Performing internal communication with the help of digital tools
- A study of how employees utilize internal communication together with digital tools

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Abstract

Digital communication tools are used as a central method for information gathering and sharing in order to facilitate communication and collaboration. When implementing a digital communication tool, it is possible to create new communication capabilities in addition to simplifying and streamlining incumbent communications such as face-to-face communication or email. The purpose of this study is to investigate how a digital tool can improve the internal communication. This has been done through examining potential possibilities and organizational benefits, but also through investigating the individual employee’s role and engagement when they used a digital communication tool. This study has investigated two different digital communication tools and explored their similarities and differences. The empirical foundation consisted of interviews and documents and showed that a digital communication tool has to be frequently used by the majority of employees for it to improve the internal communication. If this is done, it can provide higher transparency in the organization as well as opportunities for sharing knowledge and information. A digital tool, used well, can connect the organization and provide a platform where crowdsourcing, innovation and creativity can be performed. However, this seems to only happen if a digital tool is truly integrated into the organization and is employed at work by the majority of employees.

Keywords:

Digital tool, Digital communication, Internal communication, Multicommunication, Engagement.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Technology has revolutionized the way people operate business (Sward & Macarthur 2007) and allows organizations to act and establish themselves globally. People can be located in different areas of the world and still be able to communicate with each other (D’Ambr, Rice & Connor 1998; Rennecker & Godwin 2003). Organizations use technology to communicate within their structures, which allows for a global distribution of employees. The physical interactions and the virtual interactions become increasingly interwoven. Meetings and gatherings that previously took place in the office can now be performed through computer-based platforms and other digital devices. Before the internet, organizations used traditional channels of communication and interaction, such as face-to-face communication, letters, telephone calls and so on. The objectives to communicate in order to enable different working tasks have not changed over the years (Shockley-Zalabak 2006) but the way we communicate has. Now, organizations use different kinds of digital tools in order to communicate with colleague’s worldwide, they make use of digital communication.

Using a digital tool, according to Haverblad (2007), can affect productivity, efficiency and quality in an organization. A well-functioning digital tool creates good conditions for a holistic view of the organization, but also greater control and the ability to follow up different aspects in a systematic way (Ibid). Therefore it becomes vital for an organization to choose a digital tool that matches the organizations structures and objectives. One critical aspect when choosing a digital tool is the usability related to the user interface (Krug 2014). If a digital tool is too troublesome or intricacies the end users will find it difficult to use and it will presumably affect the organization in a negative way. The digital tool has to match with the organization, but as important the end users must also match the digital tool. It is the relationship between the digital tool and end users that determine the outcome. If the digital tool is too difficult and the end users do not have enough knowledge it will be a mismatch (Ibid). However, the mismatch can also go the other way - if the digital tool is too basic and simple to use and the end user possesses a higher level of experience and knowledge it will be a mismatch (Ibid). Welch (2012) states that communication and information need to be
1.2 Problematization

Employees can process and spread information within the business, they can for an instance be effective in referring to their organizations, circulating strategic knowledge and build networks that can benefit the organization (Mazzei 2014). These actions are the basis of a business's ability to generate and spread knowledge and other intangible resources that are critical for the competitive advantage (Ibid). Different people communicate in different ways and have a preference for using different communication methods. Studies have shown that face-to-face communication is the most preferred medium because it improves the chances of communication being understood as it was meant (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014; D’Ambr, Rice & Connor 1998; Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014; Daft & Lengel 1986; Nordblom 2008). But it is getting harder to perform face-to-face communication within business with an expanding global footprint (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014). More and more companies are forced into making use of digital tools in order to perform communication within the organization (Ibid).

In a more globalized world with stronger market liberalization and possibilities, organizations are showing more interest in new digital communication tools (Ernst & Young 2011). A digital tool shall facilitate collaboration and integration between the different users. There are studies that show that employees no longer have sequential interactions, but instead, have simultaneous interactions through a combination of multiple communication channels (Rennecker & Godwin 2003) and this allows for multiple communication channels where individuals have their own favorite way. According to Strid (1999) digital tool entails many advantages. Besides flexibility regarding time and location, digital tool allows the transmitter to reach out to multiple recipients at once, and store large amounts of information for a relatively small cost (Ibid). Internal digital communications are increasingly being implemented by organizations in order to communicate with employees, facilitate two-way conversations, spread knowledge and information and encourage employees to contribute to organizational strategy (Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014).

These digital communication tools can, at first sight, be seen as effective and a way to improve the organization, but scholars argue that these new tools should be considered
carefully, even if they may solve many challenges (Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014). Cook (2008) states that one of the challenges when implementing a digital tool is to get the users to actually use the digital tool and partially leave their old communication habits. Too many organizations implement digital tools and just expect the employees to start using it without further notice. The use of digital communication within organizations is argued to be an under-researched area where much is left to learn (Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014).

Organizations have different criteria’s for their different digital tools, but common criteria for smaller organizations or start-ups are that the digital tools have to be flexible and cheap. For this reason, it is essential to examine how digital communication tools are used for internal communication in smaller companies. This paper aims to provide practical insights on how a smaller organization, that has to implement flexible and cheap digital tools, uses these tools and how it can improve the internal communication. Specifically, this paper attempts to illustrate the role of digital communication tools in internal communication, their benefits and the difficulties of using them and how these tools can improve the internal communication, together with a case study in a smaller organization.

1.3 Research question

Based on the problematization described, this study aims to extend past research by present insights and knowledge on how a smaller organization, which has to use cheap and flexible tools, uses digital tools and how these affects the internal communication. The thesis has addressed the following research question:

- How can a digital tool improve the internal communication?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of digital communication in a smaller and globally distributed organization and thus explore how a digital tool can improve the internal communication. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding and insights into this phenomenon. Furthermore, this study also aims to give a complementing perspective to previous studied areas and a helpful contribution for further studies. This has been done through providing insights of how a smaller organization uses digital tools in the internal communication.
1.5 Delimitations

The digital tools that have been analysed are digital communication tools that an organization uses in order to communicate with each other regardless of international locations. The thesis is limited to one smaller organization and how they make use of digital communication tools in their internal communication.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how a digital tool can improve the internal communication. This chapter has been divided based on this research question where the chapter will begin with a focus on internal communication together with theories that concerns the area. When internal communication has been discussed and presented, the focus has been on digital tools together with internal communication and present research in that field. At last, focus has been directed towards digital tools for themselves and presents a theory on how a digital tool can be evaluated and measured.

2.2 Internal communication

Internal communication is a fast growing specialisation in public relations and communication management. It began in the 1990s in the USA and spread then to Europe (Vercic, Vercic & Sriramesh 2012). The trust of the employees towards organizations had a drastic reduction due to factors as downsizing, outsourcing and permanent restructuring (Ibid). Hence, the need for internal communication became critical (Ibid). Meng and Pan (2012) state that internal communication is becoming more important for organizations in their aim towards efficiency. Hence, the authors assert that internal communication is crucial for increased competitiveness and effectiveness in a fast changing market. An important aspect in determining an organizations success and efficiency is the quality of the communication between the employees (Kitchen & Daly 2002). Hume and Leonard (2014) states that internal communication is concerned with the relationship between the employees and the organization, each is the others most important assets.

Internal communication, according to Mazzei (2010), can be defined as all the activities an organization perform in order to spread information at all hierarchical levels. It strives to support cooperation’s and developments in order to achieve consistent results. Martynenko (2015) defines internal communication as all the communicative activities that lead to effective cooperation between employees and which in turn stimulates the exchange of knowledge within the organization. Constantin and Baisas (2015) argue that internal communication is important because it is the building block of the organizations culture and therefore, the organization itself. The process of communication and the exchange of
information and knowledge are central to the perceptions of an individual as well as an 
organizations wellbeing and success (Kaufmann & Kaufmann 2010)

Internal communication consists of both formal communication such as meetings and e-mails 
but also informal communication such as conversations with colleagues in the parking lot, 
body language and gossips (Larsson 2008; Johnson, Donohue, Atkin & Johnson 1994; Lai 
2016). Those various forms of communication are definitions of the organizations' internal 
communication and should be seen as a valuable social activity for organizations (Marchiori 
& Bulgacov 2012). A vital component of the internal communication is the selection of a 
communication channel, where the messages are transmitted.

There are two types of channels: verbal and nonverbal (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014). Verbal 
communication refers to written or spoken words to share information with others. A dialogue 
is a form of verbal communication, it is a discussion or conversation between people. It is a 
process in which people are exposed to new information. The process involves meetings of 
business colleges that represent different views on issues of mutual interests. There are 
different forms of verbal communication examples can be face-to-face meetings are 
information-rich since they allow for emotions and expressions to be transmitted and 
 immediate feedback to take place (Ibid). Communications in text-forms are more appropriate 
for describing details or when you want the message to reach a large group of people (Ibid). 
Nonverbal communication is sharing information without using words or texts. This thesis 
will focus on verbal communication where written communication applies (Ibid).

To identify the most appropriate channel of communication for sending messages the business 
needs to identify these verbal and nonverbal communication aspects. One of the key 
challenges is to choose the right channel to use within an organization – for both the audience 
and the message (see Figure 1) (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014).
Internal communication can be practised in two different ways: communication that either transmits a message or sharing communication (Heide, Johansson & Simonsson 2012). The first aspect, communication that transmits a message, consists of information and knowledge that are transported between individuals. The communication is characterized by being directed in only one direction, from the sender to the receiver, and can be explained as a one-way communication where the recipient of the message is seen as a passive individual who is willing to receive the message (see Figure 2) (ibid).

The second way, sharing communication means that the receiver is constantly participating as co-creator of the message (Heide, Johansson & Simonsson 2012). The sender and receiver participate in a two-way communication. When the person who has received a message have the opportunity to reconnect how the message is interpreted transmitter can gain an understanding of whether the message has been interpreted in the way it was intended (Ibid). Interaction and engagement occurs as a result of both the sender and the receiver are listening, reacts and responds (see Figure 3) (Ibid).

Ryynänen, Jalkala and Salminen (2013) listed four promoters for effective internal communication in their research paper: an open communication atmosphere, a non-
hierarchical structure, a variety of alternative communication channels and communication training. An open communication atmosphere concerns the fact if the atmosphere is perceived as trusting, open and safe where individuals can talk freely and be respected. Non-hierarchical structure is linked to if the organization is not strictly regulated and hierarchical. If it is to strict can an individual, either deliberately or unconsciously, avoid communicating with those above. A variety of communication channels understand that employees may prefer to use different channels when they communicate. This concerns both face-to-face communication and communication through different kinds of IT tools. Communication training refers to the training the employees receive in communicating (Ibid).

2.2.1 Internal communication and engagement
The quickly changing and increasingly connected modern world has made employees one of the most important strategic constituencies to consider for organizations (Kim & Rhee 2011). Hence, the relationship between the organization and the employees are a vital aspect to consider. Both Ter Hoeven and Verhoeven (2013) and Postmes, de Wit and Tanis (2001) asserts that there is a relationship between the flow of information and the engagement from employees towards the organization. If the employees feel involved and are provided with enough information regarding the organizations goals and also their own roles their engagement towards the organization increase (Ter Hoeven & Verhoeven 2013; Hume & Leonard 2014).

Constantin and Baisas (2015) also confirm the relationship between internal communication and engagement and states that if the employees understand the work-policies in the same way as the managers and hold the same values as them, then the whole organization are focused on the same mission. An effective internal communication can ensure that the whole organizations work towards a common goal and assist each other effectively. Being included and well informed is a crucial request in order to be able to make an effective contribution (Bharadwaj 2014). If internal communication is carefully planned with cerebral diligence, it can affect and change the attitudes and behaviour of the employees, making them more responsible and committed to the organization and their personal working duties (Bharadwaj 2014; Rousseau 1998). Quirke (2008) asserts that a well performed internal communication can provide strategic advantages through sharing knowledge, aligning employee’s efforts and engaging their passions.
Quirke (2008) further writes how important it is to follow through with the internal communication by converting awareness into action. It is one thing to have a strategy for internal communication, but it is a whole other thing to actually turn strategy into action. This is one of the biggest challenges for an organization since it means handling internal communication challenges and difficulties in order to be able to create a path of consistency in organizations (Ibid). The relationship between internal communication and engagement from employees can be explained by the fact that when information from a top-down perspective is communicated accurately, in time and is of relevance, employees in the organization are likely to feel more pleased and well informed (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). This relationship indicated that internal communication, when used properly, enhances trust and respect between managers and employees and therefore leads to engagement within the organization (Ibid).

Jackson and Welch (2007) suggest that internal communication can contribute to engaging the employees throughout the organization. An effective internal communication where the employees are well informed and enlightened regarding the organizations missions and goals creates a sense of belonging, awareness of the organizations changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims (Welch 2013). Ruck and Welch (2012) states that internal communication that involves effective exchange of information often result in commitment and engagement from the employees towards the organization, it creates a sense of belonging. The authors have developed a model that explains internal communication together with employee engagement.
The authors argue that there is a relationship between the employee’s engagement and internal communication. The model seeks for example to explain the importance of employee’s voice, based on being well informed together with concepts of organizational support and identification. Work and employee engagement is influenced by internal communication. It becomes essential for an organization to understand how communication should reach out to everyone in the organization, which communication channels to use and how many of them. Employees today face simultaneous interactions through a combination of multiple communication channels (Rennecker & Godwin 2003). If the internal communication is not performed well, feelings like distrust and uncertainty can arise from the employees (George & Jones 2012) and give a negative impact on the organization. This study will investigate three of the six areas showed in the model. The areas that have been marked with italics font are the ones that this thesis will analyse.

2.2.2 Multicommunication

Turner and Reinsch (2009) present data regarding multicommunication, the practice of engaging in multiple conversations at the same time. Multicommunication can involve various combinations of media and takes place when a person takes part in two or more
overlapping conversations. Examples of multicommunication can be talking on the mobile phone while answering e-mails, text messaging during a meeting or text message with multiple individuals. Multicommunication can also occur when having multiple conversations on the same medium. For example, texting different individuals at the same time on the mobile phone (Ibid). Reinsch, Turner and Tinsley (2008) describe multicommunication as overlapping conversations and that is an increasingly common occurrence in the technology-based workplace. Research has shown that people match a richer medium with a more equivocal message (message with multiple meanings) and a leaner medium with a less equivocal message (Turner & Reinsch 2009). Multicommunication allows people to efficient working time by allowing them to participate in multiple meetings at any one time (Ibid).

Today’s employees are facing an increasing demand to merge free time, family and work together. They have to face family time at work and they also have to manage more work demands while at home (Turner & Reinsch 2009). The push towards efficiency has increased, leading to the need to be able to participate in more than one conversation at any one time. Features associated with technology and digital tools can help to support the ability to juggle multiple conversations and allows for using different devices at the same time to communicate with different individuals (Ibid). Turner and Reinsch (2009) also highlight the unsuccessful incidents with multicommunication and suggest that this practise may be found offensive or disrespectful. The concept of multicommunication is often seen as a way for efficiency – to do more in less time. In this way, conversations become a game where the goal is to keep as many balls in the air as possible. Additionally, multicommunication becomes very sender focused with less attention on the receivers (Ibid).

2.3 Channels of internal communication

There exist multiple different channels that organizations can use in order to perform internal communication, face-to-face communication, E-mail, social media’s, SMS etc. Larsson (2008) divides the different channels into two sections. The first one consists of verbal communication such as meetings and phone calls together with written communication such as newsletters. The second is digital channels such as intranet or e-mail and other types of communication using digital devices. According to Orna (2005) there exists some dissatisfaction towards the usage of communication channels in today’s organizations. Orna (2005) states that all the different channels that an organization uses can result as an obstacle
rather than openness. Therefore, it becomes critical to find communication channels that fit with the organization and with the employee’s needs.

Several of the digital communication channels are characterized by asynchronous communication. Ruggieri, Boca and Garro (2013) argue that asynchronous communication mainly occurs when using a digital tool in order to communicate, where people interact at different times. The opposite of asynchronous communication is synchronous communication. Synchronous means communicate with each other at the same time, chat rooms or online conferences are some examples of synchronous communication. Asynchronous communication is the relay of information with a time lag. E-mail or discussion forums are two examples of how asynchronous communication can be practiced (Ibid). An advantage of asynchronous communication is that the person communicating has time to think through their message carefully, before sending the message. However, this also means that instant feedback from the receiver may not occur immediately (Ibid).

2.3.1 Communication versus digital communication

According to Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto and Nevalainen (2014) do digital communication facilitates the internal communication. In a study conducted by Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto and Nevalainen (2014), the outcome shows that companies use digital channels such as intranets and e-mail as channels for all formal communication. They argue that digital channels are more suitable to develop and spread awareness of the organization's goals than to create commitment, relations and a sense of belonging to the organization. This is because the communication that takes place in the channels are task oriented and can therefore be perceived as limiting the employees' ability to develop personal relationships with each other. For this reason, it is important that internal communication contains daily information exchange that takes place face-to-face (Ibid). There are studies that show that face-to-face communication is the preferable medium to use when employees are to communicate with each other (Stegarioiu & Talal 2014; D’Ambr, Rice & Connor 1998; Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014; Daft & Lengel 1986; Nordblom 2008). Explanations for this are that communication that takes place face-to-face can make it easier for employees to strengthen relations with each other and thus develop feelings of community (Stegarioiu & Talal 2014).

However, Friedl and Verčič (2011) states that employees want information on the organization's overall strategic goals and aims through both face-to-face and digital communication. Thus, through combined channels. This statement is similar to Welch (2012)
who claims that organizations should combine several types of channels to convey information regarding the organization and employees. Welch (2012) means that different individuals prefer different types of channels for different types of information. This means that the message should be disseminated through multiple channels so that employees are able to choose which medium they want to receive internal information from.

2.4 Communication using digital tools

According to Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989), a digital tool itself does not improve an organization’s performance, but rather how it is used. This means that the users must feel that the digital tool makes their tasks easier to perform by making use of the digital tools benefits. To just implement a digital tool and expect it to give results with no further notice is not the solution. A well-function digital tool has to fit into the organization and provide improvements in order for the employees to start using it (Ibid). Christensen and Cornelissen (2011) assert that organizations need to be able to communicate to a larger amount of people than before in order to operate their business in a global world. Using a digital tool allow for meetings and conversations to be held regardless of geographical circumstances or time differences. Turner and Reinsch (2009) believe that digital communication channels blur the boundaries of time and space. Using a digital tool in order to communicate allows for a non-stop dialogue where you can connect almost when you want and wherever you are. A digital tool can help an organization to improve productivity, efficiency and quality, and it can also provide a holistic view of the organization (Haverblad 2007). Hence, the choice of a digital tool has a major impact on the expected results and the results achieved in practice. In recent years, it has become increasingly proven that effective communication is the key to a functioning and integrated organization (Blazenaite 2011). Furthermore, Blazenaite (2011) states that effective communication contributes to the stability of the organization, and also the ability to adapt to recent trends.

Nevertheless, there are some disadvantages that can occur when using a digital tool together with internal communication. One critical aspect that can be difficult to control is the unawareness if the message has reached the expected receiver. The recipient must first be informed somehow of where the stored information is for the message to reach all the way (Orre & Palm 1995). Or if something would happen to the digital device can the communication be difficult to accomplish and other tasks may suffer from lack of being able to communicate. Sarbrough-Thompson and Feldman (1998) states that digital communication
contributes to reduced social contact and physical meetings between people. This can in some contexts give a negative impact on the organization as a whole (Ibid).

2.4.1 Success of using digital tools in an organization
Delone and McLean (1992) have done a study that examines the success factors of digital tools. The study resulted in a model that maps out the critical factors to consider when using a digital tool in an organization. It is a three-step model where all steps should be evaluated for themselves. This will help the researcher to locate both strengths and weaknesses of a digital tool.

(Figure 5. “Success model” by DeLone & McLean 2003, p. 12)

Starting to the left, system quality and information quality seeks to explore the functionality of a digital tool. This part is concerned with the more technical aspects of a digital tool, such as flexibility, integration and response time. These factors have an impact on the middle section which consists of how the digital tool is used and the user satisfaction with the digital tool. This can be measured by how well the digital tool handles the desirable activities, how well the digital tool is used and how frequently it is used. This leads in turn to how the digital tool affects the individual in the organization, which then leads to the influence of the organization as a whole, as illustrated in the figures right part. This part consist of how often the digital tool is used and user satisfaction. This can be measured by how well the digital tool handles the desirable activities, how well the digital tool is used and how frequently it is used.
The three parts can be concluded as the digital tools *functionality, utility and usefulness* (DeLone & McLean 1992).

### 2.5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework was used to analyse the collected empirical data in order to answer the thesis research question. Delone and McLeans (2003) success model has been used as the main theoretical framework of this thesis. The reason for choosing this model in this study is that it highlights concrete indicators of a digital tools success, which are relevant and applicable in relation to the aim of the study. The model has been used in this study in order to create a structured way to evaluate each success factor individually in relation to the digital tools used by Adssets; Trello and Slack. The model has also been used in relation to the internal communication. The thesis has used the models three divisions: functionality (step 1), utility (step 2) and usefulness (step 3) as a framework in the analysis. Hence, the analysis has been built and structured based on these three parts. First the two digital tools (Trello and Slack) functionality has been discussed and analysed. Information regarding which functions they use and what functions they do not use has been provided. The second part covered the digital tools utility, how often do they use these two digital tools and information about user satisfaction has been studied. The last part of the analysis has consisted of the usefulness of the two digital tools. An example of a possible question is: “do these tools provide any impact on the individual employee and the whole organization?”

However, since this model is primarily focused on evaluating the digital tools itself, the thesis has also managed authors' view of formal- and informal communication (Larsson 2008; Johnson, Donohue, Atkin & Johnson 1994; Lai 2016) (step 2), Ruck and Welch (2012) theory concerning *engagement* in an organization together with internal communication (step 3) and Turner and Reinsch (2009) theory regarding *multicommunication* (step 3). These theories have been included in the analysis together with Delone and McLeans (2003) success model in order to use communication theories in the analysis. Based on the previously presented theories for this study, an analytical model has been created as a framework for how the main theories have been used.
Critical consideration towards the chosen theories

Critical consideration towards the usage of the theories should be brought up. Ruck and Welch’s (2012) engagement model have been used in this study, but not the entire model. The model consists of six parts, but three of them have been used and analysed in this thesis. The parts that have been used are marked with italics font and are: Voice, Strategy, goals and values and Support. This choice was made based on the empirical findings, the aim of the thesis and the time frame. Engagement is a part of this study, but not the only theory that is used. If the whole model should be analysed the thesis would lose its main goal and would take on a different turn. Engagement is used together with other theories and the related parts of the model were used. This means that the model has not been analysed as a whole and the thesis can therefore not conclude any conclusions regarding the model as a whole. Moreover, critical considerations towards Delone and McLeans (1992) success model has to be raised. The authors argue themselves that this model is not finished and need more research. They state that this model needs further development and validation before it could serve as a basis.
for another researcher (Ibid). This has been taken into consideration and the model has been complemented with other related theories in order to be able to present and perform a comprehensive study with multiple aspects.
3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The choice of research design was based on the research question of exploring how a digital tool can improve the internal. This study has conducted a case study which, according to Farquhar (2012), is defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context. Using a case study allows the researcher to look at the phenomenon in context and create further insights regarding the phenomenon. This corresponded well to the design of this study, both in terms of research question and use of different data collection techniques. Case studies can be performed with both qualitative and quantitative methods or in combination (Bryman & Bell 2011). A qualitative approach has been adopted in this study which, according to Backman (2008) is appropriate if the area to be investigated requires a deeper understanding, and since this thesis aim was to investigate “how” something works, a qualitative approach was necessary. A qualitative data collection method is preferred in a study like this because the intention is to describe people's experiences and view of reality (Farquhar 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). The study has been performed with an inductive approach where conclusions have been drawn from experiences. Inductive reasoning starts with observations and the theories are proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of the observations. Patterns, practices, resemblances and regularities in experience have been observed in order to reach a conclusion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

3.2 Choice of case

To be able to investigate and explore further how a digital tool can improve internal communication, an organization that practice digital communication has to be chosen. The idea is that an organization must make use of digital communication and that they cannot use communication such as face-to-face frequently, but must use a digital tool in order to communicate. Based on these conditions, an organization named Adssets was chosen. Adssets supplies media mobile solutions (Adssets 2017). Adssets was founded 2009 and is a privately held organization with the headquarter located in Stockholm, Sweden, but their business is expanding and they now have employees located in other countries. In order for the team to communicate effectively the organization need to use different communication tools. In the
current situation Adssets is using two internal communication digital tools, Trello and Slack in order to communicate with each other (Ibid).

The study consisted of a single case study in order to create more depth and insights. Using a single case study allows for a more detailed study, in-depth data collection methods, such as a single case study, may gain perspectives otherwise missed by other methods when broader methods may be chosen (Farquhar 2012). The disadvantage that comes with the choice of a single case is the arguments for the credibility and contribution of findings (Ibid).

3.3 Data Collections

Before the empirical data was collected, a pre-study was made by the author in order to get a deeper understanding concerning the two digital tools. Each digital tool was tested as an attempt to get an understanding of the different functions and interface. The pre-study was performed through the author's private cell phone where the two digital tools were downloaded as applications that were tested and used for a period of time, two weeks, before the semi-structured interviews. Empirical data at the chosen organization were collected over a four week period at Adssets headquarter in Stockholm. The data collection consisted primarily of semi structured interviews with employees with different roles, but all of them used Trello or/and Slack in order to communicate with colleagues in their daily work. As a complement to the interviews, organizational documents were also used. These organizational documents provide information regarding Adssets background, necessary information concerning Trello and Slack. The main focus at the interviews was on the interviewed individual and his or her feeling and thoughts towards the internal digital communication. Hence, questions regarding organizational background and questions concerning the digital tools design and functions were not taken into consideration during the interviews. That information was received from the organization documents and through the pre-study. This approach created a good division and the interviews could thus obtain a deeper focus concerning the individual.

3.3.1 Pre-study

In the interest of exploring the use of Trello and Slack, the study included a pre-study where these two digital tools were tested by the author. The pre-study aimed to provide the author with knowledge and experience regarding the two tools so the semi-structured interviews would favour. By doing this, questions regarding the digital tools functions and user face
could be avoided and focus could instead be directed at the individual. The author downloaded both the digital tools into the private cell phone and created an understanding how they both worked and how they were designed. This was done over a two week period of time, where the different functions were tested, before the semi-structured interviews were performed. Information and knowledge were also gathered from “Slack guides” (Slack 2017) which is a guide that Slack has created in order to support their customers.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews
The interviews were based on the semi-structured interview strategy where an interview template is used to create a structure of the process, but where the interviewed person has the ability to answer in preferred ways and not feel controlled by the questions (Bryman & Bell 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative approach where the focus is on the individual and how the individual interprets its reality (Backman 1998). Since it was the respondent’s feelings and thoughts towards the digital tools that was the main purpose, flexibility in questions was needed. Using a semi-structured interview allows for changing the questions depending on the flow of the conversation (Oates 2005). The order of the questions was also highly dependent on the flow of the conversation and on the respondent’s answers. During the interviews, notes were taken and they were clustered depending on the category of the questions so that if an answer were considered to answer to another similar question, that question could be reframed or excluded in the conversation. A more flexible approach was suited for this research since the interviews were held with respondents from different areas of responsibility and experiences regarding the digital tools and the need for spontaneous follow-up questions were significant depending on the knowledge and expertise of the respondent.

Respondents were selected due to employee’s availability and experiences regarding Trello and Slack. This was therefore done as a non-probability sampling, where generalisations were made to theory rather than about a population. There were six employees at Adssets who offered their time and knowledge and was interviewed. Two of them could meet and perform a face-to-face interview and the other two could perform an interview through telephones.
Table 1. The table represents the respondents, their field of work, how the interviews were conducted and when the interviews were conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents 1</td>
<td>Creative development department.</td>
<td>30-03-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents 2</td>
<td>Production department.</td>
<td>30-03-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents 3</td>
<td>Research and development department.</td>
<td>03-04-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Management and director.</td>
<td>01-02-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Creative development department.</td>
<td>28-06-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Creative development department.</td>
<td>28-06-2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews were recorded, with the interviewee's permission, in order to not miss out any relevant information later on. Before the interviews the respondents were told that their identity will be anonymised, which is according to Bell and Bryman (2011) an important ethical aspect to consider when performing this data collection. Anonymity was also used to create a sense of security among the respondents and hopefully made them more open with sharing information. After the interviews the data were transcribed in order to make the collected material in a similar format and also because it is much easier to search through and analyse the data once it is in written form (Oates 2005). These six interviews with respondents who represent different departments allowed in-depth interviews that provided knowledge and insight within each department at Adssets and how they each utilized Slack and Trello. The study would have benefit if more insights could be given, but these six interviews was considered to provide enough information and knowledge in order to conduct and complete this study.

3.3.3 Interview template and operationalization
A few basic questions were prepared prior to the interviews. The questions were as simple and broad as possible so a general discussion could occur. Hence, background information
such as business position, years of working in the organization and other relevant questions were asked in order to relate the answers to a certain context (Bryman & Bell 2011).

The interview template was divided into six parts. The first part consisted of questions regarding the respondent’s background and current role in the organization. The remaining questions brought up thoughts and reflections regarding the two digital tools Trello and Slack. The first part covered the thoughts regarding the digital tools functionality. Were all the necessary functions there or do the respondents miss anything? The second part consisted of questions about the digital tools user frequency. How often do the employees use these digital tools and questions if they use other ways of communications. The last part concerned questions regarding the usefulness of the digital tools. Questions how the digital tools affected both individuals and organizational was raised. The interview template ended with a question named “own thought” where the respondents were allowed to bring up thoughts or opinions that had yet been raised. The following chart presents the templates main headings and shows how the template is divided.

Table 2. The table represents the template which was used when conducting the interviews with the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview structure</th>
<th>Examples of interview questions</th>
<th>Theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>Questions concerning the respondent’s background and current role in the organization</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The digital tools</strong></td>
<td>Does all necessary functions exist or do the respondents miss anything that the digital tools cannot perform?</td>
<td>Step 1: Functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functionality**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The digital tools</strong></td>
<td>How often do the respondent use these digital tools and for what? Do they use any complementary channels for the internal communication?</td>
<td>Step 2: Utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>user frequency**</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Formal/Informal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The digital tools</strong></td>
<td>How do these digital tools affect the respondents individually? Do</td>
<td>Step 3: Usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usefulness**</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Multi-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Respondents own thoughts regarding the digital tools</strong></th>
<th><strong>Do the respondents have anything else he/she want to bring up? Something that the interview missed or did not cover?</strong></th>
<th><strong>communication</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview template was used as a starting point during the interviews, but the discussion took many different directions depending on the respondent’s answers, experiences and role. The interview template has been adjusted to the thesis theoretical framework in order to connect the theory chapter together with the empirical chapter. This creates a flow in the thesis and makes it more coherent. The thesis used theoretical concepts as a tool for discovering meanings, relationships and structures of collected data (Bryman & Bell 2011). To use theories and concepts as tools in the analysis belongs to the most central of the scientific method. It helps to make sure that the researcher’s approach is objective and factual (Ibid). Limitations are an important aspect to consider while conducting a thesis, a too broad and outstretched thesis will not be able to offer useful findings and results (Ibid). The study has purposefully selected a study area delimited to a specific case, where theories and concepts together with empirical findings can provide useful knowledge.

**3.3.4 Documents and reports**

In order to generate background information about the organization as well as information about Trello and Slack, different documents and reports are part of the study (Bryman & Bell 2011). The documents have brought clarity about how the organization works and also about the products they work with. These documents have been in the form of the website, documents and reports. In order to get more information about the two digital tools Trello and Slack, documents from the websites was read and used. Questions in the interviews regarding the two digital tools structures and designs were purposely avoided, hence, the necessary information was gathered thorough these documents. It is important to keep in mind that these types of documents need to be analysed based on the context they are produced in, and consideration should be given to whom they are addressed to, and with what purpose (Ibid). All these documents and reports brought clarity and insights in each area. With the help of...
these could the author generate a comprehensive understanding and a deeper knowledge within each area: Adssets as an organization and Trello and Slack as digital tools.

Table 3. The table presents the documents used in the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document 1: Adssets website</td>
<td>Information about the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document 2: Trello's website</td>
<td>Provided information regarding Trello and its functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document 3: Slacks website</td>
<td>Provided information regarding Slack and its functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document 4: Adssets-Organizational document</td>
<td>Provided data over Slack ”all time messages from people and integrations”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document 5: Adssets-Organizational document 2</td>
<td>Provided data over Slack ”all time messages from people and integrations”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Analysis method

The analysis of the collected data has been made with an inductive approach. An analysis using an inductive approach, according to Oates (2006) is usually done through two steps: preparation of data and data analysis.

3.4.1 Preparation of data

After the data collection was completed it was important to get the data into a form that is ready for analysis, an important aspect to consider is to convert all the gathered material in a similar format (Oates 2005). All the interviews were recorded and were then transcribed into a word-document (Bryman & Bell 2011). Important information written in organizations documents were relocated into the word-document. This preparation of data was done to enable further processing of the material and it also helps to make it easier to scan and analyse data (Oates, 2005). The coding of the data was done based on the theoretical framework divisions. Themes were organised based on functionality, utility and usefulness of the digital
tools and important parts of documents and reports were divided into these themes. For example reports from Adssets (document 4 and 5, see subheading 3.3.4) where data over Slack “all time messages from people and integrations” and “all time messages from people and integrations” were presented, these reports fitted under the theme usability and were therefor placed there. Since the semi-structured interviews were also based on the theoretical framework, most of the answers were already placed under the correct theme.

3.4.2 Data analysis
After the collected data was sorted the next step, according to Oates (2005), is to identify key themes in the data. He divides the themes in three steps: (1) segments that bear no relation to your overall research purpose and are not needed, (2) segments that provide general descriptive information that you will need and (3) segments that appear to be relevant to your research question. This was done in order to get a clearer structure of the collected material and to facilitate the analysis. After all the material was collected and gathered together in a similar format (word-document) the first step was to sort out any irrelevant information that was not important for the thesis. This was done by erasing those parts which were considered inconsequential for the thesis. The information that was left was therefore descriptive information that was needed. Quotes and other parts from the interviews that were considered important for the thesis were highlighted in the text so that they were easily discernible later on. Important information from the organization documents were done in the same way. After the three steps were made, the material was processed even further to reduce unnecessary information, this was done by reading and remove redundant information and to highlight more different quotes that were of particular relevance to the study.

Due to the fact that both Trello and Slack have the same preferences; digital tools that are used in the internal communication, has the thesis put them against each other in order to distinguish the similarities and differences. By doing this, the author could get a better picture of how the organization works with its digital tools and how these were perceived from the employees. This also enabled the author to distinguish the contrasts in the different digital tools which could favour the conclusion.

3.5 Critical Consideration
One of the criticisms that can be directed towards a qualitative approach involves sample size. When a qualitative approach is used, it is usually not possible with a larger sample due to the
time aspect and involvement in the study. Therefore, the sample size tends to be relatively small. A more optional way of gathering insights on internal communication together with a digital tool would be to study a range of representatives from multiple companies.

Unfortunately, this research could not be carried out through a longitudinal study which gives a critical view of the qualitative approach (Farquhar 2012). Even though the interviews have been complemented with data from organization documents, the issue regarding the organizational representatives own statements and information are not avoidable. Both the interviews and the documents are consisting of data directly communicated from the organization itself. This is unfortunately difficult to collect under any circumstances and is something needed to have in mind throughout this study. Given the limitations of the chosen data collection method and the approach of gathering the majority of data from one case organization, the reliability of the study might have been affected (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Although, using semi-structured interviews allow for more in-depth interviews, but it also means limited reliability for that reason that the questions will probably be different in another study, although the interview template followed. To counteract this, clear and understandable questions have been structured and asked.

Assiduities towards the chosen respondents should also be raised. The sample of the study was based on those employees who uses the digital tools Trello or/and Slack. The selection of respondents was therefore not randomly picked but was conscious choices (and thus, somewhat controlled) made by the author. This thesis conducted six interviews with representatives from Adssets. The analyses and findings could benefit from having further input from more representatives from the organization, but due to lack of time from the employees at Adssets was six interviews conducted. However, by interviewing employees with different positions and mixed experience towards the use of the two digital tools, the gathered data was more comprehensive and generated different perspective. This contributes to a deeper picture of the phenomenon that the study examines and therefore increased its credibility. Using semi-structured interviews allow for an in depth discussion, but is also means that the information from the respondents is re-telling. Hence, situations are not observed in its actual context, which means that one can never be completely sure that the information received is truly trustworthy (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

Performing interviews over the telephone offers a way to conduct an interview when the respondent does not have time for a face-to-face meeting or if geographical obstacles exist. However, interviews over the telephone have their limitations in terms of communications
since the physical aspects such as body language and facial expressions that are included in face-to-face communication were eliminated (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). Furthermore, another critical aspect to consider is the potential impact a direct translation from Swedish to English may have. Five of the six interviews were performed in Swedish, and then translated and transcript into English. Some concepts and words can be difficult to translate and can be lost in translation. However, this has to the greatest extent been taken into account when the translations were made where the author has been careful and meticulous with the translations.

When a qualitative study is conducted it can be difficult to ignore the authors own perspective and thoughts when the empirical material is processed (Yin 2009). To show perspective consciousness, the author made an effort to be transparent when processing and analysis the collected data by having an open mind and a transparent standpoint. Furthermore, coding of the qualitative data material can be problematical because sentences and phrases may be taken out of its context which results in that its true meaning is lost (Bryman & Bell 2011). Another aspect that must be taken into consideration is the way the data analysis was conducted. The first step when an analysis regarding the collected data is preformed according to Oates (2005) is to erase irrelevant information. These choices will be affected by the individual making them (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). What some may consider irrelevant, others may think the opposite. Individual bias will affect the result and control the thesis slightly.

In establishing authenticity, the author seeks reassurance that both the conduct and evaluation of research are genuine and credible. Authenticity is achieved through being genuine to the experience and to understand the world of the case through abandoning the authors own biases and assumptions (Farquhar 2012). In order to ensure authenticity the author chose to perform in-depth interviews with open questions to encourage the representative to talk and answer the questions openly and not feel controlled by the questions outline or the author. The author's own thoughts and views on the studied phenomenon were not included in the interviews, nor was the research approach admitted to the organizational representatives.
4. Empirical findings

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the empirical collection consisted of six semi-structured interviews with employees at Adssets. Respondent 1 works at the creative development department together with respondent 5 and 6. Respondent 2 works in the production department. Respondent 3 works with research and development. The last respondent, 4 is one of the managers of Adssets. The design of the empirical findings chapter was based on both the theoretical framework and the respondent’s different answers. The chapter begins with an introduction of the respondents and are followed by a text about the digital tools Slack and Trello. The remaining parts consist of the theoretical framework where step 1 and step 2 (Functionality and Usability) are intertwined with each other. This choice was made due to the answers of the respondents. Many of their answers were difficult to separate from each other and were therefore presented together. The last part consisted of the digital tools usefulness and represent step 3 in the theoretical framework. Chapter 5, Analysis, is structured as the theoretical framework with three headlines and three subheadings.

4.2 Slack and Trello

Slack is a cloud-based team collaboration tool founded by Stewart Butterfield. Slack was launched in August 2013 and offers “effective communication” according to themselves. Slack provides mobile applications in addition to their web browser client. The idea is that it should work on multiple digital devices so that users can access their information when they want. Slack consists of chat rooms organized by topics, you also have the ability to create a private group and also use direct messaging (Respondent 1). Slack
integrates with a large number of third-party services and support community-build integrations including Trello (Respondent 2). Slack allows for communication without using email or texting, the chat rooms are open to everyone that are invited to join the client (Slack 2017).

4.3 The digital tools functionality and usability

The digital tools Trello and Slack are used as social collaboration platforms and their aim is to connect the organization and its employees and facilitate internal communication (Respondent 4). The organization has 34 employees (Adssets 2017) and these tools are used to engage the employees and to disseminate information, knowledge and news. Slack and Trello primarily serves as central points of communication and interaction between the employees (Respondent 4). These are used in order to create communication opportunities and simplify and streamline the current communication (Ibid). It is also tools for employees to maintain social contact with each other by using the different social functions that are provided to users (Ibid). Furthermore, it is a way to catch up criticism, opinions and news from the employees in the organization. Using these digital tools offers a way to open up to greater transparency for both internal and external stakeholders leading to greater transparency of what is happening in the organization (Respondent 2). Since Adssets employees are globally distributed, these social platforms are important in order to maintain a good working environment where the internal communication can flow freely (Respondent 4). Adssets is a flat-organization where everyone can communicate with each other regardless of organizational role (Ibid). The digital tools are used primarily for internal communication, but also allow Adssets employees to communicate externally with their customers if they so wish (Respondent 2). Both Trello and Slack can be integrated with other digital tools, but Adssets has chosen not to implement this function due to the security risk of sharing secret information. Since they do not own the tools themselves, they want to be careful with document containing sensitive information.

4.3.1 The usage of Trello and Slack

Both Trello and Slack are seen as social collaboration platforms, but they are used differently (Respondent 1; Respondent 2). Adssets offers employees to use Trello but only if they want to and think that it will help them in their working tasks (Respondent 2). Respondent 1, Respondent 5 and Respondent 6 used Trello in their daily work in their team. They introduced Trello into the team late 2015 and they uses Trello primarily to identify and map out working
tasks and share progresses with each other (Respondent 1). The communication is done through these tasks-mappings and the only direct messages are done through comments on these working tasks that are listed (Ibid). But even this communication is more like a check-format where employees write comments to verify each other if some listed working task needs clarification. Conversations and dialogues happen rarely (Respondent 5). Respondent 1 likes Trello for its graphic design. She thinks that it is fun and amusing to work with compared to other systems, such as excel, that are usually flat and boring (Ibid). Respondent 1 explains that the data and information that are put in Trello could be put in excel as well and hence, be used for the same purpose. But since she feels like excel is a boring and a time consuming tool, she uses Trello. She enjoys Trellos interface and find it easy and simple to use and to follow up on working tasks that her team is working with. Since most members of her team are pretty young and used to work in various IT platforms, she wants to offer fun and graphically neat digital tools to her team members, and she thinks Trello meets this criterion (Ibid). She uses Trello frequently and promotes her team to do the same. Both Respondent 5 and Respondent 6 agree with Respondent 1 and they like Trellos design and interface. According to Respondent 5, Trello is easy to use and has an enjoyable design.

“Me and my team use Trello for its graphical design. If we were to sit and work in excel we would be bored. Excel is too boring and ugly.”

- Respondent 1

Respondent 6 explained that she prefer to use Trello instead of regular e-mails, Trello is more fun to use and it gets the team connected (Respondent 6). Respondent 1 quoted a similar statement; “Trello is fun to use and is an amusingly tool to use together with work” (Respondent 1). Respondent 6 uses Trello daily in her work, she uses it to show her team her working status; which project she is currently working on and which projects that are finished. She explains that since the whole team are using Trello, it gets a lot easier to get an overview of the team's status. With the help of Trello she can easily check other colleagues working tasks and it helps the team to move forward (Respondent 6).

Respondent 2, respondent 3 and Respondent 4 do not use Trello at all in their daily work. They have the opportunity to implement Trello in their own teams, but they have deliberately not chosen to implement and use it.

“We do not need Trello since we use other digital tools in my team”
Instead, they have actively chosen to work with other digital tools that they feel meets their requirements and see no reason to change the digital tools (Respondent 2; Respondent 3). Clarification, Adssets is offering other digital tools besides Trello and Slack and the employees are free to choose for themselves (in their team) which tools they want to work and integrate with. Slack is a digital tool that almost the whole organization uses (Respondent 2) and respondents 3 calls Slack their “global communication tool”.

All the six respondents uses Slack almost every day, they use it to communicate with colleagues regardless of geographic location. Slack allows the users to create groups that can be labelled into different subjects and these have Adssets utilized. Respondent 2 explain that they have created different groups in Slack which is meant for various purposes. Every employee is not included in every group, hence, different groups are created for different people with different needs. All the different teams in Adssets usually have its own group where team members can communicate with each other. Other examples of groups that exist are groups based on different customers and different markets (Respondent 2). Respondent 2 also uses Slack frequently to communicate with colleagues that are located in Stockholm but also with colleagues that are based in another country. She is pleased with Slack and thinks that one of Slacks advantages is its group-function where the employees can create and communicate with different groups. Creating smaller groups allow for direct messaging to the desired receiver and those not affected by the message does not need to take part in the discussion.

All the six respondents explained that they can use Slack to either write a direct message to a person or they can also post a message that is not sent to a specific person but instead is visible to all the employees that uses Slack. This multicommunication is a function tended to be ignored by respondent 3. He thinks that all this kind of general communication is very time consuming and only result in information overload. When asked if he is not concerned about missing out on any important information he explains that all the significant information is also shared through other channels and will therefore be accessible. He reads all the messages that are directed to him and usually skip the general communication that do not have a specific receiver. Nevertheless, he uses Slack all the time due to the high usage from other employees.
“In slack you do not notice anything (discussions or conversations) if you are not mentioned by name.”

- Respondent 3

Respondent 1 and respondent 2 also agreed on the information overload. Since Adssets is growing each year with its employees, the general communication that occurs in Slack tends to increase and it becomes difficult to keep up with the flow. But, respondent 1 explains that the private messages have usually very fast response time. She still thinks that Slacks general messages is valuable since it gives people an overview and makes them feel involved. Slack is not only used for work-related subjects, respondent 1 and respondent 2 both explained that many uses Slack as a private communication channel as well.

4.3.2 Slack – their primary communication channel
As mentioned earlier, Slack is primarily used as an internal communication channel, but there are no obstacles that prevent the use of external communication (Respondent 3). However, respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 explains that they use Skype as the primary channel for external communication and they are pleased with this channel and will probably not expand the use of Slack further. Respondent 1 and respondent 2 are pleased with Slack and do not think that Adssets should have it changed for some other digital communication tool. They both explained that when Slack was introduced into the organization, it faced some resistance from the employees. It took some time, but eventually Slack became accepted and the employees started to use it. Precisely for this reason respondent 1 and respondent 2 think that Adssets should keep using Slack as one of their communication tools. If they would change the digital tool to another, the whole process would start over and resistance would rise again. For the time being, almost the whole organization uses Slack and, according to respondent 1 and respondent 2, it works and meets the organizations requirements and needs.

“Slack is frequently used by the whole organization, we have created different groups in Slack where we can communicate with each other. That is how we communicate, some of us works from abroad some other works from home. It is important for us to be able to share information and knowledge with each other.”

- Respondent 2

Respondent 3 agrees that Slack is a good communication channel, but he could also see communication occur without Slack. He does not feel that Slack contributes that much and
think that communication can occur through other communication channels such as Skype, e-mail and so on. A mutual agreement concerning Slacks disadvantages is the ability to not be able to search for previously written work. If it is an ongoing discussion on a topic it is pretty easy to follow and receive information and/or attached files, but if one wishes to search for an old topic and/or an old attached file it becomes troublesome. For this reason, important information and files are shared through other communication tools such as email. Respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 agreed that loosing important information or files is not an option and therefore avoids using Slack for these reasons. One advantage with Slack that respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 highlighted was the group functions where multicomunication can occur. Sometimes E-mail and other channels feel so strict and formal. Using Slack is often more fun and relaxed, and sending a message asking about lunch is not something strange or unusual (Respondent 1; Respondent 2; Respondent 5).

The response rate for Slack is pretty high at least when it comes to the directed messages. When you message a person, you can expect a pretty fast answer (Respondent 2). However, when it comes to the general messages the response rate is pretty low. But all the representatives agreed with that other channels are used if the information is important or acute. All the representatives also brought up the expectation employees have to use Slack. Since the implementation of Slack there has been an expectation that the employees should use Slack in their daily work. You do not get forced to use it if you absolutely do not want to but there still is some expectation that you should. The managers will promote the employees to use Slack and to be a part of its messaging and information sharing (Respondent 1; Respondent 2; Respondent 3; Respondent 5). Respondent 5 explains that when she started to work for Adssets she was almost immediately encouraged to use Slack in order to communicate with her colleagues. The usage of Slack is followed up with different diagrams. In these diagrams Adssets can see “all time messages from people and integrations” (Appendix 2) and also “people reading and writing” (Appendix 3). With the help of these, Adssets can get an overview of the usage of Slack and see how often the employees integrate with others. Since they are 34 employees they expect that the diagram that shows “people reading and writing” is steady around the number 34 every month.

4.4 The digital tools usefulness

Adssets headquarters is located in Stockholm but they also have employees that are located elsewhere, hence, a digital tool that can help make the internal communication easier to
perform will be a great contribution (Respondent 2). It is not only the employees based in other countries, Adssets wants the internal communication to flow regardless, many of the employee’s travels a lot to meet with both new and existing customers. They also want to facilitate the communication if an employee chooses to work from home for various reasons. Both representative 1 and representative 2 points out that other channels such as email, Skype or phone calls can take time and are therefore sometimes inefficient to use. They both agreed on that using Slack is a fast way to make contact and since almost everyone uses Slack, they can count on that the receiver will respond. Slack allows for time efficiency compared to their other channels. To write a message on Slack and send it away to the receiver takes less time than writing an email. Slack also allows us to send a message to multiple receivers due to the group function, this saves us time (Respondent 2). Slack has a positive effect on the atmosphere, communicating becomes easier and you can connect with other colleagues rather quickly. Slack has facilitated communication with employees abroad, communication has become both easier and more comfortable with our foreign colleagues (Respondent 1).

At the same time they state that they think it is good to use multiple channels when one wishes to communicate, so important information reaches its receiver. They prefer to use Slack but due to its limitation with its search function, they usually use other channels as well, just to be sure that the message has reached its target. Their aim is not to make everyone use only Slack, instead they want a flow in the internal communication and sees Slack as a tool to make it happen.

“We have many digital tools to choose between, some are a bit simpler if you prefer that and some others, like Trello, is a little bit more complicated if you are more comfortable with that.”

- Respondent 3

Respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 seems to agree on that face-to-face communication still is the preferable way to communicate. If a message is not urgent, they all prefer to wait until they meet the desirable receiver in person and can perform face-to-face communication. Respondent 1 state that with face-to-face communication you get an instant response and can have a dialogue without delayed responses.

“If possible, I prefer to use face-to-face communication because it means that you will get a response right away. If face-to-face communication is not possible to perform I would chose
Skype as a channel to communicate as it is similar to face-to-face communication with the camera option.”

- Respondent 3

However, Respondent 1 pointed out that Adssets are a global organization where face-to-face communication is not always possible and that is why digital tools are so important for them. She also highlights the benefits of using multiple channels, both when it comes to face-to-face communication as well as IT-related solutions. Using multiple communication channels allows individuals to choose for themselves and can therefore create a safety. If an individual is shy or retracted when performing face-to-face communication can a chat-like option such as Slack be a preferable way when communicating. Using different channels becomes valuable since employees' competences can blossom with the help of the different types of channels available. Hopefully there will be a channel that fits all kinds of different personalities (Respondent 1).

Adssets is a small organization that aims to grow larger each year, but in order to succeed, shared knowledge and information becomes a vital part. It is very important to share both knowledge and information through the organization (Respondent 2). When the employee’s share information about an important costumer, information about new projects, information regarding markets or problems that have occurred along the way, the organizations grows and learns from each other (Ibid). They try to create a norm in Slack where employees can share knowledge and information and thus hopefully help others.

“Internal communication has always been a fight, when we started the organization some of us had all the information and knowledge only in our head. Thus, it did not spread to others. Implementing Slack was an attempt to make the communication flow in the organization. If someone has a question or similar – post it in Slack!”

- Respondent 1

Shared knowledge and information are something they really value and strive to achieve and this leads to involvement (Respondent 1). Respondent 1 and Respondent 6 state that the employees are pleased that they know what is going on and they feel more involved and connected to the organization. Even if it is not their costumer, they receive information about the projects and are allowed to speak up if they want to help. This creates a “helping”-culture where employees are engaged and involved in all the projects, if they wish to.
“If someone works with a project, the rest of us want to know what the project is, what applies and what it is about”

- Respondent 2

This way of working connects people and increases collaboration between employees. If there is a problem with a project, help can come from outside the project group when others can access the information (Respondent 1). Both respondent 1 and respondent 2 think that using Slack as they do now facilitates the working atmosphere. Messages and conversations spread more easily and the employee’s relationship with each other gets stronger. Adssets do not wish to eliminate all other channels beside Slack. They want their employees to use Slack frequently, but they also promote other communication channels (Respondent 1; Respondent 2; Respondent 3).

Overall, all the respondents think that using Slack saves time and facilitates communication. They all highlighted that Slack is a relaxed communication channel that they can use when they wish to communicate with one or multiple colleagues. They think that Slack opens up for knowledge and information sharing and creates transparency in the organization.
5. Analysis

5.1 The digital tools functionality

The left part of the success model (see subheading 2.3.1) created by DeLone and McLean (1992) is concerned with the more technical aspects of a digital tool, such as flexibility, integration and response time (Ibid). Slack has different features and it is up to the clients to determine what they want to use and how they want to use it. All the respondents highlighted the need for internal communication with their colleagues. The need for information and knowledge to spread in the organization was an aspect that respondent 1 brought up and pointed out. The respondent emphasized the importance of sharing information and knowledge throughout the organization and not just to those who are physically present.

The usage of Slack, where much communication consists of two-way communication, can be linked to Heide, Johannsson and Simonssons (2012) theory where communication can be divided into two different ways (see subheading 2.1). Individuals are interacting with each other and interaction and engagement occurs as a result of both the sender and the receiver is listening, reacts and responds to each other. Moreover, both researchers (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014; D’Ambr, Rice & Connor 1998; Lippiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014; Daft & Lengel 1986; Nordblom 2008) and respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 discussed the importance of face-to-face communication because it improves the chances of communication being understood as it was meant and the response rate is high.

However, both Stegaroiu and Talal (2014) and respondent 1 state that face-to-face communication cannot always be performed and used, especially when an organization is globally distributed and where colleagues are geographically dispersed. If face-to-face communication is in fact the preferable channel to use but not possible to perform, a complementary method must be used. Respondent 1 pointed out advantages with face-to-face communication such as fast response time but she also state that Slacks response time, when it comes to the directed messages, is also fast. Slack will probably never cover all the advantages with face-to-face communication (based on current status) but, Slack may be an acceptable substitute if some of these requirements are filled in, such as fast responses.

According to respondent 1, Slack can be integrated with other systems, such as Trello, which she thinks is a good feature. Yet, Adssets do not use this function because they think it is too
risky to share files and documents and give Slack access to them. This could suggest that there exists certain distrust with the digital tool and the organization chooses actively not to use the digital tool functions to the full extent.

When using Slack, the employees finds it difficult to search for old files and documents, they felt like they lost important information, which made them switch communication channels for these reasons. This together with the distrust with the information located in files and documents can be linked with how the employees use the various features – or how they do not use them. Through these findings, it became clear that Adssets do not use Slack for the entire internal communication because they do not like or trust all the digital tools functions. Because of this they use other channels such as email to compliment Slacks unused functions. Respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 3 seemed pleased with the functions that they make use of but could not see Slack be used entirely due to the mistrust with the safety of sensitive materials and lost material.

According to Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989), a digital tool itself do not improve an organizations performance, but rather how it is used. This means that the users must feel that the digital tool makes their tasks easier to perform by making use of the digital tools benefits. A well-function digital tool has to fit into the organization and provide improvements in order for the employees to start using it. The usage of Slack has been proved beneficial, according to respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 4. Respondent 2 states that Slack allows for time efficiency since the tool is more accessible and easier to use that other channels. She also states that she saves time when she can write a message in one of the groups, thus, the message reaches multiple colleagues at the same time. Respondent 1 state that she can get help quickly if she get stuck, which contributes to increased efficiency.

Since almost all of the employees use Slack to communicate with each other, the internal communication improves and the digital tool is used (Respondent 4). Trello is not used by many (Respondent 1), which indicate on that the employees (except for respondent 1, Respondent 5, Respondent 6 and their team) do not feel that the digital tool makes their tasks easier to perform. Contrariwise, both respondent 2 and respondent 3 thought that Trello was unnecessary to use and would only result in a time consuming task due to the fact that they already uses other tools that they are pleased with.

Trello is a digital tool that three respondents used, who belongs to the same team. Trello can, like Slack, be integrated with other systems, but since the low attachment, there is no need for
this function. Respondent 1 and her team use other channels such as Slack when they wish to discuss different topics or when they want to ask questions. The three of them seem to like Trello, but only its function where you can list different tasks and “to do’s”. When they wish to have conversations (two-way communication) they usually use other communication channels. This indicates that Trello itself is not a great contribution to Adssets as a whole company. It is not integrated through the organization. Trello seems to add value to the team that uses it but does not affect the company as a whole.

5.2 Utility of the digital tools

In the middle part of the success model is the utility of the digital tool. This aspect consists of how often the digital tool is used and user satisfaction. This can be measured by how well the digital tool handles the desirable activities, how well the digital tool is used and how frequently it is used (Delone & McLean 1992). All the six respondents use Slack frequently, they use it to communicate with their colleagues regardless location. They can have an interaction with a person who sits in the room next to them and they can also have a conversation with a person who is miles away. They all agree that Slack allows time efficiency as well as multicommunication, and respondent 2 states that almost the entire organization makes use of Slack as an internal communication channel. Due to the high usability across the whole organization and based on the respondents answer, Slack seems to be a liked and appreciated communication channel.

However, it can be difficult to confirm due to the norm that exist in the organization where employees are expected to use Slack in order to communicate with their colleagues. If using Slack would be totally voluntary without any pressure from others, the result might turn out different. One aspect that respondent 3 highlighted was his habit to ignore general messages that are posted in Slack. He reads and responds to direct messages, but tend to ignore everything else. This is a matter that Orre and Palm (1995) write about, and states that one disadvantage with using a digital communication tool that can be difficult to control is the unawareness if the message has reached the expected receivers. The employees are encouraged to share information, knowledge, and files in Slack but how many of the employees which take part of the information can be somewhat uncertain. This can result in that the digital tool loses its purpose and intention. As respondent 4 stated is one of Slacks aims to connect the organization and its employees and facilitate internal communication but if the employees do not use Slacks intendent parts, can it become difficult to fulfil the aims
There is a visible difference between the usability of Slack compared to the usability of Trello based on the six interviews. Since Trello is used frequently by respondent 1, Respondent 5 and Respondent 6, the utility is high for them, but the overall usage of Trello at Adssets is low (Respondent 2). Respondent 1 explained that the way she and her team uses Trello can be seen as a way of communication. However, the communication that occurs is through "to-do-lists" or “working tasks-list” and dialogues and discussion rarely happens in Trello. If she wants to ask a colleague something, she uses other channels such as Slack or email (Respondent 1).

Heide, Johansson and Simonsson (2012) write about communication in two different ways (see subheading 2.1). In Trello's case, it may be interpreted that the communication that occurs is through transmit a message. Thus, the communication is directed in one direction, from the sender to the receiver, and can be explained as a one-way communication where the recipient of the message is seen as a passive individual who is willing to receive the message. Thereof can the flow of information and knowledge sharing in Trello be questioned if it is one-way communication that is usually practised. This was also confirmed by respondent 5 when she explained that Trello gives them a good overlook over the team members status, this is a way of communication but without dialogues and conversational, thus, two-way communication rarely happens.

5.2.1 Formal and informal communication

It became clear that Adssets uses Slack as one of their main communication channels due to user frequency. Respondent 2 stated that she uses Slack all the time for various purposes. Sometimes it is related to work and other times it can be discussions or conversations about lunch. Hence, some of the respondents are using Slack as a private communication channel (Respondent 1; Respondent 2; Respondent 4). This form of communication indicates that Slack is used for both formal communication, such as organizational information and knowledge, and informal communication, such as lunch-talks and personal matters (Larsson 2008; Johnson, Donohue, Atkin & Johnson 1994; Lai 2016).

Respondent 1 claims that this is possible due to the group-function that Slack has where they have different groups for different matters. Some are related to work and others are related to non-work-related subjects. Those various forms of communication are definitions of the organizations' internal communication and should be seen as a valuable social activity for organizations. Both are equally important for the internal communication and it is important
to create an atmosphere where both formal communication and informal communication can be performed (Marchiori & Bulgacov 2012).

5.3 Usefulness of the digital tools

The usefulness of a digital tool is illustrated in the right side of the model and it consists of individual and organizational usefulness. It can be measured based if the users or/and organizational productivity, efficiency and quality of work increases. This factor measures the impact of the digital tools and how its information affects the organization and what benefits it generates for the business (DeLone & McLean 1992).

Empirical findings showed that messages that were sent directly to a receiver had most responds. General messages tended to be somewhat ignored or not noticed by everyone as other tasks got in the way and there was no time left to go over Slack and all its topics that colleagues had posted. However, when employees have time they have the opportunity to “catch up” with all the topics and can then get an understanding on all the ongoing projects that their colleagues are working with.

This philosophy, where employees have the ability to share information and knowledge and where an employee can seek help from everyone in the organization by posting a message on Slack can be seen as a way to make the business more efficient and improved. Not only do employees learn from each other, the whole organization grows with it. This can be linked to organizational engagement that lots of researchers bring up as an important aspect to consider (ter Hoeven & Verhoeven 2013; Postmes, de Wit and Tanis 2001; Bharadwaj 2014; Constantin and Baisas 2015). Both respondent 1 and respondent 2 agreed on that Slack creates a flow in their internal communication and both Ter Hoeven and Verhoeven (2013) and Postmes, de Wit and Tanis (2001) asserts that there is a relationship between the flow of information and the engagement from employees towards the organization. If the employees feel involved and a feel like they are a part of the organization their engagement and satisfaction increase.

5.3.1 Engagement

Quirke (2008) writes that a well performed internal communication where employees can communicate freely can provide strategic advantages through sharing knowledge, aligning employee’s efforts and engaging their passions. Ruck and Welch (2012) write that internal communication that involves effective exchange of information and knowledge often result in
commitment and engagement from employees towards the organization, it creates a sense of belonging. For internal communication to be able to stimulate the employees' involvement in the organization, Ruck and Welch (2012) engagement model can be used as guidance. It can be difficult to cover all three aspects completely, but with the respondent’s thoughts and opinions on what Slack provides, a step in the right direction is made.

One of the areas is “Voice” (see subheading 2.1.1) and since Adsset is encouraging all the employees (by introducing the digital tool to new users, encouraging use through words as well as following up statistics) to share information, thoughts, questions etc., the “voice” of the employees can be seen as highly valued and encouraged in Slack. “Strategy, goals and values” (see subheading 2.1.1) is also one of the areas in the engagement model and this can be linked to where the respondents explained that Slack provides them with information about that is going on and on different projects. A third area in the model is “Support” (see subheading 2.1.1) and this can be linked to the “helping-culture” that respondent 1 brought up. She explained that if you need any help, you can ask multiple people in Slack through directed messages and a response usually arrives fast. This indicates that Slack opens up for an environment where employees can help and support each other.

Additional to user satisfaction, the increased information and knowledge spread in Slack can be seen as an influence. As mentioned by respondent 1, Adssets do not only use Slack for short messages, they also use it to share information and knowledge with each other. They inform each other about their different project, they ask for help if they need and they share insights and knowledge. Respondent 1, Respondent 5 and Respondent 6 mentioned no benefits of using Trello for the organization as a whole, Trello was only beneficial for their team. The last part of the model consist of both individual and organizational impact, thus, Trello seem to not provide advantages for Adssets as a whole organization. A pattern can possibly be drawn where respondent 1, Respondent 5 and Respondent 6 uses Trello in their team which in turn affects the organization, but this is something that could not be confirmed in this study. Based on the empirical findings, no aspects beneficial to the whole organization were found.

5.3.2 Multicommunication

Multiple communication channels may be linked to what respondent 1 said, multiple channels might get people to flourish and grow as individuals when they are allowed to use channels that they are comfortable with. When different channels are offered, it allows employees to
choose the channel that they are most comfortable with, they have the opportunity to use other types of communication besides face-to-face communication such as communication in written form (Slack). Allowing employees to choose Slack as a communication channel can be seen as a contributing factor in user satisfaction as the employees are not limited to face-to-face communication, phone calls or Skype, if they want to communicate in written form, they can use Slack. Respondent 2 also highlighted that when she is using Slack, she reaches out to more colleagues at the same time and therefore, saves time. She states that when communicating with only one individual, a channel such as e-mail is good to use but when she wants to send out a message to two or more people she prefers to use Slack. This statement can be linked to Turner and Reinsch (2009) view on multicomunication. According to the authors, multicomunication allows people to efficiency their working time by allowing them to participate in multiple conversations at the same time (Turner & Reinsch 2009).

This combination of different channels can be linked to Friedl and Verčič (2011) statement which are that employees want to communicate through both face-to-face and digital communication. Respondent 1 and respondent 2 stated that they would not want to use only Slack as a communication channel, instead they want to complement different channels with each other. They both like Slack because they think that it saves time and offers multicomunication, but as the same time they want to use other channels when they feel the need for it. They stated that they think it is good to use multiple channels when one wishes to communicate so important information reaches its receiver.

Ryynänen, Jalkala and Salminen (2013) listed four promoters for effective internal communication (see subheading 2.1). If these promoters are applied on Adssets digital tools, their flat-organization where they promote communication with everyone can be linked to the first two promoters, an open communication atmosphere and a non- hierarchical structure. With these factors fulfilled, the internal communication can flow freely. Since Adssets is using multiple communication channels consisting of face-to-face communication, Trello, Slack, E-mail and telephones, the third promoters is also fulfilled where the organization should offer a variety of alternative communication channels. The fourth and last promoter, communication training, could not be found during this study and can therefore not be confirmed.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to create an understanding of how a digital tool can improve the internal communication. In order to explore this question further, the opportunities and difficulties, as well as the employees’ roles and involvement of the two digital tools was analysed. This study has shown that face-to-face communication is still the preferable way to communicate with colleagues, despite the fact that today’s society offer effective and easy digital tools. This confirms a number of researches studies (Stegaroiu & Talal 2014; D’Ambr, Rice & Connor 1998; Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto & Nevalainen 2014; Daft & Lengel 1986; Nordblom 2008). However, when physical meetings are impossible or there is not enough time, digital tools are used diligently. In a more globalized world, digital tools are increasingly used and it becomes necessary to introduce this phenomenon into the organization and understand how it affects internal communication. Constantin and Baisas (2015) argue that internal communication is the building block of the organizations culture and therefore, the organization itself. Therefore, constantly striving to improve internal communication becomes vital.

Three conclusions were found in this study and can be summarized as followed:

- In order for a digital tool to be accepted and used by the employees, engagement and encouragement should come from, and be managed by the directors and managers.
- The digital tool should live up to the expectations that employees have.
- A digital tool should offer solutions that, with previous methods, were not possible to accomplish, but at the same time not limit the use of other communication channels.

This study has shown that using a digital tool like Adssets uses Slack can provide higher transparency in the organization. Conversations and dialogues can be performed where geographical barriers are no longer an obstacle. The opportunity for sharing knowledge and information can also be seen as a positive effect on the internal communication. A digital tool can connect the organization and provide a platform where crowdsourcing, innovation and creativity can be performed and then influence the organization. In order for a digital tool improve the internal communication, a top-down encouragement should occur. It is important that managers encourage the employees so they use a certain digital tool.
In order for a digital tool to improve the internal communication it has to be used, and it will not be used if it does not meet the user’s expectations. Since face-to-face communication is preferable, the digital tool would benefit from offer a similar standard. Face-to-face communication is liked since it gives instant responds. To use a digital tool in the internal communication where the response time is low will probably result with a negative impact on internal communication. Users want to use digital tools that meet their expectations when face-to-face communication is not possible to perform.

If a digital tool is to be accepted, liked and used it has to offer solutions that previous methods could not. Face-to-face communication was the preferable method but if a digital tool offers alternative communication options that can facilitate internal communication, the digital tool will likely be accepted and used. As demonstrated in this study, a digital tool could offer multicommunication where users can participate in multiple conversations at the same time. There are some effects that are more difficult to measure, like engagement towards the organization. Using a digital tool could create a greater sense of belonging and create a community among employees. This effect can also be valuable in the long term when the organizations culture can play a big role in the digital communication tools. This is something that the respondents highlighted, but could not be entirely confirmed by this study. Friedl and Verčič (2011) claim that combinations of different communication channels are important and should be considerate by organizations. Although, respondent 1, respondent 2 and respondent 4 like Slack, they all pointed out that they like other channels as well. They want to complement different channels with each other. They like Slack because they think that it saves time and offers multicommunication, but as the same time they want to use other channels when they feel the need for it. This means that an organization should understand the interaction between different communication channels and understand their different roles in the internal communication. Once an interaction has been achieved, then the internal communication can be improved.

As Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto and Nevalainen (2014) states are digital communication an under-researched area but at the same time a phenomenon that grows larger and larger as the world becomes more global and connected. This study can provide insights on how a small organization works with digital tools and what is required of an organization in order for a digital tool to improve the internal communication. The theoretical framework has been primarily based on DeLone and McLean (1992) success model. DeLone and McLean (1992) states themselves that this model needs improvements and this study has supplemented the
model with other theories such as engagement and multicommunication due of the models lack of “softer” parts that concerns the end-users. This can hopefully contribute to a broader view of the model and its strengths and weaknesses. This study serves as an interesting empirical study where an organization uses two digital tools that have the same foundation, but the usage pattern makes them completely different.
7. Practical implication

7.1 Discussion

It became clear during the empirical findings how different Slack and Trello were considerate and used at Adssets. Slack was integrated in almost the whole organization and the employees were expected to use Slack in order to perform internal communication. Employees are encouraged to share information and knowledge in Slack and they want it to be like a forum where employees can turn to if they meet any obstacles or if they have something to share. Even though Adssets do not make use of every feature that Slacks offers it is clear that they want Slack to be one of their main internal communication channels together with others. Trello however, is not quite as popular and used. Those who use it do it frequently, but seem to do that only because they have “always done so”. Neither managers nor employees make an effort to integrate Trello more into Adssets. If you as an employee want to use it you are allowed to, but since Trello is not integrated in the organization, you have to use it on your own or with your team. You cannot expect any relevant information directed to the whole organization to be placed in Trello.

The results of the study showed that using digital tools in the internal communication was appreciated by the respondents as they thought that it both saved time and allowed multicomunication. They highlighted the importance of having a flow in the internal communication and a culture where knowledge and information spread was vital. The employees are encouraged to use Slack to chat with each other, but also to write about projects, they are expected to inform about customers and markets and they are encouraged to ask for help if they need. The use of Slack contributes to utilize employee skills and knowledge. The study indicates that engagement increases, but how well it is related to the platform itself is difficult to determine and present full evidence. A further difficulty is that if the organization does not set specific goals before the introduction of such a platform, it will be difficult to evaluate in retrospect, it is difficult to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

Another reflection that would have been interesting to analyse further is information overload that respondent 3 brought up. There is a different between overwhelm employees with information and to provide them with useful and relevant information. A digital tool that just consists of a large volume of data makes it difficult to navigate and becomes time consuming, and the whole purpose with implementing the digital tool disappears. The purpose with a
digital communication channel is usually to facilitate the tasks and the communication between employees, not to cause inefficiency.

Looking at the theoretical framework and DeLone and McLean's (1992) success model that divides a digital tool into three parts to be analysed, one can see that Slack has pretty positive results in all the three parts. It is not a “perfect” match for Adssets since they do not make use of every function that Slack offers and uses other channels in the internal communication in those situations where they think Slack is not good enough. However, since they seem to be pleased with the functions that they actually are using, the frequent usage of Slack and the knowledge and information sharing that they claim occurs, all the success models different parts turn out to be somewhat positive. Using the model to analyse Trello's contribution to Adssets comes with another result. Frequency of use throughout the organization is low and respondent 1 thought it was a good tool to use when she needed to list out projects. Hence, this tool does not seem to contribute to the whole organization. This together with the non-usage results in a negative analysis when using the success model. Trello does not “pass” the models' three parts and does therefore not count as a useful digital tool to use at Adssets when following the model.

However, some reflections towards the success model and Slack can be discussed further. If the model is analysed through the three parts, it seems that Slack is a “successful” digital tool who matches with Adssets. But given that Adssets expects and push the employees to use Slack, its “success” can be questioned. Respondent 3 uses Slack a lot, but only because it is expected from him. Hence his utility will be presented high in the model, but if he could choose himself, his utility would be pretty low if not zero. This becomes a critical aspect to consider when evaluating a digital tool. The model shows that Slack is a “success” but looking closer and considerate individual opinions, the digital tool may not be as great as the model shows.

General thoughts towards Adssets preferences with internal communication are that they understand the importance and value of it. Adssets seems to promote the use of their chosen digital communication channel Slack and want their employees to use it and be a part of the internal communication but also to contribute and share their thoughts. Trello count as one of their chosen digital tools, but they do not make an effort on its behalf, they want their employees to use Slack but at the same time they do not want to limit the usage of other channel that at least some of the employees use. This can be linked to Friedl and Verčič
(2011) and Welch (2012) which both state that employees should be able to communicate through different channels. Organizations should combine several types of channels to convey information regarding the organization and employees.

**7.2 Limitation of research**

To get a more representative data collection, observations would be a good compliment to the performed interviews, this to actually see how these two digital tools are used by the employees. But due to the time frame, this was not done in this study. A complementary method would also benefit this study. This study was done through a qualitative study, but in order to explore other aspects and objectives, a quantitative study may have been beneficial. To ensure a higher credibility, more information and aspects must be gathered and analysed.

The data collection would also in an optimal situation involve more interviews from different representatives at Adssets so that Slack and Trello could have been analysed through more different perspective. The study aimed to explore and investigate how a digital tool can improve the internal communication. The idea was to provide empirical basis for understanding how companies use digital tools regarding internal communication in daily operational work. Therefore, in a broad context, the findings and data collection within this area are also limited due to the limitations of the research questions and the chosen organization.

**7.3 Further research**

This study provides some insights how a digital communication can improve the internal communication. Since the study was conducted through a single case study, the generalization may be questioned. An organization with similar characteristics may find this study interesting and instructive, but organizations in other industries, different sizes or different structures may have to set its own terms of reference. To generalize and confirm the results, more organizations with different characteristics have to be explored in order to strengthen the credibility of the study. Furthermore, in order to confirm the presented results, a longitudinal study has to be conducted. Thus, a deeper level can be reached and more accurate results can be presented. Employee’s feelings and thoughts with the implemented digital tools can change over time and therefore, affect the results. Since Adssets has actively chosen not to bind themselves with complexed digital tools and prefer to change digital tools time to time, the
relationship with the other tools matters as well. These feelings and thoughts towards Slack and Trello relates to their former used digital tools and tools that they use right now. Should another digital tool be implemented, the result may be different, as these new digital tools can provide different impact on the organization than what the study revealed.

Possible proposal for future research may be to examine this phenomenon in the long term and see what effect digital tools provides over a longer time, and provide more data on how organization engagement increases with the help of a digital tool. It would also be necessary to explore this phenomenon in a larger organization where internal communication is more complex and harder to perform only using one digital communication tool. In a more global world where changes happen more often, flexibility is considered important. Future research may be to examine digital tools role in the internal communication in a more global approach where both new opportunities and challenges emerge.
8. Reference list


Appendix

1. Interview template

Date:

Method/place:

Background:

- Business role?
- Years in the organization?
- Do you use both Trello and Slack?

Functionality:

- What do you do in Trello and/or Slack?
  - Timetables?
  - Communicate with colleagues
  - Something else?
- Are you pleased with the tools functions?
  - What is good / not so good with Trello and/or Slack?
- Is there any function that you think is missing?

Utility:

- How often do you use the tool/tools?
- What type of content do you send in Trello and/or Slack?
- How do you utilize Trello and/or Slack in combination with other communication channels?
  - Are you using other channels? Which ones?
  - Can you explain why you prefer this combination?
- Are you using Trello and/or Slack for work-related tasks only?
- What do you think about the response time?
- What do you do when you do not have time to wait for a delayed answer?
  - Do you make use of other channels?
- What do you think about your own response time using Trello and/or Slack?

Usefulness:
- Do you think that these tools facilitate your work?
- Is there anything that could improve the internal communication?
- Can you describe a common task then Trello and/or Slack can help you?
- Are Trello and/or Slack used by everyone in the organization?
- Do you feel that there are different views on how these tools should be used?
- Do you feel that there is an expectation that you should use Trello and/or Slack in order to communicate?
- Can you feel a certain pressure on you should use the system more than you do today?
- Do you think the usage of these tools facilitates communication within the organization?

Own thoughts:

- Is there something else that you want to bring up?

2. Document 4 – Adssets organizational document

Provided with data regarding Slack, “All time messages from people”

3. Document 5 – Adssets organizational document

Provided with data regarding Slack, “People reading and writing”