Planning for the National Telecommunications Infrastructure: A Framework for Understanding the Telecommunications Strategic Planning Processes (TSPP) of Thailand's National Telecom Operators

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Abstract

The overall aim of this study is to explore National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Processes (NTSPP) in Thailand. It further analyses the Telecommunications Strategic Planning Processes (TSPP) within the Telephone Organisation of Thailand (TOT), the Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT), and the Post and Telegraph Department (PTD). This study uses a multiple case study design for understanding the underlying TSPP at play among the Thai telecommunications players. However, in stating this, it is important to realise that one tacit assumption underlying the work reported here is that unless an appropriate TSPP can be inaugurated at the organisational level, NTSPP cannot succeed. The theoretical contribution of this study can be seen from the analyses that have contributed to two different levels and has also provided the theoretical justifications about the linkage at the organisational TSPP and the NTSPP. The outcome of this present research suggests that there is a significant gap between the theories of planning and theories in planning. However, this research has demonstrated that the normative-descriptive dichotomy of strategic planning theories is in fact, a useful paradigm of NTSPP research for developing our understanding from both a theoretical and an applied perspective.

Defining National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Process (NTSPP)

To date, there has not been much emphasis on the comprehensive NTSPP in the South East Asian countries. Rather, it is apparent from the existing practices that the developing nation's government has initiated a step towards the restructuring of the telecom sector, with a notable lack of emphasis on the comprehensive telecommunications strategic planning effort (Lindley and Hossain, 1996).

What is NTSSPP? For the purpose of the present study, the NTSSPP is defined as: the involvement of the concerned telecommunications bodies in the planning process for formulating national telecom objectives, defining strategies and policies to achieve them, developing a detailed plan of actions to achieve these objectives, and most importantly, transformation of the organisational planning processes into the national planning process. At this stage, it is important to raise the question: What is required for the development of a theoretical construct for NTSSPP? In the process of answering this question, the author
TSPP

realised that two assumptions need to be addressed in NTSPP. The first is the identification of NTSPP issues, pressures, and characteristics by explicating the policy, management, and technical issues for NTSPP. The second is the development of NTSPP theoretical planning and practice constructs. However, the focus is on the identification of the key NTSPP planning and practice issues; the organisational strategic planning framework and the transformation possibility; the roles of SOEs and government organisations in NTSPP has also been addressed. However, this study has also endeavoured to consider the establishment of a link between organisational and national planning. At the outset, a framework describing the implications for the study on NTSPP in Thailand is also conferred in this study.

**Background of the NTSPP Research Problem**

At the time of writing this paper, there was no evidence or clear indication of developing a comprehensive National Telecommunications Strategic Plan (NTSP) that will transform an organisational TSPP to a NTSPP for telecommunications infrastructure development in Thailand. It is observed from the case of Thailand that the process has never been a key consideration for the development of a telecommunications strategic plan. However, the literature reviewed reveals that the strategic planning for Thai telecommunications infrastructure development is largely encumbered, due to environmental influences on the organisational planning process and transforming it into a national perspective. Looking at Thailand's Fifth and Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plans, it can be understood that the Government seems to be less responsive in meeting the subscribers demands as well as their stated target. The waiting lists for the fixed line includes approximately 1.8 million lines, with a waiting time of seven years (ITU, 1994).

The Thai Government has a policy to come up with a five year plan for National Economic and Social Development. The Fifth and Sixth plans were from 1982 to 1986 and 1987-1991. Government budget shortages and limited long-term strategic planning has resulted in the delay and then the postponement of TOT's projects (Hossain and Lindley, 1997). Due to restrictions and budget constraints, TOT was unable to complete some of the projects laid out in the Fifth (1982-1986) and Sixth (1987-1991) National Economic and Social Development Plan (Chularat, 1994). As of September 1992, there were approximately 1.8 million telephone lines for 54 million people, or 3.3 telephone lines per 100 people (TOT, 1993). In the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996), the Thai Government stated a target coverage of 10 telephone lines per 100 inhabitants by the year 1996. However, due to Government budget shortages and TOT's limited line expansion capacity (200,000 lines per year) the Government awarded concessions to two private companies, TelecomAsia (TA) and Thai Telephone & Telecommunications (TT&T), for installing 3 million telephone lines throughout the nation. According to the contract, the private sector's completion should be due by the year 1997 (Chularat, 1994). It is important to raise the anomaly at this stage: why the government stated it's targeted telephone penetration to be 10 lines per 100 people by 1996, while asking the private sectors to complete the project by 1997.

Lack of sectoral planning can be seen to be a reason for the low performance of the National Economic and Social Development Plan as well. Review of the literature provides an indication that there is a lack of sectoral planning for telecommunications infrastructure development. For example, there is no clear policy statement so far about the distribution of
the total telephone lines to be installed throughout the nation in the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001). Furthermore, the Thai Cabinet accepted most of the proposal for telecommunication's infrastructure development and planning set out by TOT, except for the rural telecommunications infrastructure development plan (Bangkok Post, 1995). The Cabinet has indicated that the rural telecommunications infrastructure development proposal should be halted for the time being and no further clarifications had been made so far.

At present, Thailand is on the way to rapidly modernising and expanding its telecommunications network. Thailand seems to be very responsive to adopting state-of-the-art technology. It is observed that, developing countries like Thailand, are fortunate that they have lagged so far behind in the provision of basic telephone services in the sense that they can immediately adopt all these state-of-the-art technologies and a high level of services similar to those of developed nations (Lindley and Hossain, 1996). Needless to say, these technological leapfroggings can offer new opportunities, but it also presents some additional challenges that need to be recognised prior to new technology adoption. For example, adoption of the right technologies and proper attention towards human resources development is required, when adopting new technologies. Preparations should be taken well in advance in order to avoid similar chaos in the future.

Based on the above background to the research problem, it can be argued that the telecom industry’s problems and drawbacks on the expansion are, in fact due to the lack of strategic planning, both at the organisation level and at the national level; and the transformation of the TSPP into the NTSP.

Statement of NTSPP Research Problem

How can the need for a more formal strategic planning process for the telecommunications strategic planning functions of the major players be better satisfied and integrated to support the NTSPP in Thailand? (Hossain, 1997: PhD thesis)

Conceptual Framework for the Study of NTSPP

The conceptual framework of the study is developed through an extensive review of past and current literature. It is evident from the case of Thai telecommunications that less attention given to the process of formulating a comprehensive telecommunications strategic plan and the establishment of a link between the factors: processes, roles and responsibilities and environmental influences-which seem to be the major obstacles in the process of formulating a national telecommunications strategic plan. However, current literature on strategic planning and practices lacks the theoretical approaches on how to develop and how does the telecom managers go about the development of a Telecommunications Strategic Plan (TSP).

By looking at these process factors this research intends to establish a link between the planning processes, roles and responsibilities and environmental influences. It puts forward the argument that a critical investigation of the environmental influences is also vital for the case of successful formulation and implementation of NTSPP. This framework is based on the view of supporting the central thesis mentioned earlier in this study and finding possible explanations for the NTSPP research problem addressed in the aforementioned section. The framework is conceptually based on four factors: the input, the process, the output and the
organisational outcomes. The input factors deal with mission, objectives and strategy of Thai telecommunications industry. The process factor is related to the strategic assessment of the environmental influences that were identified in the background of the problem. The process unit is analysed, aiming at establishing a link between the strategic planning processes, roles and responsibilities and environmental influences.

It provides a foundation for the descriptive analysis of each of the influences that have an effect on national telecommunications strategic planning and practices in Thailand. The output is with the outcome of the input and process and lastly, the expected organisational outcomes from the strategic process. However, a feedback loop is established in order for the organisation to be flexible enough to adapt to environmental changes whenever required. This study is not aimed at looking into the detail of the implementation practices and the feedback process. Rather the main focus will be on the process of the development of a TSP. Furthermore, the organisational outcome unit can also be a good measure for evaluating the planning effectiveness and will eventually provide feedback to the input unit. Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework for the study of NTSPP in Thailand.

The first step of the investigation commences by looking at TSPP among the national telecom players in Thailand. Second is to discover the roles and relationships between the aforementioned national telecom players in the national telecommunications planning level. Third is the analyses of the environmental influences on TSPP among the national telecom players. Fourth is on NTSPP by looking into the possibility of transforming the organisational TSPP into NTSPP. In doing so, the author argues that for a NTSPP to be successful, the understanding of the organisational planning process and their interactions is vital. In order to provide a profound analyses of NTSPP. This study has also considered the investigation of TSPP within TOT, CAT and PTD.

Theoretical Background of the Study

What is TSPP and what is TSPP in relation to this study? In order to develop an understanding of TSPP, it is necessary to look at the Strategic Planning Process (SPP) of the traditional management. In his book, Dayson (1990: 3) argues that SPP s a

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for the Study of National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Processes (NTSPP) (Hossain, 1997: PhD Thesis)
management process involving consultation, negotiation and analysis that is aimed at ensuring effective strategic decision making. Dayson, further indicates that ensuring the generation and formulation of strategic options is a key part of the strategic planning process.

However, a review of the literature in the field of strategic planning and practice has revealed that the term SPP is not viewed from the development process and perhaps, carries a wide variety of preconceived views. For example, Mintzberg (1994), Naylor (1980), Fahey (1989), Lorange and Vancil (1977), Butler (1996), and other researchers like Neumann (1994), Dyson (1990) and Higgins (1980) have put the emphasis on factor research rather than the process research. However, there are also a few examples of factor research by Whittaker (1978), Radford (1980), Austin and Simoff (1985), Makridakis (1990), Lorange (1993), and others like Steiner (1979), King and Cleland (1987), Martin, DeHayes et al (1994), Boar (1993), King and Premkumar (1993). It is evident from the available literature on strategic planning that the academic researchers have relied on factors, rather than the process that are encountered by the practising managers (Hossain and Lindley, 1997).

Mintzberg has provided a comprehensive and comparative analysis of what he considers to be the three most popular models for understanding the SPP. The three models are: The core design school model, the Ansoff model and the Steiner model. A critical examination of these three models of the SPP has provided an indication of the lack of emphasis on the development process (Mintzberg, 1994: 35-49). Furthermore, these models and processes
are developed, based on the study of the context, that are different to the environment of South East Asia and particularly Thailand. Bryson has also provided an indication about SPP for public and non profit organisations. Bryson's proposed model of strategic planning provides an excellent insight and has established a basis for the development of a strategic plan that should be considered in the SPP. Bryson's model for the SPP has suggested that the first step of the SPP should be the initiation and agreement on a SPP (Bryson, 1995: 22-26, 47-64). In this regard, Bryson further provides an in-depth analysis of the involvement process and suggested a few measures that can be considered in the development process of a strategic plan for public and non-profit organisations.

Migliore et al have defined the SPP as a matching process of internal resources with external opportunities (Migliore, Stevens, Loudon, and Williamson, 1995: 22). However, they further argue that a well-designed SPP is required for achieving a successful result of the strategic plan. This view is contradictory to the view on the SPP of Steiner (1979). Steiner has argued that the planning process is important, not the outcome of the plan. Moreover, experiences from the available literature on strategic planning and practices suggest that there are two Ps that need to be considered in strategic planning and practices (Migliore, et al 1995: 23). The first "P" is the "product" and it should be in writing in order to achieve effective implementation. The second is the "process" involving input from as many groups as possible. So, the design of the process is important and perhaps the best strategies result from the process of creative design (Schendel, 1978. In: Milgore et. al. 1995: 203). Considering the assumption forwarded by Schendel, questions can be raised such as: What is creative design? How do organisations go about the creative design of SPP? What is/are the method/methods that need to be adopted for the effective design of SPP? Migliore et al have also argued that the SPP should be designed to answer these questions: What will we do? Who will we do it for? and, How will we do what we want to do? The public sector's strategic planning and practices have failed to address these questions. Studies indicate that the non profit organisation leaders should continuously force these questions in the SPP (Migliore, et al, 1995: 24). In order to provide a meaningful analysis, SPP for the purpose of this study, is defined as the development process and considerations that need to be, and are, encountered by the strategic planners. In another way, it can be referred to as the design of a strategic planning system for the organisation (Naylor, 1980: 49). Furthermore, Lorange and Vancil argue that strategic planning is a process that organises and coordinates the activities of the managers who do the planning. As companies differ in size, level of operations and the managerial style, evidence suggests that there can be no fixed way of accomplishing a SPP (Lorange and Vancil, 1977:139).

Premkumar and King defined strategic telecom planning as a comprehensive approach for analysing the effects of business, environment, organisation, and technological factors on the telecommunications function and then developing a long-term strategy to respond to all these factors effectively (Premkumar and King, 1990). It can be understood from Premkumar and King's analyses that the process model was formulated and empirically validated by looking at these aforementioned factors and their influence on strategic telecommunications planning. Therefore, Premkumar and King's analyses failed to provide how the organisations go about developing the telecom strategic plan and what theoretical justifications can be made on the organisation's act towards this development process. For the purposes of this study, TSPP is defined as the development process that occurs in a TSP.

Towards a NTSPP Theoretical Framework
The preceding section argues that a NTSP to be successful, the existence of TSPP at the organisational level is vital. So, the initiation and agreeing upon a NTSP is the first step. In initiating the process, it is extremely important to form a national telecommunications planning committee to oversee the whole process. The process of the first cycle follows several steps, ranging from the organisational level planning, regulatory planning and the integration of these into an overall national telecommunications strategic planning framework. It is not an easy task to develop the initial agreement among the key decision makers and therefore, Bryson's (1995: 57) proposed eleven steps, are in fact, taken into consideration with the assumption of facilitating the initiation and agreement of the NTSP. Figure 2 provides a theoretical framework for analysing NTSSP. Moreover, research shows that the support and commitment of the key decision makers are vital for the success of the organisation's strategic planning effort (Olsen and Eadie, 1982; Bryson and Roering, 1988; Nutt and Backoff, 1992; Schein, 1992. In: Bryson, 1995: 23). Similarly, the involvement of the key decision makers outside the organisation should be initiated for the success of public programs, especially if the implementation of that program involves multiple parties and organisations (McGowan and Stevens, 1983; Goggin, Bowman, Lester, and O'Toole, 1990. In: Bryson, 1995: 23). Considering this, stakeholder analysis plays a vital role in the formulation and the effective implementation of NTSP.

To Bryson, the formal and informal mandates of an organisation consist of the organisational procedures and various 'musts' that it confronts (1995: 26). Bryson's research shows that few members of many organisations have ever read the relevant legislation, ordinances, charters, articles, and contracts that outline the organisation's formal mandate. So, three fundamental mistakes can be identified from Bryson's analyses: The first is not knowing what they must do, they are unlikely to do it. The second assumption is that managers may believe that they are more tightly constrained in their actions than they actually are. The last assumption is based on the argument that managers may assume that if they are not explicitly told to do something, they are not allowed to do it (1995: 26). On the other hand, the identification of the national telecommunications mandate requires the involvement and understanding of all the participants involved.

It was argued earlier that the formulation and implementation of a TSP, either at the organisational or at the national level, requires an understanding of the environmental influences on TSPP as well as NTSP. Assessment of the environment deserves importance not only at the internal but also at the external level that influences the organisations' TSPP. As Bryson argues that the internal assessment is necessary to identify strengths and weaknesses of organisation and similarly, the external assessment is also crucial for the identification of opportunities and threats for an organisation. So, it can be argued that for the NTSP to be successful requires a through understanding of the major participants, their roles, capabilities and the changes in the international marketplace that has a major influence on TSP. These factors are considered in the conceptual framework of the study (refer to figure 1), and are also elaborated in providing a comprehensive analyses of NTSP in Thailand. It is also argued that the formulation and implementation of NTSP requires a through understanding of the organisations and its participation. However, external factors that are conducive and inhibitive to the NTSP is also addressed in this study. Bryson argued that a logical assessment of the internal and the external environment of NTSP should follow some of the following patterns.

Identification of the strategic issues of NTSPP follows two distinctive patterns: the
organisational and the national level strategic issues. However, appropriate responsibility should be assigned both at the organisational and the national level for the process of identifying the strategic issues concerning telecommunications development planning practices. In his research, Bryson argues that the identification of the strategic issues is the heart of the strategic planning process (1995: 104). Previous research also has suggested that the strategic issue is a fundamental policy question or challenges affecting the organisation's mandates, mission, and values etc (1995: 104). What should be the steps or processes adopted for dealing with the strategic issues concerning the national telecommunications development planning practice?

In his book, Bryson (1995: 32) argues that a strategy can be defined as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, actions, decisions, or resource allocations that will define and answer the questions: What is an organisation? What does it perform? and, Why does it perform things in a particular manner? Empirical evidences suggest that an organisation initiates the development of a strategy to deal with the issues discussed in the preceding sections. As organisations vary not only in size, but also in terms of the management attitudes, it is essential to establish a link between the factors and major driving forces of the managerial

**Figure 2. A Theoretical Framework for Analysing the National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Processes (NTSPP)**
(Hossain, 1997: PhD Thesis)
behaviour that have significant impact on the organisation's TSPP (1995: 33).

In the phase of establishing an effective vision, Bryson suggests that two aspects will need to be taken into consideration: First is establishing organisational vision and second, the national vision for telecommunications development. The implementation process of TSP should be taken into consideration in the formulation stage. It can be argued that a formulation of a strategic plan with the forethought about the implementation, is a sure formula for failure and lacks the touch of reality. However, in this regard Mintzberg (1994: 25. In: Bryson, 1995: 34), put forward the argument that "Every failure of implementation is, by definition, also a failure of formulation."

So, the development of an effective implementation process should be taken into consideration by the executives in the formulation phase of a telecommunications strategic plan. In the process of establishing an effective organisational and national vision for the development of the national telecommunications infrastructure, the organisations will be required to develop a description of how the TSPP will be successfully implemented (Bryson, 1995: 35). Researchers like Taylor and Nanus described this as the organisation's "vision of success" (Taylor, 1984; Nanus, 1992: 189-224. In: Bryson, 1995: 35). However, organisational psychologists (Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham, 1981), management theorists (Kouzes and Posner, 1987, 1993; Senge, 1990; Nanus, 1992; Kotter, 1995) and others (Ouchi, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982) have argued in the past, that although the importance of the development of an effective organisation vision has long been recognised, few organisations have established such an effective organisational vision (Bryson, 1995: 35).

Bryson (1995: 36) also argued that the development of a strategic plan is not enough. It should also consider how it is to be implemented. So, what needs to be considered if we are to take Bryson's basic assumption into a national telecommunications implementation planning process. The effective implementation at the national level planning requires several interrelated steps and processes aimed at building a general consensus among the key individual and organisational players. Collectively, the important assumptions that should be taken into consideration in the process of an effective implementation of NTSPP are: What is the present level of cooperation among the major participants and what level of participation will be required? How is it to be done? Have the participating organisations reached a consensus or a framework of action yet? What are the lessons from the past success or unsuccessful implementation of the national telecommunication plans? How is the NTSPP to be developed in order to cope with these competing factors? Answering these critical questions about the implementation of a NTSPP is not an easy task and requires several interrelated steps.

It is argued in the preceding sections that strategic planning is not an end in itself. Rather it is an ongoing process. If we look at the telecommunications industry (both locally and globally), it is evident that changes are rampant and the industry is largely uncertain. To date, most of the developing and developed nations are struggling in relation to answering the policy, management, and technical questions related to the telecommunications planning. These uncertainties are even more serious for the case of South East Asian countries, where the governments, to date, has yet to come up with a comprehensive plan of action to guide the future of the telecommunications industry. Considering the changes, it is clear that the review process of a TSP deserves a careful consideration. In his book, Bryson (1995: 37)
also argued that the SPP should not only be examined, but tailoring will also be necessary from time to time, to improve the next round of strategic planning.

The Design of the NTSPP Research

The preceding section has identified the cases that need to be investigated for the purpose of exploring a NTSPP in Thailand. This study seeks to explore the basic question: How can the need for a more formal strategic planning process for the telecommunications strategic planning functions of the major players be better satisfied and integrated to support the NTSPP in Thailand? An exploratory investigation of the industry which has aided the process of shaping the research design is also presented here. At the outset, this section also provides a conceptual design of the methodological framework for the purpose of this study.

Case Study Design

To Yin, a research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where here may be identified as the initial research questions and there may be referred to as the possible answers to the research questions (Yin, 1994:19). So, a research design will aid the researchers to conduct the study, collection of data, analysis of the relevant data in a systematic way for achieving the desired results. Nachmias & Nachmias defined the research design as a plan that "guides the researchers in the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the observations. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning casual relations among the variables under investigation. The research design also defines the domain of generalisability, that is, whether the obtained interpretations can be generalised to a larger population or to different situations" (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992: 77-78. In: Yin, 1994: 19-20).

The research design can also be seen as a "blueprint" of the research and should deal with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant to the research questions, what data to collect, and how to collect and analyse the data (Borum, 1991 and Philliber, Schwab, and Samsloss, 1980. In: Yin, 1994:20). Furthermore, Yin (1994) suggested five steps for the case study research design: a study's questions; its propositions (if any); its units of analysis; the logic linking the data to the propositions; and, the criteria for interpreting the findings. Whether to study a single case or multiple cases and its usefulness in theory generation is again a controversial issue. However, this study is aimed at providing a multiple case study for the case of analysing the Thai telecommunications industry. In doing so, a cross case analysis for generating a possible theory about the Thai telecommunications planning and practice is also conferred here. Figure 3 provides the research design framework for NTSPP research in Thailand. This was developed before the data collection. Furthermore, the data collection instrument was developed through looking at the conceptual and methodological framework for the research.

The cases are TOT, CAT and PTD. There are some suggestions made by Robert Yin in regard to the design of the multiple cases or the units of analysis. Yin suggested that each unit should have its design and analyse (Yin, 1994). For the purpose of this study, the same research design and data collection instrument was used for all three

Figure 3. A Framework for the study of the National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Process Research
cases. The same measurement was considered with the assumption that a cross case analysis will provide invaluable input for theory generation about the Thai telecom planning practices. This research design provided a good basis for the comparisons of the planning processes in each of these organisations and looked for the transformation options of the organisational TSPP into NTSP.

Collection and Sources of Data

The primary data for this study was collected from the case study sites through in-depth interviews with the senior executives of the public telecommunications operators in Thailand. However, some of the interviews the private concessionaires were also conducted based on two underlying assumptions. The first is for showing the applicability of the study to the private sectors planning processes; and the second is to monitor their participation in the NTSP. Twenty-one interviews were conducted among the executive officials from TOT, CAT, PTD, MOTC (Ministry of Transport and Communications), MOST (Ministry of Science and Technology), NESDB (National Economic and Social Development Board), TDRI (Thailand Development Research Institute) and TT&T (Thai Telephone and Telecommunications). Each of the interviews lasted for about 100 to 120 minutes. However, there were some limitations found in getting access to more executives and some were reluctant to provide an interview.

Lessons from Thailand's National Telecom Operators

It is observed from the Thai telecommunications industry that there is no formal procedure
of national telecommunications strategic planning adopted for the national telecommunications carriers and regulators. Rather, it is the acts and views of the executives that are dominant in TSPP. The Thai case findings on the NTSSP validate the public sector organisation is not well versed with the SPP which is consistent with Bryson's findings. It is evident from the case of the Thai telecommunications industry that strategic planning and practices are very bureaucratic in nature. In this regard, it can be argued that a formal or agreed upon SPP may aid in the process of developing a successful consensus among the strategic planners for encountering some of the bureaucratic procedure.

The investigation of TSPP within TOT, CAT and PTD provides the descriptive analyses of the telecommunications planning and practices in Thailand. On the basis of the analyses, it is evident that the national telecommunications' players in Thailand, in fact, never initiated any steps towards the development of a comprehensive TSPP. On the other hand, it is also noticed that MOTC has failed to provide proper strategic planning control mechanisms to the national telecommunications players, and resulted in the chaos among the concerned telecommunications organisations in Thailand. All three case reports suggested the inconsistency among the executive's acts and views and lack of coordination and cooperation within the departments of the organisation. This situation even puts the pressure to the Thai Government, in the process of initiateing a NTSSP in Thailand. So, this study investigates how the TSPP is occurring within TOT, CAT and PTD.

Interviews with TOT executives about the development and information gathering process of the strategic plan suggests that there are varied number of executive views about the steps that are needed for the development of a TSP. This may lead to the opinion that there is no established formal procedure of the steps that has occurred in the development and information gathering process of a TSP. Furthermore, the Office of the Corporate Affairs has provided an indication by stating:

"TOT doesn't gather any information for the development process of a TSP, rather it takes the outside information as an input to the planning process" (Pientam, 1996: in-depth interview)

This view is also confirmed by the Office of the Privatisation Affairs:
"It is important for TOT to understand the need for information gathering and how it will be used in the development process of a TSP. This is also important for the people to understand how to collect the right information" (Charoenphol, 1996: in-depth interview)

These findings may lead to a conclusion that TOT doesn't have a well established procedure for gathering information to a TSP. Rather, it is the informal acts and views of the executives that are playing a significant role in the development and information gathering process of a TSP.

The findings on CAT in this regard provide a mixed view of the executives for the steps that are considered in the development and information gathering process of a TSP. The same observations as TOT are also made for the case of CAT with regard to the steps for the process of the development of a TSP. However, one of the comments by Jorphochaudom with regard to the steps for the development of a strategic plan has identified a significant difference from the views that were gathered from TOT's executives. The Office of Telecommunications Planning indicated:

"..."
"The first step that CAT has considered towards the development process of a TSP is to gather information that is necessary and will be used in the process of developing a TSP" (Jorphochaudom, 1996: in-depth interview)

The same observations were also made for the case of PTD. It becomes evident from the three case reports that there is no formal procedure adopted for the process of development and information gathering of a TSP among Thailand's key national telecom players. Conclusions derived from the findings of the executives view on TOT's TSPP revealed that there is no formal procedure of the development of a TSP at this organisation. Thus it can be generalised from the exploration of TOT's TSPP that strategic planning is an act rather than a process for TOT. There is very little emphasis on the process, or on the development of a comprehensive approach for TOT's telecommunications strategic planning. The responses from the different interviews also provide an indication of the inconsistency in approaches to strategic planning where lots of preconceived acts and views are predominant in the planning process.

In brief, four main factors were identified from this stage of the case study findings: inconsistency among TOT's executives acts and views about TSPP; inconsistency among the executive's opinion about the types of strategic planning process that are conducted by TOT; and lastly, a lack of concern about the information gathering process for developing a TSP. The findings from TOT case study on the strategic planning and practices also indicate that TOT is using a problem solving approach rather than a process approach to strategic planning.

Finally, there are several observed impediments to TOT's strategic planning process. One major concern is the external involvement in the process. It can be gleaned from the interviews that external involvement is impeding the TSPP at this organisation. Some of these arguments are also supported by the comments received from the interviews with the executives from the Office of the Corporate and Privatisation Affairs. Pientam, from the Office of the Corporate Affairs indicated that the process of TOT's strategic planning should look in more detail at the information gathering processes. On the other hand, Charoenphol from the Office of the Privatisation Affairs also provided critical comments on TOT's TSPP. Findings indicate that it is necessary to make people understand about the significance of the strategic plan and ensuring that the required data will be collected in the information gathering process. However, Charoenphol argued that this aim can be achieved through training and retraining of the employees and creating an awareness of the importance of the TSPP itself.

The case report on the TSPP at CAT suggests that there are also lots of preconceived acts and views of the executives that are playing a vital role in the TSPP. On the other hand, there are also observed inconsistencies among the executive's acts and views towards the TSPP. Similar observations were made at TOT. Yet, TOT has adopted a more dynamic planning approach than CAT with regard to the relationship among these two organisation's TSPP. It can also be gleaned that the TSPP at CAT are less bureaucratic than the TOT case site. Furthermore, it is evident from the CAT case on the TSPP that there is no formal procedure or frameworks for the TSPP.

However, from the case of PTD, it is observed that the strategic planning, is under the
Technical and Planning Division. There is no corporate or strategic planning department in this organisation. It is observed from the case study of PTD that there are both internal and external involvements' in PTD’s TSPP. There seems to be a lack of understanding about strategic planning and its processes among PTD executives. The telecommunications strategic planning process is not well established at this organisation and this may eventually encumber the organisation's strategic planning and practices. For example, interview findings provide an indication of three different considerations from PTD’s executives involved in the development and information gathering processes of a TSP. There is also the suggestion that the considerations for financial planning is regarded as the TSPP itself at PTD.

Evidently, the above analysis suggests that none of these three organisations have a formal telecommunications strategic planning process. All three organisations TSPP are based on different acts and views of the executives involved in the strategic planning processes. Comparisons reveal that TOT's TSPP are more bureaucratic than CAT and PTD. Apparently, a comprehensive approach will be required in the future for maintaining a fine alignment between the organisational and national TSPP for effectively formulating and implementing the NTSPP. There will also be a major change in the Thai telecommunications industry in 1997 and the government is planning to privatise and eventually liberalise its telecommunications industry for the provision of a more affordable and quality telecommunications services to subscribers. Considering the present situation of the Thai telecommunications industry, it can be generalised that a significant change is required in the Thai telecommunications planning practices for coping with the future changes in the industry as well as maintaining Thailand's socioeconomic development goals.

It is revealed from the findings on the types of TSPP that there is no formal procedure or set rules of the types that are conducted or included in TSPP. Diverse outcomes were derived from the interview responses from respondents of TOT. On the other hand, four out of five responses have provided an indication of the presence of the financial planning as a part of TSPP. Yet previous academic research shows that the financial planning should be done separately from the strategic planning. In this regard, Armstrong (1989) argues that financial planning should be done separately for the strategic planning. Pientam, the Executive Vice President of the Office of Corporate Affairs of TOT has confirmed Armstrong's view by stating:

"Financial Planning is not exactly included in the strategic planning processes, rather it is conducted at the lower level planning" (Pientam, 1996: interview).

Additionally, it was also indicated by all the executives of TOT's different divisions that forecast-based planning was one of the types of TSPP. In this regard, the theoretical background has provided the argument that the types of forecast-based planning in the SPP have major flaws and that plan can be no better than the forecast that it is based upon. Burton and Froysth (1986) have argued that it can be viable to the organisational development if the forecast may never materialise in reality. It is noticed from the case of CAT that there are also a significant number of variations among the executives acts and views on the types of TSPP that are conducted by CAT. The first interview findings provide the view that CAT is in process of conducting three types of TSPP from the Office of Telecommunications Planning.
However, Jorphochaudom from the Office of Telecommunications Planning, indicated that the main types are the externally oriented planning and project studies. Second, the findings from the group interview suggest that CAT is in the process of conducting seven types of planning in TSPP. Furthermore, this significant number of observed variations can lead to the theoretical generalisation that there is no formal or process oriented approach adopted for conducting TSPP at CAT. For the case of PTD, findings reveal that there are two types of TSPP conducted by PTD. It is evident from the findings of PTD case report that there is a presence of the financial planning in PTD's TSPP. This analysis may lead to the same generalisations that are made for the case of TOT and CAT with regard to the appropriateness of the financial planning in TSPP. Furthermore, based on the findings of the three cases on the types of TSPP, it is evident that the same generalisation of the theoretical outcomes of the review process is valid here.

Findings from the interviews on TOT's goals setting process also provides an indication of the inconsistencies among the executives' acts and views. Similar sorts of observations were made in terms of TOT's quantitative and qualitative goals for the TSP. There are also inconsistencies among the executives' opinions in the quantitative and qualitative goals of TOT. This lead to the question of the organisations planning and practices and the appropriateness of the development of a TSP. It is evident from the case of TOT's goals setting process that this organisation has not yet established a formalised procedure on the goals setting process of a TSP. It was argued in the theoretical background that strategic planning should be viewed as a process of acts and views of the executives.

However, the findings on the Thai telecommunications management practices provide an indication that strategic planning and practices are the informal acts and views of the executives. It is also evident that some of the executives have classified the quantitative goals of TOT to the increase of net revenue. These findings are also consistent with the goals of Thai Government's five years National Economic and Social Development Plans, where the Thai Government actions can largely be criticised for building the telecommunications infrastructure with a lack of emphasis on the concept of universal service obligation. In this regard, if we look at the strategic planning and practices in the public sector and its goals, this may be confusing. It is gleaned from the existing strategic planning theories that most of the public sector organisations operate under the government subsidy and are thus, required to make a social contribution. Considering this argument, the opposite case is dominant for the case of TOT.

Observations on CAT's goals setting processes indicate that there are both internal and external involvement in this regard. All the respondents shared the same views about the goal setting process of CAT's TSP. However, there are some inconsistencies among the executive's opinion with regard to the quantitative and qualitative goals of TSP. All the respondents have provided an indication that one of CAT's quantitative goal is to increase the net revenue. In this instance, the same argument that is posed for the case of TOT is applicable here. There are similarities between the findings in the goals setting process of TOT and CAT. Moreover, it is evident that both the SOEs are also responsible for matching their goals with the goals of the NESDB. The findings on the goal setting process of TOT and CAT's TSP provides an indication of the bureaucratic procedure of the Thai telecommunications industry. Apparently, CAT case study indicates that CAT certainly has a more formal approach of the goal setting processes than TOT. On the other hand, PTD's findings on the goal setting process has indicated that there are the involvement of three
internal groups in this regard. The goal setting process of PTD's strategic plan is less bureaucratic than TOT and CAT. There is no indication on the involvement of external group in the goals setting process of PTD. The goals of PTD's TSP are set at the departmental level through the formation of working party and usually submitted to the Director General for the formal approval. On the contrary, the goal setting process of TOT and CAT is very bureaucratic in nature and requires the involvement of the external groups from the MOTC and the NESDB.

For example, the review process of TOT's TSP is observed to be very bureaucratic in nature. There is also evidence suggesting the involvement of the internal and external groups in the review process of TOT's TSP. However, it is evident from the analysis on the review process of TOT's TSP that there is a significant amount of variation among the executive's about the review process of TOT's TSP. This can lead to a theoretical generalisation that strategic planning and practices for the process of review of TOT's TSP are rather the executives acts and views and certainly not the process of acts and views themselves. It is also noticed from the TOT case that there is no formal established procedure for the process of review of TOT's TSP. Furthermore, findings on the process of review of CAT's TSP also provides the mixed support about the process of internal and external involvement. The same observations are made on TOT's review process of TSP and revealed the inconsistency among the executives acts and views towards the review process of TSP. However, CAT's findings can lead to a conclusion the review process of a TSP is less bureaucratic in nature than the findings of TOT.

It is also noticed from the CAT case report that the organisation structure is less bureaucratic and flexible than TOT. Further, a new concept that came out of the process of review of CAT's TSP and the executives referred to as a 'rolling plan'. This rolling plan is done every year with an emphasis on the appropriateness of TSP with the changes in the internal and external environment. The critical examination of the findings on the review process of CAT's TSP provides an indication that there is no formalised procedure of the process of review of a TSP. The inconsistency and different acts and views of the executives are playing a major role in the review process of TSP. Findings from the case study on the review process of PTD's strategic plan provide an indication that the review process of a strategic plan at PTD is not as comprehensive as TOT and CAT. It is noticed that regardless of the long history of PTD, the strategic planning and practice is under the control of the technical and planning department. However, the same observations as TOT and CAT were made for the case of PTD in relation to the involvement process of the review of PTD's TSP. PTD case report has identified the involvement of both internal and external groups in the review process of PTD's TSP. The difference between the findings of PTD and the other two State Owned Enterprises are the internal involvement processes. For the case of TOT and CAT, there is a very high level of internal involvement in the review process of TSP.

However, the internal involvement of the review process of PTD's strategic plan is less bureaucratic. For the case of PTD, the director general is internally responsible for the process of review. It is the primary responsibility of the director general of the process of review of the strategic plan and submits it to the MOTC and the Thai Cabinet for formal approval. Furthermore, it is not possible for the case of PTD to provide an indication about the inconsistency among the executives acts and views towards the process of review of the strategic plan. During the process of the second and third interview, the respondents were not permitted to share their views about the process of review of PTD's strategic plan. The
second and third interview respondents have provided an indication that the comments on the review process of the strategic plan should be the same as the first interview responses.

Moreover, some additional interviews were conducted among the executives from the MOTC, MOST, NESDB, TDRI and TT&T for gathering their view about TSPP within TOT, CAT and PTD. The purpose of these additional interviews were aimed at ensuring the internal validity of the outcomes reported here. The interview findings with Tiancharoen from MOTC indicated that Thai Government started to develop a Master Plan (MP) for the national telecommunications infrastructure development last year. Before this five year MP, MOTC developed a ten year MP for the development of telecommunications in Thailand. The initial proposal was rejected by the Thai Cabinet. However, TDRI at present is responsible for the study of the development of a telecommunications MP for Thailand. The respondent suggested that this MP is refereed to as the strategic plan for the Thai telecommunications infrastructure development.

The MOTC is responsible for the development of the strategic plan for the telecommunications as well as transportation. The types of SPP for the telecommunications development at MOTC are three fold: externally oriented planning; the privatisation plan of the telecommunications industry; and lastly, is to follow the suggestions and comments forwarded by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The overall national telecommunications development goals are under the authority of MOTC, NESDB and TOT (Tiancharoen, 1996: in-depth interview). The MOTC took five major steps into consideration for the formal SPP. However, the Minister of MOTC is responsible for giving the ultimate policy guidelines for the national telecommunications strategic plan. Figure 4 provides the view of the respondent about the steps that are taken into consideration for the development of MOTC's formal TSPP.

**Figure 4. The Steps for TSPP at MOTC (Hossain, 1997: PhD Thesis)**

It is evident from the interview findings from Vongpanitlerd that TDRI is at present working with MOTC for the development of a five year strategic plan for telecommunications development in Thailand. According to the respondent, this five year telecommunications development plan will focus on the liberalisation of the telecommunications industry in Thailand (Vongpanitlerd, 1996: in-depth interview). It is evident from the responses that this national plan for telecommunications development will be the very first one for Thailand. Figure 5 provides the respondent's view on the involvement of the goal setting processes for the national telecommunications plan. Notably, the telephone interview findings with
Waneesabut from the NESDB provide an indication that the NESDB only oversees whether the organisational level planning is according to the National Plan for the telecommunications infrastructure development in Thailand. NESDB is not responsible for any sort of detailed study on the telecommunications development in Thailand and does not provide any planning guidelines to TOT, CAT and PTD (Waneesabut, 1996: telephone interview). It can be gleaned from NESDB findings that it only suggests some comment on the rural telecommunications development in Thailand and has the responsibility to check whether the projects of the concerned telecom bodies are on schedule.

**Figure 5. The Respondent's View on the National Level Goals Setting for Telecommunications Planning and Practices (Hossain, 1997: PhD Thesis)**

![Diagram showing the relationship between NESDB, MOTC, TDRI, TOT, CAT, PTD, and Private Sectors: TA and TT&T.]

The findings on TSPP of the case study of TOT provide an indication that the strategic planning is an act rather than a process for the executives of TOT. There are lots of preconceived views and acts shown in the TOT case study to make a generalisation about the Thai telecommunications management practices. It can be gleaned from the case study that the TSPP at the TOT can be classified as an informal approach to strategic planning. It is gleaned from the TOT case that the process has never been a key concern for the development of a TSP and there are lots of inconsistencies among the executives' acts and views towards the development of a successful TSP and implementation practices. Due to the bureaucratic nature of the SOEs, strategic planning in the public sector organisation needs a lot of attention on the planning processes. In order to have a successful TSP and implementation practices, it is necessary to have a consistent process of action upon which the strategic plan should be based (Bryson, 1995:47; Charoenphol and Pientam, 1996: in-depth interview), and which should be the first step for developing a TSP.

Findings from CAT case indicates that there are certain observed inconsistencies among the acts and views of the CAT executives in the development process of CAT's TSP. It can be generalised from the case report that strategic planning at CAT is considered to be an act rather than a process. However, it was argued in the preceding sections that telecommunications planning requires a more process oriented approach. This is required not only for the purposes of the organisational learning but also for coping with the dynamic nature of the telecommunications industry where the changes are rampant and uncertainty is evident. Bryson indicated that the process should be right and be accepted by the key person involved in planning before an organisation talks about the strategic plan (Bryson, 1995). On the contrary, the findings on the case study of CAT provide very little indication on this aspect of their planning activities.
The case study revealed that PTD is responsible for the radio frequency management, and also for the study of the regulatory processes in order to provide guidance at the national level telecommunications planning. The PTD is acting as a representative of the Thai government in the international telecommunications market and conferences. The respondents at this level also provided three different views about PTD’s involvement in the NTSPP. It was indicated by the respondents that the Thai government in the past, failed to provide proper guidance and vision for the government and state owned telecommunications organisations. In order to have a sound and effective NTSPP, the transformation of the organisational TSPP into a national perceptive will be required. On the basis of the present research findings, it is evident that Thai telecommunications industry is not well directed and there has been no attempt made for the transformation and to have a NTSPP in Thailand. The transformation can be made only after there is formal process of the development for a organisational TSP. The multiple theoretical approaches (normative-descriptive dichotomy) to strategic planning will aid the telecommunications policy makers in Thailand to have developed a clearer picture about the possibilities for the development of a national telecommunications infrastructure.

This study has provided a case study of TOT, CAT and PTD. However, some additional views are also used in this study in order to create an understanding of the NTSPP in Thailand. On the basis of the analysis of the case of the telecommunications in Thailand, the main conclusions drawn suggested that there is no formal procedure of the telecommunications industry's planning and practices and eventually encumbering the NTSPP agenda as well as creating chaos among the key telecommunications players. It is believed that the national telecommunications strategic planning and practices would require a more descriptive approach to strategic planning in order to have a comprehensive process for building a consensus among the national telecommunications organisations and other key players. The descriptive approach to organisational level strategic planning will aid in the processes of transforming the organisational TSPP set into a NTSP. Looking at the present structure of the Thai telecommunications industry, it can also be argued that the industry will be in chaos after the privatisation and liberalisation of the telecommunications industry in Thailand. The rapid advancement of the telecommunications technology and the rampant changes in the global marketplace will require a certain level of organisational competence in order to be able to deal with the future changes.

This study has demonstrated the need for a formalised NTSPP oriented approach which will be required for maintaining the role of the organisation and dealing with future uncertainty. It is to be said that one can not build a building without a foundation or proper structure. This foundation of structure of the strategic planning is lacking at the Thai telecommunications industry. This research is the first attempt in looking at TSPP among the national telecommunications players in Thailand during its first 42 years (1954-1996) from the multiple theoretical perspective. However, later sections are aimed at providing a comparison between the theoretical NTSPP and the actual NTSPP.

A Synthesis of the National Case Study Findings

The case studies reported have also explored the underlying TSPP at play among the Thai telecommunications players. Theoretical analysis suggests that this study adopts a multiple theoretical approaches (normative-descriptive dichotomy) for exploring TSPP within TOT, CAT and PTD and to develop our understanding of NTSPP research in Thailand. However,
the overall findings do not dismiss the normative approach, rather it provide the rationale for adopting a multiple theoretical approach for the NTSPP research. It is evident from the findings that the theories of planning (normative approach) and the theories in planning (descriptive approach), is in fact, essential for developing our understanding on NTSPP. It can further be argued that neither the normative nor the descriptive approach, is a stand alone theory and perhaps, the development of normative theory, without the consideration of the descriptive theory, is a sure formula for failure. Moreover, Alexander (1992) and Makridakis (1990) have made similar theoretical observations in their research. The following sections provide a comparison between the normative and descriptive TSPP, which may in fact, serve to predict the future of the strategic planning for the national telecommunication planning.

A Synthesis of the Thai Telecom Operator's TSPP

The theoretical background has presented the argument that a SPP is aimed at providing a conceptual framework for the company's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). It is also important to consider, that to have a successful planning and implementation, the process needs to be passed through the line managers (Naylor, 1980: 1). In this regard, Naylor observed that the level of understanding of the formal SPP among executives is very limited (1980: 55). However, the similar observation was made for the case of the Thai telecommunications industry, where the executives have shown a similar level of understanding or perhaps, very limited on the formal TSPP. On the other hand, Vancil and Lorange (1977: 22) observed that the strategic planning tends to be less formal and a continuous process in smaller company and more formal in a larger company. However, Thai case findings do not provide any insight on the relationships between the size of an organisation and it's TSPP.

Fahey's analyses on the strategic planning suggested that most of the organisation's executives do not act in a rationale manner in designing and implementing the strategic planning (1989: 317). Thai case findings have also suggested similar observation as to Fahey's one. Furthermore, Fahey observed that most of the organisations executives lack the concern to soft sell the planning system to the divisional managers and resulted in a failure. The case of the national telecom players in Thailand, represents the similar observation and problems of the executives to soft sell the planning systems. Moreover, Markus made the similar observation that most of the executives have a lack of understanding about where their company is heading and therefore, focus on the operations rather than the strategy (Markus, 1984). Investigation on the Thai telecommunications industry suggests that most of the senior managers have a pre-assumption that the implemented planning system will help to solve all the strategic problems of their organisations. In this regard, Williamson's observation also indicated the similar findings (Williamson, 1984). Williamson further indicated that the best way to introduce the planning system is to introduce a planning calendar. The planning calendar will aid in the process of introducing the staff commitment to a planning process (Williamson, 1984). So, the Thai case findings can justify that it is now time for us to think about the establishment of a comprehensive process of TSPP in an organisation. The aim of a formalised planning process is not to force the managers to think, but to provide a framework for the managers to act in a more coordinated manner.

It was argued in the theoretical background that the top management must use the formal strategic planning process as a support to formulate strategic choices (Gilbert and Lorange, 1977). The Thai case findings also suggest very little evidence of the top management's
involvement in TSPP. Furthermore, Lorange and Vancil (1977) argued that a strategic planning system is aimed at building the coordination among the planners in an organisation. The Thai case findings revealed that there is very little similarities and coordination among the organisational planners, and is therefore, time to introduce the comprehensiveness among the national telecom players' planning process. Review of the existing literature for developing an understanding on organisations and SPP has helped to conclude that formalisation of the SPP, is important for the initiation of strategic planning in an organisation. It is also argued in the preceding chapters that SPP provides a conceptual framework to the CEO. The findings of the Thai national telecommunications players suggest that the lack of concern and attention on the development of a conceptual framework for TSPP, is one of the major impediments to the process of building a general consensus among key organisational players. However, theoretical background of TSPP also suggests that CEO's understanding on their organisation's SPP is very limited and the Thai case findings also presents the lack of understanding of CEO on their TSPP.

Theoretically, the formalisation of TSPP is related to the size of an organisations. Lorange and Vancil argues that the larger the organisation, the higher the formalisation of the TSPP should be (Lorange and Vancil, 1977). However, descriptive findings of TSPP within TOT, CAT and PTD, reveals that there is no direct relationships between the organisational size and its TSPP. It is evident that the Thai telecom managers spent more time in operation-oriented than strategy-oriented planning. Empirical evidence suggests that executives spent more time in operation than strategy-oriented planning and in this regard, similar observations were made for the case of TOT, CAT and PTD, where study reveals that executives tend to spend more time in operational planning than strategic planning.

It was argued in the theoretical background that there is a relationship between the level of environmental uncertainty and the degree of formalisation of SPP in an organisation. The Thai case findings do not provide any indication in this regard. However, the Thai telecommunications industry is conceived to be very uncertain and Naylor argued that the uncertainty increases the chances that the organisation will introduce a formal strategic planning process (Naylor, 1980). Moreover, Kukalis's investigation also suggests that there is a relationship between the environmental uncertainty and the organisational strategic planning process. Kukalis (1991) argued that a firm is more likely to introduce a flexible planning system for effectively responding to the environmental changes. On the contrary, the Thai case findings do not provide any indication on the relationships between the environmental uncertainty and the TSPP, like Naylor and Kukalis. The theoretical background of the TSPP has provided the analyses by Kukalis's research. On the basis of research, Kukalis (1991) hypothesised that the environmental complexity influences the design of the strategic planning systems, and managers tend to introduce a flexible strategic planning system under this situation. The case study on the national telecom players in Thailand represents no such indication on the environmental complexity and the organisation's strategic planning.

What this study achieved, is to demonstrate that very little relationship exist between environmental uncertainty and the formalisation of TSPP. Theoretically, environmental uncertainty is considered to be a major driving force for the formalisation of the SPP. Steiner (1976) argued that the higher the environmental uncertainty, the more formal the SPP should be. However, the descriptive findings of the Thai telecommunications players presented in the findings section, have demonstrated no understanding on the formalisation of the TSPP.
in relation to the volatile environment of the Thai telecommunications. Strategic planning theories also suggest that understanding of the environment and its influence is required for effective design and implementation of the TSPP. On the basis of this, the Thai case findings revealed that the executives have very limited understanding of both the internal and external environment, in which they interact.

Theoretical background on the TSPP, indicates that strategic planning in the public sectors is more bureaucratic in nature than the private sector organisations. It is indicated in the theoretical background that the public sector planning is rather more a role than process oriented (Alexander, 1992). The complexity of the public sector organisations and its interactions with the environment, calls for a more formal approach to strategic planning and practice. Several studies have identified that the public sector planners do not see the importance of strategic planning under this environmental situation. The Thai case findings have also presented similar observations and therefore, the planning has never been integrated with the overall management process of the organisation. Theoretically, it was argued that a plan intended to be national, should consider the involvement of the private sectors. Thai case study reveals that the private sectors participation, is rather limited in Thailand's telecommunications industry development planning and practices. Findings of the normative strategic planning literature suggest that the chain of command in the public sector organisations, is not as clear as the private sectors. The descriptive findings of the national telecommunications players in Thailand are as well consistent with the normative findings.

A Synthesis of the Thai NTSPPP

For the purpose of this present study, the actual NTSPPP is classified as descriptive NTSPPP. Similarly, the theoretical NTSPPP is classified as normative NTSPPP for the purpose of this study. Normative approach to strategic planning theories has been defined as the approach or models that are prescriptive and deal with how it should be. On the contrary, the descriptive approach was defined as the approach or models that deal with how it is in a particular context. However, the author has argued in chapter two and chapter three that none of these theories are in a 'stand alone' situation. Therefore, this study has adopted a multiple approach for justifying and initiating the theoretical generalisations about the Thai telecommunications. However, Makridakis (1992) argued, a management theory, to be of great value, should consider three levels of theoretical approaches: normative, descriptive, and predictive. So, this study has initiated the first attempt to explore the Thai telecommunications and look at from the three levels of strategic planning theories.

This section illustrates the comparison of the descriptive NTSPPP practices with the normative NTSPPP theoretical construct structure. Based on the three case studies, as well as the majority of the interview participants thus analysed, none are presently utilising planning structure to the normative NTSPPP structure. However, private concessionaries like the TT&T are planning to design a TSPP structure that is similar to the normative NTSPPP constructs (Chuttichai, 1996). Anies and Day's (1975) research identified that attitudes, lack of leadership, lack of common objective's is the major inhibiting factor of the national planning in the US. The case studies of the national telecom players in Thailand, also suggest similar patterns as the major inhibiting factors towards the NTSPPP practices. Chapter three has identified the policy-management-technical issues related to the successful formulation and implementation of the NTSPPP. Looking at the case of Thailand, it can be
argued that the government has failed to direct its telecom organisation's addressing these issues. One of the major objectives of the NTSPP, identified in chapter three is to avoid overlapping functions among the national telecom players. The Thai case findings have suggested us that the MOTC failed to introduce planning and policy control mechanisms (Charoenphol, Yongcharoen, and Vongtipanitlerd, 1996: in-depth interview).

Moreover, MOTC has also failed to ensure that TSPP exists at each of the national telecommunications players and never took any initiative towards the transformation of the organisational TSPP into NTSPP in Thailand. The problem of private sector participation in the Thai telecommunications, is very low at this stage. Though some of the private sector organisations like TA and TT&T is involved in the national telecommunications development, the ambiguity in the national policy and proper guidelines on ownership and control, is in fact, repeatedly encumbering the private sector's participation in the NTSPP. Theoretical background identified the establishment of the organisational TSPP as one of the key NTSPP planning and practice issue.

Looking at the Thai case findings, it is evident that the organisational TSPP does not exists among the national telecom players. This section further synthesises the normative NTSPP constructs with the descriptive NTSPP constructs. The theoretical NTSPP (refer to figure 2) construct was developed from John Bryson's ten step strategy cycle processes (1995). According to the normative NTSPP constructs, the first step towards the NTSPP should be the initiation and agreement upon the NTSPP. On the basis of this, the Thai case findings suggested that there has nor been any step taken towards the initiation and agreement not only for the NTSPP, but also at the organisational TSPP.

The second normative consideration of NTSPP is the identification of the national telecommunication mandates. The formal and informal mandates are defined as the organisational procedures and various 'musts' that the organisation confronts (Bryson, 1995: 26). The descriptive NTSPP has suggested very little on the national telecom mandates by the Thai government. Bryson argued that most of the managers spent very little time on reading the relevant information concerning their organisations. It is further observed from Bryson's analysis that most of the managers make three fundamental mistakes: not knowing what they must do; believe that they are more tightly constrained in their actions than they actually are; and assuming that if they are not explicitly told to do something, they are not allowed to do it (1995: 26). In this instance, the author observed similar patterns of problem among the Thai telecommunications planning and practices. The case report on the national telecommunications players in Thailand, revealed that the concerned telecommunications players including the MOTC, have very little to do with the stakeholder analysis. To Bryson, a stakeholder is the person, group, or organisations, who may in fact, claim on an organisation's attention, resources, or output or is affected by the output (Bryson, 1995: 27).

Several factors were identified in the process of assessing the external and internal environment for the formulation and implementation of the TSPP. The common factors that are inhibitive to the TSPP as well as the NTSPP in Thailand: the public policy, regulation, and the technological changes. It is also argued by several academic researchers that the rapid advancement of telecom technology is creating new challenges for the organisational planners. Telecommunications network planning now requires a more comprehensive planning approach, as the existing studies has identified that the irregular and improper planning of the network can be very expansive. With regard to the public policy in the
Thailand, the majority of the respondents indicated that to date, Thailand has not established a clear policy guideline for the national telecom infrastructure development planning practices. At present, the Thai government is taking several steps to solve the nation's immediate problems, with a view to foster the economic growth and foreign investment.

The background of the problem indicated, due to the lack of policy guidelines, the SOEs and the private concessionaires are having difficulty in expanding and maintaining their telecom networks. The study also has investigated the regulatory factors of the Thai telecommunications. It is evident from the investigation that to date, there is no formal regulatory body for the Thai telecom industry. So, the study on the establishment of the future regulatory body was an exploratory. Thailand is on her way to establish the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), the future regulatory authority. However, the exploratory investigation has provided the indication of similar inconsistency among the major participants involved in the process of establishing the NTC (Hossain and Lindley, 1997). Thailand's regulatory planning process is also been looked at, which has applied the strategic planning concepts for understanding the involvement and pressures of establishing the NTC. Findings suggest that MOTC and PTD are involved in this process. However, the author has also observed the involvement of MOST in this instance (Hossain and Lindley, 1997). What the exploration suggests, is the inconsistency among the participants in the regulatory planning process. Moreover, the executives from the TOT and the CAT, is in fact, do not possess very little insights about the establishment of the NTC.

To date, the Thai Government have not initiated any formal procedures for formulating strategies to deal with these problems. At present, the Thai Government is rather responsive to the reduction of waiting lists and the rapid expansion of the telecommunications network. In order to avoid the chaos among the players, the Thai government now needs to rethink and establish a lateral approach towards the telecommunications industry development in Thailand. The case report reveals that the transformation of the organisational TSPP into the NTSPP in Thailand, needs a more comprehensive approach to strategic planning and practice and only then, the transformation and implementation can be successful.

Conclusions

The comparison of the theoretical and actual constructs has suggested that the theoretical TSPP as well as the NTSPP can assist developing countries like Thailand, in formulating and implementing NTSP. It was argued in the preceding sections that the concept of TSPP and NTSP is at the core of the success of a TSP and a NTSP. It is also important to mention that the central thesis of this present study, is based on the assumption that unless an appropriate TSPP can be installed at the organisational level, NTSP at the national level can not succeed. In order to justify the central thesis of the study, the author has proposed a national case study design, which is adopted from Robert Yin's case study design and assumptions are consider thereafter for developing an understanding on NTSP in Thailand. The research has demonstrated the need for a multiple case study design for NTSP, by providing a descriptive analyses of TOT, CAT and PTD.

The present study also has demonstrated the need to adopt a multiple theoretical approach for developing our understanding of the theory of planning and the theory in planning for the telecommunications industry in Thailand. The theoretical background of this study also provided the understanding of the relationships between organisations, TSPP and
environment, which are embedded in the analysis of NTSPP in Thailand. The synthesis of normative-descriptive dichotomy of strategic planning theories, suggests that it is now time for countries like Thailand and academic researchers to view strategic planning as a consensus building process. On the basis of the synthesis of the national case study findings, the pragmatic working model as described in the theoretical background resulted in predicting that the essence of strategic planning should be on the consensus building process. The formal end outcome of this research, clearly meets the requirements of the research objective and provides a comprehensive answer to the basic research question: How can the need for a more formal strategic planning process for the telecommunications strategic planning functions of the major players be better satisfied and integrated to support the NTSPP in Thailand?

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List of Acronyms

CAT Communications Authority of Thailand
ITU International Telecommunications Union
MP Master Plan
MOTC Ministry of Transport and Communications
MOST Ministry of Science and Technology
NTSPP National Telecommunications Strategic Planning Process
NTSP National Telecommunications Strategic Plan
NESDB National Economic and Social Development Board
NTC National Telecommunications Commission
PTD Post and Telegraph Department
SPP Strategic Planning Process
TSPP Telecommunications Strategic Planning Process
TSP Telecommunications Strategic Plan
TOT Telephone Organisation of Thailand
TA TelecomAsia Public Company Ltd.
TT&T Thai Telephone and Telecommunications
TDRI Thailand Development Research Institute
WTO World Trade Organisation

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