

# Discursive legitimation strategies in the UK media. Case of book e-commerce

International Business Communication  
Master's thesis  
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2015

## **Discursive legitimation strategies in the UK media. Case of book e-commerce**

### **Objective of the study**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine discursive the legitimation strategies used by the media when covering various events in book e-commerce in the UK, and thereby contribute to the studies of the role of language use in constructing a sense of legitimacy of institutional change. The study aims at answering the question: “How is the legitimacy of a particular institutional change constructed in the media?”

### **Methodology**

A methodology of critical discourse analysis was applied on a collection of articles gathered from three British newspapers and magazines: The Guardian, Retail Week and The Bookseller. The dataset of 156 articles written between the years 2004 and 2006 was analyzed in three steps. Firstly, a thematic analysis of the texts was conducted to single out the most significant topics in the textual material. This stage was followed by a content analysis of specific discursive legitimation strategies used respective to the themes mentioned above. For the latter stage of analysis, a framework suggesting five major legitimation strategies used by journalists for making sense of new practices in the UK book e-commerce was applied. Those five strategies were authorization, rationalization, normalization, moralization and narrativization.

### **Findings**

Following the approach of critical discourse methodology, the study analyzed these distinctive categories of discursive legitimation strategies, signifying specific ways of making sense of, and giving sense to the changes of the market. The results of the analysis imply that each strategy type has its own distinguishing features and ways of introduction. Hence, each strategy is intended to fulfill some specific objectives in addition to the legitimation and delegitimation purposes. Furthermore, it was observed that discursive legitimation strategies are actively used in the process of the construction of institutional change and that the media is often used by the actors of the change for mobilizing allies behind their vision by using particular discursive legitimation strategies. Moreover, the study revealed that the social position of the actor producing the discourse affects the choice of the discursive legitimation strategy. Rationalization and authorization strategies appeared to be prevalent in the analyzed dataset. This means that for creating the sense of legitimacy of a practice within the e-commerce field, the journalists chose to use a formal way of presenting information, prioritizing providing objective reasoning and expert

opinions over using emotional elements and an entertaining tone in the text.

**Keywords:** discursive legitimation strategy, discourse, institutional change, institution, institutional entrepreneurship, legitimation, legitimacy, critical discourse analysis, CDA, e-commerce, media.

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## **1. Introduction**

The introductory chapter presents the background for the present thesis and provides the big picture on the research objective and the structure of the thesis. Section 1.1 discusses the background of the study by overviewing both relevant prior research and the analyzed case. Furthermore, in section 1.2 the research objective and questions are presented. The concluding section 1.3 briefly overviews the structure of the thesis and the content of the following chapters.

### **1.1 Background for the study**

Over the past twenty years e-commerce has been growing rapidly and especially booksellers have proved to be very successful and innovative in online retailing. The market in the United Kingdom represents a special case and is of particular interest due to its frontrunner role in the adoption of technological innovations. Overall the influence of online retailing on the UK's market has been twofold. Whereas the Internet has shaped book retailing in the UK heavily, the impact on e.g. grocery retailing has remained relatively low. The present thesis argues that the media has been one of the drivers behind the development of book retailing. Based on previous research it is argued that the journalists and other influencers employ specific discursive legitimation strategies in media in order to construct a sense of legitimacy of the new practices in the e-commerce of books, or in order to delegitimize companies' moves on the contrary.

It is important to point out, that the present thesis defines e-commerce of books as selling both printed books and e-books through online shops. Furthermore, due to the reasons discussed in the "Data collection" sub-chapter, the analysis of media material is limited to the years 2004-2006. The e-books have not been a popular topic in the media discussion during that time and there weren't any articles about e-books in the analyzed dataset. Consequently, present research is limited to studying retail of printed books through online channels. A brief overview of relevant prior research is provided below.

Institutions and institutional change have for years been favorite topics for in-depth analysis (e.g. Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Institutions are

defined as regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements, providing stability and meaning to social life (e.g. Scott, 2008). In recent years there has been a growing interest in the notion of institutional logics, which is considered to be a means of constructing meaning and content of institutions (Friedland and Alford, 1991). It is suggested that institutional logics specifies the boundaries of a field, its rules of membership and the roles of various individuals and organizations within this field (e.g. Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Following this approach institutional change is understood as a shift in institutional logics, a shift in the understanding of organizing principles for a specific field (e.g. Reay and Hinings, 2009). The study of the notion of institutional entrepreneurship has become an important aspect of the institutional theory. Institutional entrepreneurs are the field-level actors who disrupt existing institutional logics by initiating a divergent change or actively participating in the implementation of changes (e.g. Battilana et.al., 2009).

As institutions are understood as a set of taken for granted rules, the concept of legitimacy is referred to as one of the central concepts within organizational institutionalism. Mazza and Alvarez (2000) claim that legitimacy is understood as a state of social acceptance of e.g. an institution or a practice. Consequently legitimation is in a nutshell a process and action of ensuring legitimacy. Many scholars have recently turned to rhetoric as the main tool for achieving the sense of legitimacy of a practice (e.g. Heracleous and Barret, 2001). There is a lot of evidence for the belief that new practices may only become effective if supporting rhetoric rationalizes the usefulness of their adoption (Green, 2004), if there are valid arguments proving the rationality of the adoption of a practice. Closely related to the rhetorical perspective on institutional change adoption is the notion of discourse - written or spoken communications (Fowler & Fowler, 2011). According to recent rhetorical approaches to discourse, opposing actors in a context of social change subconsciously adopt genres of speech and writing that reflect and deliberately manipulate the values and ideology of their audience (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995). Consequently, discourses are able to construct power relations within a society and there has been a large amount of research dedicated to this topic (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1996). Furthermore, Fairclough (1995)

has proven that in particular the media is often used for establishing unequal power relations.

Following this institutional logics using particular rhetorical tactics in the media appears to be one of the ways to create a sense of legitimacy and “taken for grantedness” of a practice. Those tactics were defined by Van Leeuwen and Wodak as discursive legitimation strategies (1999). Vaara et. al. (2006) elaborated on those strategies and suggested distinguishing between five discursive legitimation strategies: normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization and narrativization.

In line with the previous studies discussed above, this thesis aims at revealing the process of legitimation construction by focusing on the discursive aspects of legitimacy. As Suddaby (2010, p. 17) points out “institutional theorists could and should pay more careful attention to how words are deliberately used to change resource allocations both in the financial and political spheres” and this study aims at addressing this gap of knowledge.

There has been some research on the use of discourses in the media for legitimation or delegitimation purposes (e.g. Leeuwen and Wodak (1999); Vaara et.al. (2006). However, the amount of research dedicated to this topic is insufficient and the language aspect of institutional change should be investigated further. The present thesis aims at finding out about the use of legitimation strategies in the context of various events within one industry at a specific point in time. With the help of the critical discourse perspective the study showcases how new practices and events are introduced and authorized through the printed media.

The theoretical background discussed above is summarized in Figure 1, which shows the process of institutional change construction. The scheme indicates, how institutional entrepreneurs “appear” from existing institutions and they are supported or opposed by other field-level actors. Both institutional entrepreneurs and other actors use discursive legitimation strategies to mobilize the allies behind their vision regarding possible institutional change. If the rhetoric of the institutional entrepreneurs attracts more support, institutional change takes place, which leads to the formation of a new



institution. It is likely that after some time new institutional entrepreneurs will try to disrupt the new institution and the whole process will repeat itself.

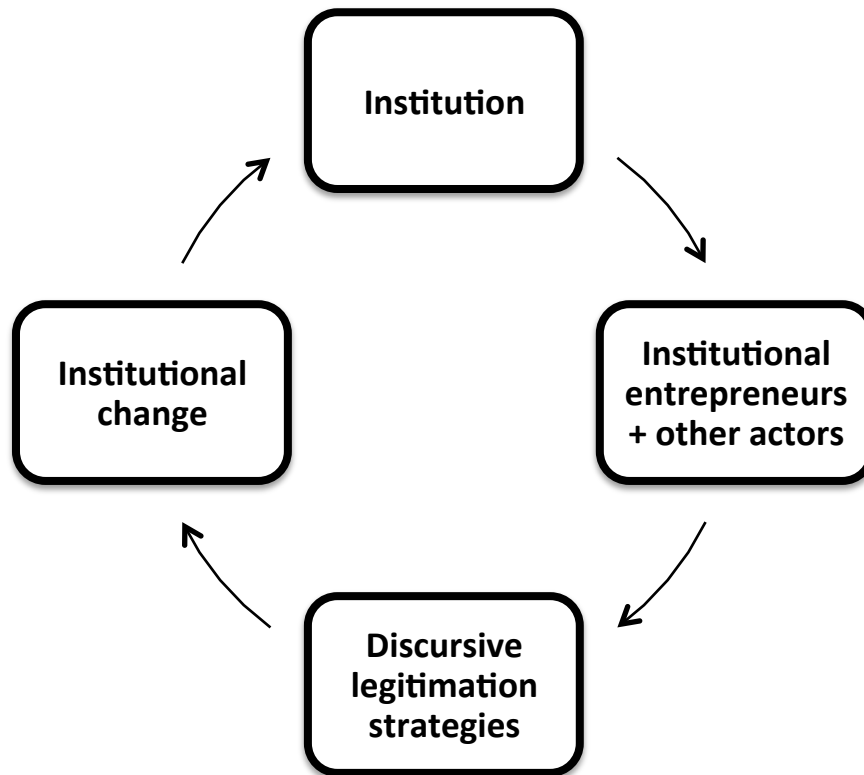


Figure 1. The process of institutional change

In practice the findings of the present research are applicable for such fields of business as communications, management and marketing, since they provide understanding of what discourses are normally used for constructing a sense of legitimacy of a new practice or what kind of discourses might produce an opposite effect.

This thesis study focuses on the development of book e-commerce in the United Kingdom is investigated. The case is presented in more detail in the next subchapter.

### **1.1.1 E-commerce of books in the UK.**

The present thesis studies the use of discursive legitimation strategies in the British media, when covering the events in the industry of the e-commerce of books in the UK.

The “events” vary largely, for example from acquisitions of smaller booksellers by bigger competitors to bricks and mortar traditional bookshops opening an online shop.

Online retailing has been an important part of book retailing in the UK during the past 20 years. The history of internet bookselling can be divided into three time periods which are briefly introduced below. The brief chronology presented below is based mainly on the thorough analysis of the newspaper and magazine articles collected for the research. The analyzed media material database included 761 articles from three sources and it will be described in more detail in subchapter 3.1.

#### *Emergence of book online retail in the UK. 1994-2000.*

The book e-commerce development started in 1994, when the first online bookshops were founded: the UK-based Internet Bookshop and the American-based Amazon.com. Both shops were founded in early 1994, inspired by the idea of using the Internet as a retail-channel. However, the two companies’ histories within six years from 1994 to 2000 differed to a large extent.

Amazon was incorporated by the founder Jeff Bezos in 1994. Although the company did not aim at being profitable within the first 4-5 years, the growth of Amazon’s market share in the USA was spectacular and it was not long before the company started expanding overseas (Spector, 2002). In October 1998 Amazon launched the UK site - [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). (Babaian, 1998).

Amazon’s competitor - Internet Bookshop was also growing within the time period between years 1994 and 2000. Although its development was not as rapid as Amazon’s, by 1998 the Internet Bookshop had grown into Europe's largest virtual retail site. At that point the company was bought for GBP 9.4 million by an established British bookseller WHSmith (The Guardian, 1999), which was the first traditional bookshop in the UK to react to the emergent technologies. WHSmith had launched its own online bookstore already in 1995.

### *New players on the book online market. 2000-2006*

The time period between years 2000 and 2006 is characterized by rapid development of book online retail in the UK. Several new players appeared on the market, e.g. Play.com and the Book Depository, which would later become Amazon's biggest competitors in the book e-commerce market (Butler, 2008). However, Amazon was keeping its leader position and by 2006 71.07% of the UK online book-buyers were using Amazon.co.uk with 13.18% shopping at Amazon.com. In sharp contrast, the share of no other online bookshop exceeded 2% (Clements, 2006).

One can say that for a long time WHSmith was the only British traditional bookselling chain competing with Amazon in the online battle. In 2005 traditional bricks and mortar bookseller Ottakar's relaunched the online shop, thereby attempting to enter the online market for the second time after abandoning their website four years earlier. However, this move didn't improve the company's overall financial performance and in June 2006 Ottakar's was bought by an entertainment group HMV (Retail Week, 2006).

### *Emergence of e-books and Amazon's triumph 2007 – present*

E-readers' appearance on the United Kingdom market may be considered the main recent event in the British book e-commerce history. In the above mentioned time period Amazon's dominance of the market was continuously growing, while some competitors were forced to put their companies for sale.

First e-readers appeared on the UK market in 2008 and e-books quickly became popular among readers. E-books are predicted to overtake hardbacks in the UK by 2018, as forecasted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (Sweney, 2014). At Amazon.co.uk the sales of e-books already in 2012 noticeably exceeded those of hardbacks- in May 2012 Amazon announced it had sold 242 ebooks for every 100 hardbacks since 1st April 2011. Furthermore, both Amazon's UK and American website to that day account for the biggest part of booksales in the UK. The company's biggest competitors on the online market were The Book Depository possessing 4-5% of the market and Play.com with 3-4%. Despite the fact that both TBD and Play.com managed to become one of Europe's largest book e-tailers, by 2013 both companies were acquired by bigger rivals.

### **1.1.2 Previous research of book e-commerce**

In the present study the bookselling industry in the UK in general is understood as an institution, whereas the emergence and further development of the e-commerce of books comprises the institutional change. Several major institutional entrepreneurs were identified, such as Amazon and the Book Depository (the UK-based book online shop founded at the same time as Amazon). Moreover, there were established traditional bricks-and-mortar bookshops who actively participated in the implementation of the institutional change. However, the present thesis is not limited to studying the media coverage of actions of exclusively institutional entrepreneurs. On the contrary, the study looks at the printed media coverage of all the events in book e-commerce at a specific time. Therefore, it is of a great interest to see, how the themes of the articles in the data set affect the choice of the various discursive legitimation strategies.

The connection between the previous research and the analyzed case study is shown in a sketchy manner in Figure 2.

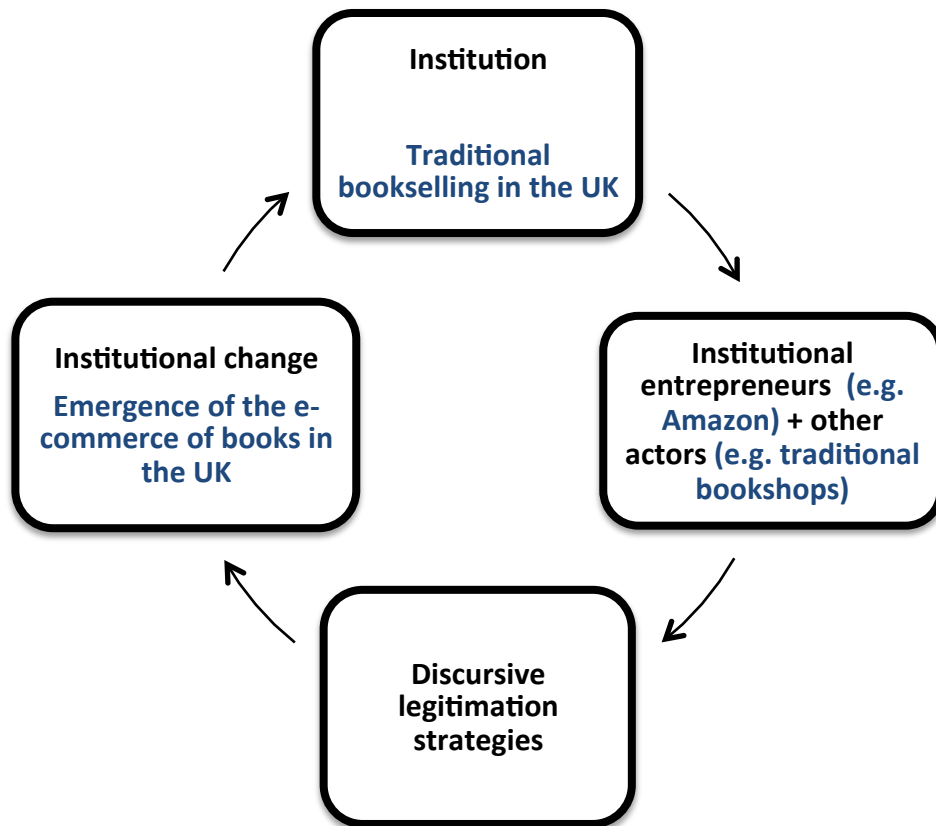


Figure 2. The case of book e-commerce in the framework of previous research.

## 1.2 Research objective and questions

The purpose of this thesis is to examine discursive legitimation strategies used in media when covering various events in book e-commerce in the UK and thereby contribute to studies of the role of language use in constructing a sense of legitimacy of institutional change. Through critical discourse analytic approach it is studied what discourses are used for legitimizing or delegitimizing the changes within an institution in the eyes of the audience. For that purpose a collection of articles from the British media is analyzed. The articles were collected from the three sources: The Bookseller, The Guardian and Retail Week, and they were published in years 2004-2006.

It is important to clarify that all the research questions presented below refer to the development of the e-commerce of books in the UK when talking about institutional change. The main research question is the following:

*How is the legitimacy of a particular institutional change constructed in the media?*

As was already mentioned above the present thesis defines the industry of traditional bookselling, which existed in the UK for centuries, as an institution, whereas the appearance and development of online bookselling constructs the institutional change. The research looks at the media material on all the events in the book online retail at a given time. Furthermore, the articles on the effect of online bookselling on traditional bookshops are also analyzed.

In order to answer the main research questions, several sub-questions should be answered:

*1. What discursive legitimation strategies are prevalent in media covering book e-commerce in the UK?*

Vaara et.al. (2006) distinguished between five discursive legitimation strategies: normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization and narrativization. Present study aims at exploring whether the same discursive legitimation strategies in case of the book e-commerce in the UK were used, and which of those strategies are prevalent in the analyzed media materials. Vaara et.al. (2006) focused their analysis on the legitimation or deligitimation of a merger of two corporations. Since in the present study legitimation or deligitimation of different events constructing institutional change are analyzed, it is expected that the proportions of use of each of the strategies would differ largely from the previous research. This would mean that the topic of a media article directly influences the strategies enacted by the producer of discourse.

*2. What discursive legitimation strategies are used by the actors of the change?*

The media materials often include quotes of company representatives, discussing the changes happening in the market. Companies which have big influence on disrupting the existing institution (e.g. Amazon) are understood as *institutional entrepreneurs* in the present study, whereas smaller online bookshops, as well as traditional bricks and mortar booksellers and other experts in the field (e.g. commission awarding booksellers for the achievements in the industry) are understood as *other field-level actors*.

*3. What kind of relationship can be detected between the theme of the text and the discursive legitimation strategy used?*

One of the steps of the critical discourse analysis of media material involves identifying the prevalent themes in the text. It is expected that those themes will shape with the discursive legitimation strategies in use. An example of a theme is the effect the development of e-commerce has had on the traditional booksellers or the Amazon concurring new heights on the UK market.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The introductory Chapter 1 has outlined the background for the study, research objectives and structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature. The literature review is divided into three parts: 1) the nature of institutional change and development of research on institutional entrepreneurship; 2) literature on legitimation and discourses involved in constructing institutional change; 3) theoretical framework developed by the author. The following chapter presents data collection and the methodological issues of the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings obtained from the collected data. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the results and the conclusions based on them.

## **2. Literature review**

This chapter presents research that has been conducted on topics relevant for this study. Subchapter 2.1 presents relevant literature on the notion of institutional change in general, the fundamental theories behind institutional change and the latest relevant studies, as well as research on institutional entrepreneurship. Subchapter 2.2 discusses the role of language in constructing institutional change and overviews prior research on the process of legitimation or delegitimation of new practices through the use of specific discourses. The concluding subchapter 2.3 presents the theoretical framework built upon the research discussed in subchapters 2.1 and 2.2. The framework serves as a basis for the subsequent empirical research.

### **2.1 The notion of institutional change**

In this subchapter the notion of institutional change and the role of institutional entrepreneurs in this process will be discussed. Section 2.1.1 provides a brief overview of the fundamental theories of organizational institutionalism in order to show the basis the research builds upon. In this section the definitions of the notion of institution and institutional logics are given. Section 2.1.2 discusses various theories behind institutional change, showcasing the importance of institutional logic in constructing the institutional change. Section 2.1.3 provides a rather deep analysis of the complex notion of institutional entrepreneurship, giving a definition of institutional entrepreneurship and discussing the conditions enabling field-level actors to act as institutional entrepreneurs. Moreover, the final section gives a detailed description of various theories on the paradox of embedded agency, which is inseparable from the notion of institutional entrepreneurship.

#### **2.1.1 Foundational themes of organizational institutionalism**

Institutional theory appeared on the scene of organizational studies already in the 1940s with Selznick's (1948, 1949) empirical analyses of organizations and institutional environment and Parson's study (1956), where he highlights the importance of institutions in the integration of organizations with other organizations in society.



A new stream of research in the sphere developed in the 1970s with research by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1977). Meyer and Rowan draw attention on cognition in the organizational context and the institutional rules functioning as myths within organizations. Incorporated by the organizations the myths allow decreasing internal coordination and control replacing those with logic of confidence and faith. These scholars emphasized the role of modernization in rationalizing taken for granted rules, which leads to isomorphism in the formal organizational structures (Greenwood et.al., 2008). As Scott (2008, p. 43) puts it, Meyer and Rowan “embraced the view of institutions as complexes of cultural rules”. For that reason, it is suggested that for instance multi-national corporations entering new markets often face challenges, due to differences in cultural norms in the new institution. Meanwhile Zucker (1977) discussed the cultural aspects of institutionalization. Based on empirical experiments she concluded that there is a correlation between the degree of institutionalization of acts and cultural persistence. Zucker highlighted the power of cognitive beliefs in people’s behavior: “social knowledge, once institutionalized exists as a fact, as a part of objective reality, and can be transmitted directly on that basis” (1977, p. 726).

Another influential contribution to the development of institutional theory was made by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who developed further the idea of structural isomorphism suggesting that by trying to change their organizations rational actors make them similar. Three mechanisms of institutional effects’ diffusion are distinguished by the authors – coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive isomorphism derives from political influence and problem of legitimacy; mimetic isomorphism arises from standard responses to uncertainty and the normative one is associated with professionalization. Many subsequent approaches to new institutionalism underlined that it was not rationality that created organizational structure.

Most approaches shifted attention to legitimacy rather than efficiency as a source of organizations’ success and survival (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983). Neo-institutional scholars within that stream of research defined institutions as "historical accretions of past practices and understandings that set conditions on action" through the way in which they "gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of taken for granted facts

which, in turn, shape future interactions and negotiations" (Barley & Tolbert. 1997, p. 99).

Another approach to institutional analysis puts emphasis on the notion of institutional logics as means of constructing content and meaning of institutions. Friedland and Alford (1991) were the first to discuss it in their seminal essay, where institutional logics was defined as "a set of material practices and symbolic constructions which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (1991, p. 248). Institutional logics builds rational behavior, and organizations and individuals participate in shaping institutional logics (Thornton, 2004).

As a universal definition of an institution, combining the different approaches, it appears appropriate to use the one suggested by Scott (2008, p.48): "institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life". This definition encompasses the approaches to studying institutional theory presented above and provides a framework for further analysis of the institutions in the present thesis.

In conclusion of section 2.1.1 it should be noticed, that institutions in an essence are a set of norms, which provide stability and meaning to social life. In other words, traditional organizational institutionalism underlines that in order to exist and become successful, organizations have to adapt to specific rules and norms existing within a field. As was discussed in the introduction, the present study understands traditional bookselling in the United Kingdom as an institution. This section has also laid the basis for studying the role of legitimacy within institutional theory, as it was shown that a stream of institutional research has been dedicated to the fact that conditions and norms form an institution, as soon as they acquire the status of taken for grantedness (= become legitimate) in the eyes of the society (e.g. Friedland and Alford, 1991).

### **2.1.2 Theories behind institutional change**

After the above brief description of the foundations of organizational institutionalism we will now narrow down the focus to theories on institutional change

Scholars have sought to identify the locus and processes of institutional change for many decades now. As is emphasized by Scott (2008) early neoinstitutional scholars such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) were mostly focusing on the ways in which institutional mechanisms constrained organizational structures and activities. In such a manner Meyer (1982) discussed environmental “jolts”, which may take different forms. Those could be technological innovations, social upheaval, competitive discontinuities, and regulatory change (e.g. Davis et.al., 1994). Such events speed up the entry of new players into the organizational field, empower existing players and change the intellectual climate of ideas (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). More recent papers by DiMaggio (1988, 1991) and Powell (1991) pay more attention to both individuals and organizations, the way they innovate, act strategically and contribute to institutional change (Scott, 2008, p. 77).

Institutional change is often associated with a change in institutional logics. “Institutional logics provide the organizing principles for a field. They are the basis of taken for granted rules guiding behavior of field-level actors.” (Reay and Hinings, 2009). Institutional logics specify the boundaries of a field, its rules of membership and the roles of individuals and organizations (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Such institutional theorists as Scott (2008) and Thornton and Ocasio (1999) have suggested that dominant institutional logics define organizational fields even though two or more institutional logics are able to exist at the same time. Most of the recent approaches to institutional theory conclude that institutional change follows a shift in institutional logics. Thornton (2004) emphasized that by becoming dominant institutional logics affect the decisions of executives drawing their attention to the issues and solutions that are consistent with the dominant logic. On the other hand, institutional logics are constructed on values and beliefs of the most powerful actors in the fields (i.e. Fligstein 1990). Those change-drivers can be new actors who challenged the existing dominant logic by suggesting a new one or established actors who revealed new ways of organizing (Hensmans 2003, Kitchener 2002).

The present section presented the notion of institutional change. It is understood that the institutional logics set the principles for the functioning of the institutions: specifies the boundaries of the institutions, sets rules of membership and the roles various actors are

playing within an institution. Thereby a shift in institutional logics constructs the disruption of the existing institution - the institutional change. In the case of the institution of book retail in the UK, emergence and further development of e-commerce in general and the e-commerce of books in particular has caused the shift in institutional logics. New actors providing the innovative service of selling books online appeared on the British market. Consequently, the rules of membership, as well as roles of actors have changed. The traditional bookshops were pushed to react to the innovation and either create online bookshops of their own, or figure out the ways to compete with the online shops. Moreover, the roles of actors in the market shifted very quickly, as already after the first 8 years in the British market Amazon managed to become the main bookseller in the UK (Clements, 2006), thus taking the leadership position and leaving minor roles to the former leaders.

### **2.1.3 Institutional entrepreneurs driving institutional change**

A discussion on the role of the most powerful actors of organizational fields in the institutional change process brings us to the notion of institutional entrepreneurship. The term was first used by DiMaggio in 1988. In his work DiMaggio argued that “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly”. (1988, p. 14). As Maguire et.al. (2004, p. 657) define it, institutional entrepreneurship refers to “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or transform existing ones”.

Institutional entrepreneurs are those who disrupt the established institutional logic in a field. Battilana et.al. (2009) point out, that institutional entrepreneurs may take the form of an organization, groups of organizations, individuals or groups of individuals and that actors must fulfill two conditions to be regarded as institutional entrepreneurs; (1) initiate divergent changes; and (2) actively participate in the implementation of these changes. Some authors note that institutional entrepreneurs can also work to maintain or disrupt and tear down existing institutions.

A stream of research has been dedicated to conditions enabling actors to become institutional entrepreneurs. As Holm (1995) points out, the change might be initiated in both first- and second-order institutional systems – a phenomenon he labels as “nested systems”. Institutional arrangements at one level are embedded in institutional systems at a higher level. Individual actors are embedded in the organizations, which in turn are embedded in the various areas of institutional life. Those field-level conditions are the first type of circumstances stimulating institutional entrepreneurship as highlighted by Battilana et.al. (2009).

Field-level conditions bring us to the notion of environmental “jolts” (changes in social and economic, environment) mentioned earlier. Such jolts motivate institutional entrepreneurs to generate new ideas in order to overcome emerging challenges. For instance the economic and political crisis faced by the European Union stimulated the European Commission to act as an institutional entrepreneur and devise the Single Market Program. Working within regulations of existing institutional arrangements the commission created a new social movement (Fligstein & Mara-Drita, 1996). Some papers also refer to acute field-level problems (e.g. dearth of resources) as to “jolts”. In such a manner Durand and McGuire (2005) studied field-level problems faced by the Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business (AACSB). The association’s established business model couldn’t answer the growing demands of students. At the same time business school’s orders were creating “scarcity in legitimizing resources”. As a solution a decision to expand legitimating agencies into a new domain was taken and the field was expanded to include European Schools, whereas the previous standards derived from the North-American educational traditions.

It is often underlined that the degree of heterogeneity in the organizational field (i.e. existence of multiple institutional arrangements) enables institutional entrepreneurship. The variance in existing institutional arrangements may lead to their contradiction, which in turn prevents actors from taking such arrangements for granted and motivates them to search for ways to solve such contradictions. Seo and Creed (2002, p.222) depict “praxis-agency embedded in a totality of multiple levels of interpenetrating, incompatible institutional arrangements (contradictions) – as an essential driving force of institutional change”. Another characteristic of external conditions prompting

institutional entrepreneurship is the degree of the field's institutionalization. Previous research has revealed a bond between the state of a field and the likelihood of institutional entrepreneurship. Less institutionalized fields provide more opportunities for institutional entrepreneurs than otherwise. (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996).

Greenwood et. al. (2008) argue that “emerging fields offer considerable scope for institutional entrepreneurship because the lack of institutionalized practices results in fluid relationships, conflicting values, and the absence of clearly identifiable norms-all of which, in turn, may pose problems that actors wish to solve, or provide opportunities on which they can capitalize”. Emerging fields provide potential institutional entrepreneurs with relatively unconstrained areas to work in and “a wide range of disparate materials from which they might fashion new institutions”. (Maguire et.al., 2004, p. 674). Several other researchers see the uncertainty often existing in emerging fields as a stimulus for institutional entrepreneurs (i.e. Dejean, Gond and Leca, 2004). Uncertainty undermines the degree to which it is impossible to predict outcomes of future decisions. As a consequence institutions help to minimize the uncertainty by guiding and structuring actors' behavior.

As for the second enabling condition of institutional entrepreneurship – the social position of the entrepreneur, several studies have proved that it is likely for actors taking a dominant position in the field to engage in institutional entrepreneurship. For example, Townley (2002) mentions that in Canada, new business planning practices were adopted as a result of a command from the government, and Sherer and Lee (2002) concluded that it were the most reputable law firms who adopted new practices of working with personnel. However, Battilana et. al. (2009) point out that the interrelation between individuals' or organizations' social position and their influence on change is field-specific, as previous studies have also shown examples of institutional change being initiated by low status organizations or individuals. For instance, Lounsbury et.al (2003) prove that non-profit organizations enabled the rise of for-profit recycling industry, and Leblebici et.al. (1991) point out that an institutional change in the U.S. broadcasting industry was initiated by peripheral players.

It is also likely for actors positioned on the intersections of different fields to engage in institutional entrepreneurship. Rao et.al. (2000) give an example of such a process–creation of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). It was developed in the 1970s in the USA as a result of collaboration of actors from different fields. The project brought together “judges, attorneys, social scientists, and mediators” (2000, p. 253), who shared their experiences and as a result found the solution for the problem of inefficiency of American court systems, which was often judged for poor performance in resolving minor disputes”. Moreover, a study on HIV/AIDS treatment advocacy in Canada conducted by Maguire et.al. (2004) proved that institutional entrepreneurs in emerging fields tended to be actors whose subject positions (legitimated identities that are available in a field (Oakes et.al., 1998)) “(1) provided them with legitimacy with respect to diverse stakeholders and (2) bridged those stakeholders, allowing the institutional entrepreneurs to access dispersed sets of resources” (2004, p. 674). The idea behind this research is that the actors embrace the power they gain from occupying a specific position in the field and it allows them to act as institutional entrepreneurs.

Some studies also point to specific characteristics and abilities of actors that enable them to act as institutional entrepreneurs, the properties that allow actors to embrace emerging opportunities and suggest alternative arrangements. Institutional entrepreneurs are perceived as “analytically distinguished social type who has the capability to take a reflective position towards institutionalized practices and can envision alternative modes of getting things done” (Beckert, 1999, p.786). For example, Mutch (2007) approached this issue from the micro-level. He studied the management reform of Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, a pioneer of directly managed public houses. Special attention was given to Walker’s Scottish background, such as education and church governance. Mutch suggested that Walker was reflecting on the existing system of management in a relative isolation from the others and as a result he was experiencing conflict with the surrounding system and was looking to change it.

Within neoinstitutional theory Luonsbury and Crumsley (2007) also underline the importance of answering the question “where do new practices come from?”. They develop a model of the process of practice creation and analysis of the case of creation of the active money management practice in the US mutual fund industry. They claim

that new practice creation is unfairly ignored in the neoinstitutional literature: “Neoinstitutionalists have developed a rich array of theoretical and empirical insights about how new practices become established via legitimacy and diffusion, but have paid scant attention to their origins” (2007, p. 993). Their model of new practice creation suggests a new understanding of institutional entrepreneurship. They see it as a more distributed notion, where actors are spread across multiple dimensions such as space, status, and time, although they are united by shared cultural beliefs that define the field.

The paradox of embedded agency. A debate on embedded agency has been going on within institutional theories for more than 20 years now. The notion of embedded agency refers to the paradox of actors being embedded in the institutional field and being involved in the cognitive, regulative and normative processes on the one hand, and their ability to envision and impose new practices at the same time - on the other. In other words, according to the concept suggested by DiMaggio (1988) institutional entrepreneurs are supposed to be interest-driven, aware, and calculative. However, as it was underlined earlier, institutions are comprised of taken for granted practices. Those two notions contradict each other and make many researchers question, whether it is possible for institutional entrepreneurs to “set free” from what used to be taken for granted and envision new opportunities. For many years scholars have been trying to find the answer to this puzzle. Some of the fundamental studies in the field are discussed below:

Scott (2001, p. 187) states: “In highly institutionalized systems endogenous change seems almost to contradict the meaning of an institution”. It is of interest, how the level of institutionalization is underlined in the quoted sentence. Building on this Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) suggest that there are two types of actor embeddedness. First type of actors are relatively embedded in the field (e.g. peripheral organizational players) and they are not completely restricted by taken-for-granted rules existing within a specific field. Consequently they consider alternative ways of functioning within a specific field and they pose a motivation for change. Some theories suggest that peripheral organizational players are more likely to be able to break with taken for granted rules. There are three reasons for such an assumption. Firstly, non-central players are less aware of institutional regulations, as they are disconnected from established players (i.e.



Davis, 1991). Secondly, because of their weak connection to the field-level processes, they are normally less aware of institutional arrangements (Zucker, 1988). Thirdly, peripheral actors are more likely to benefit from institutional change, as such actors are often disadvantaged by existing arrangements (i.e. D'Aunno et.al., 2000).

Whereas embedded actors (e.g. resource-rich central players) are neither aware of alternatives, nor they are motivated to change, they are heavily exposed to normative processes. Furthermore, they frequently have significant commitment to existing technologies, and have interests that are aligned with current practices” (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). For those reasons one of the answers to the paradox of embedded agency suggests that it is more likely for institutional entrepreneurship to emerge at the periphery of a field.

However, Leca and Naccache (2006) claim that the approach discussed in the two previous paragraphs contradicts the basic assumption of institutional theory – that actors are not able to escape institutional embeddedness. They aim at building a non-conflating model of institutional entrepreneurship, which “recognizes the ontological status of structures and actions—i.e. their distinctive emergent properties, relative autonomies, previous existences, and causal efficiency—as well as their permanent interaction, and provides tools to understand how actors can create and change institutions by using existing structures” (Leca and Naccache, 2006, p. 629).

Leca and Naccache (2006) suggest, that critical realism provides a strong basis for developing such a model. The critical realist approach analyses institutions within three levels. The first domain – empirical, focuses on actors’ actions and actors’ experience and perceptions. The second domain – actual, presents institutions as self-reproducing patterns of behaviors, which continuously acquire status of taken for granted (i.e. Barley and Tolbert, 1997). At the end, actors start reproducing such patterns of behavior without fully realizing it and without doubting their efficiency. The third level of analysis - “the domain of real” corresponds to structures within institutional logics which has already been discussed earlier in this paper (see subchapter “Foundational themes of organizational institutionalism”). In the present approach, institutional logics is defined as the underlying principles of the game, while institutions are understood as

rules of games. The critical realist approach to institutional analysis also underlines that actors do not create social reality. Instead, the structures of social reality are preexisting. Consequently, everything done by the actors is conditioned by existing social reality. “Thus, to act, actors have to use the structures, and, more precisely, their causal powers. In so doing, they can either reproduce the existing institutions or change them” (Leca and Naccache, 2006, p. 634). The critical realism approach emphasizes that actors have reflexivity and that developing new models, actors build on the existing institutional logics. It is further suggested that institutional logics can be conflicting as well as complementary (i.e. Friedland and Alford, 1991) and that they do not constitute a coherent whole. Diversity of institutional logics allows actors to find principles, which justify new institutions and challenge existing ones. Institutional entrepreneurs are using institutional logics as underlying principles for institutions they want to establish. The suggested model of institutional entrepreneurship also underlines the importance of the context for the success of the institutional change. It is noted that institutional entrepreneurs should be able to select the organizational field in order to achieve the result they wish to achieve. While institutional logics’ causal powers work in one context, they might not work in the other.

Section 2.1.3 provided a deep analysis of the notion of institutional entrepreneurship. In the essence, institutional entrepreneurs are defined as the actors who disrupt existing institutional logics in the field, thereby constructing institutional change. In the case analyzed in the present research those institutional entrepreneurs are such companies as Amazon, the Internet Bookshop (a British book online shop founded in the same year as Amazon-1994) and the traditional brick and mortar bookshop WHSmith which opened the online bookshops of its own already in 1995. Research on institutional entrepreneurship is inseparable from the paradox of embedded agency, which questions the ability of the field-level actors to “set free” from the taken for granted rules existing within a particular institution and to actually innovate (e.g. DiMaggio, 1988). The present section of the thesis overviewed different and often contradictory approaches to the paradox of embedded agency. In the case of book e-commerce in the UK the theory by Suddaby and Greenwood (2006) seems to be the most appropriate. Suddaby and Greenwood claimed that it is more likely for peripheral players to engage in the

institutional change and to disrupt the existing institutions. On the contrary, the central players within the field are normally much more committed to the existing norms and are less likely to be open for change. This was the case with the book e-commerce on the UK, since the institutional entrepreneurs-Amazon and the Internet Bookshop were completely new players on the market, which saw an opportunity in the book market for creating institutional change. All the traditional bookshops but one - WHSmith were highly resistant to the innovation and in the first 8 years on the UK market (1998-2006) Amazon had almost no competition on the online book market.

This subchapter provides an understanding of theories behind the concept of institutionalism. Specific attention is given to the notion of institutional entrepreneurship and institutional change. The case study analyzed showcases the example of an institutional change within a specific field and it is easy to understand who acted as institutional entrepreneurs in case of book e-commerce in the UK. Subchapter 2.1 also lays the ground for further discussion of the legitimation process, as it is underlined that the institutions are constructed by taken for granted or, in other words, legitimate norms (e.g. Friedland and Alford, 1991). This idea serves as a grounding for the present study.

## **2.2 Legitimation of institutional change**

As was noted above legitimacy plays a big role in the construction of both institutions and institutional change. Subchapter 2.2 presents the complex notion of legitimation and the role rhetoric and language plays in the legitimation process and in the creation of institutions. Section 2.2.1 provides the definitions of the notions of legitimacy and legitimation in the context of the institutional theory. Section 2.2.2 overviews prior research on the role of rhetoric and the use of language in the construction of the sense of legitimacy of institutional practices and institutions in general. The following section links the notion of the institution with one of the key elements of the rhetorical view on institutions – the notion of discourses. The concluding section 2.2.4 summarizes all the previous sections of the subchapter by focusing on discursive legitimation strategies.

### 2.2.1 Defining the legitimation of new institutional practices

The present section positions the notions of legitimacy and legitimation within the institutional theory, providing the definitions and a brief overview of prior research on both

Defining legitimacy. Legitimacy is one of the central concepts in organizational institutionalism. Suchman (1995, p. 574) defined legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” A more thorough definition was suggested by Meyer and Scott (1983, p. 201): “organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization – the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction. And lack or deny alternatives”. Meyer and Scott (1983) refer to legitimacy as to the adequacy of organization as theory. Consequently, a completely legitimate organization would be one, about which no question could be raised, and where no uncertainty exists.

Further research has elaborated on this definition, e.g. it has underlined that the cognitive dimension is one of the most important dimensions of legitimacy. For an entity to be legitimate, its actions are supposed to be taken-for granted by the audience. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) also suggested an interesting idea, that the absence of legitimacy is much more noticeable than its’ presence. They underline that when the organization’s activities are not taken for granted it is likely that objections and comments from various stakeholders will arise.

The present thesis adopts the definition suggested by Alvarez (2000) as the primary definition of legitimacy for the study. Alvarez defines legitimacy as a state of social acceptance of a practice or an institution (Alvarez, 2000).

Defining legitimation. When it comes to defining legitimation the interpretations are also varying to some extent. Mazza and Alvarez (2000, p.572) propose a generalized definition claiming that “legitimation is the process and action of ensuring legitimacy” (while legitimacy is understood as the state of social acceptance of an institution),

whereas Greenwood et.al. (2008) suggests that legitimation is the “process by which the legitimacy of a subject changes over time.” It is also mentioned in the latter paper that legitimation is closely related to diffusion and institutionalization.

Suchman (1995) suggested to distinguish between two types of cognitive legitimacy- (1)the degree to which an organizational form is taken for granted and (2)comprehensibility. Comprehensibility refers to the the way legitimacy is acquired in the early stages of organizational evolution. Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) describe literature dedicated to the issue. They note that the key insight from such literature is that institutional entrepreneurs employ symbolic devices that connect new ideas to “established cultural accounts” (Meyer and Scott, 1983, p. 201). It is concluded that in the early stages of adoption, cognitive legitimacy is often based on the entrepreneur’s ability to construct an accommodation with existing cultural schemas rather than on technical superiority.

Present section provided a deeper understanding of the notion of legitimacy, which is defined as a state of social acceptance of a practice or an institution (Alvarez, 2000). Legitimacy is one of the central concepts in the organizational institutionalism and the concept of legitimation builds upon it. According to Mazza and Alvarez (2000) legitimation is simply a process ensuring legitimacy. In other words a practice or institution is legitimized within a society, when it is taken for granted by the social actors. Both definitions of legitimacy and legitimation are relevant for the present thesis, since the study aims at revealing the means of constructing a sense of legitimacy of various new practices constructing institutional change – events in the development of book e-commerce in the UK.

### **2.2.2 Role of rhetoric in legitimation of new practices**

When it comes to achieving “taken for grantedness”, scholars often refer to rhetoric as the main tool at hands of institutional entrepreneurs. In such a manner Green (2004) criticizes prior approaches to management practice diffusion. He claims that prior theories see the effectiveness of new practices or structures as the main reason of their adoption, while the role of rhetoric in this process is underestimated. It can be assumed,

that new practices do not have to actually be effective, it is important that actors perceive those as effective. According to the rhetorical approach to institutionalization such perceptions are built through the use of various rhetorical strategies by managers. Furthermore, some scholars underline that new practices or structures may only become effective if supporting rhetoric rationalizes the usefulness of their adoption. From the rhetorical point of view, sufficient level of rationalization may be achieved through giving reasons and justifications. Green (2004, p. 657) claims, that “the more compelling and convincing a justification supporting a managerial practice is, the less the justification needs to be repeated or sustained in order to maintain the practice.” Green’s suggestion appears to be useful for the present research.

Earlier approaches also underlined rhetorical enthymemes or “arguments-in-use”, as well as deep structures that guide actions and influence the diffusion process. For instance Heracleous and Barrett (2001) analyzed electronic trading implementation in the London Insurance Market. In this case the diffusion of a technology innovation was researched. The arguments-in-use of conflicting stakeholders have been proved to exhibit a deep structure that is relatively stable over time and that guides stakeholders’ interpretations and actions, but it may also enable or constrain technology diffusion. From this perspective, IT diffusion is related to the perceived effects of technology on issues such as politics, power, and autonomy, framed and interpreted through agents’ rhetorical competence.

Barret et.al. (2013) summarize both earlier and later approaches to the rhetorical view of institutionalizations claiming that “institutionalized practices are embedded in arguments which reflect and shape the beliefs that guide practical action. Further, the diffusion and institutionalization of practice can be understood as a change in the structure of arguments used to justify a practice over time or, put another way, as a persistent and significant change in the types of conversations that take place as a part of actors’ routines within organizations” (2013, p. 205). Barret continues by saying that in the early stages of institutionalization, complex arguments with justifications are needed to persuade someone by advocating the moral or pragmatic value of a material practice. However, over time there may be a collapse of the argument structure which suggests evidence of past persuasion and indication of taken for grantedness and higher

levels of cognitive legitimacy. It is also underlined that in some cases the arguments do not collapse. Instead, they are contested over a long period of time. In those cases the practice may be partially diffused without becoming institutionalized. In sum, it is understood that an argument's structure at a point in time and changes in it correlate with the process and state of institutionalization. At the same time arguments might serve as restrictions or resources for setting a new institutional logic or belief.

The rhetorical approach to institutionalization emphasizing that the sense of appropriateness of the new practices is created through the use of specific arguments and rhetorical strategies. Research shows that, for example, managers employ specific rhetorical moves in their interactions with employees for establishing a new practice as taken for granted in an organization. The importance of language use in constructing the sense of appropriateness of a practice is very important for the present research, as this thesis argues that the way journalists use arguments in their articles covering the events in e-commerce of books in the UK affects the way the reader perceives institutional change.

### **2.2.3 Discourses and institutions.**

Closely related to the rhetorical view on practice diffusion is the notion of discourse, which can be defined as a written and spoken communication (Fowler and Fowler, 2011). Fairclough (1992) discussed discourses as the tools of constructing institutional change. He stated that discourses constitute three forms of social entities: concepts, objects and subject positions. Concepts are social constructions, they are frames for understanding reality within the cultural and historical context. Objects, on the other hand, are parts of the practical sphere made sensible through discourse. Like concepts objects are partially ideal but they also have a material aspect. Subject positions refer to the notion of social position mentioned in section 2.1.3. Those are locations in society from which certain defined agents produce certain kinds of texts in certain ways.

Describing processes playing a crucial role in the construction of institutions Phillips et.al. (2004) argue, that the institutions consist of texts that exist in a particular field and that produce the social categories and norms that shape the understandings and

behaviors of actors. They claim that while actions may form the basis of institutionalized processes, in being observed and interpreted, written or talked about, or depicted in some other way, texts are generated and they mediate the relationship between action and discourse.

Suddaby and Greenwood (2005) claim that “contemporary rhetorical analysis has adopted a socio-cognitive perspective on discourse, which assumes that opposing actors in a context of social change adopt genres of speech and writing that subconsciously reflect and deliberately manipulate the values and ideology of a particular discourse community (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995). Social change is thus facilitated by manipulating and reconceptualizing genres (Miller, 1994; Orlikowski and Yates, 1994)”.

To summarise, one should notice that discourses play an important role in constructing institutional change. Recent approaches to studying discourses assume that opposing actors adopt specific genres of speech and writing, which are able to manipulate values of the discourse community (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Thereby the institutional change is manipulated by the way social actors employ discourses in their speech and writing. The latter concept is significant for the present thesis, as the thesis aims at revealing how are the discourses are used in the media by journalists, institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors participating in the construction of the institutional change.

#### **2.2.4 Previous approaches to studying discursive legitimation strategies.**

Discursive approaches have been used by an increasing amount of researchers within the sphere of organizational studies recently. Defining critical discourse analysis Phillips and Hardy (2002) state: “Critical discourse analysis focuses on the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Critical discourse analysis “should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimated by the talk and text of dominant groups and institutions” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 84)... Critical discourse analysis focuses on the distal context—how it privileges some actors at the expense of others and how broad changes



in the discourse result in different constellations of advantage and disadvantage” (2002, p.10).

One of the approaches to critical discourses analysis was developed by Norman Fairclough (1995). Fairclough’s perspective stresses attention on how discursive activity structures the social space within which actors act, through the constitution of concepts, objects, and subject positions (the three types of discourses discussed in the previous subchapter. Fairclough (1995, p. 67) specifies that media discourses may and should be examined as a domain of cultural power and hegemony. He suggests that the order of discourses used in the media influences people’s interactions in private life and therefore influence public opinion. Fairclough’s approach to media discourse analysis will be described in more details in the “Methods”-chapter.

Vaara et.al. (2006) underline that discourse analysis reveals “taken for grantedness” of a practice on different levels, such as social, societal, political, and economic. More importantly they state that the critical discourse analysis perspective allows the researcher to focus on the processes of legitimation through examining the discursive practices and strategies used. In the present thesis we adopt this perspective and therefore underline that legitimation strategies are adopted by institutional entrepreneurs in order to establish a new practice as taken for granted to some extent. Furthermore, Vaara and Tienari (2008, p. 987) specify that legitimation strategies can be understood as specific ways of mobilizing specific discursive resources in order to create a sense of legitimacy or illegitimacy. It is also underlined that the use of particular discursive strategies can be planned and conscious, as well as unconscious when the author of the text reverts to the available discourse automatically. When the practice becomes legal and taken for granted, it unavoidably affects allocation of power among various actors involved in the process. Therefore one may say that the use of discursive legitimation strategies affects power relations in the society.

One of the first approaches to discursive legitimation strategies was suggested by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), who distinguished between four legitimation strategies: authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation and mythopoesis. This is how they define the legitimation strategy-types. Authorization (legitimation) is legitimation by

reference to authority. Rationalization (legitimation) refers either to the utility of the social practice or some part of it (“instrumental rationalization”), or to “the facts of life” (“theoretical rationalization”) (1999, p. 105). Moral evaluation refers to legitimation based on specific value systems. The fourth type of legitimation – mythopoesis is created by telling stories.

Elaborating on practical research findings and the theory by Van Leeuwen and Wodak, Vaara et.al. (2006) propose a slightly different classification of discursive legitimation practices. While Van Leeuwen and Wodak’s classification may be applied to different kinds of institutional change, Vaara et. al. discuss discursive strategies that justify a specific type of institutional change – industrial restructuring. The categorization presents five types of discursive strategies as follows:

- normalization - legitimation by referencing to normal or natural functioning or behavior;
- authorization – legitimation by reference to an authority;
- rationalization - refers either to the utility of the social practice or some part of it, or to “the facts of life”;
- moralization legitimation which is based on specific values;
- narrativization which involves “narrative-type reconstructions”.

As one may see, most of the strategies suggested are similar to those those discussed by the earlier approach to discursive legitimation strategies. However, based on their empirical research Vaara et.al. managed to extend the previous categorization of discursive strategies to include also normalization as a separate strategy. Van Leeuwen and Wodak previously did not consider normalization to be a separate category of legitimation, it was perceived as a “sub-type” of authorization.

Section 2.2.4 presented prior research conducted on discursive legitimation strategies. The use of those strategies in the media will be the primary object of analysis in the present study. Previous research has revealed that the use of discursive legitimation strategies and, in particular, the use of discursive legitimation strategies in media can serve as a means of changing or sustaining unequal power relations between various

actors (Fairclough, 1995). Building on that later studies have focused on specific strategies used by actors for the purpose of legitimation or delegitimation of the new practices (e.g. Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). In their study on use of discursive legitimation strategies in the media, Vaara et.al. (2006) proposed a classification distinguishing between five strategies. Since the present thesis also analyzes the use of discursive legitimation strategies in the media material, the present thesis adopts the classification of discursive legitimation strategies suggested by Vaara et.al. (2006) for studying the case of book e-commerce in the UK and analyzes which of those strategies and in what proportions were enacted in the media material. Furthermore, it is analyzed what kind of discursive legitimation strategies institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors employ in order to affect the power relations in the market.

Subchapter 2.2 presented prior research on the importance of discourses and rhetorical strategies in constructing institutional change. It can be concluded that the use of language in the speech and text of various actors within an institution directly affects the power relations in that institution. Thus it is suggested that the actors seem to employ various discursive strategies for the legitimation or delegitimation of the new practices. Those strategies are defined as discursive legitimation strategies and the use of those strategies in the British media covering the development of book e-commerce in the UK is analyzed in the present study.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

This subchapter presents the theoretical framework that will be applied in the empirical part of this study. It combines the presented research literature on the process of institutional change and institutional entrepreneurship with the legitimation studies.

The framework for the present study extends the model of the processes of institutional entrepreneurship proposed by Battilana et.al. (2009, p. 87) as their model concisely summarizes the mechanisms involved in constructing institutional change, as discussed in subchapters 2.1 and 2.2. The model suggests that the process of institutional change can be divided into three components: fulfillment of enabling conditions for institutional entrepreneurship, divergent change implementation and the institutional change itself.

### *Enabling conditions for institutional entrepreneurship*

As was already mentioned in section 2.1.3, Battilana et. al. (2009) propose that there are two enabling conditions of institutional entrepreneurship: “field characteristics” and “actors’ social position”. The field characteristics may take various forms. For instance, they can be environmental “jolts” (changes in the social and economic environment of actors), which motivate institutional entrepreneurs to generate new ideas in order to overcome emerging challenges. Another field characteristic enabling institutional change is the heterogeneity in the organizational field (meaning existence of multiple institutional arrangements). The variance in existing institutional arrangements may lead to their contradiction, which in turn prevents actors from taking such arrangements for granted and motivates them to search for ways to solve such contradictions (Seo and Creed, 2002). The lack of institutionalization of the organizational field may also stimulate the institutional entrepreneurship to construct the institutional change, as the lack of institutionalization results in conflicting values and the absence of clearly identifiable norms (Greenwood et. al., 2008).

As for the second enabling condition of institutional entrepreneurship – the social position of the entrepreneur, there have been controversial findings regarding the social position of actors, enabling them to act as institutional entrepreneurs. Several studies have proved that it is likely for actors taking a dominant position in the field to engage in institutional entrepreneurship (e.g. Townley, 2002), although there were also examples of low status actors stimulating the change. As it was already mentioned earlier in case of book e-commerce in the UK, the low status actors acted as institutional entrepreneurs, as Amazon and the Internet Bookshop were new companies each founded by one enthusiast.

### *Divergent change implementation*

The second part of the process of institutional change as suggested by Battilana et. al. (2009) is the divergent change implementation. This step is proposed to involve “creation of a vision” – activities aimed at making the case for change including sharing the vision of the need for change with followers; and “mobilizing allies” – gaining

others' support for and acceptance of new routine practices. Those processes might be challenged by the potential political opposition and the paradox of embedded agency. However, if institutional entrepreneurs manage to overcome those challenges, institutional change will successfully diffuse throughout the field.

### *Institutional change*

The third, concluding component of the model of the processes of institutional change by Battilana et.al. (2009) is the institutional change. The model claims that both previous components of the institutional change (enabling conditions for institutional entrepreneurship and divergent change implementation) are challenged by the possible institutional pressure towards stasis (existence of commonly accepted norms and values within the organizational field) and the potential political opposition and institutional embeddedness of other actors (actions of actors who are not interested in the institutional change). If the institutional entrepreneurs manage to overcome those challenges they succeed in the constructing the institutional change.

According to the model by Battilana et. al. (2009) the institutional change then affects the enabling conditions for institutional change, thereby creating the concluding link of the model. In other words Battilana et. al. (2009) claim that by constructing the institutional change the institutional entrepreneurs create a new institution with new conditions, which are able to stimulate appearance of new institutional entrepreneurs. The model by Battilana et. al. (2009) is presented on Figure 3.

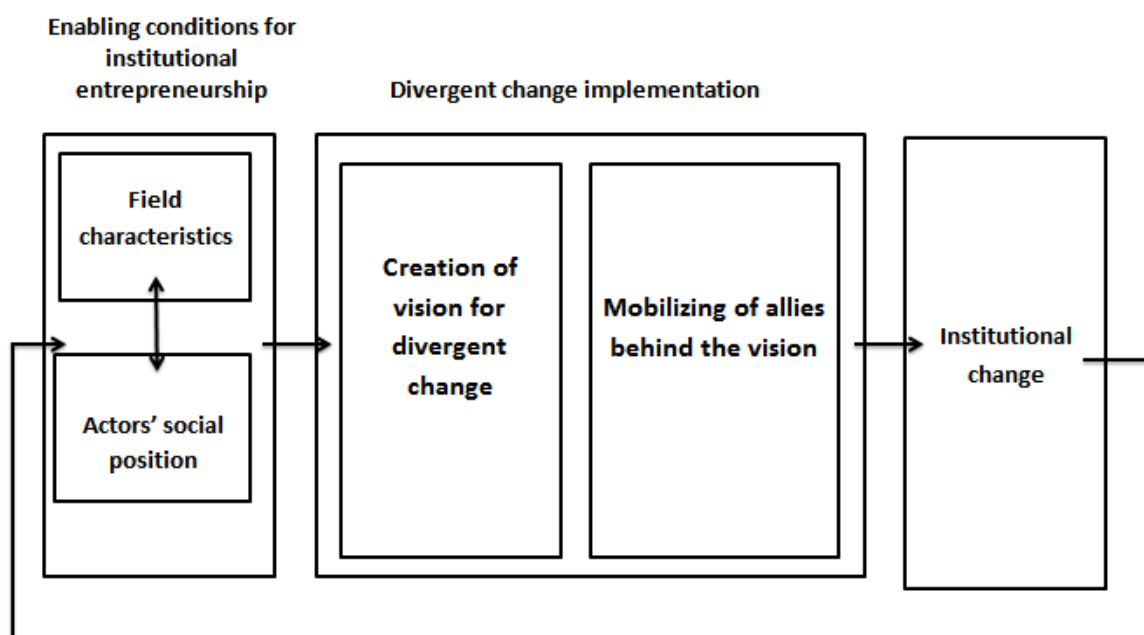


Figure 3. The process of institutional change (Battilana et. al., 2009)

*Discourses and the discursive legitimation strategies within the process of institutional change*

The present thesis further extends the model by Battilana et. al. (2009) by underlining the role of discourses and the discursive legitimation strategies within the construction of institutional change. More specifically Battilana et. al. (2009) divide the “mobilizing of allies behind the vision” stage into two parts:

- *mobilizing of resources* - accumulation of financial resources and resources related to the social position of institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana et. al., 2009, p. 83).
- *use of discourse*. While in their research Battilana et. al. briefly elaborate on the role of discursive elements in the change, the present study extends the model by adding to it the discursive legitimation strategies constructing legitimacy, as suggested by Vaara et. al. (2006) (see section 2.1.3). Their classification of discursive legitimation strategies by was created specifically for the analysis of media materials, where specific journalistic

practices influence language use and where intertextuality plays a key role. The classification distinguishes between five types of legitimation strategies: normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization, and narrativization (Vaara et. al., 2006). The framework will be used to guide the analysis of the present thesis and its potential modifications will be discussed in the theoretical implications section.

Furthermore, in order to be able to distinguish between the two parts of the divergent change implementation (creation of vision and mobilizing of allies), it is important to underline that Battilana et. al. (2009) defined the “creation of vision” through the concept of framing. There are three types of framing: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational. Diagnostic framing underlines problems in existing institutions and assigns blames (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Prognostic framing suggests the existing project as superior to the previous one, “engages the institutional entrepreneur in de-legitimizing existing institutional arrangements and those supported by opponents”. Motivational framing provides grounds for adapting new practices.

The framework for the study is summarized in Figure 4. In the practical part of the research the discursive legitimation strategies will be looked at as an element embedded in the process of institutional entrepreneurship.

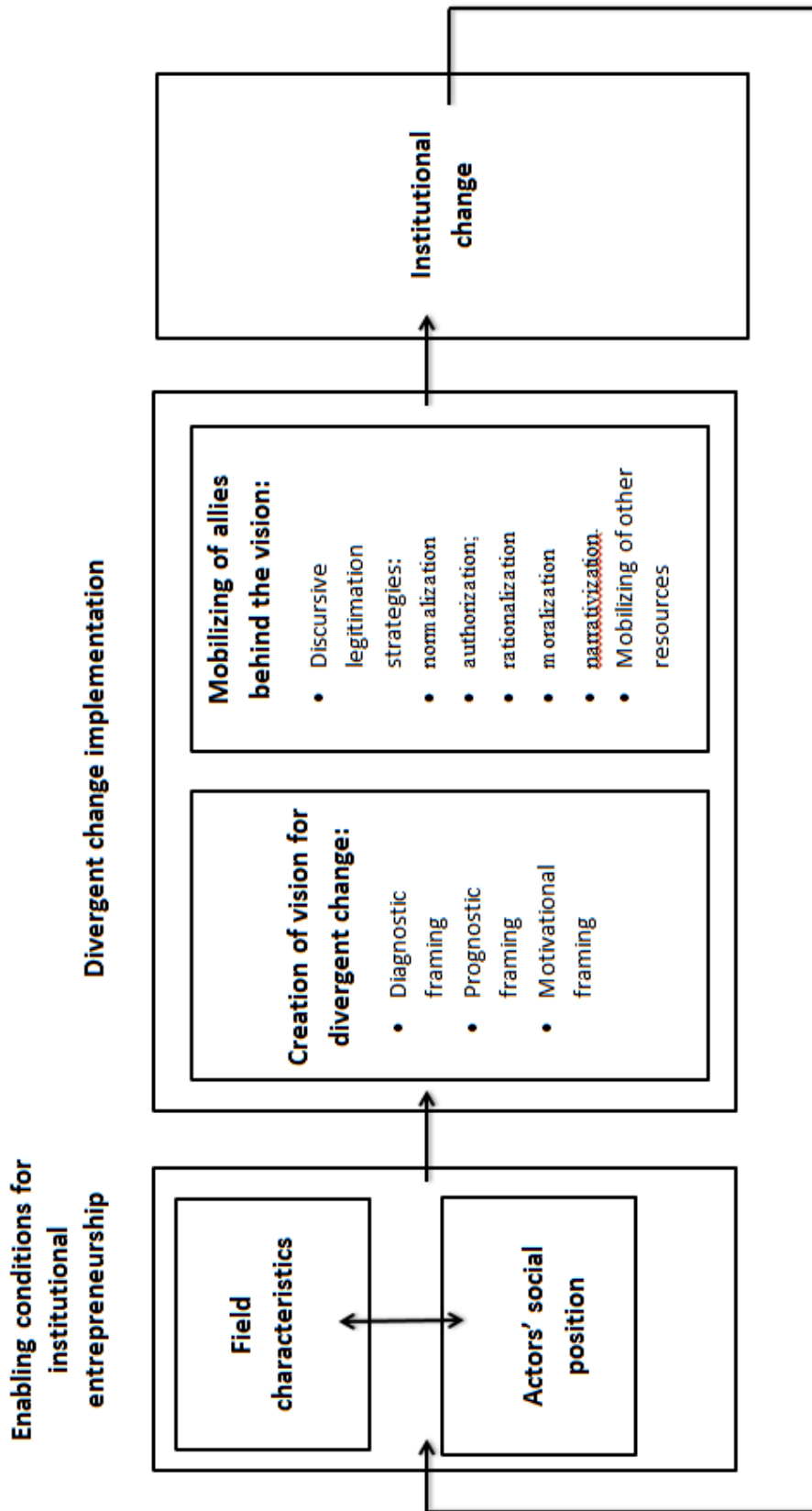


Figure 4. Theoretical Framework



### **3. Data and methods**

This chapter is dedicated to the discussion of the research methodology used in the study. This section of the thesis is structured as follows: at first the data collected will be introduced. Then the methodology of data analysis and its theoretical basis will be described. This section of the thesis ends with an evaluation of the trustworthiness of the study.

#### **3.1. Data collection**

The data for this study was collected from during spring 2013. The data extracted from the online search in the database LexisNexis contains an extensive dataset of full-text media articles written in one country (the United Kingdom). The United Kingdom was selected as the focus of the research, as the market in the UK represents a special case due to its frontrunner role in the adoption of technological innovations. The influence of online retailing on this world's leading market has been very strong and the appearance of online shops has changed the roles of various actors in the market.

Three sources were mainly used for data collection purpose: 1) a magazine about the publishing industry The Bookseller, 2) the retail magazine Retail Week, and 3) The Guardian newspaper. The following three word combinations were used for searching relevant articles: "online retail books", "Amazon books UK" and "e-book reader". The online search resulted in a large number of hits. To narrow down the scope for Retail Week and The Guardian industry filters were used; as a result the number of hits decreased to 761 articles in total. This proves that magazines and newspapers served as a good source of information for this research. The collected database is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analyzed dataset

	Articles on the book e-commerce	First article appeared in LexisNexis database in:
The Bookseller	246	2002
Retail Week	245	1999
The Guardian (with industry filter “bookstores”)	253	1984

It is also important to notice, that the timespan of the sources’ archives differs largely. The Retail Week’s archive begins from the year 1999 and the Bookseller’s from 2002, whereas the Guardian’s database goes back to 1984. This means that the data covers the main events in the book online retail development from 1994 (when it was first mentioned in the Guardian) to 2013. The search for the information was conducted during spring 2013. All of the articles identified were browsed and the most relevant for the research were saved for further reading. As a result a database of 761 articles was created. Section 1.1.1 of the present thesis (Case of the e-commerce of books in the UK) was based on the articles and the dataset provided solid background knowledge on the historical frame of the events in the book e-commerce analyzed in the empirical part.

After the articles were read and examined, and the brief overview of book e-commerce in the UK was written it was understood that the dataset to which critical discourses analysis would be applied should be limited in order to conduct a solid qualitative investigation. It was decided that the articles written between the years 2004 and 2006 should be analyzed, as these years were very rich with events in the book e-commerce section in the UK: many new online shops were opened, in particular two potential big players Play.com and the Book Depository, which would later become Amazon’s biggest competitors in the book e-commerce market (Butler, 2008). Moreover, by that time most traditional bookshops had already fully realized the power of Amazon and the effect it had on their businesses. For instance, many independent bookshops (independently owned bookstores) were forced to close their business due to lack of

customers. At the same time some of the bigger traditional bookshop chains were selling their business to bigger rivals (e.g. Ottakar's bookshop which was acquired by HMV) (Retail Week, 2006). In spite of that Amazon was keeping its leader position and by 2006 71.07% of the UK online book-buyers were using Amazon.co.uk with 13.18% shopping at Amazon.com (Clements, 2006). After the dataset for further analysis was limited to the articles written between the years 2004 and 2006 and the few articles, where none of the discursive legitimation strategies was used were excluded, the number of articles to be analyzed decreased to 156 articles.

Concluding the data collection section, it is important to notice that as Wodak and Meyers (2009) point out, in the critical discourse analysis methodology applied here sampling is not considered to be the central part of the process. On the contrary "there is no critical discourse analysis way of gathering data ... Most of the approaches to critical discourse analysis do not explicitly recommend sampling procedures" (p. 27). It is quite often that the researcher has to search for additional data during the process of data analysis.

### **3.2. Methodology**

In the present subchapter the methodology of data analysis will be presented. The subchapter starts with an introduction to the nature of qualitative research. Section 3.2.2 presents the process of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

#### **3.2.1 Nature of qualitative research**

In this study the qualitative approach to research was used. Qualitative research normally emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 279). Qualitative research is defined as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.3).

Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 280) suggest that apart from the fact that qualitative research is mostly concerned with words rather than numbers it is also important to remember its three further features:

- It follows an inductive view on the relationship between theory and research, where the latter generates the former
- An interpretivist epistemological position, which stresses attention on the understanding of the social world through examination of interpretation of that world by its participants
- Finally, ontological (constructionist) position implying that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals

For the present research the epistemological and ontological positions are of specific importance, since hereby we will try to make sense of the media materials and understand how journalists interpret the events in book online retailing in their articles. We also examine what possible meanings the readers may extract from the media materials and what outcomes the journalists may aim at, interacting with the audience through their articles in magazines and newspapers.

### **3.2.2 Critical discourse analysis as a research method**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been selected as the method for data analysis in the present research. Earlier CDA was discussed at a general level (see 2.2.4), now it is still important to specify why we find it to be appropriate for the present study.

The steps of analysis to be used here coincide with those suggested by Vaara and Tienari (2004) and are illustrated in Figure 5.

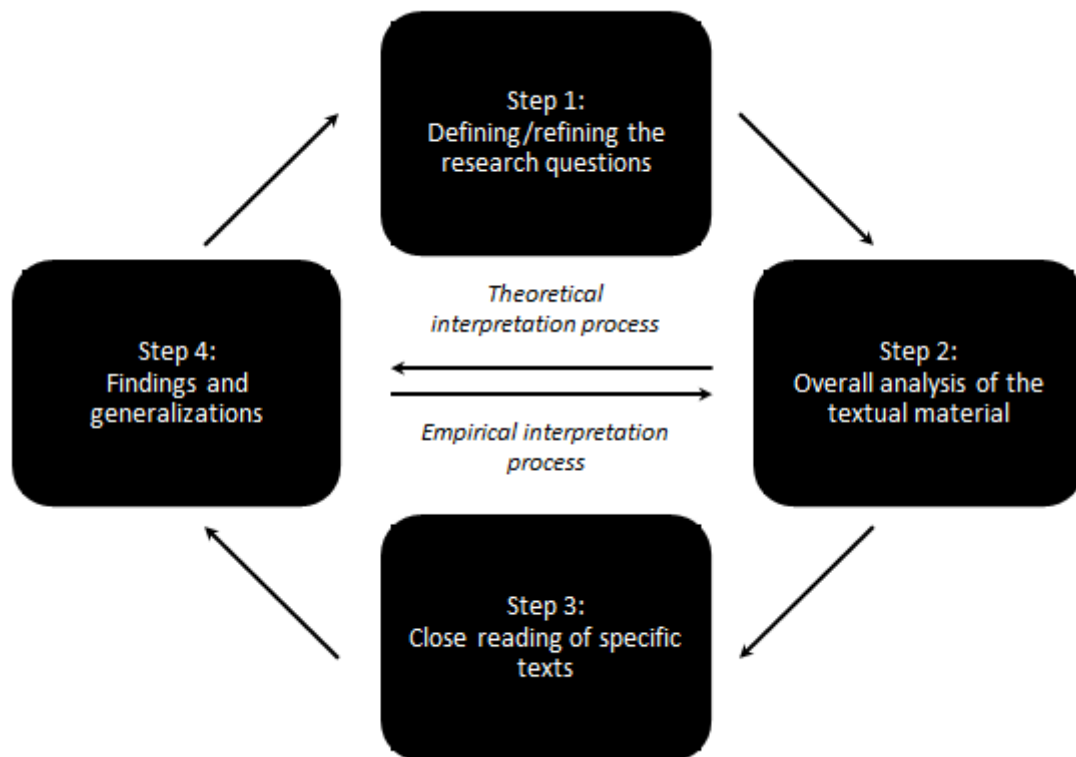


Figure 5. Research process in this thesis (adapted from Vaara & Tienari, 2004)

Let us specify what particular actions are included in every step of the process:

Defining/refining the research questions/interests.

Even though critical discourse analysis is inductive by nature Vaara & Tienari (2004) claim that it's still crucial to look at the texts through a "lens" of well-defined research questions. They underline that researchers shouldn't be misled by the inductive nature of critical discourse analysis expecting the texts to "speak for themselves", for that reason in critical discourse analysis defining research question plays even a bigger part than in some of the other research techniques.

### Overall analysis of the textual material.

Vaara & Tienari (2004) define this step of critical discourse analysis as “an attempt to grasp or “take control” of the totality of the chosen textual material”. Most important here is to be able to find potential linkages between different themes, for this purpose an ability to read “between and across” the lines is needed. Vaara and Tienari underline that one should be able to single out what is unsaid in the article, what is not explicitly discussed for one or another reason. Having an idea of what was “written between the lines” will help understanding what are taken for granted assumptions in the discourse in question in the latter stages of analysis.

At this stage the researcher should aim at understanding what the typical themes used in the texts are, what the wide-spread discursive practices are, etc. Organizing the textual material into thematic groups helps the researcher ease the further process of analyzing the texts. For example, when analyzing the media coverage of Global Industrial Restructuring (StoraEnso case), Vaara and Tienari (2006) singled out the following themes to be mostly used: price, ownership, synergy and other benefits, staff reductions, cultural differences, and division of management positions and responsibilities.

### Close reading of specific texts

When talking about this stage of CDA, Vaara and Tienari suggest that it includes four steps: genre analysis, setting the text in historical context, intertextual observations and finding out legitimation practices in use. As was already mentioned above the genre of the present data is generally a newspaper or magazine article, and the historical context was already briefly overviewed in the data collection section. It was pointed out that the articles were written at a point in time when the e-commerce of books was developing rapidly in the UK with the new players entering the market and many of the traditional bookshops closing their business. However, it was also understood that Amazon had then already established itself as the absolute leader on the market (Clements, 2006).

Let us now describe the intertextual analysis in more detail. This process comprises an analysis of the discourses used when dealing with the themes (the themes are singled out during step 2 of CDA). Discourses, put simply, are structured collections of

meaningful texts (Parker, 1992); here texts do not mean only written material, but any kind of meaningful expression physically generated by people (e.g. spoken and written). Our study limits the scope to analysis to written material only, as was mentioned earlier.

In order to complete intertextual analysis, various techniques are applicable. Vaara and Tienari (2004, p. 352) suggested defining what ideology the discourse draws on. They underline that in their exemplar article about the merger of two banks (Finnish and Swedish), two types of discourses were mainly used: nationalistic (which underlines “national interests” in the merger) and rationalistic (drawing on global capitalism ideology).

Another approach to completing intertextual analysis was suggested by Fairclough (1995, p.77) – characterization of the discourses used according to voice. Fairclough (1995) defines voice as “identities of particular individual or collective agents associated with discourses”. The voice describes the ways of language use related to the relationship between the text producer and the audience to which the discourse is addressed. More precisely, voices are “the identities of particular individual or collective agents associated with discourses” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 77). Simply put, voices are those individuals or groups of individuals whom the journalist is referring to in the text are meant. In our case they are mainly book publishers, official authorities, online and brick-and-mortar bookshop owners and other journalists.

The present study uses both of the above intertextual analysis techniques in order to get a broader perspective on the textual material.

The second step of the close reading stage is defining the legitimation strategies used. This is the decisive step of our analysis, since completing it allows us to answer the main research question of the present study: “How is a new technology diffusion legitimized in media?”

As was previously mentioned in subchapter 2.3, this study distinguishes the following legitimation strategies used in the media: normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization and narrativization. The present thesis further analyzes the strategic importance and frequency of use of each strategy. In the following chapter a detailed

explanation of the meanings and applications of each strategy is given. Also the most common ways they are exhibited in the articles will be presented. In order to find out what particular discursive legitimation strategy is used in the collected material the text is analyzed as a whole taking into consideration the context, words and meanings. It is crucial to be able to “read between the lines” of the articles in order to conduct successful critical discourse analysis of them and single out the major discursive legitimation strategies used (Pinto, 2011, p. 1). CDA continuously pushes the researcher to take a stand on issues, although this should not be interpreted as a permission to draw conclusions based on subjective assumptions or general observations. On the contrary, it is necessary to back up one’s interpretations with logical chains of arguments and textual evidence (Vaara and Tinari, 2004, p.356).

#### Refining the findings and generalizations

This step of analysis refers to summarizing the results of the study, as well as to drawing conclusions from those results. In the present paper Discussion and Findings chapters will be dedicated to presenting the findings of this step.



## 4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of newspaper and magazine articles' database. As was already mentioned in the introduction part, the study aims at answering the main research question: *How is the legitimacy of a particular institutional change constructed in the media?* In order to answer the main research question, three sub-questions should be answered:

- 1. What discursive legitimation strategies are prevalent in the media covering book e-commerce in the UK?*
- 2. What discursive legitimation strategies are used by the actors of the change?*
- 3. What kind of relationship can be detected between the theme of the text and the discursive legitimation strategy used?*

The Findings chapter of the present thesis is organized according to the three sub question. Subchapter 4.1 presents each of the discursive legitimation strategies and discusses what strategies were prevalent in the analyzed material, thus answering the first research sub-question. Meanwhile, subchapter 4.2 answers the second and third sub-questions by presenting what discursive legitimation strategies are implied by the institutional entrepreneurs and their rivals, when they get the chance to directly address the audience through media (e.g. when company representatives are quoted in the articles). Furthermore, subchapter 4.2 discusses the relationships between the theme of the article and the the discursive legitimation strategy used.

### **4.1 Discursive legitimation strategies and their use in the analyzed media material**

The present subchapter overviews the typical features of the discursive legitimation strategies. It also presents typical examples of the use of the discursive legitimation strategies in the analyzed media material. Furthermore, the present subchapter reveals what strategies were more and less common in the analyzed material.

#### 4.1.1 Rationalization

There are two major types of rationalization as defined by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999). Legitimation by reference to the utility of a practice or some part of it is called “instrumental rationalization” and legitimation by reference to the facts of life is called “theoretical rationalization”. However, the present research relies on the classification suggested by Vaara et. al. (2006), where under rationalization only instrumental rationalization is included, and theoretical rationalization is considered as a separate subtype of legitimation strategies, i.e. normalization. There are two subtypes of instrumental rationalization: objective strategy legitimation and result rationalization (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). These subtypes and their application in the analyzed material are discussed below.

##### Objective strategy legitimation

When using this type of legitimation the discourse producer justifies the activity by presenting it as “tool”, “method” or “strategy” for achieving the result. In most cases the result itself is also presented as an objective necessity. Typical moves used by journalists when using the objective strategy legitimation subtype of rationalization are discussed next:

##### *Overviewing the current situation on the market*

This type of article is characterized by explicit information on the current market situation aimed at pointing out that the market is ready or not yet ready for the event in question. For instance when legitimizing the decision of the Penguin Publishing House to actively push mobile phone compatible e-books, Howell (Bookseller, 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2005) underlined that the mobile phone technologies have been developing rapidly at the moment allowing phones to have high screen resolution. The author then discussed the fact that this type of resolution was able to support a variety of media material. The article was concluded by a note that the new technology allows a wide audience to read e-books from the mobile phones. Consequently the step of the Penguin publishing house to actively push mobile phone compatible e-books appeared as very logical and useful to the reader.

### *Presenting the move in question as a necessary step for achieving positive result*

The articles belonging to this group usually start by a short summary of the implemented practice followed by a discussion of the current position of the company in question. Normally talking about the latter, the authors underline the weak points of the existing situation the company is in. The new practice is then presented as a “cure” aimed at improving the current position.

### Result rationalization

In this case the activities are presented as something already finished, as a subject of an “effect process”. In case of Van Leeuwen and Wodak’s (1999) research these are usually justified using such words as: “achieve”, “create”, “affect”, “promote”, “facilitate”. For delegitimation purposes such words as “encumber”, “hinder”, “obstruct” were presented.

This type of rationalization was much less common in the analyzed material than the objective strategy legitimation. These texts mostly reported on achievements of the online and bricks-and-mortar bookshops. Often the reasons for the success or the failure were also given.

An example from Retail Week magazine is below:

*Blackwell Limited, which includes the library supply and retail divisions, turned a loss of £1.4 million in the year to June 2002 into a £1 million profit to June 2003. (Retail Week, 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2004).*

The author then specifies the reasons for the growth (heavy investments in the brick-and-mortar shops and overall growth of online sales). Throughout the article phrases typical for the result rationalization are used: *increased, rose, factors contributed to an improved retail performance.*

### Criticism of competitors pursuing a different strategy

Criticism of competitors pursuing a different strategy was a typical move in the analyzed material for both objective strategy legitimation and result rationalization. In the first case this method was typically used to legitimize or delegitimize the strategy selected by the company in question, whereas in case of result rationalization the criticism was applied to the end-result of the described actions.

“Going it alone online” (Bookseller, 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005) is an interesting example of how rationalization legitimation strategy is used for both legitimation and delegitimation of companies’ moves. The article tells reports an established bricks-and-mortar bookseller Ottakar’s opening its own online shop after many years of outsourcing this function to Amazon. At this point in time many of the other big players were also operating their online sales through Amazon and the author uses result-rationalization for criticizing Ottakar’s competitors by claiming that *“the major bookselling chains so willingly conceded the internet to pure-plays, specifically Amazon, thereby locking themselves into a strategic cul-de-sac”* and *“the message that goes out to consumers is that the internet is too hard for them to do unaided”*. One can easily notice that the author underlines what kind of negative effect on customers’ opinions outsourcing the online selling to Amazon is playing. By this means he justifies Ottakar’s move to start selling on their own. He further rationalizes Ottakar’s step by providing a brief overview of the current market situation as well as latest developments in Ottakar’s expertise: *“Internet usage has massively expanded, more closely matching its customer profile, and it has developed expertise through its intranet site. It (Ottakar’s) also believes there is a gap for a specialist bookshop online”*.

Characteristics of the rationalization legitimation and the methods used for applying this strategy in the analyzed material are summarized in the Table 2:

Strategy features	<p>Presents an action as a method for achieving objectively useful result</p> <p>Presents the effect the move will have</p>
Methods of strategy application	<p><u>Objective strategy legitimation</u></p> <p>Justifying the positive effect of the end-result achieved by undertaking specific step</p> <p>Presenting the move in question as a necessary step for achieving positive result</p> <p>Overviewing the current situation on the market and underlining the preconditions for the implementation of a new practice</p> <p><u>Result legitimation</u></p> <p>Giving examples of the effect a particular move has had on the (book) retail industry or on the specific company's market performance</p> <p>Criticism of competitors pursuing a different strategy (characteristic for both types of rationalization)</p>
Exemplar quotes	<i>The internet is great: easy profit and minimal costs</i>

**Table 2: Characteristics of rationalization strategy**

It is important to notice that the rationalization strategy was the most common one in the analyzed media material. It was used as a primary strategy in 70 out of 156 articles in the database. Consequently, the journalists prioritize the rational approach for creating a sense of legitimacy of the new practices within an institutional change to, for example, emotional claims, which are characteristic for such approaches as moralization and narrativization. The features of these strategies are to be discussed in the following sections.

#### 4.1.2 Normalization

Normalization legitimization is legitimization by reference to the normality or naturalness of a practice. This legitimization type seeks to render something legitimate by exemplarity, which can involve “retrospective” and “prospective” references. In the texts with “retrospective” normalization, examples of similar cases, practices or events are given, whereas “prospective” normalization gives examples of expected cases, events or practices. (Vaara et. al., 2006, p. 798).

In the present research very few articles, where this legitimation strategy was used were found. An example of such a strategy was identified in the article “WH Smith looks at Manga market” (Bookseller, 2006), in which the author discusses the plans of the retailer WHSmith to enter the world of Manga retailing. In order to justify the decision of the company he gives examples of other booksellers undertaking similar steps: *“WHSmith has been dipping its toes into the world of Manga retailing, following the footsteps of Borders, Blackwell’s and Ottakar’s”*. It is obvious from the quote that here the author refers to the example of the other bookshops in order to create a feeling of appropriateness of the company’s move to the new market.

The main characteristics of the strategy are summarized in the Table 4:

Strategy features	Refers to naturalness and normality of the practice in question
Methods of strategy application	Giving examples of similar events in the past or in the future
Exemplar quotes	<i>following the footsteps of Borders, Blackwell’s and Ottakar’s</i>

**Table 4: Characteristics of normalization strategy**

### 4.1.3 Authorization

The Guardian sample has included many Authorization articles, where the experts (Guardian journalist/invited experts) give their opinion and present the whole event from their point of view. (Life: Online: By the book: Critics said the web would destroy small booksellers, but the internet has actually given them a new lease of life, says Richard Adams / Online: Under the cover story: Despite a difficult year in 2003, publishing is experiencing a steady growth in sales. Jim McClellan explains)

Authorization is legitimation by reference to authority. When this strategy is applied the article's author refers to an expert opinion for justifying the action in question. More precisely there are two types of authorization: personal and impersonal. When personal authorization is applied the expert's role can be played by the following parties: the journalist him/herself, market analysts, corporate representatives, or industry experts. Impersonal authorization relies on laws, regulations, expert commissions (such as competition jury panel, etc.) (Vaara et.al., 2006). Previous research (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999) has also considered a separate subtype of authorization - "conformity authorization", where the answer to the essential question "Why is it done so?" is simply because "everybody does it so" or "majority does it so". However, present research identifies articles written in this manner as those with normalization strategy. In other words, the present classification of strategies coincides with the one suggested by Vaara et. al. (2006).

The two types of authorization (personal and impersonal) and their application in the analyzed material are presented below.

#### Personal authorization

It is essential to notice that the articles with personal authorization often involve distinctive emotional elements compared to those with other legitimation strategies. This is because the quoted people mostly pursue a specific goal to legitimize or delegitimize the particular action.

The authorization strategy is often used for delimitation purposes, as for example in the article “Final festive push helps high street” (Bookseller, 6<sup>th</sup> of January, 2006). In the text the aggressive price-cutting of several bookshop chains is being criticized as a strategy which can have negative effects on the booksellers’ profits in the long term. For proving her point of view, the author utilizes opinion of experts in the field:

*Headline deputy m.d. Kerr Macrae said: 'The discounting was led by W H Smith and, with the chain's wide reach, everyone felt it. There was an early panic and January sales started in December. But WHS will be taking a lot of pain in terms of margin.*

The journalist here quotes a person whose interests are directly affected by the price cutting, as the company Headline is a UK-based publishing house. Obviously the tendency of reducing the price of books is not profitable for the publishers. This explains the emotionality of the quote, especially its last sentence.

Interestingly, personal authorization was especially characteristic for the Guardian-articles. The reader could often come across “opinion articles”, when reading about the e-commerce of books in the UK in the Guardian. Usually it was stated in the heading of the articles, that the article presents an opinion of a specific person. Usually it was people were the Guardian-journalists, who were referred to as experts in book retailing. Below two examples of the headings of such articles:

- *Online: Under the cover story: Despite a difficult year in 2003, epubliishing is experiencing a steady growth in sales. Jim McClellan explains (The Guardian, 29<sup>th</sup> of January , 2004)*
- *Life: Online: By the book: Critics said the web would destroy small booksellers, but the internet has actually given them a new lease of life, says Richard Adams (The Guardian, 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 2004)*

### Impersonal authorization

As noted above, articles of this type normally refer to an expert opinion of commissions, organizations, or other authoritative bodies. A Bookseller-article “The Nielsen BookNet Supply Chain Initiative of the Year: The Book Depository” (22<sup>nd</sup> of



September, 2006) serves as a good example of impersonal authorization. The author starts the text with claiming that the innovative supply chain of the UK-based bookshop Book Depository is a true revolution in business. He justifies the idea by underlining that this was proved by the BookNet Supply Chain Initiative of the Year award jury, who decided to assign the award to Book Depository: *Supply chain innovations have the power to revolutionise the way we do business, and the judges felt that this was undoubtedly so in the case of the Book Depository.* (Bookseller, 2006).

The article also involves personal authorization, as it quotes one of the judges in particular: *"The organisation is really trying to make a difference," noted one judge. "And it is taking a leap, not just a step."* However, the name of the judge is not specified in the given text, so it is clear that in this case the opinion of the jury panel as a whole is much more important than that of a particular judge. Moreover, all the further references in the article prove this point.

The main features of the strategy are summarized in Table 5 below:

Strategy features	Justifies an activity by referring to somebody or something in which institutional authority is vested
Methods of strategy application	<p><u>Personal authorization</u></p> <p>Referring to the expert opinion of:</p> <p>the journalist him/herself  company representative  industry analyst</p> <p><u>Impersonal authorization:</u></p> <p>Referring to the expert opinion of:</p> <p>an institutional authority (e.g. the jury of various awards in the</p>

	field9
Exemplar quotes	<i>the judges felt ...</i> <i>judges were impressed</i> <i>headline deputy m.d. Kerr Macrae said</i> <i>Authors and their agents fear</i>

**Table 5: Characteristics of authorization strategy**

#### 4.1.4 Moralization

Moralization legitimization is legitimization by reference to some values. These values differ largely in various articles and depend on the research context. For example, when speaking about two big international companies' merger, the journalists mainly refer to nationalistic (emphasizing national interests) and humanistic (prioritizing employees' interests) values (Vaara et.al., 2006). In the present study two groups of values were identified: economic and humanistic. The first one mainly refers to the articles about the future of the independent bookshops (independently owned ones, often consisting of one single actual store), and their financial problems caused by the popularity of online shops. For example, articles talking about e.g. book publishers giving bigger discounts to the online shops than to the traditional ones are also classified as texts referring to economic values. The second type - humanistic legitimization refers to bookshop employees', as well as to customers who are losing on personalized service of a bricks-and-mortar shop when "forced" to switch to online booksellers.

The two groups of values applied (humanistic and economic) and their application to the analyzed material are discussed below.

#### Economic values

As stated above the articles under this category often discuss the financial challenges of brick-and-mortar bookshops, especially the independent ones.

An example of such a challenges is the “unfair” discounting of publishing houses, which prioritized supermarkets, online and chain bookshops over other independent booksellers. In this manner the publishing houses were putting the independent bookshops to a place, where competing with bigger rivals becomes impossible. The article “Angel goes online, Murder One moves” (Bookseller, 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2005) is an example of such texts:

*“The future of independent booksellers has come under so much pressure over recent years that a group of 100 bookshops have banded together in a buying consortium to negotiate terms on a par with those secured by their big chain, online and supermarket rivals”.*

One can notice that this extract has an emotional color - the future of the independent shops appears to be in danger. Just as in the case of authorization articles the author here is not afraid to show her personal perspective on the market situation. In this article independent shops owners are mostly quoted, who were hit by the publishers’ pricing. Even after stating that some publishers had provided discounts to the independent shops, the author notes: *“some people still feel that underneath the veneer of goodwill towards independents, there is little substance”* and provides explicit reasoning for this opinion.

Even a large number of moralization articles is written about online bookshops undercutting bricks-and-mortar shops, especially the independent ones. For instance, the article “Reality bites” (Cairns, 2006) presents the author's views on opening a bookstore and the challenges a young entrepreneur faces. Cairns starts with a vivid description of how attractive the thought of opening a bookstore is and how many people dream about it. He then proceeds to listing the numerous problems of a person opening a bookshop in the United Kingdom in 2006, and presents online bookshops (especially Amazon) as the major challenge of all: *“And then there is the internet. How unlucky can independent bookshops get? Of all the*

*sectors to choose from. Amazon selected book retailing to prove that ordinary people will buy products over the web. Thanks a bunch."*

Needless to point out that here the author clearly states his own perspective on the issue. However, unlike the previous example, this article was posted under the "opinion" section, which allows Cairns to be more direct in stating his opinion. The fact that here the author is referred to as the expert in the field would allow us to classify the article as one with the authorization strategy. However, here the text is regarded more as representing moralization text, due to the values the author refers to in the text.

### Humanistic values

The legitimization strategies often "meet up" within one text. In this way in the authorization article "Better by design?" (Bookseller, 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006) the author introduces his topic by referring to the attachment of customers to the traditional bookstores atmosphere and service: *"As the internet and supermarkets encroach on traditional bookselling, that calm, bookish atmosphere is precious to many. Shelves groaning with books with well-read booksellers on hand will always appeal to serious book-buyers"*. Just as in the many previous examples the author builds an attractive image in the readers' mind.

It is important to notice that the analysis revealed many articles where online bookshops are presented as "heartless" distributors, which don't build any personal relationship with the consumers. Especially that is the case with the moralization articles opposing British-based bookshops to Amazon. Then, discussing British bookshop chain Ottakar's opening of an online shop (Bookseller, 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 2006), the author presents Ottakar's as a traditional bookshop with a personal approach to the consumers. It is stated that many buyers will move to the Ottakar's online shop from Amazon, as the shop will provide the same "customer empathy" as the bricks-and-mortar Ottakar's shops. The author also cites the Ottakar's founder and managing director James Heneage to prove this point: *"We will offer warmth, customer empathy, and range authority," Heneage said. "Amazon will seem clinical by contrast."* (Bookseller, 24<sup>th</sup> of

March, 2006) It is also underlined further in the article how loyal both consumers and employees are to the bookshop, even though it has been going through difficult times.

The value of trust is raised in the article “Book buyers are smarter than you think” (Bookseller, 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006). The article is a special case, as instead of legitimizing or delegitimizing the actions of booksellers, the author criticizes another newspaper - The Sunday Times. The latter had published an article about the manipulative publicity, advertising and retailer promotions used by the booksellers to get attention for their books. That is to say that The Sunday Times had claimed, that publishers are paying to the bookshops for promoting specific titles, thereby cheating the customers. The Bookseller article’s author claims that although it was true that publishers were having a say in what booksellers were promoting, the latter still had to pick interesting titles, as otherwise the promoted books would not be sold in the end. He also provides results of studies proving, that there were many titles promoted at both high street and online bookshops, which were not subsidized by publishers. The author finishes the article by referring to the value of customers’ trust in the retailers blaming The Sunday Times for drawing the public's’ suspicion upon booksellers: *“Yet the damage, at least in the eyes of 1.3 million Sunday Times readers, has been done. Such stories erode trust in the book business, at a time when brand authenticity and integrity are valued ever more highly by consumers. The challenge for the high street is to regain that trust”* (Bookseller, 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006).

The value of trust is also addressed in the article about the trustworthiness of the Amazon book reviews. A Guardian – article “The plug fest” (23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 2004) discusses a scandal related to readers reviews on Amazon. The article reveals evidence that there have been book authors praising their own books in the reviews, misleading the book-buyers.

The main features of the strategy are summarized in Table 6 below:

Strategy features	Refers to certain values Emotional elements used in text
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		<p>The discussed activity is openly legitimized or delegitimized</p> <p>The authors often openly show their personal perspective on the problem</p>
Methods of strategy application		<p>Refers to:</p> <p><u>Economical values</u> (independent shops and traditional bookstore chains losing market share, online shops getting “unfairly” big discount on books, etc.)</p> <p><u>Humanistic values</u> (e.g. interests of employees and independent bookshops’ owners, trust issues)</p>
Exemplar quotes		<p><i>How unlucky can independent bookshops get?</i></p> <p><i>We will offer warmth, customer empathy</i></p>

**Table 6: Characteristics of moralization strategy**

#### 4.1.5 Narrativization

Some of the analysed texts also included legitimization through telling stories. Vaara et.al. (2006) paid attention to “dramatic narrativizations”, where specific parties (people or companies) were portrayed as e.g. winners, losers, culprits, heroes. Van Leeuwen stressed attention on the way in which telling a story proves that particular actions are acceptable and appropriate. In our study we rely mostly on the former approach to narrativization - “dramatic one”. These texts are often written in an entertaining tone, which further distinguishes this legitimization type. The analyzed material mostly presented the following narrativization articles: 1) telling companies’ stories from the foundation date to the event in question; 2) texts presenting some company as a leader of the industry and others as followers (e.g. Amazon versus the UK bookshops). The latter idea coincides with the one raised in the moralization articles. However, the

narrativization articles differ from the moralization ones in the way they present information. Both share the same entertaining tone and dramatic turns, but in the narrativization articles the authors usually present the particular action as a culmination of a logical story.

Interestingly, in the analyzed media material the narrativization strategy was not very common. Although some articles included some stories and there were examples of authors giving “roles” to particular actors, it was obvious that narrativization was not the main strategy of the analyzed media. The only exception in the whole database of 156 articles is the article “King of the online jungle” published in Retail Week on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2005. The article reports that Amazon celebrated its decade in bookselling business with selling a record number of the new Harry Potter novel. This event is portrayed as a culmination in the story of Amazon success. Throughout the whole article the author tells the story of Amazon from its foundation in 1995 till the article’s publishing date in 2005. The name of the article speaks for itself, showing what role is assigned to Amazon by the journalist - the role of a king of online retailing, while the shop’s founder is called “*Wall Street wunderkind Jeff Bezos*”. The author also assigns many of the Amazon’s competitors the roles of losers. The story of WHSmith bookshop, which underestimated Amazon at the early stage and lost a big part of the market share for this reason is given. Furthermore, the author claims: *Case studies from the book trade show how retailers that dismiss the might of Amazon will lose out in the long-term*

The main features of the strategy are summarized in Table 7 below:

Strategy features	Telling stories Dramatization Entertaining tone
Methods of strategy application	Assigning “roles” to the involved parties, e.g. winners, losers. Providing an explicit overview of the background of the

	event in question
--	-------------------

**Table 7: Characteristics of narrativization strategy.**

Analysis of frequency of use of particular discursive legitimation strategies in the analyzed articles

The figure below summarizes the use of strategies in the analyzed media material:

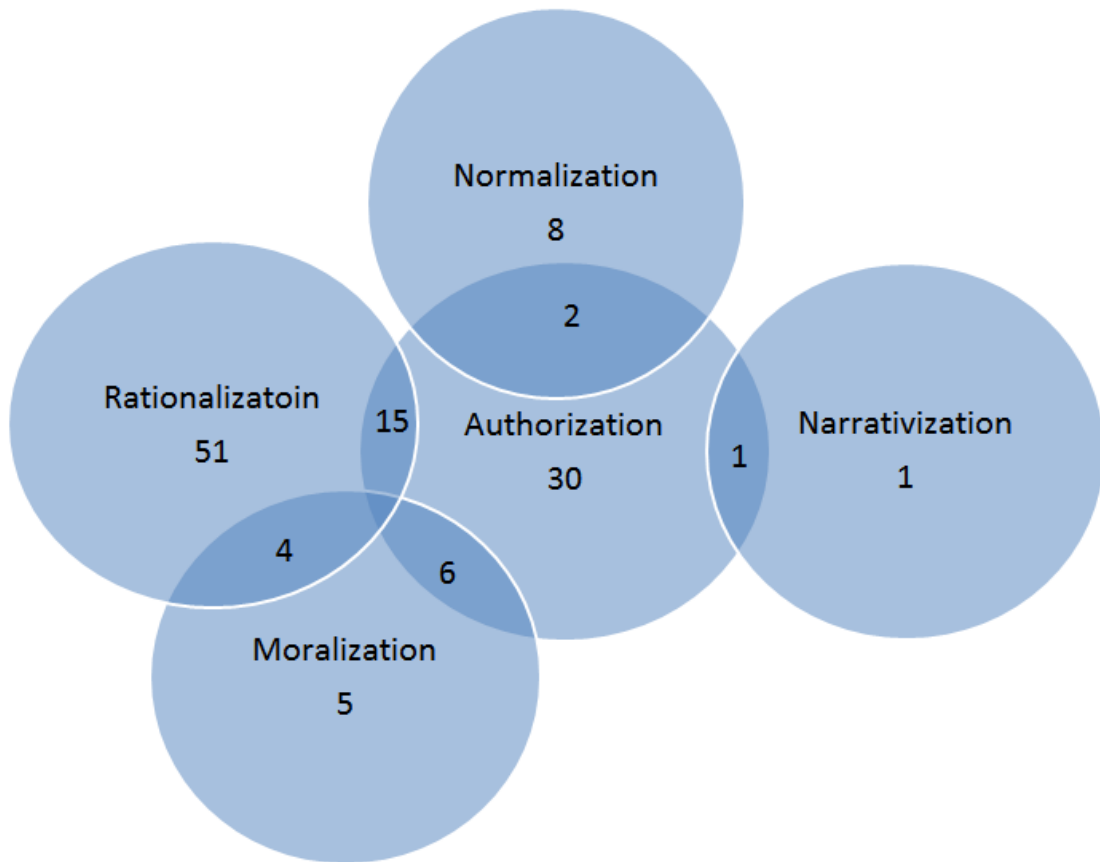




Figure 6. The use of discursive legitimation strategies in the analyzed media material.

As can be seen above the most popular discursive legitimation strategies were rationalization and authorization. There were 51 articles, where only rationalization was used and 30 articles were based on authorization discursive legitimation strategies. Meanwhile, narrativization appeared to be the least common strategy with only one article, where narrativization is used as the major discursive legitimation strategy.

Furthermore, as can be seen from the scheme, there were some articles, where two discursive legitimation strategies were intertwined. It was noted, that authorization is most commonly used to support other strategies (e.g. rationalization and moralization). Based on this an assumption may be done, that the journalists prefer to support their point of view with expert opinion in order to legitimize or delegitimize the issue discussed in the article. It can be suggested, that even in the articles where authorization was used only to support the major strategy, the authors employed a quote of an expert or experts in the field in order to either justify the journalists' way of presenting the event in question (which was usually the case with the articles based on the rationalization strategy) or to add more drama to the article (which was commonly done in the moralization articles). It is important to point out, that there were also articles, where authorization was the main strategy, while other strategies were supporting it. However, this case will be discussed in more detail in the section 4.2.1, as this section is specifically dedicated to the use of discursive legitimation strategies in the quotes.

#### **4.2. Factors affecting the choice of discursive legitimation strategies**

Present sub-chapter presents the factors that affect the choice of discursive legitimation strategies done by journalists or other parties quoted in the articles. Section 4.2.1 investigates what discursive legitimation strategies are used by the institutional entrepreneurs and their rivals, when they get the chance to directly address the audience through media (e.g. when company representatives are quoted in the articles). Section

4.2.2 overviews the connection between the theme of the article and the discursive legitimation strategy used.

#### 4.2.1 Use of discursive legitimation strategies in the quotes

The second research question focuses on the quotes given in the media material. It is suggested that there is a connection between the role the quoted company representative or other expert (e.g. industry analyst) plays in the institutional change process and the discursive legitimation strategy used in the quote. That is to say, it is claimed that the social position of the person giving interview to the media affects largely the way he/she presents information and the discursive legitimation strategy he/she uses. The most common discursive legitimation strategies used in the quotes are discussed in the present section. It was discovered, that when the institutional entrepreneurs or other actors were quoted in the articles, they mostly used rationalization or moralization strategies in their discourse.

##### *Moralization*

The moralization strategy was often used by minor actors in the institutional change process for a delegitimation purpose. For example, Amazon decided not to sell a book about possible connections of the Bush family and the families of a Jeddah-based billionaire and other rich Saudis. The book had caused a lot of discussion in the USA, however, was still available on the US Amazon. Meanwhile, the UK Amazon had taken a decision not to sell the book. In the Guardian article “Amazon boycotts Bush book” (30 of July, 2004), a representative of a publishing house criticizes the decision of the UK Amazon:

*He [the publisher] said: "I can only presume Amazon fears it will be sued. This is an important book which has created a lot of debate in the US. I think booksellers have a duty to disseminate information. Amazon is withdrawing from that responsibility."*

It is easy to see that in his quote the publisher refers to such values as e.g. freedom of speech, claiming that it is the duty of the booksellers to support the dissemination of information. That way the publisher criticizes the UK Amazon, who ignored that duty. As was mentioned in section 4.1.4 of the present thesis, referring to values (humanistic

and economic) is characteristic of the moralization strategy, which gives us the conclusion that in the present example and in other similar cases, the quoted actors use the moralization strategy to prove their point of view.

Another example of the moralization strategy used in a quote can be seen in the Guardian – article “The plug fest” (23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 2004). The article discusses a scandal related to readers’ reviews on Amazon. The article reveals evidence that there have been book authors praising their own books in the reviews, thereby misleading the book-buyers. One of Amazon’s users is quoted: *“I think it's unethical,” said another. “When someone with bias tells me ‘this book is the best book I've ever read’ and I think they are unbiased, that's where the line of ethics is crossed”*.

The quote above clearly indicates the speaker’s negative emotions and underlines the importance of ethics in Amazon’s business, which leads to the conclusion that a moralization strategy is used here.

#### *Rationalization*

Another discursive legitimation strategy commonly used by the company representatives when giving comments to the media was discovered to be rationalization. This strategy was usually utilized by company representatives to justify changes within their companies, such as management appointments and acquisitions. As an example a quote of chief executive of the entertainment group HMV Alan Giles can be discussed (Retail Week, 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2006). Giles justifies the intention of the HMV group to purchase a smaller bookshop chain - Ottakar’s.

*He says: “The strategic rationale for bringing the two businesses together is, if anything, stronger than it was when we made the first approach, in terms of the extent of changes in the market. There's been a jump in terms of consumers' willingness to buy online and concerns in terms of intensive price competition from the supermarkets”*.

As can be seen above, Alan Giles uses here typical move for the rationalization strategy - overviewing the current situation on the market and underlining the preconditions for the implementation of a new practice.

#### 4.2.2 Connection between theme and the discursive legitimation strategy

The present section discusses the connection between the theme raised of the article and the discursive legitimation strategy used, thereby answering the third research question of the study. During the analysis it was noticed, that in most cases the theme raised in the article affected the choice of the discursive legitimation strategy.

The themes which most clearly appeared to influence the choice of the discursive legitimation strategy were the following:

The first theme commonly raised in the analyzed articles referred to Amazon taking the leadership position on the online market and affecting other booksellers, as well as writers. It was discovered that discussing this subject the journalists often presented the information with the help of either rationalization or authorization strategies. The article “Going it alone online” (Bookseller, 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005) discussed in section 4.1.1 is a good example of the use of rationalization when talking about Amazon’s effect on the other booksellers’ business.

Furthermore, in the article “Browser to buyer , Amazon style” (Bookseller, 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005) book authors express their concern with Amazon’s policies through a quote, using the authorization strategy as follows:

*Publishers fear that Amazon's new p.o.d. capability (print-on-demand) strengthens its position to negotiate rights for e-book downloads, or p.o.d. editions that provide little income for authors. They are motivated to retain their bargaining chip with the retailer: the full text. Derek Johns, head of the Association of Authors' Agents, says: "We are concerned about publishers handing over entire books to third parties. Once such files are out, it is hard to control them."*

The second theme often raised in the analyzed articles is closely linked to the previous one and it refers to the financial problems of the independent bookshop. However, articles belonging to this thematic group discuss various reasons for the financial problems of booksellers, such as, for example, discounts given by book publishers to online shops and supermarkets. In those articles the authors often refer to the values typical for independent bookshops, such as customer empathy, individual approach, etc.. Consequently the discursive legitimation strategy usually used in those articles is moralization. Various examples of those articles were given in the section 4.1.4 “Moralization” of the present thesis.

Finally, the analysis revealed the articles articles, where the author delegitimizes actions of particular booksellers or book publishers are often written on the basis of the moralization strategy. While there were rather few articles delegitimizing the events in the e-commerce of books in the analyzed dataset, those that were identified were mostly referred to some values. An example of such an article was also discussed in section 4.1.4, it is the article “Book buyers are smarter than you think” (Bookseller, 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006). In this article the author delegitimizes the claim of the Sunday Times journalist, who suggested that the book publishers are paying the booksellers for advertising specific titles. The author of the analyzed article refers to the value of trust, which was damaged by the Sunday Times journalist.

Concluding subchapter 4.2 it is important to point out that whenever the actors in the bookselling industry (both institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors) had the possibility to directly address readers through the magazine by giving an interview, they mostly used either rationalization or moralization strategies in their speeches. Furthermore, a connection between the theme raised in the article and the discursive legitimation strategy used was reviled. For example, when talking about the Amazon taking the leadership position on the market, the journalists often used either rationalization or authorization strategies, whereas when talking about the financial problems of the independent booksellers, the authors mostly used moralization. The latter discursive legitimation strategy was also used when the authors aimed at delegitimizing some of the events in the bookselling industry.

Consequently, the Findings chapter discussed what kind of the strategies were used most (rationalization and authorization) and least (narrativization) in the analyzed dataset, but also revealed that the authors often use several strategies within one article. It also described what kind of discursive legitimation strategies were mostly used in the quotes of the actors in the bookselling field, and what the connection was between the theme raised in the article and the discursive legitimation strategy used.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This chapter summarizes the study, discusses its findings in the light of earlier research literature and draws conclusions. Moreover, practical implications are presented. The thesis ends with a critical review and suggestions for further research.

### 5.1 Research summary

The present subchapter presents an overview of the objective of the study and the approach to answering the research questions utilized of the thesis. The subchapter also briefly summarizes the Findings of the study.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the discursive legitimation strategies used in the media when covering various events in book e-commerce in the UK at a specific time period and thereby contribute to research of the role of language use in constructing a sense of legitimacy of institutional change. The formulated research questions are presented below. It is important to clarify that the institutional change refers to the development of the e-commerce of books in the UK. The main research question was the following:

*How is the legitimacy of a particular institutional change constructed in the media?*

In order to answer the main research questions, several sub-questions were stated:

- 1. What discursive legitimation strategies are prevalent in the media covering book e-commerce in the UK?*
- 2. What discursive legitimation strategies are used by the actors of the change?*
- 3. What kind of relationship can be detected between the theme of the text and the discursive legitimation strategy used?*

The literature review gave an overview of previous research on the process of legitimation of new institutional practices, on the role rhetoric plays in the legitimation of the new practices and on previous studies on the role of discourses in constructing

new institutions. The analysis of previous theoretical material led to the formation of a comprehensive theoretical framework for this thesis.

Following the approach of critical discourse methodology, the study analyzed distinctive categories of discursive legitimation strategies, signifying specific ways of making sense of, and giving sense to the changes in the book e-commerce market. The results of the analysis imply that each strategy type has its own distinguishing features and ways of introduction. Hence, each strategy is intended to fulfill specific objectives, in addition to the legitimation and delegitimation purposes.

Moreover, the research indicates that the journalists have often complemented the primary legitimation strategy with other strategy within an article in order to further establish sense of legitimacy of the practice or, on the contrary, to delegitimize it. It was observed that most of the analyzed articles aimed at legitimizing the new practices in the e-commerce of books and the number of the articles that aimed at delegitimizing the practices was noticeably smaller than those aimed at legitimation. Furthermore, rationalization and authorization strategies appeared to be prevalent in the analyzed dataset. The findings also revealed that in their quotes the actors in the bookselling industry mostly used either rationalization or moralization strategies in their discourse. Furthermore, a connection between the theme raised in the article and the discursive legitimation strategy used was revealed.

## **5.2 Outcomes of the study**

This section discusses the previously presented findings from Chapter 4 in the light of the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, the significance of the findings is analyzed and conclusions are drawn.

The theoretical framework for the present thesis was based on the theory of divergent institutional change implementation suggested by Battilana et.al. (2009), who examined the role of discourse in the construction of institutional change. They suggested that “Mobilizing of allies behind the vision” is one of the key processes in the construction of institutional change. Vaara et.al. (2006) also discussed this subject and the role of media in the formulation of public opinion regarding a newly implemented change. The



classification of discursive legitimation strategies by Vaara et. al. (2006) used in the present thesis was created specifically for the analysis of media materials, where specific journalistic practices influence language use and where intertextuality plays a key role. The findings of the present study are consistent with both of those theories, as it was revealed that the discursive legitimation strategies were used in most of the articles written in the analyzed newspapers in regards to the development of e-commerce of books in the UK. The few exceptions, where none of the discursive legitimation strategies were used were short articles usually composed of two-three sentences, which simply announced some event in the industry without further elaborating on it. Those articles were excluded from the initial dataset and the final dataset of 156 articles consisted purely of the articles, where the discursive legitimation strategies were used, as it was mentioned in the Data and Methods chapter. Consequently, the first conclusion can be drawn:

**Conclusion 1. Discursive legitimation strategies are actively used in the process of construction of institutional change**

Fairclough's (1995) perspective towards CDA draws attention to how discourses are used in the media for construction of the social space, through the constitution of concepts, objects, and subject positions. He suggests that the order of discourses used in the media influence people's interactions in private life and therefore influence public opinion. Hence, Fairclough suggested that the media could be used as a tool for building power relations. Vaara et.al. (2006) further developed this idea; they claimed that the media helps readers to make sense of and, thereby, legitimize specific ideas and practices. The present thesis elaborates on the ideas of Fairclough and Vaara et.al by analyzing the quotes of both institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors in the dataset. It has been revealed that company representatives and other actors in the bookselling industry were quoted in many articles, which is supported by the finding that the authorization strategy was used as a major or supporting strategy in 54 articles out of the 156 analyzed. Furthermore, the quoted experts always used discursive legitimation strategies in their speeches. As a consequence, the second conclusion can be drawn:

**Conclusion 2. The institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors use media as a channel for mobilizing allies behind their vision through employing discursive legitimation strategies.**

The findings also revealed that various strategies were intended at fulfilling specific objectives. For example, as it was presented in sub-chapter 4.2 when discussing Amazon taking the leadership position on the online market and affecting other booksellers, the journalists often used rationalization or authorization strategies, and while talking about the financial problems of the independent bookshop, the journalists mostly used moralization. This signifies that whenever the journalists wanted to legitimize the event discussed and make it appear rational in the eyes of the audience, they used rationalization or authorization. When trying to make the audience pity the independent bookshops, the journalists used a moralization strategy. However, it is important to point out here, that discursive legitimation strategies are not always used consciously, since the journalists are strongly influenced by the prevailing dominant discourses and the available discursive practices (Vaara et.al., 2006).

These findings are consistent with those of Vaara et.al. (2006), who underlined how the various strategies are used for legitimizing contemporary organizational phenomena (e.g. normalization institutionalizes specific examples of the practice, narrativization institutionalizes specific kinds of narratives and drama) (Vaara et.al., 2006, p. 804).

Furthermore, the present findings reveal that rationalization and authorization were the most commonly used strategies in the analyzed dataset. Consequently, in the case of the British e-commerce of books, the authors prioritized the more rational ways to present the information, typical of the rationalization and authorization strategies (such as providing reasoning for the changes based on facts and referring to the expert opinion), over the other strategies.

The findings seem to indicate the following reasons for those choices might be the following: firstly, the features of the institution in question – e-commerce of books in the UK is an economic institution, which leads to a rather formal way of presenting the

events within this institution. Secondly, all the analyzed media sources are established traditional media with a rather formal approach to presenting news, which is reflected in the choice of the discursive legitimation strategies applied by the journalists. This leads us to the following conclusion:

**Conclusion 3. Each strategy is intended to fulfill specific objectives.**

The findings also reveal that the position a particular actor has in the industry of book e-commerce in the UK affects the choice of the strategy applied. As discussed in section 4.2.2, representatives of big companies such as Amazon often use rationalization when giving comments to journalists, whereas minor field-level actors commonly use moralization. It is likely that this tendency can be explained by analyzing the objectives both parties pursue when discussing the events with the journalists. In many cases representatives of big companies like Amazon seem to aim at objectively justifying Amazon's success through providing reasoning based on facts. Meanwhile, minor field-level actors such as small chain booksellers or independent bookshops often try to gain readers' sympathy by underlining moral values (e.g. customer empathy their shops provide) or by discussing the financial problems they faced due to inability to compete with bigger rivals.

Although there has not been much research discussing the connection between the actor's position and the discursive legitimation strategy used, both Fairclough (1995) and Vaara et.al. (2006) discussed, how the use of discourses affect power relations in the society. Consequently, it can be stated, that the present findings support and further extend those by Fairclough and Vaara et.al.. Hence, the following conclusion may be drawn:

**Conclusion 4. The choice of the discursive legitimation strategy depends on the position of the actor producing the discourse.**

### **5.3 Practical implications**

This subchapter discusses the implications of the study and points out what they may imply for the communications, marketing and management research.

Firstly, the thesis stressed the importance of discursive legitimacy in the formation of an institution. In order for the change to become recognized and accepted within a society, information about the changes of the UK book e-commerce was communicated in printed magazines and newspapers, which allowed reaching large number of people in a short period of time. It was found out that the journalists, as well as various actors in the industry of British book e-commerce actively discussed the events in the industry taking plays in the analyzed timespan. The discourses, discussing the changes in book e-commerce gained the attention of the general public, as well as other participants of the field. As a consequence, the modifications of the institutional field were legitimized within generally society. Therefore, we have a reason to believe, that discursive legitimation strategies play an important role in legetimation of the new institution, which means that the institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors should pay specific attention to their usage in the discourses they produce.

Secondly, the results of the thesis indicate that the media is a reliable and commonly used tool for constructing a sense of legitimacy of the new practice or an event. The textual material analyzed in the thesis was created by journalists, although the representatives of e.g. bookselling companies and publishing houses were often quoted in the articles. The findings of the thesis shown the relevance of earlier theories (e.g. Fairclough, 1995; Vaara et.al., 2006) on the importance of media as a tool of sense-making and establishing a sense of legitimacy of the new practices and events within institutions. The findings of the thesis also showed that institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors actively use discursive legitimation strategies in their speeches when giving interviews to journalists. Hence, it can be stated, that the media can be utilized by the institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors as a tool for legitimizing newly introduced practices.

Thirdly, the study revealed that the journalists prioritized some discursive legitimation strategies over others with rationalization and authorization being the most popular strategies. Based on this, it can be suggested that for legitimation of events within an economic institution, such as British e-commerce of books, more rational ways of justifying or criticizing the events are preferred over the moves addressing readers' emotions typical of e.g. moralization and narrativization. Furthermore, it was observed

that the choice of strategies depended largely on the topic in question and what the journalist writing the article supposedly aimed at. Therefore, it can be stated that institutional entrepreneurs and other field-level actors should pay specific attention to the choice of discursive legitimation strategies depending on the effect they want to achieve with creating the new discourse.

Fourthly, the study revealed that the choice of the discursive legitimation strategy strongly depends on the position of the actor producing the discourse. While the biggest market players' representatives in their interviews mostly used rationalization, the small bookshop owners mostly used the moralization strategy. These findings are closely linked to the previous practical implications – the objective the actor pursues when producing the discourse. Hence, it can be suggested that there is a close connection between the social position of the actors producing the discourse and the discursive legitimation strategies they use.

#### **5.4 Limitations and indications for further research**

This section examines the thesis from a critical point of view by showing the limitations of the research. Moreover, further research possibilities are suggested.

It should be noted that this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the research materials consist only of the printed media materials from three particular media sources: The Guardian, Retail Week and The Bookseller. This means that the data is limited as compared to the large variety of modern media in the UK. However, this notion gives ground for ideas for further research. Future studies may focus on different printed editorials or even on completely different media sources, such as the television or the internet. Consequently, this can lead to completely different findings. For instance, it might be interesting to compare how the journalists of several magazines aiming at various target audiences use discursive legitimation strategies when discussing the same issues in the news.

Secondly, since the research focus is limited to one particular context – e-commerce of books in the UK in the timespan between the years 2004 and 2006, the implications made should be considered as suggestive only valid for the particular case. It is likely

that the analysis of the discursive legitimation strategies in another industry, another country and in a different period of time would lead to different results. However, this notion provides a big variety of ideas for further studies. It might be interesting to see, how the events with the same kind of institutional change (e-commerce changing the traditional bookselling industry) were presented in the media of other countries (for example, the USA, where Amazon was founded).

Thirdly, the conclusions revealing the connection between the objective the actor pursues when producing the discourse and the choice of the discursive legitimation strategy he or she makes, were made based on the assumptions of the author. Since there were no interviews with e.g. the authors of the articles in place it was impossible to state with certainty what they aimed at with particular articles. For that reason, possible further studies could concentrate on interviewing the authors of the analyzed articles and possible company representatives quoted in the texts in order to find out, what their intentions were, and examine how they wanted to present the events in question.

Fourthly, the categorization of the discursive legitimation strategies used for the present thesis was based on the one first suggested by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) and further developed by Vaara et.al. (2006). The categorization recognizes five types of discursive legitimation strategies: authorization, rationalization, moralization, normalization and narrativization. However, there might be many more strategies employed by the actors for the legitimation of the events within an institutional change. Therefore, more detailed research may reveal other discursive legitimation strategies.

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