Internationalisation in the Digital Age

A Case Study of a Born Digital and Their Road to Internationalisation
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Robert & Lisa

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Abstract

Background: Internationalisation for businesses has been researched for decades and has been well understood. However, new types of organisations have emerged in the digital age, disrupting the organisational landscape. One of these disruptive organisations is born digitals (BD), which have become more prominent in recent years. Some of the biggest companies today are BDs, including Google and Spotify. However, how they internationalise and their processes look is not well understood. Because of this, it is of interest to understand how these organisations internationalise as they have been such a disruptive force in the international market.

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to investigate the internationalisation process of a BD firm, to recognise what internal and external factors influence their decision-making and whether specific strategies are being used. It aims to utilise prior internationalisation theories to provide a further understanding of these organisations and the way they work. The goal of the study is also to provide a framework that BDs can use to internationalise successfully.

Method: This study implemented a qualitative research design with an inductive approach and a single case study for the research design. The case company works with search engine optimisation (SEO) within the online service providers (OSP) industry. It included interviews with six employees from the company, with a total of nine interviews. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to create flexibility in the interview design.

Conclusion: The key points of the study results were the following: (i) several internal and external factors and how they influenced BDs’ internationalisation were identified, and which factors had a more significant impact on their processes. (ii) It was identified that they do not plan for specific internationalisation strategies, however, it was seen that they do develop strategies, although done unconsciously. (iii) This resulted in the development of a new framework that aims to provide insights into the process BDs undergo when internationalising.
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List of Abbreviations
AI ....................................... Artificial Intelligence
BD ..................................... Born Digital
INT ................................... Interviewee
ICT ................................... Internet Communications Technology
OSP .................................. Online Service provider
SEO .................................. Search Engine Optimisation
UNCTAD ......................... United Nations Conference on Trade And Development


1. Introduction

The following chapter introduces the research by introducing the concepts of internationalisation, digitalisation, and born-digital organisations, as well as the background of these. It will also include the research problem, purpose and question this thesis investigates.

1.1 Background

Internationalisation for businesses has traditionally been well understood and researched by several influential researchers and authors for decades. Internationalisation allows organisations to extend their market opportunities and increase their customer base and profits (Ball et al., 2008; Lin & Ho, 2019) while simultaneously reducing the trade and transaction costs of doing business, increasing competitive advantage and overall performance. To manage their internationalisation process effectively, organisations must first find a suitable entry mode (Ball et al., 2008). This choice of entry is one of the most critical strategic decisions that can make for international success (León-Darder et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is a core strategic decision, and the success or failure of this decision will impact the level of resource commitment in a foreign market. It will also affect the risk faced in the host country and the level of control the organisation will gain over foreign activities (Lin & Ho, 2019).

One of the most prominent models of internationalisation processes is the Uppsala Model by Johanson and Vahlne (1977). Their model focuses on the continuous and gradual process of international expansion, where the expansion often starts slowly, at first with neighbouring countries, through collaboration and increased knowledge (Vahlne, 2020). A framework that discusses the internationalisation processes is the CAGE framework developed by Ghemawat (2001), consisting of four dimensions that describe the distance between two countries. The dimensions are cultural, administrative, geographical, and economic (Ghemawat, 2007). Another framework by Ghemawat (2007) is the AAA framework, which describes three different entry modes organisations can use when expanding internationally. These are aggregation, arbitrage and adaptation (Ghemawat,
2007). Nonetheless, several factors have disrupted traditional business practices, including digital technologies and their impact on global markets, and not all models have accounted for disrupting factors. Therefore, complicating their use across different firms or business types (Coviello et al., 2017).

For decades, businesses have been expanding with a continuous positive economic performance worldwide, and one factor that has been a focal point for this is digitalisation (Fernández-Portillo et al., 2022). Digitalisation processes have had a more significant impact in recent years, changing the current organisational landscape while also shaping the way of work and, therefore, in some cases making models or accepted understanding obsolete (Sewpersadh, 2023). The way change is done is by modifying the present value chains to incorporate digitalisation (Wentrup, 2016). One factor that has disrupted the global market and its perception is firms that are born digitals (BD). A BD firm relies on the Internet for production, operations, and delivery processes, including internet platform businesses, digital solution firms, e-commerce and retail firms, and digital content producers. Some examples of successful firms include Meta, Google, Uber, HelloFresh, Airbnb and Spotify (Birkinshaw, 2022; Vadana et al., 2019).

According to Monaham et al. (2020), digital firms share two main characteristics. The first one is that they build and leverage digital infrastructure. However, there can be variations in the degree of digitalisation where some firms are more digitalised than others (Eden, 2018). It could be because various firms have digitalised to different degrees, or some are still in the process of digitalisation. The second characteristic is that digital firms rely on digital infrastructures for communication, collaboration, and computing capabilities (Vadana et al., 2019). This capability allows the firm to create and sell its offers online through a digital business model (Monaham et al., 2020).

BD organisations share the two characteristics of digital firms, but what differentiates them from digital firms is that they have been digitalised since their inception, which means that these organisations have never had to go through the process of becoming digital. They are created to be fully digitalised organisations (Monaham et al., 2020), making it easier for BD firms to internationalise compared to traditional organisations, according to Birkinshaw (2022) and Vadana et al. (2019). They are also highly effective in the digital industry and market and more adaptive to change in the digital sector as they
build their value chain around digital infrastructures (Vadana et al., 2019). Furthermore, Birkinshaw (2022) explains that born-digital organisations can use their digital platform to expand globally and instantaneously reach clients worldwide. This is done by ignoring national borders and traditional internationalisation principles (Birkinshaw, 2022). Nevertheless, Monaham et al. (2020) noted that organisations that did not become fully digitalised at the company's inception, despite being heavily digitalised, should not be considered BD firms. However, there has also been a gap in research regarding specifically these firms and how they can internationalise effectively. For example, Vadana et al. (2019) suggested that empirical research must be done on the internationalisation process and strategies of BD organisations, adding that digital technologies will be the next era in local and international entrepreneurship and that focus should be placed on the topic.

1.2 Problem

Until now, some research on BD organisations has been carried out, including a development in the understanding of their use of digital technologies and internationalisation speed (Birkinshaw, 2022; Wentrup, 2016). Nonetheless, both these studies and empirical analyses are limited in number and concentrated on a few authors, including Vadana et al. (2020), Monaham et al. (2020), Birkinshaw (2022) and Eden (2018), focusing on the final result of their internationalisation processes and not from beginning to end.

BD organisations have made significant changes and advancements in various fields. However, as mentioned before, there is a lack of detailed research on how they act during their internationalisation process using relevant internationalisation theories. Monaham et al. (2020) argue that BDs do not need to use networking as much as traditional firms, which goes against the Uppsala model (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). This is due to current internationalisation strategies being designed for manufacturing firms, and BD firms may face unique challenges that have not been thoroughly studied. For instance, bringing up these questions: Are these challenges different from those faced by traditional firms? What external and internal pressures affect BDs during their internationalisation process, and do their strategies defer from traditional internationalisation models and to which
extent? Researchers such as Monaham et al. (2020) have asked similar questions, showing that further research is necessary to fill in this research gap and answer these questions and improve understanding of the internationalisation process for BD firms.

This is an issue as we live in a time where traditional ways and processes will be questioned and changed, and we will do things in new ways. These organisations will represent a new era of internationalisation. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how these organisations do internationalise and their strategies as the research on this area as of now is lacking (Vadana et al., 2019).

1.3 Purpose

This study aims to investigate the internationalisation processes in-depth at a BD firm, to recognise what internal and external factors influence their decision-making and whether specific strategies are being used. Based on the findings, a comparison with existing internationalisation theory has been made to provide a further understanding of these disruptive organisations. This work aims to provide a more thorough understanding of how a BD functions during its entire internationalisation process and, conjointly, provide a comprehensive perception of internal and external factors that affect born digitals during their process. With these aspects in mind, this work hopes not only to fill current gaps in the literature but also to create additional clarity within a newly established sector.

Based on the identified research gaps, the following research questions have been developed for this paper:

- How do internal and external factors influence born digitals in their internationalisation processes?
- What strategies do born digital firms rely on in their internationalisation processes?
2. Theoretical Background

The Theoretical Background gives insights into the existing literature on internationalisation and some of the most significant models for internationalisation, the Uppsala Model, CAGE Framework and the AAA Model. It also explains the background of Born Digitals, their definition and current literature on their internationalisation.

2.1 Internationalisation

There are different interpretations of what internationalisation means. Vahlne and Johanson (2013) argue that internationalisation is a result of "developing opportunities that emerge in the ongoing interaction in one or more relationships" (p. 195). When these relationships occur across borders, it is called internationalisation. Whereas according to Andersen (1993), internationalisation refers to the process of developing and implementing strategies to expand a company, organisation, or institution's operations beyond its domestic borders and into international markets. To explain these processes that occur during internationalisation, multiple models that aim to explain processes and strategic decisions have been developed and are listed below.

2.1.1 Uppsala Model

Prior to the Uppsala models creation, the current understanding of the internationalisation process for firms was that firms analysed their resources, costs and risks and compared them to the market characteristics before entering a market (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Vahlne, 2020). Johanson and Vahlne (1977) then published an article presenting a new model for the internationalisation process. The model was later given the name the Uppsala model, and today some argue that the Uppsala model is the most important and, to some extent, the only model that thoroughly explains the internationalisation processes (Cannone & Ughetto, 2014; Welch & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2014). The Uppsala model was based on empirical observations from studies on international businesses seeking economic growth (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Vahlne, 2020). In the 70s, several studies showed that firms often developed international operations slowly, taking small steps rather than simultaneously making significant investments in foreign production.
The study found that the steps to internationalise for firms were small and that companies usually started exporting to a country through an agent or intermediary. After, companies started to establish subsidiaries, and lastly, some built their own production lines in that country. In some cases, firms begin their production in the host country instead of through an agent (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). However, entry modes would still exist through partnerships with intermediaries, often someone from a company in the foreign market and only after establishing in that market would the firm replace the intermediary actors with someone from headquarters, starting manufacturing right after in that market (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). The study thereby found networking to be a crucial factor during the first steps of internationalisation.

The model has gone through several iterations (see Figure 1). However, the state and change aspects have stayed the same since the first model (Coviello et al., 2017; Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). The state aspect focuses on variables that affect the firms' perception of the market risks and opportunities (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009). The change variables instead focused on the ability of a firm to change its position in the foreign market and its operations (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). These variables affect each other, and based on the findings, a model was created which showed the basic mechanics of internationalisation that was identified, specifically the company's state and what factors drive change in the company (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). The model was created to highlight that developing knowledge was vital for a firm's internationalisation process (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009), focusing on the process or the processes that produce knowledge development and resource commitment for a firm.

![Uppsala Model 1977](image1.png)  
![Uppsala Model 2009](image2.png)  
![Uppsala Model 2013](image3.png)

*Figure 1: The Evolution of the Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009; Vahlne & Johanson, 2013)*
2.1.1.1 Iteration of the Uppsala Model

As businesses, the environment and the market evolved, Johanson and Vahlne updated the model several times. For instance, some changes throughout the different iterations included networking, relationships and internal capabilities between firms and their impact on internationalisation (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Vahlne, 2020; Vahlne & Johanson, 2013, 2017). This was done after several studies highlighted these attributes' importance (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). For example, Welch and Welch (1996) found that network development and learning are important factors for a company's internationalisation strategy. As for the studies of the relationship factor, Martin et al. (1998) found that the suppliers with inter-relationships with buyers will be more affected (increase or decrease) by their international expansion compared to suppliers with lower inter-relationships.

The 2009 model was created to show the business network impacts the internationalisation process, which was done by adding opportunities to the knowledge attribute and changing the market commitment attribute to the network position variable (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Adding opportunities was done to highlight how opportunities can provide an incentive to internationalise if there is sufficient knowledge. The reason for changing market commitment to network position was to describe how internationalisation is created within a network framework. Depending on the position within the network, it might be different if the company promotes further internationalisation (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

Vahlne and Johanson (2013) proposed another updated model to include the evolution of MBE (Multinational Business Enterprise) by incorporating dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurship theories. This model was proposed to show the change variables; commitment decisions (e.g., an organisation committing to a strategy) and the inter-organisational processes (e.g., learning and developing experience). Another change was the replacement of knowledge opportunities with dynamic capabilities, as opportunities become a subcategory of said variable. Dynamic capabilities propose that firms develop their operational capabilities through learning, experiments, and innovation over time. Otherwise, this model did not change much as it provided several examples of what should be included in the variable (e.g., in network position, includes both inter- and intra-organisational network position) (Vahlne & Johanson, 2013).
2.1.1.2 Current Uppsala Model

Vahlne and Johanson (2017) further evolved the Uppsala model to connect the digital aspect to their model (Coviello et al., 2017). This is the model that this paper will take into consideration when analysing BD's internationalisation processes (See Figure 2).

![Uppsala Model 2017](Image)

*Figure 2: The Current Iteration of the Uppsala Model (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017)*

The authors modified Change variables to include the Commitment Processes and Knowledge development processes, and State variables include capabilities and commitments/performance. The commitment processes focus on reconfiguration and coordination, which occur during uncertainty and risks, and change a firm's performance levels after using capabilities and relationships. If done correctly, it provides better performance and new knowledge and develops new knowledge (Figueira-de-Lemos et al., 2011; Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). The authors extended the description of the knowledge development process to focus on integrating social construction and sense-making within a firm which includes creating, trust-building and learning between members of the organisation, both internally and externally (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Vahlne & Johanson, 2017).

The authors provided state variables with two categories: capabilities and commitment/performance variables. The capability variable now includes dynamic capabilities and operational capabilities to provide a further understanding of the evolution process of a firm. This was also done to take into consideration digital within the firm (Vahlne, 2020). The model still included dynamic capabilities as the framework
discussed learning experiences similar to the knowledge development and commitment process corresponding to the capability's variable (Vahlne, 2020).

Operational capabilities focus on controlling Foreign Spending Accounting (FSA) within a business and its ability to persevere against liabilities of outsiders and foreignness (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). Instead, dynamic capabilities focus on the firm's effectiveness in integrating, building, and changing the internal and external competencies to exploit and develop resources based on the environment. Dynamic capabilities cannot be bought but are built and developed within an organisation. As for commitment/performance, the authors described it as the use of resources at an organisation and how effective the firm is using these resources (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017).

There has been some criticism of the Uppsala model for several reasons, one being that it does not entirely explain the internationalisation processes (Coviello et al., 2017; Monaham et al., 2020). Others have discussed firms, such as born-globals, who can expand immediately and globally, ignoring the initial stages of the Uppsala Model, to use local agents and gradual development (Jones et al., 2011; Keupp & Gassmann, 2009; Kiss et al., 2012). Similarly, Coviello et al. (2017) stated that the digital aspect of internationalisation had not been adequately discussed and adapted in the Uppsala model, suggesting that additional changes to the model should be implemented to consider the digital developments occurring. Coviello et al. (2017) also argued that the model should include micro- and macro-influences that impact the state and change variables. The authors suggest that macro-level influences include digitalisation while micro-level influences include decision-makers within a firm when expanding abroad (Coviello et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, several studies have used the Uppsala model to analyse digitalisation and its impact on internationalisation. Eduardsen (2019) used the new model to analyse e-commerce businesses and proposed that digitalisation might increase the speed of internationalisation and make it easier to find opportunities abroad. However, Eduardsen (2019) added that these results could not show the extent that the Internet had on e-commerce business nor the amount of usage of digital technologies and how it impacted their internationalisation. He concluded that further research is necessary to understand
the Internet impact in-depth. Cannone and Ughetto (2014) analysed highly digital born-global firms and proposed the existence of a positive correlation between highly digital firms and scalability in foreign markets. Nonetheless, they concluded that the reasoning or understanding of these results was not complete and further research was recommended as a quantitative research approach was used only (Cannone & Ughetto, 2014). In the context of BD firms, Monaham et al. (2020) and Birkinshaw (2022) have discussed that current understandings of BDs go against the current Uppsala model when discussing networking and the initial steps of internationalisation.

### 2.1.2 CAGE Framework

Ghemawat (2001) developed the CAGE framework, which discussed four types of distances: Cultural, Administrative, Geographic and Economic (Tokas & Deb, 2020). These four factors are used when analysing cross-border integration as it helps organisations measure the distance between different countries to make internationalisation decisions when entering new markets (Ghemawat, 2007; Tokas & Deb, 2020). This is particularly important since distances can vary between different countries and within different industries. Thus, the CAGE framework provides advantages to organisations that use it within their core business and understand their needs (Ghemawat, 2003, 2007; Tokas & Deb, 2020).

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<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Administrative</th>
<th>Geographical</th>
<th>Economical</th>
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*Figure 3: The CAGE Framework four distances (Ghemawat, 2001)*

Distance brought by cultural attributes includes communication differences, including social norms, languages, social or ethnic networks and even religions (Ghemawat, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2009). These differences can create barriers when internationalising, as miscommunication or differences in beliefs can disrupt network relationships. For example, a common language is estimated to increase trade by 42% between different countries (Ricart et al., 2004).
Administrative distances are impacted by political instability, weak institutions, and hostile government policies (e.g. taxes and tariffs), making it difficult to have an effortless entry mode (Ghemawat, 2001). Often governments have high involvement in certain industries, regulated by privacy laws or censorship laws, such as electricity, pharmaceutical, and digital industries. Other attributes include unfair market policies towards foreign companies, societal conflicts, and political risks. Countries within a common regional trading block, e.g., the European Union, increase trade by 50%, while differences in corruption decrease trade by over 10% (Ricart et al., 2004).

Geographic distances focus on physical distances through sea and land transportation, as well as different climates and the size of the country (Ghemawat, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2009). These attributes are connected to whether the countries are landlocked, the geographic remoteness and the size of the country (Ricart et al., 2004). The geographic effects are substantial, as a common border is estimated to increase trade by 125%, while landlocked countries are estimated to lose up to 50% in potential trade (Ricart et al., 2004).

Economic distance analyses the differences in consumer income, cost, and quality of human-, financial, and natural resources between the home country and other countries (Ghemawat, 2001). Other variables include the economic size, infrastructure of the country and monetisation levels. These factors result in a different willingness to pay for certain products and services, demand and opportunity of suppliers in certain regions (Ricart et al., 2004).

As for the current literature, there has been a discussion about how significant the distances are and how they can be shortened. For example, there have been technological advancements that have shortened these distances, especially digital development. Ghemawat (2007) discussed that television has proven effective at reducing geographical distances while discussing the media conglomerate Star TV and its international expansion to Asia with relative ease. Nonetheless, the cultural and administrative distance was still in play leading to Star TV's eventual failure due to the lack of local content and authoritarian governments censoring and monitoring political and taboo content on TV (Tokas & Deb, 2020). Other studies have shown how administrative and economic distance positively correlated with cost-benefit analysis, while cultural and geographic
distances negatively affected cost-benefit analysis (Malhotra et al., 2009). Kuo and Fang (2009) created a study to analyse the correlation between the CAGE distances and location attractiveness. They concluded that there was no significant impact of cultural and economic on location and that there was a significant correlation between administrative and geographic distances and location choice (Kuo & Fang, 2009). Antunes et al. (2019) found that the most significant distances for business strategy for internationalisation are cultural and economical, while administrative and geographic distances were less predominant. However, even with these findings and the usage of the CAGE model, Ghemawat himself argues that the model is general and broad in the context of internationalisation (Ghemawat, 2008). Additionally, Malhotra et al. (2009) argued that a majority of studies mainly focus on one or two distances, thereby limiting the understanding of how these distances impact businesses. To combat the generalisability of the model, Ghemawat proposed the AAA Triangle, which is more specific in the context of internationalising and strategy (Ghemawat, 2008).

2.1.3 AAA Framework

As mentioned in the CAGE framework, the AAA framework, proposed by Pankaj Ghemawat in 2007, is a thorough internationalisation theory created to explain a company's strategies when expanding to a new region (Ghemawat, 2007). Ghemawat suggests that three dimensions of internationalisation must be considered: adaptation, aggregation, and arbitrage. These dimensions provide different types of advantages when operating abroad and are often associated with different types of organisational structures (Ghemawat, 2008; Mauri & Neiva de Figueiredo, 2012).

![Figure 4: The AAA Framework by Ghemawat (2007)](image-url)
Aggregation is the dimension where a company can create economies of scale and scope economies by leveraging commonalities across different regional markets and focusing on organisational standardisation (Ghemawat, 2007, 2008). Usually, they do this by establishing their operations abroad. This is done by focusing on horizontal relationships with powerful headquarters and a homogenous organisational culture (Ghemawat, 2008). When organisations expand to new foreign markets, they can leverage and deploy their unique resources and capabilities across the foreign markets (Berry & Kaul, 2022; Ghemawat, 2018). Usually, they do this by establishing their operations abroad. These activities are because of this associated with centralisation and the concentration of resource investment (Berry & Kaul, 2022).

Adaptation activities aim to tailor its products, services and operation to the specific characteristics of the host country to provide for their local needs and preferences (Ghemawat, 2008; Mauri & Neiva de Figueiredo, 2012). An example of this could be foreign knowledge and expertise or differences in consumers' wants, needs and expectations within the foreign market Internationalisation (Berry & Kaul, 2022). The goal is to exploit the organisation's home base knowledge in the foreign market and to adapt and modify the organisation's established offerings to match the requirements and preferences of the local consumers (Ghemawat, 2007, 2018). These activities can include R&D and manufacturing activities to help fit the product to the local needs. However, it also includes marketing to customise the organisation's brand or the message sent to the local customers (Berry & Kaul, 2022).

Arbitrage activities aim to exploit the differences between the home and foreign countries through price and cost differences or other disparities (Ghemawat, 2008). This is done by leveraging a network of specialised subsidiaries to get more flexibility when dealing with the changing local conditions and a greater specialisation across countries, according to Ghemawat (2003). It is done by distributing global activities to comparatively advantageous locations (Berry & Kaul, 2022). These activities aim to enhance the organisation's knowledge and capabilities, and many of these capabilities are associated with having a greater flow of knowledge and materials between different countries (Ghemawat, 2018). Transferring these specialised products and the knowledge across the organisation's operations, the organisation can better leverage resources and expertise that are created in the location best suited for those specific activities (Berry & Kaul, 2022).
These AAA strategies can be used simultaneously, and some combinations are used more often. According to Berry and Kaul (2022), aggregation alone is used by 12% of firms, while adaptation and arbitrage are used by 2% and 7%, respectively. They also found that firms that use adaptation and aggregation are used by 20% of firms, while aggregation and arbitrage are 14%. Adaptation and aggregation are used by 6%, while using all three strategies was identified in 9% of firms (Berry & Kaul, 2022). Additionally, depending on the organisation, utilising all three strategies could negatively impact their internationalisation (Ghemawat, 2008). Ghemawat (2008) argues that a firm must first understand its organisational structure and competitive advantage, and then, one should analyse its positioning strategy. Utilising all three A’s simultaneously could be difficult and erode the competitive advantage a firm has, thereby focusing on AA as it is often easier and most efficient for many firms. Nonetheless, these assessments have been done on traditional multinational companies (Berry & Kaul, 2022), making these results difficult to transfer to BDs.

2.2 Facilitator of Internationalisation

The theories describing the facilitators of internationalisation provide added context for internationalisation processes, specifically dynamic capabilities theories. It provides a further understanding of the factors that can impact a firm's decision to expand internationally and how it can manage and adapt to the challenges or opportunities in the process (Teece, 2014). The model focuses on the importance of the firm's internal resources, capabilities, and strategic choices and the role of external factors such as market conditions, industry, and environment (Eriksson, 2014). By applying the model, a more insightful analysis of how a firm can build and leverage its capabilities, identify and pursue international opportunities, and navigate cross-border operations can be made.

2.2.1 Dynamic Capabilities

A capability is defined as the capacity to use resources to perform a task or do an activity despite the circumstances working against it. Thus, capabilities come from being able to combine resources in productive ways. The dynamic capabilities framework is an
approach that explains the importance of business processes inside the organisation and links to the organisation's external partners. It recognises critical resources and good strategic decisions as a necessity. This framework builds on a resource-based approach rather than on transaction costs or contractual concerns (Teece, 2014). Dynamic capabilities are defined as the capacity of an organisation to create, extend or modify its resources and capabilities to address changes in the organisation's environment (Eriksson, 2014). Another important aspect is the focus on transferring technology among and between the different units of the organisation effectively and efficiently (Teece, 2014). Dynamic capabilities, in their essence, are about change and being able to do the right thing at the right time. This can be many different things, for example, adapting to respond to changes or having a proactive approach when the organisation aims to create change.

In turbulent environments, the argument is that competitive advantage comes from dynamic capabilities rather than competitive positioning or industry conflict (Degbey et al., 2021; Teece, 2007).

In fast-moving business environments and open to global competition, sustainable advantage requires more than ownership of difficult-to-imitate assets. It requires unique and difficult-to-imitate dynamic capabilities. These types of capabilities can be utilised to create, extend, upgrade, protect, and keep the organisation's unique base of assets relevant (Teece, 2007). They are also the strategic routines that help firms configure resources in new ways simultaneously as new markets emerge, collide, split, change and evolve or die (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Dynamic capabilities have three different types of capacities. The first is to sense and form opportunities and threats, the second is to seize the opportunities, and the third is to maintain a competitive advantage by enhancing, combining, protecting and, if necessary, reconfiguring the organisation's intangible and tangible assets (Teece, 2007). One thing that the literature shows some consensus on regarding dynamic capabilities is that they are very relevant and linked to the performance of multinational enterprises since these organisations typically exist in a context of fast-moving environments and fierce global competition (Prange & Verdier, 2011; Teece, 2007; Weerawardena et al., 2007). These markets also have rapid technological change as well as poorly developed markets to exchange and acquire know-how in which dynamic capabilities can be advantageous (Prange & Verdier, 2011; Teece, 2007).
Prange and Verdier (2011) have developed a dynamic capabilities perspective of the internationalisation process, in which they describe different dynamic capabilities needed when going international. They explain that there are many different types of dynamic capabilities for internationalisation, which they call dynamic internationalisation capabilities. Prange and Verdier (2011) created a model that describes different dynamic capabilities needed when expanding internationally that builds on the exploration and exploitation framework. This framework was created by March (1991) and explained that organisations could use two strategies: exploration and exploitation. When going international, organisations can decide between explorative or exploitative market entry strategies, and depending on which one is chosen, different dynamic capabilities are needed. Exploration refers to discovering, taking risks, experimenting, and being flexible and innovative (Lin & Si, 2019). Exploitation instead refers to controlling, working with things that are certain and reducing risks. Exploration and exploitation have two types of dynamic capabilities, each so-called second-order capabilities: value-adding and disruption and threshold and consolidation capabilities, respectively. Second-order capabilities are capabilities that come into play when updating already existing capabilities (Prange & Verdier, 2011).

2.3 Born Digital Organisations

Digital advancements have been a necessity for the emergence of BD organisations because of their impact on the internal and external environment of businesses (Plekhanov et al., 2022; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021). These advancements have helped to create value for the stakeholders of these organisations. Examples of these advancements are disruptive technologies, which include: the Internet of Things, cloud computing, blockchain technology and artificial intelligence (AI) (Eden, 2018; Mingione & Abratt, 2020; Monaham et al., 2020; Nambisan et al., 2019; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021). To define the term BD, a distinction between BDs and other digital businesses is endorsed to minimise misinterpretations due to the similarity of the definitions (Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021).

Both Going Digital and BDs possess significant digital assets and infrastructure in their business operations. These digital assets can be divided into two types: Information and
Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and digital firms that are dependent on ICT technology (Eden, 2018; Monaham et al., 2020; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021; Vadana et al., 2019). ICT includes BDs and non-BD firms, as some ICT firms produce physical products and manufacturing procedures, including hardware, communication infrastructure, physical services, and web and mobile technologies (Eden, 2018; UNCTAD, 2017; Vadana et al., 2019). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) proposed this definition of ICT in 2017 to better classify the current sectors in the digital economy (Eden, 2018; Monaham et al., 2020; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021; Vadana et al., 2019). This distinction enables a better understanding of the nature and scope of their digital capabilities.

Based on this information, two characteristics that are similar for BDs and going digital businesses are the following:

1. Digital firms and BDs can produce and enhance digital infrastructure, such as ICT (Monaham et al., 2020; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021).
2. Both firms depend on the ICT infrastructure (Eden, 2018; Monaham et al., 2020; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021).

Both BDs and going digital firms utilise ICT infrastructure to develop their businesses. The main difference and critical attribute to differentiate born-digital firms from going-digital firms and traditional businesses are that BDs created from inception are highly digitalised and dependent on the current digital infrastructure to exist (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020; Shaheer, 2020; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021). This is significant because born-digital firms can create their foundation on their digital assets and use digital technology in their main global value chain (Eden, 2018; Vadana et al., 2019). Going digital firms are instead complementing their existing offline business with digital technology. However, they are not founded on the premise of digital technology (Eden, 2018; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021).
Table 1: Similarities & Differences Between Going Digital and BD Firms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Going Digital</th>
<th>Born Digital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of ICT infrastructure?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can enhance and produce</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digital infrastructure?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent on ICT infrastructure since inception?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A BD is, therefore, unique as these firms only use pre-Internet infrastructure to a minimum and have an organisational structure that differentiates from traditional organisations (Birkinshaw, 2022; Vadana et al., 2019). These qualities have given born digital firms different opportunities, such as adding value to customers across national borders (Birkinshaw, 2022; Eden, 2018; Nambisan et al., 2019). This has also provided them with new entry modes by using adaptation and networking to expand as fewer physical aspects are needed to take into consideration (Birkinshaw, 2022; Nambisan et al., 2019).

Current studies have additionally identified that BDs can make sales more accessible and reach more global consumers than other types of organisations (Monaham et al., 2020). They are more competitive, have lower prices and generate more profits due to having less physical presence (Vadana et al., 2019). They focus on their user base instead of increasing sales margins (Birkinshaw, 2022; Jin & Shin, 2020). Additionally, BDs provide flexibility, scalability and automation in their respective industries' digital and intangible assets (Srinivasan & Eden, 2021). Due to these advancements in digital technologies, BD firms have gone from the ICT sector to other industrial sectors, such as Hellofresh and Uber (Food-delivery and cab industries), as traditional products and services have become more digitalised (Birkinshaw, 2022; Vadana et al., 2019).

However, some of these industries are also dependent on physical presence, such as HelloFresh and Uber with personnel which is still cheaper as it is often done with local operations and exports (Birkinshaw, 2022; Vadana et al., 2019).
2.3.1 Categorisation of Born Digital

There are additionally several different types of born-digital industries and sectors to identify. Some use the UNCTAD (2017) distinction, which has divided digital firms into four categories: Internet platforms, e-commerce, digital producers and digital solutions (Eden, 2018). These firms are BDs as they depend on the digital infrastructure to function in the digital economy. Eden (2018) specifies that this sub-division is misleading as there are significant overlaps between these categories, as many larger BD firms, such as Amazon, have used mergers and acquisitions to diversify in different industry sectors.

Birkinshaw (2022) discussed that some firms are "digitally-enabled", which are born digital firms that do need on-the-ground presence even when being able to expand globally. For example, Uber and Airbnb need personnel who can provide the services while they are on a digital platform. Another classification is to separate digital businesses from those that are only partially (a similar distinction with going-digital and BDs) (Eden, 2018). However, these definitions are challenging to measure as they can create contradictions of what is a BD firm. Vadana et al. (2020) utilised this definition of a BD firm and argued that HelloFresh was not a BD firm due to the low degree of digitalisation in their value chain. However, Vadana et al. (2019) used HelloFresh as an example of a born-digital firm making the definition and categorisation of BDs more challenging to comprehend.

Other terminologies that have been identified in the following literature without using the UNCTAD (2017) or the ICT categories are online service providers (OSPs), internet firms, internet intermediaries, E-commerce, iBusiness, high-tech entrepreneurship, SME technology-based enterprises, Digital information and many more. Some categories have been studied more in-depth, for example, OSPs, while iBusinesses has not been studied to the same extent (Vadana et al., 2019, 2020; Wentrup, 2016). Other categorisation structures of digital firms have been through their value creation through C2C (eBay and Tinder with relationships and surplus goods), C2B (LinkedIn with job seeking), B2B (Alibaba – goods and services), B2C Hotel rooms, transportation, taxi services, film and music, and travel (Booking.com, Uber and Netflix) (Eden, 2018).

Based on these classifications and categorisations of BD, this study will include the UNCTAD (2017) classification in addition to companies that are fully digitalised in their
global value chain. The reason for this definition of BD businesses is due to the concept of BD firms being relatively new, resulting in the definition varying depending on the researcher. Therefore, a narrow definition allows for greater certainty that the definition is correct and objective.

2.3.2 Current Literature on BD Internationalisation Process

In the case of BD firms and their internationalisation processes, there have been several indications of abnormalities compared to traditional internationalisation processes (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020; Vadana et al., 2019; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021). One aspect that makes BD internationalisation unique is the use of digital technology for more effective and cheap networking through digital partnerships (Monaham et al., 2020). According to Vahlne and Johanson (2013), networking is traditionally slow in international markets as one will need to find an agent through networking that can provide an opportunity to try a new market. This is not the case for BDs. Instead, they can use digital and technological tools that provide direct engagements with international customers, in which traditional intermediaries in cross-border markets are excluded or replaced with other local users (For example, Uber) (Birkinshaw, 2022; Jin & Shin, 2020; Monaham et al., 2020). Due to BDs being able to go past local agents, networking might not be as crucial for BD firms and instead, most BDs focus on restructuring and adapting their value-adding activities externally and directly search for international customers (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020; Nambisan et al., 2019; Van Alstyne et al., 2016). In other words, these technologies have made it easier to efficiently coordinate global and dispersed activities and strategies and provide more effective improvements in local entry market implementations (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020).

BDs have better networking and relationship options than traditional firms because digitalisation has made them less physically and culturally restricted (Birkinshaw, 2022; Shaheer, 2020; Vadana et al., 2020; Wentrup, 2016). These technologies have made it easier to efficiently coordinate global and dispersed activities and strategies and provide more effective improvements in local entry market implementations (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020).
Another aspect of BD highlighted is that they are more aggressive in expanding internationally. It is suggested that some are so effective at rapid international expansion, even rapid global expansion, that the expansion might sometimes be by accident (Hennart, 2014; Monaham et al., 2020; Wentrup, 2016). BDs can quickly expand due to their aggressive operating processes and the opportunity to challenge and contradict traditional internationalisation processes through flexible spending accounts and low channel costs (Birkinshaw, 2022; Shaheer, 2020; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021).

The digital focus has provided a cheap alternative to expand, which makes location disadvantages less costly but also provides an opportunity to reach more difficult regions (Shaheer, 2020). This and the digital focus have provided more effective innovation sharing, resource development, and more efficient global value chains, resulting in traditional MNEs being forced to follow the digital adaptation (Eden, 2018; Monaham et al., 2020; Srinivasan & Eden, 2021). This has been called "digital globalisation" due to the aggressive nature of BD internationalisation processes (Srinivasan & Eden, 2021) and some internet firms can internationalise faster and further than traditional firms. However, there has also been some contradiction in the current literature. Wentrup (2016) suggests that some BDs, specifically OSPs, are not as aggressive as other studies propose and instead suggests that these firms are "…born at home rather than born global" (Wentrup, 2016, p. 585). This is concluded due to the limited geography in which OSPs can expand as developing countries have less technological development than developed countries. However, at the same time, Wentrup (2016) also discusses that B2C businesses for OSPs are more global than traditional businesses and have an aggressive pace of internationalisation than traditional businesses.

This contradiction was inferred to be due to competition in the OSP market as a first-mover advantage can internationalise faster if the company provides niche services and products (Hennart, 2014; Vadana et al., 2020; Wentrup, 2016). In addition, many studies have concluded the opposite internationalisation speed for BDs. Some argue that the initial international process is fast and aggressive, while others argue that it gradually expands and becomes aggressive (Vadana et al., 2019; Wentrup, 2016). One explanation for these disparities is that BD firms with international ambitions can more easily expand and be more aggressive. At the same time, BDs that prefer a more regio-centric ambition
have a more gradual and slower progression, making the business model a more influential factor (Vadana et al., 2019; Wentrup, 2016).

The last highlighted attribute of BDs is their effective use of adaptation (Birkinshaw, 2022; Monaham et al., 2020; Vadana et al., 2019). The current literature suggests that they can develop new technologies and enter different markets with fewer risks than other organisations. They can also quickly adapt their value-creation model to local markets by easily changing their digital services and products to comply with regulations and norms (Monaham et al., 2020; Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021). Because of the reliance on digital technologies, BD firms can quickly adapt to sudden customer needs and communicate directly with customers and partners through ICTs (Birkinshaw, 2022; Shaheer, 2020; Vadana et al., 2019; Van Alstyne et al., 2016). Additionally, the digital environment is turbulent with drastic changes in technological developments. It forces BD firms to be flexible and adaptive to sudden market instabilities and provides new opportunities that traditional firms would create market entry barriers (Shaheer, 2020; Vadana et al., 2019). In general, this results in BDs not having a clear vision nor a structured plan but instead experimenting with what works and what does not, due to the digital tools provided helping to quickly change and adapt different strategies and find new opportunities abroad (Hennart, 2014). This statement is highlighted by Birkinshaw (2022), who mentions that some BDs have minimal thoughts for international expansion, but instead, respond to foreign consumer demands by default.

Nonetheless, there is also some uncertainty about how some BDs can expand rapidly. For example, Vadana et al. (2019) discussed the lack of information present to describe the factor of digital infrastructure on the value chain of BD firms. Based on the current information, they are specific to one type of industry or discuss digitalisation in firms and include born-digital with non-BD firms, which makes it difficult to differentiate what factors and processes make born-digital unique regarding internationalisation. Monaham et al. (2020) discuss that the current literature lacks in-depth explanations of the effects of automation, networking, flexibility, and expansion on BD firms. Therefore, some studies have shown that the results of BDs internationalisation processes provided some explanations, but there is still much left to be studied regarding why and how.
3. Methodology

The purpose of the Methodology chapter is to present the methodological background. This is based on the researchers’ philosophical standpoint, influencing the formulation of the research. In the chapter, the decisions regarding research design, data collection and analysis of the data are explained. It is also described how the quality of the research is ensured and how the ethical implications have been faced in the research.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is the foundation for designing the research and finding suitable methods to implement it. There are two parts to the research philosophy. The first is ontology, a researcher's assumption about reality’s nature. The second one, epistemology, is the researcher's assumptions about the best ways to inquire about the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

In ontology, Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) present four positions: realism, internal realism, relativism, and nominalism. The primary debate, however, has been between realism and relativism. In this study, relativism has been the central ontological position. Relativism is a view that the perspective of the observer influences different phenomena. It is in the eye of the beholder, and thus there is not just one truth but many, depending on the observer's viewpoint (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Because of this, we decided to interview multiple people within the organisation., since people may have different opinions on the same event and why something did or did not happen. Furthermore, perceptions of the occurred event might differentiate and finding a clear truth is, therefore, not possible. Instead, the focus is to find themes and social structures based on BDs internationalisation processes.

When it comes to epistemology, there are two different types of positions, positivism and social constructionism. Our perspective is that people determine the reality of things, and that which brings value to research is the way that people make sense of their experiences. Thus, there is not just one objective truth, there are many different truths. Due to this perspective, our epistemological standpoint is social constructionist (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).
al., 2021) since this study aims to understand how born-digital organisations internationalise and help contribute to the research on born digitals.

3.2 Research Approach

This present work carried out a qualitative study with an inductive approach. A qualitative research approach provides openness and a more in-depth understanding of the subject in question compared to a quantitative or mixed approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Langley and Abdallah (2011) argue that qualitative studies have a good ability to discover knowledge and phenomena in organisations. Therefore, a qualitative research approach is beneficial to provide additional in-depth knowledge about BD firms and their use of internationalisation strategies and processes.

Qualitative research and its process of creating new theories can be done through three research approaches; inductive, deductive and abductive research approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). These three approaches are considered to be the logical reasoning in quantitative and qualitative research and are connected to the philosophical premises explained in 3.1 (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The inductive approach helps to use reasoning to connect a pattern through critical interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). An inductive approach is first to collect the data and, after, search for themes and categories through similar patterns in the data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021; Yin, 2014). The deductive research approach is the opposite. It is done by deducing the general principles to specific scenarios, which is done by looking at established concepts and filtering out irrelevant concepts based on the collected data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The last approach is the abductive approach, in which a researcher argues that a connection from the data is made based on a theory through critical interpretations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

For this study, an inductive approach was the most appropriate approach in the context of our research purpose. This is because this paper aimed to find and provide new data and information about BD firms through a qualitative lens and, afterwards, provide the identified data's theories and assumptions. However, multiple researchers heavily study internationalisation processes, which provides a significant amount of established data in
the context of internationalisation. Nonetheless, these models have not thoroughly been used to analyse BD firms, which makes an abductive or deductive approach limited and difficult. Instead, the current internationalisation processes are used after the initial analysis of the data to see if the findings of this study have similarities or differences from prior literature. Therefore, an inductive approach is the most suitable as we can more in-depth and openly analyse the internal and external factors that influence BDs' internationalisation processes and overall internationalisation strategy.

3.3 Research Design

This thesis employs a single case study approach to gather data from the interviews. A case study focuses comprehensively on one or several organisations, individuals or events during a period of time (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021) and provides theory through practice (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Since this thesis focuses on a qualitative research approach, it is vital to thoroughly understand the perspectives and experiences of the participants, in which a case study can help to provide greater knowledge about the subject at hand (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Case studies are often criticised for being unable to generalise an industry nor be entirely objective due to case studies being considered subjective and having too insignificant a sample size. However, a case study is an important method that helps to develop knowledge of the theme and helps explain complexities and narratives that are difficult to explain through other types of research design (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Socially constructionist researchers regularly use case studies because of how direct and personal the participation is between the researcher and participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The criticism of single case studies and their limited generalisability has led to researchers claiming that their contributions are limited in research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This must be considered to minimise abnormalities in the study and to risk generalising the BD industry. This study has met these challenges by interviewing different people within the organisation with different experiences and opinions, resulting in a broader perspective on the collected data.
Yin (2014) has a more positive outlook on case studies, arguing that they can easily provide high-quality research if the processes are done carefully. Yin (2014) advocates for using case studies and proposes that one should clearly describe five research design components: 1. The research question, 2. The study propositions, 3. The components of analysis, 4. Critical linking between propositions and the identified data, 5. Our structured criteria for interpretations. This study followed these principles by constructing research questions. Instead of formulating propositions, this paper used a clearly defined purpose of the study. The components of analysis in this study were identified by the formulation of clear criteria’s and boundaries for the case explained in 3.3.2 Case Selection and 3.3.4. Data Collection. Additionally, the analysis methods are thoroughly explained in 3.4 Data Analysis as well as how the coding process is structured and interpreted.

3.3.1 Literature Review Process

The literature review in this paper aims to give insight into the background knowledge of internationalisation and the theories that have been developed regarding internationalisation processes. It also investigates different factors that impact an organisation's internationalisation process. Furthermore, insights into the background of born digital organisations are also provided.

Relevant articles were found by using Boolean operators, such as AND, OR, NOT, AND NOT, to combine different keywords. Examples of such keywords are “Internationalisation”, “Uppsala model”, “Dynamic capabilities”, and “Born digitals”. The searches used different search engines, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and Primo JU Library. After articles were found, their journal impact factor was looked up, and only journals with a factor above three were collected. The articles chosen were then read through, and the ones with relevant information were included in the present work. Snowballing has also been used to find other relevant references through the ones found through searches (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).
3.3.2 Case selection

To answer the thesis’s research questions, the chosen case needed to provide insights into born digital organisations and their internationalisation process. Thus, the sampling strategy needed to be thorough to make sure that the case matched the definition of a BD that this thesis has but also has employees with relevant knowledge for the interviews. To ensure that the selected case had good quality and thus ensure the quality of the study, the following criteria that the case needed to fulfil were created:

- An organisation that follows the study’s stated definition of born digital organisations (meaning organisations that build their value chains and offerings on digital infrastructure).
- The organisation needs to have their operations in at least two different countries as they need to have experience in internationalisation.
- Employees that can participate in interviews have been working in the organisation during the internationalisation process and in positions that provide insights into the processes.

Considering these three criteria, we searched the internet and LinkedIn and searched different Facebook groups for digital companies. A post in one such Facebook group was made, and the CEO of a Swedish OSP company working with search engine optimisation (SEO) reached out. Due to the competition in the industry the case company works in, they will remain anonymous. Although the country of origin does not matter for this study, a Swedish organisation was more accessible as both authors of the thesis are of Swedish origin. The collaboration with the case company has enabled us to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

3.3.3 Sampling Strategy

When the case had been collected, it was also essential to gain access to interviewees with the ability to provide relevant information about their organisation’s internationalisation processes. To select interviewees fulfilling the criteria, non-probability sampling was used. This is a good sampling design when the purpose of the sample is to fulfil a specific purpose, for example, to provide specific information to develop theories. In this case,
purposive and snowball sampling has been used. Purposive sampling means that criteria for being included in the design have been defined, and only persons who meet the criteria will be included. Snowball sampling is when the first person who meets the criteria is asked if they know anyone else who also meets the criteria, and it is a good way to find more people relevant to studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). To ensure a good quality of the study, the following criteria were formulated:

- Someone that has experienced the organisation's internationalisation process to at least one country or more.

Based on these criteria, the interviewees were selected. For the case company, the first person identified was the CEO, who reached out to us through Facebook. The CEO was asked if they were willing to participate in the study and who amongst the employees had knowledge relevant to the purpose of our study. The recommended employees were then contacted and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Five more employees from the company were then selected and included in the sample. This gave a total of six different interviewees from the case company.

3.3.4 Data Collection

As the study has been designed to be a single case study, to ensure the quality of the study, it was important to get first-hand data. As our philosophical assumptions are relativistic ontology and social constructionist epistemology, it is another motivation to get information from different perspectives to better understand the processes of born digital organisations and the factors influencing them.

Due to this, and that we have a qualitative study, the decision was made to have semi-structured qualitative interviews. Qualitative interviews are directed conversations that evolve around questions and answers regarding a specific topic. Through this, it is possible to gather rich and detailed information from the interviewees on their experiences and understanding of them. Semi-structured interviews cover several topics or questions that have been decided beforehand. However, they also allow for flexibility regarding the order and how the questions are asked. It also allows for the introduction of new ideas and lines of questioning as the interview goes on (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).
Yin (2014) mentions that there are some backsides to interviews. These could be that questions are poorly formulated, resulting in bias or that there is a response bias. As a result, the person being interviewed might give an incorrect answer or leave some essential information out (Yin, 2014). However, there are multiple ways to avoid these backsides when doing the interviews. This is done by probing, laddering up and down, and asking follow-up questions. Probing is when questions are followed by so-called probes, for example, ‘Can you tell me more about this’. Laddering up is used to help gain information on ‘why’ to get to know the value base of the interviewee. Laddering down is used to help gain illustrations and examples of different events. One way of doing this is to ask questions in the form of ‘Do you have an example of this?’ Thus, exploring a person's understanding of certain constructs is possible. This method helped to improve and make an answer deeper and was therefore used in this study in order to gain deep knowledge of the employee’s understanding of their organisation’s internationalisation process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

3.3.4.1 Interview Protocol Guideline

The research done at the beginning of the study helped to establish the paper’s purpose, the gaps in knowledge and the research questions for this study. With the help of these, some predetermined topics and questions could be written to use as support for the research. Establishing a good frame for the interviews led to the creation a topic guide. It is recommended that topic guides be divided into at least three sections. These should be opening questions, questions on a key topic and some questions to close the interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

The opening questions were about the interviewee, how long they have worked at the company and their everyday work life. These questions gave some background to the interviewee and the context in which they work within the organisation. It also helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere for the interview. In the end, the closing section of the interview allowed them to go back to areas and topics that were brought up and found interesting. However, it also allowed the interviewee to ask any questions they might have or add to something if they felt not everything had been said (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).
The central part of the topic guide consisted of four categories relevant to the internationalisation of born digital organisations. They were ‘Before internationalisation’, ‘During internationalisation’, ‘After internationalisation’ and ‘Digital factors’ (see Appendix 1 for the complete topic guide). The key topics came from the theory and aimed to gather insights into the areas where the knowledge gap was identified. Thus, fulfilling the purpose and answering the research questions this study aims to fulfil and answer. In these categories, some questions were prepared beforehand to address findings in previous studies done on the topic. During the course of the interviews, more questions, as well as follow-up questions, emerged, which were asked in order to get as much information as possible. This aligns with the recommendations regarding semi-structured interviews by Easterby-Smith et al. (2021).

3.3.4.2 Conducting the Interviews

Once the case company's CEO had shown interest in their company participating in the study, a meeting was held in which they were given information about what the study was for, the purpose, research questions and how the information of interviews would be used. Once they had agreed and other potential interviewees had been identified and accepted, interview times were booked. All interview participants were also sent a GDPR consent form describing that they could withdraw their participation from the study at any time and their option to be anonymous (see Appendix 2).

The interviews were booked beforehand to ensure that everyone needed for the interviews was available. There were also times open for booking in case someone needed to reschedule or a follow-up interview was needed to ensure that we remained flexible. All interviews were conducted either in person or through Microsoft Teams, as meeting up in person for all interviews was not possible. The possibility of having remote interviews allowed us to book interviews more easily with the employees, as it did not matter if they could come to the office or not. This allowed us to conduct interviews with the employees who could best answer our questions and were not limited to their geographic placement at that specific time. Remote interviews are beneficial because they give a researcher a wider number of potential participants to choose from that can give relevant information (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).
There are benefits and disadvantages to both online interviews and interviews in person. When it comes to interviews in person, the company being interviewed needs to take more time as they must host the researcher. This is a benefit of online interviews since workers only need to take the time out of their day for the time that is needed for the interview and can get back to their daily tasks right afterwards. Online interviews, however, pose a more difficult challenge to build connections since, for example, body language cannot be used to convey emotions and feelings (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). These challenges were met by ensuring that we, as researchers, did not need to be hosted for the face-to-face interviews. We ensured that the company knew of this beforehand and brought everything we needed for the day/days of interviews. The downsides of online interviews were faced by having good preparations and some small talk beforehand. As the organisation is used to digital meetings, it was not a problem for them since they are used to working online with people worldwide.

When each interview began, every participant was asked for permission to record the interview. All participants agreed to it, and the interviews were recorded using our phones or through the recording function on Teams. Recording interviews gives researchers a better opportunity to have an unbiased recollection of the information gathered and allows for an accurate transcript of the interviews. It also allows the researcher to go back to previous interviews without being biased by what was said in later interviews (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, to enhance the participant's comfort, the interviews were started by asking the participants if they would prefer to be anonymous. Anonymity during interviews can create an environment where individuals feel more at ease, be more truthful, and minimise negative consequences for the participants involved (Bell et al., 2022).

The interviews were held between March 14th 2023, and April 21st 2023. There were nine interviews with six employees from different positions, from top to lower level, whom all had some decision-making impact or effects on the case company’s internationalisation processes.
The interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it is the native tongue of the participants and the researchers. This was done to ensure that the participants were comfortable during the interviews, as they might be more comfortable expressing themselves in Swedish than in English. Since it is their native tongue, they may give more detailed answers in Swedish, as some might lack the words to do so in English. Both researchers attended all interviews in which one took on the role of interviewer and the other had the observer role. The observer listened to what was said and asked follow-up questions where it was necessary and relevant. The interviews were scheduled for 60 min, but the times varied from between 25 to 61 min. Ultimately, this led to a total of 355 min in collected data. After each interview, the researchers took a few minutes to review what was said and what points were interesting for the research. It also gave time to discuss questions and if any needed to be changed, removed, or added.

### Table 2: Overview of the Conducted Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Time Duration</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>54 min 53 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT1</td>
<td>36 min 36 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT2</td>
<td>44 min 27 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT3</td>
<td>61 min 20 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT4</td>
<td>36 min 28 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT5</td>
<td>39 min 01 sec</td>
<td>14/03-23</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO Follow-up</td>
<td>31 min 07 sec</td>
<td>15/03-23</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int4 Follow-up</td>
<td>26 min 25 sec</td>
<td>21/04-23</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int5 Follow-up</td>
<td>25 min 32 sec</td>
<td>21/04-23</td>
<td>Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>355 min 49 sec</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Data Analysis

When it comes to analysing qualitative data, there are several approaches that a researcher can use. For this paper, grounded analysis has been chosen. A grounded analysis is an inductive approach that is considered open due to the constant comparison of data, making it suitable for qualitative research. The method consists of a constant comparison of the collected data and, after that, aims to generate a new theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The grounded analysis is often linked to grounded theory. However, it is also described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) that it is also suitable for research with an inductive approach and case studies. As this thesis aims to identify and explain how BD organisations internationalise through case studies and interviews, leading to the complementation of older internationalisation models, grounded analysis is a good choice of approach.

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2021), there are seven steps to the codes-to-theory model, and the steps are as follows:

- **Familiarisation**: Familiarise with all the available data that has been recorded or unrecorded and focus on the purpose of the study and what the data propose based on the data.

- **Reflection**: Reflect on what the data is about and how it impacts existing knowledge.

- **Open coding**: The coding is done by developing sets of similar and/or related codes, which are guided by what the data reflects and how it is expressed. The codes is a word that summarises the statement made by the participant (Saldaña, 2021).

- **Conceptualisation**: Finding different patterns in the codes and conceptualising them through similarities, differences, frequencies, sequences, correspondence or causations (Saldaña, 2021). These codes should be simple and close to the data, which can be done by explaining a brief description for each new code and category (Charmaz, 2014).

- **Focused re-coding**: After coding and finding patterns, one should rewind and go through the data through a second-cycle coding which helps to provide a more
in-depth analysis of the data and provide further credibility to minimise inaccurate coding.

- **Linking**: In the 6th step, one should connect different key categories, analyse how they relate to each other, and provide hypotheses that can be integrated to become a potential theory in the study (Charmaz, 2014). However, one should be transparent with how one has done their linking process to increase transparency and credibility.

- **Re-evaluation**: The last step focuses on evaluating the results and analysing any abnormalities or deficiencies in the analysis and if further re-touching is necessary.

These steps were followed in the analysis of the empirical data of this study. Once the interviews were done and transcribed, one researcher began looking for relevant quotes for this study and coding those quotes. After this was done, the second researcher looked through all the collected codes and quotes to make sure that no relevant quotes were missed or that nothing was misinterpreted. All of the codes were then collected in an Excel sheet. When the first round of coding was done, several topics of interest for this study emerged, which were never further explored in the interviews, leading to follow-up interviews with two of the interviewees. These interviews were also coded afterwards, and when this was done, it was concluded that all relevant data had been collected from the interviewees. These codes were divided into categories, leading to four themes. The themes have been used to analyse the data further, and chapter 5. Analysis has been structured after these themes.

### 3.5 Research Quality

Positivistic researchers often question the trustworthiness of qualitative studies because of the belief that quantitative and naturalistic studies address the validity and reliability more preferably (Shenton, 2004). To address these disagreements, Guba (1981) provided four criteria to analyse the relevancy, credibility, and trustworthiness to warrant quality in qualitative research. The four criteria are credibility,transferability, dependability, and confirmability. By following these criteria, one can infer that the study follows academic
standards and provides credibility and reliability to the hypothetical assumptions this study has proposed.

### 3.5.1 Credibility

Guba (1981) refers to credibility as the extent to whereby the study’s results are credible to the reader and accurately depict the subject at hand. Credibility focuses on the validity and reliability of the observers’ research methodologies (Guba, 1981; Saunders et al., 2009). To increase reliability, it is crucial to focus on whether the results will be similar on other occasions and by other researchers and whether there is transparency in the data collection (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2009). To provide credibility, this paper has been thorough in explaining the research methods taken and how the results were achieved from the data collection. Any assumptions and statements derived from the data will be presented as propositions to minimise disinformation.

### 3.5.2 Transferability

The criterion transferability describes the extent to which research findings apply to various settings, contexts, and studies. It is comparable to the concepts of external validity and generalisability (Guba, 1981). Shenton (2004) argues that a description of the contextual factors that impact the study and the limitations of the results is necessary. Therefore, specific information should be addressed, including the data collection method used, the period it was collected, the number of participants, the number of organisations involved, and any restrictions on the participants which might have impacted the data (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). To follow this step, this paper has explained how the study and data have been collected and the potential limitations these steps have produced.

### 3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability is defined as the consistency and trustworthiness of the study findings and the way the research process was presented. This is significant because it enables others to observe, verify, and assess the research approach used in the study (Guba, 1981). Dependability is closely related to credibility. However, to provide clarity, one should go
in-depth about the processes used in the study, explain the research design and its implementation, how the data collection was done, and reflect on the processes' effectiveness (Shenton, 2004). This was done by thoroughly explaining the data collection process and its effectiveness and implementation in the analysis.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, the last criterion, refers to the quantity of objective information involved in the study findings and whether it can be independently verified. To increase confirmability, the study should address the provided data and present interpretations based on objective interpretations based on the inquired data. Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that the key criterion for confirmability is that the researchers should provide potential susceptibility or vulnerabilities of the study. This is done by explaining the vulnerabilities of our study from the data collected and addressing potential interpretations or assumptions made during the data collection process or in the analysis.

3.6 Ethical Implications

When doing research, it is of high importance to consider ethical implications to ensure that the research ensures trustworthiness. To ensure that this study is ethical and that the participants' integrity, information, and interest are kept safe, the study follows the 11 key principles of research ethics developed by Bell and Bryman (2007). The principles are as follows:

*Harm to participants.* It was essential to ensure the physical and psychological well-being of the research participants. This was done by ensuring they did not have to answer questions if they did not want to and could always end the interview if they wished. The questions were also formulated to not be uncomfortable. The questions were also tested during the first interview and changed in case any signs of discomfort were shown by the participants.

*Dignity.* To respect the dignity of all participants, they were ensured that all answers were of importance to the study due to the relatively new concept of born digitals and the lack
of research on their internationalisation. Questions were also adapted to fit the experience of everyone, as they had experience from expanding to different countries and had worked at the company for a different amount of time. Participants were also encouraged to speak freely and were not interrupted.

_Informed consent._ When contact first was made with participants, they got information about the purpose, content as well as the process of the study. After they agreed to participate, they were sent a participation information sheet and a GDPR consent form that they signed and sent back before the interview began (see Appendix 2 and 3).

_Privacy._ As the study has been done in collaboration with a company, it is vital to ensure the privacy of the participants. This has been done by only asking questions relevant to the study and by making sure that all employees of the organisations that have participated in the study remain anonymous.

_Confidentiality._ To ensure confidentiality in this study, all collected data in the form of recordings and transcripts of interviews has been stored in password-protected locations. All participants have also been informed that the data will only be kept for the duration of the study. Afterwards, all data will be deleted. They have also been informed that no one other than the researchers will have access to the data.

_Anonymity._ It was explained to all participants that their anonymity would be protected and that their names or other information that could be used to identify them would not be shared with anyone, not even the company they work for. This included transcripts as well as recordings of interviews. For these same reasons, the case company remains anonymous in this thesis to protect their information.

_Deception._ To avoid deception in this study, the purpose of the study and what the gathered data will be used for were informed to the participants. They were also informed that the final result of the study would be shared with the company they work for but were again ensured that no information that could be used to identify them would be included.

_Affiliation._ As the study is done through case studies of specific companies by conducting interviews with employees, it was important to relay this information to the participants. It was informed that this is a Civilekonom Thesis at Jönköping International Business
School, but also that it is done together with the company that they work for. Thus, the result of the study will be shared with them.

*Honesty and transparency*. To make sure that the study is honest and transparent, the area of study has been made clear to the participants in advance, and the content of the interview and what type of questions that will be asked, have been made clear in advance. The methodological process has also been clearly stated in the paper, and how this help to fulfil the purpose of the study.

*Reciprocity*. It is important to make sure that the study is beneficial to all who participate, whether it be researchers or other participants. The area of study in this paper will provide valuable results and theories in academia. However, it will also be useful to the company participating in the study as it could help them gain insight into their processes.

*Misrepresentation*. To avoid misrepresenting the data collected, and thus also the company participating in the study, both researchers participated in all interviews. All interviews were also recorded and transcribed to gain a correct understanding and interpretation of the data collected. As a result, the coding is more truthful, and the results have higher validity.

To ensure the inclusion of these 11 key principles, GDPR has been followed in this study. All employees’ anonymity has also been respected, and it has been ensured that no information that can be used to identify them will be shared with their employer or in the final result of the research paper. This is important to ensure that the research is trustworthy.
4. Empirical Findings

The following chapter presents the empirical findings. First, the case company and its industry are shortly presented. After that, the findings from the interviews are presented and sectioned out after the main themes from the interview guide.

4.1 About the Company

The company that the data has been collected from in this study is a Swedish OSP working with SEO. They work with the algorithm that search engines, such as Google use, and try to optimise their customers in this algorithm. The goal is for their customers to be at the top of the search results when someone searches for a specific product, for example. They do this by contacting various publishers, such as online magazines, newspapers and many more, and paying them to publish articles containing links to their customers’ websites. In turn, the case company collects money from their customers for handling all contacts with publishers in Sweden and any other country their customers may want help.

4.2 Before Internationalisation

Before starting their internationalisation process, the company was operated only by the CEO. When beginning to internationalise, he hired several freelancers (around four) that would help him write articles and translate articles. This was explained further by Interviewee 3 (further interviewees will be called INT1, INT2 and so on) as he was one
of the freelancers that helped write articles and provided extra support for the CEO during their initial internationalisation process.

“The CEO had the main focus on customer contact at that time. I focused on finding collaboration partners so that we could buy for our customers in these countries. So, there were many contacts, negotiating, managing publications in the places where our customers have bought, and then making sure that that entire process worked.” (INT3)

Nonetheless, the CEO already considered expanding abroad, even before employing more workers. According to the CEO, there were several reasons for the company to expand abroad, starting with his understanding that the services could work in other countries, not only in Sweden.

“I worked with a couple of customers with a service where we today offer what is called of sight SEO in Sweden, and then I realised that there should be more who, there should be more who is interested in this. And so, I contacted or looked for a certain type of man, how to say, the look-alike target audience to our best customers, and that was Swedes who are between 30 to 40 living abroad. After that, find that type of profile, contact them, and assume that they work with the same as our biggest customers but in other industries and countries. And then, I contacted several of these and managed to get a few.” (CEO)

When asked about which countries they first expanded to, the CEO stated the following:

“After I got to try to it (internationalise), it was around three years ago, around March, that we went from 1 to 8-10 countries. I do not remember exactly how many countries it was. But we went from Sweden to operating in Sweden, England, France, Germany, USA, Japan and Spain (...), so that was the starting point for the global expansion. And there was an apparent customer demand to be a part that solves the global expansion for them in those regions.” (CEO)

The statement shows that their expansion occurred rapidly and through multiple countries simultaneously. It also highlights how they expanded to widely different markets from North America to Asia, even at the beginning of their internationalisation process. The statement also shows that the reason was consumer-driven in those regions.
This was further cemented by INT3, who started helping with their internationalisation process and was asked how they started to expand:

“If my memory does not fail me completely, I would almost say that more or less from day one, I would say because then we had customers interested in Norway. So, aside from Sweden then and there, we were very early involved in trying to find collaboration partners in Norway quite early. And it was probably Netherlands and Denmark after that as well, but I would more or less say from the start with Norway in mind there.”

(INT3)

This part also provides information that the countries with close proximity were also expanded to were driven by consumer demand and thought this system was viable in other markets. This was done even when the company was still young and developing. When asked if preparations were made before expanding abroad for the first time, the CEO explained that there were no straightforward preparations, only that it was about to dare to take the first step and search for new customers using the same process as in Sweden, just abroad. This statement is further cemented by the other employees who have similarly discussed their internationalisation process.

“But, preparations, I mean, it was just that we had a system to what worked in Sweden, and then it was just to go at it. We almost did the same thing, just in other countries. After that, you learn what works in other countries, but overall, it is the same.” (INT3)

When asking newer employees about their preparation structure, INT1, who has worked for around one and a half years and is currently working on finding new clients and publicists abroad, said the following:

“It can be on the same day that we, to give an example: say that in the morning someone gets a message from a customer ‘I am interested. How does the market look? Do you work in this country?’ for example. And then maybe we are not, and we say this could be interesting. Then it can go very fast. I will check how it looks, see what I can find and then give that to the customer. So, it can be on the same day we decide to contact people in another country.” (INT1)

According to INT1, analysing a new market and finding customers can take less than 24 hours. This shows that the SEO firm has a rapid and relatively standardised
internationalisation process. It also infers that one of the external drivers of why they expand is consumer driven. When other interviewees were asked why they started to expand into a new country, they agreed that it was due to customer demands.

“We had customers who requested it, who were interested, and then we decided to go through it and look at what we could find. There were opportunities for it, and that.” (INT4)

“It is often that you just follow the stream and our customers’ requests. And then it has resulted in us expanding to places where we wouldn't otherwise have been.” (INT2)

“The first part is always customer driven. That will say that we have a customer who either is active in another country and wonders if we can help them there or they want to expand to another country.” (CEO)

Instead of being proactive and analysing whether a region is viable beforehand, it is reactive, as shown by prior quotes. The consensus is that if a customer asks if it is possible to expand into a new country, they will try to enter that market. However, one aspect that hinders them from expanding is their moral viewpoints that exist within the firm, which stops them from wanting to enter certain markets. The reason is that some countries and publicists do not fit the ethical standards that exist within the firm. For example, INT3 discussed a time when a potential partnership with a publicist was immediately ended when they found out that the publicist had hateful views towards women. They would also never work in countries with authoritarian regimes as it goes against their ethical standards.

4.3 During Internationalisation

Their overall internationalising is relatively standardised, as mentioned before, due to the fast consumer-driven expansion they have used. This process often starts with a customer asking if the company operates in a specific company. If that is not the case, they look for additional customers through different search automated systems and networking that scan for viable and potential new publicists in that market through internet search engines and social media.
“But first, we make some sort of analysis of what we do is to look for publicists who can publish our customers’ texts, like, websites, and what we do is that we have different tools with us where we can see what people are searching for. And in every country, I mean, we can see volumes and what opportunities there are, how many people are already doing this, for example. We do some sort of market analysis before we go in. Rather basic before we just start trying.” (INT5)

The CEO did not want to disclose how the system worked in-depth so as not to provide too much information for potential competitors. Nevertheless, the system can find suitable clients and publicists that should have some understanding of the SEO services based on the automated system and thereby provide suitable clients with a list.

“(…) usually, we get a lot of information from different intermediaries or direct contacts and all of a sudden, you have a list of, well, 100 websites in a country we at the moment never have worked in.” (INT3)

This quote explains that the company receives much information from different contacts regarding sites they could use in various countries worldwide. One of the reasons for contacts providing them with this information appears to be due to their high levels of networking and relationship building, further explained by the following quote:

“I believe that the reason why we have succeeded so well is because the clients trust us. Trust is everything in this industry. If the clients do not trust you, you will not be able to progress with them; it might result in just a few occasional transactions. But yes, long-term customers trust in what we do, and I think that is what has led to our success. (…) And after the initial contact, even if we did not have a reason to maintain that contact, we held onto it and developed the collaboration further, constantly incorporating new ideas so that we were always with them. It was quality over quantity in that sense.”

(INT1)

INT1 highlights the need for good relations and trust to succeed in the market. It also shows how long-term clients provide a stable foundation for the firm and repeated business opportunities. It also shows that the use of networking shows develops additional partnerships and opportunities for the firm.
However, if the networking and system approach does not provide enough potential clients and customers, and if there is a lack of knowledgeable publicists about SEO in a region, they need to find new clients that are less knowledgeable. This changes their process to an extent as they need to explain their systems differently, which INT1 explained further.

“You just use the basic way that we have used before. There has been a standard since then. However, one has changed a lot in the approach one has because it is a very young industry. It has not existed that long, leading one to explain things completely differently than I would have done to a colleague. So, I see that it has changed a lot, the approach of how we do this part, talking about it if someone is knowledgeable or not.”

(INT1)

This takes more time as the employees will need to explain what an SEO can do and what it can provide to both the publicists and the client. Therefore, contacting people with a more comprehensive understanding of SEO is preferable. After this, the identified companies were contacted about a potential offer. As INT1 mentioned, these clients often had some understanding of the SEO industry and how it can be used for their benefit. After a deal is made with several identified clients and publicists, they are active in a new country and then search for additional clients in that region to expand further.

Another important factor during their process is the economic viability of certain regions, as markets view the worth of the SEO services differently, according to the CEO:

“What we have done often is to say yes and then try, which has resulted in us being in multiple countries where we have realised that it is not working. We cannot get any economy in this. That is how we have learnt that we cannot work with a Latin American company in Latin America. It needs to be someone from the Nordics with a larger perceived value to get help in that country.” (CEO)

The CEO mentions that he has accepted offers to investigate new markets and found suitable clients and publicists. However, due to the economic difference in the worth of SEO services, it is sometimes not profitable for them to expand there if they do not have the right customers. One example of this is in the quote above, where it is explained that they do not want to work with Latin American customers in Latin America due to the
perceived value of their service that these customers have. They would rather work with Nordic customers as their perceived value of the service is higher. The CEO further explained this by stating that they would not help a Brazilian company in Chile as they have different price expectations than a Nordic company. They need to find a profit maximisation between the customer's expected value for the service and the market price in the local market.

4.3.1 Obstacles During Internationalisation

Due to the standardised internationalisation processes, there have come up several factors that the company needs to consider. These include cultural, digital and administrative differences and obstacles when entering a new market. Due to their reactive market entry strategies, these obstacles mainly occur during their internationalisation processes.

4.3.1.1 Cultural Obstacles

The most common and widely discussed topic is the cultural obstacles that occur during their internationalisation processes. The most common obstacle is related to language, specifically the use of English. For example, INT5 said the following about how different regions react to their system of communication:

“Something that we have noticed is that many countries do not like English, for example, when we reach out, so that is one thing we are trying to fix a bit. To reach out in their language or try to communicate in their language, either through people we have here who know many languages or through different translation tools.” (INT5)

These language barriers are solved through different means, both through traditional and digital methods. For example, they have started looking at bi-lingual employees or freelancers. An example of this is the most recent employee, who can speak Italian, which has shown to be effective in Italy, as they prefer to speak on the phone in Italian than English through e-mail. Another example is when the CEO started in Japan, the first country where they experienced more cultural and language differences and obstacles.
The CEO discussed his experience and how he was able to implement their system in Japan.

“The first time I went to look for these influencers and publishers in Japan like this, it was rather difficult. I have never been active in the Japanese market. It is a completely different language, and it is a completely different culture. (...) In the beginning, I started to contact virtual assistants in the countries I was going to operate, so I had a virtual assistant in Tokyo, among others, who helped me who knew English. So, I said that I wanted to contact fashion or gaming influencers in Japan. (...) And then, this person got to help me and rewrite the emails I had to send to them, so they were well written in Japanese and adapted to their culture, so you greet the right way, and the cultural context is right. So that has been our step in daring to work in the countries and take help from those who understood the culture there, and then our feeling was also to source these publications for customers.” (CEO)

His experience and solution show the use of virtual assistants and local expertise to become more culturally adaptative in the region. He recognised that cultural differences could be an obstacle to doing business in Japan and sought help to bridge the cultural gap. He did not need to change the service in that region but instead adapt to the cultural difference through cultural awareness. However, most common language barriers are solved through digital translation programs, which is discussed further in 4.5 Impact of Internationalisation. Therefore, cultural differences can be overcome in the digital market by either translation systems, culturally diverse employees or, in some cases, more local expertise.

4.3.1.2 Administrative Obstacles

The administrative obstacle is another essential variable that impacts their internationalisation processes. This part often discussed legislative issues, explicitly marketing laws in a country in which it can restrict a market for them as SEO is dependent on marketing and provide search optimisation for advertisement. When asked if marketing laws have ever stopped them from entering a new market, INT4 said the following:
“Yes, absolutely, it has happened. It has happened that we skipped it. With some, how do you say it, some customers, because of the laws in the country, who want to have sensible sites to buy on because it is illegal. Of course, it has happened, or a new law has been passed that makes it a lot harder for us, which makes us feel like we do not want to put down our time on it. It has definitely happened.” (INT4)

This seems to be the most challenging obstacle for an SEO, as the language barrier can be solved through digital tools, cultural awareness and even local expertise. At the same time, laws can make their service improbable or impossible to be implemented, as it restricts the use of the service. This was further cemented by Int5 when he said the following:

“We have never worked in a country where you cannot use marketing. It would not happen, but we could if we were to work around it, for example, but, like, it would not have worked. So, we keep away from some places for that reason.” (INT5)

The statements by both INT4 and INT5 state that if laws restrict marketing, specifically digital marketing, that affects SEO services, it forces them to search for other markets instead. This makes regions with highly authoritative political structures less likely to be considered as new potential markets. This goes in hand with how they expanded, as INT1 mentioned that regulations were also a factor in how they expanded abroad.

“But Europe was the first step since the regulations are similar to Sweden. A standardised market in terms of invoices. All of these small details. It was probably easiest to start where it is familiar.” (INT1)

This can also explain their focus on establishing a solid foothold in Europe due to the common European Union laws implemented, which provide a similar legislative structure in Sweden and other European markets.

4.3.1.3 Digital Obstacles

The last significant obstacle for the company when expanding abroad is the digital obstacles that could occur. These digital differences focus on the expanding region’s lack of relevant digital infrastructure. This could be because there are not enough potential
consumers known within the SEO sector or enough digital users within said country. When asking INT2 about these issues, he said the following:

“Yeah, but we have experienced that in some countries, like especially New Zealand, there has just been a complete stop where we have not found anything, and it can, of course, have something to do with the fact that we have a type of business that does not exist over there. Just as it is rather difficult to pitch our business to a customer who does not know anything about SEO from the start, it is difficult to buy from sites that do not understand the business. So, one challenge is maybe knowledge, and then it turns into you trying to explain to those you want to buy from what it is all about. But also, we have been forced to work with other agencies who maybe are more established in, for example, New Zealand to get a product there and sell it.” (INT2)

The speaker mentions that their business service is unique and not widely understood can make it difficult to pitch their business. Specifically in New Zealand, due to the lack of familiarity with SEO. Similarly, purchasing websites from sellers who do not understand the business proposal is also challenging. INT2 further mentions that the challenge for them here was the lack of knowledge from the potential customers and potential partners, forcing them to work with other more established agencies in New Zealand to help sell their services. This quote highlights the importance of digital understanding when expanding into new markets. They also acknowledge the importance of educating customers and publicists about their business, especially in regions where BD firms such as SEO might not be as prominent.

“If we talk about this digital divide, I mean that there are countries where we may not expand because there is less access to the Internet there. I know we are in South America, one of those more digitalised regions, but rather large parts of, well, the African continent is not that digitalised, and then there is not going to be any to supply there.” (INT2)

INT2 also discusses the digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who do not to the same extent. He notes that there are countries that do not have the digital infrastructure needed for the company may not expand. He compared South America and Africa, explaining that there is no market for
the company's services without Internet access. INT2 explains that the limited access to digital infrastructure stops them from doing business in certain regions.

To solve these digital obstacles, specifically about the knowledge gap of SEO in different regions such as Italy, INT5 said the following:

“*But that is going to be a challenge going forward. I believe that we will have to. Maybe we will have to go down to Italy and talk to the magazines and explain what we do in Italian almost, and then we will need to have people who can handle that. (...) It is not easy to understand what we do. It takes a lot to explain, and a big advantage is when you can do it in their native language, face to face.*” (Int5)

The CEO also discussed this and showed how the digital obstacles might force BDs firms to adapt or at least consider the possibility of utilising more traditional processes to expand in a new market. This statement also shows that while digital tools can overcome communication difficulties, as discussed in 4.3.1 Cultural Obstacles, it might not be enough for the company to employ these systems in regions where digital understanding is less prominent. Thereby, BD firms might be forced to become less digitalised if they want to become stronger in certain markets.

### 4.4 After Internationalisation

The company processes, obstacles and solutions to these internationalisation challenges have resulted in them being in 35+ countries in less than four years. Overall, most employees, including the CEO, agree that their strategy and processes to expand abroad have been a success, with only minor changes that could have been done differently.

When asked why they have been successful with their process, INT5 said the following.

“*The model is the same no matter what country we enter (...) It is so easy, and we have made an easy model, and then I believe that it does not matter from where it is. It is so easy to understand. You do not need much previous knowledge, and we often talk with people who already understand what we are doing. I think that makes it easier as well.*”

(INT5)
According to INT5, their process is due to its ease of the system, as it provides them with a process that can be used everywhere if there is a market. It is easily understood, and their clients and markets mostly understand the importance of SEO services and how they can benefit both parties. Overall, the internationalisation process has been similar in different countries throughout their existence.

“(…) Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and then, Netherlands, Germany and Spain. Great Britain, and the US, there we have always been big. Italy with, I mean, European countries, and then we have done, well, basically all of Europe, France and worked a lot towards Canada. Then we entered Australia, New Zealand tried to enter New Zealand, but this industry has proven rather difficult. The Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. And now, most recently, South America has been interesting and Central America with Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil.” (INT2)

This statement does not include some countries such as Japan, India and other countries discussed with other participants. However, this statement does give a basic overview of their operation. They are in the neighbouring countries of the Nordics and have expanded throughout Europe. Other continents, such as North America and Oceania, have also been included. They have also established themselves in culturally and geographically distant regions, recently in South America. As mentioned before, this process has been done through consumer-driven behaviour.

There have been some difficulties in certain regions, such as New Zealand, that they thought would be easy, which have been discussed before. Nonetheless, when asked how these failures or obstacles impacted their business, INT3 said the following.

"(…) with digitalisation you do not need to invest that much (resources). Just dip your toes and be open to it. One just needs to find solutions and just be brave to try." (INT3)

Regarding digital businesses, one can conclude that testing and trying for what does and what does not work is important. This is further supported when discussing the risk of failing with the CEO:

“My fear of failure is zero. I have no fear of failing, so I am more than happy to test things. And if it fails, I note that it failed, and then I do something else. This results in us having tried many countries that did not work, and as we have not established an office
there, we have not hired local personnel, we have not done any of that, it is very easy for us to back out.” (CEO)

He further explained the following:

“We have tried to enter new countries; every time we enter a new country, it costs a little bit more because we must build a network there through a publicist we can sell to, but no, it is that we lose the time to establish a network in a country, but it is relatively small amounts of money we talk about. So, the investments are small, so in that way, it is almost risk-free for us to enter new countries.” (CEO)

The quotes discuss the risk-taking decisions when internationalising, the costs associated with internationalisation, and how the company has been able to approach these costs. According to the CEO, they have tried multiple times in different markets in which they failed. This is not an issue, as they have not established any real-life presence in those markets, which shows that BDs only use a digitalised precedence in different regions. This is why they have no fear of failure, as their presence in a failed market can quickly retreat if things do not go well. As for the costs, the CEO explains that these costs are relatively small, and the main cost is time. The CEO also suggests that the costs are low enough that entering new countries is almost risk-free for the company, which INT2 briefly mentioned. It highlights that the resources of the firm needed to internationalise are low, and therefore they can test out these markets and the lack of fearfulness that the company has. They are overall flexible with testing new markets and fallback when necessary and provide additional support of why their process has been successful and standardised.

4.5 Digital Factors

According to the participants, the impact of digital technologies is numerous as it can provide a crucial factor for their internationalisation process. When asked about the impact of digitalisation on the firm, INT2 said the following:

"If you see yourself as a digital company, it is not even a step to internationalise, but it is more like a natural thing since it is so easy to do in an industry like this. So I
absolutely believe that it has rather big implications because it is not like we have thought about, or, in some instances, we have, but when we have entered like Germany, it has become very natural. In many cases, maybe we have gotten a site sent to us, and we have almost put no effort into making this expansion.” (INT2)

This statement does provide the information that the use of digital technologies and digital firms in general that the process of expanding abroad is natural. As digital tools have minimised the necessary effort to expand and even provided them with networking in a way where they receive necessary data and resources from others abroad. This also helps to provide a further understanding of why the CEO thought, even at the start of the firm's existence, to enter new markets and not stay in Sweden. As SEO services can be used everywhere, the consensus is that if we can sell here in Sweden, we can sell everywhere that needs it. Digital technologies are also helpful tools to ease specific barriers that more traditional firms must solve. The CEO explained how being a BD has minimised those obstacles.

“(…) the thing is that AI has made a powerful entry, so before, I thought that we would have to recruit employees with different languages or have Japanese and German-speaking employees and so on. And it would probably have been like that if we had needed to open an office in the respective country, but since we can use AI to translate and there are virtual assistants, we do not need many other languages in the office. We can solve a lot from here and do a lot with good tools.”. (CEO)

"Nowadays, one can translate with ChatGPT, which has a very high level of language proficiency. However, one could not do that before because if Google Translate translated text into Japanese, people would not respond properly because it is not proper Japanese.” (CEO)

The CEO highlights here that the use of AI and virtual assistance can minimise the number of resources necessary to internationalise, which promotes the statement from INT2 that it is obvious for them to internationalise. For example, they have started utilising ChatGPT, which has only been in the public domain for less than a year, as a tool for their internationalisation process, making language barriers significantly easier. As their digital technologies and capabilities are effective, they can more easily take risks in new markets, expand more efficiently, and minimise obstacles that often occur when
entering new markets. The CEO specifies the cultural obstacles and how they can be more cost-effective than if they did not have these digital tools. Therefore, they do not need to prioritise recruiting new employees or have a local presence for their strategies. However, as mentioned in 4.3.1.3 Digital Obstacles, having a local presence might be necessary for the long-term future if they want to grow further, as there is a digital divide in some regions where digital communication is not enough for their liking. Nonetheless, their current use of digital technologies has been successful for them and provides them with an easy process model that can be used globally.

These digital technologies have resulted in several opportunities and strengths for the organisation. The first is the rapid expansion that it has provided towards the company. When discussing how digital technologies have improved their internationalisation, Int2 stated the following:

“Yes, it (digitalisation) has sped it up a lot. Now, as I have said, we are looking for things ourselves, but there are sometimes when we have found something and say that we will try it, look around a bit, and then develop the way we enter a new country, or find a new niche, so digitalisation makes you more open. You become more open to the fact that new customers can find it themselves, not just that you reach out to them, but that they reach out to you.” (INT2)

INT2 highlights the importance of digital technologies and their effects, resulting in a more rapid expansion by making the process more open and faster to find new customers. INT2 does, however, mention that openness and flexibility must be done by themselves, providing information about the need for a thorough understanding of their digital tools and how to use them effectively. This is done by learning and testing new markets and techniques, and based on what they learn, they can expand on what works. By learning and testing, they can reach out to new clients more effectively, but by using well-structured networking, clients might even come to them, making the process easier. This improvement of openness in the digital landscape and its opportunities for the organisation it can provide, INT4 discussed further.

“I mean, we have every opportunity. There is everything. We can always reach out to more publicists. There is an infinite opportunity for us in what we are doing, and I mean it is a challenge to structure it and, like, do it the right way. I believe that structures,
like, the biggest challenge, is to put time into the right thing, and that is, of course, not that unique, but it is very important. It may not be unique that a large part for us is structuring this ocean of opportunities. You need to put your time into the right things. And it is because it (the market) is so digital, and it results in, well, all of a sudden, you can reach the entire world, so to structure it, I would say, is a unique challenge.”

(INT4)

INT4 highlights the opportunities that digital technologies bring to their internationalisation due to the ability to reach out to multiple publishers and clients globally through the digital landscape, which provides countless possibilities and alternatives that would not have been possible without the Internet. INT4 also acknowledges the challenge of effectively restructuring and organising these opportunities, as finding the right clients can be difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, digital capabilities and learning capabilities within the digital landscape are necessary through the correct allocation of resources and effective structure, which is solved through learning and understanding their strengths.

However, there were also some obstacles regarding the heavy use of digital technologies. The first issue is the digital environment that they operate in. Specifically, the turbulent and rapidly changing environment.

”We work specifically with SEO, which means that we are in Google’s hands all the time. If Google changes something in their algorithm or makes an update, then we need to be able to adapt” (INT5)

INT5 highlights how external factors influence their strategy and even what they can provide for the clients. As the market is rapidly changing and evolving, they need to constantly be able to adapt to new digital changes that occur in the market to stay competitive.

Another issue was the lack of personal communication when networking and finding new customers, which Int5 discussed:

“Maybe it is not as personal, because it is a lot of, like to do it as fast as possible, optimise and those things. (...) It becomes less personal. To personalise it, it is only
INT5 five mentions how digital tools can make communication faster and easier, but unfortunately, it makes personal interactions and communication less personal. This is an issue as networking is essential for them to find new markets as they base their process on customer-driven expansion. Therefore, having good and well-established relations with those clients is necessary. Nonetheless, this is a manageable issue as they can maintain their long-term relations. This is also due to the use of digital technologies, making it easier to reach back to someone after more extended inactivity. These tools are also not perfect, according to the CEO:

“The problem is that these tools are not perfect, but rather a bit blunt, and a tool, I mean a tool that works well in Sweden, might not be very effective in Poland, and if we use that tool in Poland, then you will get the wrong impression (of the market).” (CEO)

“(…) just because you use tools that streamline (the process), you should not stop being critical. These tools aggregate a lot of information. Then they deliver some form of summary, average or data that creates different metrics you follow and evaluate.”

(CEO)

These two quotes highlight that digital tools are integral to their internationalisation processes and significantly influence the business. Nonetheless, they are still only tools, a part of their business, and they should not depend entirely on what the system gives them. There is still a need to manually review the data to gain a more in-depth understanding, which shows the need for a digital and analytical understanding of their systems. This is done to not be blinded by the data but also to understand the data and the system.
5. Analysis

The following chapter discusses and analyses the empirical findings in relation to the theoretical frameworks established in chapter 2. Literature review. It presents the similarities and differences between the findings and the theories. Additionally, a reconfigured model is presented that adds what was found in the study to the already established frameworks.

5.1 Elements of Organisation

When analysing the empirical findings, multiple organisational elements that affect the company's internationalisation were identified. These are capabilities and the organisation's characteristics. These internal factors within the organisation influence their internationalisation process and decisions and can affect the outcome.

There were four capabilities of the organisation identified in the empirical findings. These were analytical, networking, learning and digital capabilities. These can be said to be dynamic capabilities as they match the description Eriksson (2014) gave. These four different capabilities identified help the organisation to create, extend or modify its resources to match the environment they are expanding to. For example, analytical capabilities can help an organisation identify aspects of the external environment and see
what is needed. The environment of the digital market has, through the interviews, been
described as turbulent, and the case has, despite this, been able to expand successfully in
various countries all over the world rapidly. One can conclude that this is thanks to the
dynamic capabilities possessed by the organisation in question. This is also supported by
previous research done on dynamic capabilities, where the conclusion was that
competitive advantage comes from these in turbulent industries, such as the SEO industry
in this case (Degbey et al., 2021).

It has also been discovered in previous research that different types of dynamic
capabilities are needed depending on if the organisation uses explorative or exploitative
internationalisation strategies, as mentioned by Prange and Verdier (2011), and from what
has been seen in the empirical findings, the case company in question uses more
explorative methods. For example, the company has described that they are always open
to trying a new market as they do not have a high fear of failure, which points towards
them taking more risks, all things which are supported in the literature as being
explorative strategies (Prange & Verdier, 2011). These are also aspects seen in the
organisation's characteristics, further supporting them using more explorative strategies
and thus possessing dynamic capabilities that enable these strategies.

Dynamic capabilities can thus be seen as highly useful for BD organisations in their
internationalisation process, something also supported by Vahlne and Johanson (2017)
and their Uppsala model. The dynamic capabilities help organisations effectively
integrate, build and change their internal and external competencies to better exploit and
develop resources (Coviello et al., 2017; Monaham et al., 2020), which is seen in the case
company as they constantly adapt, change and add new knowledge, skills and capabilities
based on the success or challenge they face in their environment, which is also supported
by the characteristics of the organisation. Thus, this study's empirical findings have
supported this specific aspect of the Uppsala model. However, one dynamic capability
that has been identified is the digital capability of the organisation, in which the Uppsala
model is currently lacking in adaptation regarding digitalisation and taking this into
account, as mentioned by Coviello et al. (2017).

It has also been seen that this BD organisation has high networking capabilities, which is
necessary for their industry, the SEO industry, due to the high reliability of collaborations
with others. This is supported by previous studies by Johanson and Vahlne (2009), whose
Uppsala model described the need for networking when expanding internationally. Previous studies on BD organisations, as described by Monaham et al. (2020) and Birkinshaw (2022), also support high levels of networking capability. However, despite Monaham et al. (2020) acknowledging the high skills in networking done by BD organisations due to their use of digital technologies, they said it is not of as high importance to these organisations as it is for traditional firms. This statement is not in line with this study, as it was explained in interviews that networking is essential for the organisation and its ability to perform on the international market.

As mentioned before, it has been seen in the study's findings that the organisation's characteristics also influence its internationalisation. For example, they are highly flexible and adaptable, which could be what leads them to be such a fast organisation. The internal knowledge of the organisation is also something affecting them. As was written before, their adaptability and flexibility lead to them using more explorative internationalisation strategies, as is supported by the studies of Prange and Verdier (2011). The fact that the organisation is a fast one is supported by the empirical findings, in which it was found that they can decide if, when and where to expand in a matter of days and that they very quickly can see whether or not they are successful in the market, this finding supports the studies done by Wentrup (2016), Monaham et al. (2020) and Birkinshaw (2022), among others, that says that BD organisations expand more rapidly and aggressively than other organisations. This is exemplified by the case company, which, when starting its expansion some years ago, expanded to around ten countries in one week, according to their statements. Regarding the Uppsala model, this differs, as those studies have been done on more traditional firms that generally act slower, resulting in the recommendations from that model saying that things should be taken very slowly (Vahlne & Johanson, 2013).

Organisational characteristics have, as been seen by this study, a high impact on the internationalisation process of BD organisations. However, this aspect has not been adequately studied in previous research on these organisations. Neither has dynamic capabilities and what specific dynamic capabilities these organisations need to internationalise, although studies on this have been done previously for more traditional organisations. To conclude, BD organisations' internationalisation process is affected by the characteristics they have as organisations and their dynamic capabilities. They operate
in a very turbulent environment and need characteristics and capabilities that enable them to face the environment and its constant changes.

5.2 Drivers

Another factor that influences the internationalisation process is drivers. These drivers are divided into the categories of internal and external drivers.

Two internal drivers were identified: want of economic growth and moral perspective. The want for economic growth increases their want and need to internationalise. As was mentioned in the empirical findings, the CEO wants to create economies of scale, which has been a driving force in internationalisation since the beginning. This is supported by the Uppsala model and its creators, who stated that economic growth is one of the drivers for international expansion (Vahlne, 2020). Moral perspective, instead, influences how an organisation decides to expand. As seen in the interviews, the case company does not want to operate in countries with laws restricting human rights and countries with authoritarian rules, such as dictatorships. It was explained that to them, it would not feel right to support these countries indirectly or directly as it goes against their moral compass. This also influences the companies they collaborate with, as they do not want to work with publishers who, for example, have expressed hate against women. These moral drivers have not been identified in previous studies on BDs and their internationalisation, thus making it an interesting study finding.

The primary external driver found in this study was customer demand for expansion. It was found that the reason for the international expansion was that the CEO had gotten a
request from a customer who wanted the case company to help them in 10 other countries, and they decided to give it a try. Since then, they have only expanded to countries where their customers have requested help. This has been found in previous studies on BDs. For example, Birkinshaw (2022) found that the main driver for these companies was customer demand. However, it could be argued that customer demand would not be a driver if the company did not want to grow economically. As mentioned before, the company want to reach economies of scale, and one way to do this is to follow where the money goes, which in this case is to go where the customers want them to go.

Other external drivers related to this are economic opportunity, low entry and low exit costs. The economic opportunity stems from the company having identified that they can earn more money by providing their services to customers in, for example, Nordic countries in the South American market. This is because of the perceived value customers from Nordic countries have of the service. It is relatively higher than the perceived value of customers in South America, thus, providing a larger profit margin when helping customers from Nordic countries. This could also be linked to their want for economic growth, supported by Vahlne (2020). As the SEO business is digitally driven, the costs for entering and exiting markets are very low. They do not need to invest many resources into the expansion, incentivising them to expand even more. It was explained in the interviews that the cost for them is almost zero, meaning that they are always willing to try a new country out if a customer's request is. They will have lost close to zero resources if it does not work out. The external knowledge of the SEO market is also something that influences them. They explained that they do not operate in countries where the SEO market is poorly developed. They prefer to work in countries with publishers and customers who already have knowledge about the industry. These factors will be further explored in 5.3 Market Characteristics and 5.4 Methods to Expand.

Some of these identified drivers have not been discussed in-depth in the current literature in BDs or internationalisation. For example, Wentrup (2016) explained that OSPs benefit from a first-mover advantage in developing regions which could result in faster internationalisation. However, the findings in this study contradict this, as the case company would rather work in markets with high competition, suggesting that customer knowledge is a more significant driver than the chance to gain first mover advantage.
Coviello et al. (2017) found in their studies that macro and micro influences impact the internationalisation process BD organisation undergoes that has not been included in the Uppsala Model by Vahlne and Johanson (2017). The findings of this study support this, for example, customer knowledge or moral perspective. It would be interesting to do further research on these aspects of internationalisation as they have not been explored before.

5.3 Market Characteristics

![Figure 7: Coding of Theme Three](image)

Market characteristics were also identified as a factor influencing the internationalisation process for BD organisations. These are divided into the digital market, country similarities and country differences.

The digital market focuses on the attributes of this specific market. It has been identified to be turbulent, data-driven and fast-moving. The SEO industry is entirely data-driven, meaning you cannot operate without relying on digital infrastructure. The digital market is constantly evolving and changing, and new digital tools are constantly being developed, resulting in turbulence in the market. These changes are also occurring rapidly, making the market move quickly. As discussed, these characteristics force companies operating in it to be adaptable and flexible. This provides opportunities and obstacles for organisations, further seen in countries' digital similarities and differences.
The overall similarities and differences between countries were also seen as a factor that influenced the internationalisation process. There were also several similarities to Ghemawat (2007) CAGE Framework identified in the findings of this part, although there were some differences.

Through the interviews, it was found that the most common obstacle was cultural differences. For the case company, this was most specifically language differences. This supports Ghemawat (2007) statement that differences in language are challenges companies need to overcome. However, he also mentions that having the same language should be preferred, and this has not been found in this study. As the market constantly evolves, new tools are emerging that help organisations overcome this barrier. For example, AI, such as ChatGPT, can translate emails to customers and collaborators with ease. Because of this, the cultural distance provided by Ghemawat might not be as impactful as before, although it still affects BDs. This supports the statements by other research on these organisations, as it explains that digitalisation has made networking easier and overcoming cultural barriers easier (Birkinshaw, 2022; Shaheer, 2020; Vadana et al., 2020; Wentrup, 2016).

Additionally, other cultural distances discussed by Ghemawat (2007), such as norms and traditions, did not impact their internationalisation to the same extent. This could be due to the BDs not needing to see the clients face-to-face and instead utilising digital communication. The main barrier for the firm was the cultural understanding of digital tools and how one interacts with one another through the internet and digital platforms. To counteract this, the firm tried making its communication system more personal. However, this is more difficult to do through digital infrastructure than face-to-face communication, but based on the findings, their strategy has been successful so far.

The administrative distance has been found to be a significant obstacle for the organisation. The interviews explained that when you operate in the SEO industry, what can be done is entirely controlled by the marketing laws of a country. These legislative barriers were discussed by Monaham et al. (2020) when they discussed how BDs could utilise a standardised model for expansion but still need to adapt to legislative differences between countries. The empirical findings found that if a country has restrictive marketing laws, it becomes impossible to operate there. It was also explained, as mentioned earlier,
that they also chose not to work in countries with laws that, for example, restrict their citizens' freedoms.

When it comes to the economic distance and similarity, it was found that in countries that are perceived to be less economically developed, the company had more significant difficulties in working with customers. An example is when a potential customer from a South American company contacted them. In South America, the perceived value of their service is lower than in more economically developed countries, such as Nordic countries. This increases the difficulty for the case company to work with customers from, as in this case, South American countries. They also explained that a Brazilian company working in Chile could find an SEO company from South America that provides lower prices, which they cannot compete with due to the economic differences between the countries. However, this also portrays an opportunity for the company, as they have a large profit margin in doing services in South America for Nordic customers. This economic difference could be from, for example, income disparities in the South American region, pressing down costs. Other economic distances that Ghemawat (2007) has discussed could not be discovered in the scope of this study, or they were minimised and could barely be said to have an effect.

However, one economic difference that significantly impacted BDs is the differences in infrastructure. As the company's industry is entirely reliant on digital infrastructure, it cannot operate in a country with no, or close to no, digital infrastructure. Ghemawat (2007) also discusses this. However, these differences are significant for BDs and thus play a prominent role in their internationalisation process. Other economic differences he mentioned, such as consumer income, costs, wages, and financial and natural resources, were not found to influence the organisation, as they do not need to set up any of their own infrastructure or employ local workers in the country.

As mentioned, digital differences and similarities significantly impacted the case company. They are impacted by how digitally advanced a country is, as this influences their ability to expand to it in the first place. It was explained in the interviews that they prioritise operating in markets where the knowledge about the industry is higher. This has been seen to be in more digitally developed countries. It was highlighted in the findings that they prioritised knowledgeable individuals and that there exists a digital divide, making it difficult to expand to regions such as Africa. The reason for these differences
is how new SEO services are; therefore, there is a gap in understanding digital services. This is also highlighted by the fast-moving and turbulent market, which can make more digital countries even more digitalised than less developed regions as they are more flexible to adapt to new changes. However, as the digital market is turbulent and fast-moving, new markets could emerge anytime, providing more opportunities for international expansion. An example of this is seen in Wentrup (2016) and his study, where it was found that BD organisations would rather stay in their home countries rather than internationalise due to the digital divide between countries. This has not been seen in our study, which could be explained due to the fast-changing characteristic of the digital market.

One interesting finding from the study is that geographic distance was not identified to have any impact on the organisation. It was only mentioned in one interview, where it was said that working in different time zones might take longer to get answers to emails. As the company works entirely digitally, geographic distance is a non-issue as they use digital tools to overcome the barrier. This is supported by Shaheer (2020) statements that these tools provide cheap alternatives to expansion, making the disadvantages of different geographic locations less costly and providing opportunities to reach more complex regions. Additionally, Birkinshaw (2022); Jin and Shin (2020) mentioned that due to the lack of physical presence, BDs could use more adaptation and networking. The study also supports this statement as they can adapt their communication abilities through new digital tools, thereby providing better communication with their clients.

5.4 Methods to Expand

![Figure 8: Coding of Theme Four](image-url)
It was found in the study that the case company uses several strategies for their international expansion. Several differences and similarities in their strategic decisions were found compared to the Uppsala model. The first difference is the fact that the company internationalised rather rapidly. According to their statement, they expanded from Sweden to about ten other countries in around one week. In their model, Vahlne and Johanson (2013) say that organisations should expand slowly, taking one country at a time and starting with a neighbouring country. This is not how the case company did it. They started in Norway, which is a neighbouring country. However, they expanded to Japan and the US at that time as well, countries rather far from Sweden geographically. Despite it going against the Uppsala model, it is supported by other studies on BDs that have also found that they tend to internationalise rapidly (Vadana et al., 2019). This process was, as previously stated, done due to customer demand. Their focus was not on what countries would be easiest to expand to or what country was the most like Sweden. It was what their customers wanted and needed at the time.

The heavy use of networking and digital tools facilitated this process. Networking has been described in the Uppsala model as a crucial stepping stone to easily enter a new market (Vahlne & Johanson, 2013). However, this has not been supported by one article on BDs, as Monaham et al. (2020) claimed that networking is not as important for BDs as traditional organisations. As their process is mostly customer-driven, networking and creating healthy relationships between customers and suppliers, in this case, publishers, is necessary to succeed in expanding. This process has been automated and thus sped up, due to digital technologies that help the organisation collect, evaluate and summarise data and reach out to contacts.

Another similarity with the Uppsala model is the market testing to help the organisation understand how the specific market works and operates (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). Although the case company do test the market, for example, through digital technologies, it is a lot faster than what is described by Vahlne and Johanson (2017) due to the use of these digital technologies. This has been described in the interviews due to the low entry and exit costs, making it cheaper to try a market, whether it fails or is successful. The consequences are minimal, and the potential gain is large. The use of dynamic capabilities has also been discussed. As mentioned, this is also supported by the Uppsala model as
they provide valuable capabilities that help organisations in their internationalisation process (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017).

Another part of the Uppsala model is the use of intermediaries and agents when expanding (Vahlne and Johanson, 2017), which to some extent, is supported by the findings of this study. It was explained that they sometimes use intermediaries when starting to operate in a new country. However, they prefer to try without them if they can, as using intermediaries increases the costs for them and their customers, resulting in a smaller profit margin. However, as they use them sometimes, as in some countries it might not be easy to find publishers, this part of the Uppsala model is still, to some extent, true for BDs.

However, the digital factors discussed in this analysis are not discussed in the Uppsala model, which Coviello et al. (2017) also stated. The current model does not consider the digital environmental factors, which creates more difficulties in implementing the Uppsala model for fully digital businesses, such as BDs.

In the context of the AAA framework provided by Ghemawat (2008), there were some findings on the case company's international strategy. The case company in question used some levels of all three different AAA strategies.

In the interviews, the company said they have a standard way to internationalise. Customer requests start the process, and after that, they utilise a standardised system to analyse the market's viability. For example, in every country, they begin the process by searching the market using digital tools, using a mail robot to contact publishers and starting to do business by buying posts for customers from various publishers. This shows that they use aggregation as a strategy since standardisation is a part of that (Ghemawat, 2008). However, as mentioned before, it was also explained that they want to reach economies of scale, which is one of the goals of aggregative strategies, further supporting the use of it in the company's internationalisation.

It was also found that they use adaptation in their strategy as well. As mentioned, Srinivasan and Eden (2021) explain that BDs are flexible, scalable and automated within their industries, as seen in this study. Automating processes has gifted this company even more flexibility and adaptability, as it has helped speed up its internationalisation process. They show adaptability in that they adapt to different languages in different countries.
when contacting, for example, publishers, but also in that they have learnt and changed how they are doing things over the years as they have found certain ways of doing things that do not work. For example, they have hired someone from Italy who works with them from Sweden to reach out to publishers in Italy, as emailing has proven to be difficult, and making phone calls has been described as the way to do it there. In short, all these parts align with Ghemawat’s description of adaptation, supporting the use of this strategy by the case company.

It was also found that the company uses arbitrage. The definition by Ghemawat (2008) for arbitrage is to exploit differences between countries when expanding internationally. This could be to use lower wages or that some needed resources are available in one country but not another. In this instance, the case company in question has used economic differences between countries as an opportunity to make an increased profit. As explained before, this has been done through working in low economically developed countries, with customers from highly economically developed countries, to maximise the profit margin. They can, for example, take a higher price for their service from a Nordic customer when helping out in South America than when helping a South American customer in South America, thus, supporting the fact that they use arbitrage strategies when expanding abroad as well (Ghemawat, 2008).

It has been explained in the literature that companies mostly use single A strategies, some use double A strategies, and very few numbers use triple A strategies. This is because managing all three A’s challenges simultaneously has been seen to be highly challenging (Ghemawat, 2008), but somehow the case company manages to do this. It could be because of the use of digital tools, which lowers their risks and costs when expanding, thus allowing them to implement more complex strategies, whether their strategies are conscious decisions or not. It would be interesting to investigate more in the future, as this has not been discussed regarding BDs in previous studies.
5.5 Proposed Model

A new suggested theoretical framework has been developed with the presented data analysis to guide the internationalisation process and the factor influencing BD organisations, which is presented in Figure 9 below.

![Proposed Model of BD Internationalisation Process](image)

*Figure 9: Proposed Model of BD Internationalisation Process*

The first step is for the BD to want to internationalise, which is impacted by internal and external drivers. These drivers motivate the firm to start examining the viability of expanding abroad. The internal drivers were the organisational motivations to expand, which could be, e.g., economic growth and moral perspectives that guide their internal beliefs to internationalise. External drivers are created by external variables, e.g., customer demand, external knowledge of the digital service, and low entry and exit costs. These drivers provide outside pressure for the firm to expand abroad by showing that there exists a market for their services and that it is viable to do so, which further entices the firm to internationalise. The next step is the BDs strategy development, which is influenced by organisational strengths and market characteristics.

The first step in the model is for the BD to want to internationalise. As seen in the model, this is impacted by both internal and external drivers. These motivate and drive the way that the organisations will internationalise. It motivates the organisation to examine the possibilities of expanding abroad and the possible places and ways to do it. The internal drivers are, for example, motivations to expand, such as the possibilities of economic growth. They can also give motivations for how to expand, such as moral perspectives.
that influence the view of different countries and markets. External drivers are, for example, customer demand or the external knowledge of the specific market and low entry and exit costs. These drivers provide external pressure for an organisation to expand abroad.

The next step is for the BD to develop a strategy for expansion. This strategy development can be either conscious or unconscious. It is influenced by things such as market characteristics and the elements of organisations. Market characteristics, such as the digital market, influence the organisation and their strategy, as they need to keep up with the market changes and adapt accordingly. If not, they could fall behind. Country similarities and differences also influence them, as they need to consider a country's culture, economic status, administration and digital development as it might impact the way they need to enter or if it is even a possibility to enter a country. It is also influenced by the elements of an organisation, such as the organisational characteristics and their capabilities. All these things impact what they can do and how they can do things, as they, for example, might need certain skills or be able to act in a certain way as an organisation. After this, it is time to implement the strategy and expand to another country. Here, the market characteristics also influence the organisation and take a more or less significant role depending on how the organisation decides to expand. For example, suppose an organisation expands in a standardised way. In that case, cultural differences may influence success more in certain regions, whereas they may not influence as much if the organisation adapts. The implementation is also influenced by the organisation's tools, in this case, digital tools, testing and networking. Digital tools are used to analyse markets and reach out to potential contacts in new markets, helping with networking at the same time. Testing is another tool they can use, as it helps to test their strategy, whether it is successful or unsuccessful, and if anything needs to be changed.

Tools for expansion are the means for BDs to implement their strategy, including digital tools, testing and networking. Digital tools can vary from email to automation and AI. Testing is another reliable tool to enter new markets using digital infrastructure because of the low costs and flexibility. Networking is another way to find potential customers, and because of the digital infrastructure, it is a reliable and easy means to find additional consumers. Based on these tools and market influences, it will result in the outcome for the BD firm.
The implementation of the strategy will then lead to an outcome, the result of all the decisions made in previous steps. This can be either a success or a failure. No matter the result, the organisation will learn from the experience and know what to and what not to do the next time the organisation expands. For example, if it is a failure, they have the opportunity to go back and change their way of doing things. This results in a continuous loop of learning that will influence the organisation in the future as they develop a strategy for expanding abroad again.
6. Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. The research questions are answered, and theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations, and future research are presented to provide the outcomes and recommendations of the study.

6.1 Study Conclusion

This study investigates the factors that impact BD organisations' internationalisation process. The goal was to find what internal and external factors influence them, whether they rely on specific strategies, and, if so, which ones. To meet these goals, two research questions were developed. The first is "How do internal and external factors influence born digitals in their internationalisation processes?".

Several internal and external factors influencing BD organisations' internationalisation have been identified. Internal factors are attributes within the organisation, which include the organisation's capabilities and the organisation's characteristics. Capabilities such as learning and analytical capability allow for continuous learning and development of organisations. It makes them more adaptable and flexible, which makes them quicker as an organisation, all of which are organisational characteristics seen in the case company. As the SEO industry, and the digital market in general, has been identified as a turbulent market, all these capabilities and characteristics allow organisations to better adapt to the current market to stay ahead and gain a competitive advantage over others. However, in the scope of this study, no internal factors that negatively affect the organisation in their internationalisation process have been identified. This is not to say that they do not exist. This results from the information given during interviews and the fact that organisations
most likely do not want to talk about their faults but instead want to emphasise their strengths. Another internal factor is their moral driver, in which they do not wish to expand to countries where they feel laws and regulations go against their internal moral compass, meaning that an external factor also impacts this simultaneously.

Several external factors were also identified that influence the organisation and their process of going international. One thing that contradicts previous studies and internationalisation models on traditional organisations is that BDs can close to completely ignoring geographic aspects when expanding internationally due to their use of digital infrastructure. When it comes to other external factors, however, they cannot ignore them as easily. Countries' cultures and economic status still affect them. Nevertheless, they can overcome these obstacles using digital tools, minimising cost and language barriers. As the service is entirely digital, they do not need to rely on physical contact with people in other countries but can use digital tools to communicate. Despite needing to adapt to regional languages, they can also use these tools to help translate emails to reach collaborators in various countries. Economic factors also influence what customers they can help in what regions, as the customers perceived value of their service determines whether they can make a profit in a specific region or not. This is generally influenced by the country of origin and the economic status of that country. Other external factors, such as the knowledge others have about the SEO market and how widely developed it is in different countries, also influence them, as they have discovered that less digitally developed countries do not know about the industry and thus are harder to do business with. Another factor related to this is that if a country completely or almost completely lacks digital infrastructure, BDs cannot do any business within that country or region.

The main external driver, however, seems to be the customer's request for internationalisation. BD organisations are more reactive in their internationalisation process than proactive, only expanding where their customer wants to go. The digital market, and so the SEO industry, is a fast-moving, turbulent market, forcing organisations to be flexible and adaptable to the rapid changes of the market. They also need to consider a country's administrative factors when expanding. For example, a country with very restrictive marketing laws increases the difficulty of doing business there as their service is highly marketing-centred. Changes in the digital market and the emergence of new
digital technologies also influence them. One example is if Google changes their algorithm, as their business is to optimise search results for their clients, which is entirely based on that algorithm. The emergence of AI, such as ChatGPT, also influences these organisations. In this case, it has been seen to have a positive effect as it allows for, for example, quicker and more correct translation of text between different languages.

The second research question presented in this paper is "What strategies do born-digital firms rely on in their internationalisation processes?" Based on the empirical findings, the answer to this question is not completely clear. It was seen that they do not develop specific strategies for expanding internationally as they have a very reactive approach to internationalisation rather than proactive. They rely more on trying and testing what works and changing what needs to be changed rather than discussing things beforehand. This is not to say that there is a complete lack of strategies, as one could argue that this process helps them develop a strategy that works for them when expanding internationally. It has been seen that they utilise high amounts of networking to use and create new contacts in various countries worldwide. They use various digital tools to automate the process for things such as market analysis and speed up reaching out to potential collaborators in various countries. The process has been made rather standardised, although they do adopt some aspects depending on the country, for example, the language they write their emails in or the way they formulate certain things. They also adapt what customers they work with best depending on the price they can take for their service from clients from different countries, showing that they use some levels off, for example, all three various types of AAA strategies. The conclusion is that they do use strategies. However, these are not developed before the internationalisation process begins, but instead developed as they go and adapted after what they see needs to be changed and taken into consideration, thus, making the exact strategy they use more unclear to see, as it is under continuous development.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study identified several gaps in previous research, and after analysing the results, this thesis has provided several theoretical contributions. The first contribution is using
an in-depth case study providing an additional understanding of previous papers' results while explaining potential causes for those findings. An in-depth case study examining the influence of internal and external factors and providing further understanding of potential strategies of BDs have not been identified in prior research, thereby providing a new perspective of BDs in the context of internationalisation. This thesis also provides further understanding of prior research results by analysing what motivators and factors influenced the BD's internationalisation processes. For example, research done by Wentrup (2016) and Vadana et al. (2019) discussing the increased internationalisation speed is now more thoroughly understood by our findings. Another significant theoretical contribution is the identified drivers being a significant factor in their internationalisation processes. Specifically, the consumer-driven driver being a major factor for their initial internationalisation processes. Consumer demand being the reason for expansion was only mentioned by Birkinshaw (2022) and is not explained in-depth. Furthermore, the statement made by Monaham et al. (2020) about networking not being a prominent aspect for BDs is not supported in this study. Instead, networking was a crucial factor in their internationalisation strategies. Our study highlights the need for additional research on drivers and their effect on the BD's internationalisation process. The consumer-driven driver also deviates from the Uppsala model, highlighting that current internationalisation processes differ between BDs and traditional firms (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017).

This thesis also provided a model that shows how internal and external factors influence the BD's internationalisation process by considering different themes identified in the study. The model can also highlight how digital factors such as tools and the organisational understanding of digitalisation influences their strategy development and implementation. Lastly, the model displays how the outcome of the expansion provides constant learning that influences the organisations' international process.

### 6.3 Managerial Implications

The result of this study has several managerial implications that can be useful for managers of various BD organisations. It provides knowledge of what internal and external factors influence BDs in their internationalisation process and how other
organisations have faced challenges that have impacted them. The findings of this thesis can help managers in their own internationalisation process.

The thesis provides managers with information about what a BD organisation that is successful in internationalising has done, providing examples of things others can copy. It also presents examples of challenges that one needs to be aware of and what can be done to face and overcome these challenges. It also provides insights into the external and internal factors that influence internationalisation, which an organisation must be aware of.

6.4 Limitations

Throughout the study, multiple limitations affecting the result and the thesis findings have been identified.

The first limitation that has been identified is that all interviews were done in Swedish. Because of this, all interviews were translated afterwards. This can impact the extraction of quotes as certain words may not mean the same thing in Swedish as in English. It could thus impact the quality of the study.

Another limitation is using a single case study, which can impact the results' scope. It could lead to limited transferability of results for other BD organisations. Another limitation due to this is that only one industry was investigated, that of OSP, to which SEO companies belong. BD organisations exist in a wide range of industries, which means it is impossible to say how this could be applied to BD organisations in other industries. This also led to a company from only one country being investigated, which could also be a limitation, as certain things, such as challenges and barriers to expansion, might look different for companies from other countries and regions.

The last limitation is the lack of information given about aspects the organisation is lacking in and needs improvements on. This could be due to the interviewees being subjective in their own experience and not wanting to talk negatively about something where they perceive themselves as successful. It could also be due to the formulation of interview questions and their structure.
6.5 Future Research

Digital development has changed the business environment and, thus, the environment for international businesses. BD organisations as a research area are relatively new; thus, not much research has been done. Because of this, it is recommended to do even further research in this area.

The first recommendation for future research is to do a case study following a BD organisation during its internationalisation processes to follow every step. This could provide even deeper insight into the process they undergo, what factors influence them, the challenges they face, and the decisions they make to face them. Studying a company that has failed in their international expansion could also be interesting, as this could give greater insight into what these organisations have experienced and what pitfalls to avoid. This is due to survivorship bias that might influence an organisation's perspective of its own process due to its success.

As this study has only investigated an OSP, it is recommended that future researchers do studies on BD organisations in different industries to see potential differences between industries. For example, social media platforms or cloud services might experience other challenges than OSPs.

Studying BDs from a broader range of countries is also recommended. Only a Swedish organisation was included in this study, but challenges and barriers to international expansion might look different for organisations from other countries. Here, it would also be useful to include countries outside the EU, as this might also provide different challenges for companies outside the EU to expand inside the EU. As Sweden is part of the EU, they are not hindered by trade barriers that others might face when doing business in other EU countries.
6.6 Societal and Ethical Implications

The focus of this study has been placed on BD organisations, and thus the implications of the study majorly concern businesses. Because of this, it is harder to distinguish what implications it could have in the broader perspective considering society and ethics. Nevertheless, some implications can still be seen. One societal implication is that as businesses grow more digital, so does society. Because of this, it is essential to understand how digital organisations operate as they will affect society at large. What has been seen is that business and internationalisation are done differently than before, which could have implications for the societies in which organisations expand.

One example of broader ethical implications could be when discussing external factors such as country differences and cultural obstacles. It is essential to distinguish between people’s perceived, stereotypical differences and actual differences. Some of these stereotypes might have negative connotations. For example, people from certain countries are lazy. Therefore, this study has not included specific differences, instead looking at the broader context of cultural differences and focusing on how that influences internal processes.
References


Vahle, J. E., & Johanson, J. (2017). From internationalization to evolution: The Uppsala model at 40 years. *Journal of International Business Studies, 48*(9), 1087-1102. [https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-017-0107-7](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-017-0107-7)


Appendix

Appendix 1: Topic Guide

Introductory questions:

(Give information about privacy, recordings, use of name etc. (research ethics))

1. What is your name?
2. Is it okay that we record this interview?
3. Is it okay if we use your name or do you want to be anonymous?
4. (Questions for CEO) Are we allowed to use your company’s name in the paper?
5. What is your position at ...?
6. How long have you been working in this position? How long at the company?
7. Could you tell us a bit more about your daily work life?
8. How many countries are you currently active in?

Before internationalisation:

1. When did you start thinking about international expansion?
2. What was the reason for this?
3. How did the organisational structure look like?
4. Did you have any type of preparation before taking the first step?
   a. What type of preparation?

During internationalisation:

1. What was the first country you expanded to?
   a. Why did you choose this country?
2. What did your process look like when expanding abroad?
3. After did you expand to any other countries?
4. Did your process change or stay the same? Why?
5. Are there any differences in how you operate abroad compared to Sweden?
   a. Did the organisational structure change during your expansion abroad and if so, how?
6. What skills and knowledge did your company possess to give you a competitive advantage in the international market?
7. What challenges did you face during the process and how did you face those challenges?
After internationalisation:

1. Do you feel like you could have done anything differently?
   a. Why and what?
2. Do you think you have been successful in going international?
3. What do you think have been the success factors for it?
4. What skills and knowledge have your company gained from going international?
5. What do you think are the most important factors impacting whether you succeed or not when expanding abroad?

Digital factors:

1. How do you think digital technologies have impacted your internationalisation process?
2. What do you think is different in your process compared to that of non-digital organisations?
3. How do you think being digital from inception has impacted your process of internationalisation?
   a. Is there any difference compared to organisations that have undergone a digitalisation process?

End of interview questions:

1. Is there anything interesting that you would like to go back to or anything you want to add?
2. Do you have any questions for us?
3. Would it be okay for you if we reach out to you if we have any more questions?
4. If you would like to add anything or for us to remove something you have said, you can always contact us.
5. Thank you for your time, it is very appreciated!
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to participate in a master thesis study that is being conducted in collaboration with your company. It is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Thus, we ask you to please take some time to read the following information.

What is the purpose of collecting personal data for this study?
The master thesis is conducted during the spring of 2023, with the purpose of better understanding how born digital organisations undergo internationalisation, and thus what their processes look like, how they develop strategies and why. To understand what this looks like made organisations, interviews will contribute to valuable insights into these processes. The data collected will then be used to conclude the internationalisation process of born digitals, how they internationalise and what other future studies are needed to be made within this area. Collected data will be stored on Microsoft OneDrive, on accounts created by Jönköping University, and only be kept for the duration of the project and until the thesis has been graded.

It is entirely up to you to decide if you want to participate or not. If you do decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and we will ask you to give your consent to participate. All the information that we collect from you during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Information will only be used with your consent.

Under GDPR you have the following rights over your personal data:

- The right to be informed. You must be informed if your personal data is being used.
- The right of access. You can ask for a copy of your data by making a 'subject access request'.
- The right to rectification. You can ask for your data held to be corrected.
- The right to erasure. You can ask for your data to be deleted.
- The right to restrict processing. You can limit the way an organisation uses your personal data if you are concerned about the accuracy of the data or how it is being used.
- The right to data portability. You have the right to get your personal data from an organisation in a way that is accessible and machine-readable. You also have the right to ask an organisation to transfer your data to another organisation.
- The right to object. You have the right to object to any use of your personal data in some circumstances. You have an absolute right to object to an organisation using your data for direct marketing.
- How your data is processed using automated decision-making and profiling. You have the right not to be subject to a decision that is solely on automated processing if the decision affects your legal rights or other equally important matters; to understand the reasons behind decisions made about you by automated processing and the possible consequences of the decisions, and to object to profiling in certain situations, including for direct marketing purposes.

You should also know that you may contact the data protection officer if you are unhappy about the way your data or your participation in this study are being treated at dpo@ju.se.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering whether to take part in this research study.

Contact details for further information:

Thesis supervisor: Anna Blomback - Anna.Bloomback@ju.se
Thesis student: Robert Pussfalt – purc19m@student.ju.se
Thesis student: Lisa Waris Copic – wali19c@student.ju.se
Appendix 3: GDPR Consent Form

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

GDPR Consent for the Study "Organisations of the New Digital Age: A Qualitative Case Study of Born Digital and Their Road to Internationalisation"

This form indicates that I consent to participate in the Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) administered Master Thesis Project by Robert Pussefelt and Lisa Waris Copic.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this study, and I understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

I understand that my organisation has agreed to participate in this research and that all information is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator. I have been advised on what purpose the project is and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research, including safe storage.

My signature below indicates that I choose to participate in the thesis study and consent to JIBS treating my personal data in accordance with current data protection legislation and the data delivered.

If you have any questions regarding the consent form, please contact us at:

Robert Pussefelt: pu0199m@student.ju.se
Lisa Waris Copic: warislic@student.ju.se

Participant’s name [IN CAPITALS] __________________________ Date __________________________

Participant’s signature __________________________

Participant’s email address __________________________
Appendix 4: Coding of Themes One to Four

Example quotes:

"... but it’s because we have been good at identifying which markets are of interest." (Int1)

"... when they have reached out to us, we have been able to solve it, and that has allowed us to build customer trust." (Int1)

"... you start to understand other cultures in a different way (...) Like, all the communicative aspects." (Int5)

"... the work we did, that we associated with various tools, which allows one person to do the job of five people, but with the same quality." (CEO)

"We have a very good ability to quickly establish new media and market ourselves with that effectiveness." (Int1)

"You know what you’re doing; when you work with a partner that understands other market." (Int1)

"We have to be incredible quick and adaptable all the time because all the time because we work in the SEO business." (Int5)

"From one day to another everything can turn around, and then you have to be there and adjust." (Int5)

Example quotes:

"Some countries have a greater understanding of what we do..." (Int1)

"The first part is always customer-driven, meaning that we have a customer who wants to expand into another country..." (CEO)

"There are external influences, so in that way, it’s almost risk-free to enter new countries." (CEO)

"You can learn a country in a second, because I don’t have any employed staff there." (CEO)

"When we find a gap somewhere where we can make money, then we make that deal." (CEO)

"... it would probably be the moral-based reasons that one doesn’t want to work in certain markets..." (Int3)

"There has been an economic incentive to do that (setup), to build a profitable business." (CEO)

Example quotes:

When working with something as digital as we do, it opens up the possibility for us to work in a different way." (Int1)

"If Google changes something in its algorithm or releases an update, we must be able to turn around quickly." (Int1)

"... from one morning to the next, something can completely change what the standard is..." (Int1)

"In several counties we have realized that, okay, it’s not economically feasible for us to pursue this." (CEO)

"There’s people who have never done this before or have knowledge of what we do..." (Int4)

"... which I believe is mostly a language barrier because French people don’t respond to English E-mails." (Int2)

"It is possible that an event has occurred that a new law has been enacted, that makes it much more difficult for us." (Int4)

"Classical Western countries, that are very commercial by nature, like big markets words very well..." (CEO)

"Germany has over 80 million inhabitants (...) and there are tremendously many websites and different news media." (CEO)

"I feel that the barrier in English-speaking countries was quite small, it was quite similar to Swedish business culture." (CEO)

"But Europe was really the first step, because the regulations there are quite similar to those in Sweden." (Int1)
"We need to (...) adapt ourselves in order to be able to enter and buy in other countries as well." (Int4)

"They (Netherlands) are like, five to ten years behind us in terms of development, both competitively and how they work." (CDD)

"We actually use a foundation, the way we have done before, and it has become a standard since then as well." (Int1)

"...We want to become the biggest in the world in what we do, and then it’s not enough with just Sweden or Europe." (Int3)

"If it’s difficult, then we’ll give it a try and see what we can get from it, and then we’ll take the things we can gather." (Int4)

"Then there are tools that we see which have greatly increased efficiency for us..." (CEU)

"But if we may be come into contact with someone who has sites over there, then we can contact them and then have them." (Int4)

Example quotes

Codes
- Adaptation
- Exploit Difference
- Standardisation
- Economies of Scale
- Testing
- Digital Tools Usage
- Networking

Categories
- Entry Modes
- Methods for Expansion
- Tools for Expansion