CHALMERS
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A New Dawn for the Heavy Truck Dealer Network

Opportunities related to increasing electrification and direct sales

Master's Thesis in the Supply Chain Management Programme

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Abstract

For intermediaries to stay relevant in distribution networks, they need to adapt to changing conditions. Currently, heavy-duty truck manufacturers have committed to increase their offering of electric vehicles to minimise the environmental impact of transport. At the same time, firms are developing their distribution structures and strategies with the aim of fulfilling customer requirements and reducing costs, which implies utilising direct sales. The aim of this master's thesis is to investigate future business opportunities for an intermediary in a distribution network of heavy-duty trucks, in a scenario with increased electrification and direct sales. This master's thesis is based on a single case study in collaboration with Volvo Group at Group Trucks Technology, focusing on the internal and private dealers of Volvo Trucks' heavy-duty truck dealer network. To fulfil the aim of this thesis and address the research problem dealt with in this study, several issues have been investigated. The current operations of the dealers have been studied, with the aim of identifying core activities and resources to outline the current dealer roles. Taking the current dealer roles and operations as a point of departure when analysing the impact of increased electrification and direct sales, implications for the future dealer role could be outlined. Increased electrification and direct sales are reshaping the business environment for the dealers, driving significant changes in current activities, resources, and roles. Increased electrification and direct sales imply a reduction in workshop service and sales opportunities, alongside the increased importance of supporting customers in the transition to electric vehicles. Continuing to be a main customer contact point, the future dealer role will be more complex, moving towards an advisory role emphasising the need to provide the customers with comprehensive solutions. The study shows that the dealer roles are being redefined rather than eliminated. For the dealers, this implies that they need to consider their roles to ensure that they will continue to be relevant actors that create value in the distribution network. Future business opportunities for the dealers are presented in response to the impact of increased electrification and direct sales.

Keywords: Distribution networks, electrification, direct sales, intermediaries, heavy duty truck dealers.

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1. Introduction

This master's thesis is written in collaboration with Volvo Group at Group Trucks Technology in the Strategic Product Planning team. Volvo Trucks is a business segment within Volvo Group and a global truck manufacturer, providing transport solutions and serving customers in more than 130 countries (Volvo Trucks, 2025a). Providing electric transport solutions, for example electric trucks, is part of the core business of Volvo Group and Volvo Trucks offers a variety of electric truck models (Volvo Group, 2024). Road transport is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (European Environment Agency, 2024a) and has a negative impact on human health and the environment (European Environment Agency, 2025). Electric trucks represent a transport solution that will play a key role in reducing the negative impacts of road transport (European Environment Agency, 2024b). Several truck Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are currently transforming their fleets from fossil fuel powered towards electric powered in response to a need to reduce the carbon footprint from road transport (Fleischmann et al., 2024). At the same time, several businesses are shifting towards direct sales strategies, allowing for greater control over their supply chains and customer experience as well as improving profit margins (Knapp et al., 2025). In today's digital environment, shifting from offline sales channels to more online sales are widely adopted by firms, and there is a growing expectation from customers to interact with a firm in multiple and diverse channels (Cai & Choi, 2023).

Most organisations depend on intermediaries to fulfil functions that are necessary to meet customer's requirements and needs (Hayes et al., 1996). A dealer is a common type of intermediary used by firms (Fill & Fill, 2005). Volvo Trucks has an extensive network of dealers, both owned and private, responsible for selling and servicing trucks (Volvo Group, 2024). The dealer network is an important asset for Volvo Group and of significant importance for their business. Electric vehicles may challenge the dealer's current operations as the vehicles require less maintenance than conventional due to several factors, for instance fewer moving parts and less fluids (U.S. Department of Energy, 2025). Additionally, the direct sales strategies imply bypassing intermediaries, transforming the business landscape for both the dealers and OEMs (Heuser et al., 2023).

Distribution networks are in constant change, which has implications for the operations performed by intermediaries (Gadde, 2014). The intermediaries that survive are those that can adapt to the changing market conditions. The combination of increasing electrification and direct sales can impact Volvo Trucks' dealer network, and the dealers may be on the verge of a future change in their business operations. In response to a possible scenario of increased electrification and direct sales, it is of high interest for Volvo Group to understand how the dealer network can adapt and capture new business opportunities in the future.

1.1 Aim

An increase in electrification and direct sales can change the roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers and their operations in the future. For Volvo Group, it is crucial to ensure that the dealers' incumbent customer knowledge, competence, and historical importance are retained and utilised as a competitive advantage as the heavy truck market evolves. Therefore, the aim of this master's thesis is to investigate future business opportunities for Volvo Trucks' private and owned heavy truck dealers, in response to increased electrification and direct sales.

2. Introduction to Volvo Trucks

Volvo Trucks is a part of Volvo Group, a global manufacturer of trucks, buses, construction equipment and marine and industrial engines (Volvo Group, 2025a). To deliver products and services, Volvo Group depends on global and regional supply chains (Volvo Group, 2024). Volvo Group includes several business segments, whereas Volvo Trucks has the largest share of the group's net sales. There are several brands included in the truck segment of Volvo Group, such as Renault Trucks, Mack, and Volvo Trucks. Volvo Trucks has the largest share among the truck brands within the Volvo Group, almost 61% in 2024, and Europe is the largest market for trucks, followed by North America. (ibid.).

Volvo Trucks is a global leader in truck manufacturing with more than 1,000,000 trucks in running operations, and approximately 134,000 trucks were delivered in 2024 (Volvo Trucks, 2025a). Volvo Trucks offers transport solutions based on medium- and heavy-duty trucks and provides customer support through their global dealer network, with 2,200 service points in 130 countries (Volvo Trucks, 2025b). Volvo Trucks has a network of global dealers and service centres with valuable resources, such as competent and service-oriented personnel, to satisfy customer's needs and requirements (Volvo Group, 2024).

As transport is one of the most significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, shifting to solutions based on electric vehicles is essential to minimise the environmental impact (European Environment Agency, 2024a). To decarbonise and transform the transport industry to be more sustainable, collaboration between governments, industries and companies is necessary (Volvo Group, 2024). Volvo Trucks aims to be a leader in zero-emission vehicles. In 2024, Volvo Trucks delivered a total of 1,945 electric trucks, an increase of around 4% from previous year. Volvo Trucks has eight battery-electric models on the market that are developed to meet diverse transport needs. The transformation to electric vehicles is a part of Volvo Group’s strategy to offer complete solutions providing value for customers rather than just offer a product. The strategy involves understanding customers’ business and offer complete solutions including financing, equipment, several types of services, insurance, charging options and battery optimisation. (ibid.).

3. Theoretical framework

The following section presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. In this section, a dealer network is conceptualised as a business network with several actors providing resources and performing activities. The role of an intermediary as an actor in an evolving distribution network and how an intermediary's role can change due to the dynamic nature of distribution networks is outlined. Different distribution set-ups are presented along with what they imply for a firm's distribution strategy. Throughout the section, implications for the research problem related to the theories introduced are discussed. Finally, the research model of the thesis is outlined.

3.1 Conceptualising distribution

The following section conceptualises distribution from two central perspectives, distribution as a channel and distribution as a network. Furthermore, an intermediary's role in distribution is illustrated.

3.1.1 Distribution conceptualised as a channel

Distribution strategies rely on a set of strategic decisions to determine how products and services are transferred from the manufacturer to end customers (Palmatier et al., 2015). These strategies play a crucial role in creating competitive advantage and ensure that the offerings are accessible and attractive to customers. The customer experience shapes customers' perception of a company brand. Effective distribution strategies are not only about ensuring accessibility and attractiveness, but also a way for a company to differentiate itself from competitors. Differentiation is not solely dependent on product features (ibid.). It rather occurs through innovative channel offerings. The product constitutes just one component of the total purchase bundle perceive by the end-user. Equally important are the value adding services delivered by members in the supply chain. Such value adding services are also critical determinants in customers' purchasing decision. (ibid.).

To conceptualise distribution, two central perspectives can be identified: the traditional channel view and the network view. The traditional definition of a distribution channel, also referred to as a marketing channel, reflects a linear sequence of channel members acting as a gatekeeper between the manufacturer and the end-user (Palmatier, 2015). The traditional distribution channel involves three entities: manufacturers, intermediaries, and end-users. Intermediaries from a traditional perspective are defined as all channel members except the manufacturer and the end user (Hayes et al.,1996). The intermediaries play a crucial role in facilitating the distribution process by taking on parts of the necessary distribution functions. In traditional distribution channels, the interdependency between operations is typically low and critical assets are internally controlled (Gadde, 2004). Relationships between members in the channel is primarily arm's length and one channel member often takes on the role of channel captain, most commonly manufacturers, acting as the primary driver of establishing and maintaining channel links (Palmatier, 2015). Distribution channels with this traditional structure

typically include independent intermediaries, each controlling their own operations (Gadde, 2004).

A traditional channel structure, illustrated in *Figure 1*, refers to the arrangement of firms involved in the distribution process, from producer to end customer (Rosenbloom, 1995). One of the main characteristics of a channel structure is its length, which indicates the number of intermediaries involved. Channel structures can range from direct distribution, where producers sell directly to customers (Rosenbloom, 1995), to arrangements involving multiple independent intermediaries (Gadde, 2004). When companies are deciding upon their distribution strategy, they are faced with the decision to sell directly to customers or through intermediaries (Fill & Fill, 2005). The two extreme forms of distribution structures are direct channels, where no intermediaries are involved, and indirect channels, which include a varying number of intermediaries. Verhoef et al. (2015) further present three different channel types: offline channels, online channels, and traditional direct channels. Offline channels refer to traditional physical stores, online channels are internet platforms and traditional direct channels refer to catalogues and direct sales methods without physical store presence. This illustrates the range of distribution strategies available to a firm. The way customers interact with a company, whether it is through intermediaries, direct sales or online, affects the overall satisfaction of the customer (Palmatier et al., 2015).

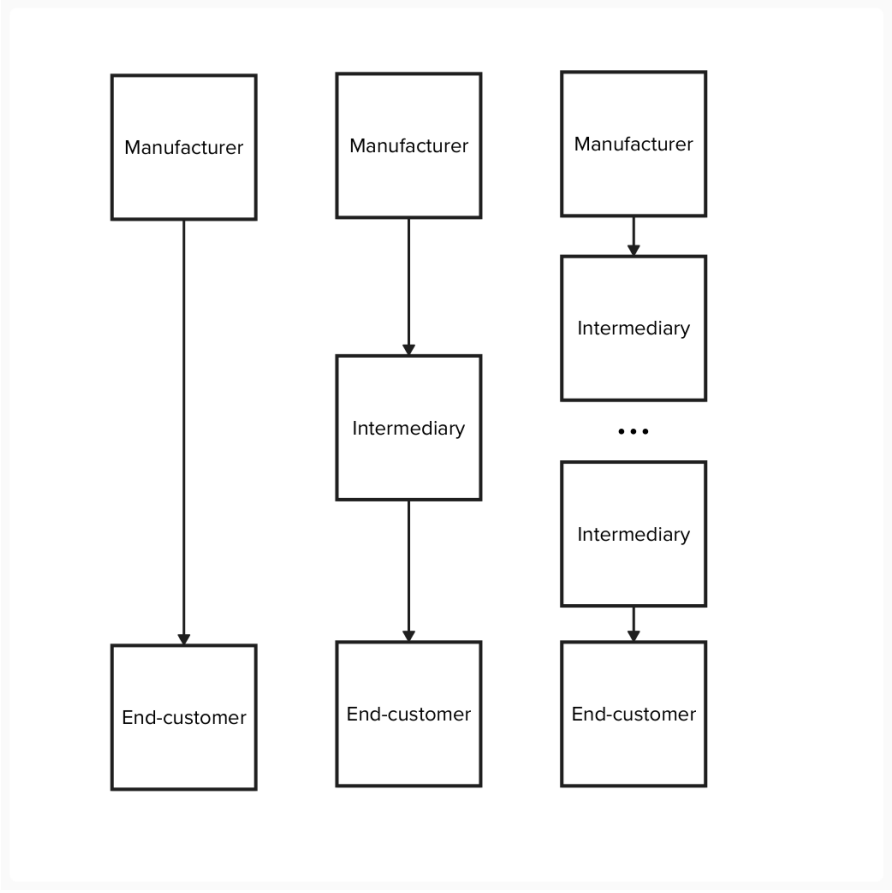

Figure 1. Traditional channel structure (Rosenbloom, 1995).

3.1.2 Distribution conceptualised as a network

An alternative to the traditional channel view and an increasingly relevant way to analyse distribution is through a network perspective. In a network view, an intermediary's role is distinct from the traditional channel view (Ford et al., 2011). Intermediaries often have more complex roles than simply deliver a product or a service, as their operations are closely connected and intertwined to multiple firms across the network, not just the manufacturer. Each intermediary is involved in a number of business relationships, where each of these relationships are intertwined to other relationships that involves other companies. Ford et al. (2011, p.130) describe an intermediary as "...a generic term for a company that provides an indirect relationship between any two companies...". In business networks, all companies can therefore be seen as intermediaries as they all have relationships to other companies independent of their role in the business network (Ford et al., 2011). Hence, each company is 'in between' other companies. Relationships between firms can be both indirect and direct (Ford et al., 2011). A dealer can be defined as an intermediary since it provides an indirect relationship between a manufacturer and the manufacturer's customers. A network perspective on distribution is visualised in *Figure 2*, illustrating that intermediaries can have direct and indirect relationship with other intermediaries. The grey area illustrates the distribution network in focus, while also acknowledging that relationship can extend beyond this network and include additional intermediaries.

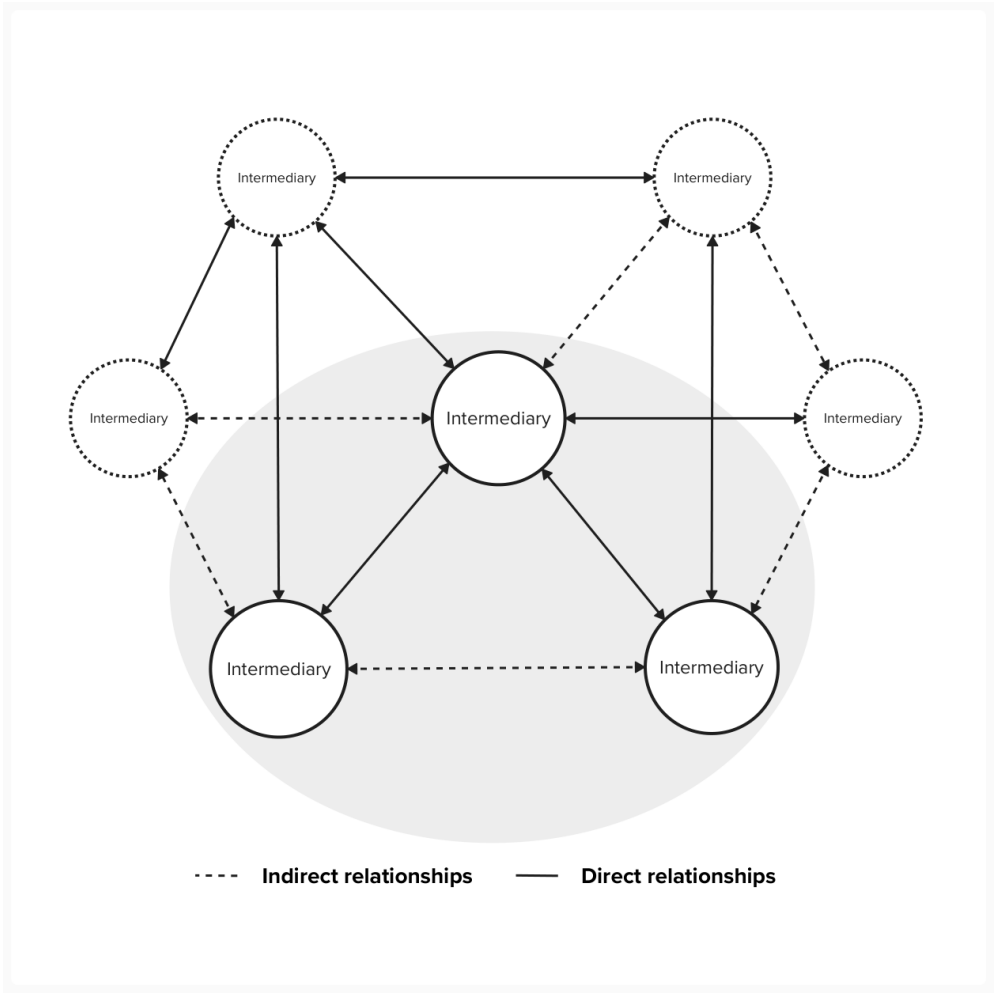

Figure 2. Distribution through a network perspective.

To analyse distribution from a network perspective, a network model is applied (Gadde, 2004). The network model applied is the ARA-model by Håkansson & Snehota (1995), which consider three layers in a business network: activities, resources, and actors. Håkansson & Snehota (1995) explains how activities can for instance be technical, administrative, or commercial. Activities can vary in type and need to be coordinated within and across firms. Resources of a firm can be illustrated as workforce, equipment, facilities, and knowledge (ibid.). Actors are the ones controlling the resources and performing the activities (Gadde, 2004). With a network perspective, activities, resources, and actors are regarded as closely intertwined (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). The interaction between actors in a business relationship creates actor bonds between the different firms (Ford et al. 2011). Activity links develop in a business relationship when activities need to be linked and coordinated between firms. For the firms in a business relationship to develop, adaptations are necessary, and if the involved businesses adapt their resources in relation to each other, resource ties are created. (ibid.). In distribution networks, activities between firms are interdependent, requiring coordination across organisational boundaries (Gadde, 2004). Distribution from a network perspective, therefore, relies on internal capabilities but also on the ability to access and integrate other businesses' resources. When activities are coordinated

between firms, the competencies and capabilities needed become integrated and increase the need of cooperation between the firms. Gadde (2004) describes how the distribution networks consist of several collective and internal capabilities.

Ford et al. (2011) discuss intermediation in connection to the three network layers. Moving from the traditional view of intermediaries to a network view of intermediation, it becomes difficult to generalise the role of a certain actor. The actor bonds between an intermediary and other firms in a distribution network can differ depending on the actor role of the intermediary. The authors explain that business performance of intermediaries and other actors is affected by the intermediary's role in the resource and activity layers, not solely the actor level. Looking at distribution from a network perspective, companies can have different roles in relation to the firms they collaborate with depending on the aim of a business relationship. This makes it difficult to determine a generic role for a certain intermediary that is involved in several business relationships in parallel. Analysing distribution from a network perspective, a vast number of activities and how they are performed and coordinated by different actors are taken into consideration. (ibid.). From a network view on distribution, firms considering themselves as intermediaries could benefit from understanding that their activities, resources, and actor role are shaped by their relationships with other actors (Olsson et al., 2013). The activities, resources and roles are not fixed, but are dependent on the context, and evolve as firms engage in different relationships. Intermediaries can, for example, play a key role in indirect sales by providing information and services to the customer, and acting as the main customer contact point. Using intermediaries can help manufacturers provide more specialised offerings by letting the intermediary tailor and deliver the offering to a customer. The changing role of an intermediary is the result of their direct and indirect relationships with other actors. (ibid.).

3.1.3 Implications for the research problem

In view of the research problem addressed in this thesis, Volvo Trucks' distribution network is analysed using the network view and the ARA model, where the concept actors, resources, and activities function as key analytical elements. As illustrated in *Figure 3*, Volvo Trucks, the dealers, and the customers are all actors, connected by interdependent activities and resources. These actors maintain both indirect and direct relationships beyond the studied distribution network, influencing the dealers' performance and strategies. This study aims to clarify and understand the dealers' roles and position within the focal distribution network. Their activities, resources and roles evolve through interactions with other actors within and outside Volvo Trucks' dealer network.

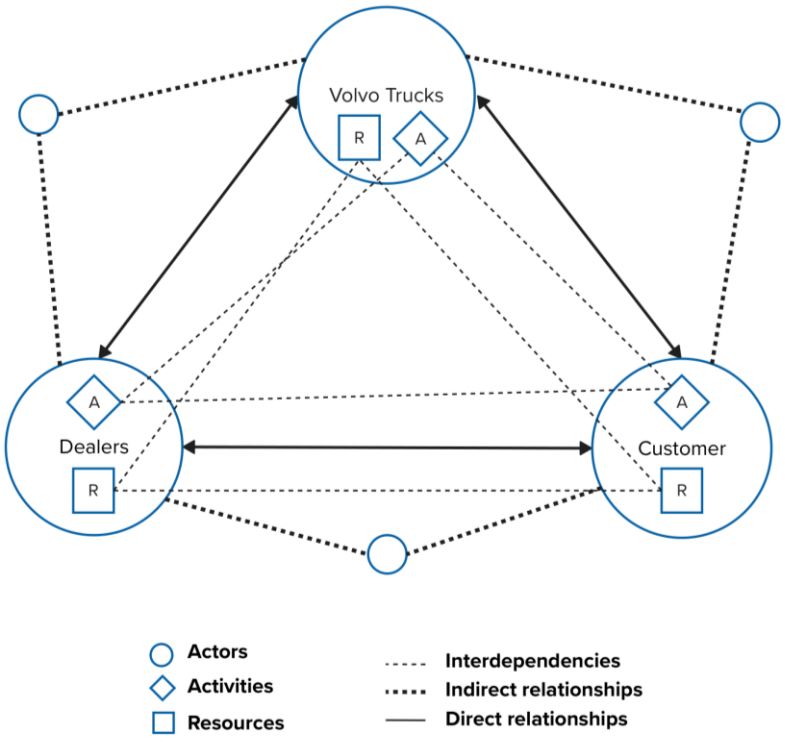

Figure 3. Volvo Trucks' distribution network.

3.2 Different types of distribution structures

As presented in *3.1 Conceptualising distribution*, there are several ways for a company to reach customers through various channels. How a firm configures and integrates these channels is referred to as the channel structure. Payne and Frow (2004) define a multi-channel strategy as using a variety of channels to serve customers, which allows customers to interact with a supplier through their preferred channels. The different channels are traditionally handled separate from each other when utilising a multi-channel strategy (Verhoef et al., 2015). With the increase of more digital channels, for instance mobile channels, there has been a shift to omni-channel strategies. Omni-channel strategies involve the use of several channels, that are closely integrated and coordinated with each other. The channels interact with one another, and omni-channel management requires a synergetic approach to handle the channels and their customer touchpoints. (ibid.). Currently, omni-channels is a common strategy used by companies, driven by the growth of social media in today's digital era (Cai & Choi, 2023).

The shift from offline channels to online channels is broadly adopted by firms in today's digital environment. The emergence of omni-channel strategies reflects firms' adoption of a complex and integrated network aimed at reaching customers through multiple, interconnected touchpoints (Verhoef et al., 2015). Verhoef et al. (2015) describe how the movement from multi-channel strategies towards omni-channel strategies is due to the increase of online channels and digitalisation. Similarly, multi-channel strategies occurred in several industries as a response to the effects of increased digitalisation. Managers that are responsible for a firm's distribution strategy must understand the current industry structure and its future evolution (Payne & Frow, 2004). Insights into emerging trends can be understood by analysing the previous evolution of the distribution structure within the industry, alongside analysing other industries globally. (ibid.).

3.2.1 Implications for the research problem

For the research problem addressed in this thesis, it is essential to recognise the existence of different strategic approaches to distribution. As this thesis focus on how direct sales as a distribution strategy affects the roles of the dealers as actors within Volvo Trucks' distribution network, an understanding of alternative distribution strategies is crucial. In this thesis, the direct sales approach is viewed from two perspectives. Both perspectives on direct sales imply bypassing the dealers. The first concerns direct sales in terms of online sales through digital platforms. The second perspective focuses on the current direct sales strategy used by Volvo Trucks, which includes bypassing the dealers by selling directly from key account managers via Volvo Trucks' market company. Furthermore, understanding how different distribution strategies can affect customer satisfaction is important when analysing the impact of increased direct sales on Volvo Trucks' dealers.

3.3 Dynamics in distribution networks

Distribution structures have changed considerably over time (Olsson et al., 2013). This change has been driven by technological advancements and shifting customer expectations, all of which has challenged the traditional linear channel view on distribution. Distribution networks are constantly changing due to dynamics in the environment (Gadde, 2014). To remain as an actor in the distribution network, intermediaries need to adapt to changing conditions. Different types of intermediaries have been important actors in the network, but their traditional role has been challenged during the years, when new types of distribution structures evolve (Olsson et al., 2013). Intermediaries have overcome these challenges by adapting their operations to the changing conditions. For an intermediary to survive, they need to be able to change to new conditions and modify their operations to continue to generate value.

Olsson et al. (2013) discuss three types of dynamics that have changed over time. The dynamics are crucial for the functioning of distribution and have affected the roles of intermediaries. Olsson et al. (2013) further identified several roles in the operations of a specific case company to exemplify how different functions of a company's operations can change based on the three dynamics. The development of these roles can be understood by combining the interrelated dynamics and the three network layers, actors, resources, and activities. The first type of dynamics is the increased specialisation in distribution, where businesses shift from managing several functions to focus on specific distribution activities, resulting in increased interdependencies of business activities between firms. One generic role identified by Olsson et al. (2013) is the role of activity specialisation. An intermediary can change its role in the distribution network by specialising in certain activities. Non-specialisation activities can instead be outsourced. By increasing specialisation, a second generic role in the actor layer, activity coordinator, can be identified. The role of coordinating activities becomes important as more specialised activities in a distribution network increase interdependencies between activities which requires integration and coordination. The second type of dynamic explained by Olsson et al. (2013) is extended dependence on resources of business partners. It is a result of increased specialisation because firms become reliant on external resources of business partners, rather than taking full ownership of resources, and form resource-sharing networks. This dynamic introduces new strategic challenges for intermediaries that must decide on which resources to own and which resources to access from business partners. The role as a resource provider or a problem solver are generic roles in the resource layer. In the resource layer, firms access and combine resources and rely on external assets and capabilities. Acting as a resource provider becomes significant due to increased focus on core competencies and outsourcing. Focusing on core competencies and utilising outsourcing is examples of activity specialisation, which is deeply connected to the role as a resource provider. Further, when there is a need to access combinations of physical and organisational resources, the other role in relation to the resource layer is problem solver. An intermediary acting as a problem solver is responsible for combining physical and organisational resources held by different actors in the distribution network. Both

increased specialisation and extended dependence on external resources are impacting relationships between firms in the distribution network. The relationships need to be modified to handle the dynamics related to resource-sharing and specialisation. For this reason, the third type of dynamics explained by Olsson et al. (2013) refers to modified relationships between firms. Strategic issues related to changing business relationships involve what business partners to prioritise and to decide levels of involvement with partners.

All three types of dynamics relate to actors, activities, and resources, and all are important parts in a distribution network (Olsson et al., 2013). The three dynamics - specialisation, resource-sharing and modified relationships - have all transformed intermediaries' roles in distribution networks. The dynamics have driven intermediaries to adapt their current roles by specialising on different activities, sharing resources with other actors and investing in long term relationships in the business network. (ibid.). When distribution networks evolve in response to a dynamic environment and when technology are driving structural changes in the business relationship between actors, the IDR cycle can occur (Morris & Morris, 2002). The IDR cycle consists of three phases: intermediation, disintermediation and reintermediation. Intermediation occurs when an actor acts as an intermediary between two actors in an industry. Disintermediation refers to when an intermediary is eliminated from the value chain and reintermediation occurs when an actor adapts and reestablish themselves as an intermediary. Disintermediated actors are likely to reintermediate rather than becoming eliminated from the network. The IDR cycle can be used to understand how distribution networks evolve in response to technological advancements.

3.3.1 Implications for the research problem

Understanding the dynamic nature of distribution networks is essential when studying the dealer network of Volvo Trucks. As Olsson et al. (2013) suggest, distribution networks are shaped by three types of dynamics, which together offer a useful framework for understanding the shifting roles of dealers within a distribution network. Understanding that intermediaries need to adapt to stay relevant becomes significant when analysing how the dealers' roles may change due to increased electrification and direct sales.

In the addressed research problem, increased electrification will be seen as a factor forcing change in the business relationships in the distribution network of Volvo Trucks, alongside contributing to a dynamic environment in the distribution network. The IDR cycle described by Morris & Morris (2002) offers a useful framework for understanding how electrification can impact the current roles of the dealers as intermediaries, and how the dealers need to evolve to stay relevant. Further, understanding the generic roles presented by Olsson et al. (2013) is useful when analysing how the dealers' roles can change due to increased electrification and direct sales. As technological shifts occur, exemplified by the shift from diesel powered to battery electric trucks, dealers may also need to offer new services and support

customers in different ways. These developments are also linked to trends in distribution structures. According to Payne and Frow (2004), there are two forms of structural changes, disintermediation (removing intermediaries) and reintermediation (adding intermediaries). According to Payne and Frow (2004), the role of intermediaries differs across industries. In some contexts, intermediaries are becoming more valuable, while in others, their ability to generate value are being challenged. In the latter case, intermediaries may be seen as a cost burden rather than an asset to the company. (ibid.). How well the dealers adapt to changes will shape the future of Volvo Trucks' dealer network.

3.4 Research model and issues to investigate

For the research problem examined in this thesis, dealers are considered actors, more specifically intermediaries, within the distribution network of Volvo Trucks. Distribution is analysed from a network perspective rather than from a traditional channel view. Distribution from a network perspective is recognised as a dynamic and interconnected system which involves several actors, resources, and activities. The distribution networks consist of interdependent activities, where firms rely on other firms' resources. Dealers as actors in the distribution network are involved in numerous business relationships and rely on both internal and external resources as means to perform their activities. The dealers' roles are analysed based on the broader network perspective as their activities and resources are coordinated and combined with other actors.

The issues that will be investigated to fulfil the aim of this report are derived from the theoretical framework. To understand the business opportunities available for dealers in the future, it is first necessary to define their current roles, including the activities they perform and the resources they control and access today. The first issues to be investigated concerns the current activities and resources of the dealers, alongside their roles as actors in Volvo Trucks' distribution network.

> *Issue 1a: What activities do Volvo Trucks' dealers perform?*
>
> *Issue 1b: What resources do Volvo Trucks' dealers control and access?*
>
> *Issue 1c: Based on Issue 1a and Issue 1b, what are the current roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers in the distribution network?*

The theoretical framework implies that distribution networks are in constant change driven by several factors contributing to a dynamic business environment. These dynamics influence the role of intermediaries within the distribution network in several ways. In context to the research problem addressed in this thesis, the two factors contributing to this dynamic environment are increased electrification and direct sales. Currently, companies are moving towards omni-channel strategies, which involves and integrates several sales channels, including direct sales as online sales. Based on this,

the second issue that will be investigated is how the roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers is changing in response to increased electrification and direct sales as factors creating a dynamic distribution environment.

> *Issue 2: How can the roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers change in response to increased electrification and direct sales?*

Research implies that intermediaries in a distribution network need to adapt to stay competitive. This makes it crucial to understand what future business opportunities there are for the dealers, in response to changing conditions. The findings derived from investigating *Issue 1a, 1b, 1c* and *Issue 2* form the foundation for finding future business opportunities for the actors in Volvo Trucks' dealer network. The first four issues provide a comprehensive understanding of the dealers' current roles and operations along with how external factors can change their roles in the future. The analysis of *Issue 1a, 1b, 1c* and *Issue 2* enables a deeper examination of how the dealers can adapt to changing conditions and continue to generate value in the future. These insights form the basis for the third and final issue of this research problem.

> *Issue 3: What business opportunities can be identified for Volvo Trucks' dealers in response to increased electrification and direct sales?*

The theoretical framework and the identified issues of investigation are integrated and form the research model illustrated in *Figure 4*. *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c* are analysed based on the ARA-model introduced in the theoretical framework. *Issue 2* is addressed based on the findings about the dealers' current roles and operations, focusing on how the current roles of the dealers are impacted by increased electrification and direct sales. These analyses serve as a foundation for answering *Issue 3*, which constitutes the main objective of this thesis.

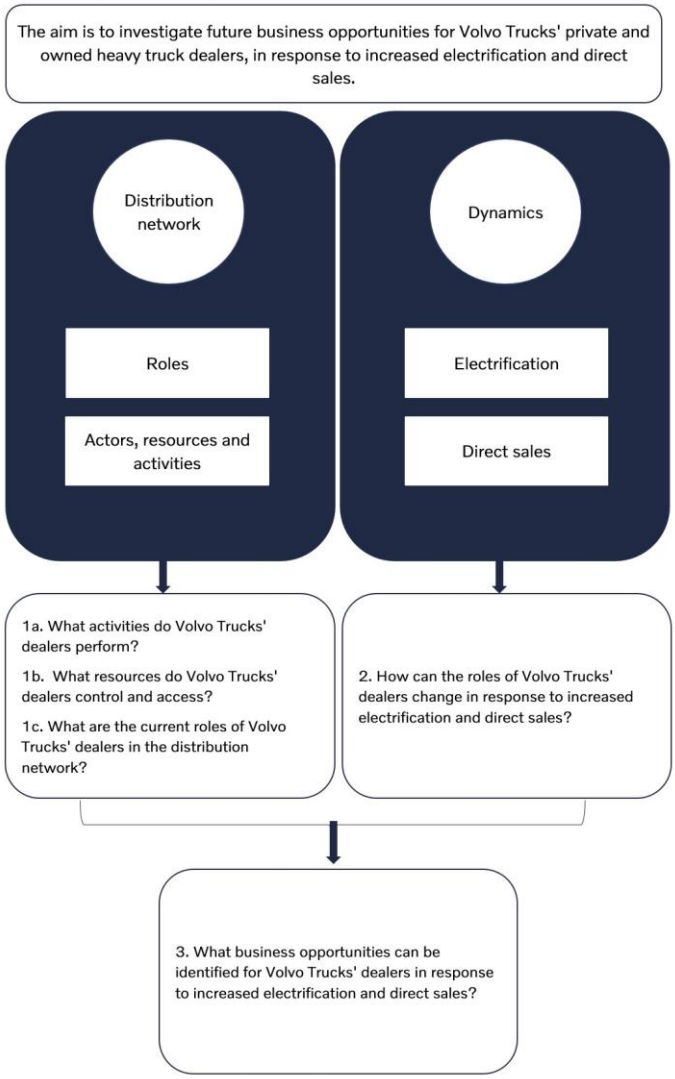

Figure 4. Research model and issues to investigate to address the research problem.

4. Methodology

The research strategy used to investigate the issues and fulfil the aim of this thesis was a qualitative research strategy. A qualitative research strategy was chosen because it generally uses research methods based on the collection of data in the form of written or spoken words (Bell et al., 2022). The research design used was a single case study design. A single case study design was chosen as it implies a thorough analysis of a single case and focuses on a delimited system or situation (Bell et al., 2022). The research design was considered appropriate as the study aimed at gaining deep understanding of a certain part of a distribution network, in this case the dealer network of Volvo Trucks. The case study enabled deep analysis of the specific situation of how the dealer network is impacted by and could adapt to increased electrification and direct sales. Therefore, conducting a single case study was a suitable research design to fulfil the aim of the study.

The case study followed the approach of systematic combining, adapting the issues of investigation, theoretical framework and research model continuously depending on insights and findings as the case study proceeded (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Systematic combining is a suitable approach for case studies (Dubois & Gadde, 2014) and strengthens the reliance on theory during a case study (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). During the process, data analysis, adapting the framework and collecting data was done in parallel, back and forth, which is the process of matching in systematic combining. The systematic combining approach allowed the different phases of the process to be intertwined and adapted to each other, which was seen as a great benefit and suitable for the study. To illustrate the matching process that occurred during the case study, the ARA-model theory in the first theoretical framework contributed to the formulation of *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c*, along with questions to the interview guides investigating activities and resources of the dealers. Discussions during several interviews regarding online sales as a direct sales strategy contributed to integrating section *3.2 Different types of distribution structures* in the theoretical framework.

The study focused on Volvo Trucks' dealer network in the region of Västra Götaland, Sweden. This limitation was necessary as it enabled gaining deeper and more thorough knowledge of a certain area, compared to studying the entire global dealer network. By solely studying a selected part of the Swedish dealer network, the scope of the study was narrowed, making the study reasonable for the available period set for the case study. The choice of studying a confined part of the dealer network of Volvo Trucks further contributed to a more logical selection of which dealers to interview as the global dealer network is extensive. However, limiting the study to a certain region implies that there is a risk that relevant information and knowledge held at dealers in other parts of the dealer network, are not covered in the study. Additionally, the data presented in this study could be more general if a larger geographical area were studied. Further, it is possible that the studied dealers are operating in a similar way as they belong to the same market, the Swedish market, and located relatively close

geographically. To illustrate, the availability of charging infrastructure for a customer can differ depending on which region or country they operate within, implying that the attractiveness of electrification for customers, and further its impact on the dealer operations, could differ in a certain region or country. Studying a larger part of the dealer network could have contributed to findings considering more activities and resources if the operations of a dealer differ depending on location. Therefore, studying a larger part of the network could minimise the risk of identifying business opportunities primarily suitable for the dealers in the studied area. However, the goal with the case study, despite the limitation, was that the result of the report could be applicable for Volvo Trucks' global dealer network. To minimise the risk of presenting identified business opportunities only applicable for the studied region, secondary data were used to support the primary data. The secondary data is not limited to the studied confined part of the dealer network and therefore expands the primary data.

4.1 Data collection

The data collection process of the study is illustrated in the following section. Primary data used for the study was collected by conducting interviews. The primary data was complemented with secondary data exemplified below.

4.1.1 Primary data collection

Semi-structured interviews, presented in *Table 1-3*, were used as the primary data collection method for the case study. Semi-structured interviews were a suitable data collection method as it is a form of qualitative interviewing suitable for studies with less general focus (Bell et al., 2022). The method of semi-structured interviewing enables concepts and theories to emerge from collected data by allowing the researcher to keep an open mind. Using semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to move outside the prepared interview guide if thoughts and questions develops during the interview. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are suitable when interviews are conducted by more than one person. (ibid.).

Interview guides were created, see *Appendix 1*, and used for all conducted interviews, to make sure that all necessary areas were covered. The questions in the interview guide were structured in relation to the issues of investigation. However, if interesting discussions occurred during the interview, the order of the questions were not necessarily followed, and follow-up question were asked. The questions in the guide were formulated to cover the issues of investigation and adapted to the interviewee's main area of expertise. Therefore, the interview guide contained both generic and adapted questions. During the interviews, one of the researchers took responsibility of conducting the interview and to cover the questions in the interview guide. The second researcher was responsible for taking notes and asking follow-up questions when necessary. The described responsibilities shifted between the researchers, implying that both researchers have been responsible for asking questions and taking notes. All interviews conducted during the study were recorded. Recording can restrict the answers of the interviewee according to Bell et al. (2022). The interviews were still

chosen to be recorded with the motivation of minimising the risk of forgetting important data and enabling the researchers to go back and listen to interviews later. The interviews were, as much as possible, conducted face-to-face. If the possibility of interviewing face-to-face did not exist, interviews took place through Microsoft Teams, which have several benefits and can create similar settings as face-to-face interviews (Bell et al., 2022).

Table 1. Overview of interviews conducted at Volvo Group including organisation, anonymised role(s), interview aim, date, time, and place.

#	Organisation	Role(s)	Aim	Date	Time	Place
1	Volvo GTT	Senior manager - electric vehicles.	Background study – electric trucks and electrification.	10/2-2025	60 min	Office
2	Volvo Trucks	Senior strategist.	Background study – electrification and dealer network.	24/2 - 2025	30 min	Office
3	Volvo Trucks	Senior strategist. Senior strategist.	Background study – understanding the dealer network.	26/2 - 2025	30 min	Office
4	Volvo Energy	Expert in Charging & Infrastructure.	Electrification and find business opportunities.	10/3 - 2025	45 min	Office
5	Volvo Autonomous Solutions	Senior manager – projects.	Find business opportunities.	14/3 - 2025	45 min	Office
6	Volvo Autonomous Solutions	Senior manager – products.	Find business opportunities.	18/3 - 2025	45 min	Office
7	Volvo Autonomous Solutions	Senior manager – operations.	Find business opportunities.	19/3 - 2025	45 min	Teams
8	Volvo Energy	Expert in BESS.	Electrification, batteries and find business opportunities.	21/3 - 2025	45 min	Teams
9	Volvo Trucks Sweden	Senior manager.	Electrification and direct sales.	26/3 - 2025	45 min	Teams
10	Volvo Trucks	Expert in services.	Digital services.	27/3 - 2025	45 min	Teams

Table 2. Overview of interviews conducted at dealers including categorisation of dealer, anonymised role(s), interview aim, date, time, and place.

#	Type of dealer	Role(s)	Aim	Date	Time	Place
11	Private Dealer A	Executive.	Understand dealer operations.	14/3 - 2025	60 min	Teams
12	Volvo Truck Center A	Senior manager at Volvo Truck Center Sweden.	Understand dealer operations.	17/3 - 2025	60 min	Dealer
13	Volvo Truck Center B	Salesperson. Senior manager at Volvo Trucks Sweden.	Understand dealer operations.	24/3 - 2025	90 min	Dealer

		Workshop Manager.				
14	Private Dealer B	Salesperson. Executive.	Understand dealer operations.	26/3 - 2025	60 min	Teams
15	Private Dealer C	Sales manager.	Understand dealer operations.	28/3 - 2025	60 min	Dealer

Table 3. Overview of interviews conducted with customer, including type of customer, anonymised role(s), interview aim, date, time, and place.

#	Type of customer	Role(s)	Aim	Date	Time	Place
16	Haulier	Executive.	Customer perspective.	11/3 - 2025	60 min	Teams

In this case study, snowball sampling was chosen as sampling method to select interviewees for the study due to the challenges of selecting relevant participants within a large organisation with multiple business areas. Snowball sampling is a purposive sampling method (Bell et al., 2022). Purposive sampling is a sampling approach in qualitative research, where participants are selected based on specific criteria and characteristics relevant to the research questions. In snowball sampling, the researchers make initial contact with a group of participants relevant for the research topic. During interviews, the initial sample of people recommend or suggest other relevant participants that meet the criteria. This sampling method is useful when accessing groups that are difficult to reach. (ibid.).

In this case study, initial interview participants suggested relevant individuals with the required knowledge for continuing the data collection, which ensured a flexible sampling process that further enabled the systematic combining approach of the study. To illustrate, interviewee #1 recommended interviewee #2, who is employed at Volvo Trucks and possesses expertise in Volvo Trucks' organisation. Participant #1 recommended participant #2 in the end of the interview after gaining deeper knowledge about the aim of the case study, with the belief that it was necessary for the researchers to move closer to the Volvo Trucks organisation to collect relevant data. Participant #2 recommended participant #12 as the interviewee could help the researchers get better insight into activities and prospects for the dealer network. Theoretical saturation, as well as the time limitation of the case study, decided the number of conducted interviews. When determining the sample size of interviews for qualitative research, it is important to balance between ensuring theoretical saturation and maintaining a manageable amount of data to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis (Bell et al., 2022). Theoretical saturation occurs when additional data no longer contribute to new insights or dimensions to the issues investigated.

4.1.2 Secondary data collection

Secondary data was collected to give a comprehensive understanding of the background to the problem. According to Tantawi (2024), secondary data is collected by someone other than the person using the data. For the background study, secondary data was

obtained through webpages, articles and organisations by searching the internet. Keywords used for finding secondary data for the background study were for instance *truck dealership*, *battery electric vehicles*, *battery electric vehicles compared to internal combustion engines*, *BEV service*, *electric trucks*, *automotive dealership*, *Volvo Trucks*, and *direct sales models*. Organisations from which secondary data was obtained were for instance Volvo Group, consulting firms such as McKinsey & Company, and environmental agencies as the European Environment Agency.

Additionally, secondary data was utilised to complement and further investigate the primary data. Secondary data used to complement the empirical findings were often based on topics discussed during the interviews, aligning with the systematic combining approach. To exemplify, information from Volvo Group's website about specific organisational functions was used to support and clarify concepts mentioned during interviews. Information regarding charging infrastructure and batteries, primarily relating to *Issue 2*, is another example of secondary data. A third example of secondary data relating to the identified solutions is information regarding the term as-a-service. To further investigate *Issue 3*, different industries with similar network structures as Volvo Trucks' dealer network have been studied to find secondary data on future business opportunities. To illustrate, exploring the forklift industry contributed to business opportunity *7.12 Increase educational offerings* after identifying different educational offerings of a forklift company. Furthermore, a business model used in the car industry, mega dealer malls, were presented in the brainstorming session and further contributed to the identified business opportunity *7.5 Operate a complete solution mall*.

4.2 Process of the case study

The case study began with a background study to acquire necessary contextual knowledge about the research problem. The background study enabled the formulation of the main content of the planning report and was conducted through interviews with Volvo Group employees. The interviews conducted during the background study were interview #1-3 presented in *Table 1*. The interviews aimed at gaining more knowledge about the Volvo Group organisation, the nature of electric trucks, and Volvo Trucks' dealer network. Interviewee #1 contributed with information on electric trucks, market expectations of electric trucks' impact on workshop service, and the importance of the electric trucks for Volvo Group's sustainability strategy. Interviewee #2 additionally contributed with information on electrification and charging infrastructure. Simultaneously, the interviewee presented an understanding about the organisation of Volvo Trucks' dealer network in Sweden. The participants in interview #3 provided knowledge about Volvo Trucks' dealer network by describing their view on the dealers' operations. The background study additionally consisted of reading and searching for external sources of information, such as articles and webpages. This information was used to get a broader understanding of the nature of electric trucks, the dealers' current operations, direct sales models, and electric vehicles' impact on workshop service needs compared to internal combustion engine (ICE) trucks.

Following the background study, the next step of the case study was to collect data for the issues of investigation. The empirical data consisted of primary data obtained from the interviews presented in *Table 1-3*, alongside secondary data which is further exemplified in section *4.2.2 Secondary data collection*. To investigate *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c*, data on the dealers' operations was obtained. Further, data concerning topics such as electrification in the transport industry, electric trucks' impact on the dealers' roles, and direct sales at Volvo Trucks expanded the empirical data to investigate *Issue 2*. In conjunction with collecting data to answer *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c* alongside *Issue 2*, data exploring future business opportunities for the dealers, *Issue 3*, was obtained through interviews along with studying other industries with similar distribution network structures. The forklift- and car industry exemplifies certain comparable industries studied. To exemplify, exploring the forklift industry contributed with insight forming the identified business opportunity *7.12 Increase educational offerings*.

As the study followed the approach of systematic combining described by Dubois and Gadde (2002), the empirical data were continuously analysed using the research model simultaneously as new data was collected. Additional to analysing the data using the research model, the empirical data were continuously analysed together with the supervising team at Strategic Product Planning at Group Trucks Technology. At the end of the process, the collected data was analysed to investigate the issues addressed in this case study. Lastly, findings from the analysis were compiled into results and conclusions.

4.3 Data analysis

The empirical data was analysed according to the research model presented in section *3.4 Research model and issues to investigate*. As the case study followed the approach of systematic combining, the data collected was analysed continuously, both during and after the data collection process. To investigate *Issue 1a* and *1b* empirical data on the dealers' current operations was analysed based on the ARA-model. By analysing the data together with the ARA-model, it was possible to map the dealers' current operations in terms of activities and resources. Further, together with the analysis of the dealers' current activities and resources, the empirical data was analysed with the aim to investigate *Issue 1c*, the dealers' current roles in the distribution network of Volvo Trucks. By understanding the intermediaries' roles in a distribution network together with their activities and resources, an analysis of the dealers' current roles was conducted.

To investigate *Issue 2*, how the current roles of the dealers is affected due to increased electrification and direct sales, the discussion took its point of departure in the three types of distribution dynamics, the IDR cycle, and the evolving distribution structures. Alongside, how increased electrification and direct sales impact dealer operations was analysed. The analysis of the impact on the dealers' current roles was based on the identified activities, resources and current roles from investigating *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c*.

The analysis of *Issue 3*, identifying future business opportunities for the dealers, was conducted by combining the analysis of *Issues 1a, 1b, 1c* and *Issue 2* together with identified opportunities from the obtained empirical data. Additionally, this analysis was extended by a brainstorming session together with the supervising team at Strategic Product Planning at Group Trucks Technology. According to Dziak (2024), brainstorming is a suitable exercise for generating and refining ideas. The session included five participants: the researchers themselves and the supervising team at Strategic Product Planning at Group Trucks Technology consisting of one Expert Strategic Product Planner, one Management Consultant and one Innovation Behaviour Specialist. The brainstorming session focused on finding a solution to the identified problem: "*Dealers can lose business in the future due to increased electrification. How can we make dealers competitive in the future?".* Prior to the session, the researchers provided preparatory material to the participants, covering a collection of root causes to the identified problem. Further, the preparatory material included relevant data from certain conducted interviews and secondary data regarding for instance electric trucks' impact on workshop service. During the session, possible future business opportunities were discussed.

The identified business opportunities from the empirical data were continuously analysed, discussed and further developed in conjunction with the supervising team at Strategic Product Planning at Group Trucks Technology during the case study period. To create a structure for presenting the identified solutions, the future business opportunities were analysed and categorised based on how closely they relate to the current core business of the dealers. The categorisation model is presented in *Figure 5* and consists of three levels. The first level, coloured dark blue, is business opportunities in line with the dealers' current activities, resources and actor roles. To illustrate, a level 1 opportunity utilises several of the dealers' current main activities and resources. A level 2 opportunity, coloured medium blue, is more distant from the dealers' current activities, resources and actor roles. To exemplify, a level 2 opportunity compared to a level 1 opportunity could require large adaptations to the dealer facility, or several new competencies or activities. A level 3 opportunity, coloured light blue, varies significantly from the dealers' current activities, resources and actor roles. A level 3 opportunity would require substantially different activities and resources, for instance competence, and implies significantly different roles compared to the current roles of the dealers.

Figure 5. Categorisation model for identified business opportunities.

4.4 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness refers to the quality of the findings in qualitative research and if the findings and interpretations can be trusted (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). To ensure the trustworthiness of this case study, a framework proposed by Lincoln and Guba (2013) was followed, which emphasises four key criteria when evaluating if a qualitative study can be trusted. To ensure trustworthiness in this case study, three of the four criteria were considered, *credibility, confirmability,* and *transferability*. Credibility refers to the confidence regarding truthfulness of the data and corresponds to the internal validity criterion. In this case study, credibility was enhanced through building a strong understanding of the case by using both primary and secondary data, such as interviews, Volvo Group internal information and internet articles. The interpretations were reviewed by the interviewees to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. As part of this process, the interviewees were given the opportunity to read through the findings and provide clarifications and feedback. This method is called member checking and enhances the credibility of the study. Confirmability relates to objectivity of the case study findings, implying that interviewees' experiences and perspectives are reflected rather than the preferences or assumptions of the researchers. Confirmability was enhanced in this case study by recording all interviews whenever possible and then transcribed to provide an accurate and trustworthy record of responses. The fourth criteria, transferability, corresponds to the external validity criterion and refers to the extent to which the case study findings can be applied to other settings. Although this case study focuses on developing a deep and contextual understanding of a certain research problem, efforts to support transferability were made. This case study investigated a specific company, however, describing and discussing the concepts presented in the case study, the findings can offer insights into

similar context. Thorough descriptions of the company setting and the current situation were provided.

4.5 Reflections on societal, ethical, and ecological aspects

The report considered both societal and ecological aspects relevant to the transformation of the transport industry. This case study aims to contribute to the broader transition towards a more sustainable future by exploring how electrification is reshaping activities and roles of actors within a distribution network. From a societal perspective, the case study highlights how different types of dynamics can impact different stakeholders in a distribution network. The transition towards electric trucks and increased direct sales involves not only technological shifts, but also current organisational structures, competence requirements, and business models. Societal aspects are also considered when identifying business opportunities for dealers to remain relevant in an evolving industry. Ecological aspects are central to the case study, as electrification is discussed as a key solution for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This study aims to encourage stakeholders in the distribution network to adapt to technological shifts and be part of the transformation of the transport industry. Although ethical aspects are important to consider in several business areas, it is not a primary focus in this case study. However, ethical aspects have been taken into consideration throughout the process to ensure a respectful approach. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical principles. This included maintaining confidentiality when requested and ensuring that all interviewees provided consent after being informed of the purpose and aim of the study.

5. Current roles and operations of dealers

This section provides an overview of the current operations carried out by Volvo Trucks' dealers, based on empirical findings from the interviews listed in *Table 1-2*. The investigation of the dealers' current operations does not intend to capture the full scope of existing activities and resources of the dealers, instead it aims at identifying core business activities and resources. The findings are organised according to perspectives from Volvo Group employees, representatives from Volvo Truck Centers and private dealers. An analysis of the findings is provided in the concluding part of the section, illustrating the current roles of the dealers.

5.1 Volvo Trucks' dealer network

To gain an understanding of the current operations of Volvo Trucks' dealers, it is important to consider the various channels through which a customer can purchase a Volvo truck. Currently, there are three main ways of purchasing a Volvo truck. The first is through direct purchase from the market company Volvo Trucks Sweden (VTS). This option is reserved for customers who meet specific requirements. Commonly, these customers are large, with operations all over Sweden, and perform centralised purchases. The second option is to purchase the truck from Volvo Trucks' own dealers, referred to as Volvo Truck Centers. Volvo Truck Centers are strategically located in and around Sweden's largest cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The third option involves purchasing a vehicle from a private dealer selling Volvo trucks. The private dealers are often family-owned firms with long-standing collaborations with Volvo Trucks. Together, the Volvo Truck Centers and the private dealers form a comprehensive dealer network aiming at creating availability and proximity to customers. In Sweden, Volvo Trucks possesses an extensive service infrastructure, with a total of 96 workshops. Out of the total workshops, 17 facilities are Volvo Truck Centers (Volvo Truck Center, 2025). One of the company's key strengths lies in this extensive dealer network.

The dealer network in Västra Götaland is presented in *Figure 6*. In this area, there are four Volvo Truck Centers and ten private dealers (Volvo Trucks, 2025c). There is no functional distinction between the services provided by Volvo Truck Centers and private dealers. All customers are equally welcome to visit any dealer.

Figure 6. The dealer network of Volvo Trucks in Västra Götaland.

Volvo Trucks offers a range of service contracts for their customers, available in different levels, allowing customers to select a package that aligns with their operations (Volvo Trucks, 2025d). Service contracts can be acquired either through a salesperson at the dealer, or centrally for customers purchasing directly from VTS. The service contracts are valid at all Volvo Trucks' workshops, ensuring flexibility and accessibility regardless of the point of purchase. Customers have the option to include a service contract at the time of purchasing a truck or to purchase a service contract at a later stage. Service contracts offer flexible service and repair options, along with maintenance planning, to keep the customer's fleet on the road. Volvo Trucks offer different levels of service contracts, ranging from basic to more comprehensive packages. Additional digital services can be included, allowing for customisation based on customer needs and preferences. The digital services include a range of offerings that can be integrated as service features, included in service contracts or provided as stand-alone offerings. This allows for customisation based on customer needs and preferences. Customers can access the entire range of digital services through the Volvo Connect portal.

5.2 Volvo Group's perspective on dealer operations

One perspective from interviews with Volvo Group, regarding the primary commission of Volvo Trucks' dealers, is that their main responsibilities are to sell Volvo trucks, perform workshop service and offer additional services, such as service contracts. The dealer network is considered as a central asset in Volvo Trucks' business model. The dealers manage the full customer experience, from initial sales to ongoing aftermarket support. A core strength of the dealers lies in their ability to build and maintain close relationships with customers, fostering a deep understanding of their business and

operations, including typical driving routes, usage patterns, and truck specifications. The dealers are expected to have service workshops in the district they operate to support customers and perform workshop service for trucks. Focusing on sales of trucks, for the workshops to remain financially viable, a sufficient volume of truck sales is necessary. Building and maintaining relationships with the customers, with the aim of understanding customer operations, are key parts of the dealers' operations. Volvo Group also highlights the significance of service availability and uptime, given the critical role that trucks play in customers' business operations. A well-distributed workshop network is therefore considered essential. The local presence of dealers, combined with their customer relationships, is seen as a strategic advantage for Volvo Trucks.

5.3 Volvo Truck Centers' perspective on dealer operations

This section presents empirical data from interviews conducted with representatives from Volvo Truck Centers listed in *Table 2*. The findings are organised according to the respective Volvo Truck Center to reflect perspectives from each dealer. In addition to the interviews, secondary data is included as a complement to the findings from the interviews.

5.3.1 Volvo Truck Center A

The core business for Volvo Truck Center A (VTC A), includes sales of new and used trucks, as well as sales of additional digital services through service contracts. In addition, VTC A is involved in offering financial services in collaboration with Volvo Financial Services. Volvo Financial Services provides financial solutions, service financing and insurance to customers purchasing Volvo Group products, such as trucks (Volvo Financial Services, 2025).

VTC A performs workshop service and repair, both on trucks and buses. Furthermore, the dealer operates rental business to a small extent. Volvo Trucks Sweden offers their corporate customers to rent trucks in different segments at 94 locations throughout Sweden (Volvo Trucks, 2025e). While the dealer exclusively sells Volvo-branded trucks, they can perform workshop service on vehicles from other brands. However, most workshop service and repair operations are performed on Volvo trucks. In addition, the sales and supply of spare parts represent two important operations of VTC A. These two operations are supported by Volvo Logistics Solutions. Volvo Logistics Solutions is part of Volvo Group, responsible for, but not limited to, ensuring the supply of products and availability of aftermarket parts to dealers (Volvo Group, 2025b). Each Volvo Truck Center employs personnel responsible for managing the spare parts function and the inventory at the workshop. Marketing initiatives are also highlighted as an important part of the dealers' responsibilities. VTC A offers selected branded products for customers, contributing to brand visibility and customer experience. Additionally, VTC A includes a tyre department, a damage workshop and perform window repair and replacement.

The dealer business is described as relationship-driven, making customer relationship management a central part of the core business for the dealers. Building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers are considered essential for trust, loyalty and future business. To support this, dealers engage in relationship-building tasks, such as customer events, offering test drives, and showcasing new trucks. Customer interaction constitutes a substantial part of the dealer's daily operations, by investing time in understanding customer needs and strengthening personal connections. It is emphasised that efforts to ensure customer satisfaction is closely related to offering high-quality repair and workshop service.

When purchasing a truck, the possibility to customise the vehicle is significant for the customer to perform their operations. Customising a truck by adding specialised features or components is referred to as body building. According to Volvo Trucks (2025f), body building is the process of integrating additional features and components into a truck's chassis to meet specific preferences and needs of the customer. At the Volvo Trucks factory, the chassis are prepared to integrate these specialised components and features, making it easier for body builders to customise the truck. (ibid). VTC A plays a central role in offering a comprehensive solution for their customers. Although the dealer does not perform body building operations at their site, they are involved in coordinating body building with external partners. This includes initiating contact with body builders, invoicing and handling documents. Furthermore, the dealer is responsible for handling warranty issues. This involves identifying technical problems, the cause of the problem and handling the administrative process of warranty claims. Additionally, the dealer engages in educational initiatives, collaborating with schools by hosting trainee programs.

Although some, often larger customers are qualified to purchase trucks directly from VTS, VTC A describes their involvement in delivering trucks to direct customers in the same manner as when trucks are sold through their own sales channel. To exemplify, a customer purchasing their truck directly from VTS pick up their new vehicle at their local dealer. The dealer also assists customers who purchase electric trucks by facilitating the installation of home charging stations. VTC A supports their customers with the instalment through partnerships with external installers. Customers purchasing electric trucks turn to the dealer for support with charging infrastructure, where the dealer connects the customers with appropriate external installers. VTC A offers charging by providing charging facilities on their site. The dealer is currently preparing their site for public charging stations. These stations will be available for all drivers, regardless of truck brand. The driver will in the future be able to visit the restaurant at VTC A, currently under construction, while waiting for the truck to charge.

VTC A offers on-site service. On-site service refers to providing workshop service and repair directly on the customer site, rather than requiring the truck to be transported to the dealer workshop. This service is primarily offered for buses, and the centre currently staffs mechanics at the bus depot where they work full-time in collaboration with other

service and repair providers. Furthermore, the dealer provides Volvo Action Service, a roadside assistance service through which a service vehicle is sent out to support drivers experiencing truck breakdowns on the road (Volvo Trucks, 2025g).

5.3.2 Volvo Truck Center B

Volvo Truck Center B (VTC B) is one of the smallest Volvo Truck Centers in Sweden. The operations of VTC B are largely consistent with VTC A and includes a broad range of responsibilities, both technical and customer oriented. Core tasks for VTC B include workshop service, repair, handling damages, and supporting customers with questions related to charging infrastructure for electric trucks. Within sales, VTC B's responsibility goes beyond the sales of trucks and includes tasks such as coordinating activities with body builders, managing service contracts, handling used trucks, rental services, financial solutions, and insurance offerings. Coordinating and enabling body building represents an important area within the sales process. While this is to a small extent part of the current operation, VTC B wants to further develop this offering.

In addition to these operations, support for customers in areas such as route planning for electric trucks, is also provided by the dealer. Several preventative maintenance processes are also in place, helping customers to avoid unexpected breakdowns. This includes digital monitoring tools, enabling early detection of issues, and follow-up systems. One example of a system used by the dealer for preventative maintenance is Volvo Service Planning, that uses the trucks' built-in connectivity to identify maintenance needs (Volvo Trucks, 2025h). VTC B offers training for drivers that are focused on energy-efficient driving, for example to minimise fuel consumption or optimise truck performance. Additionally, customer feedback is gathered through structured procedures to determine whether complementary support is needed after delivery.

Although all dealers are similar in business structure and procedures, differences in scale between the centres affect the range of offerings. VTC B explains that the sales and delivery process for a truck can extend over a full year, particularly when several additional features from body builders are added to the truck. VTC B offers a more limited set of offerings compared to larger centers. In contrast to VTC A, VTC B does not perform on-site repairs, window repairs, tyre workshop service, Volvo Action Service and lacks the capacity to handle damaged electric vehicles. Instead, damaged electric vehicles need to be transferred to other centers with necessary knowledge.

According to VTC B, the capability of the dealers to create availability is a main asset and key strength for Volvo Trucks. The wide geographical distribution of service workshops throughout Sweden is regarded as a significant factor influencing customers' brand choice, by ensuring that support and workshop services are widely accessible. Modern and well-equipped facilities staffed with educated and qualified personnel and certified mechanics are seen as essential to fulfil customer expectations and satisfaction. VTC B further emphasise that in sales operations, the relationship

between salespersons and customers is a central asset. Salespersons play an active role in supporting and guiding customers, especially in the transition to electric trucks. Customers who are sceptical towards new technologies, such as electric trucks, can be offered opportunities to test or borrow a truck. These initiatives are made possible through strong and trust-based relationships.

5.4 Private dealers' perspective on dealer operations

This section presents empirical findings from interviews in *Table 2* conducted with representatives from Volvo Trucks' private dealers, with the aim of describing their current operations. The findings are organised according to each respective dealer to reflect perspectives from the different dealers. In addition to the primary data obtained from interviews, secondary data is included to complement the primary findings.

5.4.1 Private Dealer A

Private Dealer A identifies their primary focus as workshop service and repair for trucks, which constitutes the core of their operations. Unlike other dealers located along major transport routes, Private Dealer A serves a region with limited through traffic, making serving local customers within the region a priority. Customer relationship management is emphasised as a critical part of the dealer's business. The goal is to retain customers on a long-term basis by securing service contracts and fostering loyalty, especially when facing competition from other workshops offering lower prices and reduced personnel costs.

From the perspective of Private Dealer A, competence is seen as important. However, workshop service performance is considered even more crucial, as this represents the primary source of profitability. Spare parts and workshop service are identified as the functions that are the most profitable and strategically important for the dealer's business. Private Dealer A is also certified to perform workshop service on electric trucks, in line with many other Volvo Trucks dealers, and provides workshop service for both ICE trucks and electric trucks. According to Private Dealer A, workshop service price for these two truck types is currently equal.

Proactivity towards customers is another key part of Private Dealer A's business. The dealer utilises the system Volvo Service Planning provided by Volvo Trucks that identifies when certain parts are due for repair or approach the end of their lifespan. The system enables the dealer to schedule repairs in advance and pre-order required components ahead of time. Once the repairs are planned and scheduled, the dealer can identify which parts or tools will be needed to perform the job. It also provides an opportunity for broader customer engagement by identifying and addressing additional service needs during the same visit.

5.4.2 Private Dealer B

Private Dealer B is an organisation that benefits from close connection to the surrounding region. Its local presence strengthens customer relationships and enhances the dealer's reputation. Private Dealer B identifies workshop service and truck sales as the two core operations. While these operations are functionally separate, they are regarded as interdependent and equally important for the business, each contributing to deliver a comprehensive customer experience. However, workshop service is viewed as the key function to long-term profitability. While the sales of a truck is a one-time

transaction, aftermarket service, including maintenance and repair, generates recurring revenue.

Private Dealer B's key focus is to meet customer needs by offering products that align with the customers' business requirements and support long-term profitability, while ensuring continuous support throughout the trucks' lifecycle. To achieve this, active engagement from all employees is required. The collective contribution of the employees is considered crucial to deliver a consistent service quality. Several of Private Dealer B's customers represent long-standing business relationships maintained across several generations, highlighting the importance of investing in building trust and maintaining relationships over time. Service contracts are key components in maintaining relationships over time and are frequently offered in conjunction with new truck sales. The service contracts are closely linked to the vehicle's lifecycle, helping to ensure consistent maintenance and workshop service over time. Body building parts can be included in the service contract. However, currently this applies only to smaller components that require minimal workshop service.

At Private Dealer B, the employees are considered central to the business. The dealer emphasises the importance of building a customer-oriented company culture. This culture is treated as a continuous and strategic priority to ensure alignment and a shared commitment between all employees. The employees at Private Dealer B have a broad expertise across various functional areas. Their long-standing customers from older generations value direct, personal interaction and the ability to visit the dealer in person for support and advice.

5.4.3 Private Dealer C

Similarly to Private Dealer B, Private Dealer C emphasises a proactive and close working relationship with their customers, positioning the aftermarket as the core of the business and the primary operation for long-term profitability. Maintenance and workshop service is considered important, as workshop service operations are identified as the main revenue stream. Private Dealer C is a relatively small dealer that manages the entire sales process in-house, taking on a project management role that spans from vehicle sales to direct coordination with body builders. This includes overseeing the full delivery and building process of each truck. One core principle in the dealer's business is maintaining close customer contact, even under challenging circumstances.

The core operations include aftermarket and workshop service on both ICE trucks and electric trucks. Private Dealer C also carries out more specialised tasks, such as body building and damage repairs, although these tasks are performed on a more limited scale. An example of body building performed by the dealer involves modifications to trailers. A further operation offered is the transfer of existing body structure to new chassis, a solution for customers who wish to retain specific features from their old truck. Service contracts represent a large part of the dealer's offerings, currently

included in approximately 50-60% of the truck sales. The service contracts are positioned as a key tool to secure long-term relationships with customers and ensuring regular workshop service engagements. Beyond Volvo-branded products, Private Dealer C also provides a range of related equipment, such as trailers and containers. This offering allows the dealer to meet broader customer needs and increase revenue streams beyond truck sales and workshop service.

In accordance with several other dealers, employees are described as the most important part of the dealer's business. Private Dealer C is heavily reliant on the employees' competence and industry knowledge, which is viewed as essential for building trust and managing truck sales. Furthermore, the dealer's location plays a strategic role in its operations. Their accessibility and proximity to their customers are highlighted as key strengths.

5.5 Analysis of the dealers' current operations

The main findings from the empirical data shows that the dealers engage in a variety of activities along with controlling and accessing several crucial resources constituting their current operations. The following section presents an analysis of *Issue 1a: What activities do Volvo Trucks' dealers perform?* and *Issue 1b: What resources do Volvo Trucks' dealers control and access?* Based on the insights from these two issues, an analysis of *Issue 1c: Based on Issue 1a and Issue 1b, what are the current roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers in the distribution network?* is conducted.

5.5.1 The dealers' current activities

The following section investigates *Issue 1a: What activities do Volvo Trucks' dealers perform?* From the empirical data, it is possible to identify several activities constituting the dealers' current operations, see *Table 4.* As described by Håkansson & Snehota (1995), activities performed by an actor can for instance be technical, administrative or commercial. One main finding is that two core activities performed by all dealers are workshop- and sales activities. It is emphasised that the two activities are closely interdependent. Selling a new truck to a customer enables workshop activities at the dealer, while high-quality workshop service can strengthen customer satisfaction and bring future truck purchases. However, workshop service is in many cases considered as the most important activity performed by the dealer as it represents the primary source of profitability and key function for long-term profitability. The interdependency between the activities requires active engagement and collaboration between employees to create customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the activities performed by the dealers are aligned with the principles of a relationship-driven business model. To illustrate, additional core activities of the dealers, beyond sales and workshop service, are related to building and maintaining long-term customer relationships.

Table 4. Identified activities of Volvo Trucks' dealers.

Activity	**Example**
Workshop activities	- Traditional workshop service and repair performed both on trucks and buses - Damage repairs - Window repair and replacement - Tyre department - Preventive maintenance by digital monitoring tools - Workshop service on other vehicle brands
Sales activities	- Sales of new trucks - Sales of used trucks - Sales of service contracts - Sales of digital services - Financial solutions - Insurance offerings - Sales and management of spare parts
Building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers	- Customer interaction - Understanding customer needs - Strengthen personal connections - Manage the full customer experience, from initial sales to ongoing aftermarket support - Customer events - Offering test drives - Showcasing new trucks - Gathering customer feedback
Activities related to electric trucks	- Facilitating the installation of home charging stations - Supporting customers with questions related to charging infrastructure - Support customers with route planning for electric trucks
Body building	- Coordinating body building with external partners including initiating contact, invoicing and handling of documents - Transfer of existing body structure to new chassis - Performing certain body building on a limited scale
Additional services	- On-site service - Volvo Action Service - Training of drivers - Delivering trucks for dealer- and direct sales - Rental business - Providing a range of related equipment, such as trailers and containers
Other activities	- Handling warranty issues - Engage in educational initiatives - Marketing initiatives

One main finding is the difficulty of distinguishing activities performed by Volvo Truck Centers and private dealers. The dealers perform similar activities, regardless of whether they are owned or private dealers. The similarity of the dealers' activities can be explained by the mutual goal of ensuring a seamless customer experience across the dealer network. Although the dealers perform similar activities, one finding is that the

size of the dealer affects their total offering and performed activities. This is especially true for the Volvo Truck Centers, where the larger VTC A performs a broader range of activities compared to the smaller VTC B. To illustrate, VTC A performs window replacement, which VTC B is not able to perform due to for instance safety regulations regarding handling certain types of chemicals. Further, the Volvo Truck Centers are located relatively close to each other which facilitates more streamlined collaboration. However, the private dealers emphasize the importance of being able to provide their customers with a broad range of services independent of the scale of their facility. The empirical data further imply that some dealers are more specialised on certain activities compared to others. To illustrate, VTC A is more specialised on electric trucks compared to the other dealers. VTC A has greater capacity and operates in a more mature market compared to for instance Private Dealer C. The extensiveness of the activities performed by dealers differ, depending on customer needs and preferences. The performed activities also differ depending on the location of the dealer, as some dealers prioritise local customers with certain needs.

5.5.2 The dealers' current resources

The following section investigates *Issue 1b: What resources do Volvo Trucks' dealers control and access?* From the empirical data, resources that the dealers' control and access are identified, categorised into human resources and physical resources summarised in *Table 5*.

Table 5. Identified resources of Volvo Trucks' dealers.

Resources	**Examples**
Human resources	- Employees and qualified mechanics - Broad expertise - Communication skills - Customer relationship skills - Knowledge about customer operations - Capability to create availability
Physical resources	- Workshop facilities - Facilities for handling electric trucks and damaged electric trucks - Tools - Driver lounges and restaurants - Charging stations - Local presence

Volvo Trucks' dealers rely on a various set of resources to deliver value to their customers. As explained by Håkansson & Snehota (1995), resources can include workforce, facilities, knowledge and equipment. An analysis of the empirical findings implies that human resources and physical infrastructure are core resources for the dealers, with employees being the most critical asset. In terms of human resources, the employees are considered central to the business, providing broad expertise across various areas, including communication skills and customer relationship skills. The dealers' employees serve as the primary interface with customers, offering support that goes beyond sales and workshop service. Their ability to build strong customer

relationships is based on their deep knowledge and understanding of customer operations, including driving routines and usage patterns. The dealers also possess significant competence in handling technical requirements of new trucks, such as electric trucks. Several dealers are certified in handling electric trucks, and some dealers have the capacity and expertise of handling damaged electric trucks as well. The dealer business is heavily reliant on in-house competence and knowledge of customers' business. The dealer business is described as relationship-driven, explaining why the human resources are seen as a crucial resource. They rely on broad and interdependent resources to deliver value to their customers.

In terms of physical resources, the dealers maintain modern and well-equipped facilities. The physical infrastructures ensure high service quality for customers and are closely tied to human resources. The physical infrastructure is essential for the employees to perform their roles effectively. To exemplify, providing charging facilities for electric trucks, driver lounges and restaurants illustrate the dealers' investments in physical infrastructure that are beneficial to their customers and enhance customer experience. The dealers' local presence and the capability to create availability are two other resources. The local presence and proximity to customers strengthens their customer relationships and reinforce the dealers' reputation.

5.5.3 The dealers' current roles

The following section investigates *Issue 1c: Based on Issue 1a and Issue 1b, what are the current roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers in the distribution network?* The roles of the dealers can be explained by their current activities and resources. Furthermore, the roles of the dealers are impacted by actor bonds, resource ties and activity links in the distribution network. Below, these bonds, ties and links are analysed and connected to the current roles of the dealers in Volvo Trucks' distribution network.

The dealers are referred to as actors, more specifically intermediaries, in Volvo Trucks' distribution network. They are considered a crucial part of Volvo Trucks' operations. As the theory implies, the role of intermediaries can vary between industries, and can be perceived as more or less valuable within a given business network. In the case of Volvo Trucks' distribution network, dealers are considered as a valuable asset, serving as the primary interface between Volvo Trucks and their customers. A main finding from studying the primary data is that the current roles of the dealers is not solely workshop service, sales and building and maintaining customer relationships, even though these activities often are perceived most important. The dealers also play a crucial role when it comes to coordinating activities in the distribution network of Volvo Trucks. To illustrate, the dealers coordinate activities, such as body building operations, with the sales process to ensure that the delivery aligns with customer specifications and deliveries from external partners.

In the context of Volvo Trucks' distribution network, the employees represent a critical resource, described as the most essential asset within the dealers' business. The

employees are not only responsible for the daily activities performed by the dealers but serve as a key link between various actors in the network, including customers, Volvo Trucks and external partners. This is referred to as actor bonds. To illustrate, one finding is that the dealers have great ability in building strong customer relationships based on their understanding of customer operations, creating actor bonds between the dealers and their customers. The actor bonds extend beyond Volvo Trucks, its customers and the dealers to include external partners, such as body builders. They play a critical role in the customisation and delivery process, and as the majority of trucks are tailored to specific requirements, the coordination with external actors is essential. The relationship between the dealers and the external body builders is further an example of actor bonds in the distribution network. Additionally, there exists actor bonds between the dealers in the distribution network. The dealers collaborate to enable seamless customer service, creating actor bonds between the dealers.

The interaction between the dealers and Volvo Trucks illustrates the development of resource ties which occur when firms adapt their resources in relation to each other. In Volvo Trucks' dealer network, the dealers compensate for resource and capacity gaps within Volvo Trucks, particularly in managing customer relationships and delivering local support. This creates resource ties between the actors, as Volvo Trucks and VTS operations are dependent on customer knowledge, a resource accessed via the dealers, and adapts their products and offerings based on the knowledge about their customers. While Volvo Trucks lacks the direct interface with customers, the dealers function as intermediaries providing these capabilities. As explained by Ford et al. (2011), intermediaries play a crucial role in indirect sales, providing critical information and support to customer and act as the main customer contact point, which is the case for Volvo Trucks' dealers. Depending on the type of customer, whether they purchase directly through VTS or via the dealer, the dealer's role maintains central in most cases. Another example of a resource tie is how the dealers adapt their facilities to enable workshop service of Volvo Trucks' products. Further, the dealers need to educate themselves, developing new competencies and knowledge, depending on the products offered by Volvo Trucks.

As the theory implies, the need of coordinating and linking activities between firms in a business relationship creates activity links. In the case of Volvo Trucks and the dealers, activities across the organisations are interconnected and dependent on each other. To illustrate, the dealers deliver VTS's directly sold vehicles, creating activity links between the actors. The dealers are dependent on body building activities at external actors to fulfil customer requirements, illustrating an activity link between the dealers and external partners. The body building activities need to be coordinated with the dealer's own activities, for instance sales and delivery of vehicles. Although the roles and responsibilities differ between the actors, their activities must be closely aligned to ensure a seamless customer experience. This reflects the ambition of Volvo Trucks to offer a consistent customers experience across the entire dealer network, regardless of which dealer the customer interacts with.

6. Impact of increased electrification and direct sales

This section presents an overview of how increased electrification and direct sales are impacting current operations of Volvo Trucks' dealers. The empirical findings are based on interviews with representatives from Volvo Group, Volvo Truck Centers, and private dealers, listed in *Table 1-3*. An analysis of the implications of increased electrification and direct sales for the dealers' role and operations are presented in the end of this section.

6.1 Increased electrification

Electrification is part of Volvo Group's transformation to 100% fossil free transportation and infrastructure 2040 (Volvo Group, 2024). This transition represents a significant technological shift within the transport industry. As this transformation accelerates, it brings fundamental changes to the distribution network as well as to the dealers' operations. Electric vehicles affect the dealers as the vehicles require less workshop service, reduce the need of aftersales parts, and requires new specialised skills and equipment. The following sections discuss electrification as a factor affecting the dealers' current role and operations and are based on findings from interviews presented in *Table 1-3*.

6.1.1 Impact on workshop activities

An increase in electric trucks impacts Volvo Trucks' dealers by reducing demand for maintenance and workshop service. Electric trucks differ significantly from ICE trucks in their design, leading to simplified and lower maintenance requirements (Renault Trucks UK, 2025). Electric trucks include fewer moving parts, and lack components such as oil filters, diesel exhaust fluid and aftertreatment systems that require regularly and planned workshop service. However, as mentioned during several interviews, electric trucks still contain components that require workshop service, indicating that electric trucks will not be entirely service-free. There is a general market expectation that electric trucks will require less workshop hours, making these trucks a more cost-effective investment compared to ICE trucks. As ICE trucks require more hours in the workshop, there are expectations that both the service contract for electric trucks and the total costs for owning an electric truck will be less expensive. According to several dealers, workshop service is one of the main operations that contributes significantly to long-term profitability. Electric trucks that do not require the same amount of service hours compared to the ICE trucks can lead to loss of workshop service business for the dealers, affecting the dealers' profitability.

Digital services provided by Volvo Trucks through Volvo Connect are often integrated in the service contracts. The digital services are expected to become increasingly important in the context of electric trucks, as customers typically lack prior experience and knowledge of the technology. Compared to ICE trucks, electric trucks require new and different digital services, such as Range & Route. Range & Route is a route-planning and range-simulation tool in Volvo Connect, tailored for electric trucks

(Volvo Trucks, 2025i). It allows customers to ensure that the truck has enough electricity, simulates the route and identifies factors influencing range, such as the weight of goods, topography, and auxiliary energy consumers.

6.1.2 Impact on required competence

Electrification generates a need for new and changed competencies from both service technicians and salespersons. To sell and perform workshop service on electric trucks, the dealers must be Electric Vehicle Certified through educations provided by Volvo Trucks. The technicians at Electric Vehicle Certified dealers are fully trained and up to date with the latest technologies alongside certified to work with high-voltage applications. Building new competence could be a challenge for the dealers. While maintaining their existing expertise, employees also need to develop new competencies, as emerging technologies require a broader set of skills. Recruiting individuals who possess both necessary competence and the motivation to adapt to evolving knowledge will present a significant challenge. One perspective is that future developments can demand greater expertise in software knowledge and less in hardware knowledge, implying that the dealers are expected to recruit software engineers instead of traditional service technicians. The shift may lead towards more data-driven service approaches, including fewer mechanical components requiring physical adjustments. Another perspective is that increased electrification will require a comprehensive understanding of the total cost of ownership, how to handle batteries and battery charging, and how it impacts customers' profitability. The dealers need to support customers in understanding for instance how electric trucks affect electricity consumption and advise customers on how to minimise energy costs. When discussing electrification and digitalisation of the transport industry, the Executive at Private Dealer A stated that "We will need to have a broad competence in our workshop, someone who knows the vehicle and someone who knows the software. Everyone cannot do everything". A broad range of competencies within dealer workshops is essential to remain at the forefront.

Regarding the evolving role of salespersons, one perspective is that salespersons are expected to adopt a more advisory role as the dealers' responsibilities expand to offering a complete solution for customers. Given that customers often have limited understanding and knowledge of alternative driveline technologies, such as batteries, the ability to guide and advice will be essential. Since driving assignments for customers can differ, some more suitable for electric vehicles than others, it will be crucial for dealers to advise customers on factors such as route simulation, charging and fleet sizing. To conclude, the process of selling and handling electric trucks is expected to be significantly more complex.

Electrification also impacts the service workshop at the dealers in terms of adapting current infrastructure to handling electric trucks, ensure electrical safety and offer charging stations with sufficient power. When electric trucks increase and the maintenance and repair opportunities on batteries develop, there will be requirements

of a cleanroom at the workshops. According to the Sales Manager at Private Dealer C, "going forward, it [electrification] will likely require cleanrooms, which current service workshop lack due to the absence of battery-related maintenance". The power source for electric vehicles are lithium-ion batteries that requires cleanrooms (Leventcov, 2024). Cleanrooms are essential in battery manufacturing due to sensitivity of lithium-ion battery components to contamination.

The transition to electric trucks also requires substantial investments, not only in infrastructure to support workshop service and repair of electric trucks, but also in workforce development through education and training initiatives. Handling electric vehicles involves safety risks, demanding specialised knowledge. Compliance with safety regulations further require collaboration with external partners, such as towing companies, to ensure safe operations. Developing this necessary competence and experience in managing electric vehicles is essential to encourage customers to transition to electric fleets. An important perspective from the interviews is that although the dealers are investing in education programs and trainings, opportunities to acquire hands-on experience remain limited. This challenge is primarily due to that most trucks on the market is ICE trucks, limiting opportunities for dealers to gain practical experience.

6.2 Increased direct sales

The empirical findings in this section are based on interviews presented in *Table 1-3*. As presented in the theoretical framework, companies can choose to distribute products directly to customers or indirectly, via intermediaries (Gadde, 2004). Currently, several firms are shifting towards direct sales strategies (Knapp et al., 2025) and today's digital environment paves the way for shifting to online sales channels (Cai & Choi, 2023). The following section discuss how increasing direct sales can challenge the dealers' current roles and operations.

Although the digital environment paves the way for shifting to online sales channels, insights from several interviews indicate that fully direct online sales remain distant in the context of the heavy-duty truck industry. Interviewee #2, a Senior Strategist at Volvo Trucks, stated that "to support our customers we offer multiple business models, where direct sales complement our retail channels". The dealer network is considered a critical part of Volvo Trucks' distribution network. It is perceived as a competitive advantage over new entrants offering similar products and lacking the established dealer network that Volvo Trucks has developed. According to several interviews, the dealer network represents a valuable resource as the dealers own the customer interface.

6.2.1 Impact on current dealer operations

Volvo Truck Centers are currently actively involved in direct sales, contributing both to the delivery of trucks and the provision of aftermarket services. The direct sales process relies on the dealer network, as direct customers often operate nationwide and therefore depend on a well-functioning network. When a truck is sold directly, the sales

revenue goes to VTS, but the dealers get a compensation for delivering the directly sold vehicles and revenue from future workshop service and repairs.

Customers often require adaptations to meet specific needs of their operations, which makes it challenging to sell a complete and fully assembled truck without additional adaptations. Although Volvo Trucks are producing turnkey trucks, which are vehicles that are fully prepared, equipped and ready for immediate use, a truck is generally sold with further additional body building adaptations. Implementing direct online sales are seen as a challenge due to the high degree of adaptations currently associated with trucks. The trucks are generally complex, with a broad range of adaptations, and used primarily as tools for revenue generation. It is crucial to understand that a truck is not solely a commodity, it serves as a central asset within customers' business. Volvo Trucks offers several truck variants with multiple additional bodies, thereby providing a broad offer of truck configurations. During several interviews, online sales as a direct sales model, is not considered as an alternative in the Swedish market largely due to the complexity of customer adaptations. Wrongly adapted trucks can imply large costs, further reinforcing the need for individualised sales processes. That the dealers will continue to play an important role in the future is a recurring topic from the interviews. Dealers provide customers with professional advice critical to customers' purchasing decision, a service that is difficult to offer through online platforms. Although online direct sales are not currently viewed as a viable alternative in the heavy-duty truck industry, one perspective among some interviewees is that depending on the future, the possibility of implementing online direct sales can change.

Customers purchasing directly from VTS are often fundamentally different from customer purchasing via dealers. Customers who purchase via dealers typically operate smaller vehicle fleets. One identified risk in relation to increased direct sales is the reduction of salespersons at the smaller, regional dealers. This reduction could result in a loss of valuable knowledge about regional markets, the regional customers and these customers' operations. Less knowledge and understanding of customers' operations affects the possibility to provide customers with tailored and comprehensive solutions. Furthermore, the close relationship and the customer knowledge that salespersons maintain enable them to respond to customers requesting similar trucks to those from prior purchases.

A contrasting view to the general perspective among interviewees is that online direct sales can become more common in the future. This perspective highlights that the degree of truck adaptations and specialisation could decrease as turnkey solutions provided by Volvo Trucks become more readily available. If direct sales are increasing, dealers would likely transition from primarily sales partners to focusing more on providing workshop service and support. Future business models could differ from those in place today. One perspective from the interviews regarding online direct sales is that the importance of personal relationships can decrease particularly as new generations of customers will be more used to digital solutions. Furthermore, other

factors beyond traditional personal relationships can be more influential in the purchasing process in the future.

6.2.2 Impact on customer relationships

Volvo Trucks' current direct sales strategy is described as advantageous for certain customers, particular larger hauliers, due to the simplicity of having a single point of contact at VTS. For customers who operate across multiple regions, the direct sales model eliminates the need to engage with several salespersons at multiple locations, allowing the entire process to be managed through one single point of contact. On the contrary, local dealers are seen as valuable to smaller regional hauliers, as dealers are often located close to their customers. In the latter case, availability becomes essential for finalising the sales process. One consequence of increased direct sales is that VTS and Volvo Trucks does not possess the competence and operational knowledge of small regional customers, competence that currently resides with the dealers.

The current customer base is relatively fragmented, ranging from small firms interested in purchasing a single truck to larger customers requiring multiple trucks. A recurring topic discussed during interviews is that there exists a trend where larger hauliers acquire smaller ones. This consolidation of hauliers is not considered a problem for dealers, as the acquired hauliers will most likely continue to operate in their current region and continue visiting the local dealer along with that some smaller customers will probably still exist. Although acquisitions are occurring in the haulier industry, there remains a distribution of large-, medium-, and small sized customers, with smaller customers likely to continue making local purchases in the future. However, one identified risk with this trend is that large hauliers can build their own workshops, which could compete with the dealers' operations.

The Volvo-brand has been an important factor for a customer purchasing a truck, alongside long-term relationships. One trend that can be identified in the truck industry is that truck drivers have large power in the decision on what brand to purchase. While brand loyalty and relationships still play an important role on purchasing decisions, the decision to purchase an electric truck is influenced by several other factors. Focus may shift towards price, especially when purchasing electric trucks. According to the Executive of a haulage company, currently, price is seen as the most important factor influencing the decision to purchase electric trucks, as electric trucks is a major financial investment. Although the functionality of the truck is essential to customers, they may demonstrate increased openness to consider alternatives brands. With increased electrification, understanding customer needs, challenges and preferences will therefore be central for the dealers.

6.3 Analysis of increased electrification and direct sales impact

This section presents an analysis of the empirical findings concerning increased electrification and direct sales, with a focus on the implications for the dealer roles. The analysis builds on a combination of the theoretical framework, the empirical data concerning increased electrification and direct sales and findings from the analysis of *Issue 1a*, *1b* and *1c.* This section aims to address *Issue 2: How can the roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers change in response to increased electrification and direct sales?*

Despite the changing business environment, characterised by increased electrification and direct sales, the dealer is still a strategically important actor within the distribution network of Volvo Trucks. While current activities and resources of the dealers can change, the dealer continues to act as the primary point of contact for customers and play a crucial role in providing customer support. The value adding operations that the dealers bring to the distribution network are considered crucial. According to Payne and Frow (2004), in some cases, the intermediaries' roles are being challenged by their ability to generate value. In this case study, the dealers are currently considered an important asset and value generating actor in the distribution network.

To connect this analysis to the IDR cycle presented by Morris and Morris (2002), Volvo Trucks' dealers are undergoing reintermediation, transforming the current roles and renew value creation, rather than disintermediation, which implies removing the dealer from the value chain. The IDR cycle explains how intermediaries evolve in response to changing conditions. In this case study, increased electrification and direct sales can be considered as factors driving changing conditions. Although these two factors challenge the current roles of the dealers and their current operations, it also creates new opportunities. The dealers are expected to evolve and take on new roles, such as adopting an advisory role and building new competence in handling electric vehicles. To facilitate the transition towards electric vehicles, the dealers need to take on a reassuring role to support their customers in the transition from ICE trucks to electric trucks. Further, increased electrification and direct sales imply that the dealer role should focus less on workshop service- and sales activities. The dealers need to adapt a more advisory role due to the need of developing their knowledge in areas related to increased electrification and electric trucks, such as charging solutions and route optimisation, making the dealer role more complex. With increased electrification, the customers require more support and reassurance, especially in the beginning of the transition to electric vehicles. The new dealer role would still imply being a main customer contact point by providing the customers with comprehensive support and solutions. There also exists a variation in how the dealers have adapted to electrification. Dealers, located closer to larger cities, appear to have adapted more than dealers in smaller regions where electrification is less established. One factor influencing the degree of adaptations is local conditions and the maturity of the dealers' markets. Therefore, the impact of increased electrification on the dealer roles is likely to be different for dealers depending on their location.

Further, the relevance of the three types of dynamics presented by Olsson et al. (2013) is recognised in the empirical findings. Specialisation occurs as dealers adapt their current resources, their competencies, through education and training programs to the requirements created by electrification. To illustrate, the dealers are becoming Electric Vehicle Certified to offer workshop service on electric vehicle, specialising in electric vehicles. Further, as presented in the empirical findings, dealers are required to develop competencies in several areas, which implies that employees need to specialise in different competence areas. To exemplify, the dealers may need employees specialised in the trucks' hardware and software, managing the implications of increased electrification. Resource sharing is the second type of dynamic, which could become increasingly important, as the dealers need to collaborate even more with external partners to generate value for customers. To illustrate, collaborating with firms providing charging solutions, as well as service and maintenance on charging stations, will be more important with increased electrification. Additionally, if the current direct sales model at VTS expands, the process of sharing customer knowledge, knowledge mainly held by the dealers, will become increasingly important. The third type of dynamic is modified relationships, which can be related to the impact of increased electrification and direct sales. Increased electrification and direct sales imply that the dealers are specialising and adapting to the impact of electric trucks. With increased direct sales, resource sharing of for instance knowledge in customer operations will be increasingly important. The relationship between the dealers and Volvo Trucks, as well as the relationship between the dealers and their customers will be affected. To illustrate, an increase in direct sales indicates that Volvo Trucks will continue to rely on the physical infrastructure of the dealers, their local knowledge of customers' business and their developed relationships with customers. The relationship between the dealers and their customers will be different with increased direct sales, as the customer will purchase directly from Volvo Trucks or VTS instead of through the dealers. However, the customer will still visit the dealer to perform workshop service and repairs, even if increased electrification is expected to impact the amount of workshop service performed. This further illustrates that the dealers undergo reintermediation, rather than disintermediation. One important consideration is that if price and functionality of the truck outweigh brand loyalty for customers in the future, the dealers need to rethink how they differentiate themselves to continue to perform value generating activities and staying competitive.

Relating to the four different general actor roles identified in Olsson et al. (2013), the impact of increased electrification and direct sales makes several general actor roles relevant to the dealers. Referring to the identified generic roles in the activity layer, an increase in electrification and direct sales could reduce the dealers' current operations in terms of workshop service activities and sales activities. Specialising in certain activities, as for instance developing comprehensive customer consulting skills, is an option. However, the study indicates that customers require a comprehensive solution provider, which can reflect that it is more relevant for the dealers to provide a broad range of offerings, instead of specialising in certain activities. The role of coordinating

activities is an option for the dealers to remain relevant with increased electrification and direct sales, as different actors in the distribution network are specialising on certain activities. For instance, it can be relevant for the dealers to coordinate activities of external partners, such as activities related to installing charging stations or integrating digital solutions to the truck. Focusing on the general roles in relation to the resource layer, the dealers could be resource providers by being located near the customer, providing the necessary workshop service knowledge, and knowledge about customer operations. Although increased electrification will reduce the need for workshop service, it will still be necessary to perform some workshop service, a knowledge the dealers can provide the distribution network with. Further, the dealers hold knowledge about customer operations, a valuable resource even if sales are performed directly and bypassing the dealers. Taking on the role as problem solver could be a suitable option for the dealers in response to increased electrification and direct sales. The data implies that the customers, with increased electrification, will value a dealer that is able to provide comprehensive solutions, by having knowledge in and combining both Volvo Group solutions and external partner solutions. Being responsible for combining different actors' organisational and physical resources could be suitable for the dealers to create value in the distribution network, alongside gaining comprehensive knowledge that is valuable according to the customers.

To conclude, the role of Volvo Trucks' dealers is not being eliminated, but rather redefined. The combination of empirical findings and the theoretical framework suggests that the dealers will continue to remain a valuable actor in the distribution network. The dealers will remain important actors although their current role, activities and resources will change. Two of the dealers' main activities, sales and workshop service, are challenged due to increased electrification and direct sales, implying that it is crucial to investigate future business opportunities for the dealers.

7. Identified future business opportunities

This section presents identified future business opportunities for the dealers in the distribution network of Volvo Trucks, investigating *Issue 3: What business opportunities can be identified for Volvo Trucks' dealers in response to increased electrification and direct sales?* The identified solutions are based on the primary data obtained from interviews presented in *Table 1-3* and complemented with secondary data. Each identified future business opportunity is further analysed based on its alignment to the dealers' core business in relation to the identified activities, resources and roles. The identified business opportunities are classified as level 1, level 2 or level 3 solutions.

7.1. Increase body building operations

At Volvo Trucks, the significant majority of all produced trucks are adapted by performing body building to fulfil the requirements of the customers. The dealers are utilising external body building firms to satisfy customer requirements alongside handling the required specialisation activities. The external body builder is often contacted when a truck is sold, and VTS are partnering with body builders to be able to prepare as much as possible to offer a shorter delivery time to customers. One finding is that in the future, customers will wish for one single point of contact. Owning a Volvo truck, the customer arrives at the dealer, as their single contact, who takes care of customer requirements and solve customer problems, as for instance coordinating body building operations. The customer only needs to visit or contact one actor in the distribution network to solve their possible problems.

One identified future business opportunity for the dealers is to increase body building operations. Currently, most dealers are not working with body building as it has not been regarded as a necessary segment to cover at the dealer site. Their primary focus has been on the truck chassis. The workshops have been occupied servicing the truck chassis, limiting the possibility to work with body building at a large scale. The increase of electric trucks is anticipated to reduce traditional workshop service opportunities. This development increases the opportunity for dealers to expand their service offerings with providing body building operations. Volvo Trucks' vehicles are designed to enable a seamless integration of body building adaptations (Volvo Trucks, 2025j). Fire engines, cranes, and rubbish trucks illustrate additional functions of the truck enabled by body building. To exemplify, the dealers could increase their operations on truck trailers.

One perspective on the opportunity of increasing body building is that it would require completely new competencies, several competencies which the dealers do not possess today. New competencies could be for example construction knowledge. However, as there exists a demand from customers for this kind of additional services, body building operations could serve as a value generating business opportunity for the dealers. The body building business is argued to be complicated as there are a lot of different types

of features and bodies that could be tailored for each truck, requiring significant investments and education.

A different perspective on body building presented by the dealers is that the competence needed to perform these operations are already held by the dealers which makes it possible to perform these operations in-house. Additional solutions could be to have partnerships with firms performing workshop service on, for instance, cooling units, enabling the workshop service of trucks to be performed simultaneously. Additionally, the dealers could expand their work with transferring bodies from one truck to another. To exemplify, this could imply that the dealers transfer bodies from a customers' previously owned truck to a newly purchased.

7.1.1 Categorisation of increase body building operations

This section presents a categorisation of the business opportunity increase body building operations, highlighted in *Figure 7*. Increase body building operations is categorised as a level 1 business opportunity for the dealers, which is highlighted in the inner circle in *Figure 7*. The solution is categorised as level 1 as it is closely related to the current core business for dealers and are in line with current activities, resources, and role. One view on body building as a future business opportunity for dealers is that it is an operation that the dealers could perform without major investments in resources and education. As mentioned in the previous section, *7.1 Increase body building operations*, dealers have not fully engaged in body building operations as their primary focus has been on providing workshop service for the truck itself, thereby limiting the opportunities for providing additional activities. A critical consideration is that body building could require completely new competencies, depending on the existing skills available at each dealer. This consideration could influence to which extent the business opportunity aligns with current resources and activities, and how it relates to the dealer's core business.

Figure 7. Categorisation of the future business opportunity increase body building operations.

7.2 Offer digital body building

One identified business opportunity for the dealers is to offer digital body building. Resembling the opportunity of increasing body building operations, the dealers could become digital body builders, offering tailored digital solutions for the customers' truck. To exemplify, the dealer will utilise their knowledge of customers' operations to build a tailored digital solution suitable for the customer, integrating both Volvo Trucks' digital services and external partners digital solutions to enhance the value of the truck. Today, one important activity of the dealers is to sell relating services such as service contracts and digital services, and offering digital body building expands these activities further. The idea of a digital body builder emerged during the brainstorming session after discussing the future importance of digital solutions and the opportunity for the dealers to expand body building operations. Digital services are expected to become increasingly important with emerging electric trucks, suggesting potential opportunities for the dealers to expand their offerings. In a scenario with less truck sales and workshop service activities, the dealers could expand their digital service sales activities by being a digital body builder. The dealers could support customers with integrating and adapting digital solutions based on specific customer requirements. The digital solutions could build on digital services offered by Volvo Group along with compatible external partnership solutions, providing additional value to the purchased truck in resemblance with body building adaptations.

7.2.1 Categorisation of offer digital body building

A categorisation of the business opportunity of becoming a digital body builder is highlighted in *Figure 8.* Becoming a digital body builder is categorised as a level 1 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the inner circle in *Figure 8*. The solution is classified as a level 1 opportunity, as it closely aligns with the current role of the dealers. The anticipated impact on current activities performed by the dealers is comparable to the effects observed with increasing body building operations. It is likely that current resources will shift, placing more emphasis on software-related knowledge and competencies.

Figure 8. Categorisation of the future business opportunity offer digital body building.

7.3 Expand workshop service range

According to Volvo Trucks (2025k), their main priority is to maximise the uptime of the customers' trucks. A visit to one of Volvo Trucks' dealers implies a decrease in uptime for the customer, which affects their operations (Boman, 2024). Furthermore, the need to visit multiple dealers or firms for workshop services and repairs on various parts of the vehicle, reduced the total uptime of the vehicle. (ibid.). In relation to this, the term one stop shop is mentioned several times during interviews. By offering all workshop services and repairs requested by a customer at one dealer, a one stop shop, the customer can save time and the vehicle utilisation increase (Boman, 2024). To exemplify, it is possible for a customer to schedule workshop service, software updates and trailer repairs at a dealer in the Volvo Trucks distribution network. (ibid.). The term One Stop Service is a concept for Volvo Trucks' dealers which aims at enabling comprehensive workshop service (Håkansson, 2019). Comparable to the term one stop shop, the One Stop Service-model aims at enabling the customer to only visit a single dealer that can handle the total vehicle, from tyres to the truck body. The One Stop Service-model is successively implemented throughout the dealer network, and a full implementation will require time to ensure quality of the expanded offerings. (ibid.).

In a scenario where electric trucks require less service, it will be important for the dealers to provide workshop service and maintenance on all parts of the truck that require such activities, beyond the workshop service currently provided by the dealers. To illustrate, a possible business opportunity to expand workshop service range could be to increase workshop service on trailers and bodies, such as cooling units. Today, the dealers often hire external firms for handling workshop services and repairs of additional features and bodies. However, some dealers already work with offering service on certain bodies and trailers (Rejmes, 2025). To exemplify, a private dealer with several facilities in Sweden offers cabin care and maintenance alongside body

building with the aim of being a One Stop Service dealer. To offer a wider assortment of workshop service than what is currently offered at the dealer aligns with being a comprehensive solution provider for the customers. Workshop services, like tyre replacement and window repair, are further essential offerings that dealers could handle in-house to provide a one stop shop experience for customers. In 2019, tyre service existed at 15-20 percent of the dealer workshops (Håkansson, 2019). To further exemplify, it is identified that VTC A offers tyre service in contrast to VTC B. Furthermore, a truck has several components that are wear parts and the high utilisation of the vehicles contribute to wear and tear on the truck. The transition towards electric vehicles and increased digitalisation will likely reduce the total amount of workshop service opportunities but can generate new workshop service opportunities for trucks that do not currently exist. To exemplify, an increase in additional software that needs to be updated regularly requires completely different competencies. Furthermore, this could imply that the dealers need to employ personnel who can handle all aspects of a truck, from software, such as technical systems, to hardware, such as mechanical workshop service. Employing specialised technicians, as for instance personnel specialised on software, is a further alternative.

Enablers for a one stop shop or a One Stop Service-model is preventive maintenance. By planning workshop services and repairs, downtime can decrease, saving time and money for customers (Volvo Trucks, 2025k). Offering additional services beyond the current operations of the dealers can generate additional revenue and be an attractive offering for customers. It provides the dealers with the opportunity to increase sales by proactively plan and offer additional workshop services in advance. Today, Volvo Trucks offers Real Time Monitoring, diagnostic tools and advanced telematics (Volvo Trucks, 2025k). To exemplify, Volvo Trucks has an international uptime centre that monitors uptime critical components on connected vehicles and pass necessary preventive action information to customers' local dealers.

In a scenario that involves less workshop service on the truck itself, one identified solution is to serve other products in addition to the truck. To illustrate, performing workshop service on marine generators developed by Volvo Penta is one solution identified from interviews. Furthermore, the dealers could perform workshop service and maintenance on Volvo Energy's energy battery storage products in the future. Volvo Energy develops Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) solutions, alongside on-site and en route charging solutions (Volvo Energy Global, 2025). Additionally, Volvo Energy monitor batteries in trucks alongside working with battery circularity, enabling reuse and repurposing of used batteries and ensuring responsible recycling. The BESS developed by Volvo Energy is a unit working as a large-scale rechargeable battery with the aim to store and release electrical energy when required. The BESS units are available as portal units and stationary units. The stationary units are developed to be used at industrial and commercial sites. The portable units are mobile powerhouses and offers a flexible solution in areas with limited or no grid access (ibid.). The portal units are considered easier for the dealers to manage, making them a more

suitable product to offer during the initial phase compared to the stationary units. The BESS solutions developed by Volvo Energy are complex and dependant on several factors, for instance the electricity grid. An opportunity for the dealers, connected to BESS, is to provide ongoing maintenance and workshop service on the storage units. As the market for energy storage solutions develop, local service support can become increasingly important.

7.3.1 Categorisation of expand workshop service range

A categorisation of the business opportunity expand workshop service range is highlighted in *Figure 9.* The dealers currently possess competencies enabling an expansion of the current workshop service range. This implies that the identified opportunity is close to current resources of the dealers, in terms of competencies, and the opportunity is therefore categorised as a level 1 opportunity. Important to consider is that there are still service opportunities that require new competence and knowledge, and adjustments to facilities, depending on the specific dealer. Expanding workshop service beyond traditional truck-related workshop services can vary in complexity and alignment with the dealers' current activities and resources. For example, providing maintenance and workshop service on BESS is generally considered as more complex than providing services such as window repair or tyre replacement. However, the role of the dealer remains largely consistent with their current role within the distribution network. Based on this, expanding workshop service range is categorised as a level 1 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the inner circle in *Figure 9.*

Figure 9. Categorisation of the future business opportunity expand workshop service range.

7.4 Become a comprehensive solution provider

One significant consequence of increased electrification is the growing need for dealers to provide customers with a comprehensive solution, not solely the truck as a single product. Providing a comprehensive solution for the customer will be crucial for creating a sense of security and reassurance, alongside supporting customer to understand the difference between an electric truck and an ICE truck. It is expected that the salesperson at the dealer will take on a more consultative role, advising the customer on topics as for instance charging, charging infrastructure, and what a shift to an electric vehicle would imply for the customers' current operation. To remain competitive in the future, dealers need to develop deep understanding and knowledge of new technologies, as battery solutions, and future customer needs.

The business opportunity of becoming a comprehensive solution provider means that the single point of contact for the customer to receive a complete solution, fulfilling their requests, would be the dealer. The complete solution provider builds on the previous mentioned business opportunities presented in *7.1 Increase body building operations*, *7.2 Offer digital body building* and *7.3 Expand workshop service range.* A dealer working as a comprehensive solution provider enables the concept one stop shop. Further, dealers providing comprehensive solutions expand the concept one stop shop by having expertise in additional solutions beyond the operations performed at the dealers' site. For instance, the dealer could provide customers with charging solutions tailored for that specific truck and customer. To illustrate, one customer perspective highlights that the dealer's competence regarding additional solutions and digital services beyond solely workshop service is valuable. The customer valued a certain dealer's extensive knowledge regarding vehicle-to-everything (V2X) solutions for electric trucks. According to Rehman et al. (2023), V2X solutions enable batteries in electric vehicles to generate revenue when the vehicle is not in use. In the future, the customer believes that it will be important for the dealers to have extensive competence about similar solutions and technologies, especially important for customers transitioning to electric truck fleets.

In the future, especially with increased electrification, the sales of additional value adding services will become more important. To illustrate, customers in the future can require and demand support and counselling regarding, for instance, calculating routes and route optimisation. Further, being a comprehensive solution provider can be a key role in reducing the risk perception of the customer when transitioning to an electric fleet. If the dealer can provide the customer with extensive knowledge about electric vehicles, body building, digital services and other additional services, the risk perception of the customer can be reduced. To be able to provide the customer with comprehensive solutions, the dealers must change and develop their current competencies to become more comprehensive. To illustrate, the dealers must for instance understand alternative fuels, charging infrastructure and additional services such as V2X.

7.4.1 Categorisation of become a comprehensive solution provider

A categorisation of the business opportunity of becoming a comprehensive solution provider is highlighted in *Figure 10.* This business opportunity includes integration of additional offerings and digital services, for instance body building, digital platforms, charging infrastructure, and V2X capabilities. While this business opportunity presents potential to enhance customer value and come closer to offer a one stop shop, it also requires changes to the dealers' current activities and resources. The expansion into new additional services introduces activities that diverge from the current activities of dealers. For instance, V2X technology represents an expertise area that requires the dealers to develop new knowledge and competence. Similarly, providing charging infrastructure support and body building operations require new competencies from employees, such as electrical engineering skills and knowledge in how to perform specialised body building. Several dealers do not have these competencies today, implying that the business opportunity requires new and additional resources at the dealers in terms of competence.

To support these new activities the dealers will require new, and adapted, human- and physical resources. The dealers will need to hire employees with specialised knowledge, including electrical engineers and IT technicians, as well as employees managing the customer interactions to provide a comprehensive solution. For the physical resources, dealers would need to invest in new tools and facilities, such as dedicated areas for truck modification, digital tools and IT infrastructure supporting digital services. Despite introducing new activities and resources, the current role of the dealers is maintained. Furthermore, providing a comprehensive solution for customers is in line with acting as a one stop shop.

To conclude, providing a comprehensive solution for customers requires new and adapted activities and resources, while remaining relatively consistent with the current role of the dealers. Therefore, the business opportunity of becoming a comprehensive solution provider is categorised as a level 2 opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the middle circle in *Figure 10*.

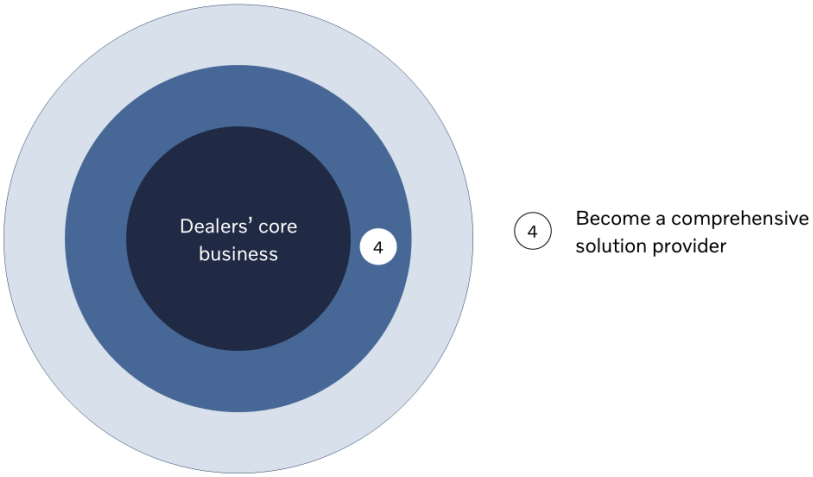

Figure 10. Categorisation of the future business opportunity become a comprehensive solution provider.

7.5 Operate a complete solution mall

The idea of the dealers operating a complete solution mall emerged during the brainstorming session. The opportunity is inspired by the business opportunities enabling the dealers to become comprehensive solution providers, together with the concept of mega dealer malls. A mega dealership mall displays several brands' vehicles, in combination with other offerings (FutureBridge, 2020). To illustrate the concept of a mega dealer mall, consider the world's largest auto mall, representing 24 different automotive brand dealers (Cerritos Auto Square, 2025a). The auto mall offers multiple services, such as comprehensive vehicle service, financing options and free shuttle bus around the mall (Cerritos Auto Square, 2025b). A solution mall would display all possible solutions, both digital and physical, that is compatible with Volvo Trucks' products or useful for Volvo Trucks' customers, such as V2X solutions. Instead of performing workshop service and sales as main operations, the dealers would be responsible for running a facility that displays both Volvo Group's and external partners' solutions valuable for the customer. The dealer would support customers by offering customised solutions and answer questions. External partners will become more important in the future, being a key factor for the dealers to provide customers with a comprehensive and expanded offer. By having knowledge in external partner solutions valuable for the customer, beyond solely the offerings performed at the dealer's site, the dealer will be able to provide a more comprehensive solution and fulfil customer requirements. External partners could be a partnering company responsible for the hardware, such as installing charging stations, or a software company responsible for the connectivity of the charging station. One additional perspective from interviews is that in the future, it will become more important for Volvo Group to be better at integrating Volvo Group's full offer into a comprehensive solution. A solution mall, together with the dealer being a comprehensive solution provider, can facilitate

integration of Volvo Group's offerings by the concept of gathering all solutions in one solution mall.

7.5.1 Categorisation of operate a complete solution mall

A categorisation of the business opportunity to operate a complete solution mall is highlighted in *Figure 11*. The proposed business opportunity for dealers to operate a solution mall involves large adaptations to current operations. The vision of a solution mall relies on the principle that all compatible services, physical and digital, should be accessible in one location. A solution mall would position the dealers as a central destination for customers to experience the full solution offerings of Volvo Group and their external partners' solutions. The core of the solution mall would be to integrate the full offering from Volvo Group, along with services provided by a network of external partners. Establishing and maintaining relationships with external partners is required. Forming these relationships is both time consuming and resource intensive, which would require dedicated employees responsible for managing these partnerships. Operating a complete solution mall would shift the focus of the dealers' activities from workshop service to more sales activities and imply a more consultative role for the dealers. Furthermore, operating a complete solution mall would require the dealers to have extensive knowledge in all possible offerings. The offerings could be far from the current knowledge of the dealers. Therefore, this opportunity represents a significant shift from current operations, both regarding current activities and resources. It also represents a shift from the current dealer role into focusing more on service integration rather than workshop service. Based on this, operate a complete solution mall is categorised as a level 3 opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the outer circle in *Figure 11*.

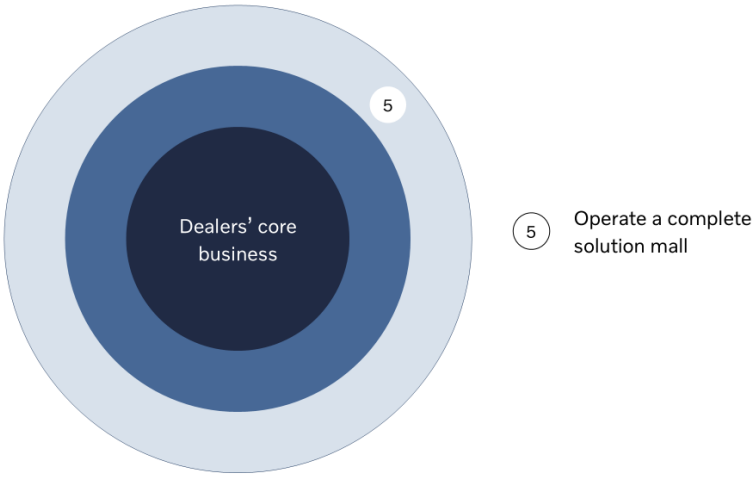

Figure 11. Categorisation of the future business opportunity operate a complete solution mall.

7.6 Develop on-site workshops

Expanding dealer on-site workshops at customers is identified as a possible future business opportunity for the dealers. Certain Volvo Truck Centers perform on-site operations today. However, this service model has primarily been implemented for buses instead of trucks, as buses are often stationed at one fixed site, making it more suitable for on-site dealer operations. One finding is that on-site workshops can become more common in the future, and that on-site workshops were initially expected to become more widespread than they are today. Expanding on-site workshop service would involve a shift where the dealer conducts workshop service and repairs directly at the customer's location, thereby limiting the need for customers to travel to the dealer. The identified trend of large customers acquiring smaller customers increases the risk of customers running their own workshops instead of visiting dealers. Operating on-site workshops at larger customers' sites could minimise the risk of losing these customers by them establishing their own workshops.

7.6.1 Categorisation of develop on-site workshops

A categorisation of the business opportunity develop on-site workshops is highlighted in *Figure 12.* Developing on-site workshops services represents an operational shift for the dealers, rather than transforming their service offerings. The core activities of the dealers remain largely unchanged, while the difference lies in where the service is performed. Relocating maintenance and workshop service to the customer site includes practical and logistical considerations, such as adapting tools and equipment. The dealers are expected to rely on the same resources in terms of employees and technical expertise. Although the core activities and resources remain stable, the role itself will evolve. Delivering services at the customer's location will require adjustments in customer interaction and mobility. This reflects a broader movement within the dealer business towards more flexible, customer-centric service models. Based on this, expanding on-site workshops is categorised as a level 1 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the inner circle in *Figure 12*.

Figure 12. Categorisation of the future business opportunity develop on-site workshops.

7.7 Engage in autonomous projects

The current sales strategy at Volvo Autonomous Solutions (V.A.S.) for autonomous projects follows a direct sales model, bypassing the dealers in the transaction process. The dealers are, however, part of the aftermarket, where V.A.S. purchase spare parts and workshop hours from the dealers involved in a project. The autonomous solutions are explained as complex solutions and implies that the truck driver is replaced by a non-human digital driver. V.A.S. provides their customers with complete transport solutions within two main areas (Volvo Autonomous Solutions, 2025). Firstly, V.A.S. offers solutions within the quarries, mining and industrial material handling segment. Autonomous solutions are implemented in confined and controlled areas, replacing drivers in repetitive and often dangerous flows. Secondly, V.A.S. offers hub-to-hub solutions, where autonomous vehicles operate on roads to move freight. Transport-as-a-Service is the base of V.A.S. offerings and includes selling a complete solution with V.A.S. as the single customer interface in comparison to selling solely a product (ibid.). To exemplify, sales are based on ton transported or kilometres driven by the autonomous truck, instead of selling the truck as a product. One perspective is that the hub-to-hub sales strategy in the future will continue to be based on a Transport-as-a-Service model.

Autonomous solutions for the truck industry are regarded as an expected development due to several factors. Since trucks function primarily as work equipment, the benefit of removing the driver is significant. Furthermore, removing the driver reduces the need of driver support and the need to adapt to driver preferences. Based on the reduced consideration of truck driver preferences, autonomous vehicles can further impact the importance of brand loyalty. According to V.A.S., automation is an attractive solution for the freight transport industry due to the global shortage of truck drivers in

conjunction with an increasing need of transport. One perspective of autonomous transport is that it will be more common in the future, although there will still exist multiple transport operations that continues to be manual. The main business segment for autonomous solutions is operations that are repetitive and dangerous for a human driver, as for instance the previously mentioned quarries, mining and industrial material handling segment.

Studying the data, one finding is that autonomous solutions are seen as a promising business opportunity for dealers. For instance, autonomous solutions that operate on specific sites often require on-site workshops or mechanics presence. V.A.S. is currently running an autonomous project where they have hired a mechanic from a private dealer that is fully committed to the project, spending all working hours at that specific site. The mechanic is responsible for up-time on the vehicles, workshop service and repair. The dealer provides the site with spare parts, purchased from the dealer by V.A.S., implying that the autonomous trucks never leave the project site. Further, flexible dealers willing to adapt their traditional business model are valuable for the V.A.S. business.

As explained above, the dealer will not be able sell any autonomous vehicles due to the Transport-as-a-service business model of V.A.S. However, there is a comprehensive need for their expertise in workshop service and repairs within autonomous project. The project sites running in harsh environments wear more on the vehicles, which further generate larger aftermarket business, workshop service, and repair opportunities for the dealers. An additional factor that can affect the dealers in the future is that the number of vehicles may decrease as the operation hours for a vehicle increase. Increased operating hours demand additional requests of workshop service and repairs which would impact the dealers in terms of availability to perform their operations.

Engaging in autonomous projects are seen as an opportunity for the dealers to expand their business and competencies. One future scenario could be that the dealers are responsible for more than solely service and repair on the vehicles. The dealers could be responsible for running the entire project site, for instance performing service operations on infrastructure and trailers alongside diagnosing digital systems. Further, and a more complex role, could be that the dealers could be a partner to V.A.S. implementing, selling and supporting the operation of an autonomous project. Furthermore, one perspective is that the dealers could be part of helping customers prepare and integrate different virtual drivers to their vehicles in the future, letting the customer choose which virtual driver they want and adding sensors to the autonomous trucks. An additional business opportunity for the dealers regarding autonomous projects is to refurbish used autonomous vehicles. This would be important in a scenario where the vehicle used in an autonomous project could continue to be utilised after the end of a project. However, this is argued to be complex as the autonomous vehicles often have modifications and are planned to be utilised until not further possible.

7.7.1 Categorisation of engage in autonomous projects

A categorisation of the business opportunity engage in autonomous projects is highlighted in *Figure 13.* Engaging in autonomous projects is categorised as a level 3 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the outer circle in *Figure 13.* The emergence of autonomous transport projects, particular in mining, quarries and material handling, has a significant impact of the dealers' current activities, resources and roles. Dealers will need to transform their operations to remain relevant within this business segment. The traditional focus on activities such as truck sales and workshop service will shift towards more integrated, on-site service, with requirements of supporting autonomous projects directly at the customer site. Activities that could be included is assisting customers in selecting virtual driver systems and refurbishing used autonomous trucks. Engaging in autonomous projects at full scale, including selling the project, would also imply a redefinition of the current business model, where dealers transition from selling individual trucks to selling performance-based solutions. Engaging in autonomous projects would also place new requirements on resources. The dealer needs to invest in specialised human resources, particular in technical and digital competencies.

One important consideration is that the extent of dealer engagement can vary and range from limited involvement in the aftermarket service to a complete project management responsibility. The deeper the engagement, the more change to current dealer operations will be required. In the near future, dealers may serve as a collaborative partner to V.A.S, supporting the current autonomous projects. However, over time the dealer role could develop to become a complete project management role. Based on this, engaging in autonomous projects is categorised as a level 3 business opportunity, as it requires substantial changes to current activities and resources, as well as it would change the current role of the dealers.

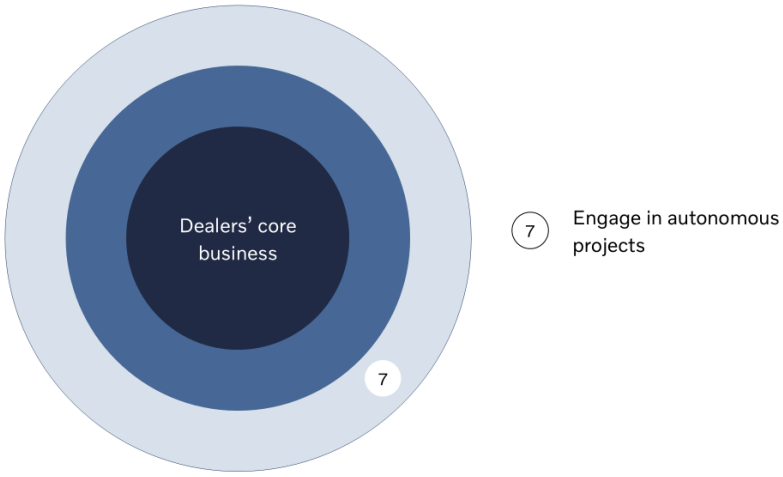

Figure 13. Categorisation of the future business opportunity of engage in autonomous projects.

7.8 Operate a leasing fleet

One recurring topic discussed during interviews is that the dealers' business models in the future will look different. It is uncertain what the future business models will look like, but several interviewees mention that it will depend substantially on future decisions, for instance decisions regarding public charging infrastructure. One view is that the uncertainty about future decisions is a challenge for customers when purchasing a vehicle as it complicates the decision on what truck model to invest in.

Leasing is a reoccurring topic when discussing future business opportunities and business models for dealers. One perspective of leasing is that it is a suitable business model for minimising the perceived risk of customers when adopting new technologies, such as electric trucks. To own and operate a fleet of trucks as a dealer is one identified future business opportunity. The dealers would own a fleet of trucks, which they lease to customers. Upon the expiration of a customer's lease, the trucks are refurbished by the dealers and prepared for leasing to other customer with other needs. The refurbishment becomes important for the dealer to prolong the lifetime of the trucks and increase the value of used vehicles. Further, leasing provides the customers with greater flexibility to try out different alternatives, as they are not bound to one specific truck. Leasing was further identified as a suitable option due to the current high price of electric vehicles. An important consideration when evaluating leasing as a business opportunity is the fact that a leasing-based business model has already been implemented by dealers in Sweden. Several Volvo Truck dealers in Sweden offer rental services called Volvo Hyrlast (Vovlo Trucks, 2025e). Customers can rent trucks for both short- and long-term periods and can range from one day to a full year. The rental fleet includes over 400 trucks, covering several segments such as distribution, long-haul, waste management and more. (ibid.).

A consequence for the dealers when owning a truck fleet is the increased risk due to the dealers committing to full ownership instead of the customer, alongside handling the used vehicles returned by the customer after the leasing period ends. An additional consequence of leasing is that the aftermarket opportunities can be impacted. If the dealer, instead of the customer, has full ownership of the vehicles and are responsible for workshop service, maintenance and repair the identified business opportunity can impact the dealers' current main source of revenue.

7.8.1 Categorisation of operate a leasing fleet

A categorisation of the business opportunity operate a leasing fleet is highlighted in *Figure 14.* Operate a leasing fleet is categorised as a level 2 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the middle circle in *Figure 14*. Operating a leasing fleet implies changes to the dealer's current operations, particularly in sales activities and physical resources, while impact on the current role of the dealers is limited. Regarding sales activities, the shift towards leasing requires a different sales model. The new sales model focus on flexibility and customisation, as

customers are no longer purchasing a truck but rather entering leasing contracts. These contracts could also include workshop service, upgrades, and customer support. In terms of resources, operating a leasing fleet requires the dealers to have additional physical space at their sites. One important consideration is that having a truck fleet can also introduce financial challenges for the dealers, as trucks that are not leased remain unutilised, tying up capital. Unutilised trucks also entail storage and maintenance costs, which could impact the overall profitability of the dealers. Although operating a leasing fleet will impact current activities and resources, the dealer role will remain unchanged in terms of acting as the primary customer interface and provide value-adding services. Given this, operate a leasing fleet is categorised as a level 2 business opportunity.

Figure 14. Categorisation of the future business opportunity operate a leasing fleet.

7.9 Change operating model to as-a-service

When studying the data, the term as-a-service is recurring, and the concept Equipment-as-a-Service is mentioned. The business model Equipment-as-a-Service is different from one-off sales of equipment (Benedettini, 2025), which can be viewed as the main sales model of Volvo Trucks' dealers today. According to Benedettini (2025) the Equipment-as-a-Service business model implies that the customer pays for the access to and use of the equipment in different metrics depending on the product and industry. Equipment-as-a-Service implies that the manufacturer keeps ownership of the product and are responsible for the up time of the products, meaning that the manufacturer is responsible for workshop service, maintenance, and repair. (ibid.). Moreover, the term as-a-service is in line with the Transport-as-a-Service business model of V.A.S. It is up to the customer to choose how to utilise the transport solution. These business models shift focus from the truck as a product, currently important in the dealer sales process, towards selling a solution as-a-service.

As-a-service business models can take several forms, such as Transport-as-a-Service and Truck-as-a-Service. The different as-a-service business models shift the traditional

business model towards more flexible, subscription-based solutions. Customers have access to vehicles bundled with services such as maintenance, insurance and charging infrastructure. As electrification, digitalisation and automation accelerate, as-a-service business models are becoming increasingly important (TRATON, 2024). Moving towards this subscription-based business model reduce financial and operational risk for customers (Herlt et al., 2024). The ownership of the trucks remains with the OEM, indicating that the utilisation, uptime, and asset risk are covered by the OEM. This reduces the residual value risk for customers. In 2024, Volvo Financial Services (VFS) and Volvo Trucks North America developed Volvo on Demand, a Truck-as-a-Service solution (Westerheide, 2024). This offering was developed to support customers in the shift towards fossil-free transport solutions and integrate electric trucks into their operations. Volvo on Demand enables customers to rent fully electric trucks on flexible terms, starting at 12 months and pay only for the distance driven. Customers can additionally include services such as insurance, route planning and optimisation, as well as charging consultation. Volvo on Demand is further a solution for reducing the financial risks for customers and encourage customers to experience electric trucks before making large investments. (ibid).

A future business opportunity for the dealers in line with the terms explained above is that the dealers could develop an as-a-service business model. To illustrate, the dealers could offer customer solutions that involve for instance the truck, the charging infrastructure, electricity contracts and a driver. This solution is in line with the identified future customer requirements of the dealer being a comprehensive solution provider and a single point of contact. Additionally, it is in line with the risk reducing benefit for the customer provided by the leasing business opportunity explained earlier. The subscription-based models, like as-a-service concepts, are closely connected to leasing, as both models involve access to a product through recurring payments rather than ownership. Further, the business opportunity changes the operating model to as-a-service expands the leasing solution further by including a complete solution for the customer.

7.9.1 Categorisation of change operating model to as-a-service

A categorisation of the business opportunity of changing the operating model to as-a-service is highlighted in *Figure 15*. Developing an as-a-service business model is categorised as a level 3 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the outer circle in *Figure 15*. The business opportunity of developing an as-a-service business model would require the dealers to develop a significantly different sales model and role, motivating the level 3 categorisation of the opportunity. Additional to owning an entire fleet of trucks, the opportunity further implies more responsibility at the dealer site. To illustrate, the dealers will need to develop additional competencies, as for instance regarding charging solutions, if covered in the offered solution. Furthermore, the dealers would need to invest in a lot of physical resources, for instance drivers and vehicles.

Figure 15. Categorisation of the future business opportunity change operating model to as-a-service.

7.10 Establish charging offerings

Today, the dealers are collaborating with external partners when customers wish to install charging stations. If the dealers were to expand their operations beyond workshop services to include charging infrastructure and related services, it would enhance the perceived safety and reliability for customers. Further, it would be preferable with a unified sales model in which both the vehicle and the associated charging equipment, including workshop service and maintenance on the equipment, are provided by one single company, for instance Volvo Group via the dealer. This approach is explained by the customer as preferred as it would foster a sense of trust and convenience. In the future, it will be important that the dealers acquire competence to support charging solutions at customer sites. Therefore, it is crucial that the dealers are involved in the upskilling and charging infrastructure developments as charging is central in the transition to electric vehicles.

A first identified future opportunity for the dealers associated with charging, is for the dealers to offer vehicle charging themselves. One expectation from customers is that vehicles leaving the dealer workshop should be returned fully charged. In addition to offering workshop service charging, dealers could invest in public fast-charging stations. However, it is not certain that the dealers developing their own public charging infrastructure is economically viable. Instead, the dealers being a part of existing partnerships with charging infrastructure providers could be a more viable solution as they do not have to build the charging stations themselves. For instance, the already established collaboration between Volvo Trucks, OKQ8, and Skellefteå Kraft, has the ambition to provide 44 charging stations in total for heavy vehicles, where 19 will be established at Volvo Trucks' dealers all over Sweden (OKQ8, 2025). Additionally, another view on public charging at dealers is that the primary focus should be on

offering charging as a part of the workshop service rather than building public charging stations. Public charging would require large-scale operations to become profitable.

In addition to offering charging equipment and public charging, the dealers could develop and establish charging facilities where drivers can recharge their trucks. While charging, the drivers could enjoy a break at the facility, which offers resting areas and a driver lounge. These areas could further provide an opportunity for the dealers to offer additional sales and workshop services. However, this solution depends heavily on the geographical position of the dealer. The dealers located near highways are better suited to implement this solution. While some dealers already introduced similar initiatives, there is a potential to further develop these offerings. One view is that the possibility of the dealers investing in their facilities to become large Truck Stops are less probable. Another finding regarding charging is that the dealers in the future can be required to work with charging stations at their customers' sites. This would further require the dealers to have in-house electricians, competence that could be beneficial with increased electrification.

7.10.1 Categorisation of establish charging offerings

A categorisation of the business opportunity establish charging offerings is highlighted in *Figure 16.* Establish charging offerings is categorised as a level 2 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the middle circle in *Figure 16.* The opportunity of establishing charging offerings, requires additional activities and resources at the dealers, depending on the specific offering. Offering public charging by joining already existing initiatives primarily require adaptations of the dealer site in terms of providing a public space for charging, compared to offering installation of charging equipment at customers which would require education and incorporating new activities in the dealers' operation. Transitioning to become a Truck Stop would give the dealer a new role in terms of providing the public with suitable facilities. As several of the offerings discussed in relation to the opportunity requires new activities and resources, which further impact the dealer role, the opportunity is classified as a level 2 opportunity.

Figure 16. Categorisation of the future business opportunity establish charging offerings.

7.11 Establish partnership with Volvo Energy

As previously mentioned in section *7.3 Expand workshop service range*, a future business opportunity for the dealers is to perform workshop service and maintenance on Volvo Energy's BESS products. Building on this, a future identified business opportunity for the dealers is to establish a partnership with Volvo Energy, creating a future dealer network for Volvo Energy. It is identified from the data that a partnership between Volvo Energy and Volvo Trucks' dealers could bring several opportunities for the dealers.

First, if the processes of qualifying the state of a used battery becomes safer and simpler in the future, the dealers could support Volvo Energy by collecting and renovating batteries in the future. Today, this process is performed at a central battery hub that Volvo Energy is responsible for. One perspective on this process is that in the future, this process may need to be performed locally due to a possible increase in total number of batteries. Second, the dealers could be responsible for selling Volvo Energy's BESS products. In the future, Volvo Energy will require a dealer network for their products. As today, the profitability of the BESS products is dependent on several local factors, such as the electricity grid, and a local dealer network will therefore be important. To scale the sales of BESS products, Volvo Energy will need a dispersed network of dealers knowing the local conditions, available to visit customers to perform workshop service if problems arise. Selling Volvo Energy's products would differ from the dealers' current sales. However, it is a suitable business opportunity for dealers with knowledge and interest in technical solutions, alongside already having the competence and equipment of performing workshop service on electric trucks. Third, the dealers could partner with Volvo Energy and build public charging stations at their sites, as discussed in the previous section *7.9 Establish charging offerings*. Finally, the portable BESS are made for temporary charging, making them ideal for rental services managed

by the dealers. However, selling and installing Volvo Energy's energy storage products require additional competence and training, as well as compliance with regulations regarding grid connections. In the long-term, if dealers adopt a more advisory role, they could act as integrated solution providers, offering the truck, the charging infrastructure, and the energy storage systems.

7.11.1 Categorisation of establish partnership with Volvo Energy

A categorisation of the business opportunity establish partnership with Volvo Energy is highlighted in *Figure 17*. Establish partnership with Volvo Energy is categorised as a level 3 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the outer circle in *Figure 17*. Partnering with Volvo Energy and developing their future distribution network would require new activities for the dealers. To exemplify, partnering with Volvo Energy could imply new sales activities related to leasing of BESS products and require on-site presence to serve stationary units. Furthermore, a partnership would require new resources, mainly in terms of competence, as for instance knowledge of the BESS products and local electricity grids. A partnership between the dealers and Volvo Energy would imply a new dealer role in terms of being the customer interface between Volvo Energy and their customers. As the partnership requires new activities, competencies and a developed dealer role, the opportunity is classified as a level 3 opportunity. Volvo Energy is active in segments that enables a sustainable transition to rely on electricity in the future, which makes the opportunity relevant in a future scenario with increased electrification.

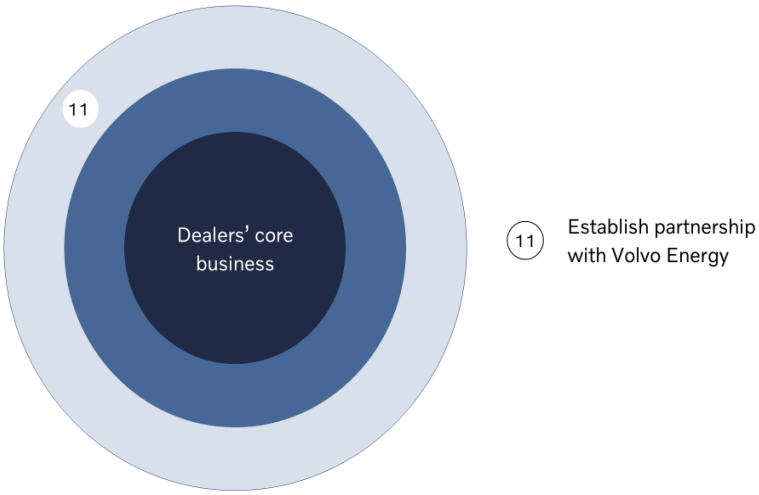

Figure 17. Categorisation of the future business opportunity establish partnership with Volvo Energy.

7.12 Increase educational offerings

Findings from the empirical data imply that activities relating to educational initiatives are part of the dealers' current operations. A future business opportunity for the dealers is to expand their educational offerings. First, the dealers could expand their current activities that aims at coaching customers' drivers. Inspired by the forklift industry where companies offer driving educations, as Linde who offers forklift driver training (Linde Material Handling, 2025), the dealers could implement similar offerings for their customers to a larger extent. Benefits with the truck driver training is higher productivity, safety and optimised battery life of the trucks. Further, Linde offers additional educations in logistics, environments where their products are used, as usage of cranes and self-inspection of pallet racking. (ibid.). The dealers could expand and offer driver training for their customers on how to drive environmentally friendly, or in a manner that is beneficial for battery optimisation. Second, the dealers could offer training in related areas to the truck, as for instance docking and loading. Third, the dealers could offer educational support for their customers in how to optimise the usage of Volvo Group's digital offerings, in line with previous solutions as being a comprehensive solution provider and digital body builder. Fourth, the dealers could expand their education of new mechanics. According to the primary data, the future will require broad and new competence of the dealers, for instance regarding new technologies as electric trucks.

7.12.1 Categorisation of increase educational offerings

A categorisation of the business opportunity increase educational offerings is highlighted in *Figure 18.* Increasing educational offerings is categorised as a level 2 business opportunity for dealers, which is highlighted by placing the opportunity in the middle circle in *Figure 18*. Educational activities currently exist at the dealer but are not identified as core business activities. Offering education, as for instance driver training and educating customers to use digital services and apps compatible with their vehicles, would change the dealer role by shifting the focus of the dealers from workshop service and sales, towards education. Further, the activities relating to education would be expanded and developed. The dealer today holds suitable competence for educating others, but to offer education in a larger scale would require further competence of the dealers and require new standards. Therefore, the business opportunity increase educational offerings is categorised as a level 2 business opportunity.

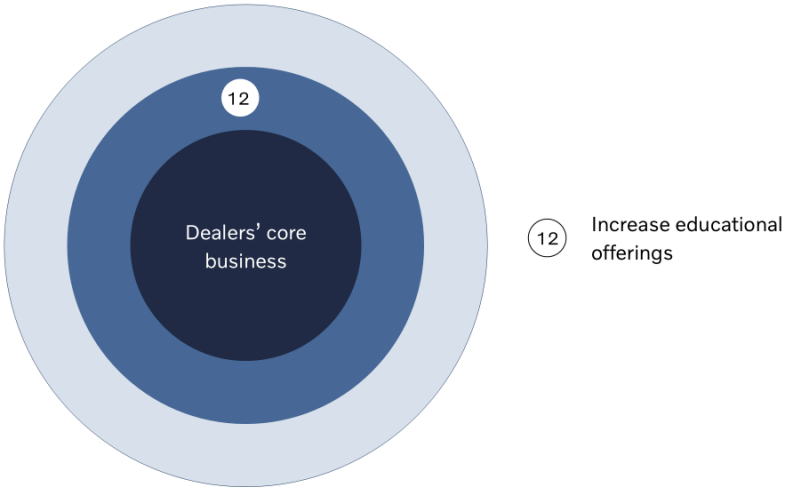

Figure 18. Categorisation of the future business opportunity increase educational offerings.

8. Result and conclusion

This section presents the concluding results from investigating *Issue 1a, 1b* and *1c,* alongside *Issue 2* and *Issue 3*.

To conclude, the dealers are currently engaged in a variety of activities along with controlling and accessing several essential resources, such as customer knowledge and workshop service competence. While the core activities performed by the dealers are largely consistent, variations of activities can be observed, depending on the size of the dealer. Smaller dealers provide a more limited set of offerings compared to larger dealers with greater capacity. Two of the identified core activities, sales and workshop service, are interdependent, implying that in a scenario where workshop service decrease, sales opportunities for the dealers can be affected. Further, aftermarket operations are considered as the activity generating the highest profit contribution. Therefore, addressing how the decrease in workshop service can impact the dealers in terms of profit could be an essential consideration. Employees are considered as the main human resource. The dealer business is deeply rooted in building and maintaining relationships with customers, serving as the main interface between Volvo Trucks and customers. To summarise and define the dealers' current role, the dealers serve as a key link between actors in the distribution network of Volvo Trucks. Acting as a key link includes coordinating activities and combining resources between actors in the distribution network, alongside compensating for resource and capacity gaps within Volvo Trucks, mainly related to delivering local support and having extensive knowledge in customers' operations.

Electrification and direct sales are two factors contributing to a dynamic business environment for the dealers. Increased electrification results in increased complexity for the dealers' operations, emphasising that the dealers need to move towards a more advisory role to offer customers a complete solution. Increased online direct sales is not considered as a likely scenario for the truck industry, given that all trucks are customised and includes several adaptations. Additionally, a scenario in which Volvo Trucks expands the current direct sales strategy is unlikely, as smaller customers are expected to remain and continue to purchase via dealers. However, while most interviews highlight direct sales as an unlikely transformation for Volvo Trucks, one perspective highlights that future generations, that are more adapted to digital solutions, may priorities convenience over the opportunity to build personal relationships and engage in traditional purchasing processes. Interesting to build upon is how other factors can impact a purchasing decision in the future. If other factors, beyond brand loyalty, becomes important in a customer's decision-making, it will be increasingly critical for the dealers to rethink and adapt to continue to perform value-generating activities. The truck industry today is largely relationship-driven, with personal relationships playing a central role for the business. The increase in digitalisation and as younger generations adapts to more digital solutions, raises questions regarding the importance of personal relationships in the future. Future generations may place greater

emphasis on other factors than personal relationships, thereby reshaping the traditional view on relationships as an important value-generating activity. To conclude the results from investigating *Issue 2: How can the roles of Volvo Trucks' dealers change in response to increased electrification and direct sales?*, increased electrification and direct sales can impact current core activities and resources of the dealers. The role of Volvo Trucks' dealers is not being eliminated, but rather redefined.

The dealers are considered as a crucial part of Volvo Trucks' distribution network and serve as a value generating actor. Considering a dynamic and evolving business environment, it is essential for the dealers to adapt and redefine their roles to remain relevant and valuable actors. The fact that the dealers' current operations can be challenged and the role redefined due to increased electrification and direct sales, highlights the importance of investigating future business opportunities for the dealers. *Figure 19* illustrates a summary the future business opportunities identified in section *7. Identified future business opportunities.* Business opportunity 1, 2, 3 and 6 are classified as level 1 business opportunities as these are closely related to the current role of the dealers, alongside being in line with current activities and resources. Business opportunity 4, 8, 10 and 12 are classified as level 2 business opportunities, while 5, 7, 9 and 11 are categorised as level 3 business opportunities.

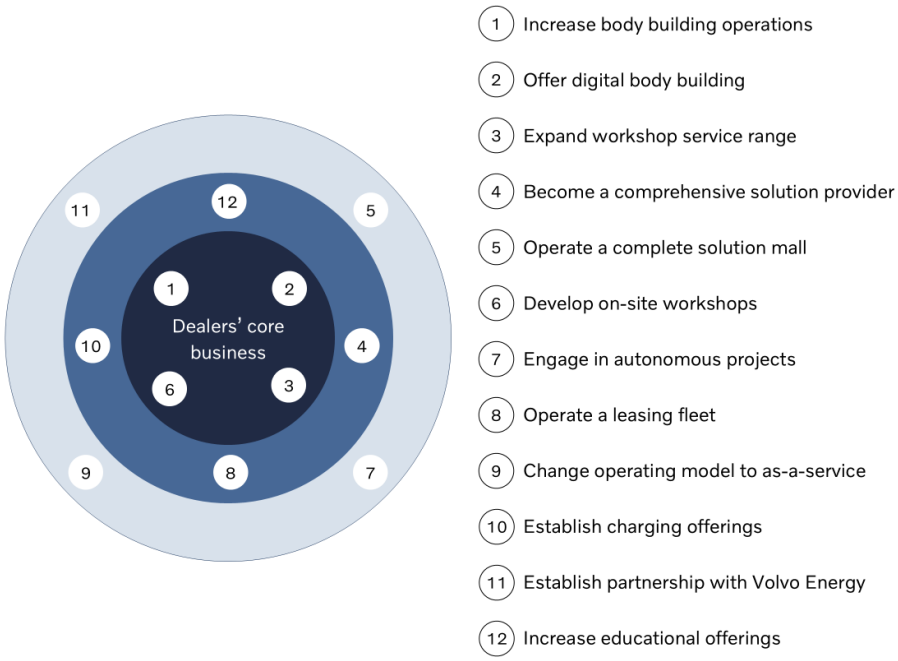

Figure 19. Summary of all identified future business opportunities.

Moving forward, addressing the research problem dealt with in this master's thesis, some recommendations for Volvo Group is presented. To support Volvo Trucks' dealers in a scenario with increased electrification, it will become important to continue to provide efficient and comprehensive education related to performing operations on electric vehicles for the dealers. Further, it will be important to enable a seamless

alignment and integration of Volvo Group's offerings, as well as offerings from established and future partnerships, to help facilitate the process of the dealers expanding their knowledge regarding related and valuable offerings. With increased direct sales, the process of transferring customer knowledge, knowledge currently accessed mainly at the dealers, will need to be developed to ensure that the incumbent and future customer knowledge is transferred to enhance the sales process. Further, it is important to understand that the dealers are currently central to Volvo Trucks' business model and the main customer interface, meaning that they today often are the first contact point for customers. As the main customer interface, they are the first actors in the distribution network to encounter customer requirements and trends. This is important to keep in mind and utilise in future business strategy decisions. The dealers have great expertise and hold valuable activities and resources for the distribution network, several which will continue to be important in a scenario with increased electrification and direct sales. To conclude, it is crucial to support the dealers when adjusting to the new dealer roles. The intermediaries adapting to dynamics alongside changing business operations to match customer needs and preferences are the ones that will continue to stay relevant in the future.

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Appendix 1

Appendix 1 includes three interview guides that were used for interviews presented in *Table 1-3*. The interview guide for Volvo Group were used in the interviews presented in *Table 1*, the interview guide for dealers is used for interviews presented in *Table 2* and lastly the interview guide for haulier is used for the interview presented in *Table 3*.

Interview Guide for Volvo Group

General background

- Is it ok to record the interview?
- Can you describe your role?
- In what different ways can a truck be sold today?
- What is the difference between Volvo Trucks' direct sales model and selling through dealers?

Dealers' current operations

- What are the dealers' main activities today? (activities can be for example be service, sales, customer support, deliveries, inventory management, etc.)
- Which are the dealers' main resources today? (resources can be both tangible and intangible, for example be facilities, machines, knowledge, workforce etc.)
- Can you explain Volvo Trucks' service contracts? Does the service contract differ between contracts for ICE trucks and electric trucks?
- What do you think are the strengths of dealers?
- What do you think are the challenges dealers face?

Future impact on dealers' current operations

- How do you think increased electrification will impact the operations of dealers?
- How do you think an increase in direct sales would impact the operations of dealers?
- What other factors do you think could affect the dealers' operations in the future?

- Do you think that the dealers' current role in Volvo Trucks' distribution network will change in the future?

Future business opportunities for dealers

- What do you think customers will value in the future?

- What would Volvo Trucks like to be able to offer their customers in the future?

- What opportunities do you see for dealers in the future?

- What threats do you see for dealers in the future?

- If the dealers were not carrying out their main activities as they perform today, what do you think they could be doing instead?

- Do you think we have asked all the relevant questions, or do you feel we have missed any important ones?

Interview Guide for Dealers

General background

- Is it ok to record the interview?
- Can you describe your role?
- What kind of relationship do you as a dealer have with Volvo Trucks?

Current operations

- What activities do you perform? (activities can for example be service, sales, customer support, deliveries, inventory management, etc.)
- Which resources do you have? (resources can be both tangible and intangible, for example facilities, machines, knowledge, workforce etc.)
- What kind of service do you perform today? Does it differ between ICE trucks and electric trucks?
- Can you explain how you, as a dealer, work with Volvo Trucks' service contracts? Does the service contract differ between contracts for ICE trucks and electric trucks?
- How are revenues distributed between service-related activities and sales activities?
    - What activity of yours is generating the most revenue?
- Are you an Electric Vehicle Certified dealer? How does it affect your business activities?
- What do you think are the strengths of dealers?
- What do you think are the challenges dealers face?

Future impact on current operations

- How do you think the dealers' activities will look like in the future?
- What do you think will be the dealers' main resources in the future?
- What factors do you think could affect the dealers' operations in the future?
- What do you think the role of a dealer will be in the future?

- Do you think that the dealers' current role in Volvo Trucks' distribution network will change in the future?

Future business opportunities

- What do you think your customers will value in the future?
- What would you like to be able to offer your customers in the future?
- What opportunities do you see for dealers in the future?
- What threats do you see for dealers in the future?
- If you were not carrying out your main activities as you perform today, what do you think you could be doing instead?
- Do you think we have asked all the relevant questions, or do you feel we have missed any important ones?

Interview Guide for Haulier

General background

- Is it ok to record the interview?
- Can you describe your role?
- What kind of relationship do you have with Volvo Trucks?
- What do you, as a customer, need during the transition to an electric fleet?

Dealers' current operations

- What do you think are the dealers' main activities today? (activities can be for example be service, sales, customer support, deliveries, inventory management, etc.)
- Which do you think are the dealers' main resources today? (resources can be both tangible and intangible, for example be facilities, machines, knowledge, workforce etc.)
- What do you think are the strengths of dealers?
- What do you think are the challenges dealers face?

Future impact on dealers' current operations

- How do you think that a truck will be serviced in the future?
- How do you think a truck will be sold in the future?
- How do you think that dealers' operations will look in the future?
- What other factors do you think could affect dealers' operations in the future?
- Do you think that dealers' current role will change in the future?

Future business opportunities for dealers

- What will you as a customer value in the future?
- What opportunities do you see for dealers in the future?
- What threats do you see for dealers in the future?

- Do you think that the relationship between dealers and their customers will change in the future?

- If the dealers were not carrying out their main activities as they perform today, what do you think they could be doing instead?

- Do you think we have asked all the relevant questions, or do you feel we have missed any important ones?

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