JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
International Business School

The Role of Formal Internal Communication In Organizational Identification

- *A case study of two Swedish offices*

BACHELOR	
THESIS WITHIN:	Business Administration
NUMBER OF CREDITS:	15 hp
PROGRAM OF STUDY:	International Management
AUTHOR:	Mathias Broomé 920121 Silvia Ko 950106 Evelina Rosander 930115
TUTOR:	Khizran Zehra & Elvira Kaneberg
JÖNKÖPING	May 2016

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude toward our tutors Khizran Zehra and Elvira Kaneberg for their continuous and thorough constructive feedback. A big thank you also goes to our seminar group for the valuable discussions throughout the entire process. In addition, we would like to thank B3017 for keeping us entertained during countless hours of writing.

Acknowledgements go out to Desirée Petersson and Calle Karlsson for their time and valuable contributions, enabling us to learn about formal internal communication and organizational identification. We are also appreciative to the respondents of the questionnaires as we otherwise would never be able to complete our work.

Last but not least, we would like to express our thanks to JIBS for offering workshops, advice and guidelines to help us forward in this complex and challenging bachelor thesis.

Mathias Broomé	*Silvia Ko*	*Evelina Rosander*

May 23rd 2016, Jönköping.

Abstract

Title: The Role of Formal Internal Communication In Organizational Identification
Authors: Mathias Broomé, Silvia Ko and Evelina Rosander
Tutors: Khizran Zehra and Elvira Kaneberg
Date: 2015-05-23
Subject Terms: internal communication, organizational identification, channels, formal communication, managers.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the formal internal communication in business organizations, in particular the role of communication channels, providing managers with insights about employee OI.

Problem

The match between individuals and their organizations, organizational identification (OI), increases employees' job motivation and satisfaction. This topic therefore deserves to be studied since strong employee OI carries important value in improving and influencing not only individual employee performance, but also the overall performance of businesses. Internal communication from management to employees leads to common thoughts about the organization that further provides members with the feeling of being part of and identifying with the organization. Since current research lacks evidence on which particular formal internal communication channels managers use to impact OI in employees, a clear gap in the literature is identified.

Method

A combination of primary- and secondary research has been used in order to fulfill the purpose of this study. A Triangulation approach has been applied consisting of semi-structured interviews with managers at two case companies and questionnaires filled in by the employees in those offices. This has provided valuable empirical insights for the analysis and conclusion.

Conclusion

The authors of this thesis have found that the greater the level of formality a channel has, the greater OI the employees perceive. Also, the size of a company matters. The larger a company is, the more frequent use of formal internal communication channels is necessary. The findings in this thesis further show that managers have an evident opportunity to affect OI in their employees. By choosing the most suitable communication channel in accordance to the specific situation, managers can affect employee OI in a positive way. It is also proven that receiving information and instructions directly from the managers can enhance OI in employees.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

1. Introduction

In this chapter, the reader will be introduced to the research topic, as well as the background to the problem and the purpose of this thesis. This section will then conclude with the research questions and delimitations that outline the boundaries of the thesis.

1.1 Background and Context of Study

Due to globalization and its increasing competitive intensity, some firms survive by growing or internationalizing, and some simply go out of business. It is therefore of vital importance that companies strategically respond to these new competitive pressures in order to stay competitive (Akhter & Fernando Pinto Barcellos, 2013). A company's level of competition, or its ability to maintain competitive, can be dependent on its employees' willingness to work toward their company's success. Further, it is needed that employees are involved, motivated and enthusiastic about their job and thus work in a manner that facilitates a company's interests and goals (Ehambaranathan & Murugasu, 2015). It is therefore highly relevant and important for managers, employees and companies themselves to uncover the key to keep employees motivated and enthusiastic and hence maintain businesses' competitiveness and performance.

Early research within social psychology displays that all individuals relate, or identify, themselves with social groups and adapt their behavior in favor of those particular groups. In essence, identifying with a certain target is the match between an individual's values and the target's values (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska & George, 2004). Furthermore, individuals have a natural will to classify themselves into various social categories (Turner, Brown & Tajfel, 1979). This classification process allows individuals to explain the nature of themselves in relation to others as well as logically understand their social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In order to identify with social groups, individuals are required to be familiar with their group membership, appreciate it, and be emotionally attached to it (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008). All this research has set the basis of social identity theory and social categorization theory. The two have ever since been developed and used in the field of organizations. The concept is then explained to be a subcategory called organizational identification (OI) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

OI is defined as the extent to which organizational members view their own values in regards to the organization's attributes (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail 1994). Further, the degree to which individuals identify themselves with an organization will enhance their self-esteem (Dukerich, Golden & Shortell, 2002). As a result of the match between individuals and their organizations, employees' job motivation and satisfaction will increase (Karanika-Murray, Duncan, Pontes & Griffiths, 2015).

Having effective internal communication is crucial as it shapes the foundation for, among other successful outcomes, identification (Lefaix-Durand & Kozak, 2009). When effective internal communication is achieved, employee job satisfaction and performance will be established (Rosenfeld et al., 2004), a condition that has previously been described as a way to define employees that have found a match between themselves and the organization (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015).

The topics of communication and OI were introduced to the authors in the courses of their bachelor program, which has provided an adequate platform to carry out this investigation. The authors of this thesis therefore feel comfortable with this particular subject regarding the role of formal internal communication in OI.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Communication can in a broad sense be defined as both formal and informal exchange of accurate, relevant and well-timed information between parties (Lefaix-Durand & Kozak, 2009). Internal communication within businesses is then defined in the same manner and extends it to take the firm's varying stakeholders at all levels in the organization into account (Welch & Jackson, 2007). This internal communication can be achieved through various means of channels such as e-mails, telephone calls, meetings (Tenhiälä & Salvador, 2014), face-to-face conversations, video conferencing, web-based tools, bulletins, documents and memos (Oke & Idiagbon-Oke, 2010). The reason why internal communication is important from management to employees, that is top-down, is because it leads to common thoughts about the organization that further provides members with the feeling of being part of and identifying with the organization (Chreim, 2002). Managers therefore possess important positions to influence the degree to which employees identify with organizations.

It is found that the relationship between communication and OI has been studied from many perspectives, but that the specific field of formal internal communication and OI is still under-researched (Chaput, Brummans & Cooren, 2011). Chaput et al. (2011) further describe previous OI research as being much centered around how reliable and valid the scales used to measure OI are. What previous research point out is that the lack of studies are within the in-depth understanding of how OI can be established through the way of communication. This is also supported by Tanis & Beukeboom (2011), who state that OI has been widely discussed in terms of the outcomes it may generate but not in the field of how to reach it, meaning there is lack of research within how OI is established. Tanis & Beukeboom (2011) further claim that even if this area is still unclear, research points to the fact that communication can have an important role in positively affecting OI.

1.2.1 Problem Statement and Motivation of Study

Since current research lacks evidence on what formal internal communication managers use to impact OI in employees, a clear gap in the literature is identified. This topic deserves to be studied since strong employee OI carries important value in improving and influencing not only the overall performance of businesses, but also individual employee performance. As previous research points out the importance of managers in establishing OI in employees, this thesis will focus on the formal internal communication channels used by managers. Theoretical and empirical findings in this thesis aim to contribute to existing literature by providing insights to specific formal internal communication channels that can aid managers in establishing strong employee OI.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the formal internal communication in business organizations, in particular the role of communication channels, providing managers with insights about employee OI.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: What role does formal internal communication play in organizational identification?
RQ2: In what ways do managers impact organizational identification through formal internal communication channels?

1.5 Delimitations

In contrast to the purpose where the authors state what this investigation intends to do, this delimitations section outlines the conscious decisions to exclude factors as well as defines the overall research boundaries.

This thesis will neither investigate nor carry out empirical research on more than two offices because it is not feasible within the restricted timeframe. Further, purposely leaving out international markets and only focusing on the Swedish market also has to do with the timeframe of this thesis. It would not be achievable to make contact with managers in international markets as it would be too time consuming.

The choice of not examining managers at headquarters is done to avoid the issue of top managers at headquarters being aloof from their employees. Investigating managers at headquarters would hence be too problematic for the purpose of this thesis.

There are many other factors that could have effects, either direct or indirect, on the extent to which employees feel identified with their organizations. These include hierarchy and structure of organizations, organizational culture, employee working experience, employee personal factors, number of years working at organizations, organizational ethics, industry, job position, external view of organizations and so on. All these factors are left out in order to solely examine the role between formal internal communication and OI.

This thesis does not aim to generalize the final results because it focuses on a small fraction of a market. Generalizing would most likely lead to biased or even inconclusive reasonings.

1.6 Definitions

Manager

- In this thesis, the authors will use the term manager to describe the individual leading employees in offices.

Employee

- The term employee is used to describe the full-time workers in offices.

Branch Office

- Branch offices are offices that are physically located away from the organization's headquarter.

Organizational Identification (OI)

- OI is defined as how the organizational members perceive themselves as sharing the same definitional attributes as the organization, and to which degree they do it (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994). In this thesis, the authors will assess OI as when employees feel part of its organization.

Figure 1: Definitions, developed by the authors (2016)

1.7 Thesis Disposition

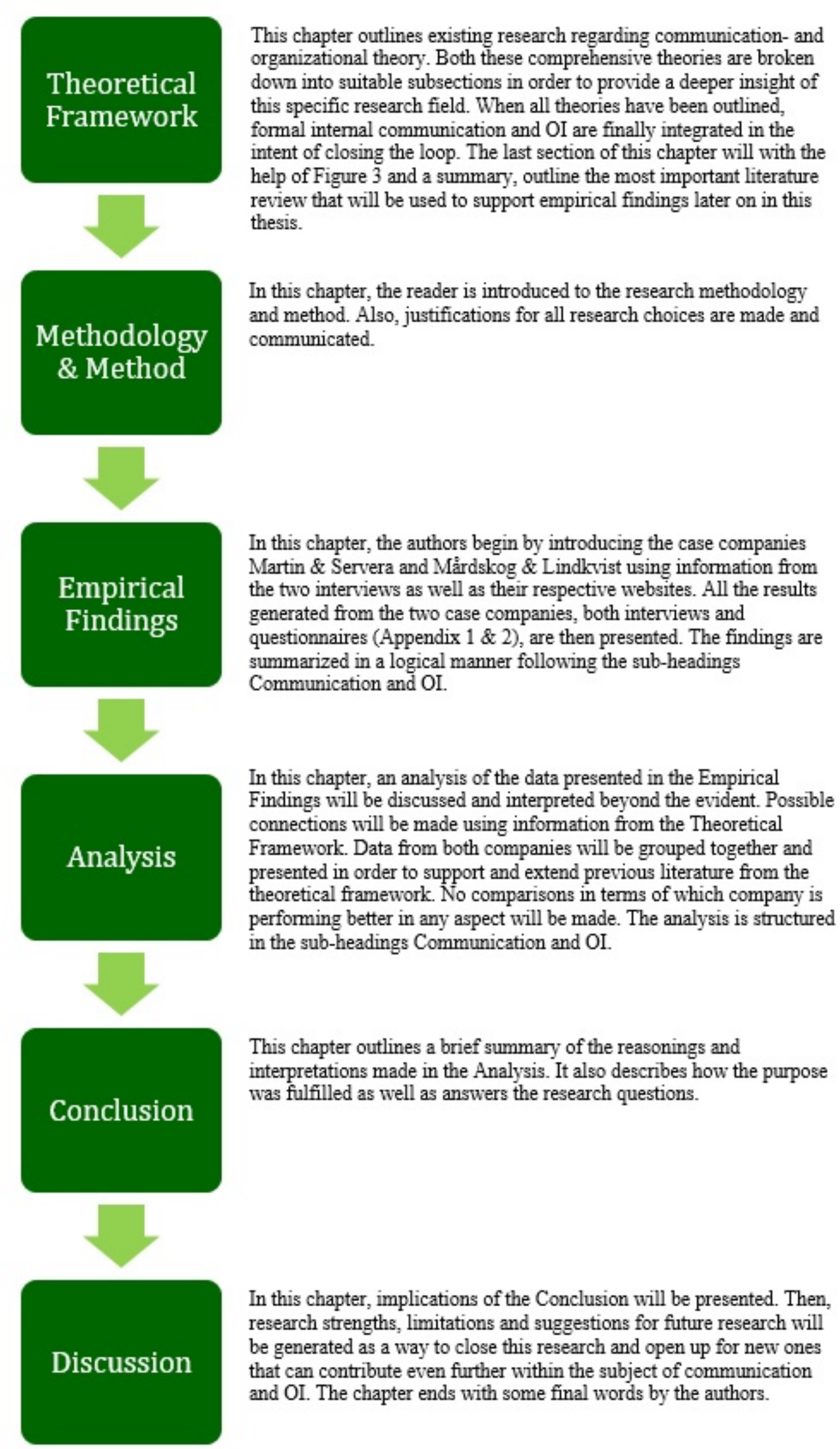

Figure 2: Thesis Disposition, developed by the authors (2016)

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines existing research regarding communication- and organizational theory. Both these comprehensive theories are broken down into suitable subsections in order to provide a deeper insight of this specific research field. When all theories have been outlined, formal internal communication and OI are finally integrated in the intent of closing the loop. The last section of this chapter will with the help of Figure 3 and a summary, outline the most important literature review that will be used to support empirical findings later on in this thesis.

2.1 Organizational Theory

The concept of organizational theory is a broad field of theory and spans over many different concepts. Beginning with the underlying levels of organizations explained as living organisms (Eriksson/Zetterquist, Mullern & Styhre, 2011), to a more comprehensive notion rather explaining them as multiple components made up of structures, systems, information, control, human resource practices and decision-making processes (Miller, Greenwood & Prakash, 2009). Miller et al. (2009) further describe that these components are the basis of organizational action. The behavior of an organization is hence influenced by its internal architecture. On the other hand, Celo, Nebus and Wang (2015) propose that having multiple components within a company create complex systems that integrate in a non-simple manner, something that ultimately affect organizational performance.

Organizations operate around missions, visions, goals, objectives and strategic intentions that are essential to remain the direction of organizational performance (Khan, Chaudhry & Khan, 2010). These elements are positively correlated to organizational accomplishments, as evidenced in a study conducted by Khan et al. (2010). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of leaders and managers to implement these goals in organizations (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). This is achieved through having effective communication with employees to ensure uniform organizational purpose and to further avoid any mismatches (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015).

These frameworks of organizational theory provide a solid foundation for understanding the motives and goals that characterize organizations. Furthermore, this knowledge may help in determining the importance of formal internal communication and its effect on OI.

2.1.1 Organizational Identification (OI)

OI is defined as how the organizational members perceive themselves as sharing the same definitional attributes as the organization, and to which degree they do it (Dutton et al., 1994). The importance of OI and employee morale is supported by the finding that strongly identified employees feel more satisfied with their jobs, are more likely to engage and feel a presence in their work and have increased motivation to dedicate themselves to their work tasks (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). OI is further claimed to help determine "who am I?" in an organization, thus defining how an individual views himself/herself in terms of the organization in which he/she is a member of (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). How individuals view the identity of their organization reflects the identity of the self and self-esteem will be enhanced as a result (Dukerich et al., 2002). In other words, the match between the self and the organization will result in, as previously presented, more engaged and satisfied employees (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Moreover, how individuals believe that outsiders view the identity of their organization is crucial since individuals have a tendency to attach importance to the social group they belong to. This external image could appear in different forms, including word of mouth, opinions of reference groups and company-controlled information shown to the public (Dutton et al., 1994). As for the organizational identity, external assessment also plays a key role in how individuals view their self-concept and increase in self-esteem (Dukerich et al., 2002). This is further highlighted by the finding that the more prestigious an individual believe that outsiders view their organization, the greater the identification between the self and the organization (Smidts et al., 2001).

Additionally, it is found that OI can help explain that the more an individual feels part of an organization, the more he or she will think and act according to the organization's perspective (Dutton et al., 1994). Mael & Ashforth (1992) further claims that OI is connected with how a person perceives similarity and shared fate with the organization. This is also highlighted by Dukerich et al., (2002) who claim that OI can be considered strong when individuals perceive the values and goals as part of their sense of self.

There are a number of underlying factors that can lead to OI in employees. The level of contact between the employee and the organization are positively correlated. This means that the higher level of contact with different people at different levels in the organization will increase the employee's OI (Dutton et al., 1994). Dutton et al. (1994) further describe that the intensity and duration of the connection between the company and the employee also affect OI. This implies that the employment length, the hierarchical situation and the importance of the employee have an impact on OI. Furthermore, Mael and Ashforth (1989) state that a person feels connected to a group when the group and the person share the same values. Another aspect that can influence OI is the connection between the personal self-expression of the employees. If this matches how the company expresses itself, it will enhance the OI (Dutton et al., 1994). An additional way for employees to perceive OI is when they feel noticed. This occurs when managers recognize individual contributions (Chreim, 2002).

2.2 Communication Theory

In broad terms, communication can be defined as formal and informal exchange of relevant, accurate and well-timed information between parties (Lefaix-Durand & Kozak, 2009). The specific communication practices that businesses undertake are significantly influenced by several factors. Mason and Leek (2012) exemplify timing, content of information, emotional state and desired outcome as important components determining communication practices. Furthermore, these elements shape the communication medium, or channel, that business actors use to exchange information (Mason & Leek, 2012). Communication differentiates itself in internal communication and external communication. Lievens, Moenaert and Jegers (1999) define internal communication as communication within the organizations and external communication as communication between organizations. The need for effective internal communication is crucial, as it shapes the foundation for successful outcomes such as identification, trust and cooperation (Lefaix-Durand & Kozak, 2009).

2.2.1 Internal Communication

Internal communication has been defined in several ways. Looking at the definition by Kalla (2005), internal communication is described as an integrated internal communication activity including all types of communications, both formal and informal, that are taking place within all levels in an organization. However, Welch and Jackson (2007) define internal communication as a strategic management style in which interactions and relationships between a firm and its varying stakeholders are taken into account. When doing this, four dimensions of internal communication arise. These four dimensions are internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication, internal corporate communication and internal line manager communication (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Firstly, internal team peer communication is achieved through a two-way direction where employees interact in a team situation in which they may discuss team tasks. Secondly, internal project peer communication is a two-way direction process in which employees discuss project information and project issues. Thirdly, internal corporate communication is achieved through predominantly a one-way direction in which the strategic managers communicate the organizational issues, for example goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements to their employees. Lastly, line management communication is achieved at basically every level of the organization. This could for instance include matters that concern the employees in terms of setting targets and appraisals from the superior (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Internal communication has in its general sense been regarded as very important in business communication. It is shown that effective internal communication can enhance employee job satisfaction and performance (Rosenfeld et al., 2004). It is further found that internal communication influences the way employees talk to each other about the organization, and then how this talk is portrayed to people outside the firm (Omilion-

Hodges & Baker, 2014). In addition, messages and information received from top management give a sense of belonging, and employees will feel they are important when they have access to full information from the boss (White, Vanc & Stafford, 2010). Internal communication can also be explained as a way to satisfy the needs and experiences of the employees and is a process that is dynamic and multi-faced. It is an important activity in which the relationship between the organization and the employee can be enhanced (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). In contrast, lack of internal communication can lead to a diminished efficiency in the workplace (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

2.2.2 Communication Channels

As described previously, communication is the exchange of information between different parties (Lefaix-Durand & Kozak, 2009). This interchange of information naturally requires channels to go through in order to be delivered from one person to another. These channels are called communication channels. There are various types of communication channels that people use when exchanging information. Some common channels are e-mails, telephone calls, meetings (Tenhiälä & Salvador, 2014), face-to-face conversations, video conferencing, web-based tools, bulletins, documents and memos (Oke & Idiagbon-Oke, 2010). It is further explained that face-to-face, video-conferencing, telephone calls and e-mails carry a greater realistic feeling of actual physical presence of the person communicating information (Oke & Idiagbon-Oke, 2010). The choice of communication channels however depends on the nature or characteristics of a task. It means that channels are more appropriate in some situations and less appropriate in others. Furthermore, the more appropriate a channel is to the nature of the task, the more effective the information will be communicated. The information itself will also be less ambiguous if delivered through a suitable channel (Oke & Idiagbon-Oke, 2010). This is important in order to avoid misunderstandings. On the other hand, other existing research explains how workers in organizations sometimes use combinations of communication channels, either at the same time or in a sequence, in order to complete an exchange of information to another party. It is suggested that employees do this because of norms or routines within various organizations (Watson-Manheim & Bélanger, 2007).

As explained earlier, internal communication can be accomplished through various means of channels. What has been found in a research on chief executive officers (CEOs) is that most CEOs commonly use email, but also face-to-face channels by talking and managing through direct contact with their employees. The findings also show that the usage of intranet and print media such as magazines, newsletters, posters, memos, and fliers are both popular and important tools in internal communication. Other, but less commonly used tools are teleconferencing and streamline video/audio (Men, 2015).

It is shown that employees prefer face-to-face communication by their managers due to of its nature of immediate feedback and management's ability to directly listen and respond (Men, 2014). The finding that employees prefer having discussion forums and direct meetings with their managers strengthens this (Friedl & Vercic, 2010). Also, this same study shows that information that is considered strategic was preferably received by traditional channels such as e-mail newsletters, intranet news and employee meetings. Conversely, and despite social media's vast usage in the employees' private lives, workers still prefer to use the intranet news feed instead of social media when receiving general organizational information. Furthermore, social networking for the sharing of intranet news is preferred over employee magazines. Likewise is employee discussion forums preferred over any type of media when the discussion is centered around issues concerning themselves (Friedl & Vercic, 2010).

2.2.3 Formal Internal Communication

Formal internal communication is a broad term that includes multiple communication channels. Tenhiälä and Salvador (2014) define formal internal communication as a standard protocol that describes *when* and *what* is being communicated and *who* is participating in the communication transaction. The formal communication is therefore traceable and is often beforehand known to the participants. Tang and Thomas (2015) extend Tenhiälä and Salvador's (2014) description and include rules, conventions and standard procedures through predetermined schedules, memos and management reports. The arrangement of formal internal communication is often determined from the top and specified in advance (Tang & Thomas, 2015). The formal internal communication can be further developed using a system that integrates the employees through a platform. This can be used as an automated version of a formal communication protocol (Tenhiälä & Salvador, 2014). Formal internal communication works as a facilitator for the mediation of information throughout the entire organization (Tang & Thomas, 2015), which sometimes makes large investments in internal communication systems necessary (Tenhiälä & Salvador, 2014). Lacking the necessary formal internal communication structure may lead to loss of information and therefore in the lack of enough teamwork. Since the formal internal communication is traceable, a better understanding of the colleagues' knowledge becomes evident, which eases the cooperation (Tang & Thomas, 2015). However, all factors that Tenhiälä and Salvador (2014) mention in order for communication to be perceived as formal do not need to be present. An example of this is a regular meeting. Even though all the participants are unaware of the content beforehand, it is treated as formal since the time is known and it follows a standard protocol (Tenhiälä & Salvador, 2014).

2.3 Formal Internal Communication and OI

Communication provides information regarding the extent to which members feel accepted as valued organizational colleagues (Smidts et al., 2001). It can particularly affect employees' degree of identifying with an organization (Bartels et al., 2007). Open and respectful communication will generate feelings of being part of a group as well as the feeling of self-esteem. Through such communication attributes, employees' willingness to identify with a company increases (Smidts et al., 2001). This further underlines the importance of communication as it steers the shaping of OI in organizational members (Larson & Pepper, 2003). Furthermore, continual communication from management to employees, that is top-down, leads to common thoughts about the organization that additionally establishes members with the feeling of being part of and identifying with the organization (Chreim, 2002).

According to various modern researchers, the specific ways of formal internal communication in which OI is established through are much undiscovered or paid little attention to. Researchers pose the question of how, empirically, it can be investigated and also put it forward as an interesting future research perspective (Chaput, Brummans & Cooren, 2011). This view is supported by other researchers that have studied the relationship between communication and OI (Chen, Chi & Friedman, 2013; Bartels et al., 2007; Millward, Haslam & Postmes, 2007; Bartels et al., 2006). The need for investigating the role of formal internal communication in establishing strong OI in employees is therefore evident.

2.4 Theoretical Framework Summary

The theoretical framework starts with the notion that organizational theory seeks to spell out why organizations exist. This is explained by their operations around missions, visions, goals, objectives and strategic intentions. The next section of the theoretical framework outlines the importance of OI. This includes findings such as the stronger the employee OI, the more efficient and motivated they become. Touching upon the communication theory, which is explained as communication that can come in both formal and informal forms, findings show that internal communication act as an important factor in establishing and thus enhancing OI. This is proved valid by the finding that internal communication can increase the level of employee job satisfaction and performance which are two important elements of OI. Internal communication can be achieved through various channels including e-mails, telephone calls, meetings, face-to-face conversations, video conferencing, web-based tools, bulletins, documents and memos. This internal communication can further be divided into two subcategories, namely formal and informal communication. With this thesis focusing solely on formal internal communication, the theoretical framework explains it as communication held through pre-determined protocols. Also, formal internal communication is about following rules, conventions and standard procedures and this way of communicating comes from management to employees.

Last but not least, findings show that continual communication from management to employees can help shape OI in employees. It is nevertheless not found in previous research what the specific formal internal communication channels to establish OI are. This thesis therefore aims to extend the existing literature by providing insights and indications on if and how managers can impact employee OI through their way of communicating.

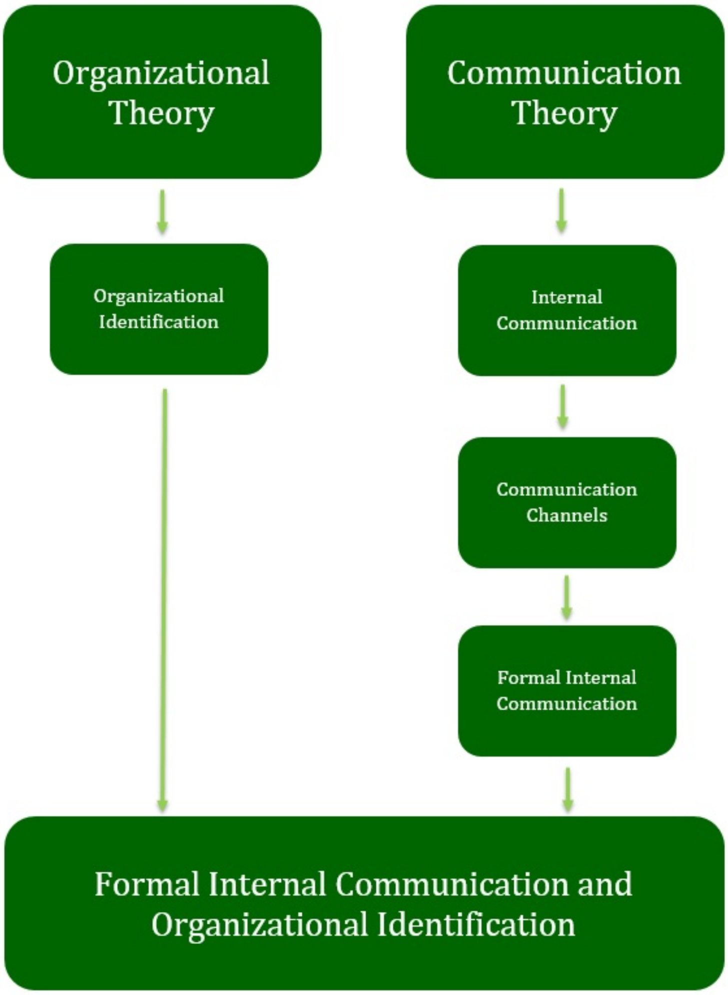

Figure 3: Theoretical Framework Links, developed by the authors (2016)

3. Methodology and Method

In this chapter, the reader is introduced to the research methodology and method. Also, justifications for all research choices are made and communicated.

3.1 Research Methodology

3.1.1 Research Approach

The aim of this thesis was to examine the role of formal internal communication in OI. The chosen method to approach this study was hence through collecting qualitative data from case studies in two branch offices within the wholesales food industry. Since the study focused on soft and intangible subjects, a qualitative approach was more suitable as it facilitated the understanding of values (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The collected data was then interpreted, discussed and made conclusions upon. For this reason, the methodology used in this thesis followed an interpretivist philosophy, that is interactive research through interviews, observations and analysis of existing literature (Williamson, 2002). Collis and Hussey (2014) further describes that interpretivism centers around the complexity of social phenomena. Identifying a research philosophy in an early stage is important as it illustrates the way researchers view the world (Saunders et al., 2007), as well as enables the researchers to reflect on choices and examine why the study was carried out in certain ways (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

This thesis followed an inductive reasoning style as shown in Figure 4. An inductive approach is when one begins with reviewing relevant and significant existing literature prior to choosing a research subject. A gap is then identified that no one else has thought about. After this, empirical data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. Theories will then emerge and be developed as a result of analyzing that data (Bryman, 2012). The underlying reasons for using an inductive reasoning style in this thesis were numerous. Firstly, it sought to generate opportunities for further exploratory research. Secondly, it developed a suitable fit between social reality of the research and the theoretical framework since it was constructed in that specific reality. Thirdly, it was a more suitable approach since the thesis studied a small sample of group subjects. Lastly, this study held a relatively flexible structure that allowed changes in the research as it progressed, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2007).

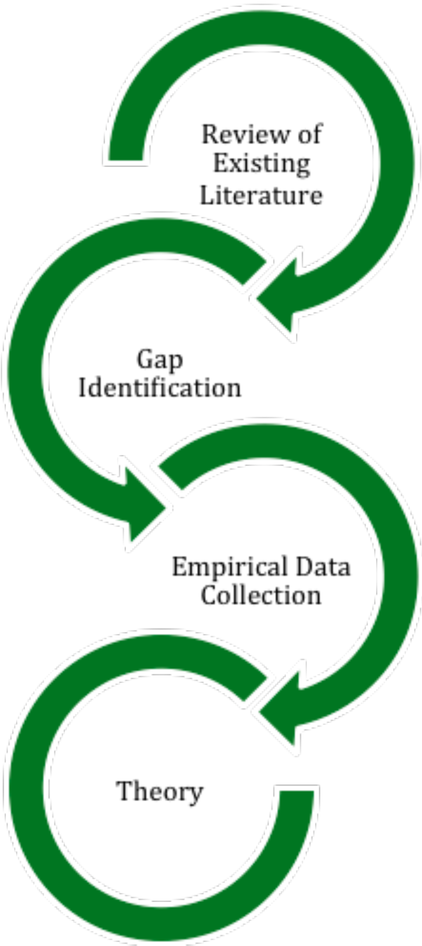

Figure 4: Inductive Research Approach, developed by the authors (2016)

The qualitative data for this thesis was collected through case studies. This is a common method used by business researchers (Easton, 2010). In these case studies, the analysis between organizations and employees is difficult to access and structurally complex. Therefore, by using qualitative data, a case study can be written and provide important insights into the employee OI. In comparison to statistical methods, case studies provide more comprehensive and descriptive results (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005). This suited the nature of the thesis as it, as previously written, regarded rather soft and intangible subjects. The specifics in which the qualitative data was gathered through were semi-structured interviews with managers at two offices in the wholesales food industry, as well as questionnaires filled in by employees at those two business branches. The qualitative method contributed with openness (Jacobsen, 2002), which strengthened the result with different nuances of the subject and therefore a more thorough understanding. The two branch offices that were subject to the collection of qualitative data were small-sized with less than 50 employees, one located in Malmö, Sweden, and the other in Norrköping, Sweden.

3.1.2 Research Design

The design of any research needs to correspond to its main research questions in order to be effective. The design of a research functions as a plan that outlines how the research questions will be approached and answered. Saunders et al (2007) further state that it is important to give valid underlying reasons for the choice of research design. This is to make the credibility of the thesis stronger.

Since the nature of this thesis was to investigate the role of formal internal communication in employee OI, an exploratory research design was appropriate. An exploratory research design aims to look into an unsure nature of a problem (Saunders et al, 2007), hence the name exploratory. It also allows more flexibility if, throughout the course of the research, new findings were to be discovered that require changes to be made. Saunders et al. (2007) explain three ways of undertaking exploratory research. These are reviewing existing literature, interviewing experts in the research field, and lastly conducting focus group interviews. In this thesis, the existing literature was the theoretical framework and the experts were the semi-structured interviews with the managers of the two offices. However, instead of focus groups, as only suggested by Saunders et al. (2007), this thesis used questionnaires with ordinary employees at the offices as the final component of the exploratory research design as seen in Figure 5.

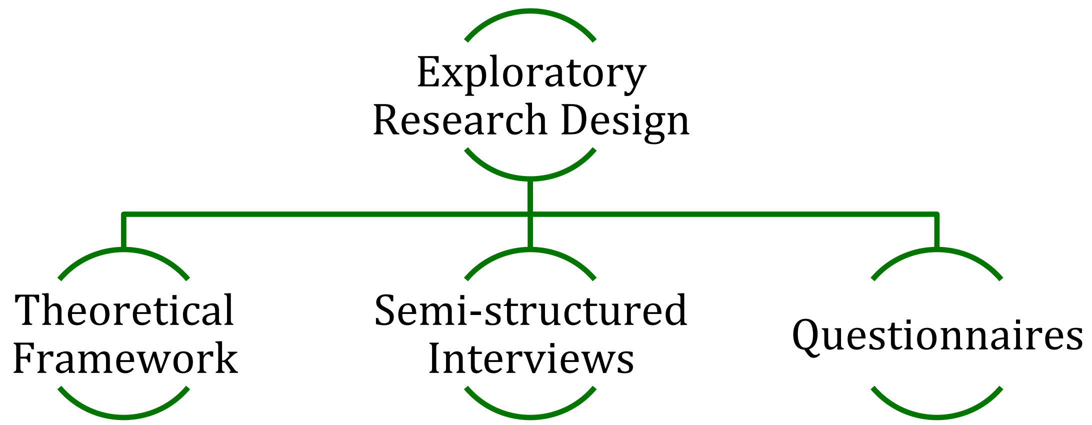

Figure 5: Exploratory Research Design, developed by the authors (2016)

In addition to exploratory research design, two other alternatives called explanatory and descriptive exist. These are research designs that aim to create causal relationships between different factors. In both cases, the research phenomenon must be clearly defined before collecting data (Saunders et al, 2007). Because this thesis explored something that is new, and cannot be defined prior to carrying out the data collection, explanatory and descriptive research designs were not appropriate and thus ruled out.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Case Study

A case study is done to examine a contemporary phenomenon, with the situation that will be investigated being within its natural real-life context (Yin, 2009). This type of study is useful when the research will focus on questions such as *what* and *how*. The data that needs to be collected will be done through various techniques, and the use of one technique does not exclude the use of the other. These include, among others, interviews, questionnaires, observations and documentary analysis. It is highly relevant to use multiple techniques within one study in order to get a clearer picture in the analysis and a more correct conclusion. This method is referred to as Triangulation (Saunders et al., 2007), which will be described in the method of this thesis.

A case study has four main purposes. First of all, it strives for explaining the causal links in a phenomena or a current event. Secondly, it takes the phenomena's natural environment into account and helps describe the issue from this perspective. Thirdly, a case study can be used to illustrate specific themes. Lastly, a case study can be a good way to clarify uncertain outcomes in a phenomenon. It is however important to pinpoint the downsides as well. A case study cannot by itself be used for generalization due to its lack of thoroughness. Why this is an issue is because of the risk in letting biased and unclear opinions affect the analysis and conclusion of the collected data. Another reason why generalization is improper is due to the fact that the data will be collected from mainly one source (Yin, 2009).

Having outlined the purpose of a case study, this particular research method was therefore deemed applicable. The authors examined a contemporary phenomenon that was within its real-life context, and tried to answer the *what* and *how* questions. The research further made use of multiple techniques in order to collect the needed data for a proper conclusion. These were interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaires were treated as a complement to the interviews which made the Triangulation method evident. Despite the fact that this thesis used two sources, and Yin (2009) claims that the generalization problem occurs when using mainly one source, the authors of this thesis still judged the sample size to be too small for generalization.

3.2.2 Selection Criteria

Snowball sampling is a method commonly used for collecting and choosing different samples to investigate. The method is most likely to be selected when it is difficult to identify the desired members of a population (Saunders et al., 2007) and when there is an absence of a sampling frame for the population (Bryman, 2012). The snowball sampling method was therefore useful for this thesis for those two reasons.

Snowball sampling is implemented in different steps. The first step is to get in contact with a possible sample for the case and explain the purpose of the research. This first contact will then make suggestions for another case that will fit the investigation. This process continues until the sample is large enough (Saunder et al., 2007). The snowball sampling method includes several difficulties, with the most important part being the risk of biased results. When choosing the next case based upon the first case contacts, the chance of receiving a very homogenous sample increases. Another difficulty is to get in contact with the new case and to persuade them to participate in the study (Saunders et al., 2007).

The choice of industry, that is wholesales food, was decided upon through the snowball sampling. From first doing a pilot study, the authors asked the pilot study manager about whether she knew someone working within sales that could help with this research. The manager had a contact within her network that worked with sales, and this person worked as the manager for a company operating within the wholesales food industry. The authors then got in contact with the sales manager at Martin & Servera and explained to her the purpose of the study, and asked whether she was willing to participate in it. Since the sales manager was working within the wholesales food industry, and the snowball sampling implies asking the first contact for any suggestions for a second contact, it resulted in the second company Mårdskog & Lindkvist. From doing this, the wholesales food industry was chosen.

The underlying reasons to why the authors specifically wanted to look at salespersons was because in order to be an effective salesperson, one has to believe in the product or service that its company is offering. Specifically, one has to believe that the purpose of the product or service will have a noble effect on customers (McLeod, 2012). Hence a salesperson has to believe in the company itself. Also, since a wholesale food organization's goal is to sell their products and services to various restaurants and to establish strong customer loyalty and thus create long-term business relationships, believing in the company and its offerings is therefore part of their jobs. This makes up the basis of OI and could therefore naturally be connected to this thesis' research purpose. Having this said, the choice of industry did not affect the results of the thesis as the questions were not industry specific.

Furthermore, the choice of conducting the empirical data collection on branch offices rather than headquarters was decided upon because those offices are typically smaller in size, both physically and employee-wise as compared to headquarters. The authors of this thesis assumed that interviewing smaller offices with fewer employees would lead to a better and closer contact as well as carefully thought out qualitative results. Also, managers at branch offices have less distance to their employees, again as compared to managers at headquarters. Because managers' influence on OI requires close relationships (Chreim, 2002), it was of importance for the purpose of this thesis to collect the empirical data from branch offices where managers and employees had close contact.

3.2.3 Data Collection

The first interview with the manager at Martin & Servera AB was carried out on the 15th of March 2016. The duration of the interview was approximately one hour. It was conducted face-to-face in the manager's office in Malmö, Sweden. The second interview with the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist AB was conducted on the 30th of March 2016. The duration of this interview was also one hour. The interview was carried out face-to-face in the manager's office in Norrköping, Sweden. Both interviews were based on the questions seen in Appendix 1. The authors of this thesis felt that face-to-face interviews provided more valuable and reliable results as compared to telephone interviews, as also supported by Saunders et al (2007). Further, the interview was voice-recorded and also taken notes upon. This was to not miss out on important information. Also, because the interviewee was a native Swede, the interview was conducted in Swedish in order to get as thorough answers as possible. The interview questions were divided up in themes (Appendix 1) in order to present them in a logical manner, and hence made it easy for the interviewee to follow.

Approximately one week after each interview, the authors sent out a follow-up questionnaire (Appendix 2) to the employees in the two offices. In order to receive a comprehensive result, the questionnaire was sent to the sales department of both the companies. This meant that the companies had similar circumstances executing the questionnaire which provided the authors with better supported results. The intended respondents were the indoor salespeople at both the offices. This was done to see whether the managers' answers had any correlation to those of the employees'. The structure of the questionnaire was also made in a logical manner with clearly identified headings, or themes, so that the employees could answer as thoroughly as possible. Since the outcome from the interviews was slightly different, the constructed questionnaire was adapted to better fit the specific companies. Having that said, the questions themselves were similar enough to be interpreted in the same manner. The questionnaire was estimated to take ten to 15 minutes to fill in. Just like the interviews, the language used in the questionnaire was Swedish as the employees were native Swedes.

3.2.3.1 Confidentiality

This thesis followed a deontological research perspective, meaning that the outcome of the thesis could never be justified using unethical data (Saunders et al., 2007). During the interviews the authors of this thesis provided the interviewee with knowledge and information of how the information would be used later. This knowledge eased the interviewee in the decision regarding their confidentiality, hence being anonymous or visible in the thesis. However, even if the managers at both companies said they did not need to be anonymous, the authors deliberately chose to keep the focus on them being the managers at either one case company instead of using their names in-text. The employees at both companies were also provided with the same information about how the information would be used later. What differed from the interviews was that the employees were assured they would be anonymous. By doing so, the employees could be sure their manager would never see who answered what and they could therefore speak their minds. Hence, the authors of this thesis regarded the results as being honest and not biased. Furthermore, since the questionnaire was firstly sent to the managers, the authors deemed the likelihood of receiving more responses as high. With this said, as the managers at both companies sent the questionnaire to all employees in their indoor sales departments, the authors of this thesis could be sure that no one employee was picked over the other. This could again ensure the responses were not biased.

3.2.4 Data Collection Techniques

3.2.4.1 Primary Data

The collection of primary data can be done in several ways. The choice of the most suitable strategy depends on what research questions need to be answered and what objectives the research have. Factors that also determine and play important roles in what research strategy that will be used are time limits and existing knowledge. Strategies that could be used include case studies, interviews, surveys, experiments and so on. It must be kept in mind that the many alternatives are not mutually exclusive, meaning that the use of one strategy does not exclude the use of another. Therefore, interviews and questionnaires can, for example, be used as a part of a case study (Saunders et al., 2007), which was the case in this thesis. As previously written, this thesis collected the primary data through the Triangulation method where the questionnaires were treated as a complement to the interviews.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a data collection technique that enables the researcher to determine that the collected data displays what he/she thinks it is actually displaying (Saunders et al., 2007). In order to ensure this, researchers use multiple sources to collect the data. This reinforcement extends the understanding of the subject, hence provides the empirical findings with more comprehensive results (Bryman, 2012). An example of this could be to first execute the interviews and then triangulate the interviews with a questionnaire. To be able to ensure that the interviews are valid, some questions from the interviews are included in the questionnaire in order to crosscheck the results (Saunders et al., 2007).

Since this study only conducted one interview at each of the company branch offices, the received information from the interviews could be biased. To avoid this bias, the Triangulation method was used by having the questionnaires validate the interviews. While a number of questions in the questionnaires were asked to triangulate the interviews, the rest of the questions were asked to deepen the authors' understanding of the role of formal internal communication channels in OI.

Interviews

In order to successfully answer this thesis' research questions, semi-structured interviews were executed. The reason behind this is that qualitative interviews have open-ended questions, making the semi-structured interviews necessary. The semi-structured interviews were based on a predetermined script with open-ended questions, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2007). This left room for the manager to describe and provide detailed answers that were more adapted to the organization. As a result, answers allowed for more details as Jacobsen (2002) explained, and a better understanding of subjects was achieved. With this in mind, different limitations were taken into account. For example, the interviewer could have formulated questions and interpreted answers in a biased manner that suited the research purpose. The interviewee may also have answered questions to emphasize the positive aspects of the company, which could question the reliability of the interview. However, the questionnaires would have detected any of these issues (Saunder et al., 2007).

The first segment of the data collection was to interview the managers at their offices and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the companies, their OI and their formal internal communication. To be able to grasp this, the interviews took place at the companies' offices where it was easier to get an understanding of the organization's day-to-day operations. Additionally, because the soft factors surrounding OI were difficult to explain in words and figures, the authors of this thesis deemed the face-to-face interviews more appropriate. The risk of losing out on vital non-verbal information and the risk of interviewer bias were minimized since the complete set of authors was present during both interviews. In order to execute a coherent interview, one author was in charge of asking the questions and the other two had the responsibility to take notes and ask potential follow-up questions. The interviews were also recorded to make sure that no information could be lost. The comprehensive interview was divided into three different sections, namely general background, formal internal communication and OI (Appendix 1). This was done in order to maintain an evident structure that made the purpose of the questions clear for the interviewee. The quality of the information received from the interview was therefore perceived as high.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be described as a way to ask a set of questions in a predetermined order. The questions are the same for all respondents, and the advantage lies in the efficient manner the researcher can collect responses. To create a questionnaire of high quality is however more difficult than one may expect. It is important to look at the research questions and objectives before forming a questionnaire in order to assure that the specific data that needs to be collected will be provided by it. Once the respondents have provided their answers, it will be of little chance to ask them for additional questions. A potential risk of questionnaires is therefore that respondents can misinterpret questions. Questionnaires are however shown to be most efficient when they are standardized in the sense that all questions will allow the respondents to interpret them in the same way. In order to get a clearer picture, it may be a good option to combine the questionnaire into a multi-methods research approach in which the researchers can use this as complement to a semi-structured interview (Saunders et al., 2007). As previously outlined, the Triangulation method was applied. This meant that a combination of various research techniques were used with the questionnaire acting as a way to support the findings in the semi-structured interview, as explained by Saunders et al. (2007).

A questionnaire can come in different forms with alternatives including self-administered questionnaires, Internet-mediated questionnaires, intranet-mediated questionnaires and telephone questionnaires. The choice of what type of questionnaire to use can be influenced by several factors (Saunders et al., 2007). The determining elements for this thesis were the number of questions that needed to be asked, the types of questions and also the characteristics of the respondents that could best answer the questions. Moreover, the authors of this thesis made use of a self-administered questionnaire where the respondents were responsible for completing the answers through an Internet-mediated survey. Why this was the best alternative according to the authors was mainly because of its ease of collecting data. The authors also justified the choice of this specific type of questionnaire as the easiest way to steer the direction of the questionnaire and its questions. The questionnaire was formed in Google Forms, and sent to the branch office managers who forwarded it to their employees. As was previously written, to ensure no answers would be biased, the managers sent the questionnaire to all their indoor sellers, whom were assured anonymity.

The collection of data can be done through different question designs. The use of open-ended questions generates in-depth answers, rating questions show how strongly the respondent either agrees or disagrees with a statement ranging from a scale from one to five, and list and category questions allow the respondent to choose the most suitable alternative (Saunders et al., 2007). All of these question designs were used in this thesis. With this said, the rating questions came in different forms with each question ranging with alternatives from one to five. On this scale, the respondents could choose to what extent they agreed with the presented statement. One represented low agreement and five represented high agreement.

3.2.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is defined as information gathered from existing sources (Bryman, 2012). The benefits of secondary data are time efficiency and low cost, whereas a negative factor is loss of control regarding the research content (Vartanian, 2011). This consequence was however outweighed by also collecting primary data.

According to Vartanian (2011), secondary research is useful in collecting information. This information will first be interpreted, and then used to determine as well as explain a research problem. The secondary data in this thesis was collected through reviewing existing literature regarding formal internal communication and OI. This was done by looking into, for example, articles and publications in order to form a valid foundation for the research of this thesis.

The search parameters in which secondary data was collected through were as follows:

Search Engines & Databases	• Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, DiVA, JU Library.
Search Words	• Top-down communication, internal communication, organizational identification, formal communication, channels.
Literature Type	• Books, Peer-reviewed articles and the Internet.
Publication Period	• 1974 - 2016.
Publication Languages	• English and Swedish.

Figure 6: Search Parameter, developed by the authors (2016)

The authors of this thesis were as thorough as possible when selecting the sources. Variables such as impact factors above one and articles that have high citation statistics were taken into account. This was done in order to ensure reliable and high-quality information.

3.2.5 Pilot Testing

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the main purpose with pilot testing is to validate both an interview and a questionnaire to determine whether the answers provided by them are reliable. Also, pilot testing allows the researcher to refine the questions in order to make it comprehensible for all respondents, and that the recording of data runs smoothly later on. With the help of pilot tests, a researcher can make a preliminary analysis of the collected data to see whether or not the questions provide any desirable answers (Saunders et al., 2007). This process could start by asking an expert or a group of experts to make a judgment about their view on how representative and suitable the questions posed in an interview and a questionnaire are. Then, there should be room for alterations if the experts make suggestions on that. Moving on to the next stage, a decision must be made about the number of pilot tests that ought to be done. The number of respondents in the pilot test depends however on several factors such as the research questions, the size of the research project, time and objectives. It must be kept in mind that smaller-scale interviews and questionnaires often lack time and resources for a large-field trial, but the importance of doing a pilot test is still essential (Saunders et al., 2007).

By firstly receiving feedback from an expert in the field of conducting interviews and questionnaires, the authors' original questions were revised accordingly. Moving on to check the validity of the questions and the reliability of the answers, the authors of this thesis then conducted a pilot test with the help of a manager in the position that was equivalent to those at Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist. After the interview was conducted, the questionnaire was sent to the chosen pilot test manager. In turn, the manager sent this test to two of her employees that answered it. After having received the answers from this pilot study, the authors analyzed the outcome thoroughly and made alterations before conducting the interviews and sending the final version of the questionnaires to the two companies that were investigated.

3.2.6 Analysis of Data

Since this research did not aim to investigate which of the two companies used the most effective formal internal communication to establish OI, there was no comparison of the two. The results of the interviews and questionnaires were instead treated separately in the empirical findings of this thesis, and then analyzed together to confirm, or invalidate, the research purpose and questions. The questionnaires were treated as complements to the semi-structured interviews, which investigated the subject even further. The inclusion of quantitative tools was therefore eliminated from the analysis.

In order to make use of the voice recorded interviews, and make sure no vital information would be left out, the interviews were transcribed and translated from Swedish to English. Transcribing a recorded interview includes various difficulties. These could include putting words into writing and how and why it is formulated the way they are

(Saunders et al., 2007). To ease these difficulties, the interviews were transcribed on the same day as the interviews were completed. Even though the authors of this thesis were aware of the possible misinterpretation of the context related questions in the translation process, the direct translation method was chosen, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2007). This was found as the only feasible choice due to the resource constraints in terms of time and money. The transcribed interviews were then summarized. The results from the questionnaires were collected electronically and also summarized.

Saunders et al. (2007) point out that there are difficulties in analyzing qualitative data through stating “...there is no standardized procedure for analyzing such data.” (Saunder et al., 2007, p.490). Saunders et al. (2007) later describe three possible ways to put together data, namely through summarizing, categorizing and structuring using narrative language, all of which were used in this thesis. Prior to executing the interviews and the questionnaires, the categorization of information was made. The intended questions were therefore designed in a coherent manner that facilitated the analysis. These predetermined categories were presented and also explained to the interviewee before the interview. Finally, in order to facilitate the interpretation of the summaries, the results were structured in a narrative manner.

3.2.7 Assessment of OI

In order for the authors of this thesis to make links between formal internal communication and OI, an assessment of OI needed to be established. More specific, this implied an outline of how OI was to be measured. The following points were the criteria in which the authors judged the interviewees and respondents of the questionnaire to feel OI:

- Sharing the same values and goals as the organization
- Taking offense when outsiders speak negatively about the company and conversely becoming happy when outsiders speak positively about the company
- Referring to the organization as “we”
- Stating that one feels part of the organization
- Having close contact with the organization
- Being motivated, satisfied, important and feeling a presence in the work
- Being noticed by their manager

If and when these types of responses appeared in the empirical findings, the authors of this thesis interpreted them as signs of employee OI.

3.2.8 Assessment of Level of Formality in Formal Internal Communication Channels

In order for the authors of this thesis to make links between formal internal communication and OI, an assessment of the level of formality in the various formal internal communication channels needed to be established. More specific, this implied an outline of how formality was to be measured. As found by Tenhiälä and Salvador (2014), communication is defined as formal when all participants know the standard protocol of *when*, *what* and *who* before engaging in the communication medium. All the three elements, however, do not need to be present simultaneously. The following points were therefore the rank in which the authors judged the level of formality in each channel, with the top point as most formal and the last point as least formal.

- General meetings
- Face-to-face / individual meetings
- Intranet
- E-mail
- Internal competitions
- Company logo
- After-work nights
- Barbeque nights

If and when these appeared in the empirical findings, the authors of this thesis interpreted the level of formality according to the ranking system above, which facilitated the analysis further down in this thesis.

3.3 Methodology and Method Summary

The methodology used in this thesis was divided into two sub-sections, namely research approach and research design. The research approach of this thesis consisted of collecting qualitative data from case studies in two branch offices within the wholesales food industry. The methodology further followed an interpretivist philosophy since the study was looking at soft and intangible subjects. With this, it meant that data was interpreted, discussed and lastly made conclusions upon. Furthermore, this thesis followed an inductive reasoning style, meaning that one begins with reviewing relevant and significant existing literature prior to choosing a research subject. A gap was then identified and empirical data was collected accordingly. With this said, since the nature of the thesis was to investigate the role of formal internal communication in employee OI, an exploratory research design was implemented. This was done by reviewing existing literature, interviewing experts in the research field, and lastly having employees at the two case companies filling in questionnaires.

The method used in this thesis consisted of case studies at two companies. These two companies were selected through the snowball sampling method in which the authors got their first contact from their pilot study manager and the suggestion to their choice of the second company from the first case study manager. This resulted in that the wholesales food industry was chosen. To be sure that the replies would generate desired results, a pilot study was done before the collection of the primary data took place. The primary data collection was done through interviews with the two managers and questionnaires responses from their employees. With the help of the questionnaire, the authors could validate or reject the sayings by the managers. This data collection technique is referred to as Triangulation. To be able to make analysis and draw relevant conclusions, secondary data was collected through reviewing existing literature regarding formal internal communication and OI.

After having collected both primary and secondary data, the results were treated separately in the empirical findings of this thesis, and then analyzed together to confirm, or invalidate, the research purpose and questions. How this confirmation or invalidation was done was through looking at ways to assess OI and ways to assess the level of formality in formal internal communication channels.

4. Empirical Findings

In this chapter, the authors begin by introducing the case companies Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist using information from the two interviews as well as their respective websites. All the results generated from the two case companies, both interviews and questionnaires (Appendix 1 & 2), are then presented. The findings are summarized in a logical manner following the sub-headings Communication and OI.

4.1 Case Companies

The two case companies are introduced to the reader in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the companies' overall goals and missions. This provides the reader with an overall understanding of the companies' ways of doing business and the general background of the interviewee. The introduction of the companies will contribute with a higher awareness of the companies' values which leads to higher knowledge of the employees' OI. This knowledge was then used in order to construct the analysis.

4.1.1 Martin & Servera AB

Martin & Servera AB is a leading Swedish wholesales food company, with their main office located in Stockholm and their branch offices located in various locations across Sweden. With their business idea being to provide their customers with services, products and knowledge that could help facilitate their customers' ways of doing business, they can make sure to achieve their vision of being the obvious choice of their customers. They serve customers all over Sweden and offer products that include everything a food provider needs. These products range from meat, fish, dairy products, alcoholic beverages to restaurant necessities and other non-food items. Claiming themselves to be offering the Swedish market's largest selection of organic food, they work with product certificates and sustainable productions (Martin & Servera, 2016).

In the Malmö branch office, 42 people are employed in the various departments. The sales staff is divided into two categories with salespeople inside the office and salespeople outside the office. Salespeople from outside the office attract new customers while salespeople from inside the office develop the existing customers and nurture the relationship with them (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15). 15 of the sales staff are positioned as indoor sellers. Working tasks among these are customer service and sales. Seven out of the 15 employees, which is almost 50 percent of the true population, from Martin & Servera's indoor sellers filled in the questionnaire in which the authors of this thesis judged to be a large enough number to analyze and draw conclusions upon.

Martin & Servera was established through a merger three years ago. Before the merger took place, Martin Olsson was one company and Servera another. When the two companies merged into one, the name Martin & Servera was settled. With her managing position at Servera, she became the branch office manager of the Martin & Servera office in Malmö. Additionally, she is responsible for the indoor sellers of the branch office (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15).

Three key values exist to guide the employees through their work: “commitment, courage and competency”. The manager believes that this is a good way to describe their reality and workplace mentality. Furthermore, she claimed that commitment was an important aspect for her long before the word even became a key value. She works hard toward being committed, and believes that it is something one must have. She also believes that courage could be learned and that competency can be enhanced and developed. The manager further claimed that she definitely feel like a Martin & Servera-person (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15).

4.1.2 Mårdskog & Lindkvist AB

Mårdskog & Lindkvist AB is also a Swedish wholesales food company with their main office located in Jönköping and their two branch offices located in Norrköping and Kalmar. They serve customers from various geographical locations in Sweden with a focus on product offerings such as meat, poultry, fish and vegetables. What they also offer are alcoholic beverages and non-food products like food packages, cleaning materials, napkins, and etcetera, with a total of around 8000 product offerings. Their customers are within industries ranging from restaurants, cafés and hotels, to fast food chains and pubs. With their offices located close to their customers, they believe they can make sure to get to know the local premises of their customers and create close relationships with them. They strongly believe in serving their customers with good service, and fast delivery is an important aspect in their way of doing business as well. (Mårdskog & Lindkvist, 2016).

There are in total 11 employees in the branch office in Norrköping. These include six indoor sellers, one purchaser and one within the administrative section. Further, there are three outdoor sellers and several warehouse workers. The deputy manager’s role is indoor sales. In specific, the manager has the overall responsibility of the indoor sales department. The indoor sellers all work toward the same goal; customer contact and care (Karlsson. C, personal communication, 2016-03-30). Five out of six employees, which is over 80 percent of the true population, from Mårdskog & Lindkvist’s indoor sellers filled in the questionnaire in which the authors of this thesis judged to be a large enough number to analyze and draw conclusions upon.

Currently, the branch office has the key values “environmental awareness, closeness and consideration”. These values are however not directly worked upon. Instead, the manager explains that “the right product, to the right person, in the right time” is something that permeates the office. That it is something that is in the back of employees’ heads when conducting business. Further, the manager states that it is of huge importance to be able to join the three elements right product, right person, and the right time. The manager explains that it is even more important to make one's own key values than to follow what someone else states (Karlsson. C, personal communication, 2016-03-30). Also, many workers have been employed here for a long time. The condition to stay that long must therefore be because they feel at home at Mårdskog & Lindkvist. The manager adds by saying that everyone can talk to one another about any matter (Karlsson. C, personal communication, 2016-03-30).

4.2 Martin & Servera Interview Summary

The interview was conducted with the branch office manager at Martin & Servera in Malmö, Sweden 2016-03-15.

4.2.1 Communication

In communicating the three key values, the manager devotes a lot of time to individual meetings. Additionally, she works with scheduled general meetings. Once a month there will be an individual meeting where she and the salesperson will go through an agenda that, among other things, includes discussion of the salesperson's customer base, how to grow and develop that base and how to improve the salesperson's sales volume and overall goals. In addition to this, group meetings are held once a week with the mission of discussing ongoing information. Once a month, a more extensive group meeting is held where issues such as work environment are brought up. Furthermore, the manager would use the same methods when communicating other work-related information and issues.

The manager has no personal preference in terms of communication channels, but rather she would use different methods for different purposes. This means that the communication channel used was dependent on what message she wanted to convey. Sometimes, e-mails were used, having the advantage that everyone received the same message at the same time. At other times, individual meetings and group meetings are preferred. As with e-mails, when and why she makes use of face-to-face interactions depends on the message. Questions about new information can easily be asked and answered during group meetings, and individual meetings could make it easier for her to communicate the company's key values. What she further believes is that each employee is different from the other. Some of them can easily interpret the given information and another may need to ask many questions and have the information explained to them before understanding it. Also, she believes that all individuals have their own preferences on how to receive the information, but this is also dependent on what type of message it is.

Another important information source is their intranet. According to the manager, the information in the intranet is open to everyone, and the headquarter makes sure that all company information is posted there. If the employees check into the intranet on a regular basis, they will essentially get to learn everything that concerns the company. The information in the intranet ranges from education and new businesses, to promotions and numbers. It is each employee's responsibility to check the intranet every now and then to stay updated.

Certain communication channels are used depending on the situation. Information that concerns the whole organization is posted on the intranet. Information that concerns the branch office that she is in charge of depends on whom the receiver is and what information needs to be sent out. If she would need to dismiss somebody, she would do this face-to-face and with the help of a HR personnel. If she goes through sales targets for the whole branch office division, she does this by gathering the whole staff. In contrast, if information concerns only one salesperson, individual meetings would be held. E-mails are used when the message concerns everyone in the branch office, or to certain salespersons if it only concerns them. The manager explains that communication throughout the office is effective and successful.

Top managers decide all sales targets, but it is the manager's responsibility to manage, conduct and delegate tasks to employees in order to reach those sales targets. The employees have no power in influencing the overall sales targets. However, the manager, together with employees one at a time, set reasonable plans of action to achieve the individual sales targets. These action plans are tailored according to an employee's customer base and competence. Further, the manager states, "I will not create plans of action that are unreasonable or make employees uncomfortable. In no way do I want to name and shame them" (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15). The action plans have to be rational and fair so that the employee can reach the target within a predetermined amount of time.

Positive critique is generally talked about in an open manner in the office. However, not in a way that makes one employee stand out much more than others. Individual success is in a more subtle way, face-to-face, communicated to the specific employee that has performed well. This is done in order to not cause any jealousy or unhealthy competitiveness between employees. Regarding negative critique, it is communicated between the affected employee and the manager behind closed doors. The manager explains that it is because of cowardice. Again, she "does not want to name and shame anyone openly in the office in front of employees that have nothing to do with the specific matter" (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15).

4.2.2 OI

In communicating with non-employees, the manager at Martin & Servera explains that she always talks positively about the company. Even more so, she uses words such as *we* when talking about Martin & Servera. Long-term customers even call her "Deservera", that is, merging the name Martin & *Servera* and the manager's first name *Desirée*. If non-employees were to talk negatively about the company, then the manager would take it personally, stating "It would be offensive to listen to someone talking bad about Martin & Servera" (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15). The manager would then immediately interrupt the conversation. She says that she would try to defend the company and hopefully change the minds of the people that are talking negatively about the company. She further states that she wants to avoid negative opinions spreading quickly through word-of-mouth. The manager also explained that when she was responsible for both the indoor salespeople and outdoor salespeople, she would take it personally when the company lost customers.

Martin & Servera's logo is printed on various items in the company. For example, on pencils, notebooks, computers and magazines. The manager adds that she does not personally find the logo attractive. Despite the dislike of the logo, she says that it probably good that it is visible for the employees since they used to be two different companies, Martin Olsson and Servera. The logo then serves as a means to establish the feeling of being one whole company.

Some team building activities that the employees have are after-works, general meetings, barbeque nights and internal competitions such as best food recipe. The aim of these team-building activities is to increase the commonality of interest, cooperation and communication. The manager finished off by answering that she definitely is a Martin & Servera-person. She feels as if she was born here, partly because she has worked there for 32 years. She adds by saying that she would probably not be able to change her job within the industry, but rather switch to another one. Also, she has established many internal and external relationships through the company that makes her associated to it.

4.3 Martin & Servera Questionnaire Summary

The questionnaire was filled in by seven out of 15 indoor sellers at Martin & Servera in Malmö, Sweden.

4.3.1 Communication

The employees at Martin & Servera have worked at the office ranging from four to 30 years. 71.4 percent feel that the key value "courage" fits in the company almost completely, whereas 14.3 percent answered somewhat, and finally 14.3 percent answered not so much. 42.9 percent of the respondents feel that the key value "competence" fits in the company completely and 57.1 percent answered almost completely. 28.6 percent feel that the key value "commitment" fits in the company completely, 42.9 percent answered almost completely and 28.6 percent said somewhat. Four of the respondents said that these three key values are used during educational sessions, one said during everyday phone contacts, another answered that the words are used through encouragement to raise one's opinion, and lastly one said through proactive thinking. Furthermore, out of all respondents, 14.3 percent feel that the key values are completely representative for them personally, 71.4 percent said almost completely and 14.3 percent answered somewhat.

42.9 percent of the respondents prefer to receive general information about the company through their intranet, the 28.6 percent prefer meetings and another 28.6 percent favor e-mail. For the individual feedback, no matter if it is positive or negative, all employees prefer to have it face-to-face communicated. It is also shown that 71.4 percent of the employees prefer receiving the sales numbers of the Malmö office through meetings while 14.3 percent prefer receiving it through e-mail and another 14.3 percent favor face-to-face. In regards to how the employees participate in the decision making regarding individual sales targets, five answered through individual action plans with the manager, one said through everyday-activities and finally one said through the monthly sale figures.

4.3.2 OI

71.4 percent of the respondents would use the word "we" when talking to external individuals, 14.3 would use the word "Martin & Servera" and another 14.3 percent would use other words than the outlined "we, them, Martin & Servera, and does not talk about it". When further asked about how the employees would react to over hearing positive critique about the company when sitting on a bus, six answered that they would feel proud and satisfied, however without actively doing anything, and one answered that he/she would go up to the people and present himself/herself. In contrast, if the employees would instead hear someone speak negatively about the company, five of the respondents answered that they would listen and then bring it up at work, one said that he/she would try to change the people's minds, and lastly one answered that he/she would feel badly about it and react by going up and talk to them if the people were lying about facts and information. 28.6 percent of the respondents said that they feel completely noticed and hence a part of the company, 28.6 percent answered almost completely noticed and 42.9 percent said somewhat noticed.

In terms of how the company makes the employees feel personally, 14.3 percent feel completely at home, another 14.3 percent feel almost completely at home and 71.4 percent do not feel so much at home. When describing the reasons to their choices, two answered that it varies from day-to-day whether they feel at home at their workplace. A negative incident could, for example, happen and hence making them feel less like home. Another reason was because Martin & Servera has quite a large staff, it could then sometimes feel less like home. Two answered that they spend so much time at the office that it becomes like home, and another two said they simply feel like home at the office. 100 percent feel almost completely satisfied at the office. The reasons are that they get respect for their ideas, they know that they are doing a good job and that the job they are doing is valuable, and that it is a good company. One said that he/she would feel completely satisfied if having the time to complete all tasks. That sometimes one has to leave the tasks for the day and take them up on the next instead.

71.4 percent feel almost completely motivated and 28.6 percent feel somewhat motivated. Reasons are the sense of strong commitment, being able to reach goals, doing a good job, that the tasks at work are fun, not being able to finish work on time and when things simply do not work out as planned. 14.3 percent feel completely important, 57.1 percent feel almost completely important and 28.6 percent feel somewhat important. The respondents answered that they get to influence the work, take responsibilities, that they feel needed and that the company sometimes does not fully appreciate the employees' work experience. 28.6 percent feel completely identified/part of, 57.1 percent feel almost completely identified/part of and 14.3 percent feel somewhat identified/part of the company. Four of the respondents answered that they really feel part of a team, one said that he/she feels that the company's values coincides with themselves, another said that almost everyone in the company knows who he/she is and a last one answered that sometimes the company feels too large to see every individual.

71.4 percent of the respondents answered that they get almost completely affected by the company's sale results and whereas 28.6 percent stated that they get somewhat affected by the sale results. The examples given by the respondents were that it feels good when the company performs well, that positive sale results opens up for internal investments and potential raises, and finally that it feels good when everyone can contribute to the sale results. Six of the respondents state that the logo is not particularly visible in the office and that it does not affect them personally. One however feels that it is visible in the office and that it incuses the company.

14.3 percent do not at all feel that after-work nights with other employees creates greater fellowship, another 14.3 percent stated not so much, 28.6 percent answered somewhat, another 28.6 percent said almost completely and finally, 14.3 percent answered that after-work nights completely creates greater fellowship with the workgroup and the company itself. 14.3 percent of the respondents answered that general meetings creates complete fellowship, 42.9 stated almost complete fellowship and 28.6 percent answered that it somewhat creates fellowship with the work group and the company itself. 14.3 percent of the employees feel that barbeque nights create complete fellowship, 42.9 percent stated almost complete fellowship, 28.6 percent answered somewhat, and finally 14.3 percent said that barbeque nights do not at all create fellowship with the work group or the company itself. 71.4 percent of the respondents answered that internal competitions almost completely create fellowship whereas the rest 28.6 percent stated that they somewhat create fellowship with the work group and company itself. 28.6 percent answered that they completely feel like a Martin & Servera-person, 71.4 percent said almost completely, and finally 28.6 percent stated somewhat.

4.4 Mårdskog & Lindkvist Interview Summary

The interview was conducted with the indoor sales manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist in Norrköping, Sweden 2016-03-30.

4.4.1 Communication

Communication within the office is by 90 percent conducted through e-mail. Most information comes from the headquarter. Some issues that cannot be conveyed through e-mails are rather talked upon during smaller formal meetings with the work group. There is one official meeting once a week where everyone at the office attends. Individual meetings are done once a year with the employees, but these are conducted by a top manager from Jönköping. The manager at the Norrköping office attends a market council meeting once a month. This council consists of employees from all the other offices. If information discussed during these monthly meetings concerns his employees in Norrköping, then he will bring it up during the weekly meetings. The manager, together with the indoor sale managers at Kalmar and Jönköping, come up with the overall sales targets and goals. There are no individual goals set for everyone. This is because all indoor sellers have such a different customer base. Instead, they all have overall sales targets to strive toward. The manager adds by saying that a tiny competitive attitude can be a strategy to get everyone to move in the same direction.

The manager states that he is satisfied with using e-mails as a primary communication channel. The manager thinks that his employees also prefer e-mails. E-mails are convenient and can give quick responses. Telephone calls are always better because then you can hear the person and his/her tone of voice. The office does not have an intranet. Rather, all information is sent from top managers in Jönköping through e-mail. The manager does not experience that their communication needs to be improved in any way. He is happy with their current communication. He however adds that because he receives so many e-mails, some of them might accidentally get lost or deleted. After some thought, an intranet might be a solution.

Despite mainly using e-mails, the manager states that he sometimes adapts his way and channel of communicating depending on the purpose and matter. If something is personal or sensitive that concerns only one employee, then he would take it face-to-face rather than through an e-mail. If there is a sales competition, the manager would call for a mini-meeting and inform the employees because it would be simpler. If something is urgent, for example a product that has a short expiry date, then he would gather everyone for a meeting. In this way, everyone would have this product in the back of his/her head when calling their customer base. With e-mails, then everyone has the option to read it later and prioritize other things instead. Indoor sellers that have performed excellent are brought up in e-mails to everyone in the office. He emphasizes what they have done well in an effort to motivate the rest of the staff. Negative critique is communicated face-to-face with the concerned employee.

4.4.2 OI

When talking to external individuals, the manager uses “we” to refer to Mårdskog & Lindkvist. He also believes that the rest of the staff does this. It is something that permeates the whole office. If external individuals were to talk positively about the company, he would get genuinely happy. He would however not act out in any way. If external individuals were to talk negatively about the company, he would take it personally. He says that it would indirectly criticize himself. Regardless of positive or negative critique, the manager would “bring it up and proceed with the case in the company” (Karlsson. C, personal communication, 2016-03-30).

Mårdskog & Lindkvist’s logo is present on several items and places in the office. This could for instance be on items such as pens and notepads. There is also a huge showcase logo in the middle of the office. The manager thinks that this can affect the way employees feel toward the company.

There are different forms of activities that employees take part in during their spare time. After-work evenings are quite common, and some people meet up more than others. There are also activities such as bowling, paintball, Christmas parties and smaller road trips. The manager would however not call these team-building activities, but rather things they decide to do together. In the Norrköping office, there is cross-sectional integration between the office workers and the warehouse workers. Everyone can socialize with one another and becomes one in the team.

The manager finishes by stating that he feels like a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person and that he identifies with the company. He feels that he is a person that fits in well as a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-employee. In terms of sales competitions, he refers to “us” as the Norrköping team and “them” as the Jönköping and Kalmar team. He also explains that some distance and competitive attitudes can be good, it does not have to be something negative. If the other branch offices were to win sales competitions week after week, then he would become a bit upset. However, in other matters apart from sale competitions, the manger would refer the other offices as “us” in Mårdskog & Lindkvist.

4.5 Mårdskog & Lindkvist Questionnaire Summary

The questionnaire was filled in by five out of six indoor sellers at Mårdskog & Lindkvist in Norrköping, Sweden.

4.5.1 Communication

The employees that answered the questionnaire had worked for the company ranging from two and half to twelve years. The questionnaire shows that 60 percent of the respondents prefer to receive general information about the company through meetings while the other 40 percent prefer e-mail. For the individual feedback, no matter if it is positive or negative, all five employees prefer to have it face-to-face communicated. It is also shown that 20 percent of the employees prefer receiving the sales numbers of the Norrköping office through meetings while the other 80 percent prefer receiving it through e-mail. Furthermore, regarding how employees participate in the decision making regarding their own sales targets, they answered by stating individual follow-up, set the budget together with the field sales people and to be able to show their opinion about new products, by follow-up of the sales figures and sales meetings to find the most optimal solutions to each customer.

4.5.2 OI

80% of the respondents would talk about the company to external individuals using the term “we” while 20 percent would use other words than the outlined “we, them, Mårdskog & Lindkvist, and does not talk about it”. Furthermore, if they were sitting on a bus and a stranger would speak positively about Mårdskog & Lindkvist, the five employees would feel proud, satisfied and happy. One employee answered that he/she would tell the colleagues about it the day after. In contrast, if they would hear someone speak negatively about the company, one of them would have felt sad about it, and three of them would have brought up this issue with someone at the company in order to figure out a solution on how to deal with it.

Regarding whether the employees feel noticed and therefore part of Mårdskog & Lindkvist, 40 percent of the respondents answered completely, another 40 percent answered almost completely and the last 20 percent answered somewhat. Furthermore, considering how their workplace makes them feel personally: 60 percent feel completely at home, 20 percent feel almost completely at home and 20 percent feel not so much at home. They described their answers with that they enjoy their workplace, it is a good climate among the colleagues, good teamwork between the sales and the warehouse employees, they can contribute with something good at their workplace and they feel noticed. One employee replied that the “you” and “we”-feeling make him/her feel negatively affected by it. 40 percent feel completely satisfied, 20 percent feel almost completely satisfied, 20 percent feel somewhat satisfied and 20 percent feel not so satisfied. One employee described his/her answer with good, free, capable and appreciated. Another one wrote that he/she enjoys the work tasks and the colleagues. One of them said that he/she feels the work tasks are quite the same at the moment. 60 percent feel completely motivated, 20 percent feel somewhat motivated and 20 percent feel not so motivated. This is explained by the employees saying they are very motivated to do a great job, that they have many targets to work for and that internal competitions are also motivating them. One employee answered he/she is not so motivated at the moment since the work is somewhat repetitive. 40 percent feel completely important, 40 percent feel almost completely important and 20 percent feel not so important. This is explained by the fact that they get feedback that makes them feel important and that they have the opportunity to express their opinions and therefore feel noticed. One employee answered that he/she feels important because his/her work is an important part of the sales. 40 percent feel completely identified/part of, 20 percent feel almost completely identified/part of, 20 percent feel somewhat identified/part of, 20 percent not so identified/part of. This is described by the employees stating good teams, good atmosphere among the colleagues and just generally good. One employee felt a bit excluded.

Regards to what extent they feel personally affected by the company results, 80 percent replied with completely affected while the remaining 20 percent answered not so affected. The respondents explained their choices with statements such as the fact that it is fun when everything at the company runs smoothly, and that one gets extremely excited when the sales numbers increase. Other explanations include that it makes them proud when they can contribute with motivation to the other salespeople at the office. Also, when the company performs successfully, it makes them happy and proud. When the company performs poorly, everyone can push each other to become even better.

Concerning the company logo and how it is exposed at the company and hence affects the employees, one of the employees feel proud of the logo on their cars but found its exposure inside the company as rather non-specific. Another employee wrote that the logo is seen in various places, for example on flags, paper and so on, but that he/she is not that much affected by it. One of them said that the logo could be seen on the roof and in the entrance but that it does not affect him/her. Lastly, one employee stated that the logo is no longer visible.

With reference to whether after-work nights make them feel greater fellowship with the group and the company, 20 percent feel complete fellowship, 20 percent feel almost complete fellowship, 20 percent feel somewhat fellowship, 20 percent feel not so much fellowship and 20 percent feel no fellowship. Furthermore, concerning the degree general meetings make them feel fellowship with the group and the company, 40 percent feel complete fellowship, 20 percent feel almost complete fellowship and 40 percent feel somewhat fellowship. Lastly, in regard to whether internal competitions make them feel greater fellowship with the group and the company, 40 percent feel complete fellowship, 20 percent feel almost complete fellowship and 40 percent feel somewhat fellowship. 80 percent answered that they completely feel like a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person and 20 percent stated somewhat.

5. Analysis

In this chapter, an analysis of the data presented in the Empirical Findings will be discussed and interpreted beyond the evident. Possible connections will be made using information from the Theoretical Framework. Data from both companies will be grouped together and presented in order to support and extend previous literature from the theoretical framework. No comparisons in terms of which company is performing better in any aspect will be made. The analysis is structured in the sub-headings Communication and OI.

5.1 Communication

The use of different formal internal communication channels in the two offices can be connected to the four dimensions that Welch and Jackson (2007) explain. The general meetings can be interpreted and categorized as internal team peer communication and internal project peer communication as they are two-way communication regarding team tasks. The use of individual face-to-face meetings can be classified as internal corporate communication and internal line communication as they are one-way communication from management to employees and typically regard setting goals and targets. The categorization of these dimensions suggests that the managers at Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist have internal communication in place, as explained by Welch and Jackson (2007).

The formal internal communication channels, as described by Tenhiälä and Salvador (2014) and Tang and Thomas (2015), that are most commonly used in Martin & Servera vary between their intranet, e-mails, face-to-face meetings and telephone calls, whereas the most frequently used channel in Mårdskog & Lindkvist is e-mail. However, as Mason and Leek (2012) along with Oke and Idiagbon-Oke (2010) explained, the content of information and desired outcome of communication determine what communication channel will be used. Referring to the interviews, both managers at the investigated offices state that they choose their communication channels depending on the purpose and matter. In specific, both managers would use face-to-face channels such as individual meetings when the content of the information is more sensitive or negative, and e-mails, meetings, telephone calls and intranet when the information is more general and targeted toward everyone in the staff. This is further seen by the questionnaire responses filled in by the employees at the two offices. 100 percent of the respondents answered that they prefer to receive individual feedback through face-to-face channels regardless if it is positive or negative. The authors speculate that this may contribute to employees feeling more valued and important in the company since it is a personal, one-way conversation between the manager and themselves. In terms of general information, the authors of this thesis can see another link. The employees at Martin & Servera prefer the channels intranet, meetings and e-mail, just like their manager suggested. Further, the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist prefer meetings and e-mails, also supporting what their manager stated. According to the authors, this finding suggests that managers may benefit from using the formal communication channels that employees prefer. In terms of the sales figures, that are general information targeted toward everyone in the staff, the questionnaires revealed that the majority of the respondents prefer to receive it through the channels meetings or email. This might add to the sense of feeling part of the organization since everyone gets to take part in the sharing of information, as suggested in the research by White et al. (2010).

During the interviews, the two managers added that face-to-face conversations are effective because they offer immediate feedback, and e-mails are convenient as they allow large amount of information to be spread quickly. One can therefore see that it follows Lefaix-Durand and Kozak's (2009) finding that effective internal communication can establish strong OI in employees. Interpreted by the authors, the effective aspect of face-to-face and e-mail communication channels as used by the managers in both Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist could contribute to OI in their employees.

Since top-down communication can make employees feel a sense of belonging (White, Vanc & Stafford, 2010; Chreim, 2002), the authors can see a trend in the two investigated offices since all information as well as sale-targets, according to the interviews, continuously come from the top manager. The results from the questionnaires also show that the employees in both offices receive individual action plans from the top manager in which the employees strive toward. Further, monthly-sale figures and general sale meetings are held and communicated by the managers in both companies. The authors therefore suggest that the two offices' employees feel part of the organization because they receive information directly from their authorities. Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2014) also explain that this top-down and face-to-face communication channel can enhance the relationship between employees and their organization. Consequently, this shows that feeling part of an organization means that the employees are identifying themselves with the organization. This finding might also have to do with the level of formality, that employees feel part of the organization because the communication channels are formal coming from the management.

As explained by both managers, they are satisfied with their current formal internal communication as they can choose which channel to use depending on the desired outcome. They explain this to be effective. Also, because the two companies differ in size, the authors believe that managers can apply the required use of formal internal communication channels. This adaptation of communication channel allows the information itself to both be more effectively communicated as well as less ambiguous since the channel is more suitable to the nature of the task, as explained by Oke and Idiagbon-Oke (2010). Lefaix-Durand and Kozak's (2009) further explain that effective internal communication leads to OI in employees, as seems to be the situation for these two managers.

Martin & Servera, the larger company has a more frequent use of formal internal communication channels whereas the smaller company Mårdskog & Lindkvist has a less frequent use of the channels. In a larger company, the flow of information is longer, which might be a reason to have those frequent communication channels with high formality in Martin & Servera. In a smaller organization such as Mårdskog & Lindkvist, the lower use and frequency of highly formal channels is probably more suitable since there is a smaller chance of information getting lost along the way. Having this said, the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist explained in the interview that he felt that an intranet, which has a higher level of formality, could act as a supplement to e-mails as he receives large amounts of them daily. The authors can therefore again see a connection between effective formal internal communication and its ability to form strong OI in the employees at Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist, just like Lefaix-Durand and Kozak (2009) bring out in their research.

5.2 OI

A good way to look at whether or not an employee feels a high level of OI is to examine how he/she thinks or acts according to the organization's perspective (Dutton et al., 1994). This is illustrated by the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist who states in the interview that he feels like a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person and that he does in fact identify with the company. This is also shown by the manager at Martin & Servera who gave a definite "yes" to the question as to whether she is a Martin & Servera-person or not. This is for instance displayed by her way of speaking to non-employees where she would talk about the company using the term "we". Referring to himself and the organization as "we" was also the case of the manager of Mårdskog & Lindkvist, who further believed that all employees in the firm do the same. This is then shown to be valid through the questionnaire in which 80 percent of the responding employees stated they talk to external individuals using the term "we". The percentage of the respondents referring to Martin & Servera as "we" was almost as high as for Mårdskog & Lindkvist, showing a total of 71.4 percent. This finding, combined with that OI is defined as how the organizational members perceive themselves as part of the organizational attributes (Dutton et al., 1994), indicates that the employees in both companies experience OI. How outsiders view their company is also highlighted by the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist that stated that when people outside the firm speak positively about them, they would have felt happy, proud and satisfied. Adding to this finding, the questionnaire filled in by the employees at Martin & Servera shows that the employees would feel proud and satisfied when someone outside the firm spoke positively about them. This finding is further highlighted by the manager saying "It would be offensive to listen to someone talking bad about Martin & Servera" (Petersson. D, personal communication, 2016-03-15). Why she felt offended could be explained by the existing literature that states that OI can help define how an individual views himself/herself in terms of the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), meaning she feels identification with the organization and thereof this reaction toward the negative critique. The same reaction was found among her employees that stated in the questionnaire that they would listen to the negative critique to then bring this up at work. Two of the employees also wrote they would try to change people’s mind about the issue and talk to the person who holds this bad view about the company. This also holds true for the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist who would take it personally and as indirect criticism to himself if someone outside the firm had talked negatively about them. His answer is shown to be the case of his employees as well. They responded that if people outside the firm would have been speaking negatively about the firm, they would have felt sad about it, and then also tried to figure out a solution to it. Having all this said, it is relevant to draw a link between the way the managers and the employees at both companies feel offended by the negative talk about their companies and their willingness to defend their organizations. This is supported by previous research that states that OI is achieved when organizational members perceive themselves as sharing the same definitional attributes as the organization (Dutton et al., 1994) and that OI can help define “who am I?” in an organization, (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), all of which show that the employees and managers feel OI.

It is also found in previous research that OI can be considered strong when an individual takes the values and goals of the organization to include it into their sense of self (Dukerich et al., 2002). This is supported by the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist where 80 percent of the respondents claimed they would feel personally affected by the company results. They explain this by stating that they get excited when the sales numbers are high and that they get proud when the company performs well. This seems to be true for the Martin & Servera employees as well with 71.4 percent responding they would be completely affected by the company sales results. They claim that it feels good when the company performs well. The literature finding by Dukerich et al. (2002) as presented previously, is further supported by the manager at Martin & Servera who states that the loss of customers was taken personally by her. Also, the same manager believes that the three key values of their organization, namely “commitment, courage and competency” are three words that truly emphasize the workplace mentality in their office. Since she takes these values to include them into her sense of self it, according to the authors, indicates that OI is strong. Nevertheless, the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist said the company had no clear key values that could guide the work, but rather that the key values would be set by each employee. This is opposing the literature finding that OI is perceived when employees share the same goals and values as the organization (Dukerich et al., 2002).

Another sign that shows that the employees perceive OI, is when the employee feel noticed in the organization (Chreim, 2002). Whereas in the case of Martin & Servera, only 28.6 percent of the respondents of the questionnaire said that they feel completely noticed, 28.6 percent answered almost completely noticed and 42.9 percent said somewhat noticed. The data presents difficulties for the authors to see a clear link in that employees at Martin & Servera feel a strong level of OI, due to the fact that the employees do not feel completely noticed. In the case of the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist however, the employees seem to perceive strong OI. This is explained by 40 percent of the employees feel completely noticed and another 40 percent feel almost completely noticed, with the remaining 20 percent feel somewhat noticed. The differences in the sense of feeling noticed may be explained through the size of the companies and the number of employees, as seen in the Empirical Findings.

Despite the fact that the manager at Martin & Servera did not personally favor the company logo, she still felt it was a good way to enhance the feeling among the employees that the company was one whole company. Her employees did however not support this opinion. Six out of seven respondents felt the logo had no impact on them and that it was not particularly visible. The manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist had the same perception toward the logo as for the manager at Martin & Servera. He mentioned that it could affect the way employees feel toward the organization. His employees did however not support his saying either. Rather, they displayed mixed feelings toward the logo and most of them felt not that much affected by it. The answers by employees can act as contradictory to the literature finding that OI can be achieved the more contact an employee has with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Even if the contact between the employee and the organization is not deliberately spelled out in the case of the logo exposure, the authors feel that this kind of communication is still regarded as implicit and thus can act as formal internal communication between the two parties.

The importance of contact between the employee and the organization is further highlighted by Dutton et al., (1994) which state that the more contact different people at different levels have in the organization, the higher the level OI. As revealed in the interview, the manager at Martin & Servera believes that the team building activities such as after-works, general meetings, barbeque nights and internal competitions act as good ways for the employees to interact with different people within the organization. According to the authors, it could also be that because the size of Martin & Servera is quite large, these formal channels are needed in order to feel part of the company. Mael and Ashforth (1989) further state that sharing the same values as the group will help the person feel more connected to the group. This is again supported by the manager at Martin & Servera stating that the team building activities have the aim to achieve cooperation among the employees and link together their common interests. The questionnaire´s replies for Martin & Servera are however mixed in terms of after-works. With 14.3 percent of the employees feeling that after-work nights do not create any greater fellowship with the group and the company, the exact same percentage show that the employees feel complete fellowship. With this said, the authors cannot see a clear indication between after-work nights and OI. What is however found as more connected to OI are the general meetings. With 14.3 of the respondents feeling complete and 42.9 feeling almost complete fellowship with the group and the company. This percentage shows that the employees have a more positive feeling toward general meetings in terms of enhancing the feeling of fellowship. The same holds true for the internal competitions, displaying that 71.4 percent of the respondents feel that this way of communication can create almost complete fellowship. Since both general meetings and internal competitions are highly formal, and because both generate great fellowship, the authors speculate that it may be that the level of formality is the underlying reason for it. Nevertheless, the manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist states that a competitive attitude in employees can act as an incentive to work in the same direction. This also holds true according to the employees stating that fellowship becomes enhanced during these internal competitions. Furthermore, team-building activities are also shown to be important at Mårdskog & Lindkvist according to the manager. What is however found in the questionnaire responses by the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist are that their opinion seem to differ from their manager about whether after-work nights can enhance their sense of fellowship with the group and the company. In the scale ranging from one to five where one corresponds to no fellowship and five meaning complete fellowship, each one of the five employees picked one number each. With this, the interpretation of these answers are somewhat diffuse and no clear link can be found in whether the employees increase their level of OI or not when participating in after-work nights. What is however found to be more related to OI is the general meetings and the internal competitions. With 40 percent answering complete fellowship to both statements, it may be seen to be connected to higher level of OI. As explained by Dutton et al., (1994), it is important to have contact between different people in organizations as it can lead to higher OI. The responses from the employees point toward that general meetings and internal competitions facilitate this contact. Again, the authors of this thesis speculate that the higher degree of formality in general meetings and internal competitions is the reason to why employees feel greater fellowship and part of their organizations.

The manager at Martin & Servera states that she definitely views herself as a Martin & Servera-person, and as much as to the degree that she believes she is so strongly connected to that company that she cannot change jobs within the industry. The fact that Dukerich (2002) states that a sign of strong OI is when the individuals take on the organization’s goals and values as part of their sense of self, the authors interpret it as an indication that the manager of Martin & Servera perceive strong OI. This is true in the case of Mårdskog & Lindkvist as well with the manager believing that the reason to why employees had stayed at the company for so long is because they feel at home in the firm. Having all this said, it is found in the questionnaires that 80 percent of the employees at Mårdskog & Lindkvist feel like a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person and 28.6 percent feel completely and 71.4 percent feel almost completely like a Martin & Servera-person. The authors feel that this demonstrates that both the employees and the managers feels connected to their company, as also suggested by Dukerich (2002).

It is also found in previous literature that strongly identified employees are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs, have a greater motivation to dedicate themselves to their work tasks, and are more likely to feel an increased presence in their work (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Most of the respondents from both companies tended to be satisfied with their job. The underlying reason for this is that their opinions are valuable for the company. The authors speculate that this could be the result of efficient formal internal communication where the managers take the employees opinions into consideration. In addition, as previously written, another aspect of OI includes motivation (Karanika-

Murray et al., 2015). When asked about the degree to which their work make them feel motivated, 71.4 percent of the employees at Martin & Servera stated they felt almost completely motivated. Mårdskog & Lindkvist on the other hand, reported a lower percentage of 60 percent that still can be regarded as high. With these results combined with the previously mentioned literature, the authors interpret that the employees of both companies perceive strong OI. One reason behind this high level of motivation in both companies is the individual goals, which are communicated during the scheduled individual meetings according to both managers and their respective employees. This again implies that there may be a connection between employee OI and this formal internal communication channel. Furthermore, the findings show that 71.4 percent of the employees at Martin & Servera do not associate the workplace with the feeling of being at home. Mårdskog & Lindkvist show different results where all respondents feel at home at their workplace. Since Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) describe that an employee with a high level of OI will have a high presence in the workplace, the differing findings from Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist display a contradiction to the literature. Due to the fact that Martin & Servera and Mårdskog & Lindkvist are different in size as well as number of employees, the frequency of using the formal internal communication channels can vary. According to the authors, this may be an explanation for the difference in their level of OI. This statement is supported by comments from the respondents at Martin & Servera, claiming that the low feeling of home is due to the large staff. Moreover, the feeling of being important is also an aspect that impact OI in employees (Dutton et al., 1994). The findings from both the companies indicate that almost all employees feel important to the companies. As some of the explanations for these results are the employees' ability to influence their work, the received feedback and also that their voice in the organization is listened upon, it might be that it is connected to the formal internal communication. Therefore, the authors see that there may be a connection between the formal internal communication and the sense of feeling important, hence the connection to OI. Another aspect of OI is that a person who shares the same values as the group will feel more connected to it (Mael and Ashforth, 1989). This seems true for Martin & Servera but Mårdskog & Lindkvist is reporting somewhat lower results. The explanation behind this could be because Mårdskog & Lindkvist does not have active key values communicated throughout the company. Martin & Servera, on the other hand, has clearly defined values that are communicated to the employees. The connection between formal internal communication and the values, hence establishment of OI may therefore be perceived as ambiguous according to the authors.

6. Conclusion

This chapter outlines a brief summary of the reasonings and interpretations made in the Analysis. It also describes how the purpose was fulfilled as well as answers the research questions.

The purpose of this thesis was to provide insights regarding OI establishment through formal internal communication. By investigating *what* and *how* different communication channels are used we were able to extend the current literature. This study collected qualitative data from two Swedish wholesales companies regarding their formal internal communication and their OI. To guide this thesis, two research questions were developed.

RQ1: *What role does formal internal communication play in organizational identification?*

The main finding points to the fact that employee OI is affected by the level of formality in the ways of communication. Since the results show that the greater level of formality a channel has, the more OI the employees perceive. This is shown by the formal general meetings, which are according to the case studies the main contributing factor to the higher perceived level of employee OI. The high level of formality in general meetings can then be compared to the seemingly less formal activities such as after-works, which are displaying either no or little effect in enhancing the level of employee OI. The general meetings also allow for the connection between the employees and the organization to be improved, which helps in establishing OI. Another way for the company to communicate in a formal manner is to put the company logo in different places in the office. This though, is not perceived as contributing to OI according to the employees. Nevertheless, since both companies use formal internal communication in different frequencies but still perceive a high level of OI, it becomes rational to judge that the size of the company matters. The larger the company, the more frequent use of formal internal communication channels is necessary. With all this in mind, the most reasonable interpretation is that formal internal communication affects employee OI in different ways.

RQ2*: In what ways do managers impact organizational identification through formal internal communication channels?*

The findings show that managers have an evident opportunity to affect OI in their employees. It is up to the managers to possess necessary knowledge of choosing the most suitable communication channel. Both managers at the investigated companies constantly decide which channels to choose in different situations. The investigation clearly shows that the employees prefer different communication channels for different information. Since all employees and managers have a high level of OI, it is therefore likely that an optimal selection of communication channel is affecting OI in a positive way. It is also proven that receiving information and instructions directly from the managers have a positive impact on OI in employees. As a result, it is reasonable to state is that managers can affect employee OI with their choice of formal internal communication channels.

In conclusion, the authors of this thesis have found that the greater level of formality a channel has, the greater OI the employees perceive. Also, the size of a company matters. The larger a company is, the more frequent use of formal internal communication channels are necessary. The findings in this thesis further show that managers have an evident opportunity to affect OI in the employees. By choosing the most suitable communication channel in accordance to the specific situation, managers can affect employee OI in a positive way. It is also proven that receiving information and instructions directly from the managers can enhance OI in employees.

7. Discussion

In this chapter, implications of the Conclusion will be presented. Then, research strengths, limitations and suggestions for future research will be generated as a way to close this research and open up for new ones that can contribute even further within the subject of communication and OI. The chapter ends with some final words by the authors.

7.1 Implications

The authors of this thesis have made a contribution in academic research in terms of the role of formal internal communication in OI. Early research has touched upon the relationship between communication and OI before, but not in how OI can be established through formal internal communication. This research pinpoints the importance of managers and in how their choice of communication channels can affect the level of OI in employees. Having this said, this research thus provides managers with insights in how OI can affect job performance, and how crucial their role is in order to establish OI among their employees. In other words, this research can benefit managers in the sense that they are provided with knowledge in which formal communication channels that can effectively establish OI in employees. Furthermore, the authors of this thesis find this research useful for other researchers that have the intention of generalizing. This research could then act as a basis for their investigation.

7.2 Research Strengths

Due to the nature of this study, that is a qualitative study, the results have contributed with an understanding of behaviors of values. In specific, this research has provided an understanding of OI in relation to its implications and importance on the overall performance of organizations and employees alike. The research has also shed light upon the role of formal internal communication channels in OI, a previously unexplored area.

7.3 Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

When undertaking extensive research such as this, it is important to be aware of the weaknesses. In this research, the authors acknowledge that managers do not have complete control of communicating OI to employees. Also, employees might need to have the psychological attribute of being open to communication as well as the willingness to identify with organizations. How one can measure this openness and willingness in employees is also of difficulty. There could therefore be a bias toward the extent to which managers can influence and affect employee OI.

Another research limitation is the fact that all data has been collected at a single point in time, resulting in causal relationships. Since this research has been undertaken within a strict timeframe, the issue was inevitable. The cross-sectional design of the study therefore restricts the generalizability of the results as well as conclusions of this research. Future research within the same topic should have a longitudinal focus and data collection in order to minimize the implications of biased results.

Another factor that has restricted the generalizability of this research's results is the population sample. It was focused in a small niche, as well as with the use of only two companies. Further, the questionnaires were filled in only by a small number of employees from each office. A larger sample of case companies and participants in the questionnaires would be of use in order to make results generally applicable, something that the authors of this study propose other future researchers to take further.

Other variables affecting OI, such as hierarchy and structure of organizations, organizational culture, employee working experience, employee personal factors, number of years working at organizations, organizational ethics, industry, job position and external view of organizations have not been controlled, rather delimited, in this research. Therefore, there might be a bias toward whether a formal internal communication channel is the sole factor influencing OI. Future research should conduct a statistical study that can control the variables potentially affecting communication channels and OI, and hence eradicate the loss of control of the other variables.

Another limitation is that the authors have deliberately eliminated the counterpart of formal communication from this research. That is the informal part of internal communication. By doing so, an important aspect of internal communication might have been overlooked since informal internal communication may play an important role in OI as well. With this said, looking at informal internal communication can be an interesting topic for future research.

One final limitation is the appropriateness of the interview and questionnaire questions. This limitation emerged during the analysis of the empirical results. Despite the fact that the authors attended workshops, conducted a pilot test and investigated how to successfully form questions that catered the purpose of this study, some data came out inadequate. This was a surprising realization for the authors since the pilot test generated desired and suitable data. Nevertheless, this limitation made it somewhat difficult to draw connections between the two firms and the theoretical framework of this study.

7.4 Final Words from the Authors

During the entire thesis process, we constantly received positive feedback regarding the research subject from different employees and managers external to the thesis. This enthusiasm from other stakeholders struck us by surprise. Being constantly reminded of the importance of OI and the desired benefits led us to establish a genuine interest in communication and OI. We therefore look forward to use our newly acquired knowledge to create stronger OI in our future workplaces. This process has also increased our understanding of the importance of communication in organizations, which will be beneficial to us in the future.

8. References

Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of management*, *34*(3), 325-374.

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization.*Academy of management review*, *14*(1), 20-39.

Bartels, J., Douwes, R., Jong, M., & Pruyn, A. (2006). Organizational Identification During a Merger: Determinants of Employees' Expected Identification With the New Organization*. *British Journal of Management*,*17*(S1), S49-S67.

Bartels, J., Pruyn, A., De Jong, M., & Joustra, I. (2007). Multiple organizational identification levels and the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*,*28*(2), 173-190

Bryman, A. (2012). Social Research Methods. New York: Oxford University Press.

Celo, S., Nebus, J., & Wang, I. K. (2015). MNC structure, complexity, and performance: Insights from NK methodology. *Journal of International Management*, *21*(3), 182-199.

Chaput, M., Brummans, B. H., & Cooren, F. (2011). The role of organizational identification in the communicative constitution of an organization: A study of consubstantialization in a young political party. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 0893318910386719.

Chattopadhyay, P., Tluchowska, M., & George, E. (2004). Identifying the ingroup: A closer look at the influence of demographic dissimilarity on employee social identity. *Academy of Management Review*, *29*(2), 180-202.

Chen, Y. C., Chi, S. C. S., & Friedman, R. (2013). Do more hats bring more benefits? Exploring the impact of dual organizational identification on work‐related attitudes and performance. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *86*(3), 417-434.

Chreim, S. (2002). Influencing organizational identification during major change: A communication-based perspective. *Human relations*, *55*(9), 1117-1137.

Clinebell, S., & Shadwick, G. (2005). The Importance of Organizational Context on Employees' Attitudes: An Examination of Worlking in Main Offices Versus Branch Offices. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *11*(2), 89-100.

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2014). Business Research. A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students. New York: Pargrace Macmillan.

Dukerich, J. M., Golden, B. R., & Shortell, S. M. (2002). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: The impact of organizational identification, identity, and image on the cooperative behaviors of physicians. Administrative Science Quarterly,47(3), 507-533.

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative science quarterly*, 239-263.

Easton, G. (2010). Critical realism in case study research. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *39*(1), 118-128.

Ehambaranathan, E., Samie, A., & Murugasu, S. (2015). The Recent Challenges of Globalization and the Role of Employee Engagement-The Case of Vietnam. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, *5*(1), 69.

Eriksson/Zetterquist, U., Mullern, T., Styhre, A., (2011) Organization Theory: a practice-based approach, Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Friedl, J., & Verčič, A. T. (2011). Media preferences of digital natives' internal communication: A pilot study. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 84-86.

H. Akhter, S., & Fernando Pinto Barcellos, P. (2013). Competitive threats, strategic responses and performance of Brazilian B2B firms. *Management Decision*, *51*(8), 1628-1642.

Halinen, A., & Törnroos, J. Å. (2005). Using case methods in the study of contemporary business networks. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*(9), 1285-1297.

Kalla, H.A. (2005), "Integrated internal communications: a multidisciplinary perspective",
Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 302-14.

Karanika-Murray, M., Duncan, N., Pontes, H. M., & Griffiths, M. D. (2015). Organizational identification, work engagement, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *30*(8), 1019-1033.

Khan, M. A., Chaudhry, H. A. I. S., & Khan, M. F. A. (2010). Impact of organization's mission an encouraging factor for overall performance. *African Journal of Business Management*, *4*(13), 2652.

Kopaneva, I., & Sias, P. M. (2015). Lost in Translation Employee and Organizational Constructions of Mission and Vision. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 0893318915581648.

Larson, G. S., & Pepper, G. L. (2003). Strategies for managing multiple organizational identifications a case of competing identities. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *16*(4), 528-557.

Lefaix-Durand, A., & Kozak, R. (2009). Integrating transactional and relational exchange into the study of exchange orientation in customer relationships. *Journal of marketing management*, *25*(9-10), 1003-1025.

Lievens, A., Moenaert, R. K., & Jegers, R. S. (1999). Linking communication to innovation success in the financial services industry: a case study analysis.*International Journal of Service Industry Management*, *10*(1), 23-48.

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of organizational Behavior*, *13*(2), 103-123.

Mason, K., & Leek, S. (2012). Communication practices in a business relationship: Creating, relating and adapting communication artifacts through time. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *41*(2), 319-332.

McLeod, L. E. (2012). Selling with Noble Purpose. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Men, L. R. (2014). Strategic internal communication: transformational leadership, communication channels, and employee satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 0893318914524536.

Men, L. R. (2015). The internal communication role of the chief executive officer: Communication channels, style, and effectiveness. *Public Relations Review*, *41*(4), 461-471.

Millward, L. J., Haslam, S. A., & Postmes, T. (2007). Putting employees in their place: The impact of hot desking on organizational and team identification. *Organization Science*, *18*(4), 547-559.

Miller, D., Greenwood, R., & Prakash, R. (2009). What happened to organization theory?. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *18*(4), 273-279.

Mowday, R. T., Steers, R. M., & Porter, L. W. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of vocational behavior*, *14*(2), 224-247.

Oke, A., & Idiagbon-Oke, M. (2010). Communication channels, innovation tasks and NPD project outcomes in innovation-driven horizontal networks.*Journal of Operations Management*, *28*(5), 442-453.

Omilion-Hodges, L. M., & Baker, C. R. (2014). Everyday talk and convincing conversations: Utilizing strategic internal communication. *Business Horizons*, *57*(3), 435-445.

Rosenfeld, L. B., Richman, J. M., & May, S. K. (2004). Information adequacy, job satisfaction and organizational culture in a dispersed-network organization. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 32, 28–54.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). Research methods for business students. Harlow: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Simpson, J.A. & Weiner, E.S. (red.) (1989). *The Oxford English dictionary*. (2. ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. T. H., & Van Riel, C. B. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification. *Academy of Management journal*, *44*(5), 1051-1062.

Tanis, M., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2011). Organizational identification and the communication of identity: Effects of message characteristics on cognitive and affective identification. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *50*(4), 784-791.

Tang, F., Mu, J., & Thomas, E. (2015). Who Knows What in NPD Teams: Communication Context, Mode, and Task Contingencies. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *32*(3), 404-423.

Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., & Tajfel, H. (1979). Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favouritism. *European journal of social psychology*, *9*(2), 187-204.

Tenhiälä, A., & Salvador, F. (2014). Looking inside glitch mitigation capability: The effect of intraorganizational communication channels. *Decision Sciences*,*45*(3), 437-466.

Vartanian, T. P. (2011). Secondary Data Analysis. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Watson-Manheim, M. B., & Bélanger, F. (2007). Communication media repertoires: Dealing with the multiplicity of media choices. *MIS quarterly*, 267-293.

Welch, M., & Jackson, P. R., (2007),"Rethinking internal communication: a stakeholder approach", Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 12 Iss 2 pp. 177 - 198

Williamson, K. (2002). Research methods for students, academics and professionals (2nd ed.). Centre for Information Studies: Wagga Wagga

White, C., Vanc, A., & Stafford, G. (2010). Internal communication, information satisfaction, and sense of community: The effect of personal influence. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *22*(1), 65-84.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case Study Research: design and methods (Vol. 4th Edition). London: SAGE

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Interview Questions to Case Managers

General Background

1. How many employees do you have at your office today (within the administrative work)?
2. What is your role as a branch manager? What responsibilities do you have? Within what field?
3. Where you a firstly employed as a “Martin Olsson” or a “Servera”? Or where you “new”? *(Not asked to the branch manager at Mårdskog & Lindkvist)*
4. Are there any key values that guide the company? If yes, are they representative for your company? How?
5. Do you as the branch manager have the same “personal” key values? Are there any ones that are missing, or any you do not agree upon?
6. How does Martin & Servera/Mårdskog & Lindkvist want an employee to be like/feel?

Communication

7. How do you work to achieve these key values in your employees?
8. How do you communicate the company’s key values to your employees? How are these key values conveyed from the rest of the firm?
9. Generally speaking, in what ways do you communicate with your employees? How often? Mostly formally/informally?
10. What communication channel(s) do you prefer? Why? Do you think your employees prefer the same?
11. Does your company have an intranet, and if so, how is it utilized?
12. Depending on the subject matter, how do you adapt your choice of communication channel? (for example, information about the company’s success/setbacks, terminations, customer opinions, results…)
13. In what contexts do you use face-to-face, e-mail, telephone, intranet, meeting, Skype, and so on?
14. How do you make forwarded messages comprehensible for others? Do you revise the information to a more suitable alternative or do you just forward it just the way you received it?
15. How do you know that your employees have understood the information you have forwarded/tried to convey?
16. How is the communication climate at your office? Do employees need to book meetings in order to speak to you?
17. Do your employees help in determining the company’s targets/objectives/goals, if yes, then how? or is this determined by the top managers only?
18. Do you talk openly about positive/negative critiques at the office? For example about the firm per se, the success or setbacks of each individual and so on...

19. Do you feel that the communication could be improved? If so, then what?

OI

20. How do you speak about your company to external people? (we/they/as a family)?
21. How do you react when external people talk negatively/positively about your company?
22. How is your company logo exposed in the office? Why/why not? How do you think this affects your attitude toward the company?
23. Do you have any team-building activities with your employees? How often? What is the objective of these?
24. Do you feel like a Martin & Servera/Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person?

9.2 Appendix 2: Questionnaire Questions to Case Employees

Martin & Servera

General Background

1. What is your position within the company?
2. For how long have you been employed at Martin & Servera?
3. The key values that guide Martin & Servera are the following: "courage, competence and commitment". To what degree do you feel that *courage* is a suitable description of the company as a whole (*alternatives:* "not at all" and "completely" ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
4. To what degree do you feel that *competence* is a suitable description of the company as a whole (*alternatives:* "not at all" and "completely" ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
5. To what degree do you feel that *commitment* is a suitable description of the company as a whole (*alternatives:* "not at all" and "completely" ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
6. Describe with an example how the company uses/work with these key values
7. To what degree do you feel that these key values are representative for you as an employee (*alternatives:* "not at all" and "completely" ranging from low 1 to high 5)?

Communication

8. How do you prefer to receive general information about the company (*alternatives: "*face-to-face", "e-mail", "intranet", "meeting", "other")?
9. How do you prefer to receive individual positive feedback (*alternatives: "*face-to-face", "e-mail", "intranet", "meeting", "other")?
10. How do you prefer to receive individual negative feedback (*alternatives: "*face-to-face", "e-mail", "intranet", "meeting", "other")?
11. How do you prefer to receive the sales numbers of the Malmö office (*alternatives: "*face-to-face", "e-mail", "intranet", "meeting", "other")?

12. Describe how you/in what ways you affect your own sales targets

OI

13. How do you talk about your company to external people (*alternatives:* “we”, “they”, “Martin & Servera”, “do not talk about it”, “other”)?
14. Let say you sit on the bus and some, for you, unknown people start talking positively about Martin & Servera, how would that make you feel as a person? How would you have reacted?
15. Let say the situation was the reverse, and someone on the bus would have spoken negatively about Martin & Servera. How would that make you feel as a person? How would you have reacted?
16. To what degree do you feel noticed and therefore part of Martin & Servera (*alternatives:* “not at all” and “completely” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
17. How does your workplace make you feel (alternatives: “not at home” and “at home” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
18. How does your work at Martin & Servera make you personally feel (alternatives: “unsatisfied” and “satisfied” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
19. How does your work at Martin & Servera make you personally feel (alternatives: “embarrassed” and “proud” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
20. How does your work at Martin & Servera make you personally feel (alternatives: “de-motivated” and “motivated” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
21. How does your work at Martin & Servera make you personally feel (alternatives: “unimportant” and “important” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
22. How does your work at Martin & Servera make you personally feel (alternatives: “not identified/not part of” and “identified/part of” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
23. Describe what you think the beliefs people that are not employed at Martin & Servera have about your company
24. To what extent do you feel personally affected by the company results (*alternatives:* “little affected” and “very affected” ranging from low 1 to high 5)? Describe the answer with an example
25. How is the company logo exposed at your office and how do you get affected by it?
26. To what degree do after-work nights make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
27. To what degree do general meetings make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company? (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
28. To what degree do barbeque nights make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company? (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
29. To what degree do internal competitions make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company? (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?

30. Do you feel like a Martin & Servera-person (*alternatives:* “no connection to Martin & Servera” and “strong connection to Martin & Serverat” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?

<u>Mårdskog & Lindkvist</u>

General Background

1. What is your position within the company?
2. For how long have you been employed at Mårdskog & Lindkvist?

Communication

3. How do you prefer to receive general information about the company (*alternatives:* “face-to-face”, “e-mail”, “meeting”, “other”)?
4. How do you prefer to receive individual positive feedback (*alternatives:* “face-to-face”, “e-mail”, “meeting”, “other”)?
5. How do you prefer to receive individual negative feedback (*alternatives:* “face-to-face”, “e-mail”, “meeting”, “other”)?
6. How do you prefer to receive the sales numbers of the Norrköping office (*alternatives:* “face-to-face”, “e-mail”, “meeting”, “other”)?
7. Describe how you/in what ways you affect your own sales targets

OI

8. How do you talk about your company to external people (*alternatives:* “we”, “they”, “Mårdskog & Lindkvist”, “do not talk about it”, “other”)?
9. Let say you sit on the bus and some, for you, unknown people start talking positively about Mårdskog & Lindkvist, how would that make you feel as a person? How would you have reacted?
10. Let say the situation was the reverse, and someone on the bus would have spoken negatively about Mårdskog & Lindkvist. How would that make you feel as a person? How would you have reacted?
11. To what degree do you feel noticed and therefore part of Mårdskog & Lindkvist (*alternatives:* “not at all” and “completely” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
12. How does your workplace make you feel (alternatives: “not at home” and “at home” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
13. How does your workplace make you feel personally (alternatives: “unsatisfied” and “satisfied” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
14. How does your workplace make you feel personally (alternatives: “embarrassed” and “proud” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
15. How does your workplace make you feel personally (alternatives: “de-motivated” and “motivated” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
16. How does your workplace make you feel personally (alternatives: “unimportant” and “important” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?

17. How does your workplace make you feel personally (alternatives: “not identified/not part of” and “identified/part of” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
18. Describe what you think the beliefs people that are not employed at Mårdskog & Lindkivst have about your company
19. To what extent do you feel personally affected by the company results (*alternatives:* “little affected” and “very affected” ranging from low 1 to high 5)? Describe the answer with an example

OI activities

20. How is the company logo exposed at your office and how do you get affected by it?
21. To what degree do after-work nights make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
22. To what degree do general meetings make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company? (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?
23. To what degree do internal competitions make you feel greater fellowship with the group and the company? (*alternatives:* “little fellowship” and “strong fellowship” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?

Grand Finale

24. Do you feel like a Mårdskog & Lindkvist-person (*alternatives:* “no connection to Mårdskog & Lindkvist” and “strong connection to Mårdskog & Lindkvist” ranging from low 1 to high 5)?