

Report to Sten A Olsson's Foundation for Science and Culture

We received the Sten A Olsson's Scholarship prior to our departure for Hangzhou and Shanghai during spring 2017. Below is a brief report of our stay and the final results from the study. The scholarship has been used to finance the data collection for our research.



The research in China

Since both of us wanted to work with a topic concerning trends in the automotive industry, the decision was rather easy for us. The automotive industry has been characterised by mature markets, mergers and acquisitions, and trends towards lower costs in the production processes. Additionally, the automotive industry has starting to embrace a transition from focus purely on products to provide service offerings. Therefore, the topic of our thesis ended up as *Collaboration as a mechanism for servitization in the automotive industry: the case of China and Sweden*. The opportunity to conduct some of the research in China was ideal. The Chinese market is the largest and world's fast growing automotive market. Moreover, several Swedish automotive companies are active in the area, which made it easier for us to find respondents. Interviews with employees within the automotive industry were conducted both in Hangzhou, Shanghai and Gothenburg.

We also managed to get in contact with Dr. Jun Jin from the Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, through support from Professor Maureen McKelvey. Dr. Jun Jin shared a valuable Chinese perspective and support within the research project as well as cultural insights and experiences.

Result

An increasing amount of companies have starting to embrace a transition from focus purely on products to provide service offerings to customers, also termed as servitization. The automotive industry is one example which has identified the potential of creating value through services. It is suggested by literature that services should be developed by several actors, so-called co-creation. The process of developing new initiatives has although been considered as expensive, resource-intensive and connected with risks. To open up boundaries between companies is perceived as a way to improve the process for new initiatives. There is although a lack of research regarding how companies can collaborate in order to develop services in a traditionally product-focused industry.

The aim of the study was to examine how collaborations was used as a mechanism for developing services in the automotive industry. This was investigated through a qualitative strategy, and more specifically with the means of multiple-case study together with a comparative perspective between China and Sweden. Findings show that there is an absence of a clear structure regarding service development, such as formal processes and decision paths. Moreover, collaborations concerning service development are increasing across boundaries and are perceived as essential for future success. The collaborative perspective between China and Sweden reveals company-specific rather than country-specific differences.

The scholarship from Sten A Olsson's Foundation for Science and Culture has enabled us to conduct interviews in China as well as broaden our understandings of the Chinese context and culture.