separately achieve their own competitiveness.

3. 0 Methodology and methods

3.1 Research methods

3.1.1 Methodology

The epistemology used in this research to further understand the client's understanding involved in the value delivery process, can help researchers from the perspective of sensemaking to understand how the client's understanding of involvement in the value delivery process affects the client's perceived value and ultimately the value delivery results. Liang (2010) points out the root of epistemology is knowledge, which means accepting fact, truth and principle by study and research; therefore, epistemology is equivalent to theory of knowledge. In general, epistemology emphasizes that awareness is the reaction to the objective world. Some researchers claim that to study how to understand is epistemology.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, which can be divided into scientific knowledge and philosophical knowledge, or perceptual knowledge and rational knowledge. There are also areas such as emotional and social which belong to this field, and it is valuable to study and summarize those fields (Li, 2010).

Weick (1995) believes that knowledge is a kind of plausibility. Epistemology can be divided into a priori and a posteriori knowledge. A priori knowledge is derived by reasoning which is not influenced by direct or indirect experience; while a posteriori knowledge is based on experience. In different view of Epistemology, some believe that people do not refuse to reason, but knowledge cannot be confirmed. It is why epistemology focuses on content of the thinking activity, while ontology focuses on the knowledge's condition (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

Epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Epistemology can be divided into positivism and interpretivism. Interpretivism is mainly used for social science, which has roots in idealism. It claims that human experience of the world is derived through active understanding and interpretation rather than passive awareness and acceptance. Therefore, epistemology claims research should go to the reality to explain it by scientific means and language. The two main research methods are interactive interview and participatory observation.

Methodology is determined by the requirements of the research. Interpretivism

seeks knowledge of the processes by which people in groups and societies make sense of their world. The real world has to be seen through human thought and not seen as separate from it (Fisher, et al., 2010) . Interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understanding differences between humans in our role as social actors (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This emphasises the difference between conducting research among people rather than about objects. The term role is quite significant here: actors play a part which they interpret in a particular perspective. In the process of value delivery, interpretivism can explain how the interaction between consultants and clients, such as listening and speaking, combined with the consulting experience, can build relevance with competitiveness from value understanding perspective. Here, the dialogue in the consulting process is viewed as a vehicle for building and organizing understanding, and explores how client and consultant understanding is interpreted to organize a response to the dialogue. In this research, consultant and client interpret the roles of each other in accordance with their own set of subjective value meanings and understanding.

Some researchers suggest that an interpretivist perspective is highly appropriated in the case of management issue research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). It is commonly held that value delivery is related to influence elements defining to see the value effect of competitiveness; it can also through the process of consulting, look for the influence elements. Interpretivism will focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind those details, subjective meaning motivating actions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This research would like to explore further the consulting service shift in the value delivery in different situations with details,

to understand how the difference in client value understanding is involved in the value delivery process.

In summary, interpretivism advocates that the individual's experience of the world is not a passive perception and acceptance of the external material world, but an active understanding and interpretation. Epistemology advocates that the understanding of the complex world is realized by studying the experience and viewpoints of the people living in the world. Researchers should go into the thick of real life to understand, explain and rebuild these concepts and meanings through scientific means and language. To use interpretivism as research methodology to do this research, there are obvious advantages: first of all, clients know what they want but rarely know how that want can be turned to need with individual expectations from the consulting process, research interpretation will help consultants know how expected value is involved in the understanding through individual perceived value; Secondly, how do different client value understandings get involved in the consulting process and ultimately affect value delivery? The interpretivist perspective is the way in which the client makes sense of the value delivery within the consulting. From the epistemology research can give the consultant a direct feedback to understand the meaning of the respondents for the value delivery. Finally, the interpretivist perspective research results help to deeply understand group different value meaning from complex context relevant to competitiveness enhancement. More details about research design can be seen in the section about the method of data collection below.

3.1.2 Methods

The interpretivism perspective means the challenge here is to enter the social world of our research subjects and understand their world from their point of view (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). It is appropriate that in using a case study with structured interviews to do the research, not only is the key research context the competitiveness situations relevant to value delivery from the double subject perspective of consulting and client, it is more complex, but also it is unique, because it is the first research about the understanding of value delivery in consulting for competitiveness in China from sensemaking perspective. The case study is relevant 'if the research wishes to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted' (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; p27). In this research, client value understanding as key context support to answer the question why, as well as how.

Understanding of how client value understanding occurs, meaning from the complexity and nature of value as well as the value driving forces of change, enables the consultant to observe the origins of client value change and project their impact on client perception and resultant changes in how they value delivery in consulting. With repeated research and tracking of how specific clients interact with their understanding and how they respond to and drive changes of understanding within their organizations, the consultant will make deep sense of client understanding of which even clients themselves may be unaware.

There are numerous techniques that help researchers interpret data that fit within a value delivery process. In its entirety, the value delivery process involves qualitative research methods aimed at exploring value delivery problems, all within target research segments. Traditionally, the value process is used to understand and deliver on what client currently value. It is useful in assisting consultant and client in a competition environment to generate new value ideas. This is because the in-depth interviews used to identify value delivery perceived impact dimensions move well beyond value attributes themselves by linking that understanding with the value delivery process. The research process focuses on interpretation of what clients said, how they had understood it, and how they had done but not said in words. In-depth interview design, interview dialogue, and interpretation go beyond surface-level client feedback and, as such, require the researcher to use step-by-step laddering techniques to link understanding attributes to higher-order client perceived value understanding consequences as well as desired value delivery states.

Related to the methods for conducting and interpreting interview data is the focus of the interviews. The interviews can also be focused on future client desires, which often needs the consultant to ask clients directly how this should be done to promote value delivery for both client and consulting, and how to present it in the future. Sometimes, clients will feel that they do know how they will do in the future, but, because clients often cannot articulate how they will do in the future, the value delivery process can direct depth interviews to focus on possible action. Specifically, when depth interviews are focused on changes in client's

macro-environment, changes in situations, and emerging opportunities in general, they may generate insights to value in the future and by extension insights to new value understanding (Kahneman, 2012).

The depth interviews that dig deeper than surface-level data as in the value delivery process are one way of generating new insights. These research methods may yield new value ideas because they tap into what it really means when researchers say the voice of client. It is a deeper understanding of how clients understand and how they want it. Dialogue and client participation in value delivery for extended periods of time helps consultants to gain this level of understanding (Kahneman, 2012). Case study is often used in explanatory and exploratory research; for this reason, qualitative and case study can be used as a mixed method to collect and analyse data; these may include interviews and observation (Wang, 2014). A case study explores a research topic or phenomenon within its context (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Yin (2009) highlights the importance of context, within a case study, the boundaries between the phenomenon being researched and the context within which it is being researched are not always apparent; this is the advantage of the case study.

Sometime, a single case is often used where it represents a critical case or an extreme or unique case (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). In this research, the author uses in-depth dialogue combining more than ten years of cooperation experience with the client, this approximately non-reproducible special consulting experience as well as this client is an inevitable result of choice. For this reason, it

is important to ensure that the single case study is suitable for the context of relevant research questions and objectives from sensemaking perspective. This research uses the method of interview and participatory observation, as for the process of value delivery with sensemaking process, and tries to understand client's true meaning through value delivery process interaction and clarification of understanding and concepts, which emphasize client value meaning in order to promote and improve the specific value delivery path in consulting.

Case studies are regarded as a text-based interpretation-qualitative research paradigm. This paradigm requires researchers to focus on the why and how problems of specific phenomena, and advocates collecting triangulation evidence through observations and interviews, and constructing new theories (Yu, 2004) by applying analytical interpretation logic. Researchers who insist on empirical research tend to say that case study is just a case investigation technique rather than a case study method (Tang and Yang, 2016). These controversies in the types of case studies have led to a gradual change in case studies and functions. Yu (2004) divides case studies into exploratory case study, descriptive case study, and interpretation case study: the exploratory case study attempts to look for new insights into things; the descriptive case study mainly describes accurately the profiles of people, events, or situations; and the interpretive case study aims to examine relevant or causal issues. Corresponding to these three types, the case study method has the function of constructing theories, describing phenomena or explaining causal logic. Eisenhardt (1989) believes that researchers need to propose their own opinions and suggestions on the case in the study process of case.

Other researchers believe that most case studies are based on an improvement or theoretical perfection on the basis of existing theories (Ito and Inohara 2015). These controversies on case study methods, accompanied by the personal subjective bias of case study researchers (Eisenhardt, 1989), cause later researchers to reconsider case study methods. Tang and Yang (2016) believe that the critical point of the case study method lies in the whole process of qualitative or quantitative research guided by case construction, suggestions and development theory. The definition of the proceduralization of this case study method means that the case study method focuses on the cases for example people or things that interest the researcher, with constructions, tests, or the development of theory as the research needs and goals. Through the collection of research ideas and the data arrangement based on research methods, finally the research conclusions are reached with certain reliability and validity.

In terms of this research, sensemaking is the theoretical framework of key researches, and makes explanation and demonstration of the case study. In the process research of consulting value delivery, attention should be paid to the role of sensemaking in the value delivery process and it is also necessary to interpret how sensemaking can help consultants and clients to explore the new meaning of client value while achieving a common delivery of client value for the purpose of competitiveness enhancement. Therefore, sensemaking is the theoretical basis for the construction and development of this research, as well as the core research and interpretation tool of this research case.

3.2 Case study

3.2.1 Case selection

If it is expected to obtain a contribution beyond the research results based on the research quantity, this case must have high typicality and a certain degree of non-replicability, thus, researchers will show enough interest in conducting a more in-depth study of this case (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). The main reasons why the research selects a single case are as follows.

Firstly, Enterprise A has typicality in the Chinese context in a specific competitive environment. When a case represents a key case of research theory, a single case is suitable (Wang, 2015). As a typical representative of the development of Chinese State-Owned Enterprises, the enterprise in this research advanced in the initial stage from the early 1950s to the 1980s, with simple resource preparation as the competitive advantage. After 2000, Enterprise A embarked on the mid-term development stage, with market competition as the guide and the development around customer needs, and the continuous cost reduction of products acted as the core of competition. So far, Enterprise A has entered the value competition stage with the higher customer value as the basis where customer is focused on, emphasizing the development pattern of the whole value chain from the preparation of raw and auxiliary materials to the end consumption. Enterprise A is witness to China's economic development process, as well as being the highly-competitive representative of enterprise development.

The history of the competitive development of Enterprises A in a specific Chinese context have many typical characteristics of economic, social and personnel factors. These typical characteristics make the Enterprise A become China's earliest clients who want help from consulting. In the cooperative with consulting service, Enterprise A has gradually transitioned from simple dependence on consulting resources for the solution to and assistance in enterprise problems to a packaged consulting solution appeal that is customer-focused and based on consideration of the future development of the enterprise. Those transformation processes rooted in the Chinese market competitive situation have determined that Enterprise A, as a consulting client, has a clear competitive development feature of Chinese enterprises, and the change in its consulting cooperation needs is suitable for the aim of this research, to know more about how to achieve simultaneously the competitiveness enhancement based on client value through the sensemaking of client value meaning.

Secondly, Enterprise A is irreplaceable and non-repeatable in terms of time and spatial dimension. The author has cooperated with Enterprise A for more than ten years, with experience of diagnosing in Enterprise A, and the author reconsiders a diagnosis of problems and analyses the diagnosis results. This kind of relationship with a client over a wide time span and with comparisons results more than twice provides irreplaceable and non-repeatable features in the time and spatial dimension.

Again, the author is relatively familiar with the language of the manager,

understands more easily the true meaning of the manager's overtones. Sensemaking is used to conduct the exploration of different situations and construction of the bridge for the gap aimed at the exertion of individuals' subjective initiative to complete the meaning construction, thus realizing the adaptive evolution of its own state of existence (Zhang and Wang, 2017). The mining of meaning itself requires understanding of the true meaning behind language and the meaning of choice for action (Wang, 2014). The process of case study is also a process aimed at specific research questions, through the researcher's observation and understanding, with the help of the understanding and experience of researchers, from the practical application observation to the retrospect of theoretical interpretation problem (Wang, 2014). For different situations, it is necessary to have deep personal understanding, to bridge the gap, and it is hoped to draw help from the details in the case study. For this study, how to better understand the true meaning of the client's retrospective process of recall is more important than the possible suggestion. Therefore, the choice of Enterprise A is also the result of careful selection after the author's due consideration.

Finally, the case study is different from other research methods in that it does not directly introduce research methods in the research process, the research objects are fewer but better (Tang and Yang, 2016). The case selection requires that the case is itself is a particular or a typical phenomenon (Wang, 2015), although there exists a controversy on whether a case study should achieve a deep understanding of a certain phenomenon or achieve an overall understanding at a wider level of research through case studies. But for this study, from the sensemaking perspective,

a more continuous case selection based on a time sequence can better help the author to deeply understand the meaning of client value.

In summary, in the Chinese context, the typicality and the irreplaceableness and non-replicability in time and space of the case enterprise, the familiarity with the managers, as well as the deep understanding of value delivery requirements by the author, determine the objectiveness and inevitability with which Enterprise A is selected as a case enterprise.

3.2.2 Case background

Founded in 1949, Enterprise A is committed to building a world-class grain company with global competitiveness. Serving as a state-owned capital investment company with Chinese characteristics, Enterprise A has developed over the past 60 years and has a pioneering advantage in the Chinese market. Its business covers more than 140 countries and regions all over the world. At present, there are 140,000 employees in total, the general assets are 544.4 billion RMB Yuan and the annual revenue is 470.9 billion RMB Yuan. The total annual business gross is nearly 160 million tons, global storage capacity is 31 million tons, with an annual processing capacity of 90 million tons and an annual port transfer capacity of 65 million tons.

Enterprise A is the largest enterprise engaged in processing agricultural products in China. The comprehensive processing capacity exceeds more than 60 million tons,

covering the main agricultural products of the Chinese people's daily consumption, including rice, grease and oil material, sugar, tea and so on. Enterprise A has formed an upstream and downstream integrated industrial chain network, including planting and breeding, warehousing, logistics, trade, processing, distribution, etc.

Enterprise A currently has eight functional departments, including the office and human resources department, and sixteen specialized company platforms including the Health Research Institute. The main body of this research is two major business segments of Enterprise A: grain and oil, and biomass chemical engineering. The former is mainly the processing of grain and oil products, and the latter is the production of fuel ethanol through corn.

In terms of the internal environment of the organization, with the development of market competition, Enterprise A, founded on the basis of the product cost acting as the competitive advantage, is being challenged by high-value-added product competitors from the market segment, and the competitive advantage of simple product cost is difficult to maintain. Enterprise A urgently needs to gain a new competitive advantage and maintain its leader status in the industry, and the sustainable development of enterprises through its ability enhancement and organizational reform including organization and manpower. Enterprise A has absorbed a large number of employees from the original enterprises through acquisition and merger in the course of historical development. The revenue and employees have been increasing continuously. Due to poor enterprise management and scarce capacity of talents, and faced with many internal managements'

contradictions and conflicts, Enterprise A is badly in need of solving the developing problems through its own efforts and the aid of external consulting. Meanwhile, as a State-Owned Enterprise, Enterprise A bears social labour employment and other social responsibilities. Although Enterprise A has the independent decision-making power of a completely independent market competition enterprise, at the higher society and national level, Enterprise A cannot realize the transformation of organizational competition structure through simple business restructuring or personnel disposal, only for the sake of commercial economy. Enterprise A needs to establish a package of multi-aspect and multi-dimensional problem solutions to solve current development problems and to improve future competitiveness.

From the perspective of external market competitive conditions, Enterprise A is faced with increasing ability enhancement including clients and suppliers. At the same time, in the process of internationalization strategy development of Chinese enterprises, Enterprise A is faced with more fierce market competition among international industries; besides, the customer demand is accompanied by an increase in market bargaining power, and the traditional and emerging customer needs are superimposed, contributing to more speaking rights. Enterprise A needs to think how to meet increasing and changing customer demands by optimizing its internal management and competitive resources to deal with external market competition better.

Certain stability is needed by the internal development of the organization. The external competitive environment forces Enterprise A to change rapidly. This

dilemma of the management situation makes the enterprise eager for consulting help. However, the thought and psychology that enterprises cannot rely on completely special consulting needs of consulting service, determines the current states of a large number of clients with a need for consulting demand, represented by Enterprise A. How to better understand the need for consulting of these clients who make a 50% economic contribution to China, especially the value delivery understanding founded for the purpose of improving competitiveness, is also important for consulting to improve competitiveness, and it is also the goal and fundamental springboard of this research.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Sample selection

Single cases are taken as the main research method, reflection and reconstruction of theories occupy a pivotal position in the research process (Shi and Liu, 2015). For the significance of sensemaking theory that this research focuses on in consulting practice, the sensemaking itself, as an explanatory tool, requires that it is necessary that the researchers are familiar with the existing division of managers before conducting an interview and participating in observation (Wang, 2015). Selecting the managers to be researched and interviewed requires considering the managers' own understanding on the value delivery process, helping the researchers to discover the gap in the process of existing value delivery, and at the same time, it is also requiring researchers to develop the new value understanding through the case study reconstruction. The value delivery re-framing based on the perspective of

sensemaking is not a process summary of managers' value understanding in the simple sense, its essence is the formation of new value meaning after the sensemaking , and this new value meaning directly triggers the changes in the consultant work during the value delivery process in the future, so the choice of interviewed managers is needed for the research itself, and it is also an inevitable condition to support the true presentation of research results.

In this research, selecting the interviewed managers is considered mainly from the following aspects. First of all, these managers have participated in the whole process of Enterprise A's consulting service at least twice, and have served as enterprise liaisons or consulting result delivery evaluators in the value delivery. Secondly, the managers are very familiar with the development history of Enterprise A, their personal employment history in the company is not less than eight years, and they are in the leadership positions. Thirdly, as consulting and cooperation witnesses, the managers themselves are interested in reviewing the consulting process to obtain more understanding of personal questions during the interview dialogues. Finally, the interviewed managers are considered as insightful persons in the manager group.

Before the start of the interview, the author booked the interviewees' time and the place where interviewees feel comfortable, including Enterprise A's meeting room. Twelve managers attend the interview, include five senior managers who are in charge of different business units of Enterprise A, seven functional department general manager from the departments of human resource, marketing, production,

quality control, technology, strategic development and finance. The managers who were selected all have no more than thirty members of staff as direct subordinates.

Among the twelve managers interviewed, seven managers were male and five managers were female. The average age was forty-five years old; six managers had a bachelor's degree; five managers had a master's degree and one had a doctoral degree. The average length of service in Enterprise A is thirteen and a half years, ranging from ten to twenty-seven years. Nine managers have experience of working only in State-Owned Enterprises and three managers have worked in joint venture enterprises. Of these managers, five managers are business unit leaders, three managers work in functional supporting departments including human resources, finance, quality assurance and strategic development, two managers in business departments including marketing and production, and one manager works in the technology department.

In total, the interviewing took three months. The main reasons are the time taken to arrange interviews with the managers, and the author also hopes, through the interviews with no more than two people each week, the interview record will be completed, and meantime, through the inspirations of interview information, the reading of more materials on the topics related to research issues will be increased in order to obtain the continuous deepening and subjective correction of the self-cognition level for the author's own research issues. To make the time convenient for the managers, the author did not order managers to do the interview in a specific time. The author only made a list and interviewed managers one by

one. During the interview, each manager talked at least one hour. Because the author has established the managers' preliminary trust, the dialogue of interviews was carried out in a pleasant atmosphere. The key information which interviewees mentioned was collected in detail in notes, and interview records and the information were recorded by the author during the interview.

3.3.2 Interview details

Sensemaking focuses on the individual dynamic understanding at every moment in the process of information (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016). The application of sensemaking mainly involves three aspects: the research problem framework design, question design, analysis and conclusion, of which the most significant influence is the 'micro-moment time-line' (Yin, et al.2008; Liu,2017) formed by the combination of sensemaking and interview method. Unlike the interview, this method emphasizes that the interviewer must complete the interview and analysis of the interviewees' entire sensemaking process around the situation, gap and help (Weick, 1995) of three elements of sensemaking. If this method is combined with neutral questions, more detailed data can be collected (Liu, 2017).

Sensemaking is the process of combining data with background knowledge to form an explanation of a problem (Baber et al., 2013). It is a continuous process of trying to understand relationships, including things and people, in order to anticipate their trajectory and take effective action (Klein, Moon and Hoffman, 2006). Sensemaking emphasizes techniques of using time-lines and neutral questions; the

former asks the interviewees to describe their order of seeking information, and analyses their seeking results according to the basic sensemaking process of situation gaps users (Zeng, 2016); the latter applies the interview technique of neutral questions in the dialogue to guide the users to present their information seeking in their own language. Micro moment time-line interviews are more suitable for understanding and obtaining individual information in specific situations (Zeng,2016). Specifically, after identifying the research question, the researcher needs to select the appropriate research object and conduct an in-depth inquiry into the context in which it is located' (Zeng, 2016). In many cases, it is difficult for the consultants to understand the client's needs, and it is also difficult for the client to clearly express their needs. Dervin (1983) advises using neutral questions, aimed at requiring the interviewees to reflect their information needs from the interviewees' standpoints, and not to reflect the interviewees' views on the interview issues.

The way that the questions are asked during the interview is mainly based on the method of open questioning. Although three main process of the sensemaking are situations, gaps, and uses sequentially, in the actual interview, the author was not completely rigid in the order, but based on the interviewees' communication habits, the author usually started from the gaps to conduct an interview by using vocabulary that was familiar to the interviewees in a process of gradual progress, and tried to inspire the interviewees to describe the relevant situation and uses on the basis of not interfering with the interviewees' thinking and language expression too early. Considering that the neutral question is not an intuitive dialogue, the

author used indirect questions as much as possible during the interview to avoid making the interviewees feel difficulty in understanding due to the problems. The interview questions details can be found in Appendix: 3- 1 Interview questions.

During the interview, the interviewer kept using phrases such as ‘tell me about it’ or ‘in retrospect, can you give me more details about it’. The open nature of the questions allowed for avenues of interest that arose to be pursued without introducing bias in the understanding response. Notes were taken during the interview to support the recording tapes to maintain validity. Each of the interviews varied in length from one to two hours. Interviews were open to stimulate dialogue and break down any barriers that may have existed between the researcher and interviewees.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Method of data analysis

Understanding and interpretation is a cognitive process, and cognition is the inner activity of the subject, which is not completely dependent on the subject’s knowledge. Many cognitive processes are preconscious (Weick, 1995). One of the difficulties in cognitive research is that it is difficult to measure the cognitive process directly. Most studies indirectly reflect the cognitive process by analysing the representativeness of the cognitive process (Barr, Grégoire and Shepherd 1998). This research adopts the qualitative single case study method to study the meaning generation process of value understanding participation in the value delivery

process. Therefore, this research needs to pay special attention to client's understanding of their situation, their own experience in value delivery, and the possible impact of these understandings on the delivery of results. This research adopts the data analysis from the sensemaking perspective, that is, in the process of client value delivery, exploring client value understanding from the perspective of internal participants in the enterprise organization, rather than the behaviour and understanding of imposed on them by the will of outsiders (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

The premise of interpretative method is that people's understanding and behaviour are based on the interpretation and description of information and events experienced (Barr, 1998). The purpose of data analysis is to capture all the complex events and different situations in the process of research, and to form a deep value understanding and description. Through the detailed recording of the narration and cues description, it is possible to obtain narrative stories as independent individuals, which help to collect and organize a large amount of data information on a collective level, and it is very important for in-depth analysis of the interpretation and understanding behind the data (Han, 2010). Based on the characteristics of descriptive research data, first-order analysis will be subjective. In order to eliminate the subjective influence as much as possible, this research classifies the content elaborated by managers into linguistic context and key content types according to the consulting process in the first-order analysis, so as to complete the first-order analysis process, this analysis process can also be understood as subjective information coding (Han, 2010).

Because first-order analysis lacks the necessary interpretative framework for understanding, it is necessary to extract the core content of first-order analysis for second-order analysis. This research is on multiple occurrences of statements or words cited as the content in consulting process; the content mainly includes the client's understanding of the situation described, and their own feelings at that moment. In particular, as the sensemaking is to make sense of the understanding, all the metaphors which were used by all the interviewees were selected, and then different interpretations of the same statement or words content were placed together. The content put together is encoded again according to the three sensemaking processes of the interpretation, so as to form the completion of the interview material from context to content. At the same time, the content is directly related to the sensemaking process, laying a foundation for further third-order in-depth analysis of the content.

Sensemaking is the process by which people give meaning to experiences, and it is also the process by which people construct information, that is, the process of information design (Deivin, 1983). Words constrain the saying that is produced, the categories imposed to see the saying, and the labels with which the conclusions of the process are retained (Weick, 1995). Sense is generated by words that are combined into the sentences of conversation to convey something about our ongoing experience. If people know what they think when they see what they say, then words figure in every step (Weick, 1995).

Sensemaking has distinctive user-oriented features (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016), so

the data analysis in this research is mainly based on the sensemaking theory, and a qualitative analysis of interview data is conducted. The qualitative analysis is seen as the research based on the differences in species or quality rather than the differences in degrees (Caporoso, 1995). Dervin (1983) believes that the value of data analysis based on sensemaking is mainly reflected in three aspects: firstly, data analysis helps to understand a series of basic assumptions about reality; secondly, the sensemaking allows the use of a large number of metaphors; thirdly, sensemaking can perform the meaning analysis on a more abstract level.

Since sensemaking is an organic combination of people's understanding and behavioural processes (Dervin, 1983), sensemaking involves many kinds of different situations between consulting and clients, where each situation consists of a personal understanding and a space-time environment. Certain obstacles can be formed between situations due to individual cognitive differences (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016). People need to achieve a consistent understanding of meaning through the joint action of their own cognition and external environment for this. Dervin (1983) interprets this process of reaching an agreement as internal as cognitive and external like procedural behaviours allow individuals to design their own space-time movements (Wang, 2015). For this kind of user-centric sensemaking as the method of data analysis, combined with the research, analysis and use in the field of organization behaviouristics of Weick (1975), as well as the research and analysis in the field of information science of Deivin (1987), it is easy to see that its processing of information contains the following relevant meanings: the real world is not complete or fixed, but consists of widespread discontinuities or gaps;

understanding cannot be independent of human existence, but the result of human cognition and understanding; understanding is subjective and limited by the individual's past, present and future space-time situations; the search and use of information appears in the form of constructive activities; unlike traditional data collection and understanding, sensemaking focuses more on the individual's direct or indirect observations to construct realistic understanding and use this understanding to guide behaviours; understanding construction behaviours will change with the environment.

Based on the implied meaning of sensemaking in the data analysis, the data analysis methods used in this research need to return to the sensemaking theory paradigm itself to interpret. Sensemaking is initially interpreted as a triangular model consisting of three elements: situations, gaps, and uses. Situation refers to the space-time background in which meaning is constructed; gaps are the needs to be solved; uses are the new meaning of personal construction. Generally speaking, gaps must be faced between situations and uses. In order to cross them, an intermediary is needed, that is, the gap is bridged (Dervin and Clark, 1987), accordingly, the four-element data analysis paradigm of sensemaking is formed. The gap bridging can be understood as getting answers, forming ideas and getting resources (Dervin and Clark, 1987).

In order to make understanding easier, Dervin and Frenette (2001) explain sensemaking through metaphor. Situations represent history, experience, personal cognition; gaps represent difficulties, problems, obstacles; bridges represent ideas,

answers, resources; uses represent help, hindrance, influence. Dervin and Frenette (2001) vividly express the sensemaking process as when an individual is moving forward on the path of cognition, an insurmountable gap is formed due to the individual's own cognitive defects in a certain situation, and in order to move on, it is necessary to use bridges to achieve leapfrogging, and thus get help.

Sensemaking focuses on the individual's dynamic performance of every moment in the process of information for understanding (Dervin,1983), each consultant is very concerned about value delivery, and also expects to gain more value understanding from the perspective of clients related to value delivery. Through the deeper understanding of client value and the interpretation of the meaning, and that understanding forms the impact on the value delivery process, this research provides a reference for the realization and delivery of client value for the purpose of improving the competitiveness of consultants more effectively. Therefore, this research regards sensemaking as both a theoretical framework and a method of data analysis, completing all key issues related to this research, interview question design, data analysis and conclusion.

3.4.2 Data analysis

This research focuses on the impact of client value understanding on consulting client value delivery. The key to this question is to understand how clients perceive and understand these values in a given situation. Because in a complex and changeable environment, the problem is often not the problem itself, but how

people think about it (Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch 2010). In other words, sensemaking becomes particularly important in specific situations (Luscher and Lewis, 2008). With the help of the sensemaking process, clients can interpret all kinds of unexpected value delivery phenomena: they have experienced and establish cognitive order for understanding so as to eliminate the discomfort caused by cognitive disorder (Weick and Roberts, 1993; Weick, 1995; Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

However, it needs to be further considered that sensemaking can help people adapt to their situation in more than one way (Weick and Putnam, 2006). There are differences in the construction and interpretation of the surrounding environment by different people (Weick, 1988). The research of Weick and Putnam (2006) indicates that it may be related to commitment, expectation of people. Actually, these factors only can be regarded as the components of the sensemaking process. This research explores client to understand the cognition of client value and behaviour, extracting client value to understand the conceptual definition a client involvement value delivery as individuals to take the initiative to understand their situation, and further affect the outcome of value delivery in consulting process, thus help consulting to achieve better value delivery of client value of action.

Traditional sensemaking mainly focuses on personal processing sense construction. With the deepening of sensemaking, the sensemaking can not only guide the individuals to recognize the outside world, but also guide the cooperative meaning construction of collective (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016). Based on this, for the

dialogue and interaction process in consulting, the cooperative sensemaking seeks to make actors openly enter, exit the cooperative sensemaking space and temporarily keep cooperative tasks (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016). Recently, the essence of the dialogue from a sensemaking perspective is to let members work together to search for and form a shared interpretation to accomplish a common task, that is, to find the knowledge bond between each other as a base point. Thus, the interview information focuses on the internal and external dialogue processes that individuals carry out to construct meanings and focuses on individual's concerns about the changing process for a certain thing under different time and space conditions (Che, Cheng and Ke, 2016) to become the key point in the data collection and analysis of interview process in this research.

The data collected in this research are mainly the interview records of the client involved in the consulting value delivery process. All the data obtained are written and non-numerical data, with a total of more than 16,000 Chinese words. These texts were classified according to the four phase of consulting process, and a total of fifty-six pieces of events related to client value understanding and sensemaking were formed, which mainly included client's value expectation, difficulty faced during the process, client's understanding of this difficulty and the next action. The extracted information is based on the sensemaking process of situation, gap and help so as to shift the linguistic narration to a more theoretical level and establish an interpretative framework (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) for client value delivery. Based on the interpretation of framework, the context analysis as first order helps better understand the changes in content of client value understanding is coded

again, thus laying a foundation for further in-depth content analysis.

As for the analysis of the content, this research further recognized the contents interpretation that is helpful to the sensemaking, such as the definition of the problem by the client, the understanding of the problem by the client and the solution from the client, which are related to the understanding of client value. In this process, the research pays special attention to the interpretation that involves client value understanding and has an obvious emotional feeling, such as affirmative, negative or not understanding. At this point, with the aid of data analysis from context information gained from the content in coding and recognition, and content to sensemaking process completely, thus established understanding of how this client value understanding to participate in the value delivery process, and the influence of client value delivery of the results. This is the second order of depth analysis for the sensemaking and prepares for meaning mining.

In order to ensure that the interview questions are well context, the author prepared three pens of different colours in advance: red represented gaps, blue represented information sources, and green represented personal understanding and emotional experiences. According to the markings of different colors, the author could keep obtaining clear data, while not interrupting the interviewees in the process of reviewing their personal experiences and feelings because the interviewer needed to clarify something. The key information of these different colour classifications was separately arranged in the forms according to the natural time sequence of the

interviews and dialogues in accordance with four categories of situation, gap, bridge and help.

The analysis of data was completed mainly in five steps. Firstly, the author put the context of respective interview records all together in the order of core questions after completing the overall interview with the manager. Then, this contextual information when put together made the author continuously keep the questions relevant. As a third step, the core points of contents were recorded according to the consulting process in four phases. In the fourth step, after completing the selection of interview information contents, this research tried to establish an understanding relationship between the contents and related to the relevant situations, gaps, bridges and uses in the sensemaking analysis method according to the order of core questions once again. Finally, through the first order contextual analysis in the consulting process and the second-order in contents analysis, and linkage of those contents' analysis in sensemaking process, this research finally formed the meaning analysis of this research.

As a single-case research, there must be a subjective cognitive bias in the case study process (Tang and Yang, 2016). In order to avoid the interference of the interviewer's personal experience in the process of data analysis, this research followed the basic method of process consulting of Schein (1999), and strictly defined the interviewer's core meaning levels according to the different phase of consulting, to avoid the interviewer's self-cognitive producing different understandings. Since both language and interpretation come from the interviewee's

own descriptions, there may be some small interfering factors that perhaps make the understanding quite different. Therefore, this research tended to use more detailed subdivision questions at this time to encourage the interviewees to make more statements. The information from these ‘more richness statements’ were marked with specific marks in the recording process so as to ensure that the author recalled the on-site scene of the moment better during the follow-up processing of interview information.

Geertz (1999) believes that the analysis of phenomena should be an explanatory science that explores meaning rather than an experimental science that seeks laws. The second and third order of interpretation based on interpretation and reinterpretation conducts the reflective understanding after making a detailed and specific description for the individual case, and then draws a new insight into the existing knowledge (Geertz, 1999). Re-studying the substantive theory through the individual case makes the description summary of the individual case itself effectively supplement the original theory (Wang, 2015). Through this research, it is intended to gain the application of sensemaking from theory to practice through the reflection on the past consulting value delivery process, and the deep exploration of client value understanding in the value delivery process. This research is based on the information collation and data analysis on the basis of sensemaking, and the sensemaking analysis in consulting is fundamental; and the data analysis process conforms to the basic paradigm in process consulting, which constitutes the overall data analysis logic of this study. With the help of this data analysis support, this research has achieved a true understanding of the value delivery from traditional to

the sensemaking of the case study.

3.5 Ethical issues

3.5.2 Consulting

When interviews are used as an alternative to collecting the survey data, no matter how the interviews are conducted, they are all more conducive to the researchers' participation and observation, while the interviewees' cognition of the problems is further clarified, and the interviewees' real intention is further understood through the interaction with the interviewees. Although the interview method is considered to be more suitable for dealing with complex and in-depth research questions, it is influenced by the quality of the interviewers (Cai, 2017), and especially when individuals are seen as a subject of study, the study subject inevitably involves some ethical issues. Which dialogues are value-relevant rather than value-free in the interviews? When these issues are further clarified in the research, the researcher is concerned that the dialogue is affected by its own value, and that the research meaning development originates from the researcher's moral beliefs, and only through the value of these moral beliefs can the root of problems be found. In other words, although case study is a scientific method, the researcher's individual value influences the study and makes individuals' recognition the basis of understanding the significance of study and discovery (Wang and Xu, 2014).

In the interview process itself, especially, different levels of value issues and the clients' understanding of the knowledge in the process of continuous construction,

under the influence of intertwined roles between different positions, ages and even genders, constantly emerge in the actual interviews and interactive situations. The self-reflection of researchers is naturally a form of self-recognition and analysis (Vardaman, Gondo and Allen, 2014). This hidden researcher value and ethical awareness is inevitably integrated into the process of data collection and meaning development through the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, and eventually forms a cognition of understanding. Is this cognition of understanding really the researcher's or the interviewees? This kind of cognition itself is not a kind of cheating, and as a study method itself, it is difficult to simply answer when it is put in the ethical context.

What are the ethical issues in this research? In the course of general interviews, the content of research ethics is mostly limited to several ethical principles regarding the voluntary participation of the interviewee, doing no harm to the participants, anonymity and confidentiality, and not cheating the interviewees (Cai, 2017). Interviewers and interviewees are independent individuals, the interviewers' speciality role determines that the researcher is the best object to determine ethical contents in the process of social research. Ethics is formulated by the researchers based on the research objects needing to be protected, and privacy and anonymity are the focus of ethics' (Lincoln, Prossley and Little, 1982). Interpretivism regards reality as asocial construction, and the interaction between researchers and research objects is aimed to understand their meaning construction; most of the time, the interviewee has two roles, one is as the subject of self-determination, participating in analysis and re-constructive meaning, and the other is a collaborator of

exploration processes and results (Lincoln, 1990). In fact, it is whether the interviewer regards the interviewee as a collaborator during the interview, but in the process of research and relationship maintenance, ethics seems to be a kind of unsolvable thing for the role of researchers (Gong, 2008). This kind of unsolvable thing, in a sense, can be considered as a manifestation of disrespect for human rights, or 'because the social order itself is full of secrets and cheating, the choice itself of this moral evil' (Mauthner and Doucet, 2008) which violates ethics but has its legitimacy (Mcnamara and Blumer, 1982).

In this research, the ethical issues faced by the researcher are mainly concentrated in three aspects: the first issue is the investigators and respondents' right to know; the second is the organizational culture, including the impact of organizational climate on respondents; the last one is secrecy and transparency in the research process. Firstly, it is about the interviewee's right to know. In order to successfully achieve the research, the significance of the research to the client may be deliberately exaggerated; also, there exists an attempt to use the past cooperation experience of each other, adopting the tactics of diversion (Gong, 2008), to induce the interviewee to be concerned about the relationship and pay special attention to the coordination work of the research.

Another problem is the confidentiality and transparency in the process of the research. Although some managers personally think that the research is about a consulting investigation, in the end, the data and results can reflect the viewpoints of a group of personnel within the organization. For personal curiosity, or to ensure

that personal rights and interests are not violated, some managers asked the author whether they could see the raw data of the investigation. In fact, both the author in person and the contact person who assisted with the completion of questionnaires were careful to deal with the problems about the questionnaire signature and information confidentiality, but the author was unable to agree to the requirement of these managers. The personal information section involved in the research, if made public, would be likely to cause embarrassment for the participants in some ways. But, if these data cannot be completely open, the author also faced the pressure of the respondents' right to know and respect for individual demands. From the perspective of the group, data privacy is respect for all people, but from the individual perspective, the appeals of the respondents need real recognition and respect from the investigators.

In this research, the author informed the interviewees in detail of their basic rights to know and the rights and interests related to questions and answers in the process before the formal interview. The author also clearly explained and obtained the interviewees' signed approval for the study purpose and the application scope of the study results.

3.5.2 Client

From the client perspective on ethical issues, the first consideration is the interview relationship. During the interview, although the interviewees are clearly informed of the right to know and the right of privacy, during the investigation the

interviewees voluntarily give up their rights because of the relationship consideration, while there is a certain factor of personal understanding, deliberately guiding. Of the twelve people in this interview, nearly thirty per cent of the interviewees explicitly put forward the request to reject recording the interview process on the grounds that the recording might disturb personal thinking. Another thirty per cent of the interviewees did not seem to approve of being recorded, perhaps because of considering the relationship, no clear question is put forward at last, which causes the interviewer to believe that the interviewees agree to be recorded, but the fact is that the other side might refuse the recording. The remaining interviewees clearly approved of the interview recording, and did not worry about any leakage of interview contents or production of adverse effects on themselves. In practice these realities are manifested in the agreement to open participation in interviews, but there are reservations on the details of interviews, and it is hard to say how many of the interviewees and the understandings explained by these people are true personal experiences, and how many deceptive elements there are. Interview connections and interviews can be carried out only because of how the interviewees consider the relationship with the interviewer, and even the relationship between the internal stakeholders of Enterprise A. This kind of ‘consent’ caused by the relationship, to a certain extent, allows the interviewer to realize that the individual has not been truly respected and there is a certain deception. However, this kind of performance seems quite reasonable for the influence of the relationship in specific Chinese context.

There are still certain organizational atmosphere effects on the interviewees’ ethical

issues, sometimes, personal manager choices and decisions are affected by the enterprise culture (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Ferrell, Rene and Johnston, 2007), or by the enterprise atmosphere (Hollinger and Clark, 1982), which is a tangible ethical issue. In the interview, when the interviewee mentioned the superior leader or the company's value choice, this was often the problem that the interviewees paused to think about the most. These problems which required time to think about were not profound, but issues for which the interviewees needed to carefully organize their words so as to make their own descriptions and expressions appear flawless. These discussion points that were clearly linked to the superiors or enterprises may have made the interviewees feel oppressed and dare not answer, or the interview technology itself may be seen as part of organizational politics (Cai, 2017). These plausible guesses may simply ignore by the researcher because they are not the core issue of this study. This threat which may come from the organization's political consideration makes interviewees hope their statement of problems and value expression are conducted along the path expected by the interviewer in order to obtain security of personal feeling. At this point, if the interviewer pays too much attention to the interviewee's 'security appeal', it will directly cause the interviewer to integrate the personal value directly into the interview process, and finally, the interviewer will violate the basic principle of interview value neutrality. Therefore, in this survey and study, when the author discovered that this was a problem that might affect the interviewee's expressed meaning, the author deliberately slowed down the speed of asking about the problems, while, in a more euphemistic way, continuously subdividing the problems to reduce the embarrassment so that the interviewee would not feel that

he or she was questioned so thoroughly.

Finally, there are also concerns about how privacy is maintained for the interviewees. In this research, more retrospective methods needed to be used for obtaining the interviewees' understanding and meaning interpretation in the process. Most of the time, because they were asked to recall the past, the interviewee often mentioned specific people's names and positions, and even personal preferences also become a powerful evidence to explain some meaning in order to make a clear statement. At this point, the interviewee was faced with a problem of privacy leakage, and the embarrassment of how to achieve information confidentiality without affecting the research results. In order to ensure the confidentiality of any personal information that the interviewee or the interviewer had ever mentioned, the author has carefully conducted technical processing for the personal information in the process of sorting out the survey data so as to ensure that the research itself does not involve any violation of personal privacy, and meantime it is guaranteed that the processed information will not be easily identified or matched to a certain specific individual through connections between key information.

4.0 Research analysis and discussion

4.1 Sensemaking of situation from client value understanding

People are continuously striving for cognitive order and gaining retrospective understanding of what is happening around them (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking as a process facilitates this by providing meaning, by interpreting explanations, to

complex issues. It is not simply the explanation of the real world, but the construction of problems to be explained from the complex and complicated reality. So, the sensemaking process contains two elements: one is to frame what it is about, the other is to understand how it towards action (Weick, 2005).

Feldman (1989) considers sensemaking to be an interpretive process, which enables organisations to interpret their organisational environment and share their respective understandings. Weick (1995) further points out that sense is about the ways people generate what they interpret, and clearly about an activity of a process. People seldom hear that someone made a sensemaking. People hear, instead, that people make sense of something but, even then, the activity rather than the outcome is in the foreground since sensemaking is a process (Weick,1995).

The basic assumption with value delivery based on client value is that the consulting can provide clients with their desired value. Using sensemaking, the focus of value delivery in consulting is on how consultants can better understand their clients' desired values in the early stage of consulting projects, and on how their clients can understand the value that the consultants believe they should be able to experience from the value delivery process. Therefore, the clients' understanding and perception of value is the key to achieving client value delivery results.

This section focuses on situations that influence client value understanding. It considers internal and external factors and other causes of change in client value

understanding. Weick (1995) defines 'situation' as meaning of time and space, the activity of the individual is only in a certain sense caused by the stimulus of the situation because of that activity of the individual. In other words, behaviour is a relating not of subject and object as such, but of two activities (Follett, 1924). Sensemaking explains how things got to be the way they now are, and hence the importance of looking at past experiences in sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking links action and cognition (Thomas et al. 1993); the action of saying something then makes it possible for people to see what they think about it from the past (Weick, 1995). This research retraces the client experience and feeling about the understanding of client value from value delivery process in consulting to realizes the sensemaking of client value understanding.

4.1.1 Client value understanding in value delivery process

The process of sensemaking is closely related to situation, which can be regarded as a form of contextual rationality (Weick, 1995). As mentioned in the literature review, a client's understanding changes as the objective environment changes (Schein,1999).

In the initial phase of the consulting project, the client's understanding of value is based mainly on the fact that their business is experiencing problems which they feel unable to resolve themselves, and hence the need for consulting. During the interviews which were conducted as part of this research, when asked why they decided to participate and get involved in the consulting project, two participants

responded as follows:

“We need consulting projects not only for our organisation’s development needs and future competition, but also because we have certain deficiencies in our ability so we need to ask the consulting service to help us solve these problems.”

“Some problems are clear to us, but some are not clear; especially, for some related to internal management problems, such as the redistribution of power resources, we need the help of external consultation companies. After all, some problems can only be understood and cannot be expressed in words, and the consulting company has more experience to deal with these problems than us.”

Schein (1988) describes the initial phase as the consultant’s first chance for conversation with the client. It builds a common understanding of the goal of the project and, in particular of how to interpret the client’s business (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012). It is also the point at which the client’s expectations are ascertained (Schein,1999). Despite this, there is often a lack of common understanding between the consulting assumptions of client value and the client’s expectations. These uncertainties, or conflict values, are mainly reflected in the fact that although consultants possess professional knowledge, clients have a better understanding of their business and competition. Understanding clients’ expressed problems is a huge challenge for consultants. This is because if they confine their approach to clients’ problems by basing the resolutions on previous clients’ problems, then they

are failing to accurately understand their current client's real problems. In order to fully understand a client's needs, consultants must first abandon their pre-conceptions which are based on their previous consulting experience, and must listen to and understand their client's problems.

Schon (1983) and Shotter (1993) discuss problem identification as a key component of professional work. In real practice, problems are not automatically presented as such to consultants. Instead, they must be constructed from problematic situations which are puzzling and uncertain (Weick,1995). To understand the problem from a problematic situation, the consultant must make sense of something that initially makes no sense (Weick,1995). The process of sensemaking is intended to include the construction and bracketing of the context cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations based on action and its consequences (Weick,1995).

The process of extracting the real problems and identifying the clients' needs is not easy and must be achieved through the application of consulting methods. One challenge consultants face is that clients' understanding or problems and needs are often not articulated in clear words and therefore consultants must interpret or 'guess' them from certain cues. Analysed from these cues, the client's understanding of their problem needs is only based on the client's own description of the problems. This is why sensemaking is introduced in the initial phase in consulting, since it encourages consultants to ask 'what is about?' (Weick, 2001). Schein (1999) advises that consultants should not be overly eager to answer the

clients' questions at the beginning of the project.

In the diagnosis phase, the clients' understanding of value is mostly based on the fact that the consultants are more experienced than them in solving similar problems. At this point, the consulting value delivery process itself relies on the client's understanding of consulting value; meanwhile, the recognition and definition of problems are full of uncertainty due to the clients' consideration of interpersonal relationships between consultant and client. When asked to reflect on what, for them, represented the greatest difficulty or obstacle to them participating in the value delivery process, participants responded as follows.

“After the clients find a consulting service, they will stop thinking. As clients, they should try to think clearly about what the problems are first, instead of being informed by the experts.”

“The consulting advice of many problems are based on the fact that within the environment the overall situation of the enterprise is unclear, Including the clients and the consultants, they all have the situations of their own understanding, taking experience knowledge into a kind of reality interpretation in the project process, and they both face time pressure and the rush to complete the project delivery.”

When working with clients, consulting usually deals with ‘a complex and ill-defined situation in which many issues are all mixed up together’ (Weick, 1995,

p.88). Weick (1995, p49) regards sensemaking as an interactive process between members of the client's organisation and their organisational environment. Furthermore, Weick believes it to be mainly path-dependent supported by enactment processes (Weick, 1995). This means it is 'constructed on existing norms and values, past events and practices' (Stensaker et al. 2012, p66), together with interactions between members of the client's organisation to 'create an understanding of the organizational environment and critical factors' (Stensaker et al. 2012, p66).

Defining a problem and designing an appropriate solution is key to achieving outcomes for value delivery, and consultants' understanding and assumptions about the problems will directly determine the result of value delivery. Because of the value to be gained from the client's understanding of their organisational environment and relevant critical factors, consultants are increasingly willing to invite clients to participate in the problem-defining and problem-solving process to ensure that the results of consulting diagnosis meet the clients' expectations, and to also avoid any possible mistakes in the consultants' subjective understanding. The fact is that, regardless of the difficulty in project communication which is caused by the clients' own internal different views on the problem, the discussion about the facts of the problem is itself a problem.

When asked to reflect on what caused them the greatest difficulty or obstacle in their experience of the consulting service, three participants gave the following responses:

“Most of the time, the problem itself is not a problem, but the problem behind it. Some problems are problems in the eyes of the leaders, but in the eyes of others, they may not be problems. Sometimes, the leaders’ views on the problems also lead to small changes in the process. These are originally the problems of language elaboration, but some people understand them as a kind of change. These understandings of leadership opinions make the problem more complicated.”

“When the problem is controversial, the consultant tends to try to balance these things. The balanced result is that the consultant tries to split the differences of these things, not only meeting the leadership requirements, but also making the project managers comfortable.”

“Reviewing now, the consultant’s help in solving the problem is limited. Perhaps through the intervention of the consultant, the contradictions of enterprises seem to have been solved from the inner feeling, but in fact the problems have not been solved. This kind of seemingly solved problems seems to really impact the problem-solving itself now. Trying to use technical means to solve the problem that cannot be solved internally is itself a problem.”

The outcome comes before the decision, the fact consists of the possibility which the individual defines retrospectively the understanding that has been made. sensemaking looks situation fulfil ongoing and context which human situations are progressively clarified, but this clarified often works in reverse (Garfinkel, 1967).

The individual actor's own actions are first order determinants of the sense that situations have, in which, individual find them self (Garfinkel, 1967), and the individual renders the outcome sensible from the fact by constructing a plausible reason in Garfinkel's (1967) words, 'the interpretation makes good sense'. The question is, is the identified and interpreted problem really a problem for the client? From the above analysis of problem-defining and problem-solving in the diagnosis stage, it can be seen that although consulting and clients often work collaboratively together, the recognition and understanding of real problems in many delivery processes has been replaced by a form of normalized project management because of the mutual interest orientation and the necessary action orientation. Although the true problem is somewhat exposed in the consulting process, the consultants and the clients ultimately are more willing to concurrently choose to turn a blind eye to these problems more often.

People who make sense are just as likely to satisfice as are people who make decisions (Weick,1995). Turner and Turner's (1971) analyses of orbital talk revealed that the reasons of expediency, or pragmatic considerations, seem to be the most important rule of defining problems. In the diagnosis stage, consulting and clients may turn a blind eye to certain problems where they may lead to difficulty in value delivery and project execution and no deserving in the clients' experiences.

The reality is that once the clients are in the process of actual implementation, it is found that everyone's dispute over the problem is only one aspect, and that the project cannot be implemented is the true problem.

“Originally, we ourselves did not think about the problem itself fully, or did not really think about it. During the collaboration process of the project, we thought what the consultants advised was all right, and also accepted the consultants’ advice. Now, once the advice is implemented, we find the consultants’ advice is not related to many specific situations. The clients can understand what those consultants explain in theory, but they do not know exactly what the consultants’ advice means, so even though the advice looks right they are not actually helpful for implementation.”

“When managers do not cooperate, they do not get what they think is valuable in the implementation process.”

“Most managers buy a computer as though they are buying a television; they open and use it, and find that there are too few things that they know about how to operate the computer.”

When clients believe, during project execution, that some solutions suggested by consulting in the implementation are not helpful or worthwhile, their perception of the consulting value delivery declines. So, whereas it seems in the initial phase that consultants and the clients seem to be doing the same thing, when the project process enters the implementation stage these divergences in opinion emerge and the original intentions established in the initial phase are forgotten. This kind of understanding conflict between consulting and clients is not only the result of mutual choices because of interests, but also no knowing about the understanding

changes in the delivery process absence of deep thinking. Weick (1995) describes important changes occurring in the environment as interruptions, thus a key event for emotional experience is the interruption of an expectation. This suggests that clients' emotional experience is as important as client perceived value during the value delivery process.

Emotion is essentially a non-response activity, occurring between the awareness of the interrupting event and an action alternative that will maintain or promote the individual's well-being in the face of an event (Berscheid, Gangestad and Kulaskowski, 1984). When people perform an action sequence and are interrupted, they try to make sense of it (Weick, 1995). The longer someone researches and acts before the interruption, the stronger the emotional response to it. If the interruption slows the accomplishment of a time sequence, people are likely to experience anger. Conversely, if the interruption has hastened their achievement of an action, they are likely to experience pleasure. Past events are reconstructed in the present as explanations, not because they look the same but because they feel the same. Any attempts to use a feeling-based memory to solve a current cognitive problem make sensemaking more difficult to apply 'because it tries to mate two very different forms of evidence' (Weick, 1995, p.70).

From a sensemaking perspective, client perceived value not only depends on what clients have experienced in the past, but also on their current understanding. It is where client value understanding is neglected that has led to clients having bad experiences of client value delivery in consulting. Therefore, it is very important for

consulting to promote the client's value delivery experience from the action, which is far more valuable than waiting for the outcomes from the client own emotions together with their understanding input.

In the concluding phase of the project, consultants need to evaluate the effect of intervention in the value delivery process and consider the possible subsequent effects of any actions they take. Evaluating effect means that the consulting project is successfully introduced through the mutual co-operation of consulting and client. In this way, clients' competitiveness based on the client value is promoted, and the clients recognise or perceive this value and are satisfied with the value delivery of consulting projects. Therefore, the effect of their mutual collaboration on projects results in their mutuality of further understanding.

In the final phase of value delivery, it is not the consistency of experience value and the in-depth understanding between consulting and client that is considered; it is the process of reflection in order to identify any deficiencies arising in the overall delivery process of the project because of the value delivery results. When asked to reflect on how any difficulties or obstacles in their understanding of the problems made them feel, responses included:

“The consultants are used to helping their clients find what they know and what they are familiar with, which makes a lot of questions clearly understandable to everyone, but from the results, what the two sides actually understand is not the same thing.”

From the above clients' evaluation of the value delivery results, it is not difficult to see that, although the consulting and clients have jointly completed the delivery of the client value, the coordination in the client value between consulting and clients in a sense has not been achieved, the consulting client value delivery still remain in a textual document form. Based on the above comments, it can therefore be seen that clients believe there are divergences between consulting and clients' understanding of the value delivery process at the beginning of the project.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this research, from the perspective of sensemaking as an interpretive tool in value delivery. Firstly, client value understanding changes as the personal cognition and the surrounding environment change. Secondly, client value understanding is an interpretation of a client's subjective cognition on specific matters. Different times, places and environments all have an impact on a client's interpretation. These variables can also lead to consultants' misunderstandings of client needs and value delivery. Finally, client value understanding is not something that exists independently of clients' behaviours. Client understanding is always intertwined with the interaction process in consulting, and is therefore going to be affected by subjectivity, randomness and complexity. These influences on client understanding will in turn directly cause the value delivery processes to become difficult and complex.

4.1.2 Four factors affect client value understanding

The value delivery process becomes complicated due to the involvement of the client value understanding and the changes in the value delivery process of the clients' understanding. Through the in-depth exploration of this study research, the client value understanding changes in the client value delivery process and the participation in the value delivery process are mainly related to leadership requirements, position responsibilities, internal coordination and personal interests.

Leadership requirements are interpreted as a requirement of organizational tasks more often; in terms of these requirements from the leader, the results show that because of a mid-way change of leadership opinions or even a disagreement of opinions between leaders, or because of the functional department's understanding of the leadership requirements inside the enterprises, the effect of these outcomes from the leadership requirements is not good from the value delivery results.

When asked what should be done to promote understanding between client and consulting, and how understanding could be achieved, responses from clients included:

“The leaders have already explained the main requirements of the project very clearly, and from the perspective of co-operating with the consulting project itself, there is three-way consensus between the top leaders, internal departments and consultants; but in fact, there are many different hidden

requirements behind these consensuses due to the differences in personnel level and experience, and there is still a need for more clarification in the process.”

“The consulting should not take the easy route in the project process to avoid it becoming stuck where leaders’ opinions are not unified because that will not help the project to achieve better delivery. How the consultants can help the leaders to clarify the differences that the leaders do not foresee in the process, and how to make the leadership’s initial instant interest of the project change into the support and participation in the process all need the consulting company to not only consider the temporary employment in the contract relationship, but also need to work from the perspective of career relations, the cooperation between consulting and us is valuable, and the two sides can also deeply integrate in the process.”

The consulting project requirements required by client leaders are often related to the organisation’s long-term development and the comprehensive consideration of internal factors. Therefore, “leadership projects” in the eyes of these leaders not only present difficulties for them in understanding individual “project images”, but also present factual difficulties in the internal co-ordination during the project process, as those people who perform tasks specifically are more willing to do things related to their jobs.

As stated earlier, Weick (1995) describes personal identities as shifting and multiple.

When those shifting identities are embodied in the client's top management, outside observers who try to predict the team's behaviour using the object perception model will struggle. What they fail to recognise is that, when teams try to assess task trends, their perceptions focus on people rather than objects (Hambrick, Geletkanycz and Fredrickson, 1993)

Comparing leaders' requirements, those projects that come from their own responsibilities or are based solely on internal functional synergy requirements get more client support in the client value delivery process. As one respondent in the study noted:

“If the professional routine of consultation processes can be truly understood and applied by the business departments, it is easy for the function managers to automatically, spontaneously and willingly integrate into the project, so the consultants and the managers can also easily establish mutual trust and collaborative relationships in a short time, and they can also tolerate the possible twists and turns in the project process.”

Apart from the consulting projects initiated by their own responsibilities, those internal collaborative consulting projects arising from the work improvement, the managers will actively participate in the project process not only because the project execution is helpful for their work, but also because of personal interest. Relatively speaking, the leadership project is biased towards the long-term development of enterprises in terms of consulting needs, which are reflected in the

relative knowledge intensive applications. The internal managers of enterprises have difficulties in the task understanding, and those at the managers' side, or the executing projects, often get a better delivery evaluation because they are related to the current work.

The only thing people do not do is take things for granted (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991); over time, people act in patterned ways and take these patterns for granted as their reality with their understand (Luckmann and Berger,1967). Client understanding is not determined by one single factor. On the contrary, it can be affected by ever-changing factors including personal interests. It is when one considers that this fact, and consulting's lack of situational understanding even when sensemaking is used, that one can appreciate the extent of the inadequacies in the traditional consulting value delivery process. For these projects with different appeals, the consulting needs to flexibly use the three different consulting work for the client value delivery, mechanically based on the completion of project tasks often fails to receive higher recognition and evaluation from the clients.

4.1.3 Variation caused in client value understanding

Sensemaking, in the context of ascertaining client value understanding through client participation in the value delivery process, is influenced by external environmental factors and individual clients' cognition. The researcher classifies these as either external factors or internal factors in this research. External factors mainly include leadership requirements, position responsibilities and internal

co-ordination; internal factors are mainly related to personal interests.

It can be seen from this research that external factors are mostly related to the direct problem-solving in the manager's personal daily work process, or the indirect work support decision-making needs. The former is mostly manifested by consulting in the general factual value understanding in terms of client's understanding, delivery and participation behaviours, while the latter requires more knowledge to be gathered to create value understanding of the entire project process.

These differences in value understanding emerging from external factors are directly related to the level of the clients' needs and the complexity of the project itself. For the actual understanding of the general project value, more demand initiators come from the functional managers themselves, and the problems that the project hopes to solve are mostly related to a specific task. The co-ordination and communication during the execution of project tasks are mostly based on the communication between managers of the same level or the simple supervisor-subordinate interaction. Consultants do not need to consider other influencing factors, and can conduct the value delivery aiming at the clients' needs only from the clients' task requirements. In this situation, the purchase model and the doctor-patient relationship model mentioned by Schein (1987) are both more suited to value delivery because they are based on the function of client value delivery that the clients' needs are clear.

Conversely, the projects involving indirect support decision-making needs in the

external causes are mostly manifested in a kind of special understanding and demands in the consulting project. With regards to the meaning of leadership internal consulting needs, including corporate managers and consultants, there are barriers in the understanding of the whole process from project requirements to value delivery. Due to barriers in the understanding of the leadership requirements and the project itself, it is necessary for client to participate in order to ensure the true meaning of their requirements is conveyed. Therefore, the leadership requirements, position-responsibilities and internal collaboration form three external driving factors that influence the client value perception and value delivery process.

The internal causes that influence the client value understanding and process participation are mainly related to personal interests. Among them, the value delivery cognition by the individual of the consulting process is related to the self-cognitive definition and classification of the project. The closer the distance between the individual and the consulting value delivery process, the closer the content of consulting comes to meeting the client's specific work or interest needs; and the more clearly the individual knows the consulting project value deliverable and processes, the more clearly the individual know how these values help the individual's work or growth. Finally, if the client understands that their participation will yield certain benefits to them, then their enthusiasm for participating in the project will be greater.

These internal influence factors of personal interest because of the project

participation, distance and value cognition, as well as self-cognition will be directly converted into the influencing factors of value understanding in the project delivery process. Therefore, personal interest becomes a key internal driving force for influencing clients' understanding of client value and the value delivery process.

4.2 Sensemaking of the gap from two different processes

4.2.1 Two differently driven processes for value delivery

As stated, gap, according to Weick (1995), refers to the understanding caused by information discontinuity. Client value understanding is facilitated during the value delivery process; it bridges the gap between consulting-client dialogue. Sensemaking lets consulting and client face the gap of client value understanding, integrated value understanding from effective dialogue to understand how to step over individual value perception.

Through the client's understanding of the changes in the client value delivery process, this research has divided the process of client value understanding and participating in the consulting value delivery process into two different processes. The first is 'consulting-driven assumed client value perception' in which the consulting assumes the client's understanding of client value, and the second is 'client-driven understanding of client value', obtaining client value understanding through the client's involvement in the value delivery process. These two processes are not regarded as either good or bad in the value delivery process, and have different adaptability to different consulting environments. Relatively speaking, on

the basis that there is a high degree of uncertainty in client understanding, and that the consulting project itself is relatively complicated, the second process is more efficient and effective than the first in relation to consulting value delivery.

“Consulting-driven assumed client value perception” mainly relates to the clients’ needs and demand for value delivery results in this research. For general consulting projects, clients are assumed to have clear needs, and the clients themselves assume they have a full understanding and cognition of these needs. Clients assume that, through the help of the consulting project, they can effectively break through the barriers of insufficient internal resources or capabilities to achieve the expected outcomes.

During the process of ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’, consulting does not need to worry about their own gaps in the client value perception any more, and they can complete the value delivery through the client’s own expression of client value. At this point, the consulting regards himself as a hammer, and the client’s needs are nothing more than a nail in the eyes of consulting, they can meet the client’s expectation and achieve the value delivery without true understanding of the client value from client perspective.

Relative to ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’, ‘client-driven understanding of client value’ is more like a complex project in the form of consulting projects. This kind of complexity is manifested in the complexity of understanding because there are different clients’ expectations in the project itself,

and the complexity of process dialogues caused by the large number of people involved in the delivery process. ‘The value delivery driving process of client process-participating’ requires the consultants to often contact the clients early in the project and try a variety of ways to understand the clients’ needs, maintain professional cautiousness on the clients’ issues, whilst avoiding answering the clients’ questions, and instead, by asking the clients more questions, help the clients identify and participate in finding solutions to their own problems. Through more connection with self-knowledge blind-spots of client business, the consulting can provide professional support for the clients’ problem diagnosis and solutions, teach the clients some skills to diagnose and solve problems, and let the clients solve their own problems by themselves while making up for their own lack of understanding for the clients. ‘The value delivery driving process of client process-participating’ is more like the process consulting model.

There are qualitative differences in the outcomes between these two processes in value delivery, and there are also fundamental differences in the requirements and methods of value delivery work practices. In the actual value delivery, if the consulting does not strictly differentiate the meaning of these two processes, the client value in the value delivery process will automatically adjust and adapt due to constant changes in client’s opinions; at the same time, clients value understanding will be also overwhelmed by consultants’ specialist knowledge and experience, and the complex environment in the value delivery process due to the influence of the changes in the consultants’ advice. Finally, in the value delivery process of the co-operation between consulting and clients, the two sides struggle to find a clear

understanding of the client value due to the constant changes of understanding between themselves. Furthermore, changes in the process at any time create doubt about the other side's co-ordination of the process which is caused by the absence of common understanding. The cumulative effect of such doubt will eventually evolve into 'dissatisfaction' in the clients' value perception and 'it is not worth' by the clients' value understanding.

“The consulting can't always pursue the technically professional routines on the basis of task orientation, and can't always grasp the information that caters to their own interests in the consulting process; they should transform the pursuit of task quantity in the work process into a problem-solving qualitative change, and help the clients realize the true self-problem participation and solving.”

These two differently driven processes for client value delivery reflect the consulting suggesting to the client what they should do, the first thing the consulting need to do is to understand the difference of the two process, and then do the value delivery. As Wiley's (1988) argument that sensemaking operates on three levels, from the individual level of analysis shifts the order of the inter-subjective, the generic subjective and the extra-subjective. Inter-subjective meaning becomes distinct from intra-subjective meaning when individual thoughts, feelings and intentions are synthesized into conversations during which the self gets transformed from I into we (Weick,1995).

4.2.2 Difference in meaning between the two processes

From the analysis of the differences two processes of ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’ and ‘client-driven understanding of client value’, it can be seen that they are not only manifested in the differences in the form of the value delivery process for the clients' value understanding, but also there are distinct differences in their value meaning.

In terms of ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’, this client value is essentially a value in a hypothetical sense rather than the real value in the process before actually examining the consulting process and the clients’ final evaluation. First of all, the value based on the assumptions of clients’ needs may not be considered as a client value whether from the clients’ perspective, or from the consulting perspective; secondly, assuming the value understanding is at most a kind of value expected by the clients from their own perspective. This kind of expected value cannot be considered as a kind of client value until the clients perceive and accept through the client process; from the perspective of consulting , this understanding of the value of consulting service providers and clients which is generated from meeting the clients’ expectations is mostly related to the claim to client value of the consulting itself; the value claims based on the satisfaction of clients’ expectation is better at explaining the value to clients from consulting their own expertise.

For this kind of response that is manifested in the client value, but is actually in the

consulting's client value claim of understanding clients' needs, its essence is still the client value interpretation based on consulting's own client value understanding, and it has nothing to do with the client value itself under the client orientation. Therefore, analysed from the perspective of client value, 'consulting-driven assumed client value perception' is still a hypothetical value rather than a real value essentially.

In terms of 'client-driven understanding of client value', the establishment and existence of its delivery value means ignoring the value delivery understood by the clients and consulting in the early stages; rather, the client value understanding is established through the interaction of consulting and clients in the value delivery process. This understanding of value based on the relationship established between consultants and clients is automatically changed into a tacit understanding mainly through the co-ordination of the two sides' actions. The two sides may still not know 'the value understanding of each other', but it does not affect the two sides' communication and collaboration on the common goal of value delivery.

There is a huge difference for client value delivery between emphasis on client value understanding participating in value delivery process, and emphasis on consulting process control to prevent client mis-understanding. In terms of 'client-driven understanding of client value', this situation of 'harmony but difference' is more suitable for China's national conditions. For this difference in the essential meaning, is not only because of specific situations of Chinese organisations, but also because of the force for the organisation's managers' value

thinking modes and habits. Therefore, compared with the process of ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’, the ‘client-driven understanding of client value’ process is a form of true client value delivery in consulting.

In terms of the value meaning analysis from the value perspectives of two different processes, Schein's (1999) three consulting models can also be used to explain and promote understanding. The former is more like a mixture of purchase models and doctor-patient relationship models, and the value delivery is mostly relying on the clients achieving client value through transferring the clients’ power to consulting; the latter is more like a process consulting model where the value delivery is achieved mainly through the deep value understanding of clients and consultants and the effective interaction in the value delivery process to achieve the value delivery on the premise of taking the client value as an assumption.

4.3 Sensemaking of value delivery

4.3.1 No conflict in meaning of value delivery

‘How I can know what I think until I see what I say, can be parsed to show how process of sensemaking built into are’ (Weick,1995). From the standpoint of sensemaking, a definition about client value with value delivery is no big problem. The strength of sensemaking as a perspective derives from the fact that it does not rely on accuracy and its model is not object perception. Instead, sensemaking is about plausibility, coherence, reasonableness and instrumentality (Weick, 1995).

From a sensemaking perspective, a third embodiment of content is in frames that take the form of paradigms (Weick, 1995) which is usually associated with shared understanding (Guba,1990). From the above-mentioned four factors: leadership requirements, position responsibilities, internal co-ordination and personal interests in which influencing the clients' understanding of the value delivery process, and the analysis for the causes of these factors in the value drive, combined with the analysis and interpretation of two different value deliveries in consultation practice and significance which are based on the client value, it is not difficult to see that consulting and clients have no essential value conflict over the meaning of client value delivery; there is only a certain difference in understanding over the value delivery methods and effects at different understanding levels of client value at most. The consulting's value delivery meaning level based on the client value and the understanding of the client's 'harmony but difference' lays the foundation for the consultant and the client to seek real co-operation under the common purpose of both parties through the establishment of consultation and a co-operative relationship.

Although client' understanding of client value varies according to the consulting stage, or according to internal and external factors, and the performance and interpretation of client value understanding varies, everything related to client value understanding illustrates two points. Firstly, the value understanding of client will be constantly changing over time. Secondly, if the process of the value understanding experienced by managers is taken as a whole, these process events

just reflect that managers generally have a high value attention, but these value understandings are different from each other. These different understandings of value will directly influence the outcome of consulting client value delivery. Thus, the client value to understand itself from subject itself, have their own different explanation, but from the perspective of the sensemaking, these different but was highly value understanding, is precisely the client value in the understanding, between consulting and client to value understand consistency may exist.

Previous research conducted by the researcher is mostly based on client value, and on whether for the consultants and the clients, the value understanding or the connotation interpretation in separate states of value understanding. The consulting and the clients struggle to maintain real co-operation due to maintaining their own value and interests. Therefore, when the help is based on the maintenance of self-interest, whether the client value claimed from the perspective of consulting value, or the client perceived value from the perspective of clients, the existing value and co-operation value is lost by both parties as independent subjects in the value delivery process of consulting projects. This consultative relationship in a separate state results in the two sides having neither future commercial continuation nor value-perception recognition in the process of mutual co-operation.

On the contrary, this kind of co-operation in the value delivery meaning based on the client value not only breaks through the 'mutual value independence' of the past co-operation between consultants and clients, but it also breaks the synergy interference caused by the mutual difference in understanding of the value delivery

process, seeking the mutual co-operation from the perspective of value delivery and meaning construction.

This kind of co-operative interpretation means, through more integration into the value delivery process, the clients can enhance the competitiveness of organisations by obtaining the help of consulting. Conversely, the consultants use the interpretation of the meaning of value to achieve the delivery of client demand competitiveness enhancement through clients' better integration into the value delivery process. In the end, clients achieve enhanced competitiveness because of consulting help, and the consulting is promoted because of its perceived value to clients. Therefore, competitive enhancement relative to other consulting services creates a win-win situation in competitiveness of consulting and clients.

4.3.2 Value delivery is an expert's work

The gap between clients as novices and consulting as experts in the process of value delivery is very large, and clients prefer that consultants offer expert behaviour rather than consulting behaviour. The difference between the two sides is that, if the consultants are involved as experts in the client value delivery process, they will be able to understand the clients' needs better and also give appropriate responses and help to meet clients' needs and change their understanding of the process.

Consulting behaviour requires consultants' work to be focused on achieving understanding and agreement of the project at an early stage in order to meet the

project schedule. When different client understandings arise during their mutual dialogues, consulting may ‘turn a blind eye’ to these issues so as not to delay consulting progress. This behavioural response to client understanding issues can be seen as consulting’s inner rejection in the value delivery process and also consulting’s own negation for the one’s own-value of value delivery at the action level. This kind of self-negative consultation method makes it difficult to obtain the real recognition from clients, not to mention the perceived value of clients.

When asked if any of the consulting feedback or suggestions had not helped, and why, one respondent stated:

“Most of time, the reason why the consultants’ suggestions are not adopted is that the consultant doesn’t understand the real situations of organisations, there is also the problem of the consultants themselves, and the consultants must be veterans. They can sensitively perceive the requirements from the leaders, and meanwhile, they have their own insight into the implementation of consulting schemes more, able to lead the clients to move forward.”

Consulting’s expert behaviours do not violate the model of the process consulting that ‘the consultant is not necessarily a problem-solving expert’. The expert behaviour mentioned in the value delivery process makes the client have greater tolerance for any errors in the process of consulting projects because of their expertise and their own conviction that they can make managers ‘speak without reserve’ during their dialogues. The consultants that process consulting describes

are not necessarily problem-solving experts, but more those who help clients identify problems. That is, those who do not need specific problem-solving expertise but who will solve client problems with the help of other external experts.

With Chinese organisations, the degree of co-operation and unreserved communication that consulting can expect from client managers depends largely on their ability to quickly establish a trust relationship with them. Those consulting experts with considerable experience of supporting organisations and focusing on client need understanding are more likely to influence client managers than are their general task-oriented counterparts. One manager stated:

“The consultants sent by the consulting company sometimes have no practical experience of organisations. What is more troublesome is that some consultants are even newly-graduated students. It is very difficult for consultants with such an identity to make managers trust what help they can bring about for their organisations.”

Furthermore, the consulting's own understanding will have a direct impact on the client's understanding of the value delivery process. Expert consultants are better at explaining their knowledge gaps at the level of clients' needs and compensating for their own shortcomings with the help of learning; while task-oriented consultants who focus on consulting methods prefer to implant their existing knowledge into the understanding and explanation of client problems', and thus achieve the promotion and completion of consultants' tasks. In China, consulting is undergoing

a rapid transformation. Due to changes in the clients' competitive environment and the complexity of their internal factors, for a long time now consulting value delivery depends on expert behaviour rather than solely task-oriented consulting behaviour.

4.3.3 Sensemaking helps to overcome limited client understanding

As suggested in the above research and analysis, client understanding of the value delivery process tends to be subjective, random and complex. Overcoming the limited client understanding to gain a consensus through co-operation requires consulting to find the corresponding methods for value delivery.

Through this research, it is found that strictly defining the differences between two types of different value delivery driving processes can help the consulting gain the consensus through co-operation when clients have limited understanding. First, distinguishing between two types of different value delivery driving processes helps consulting limit the clients' needs and understanding to the corresponding environments; secondly, corresponding to the client understanding in the process, and associating the four internal and external factors that influence client's understanding can help consulting identify client's needs better, thus bringing about the changes in communication methods. For example, for a project required by organisation leaders, consulting should constantly explore the leaders' inner expectations and perception methods of value, and meanwhile expertly identifying the issues of opinion consensus and collaboration that may arise from the client

internal factors to ensure that the value delivery process will not be interrupted by clients' problems. Furthermore, when clients' communication is driven by their personal interests, consulting needs to carefully judge which of the information provided is personal and which reflects the organizational needs in order to achieve a balanced understanding of the information resources in the consultation process. Therefore, the identification of two different processes and four factors of influencing client understanding can effectively help consulting to facilitate mutual co-operation on the premise of limited client understanding.

In addition, from the perspective of sensemaking, two types of different value delivery driving processes and four kinds of factors affecting clients' understanding can also be regarded as gaps that affect clients' understanding in the value delivery process. Taking into consideration that the gap helps consulting understand the situation through more clients, a mediation bridge is needed between situations and uses to understand the gap and help consulting break through any current barriers, leap the gap, and meanwhile help the clients solve their problems. Therefore, value delivery from a sensemaking perspective helps consulting and clients build co-operation for enhancing competitiveness through the consultant's sensemaking under the condition of background across time for the clients, and through the exploration of the clients' needs to solve the problems, thus realizing the limitation of limited client understanding, and establishing effective mutual dialogue and cooperation on the basis of competitiveness cooperation meaning.

At the same time, in the value delivery process, by strictly defining client needs and

expectations through the flexible application of three process consulting models, the gap is also a value delivery result realization on the premise that it helps consulting overcome any client understanding limitations.

In summary, various different approaches to sensemaking in value delivery have been put forward. Schein (1999) points to the direction for the improvement of future consulting methods. Weick (2001) interprets the theory by focussing on things in the vague and rigorous consultation stages, emphasizing the clients' own understanding and solution of problems in different situations, and helping to effectively interpret and explain client understanding from the aspects of organizational construction and organizational behaviours. With regard to the information meaning depending on the client's own meaning exploration, Devin (1987, 2001) helps the researcher in this research complete the reinterpretation of value delivery meaning in consulting work methods. Li (2018) proposes, by thinking deeper and using simple metaphors, making consulting more effectively deliver valuable service to clients after deep thinking about common problems.

In the future, through the essential differences in value delivery processes that the clients understand and participate in, namely 'consulting-driven assumed client value perception' and 'client-driven understanding of client value', consulting can: understand the differences in client value delivery understanding; aim at different clients' needs; correct the consulting behaviour of informing under the belief of current clients' not knowing, fully turning to how to effectively help the clients' inspiration in the field of known problems of not knowing their own; and truly

establish the relationship of consultation and co-operation that ‘in different situations, the client’s problems are ultimately solved by the users independently through the bridges’ (Schein, 1999) between the client understanding and the value delivery driving process. Through this consulting approach to the value delivery process, real client service value delivery is expected to be obtained.

4.3.4 Two disciplines for client value understanding uniformity

The core of whether the expert behaviour or the client value delivery on the premise of overcoming the limited client understanding is related to consulting’s own working methods and capabilities. In the researcher’s opinion, consulting needs to improve in two work standards in order to truly achieve harmony but difference at the level of competitiveness enhancement meaning of consulting and clients on the basis of client value.

Harmony but difference means that, although the goals of consulting and clients are not necessarily the same, they both can break through their own restrictions to achieve mutual co-operation on the premise of common interests. Therefore, consulting and clients can have different perceptions of client value and mutually different niche points but, like co-operation in the sense of competitiveness enhancement, it is enough for consulting and clients to maintain mutual respect for each other, and meanwhile achieve client value delivery to improve competitiveness.

Achieving harmony but difference between consulting and clients requires consulting to follow two working standards in their working methods. One is ‘thinking, fast and slow’ (Kahneman, 2012, p.17), the other is ‘thinking deeper but using simple metaphors’ (Li 2018, p.73). Kahneman (2012) believes that life is full of wisdom; the memories and connections in our minds give us answers through personal intuition, but there is another system of thinking in our minds the part responsible for analysis and logical judgment. Because individuals are often limited in energy and ability, we rely on our intuition more. Aiming at the defects that the two systems in our thinking may cause to our cognition, we need to identify these two systems of thinking, and meanwhile, through constant self-reflection, achieve the personal perception ability and ensure that the preventive measures on event selection are in place. Thinking, fast and slow emphasizes that, in the process of communicating with others, the focus is on the process of things rather than the result of things, and through the understanding of misconceptions in thinking of oneself and others, the reflection and promotion of self-worth are realized.

In thinking deeper but using simple metaphors, Li (2018) uses metaphors as a good way to reason, believing that metaphors can turn some esoteric and incomprehensible morality into an easy-to-understand realistic image, thereby helping people to associate real-life experiences with understanding and thinking. Therefore, under the standard of thinking deeper but using simple metaphors, an effective metaphor can be used between consulting and clients where the two sides can achieve common understanding with the help of a ‘case’ in a specific situation. Therefore, the standard thinking deeper but using simple metaphors, as the second

working standard of this study, makes the consultants think about improving working methods to promote the client understanding in the future.

4.3.5 Consulting need to go back to the basics

Achieving a strict distinction between two kinds of different client value understanding driving processes, and how to establish an effective relationship between the four core elements affecting client understanding and the two processes is a case reference which this study provides for other researchers. On the basis of sensemaking theory in consulting practice application with process research (Weick, 1995), thinking, fast and slow (Kahneman, 2012) and thinking deeper but using simple metaphors (Li, 2018) gives researchers a feasibility study on improving their working methods to client value and competitive enhancement in Chinese organisations.

No matter which kind of thinking and research methods they adopt, consulting in China needs to reflect on the different effects consulting methods have on client understanding, and should be cautious about the unprofessional practices informed by the professional, and empower clients to identify and resolve their own problems by encouraging their involvement in consulting processes. In the process of changing from consulting behaviours to expert behaviours, consulting needs to truly understand the meaning and differences of ‘harmony but difference’ in the collaboration process with clients. This series of differences all requires consulting to re-examine their own role value and the meaning realization of helping clients.

Only by going back to the basics can consulting return to the origin of value delivery around understanding and exploring clients' needs, and provide better consulting services for clients through a change in the process of their own consulting methods.

Going back to basics means that instead of assuming their own superior knowledge and understanding of the client's needs the consultants no longer regard the professional advantages of self-roles as the basis of outputting value to the clients, but change the realization of client value into the pursuit of consulting work. Under the guidance of professional and honest value principles, the existence and sublimation of the consultant's self-roles in the sense of client value can be realized through the whole process of transferring from the self-own-value to client value. It changed consultant work from seeing is believing to believing is seeing.

5.0 Conclusion and further research

5.1 Conclusion

Faced with unfamiliar and uncertain information, people tend to seek the meaning of information and to seek certainty; this process is sensemaking (Weick, 2005). The significance of sensemaking to client value understanding is that, in the current special institutional and cultural environment of China, consulting suffers from dispute over the delivery of service results because consulting is too busy mechanically dealing with the affairs at hand to see the changes in this complex and changeable competitive environment. The sensemaking theory has been introduced

in the Chinese context by other Chinese researchers but has not been applied in practice to consulting practice before as a tool in this research for improving client value delivery and enhancing competitiveness. It can be seen in this research that sensemaking can help consulting better understand how client value will benefit their clients and therefore it provides a better guide for the effective practice of value delivery in consulting.

As a typical dynamic and complex situation surrounded with high levels of interdependent cooperation between consulting and client, through using sensemaking from data collection in a case study, researchers can understand more specifically why and how client understanding happens during the value delivery process. Sensemaking then increases understanding as to how consulting and client can cooperate so as to overcome any conflict in client value meaning by understanding client value from a different perspective. Applying sensemaking to this research refines the understanding of value delivery for competitiveness enhancement in consulting in the Chinese context. The research results show how sensemaking in China not only makes sense of client value for competitiveness enhancement, but also makes sense of how client value is delivered in consulting.

This research uses a case study and applies the research method of interpretive analysis to determine client value understanding and to highlight the impact on the consulting value delivery results. The research shows that client value understanding is affected by both internal and external factors, which will finally affect the result of consulting value delivery. Those factors are leadership

requirements, positional responsibility and internal coordination as well as personal interests.

There have been significant research contributions based on practical applications of the sensemaking theory. This research clearly demonstrates that sensemaking in consulting practice has significantly helped consulting to achieve client value delivery. The research findings will be used to illustrate how this has been achieved and to suggest in terms of client value delivery which client value understanding involved in the consulting process the consultant needs to pay more attention to. Through careful analysis, the research not only demonstrates the successful application of sensemaking in a consulting context in China, but also helps Chinese consultants better understand how sensemaking can be used to help them understand what competitiveness is and how client value can lead to enhanced competitiveness. By paying more attention to their clients' needs and their client value perception, and by letting clients become more involved in the value delivery process, competitiveness is not only enhanced for the client but also for the consulting.

In general, the conclusions of this research are as follows:

Firstly, sensemaking fundamentally changes the way clients participate in the consulting process. Sensemaking that seeks client value understanding for value delivery can not only help clients better understand client value, but can also make clients more willing to actively participate in the problem-solving process. At the same time, the consultant can implement more effective intervention processes and

results realization for client value delivery with the help of better client value understanding.

Secondly, sensemaking facilitates a clearer understanding of client value for the client through interaction between the client and consulting –as a result of consultant intervention – due to a ‘client-driven understanding of client value’. This is not present in traditional consulting, which adopts a ‘consulting-driven assumed client value perception’. The choice of process determines that the client value delivery results are essentially different. The consulting-driven assumed client value perception process is still a general value delivery, providing normal consulting services to the client, whereas the client-driven understanding of client value process is closer to taking the client as the centre for client value delivery. This finding helps consulting and client achieve a unified understanding of the meaning of client value, namely, although the consulting and the client have their own different interpretation of client value, with the help of sensemaking, the consulting and the client can have the same understanding of the meaning of client value and they can achieve effective cooperation.

Thirdly, sensemaking has a significant impact for consulting to better achieve client value delivery. Although client value perception will be affected by leadership needs, internal collaboration, position responsibilities and own interests, these affect the client perception of client value in a situation of constant change in consulting. However, because sensemaking has the characteristics of capture and interpretation of sensitive events from specific cues (Naumer, Fisher and Dervin,

2008), the perception of client value can be reframed and understood through the meaning level. Through the continuous understanding about client value due to sensemaking, greater client understanding about client value, more efforts to involve clients themselves in the value delivery process themselves, together with the better satisfied value delivery experience, these refactored client value understandings and experience ultimately help consulting to better achieve the delivery of client value.

Fourthly, this research helps consulting to achieve work transformation. This research believes that value delivery is a kind of expertise which points to the future direction of consulting service. Expert work means consulting does not only focus on specific problem-solving but also helps the clients to understand how they can themselves identify and solve problems. From this research it can be seen that the process of client value understanding is itself the process of sensemaking for client value delivery. Sensemaking helps the consulting service change client value delivery from seeing is believing, where more attention is paid to the outcomes provided from consulting, into believing is seeing on how sensemaking as arguing process for value delivery.

Fifth, this research shows how client value understanding helps achieve better value delivery outcomes of competitiveness from a sensemaking perspective. By the use of sensemaking, consulting helps the client achieve their own competitiveness enhancement, and, at the same time, the client has the greatest emotional value experience in which the consulting has a unique role in helping. This is based on

the true understanding of client value from sensemaking and that continually accumulated experience of client value leads to client loyalty, which ultimately leads to achieved competitiveness enhancement of the consulting service.

This research has contributed both theoretical and practical applications of the use of client value understanding involved in the value delivery process in consulting from a sensemaking perspective. Through a new conceptual framework in consulting with the help of sensemaking, this research has interpreted two manifest critical client understanding processes involved in the value delivery process. This research has also interpreted how client understanding is enhanced as a result of their involvement in the consulting process, where there is a lack of knowledge of client value and hence practical meaning understanding.

The research has also provided a fresh view on the testing of the identified critical client value understanding and the two different processes of consulting-driven assumed client value perception and client-driven understanding of client value from the perspective of sensemaking. This sensemaking perspective allows both client and consulting to focus on the client value delivery process to achieve competitiveness enhancement at same time, thus, giving rise to fresh insight to both theory and practice by examining consulting service in China from a sensemaking perspective.

This research not only fills the sensemaking theoretical gap in the field of consulting with a new conceptual framework, but also makes a detailed

interpretation of the practical application of client value delivery of consulting in a Chinese context. In summary, sensemaking in consulting can be regarded as the input and output knowledge process of client value delivery. As the input of knowledge, sensemaking is the interpretative process of knowledge transformation, and the common understanding of client value at the meaning level is the process of knowledge output (Zeng, 2012). Sensemaking is a cognitive process of understanding (Klein, Moon and Hoffman, 2006). From this research, consulting can use sensemaking to help clients achieve better cognitive client value, and because of the re-cognising of client value, the value of consulting services provided by the consultant can be further interpreted. Thus, through sensemaking for cognitive client value understanding, consulting and client better achieve the value delivery of competitiveness enhancement.

5.2 Limitation

As with any research, this case study has certain limitations that need to be addressed and taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Notwithstanding that this research is a continuation of the researcher's previous client value delivery studies relating to competitiveness, there are still many deficiencies in this research, which are detailed below.

Firstly, the research is in the form of a single case study. Although the case study used in the study is more consistent with the practical needs of the study, realizing

the case study mentioned by Fei (1997) ‘seeing big things through small ones, from one typical to the overall’, apart from the increase in the number of interviews, the study can increase the enterprises case studies in the same research situations, in order to achieve the understanding and comparisons between different levels within the enterprise through the method of multiple case comparison, and provide more inspiration for helping the finding beyond the study.

Secondly, the case study from the perspective of sensemaking in the competitive situations of Chinese contexts is seen mainly through the definition of prior research questions and case selection, and after comparing the analysis of interview data and information with the earlier literature. In fact, there are still many examples of research in this area, and future researchers can appropriately add quantitative research cases in the process of case studies based on qualitative researches, make the appropriate inspection and evaluation of newly-developed theories, and provide a supplement in reliability and validity for research results of similar problems.

Furthermore, the research relating to competitiveness is mainly from the perspective of the client, it is still a study of specific value understanding under the interpretation of the sensemaking from client perspective. More research on client value including consultant’s understanding in the context of client value needs to be undertaken. In general, client value from the sensemaking perspective may also serve as a lens through which individual consultant’s differences may be viewed and understood.

As part of value delivery process, the consultant is expected to model professional value (Barnett, 2014). The impact of having different value understanding during the value delivery process, and the promotion of competitiveness on the premise of how consultant and clients share the value are not covered in this research. Future researchers can refer to the impact of the understanding on value delivery, explain this meaning and meanwhile completely differentiate understandings of its meaning between consultant and client from the perspective of sensemaking.

5.3 Further research

In terms of future research, the value delivery research from the perspective of sensemaking can lead to further research from the two perspectives of personal values and corporate culture. If one kind of value is regarded as culture, so this culture must no doubt contain some values (Schein, 2011).

In order to conduct further research, it is first necessary to understand what the specific impacts of personal values and organisational culture are on client value delivery, and how these impacts can be identified. Next it is necessary to consider how individual values and organisation culture affect client value delivery. What impact do these impacts have on the competitiveness of both clients and consulting in the future? From the perspective of subdivision, in China the study of client value understanding in the value delivery process from the perspective of sensemaking is only the beginning of consulting services. How to interpret the meaning between the client's competitiveness and the consulting service at a more

extensive level, in a wider range, needs more researchers, to have the interest and patience to methodically complete these unknown understandings in the known fields.

Glossary

Client

The client is defined as an individual manager, group of managers or organisation receiving a consulting service.

Client involvement

Client involvement refers to where the consulting invites the client to participate in the value delivery process in order to maximise the benefit of the consulting service to the client.

Client perceived value

Whereas the consulting perception of client value is based on an objective value, client perceived value represents the client's own perceptions and is therefore based on their subjective or emotional evaluation of the value delivery.

Client understanding

During the consulting dialogue, the client provides the meaning interpretation including text, language and meaning according to the process changes; those interpretations of meaning appear as the basic evidence for the explanation of the client's self-understanding. Client's understanding includes their own understanding, as well as their understanding after being influenced by external factors such as consultants.

Client value understanding

This is a value delivery process in which the client makes sense of client value and how their involvement can enhance the competitiveness of the organisation. In this way, client is better able to achieve competitive enhancement in the future themselves.

Client value

Client value is best understood from two different perspectives - the consulting perspective and the client perspective. The consulting perspective of client value is based on delivering the project to pre-determined outcomes judged to be what the client needs, and therefore achieving client value. From the perspective of the client, client value means broader benefits to the client than purely meeting outcomes. Therefore, it is very important that clients are involved in consulting so that there is greater understanding of the benefits they want to be achieved by the value delivery.

Competitiveness enhancement

Positive value delivery from the consulting process will inevitably lead to competitive enhancement. Not only will the client gain competitive enhancement resulting from their improved client value understanding, but also the consulting service will gain competitive enhancement from delivering a higher quality value delivery to their client and therefore gaining the loyalty of their client.

Consultant

The consultant is the person who engages with the client to deliver a consulting service – value delivery – to the client. Ordinarily the consultant is interested in project results achieved; however, through effective dialogue with the client, the consultant will help the client identify the problem and involve the client in solving the problem during the client value delivery process, and ultimately achieve competitive enhancement.

Consulting

Consulting is the term used to describe both the consulting service provided by the consultant and the consulting process. This involves gaining the client's trust and confidence by identifying the needs of the client, providing the client with professional knowledge and experience, technological support, and a wide range of information channels. The service process will involve investigation, analysis, reasoning, provision of feasible suggestions and instructions to achieve competitive enhancement for both consulting and client.

Process consulting

Schein (1999) describes process consulting as the process that enhancement the competitiveness of the client by consulting establishing a supportive relationship with the client, allowing the client to perceive and understand the events in their internal and external environment and take corresponding actions.

Sensemaking

This is a theoretical model for meaning frame which establishes a process through which clients and consulting are able to understand new, unexpected or ambiguous events. By identifying and interpreting detail indicators, client can try and understand what is happening in the organisation and apply their new learning within the organisation and thereby enhance value delivery in process consulting.

Value delivery

Value delivery describes a positive outcome of the project for both client and consulting service. It is also a consulting process and denotes the value that is achieved at the end of the sensemaking process and successful completion of the project.

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Appendix: interview questions

Part I: Introduction and reassurance (No more than 3 minutes)

Part II: Explain the purpose and procedures of the interview (No more than 5 minutes)

Part III: Interview outlines (At least 60 minutes)

Q1: How did you make the decision to use a consulting service? (Situation)

Q2: In relation to your response to question 1, what did you think of the consulting project and was there anything about it that caused you concern or uncertainty? (Situation, Gap-faced)

Q3: In hindsight (retrospect), do you remember what was the greatest difficulty or obstacle to your experience of the consulting service? (Situation, Gap-faced)

Q4: If you encountered any problems with the consulting project, where did you get help from to resolve these problems? Did the help you received support or hinder you? (Gap-faced, Gap-bridged, Uses/Helps)

Q5: Which feedback or suggestions made helped you the most? Why is that? (Gap-bridged, Uses/Helps)

Q6: Which feedback or suggestions made did not help you? Why is that? (Gap-bridged, Uses/Helps)

Q7: In retrospect, those difficulties or obstacles because of understanding problem, how would you think? (Situation, Gap-faced)

Q8: If the feedback or help you received affected your mood, please state how or in what way(s) (Situation, Uses/Helps)

Q9: In your opinion, what should be done to promote understanding between client and consultant? And how could understanding be achieved? (Gap-bridged, Uses/Helps)