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Qualitative Lifecycle Models of Micro-, Small-, and Medium-Sized Businesses

Ph. D. Dissertation - Thesis

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**Content**

Introduction ..... 3

The Objective of the Doctoral Research ..... 4

Hypotheses ..... 7

Methodology ..... 8

Evaluation of the Hypotheses and the Thesys..... 11

Areas for Future Research..... 18

Bibliography of Thesis Book ..... 19

Publications by the Author on this Topic..... 22

Papers on the Topic Presented at Conferences by the Author ..... 24

## **INTRODUCTION**

Come to know the category of lifecycle and the walk of life concepts one and all associate to different processes. Most people refer with the literal interpretation of the words to his own course of life, but the first and the end points of the journey may have been interpreted as a variety of personal approaches. The road of life is synonymous driven by fate and karma in the area for many ideas, which are in connection with the numerology according to some intense entity. A number of persons identify this concepts as their career, but some few bracket the words with the study of the lifecycle models of civil services and the educationists. There are those as well who reach straight for their CVs. If we would tip the words into the Google, we would get some insurance offers or some line service programs of foundations as results.

Towards the scientific areas the converging concepts are increasingly grow narrow and narrow. Even so, a number of different approaches to meet by the way of the various disciplines. As an example by the field of ethology a completely different criteria will be applied, such as information technology categorizes each grading commands around the lifecycle concepts.

My dissertation defines in the interpretation of the lifecycle models by the economics management discipline and will be applied by the approach especially in the case of domestic micro-, small- and medium-sized (hereinafter SMEs).

Personally I have been learning and acquiring the knowledge of the corporate lifecycle models for several years. In the background the most motivating forces as well: my own environment as being part of the everyday life of a domestic SME.

Furthermore I would like to relate the theoretical knowledge to the practical life experiences as well.

I think in the behind, that the province of the corporate lifecycle models are followed by the chicken and egg dilemma eternal. Is science capable to give properly inspiration and strategy for businesses or even the practical experiences of this companies would be lay the theoretical doctrines relying on its empirical research results?

Thesis, of course, does not undertake to solve this eternal dilemma of the above, but in terms of approaches, be sure to consider the synergistic coexistence of science and practice in mind.

## **THE OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH**

The primary aim of my thesis is to present the created corporate lifecycle models by the foreign and domestic literature knowledge, and I would like to define the detailed description of the main features of this models.

I consider my work to the aforementioned target one of the key challenges in priority, because in my opinion there are only very limited numbers and types of the lifecycle models appear in the domestic scientific community and in publications.

I must admit that during my own initial publications I personally have mentioned only the most familiar models as well, but as I finished the theoretical research works of my dissertation, I could treat this knowledge by a summary of a much broader spectrum.

On the other hand my further purpose to give a basic knowledge base for the corporate owners about the lifecycle models and its characteristics.

I believe that if key decision makers and owners of businesses could deeply acquainted with the theory of the scientific descriptions of the lifecycle models, they could be able to deliberate their strategies by several new variety of factors.

The secondary objective of my dissertation was to create a private lifecycle model, which could be able to eliminate the rigidities and possible contradictions of the presented formal models, and could be include the characterization and method of domestic SMEs.

Among the theoretical researches further goals of my work included achieving an own empirical research as well.

As my sight there are some foreign and domestic empirical researches by the field of the corporate lifecycle models, there are only bare numbers of secondary resources, while the number of publications shows more and more increasing trends. This is due to the fact that topic is continuously prioritising.

As ultimate purpose of my dissertation was to create a software program that includes the whole knowledge base of the theoretical models, but there is an online testing option similarly included. In my view, for the SMEs are equally important to be able to put the theoretical knowledge into practice by the help of my software.

The main objective is to be able to determine the current lifecycle period by the testing results, in which the firm is standing.

Finally, the classification could be discover the characteristics of the ambient circumstances and milieu.

I assume that with the mediation of the results could provoking further effects for the program users.

I would like to briefly mention those of themes, which couldn't become possible to analyse because of the content and/or quantity within of the framework of my dissertation.

Among the objectives of my thesis it was not included – inter alia – the definition and the interpretation of the problem of growth, which disciplines are exhaustive researched by Shumpeter [1934], Csapó [2009] Kuczi [2011], Kőhegyi [1998, 2001], Szerb [2000; 2010b] or McMahon [1998].

No I have undertaken to determine the whole lifetime of businesses, so the knowledge are based on static type analysis rather than dynamic processes.

Nor should I have planned to appoint the quantitative-based lifecycle models, because they try to approach to scaling of the businesses due other aspects.

My researches although impact on family businesses and succession issues [Bálint 2004g, in the depths of my work is not exhausted by any description of these fields.

In terms of the structure of my dissertation – apart from the introduction and establishment of the hypotheses – there are four main chapters.

The first main chapter contains three subchapters, which are introducing the secondary foreign (as Timmons [1977], Greiner [1972], Adizes [1979], Churchill-Lewis [1983], and so on) then the domestic (as Vecsenyi [1999], Salamonné [2006], etc...) literature of the lifecycle models. I present the detailed descriptions and the main characteristics and notes related to this models as well.

Then I summarize the overall conclusions drawn from all of the models and I give an overview of the features and flexibility of certain issues from the scope.

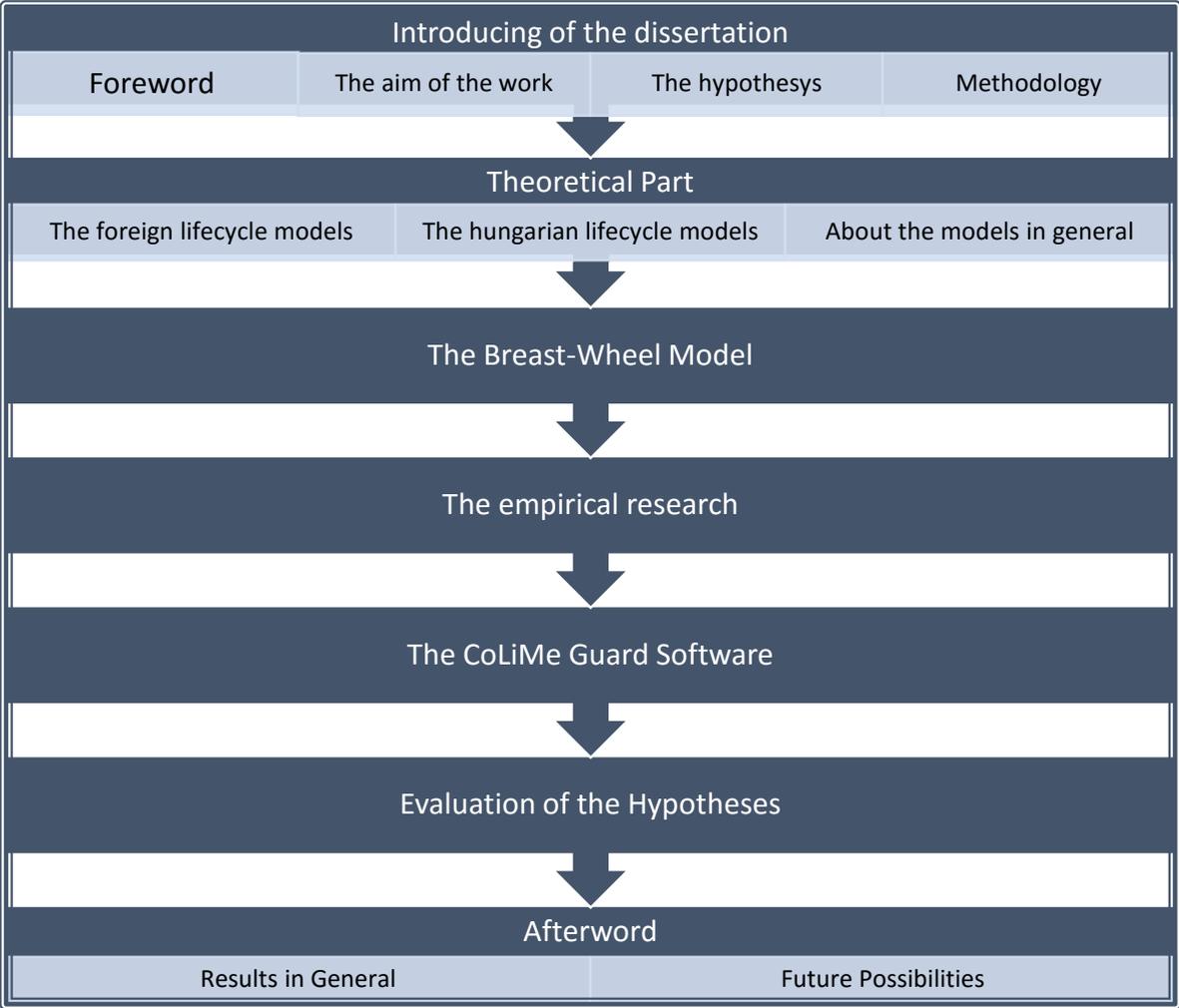
The second section displays my own breast-wheel lifecycle model based on the main aspects of the previous models.

The third major chapter summarizing the results of my empirical research phases based on my own survey.

I hands of my accessibility place of my software in the last major section, and I describe the main functions required for the proper application.

As the end of my work I evaluate my hypotheses and determine my theses, and in closing the final chapter look out for further research topic in connection with the future possibilities.

The next hierarchial diagram should help to illustrate the structure of my dissertation:



1. diagram: Structure of the Dissertation  
 Source: Edited by own

## **HYPOTHESES**

In my dissertation, I defined five different hypotheses. I present the verification and rejection of these hypotheses in the first main three chapters (theoretical literature adaptation, the presentation of my own model and the introduction of result of empiric reserach) of my work.

These are my hypotheses:

**H1:** There is justification for creation of a new lifecycle models which can define the current lifecycle stage of Hungarian SMEs with the currently known and applied knowledge of lifecycle models were used, but the inflexibility of them was eliminated.

**H2-A:** The majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are not able to correctly and accurately determine the current stage of lifecycle and predominantly classified own business in a bad lifecycle phase.

**H2-B:** The point of view of majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are beyond the starting and growing phases. Now these enterprises are aiming to increase efficiency in the (creative) phase of growth.

**H3:** The point of view of domestic SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, the scattering order of life cycle phases determined by the online testing of the Adizes model is parallel with the result of previous domestic researches [Salamonné 2008].

**H4-A:** There is a significant relationship between the age of the Hungarian SMEs in the Western Transdanubian Region and the appearance of strategy of rejuvenation of them.

**H4-B:** The way of description of my own breast-wheel model is considered most appropriate for the demonstration of corporate life by those domestic SMEs established in the Western Transdanubian Region, where the group of questions of rejuvenation strategy appeared.

**H5:** The development opportunities of domestic micro-sized enterprises in the Western Transdanubian Region in the path of lifecycle is not predestinated, but could change according to limitless possibilities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

My dissertation research area was divided into three major sections, with different methodological approaches described below were used.

In the first part of my exploration of the widest range of foreign and domestic lifecycle models I selected the most significant and with the novelty and value-added models in the theoretical chapters.

In relating to the theoretical part of my research I followed the library through data collection and onle references as well, strivingly to be able to analyse the original source of the concerned model.

During the investigation my primary objective was that I could describe the underlying main standards of the birth of the models, and I could visualize the aspects of the authors.

For me it was important also to summary and make the homogenization of the models, which I could base ont he primary literary background anlytical work.

It was chosen the empirical data collecion method to be able to cover and determine the parameters and characteristics of the lifecycle models and its phases by the analyses of the SMEs.

After identification of my research problem I set up my hypotheses based on the literature and empirical evidences.

For the primary and primarily qualitative reserach – after the verifications of the datas required for the testing of hypotheses – I have chosen the survey method.

The questionnaire-based research methodology was designed primarily to exploreatory research and the potential of its descriptive inference, problem solving and casual research. Because of the area of my main researches the qualitative methods could I prefer against the quantitative ones.

The data collection took place between August 31, 2012 and March 1, 2012, within the framework of which two hundred SME business owners and manager or senior leaders were questioned mainly in the Western Transdanubia Region.

The questions in the survey was designed specifically for business owners.

People taking part in the questionnaire survey were involved and learned to the theoretical methodological foundations related to the lifecycle models before performing the query.

The questionnaire consisted of four main parts. In the first part the basic informations of the companies have been collected. The second stage was to determine the businesses of his own lifecycle periods, in which they had to classify themselves by the characteristics of criterias.

The third module was designed to be based on the empirical facts to confirm the legitimacy of the theoretical models and show the untapped opportunities for my own model.

The fourth and final chapter was aimed to the future ownership eras.

The population of the survey was the Hungarian micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises from the Western Transdanubia Region.

The total sample size of the survey was completed by two hundred businesses, however, due to incorrectly filled or not evaluable because of the excluded responding the size of the analyzed sample was hundred and seventy-six ( $n=176$ ) enterprises.

The sampling was based on an arbitrary sampling method, i.e. a questionnaire interviewer selected the polled businesses.

The survey is not representative, on the one hand, I think that this area of investigation couldn't be easily expected to be representative, on the other hand, it wasn't intended of my work, my goal was mainly to explore the characteristics of the lifecycle and the models.

The sample does not completely follow the real composition of the domestic SME segment, but with little changes approaching it.

The company size categories, as well as additional restrictions on the legal form of the companies were not applied on the sample, and the company size categories were used as defined by the European Union and the Hungarian Laws.

In the sample are only firms which are as independent legal entities, in addition, not a subsidiary operating in the markets.

By the evaluation of the results it were used primarily the opportunities provided by the SPSS analysis software, as well as Sajtos-Mitev (2007), and univariate and crosstab analyses were mainly applied.

In most of my analyzes, the crosstabulation with two nominal criterion were compared and the relationship between variables was validated by the Pearson's chi-square test.

In the case where the experiential value was calculated by me exceeded the reference threshold, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was affirmed, that there is a significant relationship between the two variables (Sajtos-Mitev 2007, pp. 141.).

If there was a measurable significant relationship, the intensity of the connection was tested by the Cramer's V and contingent efficiency value, than the lambda, the Goodman and Kruskal tau and uncertainty values were still marked.

Two ordinal scale comparison has not been a result of the empirical research, as well as unfortunately the variable metric values has not been given any opportunity to make variance or covariance tests because of the conditions (no any normal distribution).

In the third part of my work by creating my own software I also relied primarily on the basis of the literature, which served similar methods as operated by the Adizes Institute.

The most typical criterias for each model was determined and described during the theoretical part.

## EVALUATION OF THE HYPOTHESES AND THE THESYS

I appreciate those previously described learning materials as an appropriate basis to be able to evaluate my hypotheses and be able to draw my conclusions.

The first **H1 hypothesis** regarding the fact whether there is justification for creation of a new lifecycle models which can define the current lifecycle stage of Hungarian SMEs with the currently known and applied knowledge of lifecycle models were used, but the inflexibility of them was eliminated. The hypothesis was reached by several sides.

Firstly, I defined the possibly rigidities in some cases of the previous models according to my theoretical and empirical researches. I highlighted the most striking phenomenas in my opinion that the models are represented mainly by a ladder-like growth, which is most vertical as either process-centric.

Although after the year two thousand and ten has increasingly changing the attitudes towards the right direction in my opinion, I feel that the models still need for constant renewal and interventions according to the always changing environments.

Continuing the rejuvenation approach looks not a reassuring way in accordance with the previously constructed models with respect.

I would like to intervene by creating my own model by the necessary poles and provide a universal solution with my correction phase, which could handle the crisis and transition periods of the lifecycle.

Also I would like to emphasise that my model was enacted specifically for the SME sector in contrast to some of the theoretical models that attempt to provide global practices.

After the theoretical background beyond the empirical research on several levels was my own model confirmed, and there were correlation (as for example in connection with the hypothesis H4-B), which explicitly give the key solution by my breast-wheel model.

In view of *the hypothesis H1 I can accept* my prior presumption with full confidence, adding that the findings in my opinion do not exist only in the domestic but also at international level.

The second hypothesis is divided into two parts, but the formulation and analysis is based on several common ideas.

According to my **H2-A hypothesis** the majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are not able to correctly and accurately determine the current stage of lifecycle and predominantly classified own business in a bad lifecycle phase. The result of my empirical research has demonstrated, that companies defined themselves by the first three places as being in the stages of creative, the prime and the go-go!

This was explained by the empirical part, that the period of creative has a positive attitude in which a flexible development was assumed by the respondents.

The second stage is slightly more pessimistic in tone, which was relatively with small relevance in the real. Quite a significant part of the enterprises nevertheless assumed that there is no further development opportunities for them in their journey of life.

The third category is the companies with the always renewal strategy, who felt themselves more motivation and energy to be a good opportunity to be able to achieve growth again (and again).

In contrast with the online testing by the Adizes Institute (2015a) was two category by the classification different, and only the go-go! period was same. However, this period was just beating on the opposite side in accordance with the theoretical tests.

As I tried to correlate the prior classifications to the Greiner results, the first period was only the same but the two more stages were relevantly different again and have their position even exactly on the opposite position of the lifecycle path.

At the end as a conclusion I could take this anomalies described above, so that enterprises held a mirror with the bad image about themselves, and generally they are not able to determine a realistic period of the lifecycle according only by the characteristics of the model periods, so the ***H2-A hypothesis was accepted.***

The second sub-hypothesis as H2-B were formulated that the point of view of majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are beyond the starting and growing phases. Now these enterprises are aiming to increase efficiency in the (creative) phase of growth.

During testing of the theoretical models as the results of the Adizes model (2015a) the first three stages were the go-go!, the courtship and the infant periods. According to the Greiner the first three phases were the creative, the autonomy and the delegation periods.

If the two models (similarly also by other researchers) will be homogenized, it will be clear, that by the first stages by Adizes and by Greiner are the results the same.

As end effect I can make the conclusion with a fairly high degree of security, that the most of the companies standing currently in the stage of creativity, so ***H2-B hypothesis was accepted*** again.

The third hypothesis H3 arose in me because of the point of reference of the empirical research of Salamonné (2006, 2008) and of my own research.

Not the results of Salamonné formulated doubt in me but the different approaches and outputs.

The model of Salamonné (2008, pp. 23.) has very similar ranking as the Adizes (1992) classification ascending: courtship, creativity, authority, delegation and the prime stage. In the last prime stage in the model of Salamonné (2008, pp. 23.) there was no companies, as it was no companies in the first stages as well. The 21,25% of the companies were in the creativity phase, the 63,75% were standing in the authority period and the last 15% took place in the delegation stage. So ascending by the amount of the companies: authority, creativity and delegation stages.

According to my own research (based the testing on Adizes 2015a) and after the homogenization I have got the following result: creativity (37,5%), courtship (26,7%), authority (10,2%), delegation (6,3%) and prime (4,5%). There were some other periods (as crisis and aging periods) which has the leaking 14,8%.

If I compare the two results of the researches can be seen that there are differences between the values and the orders as well.

This, of course, there are well-founded explanation, namely due to the methodology of the two surveys.

Salamonné (2008) has a restrictive condition by her empirical research knowingly gave priority to the elder medium-sized enterprises (Salamonné 2008, pp. 21.) as it sought that her sample could be describe more and more the whole lifecycle path.

However, my own research it had determined neither the size nore the age of the businesses any kind of limiting factors.

So in my opinion it had a natural difference between the order and distribution, assuming that the elder medium-sized businesses are mainly in the higher lifecycle periods.

Summarizing the scattering order of life cycle phases determined by the online testing of the Adizes model is not parallel with the result of previous domestic researches [Salamonné 2008] based on the different methodology of the two research. The **H3 hypothesis** couldn't be accepted and **is refused** in this way.

The fourth group of hypotheses were the issues of rejuvenation. As my **H4-A hypothesis** there is a significant relationship between the age of the Hungarian SMEs in the Western Transdanubian Region and the appearance of strategy of rejuvenation of them.

Following the empirical research it has demonstrated that there is a relationship actually between the two criterias, and I found that the elder a company is, the more come to the fore the issues of the rejuvenation. In this manner my **H4-A hypothesis was accepted**.

On the track of my **H4-B hypothesis** the way of description of my own breast-wheel model is considered most appropriate for the demonstration of corporate life by those domestic

SMEs established in the Western Transdanubian Region, where the group of questions of rejuvenation strategy appeared.

The processing of my empirical research proved, that the more the rejuvenation appears by the companies, the more com to the fore my own breast-wheel model as the best way of represent of the alternative choices.

However, if the companies have less of an idea of the scope of the rejuvenation, so most of the Adizes model representation method will be likely adopted.

The overall lifecycle model path appeared with regard to fifty-fifty by the companies as the more convenient way of graphical representation, but the companies who had at least one rejuvenation in their life have choosen this type of visualization so much the less.

Those companies, however, which has been voting for the Greiner model apperiance, there are the less companies, which still not have had at least one rejuvenation period. It means, that the companies, which choose the Greiner model as the most attractive, they nearly should have to across at least one rejuvenation perion in their life.

According to the above mentioned knowledge the **H4-B hypothesis was similarly accepted**. The last H5 hypothesis discussed in connection with the theoretical issues of Laky (1998), K ohelyi (2001) and Kuczsi (2011), which are confidence, that the determination of a company lifecycle is still given by the firm foundation. It means, that if a company was founded as a micro-sized company, than the way of the growth and the size is predestinated (Laky 1998). The next table contains due to my empirical research the answers of the companies in the field of the number of the lived stages of the lifecycle:

Do the company lived this period?		1st period	2nd period	3th period	4th period	5th period	6th period	7th period	8th period
N	Yes	104	104	99	81	57	37	26	19
	%	100%	100%	95,2%	77,9%	54,8%	35,6%	25,0%	18,3%
	No	0	0	5	23	47	67	78	85
	%	0%	0%	4,8%	22,1%	45,2%	64,4%	75,%	81,7%

2. table: The lived lifecycle stages by the micro-sized companies according to my empirical research

Source: Edited by own

The table clearly shows that the examined micro-enterprises in respect of up to the fourth stage is experiencing (regardless of whether the business which period has chosen on the basis of the questionnaire 5.1) a strong presence, and more than two-thirds of the examined 104 enterprises (the exact 77.9% of the total) still have crosses at least four lifecycle stages. For me, so this findings from the empirical research has been confirmed as to micro-enterprises do not want basically to vegetate only in one lifecycle stages, but it crop up more specified different phases by them the same way as by the small and medium-sized enterprises.

The crosstabulation analyses by the empirical research issues give me henceforward a clearly significant relationship between the age and the lived lifecycle periods of the companies as well.

Following the results, it can be established, that as the longer operates a micro-sized enterprise in the market, the more typical that at least five lifecycle periods is already lived by them.

In fine ***H5 hypothesis was accepted.***

The results of the evaluation of my hypotheses and my theses are briefly summerized in the following table:

Result	Hypotheses	Thesys
✓	H1: There is justification for creation of a new lifecycle models which can define the current lifecycle stage of Hungarian SMEs with the currently known and applied knowledge of lifecycle models were used, but the inflexibility of them was eliminated.	There is justification for creation of a new life cycle models which can define the current lifecycle stage of the SMEs with the currently known and applied knowledge of lifecycle models were used, but the inflexibility of them was eliminated.
✓	H2-A: The majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are not able to correctly and accurately determine the current stage of lifecycle and predominantly classified own business in a bad lifecycle phase.	The majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are not able to correctly and accurately determine the current stage of lifecycle and predominantly classified own business in a bad lifecycle phase.
✓	H2-B: The point of view of majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are beyond the starting and growing phases. Now these enterprises are aiming to increase efficiency in the (creative) phase of growth.	The point of view of majority of the Hungarian SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, are beyond the starting and growing phases. Now these enterprises are aiming to increase efficiency in the (creative) phase of growth.

	<p>H3: The point of view of domestic SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, the scattering order of life cycle phases determined by the online testing of the Adizes model is parallel with the result of previous domestic researches [Salamonné 2008].</p>	<p>The point of view of domestic SMEs, with headquarters in the Western Transdanubian Region, the scattering order of life cycle phases determined by the online testing of the Adizes model is not parallel with the result of previous domestic researches [Salamonné 2008], probably because of the devious methodology of the empirical researches.</p>
	<p>H4-A: There is a significant relationship between the age of the Hungarian SMEs in the Western Transdanubian Region and the appearance of strategy of rejuvenation of them.</p>	<p>The more elder a company is, the more appearing the strategy of rejuvenation by them.</p>
	<p>H4-B: The way of description of my own breast-wheel model is considered most appropriate for the demonstration of corporate life by those domestic SMEs established in the Western Transdanubian Region, where the group of questions of rejuvenation strategy appeared.</p>	<p>The more appearing the strategy of rejuvenation by a company, the more will be appropriate my breast-wheel model for the demonstration of corporate life.</p>
	<p>H5: The development opportunities of domestic micro-sized enterprises in the Western Transdanubian Region in the path of lifecycle is not predestinated, but could change according to limitless possibilities.</p>	<p>The development opportunities of domestic micro-sized enterprises in the Western Transdanubian Region in the path of lifecycle is not predestinated, but could change according to limitless possibilities.</p>

3. table: Results of the hypotheses and my thesis

Source: Edited by own

## **AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

I think the main aim of my dissertation to show the realization of defined static lifecycle phases for the enterprises with the help of theoretical literature sources and interactive testing possibilities.

The examination of possibility of dynamic modeling related to lifecycle model remains a great challenge for me for the future, that is how it would possible to model and later analyze the whole lifecycle path of a business with the same method, with the same system. According to my current knowledge this kind of mechanism is not exist, therefore this motivate me for a creation of overall system.

If it is possible I would like to develop the basic capabilities of the existing software, especially to the direction of the mentor way, which can find in the name of the program, also. With the help of the software I would like to provide the widest range of information for the owners and decision-makers of enterprises to help them working-out the further, successful strategies.

Along the line of this software method I would also like to extend the system with an anonym exportable database, which can be available for anyone, whereby the data recorded by the firms anyone can use for own primary or secondary research.

There is under preparation a depth interview which based on the questionnaire method in my dissertation. According to my plans this interview realize in the frame of a fifty member business group, with the help of this my theses based on the result of my empiric questionnaire can be confirmed.

There is also in my plan to organize a round-table-discussion with the attendance of owners of enterprises with the collaboration of Széchenyi István University, where we can dispute the experimental evolution of life cycles and the present point of view of the related disciplines involved the audience and university students.

I think the actuality of my choice of topic remains frequented and popular recently and medium term, also. Because of this there is several possibilities to determine future areas for further fields of work.

As my last words I would like to refer to one of my favourite movie: SMEs, maybe the best way is back to the future?

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