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**SYNERGY BY COMPETITION:
HOW BEST PRACTICES CAN BE SHARED**

A CASE STUDY OF TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

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PREFACE

You are reading the master thesis which I wrote as a concluding part of the master Strategic Management, as a specialization of the Master Business Administration. Writing this research was an interesting but challenging last part of this study. Especially because after one and a half year of studying at Radboud University in COVID times, everything slowly returned to normal. This has caused certain distractions, but also that I was able to go through the last part of my student days 'normally'.

During this process there were several people who have supported me. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Stephanie Koornneef. Although the feedback you have provided me with was not always motivating to read, I am convinced that it took my thesis to a higher level. You have made me aware of my points of improvement and ensured that my academic writing style was developed.

Subsequently, I would like to thank all employees of Tony's Chocolonely who were participating in this research. Ester in particular, for getting us in touch with interesting and inspiring staff members. Together with Gwen I have visited the head quarter of Tony's Chocolonely in the beginning of May this year. I felt very welcome in this unique office, and it was an experience to conduct interviews here. I would recommend everyone who is reading this paper to visit one of the Choco Stores when you are in Amsterdam.

I have conducted this case study together with my thesis circle consisting of Gwen Vrenken and Thom Neijzen. I would like to thank you both for the support during this iterative process. It was nice to be able to discuss things with students who were in the same situation.

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I hope you enjoy reading this thesis, while having a piece of chocolate ;-)

Lotte Westhoff - Nijmegen, June 2022

ABSTRACT

Drawing on interviews, newspaper articles and internal documents, this research examines how an organization can stimulate imitation of practices through coopetition. Coopetition is a concept used to describe the combination of cooperation and competition, which occurs interorganizational. Research has been done towards imitation, although never from the perspective of an organization that is being imitated. In this thesis the opportunity arose to examine an organization that is being imitated instead of organizations that imitate. A single case study towards chocolate brand Tony's Choclonely provides insights in how they cooperate with competition and how competing companies can be stimulated to start imitating.

Existing literature is mostly negative about imitation, findings of this study describe the positive effects of imitation. Leading by example helps to convince competitors to imitate through coopetition. By providing a ready-to-use program, imitation becomes interesting, and coopetition becomes accessible for potential coopeting companies. By explaining how imitation can be stimulated through coopetition and why coopetition is an interesting strategy for companies, this study provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and contributes to the literature of coopetition and imitation.

Keywords: imitation of practices; coopetition; competition and cooperation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	2
Abstract.....	3
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Theoretical framework.....	11
2.1 Imitation	11
2.2 Coopetition.....	13
2.3 Imitation and coopetition	16
2.4 Conceptual model	17
3. Methodology	18
3.1 Research design	18
3.2 Data collection.....	20
3.3 Data analysis.....	21
3.4 Tony’s Chocolonely.....	22
3.5 Research ethics	24
4. Results.....	26
4.1 Being an example	26
4.2 Making impact and creating awareness	29
4.2.1 Open Chain.....	29
4.2.2 Five sourcing principles.....	30
4.2.3 Campaigns.....	32
4.3 Stimulation through (social) media.....	34
4.4 The role of competition.....	36
4.4.1 Convincing competition.....	36
4.4.2 Collaborate on cacao, compete on chocolate	37
4.5 Legal change.....	39
5. Discussion & Conclusion.....	42

5.1 Discussion	42
5.1.1 The interpretation of findings.....	42
5.1.2 Theoretical contributions	46
5.1.3 Practical contributions	48
5.1.4 Limitations	50
5.1.5 Suggestions for future research	52
5.1.6 Role as a researcher	53
5.2 Conclusion.....	55
References.....	57
Appendix.....	62
Appendix 1 - Advertisement Tony’s Chocolonely.....	62
Appendix 2 - Sweet Solution campaign	63
Appendix 3 – Overview interviewees.....	64
Appendix 4 - Numerical representation newspaper articles	65
Appendix 5 - Interview protocol	67
Appendix 6 - Axial codes	71
Appendix 7 – Data Structure.....	72
Appendix 8 - Planning.....	73

1. INTRODUCTION

Coopetition can be explained as a strategy wherein firms cooperate with each other and compete against each other simultaneously (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Bouncken et al., 2015; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). Coopetition implies joint activity to achieve organizational and common goals, establishing opportunities for collaborative advantage and motivating organizations to generate larger benefits and create value (Czakon et al., 2020; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Kim, 2020; Schermerhorn Jr, 1975). Coopeting companies must manage the paradox of simultaneous cooperation and competition, balancing between cooperating with their partners in good faith while maintaining the state of powerful competitiveness with their rivals, which are also often their partners (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Hamel, 1991; Khanna et al., 1998). Coopeting businesses, therefore, face the challenge of balancing between concealing and revealing knowledge, which can lead them to being imitated by their competitors (Hallberg & Brattström, 2019).

According to Haunschild and Miner (1997), interorganizational imitation occurs “when one or more organizations' use of a practice increases the likelihood of that practice being used by other organizations” (p. 472). Imitating another firm’s practices may have a positive effect towards an organization’s strategy. For instance, for weaker organizations, the negative effects from failure to innovate may be higher than the risky opportunities from being the first mover in complex markets with incomplete information (Ordanini et al., 2008). Specifically, studies show that imitation helps organizations avoid unfavorable reputational effects that may arise from their decisions, because such (bad) decisions are more frequently performed by other companies and lessons have been learned from these choices (Ordanini et al., 2008). Imitation can therefore help organizations in improving their decision-making and offsetting certain risks. Subsequently, the imitated organization may look for protection from imitation by using complementary resources, causal ambiguity, and protection of intellectual property (Hallberg & Brattström, 2019; Mariani & Belitski, 2022). A limitation of these studies, however, is that they only consider the advantages of imitation for the imitating organization and the disadvantages of imitation for the imitated organization. In this research contributes to literature by paying attention to the advantages of imitation for the imitated organization.

While previous studies have shown that organizations tend to mimic the structure (Gnyawali et al., 2006), operational processes (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996), and even names of other

organizations (Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Glynn & Marquis, 2006), little is known about how to promote imitation. Promoting refers to the stimulation of imitation of practices, which for instance can be interesting for organizations that want to achieve a certain goal together with other organizations. For example, research has shown how isomorphic pressures result in the more similar organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Kostova et al., 2008), but has regarded these pressures as exogenous forces. More recent research, however, has started to uncover how individual organizations change institutional norms (Gërkhani & Van Breemen, 2019; Golant & Sillince, 2007; Peterson, 2013), emphasizing the role of institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana et al., 2009; Maguire et al., 2004; Suddaby et al., 2017). For instance, Enninga and van der Lugt (2016) examined Heineken and Krups' co-innovation of the Beertender: combining a small Heineken beer keg with Krups' technology and appliances, resulted in a beer tap at home. The kind of innovation where two companies strengthen each other is a widely used example of a co-innovation, as, for instance, in the Odenthal et al. (2004) study. Taking over and thereby enhancing each other's qualities becomes clear in this example. For instance, avoiding first-mover risks is one of the many interesting elements of imitation (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). The positive aspects of imitation for the organization being imitated are often not emphasized. Hence, this makes the stimulation of imitation an issue in need of a closer look.

The aforementioned studies are informative on the advantages and disadvantages of coopetition and imitation. However, little academic research has been done on forms of coopetition that intentionally focus on imitation (Mariani & Belitski, 2022). Thus, Mention (2011) argues that using competition knowledge can, in fact, increase the rate of imitation rather than encourage innovation. Organizations that depend on coopetition are less likely to innovate drastically on their own without considering their competition (Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Mention, 2011). They can use coopetition-acquired tacit information to pursue an imitation strategy (Mariani & Belitski, 2022). These studies show that coopetition reduces a company's innovative capacity. But what if innovation is not the primary objective, and it is imitation that a company, in fact, attempts to achieve? Scant academic studies have shown the benefits of imitation (Ordanini et al., 2008). Because these benefits may be interesting for organizations that use imitation strategically, it would be interesting to enhance existing literature on imitation by exploring the phenomenon of coopetition.

Research has been done on interorganizational competition and imitation (Ordanini et al., 2008; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990), wherein companies or organizational fields that imitate competing organizations are analyzed. However, there is no literature on the perspective of the organization that is being imitated. This new perspective is important to investigate because imitation may also have benefits for the organization that is being imitated. Being imitated may indicate success and leadership (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Organizations use imitation under conditions of uncertainty (Henisz & Delios, 2001) or to reduce risks concerning innovation (changing their resources and performance) (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Thus, Schermerhorn Jr (1975) has shown that resource scarcity, performance distress, or situations of coercive pressure constitute basic motivations for cooptation. Very little academic attention, however, has been paid to the connection of cooptation and imitation (Mariani & Belitski, 2022). In this research, a case study will be conducted to examine how an organization can use cooptation to stimulate the imitation of its practices. This thesis provides the possibility to examine an organization that is being imitated and wishes to be so. Consequently, to fill the gap in the literature, this thesis explores how organizations can stimulate imitation of practices through cooptation.

This research is socially and practically relevant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of the advantages that imitation can have for an organization that is being imitated. This, in turn, will enable the organizations to appreciate the various benefits of this phenomenon instead of focusing solely on the known disadvantages. Consequently, this research contributes to the understanding of the stimulation of imitation of practices through cooptation, which can help organizations wishing to be imitated to encourage other organizations to imitate their practices. This is a desirable effect, as it has been shown that stimulation of imitation through cooptation aims for better outcomes for both parties, including achieving common goals, establishing collaborative advantage, generating larger benefits, and creating value (Czakoń et al., 2020; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Kim, 2020; Schermerhorn Jr, 1975).

Organizations have various reasons for wanting to be imitated. For example, the organization of focus in this research has a socially relevant mission and is thus a kind of organization that strives to make an impact (Tony's Chocolonely, n.d.-b). By sharing this mission with its competitors, and through imitation of practices, the socially responsible goal might be achieved in a shorter period, and/or the organizations can have more impact together. The insights derived from this study, therefore, can be useful both for organizations with mission statements

that they cannot achieve alone or for individual organizations that seek to change institutional norms (Gërxfhani & Van Breemen, 2019; Golant & Sillince, 2007; Peterson, 2013).

The academic relevance of this study concerns the fact that this subject has never examined from the perspective of an organization that is being imitated. Existing literature focuses on, and offers insights into, various advantages for the organizations that imitate (Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Ordanini et al., 2008) and the disadvantages of imitated organizations (Hallberg & Brattström, 2019; Mariani & Belitski, 2022). This new perspective will contribute to literature on imitation by looking into the advantages of being imitated. Moreover, by connecting this subject to coopetition, an important contribution is made to research on imitation and coopetition (Mariani & Belitski, 2022), as not much is known about how these two concepts can reinforce each other. The insights of this research broaden the research stream on imitation and coopetition. Consequently, this study can be useful as the basis for further research into these topics. In conclusion, this thesis contributes to increasing knowledge about the organizational imitation of practices and coopetition by examining these concepts from a different, more positive, angle.

Research question and sub-questions

The research question is stated as follows:

‘How can an organization stimulate imitation of practices through coopetition?’

The following sub-questions have been formulated to support the main question:

1. How does Tony’s Chocolonely stimulate imitation of its practices?
2. How does Tony’s Chocolonely participate in coopetition?

Research outline

This research aims to examine how organizations can stimulate the imitation of practices of other organizations through cooperation. This research proceeds as follows. First, literature concerning imitation and cooperation is reviewed in chapter 2. Second, further research is carried out concerning these topics using a single case study of the chocolate brand Tony's Chokolonly. Why this company constitutes an interesting and important subject for a case study is explained in chapter 3.1, and what this company is about is explained in chapter 3.4. To collect enough information for formulating an answer to the research question, interviews with the company's employees are conducted. This data is collected, and, together with results of the analysis of documentary information, an answer to the research question is formulated. The answer to the research question is based on the answers to the sub-questions, which are answered in chapter 4. By developing these answers, this study contributes to the existing research by providing a better understanding of the advantages of imitation and cooperation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Imitation

Interorganizational imitation is defined by Haunschild and Miner (1997) as the “phenomenon that occurs when one or more decisions made by one or more organizations increases the likelihood that the same choices will also be made by other organizations” (Ordanini et al., 2008, p. 378). This definition involves the relationship between an organization and its environment and the position of this organization in the market in which it operates. This paper will focus on an organizations’ decisions concerning the imitation of processes and products.

Organizations imitate other organizations, with the aim of letting others pay for research and exploration (Dutton & Freedman, 1985; Haunschild, 1993; Lant & Mezias, 1990; Levitt & March, 1988). Subsequently, in reaction to competitor activity, imitation can be a strategic tactic, whereby second-movers profit from the fact that the first mover has undertaken the risk related to product development (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that, according to the institutionalization theory, organizations imitate the activities of other organizations to acquire legitimacy. In summary, organizations have different motives to imitate, which consider how a given company might benefit from the copying behavior.

Ordanini et al. (2008) offers a helpful analysis of different perspectives that experts might take regarding imitation. A neo-institutional theory sociologist, for instance, will mostly focus on the imitation of performance in an organization (Ordanini et al., 2008). From this perspective, imitation is characterized as a behavioral strategy aiming to gain legitimacy in the fields in which organizations operate (Henisz & Delios, 2001). Being imitated may thus indicate acknowledgement of the success and leadership of an organization in its institutional environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), while imitating helps organizations discover better ways to carry out their own activities under conditions of uncertainty (Henisz & Delios, 2001). From the perspective of a strategic management scholar, it is expected that imitation is discussed based on a company’s resources (Ordanini et al., 2008). From this resource-based view, a company can only maintain a competitive advantage position if it has valuable, rare, hard to imitate, and/or replaceable resources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991). When barriers towards the imitation of resources are lacking, companies can only achieve temporary benefits

from competitive advantage (Peteraf, 1993). From this perspective, imitation is viewed as a critical treat that companies need to avoid. This brief survey shows that one can view imitation from different perspectives, which make it either a positive or a negative phenomenon. In the present study, the positive aspects of imitation will be investigated and brought to light.

Imitation can be characterized as a behavioral strategy aiming to gain legitimacy in the fields in which organizations operate by focusing on the imitation of performance in an organization (Henisz & Delios, 2001; Ordanini et al., 2008). According to Ordanini et al. (2008), the motivation behind the tendency to imitate and the minimization of environmental uncertainty is represented by the pursuit of legitimacy. The key motivator for imitation is the decrease in environmental uncertainty (Oliver, 1997; Ordanini et al., 2008). Next to environmental uncertainty, organizations especially have uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of practices and structures (Haunschild & Miner, 1997). With regard to the purpose of imitation, “the best way to gain legitimacy and reduce uncertainty is for actors to imitate the decisions of key players, or those heavily represented in their field” (Ordanini et al., 2008, p. 381). The studies mentioned in this paragraph show that imitation of important players in the market is the most effective manner to reduce uncertainty and gain legitimacy: the decisions they’ve made worked out positively and therefore are interesting to copy. However, there are different degrees of imitation that organizations could apply in their operations, which are clarified in the next paragraph.

Within the subject of organizational imitation, a distinction is made concerning creativity between one-on-one copying and a creative way of imitating a strategy (Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Schnaars, 2002; Shankar et al., 1998). Regarding the former, products or processes are performed in the exact same way as done by the competitor. In contrast, imitation is used as an example of innovation with the aim of improving a practice or product that already exists. In such situations, an organization deliberately imitates another company (to a certain degree). This, however, can also occur less consciously: imitation can arise through a more intuitive kind of influence, in which routine behaviors are “taken for granted” and then adopted without awareness (Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Zucker, 1977). Because frequency affects outcomes, these processes can be described as the purest form of social influence (Haunschild & Miner, 1997). Herewith, imitation arises unconsciously simply because the imitated practices happen to occur frequently. Unintentionally, an organization imitates certain practices to gain legitimacy. Companies select structures and practices that many other firms have adopted

because when several firms adopt a practice, the legitimacy of that practice is amplified (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). In conclusion, organizations imitate other organizations consciously or unconsciously, often adopting a degreed approach.

Although these studies offer insight to the different meanings and perspectives of imitation, the perspective of an organization that is being imitated is not clarified yet. By examining a case study of an organization that is, and wants to be, imitated, this research gives the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of this perspective. Additionally, in this research, imitation is linked to coopetition, through which imitation is applied in simultaneous cooperation and competition. In the next section, the concept of coopetition is clarified.

2.2 Coopetition

When two parties help each other such that the outcome benefits both, the process can be described as cooperation (Snow, 2015). When organizations aim for dominance when operating on the same market in conflicting positions, competition arises (Porter, 1980). Combining the definitions of competition and cooperation results in coopetition (Nalebuff & Brandenburger, 1997), defined as the phenomenon in which companies participate in cooperation and competition with each other (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Lado et al., 1997), with the intention of creating value (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018), where the intention of value creation describes a company's main goal to generate new benefits (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). Consequently, by applying coopetition, an organization can benefit from cooperation with its competitors.

“It takes two to cooperate” (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021, p. 50). In cooperation and, therefore, in coopetition, companies share their resources. According to Brandenburger and Nalebuff (2021), sharing resources can create a competitive advantage on the one hand and, on the other hand, a company might have to give away their competitive advantage. The extent to which coopeting companies share their expert knowledge varies. Each organization adds value in coopetition because of its unique strategy or resource, described as their “special sauce” by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (2021, p. 50). This “special sauce” adds value on its own or creates value in combination with a strategy or resource of a competitor (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021; Nalebuff & Brandenburger, 1997). The extent to which special strategies or resources

add value differs. These specialties within coopetition can be divided into four categories, in which the name and explanation of the category are similar, as shown below:

- “Neither party has a special sauce at risk, but the parties’ combined ingredients create value” (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021, p. 50).
- “Both parties have a special sauce, and sharing puts them both ahead of their common rivals” (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021, p. 50).
- “One party has a strong competitive advantage, and sharing only heightens it” (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021, p. 51).
- “One party shares its secret sauce to reach another’s customer base, even though doing so carries risks for both parties” (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2021, p. 51).

While in the first two categories both parties may or may not have unique resources, the companies in the third and fourth categories differ from each other in the added value of their resources. Hence, these categories are helpful in realizing whether organizations are interesting to cooperate with. Since coopetition and imitation are conceptually linked in this study, at least one party must have special resources to be interesting enough to be imitated. Therefore, organizations in categories two and three will contribute the most to the imitating and imitated companies.

The definition of coopetition combines two aspects: rivalry and mutuality. The unique consolidation of rivalry and mutuality “maximizes mutual outcomes through joint innovation and efficiency” (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018, p. 2518), due to its shared focus and continuous drive for innovation and new opportunities (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). In research of Bouncken et al. (2015) is stated by Ritala and Hurmelinna-Laukkanen (2009) that the ability of a company to gain from coopetition is affected by the extent to which this company can protect its innovations and core knowledge against imitation. Two points can be drawn from this analysis. First, studies such as these exemplify a negative approach towards imitation. In contrast, instead of focusing on how an organization can protect its innovations and core knowledge against imitation, this research examines how organizations can benefit from imitation and how this phenomenon can be stimulated through coopetition.

Second, although these studies shed light on the way coopetition can be implemented by organizations, they do not provide information about how to balance cooperation and

competition appropriately. The simultaneity of cooperation and competition is an important aspect of cooptition because different cooptition engagement forms may result in varying outcomes of cooptition (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). For example, when cooperation and competition are low, it is easier to manage the situation because the situation is less complex (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). Despite the minimal likelihood of benefits and obstacles, and limitations in value creation, cooptition may still exist in such circumstances. When, in contrast, there is a high degree of cooperation and competition, the situation becomes more complicated (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). In this case, there is a greater chance of value creation.

Certain factors are needed for a collaboration to succeed: membership, purpose and objectives, structure, process, and communications and finances (Lydeka & Adomavičius, 2007). This implies that, before an organization engages in cooptition, they should consider carefully what values they have to offer to the competitor and what factors they are willing to share with competition. In addition, each company should think about what they wish to achieve through cooptition.

Through cooptition, a development arises in the organization's culture, goal, program, or a mission, indicating that cooptition may be viewed as a type of organizational change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that while organizations tend to become more similar with time, this type of organizational change is not necessarily motivated by competition or the need for efficiency. Instead, identity and legitimacy are a major concern for this type of institutional change (Granata et al., 2019). Thus, in their research on imitation, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that organizations imitate the activities of other organizations to acquire legitimacy, which may explain organizations tend to become more similar with time. Because, as explained in Section 2.1, organizations tend to adopt structures and practices of other organizations because many organizations use those structures and practices, the legitimacy of that practice gets amplified (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). Interestingly, in research both on imitation and on cooptition respectively, legitimacy is often emphasized as an important factor. The next section will examine these concepts further and clarify the nature of their relationship.

2.3 Imitation and coopetition

Coopetition enables organizations to learn from their competitors (Mention, 2011). In this learning, acquired knowledge gets shared, and the innovation of a certain competitor is imitated (Roper et al., 2017). Concealing and revealing knowledge can result in imitation by competitors (Hallberg & Brattström, 2019). Mention (2011) adds that imitation is triggered by sourcing information from competition. Jointly, these studies show that when information and knowledge are shared or transferred, organizations tend to imitate. However, coopetition is not just about knowledge sharing, competing organizations must also work together. Research of Mariani and Belitski (2022) states “collaboration with competitors increases the propensity of imitation” (p. 7). The more intense the coopetition, the more likely it is that the companies will imitate one another's products.

Imitation can be seen as a process of combining different sources of knowledge with closely rival companies, which is stimulated by a high degree of familiarity (Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Shane, 2000). Because of this familiarity regarding the routines and knowledge of competing companies, company’s control over this knowledge eventually weakens (Katila & Ahuja, 2002; Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Srivastava & Gnyawali, 2011). Together with agreements made, knowledge about their customers, and the market in which both companies operate, sharing knowledge creates favorable conditions for imitating the competitor (Mariani & Belitski, 2022).

In summary, these studies clarify that sharing knowledge with competition reduces company’s control over this knowledge. In turn, knowledge-sharing is a condition for imitation which may be used by the competitor to their advantage. However, although the sharing of knowledge reduces company’s control over their knowledge, it also gives them an opportunity to coopete, which may bring in its own benefits.

Notably, in the literature on imitation and as well as that on coopetition, legitimacy is often emphasized as an important factor. Organizations operate in highly dynamic, unpredictable, and turbulent economic environments, where technical, socio-political, and environmental changes often undermine any prospects of competitive advantage (D'Aveni et al., 2010; Mariani & Belitski, 2022). As a result, competitive advantage is often temporary and fragile for organizations. Therefore, organizations continue to dedicate resources for their strategies, tactics, and tools to create and maintain a competitive advantage (D'Aveni et al., 2010; Mariani

& Belitski, 2022). To link this literature, development of resources and creating competitive advantage can be achieved through coopetition and imitation.

When analyzing relationships between a company and its environment, legitimacy is an important concept (Mousa & Hassan, 2015). Within coopetition and imitation, not only the environment of the organization is important, but the organization itself. Many organizational dynamics are shaped by cultural norms, symbols, beliefs, and rituals, constituting the core of the concept of “organizational legitimacy” (Suchman, 1995, p. 571). Accordingly, Suchman (1995) defined legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (p. 574). Suchman (1995) further stated that besides affecting how people act towards organizations, legitimacy also affects how people understand the organization, by clarifying what an organization is doing and why they do what they do. As a result, a legitimate organization can be seen as more worthy, meaningful, predictable, and trustworthy by its public.

2.4 Conceptual model

In Chapter 2, the main concepts of this research were discussed: imitation (of practices) and coopetition. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 introduced and clarified these concepts, while section 2.3 explained how these concepts relate to each other. By conducting a case study, this thesis will examine how an organization can stimulate the imitation of its practices through coopetition. The main concepts, imitation and coopetition, both influence the chosen unit of analysis for this thesis: an organization. Subsequently, imitation and coopetition are interrelated, as explained in section 2.3. Besides, within analyzing an organization, its environment and the perception of its actions, legitimacy arose as an interesting concept and influences both coopetition and imitation.

Figure 1 below depicts the conceptual model of this study, including the two central concepts (imitation and competition), the chosen unit of analysis (organization), and legitimacy.

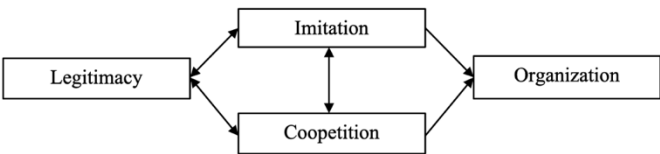


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

To answer the research question, a qualitative case study is conducted, implying that an individual unit of analysis is thoroughly analyzed, with the emphasis on underlying development factors in relation to the environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989; Myers, 2020). In this research, the chosen unit of analysis concerns an organization.

Myers (2020) examines the concept of the case-study research in business and defines it as using “empirical evidence from one or more organizations where an attempt is made to study the subject matter in context” (p. 93). Multiple types of data are used, although interviews and documents provide the most of the evidence (Myers, 2020). Because of limited understanding of the background of a new topic, in the early stages of research, case study research is generally used for developing new theories (Myers, 2020). Therefore, this research towards imitation and competition is inductive and exploratory. Jebb et al. (2017) define exploratory data analysis as “the mode of analysis concerned with discovery, exploration, and empirically detecting phenomena in data” (p. 265). Because of the more open-ended nature of reasoning in inductive research (Myers, 2020), this theory-building approach is the most appropriate in this research.

Little is known about the relations between the concepts of imitation and competition. Subsequently, this research provides the opportunity to examine an organization that is being imitated, which, to the author’s knowledge, has not been done before. When concepts will be uncovered through thorough analysis of the gathered data, this means that the researcher analyses bottom-up (Myers, 2020). After analyzing collected data about the topic, patterns in data may begin to emerge (Myers, 2020), which can lead the researcher to developing a new theory. These patterns in data may lead to new theory concerning the stimulation of imitation through competition. Hence, a case study is applicable in this research to ensure to go in depth into the material.

To specify the type of the case study being conducted, this research is a single case study. Based on the definition of Yin (2009), this research is a revelatory case and therefore an applicable reason to conduct a single case study. In the situation of a revelatory case, a researcher can analyze an organization or phenomenon that is inaccessible to other researchers and therefore

constitutes an interesting object of study (Yin, 2009). In this thesis, an opportunity arose to examine an organization that meets this criterion. In particular, this case study is selected using “extreme case” selection. Where a revelatory case is inaccessible to other researchers, extreme cases are inaccessible to traditional approaches. As explained by Eisenhardt et al. (2016), examining an extreme case provides an opportunity to go in depth towards a unique case that is generally inaccessible to traditional deductive approaches. Extreme cases are interesting to observe because of their imposing challenges. Using an extreme case can therefore make it easier to generate insights. Specifically, “their “extremeness” makes their insights more transparent” (Eisenhardt et al., 2016, p. 1118). Research is done concerning the imitation of companies in organizational fields (Ordanini et al., 2008; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990). This case study gave the opportunity to research a single organization that is being imitated. Since no research has been conducted on an organization from this perspective, this study enhances the body of knowledge about the subject of imitation and cooperation.

To contribute to the literature and provide an accurate answer to the research question, this case study is conducted for the company Tony’s Chokolonely. Tony’s Chokolonely is a Dutch company dedicated to contributing to worldwide social and environmental goals (Tony’s Chokolonely, n.d.-b). Because of their extraordinary actions and being one of the first companies with a mission to convince their competitors to become part of this grand challenge, Tony’s Chokolonely constitutes a suitable “extreme” company for this case study (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). For instance, where other companies fail to take responsibilities for their actions, Tony's Chokolonely does things differently. During an advertisement about New Year's resolutions at the beginning of 2022, Tony’s Chokolonely (2022a) warned their customers of dangers of their product and admitted that they were part of the worldwide sugar crisis (Henry & Ranawana, 2012)(see also Appendix 1). Another example is their Sweet Solution campaign (see Appendix 2), in which Tony’s Chokolonely recreated four well-known chocolate bars of competing brands (Tony’s Chokolonely, 2022b). Tony’s created these look-alikes to show that these bars can be made in a slave-free way, drawing worldwide attention to the fact that all chocolate should be produced without using illegal child labor and modern slavery.

Statements like these show that Tony’s’ Chokolonely is a unique organization, making Tony’s an interesting subject for conducting a single case study. The specific meaning of Tony’s Chokolonely’s mission statement and the ways in which they want to incorporate competition will be expanded on in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4).

3.2 Data collection

Different data collection methods are combined in this research due to the use of a single case study approach (Myers, 2020; Yin, 2009). Qualitative data is obtained by using newspaper articles, internal documents, and data from interviews, thus applying a triangulation method (Myers, 2020). Before conducting the interviews, data is collected about the topics of competition and imitation. Additionally, documentary information is acquired about Tony's Chocolonely using newspaper articles, archives, previously conducted surveys and interviews, their activity on social media, and on their own media platforms (Eisenhardt, 1989). It is assumed that newspaper articles provide objective facts, contrary to personal opinions and articles by columnists. Therefore, newspaper articles were the focus point within the analysis of documentary information.

To provide a representative view, articles from five well-known newspapers in the Netherlands are selected for research: AD, NRC, de Telegraaf, Trouw, and de Volkskrant. Because these newspapers are the five largest newspapers in the Netherlands and due to time limitations, this research was focused only on these newspapers. By using the keyword "Tony's Chocolonely", information was collected about Tony's Chocolonely's past activities and their participants. In addition, it was interesting to see whether Tony's engage in competition or if they are in contact with their competitors in another way. This newspaper review provided a good understanding of the history and current activities of the company, which could be further investigated in the interviews and helped to identify the right subjects to be questioned during the interviews.

Subsequently, interviews were conducted. The interviews were held with the employees of Tony's Chocolonely and helped provide a better understanding of the importance and the impact of working together with their competition, which is part of their mission statement (Tony's Chocolonely, n.d.-b). Furthermore, the company's current strategy concerning imitation was examined. Questions were asked about the way Tony's Chocolonely's currently interacts with their competitors, including why the company thinks it is interesting to cooperate with competition and what they want to achieve when competitors imitate their activities and goals. During the interviews, the researcher requested to see internal company documents that are not available online. Unfortunately, only the annual reports (which can also be found online) were shared. However, annual reports were a third data source in this study. Together with the

newspaper articles and data from the interviews, this created three forms of data to code, which ensured triangulation.

The number of interviews to be conducted was determined based on the information that emerged during the interviews and the number of employees who were willing to participate. Because this case study was done in a thesis circle, implying that three researchers took part in the study, more data could be collected and analyzed. If all the company's employees were willing to participate, conducting interviews would have stopped upon reaching the saturation point. At point of saturation, no new information is emerging from the interviews and therefore no additional interviews need to be conducted (Myers, 2020). Research of Marshall et al. (2013) recommend fifteen to thirty interviews in a single case study. Although attempts were made to achieve this number of interviews, this was unachievable due the small number of (managerial) employees at Tony's Chocolonely. Because this research concerns the strategy of coepetition and stimulation of imitation, it was interesting to speak to employees who are responsible for the strategy of the company. It was predicted that especially employees in a managerial position would have insight into this. Therefore, this research was aimed at conducting twelve interviews with managers from different departments. Due to the limited response, however, only ten employees have been interviewed. An overview of the interviewees and their position within Tony's Chocolonely can be found in appendix 3.

3.3 Data analysis

During the interviews, the researcher made audio recordings. The audio recordings of the interviews were attentively listened to, and simultaneously transcribed. Together with the data gathered from documentary analysis, this provided the foundation for the analysis. The first step of the analysis was the coding of the interview transcriptions and the collected documentary information. To be able to refer to the reviewed articles correctly, a numerical representation was used (see Appendix 4). The coding process consisted of three phases and helped ensure a more accurate and consistent interpretation of the coded data (Gioia et al., 2012). The data was divided into different themes, which was data-driven and emerged bottom-up, without the researchers attempting to fit the data into a certain model or frame (Myers, 2020). This strategy stimulated the identification of patterns in the data and informational overlap among the interviews. These different patterns and overlaps were then compared to the coded internal

documents and newspaper articles. These three information sources combined ensured triangulation and were used to formulate an answer to the research question (see Chapter 1).

Because this research was done in a thesis circle, three researchers from the thesis circle conducted the interviewing and coding. Dividing data collection and document coding among the researchers allowed the researchers to be more efficient, which made it possible to collect and analyze more data. Although the three researchers had three different subjects to examine, the same interviews with the same coding could be used. This is because clear agreements were made prior to the interviews, in which each researcher could ensure that the right questions for their research were addressed in the interview. After conducting the interviews, the researchers met to discuss the codes that were relevant to all studies. While, as expected, there were some codes that were less important in one study than in another study, this did not cause any problems as each researcher took their own responsibility regarding their contribution to answering their own research question.

Regarding the reliability of the research, the three researchers coded one interview together to facilitate the same coding style. The coding of the other interviews and documents was divided among the researchers. The knowledge resulting from the coding was continuously discussed among the three researchers. After the first coding phase, the researchers met again to discuss the codes and adjust them where necessary. After all open coding was individually completed and discussed as a group, the axial and selective coding was performed as a group. In these final, more specific phases of coding, it was important to be able to discuss the process continuously, resulting in the most optimal results for knowledge gathered from the data.

3.4 Tony's Chokolonly

For this research, a case study on Tony's Chokolonly was conducted. Tony's Chokolonly is a Dutch chocolate brand that has been committed to the mission of "making all chocolate 100% slave free" (Tony's Chokolonly, n.d.-b). This mission and the company were launched in 2003, thanks to the television program "Keuringsdienst van Waarde" (Value Inspection Service) presented by the Dutch journalist Teun van de Keuken. Van de Keuken was shocked by the terrible condition of the cocoa industry and decided to do something about it. After investigating Nestlé, who, among other brands investigated, refused to disclose anything about their production, van de Keuken decided to produce slave-free chocolate himself. Soon after, the first

Tony's Chokolonely milk chocolate bar was available for purchase in November 2005. Tony's Chokolonely chose to present their first chocolate bar in a red wrapper to emphasize the alarming problem with modern day slavery and child labor.

What makes Tony's unique as a company is that they do not conduct their business in a conventional way unlike many other chocolate-makers. For example, Tony's divide their chocolate bars into unequal pieces to represent inequality, insidious in the chocolate industry. And their annual report is called "JaarFAIRslag" in Dutch, highlighting the word "fair" in the title. In 2017, Tony's Chokolonely became the market leader within the chocolate industry in the Netherlands, and it became clear that they had a substantial impact on combating child labor and modern slavery (Tony's Chokolonely, 2021, n.d.-a).

With financial support from Oxfam Novib (a worldwide development organization that mobilizes the power of people against poverty (Oxfam Novib, n.d.)), Tony's Chokolonely has been conducting extensive research into the cocoa chain in Africa. As a result of their research, all cocoa they need for their production is purchased fairtrade. The fact that chocolate is produced sustainably and is 100% fairtrade, however, does not mean that it is slave-free because the 'fairtrade' label has different requirements. As stated by Tony's Chokolonely, 100% slave-free chocolate should become the norm (Tony's Chokolonely, n.d.-b). This, however, is not so easy to accomplish. To this end, Tony's have selected three "pillars" to facilitate their mission: (1) Tony's creates awareness (since 2005), (2) Tony's leads by giving the right example (since 2012), and (3) their example makes other people (businesses) to follow (since 2019). Setting a good example of successfully and commercially making slave-free chocolate is accomplished by Tony's Chokolonely using five principles of cooperation. These include: traceable beans, a higher price for cocoa, strong farmers, long-term contracts with farmers, and investing in quality and productivity (Tony's Chokolonely, 2021, n.d.-b). While many chocolate brands claim that they do everything they can to be sustainable, this, according to Tony's, is not enough. Tony's Chokolonely wants to address their competitors about this misunderstanding on sustainability, and they want to cooperate to achieve their mission to make all chocolate 100% slave free.

3.5 Research ethics

Research ethics was important in this thesis because the research involves people (Wiles et al., 2006). To treat the participants in this study ethically, a number of factors were considered and implemented in this study. This section will clarify these considerations. For further details on the ethical procedures in this research, see the interview protocol in Appendix 5.

First, prior to, during, and after conducting the interviews, it was intended that all parties should feel that the information that they provide was secure. For example, if there were questions or subjects that the participant did not want to discuss, the researcher had to agree with their choice. Moreover, the participants were free to quit the interview at any time. The participants were informed of these options prior to and during the interviews. Subsequently, the aim of the research was clearly discussed with the participants beforehand to avoid undesirable situations during the interviews. Thus, if a participant wished to remain anonymous in this research, they were informed that this was possible, and that their information would be just as valuable. The names of the participants who requested to be anonymous were not mentioned in the research.

To make sure that all relevant risks and benefits were clear for the participants, they were discussed beforehand. To guarantee transparency, the information gathered during the research was shared with the participants upon their request. If, for any reason, the participants did not support the results because it was worded or used differently than they intended, their answers were withdrawn and formulated in a different way. Only the overarching results, as concluded from the analysis of the interviews, are shared with Tony's Chocolonely; the transcripts of the interviews were not shared. The participants were informed of this, ensuring that they could discuss various matters freely, without worrying that their answers could be traced to them. After completion of this thesis, the results of the research will be shared with all participants. The organization of this case study is allowed to apply the results to their current strategy. If parties not involved in the study wish to use these results for sharing or implementation, this must be approved by the parties that did participate.

For data management, conducted interviews were transcribed by the researchers in the thesis circle. This data was shared among the researchers in a Google Drive file, which was inaccessible to those not included in the thesis circle. ATLAS.ti was used for coding. Company's internal documents, newspaper articles, and the interviews were coded and stored

in this program, and corresponding files were only accessible to the researchers of this study. The data was categorized, making it easier to manage it during the research, discuss with other researchers, and to interpret it. The interviews are labeled by the interviewee's first name and position (see appendix 3). The newspaper articles are categorized based on numbering (see appendix 4). The acquired data will not be shared in this thesis; only the results obtained from the data will be mentioned. Where applicable (and as indicated earlier), the names of the participants wishing to remain anonymous have been omitted.

4. RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of ten interviews and research from the analysis of 30 articles and five annual reports are discussed. In the interviews with employees of Tony's Chocolonely, their strategy for coepetition and how other companies imitate their practices are examined. In the case of Tony's, it is striking to see how motivated this company is to achieve their mission, 100% slave-free chocolate. Since this mission cannot be achieved by one company on its own, Tony's need their competitors.

To make these results more visible and better interpretable, the transcriptions of the interviews, internal documents and newspaper articles are coded. This coding is done in three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The open and axial codes of all data can be found in ATLAS.ti. The meaning of the colors of the axial codes can be found in Appendix 6. For the generation of the results used to answer the sub-questions of this research, a selection is made within the codes that were applicable. For this research, five selective codes are assigned, consisting of: being an example, stimulation through (social) media, making impact and creating awareness, role of competition, and legal change. In Appendix 7, a presentation can be found of the developed data structure as basis for the findings in this research. The table presented in this Appendix is constructed by the use of the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012). This chapter is structured according to the five selective codes created using the Gioia method.

4.1 Being an example

“The ultimate goal of the founders is for large chocolate manufacturers to follow their example.” – Article 2

As the above quote indicates, Tony's Chocolonely's end goal is imitation, and in particular, that the large chocolate manufacturers begin to follow their example. According to the interviews conducted with Tony's employees, however, Tony's goal is more specific than what was stated in the quote. In particular, Tony's Chocolonely wants all chocolate to be 100% slave-free. Since Tony's Chocolonely will never have 100% market share in the chocolate industry, they should work together with competitors and NGOs to achieve the highest possible impact, explained by Peter, who is working in the sales department of Tony's Chocolonely, during the interview. Because Tony's cannot achieve this alone, this calls for an imitation of their practices. This, in

turn, implies that Tony's Chocolonely must show that they are successful and therefore of interest to other companies – their potential imitators.

Being a good example and thereby inspiring other companies is covered in Tony's Chocolonely' mission. Tony's Chocolonely has grown into a large and well-known company – they are no longer a small player but an important competitor, as indicated by Ester, Tony's Chocolonely's Country manager Benelux & Beyond. As discussed in the theoretical framework (section 2.1), Ordanini et al. (2008) stated that imitating decisions of key players or powerful organizations is the best way to gain legitimacy and reduce uncertainty. This is an important characteristic to stimulate imitation towards competitors and may ensure that the business model is being copied. As indicated by Lisette, who works at the sales department of Tony's Chocolonely, this is exactly what Tony's Chocolonely wants to achieve. They want either competitors that join the Open Chain or competitors that copy their strategy and source cacao beans in a comparable way.

Tony's Chocolonely's uses the “three pillar roadmap” to accomplish their mission, as explained in section 3.4. Consequently, it is used in strategy formation, as quoted by Juliette (Brand manager bars Benelux & Beyond) below:

“The strategy formation is mainly determined by those three pillars, so those are; awareness, lead by example and inspire to act.” - Juliette

During the interviews, it became clear that the inspiration to act refers to the stimulation of imitation. Competitors can, for instance, imitate this way of strategy formation, which is mainly focused on the company culture and its norms and values. This outcome ensures that Tony's Chocolonely is actively working on being imitated, because they partly base their mission and strategy formation on these factors.

Imitation occurs when decisions made by an organization increase the likelihood that other organizations make the same choices (Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Ordanini et al., 2008), these decisions should also have good outcomes to be trustworthy and interesting for other organizations to imitate. Therefore, to be interesting enough to be imitated, Tony's Chocolonely needs to make a profit. In article 6 (see numerical representation in appendix 4), Ynzo van Zanten, who is responsible at Tony's Chocolonely for spreading the mission, explains that

Tony's Chocolonely does not aim to make a huge profit, but rather, they invest in improvements in their sector. However, from the results of the interviews, it also became clear that without making a profit, Tony's business model would not be sufficiently trustworthy for their competitors, and that would mean that there is a little chance that especially large companies would want to engage in imitation. As explained by Tony's Chocolonely's Country manager Benelux & Beyond Ester in the quotation below.

“Because that's what they think: those goat wool socks are idealistic people who just do not have a good business model. Then you keep doing it alone and then no one will join you. Then you keep doing that alone. And then you probably stay small and make too little impact.” - Ester

Here, Ester indicates that without making a profit, other organizations will only see Tony's Chocolonely as a company of dreamers or idealists who lack a solid business model, thus making them less of interest to imitate. Consequently, too little impact would be made by Tony's, and their overall mission would not be fulfilled. Therefore, it is of importance that Tony's Chocolonely demonstrates that their business model in fact works for them and can also be of interest to their competitors. These successes can be shown by word-of-mouth advertisement when consumers talk about the company in positive terms. In addition, competitors can find the financial successes in the annual report, which is available to everyone (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). However, it's not just the outcomes that is important to share, the efforts that an organization has made to achieve these outcomes can stimulate imitation as well. As discussed in the theoretical framework, imitation is a strategic tactic whereby organizations profit from the risks undertaken by the first mover (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Therefore, by sharing the risks undertaken in their research and exploration phase, for example, Tony's Chocolonely can trigger other organizations to imitate.

The interview with Steven, Tony's Chocolonely's Sales manager Benelux, points out that copying behavior indicates that an organization being copied is doing well. This is confirmed by DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) research, who state that being imitated indicates acknowledgement of the success and leadership an organization has in its institutional environment. It is just a shame that, in case of Tony's Chocolonely, often only a chocolate taste is imitated and not the way of production, adds Steven. For instance, many competitors now

produce chocolates with a caramel sea salt flavor. Tony's Chocolonely started with this unique flavor, and this has been recently imitated by several chocolate brands.

“That is absolutely no problem for us if they also adopt our way of sourcing, but that often does not happen. That is a pity. They forget the key message outside the taste and that is our objective and mission.” – Steven

This quote underscores that Tony's Chocolonely does not have a problem with the imitation of (parts of) their business model, but rather, with the fact that the primary thing they want to be imitated is often forgotten: sourcing chocolate in a slave-free and child-labor-free manner. From the results of the interviews, it can therefore be concluded that Tony's must engage in better communication with the imitating companies, to make them aware of the advantages of Tony's Open Chain (explained in chapter 4.2.1).

The results of section 4.1 show that Tony's Chocolonely is actively working on being a good example for other companies, and that the underlying mission of 100% slave-free chocolate worldwide is their primary motivation. As Tony's Chocolonely is fast becoming a big player in the field, their mission is receiving increasing attention. Consequently, more companies are willing to take part in Tony's principles and join their mission. Tony's Chocolonely tries to stimulate imitation by presenting their results. However, the analysis above suggests that presenting their efforts in achieving certain outcomes may be another way to effectively stimulate their imitation. These efforts are made, among other things, by their Open Chain principle and the five sourcing principles. In the next section, the meaning of Open Chain and the five sourcing principles will be clarified, followed by an illustration of how Tony's Chocolonely makes use of campaigns.

4.2 Making impact and creating awareness

4.2.1 Open Chain

Tony's Chocolonely want to coopete because they realize that they cannot achieve their mission on their own. Within coopetition, organizations intend to create value by generating new, additional benefits (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). From the results of the interviews, it became clear that the benefits that Tony's Chocolonely want to achieve all concern making a high impact and thereby achieving their mission of a 100% slave-free chocolate, which they

cannot achieve alone. Consequently, it was examined how Tony's address companies to stimulate cooepetition. For this cooepetition, Tony's Chocolonely created "Open Chain" principle. Companies that join the Open Chain can copy Tony's way of sourcing cacao beans and are provided with the resources to accomplish this goal. This allows these companies to contribute to reducing poverty and poor working conditions of farmers in Ghana and Ivory Coast.

"If more parties join the Open Chain, you see that a lot more cacao has sourced through the Open Chain. So, you just see what we do is getting bigger and bigger and therefore making more and more impact" – Lisette

The above quotation shows that the Open Chain principle serves towards achieving Tony's mission of making more impact by cooepetition. Based on the four cooepetition categories identified by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (2021), Tony's Chocolonely has a special resource, and a company cooepeting with Tony's can take advantage of the benefits. With the sourcing principles of the Open Chain and contacts that cooepeting companies can make use of during the process, they can avoid the first-mover risks (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Conversely, if an organization makes use of Open Chain, this can contribute to Tony's Chocolonely's mission. As a result, both parties help each other in achieving their missions and gain competitive advantage. This, in turn, may put both companies ahead of their common rivals (for instance, those companies that still use slavery and child labor).

Tony's Open Chain principle gives companies the opportunity to imitate their sourcing methods and will help them by providing all the information they need to source and sell cacao in a slave free manor. From this, it can be inferred that the Open Chain principle contributes to the stimulation of imitation through cooepetition: via this imitation of practices, companies work together until the chocolate bars arrive to the supermarket. In the next section, the balance between collaborating on cacao sourcing and competing on chocolate is clarified.

4.2.2 Five sourcing principles

For Tony's Chocolonely, taking responsibility is very important. They are and fundamentally want to be an example: a company that successfully and commercially makes slave-free chocolate. To this end (and as explained in section 3.4), Tony's have established the five

sourcing principles: pay a fair price, traceable cacao beans, long-term agreements, farmers stand strong together, improve quality and productivity together (Tony's Chocolonely, n.d.-c). These five sourcing principles are formulated to manage the contact between chocolate companies operating all over the world and the cacao farmers in Africa. The results of the interviews clarify that Tony's Chocolonely expects every company to adhere to these five principles, both for companies with which they cooperate with and the companies with which they do not do business. Applying these five principles can be stimulated because Tony's Chocolonely can prove that this way of sourcing pays off. Therefore, uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of practices and structures that organizations experience (Haunschild & Miner, 1997) can be reduced by imitating their strategy.

When collaborations are initiated with the Open Chain partners, the five sourcing principles are fundamental for execution, because Open Chain is based on the five sourcing principles. Albert Heijn's own brand, Delicata, is an often-mentioned example during the interviews and in Tony's annual report (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). Albert Heijn has become a partner through Tony's Open Chain and now imitates Tony's way of purchasing cacao using the five sourcing principles (Tony's Chocolonely, 2019). By bringing in a large company like Albert Heijn, Tony's Chocolonely hopes that other big companies will also be encouraged to imitate their way of sourcing cacao beans. Additionally, Tony's Chocolonely is already partly satisfied when an organization starts considering the benefits of sourcing cacao in a slave-free way, because this would indicate that Tony's has already made some impact and awareness is created regarding their mission.

Although the five sourcing principles have been formulated by Tony's to manage the contact between the chocolate companies and the cacao farmers in Africa, the principles also partially apply to the relationship between Tony's Chocolonely and their partners. For instance, concerning long-term agreements, Tony's Chocolonely can only make an impact with long-term collaborations. Cooperating on the long-term is therefore a requirement for organizations become part of Open Chain. Consequently, it is not part of Tony's strategy that competitors observe Tony's Chocolonely's strategy, advertise their collaboration, and then leave the Open Chain. Doing so would only create an impact in the short time, but nothing of substance would be achieved in the long run. This is corroborated by the interview with Erik, which indicated that many players on the market advertise their sustainability program but fail to take any major steps and make good on their promises. This is "greenwashing", and Tony's Chocolonely wants

to prevent this. The interview with Peter adds that greenwashing does not happen within Tony's Chocolonely, which is one of the reasons why Peter works here.

In conclusion, coopetition with Tony's Chocolonely can be stimulated by Tony's five sourcing principles. It is of interest to Tony's competitors to be part of this coopetition for a longer term because both parties can rely on each other for long periods of time. Long-term coopetition increases the intensity of the partnership for both partners, which makes the situation more complicated because organizations depend on each other for a longer period (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). However, the chance of value creation increases as well (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). This value creation makes it more attractive to invest in each other on the long term instead of a shorter period or to set up a collaboration only on one project. The high degree of coopetition can be seen positively because the organizations work together towards the same goal. With an intense partnership, more impact might be made in shorter periods of time.

4.2.3 Campaigns

To create awareness of their mission, Tony's Chocolonely extensively uses various media. In addition to social media, Tony's Chocolonely runs advertisements on their website and, recently, in the bus stops. Tony's Chocolonely's 2017/2018 annual report indicates that these actions have attracted attention abroad (Tony's Chocolonely, 2018). For example, Tony's Chocolonely's campaigns have been featured in the media in Belgium and Germany. This indicates that what Tony's Chocolonely does is unique, and this international attention can be an opportunity for imitation: foreign companies become aware of Tony's Chocolonely's core mission through these campaigns and may be inspired to do the same.

Tony's Chocolonely tries to respond to the market by selling seasonal products, for instance, during Sinterklaas, Christmas, and Easter. Because Tony's Chocolonely is an impact company, a campaign is always made to increase its impact. This can be done, for example, by involving another company. Thus, in collaboration with Oxfam Novib, Tony's Chocolonely created a slave-free chocolate letter (as mentioned in article 29, see numerical representation in appendix 4). These letters are corresponding to the first letter of your name, as a gift from Sinterklaas in the Netherlands. This is an initiative in which a company's mission is spread in a unique and striking way. A collaboration, such as the one with Oxfam Novib, can create brand awareness

and can influence other chocolate companies to imitate this strategy. Imitating an organization like Tony's Chocolonely, which is strongly represented in their field, is an attractive method for other organizations to gain legitimacy and reduce uncertainty (Ordanini et al., 2008). However, these organizations should know that Tony's Chocolonely approves of imitation of its practices, as it is generally not acceptable to simply copy another company's practices or products.

To approach the Big Choco (the large chocolate companies) about their way of sourcing cacao and to stimulate them to operate in the same way as Tony's Chocolonely, Tony's Chocolonely has chosen an unusual strategy. In 2021, Tony's launched a campaign in which chocolate bars of their four competitors were copied and their corporate identity was used on the wrapper of a Tony's chocolate bar. This campaign was called "A Sweet Solution to a bitter truth" (see Appendix 2). The tastes of these chocolate bars were used to create a Tony's Chocolonely new version of Twix, Toblerone, KitKat, and Ferrero Rocher. More important, these new tastes were produced in a slave-free manner, which was not the case with the original chocolate bars of these brands. With this idea, Tony's Chocolonely wanted to create awareness by showing that these brands can also source cacao in a fair way and can no longer hide from the reality of child labor and modern slavery.

*"It is an action with a wink. We hope for cooperation in this chocolate industry." –
Thecla Schaeffer, head of marketing – Article 7*

This quotation shows that this campaign was used as a playful way to introduce a serious subject. It was an introduction to a new program to tackle child labor. The opportunity arose for Big Choco to imitate practices of Tony's Chocolonely or to even become partner of Open Chain. Tony's 2020/2021 annual report indicates that some of the Big Choco companies positively responded to the Sweet Solution campaign: they were pleased with the commitment to the fight against child labor and modern slavery and indicated that they wanted to work together with Tony's on this joint agenda. Unfortunately, however, the interview with Bibianne indicated that this campaign has not yet had any effect on the production of the competitors who have expressed the desire to cooperate. Despite this, the Sweet Solution campaign has generated substantial attention in the media and the Big Choco to Tony's Chocolonely's brand and mission. This may have an indirect effect on the competition opportunities, perhaps in the long run.

The results of section 4.2 illustrate that Tony's Chocolonely is making an impact and is creating awareness of their brand and mission. First, by enabling cooptation via Open Chain, Tony's Chocolonely ensures that impact is being made by allowing competing companies to imitate their way of operating. This brings Tony's Chocolonely one step closer to achieving their mission, as they help competing organizations to contribute positively to this mission. Second, the five sourcing principles especially have a high impact on the cacao farmers in Africa. However, by sharing these principles and the positive outcomes of working with these principles with other companies, Tony's Chocolonely is stimulant for imitation. Research of Mention (2011) supports this result by explaining that imitation is triggered by sourcing information from competition. Finally, Tony's Chocolonely's outstanding campaigns make Tony's Chocolonely a unique company and create awareness among their customers and their competitors. By approaching competitors with the benefits of cooptation in achieving a mission, imitation of practices is stimulated because the competitors want to achieve the same for their brand.

4.3 Stimulation through (social) media

In comparison to other food brands, Tony's Chocolonely has many followers on social media (for example, on Instagram). In the interview with Ester, it is discussed that as Tony's Chocolonely has grown as a company, so has their criticism. Ester explained that Tony's Chocolonely has faced criticism from various groups of people, for instance followers on Instagram and journalists, who speak negatively about the brand. Instead of being disappointed by criticism, Tony's Chocolonely seizes this opportunity and uses it to start a conversation:

"We are so convinced that we are doing very well, but we also say: it is never finished. So, keep asking us." – Ester

This quote shows that Tony's Chocolonely admits that they are not perfect and not finished achieving their mission. If a Chocofan (interested and committed customers of Tony's Chocolonely) or another company has ideas that Tony's Chocolonely has not yet thought about, these ideas are immediately investigated by Tony's Chocolonely, by paying attention to the possibilities. Tony's Chocolonely is grateful for this openness and makes themselves unique by sharing the next steps in the progress of innovation with the Chocofans. This transparency is important for Tony's Chocolonely and makes them accessible to both consumers and

competitors, which is how Tony's Chocolonely participates in cooptation. As a result, taking these ideas seriously and continuing to develop their strategy (in part, by considering these ideas) contributes to Tony's Chocolonely successfully maintaining their competitive advantage over other companies (D'Aveni et al., 2010; Mariani & Belitski, 2022). Achieving and maintaining competitive advantage, in turn, effectively stimulates imitation.

Tony's Chocolonely is active on social media and uses this platform, along with other social media platforms, to contact their competitors. The interview with Bram, Brand Manager of Tony's Chocolonely, clarified that, for instance, Tony's Chocolonely often gives compliments to companies for the step that they have taken towards producing slave-free chocolate. Subsequently, Tony's Chocolonely also suggests what next steps this company can take in the future. This example shows that Tony's Chocolonely stimulates the companies they are competing with as well as other companies to never stop improving themselves. By starting the conversation, a company might be interested in the ideas and practices of Tony's Chocolonely. During this conversation, Tony's Chocolonely can mention its "special sauce", as characterized by Brandenburger and Nalebuff (2021). As a result, their expertise can help another organization to gain competitive advantage, or, alternatively, both parties can share their special resources to rule out common competition. By sharing their resources and/or stimulating an organization to imitate, cooptation can therefore be encouraged.

Tony's Chocolonely also competes on social media. Recently, cooptation between Albert Heijn and Tony's Chocolonely existed for three years. The two companies sent three chocolate bars to the press interested in this collaboration, to create brand awareness. Sharing the chocolate, and therefore the story behind it, sparked interest in the press to write about it. Notably, this cooptation has been going on for three years now, and Tony's Chocolonely have indicated that they are satisfied that Albert Heijn's chocolate bars are sold well. It is certainly an exceptional occurrence when companies are pleased for each other when things are going well within the competing company. The intention of value creation is a motivating aspect of cooptation (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). By sharing these successes in cooptation on social media, Tony's Chocolonely hopes that other companies will be stimulated to do the same, thus serving a launchpad for initiating cooptation with new companies.

Concludingly, in addition to being active on social media, more traditional media are used by Tony's Chocolonely as well. The chocolate bars sent to the press, for example, are an incentive

for the press to mention Tony's Chocolonely in newspaper articles. They also continuously post messages on their own website in which they keep interested parties informed about their developments and projects. The analysis presented in this section indicates that Tony's Chocolonely uses media for several reasons – not just to share their outcomes and campaigns with their audience but to stay in touch with their consumers and competitors. In particular, Tony's Chocolonely stimulates competitors via social media and offers them the opportunity to step into the Open Chain Principle, by showing them that activities can always be performed better. This creates an opportunity for their future partners to participate in coopetition with Tony's Chocolonely.

4.4 The role of competition

4.4.1 Convincing competition

Henk Jan Beltman, CEO of Tony's Chocolonely, mentions in Tony's annual report of 2020/2021 that Tony's Chocolonely is on its way to creating significant and revolutionary international impact through their Open Chain principle (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). More success will result in being more interesting to other companies, which will stimulate coopetition. This, in fact, has already happened with Albert Heijn, the largest supermarket chain in the Netherlands with a market share of 39,5 % (Albert Heijn, 2022). They became part of Tony's Open Chain and now source cacao beans for their private label Delicata in the same way as Tony's Chocolonely. The participation of a large company such as Albert Heijn hopefully makes other big competitors to consider coopeting with Tony's and stimulates this way of sourcing cacao beans.

In addition to companies approaching Tony's Chocolonely regarding the opportunities in the Open Chain, Tony's Chocolonely also actively approaches their competitors to convince them of joining their mission. These companies are then invited to talk about the Open Chain principle and convinced to join. In her interview, Ester indicated that smaller companies, in particular, are open to talk about the opportunities. She explains that larger companies are often locked into a certain production or marketing system, which makes it difficult for them to change their approach. Thus, even if the employees of large companies, responsible for this strategy, want to change, this is not easy to achieve. Hence, it is easier to connect small companies to the Open Chain.

“If Mars says we will be in your open chain tomorrow, then we do not have enough cacao beans. They are that big. But that would be a fantastic challenge” – Ester

While it is expected that big companies will not suddenly change their minds about joining the Open Chain, this quote of Ester implies that Tony’s Chocolonely is not afraid of a challenge. Every interview has shown that the mission to make the world better together is more important to Tony’s Chocolonely than the company’s additional activities. Consequently, Tony’s Chocolonely likes to take on the challenge. For instance, cooperation with a large company like Mars would be a big opportunity.

Correspondingly, it does happen that Tony’s Chocolonely has been in contact with a competing company for a long time, and suddenly an opportunity arises to work together. In that case, the opportunity is taken to make the competitor familiar with the way of sourcing cacao using the principles of Tony’s Chocolonely, to improve the sourcing methods of a competitor. On the other hand, this cooperation can be used for marketing purposes: to create awareness, leading by example, and inspire to act (for instance, by involving Chocofans or by approaching influencers), to be used for the achievement of the common goal or to generate interest in other competitors to join the Open Chain.

The more organizations imitate Tony’s or become part of their Open Chain, the more interesting it becomes for other companies to join. Organizations adopt structures and practices that many other organizations implement, because when multiple companies adopt a practice, the legitimacy of that practice is increased (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). In theory, that could mean that the number of cooperating partners will continue to increase, as Tony’s becomes more interesting to imitate. In addition, with a larger group of cooperating companies, more impact can be made, accelerating the execution of Tony’s Chocolonely’s mission. This, in turn, can stimulate even more companies to imitate because it is faster to meet the goals working together than when doing it alone.

4.4.2 Collaborate on cacao, compete on chocolate

It was noticeable during the interviews that every employee indicated that Tony’s Chocolonely’s main goal is not to make profit and that Tony’s Chocolonely, therefore, do not compete with other companies. As explained earlier, it emerged from the analysis of the

interviews and documentary analysis, that the company needs profit to be interesting to be imitated. The interview with Belinda (Impact editor & Chocolonely Foundation Manager), provided clarity on this, as quoted below:

“What we always say is: we collaborate on cacao, but we compete on chocolate. Which works very well because it has a lot of c’s in the sentence. It looks good when you write it down. Basically, what that means, it is an absolutely absurd idea to put the competition, the capitalist competition, on the backs of farmers” – Belinda

This quotation implies that within coopetition, there is competition only concerning the sales of the chocolate bars. Everything that happens in the chain before the bars are in the supermarket is not based on this competition. Especially in these previous steps, Tony’s Chocolonely needs its competitors to cooperate. As a result, the farmers at the beginning of the chain will earn a living income and experience wellbeing (Tony’s Chocolonely, 2021). Nevertheless, this process can still be understood as coopetition, because the two companies compete and cooperate simultaneously (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Gnyawali et al., 2006; Lado et al., 1997). It is only during the sourcing of cacao beans that they do not compete. It is therefore recommended that Tony’s mention this in their communication with potential competitors. It is imaginable that the Big Choco quickly lose their interest upon hearing that Tony’s Chocolonely’s business model is not about making profit and maximizing their sales of chocolate bars. In the end, Tony’s Chocolonely cannot be successful without selling chocolate bars, and this needs to be communicated clearly for Tony’s to remain of interest to other companies.

During the interview with Peter (sales department), it became obvious that Tony's Chocolonely values fairness in the way farmers are treated in Africa, but also in their principle that the employees always come first. The company attaches great value to these norms and values, and employee wellbeing is important in the whole chain of collaboration on cacao. This means that they expect the same from their partners, including those that joined the Open Chain. They work together and take each other into account from the first moment of cooperation, until the chocolate is in the shops and supermarkets. At that moment the competition starts. However, from the information gathered through the interviews, it can be concluded that Tony’s Chocolonely is satisfied if a coopeating company is doing well in sales. Tony’s goal in coopetition is to make a bigger impact together, making it beneficial for everyone. Since

employee wellbeing is becoming an increasingly important topic for organizations in relation to an organization's performance (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Hamilton Skurak et al., 2021), Tony's norms and values can be used in the stimulation of imitation of practices in their competitors. So, the fact that Tony's Chocolonely is aware and highly cares about this issue makes it more interesting to cooperate with.

The distinctions clarified in this subsection indicate that successful examples of cooperation or the practices of Tony's Chocolonely increase other companies' interest in imitation or competition. One obstacle to this process is that larger companies cannot easily adjust their strategy, making it harder for Tony's to convince them to imitate their practices. However, as explained in this subsection, the cooperation offered by Tony's Chocolonely mainly focuses on the practices before the chocolate bars reach the supermarkets. This could make a difference for Big Choco in their consideration of imitation. Therefore, communication with competitors is an important aspect both in cooperation and the stimulation of imitation.

4.5 Legal change

In addition to cooperation in sourcing cacao beans and producing chocolate in a fair way, Tony's Chocolonely also cooperates with competitors in promoting positive legal changes congruent with their mission. A notable example of the latter is the Child Labor Law, mentioned during the interviews and in the annual report (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). Tony's Chocolonely collected signatures, from everyone who wanted to support, for a petition concerning this law and went to the European parliament in Brussels together with competitors to stand up for this subject:

“In October 2018, we argued for European legislation together with other chocolate companies in the EU in Brussels. And here too the following applies: it is a matter of persevering and continuing, until it is really well regulated in a beautiful law.” - Annual report 2018/2019

The above quote shows that while it can be difficult to achieve a mission even when multiple companies collaborate, companies still have a bigger impact when they work together. Subsequently, the visit to Brussels and the campaigns concerning the law bill (proposal for a new law) at the European Commission resulted in a new Child Labor Law. Tony's Chocolonely

wrote the bill together with other parties, and the bill has been approved. The law is about the companies' responsibility for what happens in their production chain, and that the individual (e.g., a cacao farmer) who must deal with the conditions of the industry on his own, is not responsible for preventing child labor. This is because farmers do not want their children to work but must do so, due to the heavy workload that makes them unable to do the work alone. The aim of this new bill was to ensure that a company can be held accountable for child labor and is prosecutable if it does not comply with the rules. This is not approved but is adapted to a moral responsibility, instead of a legal offense.

From the results of the interviews, it became clear that coopepetition with Tony's Chocolonely also involves engagement in legal change, once more clarified in the quotation below:

“The point is that companies are responsible for what happens in their chain and that you do not place the responsibility on the individual.” ... “We wanted companies to be held accountable for this, so that you would be punished if you don't. And that has been adjusted, the nuance to; you are kind of morally responsible, rather than immediately punishable.” - Umut

To make a joint impact in the cacao industry and to convince governments to make changes, reliable and independent information is needed (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). In Tony's Chocolonely's annual report of 2020/2021, it is reported that VOICE, a global network of NGO's and Trade Unions working on sustainability in cacao (VOICE Network, n.d.), is helping Tony's Chocolonely by sharing their research in the cacao industry. Tony's Chocolonely coopes in this legal challenge with competitors, including Mondelez, Mars, Nestlé, and Unilever. Coopeting with the Big Choco ensures bigger impact regarding legal subjects, such as child labor and modern slaver. Consequently, this coopepetition creates opportunities for the future. Once Tony's Chocolonely is in contact with the Big Choco, it will become easier to convince them to become part of the Open Chain or to imitate (parts of) Tony's Chocolonely's business model. An important first step in convincing these large companies was made by Tony's Chocolonely in their “Sweet Solution” campaign, in which these companies were held accountable for their practices regarding slavery and child labor.

In summary, this section has shown that Tony's Chocolonely does not only coopepete regarding the production and selling of chocolate, but that they attach great importance to the

circumstances in which this market operates, by sharing their dedication towards this subject with several Big Choco companies. The existing competition with the large companies on legal issues, and by constantly contacting competitors about this subject, might lead to the imitation of practices concerning sourcing cacao in the future.

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This section will provide a critical discussion regarding the insights of this study. Chapter 5.1 consists of the interpretation of the findings, theoretical and practical contributions, limitations of this research, suggestions for future research and a reflection on the role as a researcher. In chapter 5.2, a conclusion to the research question is provided.

5.1 Discussion

The objective of this research was to gather insights from the literature on cooperation and imitation and to explore how an organization can stimulate imitation through cooperation. Through the interviews with employees of Tony's Chocolonely in combination with data from newspaper articles and annual reports, these insights are provided.

5.1.1 The interpretation of findings

This study was conducted to provide an answer to the main research question: *"How can an organization stimulate imitation of practices through cooperation?"* This question was examined through the perspective of an organization that wants to and is being imitated (Tony's Chocolonely), in comparison to the standard approach taken in the literature, which focuses on the organizations that do the imitating. In this section, key points of overlap and contrast between these two perspectives are reviewed.

First, based on the findings in the interviews and documentary analysis, this research shows that organizations that want to be imitated try to make it as easy as possible for other organizations to copy their practices. By creating programs or communities that can be easily joined by an interested company, the barrier to imitate is lowered as much as possible. This finding fits well with the literature on the benefits associated with being a second mover. Thus, research shows that imitation can be a useful strategy, whereby second movers profit from the first mover undertaking the risks related to product development (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). Since this research has chosen to focus on the perspective of a company which functions as first mover, it can be stated that the first mover can benefit from taking the risks related to product development. Specifically, this organization is willing to take the first-mover risks because doing so would increase its chances of being imitated by other companies.

Second, this research showed that an organization must be profitable to be imitated. If an organization is not profitable, then other organizations might not take the risk of imitating its practices. Accordingly, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that being imitated may indicate the success and leadership of an organization in its field. Being successful as stated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and being profitable, as came forward from the interviews, can be interpreted similarly: both indicate that an organization is doing well. Therefore, can be stated that this research supports the findings of DiMaggio and Powell (1983). This conclusion, however, contrasts with other approaches to imitation. Instead of seeing imitation as a potential success factor, several sources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991) argue that a company can maintain its competitive advantage only if it has valuable, rare, hard to imitate, and/or replaceable resources. It has also been argued that without barriers towards the imitation of resources, a company can achieve only a temporary competitive advantage (Peteraf, 1993). However, the opposite to these statements emerges in the present research. Tony's Chokolonly became a market leader of the chocolate industry in the Netherlands in 2017 and has not let go of its title since then (Tony's Chokolonly, 2021, n.d.-b). This means that this organization, which regularly stimulates imitation, is successful and has a competitive advantage. Importantly, this effect is robust since Tony's Chokolonly has retained its position as a market leader for almost five years now.

Third, concerning the performance of an organization, imitation can be characterized as a behavioral strategy aiming to gain legitimacy in the fields in which organizations operate (Henisz & Delios, 2001; Ordanini et al., 2008). Organizations experience uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of their practices and structures (Haunschild & Miner, 1997). According to Ordanini et al. (2008), the best strategy for actors to increase legitimacy and decrease uncertainty is to model their actions after those of powerful organizations or groups that are well represented in their industry. Regarding uncertainty, this research has shown that by imitating the decisions of a key player, uncertainty is reduced. This is because the decisions and practices are already established by the key player, prior to the imitation and have been performed before with successful outcomes. Regarding legitimacy, this study did not yield any significant results. While the study's theoretical framework (chapter 2) indicated some links to legitimacy, nothing was discovered about legitimacy during the interviews and the review of internal documents and newspaper articles. However, it should be noted that legitimacy was not specifically asked about during the interviews, and there was no targeted search on this concept during document review. Since legitimacy is an important concept when analyzing

relationships between a company and its environment (Mousa & Hassan, 2015), and since organizational dynamics are the core of the concept of organizational legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), this concept could be of added value for the understanding of stimulation of practices through cooptation. It would therefore be useful to conduct more research into the relationship between legitimacy and cooptation on the one hand, and legitimacy and imitation on the other hand, and the overlap between them, in future studies.

Fourth, regarding the distinction between one-on-one copying and a creative way of imitating a strategy (Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Schnaars, 2002; Shankar et al., 1998), this research has added a new dimension. In this case study, the situation occurred that the target company's strategy was being imitated by other companies, and this strategy leads to different outcomes for different companies. All tools necessary for implementing the right strategy prior to the production and sales process have been offered by the organization that is being imitated, allowing its competitors to perform the relevant processes in the exact same way. These tools include clear and helpful communication, whereas in other cases of imitation, good communication can be lacking because companies do not feel free to ask. Normally, once organizations have all the resources available to make their own product, they are free to develop and innovate. In context of cooptation, however, there are always possibilities for collaboration and discussion. This shows that imitation can be used in several ways, and so the status of imitation is not so black and white as is often presented in the literature. Organizations can imitate each other fully or only partially, and communication is an important factor for the outcomes.

The fifth finding of this research concerns the combination of rivalry and mutuality in cooptation, and that through joint innovation and efficiency, mutual outcomes are maximized (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018). This research corroborates these ideas in part, by showing that two parties can perform better in cooptation: efficiency is gained because an imitating organization can easily adopt an existing strategy. However, no results on joint innovation have arisen in this research. The imitated organization in this case study has no need (yet) for innovation, due to their focus on using imitation to improve the outcomes at the beginning of the production chain. Exploring the innovation aspect, however, might be interesting for future research because, unlike the case study, organizations always continue to improve and might want to include their competing partners. Specifically for this case study, exploring the

innovation aspect can be interesting for future research to determine how the organizations can continue cooperating after the mission of slave-free cacao sourcing has been achieved.

Sixth, this case study research showed that the imitated organization wants the best result for all parties involved in the imitating process. This is a good way to approach organizations for participation in cooperation: it causes the organizations to be interested in cooperating, since they know that the aim is to bring out the best in each other. Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton (2018) argue that the simultaneity of cooperation and competition is important for positive outcomes and highlight a difference between low and high intensity of cooperation. An interesting addition to the above statements of Gnyawali and Ryan Charleton (2018) from this research is that during the process of cooperation, the intensity of cooperation might change: whereas in the first part of the (in this case sourcing-) process, the practices are imitated one on one, after sourcing, the imitating organization can determine for itself how these practices are to be continued to create a product. The first phase of cooperation in this case study is therefore very intense because of the demanding cooperation. Research indicates that such high degree of intensity entails risks, but that it can also lead to higher value creation (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018): because the imitated strategy has already been implemented multiple times, the risks for the imitating organization (such as the one explored in the present study) decrease. With that, value is created for both parties because they can help each other in achieving each other's mission.

Seventh, this research has shown that the basis for cooperation is sharing knowledge and resources, which supports existing literature. Hallberg and Brattström (2019) state that concealing and revealing knowledge can result in the imitation by competitors. Mention (2011) shows that imitation is triggered by sourcing information from competition. In this research, imitation was an explicit aim for the imitated and imitating organizations, which makes it possible to look at this literature in a different way. Instead of concealing and revealing knowledge can result in imitation by competitors, in this study it is worded as 'by concealing and revealing knowledge, imitation can be stimulated', where in this research the nuance is made to revealing and sharing knowledge. Sourcing information from competition is performed intentionally because imitation takes place within the context of cooperation.

Eight, this research has shown that imitation and cooperation can occur simultaneously. From previous literature, it emerged that collaboration with competitors increases the propensity for

imitation (Mariani & Belitski, 2022), whereby the more intense the cooperation, in terms of degree of competition and collaboration, the greater the chance that companies will imitate. This research offers further support for these findings: when companies cooperate, they share their resources, and when the resources are shared, the organizations are likely to imitate each other's practices. Given that in this case study imitation was an explicit goal for the target organization, the outcome that when sharing resources, the likelihood of imitating practices increases, is viewed as positive. However, this research shows that companies sometimes only imitate those parts of the practices they are interested in. In this case study, imitating the entire strategy is valuable in terms of social responsibility, and imitating just one practice would not bring high value. It should be noted that companies that only imitate part of the strategy are often companies that have not yet entered an official cooperating partnership, and therefore should be stimulated to do so, in order that value can be created.

Last, the propensity for imitation tends to increase when organizations cooperate, as previously noted. When knowledge is shared with the company's competitors, this sharing is stimulated by a high degree of familiarity (Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Shane, 2000), which results in a decrease in the organizations' control over their knowledge (Katila & Ahuja, 2002; Mariani & Belitski, 2022; Srivastava & Gnyawali, 2011). These findings from previous literature also emerge in this research and are experienced as logical. When an organization shares its knowledge with its competitors, its control over this knowledge will weaken as a result. However, when an organization consciously chooses to share knowledge and resources with the competing organization (as is done in cooperation), the weakening of control will not be viewed as a negative outcome. Concludingly, an organization consciously chooses to share knowledge, aiming for value creation when this knowledge is used by imitating organizations.

5.1.2 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to literature on imitation of practices and cooperation. Examining the perspective of an organization that is being imitated provided new insights into the stimulation of imitation through cooperation, which interestingly differ from the insights drawn in research on the organizations that imitate.

First, this research positively contributes to literature by highlighting what an organization can gain from imitation through cooperation, instead of trying to protect itself from imitation.

Previous research on this topic stated that the ability of a company to gain from cooptation is affected by the extent to which this company can protect its innovations and core knowledge against imitation (Bouncken et al., 2015; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). The results of this study, however, demonstrate that imitation can positively influence a company's strategy and therefore positively affects the development of cooptation. This case study shows that imitation of practices by an organization can be used to achieve a common goal. Therefore, these innovations and knowledge should not be protected against imitation in organizations who wish to cooptate, but rather, shared with competitors aiming for shared outcomes.

The second theoretical contribution concerns the motivation for cooptation. Resource scarcity, performance distress, and situations of coercive pressure are identified as basic motivations for cooptation by Schermerhorn Jr (1975). In this case study, cooptation can be seen as performance distress because the organization that is being examined (Tony's Chocolonely) cannot achieve its mission alone. However, this organization does not need cooptation to be successful, as it has already achieved success, but needs cooptation in achieving a mission. Therefore, this study offers an interesting extension to the current literature, and namely, it demonstrates that cooptation is not valuable only when something is missing in a company's business model or in situations where cooptation is needed for a business to survive. Instead, this study shows that two successful companies can improve themselves through cooptation by imitating (parts of) each other's strategy. This, in turn, can solve the problem of resource scarcity through the sharing of knowledge and resources. As a result, organizations can help each other in achieving their mission, which solves performance distress.

Third, it is interesting to point out that imitation occurs highly deliberately for the target organization explored in this study. Thus, in the case of Tony's Chocolonely, organizations are persuaded to imitate. This perspective drastically differs from how imitation is standardly viewed in the literature. Literature exists on conscious imitation (explored in this research), as well as on imitation occurring less consciously (Haunschild & Miner, 1997; Zucker, 1977). However, this literature on conscious imitation uses the perspective of the organization that imitates. Present research shows that the organization being imitated can in fact benefit from imitation and thereby can actively encourage it. For example, being imitated can help an organization in achieving a mission, if an organization cannot reach by itself. Moreover, by encouraging imitation, the imitated organization can give direction to what is imitated (or what is not) and how this process is done.

The final point of theoretical contribution made by this research concerns the first-mover risks undertaken by the organization that is being imitated. Existing research shows that organizations that imitate often do this to avoid the risks associated with being the first mover (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988). This study, however, showed that organizations that want to be imitated, like to present their positive results to other companies to stimulate their interest in imitation. In contrast to presenting results, it could be interesting for organizations that want to be imitated to show the efforts that they have made to create these positive outcomes, concerning first mover risks that are taken to gain these results. Presenting the efforts and the risks that are taken by the (wanting to be) imitated organization, may be stimulant for other organizations to imitate. In summary, while the current literature predominantly sees the first-mover risks as negative, this research extends this theory by clarifying the positive aspects of being the first mover, and in particular, harnessing these aspects to stimulate imitation.

To summarize, coopetition can be a useful strategy to explore for organizations that want to be imitated. This research has contributed important insights on particular benefits that may come from doing so. First, when an organization has a mission, it cannot achieve on its own, it may rely on other organizations to achieve this mission. By collaborating with its competitors, substantial progress can be made towards achieving its mission. Second, by encouraging imitation, the organization can also give direction to the way other organizations use their strategy, especially when certain tools are offered (such as Tony's concept of the Open Chain and the five sourcing principles) (Tony's Chocolonely, n.d.-c; Tony's Open Chain, n.d). By imitating practices through the tools that are provided, the imitating organization avoids the first-mover risks (Haunschild, 1993; Lieberman & Montgomery, 1988), and the imitated organization can ensure that the right strategy is followed for achieving the mission.

5.1.3 Practical contributions

When conducting this study, several interesting practical contributions came to light. First, for an organization to gain interest in imitating the practices of another organization, the advantages of coopetition should be visible. As was stated in the interviews, this is best achieved by leading by example. To make coopetition accessible to new companies, a ready-to-use program, such as Tony's Chocolonely's Open Chain, is recommended. With a ready-to-use program, companies no longer need to reinvent the wheel, making it more attractive to them to engage in

coopetition. The benefits for the organization that is considering imitating another organization should be clear to the company, to make a reasonable choice on whether to join the coopetition.

Second, an interesting characteristic for stimulating imitation to a company's competitors arose while triangulating data from previous literature with data originated in this study. Imitating decisions of key players or powerful organizations is the best way to gain legitimacy and reduce uncertainty (Ordanini et al., 2008). The organization that wants to be imitated in this case study is a market leader and therefore a key player in its field. When this information is relayed to potential cooperating partners, or becomes obvious otherwise, it, together with the benefits entailed by imitating a powerful organization, can constitute a powerful stimulus for imitation.

As indicated before, leading by example is a key characteristic of the target organization in this case study in its strategy towards coopetition. Within this strategy, the organization is working with the five sourcing principles (see section 4.2.2). The third practical contribution of this study concerns that other organizations can imitate these principles when entering a cooperating partnership with Tony's. Working with these five principles is likely to pay off, as the organization that is being imitated has already positively experienced working with these principles, and therefore using these five principles is an interesting tool for other organizations to imitate. Given that uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of practices and structures, experienced by the organizations, is a common phenomenon (Haunschild & Miner, 1997), sharing beneficial approaches can be used to stimulate imitation.

Although sharing practices can be used to stimulate imitation, organizations must know that they are permitted to imitate. Since imitation is typically viewed negatively, companies interested in imitating a practice or a strategy might be ashamed to engage in imitation. Therefore, the last practical contribution of this study is that organizations that want to be imitated need to show their competition that imitation is accepted and welcome. This research shows that organizations wanting to be imitated can best achieve awareness of this by entering a conversation with their competitors. In this case study, for instance, organizations are stimulated via social media by giving compliments on what they are currently doing and by indicating what can be done better in the future. This positive approach creates openness towards each other, which stimulates interest in coopetition. However, an alternative strategy is also possible to promote coopetition: organizations can also be called out about their flaws. Although this requires a bolder approach, an organization can use this to informally challenge

their competition for possible improvements. If competition is open to improvement, this is an excellent opportunity to propose the imitation of practices and to compete.

5.1.4 Limitations

The first limitation concerns the generalizability of the findings of this study across other organizations in the chocolate industry. Because Tony's Chocolonely is a relatively small company, with a small number of employees in managing positions, a select number of interviews were conducted. Many of the same outcomes emerged in these interviews, and comparable answers were given to the questions. It was interesting to examine how employees from different departments of Tony's Chocolonely looked at certain topics differently. This, in combination with the data gathered from internal documents and newspaper articles, ensured good saturation of this research. However, a higher number of interviews would have increased the reliability and external validity of this research even further and would have also increased the degree of generalizability for other companies in the chocolate industry (Myers, 2020). Employees from several departments or other layers of the organization may have other experiences concerning this subject in comparison to the current participants. Subsequently, a higher number of interviews could have contributed to the understanding of imitation and competition in the company of this case study. Nevertheless, the researcher has been able to gather suitable information from the company to provide an answer to the research question.

Subsequently, this study is limited due to some (possible) unintended biases, which affected the generalizability of the results. This arose because the interviewees were all selected by one contact person within Tony's Chocolonely, and the participants could then decide whether they wished to participate in the study or not. Due to this way of generating the sample size, the employees who were not asked to participate did not have the opportunity to share their insights. These employees could have made an important contribution or have interesting views relevant for this research. It is also possible that the unapproached employees had a more neutral opinion than those who chose to participate in this study, or, conversely, they may have held stronger views compared to the actual participants. Their unintended exclusion may result in a bias in this study. For future research, the participants should be gathered in a more random manner.

Moving now to the third limitation, the data collected from newspaper articles did not contribute sufficiently to this research. The insights provided by the newspaper articles often confirmed

the information that emerged during the (introducing parts of the) interviews. However, the information that was collected from these documents was superficial and did not cover the relevant points with enough depth. Thus, the third limitation in this study is that, due to the poor information that emerged from newspaper articles, the researcher could not optimally triangulate with the data from the interviews and from internal documents. More in-depth articles about the strategy of Tony's Chocolonely would have amplified the data that was collected from the interviews, what might have provided a better interpretation of the results. However, the data gathered from the annual reports did have more in-depth information. In conclusion, while combined information sources made it possible to draw conclusions and did not yield any substantive problems in formulating results, supporting documents of high quality would have strengthened the outcomes of this research.

The fourth limitation of this research concerns the mission of Tony's Chocolonely. The focus on the mission of 100% slave-free chocolate was evident during the interviews. However, it became clear during the interviews that while this, indeed, is the focus of the company, its employees were not able to separate the company's mission from its other activities. Thus, when, for instance, a question was asked about a certain strategy, the answer always ended with the mission coming first. This pattern made it difficult to get a good illustration of company's alternative activities (such as contact with its competitors) without the mission mentioned as the most important goal. This focus on the mission may have influenced the outcomes of this study because less attention was paid to the concepts of imitation and competition.

Next, this case study is conducted in a thesis circle. Although dividing the data collection created the ability to collect more data, each researcher may have unintentionally focused on one's own subject. The fifth limitation of this study concerns this bias. Dividing data collection may have ensured that not all the relevant aspects were discovered in the interviews conducted by a given researcher. It is possible that other interviewers did not ask further questions about interesting areas for this research. As a result, data of added value may have been lost, or topics discussed during the interviews may have remained superficial where more information could have been discovered.

The sixth and final limitation concerns the scientific method deployed in this research. Single case studies provide little support for generalization (Yin, 1994). Here, a single case study was chosen due to the nature of the specific organization and the situation that is being examined

(see section 3.1). Although the researcher could go more into depth in this case study because of the focus on one particular case, investigating multiple cases would have contributed to the generalization of the study. This is an opportunity for future research.

5.1.5 Suggestions for future research

As mentioned in previous section, the generalizability of this study is limited. However, according to Myers (2020), conducting one case study is sufficient for gathering enough information to answer a research question. In particular, using more cases instead of one case will not increase the validity of the findings (Myers, 2020). Yin (2018) also notes that generalizing from a single case study is possible. However, it could be interesting for future research to conduct a multiple case study on this subject. For future studies, preliminary research can indicate other companies that are being imitated by competitors. It would contribute to this research and the literature if companies of other industries are included and compared with Tony's Chocolonely. The new data can corroborate or challenge earlier data and illustrate the differences between certain companies or branches.

Subsequently, from the perspective of this research, it is recommended to keep collecting data in this case study. Tony's Chocolonely is a company consisting of a small number of team members. However, not everyone has been interviewed. It would be interesting to examine more employees from different layers and departments of the organization. More interviews would ensure higher reliability (Myers, 2020), the same is applicable for the documents. More in-depth (newspaper) articles can be examined and analyzed. Finally, the results can be improved by reviewing internal documents, such as records of internal meetings.

In this research, the benefits for an organization that is being imitated have been examined. Another suggestion for future research is to find out the perspective of organizations that are going to imitate another organization. Earlier research has shown the perspective of organizations that imitate (Ordanini et al., 2008; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990; Snihur & Zott, 2013). However, scant academic research is conducted on organizations that intend to imitate. Once their motivation for this strategy is made clear, and the advantages and disadvantages are illustrated, this can create valuable insights for the organizations that are being imitated. Adding the information about the perspective of such organizations would improve this research and

offer an important contribution to the literature on imitation (for instance, by examining the considerations that this organization makes during the process of imitation).

The last suggestion for future research concerns the organization's legitimacy. Legitimacy emerged an interesting link with other key concepts in this study, because legitimacy is required for the imitation to take place (Ordanini et al., 2008). However, legitimacy cannot be directly used by the imitated organization in the stimulation of imitation through cooperation. This is because legitimacy is not a characteristic that an organization can simply impose on itself (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). For future research, it would be interesting to dive into this topic by examining the legitimacy of an organization that wants to be imitated and/or what effects legitimacy has on cooperation, and for instance if there are indirect ways to increase legitimacy?

5.1.6 Role as a researcher

Tony's Chocolonely is a well-known and unique company, viewed by the researcher in a positive way. This can cause a bias, which can have a negative influence on the results of the research. To prevent this, the researcher tried to dispose of this image of the company and view the company neutrally. During the interviews, however, it was difficult to stay focused because of the enthusiasm of the employees. This ensured that in some situations more attention was given to topics such as the company's mission, rather than the subject of this research and the questions that were asked. The researcher has tried to focus on the main topic of this research by asking again some of the questions to the interviewee. During the documentary analysis and the coding of the interviews, separating the organization from the research was beneficial for this study.

The researcher was part of a thesis circle, consisting of a group of three students with different subtopics within the single case study of Tony's Chocolonely. As mentioned in discussion of limitation of this study (section 5.1.4), during the interviews and the coding of the documents, all researchers may have an unintentional focus on their own research topic. This, however, has been anticipated by continuing to remind each another of the research subjects and by coding one document as a group to ensure the same coding style. In addition, the researchers regularly held meetings to discuss the topics and outcomes. This resulted in a focus for everyone's own research, with the opportunity for consultation regarding the overlapping parts.

Lastly, the relative lack of experience of the researcher may have influenced the quality of the study. Consequently, it is possible that the optimal result was not achieved during data collection and that considerable information was left behind during the interviews. The researcher was aware of her inexperience and therefore proceeded carefully while conducting this study and collaborating with other researchers in the thesis circle. Despite these limitations, this research has contributed positively to the development of the academic writing style of the researcher and ensured that the quality of the study was sufficiently improved during this iterative process.

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter provides a conclusion regarding the following research question: “*How can an organization stimulate imitation of practices through coopetition?*”. Coopetition is an interesting method for combining resources as competitors, ensuring that a company can improve itself and that competitors work efficiently towards a common goal. Coopeting companies need to realize that, in addition to cooperation, there is also room for competition. Companies can learn from each other and improve each other’s practices, while remaining competitors.

For organizations with a mission that they cannot achieve alone, coopetition can serve as a useful strategy. Within coopetition, competing companies imitate the strategy that leads to achieving a certain mission. In doing so, the organization that imitates avoids first-mover risks and can start performing the strategy avoiding unnecessary uncertainty and risks. For the organization that is being imitated, coopetition contributes to the achievement of the mission. Hence, imitation of practices can be applied to work together towards the same goal. The company that is being imitated, in turn, needs to provide the right tools to start coopeting, and the advantages of imitation must become visible to stimulate interest in other companies to cooperate.

For the stimulation of imitation, a ready-to-use program is recommended. This ensures that the competitor can easily imitate the relevant practices, and the company being imitated can know that the practices are well performed. Additionally, imitation can be stimulated by providing the right example. Organizations that want to be imitated must show that their business model works and that it is of interest to other organizations to imitate this strategy in whole or in part, both for making a profit and for being well-known by their customers. Moreover, as this case study concerns a high-impact company, in such cases it is also important to demonstrate that an actual impact is being made.

Finally, to convince its competitors of coopetition, media (including social media) can be used to prove that a company’s current strategy is lacking or that it is doing something incorrectly. Importantly, a company can be alerted to their shortcomings in a positive way. This engagement of the media can ensure that the benefits of coopetition are brought to light.

The last thing that can be concluded from this research is that a company's success is the biggest motivation for both imitation and competition. Successful competition between two companies both doing well in the industry makes it valuable for other companies to be part of it.

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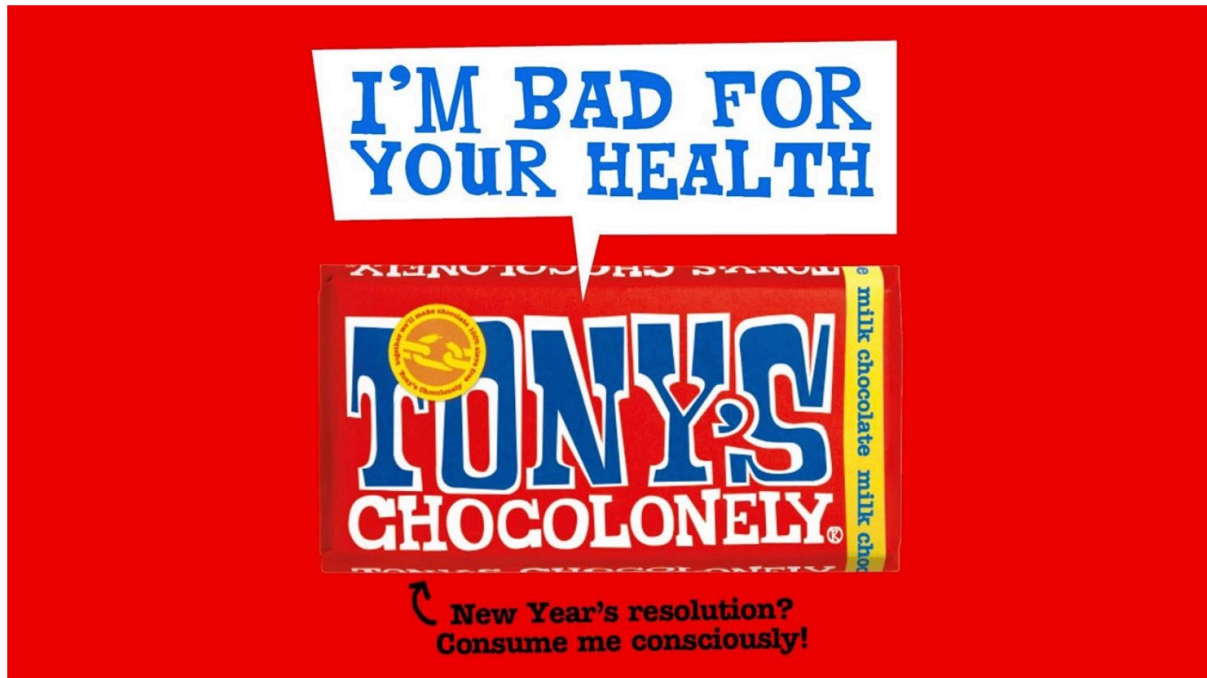
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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Advertisement Tony's Chocolonely



Appendix 2 - Sweet Solution campaign



Appendix 3 – Overview interviewees

Name interviewee	Position within Tony's Choclonely
Belinda	Impacticular Storyteller & Choclonely Foundation Manager (impact editor)
Bibianne	Princess Creatrix (marketing manager Benelux & Beyond)
Bram	Brand manager
Erik	Ecommerce manager
Ester	Country manager Benelux & Beyond
Juliette	Brand manager bars Benelux & Beyond
Lisette	Sales
Peter	Sales
Steven	Sales manager Benelux
Umut	First Aid Kid (chocofan insights captain)

Appendix 4 - Numerical representation newspaper articles

Number	Newspaper/company	Title
1.	AD	Beursgang Tony's is pr-stunt
2.	AD	Chocolade zonder slavenbloed, het kan dus
3.	AD	Chocoladeletters uit de supermarkt met fairtradekeurmerk: bekende merken vallen tegen
4.	AD	Tony's Chocolonely groeit niet meer in ons land: 'Milka is dit jaar nummer 1'
5.	AD	Topman Tony's Chocolonely aangehouden na 'politiek statement'
6.	AD	Impact Tony's Chocolonely voor slaafvrije chocolade blijft druppel op gloeiende plaat
7.	AD	Tony's Chocolonely wil cacao-industrie (opnieuw) wakker schudden
8.	De Telegraaf	Flinke groei maar geen winst bij Tony's
9.	De Telegraaf	Tony's Chocolonely laat groei zien in coronatijd
10.	De Telegraaf	Hogere chocolaprijs dreigt door cacaokartel in Afrika
11.	De Telegraaf	Eigenaar Tony's Chocolonely lonkt naar multinational
12.	De Telegraaf	Belangenclub: Tony's Chocolonely geen 'ethische producent'
13.	De Volkskrant	In de chocola van Tony zitten óók slaven
14.	De Volkskrant	Afgekeurd
15.	De Volkskrant	Cacaoboer heeft genoeg van hongerloon
16.	De Volkskrant	Tony brandt zich aan Zwarte Piet
17.	De Volkskrant	Tony's Chocolonely valt af van lijst van slaafvrije chocoladeproducenten ook al is de chocola zelf 100 procent slaafvrij
18.	De Volkskrant	Ruzies en blunders worden breed uitgemeten in Siebelinks boek over Tony's Chocolonely
19.	NRC	Chocola stuwt verkoopfairtrade
20.	Tony's Chocolonely	Here's our take on Nestlé's new program
21.	Trouw	Tony's Chocolonely helpt amper
22.	Trouw	Voor veel cacaoboeren is een leefbaar inkomen onrealistisch. Zij zijn meer geholpen met ander werk.
23.	Trouw	Tony's Chocolonely mag zich slaafvrij noemen

24.	Trouw	Chocola; Cacaoketen kiest voor verlicht eigenbelang
25.	Trouw	Chocoladejournalistiek; Hoe de Keuringsdienst van Waarde in repen gaat en laat zien hoe slaven cacao verbouwen.; zij van de media
26.	Trouw	De 'slaafvrije' chocolade van de KVV
27.	Trouw	De alarmbel die op de redactie had moeten klinken, ging niet af
28.	Trouw	Rechter erkent 'slaafvrije' chocolade
29.	Trouw	'Eerlijke' chocoladeletter op de markt
30.	Trouw	Tony's Chocolonely pleit voor wet die eerlijke cacaohandel afdwingt

Appendix 5 - Interview protocol

Introductie

Wij zijn masterstudenten Business Administration in de specialisatie Strategic Management aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. In het kader van onze afstudeerscriptie doen wij onderzoek naar de vraag hoe organisaties het gedrag van andere partijen in de industrie kunnen beïnvloeden. Individueel onderzoeken we dit onderwerp vanuit verschillende deelonderwerpen, maar allemaal door middel van een case study van Tony's Chocolonely. Om onze onderzoeksvragen goed te kunnen beantwoorden, hebben wij via Ester interviews met medewerkers van Tony's Chocolonely georganiseerd. Wij hopen dat u ons relevante en interessante informatie kan verschaffen. De informatie die wordt verkregen uit dit interview zal worden verwerkt in de resultaten en data-analyse van ons onderzoek en worden gebruikt voor onze conclusie. Het transcript van dit interview wordt niet gedeeld met Tony's Chocolonely, enkel de algemene bevindingen en getrokken conclusies. Indien gewenst, kunt u anoniem blijven. Anders zullen we mogelijk uw naam en functie benoemen.

Het interview bestaat uit open vragen. U bent uiteraard vrij om te bepalen op welke vragen u wel of geen antwoord geeft en op welke manier u dat doet. U bent ook vrij om op ieder moment te stoppen met het interview. Voor het verwerken van de informatie uit dit interview in de resultaten van ons onderzoek en in onze scripties zouden wij het gesprek graag willen opnemen, zodat wij het later volledig en betrouwbaar kunnen transcriberen. Gaat u hiermee akkoord? Tot slot, heeft u zelf nog vragen of wensen voordat we starten met het inhoudelijke interview?

Afsluiting

Tot zover onze inhoudelijke interviewvragen. Wij zullen betrouwbaar en met vertrouwelijkheid met uw antwoorden omgaan. Onze grote dank voor uw medewerking en openheid. Wij zullen naar aanleiding van de opname dit interview transcriberen. Het is mogelijk dat we u het transcript van het interview toesturen alsmede onze uiteindelijke versie van de master thesis, zodat u de resultaten van het interview kunt inzien. Wilt u dat?

Dan willen we u, ook namens de overige groepsleden die niet aanwezig zijn, nogmaals hartelijk danken voor uw medewerking aan dit interview. Mocht u nu of hierna nog vragen hebben, schroom dan niet om contact met ons op te nemen. Indien gewenst, kan een van ons zijn of haar contactgegevens achterlaten.

Interview vragen medewerkers Tony's Chocolonely

<p>Introductie</p>	<p>1. Hoe lang werkt u al bij Tony's Chocolonely en in wat voor functies bent u werkzaam geweest?</p> <p>a. Op welke afdelingen werkte u precies?</p> <p>b. Waarom bent u hier gaan werken?</p>
<p>Nu duidelijk is wie u bent en wat uw functie is binnen Tony's Chocolonely, zal het volgende gedeelte van het interview zich richten op enkele vragen over de strategie van het bedrijf en de wijze waarop deze tot stand komt.</p>	
<p>Strategie</p>	<p>2. Kunt u in uw eigen woorden vertellen waar Tony's Chocolonely voor staat? <i>Doelen, missie, visie...</i></p> <p>3. Hoe merkt u dat Tony's Chocolonely bijdraagt aan verandering in de chocolade industrie?</p> <p>a. Zijn er specifieke medewerkers dan wel functies die hieraan bijdragen en op welke manier?</p> <p>b. Hoe probeert u (in uw functie) bij te dragen aan deze verandering/missie die Tony's Chocolonely nastreeft?</p>
<p>De volgende vragen focussen zich op de vraag hoe Tony's Chocolonely probeert invloed uit te oefenen op bestaande instituties. Tony's Chocolonely bezit in onze ogen kenmerken van 'institutional entrepreneurship' en 'social entrepreneurship'. Bent u bekend met deze begrippen of zullen we u hier kort toelichting over geven?</p>	
<p>Institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurs /entrepreneurship & institutional change</p>	<p>4. Aan welke normen en waarden hecht Tony's Chocolonely waarde?</p> <p>a. Wat is de impact van deze normen en waarden op de strategievorming van Tony's Chocolonely?</p> <p>b. Welke normen en waarden willen jullie graag overdragen in de industrie?</p> <p>5. Tony's Chocolonely is een profit organisatie, aan de andere kant wil Tony's Chocolonely marktleider zijn op het gebied van</p>

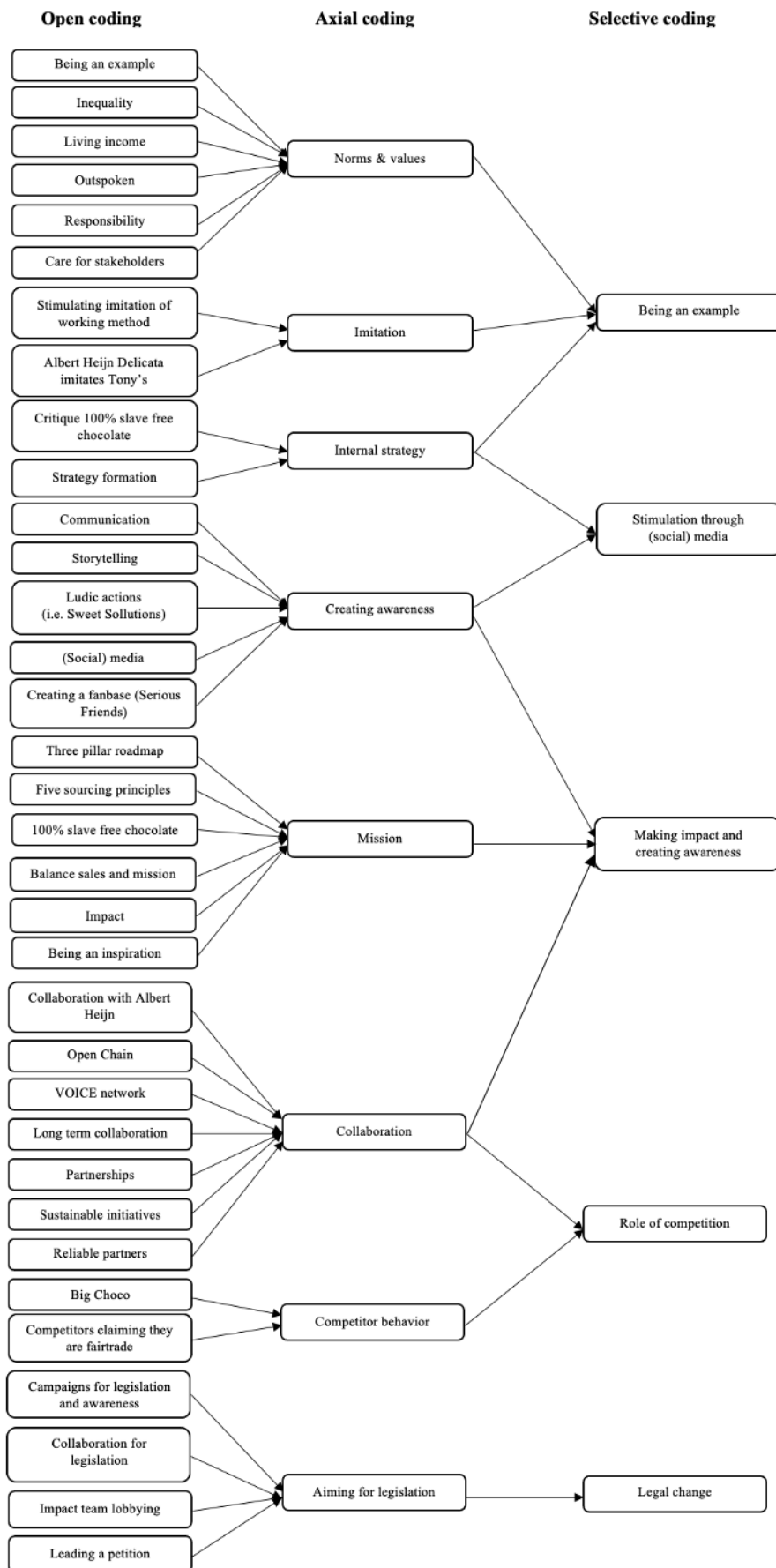
	<p>duurzaamheid en fairtrade. Hoe balanceren jullie die tweeledige doelstelling van winst en duurzaamheid?</p> <p>6. Hoe proberen jullie ervoor te zorgen dat overheden en wetgeving meer oog krijgen voor de problemen in de industrie die jullie willen aanpakken en hoe zorgen jullie ervoor dat er iets veranderd op het gebied van wetgeving en sanctionering? → <i>normen en waarden in industrie</i></p> <p>a. Wat is de strategie erachter? Passen jullie de organisatie daarop aan? Zien jullie al resultaat?</p> <p>7. Hoe zorgen jullie ervoor dat jullie consumenten of andere groepen bijdragen aan verandering in de chocolade industrie? <i>Bijvoorbeeld door hen problemen in de industrie onder de aandacht te laten brengen en de regering en andere organisaties in de industrie ter verantwoording te laten roepen?</i></p> <p>a. Wat is jullie strategie daarachter?</p> <p>b. Creëren jullie verder ook nog ander collectief activisme en waarom en hoe?</p> <p>c. Welke resultaten hebben jullie hiermee bereikt?</p>
<p>De volgende vragen die we u willen stellen, hebben betrekking op de concurrentie van Tony's Chocolonely en hoe en waarom Tony's daarmee samenwerkt en verandering in hun gedrag probeert te bewerkstelligen.</p>	
<p>Concurrentie en imitatie</p>	<p>8. Waarom is het belangrijk/interessant om samen te werken met concurrenten?</p> <p>a. Wat wilt u bereiken met deze samenwerking?</p> <p>9. Wat heeft het voor een impact als een concurrent de activiteiten en doelen van Tony's imiteert?</p> <p>a. Is er een manier waarop deze imitatie gestimuleerd wordt?</p> <p>10. Waarom denkt Tony's dat het streven naar winstgevendheid van concurrenten leidt tot de problemen in de industrie? En hoe proberen jullie verandering te brengen in de focus op het streven</p>

	<p>naar winstgevendheid door andere spelers in de industrie? → <i>meest recente jaarverslag</i></p> <p>a. Zien jullie hier resultaat van?</p>
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Appendix 6 - Axial codes

RED	Aiming for legislation
BLACK	Change (institutional/social)
PINK	Changing societal mindset of socially responsible behavior of companies
TURQUOISE	Collaboration
PURPLE	Collective activism
DARK BLUE	Competitor behavior
LIGHT BLUE	Creating awareness
DARK GREEN	Imitation
YELLOW	Entrepreneurial
ORANGE	Mission
BROWN	Norms & values
GREY	Organizational design / internal strategy

Appendix 7 – Data Structure



Appendix 8 - Planning

The deadline of this research proposal is the 25th of March 2022. The deadline of the master thesis is the 13th of June 2022. The data for this research will be collected from week 13 until week 17. When the interviews with employees from Tony's Chocolonely will be conducted depends on their availability. After that, from week 16 to week 19, the data will be analyzed. Following with the analysis and establishing of results in week 19 until 21. In week 21 until 23 the conclusion and discussion are formulated. Finally, week 23 and 24 will be used for the finishing touches and to process feedback. In the figure below, an overview of the time schedule is provided.

Research phase	Tasks per phase	week 12	week 13	week 14	week 15	week 16	week 17	week 18	week 19	week 20	week 21	week 22	week 23	week 24
Research proposal	Deadline -> 25th of March													
Collect data	Development interview questions Tony's													
	Conducting interview at Tony's													
Analysing data	Analysis of the interviews													
	Formulating results													
Results	Write results chapter													
	Formulating conclusions													
Discussion & conclusion	Write discussion and conclusion chapter													
	Processing feedback													
Finishing touches	Processing feedback													
Final thesis	Deadline -> 13th of June													