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## **EFFECT OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES ON THE R&D AND MARKETING RELATIONSHIP**

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### **Abstract**

a) Briefly describe the existing state-of-the-art

The impact of management consultants conducting organizational development or human process interventions on intra-organizational relationships has been widely explored (Rothwell & Sullivan, 2005). However the impact of other kinds of management consultancy service such as innovation management consultancy services on intra-organizational relationships has not being addressed.

b) Explain the research gap that you are trying to fill

Cross-functional collaboration between R&D and marketing areas is critical to achieve innovation success (Gupta et al., 1986). However, there are individual and organizational factors that could impede integration and collaboration. Therefore, some research has explored possible solutions to improve this relationship (Griffin & Hauser 1996). It has been proposed that management consultants could promote intra-organizational relationships in their clients. This research is focused on a specific type of management consultancy, i.e. innovation management consultancy services (services specialized in developing, facilitating and managing their clients? innovation process in a collaborative

manner). Literature on the impact of innovation management consultants on organizational relationships is virtually non-existent. Given this fact, the objective of this research is to identify how innovation management consultancy services could modify the relationship between R&D and marketing

c) Give your main theoretical arguments

Since there is not substantial research on this area, this research follows an explorative approach. However, this research draws upon the domains of firm-level innovation management, performance measurement, and organisational change, with special attention given to the possible organizational learning. Learning is highlighted as prior research has proposed that management consultants promote organizational learning (Gable, 1996) that could be reflected in organizational changes and business success (Dierkes et al., 2001).

d) Spell out your method (and data, if an empirical paper)

This research uses a case study approach in order to generate a preliminary framework to describe the impact of innovation consultants on the R&D and marketing relationship. Twelve case studies were carried out. Information was obtained through interviews with innovation consultants, innovation directors, marketing managers, and R&D managers or leaders. These case studies comprised different type of innovation consultancy services conducted in large companies from different industrial sectors. Within and cross-case analysis has been performed.

e) Present your results

From the empirical evidence, a preliminary framework has been developed. This framework connects the importance of the characteristics of the client and the consultant, the different activities conducted by the consultant, and finally the changes promoted mainly as a consequence of the learning obtained. It is important to note that although interviewees recognized and provided anecdotic evidence of changes obtained after the consultancy services, the general opinion is that such changes were product of a multiple and diverse contributions.

This study has provided a useful initial step to describe the conditions under which consultancy firms could have major impact on the R&D?marketing relationship. Therefore, the next stage of this research stage will be focus on the validation of this framework.

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# EFFECT OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES ON THE R&D AND MARKETING RELATIONSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

The impact of management consultants conducting organizational development or human process interventions on intra-organizational relationships has been widely explored (Rothwell and Sullivan, 2005). However the impact of specific types of management consultancy service, such as innovation management consultancy services on intra-organizational relationships has not being addressed.

Cross-functional collaboration between R&D and marketing areas has been shown to be critical to achieve innovation success (Gupta et al., 1986). However, there are individual and organizational factors that could impede effective integration and collaboration. Some research has explored possible solutions to improve this relationship (Griffin and Hauser, 1996). It has been suggested that management consultants could improve intra-organizational relationships within their clients (Tilles, 1961). Our research is focused on a specific type of management consultancy, innovation management consultancy services. Research exploring the impact of innovation management consultants on organizational relationships is virtually non-existent. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify how innovation management consultancy services could modify the relationship between R&D and marketing

Since there is not substantial research on this area, this research follows an explorative approach, drawing upon the domains of firm-level innovation management, performance measurement, and organisational change, with special attention on organizational learning. Learning is highlighted as prior research has proposed that management consultants promote organizational learning (Gable, 1996) that could be reflected in organizational changes and business success (Dierkes et al., 2001).

This research uses a case study approach to generate a theoretical framework to describe the impact of innovation consultants on the R&D and marketing relationship. Twelve case studies were carried out. Information was obtained through interviews with innovation consultants, innovation directors, marketing managers, and R&D managers or leaders. These case studies comprised different types of innovation consultancy services conducted in large companies from different industrial sectors. Within and cross-case analysis has been performed.

Based on our review of the literature and empirical evidence, a theoretical framework has been developed which connects the different activities conducted by the consultant with the short-term results and longer-term changes promoted. This framework also illustrates the importance of the role of consultant and company characteristics.

This study provides a useful initial step to describe the conditions under which innovation management consultancy firms could have an impact on the R&D–marketing relationship. Further research stage will be required to validate this framework.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Management consultancy services (MCS) have attracted scholars' attention over the last two decades (Mohe and Seidl, 2011). Three reasons could have generated this interest: (i) the significant global growth of the consulting industry (Greiner and Poufelt, 2010) and its geographical and scope expansion (Mohe and Seidl, 2011); (ii) the changing external environment that force companies to obtain specialized competences ( Kocabey, 2011) and (iii) the increasing impact of MCS in many business organizations (Kitay and Wright, 2003).

Management consultants (MC) provide professional services in different areas. For instance they work on areas including: strategy, project management, organisation/operation management, change management, human resources, business process re-engineering, marketing/corporate communications, and outsourcing advice (Sadler, 1998; MCA, 2010).

Studies of management consultancy services have been mainly focused on the general analysis of the use of consultants instead of specific types of services (Kitay and Wright, 2003). Consultants' effects on intra-organizational relationships have been only addressed in the case of organizational development (OD) services (Rothwell and Sullivan, 2005). Little attention has been given to the study of innovation management consultancy services (IMCS) and their effect on intra-organizational relationships, specifically the R&D and marketing relationship. This paper aims to fill this gap in the extant literature and contribute to a better understanding of the IMCS role and contributions to their clients' R&D and marketing relationship.

Based on the evidence gained from 12 case studies covering different IMCS in large manufacturing companies, this paper presents a framework that integrates consultant activities, consultant contributions, changes promoted linked to changes on the R&D and marketing relationship and different factors that could underpin the consultants' effects on the relationship.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The next section presents a systematic review of MCS, IMCS and their contributions to their clients. Section 3 describes the methodological approach, sources of data and analytical process followed in this research. Section 4 describes the results and Section 5 presents a discussion of the emerging framework. Finally section 6 presents conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Management consultants

Management consultancy services (MCS) have been defined by Greiner and Metzger (1983,7) as "an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify problems, analyse such problems, recommend solutions to these problems and help when requested in the implementation of solutions".

Studies of MCS have been mainly focused on the general analysis of the consultants' phenomena instead of specific types of services (Kitay and Wright, 2003). Areas that have been explored include: consultation models and consultancy roles (Schein, 1990; Kitay and Wright, 2003; Appelbaum, 2004); consultants characteristics, skills or capabilities (Bloomfield and Danieli, 1995; Simon and Kumar, 2001); client-consultant relationship (Appelbaum, 2004) and factors success and contributions (Appelbaum, 2004; Schwarz, 2004; Kocabey, 2011). These studies have been generally descriptive (Bloomfield and Danieli, 1995) atheoretical and prescriptive (Sturdy et al., 2004). Considering the different types of consultancy activities and their growing use, some researchers have highlighted the fact that the amount of empirical research is limited (Dawes et al., 1992; Appelbaum, 2004; Appelbaum and Steed, 2011) and stressed the need for more research (Canato and Giangreco, 2011).

Management consultancy services have been also referred as a "knowledge industry" since consultants can transfer to their clients, specific competences or knowledge (Berry and Oakley, 1993; Bessant and Rush, 1995) and help them to learn (Chitakornkijasil, 2010). Indeed, Steele (1975) suggests that learning is the core of consulting.

Due to the different roles that consultants can play inside a company, they could make several contributions. They could help clients to change their habits (Chitakornkijasil, 2010), promote cultural changes (Feldman and Boulton, 2005), promote change organizational relationships (Schein, 1961; Tilles, 1961), bring different communities together during their activities, improve the communication processes between groups (Druckman, 2000), and facilitate organizational change (Tisdall, 1982). Therefore, MC have been considered as agents of change (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Kakabadse et al., 2006).

Some researchers have studied the possible effects of consultants on intra-organizational relationships (Rothwell and Sullivan, 2005). However, such studies are focused mainly on OD consultancy services, since those services look to improve organizational effectiveness through the modification of organization's culture (Beer and Walton, 1987; Cummings and Worley, 2008) and are focused on the human side of the organization (Porras and Berg, 1978). So, one of their main purposes is to modify the behaviour of individuals and their interaction processes (Friedlander and Brown, 1974). For this reason, it has been claimed that OD differs from other approaches of organizational change, such as IMCS (Cummings and Worley, 2008).

Although OD consultancy services could be considered as different to other consultancy services (since other MCS generally ignore psychological, cultural, and related issues (Schaffer, 1997)), some researchers have suggested that consulting has been changing and now consultants do not only provide expertise but also help clients to shape their diagnosis and management capacities (Turner, 1982; Mclachlin, 1999). So, OD services help improve human processes (Cummings and Worley, 2008), and facilitate learning and change (Werr et al., 1997). Consultants are using common OD techniques to generate change and also learning and improvement (Cummings and Worley, 2008). Therefore it could be logical to infer that other types of MCS could also promote changes in intra-organizational relationships.

## 2.2. Importance of the R&D and marketing relationship

Innovation has been considered as a fundamental element of firm's growth and competitiveness (Obstfeld, 2005). The R&D–marketing relationship is critical to achieve innovation success (Gupta et al., 1986; Souder, 1988; Griffin and Hauser, 1996) since these areas share responsibilities along the innovation process (Griffin and Hauser, 1996). Although this relationship is fundamental to successful innovation, several researchers have found that the interface between R&D and marketing presents some problems (Gupta and Wilemon, 1990,1991). In fact, Souder (1988) found that 59.2% of the development project studied showed disharmony in the R&D and marketing relationship, a problem that generate low organization's new product development effectiveness and project failures. Individual factors (such as socio-cultural differences, self-interest or time orientation) and organizational factors (such as centralization, formalization, success measures and rewarding system, operational characteristics or senior management's attitude) have been shown to inhibit the integration of those areas (Gupta et al., 1986).

## 2.3. Innovation management consultants

Innovation management consultancy services (IMCS) are a specific type of MCS specialised in developing, managing and facilitating implementation and integration of their clients' innovation processes (Essmann, 2009). They may also provide other services related with innovation such as innovation management advice or innovation coaching (OECD, 2011) to improve the operation of the client's innovation process (European Commission, 2008). IMCS cover several areas: innovation strategy, innovation organization and culture, innovation life-cycle management, among others (Diedrichs et al., 2006). Thus, it is possible to propose that IMCS could bring the same contributions as MCS to their clients. Consequently, they could change clients' habits and promote change on intra-organizational relationships.

Studies discussing MCS contribution to clients' business performance have been conducted (Redman and Allen, 1993; Wright and Kitay, 2002). Nonetheless, according to Canato and Giangreco (2011), few academic studies focused on IMCS have been performed. Those studies are mainly related to the role of these consultants in innovation (Muller and Zenker, 2001; Alam, 2003), and other activities related such as technology transfer or acquisition (Bessant and Rush, 1995; Veugelers and Cassiman, 1999).

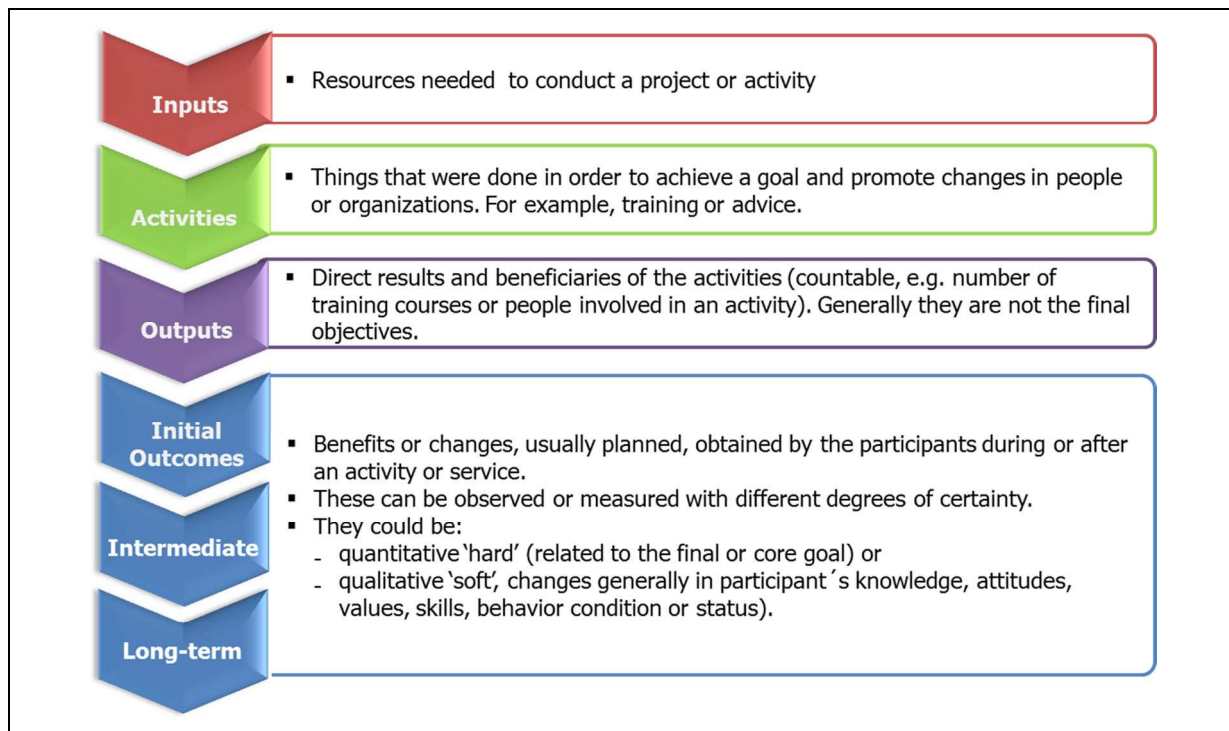
Extant literature has given little attention to the changes promoted by IMCS on intra-organizational relationships, especially between R&D and marketing functions. As a result, there is a gap in theory that could help to explain the contributions and effect of IMCS on organizational relationships.

Tilles (1961) suggests that the intervention of a consultant in a company can affect internal relationships of the management team, an important change since it is pervasive and indelible. With this background in mind, this research aims to explore how an IMCS may affect the R&D and marketing relationship within large manufacturing firms.

## 2.4. Impact assessment model

Impact has been defined as the tangible or intangible effect, result or consequence of an action caused by an agent (Hawkins and Allen, 1991; Collins, 2006). Since the aim of this research is to identify the effect or impact of the IMCS on intra-organizational relationships, an impact assessment model will be used.

Different models have been proposed in the literature to identify and evaluate the impacts of an intervention. One is the conceptual chain process (Plantz et al., 1997), proposed in the context of microfinance intervention but extended to other areas. This process involves the analysis of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The conceptual chain**

Source: Based on Plantz et al., (1997), with additional information from Mayoux (2002) and Wainwright (2003).

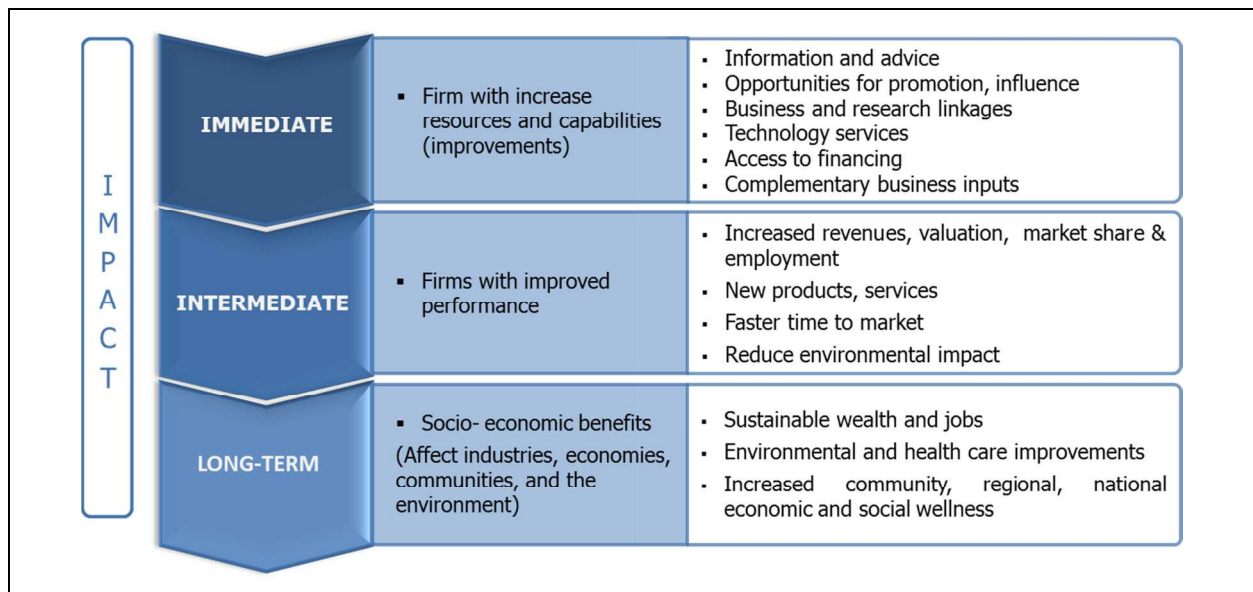
Dalziel and Parjanen (2010) have proposed an alternative model for specifically measuring the impact of innovation intermediaries. This model links the intermediary purpose to outputs and impacts on participating firms, generating a logic model to measure impact. This model (Figure 2) uses a similar structure to the conceptual chain model presented in Figure 1. However the Dalziel and Parjanen model describes impacts instead of outcomes, and categorises impacts into three types (Figure 3).



**Figure 2. General logic model for innovation intermediaries**

Source: Dalziel and Parjanen (2010)





**Figure 3. Types of intermediary impacts**

Source: Dalziel and Parjanen (2010).

The Dalziel and Parjane model does not consider organisational learning (OL) as an outcome. However, for the analysis of IMCS, this is an important issue as: (i) one of the main contributions of MCS is providing learning (Steele, 1975; Berry and Oakley, 1993; Gable, 1996); (ii) OL could be reflected in organisational changes and business success (Gable, 1996; Phillips, 2000); and (iii) OL has been linked to OD activities in management literature since in some cases OL can be seen as a way to achieve organizational goals (Massey and Walker, 1999). Therefore, OL seems to be an important element to consider as an outcome in our impact assessment framework. Different measurements have been proposed for OL. Some of them are derived from theories considering factors enabling learning and others from studies focus on a process of change (Lähteenmäki et al., 2001). Following a process approach Lähteenmäki et al., (2001) have proposed different indicators of learning (Table 1).

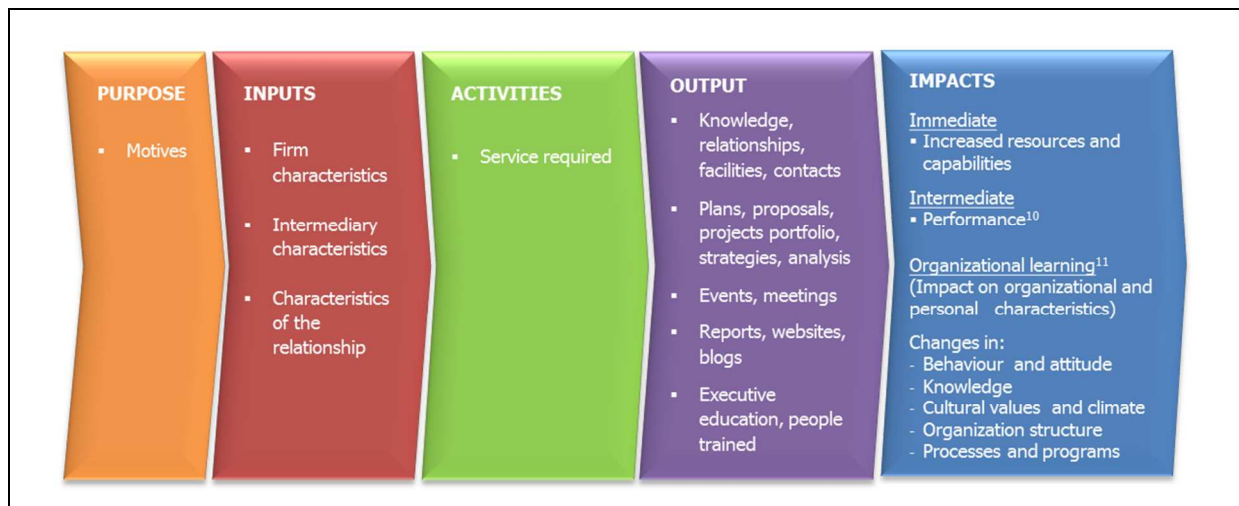
**Table 1. Measurement of learning in the process approach**

Measurements
Changes in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledge (changing associations, frames of reference and programmes)</li> <li>▪ Behaviour (risk taking, management support, participation in decision-making, cooperation)</li> <li>▪ Organization of work processes (change in routines, feedback and reward systems, teamwork, information flow)</li> <li>▪ Climate and culture (change in operation and business culture)</li> </ul>

Source: Lähteenmäki et al., (2001)

Having reviewed the insights on the conceptual and empirical literature from four different strands of literature (management, performance measurement, OD and OL), these elements were integrated into an operationalisable analytical framework (Figure 4) that has been used to gain insight from the cases studies.





**Figure 4. Analytical framework to be considered in the study**

Source: Authors. Adapted from Dalziel and Parjanen (2010) with additional information from Fiol and Lyles (1985), Gable (1996), Phillips (2000), Robey et al. (2000) and Lähteenmäki et al. (2001).

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The main objective of this research is to develop a framework to determine the impact of IMCS on intra-organizational relationships, specifically R&D and marketing areas. The literature review showed that the focus of this research has been only studied marginally. Therefore, an empirical approach is used in order to address the research question.

Twelve case studies were conducted. Each case analysed a completed innovation management consultancy service performed in a large<sup>1</sup> manufacturing company at least six months before the interviews. This timeframe was necessary to observe possible impacts, as it has been found that complete implementation of consulting projects often requires a considerable length of time (Phillips, 2000).

The case studies involved different kinds of IMCS conducted in companies from different industrial sectors and were selected based on theoretical sampling to obtain a replication logic design, since this provided the opportunity for cross-case analysis and the extension of theory (Benbasat et al., 1987). Only manufacturing companies were considered as this choice allowed to control at least one variable.

The twelve cases are divided in two groups:

Six core case studies (referred to hereafter as *company case studies*). A minimum of two people were interviewed for each case in order to be able to contrast and verify information about the R&D and marketing relationship situation before, during and after the consultant intervention. Interviewees include company managers or directors (R&D managers, marketing managers or innovation directors) and lead consultants. As information is best elicited from people who have knowledge of the phenomenon, informants were only people directly involved in the consultancy service. Companies for these cases were selected pragmatically, based on the access to the innovation, R&D or marketing director/manager of the company. Access was obtained via one contact inside the company. A snowball technique was used to build our sample.

Six additional study cases (referred to hereafter as *consultant case studies*). These cases involved only interviews with innovation consultants about a specific consultancy service in order to get more

<sup>1</sup> Companies with more than 250 employees. It was decided to focus this study only on large companies to ensure consistency and comparability.

information from the consultancy side. Consultants were also selected pragmatically. These were invited through personal contacts or an open invitation on a professional network. Consultants were asked to provide a short description of their service portfolio and select one of these services based on its relevance in terms of involvement of R&D and marketing staff. Table 2 summarizes the consultancy services analysed.

**Table 2. Summary of the case studies analysed**

Company hiring the IMCS	Focus of the consultancy service	Company Sector	Interviewees	Code	Change in the relationship
<b>Company case studies</b>					
1	Innovation climate	Concrete and cement	New business manager R&D manager	D1 R1	✓
2	Funding	Auto parts	Innovation Director Project technology manager	D2 R2	x
3	Roadmapping	Automotive and auto parts	Consultant Innovation Director New businesses manager Senior Researcher	C3 D3 M3 R3	✓ not sustained
4	New business Opportunity Identification	Mobility solutions	Consultant New business manager	C4 M4	✓
5	Training on marketing communication + RM	Paint & Coatings	Consultant General manager	C5 D5	✓
6	Opportunity Identification	FMCG	Consultant Project manager Senior research scientist	C6 M6 R6	✓
<b>Consultant case studies</b>					
7	Funding	Agriculture & food	Consultant	C8	✓ limited
8	Innovation management process	Pharma	Consultant	C8	✓ not sustained
9	Idea generation process	Food	Consultant	C9	✓
10	Re-design business model	Glass manufacturing	Consultant	C10	✓
11	Idea generation process	Plastic manufacturing	Consultant	C11	✓
12	Product development process	Household cleaning supplies & other consumer chemicals	Consultant	C12	✓

Source: Authors

A code using one letter and the case number was used for each interviewee. C=consultant, D=innovation directors/managers or other directors/senior managers, M=marketing, and R=R&D

A positive change (✓) on the relationship in a case was determined following a qualitative evaluation of interviewees' quotations.

The main data source was a semi-structured in-depth interview conducted face-to-face or by phone. A protocol to collect data was used, in order to ensure compatibility across the different cases (Yin, 2009).

The interviewees were encouraged to describe the intervention but also to talk retrospectively about the R&D and marketing relationship before, during and after the consultancy service. The interview covered the following aspects: (i) purpose of the consultancy service; (ii) inputs (characteristics of the company as well as the consultant); (iii) activities (activities conducted); (iv) outputs (results); and (v)

impacts (changes identified after the consultancy activities, especially changes in the R&D and marketing communication or integration).

Conversations were recorded and fully transcribed. The analysis was inspired by a grounded theory approach. A qualitative within- and cross-case data analysis was also used.

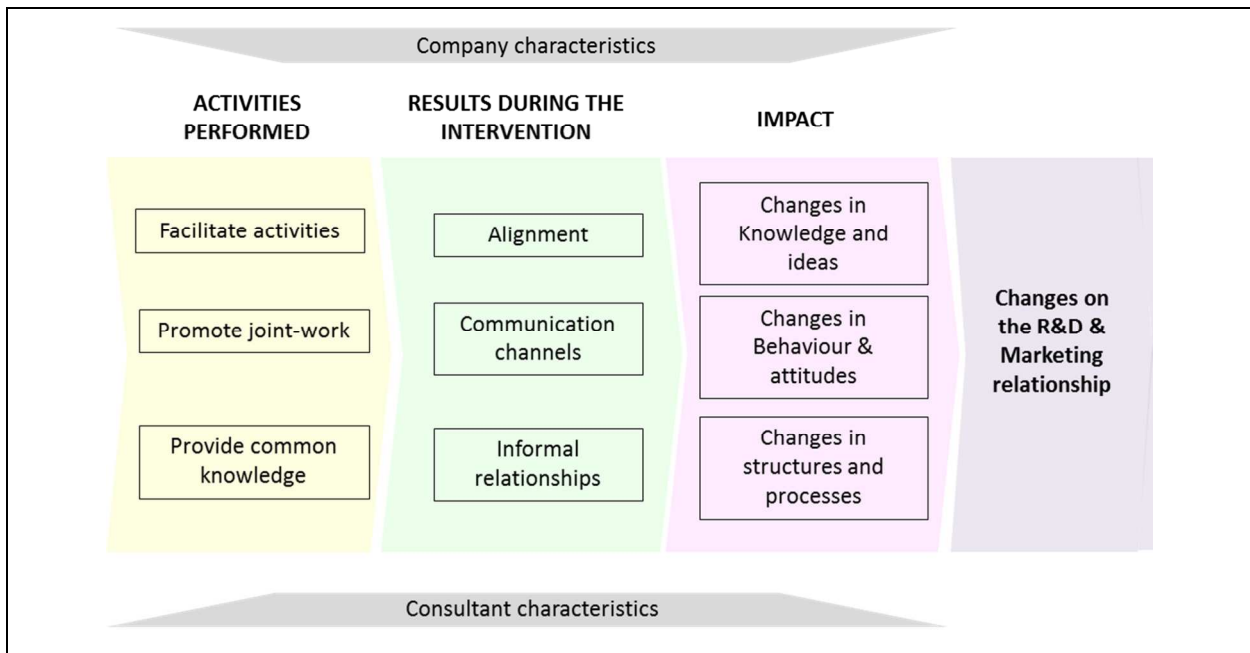
Data were classified following the initial analytical framework and systematically coded, categorized, standardise, reduced and displayed in order to identify relevant factors, patterns, as well as possibly relationships between variables. Cross-case analysis was conducted following three strategies proposed by Eisenhardt (1989): (i) selection of some categories and identification of within-group similarities and intergroup differences, (ii) selection of pairs of cases and the determination of similarities and differences between each pair, and (iii) division of data by data source, to exploit the unique insights possible from different types of data collection.

A change in the relationship was determined based on the evaluation provided by interviewees in a scale from 0 to 10, as well as through a qualitative analysis of interviewees' quotations.

#### 4. RESULTS

The modified framework derived from the empirical evidence illustrating the effect of IMCS on intra-organizational relationships consists of three main parts: activities performed, results, and impact<sup>2</sup> (Figure 5). This framework is derived from theoretical replication of successful and unsuccessful cases. Successful cases were those where interviewees suggested that there was a positive change on the relationship between R&D and marketing participants.

**Fig 5. Theoretical framework**



Source: Authors

<sup>2</sup> Changes observed after the consultancy service

## 4.1. Activities performed

### 4.1.1. Facilitate activities

Facilitation activities were recognized by several informants, as an important consultant contribution to the improvement of the relationship. Facilitation involved: (i) the establishment of a positive climate; (ii) a mediation role; (iii) mechanisms to engage; (iv) mechanisms to encourage people to participate and (v) activities to convince stakeholders about the importance of the objective as well as their participation.

#### Positive Climate

The establishment of a positive climate was mentioned by all company informants. They reported that such climate was achieved by IMC by making no distinctions between participants, allowing no power differences and using non-specialized language. Such climate was one that enabled everyone to feel engaged, integrated, able to talk to each other, and to contribute and feel part of the process.

#### Mediation role

In almost all the case studies the relationship between R&D and marketing was not good prior to the consultancy intervention in the opinion of interviewees and they suggested that consultants played a mediator role between R&D and marketing, becoming a link and convincing participants of the importance of establishing a relationship.

#### Encourage and engage people

Several informants recognized that consultants used dynamics and techniques that motivated and inspired people to take part on the initiative. Participants noted that the consultants encouraged people to come and work together, and build momentum, and gain their commitment. As C6 described “We make sure that the project was designed to engage (...). So our methodology also involved engagement with different people in a manner that they could come together in a very generative space and work together”.

#### Convince stakeholders

In 8 cases, interviewees reported that generally consultants involved senior managers at the beginning of the process in order to convince them of the importance of the consultancy process from the outset. This allowed consultants to get top managers’ commitment throughout the process, and in that way facilitate the process and all the changes required through a top down approach. This created not only involvement of the top managers but also motivated the rest of the organization to participate.

### 4.1.2. Promote joint-work

The promotion of joint-work between participants was considered as a key consultant contribution to the improvement of the R&D/marketing relationship according to informants from 11 cases. These activities involved the promotion of both: (i) multidisciplinary team work and (ii) physical interaction between participants from different areas.

#### Promote multidisciplinary team work

A cross-functional team-working approach was used in almost all the consultancy interventions studied, except in the case 2. Teams were normally temporary, though some of them continued after the intervention. In the opinion of interviewees multidisciplinary team work allowed them to get to know each other, establish a communication generally not achieved through daily activities, align

participants since different people were able to think and work to achieve a common goal following the same templates and norms, and feel part of the development and delivery of the results.

#### Promote Physical interaction

Several informants suggested that the opportunity to have face-to-face interactions allowed participants to think together, identify problems, find mutual solutions, have more integration and even establish interpersonal relationships. As M6 said: “I have this state that it is probably not brighter but distance and time makes a big difference. So the four hours away stop to keep up the relationship”.

#### *4.1.3. Provide common knowledge*

The generation of ‘common knowledge’ among the project participants was recognized by several informants as an important consultant contribution to the improvement of the R&D/marketing relationship. Different activities were provided by consultants to achieve the objective, including: (i) common training and (ii) common tools and methodologies

#### Common training

All the cases except case study 2 involved common training for R&D and marketing people. Training sessions were generally provided to multidisciplinary teams, under the approach of workshops and on-the-job training. According to informants, training was an element that contributed to change the relationship since it helped participants to use common concepts and language, communicate, get a complete view of the organization, and improve understanding of how the other department works.

#### Provide common tools and methodologies

The usefulness of frameworks, methodologies and tools provided by the consultants in the improvement of relationships was highlighted by almost all the interviewees. They remarked that methods, methodologies and tools provided by consultants were useful in the sense that these promoted: (i) communication, because some of them provided new communication avenues or simply encouraged direct communication between participants; (ii) the generation of a common a framework, understanding and language; and (iii) involvement of people.

The case studies showed that IMC promote interaction between participants not only through enabling adequate social conditions, but also by providing useful and common knowledge to them, as well as methods and physical spaces that allow higher levels of integration.

## **4.2. Results during the intervention**

### *4.2.1. Alignment*

Alignment between individual participants and functions was suggested as one useful consultant contribution to change the relationship. In interviewees’ opinion, this alignment was achieved through the establishment of a common vision and approach as well as a common language.

#### Common vision and approach

In general informants claimed that one fundamental consultant’s characteristic was their ability to generate a common purpose or objective in all the participants. This promoted that participants from different areas tried to work together since they recognized that it was also their responsibility and it was needed to achieve a common good.

### Common language

Common language, in the words of some informants, was a consequence of “the exercises and the sessions” and “courses” and its importance lies on its usefulness to allow areas to communicate and understand.

#### *4.2.2. Communication channels*

According to the interviewees, new direct communication avenues were established thanks to the consultant activities and tools. Those avenues were recognized as an important consultants’ contribution to improve the relationship.

### Communication tools

Some of the tools brought by the consultant were useful to improve communication since they force the establishment of communication channels. For instance, one of the tools mentioned by different informants was roadmapping. As D3 said: “The Roadmapping exercise itself helped us to have communication not only within a group, but also between working groups, because you need inputs not only from marketing but also from commercial, technology, engineering and operations. So, this was a communication tool”.

### Reinforcing direct communication

Interviewees recognized that direct communication between participants was promoted through consultant activities, consultant’s tools and recommendations. As M6 stressed, consultants “gave me an avenue to talk to marketing now, or [to] share”. Those direct communication channels derived into a more close communication between participants.

#### *4.2.3. Informal relationships*

### Knowing people

Consultants’ methods gave the opportunity to company participants to know people from other areas during the consultancy service, establish informal communications and building new informal relationship between R&D and marketing people. This was noted to be useful in the interviewees’ opinion since generally participants did not have the opportunity to know and hear people from the other area before, and common sessions represented an opportunity. As R6 mentioned: “I think people were extremely open and I really think... you know we met us, marketers and scientists, and we ended up like friends and that is what we probably still are”.

## **4.3. Impact**

Interviewees pointed out different changes that were experimented with during the consultancy services, and described how those changes contributed in their opinion to strengthen the relationship between R&D and marketing people.

Three main changes were considered central to achieve changes on the R&D and marketing relationship according to informants: (i) changes in knowledge and ideas, (ii) behaviour and attitudes and (iii) changes in structures and processes.

#### *4.3.1. Change in knowledge and ideas*

Some interviewees recognized that consultancy activities promoting learning process were key for the improvement of the relationship. Indeed, interviewees pointed out that they were able to have a better understanding of both (i) the working processes, and (ii) the roles of the different areas as well as the importance of the relationship between R&D and marketing.

### Understanding of processes

In interviewees' opinion getting an understanding of the working processes (i.e. the innovation process) was important since they were able to understand how processes work, how they are structured, what are their objectives and what kind of links between different areas are required. They were able to identify the process as a whole and not as isolated activities or specific area activities.

### Understanding of roles and the importance of the R&D and marketing relationship

Linked to the understanding of the process, informants remarked that they also learned the role of R&D and marketing people along the innovation process, and understood the importance of the activities performed by participants from the other area as well as the need of coordination, in other words, the importance of the relationship. They recognized their capacities and limitations of knowledge as well as their main contributions along the processes, and they were able to improve the communication with the other area and integrate better with it.

#### *4.3.2. Change in behaviour and attitudes*

Interviewees stressed that there were changes in participants' behaviours after the consultancy service, since they now felt a greater connection with the achievement of the targeted goals. There was more recognition to people from the other area, and areas that had less power on the organization got more recognition. And this promoted in the words of some informants that people turned 'empathetic', 'enthusiastic' and presented a 'more collaborative behaviour'.

### Recognition of the other area

According to several interviewees, parallel to the understanding of the importance of the other areas, participants were more opened to accept the point of view and approaches to problems of the other area. They started appreciating the way of thinking and opinions of the other area and there was a change in attitude and behaviour. As R6 explained: "We understand where marketing was coming from, why they needed the information that they needed and we also made much more often effort now not to put those dissatisfied, just putting the content in the lab, but to move forward to produce something that is more tangible and I think the feeling is too for them. So I think that we really changed"

### Change in area power

Although the interviewees did not note a real change in the power balance between R&D and marketing, the areas that have less power inside the organization were now clearer following the consultants' intervention. Consequently, there was a change in the operation and a more collaborative environment was promoted. As R3 said: "Commercial people haven't lost power but they have recognized us. Technology has a little more value".

#### *4.3.3. Change in structures and processes*

One of the consultants' contributions considered useful by interviewees to promote the involvement or interaction between participants from different areas was the establishment of new processes and the promotion of changes in the organizational structure.

### New structures

Participants pointed out that the consultants' activities promoted changes in the organizational structure that encouraged more interaction between R&D and marketing people. Changes involved the creation of areas or mainly the establishment of certain groups to conduct specific activities. In



some cases those changes were direct consultant recommendations but in others were company's initiatives that, according to some interviewees, could be product of the learning acquired by participants through the intervention. Some examples of new groups created were: the establishment of boards or committees that strengthened the relationship between R&D and commercial people. The operation of these groups generally involved the development of certain periodic activities and forced information exchange.

#### New common processes

One consultants' contribution was the establishment or modification of processes. The utility of these common processes on promoting involvement or interaction between participants from different areas was most frequently highlighted by consultants than by company informants.

Some consultants remarked the importance of changes on the decision making process, and suggested that sharing decision-making power between R&D and Marketing people was useful to improve collaboration since people feel more committed. As C12 described "we tried [...] to push down the responsibilities as low as possible so that the front line guys who actually know what was happening and were [in] much closer touch to the customers were actually making decisions. So we find that having that decision making process where you got managers being able to fund different projects. They collaborate much more efficient and better with the different organizations when they were actually responsible for it".

Interviewees pointed out that the three types of changes mentioned above, were mainly at the personal level. Therefore there was a change in the relationships at personal level and not necessarily at area level. However, it is important to mention that some cases involved all or at least an important number of people from R&D and marketing areas, or in other cases there was an initiative to extend training or methods to more people inside the areas.

#### *4.3.4. Changes on the R&D and marketing relationship*

Informants evaluated the conditions of the relationships before and after the consultancy service. In general, they evaluated the relationship as bad or non-existent before the consultancy services in all the cases, except in cases 4 and 5. Positive changes on the relationship were mentioned by informants in almost all the cases. However, interviewees were unable to determine the direct impact of the consultancy activities on the relationship, since they mentioned that there were other factors that contributed to the relationship change, mainly internal companies' decisions and initiatives. So it was difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship. For example M6 said: "The Research area hadn't worked with us before (...) I still work with my discovery guy now (...) I think we have enough engagement now with R&D community (...) we certainly interact with R&D differently. I do not know if it is directly because the consultant just drove it, because part of the work that we have done, [or] the processes that we created. We know now our R&D. I do not if I can give direct credit to the consultant (...) the baseline was not dialog and now there is a strong dialog".

#### *4.3.5. Company and consultant characteristics*

Among the cases, different company characteristics were identified as factors that limited the results obtained. In the opinion of the interviewees some of these characteristics were:

- a) Participants' lack of time to get involved into the consultancy service, due to heavy workload. This meant that participants could not dedicate time to this work and had low commitment, affecting team-work.

The lack of follow up of the processes and recommendations. For example in case study 3, although the relationship was intensified during the exercise, it felt again. In the opinion of D3 "This integration didn't continue (...) We are not [following the plan] as it was established, with all the

key players of each stage or all the review events listed on the plan. This is our problem, we are not doing monitoring and keeping the spirit that it was recommended to follow”.

Staff continuity. Some informants suggested that frequent staff changes limited the results. Due to the fact that people involved on the consultancy service have left the company, the achieved progress has been lost. As D3 said “if we constructed something with this exercise, with the crisis we lost it, because we had so many changes in the organization”.

Interviewees’ comments suggest that improvement of the relationship between R&D and marketing is limited by company’s characteristics. In fact, it seems that the consultancy effect on the relationship is contingent not only on the company’s characteristics but also consultant characteristics.

Informants highlighted two company characteristics that could affect the consultant impact on the relationship: the characteristics of the participants and the top manager support. Talking about the consultant characteristics, informants mentioned: consultant personal characteristics and skills. Regarding consultant personal characteristics, informants mentioned two points that could determine the effect of the consultant over the relationship (i) their behaviour, and (ii) intellectual ability. Whereas regarding consultants’ skills three abilities were suggested: (i) ability to communicate and motivate participants, (ii) ability to work with people, and (iii) ability to understand different type of people and company’s situation.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Building upon the analytical framework presented in Figure 4, a new theoretical framework was inductively developed from evidence (Figure 5). This framework consists of three parts: activities performed, results and impact of the consultancy service. Such a framework illustrates IMC’s activities and the resulting progression of changes promoted by them, and how these are directly related to a change in the relationship between R&D and marketing areas.

### 5.1. Activities performed

Three main consultant activities emerge from our cases as useful for improving the R&D and marketing relationship: facilitation activities; promotion of joint working; and provision of common knowledge. These activities have also been highlighted in management consultancy and OD literature as having positive impact on consultancy success.

#### 5.1.1. Facilitate activities

Facilitation activities were recognized by interviewees as an important consultant activity to improve the relationship and as a way to bridge different organizational, functional or professional sub-cultures to produce unified action (Werr et al., 1997). In our framework, four different activities were identified in the cases as part of the facilitation activities and these have been acknowledge as elements contributing in general to integration:

- a) Generation of a positive climate - helps team-building according to the literature on facilitation (Heron, 1999) and management (Kubr, 2002).
- b) Mediation role - looks to transform relationships between participants (Schwarz, 2002).
- c) Encourage and engagement of participants – promotes consultancy activities that get support and ownership (Kubr, 2002) and facilitates community integration (Hogan, 2003).
- d) Activities to convince top managers – they are crucial to achieve consulting success since could be useful to gain commitment from lower levels and bring people to work together (Turner, 1982).

Our cases showed that consultants followed a facilitative consultant style, an approach that have been associated with the *process consultant* model according to Stewart (2006). *Process consultation*

in the opinion of Cummings and Worley (2008) helps group members to change and improve their behaviours.

### *5.1.2. Promote joint-work*

Empirical evidence agrees with different ideas relating to joint work proposed in the literature. Firstly, there is the idea that team work approach is useful to provide a common holistic view of the organization and understand and recognize the roles of the other participants within the team (Cummings and Worley, 2008). Secondly, the idea that team work is a common method to promote changes in organizations (Kubr, 2002; Feldman and Boulton, 2005).

The importance of the physical interaction suggested by informants could derive of the fact that cases were performed in large companies and some of those have significant geographical distances between their R&D and marketing areas, so that R&D and marketing people may not have many opportunities for direct face-to-face interaction. The importance of this point could be due to the fact that communication drops with distance (Griffin and Hauser, 1996) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have noted that physical interaction could contribute to the establishment of interpersonal relationships.

### *5.1.3. Provide common knowledge*

According to our evidence, consultants provided common knowledge to participants through two main activities: provision of common training and common tools and methodologies.

The idea that common training activities could be useful to improve the relationship is not new. In the management literature, training provided to managers to improve relationships between areas has been analysed by Reynes (1999). Her conclusions suggested that mixing people together in a class is very useful, because it could help participants to understand the mission, vision and goals of the consultancy intervention; appreciate other's point of view; and solve problems between them since some of the existing tensions can be eliminated, bridging the gap between silos and promoting communication. Finally, the idea proposed in the framework that training could contribute to modify attitudes and finally the relationship is supported by Steward (1991). Steward stated that all kind of trainings, independent of their purpose, will modify individual perceptions and attitudes.

In general, interviewees remarked that methods, methodologies and tools provided by consultants were useful to modify the relationship in the sense that these generate a common framework and language, and promote communication, understanding and involvement of people. Interestingly, Werr et al. (1997) have also emphasized the importance of common methods in collaborative work in largest multinational companies. Therefore our findings confirm previous conclusions available in management consulting literature (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003; Sturdy, 2011).

## **5.2. Results during the intervention**

### *5.2.1. Alignment()*

One result of the consultancy activities that was recognized by informants as useful in strengthening the relationship between areas was the establishment of alignment between participants. Alignment was reflected in the establishment of a common vision and approach and a common language.

The importance of a common approach and impact on changes in relationships has been previously identified on the literature. Sturdy (2011) and Werr et al. (1997) have pointed out the importance of common goals and objectives as a factor to facilitate collaboration between client participants. Moreover, it has been stated that when participants know and agree on the vision and goals, they tend to have a positive response (Maddux and Wingfield, 2003) and conflicts can be reduced (Reynes,

1999; Kubr, 2002). Additionally, the importance of a common language to facilitate communication during a change process has already been stressed by Werr et al. (1997).

### *5.2.2. Communication*

New communication channels and reinforcement of direct communications were recognized by informants as important consultant contributions to modifying the R&D/marketing relationship.

Communication has been broadly explored in literature on management consulting and team building and their importance on the establishment of strong relationships is well recognised. For example the establishment or reinforcement of direct communication has been associated with reduction of misunderstanding and promotion of the accomplishment of team work (Charan, 2006; Archer, 2009). Charan (2006) and Douglas (2006) have stated that communication can shape people's attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, and Kubr (2002) has suggested that informal communication networks might produce greater and faster changes in attitudes.

### *5.2.3. Informal relationships*

The importance of 'knowing each other' might have been highlighted by interviewees due to the fact that cases were performed in large company, where scale and organisational complexity may mean that it is difficult to know staff from a different area. However, this point was associated by interviewees with the opportunity through the consultancy intervention to develop friendships with participants from the other area and, according to Li and Chen (2010) friendship can promote effective functioning.

## **5.3. Impact**

According to informants, the consultancy activities lead to changes in knowledge and ideas; behaviour and attitudes; and changes in structures, processes and programs that took place. All of these changes were associated with a change in the R&D and marketing relationship.

In our proposed framework, changes in knowledge were linked to the understanding of processes and roles, and finally to informants' recognition of the importance of the relationship. Two main points stand out here. Firstly, the importance of consultants' contributions to organizational learning and secondly, the linking of this knowledge with the generation of new attitudes.

These two points align with some ideas expressed in management consultancy and organizational learning literature. First, the belief that MC are distributors of knowledge (Sturdy, 2011) and second, the idea that any action providing information or experiences to individuals could promote the adoption of new attitudes that could partially influence behaviour (Kolb et al., 1984).

Finally, changes in structure and process have also been recognized in management literature as important elements to support change inside companies (Kubr, 2002).

### *5.3.1. Company and consultant characteristics*

The fact that consultant and client characteristics could shape the effect of the IMCS on the relationship was not surprising, since studies on management consultant literature have reported that consultancy service success is highly dependent of the consultant and client characteristics (Mclachlin, 1999; Appelbaum, 2004).

This paper adds an important empirical focus on the effect of IMCS on the R&D and marketing relationships and allows the identification of the consultants' activities that were of particular relevance on the achievement of changes on the relationship.

The improvement in the R&D and marketing relationship has been broadly studied and several strategies have been proposed to improve that relationship (Gupta et al., 1986; Griffin and Hauser,

1996). Therefore, it is worth comparing the identified contributions in this research versus different mechanisms suggested by prior research to improve the relationship, to identify if there is a match between our empirical results and the extant literature.

Table 3 highlights some of the contributions identified in this research that align with those identified in our earlier literature review.

**Table 3. Comparative analysis between IMC contributions identified in this research and possible solutions to improve relationships reported in the literature**

Possible solutions recommended on literature	Identified useful IMC's contributions in case studies to improve the relationship
Cross-functional or common training in techniques and tools, to achieve a common language and methods <sup>[1]</sup>	Common training Common language
Promotion of long-term relationships that foster trust <sup>[1]</sup> and friendships <sup>[2]</sup>	
Informal social interaction <sup>[2,4]</sup>	Informal relationships (Knowing people)
Foment harmonious R&D-marketing relationships <sup>[3]</sup>	Positive climate
Job rotation <sup>[4]</sup>	
Similar professional/ bureaucratic orientation <sup>[3]</sup> between the R&D and marketing managers	
Motivated teams <sup>[2]</sup>	Engage people
New incentive and Joint reward system <sup>[2,3,4]</sup>	
Encouragement of teamwork <sup>[1,4]</sup>	Teamwork
Work together from the beginning of a project <sup>[5]</sup>	Physical interaction / Work together
Changes in organizational structures <sup>[1,3]</sup>	Changes in organizational structures
Formal integrative management processes <sup>[4]</sup>	Changes in processes
Structure decision making process across functional groups <sup>[4]</sup>	
Decentralization of decision making <sup>[3,4]</sup>	Share decision making process
Continuous information flow <sup>[4,5]</sup>	Communication channels
Top management support <sup>[3,4]</sup>	Convince top managers
Facilities re-design or relocation <sup>[1]</sup>	
Formalization of rules and procedures for functional interaction <sup>[6]</sup>	Provide common processes, tools and methodologies

Source: The author based on [1] Cotterman et al. (2009); [2] Li and Chen (2010); [3] Gupta et al. (1986); [4] Griffin and Hauser (1996); [5] Lu and Yang (2004) and [6] Hernandez (2006).

This study contributes to management consulting literature by illustrating the positive effect of the IMCS on intra-organizational relationships. It contributes to firm-level innovation management literature since this research confirms the usefulness of certain mechanisms to improve the R&D and marketing relationship suggested by scholars. Moreover, as it can be seen in the discussion section, our findings agree with several claims established on management consulting literature as well as OD literature.

Additionally, this research contributes to the on-going debate on management and organizational literature about the differences or similarities between OD and MCS. On one hand, Cummings and Worley (2008) and Schaffer (1997) have claimed that OD are different from other approaches of organizational change such as IMCS, since they look to improve organizational effectiveness considering human aspects. On the other hand Turner (1982) or Mclachlin (1999) support that MCS have been changing and now consultants are more focused on shaping clients capabilities. Likewise Church et al. (1994) also believe that OD services are changing and now are more focused on business

effectiveness and productivity than on humanistic issues. Therefore, the difference between the effect of OD services and MCS on the client is disappearing.

Our findings suggest that the view proposed by Turner (1982), Mclachlin (1999), and Church et al. (1994) that MCS and OD services are not substantially different is correct. Our empirical evidence reinforces the idea that IMCS are able to modify interpersonal relationships, as well as the OD consultancy services. Additionally, cases revealed that consultants were not only providing expertise to their clients as in the *content process* consultancy approach proposed by Schein (1978). Consultants in several cases tended to go more to the *process consultation* model, one of the interpersonal and group processes approaches commonly used in OD interventions (Mclachlin, 1999; Cummings and Worley, 2008), since they were trying to facilitate involvement of the clients in the diagnosis but also in the solution of their problems. Additionally IMCS used some team building strategies and other OD approaches (Cummings and Worley, 2008)], to promote the creation of a 'joint team' attitude for R&D and marketing, and enhance this team effectiveness (Gilley et al., 2010).

### Research limitations/implications

While this study provide with certain understanding of the impacts of innovation consultants, findings are constrained by some methodological limitations. Firstly, this study is based on cases from different industry sectors which increase its external validity, but this may limit their internal validity since it is very difficult to examine the context and possible external influences on the final results. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate cause-effect relationships. Secondly, although informants were interviewed about the conditions before, during and after the intervention, data is based on memory, therefore certain information could be omitted or altered. And finally, the consultants' selection method through a professional network may have caused certain bias compared to the results that would be obtained from a random sampling of consultants.

The methodology used during this research was selected due to time restrictions. An alternative way to develop this research could be to conduct longitudinal case studies. This would allow identification of how the R&D and marketing relationship changes over time in a more precise manner.

This is an exploratory study based on a qualitative methodology. Due to the number and characteristics of cases explored no claims are made about generalizability or representativeness. Further cases or a quantitative approach could provide additional understanding of how these consultancy activities modify the R&D and marketing relationship, as well as how client and company characteristics affect the R&D and marketing relationships.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the analysis of literature suggested that there was a lack of a framework that can be used to explore systematically how innovation management consultancy activities may impact the intra-organizational relationships, particularly those between R&D and marketing teams.

Building from an analytical framework based on the literature and following a grounded approach, the analysis of twelve case studies allowed the development of a framework that captures the contributions and effects of the IMCS on the R&D and marketing relationship. This theoretical framework comprises key consultant activities and their contributions that ultimately determine the effectiveness of these consultancy interventions on intra-organizational relationships. It also highlights the importance of the consultancy and client characteristics, since these could shape the effect of the consultancy service.

It is important to note that although interviewees recognized and provided anecdotal evidence of changes obtained after the consultancy services, the general opinion is that such changes were product of multiple contributions.

This theoretical framework shows an interconnection of several areas of knowledge, since our findings supports different claims stated on OD, OL and management consultancy literature.

The next step of this research is testing the emerging framework presented in this paper through a qualitative research approach.

This research contributes to the management consulting literature, giving another perspective on the consultancy activities and providing a theoretical framework to understand one of the generally ignored contributions of the IMCS. Additionally, it contributes to firm-level innovation management literature since it provides empirical evidence to confirm the usefulness of certain activities as a possible strategy to improve the R&D and marketing relationship.

Potential clients of IMCS could find in this research not only information about one possible impact of those consultants, but also an idea about how to make the most of their collaboration with these type of consultants.

This research project and the research findings open the door to a number of studies that could be undertaken within the field of innovation management consulting. For example future studies could focus on one specific sector and/or consultancy service in order to analyse in more detail the importance of the consultant and company characteristics.

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