Is working from home working, for the leaders in the creative industry?

- A case study exploring the influence of remote working on leadership productivity in the creative industries, due to Covid 19,
Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Is working from home working, for the leaders in the creative industry?  
A case study exploring the influence of remote working on leadership productivity, due to Covid 19.  
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Date: 2020-12-09  
Key terms: Covid-19, Digitalisation, Remote Working, Leadership Productivity

Abstract

Background: With the emerge of increased digitalization and remote working due to the current pandemic Covid 19, leaders are challenged to adapt to the situation by leading virtually and changing normal work practices and processes. To maintain and follow the social guidelines made by the WHO, several companies have implemented remote working as a strategy that may affect the ability to be a productive leader.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the influence remote working has had on leadership productivity due to Covid 19, and how this may hinder or benefit organizations in the creative industries.

Method: This research is an exploratory qualitative study conducted, focusing on one single organization where semi-structured, and in-depth interviews were held with eight participants who were all leaders in different forms. A thematic analysis was used to investigate the primary data.

Conclusion: The empirical findings suggest three main areas that explain the influence of remote working on leadership productivity: 1) Remote working in the creative industries are seen as having an overall successful impact on leadership productivity. 2) Leadership productivity is highly dependent on personal preferences and individual qualities. 3) A new type of business model is arising.
Acknowledgement

First of all, we would like to take the time to send gratitude towards our tutor, MaxMikael Wilde Björling, for providing us with feedback and support throughout this entire process. He has contributed with guidance and instructions from start to finish with his expertise and knowledge, something that has led us to new insights and inputs which eventually, generated a qualitative research.

Secondly, we would like to thank the participants for taking part in our study. The informants contribute with valuable analysis and reflections regarding the topic by expressing their thoughts, knowledge and expertise. For this, we would like to express our deepest gratitude.

Thirdly, we would also like to thank each other for keeping the spirit up during these weeks and seeing the positive sides of each issue that occurred during this course. Thanks to this, the research could keep moving forward and eventually a tremendous result could be made.

Anton Delwer

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a clear insight regarding the topic in question, with concepts and definitions that will be brought up frequently during the paper. In addition, the reader will be introduced to the phenomenon of remote working in terms of leadership productivity as well as a brief background and connection to the current pandemic Covid 19. Furthermore, this chapter includes a problem discussion and a statement of purpose followed by the research question. Finally, this chapter also includes delimitations, a short introduction to the chosen company, the target audience and the key definitions.

1.1 Background

Digitalization is a phenomenon that has been increasing rapidly within different business areas and even business models during recent years (Rachinger & Schirgi, 2019). With the ongoing pandemic around the world named Covid 19, the demand for digitalisation has never been as high as it is today. Moreover, the demand for having the ability to shift from working at the office to working from home is clearly increasing. The majority of larger and more well-known companies such as Spotify and Google have introduced strategies for working remotely (Kelly, 2020). This change seems to occur to maintain efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity as well as saving costs during this extreme world crisis. It is further indicated that the availability and usage of technological tools are said to be the key to working remotely (Kelly, 2020). Kane et al. (2019) implies that leaders are facing obstacles as a result of digitalization and that one of the major challenges is the increased demand for moving towards a more flexible work approach and thereby also an increase for greater productivity.

Covid 19 have put even more pressure on leaders, since following the general guidelines set by the World Health Organisation regarding social distancing (WHO, 2020), managers are being challenged as they must adapt to these circumstances and new ways of managing individuals. Bass (1990) suggests that in recent years management has moved from a transactional leadership style with an authority approach towards more transformational leadership with the focus on monitoring, inspiring and manage the process of the business. Maybe now more than ever, this is of great importance since the leaders are thereby today not the experts within the business areas, they are experts in managing employees. Daft and Benson (2016) indicate that managers nowadays must possess expertise within the qualities of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Further, it is suggested that successful leadership lies in influencing employees towards the attainment of the organizational goals (Daft & Benson, 2016). Because of the
pandemic and the need for transformation in many organizations, one can argue that current management practises might influence productivity. Productivity is a term with many differential meanings. However, the most common and general definition of productivity is to describe it as the relation between output and input (Rogers, 1998). Because of the shift that allows individuals to work outside of the traditional office environment, there might be a larger need for productive leaders that may lead to achieving organizational goals. Leadership productivity is the meaning of a leader's responsibility for the work productivity of his team which is affected by the leader's performance” (Desjardins, 2012). Productive leaders must acknowledge both their own productivity and their team's productivity (Desjardins & Christop, 2012). To increase leadership productivity the focus should lay on basic managerial tasks such as: Goal Orientation, Support, and Time Optimization (Desjardins & Christop, 2012).

As the corona virus is increasing remote working and managers are in a need of staying productive, a gap in the literature has been found and will be presented in the study down below. Due to the disruption in the normal working condition that Covid 19 has brought to the phenomena of productivity, there is an interest to explore the influence of this new digital working strategy on leadership productivity. Due to the pandemic being a relatively new and unexplored area, there is not enough literature or studies that have been made in reference to this. Since previous literature (Bloom, et al., 2015) and (Hunter, 2019) have investigated remote working connected to employee productivity, this study takes on a different angle by focusing on the productivity among leaders. This “new” type of business model where individuals are forced to work from home is said to have led to many different beneficial factors regarding time, money, and resources as many companies might consider continuing with this model of home offices in the future, when the pandemic is over (Kelly, 2020).

Furthermore, Gal et al (2019) states that there is a positive link between digital solutions and productivity. However, it is also mentioned that there are studies made by for example Bartelsman (2014) showing zero effect towards firm productivity, which may be seen as a contradiction to this statement. A recent article posted by Waller (2020) states that the Coronavirus has been speeding up the digital transformation in several countries, where a global survey made by Twilio is confirming this statement by saying that Covid 19 has been speeding up the digital transformation by 5.3 years (D'mello, 2020). It is indicated by Harper (2020), Lerman and Dwoskin (2020) that the coronavirus had created a new type of working strategy, especially
within the creative industries. An example of this would be the company Microsoft that are implementing fewer days a week of work at the office implementing a home-based office instead with a clear shift towards working more remotely (Harper, 2020). Another example is that the current crisis has forced a rapid transition towards working remotely. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, announced that 50 percent of its currently 45,000 employees would be shifting to WFH/Remote working strategy within the timespan of five to ten years (Lerman & Dwoskin, 2020). Facebook is not the only large company that is considering making remote working a new normal. Spotify, Twitter, and Shopify are also following the new path (McLean, 2020).

1.2 Problem

In his famous book Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world, Don Tapscott (2009) highlights the importance that the new and upcoming workforce, the Net Gen would have on the business model and structures. It was already argued over ten years ago that the attitude amongst the new and upcoming workforce was going to be different. As the Net Gen had and would continue to grow up with the rapid increase in technology and specifically the use of the internet, remote working would become a phenomenon worth investigating and understanding for many companies as the Net Gens attitude towards collaboration and especially being able to “... being free to work when and where they want” (Tapscott, 2009, p. 150).

The opportunity of being free and working whenever an individual prefer may however hinder some industries. This might be especially true for the creative industries where physical and social interaction is a crucial aspect for creativity and innovation for enterprises (Paulus, et al. 2008). Creative industries may be defined as: “those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Governance UK, 2018). To clarify, this includes the Advertising and PR industries.

In today society, the creative industries tend to be very interactive and social but also very digitalized. Thus, regarding Covid-19 pandemic and the current situations many companies are shifting towards remote working and digital leadership. There is a gap within this area, both due to the virus being new and unexplored but also within the phenomena of leadership productivity in connection to working and leading remotely (ICA, 2020).
Due to Covid-19 still being present and ongoing today, there seems to be a lack of knowledge within this topic in terms of its influence on leadership productivity. Moreover, the lack of knowledge for how the use of digitalization and working virtually has improved or weakened leadership ability to ensure productivity in its organizations during the pandemic. Even if digitalization and the use of offices enable humans to easier interact, communicate and interlink through virtual platforms and tools (Khan, 2016) it is not clear whether digitalization and this new work set-up have a positive impact on overall leadership productivity. Furthermore, the problem has arisen due to the author’s interest within productivity connected to leadership, and how leader's adaption of the increased usage of WFH (Working from Home) has affected the productivity among managers working in the creative industries. Is it possible for an overall productivity decrease or are Covid-19 forcing new solutions that spark leadership productivity.

As mentioned, there is a low amount of confirmed academic literature on the gap in question as to the problem of Covid-19 ads new implications, challenges, and adaptations on different working processes (Blackburn, et al., 2020). Previous literature has examined the motions behind employee productivity and the effect of remote working/WFH. Examples of such are: Bloom et al (2015) and Hunter (2019). However, the linkage connected to leadership seems to have fallen through the cracks. In addition to the clear gap of literature, this problem also presents an opportunity for further research to tap into the potential of arising new leadership styles or business models in order to maintain and increase productivity amongst managers. However, the interest of this research is to discover and explore the influence of remote working on leadership productivity in these times of change and challenges of the year 2020.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relatively undiscovered connection between leadership productivity and the use of remote working for an organization in the creative industry in Sweden. This is to gain a better explanation of how remote working and digitalization may enhance or hinder leadership productivity. Additionally, this research will focus on the creative industries because of the reason that they tend to be highly developed within their IT departments and strategies and where the creativity is often seems to be influenced by social interaction.

As the pandemic has had a significant impact on businesses who have been pressured by the virus to transform several key elements in their organizations (Dwivedi, 2020), focus will also
lay on the current pandemic of Covid-19 and the effects that it has brought on the leader's ability to maintain efficiency and effectiveness. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to beneficial knowledge on how to lead employees effectively remotely. Besides, this study may also provide insight in both short-term and long-term organizational goals on leadership productivity and the digital environment. As Covid-19 may be viewed upon as a test for many companies on how to maintain productiveness among managers, many businesses may see this research as valuable insight and as an addition to their already existing knowledge.

This topic was chosen due to its significant relevance where a large part of the creative companies in Sweden utilize digital solutions within their day-to-day activities and since the use of digitalisation is increasing and creating new opportunities for businesses overall (Rachinger & Schirgi, 2019), as well as the researchers’ great personal interest within the field. In addition to this, this research question was also chosen due to the pandemic of Covid-19 that has lead businesses and managers to adjust to the situation. To clarify, individuals are advised to keep social distance by for example having the possibility of more remote working opportunities (Dwivedi, 2020). To conclude this purpose statement, this thesis aims to contribute with valuable information from an exploratory perspective on the influence of remote working on leadership productivity, due to the pandemic Covid-19.

1.4 Delimitations

There are three main delimitations in this study. Firstly, the author’s have narrowed it down to an enterprise within the creative industries, both due to the authors interest in marketing and communication, but also because of the belief that the industry would depend deeply on remote working in their organizational processes and daily activities in the future. Secondly, due to the practical reasons for living in Sweden, currently with a base in the city of Gothenburg, the population of Gothenburg has been chosen to limit the scope of the research. Additionally, Sweden has been chosen due to the interest in the large number of companies having the ability to work remotely during humanitarian crises, mainly because of the significant IT infrastructure. Thirdly, the sample size of one major organization within the creative industry has been chosen: ICA Reklam AB
1.5 Research Question

The following research question is proposed based on the previously defined problem:
RQ: “What influence has remote working had on leadership productivity in the creative industries, due to Covid-19?”

1.6 ICA Reklam AB

ICA Reklam AB is one of Sweden's largest agencies in the creative industry and it has been existing for 40 Years. The company has won several awards such as Guldnyckeln and Swedish Content Awards in 2016, for their innovative and effective communicative solutions. ICA Reklam currently has around 360 employees divided into 6 departments. These departments consist of 33 teams and 25 managers. Their office is based outside of Gothenburg (ICA Reklam, 2020).

1.7 Target Audience

For this study, the researchers have assumed that the reader has in-depth knowledge and are able to use, analyse and understand this Bachelor Thesis. The target audience of this study is business administration students and professionals within the field, especially focusing on managers and leaders that work in enterprises that utilizes digital strategies frequently.
1.8 Definition of main concepts

**Digitalization:** “Digitalization reflects the adoption of digital technologies in business and society as well as the associated changes in the connectivity of individuals, organizations, and objects” (Urbach & Röglinger, 2019).

**Remote working/WFH (Working From Home):** “A situation in which an employee mainly from home and communicates with the company by email and telephone” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2020).

**Productivity:** “The relation between output and input” (Rogers, 1998)

**Leadership:** “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.” (Breuer and Szillat, 2019).

**Leadership productivity:** “Leadership Productivity means that a leader has the responsibility for the work productivity of his team and causes changes of this productivity by his performance” (Desjardins, 2012).

**Coronavirus/Covid-19:** “Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease Covid-19”(WHO, 2020).

**Creative industries:** “Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Governance UK, 2018).
2.0 Frame of Reference

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the topic in question. This is done by first, clarifying the method adopted for the theoretical framework and the use of sources. Second, the audience will be presented with the theory in the following sections of key areas: Covid-19, Digitalisation, Remote Working, and Leadership Productivity.

2.1 Structure adopted for the theoretical framework

With the intention of providing the audience with insightful and meaningful research, this chapter of frame of reference has been structured by applying a systematic approach. This has been done by sectioning each area of choice with its own rubric when reviewing and analysing the findings of the literature. As a result of this manner, a useful body of literature within the chosen key areas: Covid-19, Digitalisation, Remote Working and Leadership Productivity have been used. In addition to this, a short paragraph highlighting the existing gap of literature is also presented.

To the greatest extent possible, with the aim to ensure the highest quality in research, this study has been developed by using trustworthy and credible sources. To begin with, the frame of reference has been drawn from: Primo, Google Scholar, and Jönköping University Library. Additionally, the chosen literature is only peer-reviewed articles with minor exceptions of articles that were seen as valuable, applicable and accurate. To ensure relevant articles, a timeframe of 8 years was chosen. However, some of the articles were older but at the same time well-known and well-cited sources, that contributed valuable information to this paper. Example of such sources are Guba and Lincoln (1985), Olson (1983), and Cowton (1998).

2.2 Covid-19

Covid-19 is a current pandemic in 2020 caused by a new and unfamiliar coronavirus named “Covid-19” which may lead to illness among individuals. The first case was identified in China December 31, 2019 and has since then increased rapidly all over the world with 40% globally confirmed cases in mars 2020 (WHO, 2020). One of the most important recommendations for society and individuals made by the WHO, is to maintain social distancing (WHO, 2020). Regarding the situation in Sweden, many of the temporary and mandatory laws within other countries around the world are only suggested as public advice that the population and each individual can choose to follow (Folkhälsomyndigheten,
These strict guidelines and recommendations have forced companies to rethink and adapt their everyday strategies and pushed organization into virtual work environments (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). A recent study made by Dannenberg (2020) argues that the current pandemic of Covid-19 has had an increase in digitalization due the reduction in physical and individual meetings. Idekop (2020) supports this statement by naming Covid-19 as a “acceleration of digitalisation”, where home office solutions are mentioned as one of the key factors as the major adaption to follow the restriction of the virus. Dwivedi (2020) indicates that the pandemic has created a so-called “new normal” for how enterprises operate on their daily activities and that during the last couple of months, companies have been forced to change and transform into new ways of interacting. Furthermore, Dwivedi (2020) also states that this transformation from face-to-face interaction to digital communication might not just be a current phase, but rather a change that will affect organizations future processes and practices as well.

2.3 Digitalization

Brennen and Kreiss (2014, p.1) define ‘digitalization’ as “the way, in which many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures”. To clarify the concept of digitalization in terms of this research paper, the concept will be understood as combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies (Bharadwaj, et al. 2013). It is widely known that digitalization has put pressure on organizational performance as they are forced to adapt and adjust in order to stay relevant, up-to-date, and innovative to either gain or maintain a competitive advantage.

Tapscott (1997) discusses the effect of digitalization where he firmly argues that using information technology will substantially increase both productivity and effectivity in all organizations. He states that an individual may enhance its own effectiveness by using more interactive multimedia technologies. Further, it is argued that a team within a company may use digital tools as a way of being more productive and change the existing way of working. Moreover, the process of digitalization and technology contributes to the development and thrive for innovation where large structural and managerial changes have occurred due to the rapid technological evolution and more is to come (Tapscott, 2019). The rise of digitalisation, the digital revolution and the solutions bring a whole new workforce to society according to Tapscott (2019), the upcoming and present generation enables digitalization to thrive even more and is suggested to be changing each institution on the planet.
Digitalization has re-arranged the way individuals work in our society as well as it has contributed to alterations within the organizational environments (Vuori, et al., 2019). Some of the advantages of digitalisation are lower operational costs, gained knowledge in order to understand cost drivers, cause of risk and process performance (Parviainen et al. 2017). In addition to this, digitalization can give economic growth, reduce the number of unemployment and a higher life quality. It is also mentioned that managers can sport critical issues beforehand by taking advantage of real-time reports on performance (Parviainen et al. 2017). All in all, digitalization is said to improve productivity (Vuori, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, a recent study by Gal et al (2019) shows a positive linkage between digitalization productivity performance. The findings include the results of an association with firms who are adapting to digital technology and that they are generating a significant productivity increase. In addition to this, other studies as for example Syverson (2011) and Draca (2009) also argue evidence of a beneficial link between these two phenomena. On the contrary, digitalization is said to pressure both organization and managers due to transformative processes where managers need to lead the transformation, and by that, making complex and difficult decisions (Zeike, et al. 2019). Additionally, during the recent pandemic of the coronavirus, there has been an increase in the use of digital tools (Case, 2020). One of the major services that has had the most attention is the app ZOOM which works as a video conference tool (The Guardian, 2020). Other systems that have been used are Microsoft Teams and Slack (Case, 2020).

2.4 Remote Working

Remote working is recently defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary (2020) as: “A situation in which an employee works mainly from home and communicates with the company by email and telephone”. Whereas a similar definition by Olson (1983, p.182) be: “organizational work that is performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time”. Olson (1983) continuous by describing this type of flexible work arrangement that allows employees and managers to have more flexible working arrangements regarding location and time and argues that this is based on management recognition.

According to Hunter (2019), a survey conducted by the company Vodafone are showing result of 75 % of organizations all over the world is adapting to flexible working arrangements, such as providing opportunities for employees to work from home. Among these 75%, it is
mentioned that 83% of those have had improved productivity. Furthermore, a study conducted by Butler et al., (2007) examines the effect of remote working on productivity, where it is mentioned that the majority of studies made beforehand confirms the assumptions that having a more flexible working approach, does in fact increase productivity. Additionally, Butler et al., (2007) argue that by following Westfall’s model including these three factors: amount of work, intensity of work and efficiency of work, it may be confirmed that the productivity does increase by working remotely. Moreover, it is also stated that this result can even be sustainable over a period. Incoherence with this statement, Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) indicates that during the last decades, there has been a significant increase in remote offices, mainly due to the technological development in society. Findings from the research show that there is a positive link between an increased work effort from employees that has the possibility to work outside of the organisation, compared to those individuals that are always present at the physical office space (Rupietta and Beckmann 2018). A study conducted by the IWG (2018) shows evidence of 82% of the respondent professionals said they were more productive working remotely/WFH.

Remote working is argued by Hunter (2019) of having many benefits for individuals. These benefits are mentioned as increased creativity and increased family time by not having to transport oneself from A to B. Hunter (2019) also so argues the result of a conducted survey including around 10,000 individuals working around the globe, where 89% of these participants did indicate on the fact that flexible working should be viewed upon as a new normal at their workplaces. In addition to this, Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) study on the effects of remote working shows the results of a positive impact on employee work combined with increased motivation. However, even though there are significant advantages with working from home, there are also downsized mentioned by Hunter (2019), as some individuals are not built to perform in an environment that does not include teamwork and team efforts.

A two-year study made by Bloom et al. (2015) shows a significant number of a 13% productivity increase for individuals working from home. However, as a contradiction to this, Hunter (2019) presents an argument that the lack of face-to-face interaction may have negative effects. Further, it is argued that these types of interaction are important for collaboration, innovation and relationships. In addition to this, Mulkeen (2007) states that for remote working to work, managers need to look closely at each of their subordinates and understand the underlying motivations that boost productivity. He also indicates the importance of managers being
able to set goals, strategies and expectations from the early beginning. Furthermore, the communicative differences among the employees are implied as crucial for succeeding with virtual strategies (Mulkeen, 2007).

2.5 Productivity Definition and Clarification

There are several meanings and interpretations of the term productivity. According to Rogers (1998, p.2) productivity is: “the relation between output and input”, which is seen as the most general term to describe the phenomena. However, Rantanen (1995, p.551) defines productivity as “the composition of effectiveness and efficiency” and any factor that makes an organization more functioning. Thus, regarding organizational purposes, there is a need for acknowledging the fact that the term productivity is widely misunderstood and that there seems to be a lack of knowledge when it comes to the definition and understanding of the concept (Syverson, 2011). Further, productivity may also indicate on efficient use of resources or the result that it takes to accomplish a task (Prokopenko, 1998). Additionally, Prokopenko (1998) describes a general and more specific explanation to the phenomena where productivity is seen as a measurement for how enterprises successfully take on these following criteria: Objectives (the degree to which they are achieved), Efficiency (How effective resources are used to generate useful output), Effectiveness (what is achieved compared to what is possible), and Comparability (How productivity performance is recorded over time).

For this bachelor thesis, the meaning of productivity will be shared with APO (2008) who defines the phenomena as the following: “the composition of effectiveness and efficiency” which means: “Doing things right” + “Doing the right things”.

\[
\text{EFFECTIVENESS} + \text{EFFICIENCY} = \text{PRODUCTIVITY}
\]

*Figure 1. Productivity Definition*

2.6 Productivity in Creative industries

Hatanway and Magg (2016) states that the creative industries are highly productive. Creative industries are “Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and
exploitation of intellectual property” (Governance UK, 2018, p.13). Creative industries may for example be advertising or marketing firms. Hatanway and Maggs (2016) indicates that the key to organizational success for a creative environment (in terms of sustained economic growth) is based upon the result in productivity. The results are argued as to how well it produces output from a variety of inputs and is the meaning of economic efficiency. Managing creative teams with effectiveness and efficiency pose some challenges for leaders, since a successful outcome is said to be highly dependent on the frequent interactive communication within the team. Additionally, there are also issues concerning how to manage uncertainty and unknowability in the organization while at the same time embracing and boosting creativity (Cerneviciute & Strazdas, 2018). Incoherence with this, Madanchian et al., (2017) discusses the effect of leadership effectiveness on organizational performance, where it is said to be one of the most crucial factors to overall organizational success or failure. This is argued as being accomplished by creating situations that are in the best interest for the enterprise, with specific attributes and qualities (Madanchian et al., 2017).

2.7 Leadership and Productivity

Rosari (2019, p.17) argues that there are several different definitions of the phenomenon of leadership, since it may be interpreted differently depending on an indidual self or personal interest. However, there is one main definition presented in the article which is as follows: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes”. Leadership is moreover stated as being based on four elements: 1) influence; (2) relationship between the leaders and followers (3) followers intend real changes; and (4) mutual purposes (Rosari, 2019).

Leadership Productivity however, (Figure 2) may be described as “a leader has the responsibility for the work productivity of his team and causes changes of this productivity by his performance” Desjardins (2012). Leadership productivity may be explained by the Leadership Productivity Model which is a summary of different criteria for evaluating the performance of leaders. The meaning of being a productive leader is based upon the fact that a leader needs to take responsibility for their own productivity as well as all their subordinates (Desjardins, 2012).
As the leadership productivity model suggests, leadership productivity is the sum of a leader's own work productivity added with the total subordinate's work productivity. This in turn according to Desjardins (2012) may lead to a sacrifice of the subordinate's workload as leaders might prioritize their workload productivity. According to Desjardins (2012), three main components can assist and enable modern leaders to enhance both their own and their subordinate's productivity, three components consisting of leadership tasks that may contribute to productivity. *Goal orientation, Support, and Time-Optimization.*

1. **Goal Orientation:** *Goal Definition, Goal Clarification, Process Acceptance and, Result Acceptance.* The meaning of this task for the leader is to constantly use relevant strategies with the aim of defining and achieving organizational goals. This includes defining the goal and clarifying it properly (by using the SMART model as an example). Goals are set to be achieved and could work as a form of measurement for when companies evaluate productivity. Additionally, an important part of this model is the process and result acceptance, it includes accepting how an employee achieves a goal and accepting the result of that goal. This part is vital, and failure may lead to unproductive work or even re-work of the establishment of the organizational goals. (Desjardins, 2012). Desjardins suggests (2012) that a clear goal definition increases the motivation amongst subordinates, this motivation can further be increased even more if the subordinates feel that the goals are clear, and processes enable them to achieve the goals as well as gaining personal development. However, it is also acknowledged that subordinates demand, evolve, and thrive under the process of achieving goals above their current ability and skills. Therefore, leadership support is of great significance (Desjardins, 2012).

2. **Support:** To succeed with the organizational goal's employees, need support from their leaders in the process. This task includes: Interaction, Information, Feedback and Coaching (Desjardins, 2012). These four aspects of support determine in what way leadership will affect productivity. It is stated that the need of present leadership is crucial, that leaders must spend time interacting in person, face to face with their employees, leaders must be capable of spending quality time together with their subordinates to make sure that the productivity is aligned with the goals. These four aspects can be viewed as a set of guidelines that enables the leaders to guide their employees towards desired productivity. For leaders to be able to give the right and proper feedback whether it is negative or positive enhances the productivity, is according to the model wrong feedback reduce productivity both amongst subordinates and consequently leaders as they affect one another. Coaching serves as a tool to build a relationship between
managers and their subordinates, it provides clear instructions that in turn trigger and influence subordinates to engage in what is called self-learning processes which ultimately contribute to productivity, and leadership productivity.

3. Time-Optimization: By optimizing the time of work, a leader can increase productivity. This third step of the leadership productivity model includes the leader's ability to be aware of its own performance (in terms of work time) and how this may affect its employees. These factors consist of Workload Optimization, Scheduling, and Meeting Optimization. This means that a time allocation must be established for a specific goal or a project and that scheduling is used as a tool that should consider all employees’ time schedule. Additionally, Meeting optimization refers to the effectiveness and efficiency in meetings (Desjardins, 2012). The visual description of leadership productivity explained by The Leadership Productivity Model can be seen in Figure 3.

![Leadership Productivity Model](image)

*Figure 2. Leadership Productivity Definition (Desjardins and Christoph, 2012)*

![Leadership Productivity Model](image)

*Figure 3. Leadership Productivity Model (Desjardins and Christoph, 2012)*
2.8 Leading virtually through Remote Working (Digital Leadership)

Leadership is the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistant. (Prentice 2004). Digital leadership may therefore be defined with a similar approach as digital leadership is the accomplishment of a goal that relies on ICT (information and communication technology) through the direction of human assistant and uses of ICT (Husing et al. 2013). Bolden and O’Regan (2016) indicate that the increased digital transformation in society generates challenges on leadership (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). In like manner, Kane et al. (2019) agrees with this statement by arguing that leaders are facing obstacles as a result of digitalization. Additionally, it is also discussed that the most challenging aspect for leaders or managers is the demand for a more flexible work approach (etc. remote working) combined with greater productivity.

Brett (2018, p. 36) describes digital situational leadership is: “a leader’s ability to understand the current situation and maintain their agility to move around the four modes as required” and where he present a model that represents and explains what a leaders need to manage and maintain to be lead virtually. The digital situational Leadership Model, as can be seen in Figure 4, imposes four factors considering successful virtual/digital leadership where a digital leader should obtain the capacities including: Tactical vs Strategic, Delivery vs Culture. The meaning of these qualities may be explained as the ability for leaders or mangers to be agile, flexible, and to respond both quickly and tactical to changes and/or urgent situations. At the same time, a leader must be strategic when making these decisions. The second part consisting of Delivery vs Culture has the meaning of delivering result that are in line with the company’s vision, also establishing a positive environment and culture at the workplace (Brett, 2018).

Brett (2018) further explains the detailed version of the model by arguing the difficulties in management regarding the delivery of results while keeping a pleasant and positive culture. Furthermore, also the struggle of being tactical and strategic at the same time. In addition to considering being Tactical, Strategic, Delivery, and Culture, a digital leader may obtain four different types of “modes” referring to the following:
1. Get Stuff Done: This mode refers to acting fast and making decisions where the focus is on short-term delivery.

2. Futurist: This mode refers to the action of planning, road mapping and thinking about the future.

3. Friend of the Team: This mode refers to prioritizing individual happiness and greatness and the focus is on short-term culture.

4. Utopian: This mode refers to building and maintain a positive culture where the aim is to create an environment where everyone is happy (Brett, 2018).

Additionally, Brett (2018) states the crucial importance of being aware of your modes as a leader and which one are focusing on since this will help leaders to develop knowledge and improving the qualities of each modes.

Figure 4. The digital situational Leadership Model (Brett, 2018).

2.9 Gap in existing literature

Although there is a growing body of literature that examines the extensive use of digitalization and remote working. For instance, Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) talks about the effect on employee efforts and productivity whereas Baruch (2000) as well as Gajendran and Harrison (2007) are analysing the advantages and disadvantages of remote working/WFH. There seems to be lacking literature and knowledge in the linkage between leadership productivity and working in larger scales remotely. As the creative industries are generally well-known for being creative in terms of digitalization, this has naturally shifted the study towards this
industry. There is not enough academic literature that investigates the outcome of a leader’s ability to be productive in these environments. Moreover, with the recent pandemic of Covid-19 that are pressuring many enterprises and managers to increase the usage of digital solutions (Blackburn et al., 2020) and to work remotely, there is an interest to explore the influence of remote working on leadership productivity in the creative industries, due to Covid-19.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter will describe and explain the chosen methodological approach and structure of the research followed by the appropriate research design, data collection and data analysis. This section will be concluded by the underlying principles of the research quality and ethics.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

A research philosophy is the fundamental standpoint for the decided and chosen principles of a scientific investigation. These principles emerge from the investigator's beliefs about legitimate knowledge about a reality how it is obtained (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, Collins and Hussey (2014) define the research philosophy as “A set or system of beliefs stemming from the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence”. Once the researchers have recognized and accepted the philosophical stance of validating knowledge of what reality is and how it is obtained a research paradigm starts to materialize (Lowndes et al., 1995). Positivism and interpretivism is often considered as the two major common research paradigms utilized within research. The difference between the paradigms depends upon what can be determined as valid knowledge for the interpretation of reality.

Positivism relies heavily on independence and objectiveness of the knowledge and thereby for the knowledge to be accepted and considered valid it must be measurable and observable. Interpretivism on the other hand emphasises human imagination as a vital part for obtaining knowledge about the reality. This approach consequently contributes to a more subjective path of interpreting information as human imagination will differ from individual to individual (Lowndes et al., 1995). Moreover, in order to ensure the objective and independent fundamental standpoint towards what is considered valid knowledge, positivism tends to emphasize the usage of a quantitative research approach. The method for collecting data for instance typically consists of questionnaires and surveys that more easily can observable
and measurable. Studies that are built upon the interpretivism approach utilize more qualitative research methods such as observations, interviews or case studies. The major reason behind this is that the subjective human imagination is greatly stimulated by such methods. Further, this stimulation of subjective human imagination contributes to a great variety of interpretations of the same information (Lowndes et al., 1995).

The authors of this research have chosen an interpretive approach as the common belief is that human imagination plays a vital role for how individuals views and interpret the reality of the chosen topic and research. As the interpretivism suggest, the same reality can be interpreted differently amongst different individuals, it a subjective phenomenon as the human imagination leads to various ways of interpreting the same information (Collis & Hussey, 2014). This is something the authors believe fits the case study for investigating the effects of digitalization and remote working on leadership productivity during the coronavirus pandemic.

3.1.2 Research Approach

Steaming from the standpoint of interpretivism the researchers have chosen to conduct a deductive study that aims to test already existing theories in order to explain the problem of the study. A deductive study is described by Karen Soiferman (2010) as working from the top-down instead of the opposite inductive way of bottom-up. The main difference between deductive and inductive research is in the approach for how the researchers are either trying to explain a phenomenon by testing already existing theories or attempting to create and develop a new theory out from the research results and analysis (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

As the research intends to test already existing theories rather than attempt to develop a new theory when investigating the phenomenon, a deductive approach is more relevant. Moreover, due to the short timespan of this study a deductive research is more appropriate, as it would take a larger and wider sample size in the attempt to develop and create a new theory out of this research.

3.1.3 Research Design

To be able to fulfil the purpose of this study, the authors will use an exploratory design. According to Erickson (2017) an exploratory research approach is appropriate when there might be unexpected answers, a need for flexibility and when the researchers are striving
for depth and open responses. Because of the limitations of this research and the uncertainty of
the issue, the exploratory approach is valuable to find out new insights and shed new light onto
the phenomena in question (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, this research is built upon
a qualitative research design, since this approach enables the authors to gain a deep
understanding of the chosen research question. Since qualitative research is a research strategy
that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of
data (Hammersley, 2013), semi-structured interviews will be the basis for collecting the
primary data. Additionally, due to this study being built upon an exploratory approach, the
authors have chosen the path of a case study because of the reason to this being the most
relevant application to the research. The authors have chosen to examine one single
organization. According to Gerring (2004) a case study is “an intensive study of a single unit
with an aim to generalize across a large set of units” and has therefore been chosen for this
qualitative research.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Data Collection

3.2.1.1 Supportive Literature
For this research, supportive literature was collected through prior literature including previous
research, studies and theories collected from Primo, Google Scholar and Jönköping University
Library. This form of data will be used in the analysis of the empirical findings where the
supportive literature is compared to the primary data from the interviews.

3.2.1.2 Primary data
Primary data are gathered through specific methods chosen to the relevance of the research and
adds to the already existing knowledge and literature. (Hox & Boeije, 2005), examples of such
are interviews, focus groups or observations. For this qualitative research, primary data was
collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded and selectively
transcribed by both authors separately before they were applied and analysed through a the-
matic structure. This approach was chosen in order to ensure investigator triangulation that
enhances the credibility of the findings. By applying investigator triangulation, the authors col-
lect, assemble and interpret data individually in order reduce subjectivity by obtaining multiple
and different angle of views and perspectives from the authors (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In this
research the authors collected data both collectively and individually, additionally, the authors
transcribed and interpreted the information separately before discussing and clarifying the findings together.

### 3.2.1.3 Sampling Approach

A sample refers to the process of selecting a segment of the population for investigation (Rahi, 2017) and is often used when it impossible or even impractical to reach out to the entire population” (Saunders et al., 2016). The sampling has been selected by a non-probability method, which means that “the selection of the sample is made on the basis of subjective judgment of the investigator” (Alvi, 2016, p.13). The sampling method has been chosen based upon Robinson (2014) four-step approach including:

1. **Sample universe**: Inclusion criteria: Since the purpose of the research is to investigate leadership productivity, the inclusion criteria are that the individual is a team leader or a divisional manager at their workplace, which means that they have had responsibility for multiple employees and subordinates. Exclusion criteria: The participant cannot be an individual who does not work in the advertising industry, and as this is a case study of ICA Reklam advertising department, the individuals must have been working within the organization the past 5 years.

2. **Sample size**: Since the size of a sample used for qualitative projects is influenced by theoretical and practical considerations (Robinson, 2014), and that the sample size of the conducted study was not set specifically, the number of participants was eventually ten, this, considering both time frame and the voluntary leaders at the chosen organization.

3. **Sampling strategy**: This study is based on a non-random sampling technique called purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to selecting individuals based on the aim of the research and specific attributes or qualities the participants must obtain (Etikan et al., 2016). These criteria were for example individuals who currently work in the advertising industry and individuals who obtain a form of a leading role at their workplace. Based on this, the approach was helpful for selecting the most relevant participants for the study. Further, it is significant that the participants have been exposed to the fact that their subordinates have been working remotely during Covid-19.
4. Sample sourcing: Because recruiting interviewees within a specific organization may impose challenges (Robinson, 2014), the researcher contacted a mutual connection to be able to access the communication channels used at the advertising firm. To avoid bias and to consider all ethical aspect, an informative email was sent to this person who forward the email to all team leaders and divisional managers.

3.2.1.4 Semi-structured Interviews

The 8 interviews were conducted in October and November 2020 where the aim was to gather information about the participant's own practices, beliefs, and opinions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interview types may be chosen depending on the aim of the research purpose where they can be either unstructured, semi-structured, or structured. (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). For this study, the disposition of the interviews followed a carefully chosen semi-structured approach as this structure generates an in-depth understanding of the chosen key areas (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A guideline (Appendix 2) was used to ensure that the researchers covered the chosen material (Harrell & Bradley, 2009) and in order not to compromise the quality of the collected data. By implementing this strategy, the authors may assure a higher degree of clarity and relevance in terms of the phenomena and that the participants may answer with increased accuracy.

Prior to the start of the interview sessions, the participants were introduced to key concepts, the aim and the purpose of the research. In accordance with this, the participants also received a short email one week before the interviews were held to access information about the relevance of the study and to decide on a mutual date. Further, the participants were to sign a digital consent form (Appendix 1) signed in beforehand. During the session, the authors made sure to establish a report on the participants feelings and thoughts with a constant reminder of the availability to withdraw at any time, as well as them being anonymous.

The interviews took place via Zoom or Telephone with a duration ranging from 30 to 45 minutes. Due to the corona outbreak, these interviews could not be held face-to-face and the authors agreed on video-conferences sessions as the second-best option. However, some of the participants had complications and could only be available for telephone interviews. The individuals taking part of the study were between the ages range from 35-55. All of the interview sessions were held in Swedish due to this being the native language for each
participant and for the researchers of this paper. The result was afterward transcribed and translated into English. The complete information about these sessions can be found in Table 1.

3.2.1.5 Interview Questions

The complete list of interview questions for this study can be found in Appendix 4. The main purpose of the interview questions was to investigate the influence of remote working on leadership productivity, to focus on the current pandemic Covid-19 that has shifted organizational strategies towards a more digital use. The interview was based on the semi-structured question, where some of these were predetermined yet allowed the conversation to go beyond the format. This generated valuable information and uniformity. Additionally, the interview questions were created as open and probing to be less threatening and to boost deeper insights and thoughts. As Saunders et al. (2009) states, that the researcher should consider open, probing, and closed questions. However, no closed question was used in this case whereas the open questions were formulated by using “what” and “how” to encourage free responses. Probing was used to ask more detail on a particular matter, an example of this was: “Why do you think this is the case?”

3.2.2 Data Analysis

With the intention of presenting a high qualitative data analysis and due to the high degree of complexity when analyzing, a thematic analysis has been used to investigate the primary data. The collected data from the interviews will be analyzed based upon Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis. The analysis itself is based upon a process of six phases with the primary purpose is, to begin with discovering, notice and understand meaningful pattern as well as obstacles and issues with the collected data that in the end will contribute to defining particular themes that will be used when conducting the research. The framework will help and contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomena of leadership productivity and remote working. Thus, the framework and its process consist of six sequential phases to follow:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data – The first step is important because it is here the researchers notice key ideas and concepts that can assist and provide a better understanding of the data. This stage often requires multiple revisits of the data.
2. Generating initial codes – These key ideas and concepts that the authors have recognized will work as the first list of codes concerning the research question and its analysis is of high interest.

3. Searching themes – Once a deeper understanding is attained, the codes should be organized into groups in which they are relevant or have a connection to each other. These groups are then formed into a thematic table to visually organize and understand the relations.

4. Reviewing themes – The next step is to obtain certainty in the relevance and appropriacy of the created themes where the focus should lay on ensuring high quality by investigating the correlation and amount of sufficient data. This step often involves rearrangements and redefinitions of the codes and themes.

5. Defining and naming themes – This process can be started when the review of themes is satisfying and completed regardless if rearrangements were necessary or not. This step includes giving the themes suitable names for the themes that display what the overarching themes are about.

6. Producing the report – Once the thematic analysis is completed, it is used to finalize the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The process of data analysis will consequently start with the researchers thoroughly listen and going over the interview's multiple times. The intention is to gain a sufficient understanding of the data that enables the researchers to identify important concepts and ideas, so-called codes of the phenomena. The goal is to generate a list of these codes that are of high interest to the research itself. These codes will eventually when the researchers have gained enough understanding be divided, organized, and put into different groups of codes to each other.

3.3 Ethics

To ensure that no ethical harm for the participants during this process, this research has also been made according to the ethical guidelines for qualitative research set by the Market
Research Society (MRS Guidance, 2014). These guidelines can be seen in detail in Appendix 3. Additionally, in the present study, the authors have chosen to describe the persons being studied as participants. This is in accordance with Morse (1991) who postulates that the term participants symbolize a more active engagement from the persons being studied, and that the term is commonly used in qualitative research.

Collis and Hussey (2014) describes ethics as the moral principles an individual must possess and continues with explaining that research ethics expands even further since the authors must implement these considerations within the chosen area of investigation. In this study, the authors have taken ethics as one of the major important aspects of the entire process. Therefore, the authors have chosen to use: Anonymity and Confidentiality, Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability, in order to increase the reliability of the findings and to ensure a high-quality research process and good research practice (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). These will be elaborated on in the following sections.

3.3.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality: Qualitative research concerns the need to respect the autonomy of those being studied (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Therefore, to secure the anonymity of the participants involved in the conducted study, comprehensive measures were made. The participants were to sign a consent form (Appendix 1) informed of their anonymity with the ability to withdraw at any time during the interview sessions. In addition to this, the names of the participants were exchanged for fictional character names to protect the individual's identity and to increase the responding rate of more qualitative answers. Confidentiality refers to the protection of information supplied by research participants (Bell & Bryman, 2007). To ensure confidentiality the participants were asked to read the informative formula (Appendix 2) and the investigators explained the purpose of the research together with a thorough explanation of remote working regarding leadership productivity. It was also clearly stated how the collected data would be handled and stored to keep personal information confidential.

3.3.2 Credibility: As Shenton (2004) mentions, being able to ensure credibility is one of the main components in terms of trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the attempt of giving a truthful picture when examining the phenomena in question (Shenton, 2004) and to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them (Cope, 2014) The first step to establish trustworthiness has been done by collecting data from previous
literature that was extensive, valuable, and relevant for the research question. In this case, the credibility of the study has been made by considering several of the strategies presented by Shenton (2004). The authors of this study have made sure that the voluntary participant's responses are as honest and open as possible by detailed information regarding each aspect and step of the process including the possibility to withdraw, anonymity and data collection confidentiality. Moreover, the progress of fulfilling the research purpose has been made by several debriefing sessions between the authors themselves and the project director. To establish a high level of trustworthiness, the researchers have evaluated the project frequently and made changes to ensure credibility when needed.

Additionally, to increase the validity of the research data the implication of data triangulation was necessary. In this research, multiple interviews with different managers within different segments of the company were carried out at different times. Data triangulation is a useful tool when collecting valid data and enhance the trustworthiness of a study. Data triangulation means that data is collected from multiple and different sources and at different times (Collins & Hussey, 2014). As the research predominantly focuses on a qualitative research approach and from only one company, it is of great importance to collect data from multiple sources. In this case, the researcher has been lucky enough to get 8 interviews from different departments at ICA Reklam to enhance the data triangulation. Collins and Hussey (2014) describe data triangulation as when a research or study’s findings are based and consist of data collection sources from different sources and at different times.

3.3.3 Transferability: Transferability refers to the findings being able to transfer into an alike situation (Houghton, et al. 2013). Equally important is therefore the responsibility of the authors to provide valid information and knowledge that may be applied by the reader (Cope, 2014). Firstly, the findings of this research have contributed useful indicators to professionals within the field of leading and managing employees. Secondly, due to the investigator’s choice of conducting a qualitative study including a smaller sample size because of with limited time frame it may be difficult to apply the result to a larger population. Hence, it may be argued as a study with a low transferability to organizations outside the creative industry. However, all things considered, this criterion is often relevant when the purpose is to make broad generalizations (Cope, 2014).
3.3.4 **Dependability**: Dependability requires each investigator to have full responsibility for the entire process being logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This is often done by auditing, which refers to tracing the process of the research step-by-step (Shenton, 2014). In incoherence with this, both authors in charge of this research were all engaged in each step of the investigation starting from the interviews, the digital recording, and the collecting and storage of data. During the interview sessions, their actions were taken in terms of caution. For instance, the recording was made on multiple devices, and an audit trail (Appendix 4) including interviews, data, and observations was implemented. Furthermore, a detailed description of the data gathering is found in section 3.1.2 together with the in-depth explanation of the chosen research design to support the dependability criterion. Finally, the researcher agrees that in the field of data collection the same participants, methods, and context were made (Shenton, 2014).

3.3.5 **Confirmability**: Confirmability refers to the neutrality and accuracy of the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Additionally, also the researcher’s ability to indicate and confirm that the gathered data is only from the participants and not affected by biases from the authors (Cope, 2014). The confirmability criterion for this study has been fulfilled by several factors. Most importantly, the reader may follow the steps of the data gathering in the audit trail, where it is demonstrated that the result and findings emerged from the data itself and not from the investigators. This coding process is to prove that the data were not angled, twisted or impacted in any way. Correspondingly, the use of raw quotes collected from the interviews increases the level of confirmability of this study.
4.0 Empirical Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to present the empirical findings generated from the data collection through the case study on ICA Reklam AB. This chapter is divided into sub-chapters with a structure and approach that combines the result and the integrated analysis due to clearly identified themes (Åkerlund, 2017). The aim of this section is to give the reader an in-depth understanding on how the theoretical frameworks is associated with the findings of this study.

Table 1 displays the overview of the participants taking part in this qualitative study. It shows the duration, location and the type of interview that was made. All the participants were Team Leaders at ICA Reklam where each leader had subordinates in their team ranging from 3 to 15 individuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Role of the Participant</th>
<th>Duration of Interview (min)</th>
<th>Location of Interview</th>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>37 min</td>
<td>Via Teams</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>40 min</td>
<td>Via Teams</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>Via Telephone</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>42 min</td>
<td>Via Teams</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>36 min</td>
<td>Via Telephone</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>39 min</td>
<td>Via Teams</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>41 min</td>
<td>Via Telephone</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>32 min</td>
<td>Via Teams</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Interview participants
Table 2 presents the Thematic Analysis that was conducted to analyse the empirical findings and to find patterns that were interesting and important for this research. This analysis was concluded by following an analytic process and an Audit Trail (Appendix 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Performance</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Administrative task and activities</td>
<td>Less interruptions</td>
<td>Effective communication channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Remote Working</td>
<td>Digital leadership</td>
<td>Covid-19</td>
<td>Creative industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Productivity</td>
<td>Increased efficiency and effectiveness</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Administrative tasks</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interaction</td>
<td>Face-to face meetings</td>
<td>Social Gatherings</td>
<td>Body Language</td>
<td>Facial expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Distractions</td>
<td>Balance work and personal time</td>
<td>Working from home</td>
<td>Increased amount of meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individual Qualities</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Self – Discipline</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leadership</td>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Guidance and Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Thematic Analysis

4.1 Leadership Productivity – Definition and Meaning

During the interviews, the participants were asked to explain with their own words, the two terms leadership and productivity. Regarding leadership in connection to productivity, the participants explained this phenomenon similarly yet differently depending on their attitude and experience. For most of the participants, the meaning of being a productive leader is based upon both effectivity and efficiency. Accordingly, the majority of the participants also argue the crucial importance of being present, available and open as a productive leader, especially during Covid-19. The term “available” and “present” was said among almost all the team leaders when the question about leadership and productivity definition was asked.

Participant #4: “Leadership for me is about being available for your employees”
Participant #7: “It means to take part where everything happens, being available and participate, being present”

Participant #1: “Personally, leadership for me is the meaning of helping other individuals to get the rights tools they need to succeed with the common goals set by the team and the organization”

Participant #3: “Leadership for me is how you monitor success with each person. This means to not control but instead see to what kind of need an individual may have and then coach and lead the way forward”

In addition to this, all of the leaders suggest that their productivity is aligned with their team's productivity, as their job is to coach and make their employees work and achieve the common goals of the organization. Some of the leaders divided their productivity into two parts, where one was about their administrative work in terms of efficiency and how fast they can work with these specific tasks. Whereas the other part consisted of handling the effectiveness and workload of the employees, which included coaching, guidance, and acting as a support system.

Participant #5: “Productivity is to see to what the group needs to be able to finalize the task. It also includes being proactive, to see what will happen now, and what challenges will come our way. There is a difference between productivity between employees and the leader itself”

Participant #8: Productivity is closely connected to presence, to be close to coworkers, and to generate productivity and effectiveness. Help, support, and coach everyone to increase productivity”

Analysis: Overall, the general understanding and meaning of leadership connected to productivity seems to be in line with Rosaris (2019) argument that there are several different definitions of leadership, depending on each individual. The majority of the interviewees describe a difference in terms of leadership productivity and productivity among the subordinates. This may show a close connection to Desjardins (2012) statement regarding productivity being seen as two separate parts and responsibilities. As Desjardins (2012) suggests, modern leaders in today’s society need to accomplish the crucial task of optimizing
their workload and productivity to reach better interaction, coaching, and support to the team. In fact, the finding shows that many of the participants are arguing exactly that. Meaning, that they have managed to stay more focused, effective, and efficient with administrative tasks and increased their availability, presence, openness, and guidance as leaders.

4.2 Attitude towards Remote Working and Digital Leadership

The participants were asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working remotely during the pandemic. The empirical findings suggest that 2 out of 8 team leaders in the creative industry at ICA Reklam has a slightly negative mindset to working remotely. As an example, Participant #1 argues that the underlying factors behind this attitude are because of the proven record of a decrease in the overall “pace” of the work in their team, mainly due to the extreme amount of increase in the number of meetings. Even though digital solutions and the shortened communication may be seen as a quick and smooth way of reaching your team, the lack of face-to-face meetings, interactions and social gathering is said by this participant to negatively influence the leader’s ability to be as effective and efficient as possible. These physical meetings are argued by Participant #1 and Participant #3 as a key factor to tick of daily activities more productive than what it takes to go through the increased communication channels such as emails, messages, or other digital communication outside of the office. It was also mentioned among some of the participants that distractions from the home environment may affect their quality as a productive leader.

In contrast to this, Participant #2 and Participant #4 argues that less “distractions” at the physical office has led to more effective and efficient communication and where administrative tasks have shortened the timespan of these daily activities tremendously. Further, the participants suggest that remote working may work differently for everyone depending on each personality. As an example, a person who tends to be more on the social side would probably struggle a bit more by just staying at home without interaction. Additionally, some of the leaders were also discussing the importance of the social aspect in terms of boosting creativity whereas others said that the ability to work from home makes them more focused on specific tasks and activities and also, more creative. Furthermore, the majority of the participants mentioned the IT Infrastructure at ICA Reklam was vital to succeed with the shift towards remote working.
Participant #5: “Digital leadership is both interesting and exciting for the future, the physical leadership might be needed at the beginning of the job but in general the creative industry with digital leadership is exceptional. It has created a new type of self-discipline where I feel like I am is not needed as much and may focus more effectively on administrative tasks. Also, the teams feeling has been increasing a lot”

Participant #7: “By working remotely and using digital leadership strategies I would say that my own focus has increased, and I do feel more productive when working from home.

Participant #8: “Covid-19 has made ICA Reklam attitudes towards remote working more positive compared to how it was before. Flexible work will probably be more accepted and compared to an individual level. It works to works from home”

Participant #2: “To work on distance has increased the overall communication where I feel that the teamwork is better, and we can let the creativity flow more freely since you may “turn off” the digital tools you are using and focus on yourself”

All in all, the majority of the attitudes towards remote working and the adjusted situation with Covid-19 may be seen as positive. Table 3 below represent a short a summary of the key findings concerning the advantages and disadvantages of remote working and digital leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE ATTITUDE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE ATTITUDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased focus</td>
<td>Lack of motivation among the subordinatres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased performance among the team members</td>
<td>Lack of social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased time in transportation to the office</td>
<td>Slow communcation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased flexibility</td>
<td>Distractions at home</td>
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<td>Higher level of self-discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased focus on administrative tasks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Well established IT Infrastructure</td>
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</table>

Table 3: Positive and Negative Attitudes

Analysis: In the empirical findings, the participants suggest several benefits of working remotely, by using digitalization and digital leadership to their advantage. According to Tapscott (2019) digitalization is seen as thriving. Tapscott (1997) argues that digitalization increases productivity, signs of this are indicated in the result. Moreover, the result also shows that this
has changed the leaders individual work (Vuori et al., 2019) and that it may in the future contributed to less operational cost once a physical office is not needed as large as it is today. One may argue that this is a proof of the beneficial link between productivity and digitalization (Svyerson, 2011) and (Draca, 2009). Even if the general attitude for remote working and digital leadership is said to be positive, there has been evidence showing a slight decrease in motivation among the subordinators as reported by the participants. As Rupietta and Beckmann (2018) states, remote working shows the results of a positive impact on individual work combined with greater motivation. However, as a contraction to this, one cannot argue in this case the complete opposite regarding the motivation aspect.

During the primary data collection, many of the team leaders were arguing the importance of presences and attendance when it comes to be a productive leader. Two factors that are more challenging when a digital form of leadership must take place. Overall, the leader’s states that they are still able to work quite good as pre Covid-19, even though the normal conditions are hindered there is just a need for an increased adaption and flexibility. However, the difficulties of being a productive leader are stated by Bolden and O’Regan (2016) and (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020) and which is also discussed among the participants. The participants where arguing the struggle in how to manage in uncertainty conditions by still keeping creativity and motivation flowing. This argument goes hand in hand with (Cerneviciute & Strazdas, 2018) was saying about the difficulties of leading creative teams. Other key challenges are said to be the large change of adaption and flexibility and at the same time generating a high qualitative productivity performance. These findings are in lined with Kane et al. (2019) statement about the demand of more flexible work approach (etc. remote working) combined with greater productivity.

4.3 Leadership Productivity - Influence and Impact by Covid-19

ICA Reklam may be established as a successful enterprise during the pandemic. The interviews show equally or increased productivity for the majority of the team leaders within the company. Further, the results present one major impact on leadership productivity, and that is the adaption for the leader to work even more as a support system with increased communication, coaching and meetings with the leader and its subordinates. In addition to this, all of the interviews included a discussion of remote working as a successful “tool” depending on each personality and preferences.
Participant #1: “The corona virus has not affected my ability to be productive, but the only difference is the structure and strategies in the daily activities, such as an increase in meetings and it takes a bit longer to connect with people.”

Participant #4: “Administrative work has been more effective and efficient compared to before. There is less disruptions from the teams! There is less physical meetings, and less time spent going to and from the meetings. This has had overall increase in the productivity! The time is more compromised, and you are more focused which have contributed to a new effectiveness and effectiveness that enhances productivity within our firm. Since this has led to more time, I feel like I can interact with my team more”.

Participant #7: “I can focus heavily on my administrative work without getting interrupted every now and then which enables me to be more productive with my own work. Consequently, I do have more time to interact and coach my subordinates with higher quality and more efficient, which in turn increase their productivity. If we look at numbers and the goals that we have at ICA Reklam, there has been an increase in overall productivity in our department.”

Participant #5: “The productivity increase in the team is more effective and the daily tasks is always handled and placed in charge of someone. The group is working better, the relationships between, other groups are better too”

As previously stated, two of the leaders had a more negative attitude towards remote working in terms of their productivity compared to the other six participants. The ability to be present at the office through the traditional way of working is something that the leaders are seeing as a key factor for their success in effectivity, efficiency and thereby also productivity. These participants were discussing that the corona virus and remote working has led to a slight decrease in productivity for them personally, because of different distractions. The reasons behind this were for example: increased time of getting an answer, getting things done, distractions at home and increase motivational support for the employees. The reasoning behind the statements from these two managers are also the lack of social gatherings, body languages and facial expressions that enables the managers to determine the well-being of their subordinates. Moreover, it is also said that is has affected the team motivation, which is seen
as an anchor for productivity. The lack of team motivation steam from things such as creativity, coaching, self-discipline, and working from home, that contributes to the employee's productivity. Nevertheless, it is argued that productivity might not decrease short term with this type of work model, however, in the long run, these two participants fear that productivity might decrease due to less energetic team motivation and spirit.

Participant #3: “Corona has affected my leadership, with increased communication and the need for asking more questions. It's not as effective to work digitally, since there is now a decrease in the overall work pace because we are not allowed to see each other. It has been less effective to work remotely, but the employee has been more positive on this manner”

Participant #1: “The social aspect is lacking; body language is missing, and it takes longer time to reach people digitally compared to when you can meet quickly in the hallways

Analysis: One may argue that ICA Reklam’s impact and influence of the coronavirus have had a positive impact on the company. The company has followed the general guidelines made by the WHO (2020) and Folkhälsomyndigheten (2020) to keep distance and work from home. By looking at productivity among the leaders just as Butler, Aasheim and Williams (2007) and Hunter (2019) presents in their studies where their result shows an increase in productivity in terms of more flexible work arrangement, ICA Reklam also shows the same significant result with an overall positive influence on leaders productivity, which is drawn from the interview attitudes towards the subject. All in all, this may be in accordance with Bloom et al. (2015) research that shows a productivity increase for individuals working from home.

Regarding more specifically on how a leader's own productivity has been influenced by remote working and Covid-19, one may implement Desjardins (2012) Leadership Productivity Model consisting of the three leadership tasks that may contribute to productivity and to evaluate the situation at ICA Reklam.

Goal orientation: The findings suggest that there is a clear goal definition among the leaders and the subordinates at ICA Reklam. From Desjardins (2012) point of view, this is significant both for the team to succeed with their goals but also for the managers to maintain a productive leadership style. The finding shows proof of clear goal definition among the participants.
**Time-Optimization:** As mentioned by the majority of the interviewees, remote working and the use of digital leadership has influenced the leader’s ability to focus more on their specific administrative task, and thereby, also optimized their time of work. As in line with Desjardins (2012) it may be argued that the team leaders at ICA Reklam are aware of their own performance in terms of time of work, which may positively affect their subordinates and the overall organisational performance. The results display a clear enhancement in this segment—meetings have been more effective, less time consuming and the managers indicate that they are able to finalize their administrative workload more productively. This in turn, has created more time for the leaders to spend supporting their subordinates and their team. Overall, the leaders have succeeded with both their goal orientation and their time-optimization, which leads to an overall better support system.

**Support:** Frequently throughout this process, the participants argued the crucial importance of support and guidance to their team, especially with the new circumstances of leading virtually. Desjardins (2012) model represents four main factors that need to be considered in terms of leadership productivity and support: Interaction, Information, Feedback and Coaching. All in all, three out of four except from interaction may be fulfilled by the leaders as these factors are discussed and stated in several quotes. However, Desjardins (2012) also mentions interaction by face to face meetings, which in this case all of the leaders are missing. This part of the support is stated as one of the major downsides of remote working and a disadvantage where Covid-19 has put everyone to a test.

To conclude, in connection with the **Leadership Productivity Model** leadership productivity equals the sum of the individual productivity for the managers plus the productivity among all their subordinates. It is clear that the individual productivity have increased due to enhancement of time-optimization, the progression results in a better support system that increases the subordinates productivity as well.

### 4.4 Productive Leadership: Modes in times of changes

General findings of this research did not show any sign of change in terms of leadership styles, the managers have chosen and been able to stay within the same framework of leadership even though Covid-19 brought a fast transition into digital leadership and remote working. However, the only difference is that there has been a slight shift towards leadership that focuses even more on support and guidance.
Participant #6: “Digital solutions have enabled me to be more productive with my own work as I am able to get into my own focus zone and actually finish my own administrative task more effective and efficient. Additionally, I have had to reorganize my approach towards scheduling meetings and making sure my subordinates feel comfortable, confident, and motivated in their work as their workdays are much more self-driven in the digital world.”

Participant #4: “Motivation has been a key factor that many of my subordinates struggle with and it has been a challenge to monitor and notice the signs when everything is digital, and I do not see them daily. Therefore, digital solutions such as teams and zoom together with frequent check-ins and a structural meeting schedule have been very helpful.”

Participant #7: “I have not changed the fundamental features of my leadership; however, I have adjusted small details to get information on how my subordinates are doing in terms of their well-being. The results on paper have not shown any negative impact on the results in terms of productivity, but it has been necessary for me to more often check in on my subordinates to ensure that they feel happy and motivated with their environment.”

Analysis: As the situational leadership model Brett (2018) display different modes of leadership necessary to be a successful digital leader such as tactical, delivery, strategical, and cultural, and when the digital situational model was applied to the results the researchers could see signs of all the modes that contributed to achieving the goals within the organization. Most of the empathizes were put on the futuristic mode as one of the largest and most significant change within the organization have been to adjust the time optimization displayed in the leadership productivity model. As mentioned before, time optimization in terms of scheduling team meetings and individual meetings between managers and subordinates have been of great significance to create a productive environment for the managers. Second in line the cultural mode has been adjusted quite much as many of the managers struggle to notice and handle the well-being of their employees. Motivation is one factor that the organization has struggled with during the process of digitalization.

By acknowledging these challenges and necessary steps to tackle them, the futuristic and cultural mode can be viewed as the most important modes when analyzing the digital leadership model to the results of the research. The majority of the participants did not mention any
decrease or struggles to keep the delivery on at least the same level as before Covid-19, in contrary they have realized better productivity and consequently faster delivery from many of their subordinates. Hence, there has been minimum emphasis put on the tactical mode as the organizational structure has not been in any need of change. According to the results and analysis of the digital situational leadership model the managers within ICA Reklam have been prioritizing, ranked, and utilized the different modes in the following order:

1. Futuristic
2. Cultural
3. Delivery/Tactical

4.5 Leadership Productivity: Key strategies and tasks
The managers were in the interview asked to name 3 key strategies or features to successfully and productive lead digitally in an organization that applies remote working. As in section 4.1, presence, and availability were mentioned here as well. In addition, collaboration and clear goal definition were argued as key strategies for a successful result.

Participant #1: “In order to successfully stay productive and lead remotely a leader most be, 1: present, 2: available to reach through both scheduled team and individual meetings and 3: Have a good work environment and balance between work and personal life.

Participant #2: “Three strategies to be productive is to be present regardless if it is digitally or physically, that’s to most important factor for being productive. There is a most to be available through both scheduled meetings but also when subordinates require urgent help, however, since the transition into remote working most of the subordinates work freely and are much more self-driven, creative and flexible. Lastly, knowledge about how my employees are doing is one very important key factor that assists me in how I plan my work to keep up both my own and my subordinate's productiveness. I also want to mention the IT infrastructure as an important factor that enables this whole company to work as remotely as we can do today.”

Participant t #3: “I believe collaboration, support from managers and teamwork is of great significance for us to stay productive during remote work.”
**Participant #7:** “There is a must to have a clear goal orientation and follow up these goals weekly through scheduled meetings. There must be a work environment suitable and favorable for all employees. We also need to focus heavily on motivation through time optimization and agile methods to follow up with the delivery and results in terms of our goals.”

**Analysis:** When comparing the key strategies and tasks, they are somewhat related to each other and they look similar amongst all the participants. A large emphasis is again put on the fact that rearrange meetings in order to optimize time and unload more time to support, coach, and interact with their subordinates. Both the models from (Brett, 2018) and (Desjardins 2012) and its theoretical framework can be displayed as an effective way of reorganizing the time optimization. Moreover, support factors of the situational leadership model may lead to an increase within leadership productivity as well as focusing on the futuristic and cultural mode enable and makes it easier for the managers to achieve a desired level of productivity and further also increase it. One may argue that the key strategies to perform on a high productive level does not depend entirely on wheatear or not the team is working remotely or physically since the fundamental goals, mission and vision is still the same. Most importantly, the participants were all arguing that effective strategies may depend on individual personality and preferences.

**4.6 The future of remote working for the Creative Industries**

Concerning the future of remote working for the creative industries, a recurring theme from the majority of all participants was that they all could see a new type of business model taking shape. This “model” is explained by the participants as a flexible approach that combines the advantages of remote working and working at the office. This strategy makes it possible for each individual and the team leaders to choose when they want to be social and spark creativity around the team, but at the same time, be focused and productive with administrative tasks. Additionally, many of the leaders were discussing the importance of individual preference and the crucial importance of having a choice when it comes to working remotely.

**Participant #4:** “I am less stressed. Everything is easier in life, especially by looking at the well-being factor. This new type of working is the way to go. Also, from an economic
perspective the location or office will save a lot of money if the choice is to shift to more digital work”

Participant #6: “Remote working has given people the opportunity to choose themselves. But there might be a place for the social aspect where everyone may come together. There might be a good idea to be at the office one time each week”

Participant #7: “Covid-19 has made ICA Reklam attitudes towards future remote working more positive compared to how it was before. Flexible work will probably be more accepted if we adjust this to an individual level. It works to works from home”

Participant 2: “Working remotely may be a good tool to use even in the future, however, for this to work it is crucial to adapt this to how you are as a person and whatever suits you best”

4.7 Final Analysis

Previous literature argued that the coronavirus has pushed the organization into virtual work environments (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020) and also increased digitalization (Dannenberg, 2020) and (Idekop, 2020), which is closely connected to the empirical findings. The findings suggest that the majority of the managers have been forced to adapt to new ways of working without major adjustments in their leadership styles. Just as it is argued by Dwivedi (2020) this recent pandemic has created a new norm. At ICA Reklam this will shape and form the future of the company many years from now. The increase in scheduled meetings has contributed to a more difficult way of getting in touch with managers, subordinates, and other colleges. However, the increase of scheduled meetings has also contributed to more effective time for the leaders to do their administrative work without getting interrupted. As the managers have been able to productively work and finish their administrative tasks, more time is set free to interact with, coach, and make their subordinates more productive. Hence a more effective and efficient way of working has overall enhanced productivity within the creative industry of ICA Reklam. The importance of this is supported by previous research which identifies that the key to organizational success for a creative environment is based upon the result in productivity (Hatanway & Maggs, 2016).

The results clearly display a cohesive utilization of the two models, most empathizes is put on the futuristic mode that helps managers with their planning, this in improves and increases the
time optimization of the leadership productivity model. Therefore, there is a clear and straight forward link between the models that enables managers to improve their productivity while working remotely.

Covid-19 has brought large changes within the creative industry of ICA Reklam. Most of the work has been redirected towards the home of all employees. All the managers that took part in the study and interviews claimed that the transition from working at the physical office to working remotely from home and other places was very smooth. The reason behind the smooth transition was said to be the IT infrastructure that Sweden, ICA, and the employees have in today's society. The most advanced and largest technology used within the company was before the outbreak of Covid-19 said to be nearly impossible to move when discussions about remote working took place. Nevertheless, when Covid-19, in fact, became acknowledged as a dangerous pandemic it took ICA three days to move, set up and give access to the most advanced technology for the team that was in need and utilized it daily. Just as Tapscott argues (1997) that information technology will increase productivity and effectiveness. This situation within ICA is proof of this statement and has changed the existing ways of working. This process of digitalization in turn enables remote working to thrive and reach new levels as shown in the case of ICA.

Further, results from the interviews show that it is possible with remote working to cut cost as in line with (Parviainen et al. 2017) essentially which in turn lead to increase in effectiveness and efficiency in the usage of company resources. Consequently, this improves the productivity of the company as a whole as argued by Vuori et al. (2019) and Gal et al. (2019) and it is easier for the managers to be productive as both time and costs within essential areas of the business. This is done by redefining the common and individual goals of the employees. The leaders adopt the definition of the goals towards the specific situation and remote working, which in turn helps the subordinates to focus on their work, creativity, and responsibility to reach those goals. This is very similar to what the leadership productivity model (Desjardins, 2012), which is introduced in the theoretical framework suggests influence the overall productivity for a manager.

By comparing the leadership productivity model to what the managers at ICA Reklam suggest, is leadership productivity many similarities can be found. The overall goals orientation has remained the same throughout Covid-19, so there is no clear change in what the model suggests
under the heading of goal orientation. The results and goals for both managers and their subordinates are intact with how they looked like before Covid-19. The modification that has been done and positively executed is time optimization and support. Meetings that handle the follow-up for goals and weekly playing have been optimized which have generated more time for managers to focus heavily on their line of work that

By analyzing the results from the interviews, a clear line of argument that digitalization and remote working contributed to a slightly more effective and efficient way of working for the leaders within ICA may be presented. These results analyzed with the leadership productivity model illustrate the clear and straightforward picture that remote working has a positive effect on both administrative productivity as well as subordinate's productivity which also increases the leadership productivity according to the model. To evaluate this further, the effective and more efficient ways of scheduling meetings over digital solutions such as teams and zoom have contributed to the subordinate's can structure and plan their day to make more effective workdays. They have been able to work much more self-driven, creative, and by doing so more productive. As an example, ICA has been having early week meetings where goals are followed up, the week planned out to every employee knows what is going to be done during the workweek. Questions and reflections on what might hinder the subordinate's weekly work have been resolved during these meetings and thereby team leaders can optimize and plan their work according to and in line with this.

5.0 Conclusion

This section includes a summary of the empirical findings in regard to the purpose and research question.

The empirical findings and the analysis suggest three main areas that have been found during this conducted research. 1) Remote working in the creative industries is seen as having a successful impact on leadership productivity. 2) Leadership productivity is highly dependent on personal preferences and individual qualities. 3) A new type of business model is arising.

First of all, from an exploratory perspective, remote working is seen as having a successful impact on leadership productivity where the empirical findings show a positive attitude amongst 6 out of 8 participants, regarding using digital leadership and adapting to the pandemic
restrictions and challenges. The two major negative aspects that may be found in the empirical findings is that the lack of motivation of the subordinators has slightly decreased, where an increase in management coaching has been the answer to solving this issue. The other disadvantage is the lack of social interaction, something that is argued on having an effect on an individual's creativity. The factors that have been found as the most influential and important on leadership productivity, is the change of adapting to more communication, support, and coaching leadership. This type of leadership has been existing pre Covid-19 and the results show that this has just increased and not dramatically changed. Overall, ICA Reklam has proven to be performing somewhat better or at least equally as good as before the coronavirus.

Second of all, this study suggests that individual preferences may influence a leader's ability to be efficient and effective. The primary data shows that working outside of the office may depend heavily on how you are as a person, where some leaders may therefore be more productive in their own “bubble” at home, whereas other leaders need to be closely aligned with their team to work effectively and efficiently.

Lastly, a new type of business is arising. This shift of being a digital leader has also led to the opportunities and possibilities for a new type of business model. This business model is a perfect example of connecting both the benefits of remote working and the benefits of the physical and social contact that may spark and enhance productivity in the creative industries. This “new” model is presented by almost all of the participants where it is suggested that for each week there shall be 2 or 3 days on a schedule that are set as “meeting days” at the office. Here, the employees can ask questions, get coaching, and tick off their to-do lists while at the same time gaining the social interaction. The 3 or 4 days that are left of the week shall be free and flexible to work remotely and wherever the employees feel most comfortable with. For the leaders that have been a part of this research, this model is seen as a good strategy for the future of ICA where it may be applicable and adaptable to each preference and qualities. This concludes that remote working is actually working.
6.0 Discussion

The purpose of this last chapter is to provide the reader with a contributions statement followed by practical implications. Furthermore, limitations during the process of this research are discussed and a short critical reflection of the authors' work is presented. This is eventually concluded with suggestions for future research within the area of choice.

6.1 Contributions

This paper makes an important contribution to research on remote working and leadership productivity. First of all, in contrast to prior literature whose focus has been to investigate employee productivity and working remotely, this study shifts the focus from an employee perspective by looking at leaders in the creative industries instead. Due to the importance of leadership for organizational success or failure and the current rise of usage of remote working pushed by Covid-19 and the society, the research gives the reader a deeper understanding of the challenges, issues, and advantages of working remotely.

Second of all, the research indicates the endless possibilities of working outside of the office for other industries and studies to investigate or try new ways of working in today's modern society. Further, the company that has contributed to this research also implies to a new type of business strategy that combines the two worlds of a physical office and working from home. This may lead other companies to try new and innovative business strategies as well. From a managerial perspective, the empirical findings of this study may serve as guidance on how managers and leaders in the creative industries may adapt to the increased digitalization, future pandemics, or other humanitarian crises that may hinder normal business performance.

Lastly, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing clarity to the phenomena of productive leadership as the definition and understanding have been lacking in previous literature. It also adds to the understanding of digitalization and remote working by explaining both positive and negative influential factors on leadership productivity. This expands the academic understanding by adding practical knowledge from eight team leaders in one of the largest advertising firms in Sweden.
6.2 Practical Implications

From an exploratory perspective, the empirical findings within this research envisions the practical implication of how remote working influence leadership productivity, due to the Covid-19 outbreak in the year of 2020. The findings indicate on remote working as a successful yet challenging business strategy where it is crucial for leaders to adapt, understand and implement new ways of working in times of change.

6.3 Limitations

The conducted study does have possible limitations. However, these may be an opportunity window for future research within the area of remote working and leadership productivity.

*Single organization:* First, the research is limited to one single organization (Case Study) which may impose difficulties in concluding a broader generalization on other companies. Important to keep in mind is that the findings may not be equal if the study were to shift to a different industry or another organization, which shows the significance of this research's contribution to explore future research with the attempt of a broader scope.

*Covid-19:* Secondly, the plan was to conduct face-to-face interviews but due to the coronavirus still being present during the fall semester the authors together with the participants decided that all of the interviews were to be held via Team or Telephone since these interviews would be more accurate in terms of following the social distancing guidelines and taking individual responsibility. Interviews that are held where everyone is seen physically generally tend to capture body language and social cues rather than through telephone or video, which therefore is seen as a limitation worth mentioning in this case. Although, the majority of the interviews were held as video calls to increase the credibility of the results the time aspect of getting a response from the chosen participants took longer than expected which led to a minor decrease in efficiency for the research during that time.

*Language barrier:* Thirdly, the interviews mentioned in this study were held only in Swedish due to practical reasons. After the interviews were complete, selective transcribing and translation processes began into English. Because of individual interpretation, this process was made one time for each author since a limitation lays in the accuracy during the language translation. Even though this increased the time of the data collection it also increased the
trustworthiness of the result. Additionally, because the authors applied triangulation during the transcribing process to ensure credibility and to lower this risk (Collis Hussey, 2014), this limitation was set to a minimum.

6.4 Critical reflection

During this process, the researchers have understood the importance of being self-critical since there is always room for improvements in each process and each aspect. One reflection that was made was the difficulties in limiting the scope of the research since the phenomena of leadership productivity, digitalization, and remote working may be found in a large quantity of literature. This has been established as a struggle for the authors, however, it is also seen as a strength where knowledge has been deeply enhanced within these three main areas. A suggestion for improvement and change would be to either focus entirely on leadership productivity or remote working since the experience and knowledge gained during this time will now be usable for future investigations.

6.5 Future research

Due to the broad topics that have been discussed during this study, the possibilities for future research are many. One suggestion of further research would be to expand the scope of the study by examining more in-depth on how the possibility for remote working/WFH in today's society may improve the organization's long term goals, as well as productivity and efficiency starting within management. As an example, this would draw upon one of the delimitations presented in previous paragraphs regarding the limitations of the sample and increase the participants to get a broader picture or even chose another industry to compare and contrast result and effect factors. Prior research has examined this, but not solely focusing on the pandemic and its drastic changes and challenges. Another suggestion would be to examine the difference between remote working and working from home, and its effect on either employee or leadership productivity. Would there be a difference between working from home or working a at café? Or is WFH and the benefits it comes with, the key to success for future business? Another example would be to look at the effect on increased or decreased productivity in this case.

Lastly, for future research, it could be significant to test the long-term effects of working remotely. This study has only aimed for the time of Covid-19 and what changes, adaption, and
contributions are have brought upon the creative industry of ICA Reklam. Future research could examine the long-term effects, past Covid-19, of the changes that have been made within the past year and from an exploratory perspective investigate if these results are different long term compared to the short term.
7. Reference list


8. Appendices

Appendix 1
Consent form for Interviews

**Research purpose:** The aim of this study is to **explain** the influence of remote working on leadership productivity due to Covid 19.

**Researchers:** Anton Delwer & Olivia Boe

**Information:**
- The interview will take around 30-60 minutes
- The interview will be recorded
- You will remain anonymous as participants and will therefore be given a number for if you are to be referenced directly.
- We may contact you after the interview to clarify any statements said under the interview

**By signing this document, you accept the following terms:**
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I will not be compensated for this interview
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and make any adjustment I deem necessary to maintain the integrity of my answers
- I am entitled to ask the researchers anything about the researchers during the interview and thereafter
- I have read and accepted the information

Signature of participant  ----------------------------     Date  --------------
Signature of researcher  ----------------------------     Date  --------------
Appendix 2
Interview Questions for Bachelor Thesis & Interview structure, questions and guidelines

Introduction: This interview will discuss leadership productivity in relation to remote working. The questions will mainly include: Digitalisation, Remote Working, Leadership Productivity and Covid 19, where the purpose is to explain how a leader’s productivity have been affected by the increase in remote working due to the corona virus.

The interview will start with an explanation to the participant what the research is about, the purpose and how the data will be stored. A consent form (Appendix 1) is also emailed and signed digitally. Further, main concept, such as the meaning of Leadership Productivity, are defined in beforehand for clarity.

- Is it OK if we record this following interview session?

Questions regarding the Participant

- What is your job role/position?
- How many employees do you monitor in total?

Questions regarding Leadership & Productivity

1. What does leadership mean to you and how would you describe yourself as a leader?

2. With your own words, what does it mean to be productive?

3. How would you describe leadership in terms of productivity?

4. What is your approach on being productive and how do you make sure that your team is as effective and efficient as possible?

5. What are your thoughts about digital leadership and leading virtually?

Questions regarding Remote working/WFH and Covid 19
6. How has Covid 19 affected your organisation and your creative industry?

7. Has Covid 19 affected your leadership style? Elaborate both yes/no answers.

8. How would you describe your teams' strategy and adaption to the social distancing guidelines and the increase in remote working?

9. Based on your previous experience, does working from home cause any changes in your management skills and practises?

11. How do you as a leader measure/evaluate productivity? How do your measure/evaluate your own productivity? Now vs Covid

12. Would you argue that remote working makes you more or less productive? Elaborate.

13. Would you argue that the increase in remote working have been beneficial for you as a leader or is this seen as an obstacle? Elaborate.

15. Have you experienced a productivity increase or decrease among your team-members regarding the current situation of working more virtually?

16. What systems does your organisation use to support remote working? Are these systems beneficial for you as a leader in terms of productivity?

17. How is your organisation currently working? Remotely or from the office? As a productive leader, which one do you prefer and why?

18. How do you see the future of remote working developing in your organisation and in your team?
Appendix 3

The Principles of the MRS Code of Conduct

1. Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.

2. Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.

3. Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.

4. Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their professional activities.

5. Researchers shall respect the rights and well-being of all individuals.

6. Researchers shall ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.

7. Researchers shall balance the needs of individuals, clients, and their professional activities.

8. Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgement in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.

9. Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.

10. Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession.
### Appendix 4

#### Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical steps</th>
<th>Analytical Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Familiarizing with data</strong></td>
<td>While listening to the recorded primary data, notes and potential important factors were written down in one document. The purpose of the first listening to the recorded audio was to get familiar with the data and gain an overview. The authors kept separate documents on their own specific notes and later on this was combined into one single document.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Generating initial codes</strong></td>
<td>The second and third recordings were focused on finding codes and themes generated from the data. The first codes were based on the respondents quotes and arguments. When this was set, both authors read through the material once again where some changes to the initial codes and themes were made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Searching for themes</strong></td>
<td>Based on the codes from the first two steps, the authors discussed potential emerging themes. Example of some of the initial themes were: 1) Teamwork, 2) Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Reviewing and defining themes</strong></td>
<td>The analytical process continued with a preliminary theme generated from the initial codes. During this process, the authors agreed on the same interpretation and indicators from the recorded audios. The codes and the themes that was found in the primary data was reviewed several times in order to ensure validity and credibility for the data as a whole. For example, a preliminary theme was named: Teamwork but later on it was changed to Individual Qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Defining and naming themes</strong></td>
<td>The final themes were named once the authors agreed on the same interpretation and indicators from the recorded audios.</td>
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