



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

*Jönköping International
Business School*

Family SMEs challenged by crisis

A multi cased study to identify strategies applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis

BACHELOR/MASTER/DEGREE PROJECT: *General Management*

THESIS WITHIN: *Major*

NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15hp*

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *Engineering management*

AUTHOR: *Ilias Boukrach & Erica Karlberg*

JÖNKÖPING May 2021

Acknowledgements

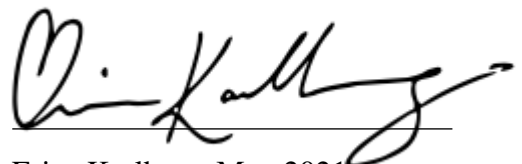
We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the participants taking part in the study by sharing their insightful comments and thoughts. Your contribution has been very valuable for us to be able to proceed the research.

Our gratitude extends to our supervisor Tommaso Minola that provided us with guidance and support along the journey of writing our thesis.

Lastly, we want to thank all the people that have been helping and supporting us from start to finish.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a few sharp strokes.

Ilias Boukrach, May 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a cursive style with a prominent 'E' and 'K'.

Erica Karlberg, May 2021

Master Thesis in General Management

Title: **Family SMEs challenged by crisis** - A multi cased study to identify strategies applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis

Authors: Ilias Boukrach & Erica Karlberg

Tutor: Tommaso Minola

Date: 2021-05-24

Key terms: *Family firms, family SMEs, Sweden, crisis, strategic and crisis management*

Abstract

Background: The Covid-19 crisis has caused limitations that have led to some serious economic consequences around the world. The crisis that is still ongoing has created a complex situation for most economic actors. Every firm has been affected by the crisis in one way or another including family firms, that play a vital role in the global economy. The majority of family firms are family small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), that occupy an enormous proportion of the economy. Considering the evident role of family SMEs, the crisis situation calls with urgency to investigate strategic measures that family SMEs apply in order to survive. Different from all other countries, the Swedish government has implemented the most unorthodox and relaxed restrictions in the world. This created a unique business environment for Swedish firms to operate in. Family SMEs generate 60 percent of value to the non-financial economy, and 65 percent of employment in Sweden. The crucial economical role of family SMEs in Sweden in combination with the unique restrictions, has triggered the urgency to investigate the strategic measures that Swedish family SMEs apply to adapt.

Purpose & method: This study aimed to find an answer to the question of what strategic measures are applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis. This study was executed by conducting qualitative research. 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 Swedish family SMEs from the construction, design, building, manufacturing, education and sports industries. The collected data was then sorted and analyzed systematically to generate knowledge, and draw upon conclusions that answer the research question of the study.

Conclusions: The findings showed that Swedish family SMEs use a different set of strategic measures in order to cope with the crisis. This study identified five strategic measure combinations which are: three cases of persevering + innovation, 1 case of retrenchment + innovation, 1 case of retrenchment + persevering, one case of retrenchment + persevering + innovation, and one case of pure persevering. It was found that the use of the strategic measures depends on five decisive factors namely, the impact of the crisis on the firms, the industry of the firms, the unique governmental restrictions, the preparedness of the firms for crisis and the development of the strategic measures through time. One interesting result was that all the firms in the sample have benefited financially from the crisis in the long-run, despite the challenges regarding supply chain disruptions.

Table of Content

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE.....	5
1.3 DELIMITATIONS	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
2.1 FAMILY BUSINESSES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS	8
2.1.1 <i>Family business definition</i>	8
2.1.2 <i>Characteristics</i>	8
2.2 SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED FAMILY FIRMS.....	10
2.3 GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE RISKS OF COVID-19 IN SWEDEN	11
2.4 FAMILY FIRMS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT	13
2.4.1 <i>Family firms during crisis</i>	14
2.5 FAMILY FIRMS DURING COVID-19 AND THEIR STRATEGIC RESPONSES	16
3 METHODOLOGY	19
3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	19
3.1.1 <i>Ontology</i>	19
3.1.2 <i>Epistemology</i>	20
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH	20
3.3 RESEARCH METHOD	22
3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY	23
3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE	23
3.5.1 <i>Primary data</i>	24
3.5.2 <i>Secondary data</i>	28
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS	29
3.7 RESEARCH QUALITY	30
3.7.1 <i>Credibility</i>	30
3.7.2 <i>Transferability</i>	31
3.7.3 <i>Dependability</i>	31
3.7.4 <i>Confirmability</i>	32
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	32
4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	35
4.1 FACTOR 1: IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE FIRMS.....	36
4.1.1 <i>Strategic measures applied by the firms during the Covid-19 crisis</i>	42
4.2 FACTOR 2: INDUSTRY OF THE FIRMS	45
4.3 FACTOR 3: UNIQUE SWEDISH GOVERNMENTAL RESTRICTIONS	46
4.4 FACTOR 4: PREPAREDNESS BEFORE THE CRISIS	46
4.5 FACTOR 5: DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC MEASURES THROUGH TIME DURING THE CRISIS.....	47
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	48
5.1 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT.....	48
5.2 FAMILY FIRM RESEARCH.....	52
6 FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS.....	54
REFERENCE LIST	56
APPENDIX 1	1
APPENDIX 2	3
APPENDIX 3	8
APPENDIX 4	9

Figures

Figure 1: Interrelation within Family businesses (adapted from Taqiuri & Davis, 1982).....	9
Figure 2: Inductive bottom-up approach (Lodico et al., 2010).....	21
Figure 3: Framework of the five decisive factors for the use of strategic measures by family SMEs.....	35

Tables

Table 1: Overview of selected family SMEs	26
Table 2: Principles of ethical considerations (Bryan & Bell, 2015).....	34
Table 3: Impact of the crisis on the firms and the applied measures.....	37
Table 4: Combination of strategic measures used by the firms	42

Abbreviations and acronyms

SME – Small and medium sized enterprises

FFs – Family firms

SEW – Socio-emotional wealth

1 Introduction

The first chapter will provide an introduction for the researched phenomenon of family SMEs during crisis. It starts with a background of the crisis situation today, and then continues with concepts of family SMEs, and the way they deal with crisis. Further, the introduction will be narrowed down to the research problem and research question of the study to close the chapter with delimitations.

1.1 Background

On the 11th of March 2020, a pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO). The highly transmissible coronavirus spread rapidly worldwide and evoked a horror-structured effect on global health (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has been causing many countries to dramatically shut down daily life activities to slow down the spread. “Social distancing” is one of the tactics that has been widely applied, and some countries have taken more radical decisions to totally shut down different social facilities. The limitations that come with social distancing and other containment methods have had a significant effect on saving lives. However, the limitations have led to some serious economic consequences around the world. Since the start of the pandemic, stock markets have experienced dramatical crashes (Baker et al., 2020) that resulted in harsh economic recessions and bankruptcy of businesses (Baldwin & Weder, 2020; McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). Severe restrictions have been set on firms in various industries by mandating social distancing, health protection policies and even locking down non-essential businesses in many countries. These firm restrictions have triggered simultaneous demand and supply-chain issues (del Rio-Chanona et al., 2020).

The limitations and restrictions also affected the general buying power and consumption in private households (Muellbauer, 2020) when people started to lose their job. In April, just one month after the crisis started, 22 million people lost their jobs in the United States (Ponciano, 2020). At the start of 2021, 21 percent more people were unemployed compared to the start of 2020 (Schrmer, 2021). Unemployment rates increased to more than double in Austria, and about 30 percent of employees in Switzerland have been placed on short-term layoffs.

As the pandemic continued to take place, businesses were forced to let go of employees which resulted in the decrease of the consumer demand even more. The pandemic, that is still ongoing, came as a big shock and has raised uncertainty regarding its magnitude, duration and consequences (Wenzel et al., 2020). The pandemic and its consequent governmental restrictions have created a very unique and complex crisis situation for most economic actors worldwide.

Interestingly, as most governments worldwide have applied severe restrictions on businesses, the Swedish government did not follow the same approach. The Swedish government got a lot of attention due to its unorthodox approach in managing the outbreak. Uncommonly, the Swedish government took less restrictive measures than its European and Nordic neighboring countries, and had one of the most carefree lockdowns in the world. The country relied heavily on voluntary social distancing guidelines since the start of the pandemic including working from home and avoiding public transport where possible. The government made clear that their strategy was not designed to protect the economy, but to introduce sustainable and long-term measures. This, with the hope that the strategy to keep society open, will limit job losses and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on business. Although most businesses were allowed to remain open and have continued to operate, the country's economy got hit. Sweden's economy is highly dependent on export, and was damaged by lack of demand from abroad since the start of the crisis. (Savage, 2020; Tharoor, 2020)

Businesses like restaurants, shops and gyms struggled to attract customers despite being allowed to continue their operations. Unemployment rates have increased by 36 percent, and the number of business bankruptcies by 43 percent in June 2020 in comparison to June 2019 (Hensvik & Skans, 2020). Sweden's stock market had the highest intraday gross directional volatility spillovers in comparison with other European stock markets. Moreover, manufacturing exports decreased significantly in March 2020, resulting in supply chain disruptions and limitations in growth (Aslam et al., 2021). Regardless of the consequences of the Swedish government's strategy, the unusual restrictions have created a unique business environment for Swedish firms to operate in. This could make it interesting to put the focus on the Swedish business landscape in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.

Within the business landscape, every firm has been affected by the crisis in one way or another including family firms. Family firms (FFs) play a significant role in a country's economy as wealth creators, employers and innovators (Filser et al., 2016). For this, FFs are key contributors to the global economy, represent two-third of all businesses worldwide (Ballini et al., 2020). The European commission defines FFs as firms where at least one representative of the family is involved in the governance, and where the majority of decision-making rights are in the possession of one or more family members (European Commission, 2012a).

FFs are known for their self-governing, family-oriented existence and their constrained capital and resources, which can make them vulnerable to crisis situations (Lee, 2006; Kim & Vonortas, 2014; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). The literature explains how FFs behave differently from their non-family counterparts when facing crisis. For instance, increased family ownership decreases the probability of implementing any formal crisis policies (Faghfour et al., 2015). Also, performance during a crisis situation is highly affected by the emotional attachment of the family (Arrondo-García et al., 2016). Long term survival is highly prioritized over short-term performance, which often results in sacrificing short-term gains. The different behaviour may lead FFs to implement unique and specific coping strategies to survive.

FFs possess certain characteristics that can make them outperform non-family firms during crisis (Bauweraerts, 2013). They have greater resilience and profit from distinctive motivation and support from family members (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). Family engagement boosts flexibility, which is an important attribute to possess during crisis (Bauweraerts, 2013). Moreover, they possess an immense will to preserve their socioemotional wealth during crisis situations which often leads to outperformance (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). Family members show great concern for their firms' image and reputation, and are willing to pass a clean and well-functioning business onto successive generations (Berrone et al., 2012). The majority of FFs are small to medium sized businesses (family SMEs). The European Commission categorizes SMEs into 3 types. Medium with employees up to 250 and a turnover less than €50 million, small with employees up to 50 and a turnover less than €10 million, and micro with employees up to 10 and a turnover less than €2 million (European Commission, 2012b). SMEs occupy an enormous proportion of the economy and form 99 percent of all businesses in Europe.

More than 50 percent of the European Unions' GDP comes from the operations of SMEs (Tudor & Mutiu, 2008). The literature underlines the vital role of SMEs in the economy of a nation (Hillary, 2000). SMEs play a crucial role in employment worldwide (Erixon, 2009) and are a main source for innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and modernization (Hillary, 2000). In Sweden, SMEs generate more than 60 percent of value added in the non-financial business economy, and more than 65 percent of employment. There are approximately 58 SMEs per 1000 Swedish inhabitants. This clearly indicates the important role of SMEs in the country's economy. The literature addresses the vulnerability of family SMEs in times of economic crisis. This vulnerability can be explained by their limited financial resources (Thorgen & Williams, 2020), their lack of preparedness for cash flow disruptions, and their lack of professional management (Herbane, 2010).

The current crisis situation that can be labeled as both unique and complex creates an urgency to investigate how the crisis has affected family SMEs. More importantly, by considering their evident significant role in the global economy, it is of high priority to investigate the coping strategies that they apply in order to survive the ongoing crisis. The collapse of family SMEs, that form the backbone of a nations' economy, can have serious consequences. Acquiring a deep understanding of the coping strategies that they apply is of high importance for family business research (Kraus et al., 2020; Wenzel et al., 2020). The unorthodox governmental restrictions of the Swedish government have created a unique business environment. The unique business environment that operates in a complex ongoing crisis could make it interesting to put the focus on Swedish family SMEs.

Due to the novelty of the ongoing crisis, there have been only a few academic studies that have researched how and by what measures FFs are responding to the crisis (Kraus et al., 2020; Zajkowski & Żukowska, 2020). The few studies have relied heavily on the work of Wenzel et al. (2020) to carry out their investigations. Wenzel et al. (2020) constructed a theoretical framework of four strategic responses that are implemented by FFs to face crisis, namely retrenchment, persevering, innovating and exit. Retrenchment refers to the measures that the firms follow in order to reduce their costs. Persevering focuses on sustaining ongoing business activities throughout the hardships of crisis. Innovating refers to strategic measures that revolve around identifying new opportunities, and readjusting the operations according to the changes in the business environment as a result of crisis. Finally, the exit strategic response

indicates the discontinuation of firms when all the other strategic measures turn out to be insufficient for survival.

1.2 Research problem and purpose

Although there is plenty of research done in the fields of family business and crisis management as separate areas, not much research has been done when merging the two fields. For instance, just a very few studies have investigated how FFs deal with crisis in general (Cater & Schwab, 2008; Herbane, 2013; Kraus et al., 2013; Faghfour et al., 2015). When it comes to the current crisis, only a few academic studies have researched how and by what measures FFs are responding to the crisis (Kraus et al., 2020; Zajkowski & Żukowska, 2020). The novelty, complexity and uniqueness of the current crisis explains the limited research done so far. This means that there are some gaps in the fields of family business and crisis management research that need to be investigated. Considering the vital economical role of family SMEs, the current situation triggers the urgency to investigate the strategic measures that can be applied in order to survive the crisis. The current situation calls for extensive research in order to provide family SMEs with solid strategic measures that will enable them to adapt to the current situation.

The investigation of Kraus et al. (2020) is one of the few studies that researched the effect of the Covid-19 crisis on FFs, and the strategic measures that were applied. The investigation took place in five Western European countries (Austria, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) during the early stages of the crisis (March-April 2020). Kraus et al. (2020) used the work of Wenzel et al. (2020) as their framework for analysis. The work of Wenzel et al. (2020) contributed to strategic and crisis management research by constructing a theoretical framework of four strategic measures applied by firms in times of crisis, namely retrenchment, persevering, innovating and exit. By using this theoretical framework, Kraus et al. (2020) were able to identify strategic measures used by family firms in the five western European countries. The investigation represented the first empirical study in the management field providing initial evidence of the economic impact of the ongoing crisis on FFs. The work of Kraus et al. (2020) provided a number of new insights. For instance, the study highlights the fact that most FFs usually apply a combination of different strategic measures.

Despite the fact that the study has provided rich insights, they can only be considered as preliminary. First, because the study was executed in only five western European countries. Second, because the investigation took place in an early stage of the pandemic. And third, because the investigation focused on FFs of all sizes and did not target family SMEs in particular. The limitations of the study encourage to do research in other countries, but also in more advanced phases of the pandemic to get a more global overview on what strategic measures family SMEs apply. Family SMEs in other countries operate in different business environments and might possess unique characteristics, which might affect the use of strategic measures. Focusing on Swedish family SMEs that operate in a different business landscape than the rest of world, due to the unique governmental restrictions, will contribute to the acquirement of a more global overview. Also, conducting research in a more advanced phase of the crisis can lead to new insights. Applied strategic measures by Family SMEs in a more advanced phase of the crisis can take another direction and witness more complex developments. Strategic measures can be developed to a further extent or can be changed completely through time according to the situation at hand (Kraus et al., 2020). Monitoring the change of strategic measures through time will provide a deeper understanding of the decision-making process within Family SMEs (Wenzel et al., 2020). This was not possible during the investigation of Kraus et al. (2020) due to the early timing of the study.

Investigating the strategic measures applied by family SMEs in the new context of Sweden during a more advanced phase of the pandemic can contribute to research from several angles. First, the findings of Wenzel et al. (2020) can be confirmed by identifying strategic measures that fit into the theoretical framework of the study. The investigation can also identify new strategic measures that can develop the framework to a further extent. Next, the findings of Kraus et al. (2020) can be confirmed by detecting the use of the same combinations of strategic measures. The investigation can also reveal more complex or developed combinations. Furthermore, putting the focus on family SMEs instead of FFs of all sizes can lead to new insights regarding the implementation of strategic measures. This, considering their unique characteristics and particular vulnerability in times of crisis.

The mentioned arguments have directed this research investigation to the following research question:

Q1: What strategic measures are applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis, and why?

1.3 Delimitations

The study focused on family SMEs within Sweden only, and was limited towards a specific target group. Non-family SMEs or family firms of bigger size were excluded from the study. The study was open to include Swedish family SMEs from various industries to get a more profound overview regarding the implementation of strategic measures. The outcome of this study has contributed to family business research and crisis management by providing an in-depth understanding of the strategic measures that family SMEs apply in order to cope with the current crisis, and with crisis in general.

2 Literature Review

The initial step to develop this thesis was to review pre-existing literature on family firms, SMEs, the Swedish government's way of acting towards the Covid-19 crisis, crisis and strategic management and strategic measures applied by family firms in order to adapt to crisis situations. This chapter will provide a profound theoretical background that enables the reader to grasp the necessary concepts that will allow to follow and understand the content of this study.

2.1 Family businesses and their characteristics

2.1.1 Family business definition

The European Commission (2012a) has defined a family business by a number of features: First, a firm can be considered to be a family business when “*The majority of decision-making rights are in the possession of the natural person(s) who established the firm, or in the possession of the natural person(s) who has/have acquired the share capital of the firm, or in the possession of their spouses, parents, child, or children's direct heirs.*” The decision-making rights can be either direct or indirect. Second, At least one family member that represents the family has to be formally involved in the governance of the firm. And third, the person that established or acquired the firm, or alternatively his/her family or descendants possess 25 percent of the decision-making rights (European Commission, 2012a).

2.1.2 Characteristics

Family businesses are mainly influenced by the family members and can differ in the way they handle organizational behaviors compared with non-family businesses (Basu, 2004; Gagné et al., 2014). The differences can also have an impact on the entrepreneurs' aspirations and interaction, and on how these behaviors affect the outcome of business (Basu, 2004). The businesses form a big part of societies' firms today and have an important role in the economy (Family Business Network, n. d.), long-term stability and sustainability (Siakas et al., 2014). They are often considered to be characteristically different compared with non-family businesses regarding their structure. Scholars and researchers worldwide tend to give family firms a lot of attention due to their multidimensionality and complexity (Sharma et al., 2012).

A three-circle model provided by Taqiuri and Davis (1982) is a useful tool to grasp the main distinctions of family firms. The model combines three elements which are family, business and ownership (*figure 1*). The three elements and more specifically the points of overlap cause bivalent characteristics. They are therefore the unique attributes of family firms and consequently the origin of advantages and disadvantages (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). The definition of family firms has taken multiple directions and differs from one author to another. Some authors are distinguishing their definition of family firms on the basis of how involved or detached the family members are within their firm (Diéguez-Soto et al., 2015). Others do this on the basis of the number of generations, management positions or the size of the firms (Andersson, 2017).

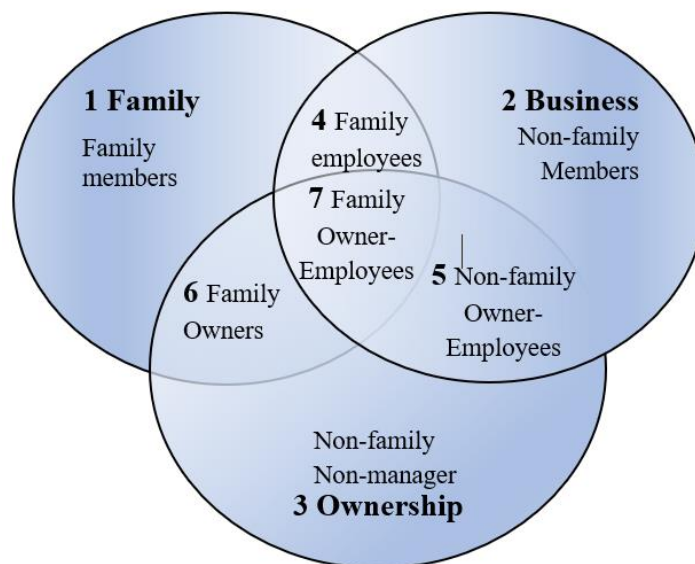


Figure 1: Interrelation within Family businesses (adapted from Taqiuri & Davis, 1982)

How the firms are dealing with the family (the emotional aspects) and the company (the professional aspects) is essential. This is how they can play dynamic or conflicting roles when there are both private and personal interests to aim for (Siakas et al., 2014). FFs tend to be more socially responsible to protect their image as well as their reputation when the family's reputation is at stake (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). This means that there is serious concern regarding how they act and handle different situations. This concern enables the firm to be passed on as flawless as possible to next generations. Goals within family firms are often driven by family-centric and non-financial motivations (Basu, 2004; Gagné, et al., 2014).

2.2 Small and medium-sized family firms

There is no definite definition of SMEs in the literature, mainly because of the extensive variety of businesses within SMEs. For the purpose of this research study, the definition constructed by the European commission will be considered. The European commission (2012b) categorizes SMEs into three types with the following descriptions:

- Medium: businesses with employees up to 250, and a turnover less than €50 million
- Small: businesses with employees up to 50, and a turnover less than €10 million
- Micro: businesses with employees up to 10, and a turnover less than €2 million

There are some main differences that can be identified when comparing SMEs with larger organizations. The main differences can be expressed on the basis of three levels. First, in terms of processes, SMEs have in contrast with larger organizations simpler planning and control systems, and have more informal ways of reporting. Second, in terms of procedures, SMEs have a lower degree of standardization alongside idealistic decision procedures. Third, in terms of structure, SMEs have a lower degree of specialization where employees have more multi-tasking functions with a higher degree of innovativeness (Ghobadian & Galleary, 1997).

SMEs play the most vital role in the economy of a nation (Hillary, 2000). SMEs are a crucial factor for employment worldwide and form the backbone of an economy (Erixon, 2009). They provide and yield opportunities for employment especially during periods of recession. SMEs are considered to be a main source for innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and modernization. Within SMEs, individual innovative effort and competition is built due to the crucial role they play in the economy, which enhances the future development of businesses. SMEs occupy an enormous proportion in the economy. Approximately 99 percent of all businesses in Europe fall into this sector. Two-thirds of all private sector jobs and half of new jobs are provided by SMEs. More than 50 percent of the European Union's GDP comes from their operations (Tudor & Mutiu, 2008). There are approximately 58 SMEs per 1000 inhabitants in Sweden. Particularly in the non-financial business economy, SMEs generate more than 60 percent of value added and more than 65 percent of employment. This makes them a fundamental part of the Swedish economy (European Commission, 2012b).

In the literature, there is a definitional dilemma on how to identify SMEs. This is the case since there is no unanimity in defining family firms themselves. Despite the fact that researchers did not reach common grounds in defining family SMEs in an empirical context, a consensus was achieved from an operational point of view. From an operational perspective, family SMEs can be defined as ones in which at least two family members are involved. The involvement must be measured on the basis of at least two elements, which are the company's control (ownership or voting rights) and governance/management. The involvement of at least one family member in both roles is required. An SME reaches a more robust familial nature, when more than one family member is involved in both ownership and governance/management roles. Shortly, family SMEs can be operationally identified by considering a controlling presence of the family in ownership, on the board of directors or in the management of the firm (Roffia et al., 2021).

In times of economic crisis, SMEs are often the most vulnerable due to their limited financial resources (Thorgen & Williams, 2020). Their vulnerability can also be explained by their lack of preparedness for cash flow disruptions and their lack of professional management (Herbane, 2010). The lack of professional management can be summarized in little to no investment in improvement opportunities, little knowledge about the market, lack of demand forecasting and formal planning and lack of managerial skills. These flaws explain the failure of many SMEs when facing an economic crisis (Eggers, 2020). Further, they tend to be more easily damaged by their strategic partners in times of crises. Strategic partners may take advantage of the fact that they have a relatively bigger size, and may decide to secure their financial resources (Alvarez & Barney, 2001). This may result in strategic partners putting multiple forms of pressure on their smaller counterparts (Oukes et al. 2019).

2.3 Government actions to mitigate the risks of Covid-19 in Sweden

The pandemic that developed through Covid-19 have had major consequences economically and socially (European Commission, 2020). It has had a direct effect through what the virus is doing to people, and an indirect effect by countries applying different measures in order to stop the spread of the infection. As a precaution strategy, some countries have been shutting down and stopping social activities completely (Baker et al., 2020). This resulted in huge negative shocks on the global market (European Commission, 2020).

The Swedish government got questioned by the whole world for the little and relaxed restrictions towards the Covid-19 pandemic (Courtemanche et al., 2020; Ahlander & O'Connor, 2020). The government decided to narrow gatherings to 500 at the start of the pandemic and then to 50 (Regeringen, 2020a) while most countries worldwide demanded a complete lockdown in response to the first infection wave (Born et al., 2020; Fetzter et al., 2020).

However, the logic behind the unorthodox restrictions is explained by a number of Swedish individuals. For instance, the Health Agency Chief Epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell said in an interview *"It is important to have a policy that can be sustained over a longer period, meaning staying home if you are sick, which is our message,"*. Fölster (2020) shows that the shutdown of several sectors would force companies to reduce their operations. This would consequently result in 14 percent of the Swedish companies going bankrupt within three months, and in 22 percent if the shutdown was stretched to six months. Hessius (2020) argued that if Sweden and the world were to continue with lockdowns, more people would die from the economic crisis and financial consequences than the pandemic itself.

Despite the fact that Sweden had looser restrictions compared with other European countries, employers have still been advised to let employees work from home if possible (Folkhälsomyndigheterna, 2020c). The government have had a security net for the people that got furlough, got fired or had to take care of the kids in case of sickness. The qualifying sickness day is temporarily abolished to ensure that people who feel just a little sick stay home from work, without the need to prove sickness with a doctor's certificate. The number of days that people can stay home without a doctor's certificate was extended from 7 to 14 days in case of having little sickness symptoms (Regeringskansliet, 2020b).

There is the flexibility for workers that get sick or cannot go to work because of contagiousness reasons to get a guaranteed compensation (Försäkringskassan, 2021; Regeringskansliet, 2020b). The government provided a support package for firms that got badly affected by the crisis, and an additional support package was offered to SMEs. Among the measures in the support package, was that the state temporarily took over the costs of sick leave, parts of the salary costs for short-term layoffs, and provided a deferral for companies' tax payments to help the firms to keep their business alive (Larsson, 2020).

To be able to contain better restrictions, a temporary covid-19 law was introduced in January 10, 2021. This gave the authorities the ability to impose restrictions on different activities and locations. This law has the authority to limit the size of crowds and close down activities if necessary (Sveriges Riksdag, 2020/21:SoU23). The law also gave the different municipalities the ability to have various restrictions in their area to handle the situation (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020c).

2.4 Family firms and crisis management

Literature in the context of crisis management in firms has taken many paths in previous years. Perspectives differ according to different research areas (management, accounting, finance) (Hale et al., 2005), strategic measures to crisis situations (Baron et al., 2005) and handling of firm representatives (Harvey & Haines, 2005). Some literature covers crisis that is caused by firms, while other literature covers crisis that comes as an effect of natural disasters (Park et al., 2013; Runyan, 2006). Some researchers have described the characteristics of crisis (Runyan, 2006). Some of these characteristics can be specified as unexpected changes in a certain system (Greiner, 1989), a significant risk to the firm's survival (Witte, 1981), small time frames for decision making (Hills, 1998; Pearson and Clair, 1998) and big amounts of involved stakeholders (Elliott & McGuinness, 2002).

Researchers that investigated the outcome of crisis have dealt with different perspectives. For example, from one perspective researchers investigate the developed relationship with stakeholders after crisis (Coombs, 2007; Elsbach, 1994; Pfarrer et al., 2008). While others investigate the adjustments for survival and learning journeys during crisis situations (Lampel et al., 2009; Veil, 2011; D'Aveni & MacMillan, 1990). Research has shown that crisis does not only come with negative consequences for stakeholders, but it can also bring some potential positive effects with it. Crisis situations trigger firms to apply innovation approaches and explore new markets (Faulkner, 2001).

The management's perception about crisis whether it is a threat or opportunity, is a decisive factor on how managers will respond to the crisis situation. Managers who perceive crisis as a danger will usually respond emotionally and function with a limited opportunities mindset. On the contrary, crisis can be seen as positive by managers which can lead to a flexible and open working approach (Brockner & James, 2008; Dane & Pratt, 2007; James & Wooten, 2005). Crisis can be examined from an internal and external point of view. Hereby, three main process steps apply: pre-crisis management, crisis management and post-crisis outcomes (Bundy et al., 2017).

2.4.1 Family firms during crisis

Family firms are known for their self-governing, family-oriented existence and their constrained capital and resources. This makes family firms typically vulnerable when exposed to crisis (Lee, 2006; Kim & Vonortas, 2014; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). It typically harms the holder of a family firm on two levels. First, as a private citizen in society and second, as a business owner (Runyan, 2006). For the majority of owners, the firm represents their family's legacy. Therefore, the efficient and practical management of crisis is fundamental for the survival and longevity of FFs. This is especially for family SMEs, when crisis can put their socioemotional endowment at risk (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011).

The firms possess certain uniqueness regarding their behaviour and measures. For instance, it has been proven that increased family ownership decreases the probability that the firm will apply formal crisis policies (Faghfouri et al., 2015). It has also been shown that FFs' performance is affected due to the significant emotional attachment of the family (Arrondo-García et al., 2016). They prioritize long-term survival over short-term performance which makes them sacrifice short-term gains if necessary (Lins et al., 2013; Minichilli et al., 2016). Because of this, they may implement unique measures. The survival-oriented business strategy of FFs results in underinvestment, which can cause underperformance in comparison with nonfamily firms. This was revealed from the 2008-2009 financial crisis (Lins et al., 2013) that showed that they invest less which makes them suffer more in the face of stock market downturns (Lins et al., 2013).

On the other hand, research showed that family firms can outperform nonfamily firms during crisis (Bauweraerts, 2013). This is due their greater resilience through family involvement. The specific commitment of family members can form and develop unique resources which are usually unobtainable for non-family firms (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). In addition, they profit from distinctive motivation and support from family members. This support comes in multiple forms like free or loaned labour, additional capital investments and low interest loans (Siakas et al., 2014; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). Family engagement boosts flexibility, which is an extremely valuable tool to possess during crisis (Bauweraerts, 2013). The less formalized structures (Songini, 2006) and greater solidarity with stakeholders (Berrone et al., 2012; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006), encourages the search for more proactive and innovative measures to mitigate the consequences of sudden crisis shocks.

Moreover, family firms possess an immense will to preserve their socioemotional wealth which can lead to outperformance (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). The family principals show great concerns for the family's public image and reputation (Berrone et al., 2012). In this context, they are less engaged in activities that can harm the firm's reputation including tax aggressive activities that can cause administrative enquiries or penalties (Chen et al., 2010; Niskanen, 2011). The concern of family firms to keep their reputation flawless enables them to develop solid trade relationships with suppliers and customers. The path of organisational resilience leads them to manage gross sales margin in efficient ways during crisis (Bloch et al., 2012). Owners and managers have a good alignment of interests which creates a competitive advantage (Anderson & Reeb, 2003). This is not the case in nonfamily firms where conflict of interests is more common between the owners and managers. The conflict between owners that have long term orientations and managers that have short term motivations can become costly during crisis. In that sense, managers tend to invest in risky projects when the company is about to collapse, since they can benefit from the excess of risk without paying the price of failure (Zhou, 2012). FFs usually have a good alignment of interests between owners and managers and do not have to deal with such problems.

It is common for FFs to act more responsibly towards their employees and the environment. In addition, they have the tendency to make decisions that align with the beliefs, values and non-economic goals of the firm (Chrisman et al., 2005; Dyer & Whetten, 2006). They have unique and specific ownership structures, which enhances making decisions and responding to unexpected changes in a quick and non-bureaucratic manner (Carney, 2005).

2.5 Family firms during Covid-19 and their strategic responses

A few studies have attempted to investigate FFs during the Covid-19 crisis. Quality research has been carried out in five European countries to investigate how they reacted to the pandemic. The research revealed that FFs showed extraordinary solidarity with both their employees and stakeholders. Maintaining a solid relationship with employees and stakeholders is a powerful tool that secures mutual support and builds a sense of unification (Kraus et al., 2020). Also, Research conducted among Dutch family firms has shown that they have treated their employees in an exceptional manner during the Covid-19 crisis (Floren et al., 2020). Keeping their employees has much more importance than for example, earning a dividend payout.

Different actions that were taken by FFs during the Covid-19 crisis can be represented in multiple strategic responses. There are four types of strategic responses that family firms apply during the crises (Wenzel et al., 2020) which can be specified as:

- **Retrenchment:** this strategic response refers to the measures that family firms follow in order to reduce their costs (Pearce & Robbins, 1993) and intricacy (Benner & Zenger, 2016). Applying this type of strategy can cause both positive and negative consequences. Following cost-cutting measures helps FFs to maintain liquidity and create robust foundations for long-term recovery (Pearce & Robbins, 1994). This is a positive effect of retrenchment as a direct response to crisis. However, retrenchment is usually associated with decreased performance (Barker & Duhaime, 1997). This is especially the case when crisis lasts for longer periods of time. When retrenchment is applied in the long run, critical changes in resource use and company culture occur (Ndofor et al., 2013).
- **Persevering:** the strategic measure focuses on sustaining ongoing business operations and activities during crisis. The positive effects of persevering can be explained by the fact that changing strategic measures frequently, reduces the core value of a strategical renewal (Stieglitz et al., 2016). Research has shown that the foundation of this strategic response is to avoid starting a strategic renewal at the wrong time. Implementing the persevering strategy in a successful manner is highly dependent on the duration of a

crisis. The longer the duration of the crisis, the scarcer the financial resources of the family firm become (Wenzel et al., 2020).

- **Innovating:** The strategic measure focusses on recognizing opportunities and readjusting operations and activities according to the changed environment. A crisis situation encourages firms to think more openly about new opportunities (Roy et al., 2018). It also enables them to reflect upon the feasibility of their business models (Ucaktürk et al., 2011). When firms detect which elements of their business models are more solid, it becomes easier to identify opportunities for business model innovation (Clauss, 2017). Research has proved that innovation regarding business models is triggered by external factors like changes in the competitive environment (Clauss et al., 2019) or the emergence of new technologies (Pateli & Giaglis, 2005). The innovating strategic response has the potential to put firms into a stronger position for the future, and may provide sustainable solutions (Wenzel et al., 2020). For example, firms might need to find new ways to create revenue during crisis. This is when the implementation of innovating measures becomes fundamental. Nonetheless, low liquidity is considered to be a limiting factor for the strategic measure. Over longer periods of time during crisis, managers can miss the window of opportunity to make strategic change (Wenzel et al., 2020).
- **Exit:** is the last strategic response that firms apply when other strategies turn out to be unsuccessful. Yet, the successful discontinuation of firms can create new opportunities and provide new resources (Carnahan, 2017). In other words, the exit of firms enhances strategic renewal and enables the establishment of new firms (Ren et al., 2019).

Research has stated that FFs mainly applied pure perseverance or a combination of perseverance, innovation and retrenchment in order to adapt to the Covid-19 crisis. It is important to mention that these findings apply for the early stages of the crisis. These findings propose that the long-term focus of family firms might instinctively lead them to take the most reasonable steps. However, it is not possible for family firms to implement such steps without having enough liquidity before the crisis occurs. (Kraus et al., 2020)

Research has shown that FFs apply different approaches to face crisis. The selection of the most suitable response strategies depends highly on the starting situations. The firms' sector seems to be one of the most important decisive factors that affects the degree to which the FFs are affected by the pandemic. Other factors like firm size appear to play a significant role as well. Some FFs apply strategic measures that go far beyond persevering even with the fact that they were hardly affected at all. From this, it can be stated that the entrepreneurial orientation of the management team helps to consider the crisis situation as a business opportunity. (Kraus et al., 2020)

The strategic measures have both short-term and long-term consequences and were mainly applied for two reasons. First, to secure and protect liquidity and second, to ensure long-term survival. Not a single strategic response on its own is suitable to achieve both goals simultaneously. This explains why FFs have applied a mixture of strategic measures (Kraus et al., 2020). The selection of a mixture of strategic measures is described in the literature as "ambidextrous crisis management" (Schmitt et al., 2010).

3 Methodology

This chapter will describe and discuss the research philosophy, approach, method and strategy, which will guide the reader through the methodology used in order to find answers to the research question of the study. This will be followed by explaining the data collection and data analysis procedures. Subsequently, an assurance of quality will be given with a description of how the ethical considerations were applied.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Methodology is a way to get an opportunity to test the logic and the content of research. Using different ontological and epistemological assumptions enables to gain knowledge, and build a developed methodology in research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Depending on the adequacy of the method and the natural science assumptions, the research will guide the researcher to understand the phenomenon studied (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is a philosophic concept that explains the truth of society and natural science. The truth can be seen agnate to realism, that is one truth, or as relativism where there are multiple realities that exist. The relativism is shaped by context where the truth evolves and changes throughout time (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). This study has used a relativistic ontology where the knowledge was defined as the reality depending on the perspective of the external world. This stand endorses that the understanding, knowledge and reality are created by people and interaction which can imply that if it is right for someone, it can be wrong for someone else (Esterby-Smith et al., 2015). This means that there is no single objective truth or reality to be discovered, rather a multiple perspective on the same issue depending on the observer's perception (Esterby-Smith et al., 2015; Mathison, 2011). Time and place are also two aspects that are contingent in this context (Smith, 2008), particularly when the researcher in a study will be interacting with various firms that are operating in different areas and have different recourse endowments.

3.1.2 Epistemology

There are different ways to conduct and understand data. Epistemological considerations address how knowledge in specific fields is seen as acceptable or should be studied (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2012), and it describes how people make sense of the world (Esterby-Smith et al., 2015). This study's epistemology is based on a social constructionism paradigm which is also the case with the chosen ontological position. Realities are created through interactions with people, the environment and the attributes in people's actions (Costantino, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). How people share experience through language has an impact, since it can make a difference between people's understandings (Esterby-Smith et al., 2015).

The purpose that has been elaborated in this study concerns how different family firms have managed the crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic. In doing so, we acknowledge the perspective, dynamics and changes that have an important role when it comes to individual understandings and acting. The study will be depending on the realities of the participants, and the insights that we got through the interactions during data collection. The multiple perspectives will further provide indication of in-depth understandings with social constructionism, that will give insights that is needed for the analysis of the study. The paradigm will provide us with flexibility to interpret the empirical findings (Habermas, 1978), contribute to theory building, and provide related practical recommendations (Esterby-Smith et al., 2015).

3.2 Research Approach

There are three general approaches used in research when investigating a specific research topic, namely the abductive, deductive and inductive approach. The abductive approach starts in general with some deficient and incomplete observations. Researchers that apply abductive reasoning try to find the best prediction for those observations by the use of theory. It is often used when there are many uncertainties in a particular field of research. (Saunders et al., 2012)

A deductive research approach is focused on developing a hypothesis (or hypotheses) on the basis of already existing theory (Wilson, 2014). After developing a hypothesis, a research strategy is designed in order to test the formulated hypothesis. It explores a known theory or phenomenon and evaluates if that theory is valid in given circumstances (Snieder & Lerner,

2009). The developed hypothesis is evaluated by opposing it with observations that either results in a confirmation or a rejection (Snieder & Larner, 2009).

An inductive approach starts with detailed observations of the world and seeks to find a pattern within them in order to generate new theory (Babbie, 2010). This approach involves the search for patterns from observations in order to develop new explanations that will eventually result in the generation of new theory (Bernard, 2017). There is no hypothesis within the inductive approach which gives the researcher more flexibility in terms of reshaping the direction of the study. It is important to notice that an inductive approach does not entail neglecting previous theories and prior knowledge when developing research questions and objectives. The goal of the approach is to generate explanations from the collected data in order to detect patterns and relations to develop a theory. However, the approach does not prevent using existing theory to formulate the to be explored research question (Saunders et al., 2012).

The inductive approach that was chosen for this study, is based on learning from experience, regularity patterns and relationships in order to reach conclusions. The reasoning is often recognized as a “bottom-up” approach to knowing, in which researchers use observations to explain or describe a picture of the phenomenon that is being investigated as illustrated in *figure 2* (Lodico et al., 2010).

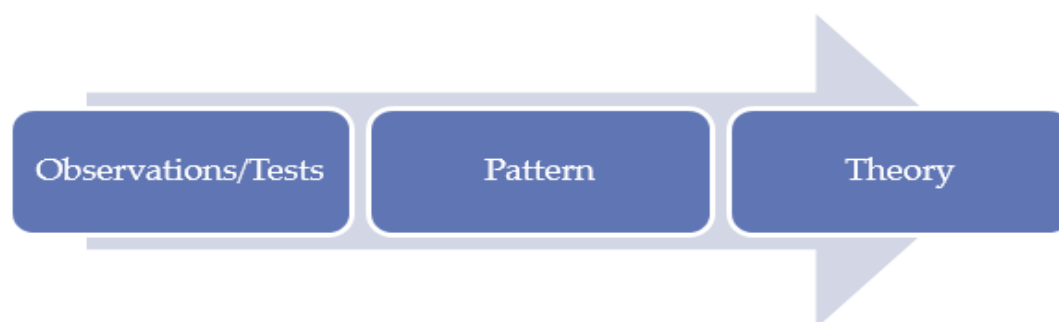


Figure 2: Inductive bottom-up approach (Lodico et al., 2010)

Since the aim of the study was to identify strategies that Swedish family SMEs apply during the current crisis, it was important to focus on understanding real-life observations. These observations were in order to find patterns that will generate new theory. This research started with little knowledge about the strategies that family SMEs apply, especially in the new context of Sweden in a more advanced phase of the pandemic. Prior knowledge and theories in the area of crisis and strategic management were used in order to formulate the aim and research

questions of the study. The inductive approach was considered to be the most appropriate, since theory coupled with real life experiences and observations will lead to new insights. The approach will help to obtain an in-depth and up to date understanding of strategic and crisis management in the new context. New theory can be generated by identifying new strategies or new combinations that were not identified in previous research.

3.3 Research Method

Research can be constructed by a qualitative or a quantitative approach. When a study represents numbers, statistics and graphs, it means that there is a quantitative method applied. When there are structured interviews and surveys with large quantities of numbers, this method is preferable. The method is less complicated to understand and is more tangible. However, the quantitative method is inflexible and non-personnel which can make it hard to understand the circumstances of a phenomenon, and to get the right and honest answers. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2012)

If a study is focusing on definitions, interpretations, meanings and aims to describe relations and constructs in words, a qualitative method is used. This method accounts to what the research participants said or did. For instance, recorded interviews, transcripts, written notes from observations, videos and documents are used to collect data. It has often a more explorative nature that involves open-ended questions and responses. This makes it possible to follow and understand the entire interaction between the researcher and participants. The lack of standardized questions and answers can make the results hard to compare statistically. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015)

For this research, a qualitative method design has been chosen. The different in-depth answers are of high importance to understand the phenomenon of the study. This means that the study will make use of non-numeric data where spoken words and language will be used and analyzed in order to gain comprehensive understandings.

3.4 Research Strategy

When using a qualitative research method there are numerous strategies to adapt. The gathering could be done by interactive participatory research, observations, action research, archival research, ethnographical research, narrative research, grounded theory, and case study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The strategy identifies the action plan that should meet the research objective (Saunders et al., 2012) which includes the research method and approach to be able to analyze the generated data.

Following the study's research purpose of examining how family SMEs worked with crisis management, we derived one research question to be answered throughout the study. The research aimed to do an extensive multi case study where the goal was to acquire the strategies that the firms are applying to be able to survive the Covid-19 crisis. Case studies have the advantage where real-life experiences can be captured and understood on a deeper level.

3.5 Data collection procedure

The method of collecting data with a qualitative research design observes a range of sources from documents to conducted interviews. It focuses on non-numeric data through primary and secondary data. The primary data is new collected information to gain new understandings and insights of an investigated subject from diverse respondents. The secondary data is already existing information and is originated from another authority. This means that it is crucial to evaluate the data and source, to evaluate the validity and identify the quality of the information before using it. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015)

To validate the research, we used the method of triangulation (Yin, 2012). Triangulation cross-checks the data which plays a major role for creating accuracy and credibility (Tracy, 2010). To pursue, we used data triangulation, one of Denzin's (1978) four types of triangulation, which is data collection from various sources (Abdalla et al., 2018). With the research focusing on family SMEs, we were constantly encountered with different information sources at diverse places and situations. There were also multiple individuals (preferably two) within the board of the firms that were interviewed within one company. The participants have provided the investigation with varying perspectives on the phenomenon of crisis management with necessary details about the company size, operating industries and family engagement which have influenced the triangulation positively. This is particularly important when doing research

in the field of family firms. Various viewpoints have to be considered due to merging aspects in family relationships and business decisions (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

3.5.1 Primary data

Since the research investigates crisis management within family SMEs, interviews have been of great importance. It is the most effective way of understanding how the firms are managed, which can show if there is a pattern among the different firms. Considering the purpose of the research, it required accurate in-house information.

The investigation has been carried out where data was collected through semi-structured interviews. A number of 7 family SMEs have been selected and contacted which are active in different sectors. In total, 12 interviews were conducted within this study. For the interviews, an interview guide was followed in order to allow ourselves to spontaneously react to the respondents' statements (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Guest et al., 2006; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). Two executives at most of the firms were interviewed to get a deeper understanding of the applied strategies. The data was directly analyzed after each interview was executed to not mismatch any of the information.

Sampling

Choosing the right sampling strategy is crucial for quality research. There are four commonly known methods of sampling, namely random, systematic, stratified and purposeful sampling (Saunders et al., 2012). Random sampling is the simplest and most straightforward probability method. It is most known for selecting a sample among the population for a wide variety of reasons. By using random sampling, there is an equal probability for each member of the population to be selected. Systematic sampling is another probability method. With this method, members are selected from a larger population according to a random starting point and a fixed periodic interval. Stratified sampling is also a probability sampling method in which the population is divided in two or more groups according to common characteristics. The method intends to make sure that the sample represents certain sub-groups. Implementing the method involves dividing the population into subgroups, and then choose members from each subgroup in a proportionate manner. Purposeful sampling is the only non-probability method among the four. Using this method requires a researcher to rely on his/her own judgement when

selecting members from a population. The method is also known by judgment, selective or subjective sampling (Saunders et al., 2012).

From using a qualitative research design and a confined research question, the selected method for the study was purposeful sampling (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Morse et al., 2002). Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) describes the method to be used in accordance to the purpose of the study that meets the eligibility criteria. The purpose of the study requires obtaining data about strategic measures that have been applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the crisis. It is important to acquire data that is accurate and trustworthy. Accurate data can only be obtained from a selective group of members that function inside family SMEs. Namely, from members that are involved in decision making, strategy creation, and are part of management that run the family SMEs. This specific group of members have a deep understanding of how their firms have been affected by the crisis, and how this affected their decision to come up with strategic measures. Collecting data from members outside this group may lead to inaccurate and misleading findings. By using purposeful sampling, the right and appropriate members can be selected for data collection.

The firms that were investigated had to cover four main criteria in order to be selected. *First*, the firm had to be a family firm. This means that family members have to be involved in running the firm, and have control over strategic decisions. *Second*, the firms had to be functioning, “be alive”, in order to be able to investigate the purpose of the study. *Third*, the firm had to be medium, small or micro sized to fit the scope of the investigation. *Fourth*, since the focus of the study was to investigate crisis management inside family SMEs, it was of high importance to be able to reach high position members active in the management.

To get an understanding of the perspectives of the high position management members: CEO’s, partners, founders, owners, board members, deputy board members and Chairmen of the board were interviewed. From each firm, preferably two members were interviewed to get a wider, more complete and overall perspective. No specific industry was chosen for the samples, and family SMEs from various industries were investigated. Selecting firms from different industries allowed maximum variation within the samples. *Table 1* below provides an overview of the respondents and their firms’ characteristics. The firms were coded with letters from A to G for the sake of simplicity, and will be described by codes in the findings.

Table 1: Overview of selected family SMEs

Firm	Code	Location	Industry	No. of employees	Year of foundation	Informants' positions
Allmogegården i Tolarp	A	Huskvarna	Education, retail trade	2	2003	-Founder -Partner
Borg Mark & Entreprenad AB	B	Jönköping	Construction, design & interior design business	3	2008	-Founder
Carrus Components AB	C	Sävsjö	Manufacturing & industry	14	2005	-CEO -Board member
Wiklund Trading International AB	D	Svalöv	Mining, construction & installation equipment, wholesale	16	2003	-CEO -Founder
MJM Group AB	E	Jönköping	Sports stadiums & sports facilities	4	2020	-Founder -Board member
Bygglovskonsulterna AB	F	Jönköping	Building, construction, design, drawings	2	2020	-CEO
Crometjänst AB	G	Vaggeryd	Metals industry	15	1962	-CEO -Deputy member

Interviews

There are different interview styles that can be accommodated. They can be highly formalized and structured, or semi-structured having a base but allowing the interviewer to be more open and flexible, or without any guidelines in an unstructured way (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This study used a semi-structured frame where there was a list of questions, and the researchers had the flexibility to ask questions outside the list. The interviewees were interviewed one on one, and were asked to be recorded in order to be able to transcribe and analyze the answers. A Swedish and English template of the question list is provided in *appendix 2*. Some participants were interviewed using digital tools (Zoom, Teams and phone) while others were interviewed in person according to the participants' preferences. The interviews took 60 minutes each on average. More detailed info like the dates and exact duration of the interviews can be found in *appendix 3*.

Most of the interviews were held in Swedish to make the interviewees feel comfortable. Due to this, they were able to express their thoughts more easily. The concepts that were brought up during the interviews were in accordance with the purpose. The questions were based and developed in line with the research question. Some of the questions were similar with some degree of overlap. This was done to make sure that a clear understanding of the phenomenon would be obtained, and that the interviewees would elaborate on a more detailed level. Open

ended questions were used so that the interviewees would have the opportunity to develop more in-depth answers (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The questions have been categorized and divided into topics to guide the interviewees through the interviews. This guidance has enhanced their focus to evaluate their answers and give valuable insights (Ritchie et al., 2014). There were three different categories of questions in the question list. The first part was more general, the second part focused on management aspects, and the last part was more specific and focused on strategic management aspects. The interviews were audio recorded to be able to grasp all the interviewees' insights, and to be able to ask follow up questions in a spontaneous way without worrying about taking notes. Writing notes throughout the session can interfere and interrupt the process of interviewing. Taking notes can result in missing out important information (Britten, 1995) which made us prefer audio recording.

The first part of the interviews was more of an open start, where we had the chance to get to know the interviewees and put them at ease. Aspects like how long the participants have been running the firm, what the firm is doing and the day to day operations were discussed. This is a good way to start, so that valuable information can be collected along the way. The first interviews were considered to be a "pre-test" where the participants could verify the right order and flow of the questions in the list. Some small adjustments were made on the list regarding the order and flow of questions later on with the rest of the interviews. The interviewers tried to talk with the same vocabulary and language level as the interviewees, and avoided the use of any complex terms to make the questions clear and understandable (Britten, 1995). For instance, the word "strategy" can be misleading for the interviewees since it is a wide concept. The word "handling/hatering" have been used instead of "strategy" in Swedish. Also, the word "tillvägagångssätt" meaning "approach" is more used in Swedish, which made the interviewees understand the questions better and grasp the concepts of the investigation.

The questions asked in the last part of the interviews were elaborated in more depth for the interviewees. When the interviewees were asked specific questions about the applied strategies, examples of strategic measures from the literature were mentioned. This was especially done when the interviewers had the feeling that the interviewees had more insights to share. This was also done to make sure that no valuable information was missed. For instance, when one participant declared that his firm relied only on persevering measures, questions like "*So you*

did not rely on any cost cutting measures?” or “*what about using innovative measures like the use of digital tools, digital marketing or adjusting your workspace?*” were asked. Then the interviewee could either confirm his first statement or add more valuable information. These kinds of questions were also asked when interviewees shared very detailed insights. Questions were also asked to verify if the firms have used any measures that fall outside the four strategic measures introduced by Wenzel et al. (2020).

3.5.2 Secondary data

A literature review is one way of learning from previous research (Bryman & Bell, 2015) which is the way this study has based its direction and purpose on. The systematic literature review was carried out by searching for related articles on the websites Scopus and Google Scholar that were accessed by Jönköping University digital library. Key words like: *family business, family firms, Sweden, crisis, crisis management* and *strategic management* were used to narrow down the search. The articles were then listed and ordered from 1-5 according to their relevance, where 1 is *highly relevant* to 5 that is *somewhat relevant*. From this gathering, snowball sampling was used to find more relevant knowledge to cover all the angles of the study.

Because the Covid-19 crisis is a novel and still ongoing phenomenon, the recent and limited number of articles that covered the phenomenon were combined with older crisis management and family firms research articles. Some criteria were followed in order to select the articles for the study. The selection was based on the number of citations, the degree of relevance, the novelty and publisher. The number of citations, the degree of relevance and publisher was considered for older articles. The novelty together with the degree of relevance and publisher was considered for recent articles that cover the phenomenon of the Covid-19 crisis. By analyzing secondary data that already exists, interesting insights and new perspectives can be added to the collected data (Ritchie et al., 2014). Since the secondary data is not generated by us, it was crucial to evaluate its quality and validity. The names of the firms, their location, their industry and the names of the high executives were collected as secondary data on websites like *allabolag.se* where the firms' details are documented.

3.6 Data analysis

To be able to gather as detailed information and understandings as possible, we decided to gather empirical data from multiple companies within the selected sample. This way we had the opportunity to explore the phenomenon in detail and evaluate their systematic approaches when facing the crisis. After collecting empirical data through interviews, grounded analysis, the most used method (Bryman & Bell, 2015) was considered to be the most suitable way of analyzing our data.

The process was initiated by first transcribing all the interviews that were recorded. We used both Word and Sonix.ai as tools to enhance the transcription process. Although, the tools were not 100 percent accurate, it helped us obtain the first drafts of the transcription. After this, the recordings were relistened multiple times to adjust the transcriptions manually, and make the data accurate and trustworthy. During the relistening process, we made sure that no information was left out. The Swedish transcriptions were then translated into English so that both researchers could understand and analyze the data. The data has been systematically collected, transcribed and ordered after each interview was conducted. After all the interviews were conducted, and all data was collected, transcribed and ordered, the analysis process started. We followed the steps that were described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) for carrying out the grounded analysis:

- **Familiarization** – We started to look through all collected data. The unnecessary and irrelevant data, for instance, small-talk or any information that was not related to the asked questions were removed. Here we started to get familiar with what has been expressed throughout the interviews.
- **Reflection and open coding** – The collected data was then summarized according to the categories of the questions. These were general data (included answers about daily operations, most important activities, number of people involved in decision making, impact of the crisis on the firms and problems with purchasing/delivery/transport), general management data (included answers about roles of management members and their knowledge, planning of strategies, lessons learned from each other and trusting each other's judgment), and strategic management data (included more specific answers about the implementation of strategic measures).

- **Conceptualization and focused re-coding** – The data that was categorized into three categories were linked with each other for each case. This was in order to get a deep understanding of the overall situation and circumstances that have led the firms to implement their strategic measures. By the use of Wenzel's framework the applied strategic measures were categorized into four categories: retrenchment, persevering, innovating and exit.
- **Linking** – we have linked the cases with each other which resulted in finding the theme of the decisive factors that have affected the implementation of the strategic measures for all firms in the sample. Then we have ordered the five decisive factors according to their importance on the basis of the summarized answers from our interviewees.
- **Re-evaluation** – All the created codes and themes have been re-evaluated and confirmed by going back and forth through the steps of the analysis.

3.7 Research Quality

When doing research, it is important to increase the quality with reliability and validity to avoid and reduce suspicion (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The reader is not always at the same phase of understanding as the author, considering that the authors are getting acquainted with the phenomenon and the aspects around it (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, the readers can question it. To reach stronger reliability and validity there are four criteria to evaluate the trustworthiness that determine the quality of the study (Given & Saumare, 2012), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.7.1 Credibility

The consistency of the study is showed through credibility and includes how accurate the researcher has presented the phenomena perceived by the population within the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In order to do so, the participants were selected to ensure open and truthful responses (Jensen, 2012a). The semi-structured interviews were the best method to use to get the major advantage of its real context. The questions that were asked throughout the interviews were mostly non-leading questions to be able to be as objective as possible. Therefore, the conducted interviews were done with two people within the board of the firms

to get more stable responses that align with each other (one confirms the other). By having all the interviews recorded, it also allowed to go back and have a second look at the answers while documenting the study. We put a lot of emphasis on the findings, to get the most appropriate method to gain the decisive and valuable insights to understand the topic in-depth.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability goes in parallel with the external validity which concerns if the findings of the study can be forwarded to other contexts, generalized, and be applicable in different circumstances or times (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Jensen, 2012b). Because family firms are quite complex, unique, and have divergent working areas regarding CEO's/board members' values and emotions, it can impact the extent to which the study can be generalized. It is important to describe the method, and in which situation like time and context the data was collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance the transferability, the choices and processes are explained in detail. The information about the collected data has been provided sufficiently, so that the reader has the ability to determine if the method is applicable in other contexts.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is raising the question if reproducibility of the research findings is possible (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It shows if the same or similar methods are to be used, comparable findings will be obtained (Bryman, 2016). To be able to do this comparison, it is crucial that we provide a detailed description of our data collection, methods, and analysis. As stated before, our findings are affected by many factors with the family firm's complex and unique characteristics, but also the board members' values, judgements, and preferences. The study is also a qualitative research that is conducted in an environment that is constantly changing with different restrictions. Therefore, the replicability of our findings is affected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Jensen, 2012c). To strengthen the dependability, we are explaining our method in detail, and providing the semi-structured interview questions. The answers towards the questions may vary and change due to the circumstances at the time, and the participants' responses that required probes questions.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability correlates with neutrality and objectivity, which affects if the researchers' have influenced the study with their own decisive values in any degree (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The interpretations must match with the findings in data collection (Jensen, 2012d). Since our research was carried out with the help of a literature review, it had influential impact in different ways on how the study and interview questions were formulated. In the interviews, we used open ended questions to increase the confirmability where we could limit our own influence. But at times, in order to get a better answer, we gave examples to the interviewees to grasp some important concepts that were necessary for our study. We also summarized what was being said by the interviewees, to clarify insights and to give the interviewees the chance to elaborate more if certain aspects were misunderstood. The participant could take as much time as they wanted to answer and express themselves before there were any follow-up questions to delimitate the effect on their answers. Therefore, we think that we took sufficient actions to ensure that our findings are determined by the responses.

3.8 Ethical considerations

A number of ethical principles were considered while executing the research with the aim to protect the interviewees that participated in the study. After having the initial contact with the participants on the phone, a confirmation email was sent with a short summary of the aspects and agreements discussed during the call. The emails also contained detailed information about the purpose of the study. It also requested the participants to specify their preferences regarding the dates and means of conducting the interviews. This was done to guarantee absolute clarity, and to ensure that the participants are completely comfortable before the interviews take place.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) forms were also sent with the emails and had to be filled and signed by the participants to ensure that they are fully informed about how the data is going to be processed and protected. By filling and signing the forms, the interviewees declare that they are fully aware of their rights as interview participants, and were given the contact information of the authors if any questions would appear. Right before interviewing, the participants were asked for permission to record the interviews, and to report the names of their companies in the findings. The participants were also asked about the extent of confidentiality of the collected data. They were also reminded vocally by their rights mentioned in the GDPR forms.

Further, some other ethical principles were considered in order to protect the integrity of the research community. Any form of deception was avoided about the nature, aim and goals of the research study. Every aspect of the study from start to end was communicated and documented in full honesty and transparency. Any misleading information or false reporting was completely avoided. The literature describes the importance of being aware of these ethical principles when doing research. The way interviews are structured and how questions are asked could lead to personal or societal harm. This can occur in the form of psychological, social or economic harm (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In order to avoid this, Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) proposed ten principles of ethics that were originally suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015), which are presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Principles of ethical considerations (Bryan & Bell, 2015)

S. No	Principle	Concern
1	Making sure that no harm is caused to the interview participants	Protection of interview participants
2	Ensuring that the dignity of the interview participants is respected	
3	Ensuring that the interview participants are fully informed	
4	Protecting the privacy of the interview participants	
5	Ensuring the confidentiality of the collected data	
6	Avoiding deception regarding the nature, aims and goals of the research	
7	Protecting anonymity of individual organizations if requested	Protection of the integrity of the research community
8	Ensuring full declaration of affiliations, funding sources and conflicts of interest	
9	Ensuring honesty and transparency in communication about the research	
10	Avoiding communicating misleading information or false reporting of research findings	

The interviewees have been offered to see the draft before finishing the study, to make sure that the information that got collected is representative to what they have intended to share. When reflecting on the actions that were taken on both execution and documentation levels, it can be stated that all the ethical considerations proposed by literature have been covered and respected in this study.

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

In this chapter the empirical findings of the study will be presented. The empirical findings are a result of analyzing the data that is collected from interviewing the study's participants from the sample of family SMEs. The list of questions asked during the interviews is presented in Appendix 2. All the answers collected from the interviews are summarized and presented in three tables according to the category of the questions (general, management and strategic management questions) in Appendix 4.

Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the strategic measures that the firms apply during the crisis, it was important to get a good understanding of the factors that could have affected the implementation of these measures. From the analysis, it was found that five factors have affected the use of strategic measures, namely: the impact of the crisis on the firms, the industry of the firms, the unique governmental restrictions, the preparedness of the firms for crisis and the development of strategic measures through time. These five factors together have triggered the firms to apply a set of strategic measures, and have been ordered according to their degree of importance in the findings. The five factors identified for the implementation of the strategic measures form the framework for the findings, which is presented in *figure 3*.

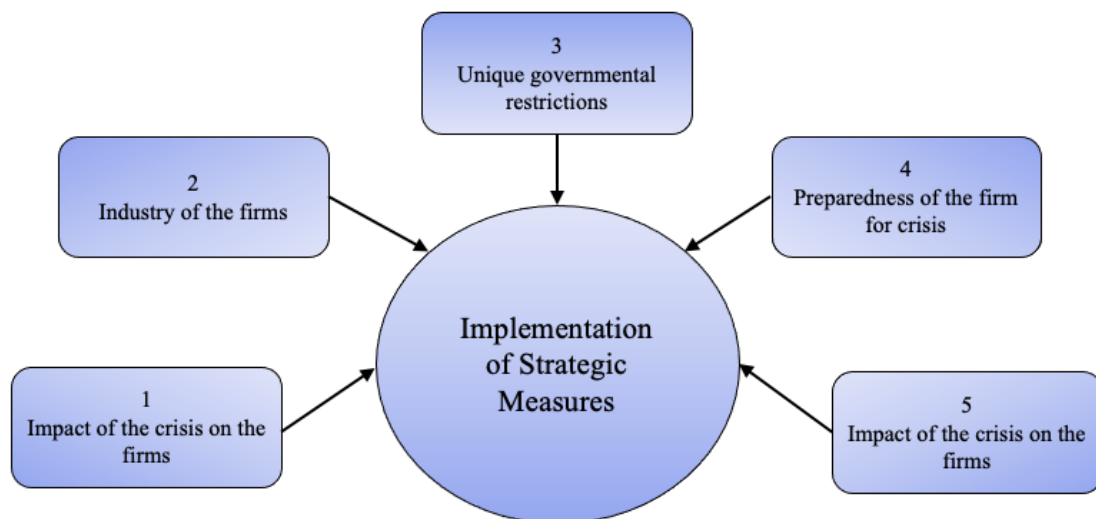


Figure 3: Framework of the five decisive factors for the use of strategic measures by family SMEs

4.1 Factor 1: impact of the crisis on the firms

It was found that the way the crisis has impacted the firms played the most important role in the implementation of strategic measures. Overall, it can be stated that all firms in the sample have benefited from the crisis situation. From the findings, it was evident that the firms have been impacted by the crisis differently. Some of the firms (A, D, G) have suffered financially in just the first few months of the crisis, and were able to continue their operations again. After the operations have been recovered, the firms achieved new records of sales, revenues, turnovers and profits. This means that the firms have suffered in the short-run but have benefited in the long-run. The suffering in the short-run had different causes like customers closing their doors (G), customers not being able to be physically present (A) and delivery and supply chain disruptions (D, G). Other firms (B, C, E, F) have been able to continue their operations during the crisis without any financial downturns. In fact, the firms have scored new financial records that surpassed records of last years. Despite the financial benefits with no downturns, the firms have faced some challenges regarding delivery. Some firms (B, C, E) experienced longer delivery times of products and materials due to the decrease in production capacity from suppliers. Most firms (B, C, D, E, G) experienced higher prices from suppliers due to the higher transportation costs during the crisis.

Since that the impact of the crisis on the firms was found to be the most important factor in the implementation of the strategic measures, the impact of the crisis on each firm from the sample along with the applied measures are presented in *table 3*. The challenges regarding delivery, purchasing and transport for each firm are presented in the table as well. The codes of the firms are presented next to each firm so that the findings could be easily followed for the rest of the chapter.

Table 3: Impact of the crisis on the firms and the applied measures

Firm Code	Impact of Crisis	Problems with delivery, purchasing and transport	Applied measures during crisis
<p>(A)</p> <p>Allmogegården i Tolarp</p>	<p>+The company suffered from the crisis at the start since that the school that the farming program is going through closed its doors. The farm had to apply stricter restrictions, and a number of participants could not stay under these rules and left. The borders were closed and volunteers could not come from abroad anymore. Only a few volunteers and students were left. This affected the economical state of the farm.</p> <p>+For some time, the farm had to rely on savings. The revenue/ turnover of the farm has decreased by at least half. (October, November, December 2020). After a while, it started rolling again but still with smaller capacity. There was also some chaos on the farm since there were two groups with different opinions. One group was terrified from the pandemic while the other was not afraid at all.</p> <p>+The farm was able to attract more students and volunteers after a while and had one of its best years. This is probably because a number of people started to think what a crisis can cause and wanted to learn how to farm themselves. The limited job opportunities in the market also made</p>	<p>No problems with delivery since the farm produce most things itself.</p>	<p>+Despite the tough period that the farm had to go through because of the pandemic, the farm continued to operate its activities. It was very challenging because of the lack of people at the start, but with time things started to roll again.</p> <p>+The farm made use of digital tools for meetings with new students and volunteers etc.</p>

	some people invest time in learning how to farm.		
(B) Borg Mark & Entreprenad AB	<p>+The company has grown during the pandemic and has been operating well. The construction company have had revenue records last year.</p> <p>+People that work from home have more time and money to think about renovations at home. Construction companies have benefited from this a lot since the start of the crisis.</p>	<p>It has been challenging for the company with delivery times of products and materials due to the pandemic. The company had to keep the late delivery times in mind while planning projects and jobs. There is mostly sometime between the ordering and executing a project.</p>	<p>+The company just continued its operations without any problems. The owners start very early and go to the site of the projects which minimized contact with too many people. This kept everyone healthy and fit in order to execute their work. The work continued like it did before the crisis without any significant changes. The company actually benefited from the pandemic when it got tax relief and some other benefits that the company did not really need but used as a contingency fund in case anything happens in the future.</p> <p>+The company started to use digital tools in order to communicate with its customers to minimize personal contact. This has increased time efficiency for the company since a lot of aspects can be discussed online. The company has also started their own website for their customers to initiate contact.</p>
(C) Carrus Components AB	<p>+The company has not been affected in a negative way by the crisis. The company had its best year in terms of sales and turnover. On the other hand, prices of materials have increased a lot, but the situation was definitely not worse than before the crisis happened.</p> <p>+The company has had a lot of sales since most of its customers did not suffer from the crises as well and just continued their operations. Although the crises did not affect the company negatively in terms of</p>	<p>The company has experienced longer delivery times due to decrease in production capacity from the suppliers during the pandemic. The delivery went from 3-4 days to 2-3 weeks depending on the order. Some products from China may even take 2-4 months.</p>	<p>+The company continued its operations and barely faced any serious problems that stood in the way of functioning. The company has also some internal procedures where employees are responsible for multiple roles. This makes it easier for employees to replace each other in case something happens. This has enabled the company to persevere and continue its operations when a number of employees called in sick just after the crisis started. There is always backup when an employee cannot execute a job. The company describes itself as quite flexible and can adapt itself to market needs so that it can continue operating its activities.</p>

	<p>sales and turnover, it caused some uncertainty and constant fear that things can change and get worse instantly.</p> <p>+The company got a lot of sick employees since the start of the crises, especially at the start when 8 of 15 employees got sick in the first phases of the crisis.</p>		
<p>(D)</p> <p>Wiklund Trading International AB</p>	<p>+Covid-19 has had a good impact on the sales of machinery to the company's surprise. There has been a little decrease in sales at the start of the pandemic (March, April 2020) but then the sales sky rocked. However, there have been some problems with supplying the machines since there is a shortage of machinery during the crisis.</p>	<p>The pressure has been too high on Europe to keep supplying machines. The company needed much more machines than normal because of the high sales, but the suppliers were unable to supply large numbers of machinery due to limitations of production in some European countries.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>+The company applied short-term layoffs in the first two months (March-April) of the pandemic because of the tough period at the beginning. After a few months' things got better financially but the short term lay-offs were still put in place just as a precaution. When things got normal again and sales started to increase more and more the company shut down the short-term layoffs earlier than planned (August). In case the company is going to face trouble in the future, it is planning to rely heavily on retrenchment. Like lay-off of employees and cutting down salaries of the company owners.</p> <p>+The company continued operating despite the tough first two months of the crisis. Things got better financially short after that which helped the company to continue its activities and operations as usual.</p> <p>+The company did not come with some major changes in terms of innovation to face the crises. Some very minor aspects changed, like customers using more email and phone contact with the company in the first two months. This changed quite quick when things got better with the company and customers started to come on site again as usual. The company have relied more on</p>

			digital meetings with customers and colleagues that were geographically scattered, which helped the company to save time and money.
(E) MJM Group AB	<p>+The pandemic affected the company positively. This happened when most municipal facilities have closed because of the crises (associations, swimming pools, libraries.,) while the Paddle Tennis facility of the company just opened.</p> <p>+Many people that did not have the idea to play Paddle Tennis before the crises started to play it. Most of the Paddle Tennis facilities are privately owned, which means that it has more control and power over the restrictions than municipal facilities. All Paddle Tennis facilities stayed open during the pandemic. The fact that Paddle Tennis is quite trending right now helped the company attract customers as well.</p>	<p>The pandemic caused some problems getting products to establish the facility's courses (courses from Spain) delivered on time. The prices have also increased for some goods (price of steel). There have been problems of delivery time with goods that are sold in the store of the facility as well and the price of the goods have increased by the suppliers. The higher prices are due to the higher transportation costs to get the products from the suppliers as a consequence of the pandemic.</p>	<p>The company continued with its usual activities and operations during the crises. This was possible since customers can play Paddle Tennis without crossing any lines regarding restrictions. The courses can be rented for 4 customers (which is an acceptable number) and there is enough space between the players. The restriction did not limit the daily activities of the facilities.</p> <p>+The Paddle Tennis courses had to be Covid-19 adapted. The company made some adaptations and adjustments in the Paddle Tennis facility to make it as safe as possible for costumers. The company have implemented some ground rules and have provided the customers with protection tools to keep everyone safe (hand sanitizers).</p>
(F) Bygglovskonsulterna AB	<p>+The company cannot compare before and after since it was founded during the crisis. The company has been benefiting from the crisis since a lot of people work from home and have the time to renovate their houses. Money that was invested on vacations before is now invested in renovation of houses.</p> <p>+On the other hand, the crisis complicated opportunities to grow since it is harder to get in touch with more customers face to face and establish strong</p>	Does not apply.	<p>+Going digital when communicating with customers using digital tools but also with marketing. The company relied more on digital marketing through social media and google advertisements to compensate for the social distancing restrictions. Going digital was critical for the company's survival during the crisis.</p> <p>+Because of the uncertainty of the market during the crises, the company did not want to invest money in an office and hiring employees. All of the activities of the company are done from home by the CEO and the founder. So, the company have</p>

	<p>bonds with customers. The restrictions made it harder to find more customers and to build trust. Building relationships and even communicating with current customers is more challenging and goes much slower.</p>		<p>considered to go easy on spending money before finding itself in a hard position. All unnecessary investments for the company to do its work were postponed until the crises is over. For the first few months the CEO and founder did not get any salaries.</p>
<p>(G) Crometjänst AB</p>	<p>+At the start of the pandemic the company suffered a lot due to costumers closing their doors. But slowly the company was able to run its operations again when customers in different industries and times started to operate again.</p> <p>+The company have then benefited from the crisis and had turnovers and sales that exceeded the years before. It exceeded even the year 2018 the it considered to be an excellent year for the company. Next, the company managed to grow with new customers and jobs.</p>	<p>There have been some problems with delivery of some raw materials and chemicals from Germany as well. When the sales of cars went down due to the crises, most suppliers of raw materials and chemicals stopped supplying goods to the company as well. This is changing and going back to normal but slowly.</p>	<p>+the company was worried about its liquidity. Mortgages were stopped and the collaboration with some customers was re-evaluated regarding the risks in continuing working with them. More money was secured in short-term credits and funds were sold. The company stopped making expenses and just settled down. The owners did not take any salaries to cut costs. The company did not take any lay-off procedures.</p> <p>+The company could not operate in the first 1-2 months of the crises due to customers closing their doors. At that time the company have used this time for cleaning and fixing the process and production facilities. After that some costumers started to operate slowly, and the company tried to take a number of jobs that kept the operations running. 6 months after the crises started, the company started to get more jobs. Until now the company still relies heavily on a number of major jobs in order to be able to continue operating. It is slowly getting back to normal. The fact that most competitors closed helped the company to get some new customers.</p>

4.1.1 Strategic measures applied by the firms during the Covid-19 crisis

The measures applied by the firms listed in *table 3* needed to be identified and categorized to a further extent. For this, the work of Wenzel et al. (2020) was used in order to identify and categorize the measures with the use of their theoretical framework. The measures were analysed one by one and categorized into the four categories of the framework, namely: retrenchment for cost cutting measures, persevering for measures that aimed at sustaining the firms' activities, innovation for measures that aimed at identifying new opportunities and readjusting the firms' operations, and exit for measures that are applied to stop and discontinue the operations of the firms.

Most firms have used a combination of strategic measures in order to cope with the crisis. Three firms (A, B, G) have used a combination of persevering and innovation measures. One firm (D) combined retrenchment, persevering and innovation measures. Another firm (F) combined retrenchment and innovation measures. One firm (G) combined retrenchment and persevering measures. And lastly, only one firm (C) did not apply a combination of strategic measures and used pure persevering. No cases of firms that applied exit measures were found in the sample since firms that have discontinued their operations were not among the target group of the study. An overview of the combination of strategic measures applied by the firms is presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Combination of strategic measures used by the firms

Strategic measures	Number of companies
Pure Persevering	1 (C)
Pure Innovation	None
Pure Retrenchment	None
Retrenchment + Persevering	1 (G)
Retrenchment + Innovation	1 (F)
Persevering + Innovation	3 (A, B, E)
Retrenchment + Persevering + Innovation	1 (D)

The three firms (A, B, E) that combined persevering and innovating measures were able to persevere and continue their operations without any serious problems. The firms benefited financially from the crisis and did not see the need to cut any costs to protect their liquidity. The founder of firm (B) stated: *“To our surprise, the crisis did us good financially, so we did not think about saving any costs so far”*. When it comes to innovation, the firms did not make significant adjustments to their business model or operational activities. Two firms (A, B) relied on digital tools to maintain communication with customers, colleagues and suppliers. The other firm (E) adjusted its workspace and way of interacting with customers to secure

health protection and safety. All three firms declared that the use of the mentioned innovation measures was critical in order to persevere through the crisis. The two firms (A, B) that implemented digital tools are planning to continue using them after the crisis since it enabled to save travel expenses and increase work efficiency.

The firm (D) that combined retrenchment, persevering and innovation experienced a decrease in sales and costumers in the first few months of the crisis, and was worried about its liquidity. The CEO of the firm (D) stated: *“The first few months of the crisis were quite tough on us, and made us worry about the liquidity of our firm. We were forced to find ways to save costs”*. The firm became careful and relied on short term layoffs of employees as a precaution to protect its liquidity. When things got better in terms of sales and costumers, and the firm was able to run its operations again, the short-term layoffs were shut down. The firm increased the use of digital tools to communicate with its customers. It was also used more often between colleagues within the firm, especially when they are geographically dispersed. The innovation measures have helped the firm to continue its operations and save unnecessary costs.

The firm (F) that applied both retrenchment and innovation measures was established during the crisis, and was well aware of the risks of operating in it. Due to this awareness, the firm postponed making any investments or expenses (hiring employees or renting an office space) that are not vital for the continuation of the daily operations. The CEO of the firm (F) stated: *“We were quite aware of the risks of establishing a company in this crisis, so we made sure that unnecessary costs and investments for the survival of our company were postponed until the crisis is over”*. The firm also relied heavily on innovation using digital tools and digital marketing. The digital tools were used for communication with customers while digital marketing was used to find and attract new ones. Innovation was crucial for the firms’ operations since it was difficult to engage with customers face to face. The CEO of the firm (F) also stated: *“Going digital was critical for us in order to be able to do our job. The crisis made it challenging to communicate or attract with new customers. I would say that going digital has saved us”*. There was no sign of persevering since the company was founded during the crisis. However, the firm was able to navigate through the potential risks and make the operations run smoothly despite the challenges.

The firm (G) that combined retrenchment and persevering measures relied at the start of the crisis on saving costs. This was done in order to protect its liquidity due to decrease of revenue and customer jobs. Mortgages were stopped, more money was secured in short-term credits and funds were sold. The owners of the firm did not take any salaries as well to save costs. Despite the tough period at the beginning, the firm did not follow any layoff procedures. After a while, the firm started to invest time and money in maintenance and renovation of its own production process. The crisis gave the firm the opportunity to find the time and energy to do so. The firm was able to persevere its operations after getting a number of new customers and jobs. Continuing with the daily operations and activities during the tough period helped the firm attract new customers since the majority of its competitors have closed their doors. The CEO of the firm (G) stated: “...*the majority of our competitors have gone bankrupt, so their customers came to us which helped us getting more customers and jobs*”. There are no signs of innovation measures followed by the firm during the crisis.

The firm (C) that applied pure persevering measures have not faced any serious difficulties since the start of the crisis, and had a significant increase in sales and turnover. This made the company confident and not worried about cutting any costs. The firm did not mention the necessity to apply any innovation measures either. The internal structure of the firm has helped a lot to keep the operations running. All employees have multiple roles within the firm and can replace each other any time in cases of unexpected shocks. The CEO of the firm (C) stated: “*All employees have several roles which made us quite flexible during the crisis. A good example is when 8 out of 15 employees had to stay home because of sickness reasons. We were still able to continue our work*”. This has not prevented the firm from persevering and continuing its day-to-day activities.

4.2 Factor 2: Industry of the firms

The industry has affected the way the firms were impacted by the crisis, and consequently has affected the implementation of strategic measures. Most firms belong to industries that have benefited from the crisis situation. For instance, the majority of the firms (B, C, D, F, G) belong to the construction, design, building and manufacturing industries. These industries have evidently thrived during the crisis due to several reasons. A significant number of people work from home which increased their willingness to renovate their houses, garages, companies etc. Tougher travel restrictions made it easier to invest money, that was normally spent on vacations, into renovations. More people staying at home has increased the demand from these industries. The CEO of firm (F) stated: *“More people work from home and have more time to renovate their houses. People have also access to more money that was normally spent on vacations. I think that this explains why we have benefited from the situation”*. Some firms (B, F, G) have had more jobs, projects and customers than before the crisis. Other firms (C, D) have reached sales records of construction machines and tools.

Firms in the sports industry have benefited from the crisis as well. One firm (E) had good numbers of customers and high revenues. The firm explains this by people having more time to spend on sports and on trying new things. The firm has also a very niched focus in the industry that happened to be very trendy during the crisis period. The sport can be practised by a limited number of people while maintaining a safe distance. Some municipal facilities (associations, swimming pools, libraries etc.) have closed their doors, which helped the firm attract more customers. Some firms in the educational industry have also managed to take advantage. One firm (A) that operates as an ecological farming school was able to attract a larger number of students and volunteers. According to the firm, more people started to get aware of what a crisis can cause and wanted to learn how to farm themselves. The limited job opportunities in the market made people invest more time in farming as well.

4.3 Factor 3: Unique Swedish governmental restrictions

The Swedish governmental restrictions have played a vital role in the firms' ability to survive through the crisis. All firms were allowed to keep their doors open and continue their operations. The firms would not have been able to apply any strategic measures for survival if they had to close down. Some firms (A, D, G) have suffered financially at the start and would not have been able to recover and later benefit if it wasn't for the relaxed restrictions. Also, other firms (B, C, E, F) have not been facing any serious challenges since the start of the crisis but would have suffered financially if they had to close down. All firms have stated that they could not survive for more than a couple of months if they were forced to discontinue their operations. The majority of the firms would have considered to exit if that was the case. The CEO of firm G stated: *"I believe that we wouldn't have been able to survive for more than a couple of months without income if we were forced to close our doors"*. This indicates the important role of the governmental restrictions in the survival of the firms. Firms cannot apply any strategic measures to cope with the crisis if they are forced to close their doors, which will eventually lead to the exit of the firms.

4.4 Factor 4: Preparedness before the crisis

The firms all have in common that there were no formal crisis management plans before the crisis took place. However, there are some differences between the firms when it comes to their preparedness for crisis. Two firms (A, B) did not have any concrete crisis management plans in mind. Three other firms (C, D, G) had some cost cutting measures in mind to protect their liquidity. One firm (C) has suffered from previous crisis situations (the 2008 crisis), and has learned to face unexpected external shocks with quick actions instead of following formal crisis plan procedures. Another firm (G) was heavily insured in case of unexpected catastrophes. All firms have reacted quickly and were able to come up with strategic measures that enabled them to survive, regardless of the firms' preparedness. The CEO of firm (C) stated: *"We did not have any formal crisis plans before, we tried to make some changes in our firm as soon as the crisis has started"*.

4.5 Factor 5: Development of strategic measures through time during the crisis

For most firms (A, B, C, E, F, G), the applied strategies did not witness any significant developments throughout the crisis period. The firms continued using the same strategic measures from the time they were implemented during the early phases until the data of the study was collected. Some of the firms have used a particular strategic measure in different degrees. For instance, one firm (G) has changed the degree of retrenchment measures according to the extent of its necessity. The firm went from using multiple retrenchment measures at the start, to using fewer measures later, along with some investments in its production line. There was only one firm (D) that witnessed change in its applied strategic measures. The firm combined retrenchment, persevering and innovation measures at the start of the crisis. The uncertainty of the crisis has caused the firm to rely on short-term layoffs as a precaution to protect its liquidity. After a while, the firm decided to stop applying retrenchment measures by shutting down the short-term layoffs. This happened when the firm got more confident in its abilities to continue its operations without any financial downturns. The founder of firm (D) stated: *“We stopped the short-term layoffs as soon as things got back to normal again”*. After this, the firm continued using persevering and innovation measures only.

5 Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter a discussion and conclusion of the study will be provided. The empirical findings of the study will be discussed while reflecting back to the existing literature. Final conclusions that answer the main question of the study will be drawn. The chapter will be presented by the study's contribution to the research areas of strategic and crisis management and family firms' research.

To the authors' knowledge, this study represents the first empirical study in the management field providing initial evidence of strategic measures applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis. Based on a sample of 7 family SMEs, the findings of this study contribute to two main research areas, namely crisis and strategic management and family business research.

5.1 Strategic management and crisis management

This study confirms the findings of Wenzel et al. (2020) by identifying strategic measures that all fit in their constructed framework. No measures were detected that fall outside this framework. The study of Wenzel et al. (2020) mentions that finding examples of other strategic measures that do not fit into the framework would bring new insights. For instance, measures like using slack resources to help other individuals and organizations in times of need (Muller & Kräussl, 2011), forming temporary collaborations with other firms (Bucheli, Salvaj, & Kim, 2019; Mitchell & Singh, 1996), or obtaining smaller players (Cozzolino & Rothaermel, 2018; Furr & Kapoor, 2018). None of these measure examples were identified within the sample of this study.

The findings confirm the insights of Kraus et al. (2020) that indicate that family firms usually use a combination of strategic measures in order to cope with the current crisis. All strategic measure combinations identified in the research of Kraus et al. (2020) were identified in this study. This means that no new combinations of strategic measures were identified. In our study sample, the combinations of strategic measures were identified as follows: three cases of persevering + innovation, 1 case of retrenchment + innovation, 1 case of retrenchment + persevering, one case of retrenchment + persevering + innovation, and one case of pure persevering. Just like in the study of Kraus et al. (2020), persevering was the only strategic

measure that was applied on its own. No exit cases were identified since firms that discontinued their operations were not among the target group of firms. From the combination of strategic measures identified in this study, some general statements can be made about why family SMEs select a particular combination of strategic measures in the current crisis situation:

- Firms that combine persevering and innovation measures do not see the need to cut costs and are not worried about their liquidity. These firms usually benefit from a crisis situation financially and do not experience any financial downturns. Digital tools are being used to maintain communication with stakeholder, and small adjustments in the workplace are made. The small innovation initiatives turn to be crucial for the firms' continuation and enables to save expenses and increase work efficiency. The firms still deal with non-financial challenges that force them to persevere through the crisis.
- Firms that add retrenchment measures to persevering and innovation usually face financial downturns at the start of the crisis and are worried about their liquidity. These firms tend to shut down cost cutting measures after recovery from the downturns.
- Firms that combine retrenchment and innovation measures are usually quite aware of challenges of the crisis and find a way around it before entering the market. These firms are often established during the crisis and are able to navigate through the potential risks and run their operations accordingly without being forced to persevere.
- Firms that combine retrenchment and persevering measures usually do not need to apply any innovation measures like the use of digital tools or digital marketing in order to continue their operations.
- Firms that apply persevering purely persevere their way through the non-financial challenges of the crisis without the need to save costs or make innovative adjustments.

The explanation of why different strategic measure combinations is used by family SMEs goes beyond these statements, and can be traced back to five decisive factors identified in this study. The most important decisive factor is the impact of the crisis on the firms. Despite that all firms in the sample have financially benefited from the crisis in the long run, some differences have been observed. Some firms have suffered financially in the short-run and have been able to recover and benefit in the long run. Other firms have benefited since the start of the crisis without facing any financial downturns. These differences have led the firms to apply different combinations of strategic measures. The overall positive financial impact on the firms was still accompanied with some challenges regarding supply chain disruptions.

The industry of the firms has been identified as the second most important decisive factor for implementing the strategic measures. This aligns with the findings of Kraus et al. (2020) confirming that the industry (sector) of firms is one of the most decisive factors. Most firms in the sample operate within the construction, design, building, manufacturing and sports industries. These industries have benefited from the crisis situation in Sweden which resulted in the firms' financial profits. This means that the industry has affected the way the firms were impacted by the crisis, and consequently has affected the implementation of the strategic measures. The unique Swedish governmental restrictions in Sweden have been identified as an important decisive factor as well. The relaxed restrictions have allowed the firms to keep their doors open and continue their operations. This means that the unique restrictions have enabled the firms to apply strategic measures in order to cope with the crisis. More strict restrictions, like being forced to shut down operations, would have prevented the firms from applying strategic measures, which would have led to the bankruptcy of most firms in the sample due to their constrained liquidity.

The crisis management at firms and their preparedness for crisis has also been identified as a decisive factor. All firms did not have any formal crisis plan procedures in advance, although their preparedness for crisis was different. Some firms had no strategic measures in mind at all before the crisis, while others considered some basic retrenchment measures. Some firms have learned from previous crisis situations, and others were heavily insured in case of unexpected catastrophes. However, all firms have reacted quickly and have applied strategic measures that have enabled them to adapt to the situation. This confirms theories from previous literature stating that the flexibility of family firms is a valuable attribute to possess in crisis situations (Bauweraerts, 2013).

The development of strategic measures through time has been identified as the last decisive factor. For most cases, the measures did not witness any significant changes or developments through time. However, some new insights have appeared from analyzing the findings. For instance, firms can change the degree of using a certain strategic measure according to the extent of its necessity. This study identified a case where a firm went from multiple retrenchment measures at the start to fewer measures later on. Firms can also drop a certain strategic measure completely and continue with others. This was the case with a firm that used retrenchment, persevering and innovation measures at the start, and dropped the retrenchment measures later on when the firms' situation changed to the better financially.

Apart from the decisive factors, our study has contributed with new insights. For instance, the study of Wenzel et al. (2020) introduces persevering as continuing a firm's activities through the hardships of crisis by relying on the consumption of slack resources or debt financing (Wenzel et al., 2020). Our findings prove that this is not always necessarily the case. All firms in the sample have benefited financially from the crisis, and did not experience serious financial downturns in the long run that could have forced such actions. However, the firms had still to deal with challenges that required persevering. This means that the firms have pursued to mitigate the adverse impacts of the crisis without relying on liquidity. The firms have relied on outstanding collaboration and support of employees, better planning and better communication with stakeholders in order to persevere. From this perspective, firms do not necessarily have to count on their financial resources in order to persevere especially in situations where financial downturns are not an issue.

Further, the innovation measures that were taken by the firms did not go beyond using digital tools to communicate with stakeholders, applying digital marketing to attract new customers, and making minor workplace adjustments. No firm has made significant changes or adjustments in its business model or overall activities. The fact that all firms did not face tremendous financial downturns have decreased their willingness to do so. This does not change the fact that the limited innovation measures have had a crucial role in being able to continue the operations. In fact, some firms have declared that persevering was not possible if not for the innovation measures. This aligns with Wenzel et al. (2020) stating that innovating is an important, if not unavoidable measure for sustaining firm survival. It also aligns with their statement that strategic measures are not unrelated, and that one measure might be a necessary

precursor to another (Wenzel et al., 2020). In this case, the innovation measures were a necessary precursor to be able to persevere. The majority of firms that have applied innovation measures are planning to continue using them after the crisis due to the advantages of saving travel expenses and increasing work efficiency.

5.2 Family firm research

The findings of this study support previous research from several angles. Overall, all firms have benefited financially from the crisis. This aligns with the literature stating that crisis does not only come with negative consequences, but can also come with benefits (Faulkner, 2001). The findings have proved that most family SMEs have constrained financial resources (Lee, 2006; Kim & Vonortas, 2014; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). Most firms have stated that they cannot survive for longer than a couple of months without income. The family SMEs have also prioritized long-term survival, which is why some firms have applied retrenchment in order to protect their liquidity (Lins et al., 2013; Minichilli et al., 2016).

The firms have also reacted quickly to the situation instead of applying formal crisis policies. The specific structure of family firms enables to respond to unexpected changes in a quick and non-bureaucratic manner (Carney, 2005). Increased family ownership decreases the probability of following these policies (Faghfour et al., 2015). All firms did not have any formal crisis management plans, except for some experience acquired from previous crisis situations. The literature also states that family firms profit from support that comes in multiple forms like free labor (Siakas et al., 2014; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). High position members from some firms have stated not taking any salaries to help cutting costs. They also showed great concerns for the family's public image and reputation (Berrone et al., 2012). One firm was willing to persevere in order to maintain their good reputation within the industry.

Family engagement boosts flexibility (Bauweraerts, 2013) as employees at one firm fulfilled multiple roles, which enabled them to replace each other in cases of unexpected shocks. The firm was still able to continue its operations despite that the majority of its employees stayed home for sickness reasons (Covid-19 infections). High executives within the firms showed great alignment of interest which is prioritizing the survival of their firms. This is in contrast of what non-family firms experience, since there is usually more conflict between owners that have long term orientations and managers that have short term motivations (Zhou, 2012).

It is also more common for family firms to act more responsibly towards their employees (Chrisman et al., 2005; Dyer & Whetten, 2006; Floren et al., 2020). All firms have showed great concern and support for their employees' safety and jobs during the crisis. One firm did not take any lay-off procedures despite the tough period at the start. Another firm stopped the short-term lay-offs as soon as things got back to normal so that their employees can get back to work. The findings confirm that maintaining a solid relationship with employees is a powerful tool that secures mutual support, and builds a sense of unity (Kraus et al., 2020).

6 Future research and limitations

In this chapter the limitations of this study will be presented. Based on these limitations, some proposals for potential future research ideas will be introduced by the authors. This is to cover the gaps found in the areas of strategic and crisis management and family firms' research.

This study has confirmed various theories from previous literature studies, and has contributed to the areas of strategic and crisis management and family firms research by providing new insights. However, the findings of this study should be considered as preliminary. The study represents the first empirical study that provides initial evidence of strategic measures applied by Swedish family SMEs in order to cope with the Covid-19 crisis. The findings should be confirmed by future research that cover the limitations of this study.

First, the study has included a limited number of family SMEs. Second, the limited number of family SMEs operate in a narrow number of industries (construction, design, building, manufacturing, education and sports). Future research could validate the findings by including a larger number of family SMEs that operate in a wider range of industries. It was found that the industry of firms is a decisive factor that impacts the use of strategic measures by family SMEs. All of the firms in the study sample operate in industries that have benefited from the crisis situation. Family SMEs in other industries should be investigated, especially with the focus on firms that have suffered financially in order to obtain more profound findings.

Further, all family SMEs in the sample of the study belong to the southern part of Sweden. Family SMEs from other regions of the country should be included. It was found that the unique governmental restrictions in Sweden form a decisive factor in the use of strategic measures as well. The governmental restrictions vary from one region to another in the country, which means that the effect of this variation on the use of strategic measures could be investigated. In order to get a more global overview, family SMEs from neighboring countries and other European countries should be considered. The focus on other countries could bring new insights since their governmental restrictions are known to be stricter than in Sweden.

The conclusions drawn in this study cannot be considered as final and should be either confirmed or developed further by conducting research in new contexts. The five decisive factors identified in this study would differ in new contexts, which means that new insights regarding the use of strategic measures could be provided. For instance, no new combinations

of strategic measures were found in this study when reflecting back to previous literature. Also, the strategic measures did not witness any significant changes or developments through time during the crisis. Business models and operational activities did not experience any drastic changes other than the implementation of some minor innovation measures like digital tools and digital marketing. Future research could investigate if this is the case with family SMEs that operate in new contexts of region, country, industry and phase of the crisis. The authors of this study also encourage future research studies to investigate the use of strategic measures in both later and post-crisis phases. Furthermore, it could be interesting to investigate the cultural changes within family SMEs after the crisis as a consequence of applying strategic measures.

From a practical point of view, this study has some limitations. Some interviews were conducted with the use of digital tools. It was noticed that some participants were not used to have digital meetings. This resulted in the participants not being completely comfortable conducting the interviews digitally, which may have affected their answers to questions and insights on matters of the investigation. The same was noticed with an interview that was conducted via phone. Also, the authors of the study observed that there is a knowledge gap between two high position members within the same firm. It was usually the case that one member has richer and more detailed insights than the other. The way the participants of the study grasped the questions and concepts also differed from one to another. These limitations have led the authors to invite future studies to investigate how these gaps in knowledge and understanding between high position members can affect the decision-making process of applying strategic measures. Also, it would be insightful to look into how the nature of family relationships (siblings, parents or other forms of relationships) between high position members can affect this decision-making process.

Future research studies could rely on the findings of this study, and consider it as a starting point to compare findings obtained from other contexts. This in order to get a more global overview of strategic measures applied by family SMEs in the current crisis.

Reference list

- Abdalla, M., Oliveira, L., Azevedo, C., & Gonzalez, R. (2018). Quality in Qualitative Organizational Research: Types of triangulation as a methodological alternative. *Administração: Ensino E Pesquisa*, 19(1), 66-98. DOI: 10.13058/raep.2018.v19n1.578
- Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B. (2001). How entrepreneurial firms can benefit from alliances with large partners. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 15(1), 139-148. DOI: 10.5465/AME.2001.4251563
- Amann, B. and Jaussaud, J. (2012), "Family and non-family business resilience in an economic downturn", *Asia Pacific Business Review*, Vol. 18(2), 203-223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602381.2010.537057>
- Anderson, R., & Reeb, D. (2003). Founding family ownership and firm performance: evidence from the S&P 500. *The Journal of Finance*, 58(3), 1301-1327. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1540-6261.00567>
- Andersson, W. F., Johansson, D., Karlsson, J., Lodefalk, M., & Poldahl, A. (2017). *The characteristics and performance of family firms: exploiting information on ownership, kinship and governance using total population data*. Örebro: Örebro University. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-017-9947-6
- Arrondo-García, R., Fernández-Méndez, C. and Menéndez-Requejo, S. (2016), "The growth and performance of family businesses during the global financial crisis: the role of the generation in control", *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, Vol. 7(4), 227-237. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-017-9947-6
- Aslam, F., Ferreira, P., Mughal, K. S., & Bashir, B. (2021). Intraday Volatility Spillovers among European Financial Markets during COVID-19. *International Journal of Financial Studies*, 9(1), 5.
- Babbie, E. (2010). *The practice of social research*. Vol 12. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Baker, S., Bloom, N., Davis, S.J., Kost, K., Sammon, M. and Viratyosin, T. (2020), "The unprecedented stock market reaction to COVID-19", *Covid Economics: Vetted and Real-Time Papers*, Vol. 1(3). DOI: 10.1093/rapstu/raaa008
- Ballini, B., Celada, M., Goenaga, P., Gramkov, P., Rousseau-Calisti, I., Sangle-Ferriere, M., Schwartz, N., Tomkos, T. (2020), "2019 Pan-European RRA Study on Family-Owned Business". *Family-owned companies' challenges and common peculiarities*. Russel Reynolds Associates. <https://www.russellreynolds.com/insights/thought-leadership/2019-pan-european-rra-study-on-family-owned-business>
- Barker, V.L. and Duhaime, I.M. (1997), "Strategic change in the turnaround process: theory and empirical evidence", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 18(1), 13-38. DOI: 10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199701)18:1<13::AID-SMJ843>3.0.CO;2-X
- Baron, S., Harris, K. and Elliott, D. (2005), "Crisis management and services marketing", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 19(5), 336-345. DOI: 10.1108/08876040510609943
- Basu, A. (2004). Entrepreneurial aspirations among family business owners. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*. Vol. 1(1), DOI: 10.1108/13552550410521353
- Bauweraerts, J. (2013). How do private family firms face the crisis? Empirical evidence from Belgium. *International Business Research*, 6(8). doi:10.5539/ibr.v6n8p91
- BBC (2020). Covid-19: *Germany introduces new restrictions amid rise in cases*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55324422>
- Benner, M.J. and Zenger, T. (2016), "The lemons problem in markets for strategy", *Strategy Science*, Vol. 1(2), 71-89. DOI: 10.5465/ambpp.2015.12448abstract
- Bernard, H. R. (2017). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Rowman & Littlefield. Vol. 21(2)

- Berrone, P., Cruz, C., & Gomez-Mejia, L.R. (2012). Socioemotional wealth in family firms: Theoretical dimensions, assessment approaches, and agenda for future research. *Family Business Review*, 25(3), 258-279. doi:10.1177/0894486511435355
- Bjorklund, K. & Ewing, A. (2020). Time. *The Swedish COVID-19 response is a disaster. It shouldn't be a model for the rest of the world*. <https://time.com/5899432/sweden-coronavirus-disaster/>
- Bloch, A., Kachaner, N., & Mignon, S. (2012). *La stratégie du propriétaire: Enquête sur la résilience des entreprises familiales face à la crise*. Paris: Editions Pearson. doi: 10.1136/bmj.311.6999.251.
- Britten, N. (1995). Qualitative research: qualitative interviews in medical research. *Bmj*, 311(6999), 251-253.
- Brockner, J. and James, E.H. (2008), "Toward an understanding of when executives see crisis as opportunity", *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 44 (1), 94-115. DOI: 10.1177/0021886307313824
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods (4th edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (Fifth ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bucheli, M., Salvaj, E., & Kim, M. (2019). Better together: How multinationals come together with business groups in times of economic and political transitions. *Global Strategy Journal*, 9(2), 176–207. DOI: 10.1002/gsj.1326
- Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M.D., Short, C.E. and Coombs, W.T. (2017), "Crises and crisis management: integration, interpretation, and research development", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 43(6), 1661-1692.
- Campopiano, G., De Massis, A., & Kotlar, J. (2019). *Environmental Jolts, Family-Centered Non-economic Goals, and Innovation: A Framework of Family Firm Resilience*. In *The Palgrave handbook of heterogeneity among family firms*. 773-789. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-77676-7_28
- Carnahan, S. (2017), "Blocked but not tackled: who founds new firms when rivals dissolve?", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 38(11), 2189-2212. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2653>
- Carney, M. (2005), "Corporate governance and competitive advantage in family-controlled firms", *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 29(3), 249-265. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00081.x
- Cater, J. and Schwab, A. (2008), "Turnaround strategies in established small family firms", *Family Business Review*, Vol. 21(1), 31-50. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-6248.2007.00113.x
- Chen, S., Chen, X., Cheng, Q., & Shevlin, T. (2010). Are family firms more tax aggressive than non-family firms? *Journal of Financial Economics*, 95, 41-61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jfineco.2009.02.003>
- Chrisman, J.J., Chua, J.H. and Sharma, P. (2005), "Trends and directions in the development of a strategic management theory of the family firm", *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 29(5), 555-575. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00098.x
- Clauss, T. (2017), "Measuring business model innovation: conceptualization, scale development, and proof of performance", *R&D Management*, Vol. 47 (3), 385-403. DOI: 10.1111/radm.12186
- Clauss, T., Abebe, M., Tangpong, C. and Hock, M. (2019), "Strategic agility, business model innovation, and firm performance: an empirical investigation", *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, doi:10.1109/TEM.2019.2910381.
- Coombs, W.T. (2007), "Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: the development and application of situational crisis communication theory", *Corporate Reputation Review*, Vol. 10(3), 163-176. DOI: 10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049

Costantino, T. E. (2008). 'Constructivism'. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 117-120). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Cozzolino, A., & Rothaermel, F. T. (2018). Discontinuities, competition, and cooperation: Coopetitive dynamics between incumbents and entrants. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(12), 3053–3085. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2776

D'Aveni, R.A. and MacMillan, I.C. (1990), "Crisis and the content of managerial communications: a study of the focus of attention of top managers in surviving and failing firms", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 35(4), 634-657.

Dane, E. and Pratt, M.G. (2007), "Exploring intuition and its role in managerial decision making", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 32(1), 33-54. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2007.23463682

del Rio-Chanona, R.M., Mealy, P., Pichler, A., Lafond, F. and Farmer, D. (2020), "Supply and demand shocks in the COVID-19 pandemic: an industry and occupation perspective", *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.59020>

Denzin, N. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. (2nd ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>

Diéguez-Soto, J., López-Delgado, P., & Rojo-Ramírez, A. (2015). Identifying and classifying family businesses. *Review of Managerial Science*, 9(3), 603-634. DOI: 10.1007/s11846-014-0128-6

Dyer Jr, W. G., & Whetten, D. A. (2006). Family firms and social responsibility: Preliminary evidence from the S&P 500. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(6), 785-802. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2006.00151.x>

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2015). *Management and Business Research* (5th edition). Sage Publications Ltd.

Eggers, F. (2020). Masters of disasters? Challenges and opportunities for SMEs in times of crisis. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 199-208. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.025

Eisenhardt, K.M. and Graebner, M.E. (2007), "Theory building from cases: opportunities and challenges", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 50(1), 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160888>

Elliott, D. and McGuinness, M. (2002), "Public inquiry: panacea or placebo?", *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 10(1), 14-25.

Elsbach, K.D. (1994), "Managing organizational legitimacy in the California cattle industry: the construction and effectiveness of verbal accounts", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 39(1), 57-88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159839>

Erixon, F. (2009). SMEs in Europe: taking stock and looking forward. *Centre for European Studies*. 8. 293-300. (DOI 10.1007/s12290-009-0093-7).

European Commission, (2012a). *Family business*. From 20210215. https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/supporting-entrepreneurship/family-business_en

European Commission (2012b). *SME definition*. https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en

European Comission, (2020). *Jobs and economy during the coronavirus pandemic*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/jobs-and-economy-during-coronavirus-pandemic_en

Faghfour, P., Kraiczy, N.D., Hack, A. and Kellermanns, F.W. (2015), "Ready for a crisis? How supervisory boards affect the formalized crisis procedures of small and medium-sized family firms in Germany", *Review of Managerial Science*, Vol. 9(2), 317-338.

Family Business Network, (n. d.). *Om familjeföretag*. <https://familybusinessnetwork.se/om-fbn/#om-familjeforetag>

Faulkner, B. (2001), "Towards a framework for tourism disaster management", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 22(2), 135-147.

Filser, M., Brem, A., Gast, J., Kraus, S. and Calabr_o, A. (2016), "Innovation in family firms—examining the inventory and mapping the path", *International Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 20(6), 1650054. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1363919616500547>

Floren, R., Berent-Braun, M., & Bles-Temme, L. (2020). *Family businesses and the corona crisis (COVID-19)*. DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.24894.64324

Folkhälsomyndigheterna (2020a). *Nya regler för restauranger och krogar*. <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/nyhetsarkiv/2020/mars/nya-regler-for-restauranger-och-krogar/>

Folkhälsomyndigheterna (2020b). *Information till förskola, grundskola och gymnasier om covid-19*. <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/verksamheter/information-till-skola-och-forskola-om-den-nya-sjukdomen-covid-19/>

Folkhälsomyndigheterna (2020c). *Personer över 70 bör begränsa sociala kontakter tills vidare*. <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/nyhetsarkiv/2020/mars/personer-over-70-bor-begransa-sociala-kontakter-tills-vidare/>

Furr, N. R., & Kapoor, R. (2018). Capabilities, technologies, and firm exit during industry shakeout: Evidence from the global solar photovoltaic industry. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(1), 33–61. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2709

Fölster, S. (2020). "Regeringen missar det största ekonomiska hotet". <https://www.svd.se/regeringen-missar-det-storsta-ekonomiska-hotet>

Försäkringskassan (2021.) *Coronaviruset – det här gäller*. <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/privatpers/coronaviruset-det-har-galler>

Gagné, M., Sharma, P., & De Massis, A. (2014). The study of organizational behaviour in family business. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 23(5), 643-656. DOI: 10.1080/1359432X.2014.906403

Ghobadian, A. and Gallear, D. (1997). Total quality management in SMEs. *Omega*, 24(1), 83-106. DOI: 10.1016/0305-0483(95)00055-0

Given, L. M., & Saumure, K. (2012). Trustworthiness. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. p. 896

Gomez-Mejia, L. R., Haynes, K. T., Nunez-Nickel, M., Jacobson, K. J. L., & Moyano-Fuentes, J. (2007). Socioemotional wealth and business risk in family-controlled firms: Evidence from Spanish olive oil mills. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52(1), 106-137. DOI: 10.2189/asqu.52.1.106

Gomez-Mejia, L. R., Cruz, C., Berrone, P., & De Castro, J. (2011). The bind that ties: Socioemotional wealth preservation in family firms. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 653-707. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2011.593320>

Greiner, L.E. (1989), Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow. *Readings in Strategic Management*, Springer, Heidelberg, Vol.76(3). DOI:10.1007/978-1-349-20317-8_25

Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L. (2006), "How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability", *Field Methods*, Vol. 18(1), 59-82.

Habbershon, T.G., & Williams, M.L. (1999). A resource-based framework for assessing the strategic advantages of family firms. *Family Business Review*, 12(1), 1–25. doi:10.1111/j.1741-6248.1999.00001.x

Habermas, J. (1978). Knowledge and human interests (2nd ed.). London: Heinemann

Hale, J.E., Dulek, R.E. and Hale, D.P. (2005), “Crisis response communication challenges: building theory from qualitative data”, *The Journal of Business Communication*, (1973), Vol. 42(2), 112-134. DOI: 10.1177/0021943605274751

Harvey, S. and Haines, V.Y. ii (2005), “Employer treatment of employees during a community crisis: the role of procedural and distributive justice”, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 20(1), 53-68.

Hensvik, L., & Skans, O. (2020). Covid-19 crisis response monitoring: Sweden. *IZA Country Report*.

Herbane, B. (2010). Small business research: Time for a crisis-based view. *International small business journal*, 28(1), 43-64. DOI: 10.1177/0266242609350804

Herbane, B. (2013), “Exploring crisis management in UK small-and medium-sized enterprises”, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 21(2), 82-95.

Hessius (2020). Kerstin Hessius: *Avbryt nedstängningen – priset är för högt*. <https://www.di.se/debatt/kerstin-hessius-avbryt-nedstangningen-priset-ar-for-hogt/>

Hillary, R. (2000). *Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and the Environment*. UK: Greenleaf Publishing Limited.

Hills, A. (1998), “Seduced by recovery: the consequences of misunderstanding disaster”, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 6(3), 162-170. DOI: 10.1111/1468-5973.00085

James, E.H. and Wooten, L.P. (2005), “Leadership as (Un) usual: how to display competence in times of crisis”, *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 34(2), 141-152.

Jensen, D. (2012a). Credibility. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 139). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jensen, D. (2012b). Transferability. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 886-887). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jensen, D. (2012c). Dependability. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 209). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jensen, D. (2012d). Confirmability. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 112-113). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Johansson, D., (2020). *Stanna hemma från jobbet och få smittbärrpenning*. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/stanna-hemma-fran-jobbet-och-fa-smittbararpenning>

Kim, Y. and Vonortas, N.S. (2014), “Cooperation in the formative years: evidence from small enterprises in Europe”, *European Management Journal*, Vol. 32(5), 795-805. DOI: 10.1016/j.emj.2014.02.003

Kraus, S., Clauss, T., Breier, M., Gast, J., Zardini, A., & Tiberius, V. (2020). The economics of COVID-19: initial empirical evidence on how family firms in five European countries cope with the corona crisis. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 26(5). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-04-2020-0214>

Kraus, S., Moog, P., Schlepphorst, S. and Raich, M. (2013), “Crisis and turnaround management in SMEs: a qualitative-empirical investigation of 30 companies”, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, Vol. 5(4), 406-430.

Lampel, J., Shamsie, J. and Shapira, Z. (2009), "Experiencing the improbable: rare events and organizational learning", *Organization Science*, Vol. 20(5), 835-845. DOI: 10.1287/orsc.1090.0479

Larsson, T. (2020). *Regeringen presenter stödpaket på upp till 300 miljarder kronor till näringslivet*. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/ekonomi/regeringen-presenter-stodpaket-pa-upp-till-300-miljarder-kronor-till-naringslivet>

Lee, J. (2006), "Family firm performance: further evidence", *Family Business Review*, Vol. 19(2), 103-114.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Lins, K.V., Volpin, P. and Wagner, H.F. (2013), "Does family control matter? International evidence from the 2008–2009 financial crisis", *The Review of Financial Studies*, Vol. 26(10), 2583-2619. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ju.se/10.1108/RAF-03-2015-0039>

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtler, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*, Vol. 28. John Wiley & Sons. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v14i3.103>

Mathison, S. (2011). Relativism. In S. Mathison (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412950558.n331>

McKibbin, W., & Vines, D. (2020). Global macroeconomic cooperation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: a roadmap for the G20 and the IMF. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 36(Supplement_1), S297-S337. DOI: 10.1093/oxrep/graa032

Miller, D., & Le Breton-Miller, I. (2006). Family governance and firm performance: Agency, stewardship, and capabilities. *Family Business Review*, 19(1), 73–87. doi:10.1111/j.1741-6248.2006.00063.x

Minichilli, A., Brogi, M. and Calabrò, A. (2016), "Weathering the storm: family ownership, governance, and performance through the financial and economic crisis", *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, Vol. 24(6), 552-568.

Mitchell, W., & Singh, K. (1996). Survival of businesses using collaborative relationships to commercialize complex goods. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17(3), 169–195. DOI: 10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199603)17:3<169::AID-SMJ801>3.0.CO;2-%23

Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K. and Spiers, J. (2002), "Verification strategies forestablishing reliability and validity in qualitative research", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 1(2), 13-22. DOI: 10.1177/160940690200100202

Muellbauer, J. (2020), "The coronavirus pandemic and US consumption", VOX CERP Policy Portal, Vol. No Muller, A., & Kräussl, R. (2011). Doing good deeds in times of need: A strategic perspective on corporate disaster donations. *Strategic Management Journal*, 32(9), 911–929. DOI: 10.1002/smj.917

Ndofor, H.A., Vanevenhoven, J. and Barker III, V.L. (2013), "Software firm turnarounds in the 1990s: an analysis of reversing decline in a growing, dynamic industry", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 34(9), 1123-1133. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2050>

Neergaard, H. and Ulhøi, J.P. (2007). *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar Publishing, Northampton, MA. DOI: 10.1108/17506201011029537

Oukes, T., von Raesfeld, A., Groen, A., & PCDIAB Consortium. (2019). Power in a startup's relationships with its established partners: Interactions between structural and behavioural power. *Industrial marketing management*, 80, 68-83. DOI: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.12.007

Park, Y., Hong, P. and Roh, J.J. (2013), "Supply chain lessons from the catastrophic natural disaster in Japan", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 56(1), 75-85. DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2012.09.008

- Pateli, A.G. and Giaglis, G.M. (2005), "Technology innovation-induced business model change: a contingency approach", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 18(2), 167-183. DOI: 10.1108/09534810510589589
- Pearce, J.A. and Robbins, D.K. (1994), "Retrenchment remains the foundation of business turnaround", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 15(5), 407-417. DOI: 10.1002/smj.4250150507
- Pearce, J.A. and Robbins, K. (1993), "Toward improved theory and research on business turnaround", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 19(3), 613-636. DOI: 10.1177/014920639301900306
- Pearson, C.M. and Clair, J.A. (1998), "Reframing crisis management". *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 23(1), 59-76. DOI: 10.2307/259099
- Pfarrer, M.D., Decelles, K.A., Smith, K.G. and Taylor, M.S. (2008), "After the fall: reintegrating the corrupt organization", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 33(3), 730-749. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2008.32465757
- Ponciano, J., (2020). *It Could Take 4 Years To Recover The 22 Million Jobs Lost During Covid-19 Pandemic, Moody's Warns*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanponciano/2020/11/30/it-could-take-4-years-to-regain-the-22-million-jobs-lost-during-covid-19-pandemic-moodys-warns/>
- Regeringskansliet (2020a). *Förändringar i förordningen om förbud mot att hålla allmänna sammankomster och offentliga tillställningar*. <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2020/10/forandringar-i-forordningen-om-forbud-mot-att-halla-allman-na-sammankomster-och-offentliga-tillstallningar/>
- Regeringskansliet (2020b). *Åtgärder på socialförsäkringsområdet med anledning av coronaviruset*. <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/socialforsakringar/atgarder-inom-sjukforsakringen-med-anledning-av-corona/>
- Ren, C.R., Hu, Y. and Cui, T.H. (2019), "Responses to rival exit: product variety, market expansion, and preexisting market structure", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 40(2), 253-276. DOI: 10.1002/smj.2970
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C., & Ormston, R. (2014). *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers* (2). Los Angeles, California: SAGE.
- Roffia, P., Moracchiato, S., Liguori, E., & Kraus, S. (2021). Operationally defining family SMEs: a critical review. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*. DOI: 10.1108/JSBED-11-2020-0399
- Roy, R., Lampert, C.M. and Stoyneva, I. (2018), "When dinosaurs fly: the role of firm capabilities in the 'avianization' of incumbents during disruptive technological change", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 12(2), 261-284. DOI: 10.1002/sej.1278
- Runyan, R.C. (2006), "Small business in the face of crisis: identifying barriers to recovery from a natural disaster I", *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 14(1), 12-26.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students*. (6). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. DOI: 10.1108/qmr.2000.3.4.215.2
- Savage, M. (2020). Did Sweden's coronavirus strategy succeed or fail. BBC News. Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53498133>. [Accessed 10 March 2021].
- Schmitt, A., Probst, G. and Tushman, M.L. (2010), "Management in times of economic crisis: insights into organizational ambidexterity", *Management*, Vol. 13(3), 128-150. DOI: 10.3917/mana.133.0128
- Schrmer, I. G., (2021). Arbetslöshet. https://www.ekonomifakta.se/Fakta/Arbetsmarknad/Arbetsloshet/Arbetsloshet/?gclid=CjwKCAiAgc-ABhA7EiwAjev-j8LHMBkQMNUowf3jY7GFaIUzKJ0f2II8InON95tgbKfM3Vokl_EJ4BoCZzsQAvD_BwE [Accessed: 24 March-2021]
- Sharma, P., & Salvato, C. (2013). A balancing act between continuity and change. *The endurance of family businesses: A global overview*, 34. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139794848.004

- Sharma, P., Chrisman, J. J., & Gersick, K. E. (2012). 25 years of Family Business Review: Reflections on the past and perspectives for the future. *Family Business Review*, 25, 5-15. DOI: 10.1177/0894486512437626
- Siakas, K., Naaranoja, M., Vlachakis, S., & Siakas, E. (2014). Family businesses in the new economy: How to survive and develop in times of financial crisis. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 9(14), 331–341. doi:10.1016/s2212-5671(14)00034-3
- Sirmon, D. G., & Hitt, M. A. (2003). Managing resources: Linking unique resources, management, and wealth creation in family firms. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 27(4), 339-358. DOI: 10.1111/1540-8520.t01-1-00013
- Smith, J. K. (2008). 'Relativism'. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (pp. 750-753). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- Snieder, R., & Larner, K. (2009). *The art of being a scientist: A guide for graduate students and their mentors*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-5823.2010.00109_28.x
- Songini, L. (2006). 15 The professionalization of family firms: theory and practice. *Handbook of research on family business*, 269. DOI: 10.4337/9781847204394.00026
- Stieglitz, N., Knudsen, T. and Becker, M.C. (2016), "Adaptation and inertia in dynamic environments", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 37(9), 1854-1864. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2433>
- Sveriges Riksdag (2020/21:SoU23). *Socialutskottets betänkande*. https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/en-tillfallig-covid-19-lag_H801SoU23
- Tagiuri, R., & Davis, J. (1996). Bivalent attributes of the family firm. *Family business review*, 9(2), 199-208. DOI: 10.1111/j.1741-6248.1996.00199.x
- Tharoor, I. (2020). *Has Sweden's coronavirus strategy failed?* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/11/18/sweden-coronavirus-surge-policy/>
- Thorgren, S., & Williams, T. A. (2020). Staying alive during an unfolding crisis: How SMEs ward off impending disaster. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, Vol. 14, e00187-e00187 DOI: 10.1016/j.jbvi.2020.e00187
- Tracy, S. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. DOI: 10.1177/1077800410383121
- Tudor, A.T. and Mutiu, A. (2008). Pro And Contra Opinions Regarding A SME Accounting Standard. *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Oeconomica, Faculty of Sciences*. 1(10). 1-4.
- Ucaktürk, A., Bekmezci, M. and Ucaktürk, T. (2011), "Prevailing during the periods of economical crisis and recession through business model innovation", *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 24, 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.095>
- Veil, S.R. (2011), "Mindful learning in crisis management", *The Journal of Business Communication*, (1973), Vol. 48(2), 116-147. DOI: 10.1177/0021943610382294
- Wenzel, M., Stanske, S., & Lieberman, M. B. (2020). Strategic responses to crisis. *Strategic Management Journal*. doi:10.1002/smj.3161
- WHO (2020). Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) SITUATION REPORT - 1. In Organisation, W.H. (editor, Nover Coronavirus: World Health Organisation. https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019?gclid=Cj0KCQjwkZiFBhD9ARIsAGxFX8BVmIdpAKxiScStoCPjbkOtYg4qVThgw8Mh0dVpD1ESbUHHqwolsnMaAu1pEALw_wcB [Accessed: 03/24-2021]
- Wilson, J. (2014). *Essentials of business research: A guide to doing your research project*. Sage.

DOI: 10.1177/097215091101200211

Witte, E. (1981). Die Unternehmenskrise–Anfang vom Ende oder Neubeginn. *Unternehmenskrisen–Ursachen, Früherkennung, Bewältigung*, Stuttgart, 7-24.

Worldometers, (n.d.) *COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC*.
<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries> [Accessed 26/03-2021 & 17/05-2021]

Yin, R. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publication Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-009>

Zajkowski, R., & Żukowska, B. (2020). Family Businesses during the COVID-19 Crisis–Evidence from Poland. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio H–Oeconomia*, 54(3), 101-116. DOI:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/h.2020.54.3.101-116>

Zhou, H. (2012). *Are Family Firms Better Performers During Financial Crisis?* Working paper. DOI:
10.2139/ssrn.1967951

Appendix 1 - Email for the interviewees in Swedish & English

Hej X,

Som vi pratade om på telefon skulle vi verkligen uppskatta möjligheten att genomföra några intervjuer för våra studier. I vårt examensarbete undersöker vi hur familjeföretag hanterar eller använder sig av olika strategier för att klara sig igenom Covid-19-pandemin. Vi skulle därför uppskatta om du kan ge en timme av din dyrbara tid för oss att ställa några frågor för hur det faktiskt kan gå till i verkligheten. Vi skulle också uppskatta om vi kan få chansen att intervjua två personer från ledningen för att få ännu mer förståelse.

Vi är flexibla när det kommer till att genomföra intervjuerna. Vi kan vara tillgängliga via något kommunikationsverktyg som Skype, Zoom, Teams etc. eller träffas på plats. Vi är också anpassningsbara när det gäller dagar och tid så återkom med en dag och tid som överensstämmer med dina preferenser.

Vi har bifogat ett formulär som du kan läsa och gå igenom innan intervjuerna. I det här formuläret bevisar vi att de insamlade uppgifterna från intervjuerna kommer att skyddas och förbli konfidentiella. Det anges också att du kan välja att inte nämna ditt eller företagsnamn i vår rapport om du föredrar det. Vi skulle uppskatta om du kunde fylla i och underteckna formuläret efter att ha läst igenom det.

Kontakta oss gärna om du har mer specifika frågor till intervjuerna. Du kan kontakta oss via denna mail eller nummer: +467....

Vi hörs snart igen!

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Erica och Ilias

Dear X,

As we stated through our phone call that we had, we would really appreciate the opportunity for us to conduct some interviews for our studies. In our research, we are investigating the strategies that family firms have applied in order to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. We would appreciate if you can provide an hour of your precious time for us to ask you some questions. The perfect situation for us is to be able to interview two people from your management team.

We are quite flexible to conduct the interviews either through communication tools like Skype, Zoom, Teams etc. and we are also adaptable when it comes to days and time. We would like you to choose the way of doing the interviews at a time that aligns with your preferences. We have uploaded a form that you could read and go through before the interviews. In this form, we prove that the collected data from the interviews will be protected and will stay confidential. It also states that you could choose not to mention your company's name in our report if you would prefer so. We would appreciate if you could fill in and sign the form after reading it through.

Feel free to contact us if you have more specific questions for the interviews. You can contact us through this number: +467.... Please inform us about the date and time that you would prefer.

Best wishes,

Erica and Ilias

Appendix 2 - Interview guide in Swedish & English

Allmänt General
Vad inriktar sig erat företag på? <i>What does the company do?</i>
När startade ni företaget och hur länge har ni varit igång? <i>For how long has the company been running?</i>
Kan du beskriva vad du gör en vanlig dag på jobbet? <i>Can you explain the daily operations that you're doing?</i>
Hur många är ni som jobbar och vem är det som utför jobben? <i>How many are you that are working at the firm, and who is doing what?</i>
Hur prioriterar du dina arbetsuppgifter under en jobbdag? <i>How do you prioitize your tasks during a working day?</i>
Finns det olika projekt som prioriteras olika? Är det det som genererar mest pengar som prioriteras? <i>Are there different projects that can be prioritized different? Is it the things that generate the most money that get prioritized?</i>
Vilken är den viktigaste aktivitet eller arbetsuppgiften du har på en jobbdag? <i>What are the most important activities throughout a working day?</i>
Hur många personer är involverade vid beslutstaganden? <i>How many people are involved in decision making?</i>

<p>Har era kunder påvisat en påverkan av corona-pandemin? Om ja, hur? Mindre försäljning?</p> <p><i>Have your customers demonstrated an impact on the corona pandemic? If yes, how? Did the sales decrease?</i></p> <p><i>Did the pandemic have a negative impact on the business?</i></p>
<p>Har ni haft några problem med inköp/leverans(kedjan)/transport?</p> <p><i>Have you had any problems with purchasing / delivery (chain) / transport?</i></p>
<p>Krishantering Crisis management</p>
<p>Har olika medarbetare olika typer av roller beroende på deras erfarenhet och egenskaper?</p> <p><i>Do specific members have certain roles in a team depending on their experience and knowledge?</i></p>
<p>Planerar ni era tillvägagångssätt (strategier) för att hantera olika situationer tillsammans?</p> <p><i>Do you plan your strategies together?</i></p>
<p>Har ni lärt er av varandras erfarenheter?</p> <p><i>Do you learn lessons from each other?</i></p>
<p>Litar ni på varandras omdömme på de olika avdelningarna?</p> <p><i>Do you trust each other's judgment in the different departments?</i></p>
<p>Strategihantering Strategy management</p>
<p>Före Corona, hade ni en hanteringsplan (strategi) för hur ni skulle hantera om en kris skulle inträffa? Om ja, vilka strategier? Om nej, vad gjorde ni för att hantera det? Permetering?</p>

Before corona, did you have a strategy for how to handle a crisis?

If yes, what was the strategy? If no, what strategy did you have to apply?

Vilka tillvägagångssätt (strategier) har varit nödvändiga att använda i erat företag i början och nuvarande av coronakrisen?

Nedskärning

→ Har ni tagit åtgärder där ni kan dra in på kostnader?

Uthållighet

→ Har ni fortsatt med de vanliga arbetsuppgifterna?

→ Hur länge tog det innan ni behövde byta strategi?

Innovation

→ Har ni försökt att hitta nya möjligheter att anpassa till den nya situationen?

→ Har ni gjort några förändringar i olika arbetsuppgifter? Om ja, varför?

→ Har eran affärmodell ändrats? Om ja, varför?

Exit

→ Har ni övervägt att lägga ner verksamheten? Om ja, varför?

What strategies were necessary to apply in addition to your initial crisis strategy after Covid-19 happened?

(in case we do not get satisfying answers: we could mention examples of strategies found in literature and ask specific questions about that)

+Retrenchment: Cost cutting measures

➔ *Did you take actions in order to save cost expenses?*

+Persevering: sustaining the ongoing business operations

➔ *Did you try to continue with the usual business operations?*

➔ *How long did this last until you had to switch to another strategy?*

+Innovating: Recognizing opportunities and readjusting the firm's operations and activities according to the changed environment as a result of crisis

➔ *Did you try to find new opportunities to implement in your business because of the crisis?*

➔ *Did you make any adjustment in the business operations and activities, if yes, why?*

➔ *Did anything change in your business model? If yes, why?*

+ Exit: Discontinuation of a business when the other strategies turn out to be unsuccessful

➔ *Did you actually consider to stop the operations and shut down the business? If yes, why?*

Har erat arbete eller strategier ändrats under tiden som pandemin har fortgått nu när det är över ett år?

→ Vad har ändrats? Varför har det ändrats?

Did the strategy change during this long time of period that have lasted over one year?

➔ *What did change? And why did it change?*

Använde du en kombination av ovan nämnda strategier? Hur utvecklades detta och hur kombinerade ni detta? Förändrades denna kombination och varför?

+ Avskärning: Kostnadsbesparande åtgärder

+ Uthållning: upprätthålla den pågående affärsverksamheten

+ Innovation: Att känna igen möjligheter och justera företagets verksamhet och aktiviteter enligt den förändrade miljön till följd av kris

+ Exit: Avbrytande av ett företag när de andra strategierna visar sig misslyckas

Did you use a combination of the strategies mentioned above? How did this develop? Did this combination change and why?

+Retrenchment: Cost cutting measures
+Persevering: sustaining the ongoing business operations
+Innovating: Recognizing opportunities and readjusting the firm's operations and activities according to the changed environment as a result of crisis
+ Exit: Discontinuation of a business when the other strategies turn out to be unsuccessful

Har dina tillämpade strategier fungerat för att överleva pandemin?
Fungerade dina handlingar för att överleva krisen?

Om **ja**, varför tror du att det fungerade?
Om **inte**, varför tror du att det inte fungerade?

Have your applied strategies worked in order to survive the pandemic?
Did your actions work in order to survive the crisis?

*If **yes**, why do you think it worked?*
*If **not**, why do you think it did not work?*

Finns det några strategier som ni kommer att tillämpa framåt?

Do you think there are some strategies that you will be using within the future?

Tror du ni kommer att bli starkare av att gå igenom pandemin?

Do you think that you will get stronger from going through the pandemic?

Appendix 3

	Position of the interviewee	Member of the owning family	Date	Interview length	Interview type
A	Founder/Partner	Yes	April 27	55 min	Personal
	CEO/Partner	Yes	May 1	40 min	Personal
B	Founder	Yes	April 20	55 min	Personal
C	CEO	Yes	April 21	65 min	Personal
	Board member	Yes	April 29	55 min	Via Phone
D	CEO	Yes	April 19	60 min	Via Teams
	Founder	Yes	April 26	60 min	Via Teams
E	Founder	Yes	April 17	60 min	Personal
	Board member	Yes	April 19	40 min	Personal
F	CEO	Yes	April 4	45 min	Via Zoom
G	CEO	Yes	April 20	120 min	Personal
	Deputy-member	Yes	May 2	55 min	Via Teams
Total				710 min	

Appendix 4

Summarized general data collected from interviews

Code	How long has the company been running?	Daily operations	Way of prioritizing tasks	Most important activities on a workday	How many people involved in decision making?	Impact of corona on business, negative/positive?	Problems with purchasing/delivery/transport?
A	2003	It is a private educational school that teaches small farmers through folk high school education	Everything is planned. The company makes a monthly and weekly planning and follows them. In the farm, animals have always the priority, then comes the cultivation then the household chores. Priorities regarding teaching are sometimes based on keeping the activities fun for students and volunteers, especially during projects. Income is not highly prioritized in the farm. It is more about to keep the farm running.	+Teaching everything around farming +Teaching household stuff +Organizing +Meetings +Supervising volunteers +working on projects	Both are in the lead, but each one focusses on what they are good at when teaching the students/volunteers. Daily activity decisions are often made by the whole group, but big decisions are made by both.	The company suffered from the crisis since that the school that the farming program is going through closed its doors and just continued with distance education. The farm had to apply stricter restrictions, and a number of participants could not stay under these rules and left. The borders were closed and volunteers could not come anymore from abroad. Only a few volunteers and students were left from before the crisis happened. This affected the economical state of the farm a lot. For some time, the farm had to rely on savings. The revenue/ turnover of the farm has decreased by at least half. (October, November, December 2020). After a while it started rolling again but still with smaller capacity. There was also some chaos on the farm since there were two groups with different opinions. One group was terrified from the pandemic while the other was not afraid at all. The farm was able to attract more students and volunteers after a while and had one of its best years. This is probably because a number of people started to think what a crisis can cause and wanted to learn how to farm themselves. The limited job opportunities in the market also made some people invest time in learning how to farm.	No problems with delivery since the farm produces most things itself
B	2008	All in construction, land swaps, land construction and new	The most important thing for the company is that everything works and goes smoothly. That everyone one is prepared before the work is done and that everyone knows what to expect. The company values efficiency while executing its work, and executes its	+Digging and shaping tiles +administration work +Work on construction projects +Good communication with customers	There are two people involved in decision making, the owner and his brother that own and run the company 50/50	The company has grown during the pandemic and has been operating well. The construction company have had revenue records last year. People that work from home have more time and money to think about renovations at home. Construction	It has been challenging for the company with delivery times of products and materials due to

		production of slightly larger objects	activities in parallel. The company also often prioritizes jobs that pay good money, like the rock cracking jobs for municipalities. So, the company often puts other jobs on hold if possible, to work on this kind of profitable jobs.			companies have benefited from this a lot since the start of the crisis.	the pandemic. So, the company had to keep the late delivery times in mind while planning projects and jobs. There is mostly sometime between the ordering and executing a project.
C	2005	Mechanical workshop that manufactures tools for excavators, wheel loaders and forklifts, and also tools for trucks	Receiving orders, customer contact and invoice handling have the priority for the company's owner. The priority also goes to the size of a project. Bigger projects where there is more money to gain get often the priority	+Manufacturing of the tools +Selling of the manufactured tools +Communication with customers +Handling purchases +Administration work +Accounting work +Producing +Monitoring the market especially material costs that change quite fast, and making new price lists	Two people in the lead are involved in decision making most of the time. Other employees have their say as well in making decisions but the final say in on the two in the lead. The other employees involve in small day to day decisions.	The company has not been affected in a negative way by the pandemic. The company had its best year in terms of sales and turnover. On the other hand, prices of materials have increased a lot, but the situation was definitely not worse than before the pandemic happened. The company has had a lot of sales since most of its customers did not suffer from the crises as well and just continued their operations. Although the crises did not affect the company negatively in terms of sales and turnover, it caused some uncertainty and constant fear that things can change and get worse instantly. The company got a lot of employees since the start of the crises, especially at the start when 8 of 15 employees got sick in the first month of the pandemic.	The company has experienced longer delivery times due to decrease in production capacity from the suppliers during the pandemic. The delivery went from 3-4 days to 2-3 weeks depending on the order. Some products from China may even take 2-4 month,
D	2003	Selling machines to the construction industry, it can be an independent lessor or municipality (like a wheel loader or excavator	There was not really a concrete answer. Seems like it depends on the size of the project.	+Selling construction machines +Communication with customers (phone calls, e-mails, distributing graphs to customers that want to but machinery or have questions or buy spare parts) +Receiving visits +Some administrative and accounting work +Showing machines out in the yard	All 3 partners of the company are involved in decision making. For big decisions every partner is involved but for smaller everyday decisions, decisions can be made individually. This is easy for smaller decisions since the partners trust in each other's judgement and abilities	Corona has had a good impact on the sales of machinery to the company's surprise. There has been a little decrease in sales at the start of the pandemic (March, April) but then the sales sky rocked after that. However, there have been some problems with supplying the machines since there is a shortage of machinery. s.	The pressure has been too high on Europe to keep supplying machines. The company needed much more machines than normal because of the high sales, but the suppliers were unable to supply large numbers of

		for example)		<p>+Logistic responsibilities (checking availability of machinery, parts and Accessories and taking care of bringing machinery from abroad to Sweden and managing the transport of the machines)</p> <p>There is a lot of multitasking in the company on a daily basis.</p>			<p>machinery due to limitations of production in some European countries</p>
E	Since July 2020 (10 months so far in the time of the thesis)	Managing Paddle tennis facilities (racquet sport)	It depends a lot. For now, the priority is the new facility in Jönköping. Other than that, the priority goes to administration work and looking after our staff at the already established facility.	<p>Renting out the paddle courses in the facility to costumers, and also running a shop in the facility (selling paddle equipment). These days the board members keep themselves busy with establishing a new Paddle facility in Jönköping and everything that comes with it regarding administrative work.</p>		<p>The pandemic affected the company positively. This happened when most municipal facilities have closed because of the crises (associations, swimming pools, libraries..) while the paddle facility of the company just opened. Many people that did not have the idea to play paddle before the crises started to play it. Most of the paddle facilities are also privately owned, which means that it has more control and power over the restrictions than municipal facilities. All paddle facilities stayed open during the pandemic. The fact that paddle is quite trending right now helped the company attract customers as well.</p>	<p>The pandemic caused some problems getting products to establish the facility's courses (courses from Spain) delivered on time. The prices have also increased for some goods (price of steel). There have been problems of delivery time with goods that are sold in the store of the facility as well and the price of the goods have increased by the suppliers. The higher prices are due to the higher transportation costs to get the products from the suppliers as a consequence of the pandemic.</p>

F	October 2020 (6 months so far in the time of the thesis)	Making 3D drawings and providing detailed documents for customers that have renovation plans for their homes, garages, villas etc. -> These drawings and documents are sent to the municipality to get permission to carry out the renovation plans	It is based on the workload and the type of customers. Each customer gets leading times depending on the size of their project. Customers with small projects expect to receive their documents sooner, so they have the priority. When the company has multiple projects, the employees keep themselves busy with just that along with continuous Communication with the customers to make sure that everything goes smooth and well. When there are less projects, the company engages more in marketing (social media and google advertisement) activities and strategizing for the future while keeping an eye on the market dynamics	Communicating with customers and working on the drawings and necessary documents on a daily basis. Accounting, marketing and strategizing from time to time when the workload gets lower. The CEO is responsible for accounting and engages more with marketing and strategy activities. While the founder engages more with the daily activities of communicating with customers and providing them with the drawings and documents.	Both the CEO and founder are involved in decision making which is a continuous process	The company cannot compare before and after since it was founded during Corona. But the company has been benefiting from the crisis since a lot of people work from home and have the time to renovate their houses. Money that was invested on vacations is now more invested in renovation of houses → on the other hand it complicated opportunities to grow since it is harder to get in touch with more customers face to face and establish strong bonds with customers. The restrictions made it harder to find more customers and to build trust. So, building relationships and even communicating with current customers is more challenging and goes much slower.	Does not apply
G	1962	Surface treatment of metal structures. Processing services of metal treatment	First the priority goes to making sure that the process is running smoothly and without any problems and then comes communicating with customers and suppliers and going through and implementing projects and being on production. After these responsibilities are taken care of, some time is spent on environmental permits and staying up to date with rules and regulations and monitoring restrictions (this is the case since the company engages in environmentally hazardous activity). This means that there is a lot of multitasking activity during a workday	+Communication with customers, the factory and suppliers. +grinding and process treatment of metal +Keep an eye on the market and monitor what customers are doing +strategize for the future Most of the time the owner stays on the background to monitor all the activities and projects that take place. When it is	2 people are in the lead and are engaged in decision making, but the owner is more dominating when it comes to big decisions since he has more experience and a deeper expertise regarding most of the daily activities. This means that the other partner does have a say in every decision but the final decision is up to the owner. Small operational	At the start of the pandemic the company suffered a lot due to costumers closing their doors. But slowly the company was able to run its operations again when customers in different industries and in different times started to operate again. The company have then benefited from the crisis and had turnovers and sales that exceeded the years before. It exceeded even the year 2018 the it considered to be an excellent year for the company. Next, the company managed to grow with new customers and jobs.	There have been some problems with delivery form China, but the company managed to get supplies from other suppliers. There have been some problems with delivery of some raw materials and chemicals from Germany as well. When the sales of cars went down due

				<p>necessary, he can jump in and help with the daily operations. (The owner is also the CEO, finance manager, Human resource manager, salesperson, repairer and technician which means he can help with all activities when necessary)</p>	<p>decisions are also made by other employees in operations. They can make such small decisions themselves and do not have to involve the owner in every small detail.</p>		<p>to the crises, most suppliers of raw materials and chemicals stopped supplying goods to the company as well. This is changing and going back to normal but slowly.</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

Summarized management data collected from interviews

Cod e	Certain roles in team depending on expertise and knowledge of members	Do you plan strategies together?	Do you learn lessons from each other?	Do you trust each other's judgment in the different departments?
A	Founder is a typical farmer that has a lot of knowledge in agriculture, forestry and things like that. The partner focusses on tasks more like planning, information and technology, each one of them plan their own areas.	Yes, the partner and founder mostly when it comes to big decisions.	Absolutely, the partner learned everything regarding farming and agriculture from the founder. The founder learned a lot when it comes to planning and technology from the partner.	Yes, although there is sometime room to disagree with each other.
B	The right man is kept at the right place all the time.	Even though the two brothers in the lead share everything in the company 50/50 (time, money, effort), The founder is still more dominant and acts as a leader while his brother acts more like an employee. The founder is more confident and social and has the tendency to make decisions. Big decisions like big investments still requires the green light from both brothers. So before important decisions are made, the brothers discuss it and agree on it.	Absolutely, with time the two brothers got to know each other's strengths and weaknesses. The founder takes care of all the responsibilities where social skills are required, while his brother focusses more on carrying out the work.	Yes, the brothers trust each other's judgement completely
C	No employee inside the company has just one role. As a small company everybody is multitasking and involved in multiple roles. At the same, for some responsibilities specific people are assigned. The two people in the lead have 19 years of experience in the field and are therefore responsible for decision making and strategy creation for the company among a number of other responsibilities that are carried out on a daily basis.	Yes, strategies are planned together by the two in the lead. Most decision paths are quite short since they communicate every day. Larger decisions (economic decisions or investments) take mostly longer times and some back and forth thinking before it actually takes place.	Yes, this is often the case in the company since the people work with each other closely all the time. Each one learns from someone else's experiences. In the small company people are involved in multiple roles and take over each other's work when necessary. People at the company learn from each other every day.	Yes, the two people in the lead have worked with each other for 19 years and trust each other's judgement. They complement each other in different ways
D	People in management have roles depending on experience and background. The CEO has a financial background and deals a lot with numbers, after hiring more finance people he got more involved in sales. Each manager works with what they are good at, and they keep each other informed of what is happening. Since each one knows his strengths, they just focus on making use of that.	Yes, important strategies are planned together among the three partners	Question was not really asked but it seems so from the context	Question was not really asked but it seems so from the context
E	+Founder is taking care of all the work to establish the new facility in Jönköping, he also monitors the activities that take place in the company and makes sure that	All board members (4) are involved in decision making. All the important decisions are discussed among the four members and actions are taken when all of them agree. Small decisions are not always necessarily	Yes, the tasks have been divided according to each one's expertise, experience and knowledge. So, the board members learn from each other all the time.	Yes, as long as the board members are on the same track and believe in the same ideas, it is going to be fine. There have

	<p>everything goes smoothly (Helps board member to keep an overview of what is happening and of where the company is going)</p> <p>+Board member takes care of handling the contacts with different construction companies, and since he came from that industry, he has more control over prices.</p> <p>+Founder1 takes care of the daily activities at Vaggeryd and also takes care of marketing since the company is just newly established. He also looks after the staff that work there. Overall, it is the two (Founder1 and CEO) that take care of the daily operations that need to take place for the company to operate.</p> <p>+Founder2: Plays the role of connecting the company with a restaurant with the possibility to fuse the two companies so that the Paddle facility can provide their customers a lunch restaurant.</p>	<p>discussed among the members especially if these decisions are based on someone's particular knowledge or expertise. There is a trust between members and so far, everyone has been on the same page. If differences occur in the future, voting will be used to determine the final decision.</p>	<p>+Board member: has knowledge in buildings and related calculations and also experience in running companies</p> <p>+CEO handles negotiations with property owners and parties and works with sales and buying packages and also attracting customers.</p> <p>+Founder1: handles marketing of the company</p> <p>Founder2: supports physical parts when it comes to building</p>	<p>been no trust issues so far running the first paddle facility, and the company believes in the possibility to expand and keep doing what was done before.</p>
F	<p>The CEO is responsible for accounting and engages more with marketing and strategy activities. While the founder engages more with the daily activities of communicating with customers and providing them with the drawings and documents. It was divided this way because of their educational background. The founder is a building engineer, and the CEO has an accounting background</p>	<p>The CEO is more engaged with strategizing and planning for the future. But before any important decisions are made, he has discussions with the founder and once they both agree the company proceeds with applying the strategies</p>	<p>Yes definitely, especially during brainstorming sessions and due to their different skillset and educational background.</p>	<p>They both trust each other's judgement when it comes to their own area of expertise. However, when big decisions are made, discussions and brainstorm sessions are critical in order to proceed. With small decisions regarding daily activities, they trust each other's judgment fully.</p>
G	<p>Employees have different tasks according to experience, knowledge and skill. The owner" partner is more engaged in short-term activities and planning while the owner tends to engage more with strategic activities and planning for the future (5-10 years)</p>	<p>2 people are in the lead and are engaged in decision making, but the owner is more dominating when it comes to big decisions since he has more experience and a deeper expertise regarding most of the daily activities. This means that the other partner does have a say in every decision but the final decision is up to the owner. Small operational decisions are also made by other employees in operations. They can make such small decisions themselves and do not have to involve the owner in every small detail.</p>	<p>Seems like it from the context.</p>	<p>Seems like it from the context. But the owner is more dominant when it comes to bigger and more important decisions. He has the final say in things</p>

Summarized Strategic management data collected from interviews

Cod e	Before Corona, did you have a strategy for how to handle a crisis?	What strategies were necessary to apply after Corona happened (In addition to your initial crisis strategies if you had any)? -Retrenchment -Persevering -Innovating -Exit	<i>Did the strategy change during this long time of period that have lasted over one year?</i> <i>What did change? And why did it change?</i>	Did you use a combination of the strategies mentioned above? How did this develop? Did this combination change and why?	<i>Have your applied strategies worked in order to survive the pandemic?</i> <i>Did your actions work in order to survive the crisis?</i> <i>If yes, why do you think it worked?</i> <i>If not, why do you think it did not work?</i>	Has the interview given you any new insight and if so, what?
A	There was no crisis management plan before the crisis.	+Persevering: despite the tough period that the farm had to go through because of the pandemic, the farm continued to operate its activities. It was very challenging because of the lack of people at the start, but with time things started to roll again. +Innovating: the farm made use of digital tools for meetings with new students and volunteers etc.	No, the strategies did not really change. The farm kept persevering through the challenges of the crisis and used digital tools to make communication with students/volunteers easier due to the restrictions	+Persevering +Innovating	There were a lot of challenges along the way by continuing the farms operations during the crisis. But the strategies have helped the farm to survive the crisis so far.	The farm has learned a lot from crisis and believes that the learned lessons have made the farm stronger.
B	No, there was no crisis management plan in place before the crisis happened.	+Persevering: The company just continued its operations without any problems. The brothers start very early and go to the site of the projects. This minimized contact with too many people, which kept everyone healthy and able to execute their work. The work continued like it did before the crisis without any significant changes. The company actually benefited from the pandemic when it got tax relief and some other benefits that the company did not really need but used it as a contingency fund in case anything happens in the future.	No, the strategies did not really change from one strategy to another during the crisis.	+Persevering +Innovating	Yes, the company was able to continue its operations without any serious problems. But the company believes that innovating by using digital tools was crucial to get jobs and keep in contact with customers. This	The company believes that the crisis will make the company stronger.

		+Innovating: The company started to use digital tools in order to communicate with its customers to minimize personal contact. This has increased time efficiency for the company since a lot of aspects can be discussed online. The company has also started their own website for their customers to initiate contact.			means that persevering was not possible without innovating. The company is planning to keep using the digital tools even after the crisis is over.	
C	There was no concrete crisis management plan before the crisis but the company has learned a lot from the 2008 crises. The company suffered a lot during that crisis and had to sacrifice employees and cut off salaries. It was a very painful experience and a hard period to go through. One of the owners considers this crisis to be nothing in comparison with the one in 2008. At that time, the company relied on quick action when something happened instead of having crisis strategies in advance.	+Persevering: the company continued its operations and barely faced any serious problems that stood in the way of functioning. The company has also some internal procedures where employees are responsible for multiple roles. This makes it easier for employees to replace each in case something happens. This has enabled the company to persevere and continue its operations when a number of employees called in sick just after the crisis started. There is always backup when an employee cannot execute a job. The company describes itself as quite flexible and can adapt itself to market needs to that it can continue operating its activities.	No, the company just continued with its operations throughout the whole period of the crisis. The company only went with persevering so far and did not need any additional strategies in order to function.	+Persevering only	Persevering has absolutely worked since the company has had an increase in sales and turnover just by continuing its operations like before the crisis with no special changes or adjustments.	Does not apply
D	Before the crises, the company had as a strategic measure to cut unnecessary expenditure and investment (purchasing more machines), so the company's strategy before the pandemic happened was to decrease spending. --> Retrenchment	+Retrenchment: The company applied short-term layoffs in the first two months (March-April) of the pandemic because of the tough period at the beginning. After a few months' things got better financially but the short term lay-offs were still put in place just as a precaution. When things got normal again and sales started to increase more and more the company shut down the short-term layoffs earlier than planned (August). - --> In case the company is going to face trouble in the future, it is going to rely heavily on retrenchment. Like lay-off of employees and even cutting down salaries of the company partners. But exiting is not seen as an option by the company. +Persevering: The company continued operating despite the tough first two months of the pandemic. Things got better financially short after that which helped the company to continue its activities and operations as usual.	+It went from retrenchment + persevering ---> just persevering. Retrenchment was not necessary anymore (after a few months of being cautious) since the company has been selling more than normal and having good sales. +When analyzing the interviews, try to identify strategies that do not fit the four strategies listed in literature.	+Retrenchment +Persevering +Innovating (to a certain extent)	Yes, the strategies have worked for 100 percent. It was explained why before.	Does not apply

		<p>+Innovating (to a certain extent): The company did not come with some major changes in terms of innovation to face the crises. Some very minor aspects changed, like customers using more email and phone contact with the company in the first two months. This changed quite quick when things got better with the company and customers started to come on site again as usual. The company have relied more on digital meetings with customers and colleagues that were geographically scattered, which helped the company to save some money.</p>				
E	Does not apply since the company was found during corona	<p>+Persevering: the company continued with its usual activities and operation during the crises. This was possible since customers can play paddle without crossing any lines regarding restrictions. The courses can be rented for 4 customers (which is an acceptable number) and there is enough space between the players. The restriction did not limit the daily activities of the facilities.</p> <p>+Innovating (maybe): The paddle courses had to be Corona adapted. So, the company made some adaptations and adjustments in the paddle facility to make it as safe as possible for costumers. The company have implemented some ground rules and have provided the customers with protection tools to keep everyone safe (hand sanitizers).</p>	The strategies applied in order to survive corona did not really change from one to another. Persevering was applied since the start of the company during the pandemic and stayed, and innovating was implemented gradually according to the strictness of the pandemic restrictions.	+Persevering +Innovating	Yes, the strategy to continue operating during the pandemic worked well since the paddle industry did not suffer during the crises and facilities continued to operate and get customers. Innovating worked also pretty well since it was necessary to make some adjustments to the facilities and daily activities (according to restrictions) in order to be able to continue operating.	<p>yes, that's most of it. It gave me more insight into what we do and how we actually work.</p> <p>You hear how it works and it makes you think about what it will be like if there is more work with the form we have today, it does not respond with what is the driving visa and I have got difficult, but as you have today the arrangement, we have today has worked great so it has probably made me realize that yes But it's still working, and then we'll see if I can handle it, too. Because I have a lot of responsibility. And what could I possibly add to the company? What could Board member do beyond that the building parts? And what could Founder1 do besides the marketing and administrative in Vaggeryd. It's that realization to know if my team can handle other things than what we do today.</p> <p>Yes, I think in the long run it must be someone who also makes sure to guide them and that is very much new for</p>

						many of us. Is it really when it came out as I said about construction companies and various construction projects, but I started to learn a little more now that we are sitting with Board member, for example, who has experience and who can explain. And in the same way, I help him and support him in the parts he may not be so sure that we can run it better. I think in the long run, I think we will probably make it more equal dividends on tasks than it is today.
F	Does not apply since the company was found during corona	<p>+Innovating: going digital when communicating with customers using digital tools but also with marketing. The company relied more on digital marketing through social media and google advertisements to compensate for the social distancing restrictions. Going digital was critical for the company's survival during the crisis</p> <p>+Retrenchment: because of the uncertainty of the market during the crises, the company did not want to invest money in an office and hiring employees. All of the activities of the company are done from home by the CEO and the founder. So, the company have considered to go easy on spending money before finding itself in a hard position. All unnecessary investments for the company to do its work were postponed until the crises is over. For the first few months the CEO and founder did not get any salaries as well</p> <p>+Exit: The company did consider to stop its operations after 2-3 months since it was founded. The crises complicated the process of finding customers at the beginning. But after that, things got better. The company is not entirely sure if it was just because of the crises. Startups outside crises situations face these problems as well.</p>	No, the mentioned strategies were applied since the start of the company (during the crises) and did not change. The strategies worked well and it was not necessary to change or adjust them.	+Innovating +Retrenchment	Yes, going digital helped carrying out the communication activities with the customers and also with marketing. Going digital has saved the company for sure and was critical for continuing the operations. Also saving unnecessary expenses for the company's daily activities saved the company from getting into tough situations, like postponing renting an office and hire new employees. The CEO and founder did not get salaries as well for a couple of months to reduce costs and save expenses.	No, the CEO had nothing more to add
G	The company is heavily insured in case of some	Retrenchment: the company was worries about its liquidity. Mortgages were stopped and the	The strategies did not fundamentally change	+Retrenchment +persevering	Yes, protecting liquidity meant a lot	The owner had a lot more interesting perspectives to

	<p>unexpected catastrophe, and there was a strategy to protect the company's liquidity by saving costs and reducing expenses.</p>	<p>collaboration with some customers was re-evaluated regarding the risks in continuing working with them. More money was secured in short-term credits and funds were sold. The company stopped making expenses and just settled down. The owners did not take any salaries as well to cut costs. The company did not take any lay-off procedures.</p> <p>Persevering: The company could not operate in the first 1-2 months of the crises due to customers closing their doors. At that time the company have used this time for cleaning and fixing the process and production facilities. After that some costumers started to operate slowly, and the company tried to take a number of jobs that kept the operations running. 6 months after the crises started, the company started to get more jobs. Until now the company still relies heavily on a number of major jobs in order to be able to continue operating. It is slowly getting back to normal, but the financial damaged due to the crises have not been totally recovered yet. The fact that most competitors closed helped the company to get some new customers.</p>	<p>throughout the pandemic. The cost cutting strategies within retrenchment changed according to the extent of its necessity. The company has some experience when it comes to crisis management and has learned a lot from previous financial shocks.</p> <p>Retrenchment was relied on heavily at the start, but at a later stage. The company has reduced the extent of retrenchment and invested some money into the production process.</p>		<p>for the company especially during the first 2 months when there were no customers. Persevering the operations with the major jobs from customers that slowly started to operate again helped the company to stay on its feet and continue its activities.</p>	<p>add, but most of them are not that related to coping strategies in the face of the crisis but more related to doing business in general and how to keep functioning as an SME in the metal industry</p>
--	---	---	--	--	--	--