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The Internal Crisis of a Corporation

Effects on coordination, cooperation, integration and communication
by the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Communication is a part of coordination, integration and cooperation. Mainly, communication links the three aforementioned components, it is something that is maintained mainly within a multinational corporation. Crisis, including pandemics, come and go. Crises affect both corporations and the world in general. Corporations are affected both externally and internally, where the internal structures are communication, cooperation, coordination and integration. The purpose of this thesis is to identify how multinational corporations work with internal factors when unexpected changes in external circumstances arise, with a focus on Covid-19. Internal factors being cooperation, coordination, integration and communication. There is a general view of how MNC's and executives use communication to reinforce cooperation, coordination and integration during pandemics. The research question of this thesis is answered with the help of the deductive method. Complimenting that method, this thesis also was made to be a qualitative study, where leaders from different industries were interviewed. This, mainly to extract information about how their respective companies work with their communication (coordination, integration and cooperation). During the Covid-19 pandemic, communication has been affected in several ways, and since it also is an essential part of a company's ongoing operations, it would also be affected. This led to the conclusion that there have been difficulties in implementing quality communication which has affected coordination, integration and cooperation. Measures and changes have been made in response to the effects Covid-19 has had on the investigated companies, such as crisis communication and an increased use of digital communication means.

Key words: *Communication, coordination, integration, cooperation, Consulting, transport, digital, real estate, material handling, internal communication, MNC, crisis communication, pandemic, Covid-19*

Definition List

Communication: The exchange of information between persons or places within a corporation

Cooperation: Units voluntarily arrange mutual exchange of resources and information that is beneficial for the entire corporation.

Coordination: It is an attempt to unify, synchronize and integrate efforts made by a group of members and employees within a corporation.

Covid-19: An infectious disease that affects one's respiratory system, attacking it and making it difficult for the victim to breathe.

HQ: Head quarter, which can be on a parent company level, region level and subsidiary level.

ICT: Information communication technology. Infrastructure and components that allow people and organizations to interact in the digital world.

Integration: How organizations manage resource flow through the corporate network consisting of various units which are geographically spread.

MNC: Multinational corporation, operating in at least one country outside their home market.

Parent company: Holds more than 50% of the subsidiary's votes or is regulated in the form of influence agreements. Together, parent company and subsidiary form a concern.

Pari passu: A Latin phrase which means "equal footing", when two or more things develop in synchronization with each other.

Regions: Geographical areas where the corporation has a collection of different departments with an own region head quarter.

Short furlough: Employees' working hours decrease for a short period while the government enters and provides financial support to the employer. Employees may retain a large part of their regular salary during the furlough, while reducing the corporation's personal costs.

Subsidiaries and Subunits: It is a company which is controlled or owned by another corporation.

Tacit knowledge: Knowledge or information which can only be transmitted through physical meetings.

WHO: World Health Organization

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1 Introduction

The introduction will present background information regarding the emergence of multinational corporations and how communication within MNC's is linked to other internal factors. Further on, a problem discussion regarding the topic is featured followed by a definition of the study's purpose and research question. In the final section, a description of existing delimitations will be presented.

1.1 Background

Over the course of history, the world economy and international trade have gradually opened up. Mobility of resources and capital, such as people, products and information, has increased (Dicken, 2015). Companies have been able to conduct operations more internationally due to things such as free trade agreements and technological development. Free trade agreements have been formed to facilitate trade between countries and promote easier exchange of goods. Technological developments have supported companies to effectively manage scale and economies of scale globally. This has resulted in the development of operations in several countries with geographically and culturally dispersed subsidiaries by different multinational corporations (Dicken, 2015; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018). Multinational corporations are structured in such way that they are to be efficiently responsive to different nations and have the capability for making use of experiences from around the globe.

For corporations to be efficiently responsive to different nations and have the capability for making use of experiences from around the globe, coordination, integration, cooperation and communication need to be implemented throughout the whole corporation, from parent company to the subsidiaries (Bartlett & Beamish, 2018). Communication connects the company's internal departments with each other, but also external parties. They are able to do that by exchanging information and knowledge, two important intangible assets, that can be exchanged between the parent company and its subsidiaries or local markets and the parent company itself (Ghoshal, Korine & Szulanski, 1994; Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Venaik, Midgley & Devinney, 2005; Schotter & Bontis, 2009). Therefore, multinational corporations are highly dependent on HQ and all its subsidiaries, as well as external contacts in local markets (Forsgren, Holm & Johanson, 2005; Scott-Kennel & Michailova, 2016).

Communication is an essential component within the following three factors, cooperation, integration and coordination. Without it, the corporation would not be able to uphold the desired efficiency of these three components. Cooperation is when units within a corporation voluntarily arrange a mutual exchange of resources and information that is beneficial for the entire company (Ahuja, 2000). Integration is described by Ensign (1999) as how organizations manage resource flows through the corporate network consisting of various units which are geographically spread. Coordination within a company is an attempt to unify, synchronize and integrate efforts made by a group of members and employees. This to create a platform of which the employees can together pursue a common goal (Ensign, 1999).

There are different types of crisis around the world that affect it in different negative ways. The last circa 10 years only, there has been a financial crisis, natural disasters and most recently a Covid-19 pandemic. Just as the world is affected in different ways, so is the internal structure and function of a company (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Heide & Simonsson, 2014; Kim, 2015). A part of that internal structure is the communication of a company. The communication is an essential part of the company and is one of the things that is directly affected by the different types of crisis (Petrov, 2011; Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2014). What can be noticed in the case of Covid-19, which has been classified as a pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020), is the potential effect it can have on the integration implementation, coordination application, cooperation performance and communication as a whole. As previously mentioned, communication is essential since it is closely knitted with different components of the maintenance of the internal part of the company; integration, cooperation and coordination (Ensign, 1999; Ahuja, 2000; Schotter & Bontis, 2009).

1.1.1 Covid-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified Covid-19 as a pandemic (WHO, 2020). According to WHO (2010), a pandemic is a new influenza virus which rapidly spreads worldwide. The first case of Covid-19 was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Since then it has spread throughout the world (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2019). This has resulted in severe consequences for communities worldwide (WHO, 2010; Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2019). Society as a whole has been affected by the respiratory virus. Health care, how people are living their daily life and entire companies were amongst the several societal components effected by the pandemic. Governments have introduced different measures to stop the spread of Covid-19. Countries such as Italy, Austria, Spain, France, Denmark, Australia, China, and a number of US states have been put in nation-wide

quarantine, not allowing social gatherings and unnecessary personal meetings. Entire economies have been negatively affected by the sudden halt in business and life in general (Dunford, Dale, Stylianou, Lowther, Ahmed & Torre Arenas, 2020; Secon, 2020).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Due to the prevailing situation with Covid-19, companies have experienced several changes and difficulties (Sellgren, 2020). According to Svenskt Näringsliv's survey on Swedish companies operating abroad, seven out of ten of them have stated that trade with other countries has become more difficult during the development of Covid-19 (Stellinger, 2020). Stellinger describes the actions of some EU countries as protectionist and counter-productive (2020). In addition, companies' workplaces and ongoing operations have changed as well, as employees have been put on short-term leave or are asked to work from home (Arbetsmiljöverket 2020; Eriksson & Falkirk, 2020; Wiklund, 2020). Spotify, Paradox, Google and Microsoft are just some of the international companies that encourage and request their employees to work from home (Wiklund, 2020). In such circumstances, corporations need to continue with their flows of resources, including the flow of information and competence. Ensuring the movement of information is important, to be able to cooperate, coordinate and integrate with all units in the organization. These factors are essential when trying to enable the entire company to be productive with its geographically and culturally differentiated subunits. (Forsgren et al, 2005; Scott-Kennel & Michailova, 2016; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018).

Pandemics are nothing new, they have come and gone during the course of human history (Newman, 2020). Prior to Covid-19, pandemics such as the Spanish flu in 1918, the Asian flu 1957, Hong Kong pandemic 1968, SARS 2003, Swine flu 2009, and most recently MERS in 2012 (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2019; Hewings-Martin, 2020) have affected the entire world negatively. What makes Covid-19 different from other pandemics is its rapid spread, which, according to WHO expert advisor David Heymann (2020), is due to globalization and the ability to travel around the world. During SARS and MERS for example, the movement of humans was less widespread. It has been reported how corporations handle the pandemic externally, such as transforming operations, marketing and changing work environments (Zachrisson, 2020; Eriksson & Falkrik, 2020; Clift & Court, 2020; Euronews, 2020). However, there is little information on how corporations handle these circumstances internally. Internal business communication, which is a relatively new area of research that

began in late 1990s/early 2000s (Vercic, Vercic & Krishnamurthy, 2012), has insinuated researchers to write more on the subject (Jablin & Putman, 2001; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Bovée & Thill, 2017).

As Newman (2020) mentioned, pandemics will always appear and disappear, therefore it is important to know how corporations work and manage these circumstances, so that information can be used in future similar situations. Since communication is a means for corporations to exchange information, knowledge and competence (Schotter & Bontis, 2009), it will remain important whether there is a pandemic or not. Further, communication is used to improve coordination, integration and cooperation (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Mauri & Figueiredo, 2012; Ahuja, 2000). As corporations adapt and change their business due to Covid-19, it is of interest to go deeper and see if there are internal changes and, in such cases, how these changes should be handled and standardized. The internal factors that will be investigated through a communication lens are coordination, integration and cooperation.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how multinational corporations work with internal factors when unexpected changes in external circumstances arise. Where the focus on the external circumstances will be pandemics and especially Covid-19, which is live during the writing of this thesis. Internal factors being cooperation, coordination, integration and communication. It is a general view of how MNC's and executives work with cooperation, coordination and integration through communication during pandemics.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the above reasoning, the following research question has been formed;

How do MNC's and their executives work with cooperation, integration and coordination through communication during Covid-19?

1.5 Delimitations

External uncertainties have a variety of occurrences such as natural disasters, economic crises and pandemics that can affect corporations' internal structures. We have therefore decided to limit the thesis to pandemics and, specifically, Covid-19 since the virus is live during the time the thesis is written. The internal structures that will be examined in more detail are primary communication, impact on coordination, integration and collaboration within multinational corporations.

2 Theory

In the theoretical chapter, selected theories will be presented and explained. These theories will provide a background on the internal structures within a multinational corporation and how communication is connected to multinational corporations' internal factors; cooperation, integration and coordination. Together with the empirical findings, the theoretical framework provides a foundation for the analysis

2.1 Network Based Multinational Corporations

As the world economy and trade becomes more globalized, multinational corporations have turned out to be, as Forsgren, Holm and Johanson (2005 p. 1) describe it, "one of the most significant institutions of modern societies". Multinational corporations are driven by the requirement to be globally effective, respond to different national demands, be receptive and innovative at global scale. In other words, they need to be efficient, flexible and have the ability for global learning. These must be balanced, and one factor cannot be replaced by the other (Bartlett & Beamish, 2018; Forsgren et al, 2005).

The above mentioned factors, has led to the inception of the term 'network based Multinational corporation', coined as "integrated network" by Bartlett and Beamish (2018). Ciabuschi, Dellestrand and Holm (2012) describe multinational corporations as organized networks with relationships that spread across national borders. In the integrated network, all subunits are operating in unique national environments, operations that HQ's do not have a lot of influence over. Instead, and this is shared among all units in the multinational corporations, they are able to individually act as a strategic centre for certain products or processes and may also have specialized roles (Forsgren et al, 2005; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018). Ghoshal and Nohria (1997) explicate the structure of multinational corporation as a network of differentiated linkages, which are both external and internal. Scott-Kennel and Michailova (2016) as well as Forsgren et al (2005) present these linkages as being internal, external and dually embedded. Embeddedness is explained as a close relationship, where the synergy is reflected in the exchange of information and how well resources are adapted between units in the multinational corporation (Asakawa, Park, Song & Kim, 2018). External embeddedness signifies the subsidiaries' position in the local market, as well as their ability to create and transform firm-specific advantages. Internal embeddedness is the HQ and its subsidiaries position within the internal network, and the relationship within the subsidiary itself, with HQ

as well as associated subsidiaries. Dual embeddedness combines these two in which subsidiaries act as links between the multinational corporation and its local market with, among others, communication of knowledge and competence (Scott-Kennel & Michailova, 2016; Forsgren et al, 2005).

2.1.1 Internal network

In the internal network, a company's key activities are located in areas where there are the most strategic benefits. The key activities are performed by the sub-units, which are located in areas where they can perform at their full potential. Thus, the company's sub-units have important strategic positions within the company (Bartlett & Beamish, 2018). Ciabuschi, Dellestrand and Holm (2012) confirm this by explaining that the HQ of a company consist of a set of different functions and activities that can be performed at various levels in the organization; company-, division/function/regional- and subsidiary level. This means that subsidiaries can also take on important and leading roles in multinational corporations (Ciabuschi et al. 2012; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018). While the subunits work with specialization activities and operate in the local market in capturing and identifying opportunities, such as competence and information (Forsgren et al, 2005; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018), the HQ has the overall responsibility for the multinational corporation. Those responsibilities include planning, resource distribution and organization of regions/divisions. The different tasks that HQ's have include the creation of new business, the establishment of corporate connections, planning and implementing norms, and maintaining shared values and common goals. Further, they should look at the environment of their subsidiaries, and when these become turbulent. To maintain competitiveness, the HQs will analyse and deal with the subsidiaries individually as well as the entire network. The middle level, i.e. the region/division level, is both the recipient of corporate HQs control but also a contributor of similar control towards smaller local subsidiaries (Ciabuschi et al, 2012). An important aspect that Forsgren et al (2005) states, is the power structures of multinational corporations, which depend on this reciprocity of resources. Thus, power is generated by those who control resources and capabilities, regardless of the position in the hierarchy one has.

Forsgren et al (2005) explains that the understanding of subsidiaries, the group's network and the relationships between each unit, is what paints a complete picture of the company's direction and the strategies that are followed, mappable.

Figure 1 below visualizes the different knowledge bases that are a result from the

conceptualization of HQs at various levels. It indicates that different functions and activities can be performed at different stages. In addition, it can be the result of the knowledge situation for the head office and the hierarchical position, as well as expectations of what the head office should do

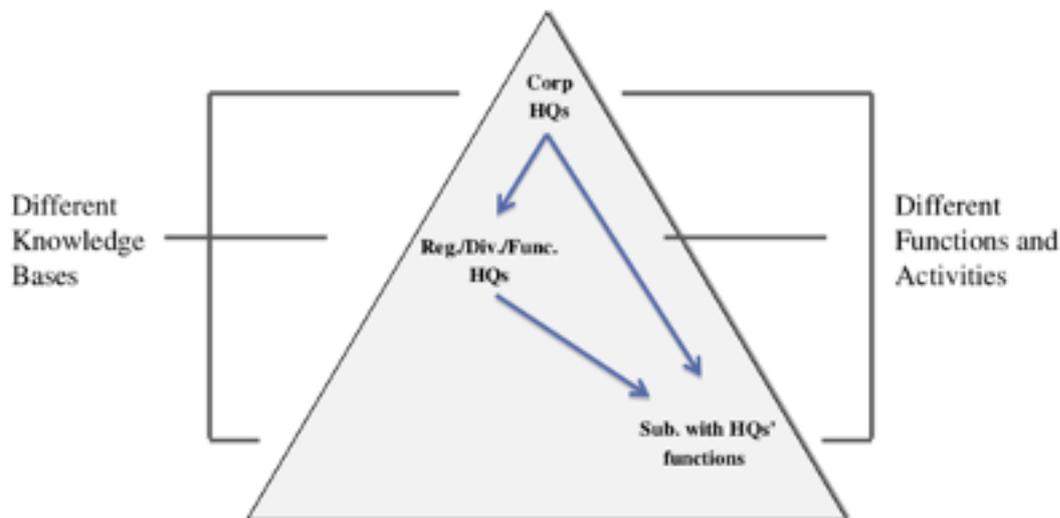


Fig. 2. Different levels of headquarters functions and knowledge.

Figure 1: Ciabuschi et al (2012). Different levels of GQs functions and knowledge.

2.2 Communication

Nobel and Birkinshaw (1998, p. 484) describe communication as “the exchange of information through various media, including face-to-face visits, letters, phone calls, and electronic mail”. The exchange of information and knowledge in firms can take place at different stages and directions, both externally and internally (Ghoshal et al, 1994; Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998). They describe the different directions of communication as lateral and vertical linkages of communication. There are two types of vertical linkages, one of those is the communication between and its subunits, the other is the communication between subunits and its external partners. The lateral type is when subunits are exchanging information and knowledge internally between each other.

2.2.1 Internal communication

Vercic et al (2012) defines internal communication as a management function which is responsible for internal organizational communication. Bovée and Thill (2017) explains internal communication as; the exchange of information and ideas within the firm. Furthermore, it is an interdisciplinary function that integrates personnel management, communication, and marketing (Vercic et al, 2012). They also describe the notion as, “the aspiration (starting from the vision and proceeding to policy and mission statement and eventually to strategy) of achieving a systematic analysis and distribution of information at all strata simultaneously coordinated in the most efficient way possible” (p. 225).

Multinational corporations use internal communication within the organization to ensure that important and necessary information and capabilities are available for all units (Schotter & Bontis, 2009). According to Venaik et al (2005), multinational corporations use network structures to stimulate internal learning and communication among the organization’s geographically and culturally dispersed units. Ghoshal et al (1994) explains that vertical and horizontal linkages are present within interpersonal communication, which in turn describes communication between employees and their superiors, within and in between different subunits. Balancing both horizontal and vertical communication within the firm is, according to Cornelissen (2017), key to achieve a productive internal communication. In order to achieve this, communication from executives and communication departments should contain relevant information for the employees and give them the opportunity to be acknowledged and involved in the organization (Cornelissen, 2017).

On a personal level, J. Mayfield and M. Mayfield (2002) explain that a leader should speak to an employee in a certain manner, as to ensure their commitment to the company and its enforced guidelines. A leader should have three types of so called ‘languages’ when interacting with an employee: a direction giving language, an empathetic language and finally a meaning-making language (J. Mayfield, M. Mayfield, 2002). The three components together make up what is called MLT or “Motivating Language Theory” (Sullivan, 1988). These different types of languages also apply to the case of executives trying to implement different pandemic preventing guidelines. It is important to keep in mind, as an executive in a company, what kind of communication they use to make employees follow the pandemic guidelines. A good set of communication skills is key to creating loyalty and cooperation

from employees (J. Mayfield & M. Mayfield, 2002). Thus, checking of two of the key components compromising the network theory.

2.2.1.1 Internal crisis communication

In short, Kim (2015) describes crisis as an internal or external unpredicted event, which potentially affects corporations in a negative manner. Crisis communication has another meaning. Explained by Johansen, Aggerholm and Frandsen (2012), crisis communication is the interaction between managers and employees, in a private or public organization, before, during and after an organizational and/or social crisis. Similarly, Kim (2015) defines crisis communication as the collection, processing and dissemination of information, which are necessary to address during a crisis. Frandsen and Johansen (2011), Heide and Simonsson (2014), and Kim (2015) all divide this into three steps. The first step is before the crisis occurs, “pre-crisis”, where the company works with preventive and preparatory measures before a possible upcoming crisis. Step two is during the crisis when the focus is on managing the crisis and communicating how it will be implemented. The third and last step, “post-crisis”, is when the company is in a learning phase and adapts the organization to prepare for possible future crisis. Johansen and Frandsen (2011) also emphasize that these steps are not completely separated from one another, they can overlap and be repeated if needed.

Johansen et al (2012) study shows patterns related to corporations’ crisis communication and crisis management. One of those is that most, especially bigger companies, have crisis or contingency plans, which also include an internal dimension. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that every crisis is unique, which means that corporations cannot always follow prescribed crisis plans but most also improvise upon them (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). Amongst companies, it is common to have a formally appointed person or group to deal with crises (Johansen et al, 2012). These crisis preparation measures are not without its flaws. Heide and Simonsson (2014) say that corporate communicators has a limited role during crises and are called in when the crisis has already arrived. They refer this as “communication on demand”, which limits the potential for a strategic approach. The solution to this is to give communicators different roles depending on where the organization is within the three different stages of crisis (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). Even though it is important to have rotating key personnel in multiple locations of operations within the firm. Day, McKay, Ishman and Chung (2004) emphasise that the knowledge generated from these key personnel is not only shared with specific managers but is also communicated openly to all units and

employees within the corporation. What Heide and Simonsson (2014) reinforce, is the integration of both crisis communication and information exchange with everyday activities and considering it as a continuous instead of separate task for specific periods and situations

2.2.2 Formal and informal communication

Combining two very different things have always been problematic, mainly because two opposites of things always contradict one another in one way or the other. The problem of polar opposites interacting is also applicable to, in this case, formal and informal communication (Dow, 1988). These two types of communication are according to Morgan, (2006), different in several characteristics such as; underlying metaphors, mechanistic and organismic, respectively. Trying to combine these two different communication styles, can bear with unwanted problems during a company's handling of general corporate communication (Hartman, Johnson & David, 1990), especially during a pandemic.

According to Dow (1988), formal communication emphasizes an authoritative coordination of work as an aim to achieve a company goal. What that means is that formal communication fulfils the purpose of transmitting a corporation's intentional design of the organization. Formal communication is often associated with lack of flexibility, and standardization of the choice of words. That ruggedness and formality ultimately causes it to also have difficulty to fulfil any other purpose (McPhee, 1985; Dow, 1988). It is often characterized with short-lived period of sharing corporate goals and guidelines. Information often being transmitted through one's superiors.

In contrast, informal communication focuses on recurrent patterns of interaction. Recurrent patterns and the recognition of the fact that communication relationships are not only based on the formal position or title that different employees possess (Dow, 1988). Informal communication often also leads to the formations of smaller informal groups within the working space, people connecting based on a shared combination of human needs (Schein, 1965). This creates a social structure within the company, something that cannot be regulated by the its formal communication (i.e. regulations, rules and guidelines) (Blau, 1954).

The coexistence of these two different types of communication is difficult to balance in general, (Hartman et al, 1990), but is challenging especially during a pandemic (considering the different restrictions are enforced by different states).

2.2.3 Communication channels

According to Oltrazhevskiy (2019), communication channels are the link from which information exchange takes place. Those links can be digital/technological and face-to-face. Communication channels are constantly changing due to the development of information communication technology (ICT) and changes in the communication behaviour of the audience (Winger, 2005; Oltrazhevskiy, 2019).

Face-to-face contact is the direct contact between people. It creates a dialogue that leads to the identification of transferable opportunities and information (Winger, 2005; Schotter & Bontis, 2009). Schotter and Bontis (2009) explain that this way of communicating is effective, particularly in a corporate context, which is especially benefited from open communication and cooperation. According to Kupritz and Cowell (2011), face-to-face communication enables the possibility for social presence and understanding of each other. It is a good means for communicating necessary and sensitive information as well as tacit knowledge. Making use of this specific communication channel, firms can avoid misunderstandings and rumours both within and outside of the organization. Thus, communication is preferred in uncertainty and ambiguous situations, such as confidential and sensitive circumstances (Kupritz & Cowell, 2011). Although face-to-face contact is preferred in a corporate context, it is often not feasible. The reason being mainly the cost of transportation. It is not a cheap matter, transporting employees from place to place, the cost of employee transportation often leads to a large accumulated cost (Winger, 2005; Schotter & Bontis, 2009).

The expensive, but very effective, face-to-face communication, has often been substituted by different communication channels. Mainly, those channels have been developed by the tech industry (Winger, 2005). Tech such as computers, phones and smartphones have given companies the opportunity to reach both their own employees and consumers regardless of geographic location and time zone, in a way that has not been possible before (Lipiänen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen, 2014; Oltrazhevskiy, 2019). These inventions offer an instant, easy and flexible transfer of information (Lipiänen et al 2014). Instead of waiting for several hours to meet someone and discuss a subject, a message can be sent in milliseconds or a call can be made to skip the travel time of transportation (Kupritz & Cowell, 2011; Lipiänen et al, 2014). Something that can be assumed to be very important when broadcasting information about a disease that has reached a pandemic-level threat. Further, Lipiänen et al (2014) states that corporation blogs had the ability to convey corporate spirit.

Although technology dependent communication is a lot faster than the prior type of communication, it is not without its own drawbacks. According to Lipiäinen et al (2014), employees experience a need for face-to-face contact in particular informal communication. Whether it's instant messaging/e-mail, a video conference or a normal call, the drawback is basically the lack of the substantial advantage that a face-to-face meeting has (Winger, 2005; Kupritz & Cowell, 2011). Tacit knowledge is one of those disadvantages that technology dependent communication does not have. Jeanes (2019) defines tacit knowledge as knowledge or information that cannot be conveyed in written form or verbal form. Tacit knowledge can only be delivered face-to-face (Jeanes, 2019). The difference between the previously mentioned communication channels, can often lead to information asymmetry and ultimately lost or misinterpreted information (Schotter & Bontis, 2009).

2.2.4 Cooperation

In network-based companies, there are different links between each unit. One of these linkages is cooperation. Cooperation is defined by Ahuja (2000) as when units within the company voluntarily share resources and information to others internally to benefit the entire corporation. The cooperation together with the communication links create network benefits for the entire corporation. They promote the sharing of resources, knowledge and information for all entities, and facilitates access to the spill over effects (Ahuja, 2000). However, it is more challenging for multinational corporations to create collaboration amongst its subunits because they are geographically dispersed (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005). Geographically dispersed groups are at greater risk of ending up in conflicts and have less chance of achieving a healthy team spirit, compared to collocated teams. Hinds and Mortensen (2005) argue that shared identities and contexts contribute to reduced conflicts between teams within organizations. It is important to achieve a commonality as the teams must work towards a collective vision which the whole company must follow. This commonality can be achieved through shared identity and context, as well as informal communication. Informal communication between MNC's units reduces conflicts between them and promotes collaboration and a sense of belonging within the corporation (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005). Cooperation in all parts of the multinational corporation increases through informal meetings, reciprocal visits and internationally staffed committees. These should, according to Schotter and Bontis (2009), be regular and frequent as it promotes the identification of potential collaborations and exchange of capabilities. Venaik et al (2001) supports the idea that

cooperation improves organizational learning and improves rapid communication of information, for example in the case of new market opportunities and threats. Hence, there is mutual stimulation between cooperation and communication. Hinds and Mortensen (2005) argue that informal communication contributes to strengthened sharing of identity and context between the organization's units. They argue that these effects reflect the role of informal communication in facilitating identification, conflict management and thus fostering collaboration between entities.

2.2.5 Integration

Ensign (1999) explains integration as, how organization manage resource flows through the corporate network consisting of various units which are geographically spread. Multinational corporations manage subsidiaries that are characterized by geographical dispersed, differentiation and interdependencies, which requires extensive integration of all units (Ghoshal et al, 1994; Berry, 2014). According to Berry (2014) communication is fundamental for the exchange of information and knowledge between the organization's units, by allowing everyone to share relevant information and knowledge, integration can be achieved by every unit in the company. Mauri and Figueiredo (2012) acknowledge that by improving internal communication, structures and systems that allow firms to simultaneously increase cross-border integration can be progressed. Communication channels, common knowledge, visibility and integration of units' activities develops simultaneously within the MNC. This can be beneficial for overcoming difficulties in combining knowledge and information from various countries, which in turn can promote joint innovation creation of the entire company (Berry, 2014). One way of improving integration and communication within multinational corporations is the development of informal relationships between managers, which are part of the lateral communication. These relationships with direct horizontal contact can be generated through, for example, joint work teams, tasks and meetings which Ghoshal et al (1994) describes as network mechanism. The mechanism contributes to interpersonal communication, which in turn leads to ongoing communication among people in different parts of the company (Ghosal et al, 1994).

2.2.6 Coordination

Coordination is a term used to explain the relationship between network-based organizations' units (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999; Ceratto, 2006). Ensign (1999) states that coordination is mainly implemented by the central management across national borders,

creating a shared strategy across the board. Network-based organizations have different activities, functions and geographical areas that are treated differently (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999; Ceratto, 2006). The roles and responsibility are thus different between units. In order to maintain these differences, all while the entire organization strives to work towards the same vision, flexibility and communication are key aspects in being able to coordinate the integration and differentiation of resources in the network (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999; Bartlett & Beamish, 2018).

The coordination takes place between the company's units, which allows sharing of accumulated knowledge extracted from different activities (Ensign, 1999). Systems and processes must therefore be developed to support international coordination and communication of information (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998). Nobel and Birkinshaw (1998) describe how coordination and communication is incorporated in the MNC network. There are vertical linkages of communication between units and HQ, lateral linkages of communication between the international subunits themselves, as well as vertical linkages of communication between subunits and external parties (Ghosal et al, 1994; Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998). The vertical communication between units and their HQs contribute to the coordination of retained differentiation and consistency throughout the organization (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999). The lateral linkages of communication between subunits within the network contribute to facilitating the flow of new ideas between units and the creation of synergies (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998).

As interdependency is created in network-based organizations coordination, new requirements for sharing of information will arise. In order to achieve reciprocity within the MNC, assets and responsibilities need to be allocated to each unit (Ensign, 1999; Ceratto, 2006; Vahlne & Johanson, 2013). For this to happen, the requirements for good communication must be fulfilled (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998). All information cannot be transmitted through formal systems, but different socialization processes, for example movement of people, informal communications or group forums, is needed to achieve coordination. The transfer of staff between the company's units can support coordination in several ways, by reducing differences between units, establishing personal contacts that facilitate joint projects, and promoting corporate identity. Some MNC's have active rotating programs or groupware by continuously arranging training and development programs. This also applies to company-oriented and training programs where managers from various units within the organization

meet and contribute to increased coordination within the organization. Ensign (1999) describes that the challenges MNC's face stem from the organization and management differentiations, whilst at the same time maintaining cohesion. Good coordination can be implemented to ease those challenges.

3 Method

The purpose of this methodology chapter is to create a clear picture for the reader on how the thesis has proceeded. This chapter will begin with explaining what approach in which this study will be conducted and why it was chosen. The cases will continuously be compared to the chosen theories, as to create a stable foundation for the thesis and a clear picture for the reader as to what the purpose of this paper is.

The above description of how the thesis will take shape, in combination with the contents of the study, will attempt to establish a reference point. A reference point so one can evaluate the study's quality and suitability of creating an insight to the issue which the research question raises.

3.1 Research Approach

This study's theoretical foundation mainly rests on communication and looking at cooperation, integration and coordination through a 'communication lens'. A qualitative method is deemed to be the most appropriate for this work. It is the most suitable, because the purpose of this paper calls for a deeper understanding of the thought process behind a certain decision that is made by an executive within a MNC (Andersen, 1998). The way of which a qualitative method is going to be conducted in this study, is mainly through several interviews of managers from different companies (Lind, 2019).

In combination with that, one has to perform one of three methods, either the inductive, deductive or the abductive method. By examining established theories within communication and cross-border management and comparing these with how corporations deal with these aspects during a pandemic, a deductive research approach is appropriate (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since companies are facing a new situation which tests their ability to conduct internal operations based on established statues and norms, there is a need to analyse established theories. In the deductive method, established theories of communication and international management are tested against observations of how companies conduct internal operations during a pandemic based on communication and international management (Patel & Davidsson, 2019). When making use of the deductive method, one proceeds on to understanding the interview results based on different pre-

existing theories, which is what will be done after conducting each and every interview (Lind, 2019).

3.2 The Multiple Case Study

This study aims to make an observation of the case studies included, as to be able to answer the research question; *'How do MNC's and their executives work with cooperation, integration and coordination through communication during Covid-19?'*. According to Lind (2019), observations cannot be conducted if one does not make use of an external starting point. The reasoning behind that decision is because this study will examine a new circumstance that has risen, Covid-19, which has affected the world economy as a whole.

Although a single case study might create a more in-depth empirical data focus and understanding of the subject in question (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Siggelkow, 2007; Fletcher & Plakoyiannaki, 2011). This study has chosen to examine several companies active in varying industries. The reason behind that, is to attempt to create an analytical generalization, which is most suitable when attempting to search for a common denominator within a large variation of companies (Halkier, 2011). In addition, a multiple case study enables an analysis of data within each case and between different cases. In this way, differences and similarities can be identified, which can contribute to the emergence of new theories (Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Gustafsson, 2017).

3.3 The Research Process

The research process began with finding a good combination of an interesting research question coupled along with relevant theories. Not only did the research question have to be interesting, but also relevant in context of the time it was written in. An interesting research question was conceived after reading about Covid-19 and other pandemic's impact on the economy and corporations. Since Covid-19 is live during the writing of this thesis, it is considered relevant to write about pandemic's impact on a corporation's internals. The choice of focusing on communication as an internal factor within corporations is because communication is the link between everything that is done within the company. Linking things such as coordination, integration and cooperation (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005; Mauri & Figueiredo, 2012; Berry, 2014). Relevant theories that has a connection with the research question were then found by searching research articles at Google Scholar and the University of Gothenburg's online library. In the search for relevant

theories, keywords such as *communication, cooperation, integration, coordination* and *MNC* were used to find suitable theories that relate to the topic of the thesis.

The method chapter was written continuously throughout the work to document how the thesis has evolved from the design of the research topic and research question to a conclusion. Following step of this research, the empirical data is collected through interviews whilst keeping the purpose of this study in mind. The interviews laid the foundation for the entire empirical chapter in which an explanation of how the companies worked internally during Covid-19. This led to an analysis where empirical findings together with previously described theories were used to arrive at a conclusion and an answer to the research question.

3.4 Data Collection

The purpose of this subheading is to present what kind of data was collected and where they mainly were taken from. Following the description of the primary data, which in this case mainly stems from the interviews conducted. It will also be explained why certain methods for gathering data were chosen.

3.4.1 Primary Data

A qualitative method is made with a collection of primary data which is conducted through interviews. Interviews are meaningful in a qualitative method as it gives people the opportunity to express thoughts and experiences (Arsel, 2017) In this study, interviews are relevant in order to gain access to the primary source, i.e. the respondent's experience of how the company works internally during Covid-19. Further, since Covid-19 is ongoing during this work, there is not much secondary data available. In addition, there is the possibility for the interviewer to both formulate questions before interviews and to develop and shape questions during interviews (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Every interview is individual and unique which can lead to the opportunity to go deeper into one or more subjects (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The variation between the different interviews, is seen as something positive, mainly because the afore mentioned factors (communication, integration, coordination and cooperation) are focused by at different degrees by different companies.

3.4.1.1 Selection criteria

When choosing the right respondent, the main criteria was that it was a person with responsibility over a larger number of employees. This is mainly because it would directly

assist in the answering of the research question, but also increase the potential for a greater amount of insight into the company's Covid-19 management. Besides that, it was also important that the company, in which the respondent was working in, be international. What that means is that it has operations in more than one country. That low bar, is the reasoning behind including Digit (See table 1). Digit is a company that has only expanded to one other country, Sweden, but is planning on expanding even further.

Besides the two aforementioned points, there was not any other criteria when it came to what industry the company should be active in. What accompanied the criteria of the companies being multinational, was also that the companies offer different types services and products. The purpose of that addition was to create a broader insight into how different industries work with cooperation, coordination, integration and communication.

No particular area of the globe was sought after, rather, simply the company which was most accessible would be subject to interviews. Since both authors of this paper had a direct link to the respondents, those particular people were chosen as interview subjects

3.4.1.2 Interviewing process

The authors of this paper became well-read in the research topic before the design of interview questions began. Interviews were a semi-open conversation, between the interview subject and the holders of the interview (Lind, 2019). The interview questions have been formulated in advance and additional follow up questions were asked in connection to the predetermined questions. The formulated question which were created in advance can be found in appendix 8.1 What was considered during the formation of the questions, was the need to make them broad so that they may lead the interviews as a whole, to varying directions. It was not desired that the answers of the respondents inevitably lead to the same results. The aim is to find out what the companies do, not if they necessarily do something specific. General questions about their role in the company were asked and after that, theory based, and Covid-19 questions were raised.

The interviews were all conducted on Zoom, a digital platform offering video chats, chats and normal calls. Being confined to that digital platform, instead of conducting the interview face-to-face, hindered the interpretation and analysis of different factors surrounding the interviewed person. Those factors include things such as reactions, surroundings and body language. After informing them of their integrity, the research question of the thesis was sent

to them, so they would be able to continuously relate their answers to it throughout the entire interview. Two people interviewed each respondent at the same time, both having been delegated certain questions, so there would not be any unintended interruptions. Each question was raised in the same order for every respondent, combined with some follow-up questions which were different from interviewee to interviewee. The interviews ranged between 20 to 50 minutes, averaging at about 35 minutes.

Table 1

Company “Alias”	Respondent “Alias”	Industry	Role	Interviewed
Alfa	Frances	Consulting	Head of Unit	2020-05-07
Digit	Jackie	Digital real estate	Swedish CEO	2020-05-05
Seaway	Chris	Transport	Business Developer Manager	2020-05-01
Ware	Lee	Material Handling	Team Manager (West)	2020-04-16

Further, the recorded interviews were listened to, where bookmarks were marked at times when the respondent commented on something relevant to the essay’s analysis and could contribute to answering the research question. The data from the interviews was thematically divided to facilitate the analysis process. The analysis identified how corporations’ situations can be explained and compared to selected theories, which should create an understanding for the reader on how corporations during pandemics work with coordination, integration and cooperation through communication.

3.5 Analysis Process

An empirical analysis combined with an ongoing theoretical analysis are the two components making up the analysis process. The main point, when analysing the results of the empirical data, was to find themes common between all the studied companies. This, according to Braun and Clarke (2008), is the way one conducts a thematic analysis method. The same source states also that a thematic method is necessary if one wishes to have a rich and detailed account of data, mainly thanks to the flexible and general usefulness nature of the analysis method the analysis follows the same structure as the empirical chapter does. What that

means is that the same order of subheadings was instated in both the analysis and the empirics, mainly so that the reader could easily follow the connection of the two chapters.

Further, the subjects were asked how effective they felt their crisis decisions were, mainly to take into account the differences between what is said and what was done. Comparisons were made between how the different factors (communication, integration, cooperation and coordination) were defined in this paper and how they were attempted to optimally be implemented in the subject's respective companies.

3.5.1 Empirical Analysis

When structuring and analysing the collected data, problems may arise such as the fact that it becomes overwhelming with a lot of data that is not relevant to one's study and important data can be forgotten, can appear (Soulsby & Clark, 2011). To prevent this to occur, bookmarks are used in the codification and analysis of the audio-recorded interviews, which is approved by the respondents. Every interview is thoroughly listened to and simultaneously bookmarks are used at times when the respondent said something relevant to the study. This helps to combine patterns with selected theories, which will counsel to a thematic empirical chapter. The reason why transcription was not made, is because it was found that it would be too time consuming and time ineffective, in the case of this study. Despite transcription giving a clear overview of what has been said during an interview, a different path was taken as to invest time in other areas of the thesis. All notes received from using bookmarks are compiled and categorized by corporation, to get an overview of the corporation and enable analysis between the companies.

3.6 Quality of the Study

In order to ensure the quality and reliability of this paper, certain necessary aspects have been considered. These necessary aspects are; dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability (Guba 1981; Shenton, 2004), which will be elaborated upon, as to create trustworthy thesis. All the previously mentioned components must be kept at a high standard so that the general quality of the study reaches a satisfactory level (Guba, 1981).

3.6.1 Dependability

A qualitative study is difficult to replicate according to people such as Guba & Lincoln (1994), Eriksson & Kovalainen, (2008). Thus, it is of utmost importance to consider

dependability, whose definition is described by Guba et al (1994) as the possibility to track development of insight and the analytical process that is applied in a study. Therefore, the method and analytical process, in this thesis, has been described thoroughly and extensively about how the research process has progressed with all its steps. To maintain a red thread throughout the work, commitments have been made, which will contribute to a clearer vision of the research process for the readers. One of these commitments is that both authors worked in the same chapter, which enabled control solutions to be made and question could be asked to each other. Other commitments are that both writers conducted the interviews and designed the questions to ensure that no misunderstandings arose and that the questions were answered. Hence, the reader of this paper has the opportunity to follow the decisions made during the process from establishing a research question to the analysis and conclusion. The purpose of these commitments and the presentation of the research process and analysis process is for the reader to feel the sense of trust in the choices made in this study and understand the reasoning behind them (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

3.6.2 Credibility

Shenton (2004) describes credibility as the potential to explain something in different ways, ultimately making one question if things such as the explanation of empirical events can be believed or not. To ensure a higher level of credibility for this study, a vigorous research method was conducted. A method which often included cross fact checking, where information taken from a certain source was compared to other articles with similar research questions. For example, things that are said by one leader is often compared to what is written from other sources, as a way of ensuring what is said is true and not made up as an attempt to disrupt the credibility of the company itself. Credibility was kept in mind even when conducting the interviews. As previously mentioned, the questions that were raised to the leaders were not sent in beforehand, mainly so that there would not be any possibility of preparing a certain of answer. In the end of the day, leaders naturally want to make themselves look good (Brown & Trevino, 2006), which is something that would ultimately risk their credibility as a source for this study. Furthermore, credibility has been maintained through a multiple case study which enables triangulation. The triangulation is done both in the empirical findings between the studied companies and in the analysis between the companies and the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework. As a result, the various cases allowed an understanding of how different companies applied coordination, integration and cooperation through communication during Covid-19. Member checks has also been

made to increase the credibility of this thesis (Shenton, 2004). This was sought by offering the interviewees the opportunity to check at what had been written about them and the company in the empirics. Finally, the findings retrieved through the interviews will be compared to the information gathered from articles and literatures, as to come to a sound conclusion that is based on facts and information from a trustworthy source.

3.6.3 Confirmability

According to Guba (1981), confirmability is someone bias towards something. Objectivity is thus an important aspect when discussing the confirmability of the thesis (Shenton, 2004). In order to avoid bias and thereby increase confirmability, the authors have read each other's parts which they have been responsible for. Meetings with a supervisor have also been held continuously, where the supervisor looked through the thesis and provided feedback to parts where it needs to be corrected. Seminar with other thesis writers has been held where there has been discussions and feedbacks to reduce bias and thereupon increase the confirmability of the thesis. Further, confirmability was handled in this thesis through the careful and clear use of sources, and that these sources presented correctly both continuously throughout the text as well as in the reference list. Triangulation is applied as a tool during work to continuously confirm used sources. Transparency will be an important part of the analysis and conclusion to deal with the paper's confirmability and quality.

3.6.4 Transferability

By transferability in a qualitative study, it is meant that the study's findings may be applicable in other contexts, which in turn helps the reader to judge the text of the thesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to achieve transferability in the dissertation, explanations of concepts such as network based multinational corporations, internal communication, and delimitations have been made. The explanation that this study uses analytical generalization instead of statistical generalization gives clarity to the reader on how the study has progressed. The adoption of analytical generalization provides a motive for the reasoning behind the decision to include a large variation between the case studies. In addition, it has been explained how the data collection process went, where the work before the interview was presented and where the interviews occurred, all in the purpose of giving a complete understanding of the research. Delimitations are described to help the reader understand the main purpose of the dissertation and why certain aspects are not considered which may be of interest for future studies. All relevant information taken from different sources, will be linked with a reference

to the source it was taken from. According to Patel & Davidson (2019), the most common way of referencing a source when writing a subject about behavioural- or social science, is following the American Psychological Association guidelines. Therefore, this paper will also comply to those guidelines.

3.6.5 Ethical perspectives

When gathering primary data through personal interviews, it is extremely important to be aware of the ethical perspectives and challenges that will arise (Patel & Davidson, 2019). According to Lind (2019), it is of outmost importance to inform the interviewee, of what purpose the interview will be conducted and what the shared information will be used for. Therefore, it will be informed to the interviewee that together with the company they will be anonymized. Furthermore, they will be told that the information shared will only be used in this paper and only published in the school's public database. Nothing said will be used against them in any way shape or form. Permission will be asked for, before even starting the interview. Eventual recording of the interview will also be done if permitted by the person in question.

3.7 Limitations

Not being able to conduct an in-depth study of each and every company, is a direct consequence of having so many different ones. Subjects are treading in uncharted water, which makes their insight on what should be done very limited.

Due to Covid-19, a larger amount of test subjects was not achievable. That hindered the study from presenting a broader sense of understanding surrounding the situation of MNC's and executives handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Further, there was not a sufficient amount of time to create a thorough investigation of how MNC's and its executives work with the thesis main factors (communication, integration, cooperation and coordination). A nuanced picture of the situation and more precise information was not possible to achieve.

It is worth mentioning that including companies that vary in industries, has its drawbacks, such as the difficulty of creating a statistical generalization. Instead, the study presents the possibility of an analytical generalization (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki 2011), which in part explains the reasoning behind the decision to include a large variation between the case studies.

4 Empirics

In the following chapter, data from the interviews will be presented in a certain order, facilitating the analysis and providing an answer to the research question. As previously mentioned, the respondents and their companies they work for will be anonymous, and therefore is given an alias. In order to clarify who, the respondents are as well as, what industry they operate in and what role they have in the company, the *Table 1* under *3.4.1.2 Interviewing process* has been conducted.

The data gathered from conducted interviews will be presented in following subheadings; Communication of Information and Guidelines, Communication Channels, Crisis Communication & Crisis Groups, Cooperation and Coordination & Integration. Coordination and integration are dealt with under the same subheading because they will be described in the same context and are mutually interdependent.

4.1 Communication of Information and Guidelines

Communication is seen as the umbrella term, included in the different factors that is used to examine these different companies. The case companies' communication permeates many parts of their internal operations and has been central to the provision of Covid-19 guidelines and recommendations. Communication is a key tool for informing all units, subsidiaries and employees how the corporation should proceed, regarding government guidelines and rules, under the circumstances discovered in the track of Covid-19. Alfa, Digit, Seaway and Ware have all informed preventive Covid-19 guidelines, some of which differ between subsidiaries and parent company.

A preventative measure that differs between companies is whether employees should work at home or not. Ware and Alfa have measures where employees should work from home. In Ware, some departments only work from home, while other departments work two days of the week at the office and the remaining time from home. These measures depend on the duties of the department and the spread of the virus in that particular region. Lee describes that the region of Sweden has been able to resist the European Region's demand for short-term furlough, as the Swedish subsidiary has duties in comparison with their subsidiaries in Europe which are in lockdown. However, in Digit the employees are not compelled to work from home. Jackie has a twofold opinion about the fact that Digit's employees do not work from

home. Jackie expresses that the employees are meeting people in their work during showings of apartments and writing of contracts, which is more exposing than being in their office. “It feels almost ridiculous if we say that you are not allowed to come into the office, we cannot close our business. So, you have to be out and meet people” - Jackie [Translated from Swedish by authors].

Seaway on the other hand, has created its own guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Those measures include a guideline for each region to adhere to its authority recommendation and rules on the virus. Seaway encourage its employees to work both at home and at the office. At the head quarter different functions have been divided between departments, which means that if the disease arrives in a department, not everyone with the same function will be affected.

A common theme discovered amongst all the companies and their communication regarding preventive recommendation of Covid-19: Alfa, Digit, Seaway and Ware, is that they have a decentralized system when it comes to Covid-19 prevention guidelines. All the companies that were studied were subject to different recommendations coming from different national public health agencies. More specifically, the guidelines communicated out internally, from the different departments within the case studies, originated from local national governments. General preventive guidelines regarding Covid-19 is communicated by the companies' head quarter. Questions regarding employees such as short-time furlough is communicated by the human relation department.

4.2 Communication channels

All of the interviewed companies had, through different communication channels, routine updates and follow-ups concerning the future of the company and the virus as a whole. These updates also served as dialogue tool between the employees and the executives, a top to bottom, bottom to top system, where demands and information flows in both directions of the hierarchy.

Common for all companies is that, digital communication channels have increased while physical meetings have been reduced and missions ceased. Of the digital communication channels, mail, instant messaging, intranet, video meetings and ‘Microsoft-teams’, are used most frequently. For Digit, distance communication with digital communication tools

between the parent company and the subsidiary has existed since the establishment of the Swedish subsidiary. Jackie explains this as, “Since we are at the beginning phase of expanding the business and are relatively new, distance communication works as a foundation and is the heart of the corporation” [Translated from Swedish by authors]. Seaway have weekly broadcasts on the company’s intranet, where the company’s CEO describe the situation the organization is in both internally and externally. In the same company, forums have been created in the head quarter, where information is given to the different departments, filling the purpose of motivating the employees.

The transport corporation differed in their structure of who communicated the *formal* information and which ones provides the information. CEO is responsible for the company wide communication, whilst the communication and PR department are responsible for providing the information that is communicated by the CEO. Generally, all corporations exchange *informal* information mutually from parent company to subsidiaries and vice versa.

According to all the interviewed companies, there is no possibility anymore to read your counterparts emotions or reaction to certain things one says, mainly because of the decreased face-to-face time in meetings. One may consequently risk seeming unempathetic while communicating through anything other than a personal meeting. This is expressed by Frances as follows: “Sometimes you have bad news and unfortunately these have to be taken over the phone. It is not perceived as so empathetic to call on the phone” [Translated from Swedish by authors]. For Digit, who recently started their internationalization, the Global CEO and the CEO of the Swedish branch are those who have been most affected *within the company* by the pandemic. This is mainly because of the travelling which they are not able to do because of the current global situation. The difficulty of traveling has affected the company’s prospect of maintaining the profits of its first international expansion. Although they did not implement any official guidelines across the entire company, they still did provide their employees with recommendations on how they should act if sick or when they are around clients. One could also mention that the offices in its home country were restricted to a larger extent than they were in Sweden. It is worth noting that Digit is considered to be a MNC, despite it not being as large as the rest of the studied corporations, mainly because it actually has expanded to a foreign company. Transmitting information such as, follow-ups, data, experiences and general knowledge surrounding the development of the Swedish branch, has become more difficult and limited by the fact that the face-to-face meetings have been limited.

4.3 Crisis Communication & Crisis Groups

The companies interviewed differed when it came to corporation holding crisis group, crisis communication and crisis management. Common for three out of four companies is that a crisis group and a crisis management plan were established when the pandemic began to spread across Europe and Scandinavia. It is primarily the human relation department that has been involved in this role of analysing, gathering information, describing, informing the latest updates on internal circumstances such as short-time furlough, the spread of the virus and how the business should continue.

However, two companies differed from both each other and the other interviewed companies. The newly established digital real estate firm Digit has no crisis group or crisis management plan, which was explained by Jackie being because Digit is in a growth phase. Jackie further explains that preventive measures now would not be relevant in a month or a week, as their operations grow and develops. “For companies that are in constant change and growth, there are processes that are not business essential, but nevertheless still operational, which can be great. But if you take the example of crisis communication, it demands several weeks or months of work to be updated each time, which we find to be not as good”- Jackie [Translated from Swedish by authors]. While the more established transport corporation Seaway whose business regions are in the Baltic, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany, constituted a “corona task force” group at the management level when Denmark closed national borders and schools. The corona task force is a group whose purpose is to initiate the issues that need extra focus during the pandemic. Part of it is that a group of relevant parties is monitoring business continuity, which means ensuring whether the Seaway can continue to operate. In addition, the security was examined to ensure that the Seaway takes correct measures regarding, for example, pandemic regulations. Many functions within Seaway’s head quarter went into a state of readiness which were board of directors, commercial management group, human relation- and communication department. Within these department, information is collected and evaluated in order for the company to continue with its operations.

But to summarize, all companies did some kind of preventive measures to fight the spread of Covid-19. Whether it be the more extensive action taking of Seaway, or the more laid-back

approach of Digit, one could say that all the companies have done what they can do to contribute in the fight against Covid-19

4.4 Cooperation

According to the interviewed companies, creating an environment which encourages cooperation is made more difficult, directly because the daily contact with colleagues and informal communication cannot be maintained. In addition, the companies express that it will be challenging to cooperate when subsidiaries follow its country's guidelines, which may differ. This has resulted, for Digit, in employees missing or skipping important team building activities such as: virtual lunches and other after work events. The remainder of companies have also started a virtual workspace initiative, with limited effect on their employees. Thus, daily team meetings have been arranged which are virtual. In these meetings, reconciliations are made, to see where the group and individuals are now with their work and where they are heading. On the other hand, it is perceived demanding for the leader to follow up work, drive the group forward and motivate the employees. Chris describes Seaways early lesson about Covid-19 and employee motivation "It is easier to keep your motivation up and running as when you continuously receive information flows about what is happening. But when these flows of information slow down, it may become more difficult" [Translated from Swedish by authors].

Other complicated situations with sub-units that follow their country's guidelines, which is expressed by Alfa and Ware, are how others within the company see and accept the HQ's actions in the situation. Alfa and Ware explained that they have had initial problems with the head quarter in particular wanting to incorporate their country's rules and recommendations into the subsidiaries. Frances describes the corporation differences as follows, "There will always be a built in differentiation between different parts of a company" [Translated from Swedish by authors]. By having open dialogues and an increased understanding of the countries' differences both with this circumstance and otherwise, acceptance of the disparities has been incorporated and eventual issues has been harmonized and visible.

For Seaway, Covid-19 has affected their cooperation between its regions. Education and talent programs that help the company with its regions to respond to local need while all working towards the company's shared vision. These are not being arranged now but will start when the pandemic is over. Other approaches Seaway is taking to maintain the

cooperation are daily video meetings between the regions' management and the HQs. During the meetings, each region tells how they work with Covid-19 and what their surroundings look like, which facilitates everyone get a part of each other's external analyses.

Each company that was interviewed for this study have voiced difficulties in establishing cooperation, both within and between different departments during the Covid-19 pandemic. The reason behind those difficulties stem mainly from the national and government orders recommending employees to work from home or outright lockdowns prohibiting anyone from going outside.

4.5 Coordination & Integration

The main common theme that was discovered to be relevant amongst all of the studied companies, was the attempt to squeeze in a sensible number of meetings during the week. Meetings that, was said by the interviewed leaders, were meant to be an attempt at creating a harmonious coordination and integration within respective companies. The frequency of said meetings vary depending which company one chooses to look at, but one could say that they all were discussing similar things: what does the future look like for the company, status report on resources and competences, progress of the current Covid-19 pandemic and possibilities of 'going back to business as usual'.

Despite that deviation of behaviour, Ware and all the other companies expressed difficulty in creating an effective team coordination exclusively because of the differences in restrictions set by different countries. It was expressed that there was difficult to create a joint project between Swedish team and a French team. What was expressed was the difference in effectiveness in the projects, making most of the burden fall on the Swedish team. This was just an example of the situation for Alfa, but one could find a common theme between a looser and less restrictive grip within a nation and the effectiveness of its businesses.

According to Lee, the measures that have been taken to maintain integration within the corporation have been difficult to look into employees' progress, motivate them and create an environment which encourages progress. Further, the coordination of staff has been affected by the imposed travel restrictions; personnel that were planning on projects based in Sweden were not able to travel to the country. A challenge for Seaway's integration and coordination was when countries began to introduce new Covid-19 preventive rules frequently, one of

which was travel restrictions as a measure to spread the pandemic. Tourism transport, one of two major sources of revenue, fell away from the corporation. Seaway was affected and they needed to act quickly, while being flexible for new actions in a short time.

An early lesson for Seaway and the other interviewed companies, which facilitated collaboration but also the integration of information between all subsidiaries, was that all subsidiaries must be open with the communication of information. To be more specific, it concerned information that come from their governments about pandemic measures, this mainly because of the differences between countries. It is preferred that information comes from the subsidiaries, as a primary source, to the HQ, instead of the HQ being forced to read news from a secondary source. In addition, Seaway's environmental scanning is shared to enable everyone to learn from others within the company, both externally an internally. Chris states environmental scanning impact on the corporation as, "The environmental scanning has been at its forefront [...]. These have been of great help to everyone within the corporation as resources can be distributed among the regions" [Translated from Swedish by authors]. These analyses are mutually shared within Seaway in which every subsidiary as well as HQ becomes aware and informed.

5 Analysis

In this chapter, the results from the empirical data has been analysed, all while keeping the aforementioned theories in mind. It will follow the same structure as the empirical chapter, making it easier to identify relevant links between theory and empirics.

5.1 Communication of Information and Guidelines

What all these companies have in common, is the independent work their subsidiaries do within their respective country of operations. This independent work, following local Covid-19 guidelines, indicate that there is a decentralized type of structure and control within each and every company. The decentralized structure of the companies therefore implies that there is a fair amount of differences between each subsidiary, both when it comes to virus prevention measures and the ongoing operations.

These differences have sometimes led to disagreements within the corporation, where Ware for example has been forced to refute the implementation of short-time furlough suggested by their HQ. The main problem is the differences their ways of working a decentralized company structure entail. Even though these differences exist, it is still important that the entire corporation and all its subsidiaries find ways to work together towards the common company vision (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999; Ceratto, 2006). Seaway is an exception to this trend among the studied companies, since they implement guidelines across country borders in all their subsidiaries, one of these guidelines being the encouragement to follow local public health agencies recommendations. This may be a contributing factor to the fact that no disagreements have yet taken place between regions and HQ in Seaway. Since there are clear guidelines that show commonality and difference within the company, which (Ghoshal et al, 1994; Berry, 2014) mentions that it is one of the main features of a MNC, it can contribute to an increased understanding among everyone within the corporation.

5.2 Communication channels

Both positive and negative outcomes have been generated within all of the case companies, regarding the decrease of physical meetings and the increase of digital communication channels. The positive effects stated by the respondents is that assignments and projects have been completed in a shorter span of time during the pandemic, compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic. This may be due to the fact that one is not confined to time and place (Lipiänen

et al, 2014; Oltrazhevskiy, 2019). Even though it has been stated by the case companies that communication through digital platforms are more effective, the pros of that does not outweigh the con of not being able to read emotions and reactions. Distance communication with the help of digital communication tools has lately been used more frequently, while the face-to-face meetings have decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is problematic since, according to Kupritz & Cowells (2011), face-to-face communication is preferred during uncertain and ambiguous situations, but is now avoided because of the pandemic. This has contributed to new aspects that companies are now forced to consider during their ongoing operations. Absence of the ability to read the other parties' emotions, reactions and expressions is made more complicated in situations such as layoffs and short-time furloughs, where the employer can seem unempathetic. Lipiäinen et al (2014) and Schotter & Bontis (2009) have reaffirmed this assumption in their own studies, the fact that digital communication channels often lead to information asymmetry and misunderstood information. To avoid the misunderstandings, the subjects (especially Seaway and Ware), have had open dialogues and frequent contact to combat the disadvantages that come with lack of face-to-face contact. Videocalls are seen as a temporary substitute, imitating face-to-face contact.

For Digit, that at the time of the interview were in the starting phase of their first international expansion, the restrictions have mainly affected the executive's business trips between the HQ and Swedish office. Considering that the Swedish office is Digits first international expansion, expresses that it is important for the CEO of the company to be on site. To be on site Jackie explained, is important as to be able to oversee the development of the office, something that is not possible considering the restrictions imposed in the two countries (HQ home country & Sweden). The CEO is not able to identify and analyse the progress of the Swedish site. This can contribute to complications for Digit if travel restrictions persist. Because the information and knowledge generated by these visits in each company requires that one is present and physically present, which Jeanes (2019) describes as tacit knowledge. The importance of being physically present is because this information or knowledge is very difficult if not impossible to codify remotely (Jeanes, 2019), such as digital communication channels.

The question remains though, is there or even will there be a communication channel that can fill the same function as face-to-face contact? As previously mentioned, by all the companies included in the study, executives' risk being seen as unsympathetic in certain situations mainly because of the disability in reading the environment. This is a problem that all companies, even those we did not study, are affected by. One might notice a domino effect indirectly linked to this problem which often leads to less productivity. Less productivity because of decreased motivation, leads to less revenue (because of less sales), which in turn leads to several other entities being affected. The consequences of not being able to meet in person, seems like a problem that will persist forever, despite the possible technological advancements of the future.

5.3 Crisis Communication & Crisis Groups

The afore mentioned three steps of crisis management, are Pre-crisis, Crisis and Post crisis. At this stage of time, the first two steps (pre-crisis and crisis) can be analysed as the corporations are or have been in these stages.

5.3.1 Pre-crisis

Pre-crisis, as Frandsen and Johansen (2011), Heide and Simonsson (2014), and Kim (2015) describe it, is the time before a crisis occurs. This is the time where companies have the greatest possibility for preparing and protecting its assets. Covid-19 is not like any other pandemic in modern history, mainly because of its rapid spread across the globe (Medical News, mars 26, 2020). This has made it practically impossible for many of the studied corporations and its subsidiaries across the world to implement pre-emptive measures, despite the pre-crisis slot being the optimal time to do it. In adding to the spread, making it more difficult for companies to prepare, it was impossible to predict how restrictive each country would end up being. What ended up happening was that the companies, including those that were chosen for this study, adapted to the development of Covid-19 in real-time, as it was happening. Adapting by making new guidelines, making only enforcing only locally made decisions and going by trial and error. According to Heide and Simonsson (2014), that is one of the only ways in handling an unpredictable crisis.

5.3.2 Crisis

During the crisis, Covid-19 began to spread all over Europe and Scandinavia. Following that fact, measures were taken to re-structure Alfa, Ware and Seaway where crisis groups and

crisis management plans were established. In these groups and plans, human relations and the communication departments are involved in analysing, collecting information, explaining and informing the company on the latest updates. The companies were practicing what Heide and Simosson (2014) call “communication on demand”. In the case of Alfa, Ware and Seaway, certain parts of human relations and communications department are summoned when needed, in cases such as the discussion of board members. This enables them to communicate out correct and relevant information. The synergy between the board, human relations and communications department, is according to Day et al (2004) important as to maintain transparency in front of the employees.

Digit is the only company without any crisis preparation measures. Jackie explains that, considering that the company is in the growth phase, crisis plans or any preparing measure, would only have to consistently change. This is somewhat in the same line as Johansen et al (2012) presented in their work that crisis groups and crisis communication were more common within larger corporations. However, for Digit’s part, it may not depend on the size but on what phase the company is in. Thus, the company’s phase can be a factor that influences whether companies have crisis management and crisis communication. One could reason that there might be an additional reason behind Digit’s active decision to not gather a dedicated task force. Besides the fact that the company is in a growth phase, one might argue that no task force exists within the company mainly because of certain circumstances surrounding their countries of operations and the services they offer. Digit is active in Sweden, where a complete lockdown was not in question, so operations where realtors meet clients was still possible. In contrast, the restrictions in its home country was a lot stricter, compared to Sweden, but that was not a problem either since all of Digit’s operations there is digital. When considering what countries they operate in, a crisis group is not really needed, but that mindset might change in the future, depending on what country they choose expanding to next.

5.3.3 Post-crisis

Since the Covid-19 pandemic was still present during the compilation of this thesis, a post-crisis analysis is difficult to interpret. However, the respondents have expressed some lessons learned so far by Covid-19. Lessons such as that there should be an open dialogue between subsidiaries and their parent companies. The information generated between subsidiaries and the parent company, as well as the information generated from the authorities in the unit’s

country of operations, should only be the information that the companies must follow. In this way, false information is avoided from secondary sources, such as media and other irrelevant sources. The open dialogue also allows acceptance between the different approaches of the units that have been caused by Covid-19. This open dialogues between multinational corporations' units can contributed to a more efficient, cooperative and accepting relationship between them. Future differences that may emerge can be addressed through open dialogues to ensure that everyone within the corporation work towards a shared vision. These lessons can be used as a preventative measure for future possible pandemics.

5.4 Cooperation

Since physical meetings and business trips have been cancelled, the cooperation between and within the units themselves has become more difficult and complicated. This decrease also directly affects the informal communication, decreasing it drastically. In turn, Hinds and Mortensen (2005) explain, this decreases the individualization of the different identities and sense of belonging between the HQ and its affiliated companies. The increase in misinterpretations made *pari passu* increase with the decrease in informal communication, sometimes leading to misunderstanding and conflicts. Alfa and Ware are the two companies in which one can finds this type of problem, where there is lack of understanding when it comes to the difference in countries and subsidiaries situations. Frances and Lee stress that an open dialogue between an affiliate and its HQ, promote tolerance and the spotlighting and solving of possible shortcomings (problems).

Videocalls have temporarily replaced all psychical meetings, which respondents express creates difficulty in creating an environment where cooperation is encouraged. In addition to the limitations of meeting forums, the lack of daily communication and informal communication have been named as factors for the difficulty in upholding a cooperation encouraging environment. This is in line with Lee and Frances's voicing concerns surrounding the disagreements between HQ and its affiliates. This concern is further explained by Hinds and Mortensens (2005) reasoning about shared identities and its contexts. In addition, Hinds and Mortensen (2005) express that informal communication contribute to reduced conflicts and increased commonality. What Alfa, Digit, Seaway and Ware have in common is that videocalls are made for the formal aspect of their communication, which is directly linked to the decrease of informal communication during the Covid-19 pandemic. The companies fulfill the criteria of what previously has been described as "direction giving

language” (J.Mayfield & M.Mayfield , 2002), since they during their formal meetings discuss how every region works during the pandemic and how the external environment (globally) looks like.

Further, Alfa and Ware have expressed that there is difficulty in motivating their employees and showing empathy since the environment in which they communicate makes it more difficult to interpret certain signals. Social presence is not possible and there is no ability to read emotions and reactions. According to Kupritz and Cowell (2011), this is because face-to-face contact is the only communication channel that is enable the possibility for social presence and understanding of each other. Another potential reason why Alfa and Ware find it difficult to motivate their employees and stimulate the cooperation within the corporation is that informal communication has decreased. More people work from home during Covid-19 compared to before the spread of the pandemic, which has led to reduced daily communication between employees. This may be related to Hinds and Motensen (2005) reasoning that informal communication, such as informal meetings, reciprocal visits and internationally staffed committees, increase the cooperation in all parts of the multinational corporation. If informal communication continues to decline within the companies, there is the risk that conflicts, and misunderstandings will occur. As Hinds and Mortensen (2005) argues, informal communication is a tool for increased sharing of identity and context between the company’s subsidiaries.

5.5 Coordination & Integration

Not only are companies forced to consider different business activities, functions and geographical factors (Nobel & Birkinshaw, 1998; Ensign, 1999; Ceratto, 2006) in their different decisions, they now have to consider the variety in restrictions that all of their subsidiaries are obliged to follow. As Ensign (1999) describes it, the biggest challenge is for the companies to coordinate through the organization's different environments while at the same time trying to uphold some type of unity within the organization. This complex synergy has evidently affected the case subject's coordination and integration. The digital communication channels combined with the company’s forums and meeting have been the main tool in combatting the loss of quality in the coordination of resources and integration of different ideas, products and cultures etc.

5.5.1 Coordination

Alfa, Digit, Seaway and Ware have all been affected in different degrees, when it comes to their coordination. Ware fulfils none of Ensings (1999) criteria's for how good coordination should be implemented and achieved. He states that good coordination is applied by central leadership, across country borders, as to be able to create a shared strategy within the entire organization. Since each and every subunit follow the restrictions set by their respective country of operations, a lot of different ways of working has developed. In the case of Ware, its Swedish branch have had the "work as usual" mindset, while the HQ for the European region has shut down completely. On top of that, difficulty in the coordination of employees from different countries has hindered the development of projects in Sweden.

Alfa, Digit and Seaway have partially been able to create good coordination amongst their different affiliates. The HQ of Digit offer their services only digitally, whilst their Swedish office are more versatile in their mix of both physical and digital offering of their services. However, the business trips between Sweden and the HQ's country of operation have all been suspended. That, according to Jackie, directly affect the company's ability to update the global CEO on the current state of the Swedish branch. Sensitive information, such as the state of a start ups first international expansion, is best transmitted in person, according Kuprits and Cowell (2011). This claim was supported during Jackies interview, where they emphasized the weight of being physically present during board meetings.

In the case of Seaway, one has been able to enforce multifunction guidelines, which both recognize the variety in country restrictions but also create a common path for the entire organization. Coordination of information has barely been sustained in the company's forums. The aforementioned forums include content created by different regions, include environmental scanning and the losses from the decrease in tourism. Alfa mentioned that they do so called "synchronization meeting", which in a way fills the same purpose as Seaways above mentioned forum. Seaways and Alfas different strategies both are evidently able to create homogeneity within respective organization, making it able for them to run their business at a decent operational level (Ensign, 1999; Ceratto 2006, Vahlne & Johanson, 2013). Contrariwise, Seaways has talent program and similar skill developing programs that have been cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These programs are considered to be a part of its forum portfolio where coordination and cooperation are improved upon. This complicated sustainment of the coordination within the company.

5.5.2 Integration

All the interviewed companies are routinely receiving reports from their affiliates, including how their ongoing day to day business is doing during the Covid-19 pandemic, which according to Nobel and Birkinshaws (1998) explanation can bring forth a flow of fresh problem-solving ideas. This affects the integration by improving the overall internal communication, through frequent videocalls, virtual meetings and company forums. All of the aforementioned tools increase the integration across all national borders, of which the company's subsidiaries preside in (Mauri, Figueiredo, 2012). It is generally difficult to differentiate between integration and coordination, since both terms are used in the same context. During meetings and in forums, since subunits exchange information, one could say that they integrate with one another despite the pandemic induced restrictions. The emphasized importance of an open dialogue as a fundamental tool in integrating every employee within an organization, is reaffirmed by Berry (2014). Meanwhile, coordination is necessary to allocate resources and information to the right part of the company. Communication being the ideal tool to facilitate this.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis is to understand how multinational corporations and their executives work with internal factors in external circumstances. Where the delimitation was made to the Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis has made it possible to answer the research question, *How do MNC's and their executives work with cooperation, integration and coordination through communication during Covid-19?*

Coordination and integrations have had to change in the cases of all the companies included in this study. When it comes to certain restrictions implemented by different countries, the respondents have expressed difficulty in considering subunits difference of environments while at the same time attempting to work towards the company goals. Physical gathering such as training, talent programs, business trips and projects led by foreign affiliates have all been cancelled, ultimately affecting coordination negatively. Integration has been able to be sustained to an adequate degree, mainly thanks to alternative digital communication channels. With the help of these digital communication channels, subunits have been able to share their experiences of how they work during the Covid-19 pandemic and environmental scanning.

Cooperation has also been affected by Covid-19 and the increased use of digital communication channels. These effects have led to difficulties, according to the respondents. Since communication is an essential part in maintaining a healthy level of cooperation, lack thereof has negatively affected the overall magnitude of cooperation. The explanation for this is that face-to-face communication has decreased dramatically. The reduction in face-to-face communication has affected corporations' cooperation, which can be described by the fact that face-to-face communication and informal communication are interdependent. This is because informal communication allows room for direct contact with colleagues, other units and subsidiaries where ideas and information can be exchanged. Before Covid-19, the studied corporations had digital communication channels that were more or less utilized, but during Covid-19 the use of the digital tools has increased and been used as a complement to the physical meetings. Alfa, Digit, Seaway and Ware, have all expressed that digital communication channels, especially video conferencing, have been a good solution to the problem of reduced face-to-face contact. At the same time, they indicate that digital communication channels are not something that can last for a long time as the only communication channel but works as a short time solution.

Other approaches that has occurred in the path of Covid-19, for the majority of the studied companies, was the expansion of crisis management. One could conclude that the way the different companies would work with crisis management during the pandemic, was by taking different actions that they found suited their companies best. Alfa and Ware had very similar crisis management, where their different subsidiaries would follow the guidelines made by their respective responsible public health agency. Seaway and Digit were the ones that differed on two different levels, both from the remaining two companies but also from each other. In the case of Digit, some minor measure was taken, mostly in the form of informing employees of certain national guidelines. Seaway on the other had taken more drastic measure, in the form of creating a crisis-task force and enabling a constant state of readiness in the HQs.

6.1 Managerial Implications

What one has noticed in general, is the room for improvement in the area of preparing for the crisis imposed by a pandemic, such as Covid-19. Considering that Covid-19 is not the first, only nor last pandemic this planet is going to face, one could argue that measure should be put into place to prevent the negative effects it has on a company internally. A great example of this is the way Seaway sticks out from the other studied company. They stick out when it came to the high degree of which they were prepared, mainly because they were fast to respond and to several damage controlling measures. One could prepare by having a structural and standardized way to respond to pandemics, combining that with a fast response early in the development of them. A measure that could be taken is for example, the very common pre-emptive crisis handling measure of accumulating liquid assets. Further, something that was mentioned by the companies and that has to be reiterated in this chapter too, is the importance of having an open dialogue with complete transparency. The respondents had voiced that they during the Covid-19 pandemic have learnt the importance of having an open dialogue between the companies in the company group. Considering the fact that different subsidiaries follow different guidelines, depending on what their country of operations is, has further highlighted the importance of having an open dialogue within the company group. Having an open dialogue improves the ability to work toward a common company goal, despite the differences between the different departments or companies within the group.

6.2 Limitations

There have been several limitations discovered during the formation of this thesis. One of the limitations is the fact that this study has attempted to create a general picture of how companies work with their communication and crisis management, instead of focusing more in-depth of the different effects within the different industries. The differences of the diverse industries, that were included in this thesis, have not been explained or analysed further which can be problematic. Recommendations and different conclusions might not be applicable to any industry. An example of this is the dissimilarities between digitalized industries and industries dependant on travel and logistics, e.g. tourism and manufacturing companies. Further building on the afore mentioned problem with generalization, is the fact that all of the test subjects were based in Sweden. One cannot apply the results of the findings on any part of the world, considering that there are countries that have contrasting cultures and have had a different pandemic preventing approach to what Sweden has had.

There also existed an imbalance in the different levels of insight the various executives have had into their own companies. What has caused that, in this thesis, is the fact that the respondents do not work in the same level within their own companies' hierarchies. Some of the interviewed executives worked in HQ, closely with HQ or basically just in a subsidiary that is not closely linked to the HQ. It was found that the respondents that worked closer or within the HQ had more insight into its internal communication and crisis management. These limitations, and the lack of facts and trustworthy statistics in general, have made it more difficult to come to a more nuanced conclusion that includes several aspects that would have made it the conclusion more solid.

6.3 Future research

There are many ways in which one could dive deeper into the different subjects that this paper handles. One could argue that it would be beneficial for many parties if one were to do research about the handling of post-crisis Covid-19, trying to explore how different companies have gone about it and which way has worked the best. Further, it would be interesting to study a certain branch or industry, applying a similar research question to the one of this thesis. Diving deeper into the effects of the logistics, oil or tourism industry might be some industries that would be interesting. Another study one should do is a more in-depth research about the effects of decreasing business trips. What would the different effects be of companies only conducting necessary business trips? As a final example one might find it

interesting to see how a substitution by digital meetings (of face-to face contact) affect the recognition and reading of the differences in different cultures?

7 Reference list

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8 Appendix

8.1 Interview questions

Intervjufrågor

Generella frågor

- Vad har ni för roll inom företaget?
- Vad gör ni i er roll?
- Hur länge har ni arbetat inom företaget?
 - Har ni haft andra positioner inom företaget?
 - Vilka var dina arbetsuppgifter då?

Kommunikation

- Har ni kommunikation med andra avdelningar inom företaget, både inom landet och internationellt?
 - Skiljer sig kommunikationen mellan dessa, och hur kommunicerar ni med varandra?
 - Finns det några direkta kommunikationslänkar eller är de indirekta (informationen passerar en annan part innan den mottagaren)?
- Hur kommunicera ni ut era guidelines/policies om COVID-19 som er verksamhet har för att minska spridning och skapa en trygg arbetsmiljö?
 - Inom er avdelning/enhet?
 - Mellan enheter?
- Hur kommuniceras/arbetar ni med dessa i den dagliga verksamheten? Med detta menar vi hur era guidelines/policies implementeras bland de anställda.

Inom er enhet

- Hur upprätthåller ni teamspirit när det ombeds att ha social distansering?
 - Tycker ni att detta försvårar ert sätt att skapa denna känsla? Varför?
- Vad gör ni/företaget om budskapet inte kommer fram och implementeras av de anställda eller enheter?

Mellan enheter

- Hur ser ni över/delegera resurser, såsom information och kompetens, så att rätta resurser är på rätt plats inom företaget?