

**THE INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON
ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN THE FINNISH
CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY**

**University of Jyväskylä
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ABSTRACT

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| Abstract <p>This master's thesis examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the learning of Finnish consumer goods industry organizations. The study was conducted using the grounded theory method, in which the base for a theory was constructed to understand the phenomenon. For the theoretical background secondary data was collected from previous research and articles, and primary data for creating the theory was collected by creating semi-structured interview questions and then by interviewing 8 employees of a consumer goods organization. The data analysis used a qualitative research method utilizing the Gioia methodology, in which the collected data was coded into themes and aggregate dimensions that emerged from the interviews. The dimensions from the analysis were divided into different phases based on whether they were related to organizational learning in the time before, during, or after the pandemic.</p> <p>The results of the study allow us to conclude how the learning of organizations has been altered as a result of the changes caused by the pandemic. They show that organizations in the consumer goods industry, that have been around for decades have managed to gather a huge amount of knowledge and skills from what they have learned over history but also developed embedded and anti-change structures where information and knowledge is shared mainly within organizational silos and not the whole organization. The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to face the unknown and make difficult decisions. Finding new ways of doing things was the only way to survive as it was no longer possible to carry out the processes as they were. Although at first the pandemic caused difficulties for people and organizations to cope, these means of renewal are now seen as useful for the organizations and not harmful or unnecessary.</p> <p>Many organizations whose history of learning has been rather exploitative and where knowledge flow has been from the organization to the individuals, now use organizational learning behaviors that are either explorative or ambidextrous. The Finnish consumer goods organizations have started to show learning behaviors where information flows either more from individuals to the organization (feed-forward) or it is two-way interactive and hence the organizational learning has changed during the pandemic.</p> | |
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| <p>Tämä pro gradu tutkielma tutkii koronapandemian vaikutuksia Suomen kuluttajatarveteollisuuden organisaatioiden oppimiseen. Tutkimus tehtiin grounded theory-tutkimusmenetelmää käyttäen, jossa datan pohjalta rakennettiin pohja ilmiötä käsittelevälle teorialle. Primäärinen data kerättiin luomalla puolirakenteinen pohja haastattelukysymyksille ja haastatteleamalla erään kuluttajatuotteiden yrityksen työntekijöitä, sekä hankkimalla sekundääristä dataa aihealueen aiemmista tutkimuksista ja artikkeleista.</p> <p>Data-analyysissa käytettiin laadullista tutkimusmenetelmänä Gioia-metodologiaa, jossa kerätty aineisto koodattiin teemoihin ja kokonaisuuksiin. Analyysin kokonaisuudet jaettiin eri vaiheisiin sen perusteella, olivatko ne liitoksissa organisaation oppimiseen ajassa ennen pandemiaa, sen aikana vai sen jälkeen. Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella pystytään paremmin päättämään, kuinka organisaatioiden oppiminen on muuttunut pandemiasta johtuvien muutosten seurauksena.</p> <p>Tulosten mukaan organisaatiot kuluttajatuoteteollisuudessa ovat toimineet vuosikymmeniä ja onnistuneet keräämään valtavan määrän tietoa ja taitoa asioista mitä ne historiansa aikana ovat oppineet. Monet organisaatiot ovat ajansaatossa siiloutuneet ja niillä on suuria muutoksia vastustavat rakenteet. Teknologian ja automatisoinnin käyttöönotto oli harvalla organisaatiolla sillä tasolla mikä niiden operaatiokokoluokkaan nähden olisi tehokas. Koronapandemia pakotti monet organisaatiot uuden eteen niin, että uusien toimintatapojen löytäminen oli ainoa selviytymistapa kun prosessien läpivienti entiseen tapaan ei ollut enää mahdollista. Uusiutumiskeinot nähdään nyt entistä tarpeellisempina ja moni organisaatio, jonka oppimistapa on läpi historian ollut vanhaa hyödyntävä (exploitative) ja tiedon suunta on kulkenut organisaatiolta sen parissa työskenteleville ihmisille (feedback) pandemian johdosta muutti oppimistapaansa joko tutkivaksi (explorative) tai näitä kahta yhdistäväksi oppimistavaksi (ambidexerial), jossa tieto kulkee joko enemmän yksilöiltä vaikuttaen organisaatioon (feed-forward) tai sitten ollen kaksisuuntaista vaikuttamista ja tiedonjakoa (two-way communication).</p> | |
| Asiasanat COVID-19, oppiva organisaatio, strategia | |
| Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto | |

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Consumer goods industry is complex, fast paced and consists of multiple different variables in its supply chain that are being affected by changes repetitively (Eberenz & Schröer, 2019). Thus, it requires intensive planning and strategy making which makes it more vulnerable when it comes to crisis situations and other unforeseen events, such as pandemics (Oxford Economics Ltd., 2022). Organizations are used to making decisions and forming strategies based on what they or similar companies have already faced in the past, and some have experienced troubles to move away from these processes to newer ones. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry has experienced a lot of pressure to function the way it used to with the functions that were formed by learning from previous challenges. Many companies were forced to execute their technologization and other projects at a faster pace than originally planned or they had to start the process from the ground.

As none of the earlier pandemics or crisis have had similar worldwide effects as the current COVID-19, forecasting consumer buyer behavior now is even more complicated than before, which is resulting to problems beginning from production to logistics and delivery and causing a lot of uncertainty on a global scale (UNCTAD, 2020). Designing the functionality of companies' supply chains among the uncertainties brought by the pandemic, the everyday life of people working in different functions of organizations has become more demanding than ever. It is not easy to say for each individual working at companies in the consumer goods industry how the pandemic affected them and what these past few years have taught them. Therefore, I am researching on the topic of the effects of the pandemic to learning of the organizations operating in the consumer goods industry in Finland.

This topic was chosen based on the researchers working experience in the field of consumer goods where it has become evident that the currently ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the industry through its every function and thus studying on this topic has become an issue to be examined. The research is taking the viewpoint of the effects of the pandemic to organizational learning process in companies in this specific industry.

This topic is especially interesting to the people working in positions that affect decision making in the consumer goods companies, as it shows how leaning processes have changed during the pandemic and thus the improvement of these processes become potentially more beneficial to the company when they form their strategies to perform better. For example, if you understand why your organization's processes work or why not, you are learning from them and that eases the future development of processes and forming of strategies (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1996). Sharing and creating more knowledge among the

organization's members and increasing the company's competitive advantage with this knowledge is more efficient if it is understood how they learn (Argote & Ingram, 2000).

Besides the research on organizational learning, there is not much earlier research on the effects of the pandemic as it is still ongoing at the time of carrying out this research in the spring of 2022. However, there are different theories and frameworks on organization learning, and studies on the effects of previous pandemics as well as similar shocks to the industry and global trade e.g., financial crisis of 2008. As this current pandemic is out of the ordinary with its multitude and speed of spreading worldwide, it cannot be entirely compared with earlier events that have influenced the consumer goods industry. Lately, more research on the effects of the pandemic on all industries are on the rise and it is possible that concurrently with this research, there might be alternative studies being written.

As the long-term effects of the pandemic cannot be reliably forecasted, I am researching on how the companies had to modify their daily operations when the pandemic started to emerge, and how they have responded and had to reform based on what they have faced and learned from before. To prevent the negative effects of future events like pandemics that may freeze a part or their whole supply chain indefinitely this study can be very fruitful for the companies operating in all fields.

Before the pandemic it wasn't as obvious for companies to consider a pandemic as a serious threat to affect markets simultaneously all over the world at the speed COVID-19 did in the early spring of 2020. However, it is possible that now that we are experiencing this pandemic the organizations are taking these issues of facing such global scale crisis' and facing the unknown into consideration as they are learning from this one. It is important to try to figure what could be the aftereffects of learning organizations, how facing a global crisis can change organizations and how they can improve learning and strategic decision making. I believe that addressing the problem empirically by interviewing the employees of a wholesale company of consumer goods from multiple different levels, from management of different parts of the organizations, it is easier to understand the complexity of this.

1.2 Research problem

Organizational learning from the COVID-19 pandemic has already started and it is evident that the companies needed to adjust their processes immediately when the virus started rapidly spreading in 2020. The effects of the pandemic, for example on the way we work and how companies operate, have been tremendous, although it is forecasted that the world economies' growth has started to recover (Fitzgerald et al., 2022). Because of the pandemic, many industries had to rearrange if not all then many of their processes to keep going and companies that couldn't find these ways may have needed to close their

doors for good. Quick decision making was required from all organizations, and the decisions that were done made a shift in the use of company resources.

For example, before the pandemic many people were working daily in their offices but suddenly were not able to do so due to restrictions for safe distances and thus not working at home instead of office spaces became one of the safest options. Additionally, the threat of being infected at one's workplace or in the stores forced people to stay at home even with the slightest symptoms. Many consumers began shopping online, which caused more pressure for example in logistics and manufacturing to produce and deliver the pre-pandemic amount of goods when there were not as many employees to carry out these operations (Zhu et al., 2020). The fast pace and global extent of this pandemic is something that hasn't been seen with other pandemics or other events affecting the economy.

Therefore, the problem is that research on organizational learning may require update. How have the organizations and the people working in these organizations learned from this pandemic? Are they thinking that when the pandemic is declared to be over there is a possibility to go back to the old working ways or is the new learning techniques and processes here to stay? Also, do the future organizations see learning from these kinds of unexpected events necessary if the possibility of these types of global scale crisis to happen is so low?

1.3 Research questions

The research question can be specified as following:

- Has the organizational learning process in the consumer goods industry changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The data and methodology that will be used include secondary data from news sources, previous research on organizational learning and COVID-19 related matters as well as empirical data carried out from semi-structured interviews with industry professionals. The methodology used will follow the Gioia method.

1.4 Structure

This master's thesis is structured so that the introduction part will cover the background and motive for this specific study. The introduction will be followed by theory on organizational learning, previous pandemics, and the consumer goods industry in Finland. To understand the theory behind this study, the terms will be explained and the previous research on the topics will be introduced as well. This is done so that the reader will be able to understand the topics thoroughly. The motive for the study is explained so that it is clear why this specific topic is interesting and what difference it makes to the academic field of business and economics.

After covering the theory, this study will move on to introducing the methodology of the study and the demographics of the interviewees so that it is clear why these specific people were chosen to be interviewed and this specific method was chosen to execute this research. In order for the study to continue after having the actual interviews they will be transcribed and coded so that it is possible to build the theory by using the Gioia method and reveal the results of the study. After covering all of the above mentioned, it is time for analysis and discussion of the study as well as recommendation for future research. This part is especially important as I have noticed that many previous studies always leave something open, and it is for certain that my research will have something for someone to continue from.

The last part of the structure includes the list of references. This will be done with the help of Zotero software, which collects all my used references and makes an APA style reference list out of them. Last is the appendix which will include all the used graphs and interview questions used in the collection of the data.

2 ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

This part of the document covers the studies on organizational learning from different schools of thought. Organizations consist of a group of people that exist for some purpose such as sharing different tasks, workforce, resources, and technology. Companies are also organizations. The organizational learning refers to the process of developing knowledge that is to change behavior and direction (Škerlavaj et al., 2007). It is not certain whether an actual theory on organizational learning has been successfully developed but there are a variety of different frameworks explaining different phenomena related to the concept (M. Crossan et al., 2011).

2.1 Organizational learning

Like in many other decision-making strategies are formed and structured so that companies would strive in the competition against others and external factors such as market changes. Usually, the plans for a strategy are made on the basis of what the company and its organization forecasts to be to their competitive advantage or what their knowledge and history tell what works and what doesn't (Vancil & Lorange, 1975). Similarly, to individuals it is easier to know how to act in a situation if you have encountered a similar situation before and know what the results of your actions can be. Thus, like human learning process many of the organization's strategic decisions are based on the findings of organizational learning.

Scholars of organizational learning are studying the benefits and effects of learning to strategic renewal. Some studies take the look that learning happens by trial-and-error but more likely it is more complex than that (M. M. Crossan & Berdrow, 2003). In this section I will talk more on the research on organizational learning. One framework by Crossan et al. (1999) introduced a framework on organizational learning that presents it as a dynamic process. A follow up to the article by Argote & Miron-Spektor (2011) presents four different communities of learning: individual, group, organizational and inter-organizational communities of learning. The following sections will be covering these articles and their frameworks more.

2.2 Different communities of learning organizations

The theory of organizational learning is introduced with articles and studies on different factors affecting the process such as traumatic events or witnessing other organizations experiencing events that teach them (Hällgren et al., 2017) as well as the different levels and groups where the organizational learning process

happens e.g. the Dimensions for a theory (developed in 1995) or the 4I framework by Crossan et al. (1999). These different communities of learning give a sense of how organizations learning process may flow within the organization.

2.2.1 Individual

In order to understand organizational learning process, it is important to understand that all of the organizations are constructed from different people with their individual experiences and purposes in the organization. All of these people may have different views on how they have experienced the events that have happened in the organization or outside of it that may affect the future events in their organization.

The theory on organizational learning and especially the framework introduced by Crossan et al. (1995) has been one of the most cited articles on the issue. The article mentions four different groups of learning and one factor affecting all groups is the individuals themselves with their own personality and their own individual experiences of how to learn. Some learn easy and are able to express themselves and their ideas more clearly and easily than others (M. M. Crossan et al., 1995). Learning of individuals in an organization also requires some external and internal forces which then influence other learning groups as well. In addition each employee makes sense out of their own realities in a way that it is difficult to fit in to one theoretical framework (Gioia et al., 2013).

Another article on organizational learning by Crossan et al. (1999) introduces the stages where the learning happens. Individual learning happens quite differently than the other levels of learning as the person is trying to comprehend what has changed or how one should behave in a certain situation on their own (M. M. Crossan et al., 1999). Individual learning can affect all other groups of learning but is not required to all as all other groups consist of individuals that make sense out of the processes and may instantly start learning on how to execute different tasks even without anyone telling them how to do it (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). What affects the learning of individuals in an organization consists of multiple things and one factor is the persons own background and experiences.

2.2.2 Group

One important factor to remember is that individuals in organizations are in contact and communication with other people almost all the time. In teams and organizations communication flow is important to allow learning from each other, and decisions are made based on talk and other communication. Individuals reflect on their experiences in the organization and talk about other viewpoints which they may see differently but learn from them. This so-called conflict resolution may be one of the most important parts of organizational learning as not all decisions are made in great agreement and the individuals behind the ideas that resulted to an agreement to change something have faced resistance (Van de Ven et al., 2019). Hence individuals need to overcome this

organizational or team members resistance in order to get their own opinion heard to affect the decision making regardless of the power imbalance in the workplace.

As mentioned, having conversation with other people in the same organization helps creating mutual understanding and knowledge. Research has found that similarly to the basic logics of language, individual's learning results are shared to create mutual knowledge with the use of metaphors so that other people are able to understand and envision the situation the other person has faced (M. M. Crossan et al., 1995, 1999).

What is problematic in creating mutual learning in the group setting, is to note in which surroundings people are most likely to learn from each other. For some people it might be that they are more comfortable sharing their thoughts differently than others and that there can be power imbalance in group settings that might affect these situations. One example could be a situation where a manager of a team is asking for thoughts and ideas to change a process but their individual dynamics with the team members may influence the members' willingness to share their thoughts and things they have learned.

In team dynamics changing even one member can be of difference to improve or reduce mutual learning. In some cases, the organizations teams and groups have been formed so well that changing or adding members might not be beneficial. "Knowledge provided to an established organization may not be as useful because it conflicts with networks already in place at the organization. By contrast, knowledge provided at the start of operation is less likely to create such conflict because networks of knowledge are not yet fully established" (Argote & Ingram, 2000). It is also mentioned that moving people from unit to another to create knowledge, might place the changed individual to a position of minority, and thus filling out the task with a new group becomes more complex.

In organizational learning there are also many other barriers and also forward pushing forces that influence the learning happening in teams to flow to another direction in the organization. Individual characteristics and team dynamics help push ideas and create knowledge, but the organizational settings and design may create barrier to share these with other parts of the organization where organizational learning becomes more localized to teams and certain locations. The term silo learning describes these kinds of settings quite well. Silos created within an organization puts parts of the organization in its own silo, from where the information flow doesn't escape and mainly stays inside it (Forsten-Astikainen et al., 2017).

2.2.3 Organizations

Organizations can be defined as groups of people that are working together to reach the same goals or purpose. In this study case, the organization is a company that consist of multiple organizational parts working for the same purpose; to supply products that end to the consumer and supplement their lives making them easier. Therefore, the purpose of these organizations is to work so that the process flows smoothly, is economic, sustainable, and profitable. This requires

all parts of the organization to function well and require them always find new ways to work better even when the external or internal factors change. Organizational knowledge plays an important role in learning and finding these new ways. Knowledge not as an object but as a dynamic process is involved in the learning process (Nag et al., 2007).

The barriers and influencers on organizations dynamic learning process are varying and depend on multiple factors. As there are multiple groups of learning that affect the organization, being in the middle of the learning process the organizations have a great influence on the other directions as well. For example, if the organization has created knowledge and based the ways their processes and tasks are done on these learnings, the institutionalized knowledge might likely affect the other groups of learning working inside the organizations as well. Exploiting previous knowledge and learnings the organizations change the way for example individuals and teams can learn and create new knowledge, or they might affect how other organizations see what works and what does not (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). This sometimes becomes embedded in the organization and changing the way an organization functions and learns can be difficult to change. In some organizations that learn by constantly exploring new, sometimes because they simply do not have knowledge that could be exploited, finding relevant knowledge can be difficult. Hence, the way the learning affects the organization and its identity as it is the way it functions to perform better.

Organizational identity may constrain change, as how the organization feels its core is, it should probably not be changed (Nag et al., 2007). The organizations routines, skills and decision-making processes can be seen as the thing that created the identity and what the company consists of. Future research on strategic change should be more of the understanding how to use knowledge in processes rather than acquiring that knowledge. Also, adapting old knowledge with new to adapt to change in the environment. "For transformation to occur, an organization must address not only its knowledge content, but also its knowledge-use practices" (Nag et al., 2007).

2.2.4 Interorganizational

Between different organizations, such as competing companies that operate in the same industry or collaborating companies in industries like logistics and transportation can also learn from each other. This is called interorganizational learning.

In interorganizational learning organizations may follow the news and reports, but also their common customers to see what the responds to challenges and changes of the competitors are. For example, the EU regulations affecting companies in the consumer goods industry influence the companies mutual dynamics in a way they share and fight for their customers. One example is one company focusing to rebranding themselves as a responsible and sustainable company to attract more customers from a certain sector and hence demanding more product information from their suppliers and their manufacturers. Consequently, this learning from the consumer behavior affects organizations

and their learning on how to carry out processes and how not in order to be attractive in the market and among other organizations, thus creating competitive advantage (Argote & Ingram, 2000).

Knowledge shared among individuals in an organization can create competitive advantage if that knowledge is something that not many competitors have acquired as well (Argote & Ingram, 2000). If we imagine that interorganizational learning is something that comes from companies learning from each other, these companies are most likely decreasing the competitive advantage one company has over others. Interorganizational learning and knowledge spillovers occur among moving products and employees rather than organizational processes as in organizations the knowledge is embedded in their operational systems.

2.3 Exploration and exploitation

The 4I model has been one of the most explored and cited theories in organizational learning to this day. To expand this framework further, Nielsen et al. (2018) explored the flow of different learning between the learning groups and found that explorative learning mainly flows feedforward from individuals towards organization and exploitation the other way around as feedback. In research on strategic renewal and management development, organizations that are able identify their organizations ability to learn and recognize this are usually seen to be better in this context.

The article explores the way exploration and exploitation in previous research has been separated and tries to see the two ways of learning more as processes that go somehow hand in hand. It is clear that in organizations that try to explore opportunities and find new ways to grow, these ways of learning are fighting for the same resources and somehow finding the balance to give both as much is difficult. Giving more resources to exploration decreases the amount given to exploitation and this has its own downsides for example gaining of benefits of experimentation requires many failed attempts and may cause loss of resources without gaining a thing. On the other hand, if an organizations takes all its resources to exploit their current practices may fall in to the trap of competency in which they are not able bring anything new to the market (Nielsen et al., 2018).

There are a lot of research on ambidexterity of learning and resources which takes a look on the organizations that are able to exploit both ways of organizational learning. The theories and research on ambidexterity introduces it as a way of exploiting and exploring to find opportunities and using resources, these being the components of the ability (Koryak et al., 2018).

2.4 Ambidexterity

The article by Koryak et al. (2018) explore the ambidexterity of organizations and another article and Mom et al. (2018) both, the organizations and especially the individuals in them that are able of being ambidextrous in their learning practices. There are a lot of research on different levels of the organization that are responsible of the organizations ability to explore and exploit practices to learn. The “Multilevel Integrated Framework of Firm HR Practices, Individual Ambidexterity, and Organizational Ambidexterity” by Mom et al. (2019) essentially introduces the organizations HR practices the part of the organization that is able to influence the ambidexterity of the organization, especially on the individual level which can be seen in the Figure 1. The ability for an organizations ability to pursue exploration and exploitation are dependent on the individuals that work in them, and different practices and resources given to them define which one is encouraged by the organizations management and other managerial positions, for example HR.

Figure 1
A Multilevel Integrated Framework of Firm Human Resource (HR) Practices, Manager Ambidexterity, and Organizational Ambidexterity

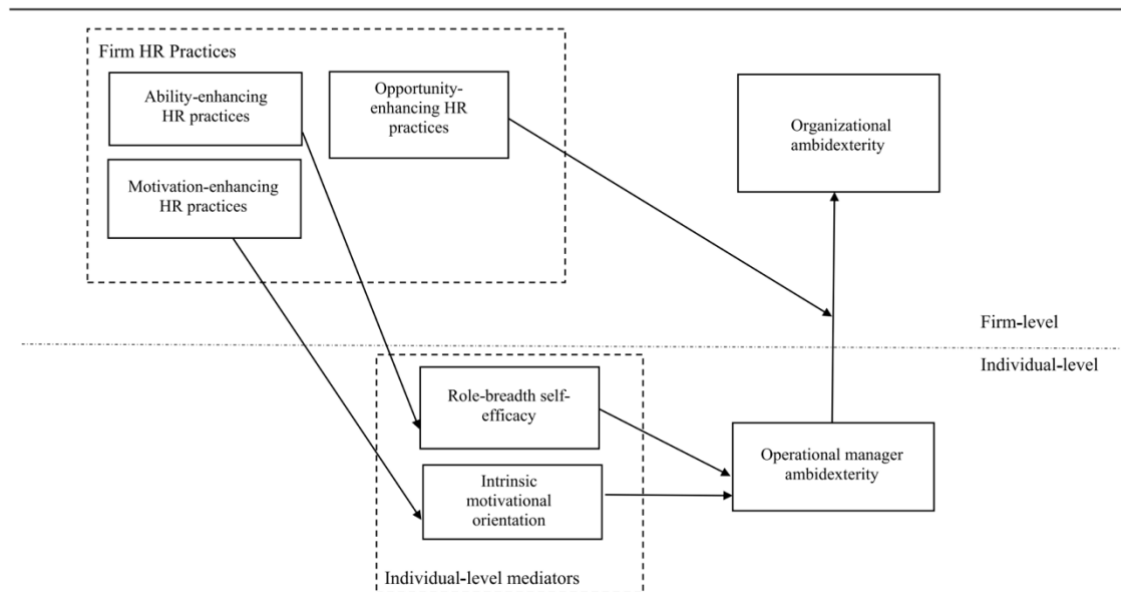


FIGURE 1 Framework of HR Practices, Individual Ambidexterity, and Organizational Ambidexterity, Graph from Mom et al., A Multilevel Integrated Framework of Firm HR Practices, Individual Ambidexterity, and Organizational Ambidexterity (Journal of Management, 2019)

The research stresses the fact that HR is probably one of the most important factors to influence the organization’s processes and this needs to be deeply understood as they are able to contribute to the ways the organization learns with mediating factors to individuals. Hence it has a top down influence on the

individuals behavior and hence also the upward relationship between the organization and the individual (Mom et al., 2019).

In the other article by Koryak et al. (2018) on Exploitation and exploration in exploration learning the organizations ability to recognize the ways they learn and exploit this in renewal and strategies. The example of an organization that first had decided to change their IT processes in the light of it being done by other organizations and hence pressurized to become the future of the organization as well. In the end the individuals intuition to explore feedback information from the use of existing practices helped them to decide another alternative that ended up minimizing their short-term risks.

Upgrading the organization's current IT platform instead of changing to a platform that could not be integrated to other processes could have been realized to be a bad decision in the long run. Here the feedforward flow of information being interrupted by even one feedback loop changed the way the process change was seen and hence the use of ambidexterity helped the organization to make the right choice with minimized risks (Koryak et al., 2018).

2.5 Organizational climate

The climate of an organization is the overall atmosphere at one's workplace and for example how the employees feel about working in that organization. It affects employees in many ways and for example enables innovation and shared knowledge among them. It is extensively studied what kind of a climate then is supportive for the above mentioned. The better the organizational climate, the better the employees want to work in that organization and are able to create mutual knowledge.

In the study of Cheung-Jen et al. (2010) on the role of organizational climate and structure on knowledge management and innovativeness it is found that the most innovative companies will be more successful to survive external changes. Hence could be derived that thriving companies most likely have structures that support this good organizational climate and innovativeness. Companies that have centralized and formalized structures, innovativeness is smaller as it is supported by knowledge creation and sharing which in these settings are not easily done. One additional hampering factor is that employees see knowledge as their competitive advantage and sharing it is not motivating. The study supports the findings from companies with integrated, decentralized, and informal structures being the ones that are most innovative and supportive to employees knowledge sharing.

2.6 Processes of learning

The article of Argote and Ingram (2000) on the processes of learning of organizational learning explains that there are two types of knowledge transfer, creation of it and the transfer of knowledge which then become embedded in the different parts of the organizations processes This is a continuum to earlier research on organizational learning and expands the theory to another viewpoint.

2.6.1 Creation of knowledge

Knowledge is in many ways created rather than already existing. If we think about creation of knowledge, it quite literally means that it is created after it has been unknown and hence becomes current knowledge. In knowledge this could mean, that something that was not common knowledge before someone makes sense of it so that the knowledge about that one thing or phenomena is acknowledged at least by one person and they understand what it means (Argote & Ingram, 2000).

Organizations with the help of their members can create knowledge. The members face an unknown situation alone or in groups, and they make sense out of it to create knowledge about that to themselves. One example is where a member or members of an organization come together to discuss a problem they have faced and by discussing about it they become aware of a problem that exists and thus try to find a solution to it. Thus, knowledge about this new problem and also a possible solution is now existing. One way for an organization to create knowledge is to explore new opportunities and ways of carrying out processes (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011).

2.6.2 Transfer of knowledge

According to the research of Argote and Ingram (2000) the transfer of knowledge in organizations is difficult to measure as the knowledge lied in multiple parts of the organization. It is found in individuals, roles and structures, procedures and practices, culture of the organization and then the physical structure of the organization. Knowledge can be transferred within the organization in multiple occasions and without the counterparts even acknowledging the fact that knowledge was transferred. It is quite almost a subconscious event.

2.6.3 Retention

Another article by Walsh and Ungson (1991) on organizational memory explains how the knowledge embedded in organizations are acquired by using the two processes mentioned above. Similar to individual humans, organizations acquire knowledge and use processes that are alike to those they have used when faced situations in the past. Changing processes can be difficult just like it can be for a person to change their eating habits to lose or gain weight or finding other ways

of learning to improve the quality of their life. Sometimes knowing a new way of doing things and knowledge gain is better but changing your behavior permanently is more complex than that, similarly organizations forget what they have learned (Levallet & Chan, 2019).

Organizations work the same way; the only difference is that it constructs of multiple people with their personal memory inside one big machinery instead of just one person and in addition the knowledge is embedded also in their tasks and the tools the organization is using. Thus, changing the way the big picture works more than just one person's actions need to take a different direction (Argote & Ingram, 2000). There are also a variety of barriers for knowledge to become embedded in the organization's processes.

Especially cumulative knowledge may become a barrier for new knowledge to become embedded and institutionalized in the organization, as cumulated knowledge has grown most likely for a longer period of time and is strictly rooted in the organization (M. M. Crossan et al., 1999). Hence, it is quite dependent on the organizations learning processes to be able to break the habit or process that has become institutionalized but would be better for the organization if the new way would be used for example in cases where the used processes and knowledge are outdated or the operational environment radically changes (Zhu et al., 2020).

In older companies, the opposite of cumulative knowledge and incorporated processes is the companies that suffer from the risk of corporate amnesia. It quite literally means that the company or organization cannot benefit from its own gained experience. This can be seen in many organizations that operate for example in industries with high employee turnover rate (Kransdorf, 1998). This phenomenon also touches the experiences with brain drain or human capital flight that describes the individuals who after receiving wide knowledge and experience training at home then move to other opportunities outside of their home country or organization. Thus, the home countries and organizations will not benefit from the trained individuals and their trained know how as much as the target must have been when beginning their training (Kransdorf, 1998).

Organizational memory and written documentation on the organization's milestones play a big role avoiding the aforementioned amnesia. For example, written form instructions enable newer employees to introduce themselves with the organizations processes and ways of working. Writing these things down to better help the organizational memory to move from employee to employee about what has worked and what not. In addition, the interaction between humans and IT enhances learning in the organization as for example with automation focusing on things that cannot be automatized save time for learning new.

2.7 4I framework of organizational learning

This framework and research are continuum of the original article by Crossan et al. (1999). According to the article there are four different processes related to organizational learning: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing which functions are demonstrated in the figure 2. Each of these processes include several inputs or outcomes and each of them can be applied to one or two but rarely not all levels of learning. Although it is difficult to identify at which level each process starts and where it ends.

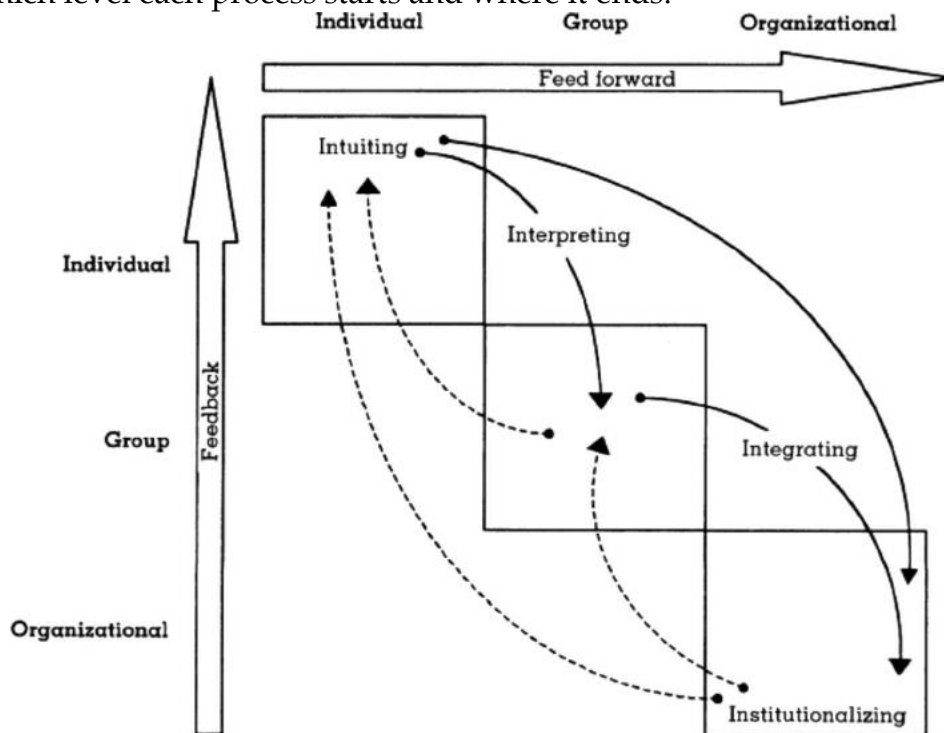


FIGURE 2 Framework of Organizational learning groups and flow of learning process, Graph from "An Organizational Learning Framework: From Intuition to Institution" by Crossan et al., (1999), *The Academy of Management Review*, p.532

The basic level of learning happens at the individual level, mostly when a person has an intuition on some kind of a pattern of change. Interpreting happens when the things the person is seeing or understanding become more into reality to themselves and the person is able to put the experience into words. This theory is supported by other studies as well. In an article on the narrative perspective on organizational learning it is supported that through narratives organizational decision makers are able to make sense of their unusual experiences when they need go back to the memory to explain it verbally to others. This applies especially well to situations where the experience is faced for the first time so that the event is previously not known (Garud et al., 2011).

From this point the process flows more to collective behavior where the group creates a mutual understanding of the things happening around them. Thus, the ideas and learnings of an individual are integrated to other people's minds through conversation. These learnings may become institutionalized

when they are carefully integrated into the organization in the forms of embedded processes and rules and other practices used in the organization, and they are a result of this longer process of organization learning. Even if the person whose intuition the initial idea came from leaves the organization, the institutionalized idea itself doesn't (M. M. Crossan et al., 1999).

The flow between the different levels is going two ways, individual learning leads to institutionalized information (feed forward) and the other way institutionalized practices affect the way individuals in an organization think and work (feedback). Thus, it is important to understand the ways these affect each other and be able to notice how each of them can prevent the free flow of learning from one level to another (M. M. Crossan et al., 1999). There are also some personal effects of people trying to institutionalize their ideas and individuals with the most power being the ones who are more likely to do this. They are most likely to be able to convince people to help them to institutionalize their ideas. If an idea ends up being institutionalized it'll most likely impact the future of the organization and its members (M. M. Crossan & Berdrow, 2003).

Oftentimes the employee turnover also affects the ideas becoming institutionalized and thus if many employees change the company over a short time period it is likely that none of their ideas are to stay. This one explains more the beforementioned corporate amnesia. On the other hand, if there is no employee turnover exploring new ideas and replacing old habits, renewing processes becomes difficult. Based on the research and use of this framework it would be possible to identify whether a company is learning more by exploiting or exploring and which is more dominant, also how the effects of the pandemic have affected the groups and stages where the learning happens in an organization.

3 CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY

In this section the specifics of the consumer goods industry will be covered to understand more the external forces affecting our case company, including what they do and how the industry is in Finland.

Consumer goods are a term used for a variety of products that a regular person as an end user buys for their own consumption. They are also final products instead of materials or products that are still to be produced further. These goods can be either durable, non-durable or services depending on how long they are to be used by the consumer (Investopedia, 2022). In the figure 3 the functions of the chain are visible and understood. The chain starts from the demand by the end consumers and flows through each stage where the other side of the chain respond to the demand by acquiring raw materials that will be processed to products and in the end ending up filling the demand. (Transalia Srl, 2021)



FIGURE 3 Visualization of how the Supply Chain of Consumer Goods functions, Graph from "Supply Chain" by Transalia Srl, (2021)

3.1 Market in Finland

The importance of an industry to the economy can be measured with many variables but one to mention is its market size and monetary worth of an organization, especially in industries where there are not many organizations competing against each other (Melitz & Ottaviano, 2008). The bigger the market the bigger its impact on the economy. For example, if one industry experiences turbulence it may affect the economy of a country in great length. To be able to evaluate the size of the consumer goods industry in Finland, we identify the general customer type of buying consumer goods from a wholesale company and calculate the capital of the firms operating in this industry together. However, it might be difficult to calculate the worth of one specific industry as many firms operate in many industries simultaneously.

The operations of wholesale companies give a good insight to the whole industry, as they are usually the middlemen between manufacturers and their customers are traders to end-use consumers. These kinds of customers are usually retailers of the goods which means private businesses owned by smaller entrepreneurs or bigger retail chains that have multiple stores across the country and also sell other products besides consumer goods. Thus, the customer of a consumer goods wholesale company is one that most likely sells goods such as kitchenware, sports equipment, toys, and other goods besides their selection of groceries (Eberenz & Schröer, 2019).

There are multiple bigger retailer chains in Finland that have consumer goods as one of their main businesses and their customers are people that buy their consumer goods in Finland and not for example from other countries or webstores based outside of Finland. In 2020 the worth of trade in retailing goods and groceries was around €20 billion when in 2019 it was more than €2 billion less (A.C. Nielsen Finland Oy, 2020, 2021). The biggest retailers whose main business are selling consumer goods to end-users are S-Group, Kesko Group, Tokmanni, Puuilo, Kärkkäinen, Lidl, Minimani, Stockmann and other smaller companies.

In trade of retailing groceries and goods, S-group had 2021 turnover of € 9,3 billion (SOK, 2022). Kesko group is second largest with €5,9 billion turnover in retailing goods and groceries and had a 5,9% increase in consumer goods in 2021. The worth of the consumer goods in K-Citymarket alone was around €620 million. (Kesko, 2022) These two groups have been continuously the two biggest retailers of goods in Finland and for example in 2018 they made up to 82,5 % of the whole industry.

The importance of the decisions these two groups have made in recent history affect their stakeholders greatly. For example, investments and improvement in digitalization based in changing consumer habits to shop online has put a lot of pressure for the wholesalers of goods as well. In 2014, S-Group announced that due to multiple reasons like digitalization of the industry, continuous downturn of the purchasing power in the country and other

problems they have started to make changes in their consumer goods organization (Pirkanmaan Osuuskauppa, 2014).

3.2 Regulation of the market in Finland

A big part of doing business in consumer goods is regulated in Finland as a part of the European Union (EU). This affects many things the companies in that field need to consider in order to survive and compete against competitors and meet the requirements of the law that protect the rights of the consumers. One big factor in doing business in the field the amount of taxation against products and imported goods as well as the regulations and laws set by the European Commission (EC) considering the product quality and standards. To consumer goods apply the EU legislation, sectoral legislation, and market surveillance legislation (European Commission - European Commission, 2022). This places the responsibility for businesses to provide the customers with products that are safe to use for the consumer as well as to the environment, but also to the state to make sure that everything sold in the market is safe and meets the requirements.

In addition, in the last few decades end consumers have become more aware and interested in the product safety and standards and this puts more pressure on the manufacturers and suppliers to offer goods that meet and exceed these requirements. How these changes to the legislation have changed the consumer goods industry is that it places a lot of pressure and economic challenges to the manufacturers to produce quality items and have all required documents to prove the safety of the product. Thus, to note when this pressure started to affect companies operating in the industry we can see clearly when a lot of companies started to change their processes to better suit the changing customer needs.

3.3 Case company

The individuals that are interviewed for this study are employees in a wholesale company of consumer goods based in Finland. It has been in the consumer goods industry for over 60 years and grown from a company of one employee to company employing over 200 people in multiple countries and exceeding annual turnover of over 100 million euros. It is a family business, which makes it interesting as the owners of the company have been able to see the growth and expansion of the company since their own childhood and are able to build up the company using their own and their parents' learnings. The business type of a wholesale company gives more insight to the whole value chain as these companies usually have visibility to all parts up and downstream of the chain.

In the past 20 years the case company has made many strategic decisions to invest in growth and for example build more space with a new logistics center,

big organizational changes to focus more on exports and their own brands. This includes changing the name of the company that has been in Finnish but is now in English which is assumed to be more appealing to the international customers.

Another change has been the organizational changes. Compared to year 2020 and 2022, the organizational design has changed quite a bit. The chart of 2020 can be seen in the figure 4 in which there are a few departments under the supervision of the CEO. This year in 2022, the organization consists of different departments which can be seen in the figure 5: sales, supply chain, HR, and Finance & Administration. All of these departments have subfunctions which makes the employees responsible for a more focused group of processes and tasks compared to the previous organizational model. These functions have evolved throughout the company's 60 years of history and the organization that is in place now is not the same what it was 2 years ago. This is all due to employee turnover, growth in domestic and international sales, as well as automatization and other investments made in the recent history. The organization has changed its processes to better suit the needs of different functions to perform better and grow.

In the Finnish industry of consumer goods, the company plays a big role as it has operations that affect partners in both directions in the value chain, customers, and manufacturers. Therefore, the strategic changes and any decisions made in a wholesale company affect many different businesses all over Finland and abroad.

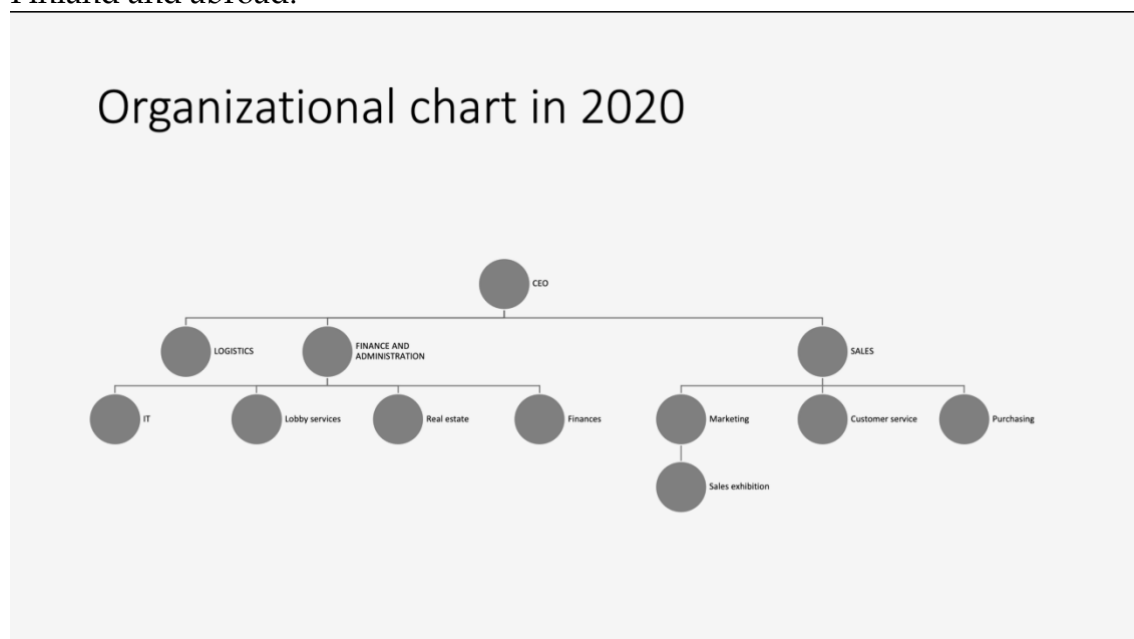


FIGURE 4 Organizational chart in 2020

Organizational chart in 2022

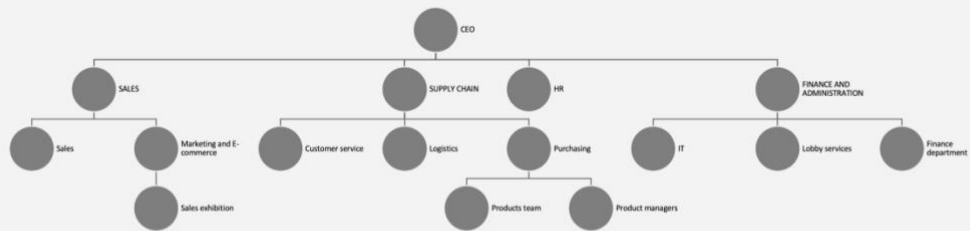


FIGURE 5 Organizational chart of the case company in 2022

4 COVID-19 AND OTHER PANDEMICS

To understand more the reasons behind the pandemic and why it has had such a great influence on the world economy and how organizations learn and behave, this research takes a separate look on the current pandemic as well as pandemics that have occurred in the recent history to be a comparison.

A pandemic is a term used for infectious illnesses that spread around an area larger than one continent: For example, multiple continents experiencing epidemics at the same time of the same infectious disease are suffering from pandemic. The effects to an area that is experiencing a pandemic of a disease may suffer from things like economic downturn due to increase of patients in hospital care, employees being absent from their work and demanding social benefits in order to survive from daily life. (Kela, 2022)

COVID-19, officially corona virus disease 2019 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. World Health Organization (WHO) announced it a worldwide pandemic on March 11th, 2020. The birthplace and reason have been argued a lot, but one of the first explanations for its birth is that it was first in the city of Wuhan, China in late 2019, where it started its spread all over the world. The first cases were with patients who shared a workplace at Seafood market in Wuhan, which is known place for selling animals. Viruses belonging to the same coronavirus family have started pandemics previously as well. (Arshad Ali et al., 2020) The symptoms of the illness that are listed in the figure 6, include fever, soreness of the throat, diarrhea, headache among others (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Finland, 2022).

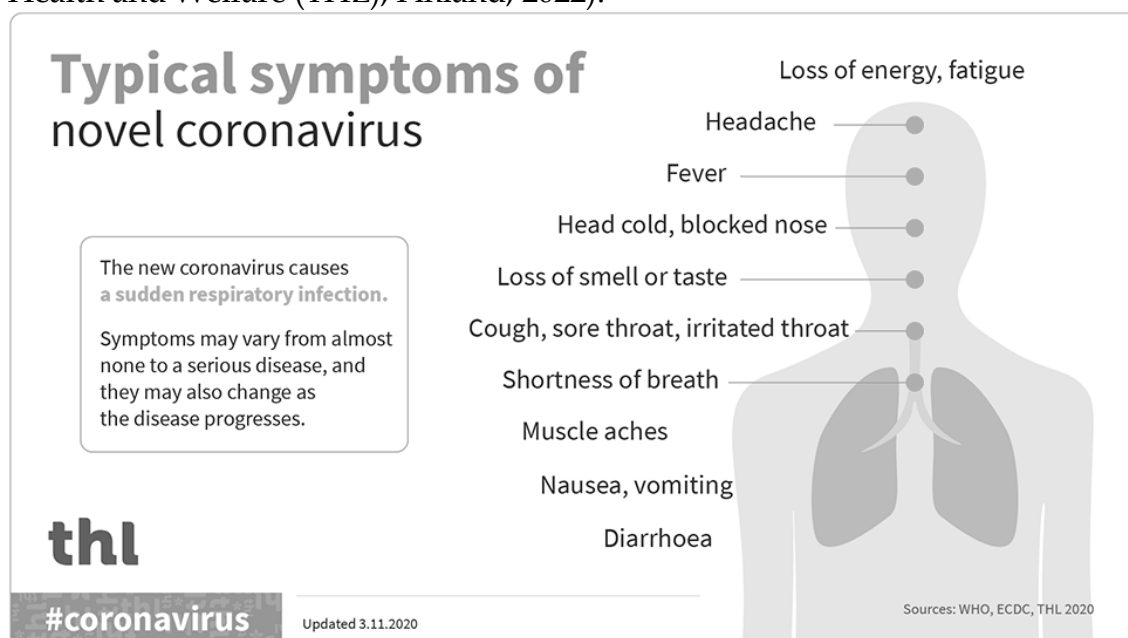


FIGURE 6 Novel coronavirus and its symptoms, Graph from Typical Symptoms of Novel coronavirus, THL, (2020)

4.1 Recent history of pandemics

The world population has faced pandemics other than the currently ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and it is a known fact that new diseases and viruses will continue formulating and spreading. Examples of the most recent pandemics from the last 120 years our mankind has faced are for example the Spanish flu which was spreading amongst the countries that had been taking a part in the first world war. It is evident that the war had made the circumstances for the virus to spread easier. Thus, the relationship and correlation between the men dead because of the war and the pandemic following the war, these factors cannot be clearly separated from each other it has become one of the deadliest pandemics in our recent world history (Mascie Taylor & Moji, 2021).

In the family of coronaviruses there have been a few outbreaks in the past 30 years. In the coronavirus family there have been a few outbreaks causing this acute respiratory syndrome, SARS -CoV outbreak emerged a pandemic in China in 2002 and was declared to be ended a year after. Another outbreak of another member of this virus family was spotted in 2012 in Saudi Arabia and spread mainly in the Middle East region. The difference to the currently ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is that even within the past 20 years the world has changed in relation to travelling, how we work and spend our money as well as maintaining a certain level of hygiene (Mascie Taylor & Moji, 2021).

4.2 Timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic

In the late months of the year 2019 at that time an unknown virus was first detected in Wuhan, China. People who had symptoms were later linked to the same seafood market and from there the virus had spread to others who had had no links to the market at all. Then the virus spread all over the world especially among international travelers, and later became a worldwide pandemic once it started spreading in early months of 2020. The first months the news titles were talking about a mysterious virus but soon it got the name COVID-19. It was detected to be similar to coronaviruses like SARS-CoV, which also caused epidemics and pandemics in the early 2000s (Zhu et al., 2020).

There are multiple reasons why this type of virus spread faster and became pandemic in such a short time span. One of the most affective reasons are the increase in global aviation and trade. These are a result of increase in living standards and the rise of the middle class. Within almost 20 years the number of flights has risen tremendously and almost doubled. Also, it has been studied with the same virus family that the coronavirus has the ability to propagate at an alarming rate. From the initial birthplace of MERS outbreak in Saudi Arabia, only 22% of the patients of the 198 early cases had been in direct exposure and the rest had been affected otherwise (Arshad Ali et al., 2020).

The interconnectedness of the world enables the virus to travel from country to country with the same speed as an airplane can, thus if serious measures to control the spread, a worldwide pandemic can formulate within weeks. Compared to earlier pandemics where the speed has been slower and the governments and countries have had time to prepare with vaccines and other measures to control the spread of the virus among its citizens, the current pandemic is nothing the society has seen before.

As soon as the virus was detected to be a part of the coronavirus family many pharmaceutical companies begun creating a vaccine for the virus. It took months for the first company to introduce a working vaccine and a few months later there were multiple available brands for governments to acquire and offer to their citizens. In Finland the government's strategy to control the spread of the virus and give more time to acquire more vaccines was to follow the instruction *Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL)* which gave analysis on the situation and instructions to the government (THL, 2022). For example, in March 2020 this led to the government to put the country on lockdown. The lockdown would mean restrictions on different organizations and public places being open and this change needed a state of emergency to be announced in order for the government be able to restrict the basic rights of individuals.

The first restrictions were made in mid-March 2020, and it was weeks after the first ones were released. After the first months midst the pandemic there was lockdowns in many countries and strict law enforcement to control the spread. This made people from all over the world working in all kinds of industries become anxious of the future and worried what is to come as no one had experienced this type of limitation of basic human rights before.

The strategy to control the spread of the virus in Finland has changed during the first two years in some parts and many stages. For example, at times there were limitation for the amount of people in the same room and no facemasks were required in public places, which then later became announced in the media that this could have also been due to the fact that the country hadn't been able to acquire enough face masks to supply the demand for everyday use for all citizens (Waris, 2020). However, as the second wave of infections came in the fall of 2020 and when many companies had begun to produce masks themselves it became mainly mandatory to use face masks in public places and maintain safe distances to other people.

It became well-known thing that every two weeks the situation with infected cases and death numbers were announced by THL and the government had to take a look at the restrictions and if they were needed and effective every now and then. At times restrictions were released and living closer to normal life was possible but, in a moment, restrictions were restricted, and individuals had to adapt to these in their normal lives.

In 2021 after the first rounds of the vaccine becoming available to Finnish citizens, the government gave the possibility for example to restaurants and bars that had negative effects on the restrictions of people contact so that in order to offer their services normally they could use the option to require vaccine passports. These passports were given to the people who had taken the vaccine

(at least one dose) so that they could show they were less likely to spread the virus in case they were infected. (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2022) Many companies took the chance to use it as the industry had been taking a lot of hit from these restrictions, but some felt that this would divide the society into two; those who are willing to vaccinate themselves and those who don't.

The use vaccination passports didn't decrease the number of new cases and the spread of the virus became "impossible" with known effective restrictions. In 2022 countries started releasing all their restrictions and started giving implications that the normal days were ahead (Muhonen, 2022).

4.3 Effects on consumer goods

This section will cover more information on the news articles on what has been said e.g., about the factory shutdowns, employee shortage, container crisis and bottlenecks in the harbors, delays in deliveries and other symptoms of the pandemic affecting the consumer goods industry.

As markets in different economies are heterogeneous, they reacted to the spread of the virus differently. For example, markets and industries that have a nature of people meeting and having other contacts and not being able to transfer the job to be done remotely, were hit the hardest. In the first quarter of 2020, there was a significant decline for turnover in companies operating in China, especially as the pandemic had an impact on production, operation and sales which in turn reflect as negative return rate (Shen et al., 2020). The reason for this was mainly that the factories in countries where most goods are being produced, were forced to shut down as the governments made it very difficult or even impossible to do business when people were not allowed in the same premises. When the factories were closed the products naturally were not produced and this caused shortage in supply as soon as the demand from the end consumer side increased when people wanted to buy again and started shopping for different things to improve their quality of life while spending more time inside their homes. (Kupferschmidt & Cohen, 2020)

Digitalization became the main priority in many industries as customers were not able to do their shopping on site and began online shopping. This applied to people working in retail stores as well, in addition to when working was to be executed remotely and online to avoid human contact (Valtioneuvosto, 2020). Thus, the parts in the value chain of the consumer goods industry that were not digitalized were the ones that had negative effects first. Manufacturing and transportation are difficult to digitalize completely and thus the pandemic forced companies to either cut down their production or risk the health of their employees with the fear of infections. Many shut down their factories in China and for that reason production of certain items was delayed with months when the demand then rose significantly (Zhu et al., 2020).

Once the shutdowns in China were over after a few months, the world consumption began to rise up and there was a huge shortage on home supplies

and all kinds of items that were used to decorate or renovate homes, or other items you would need when you suddenly start spending most of your time at home. Due to complexity of the supply chain the production of items all across the world usually requires months before it is possible to have them on the shelves, and therefore worldwide trade fell into a crisis after not having goods ready to be shipped. Production tried to answer the demand and went up multiple times to what is possible to transport and thus became container crisis. There are only a certain number of containers in the world, and it has been for years that once the container is filled and shipped, it takes weeks before it is back. Thus, suddenly there were not enough containers in certain harbors to transport all produced and ordered items. This shortage of containers has caused a lot of problems in shipping all over the world when there are more products waiting for their shipping but no one to deliver them.

One additional factor influencing the industry is that as the demand restrict face to face communication and prevent the spread of viruses and germs, many governments and health sector organizations suggested that the use of face masks and maintaining higher hand hygiene would be required in certain situations where keeping a safe distance to other individuals wouldn't be possible. Therefore, there was a sudden increase in the demand for these products in these supplements which hadn't been produced for regular consumers in this scale (Babaahmadi et al., 2021).

Many manufacturing companies began focusing their operations to produce more these essential items that became out-of-stock items in the matter of days, and thus instead of producing their regular products for example breweries took part in producing hand disinfectant which can be made using the same machinery and from the same base ingredients as for example hard liquor. The textile manufacturer Finlayson began selling face masks for one time use as well as fabric ones when the demand for face masks rose after the governmental guidelines were published (Knuuttila, 2020; Kuparinen, 2020; THL, 2022). In the consumer goods this meant that many companies saw an increase in sales for goods that help maintain cleanliness and hygiene, for example chemicals and cleaning supplies were in demand all over the world .

Due to the changes in the industry and restrictions affecting companies and their staff, many companies producing resources, and ingredients for all kinds of products faced problems to supply to fulfill the need. In many raw materials this increase in demand could be seen in the rise and also the difficulty to receive certain products that include these materials. This caused a worldwide crisis in commodity prices which in the long run would affect everything on the value chain; staff and possibility to do business without increasing prices.(Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto EK, 2022)

Another important factor influencing the industry was that since restrictions were made also in relation to travelling outside of Finland our entering countries where the governments had enforced their own regulations making business trips as usual was not possible anymore. Purchasing and trips to exhibitions had been a big part of constructing a product portfolio and because of the pandemic it had been made impossible to execute the normal way when

travelling became heavily restricted all over the world (STT, 2020; Tamminen, 2020). What had been done earlier during business trips to for example in China had to be done in an alternative way. This meant that buyers and other people working in the purchasing had to do their jobs using email and searching online what was available, and also be in communication with their contacts who had been manufacturers until then. The reality of the occupation had become different; from a manual labor to a fully remote data driven job.

It is important for the companies operating along the value chain to consider these changes and external factors creating a threat for them and think what they have learned by now, and how they could also learn better in the future. Understanding the connectedness of every part of the value chain and the world the companies are able to learn from the changes the pandemic has made.

5 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To collect data for the empirical part of this study, qualitative methods were used by using semi-structured interview frame and interviewing with at least 8 individuals. These individuals are working in higher level professions in different parts of an organization in a wholesale company of consumer goods. Due to limitations in time and other resources the organization that was chosen for the employee interviews is the researcher's employer and is playing a key role in this research. It would be time consuming to recruit employees from external companies as there are no existing contacts. The organization is for the same reasons rather accessible and convenient to reach, hence a good research object in this case.

The case company employed over 200 people in 2021, and its turnover was around €100 million which in Finnish scale makes it a midcap company (Koso, 2022). As a wholesale company the case company could give insight and answers that can be stretched to view the situation all across the value chain, from end users to the manufacturers of the products. In addition, there was secondary data collected from news articles and industry reports on the effects of the pandemic that describe more on the conditions of the consumer goods industry as well as the timeframe of the pandemic.

The qualitative method was in use as the organizational learning process phenomena is very complex subject to understand, and especially in this case where the point of view was it being influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the organization's employees, and their individual working experience affecting the way they learn. Thus, qualitative methods were found to be most beneficial for this kind of study because the methods allow comprehending phenomena that cannot be easily measured or analyzed with quantitative data.

To collect the right kind of data the interview questions were formed so that it was possible to answer all research questions based on the analysis of these. To create questions that were easy for the interviewees to understand and answer without too many limitations checkpoint questions were created and divided in to four theme sections that covered the organizational conditions before, during and after COVID-19 pandemic. Each question was a conversation starter rather than a yes or no question, so that the interview flows like a natural conversation. The language of the interviews depended on the interviewees' preference, and all interviews were conducted in Finnish. As each participant are individuals and some questions were not found to be that fruitful, some of the questions were modified after each interview so that the last interview answers could bring as much relevant and additional data related to the research questions.

In addition to changing some of the questions according to the individuals, the function part of the employees' organization was taken into consideration when the questions were prepared. For example, as the interviewees are from different levels of the organization e.g., sales, management, purchasing, supply chain and logistics these organizational backgrounds were also being considered.

In the beginning of the interviews questions about demographics and working experience were considered to learn more on how they see that their background may have had an effect on their view on organizational changes and functions, and hence the effects on organizational learning.

When the interviews were taking place, the interviewees were given the opportunity to choose whether they prefer online video conference settings or on site at the office. They were able to choose the date and book a one-hour interview time themselves. As all interviews were carried out within one month there were enough of time to conduct the interviews, change the questions if needed and analyze the data simultaneously. The interviews were recorded for the ease of analyzing the data, and the interviewees' permission for audio recording with or without video were requested before beginning each interview.

Once the interviews with 8 professionals were executed, the data was collected by transcribing their answers and coding the data to first order concepts, second set of themes and finally aggregate dimensions. This is a coding method introduced in publications about analyzing qualitative data such as the book by G. Gibbs (2007) where the ways this type of research should be done are explained. Hence, following these instructions the coding was made with a word processing program Microsoft Word and coding manually placing different sets of concepts into themes. The last two rounds of coding to get to the point where there were aggregate dimensions, Microsoft Excel helped organizing the data and finalize the coding.

The coded data was analyzed, and a grounded theory was formed using the Gioia method. This was done in order to find answers to the research questions and explain how COVID-19 pandemic had an influence on the organizational learning of the company. The Gioia method is a convenient analysis method for this kind of research, as the theme of the study is yet quite understudied and thus the phenomena is better explained constructing a new theory from the words of the interviewed than trying to test one hypothesis and a theory for example (Gioia et al., 2013).

5.1 Gioia method and Grounded theory

This part covers The Gioia method more and what type of research cases it is most likely to be used with. The Gioia method is a one way to do a grounded theory for a research problem. The explanation for the use of grounded theory in this research is that to understand a phenomenon where for example the members of an organization explain their own experiences it is important to let them describe it with their own words and not put words in their mouths as an interviewer. For example, one research pointed out that the terms used in a lot of previous research doesn't really match the words that the interviewees use by themselves and thus the whole experience has another meaning (Gioia et al., 2013).

As the effects of the pandemic on organizational learning fit this description quite well could be said that building a theory from the ground up would be most beneficial to understand the effect phenomena. In the Gioia method, our grounded theory is done by categorizing the data from the interviews first into two: 1st order concepts used by the words of the interviewees, and 2nd order themes based on previous concepts and theories that might help in creating a basis for our framework. The final steps for creating the framework include creating a model. This model should somehow show the dynamic relations between the first two mentioned.

5.2 Data collection

The data was collected from interviews with professionals working in the case company that is a wholesales company operating mainly in Finland. The

Table 5—Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) Method

| Phase | Purpose of Phase |
|---|---|
| Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions | To create an interview protocol matrix to map the interview questions against the research questions |
| Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation | To construct an interview protocol that balances inquiry with conversation |
| Phase 3: Receiving feedback on interview protocol | To obtain feedback on interview protocol (possible activities include close reading and think-aloud activities) |
| Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol | To pilot the interview protocol with small sample |

interviews were constructed by following the IPR framework (introduced in the figure 7) which gives a great base to an interview with questions that help the researcher answer the research questions based on the data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

FIGURE 7 Interview Protocol Refinement (Castillo-Montoya, 2016)

The employees that were chosen for the interviews work in managerial positions in different functions or departments or in the management of the company. To save resources both from the company's end and the researcher, only these 8 people were interviewed as they are aware of their own business functions and employees and thus it is not needed to interview each of the 200 employees of the company individually.

The interviews were semi structured and carried out in Finnish as all participants speak the language as their native language. The interview included questions divided to three themes: individual working and study background, the organization, and its processes and thirdly the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the organizations processes. Also a few questions about their views on the future of the organization were asked to conclude the interview and the employees' thoughts on the effects of the pandemic to the organizational learning processes. The approximate length for each interview was one hour. The interviews were mainly done via Zoom video conferencing app as it was more favourable method giving the interviewees schedules and locations, and it enables to record the interviews which makes transcribing and analysing the data from these interviews easier. Two interviews did take place at the company's premises as it was agreed to be more suitable in these cases and the circumstances allowed them as well.

Each interviewee was given the same base questions about their educational background and working experiences before coming to work at the company. There were also other background questions to find out how their own personal backgrounds have affected their current position in the company and from there impact on the organization.

After the interviews the recorded tapes were saved and later used to transcribe the given answers to a written form. From this data a set of themes was coded which helps to understand the overall experiences and for example given terms that the employees answers revolve around in that organization. After the first interviews before attending the following ones some of the interview questions were modified so that the answers would more likely give answers that could be linked to the previous research on organizational learning.

After all interviews were done and coded, a grounded theory was then formed keeping in mind what the organizations learning processes has been before the pandemic as well as how the employees think that these will evolve or change after the pandemic.

6 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The following section will cover the results of the interviews with our case company employees. The company of where all the interviewees work at in multiple different positions belongs to the consumer goods industry in Finland. It employed over 200 people in 2021, and its turnover is around €100 million which in scale makes it a midcap company in the classification of Finnish companies (Koso, 2022). The interviewees were chosen from different levels and parts of the organization so that the results of the answers would give a comprehensive look on the organizational learning processes not only in the level where actual decisions are made but all the other parts connected to that part as well. Also, as the individuals have spent more or less of their working life at the company this gives a more comprehensive look on the company's history and its organizational processes and learning throughout.

The summary gives a better look on what the answers from the interviews were and how some of them were comparable and similar to each other. All of the interview dates were set via email and the interviewees were given a short summary of what the research is about, the notice of research and the privacy notice. A total of 8 interviews were done within a month from each other. Between each interview the set of questions were modified a little to fit each interviewees position in the company and their history in the organization. The interview questions were divided into four different themes: individual background, organizational processes, the COVID-19 pandemic and lastly conclusive questions about their individual views of the future of the industry and organization.

6.1 Individual background and position

“I have grown in an entrepreneurial family, that is, from an early age, under the influence of such strong working ethic and morale. Everything I want is to be built on my own and when I came to the organization, I have been able to construct things and concepts we didn't have then. So, from the beginning, I have been able to take responsibility and be involved in creating new and networking with our other departments. They trusted my abilities and asked to come to this organization back then” Employee on how they ended up in their current position

Each of the 8 individuals had spent different amounts of time at the company the shortest time being one year and longest around 20 years of employed time. Whereas from the 60 years of the company's history maybe 20 years could be covered from personal experience of the employees. Each of them had worked in other places before coming to work at the company and the industry varied from retail and consumer goods to IT. Not all had for example higher degree education but all of them mentioned gaining most of their knowledge from their previous

working experiences and personal interest towards certain issues like entrepreneurship or business development.

In the discussion about what the employees had experienced in their previous working places and in the company, they work at now it came out that many of them had experienced a lot of similar problems and had used processes regardless of the type of organization they had been before in the industry. Many of them had experience from the traders of goods such as chain companies like Kesko Group or S-Group, which are one of the biggest organizations in the industry and have showed many similar ways of learning as the case company.

In the chart 1 the backgrounds of the interviewees are named to give insight how their experiences in working life or studies may have affected the way they learn or for example how the changes in learning of the organization may have been influenced because of the employees. 6 out of 8 interviewees had been working in their current position less than 2 years the longest position holder being the CEO.

CHART 1 Background of Interviewees

| Position | Years in position/ in organization | Education | Working experience |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Manager (Customer Service) | 2 / 14 | BBA (HR and internal accounting) | sales, retail, cleaning |
| CFO | 2 | MSc in Business and Economics | financial management, business control |
| Manager (Product data and development) | 0 / 21 | BBA | design, retail, purchasing and forwarding |
| CMO | 0 / 9 | Vocational Qualification in Business and Administration | Sales, Marketing, E-commerce |
| Director (Purchasing) | 4 | Vocational Qualification in Business and Administration | Buying, Marketing, Purchasing, Consulting |
| CEO | 9 / 16 | MSc in Business and Economics | Sales operations, purchasing, personnel management |
| Manager (HR) | 2 | MBA (Business development) | HR, recruiting |
| Director (Supply chain) | 1 | MSc in Technology (Industrial engineering) | Purchasing, product & process development, procurement, global supply chain management |

“If I threw an idea and then I was told that no you can't promote this yourself because it's the responsibility of that x team to take it on their development list and see whether it should be developed. Then in 2 years I might get a message that hey now by the way, this development idea of yours finished” -Interviewee on their previous organization in the consumer goods industry

An interesting fact is that half of the interviewed employees had been working in the organization before starting in their current position which would indicate that working in the organization allows position change and promotion as the organization learns and grows. All of the employees had some kind of an educational background related to the field of business. According to the answers of the interviewees is that it seems to be a shared factor among the companies in the consumer goods industry that there are not that many newly established organizations but most of them have long roots and thus have established processes and systems that have been in work for decades. For example, one employee mentioned that being able to influence the processes they were involved everyday with may have taken months or years to actually change. Some of these processes are institutionalized in the organization so well that changing the direction to function the company has multiple barriers and people that need convincing before the suggestion is being taken in front of the people making final decisions.

There are also smaller companies in which the process changes are not as strict or there are not as many barriers to influence decision making but the learning processes are similar. One example of this sort of flexibility is also the way to have contracts with employees. Compared to many bigger retailing cooperatives, smaller companies and for example family companies allow more freedom in making these decisions to hire than chains that have built a system that employs many people based on the same rules and making changes to these would be difficult.

“ A family business after all those chains (retailing cooperatives) there's a lot of difference. Maybe it's the flexibility here, in my own personal contract it was possible to go and agree on things that suit both sides. And we could just see if this is going to be something that works and here I am” - Employee on organization flexibility

“Big cooperatives train their own group (employees) and there always have new coaching and other programst. Through that I have gained a lot of different kind of knowledge. But I feel that it is not necessarily done on that scale anymore, but I myself have. It had been terribly good because, for example, they put together the whole thing. When you are in the same chain you go through functions from food, to hotels, the ABC-chain (gas stations), hardware stores and everything. It's like an ingenious system. The understanding of all industries” - Employee on their experience in different parts of a retailing cooperative SOK

One additional characteristic among the companies is that many employees that has been working for example in the bigger retailer chains, they have learned or been taught about the industry within the companies different processes and sometimes with external educative courses to support that education to understand the business. The understanding of industries and how they function

has helped many of these employees to climb up the stairs to higher level positions in these companies as well as be able to become influential in the organizations processes in some form. One of the employees had also found their way in the organization by first being an employee at customer company but becoming a regularly seen face at the case company.

“This title has been launched when I started working in this position, and previously the team was under the reporting to another manager. But of course, the operations have grown a lot and we still have a new organizational change that has come into force at the beginning of the year. It’s fun to think about that I’ve done this work and tasks when I first came into the house (organization) and back then there wasn’t a team per se. Maybe two people. And that now there’s a team of 13 people” - Employee on the changes in their position and organizational change

“Well it has been part of my job, but I have had such a broad job description that now I want to focus on that area of work because if there are 3 sub-teams then there will be a challenge that you can't really develop anything” Employee comparing their role change in the organization after organizational change

“X used to be the manager in the past and they’re still in the house, of course, but as if X might be more of a practical worker. My role then was to bring it up a step. X has been in the house for a long time 15 years before I came. They have had a very long background in the house and strong experience dealing with the systems here and previous development projects. Now when these projects were last done X was there and has been involved as they understand the processes well, maybe even clearer, and better than I do” employee on starting in a role after another employee and processes being built by them

In the individual background section, the question if anyone had worked in their current position before, to many of the interviewed there had been no one in their position as the position had been added in the organizational chart and design recently. They had been hired for this role as the first person ever and have been able to construct the frames of their roles themselves as these positions has been created in the organization as the result of organizational changes. One of the interviewed is the CEO of this family company and they had become the third successor less than 10 years ago. Most of the interviewed employees had been working in another position in the case company, mainly with less responsibility or the amount of subordinate had changed after starting in their current managerial or directive roles.

“The organizational change itself will definitely take some time because we still have that kind of transitioning in our roles, i.e. the people who stayed with my team, the purchasing cycle is so long that if an order is placed in the autumn then the products come in the summer or even in the autumn so there are also a lot of things that are still in their care. The goal is that by the summer, the roles are focused on doing their current roles, and this transition wouldn’t no longer be in the stage where the old job and tasks are.” Employee on the seasonal cycles in the organization and challenges of organizational change

The interviewees were asked to describe their daily or weekly tasks in their current role. A few of them said that their tasks follow the seasonal cycle and thus there are not so many tasks that would be done every day. For example, in the purchasing department as the sales orders are planned and made months well in

advance as the manufacturing and transportation process requires this time before they actually get the products, they do different type of procedures and tasks at the beginning of the season and towards the end of it.

The question on how they share information between their own part of the organization or in their teams there were a lot of similar answers. As the current situation is a following period after the pandemic a lot of communication has been transferred to be executed online. Currently as the pandemic situation is different and governmental restrictions have been removed, there is a possibility to work at the office. However most have continued working from home and thus mainly communicate via email and teleconference applications like Microsoft Teams and other technological solutions. The communication has changed since the beginning of the pandemic tremendously as before the pandemic the whole organization was mainly working on site at the office 5 days a week.

The difference between working from home is that they mentioned that communication has become more organized and more scheduled compared to previous communication style of their teams and organizations. As there had not been the new organization of supply chain before there is no comparison inside this organization but as it has been formed from the previous organizations of purchase, logistics and customer service it is evident to the employees that the communication between these three has increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Most of the managers mentioned that they have scheduled a weekly meeting with their team members and subordinates to keep up with their current tasks and projects. They also have weekly or monthly meetings with other managers or with the management of the company in order to keep them posted about different teams and how they are doing in the big picture. The frequency of meetings on current tasks and how the team members are doing is definitely increased since the pandemic and moving to online platforms, but all mainly agreed that the themes of these meetings are restricted and exclude a lot of “quiet information” as the time of all employees is limited and also many have felt that sharing thoughts and feelings doesn’t fit in the big picture when the most important stuff are being shared in those meetings.

6.2 Organization and its processes

The questions on the organization and its processes were formed so that the employees would describe the organization’s state before especially at the time when they first entered the company and then move to the processes and state of it before the pandemic. As the employees had different working backgrounds and not all of them had worked in the company for more than 10 years the answers were varying in that side, but the descriptions of the organizations processes were quite homogenic. As there are not too many organizations operating in the consumer goods industry there were many individuals that had

experience from other companies as well and there were many similarities between them and to the case company in its organizational learning processes.

Many of the employees had been working in the company before the current CEO started in their position more than 10 years ago. There were a lot of similar answers when asked about the state of the organization then and now, and the answers indicated that the organization had worked using the same working processes and there were many employees who had been under the contract of employment for decades. At the change of the millennium and especially in the last 10 years when the new generation stepped in the CEO position things have started to change in a very fast speed. The organization began focusing on exports, has been renewing processes and focusing on automatization of those as well as investing in technology. However, many process changes related to automatization and technology haven't been executed or started before the pandemic even though there has been plans to do so.

“ Big development gap is to break the conversational distance to other departments. Sometimes one of others is visiting our meetings and vice versa but we have such a big gap to do that as individuals so that the departments would work more actively with other departments. A lot of what is being already done for example in marketing we have a new sales letter that comes once a month, but it is not distributed to the whole house but at the moment only to the sales department. It's little things like that to keep everyone stay on top of everything” Employee on improvement on transparency but it being in the works

The talks about enhancing internal communication have been in the works for years and creating a better way to communicate has resulted to plans of organizational change which was started earlier this year as a result of these plans. The organizational change has required multiple new hires in order for the organization to complement their skills and knowledge on business development and other process development related tasks, as well as recruit in foreign companies to support the plans to focus more on exports and grow in that sense as well.

“I went to make purchases for the toys for next summer. I went and got praised by my manager when I had had a calculator with me and brought a piece of paper where I wrote what I had ordered. My manager was like “really great like wow you calculate what you ordered”. In those retailing cooperatives and anywhere else as well that time, it was great if one counted a little what was being bought. This was the level back then and nowadays everything is budgeted. Everything comes from computers.” Employee on the change of budgeting and forecasting in the last few decades

“9 purchasing coordinators who take care of everything like the product packaging and documentation, the purchasing issues etc. It is quite a wide role. And they need to know the product throughout, the specific legislation and the fact that the product is compliant for the EU market, to make those packages where the consumer has all the information they need to know about the product. And then in the role of the procurement coordinator if they focus on the packaging material then updating and communicating with the supplier about the current situation is unnoticed” Employee on the effects of new requirements in today's consumer goods suppliers and how they shape the roles

“These two years has brought the fact that roles have been too big, and people can't focus on their tasks, i.e. some point of the value chain always suffers and then it causes customers to give feedback on where their goods are when our delivery dates do not match. Corona has contributed to this change yeah, but I think the change would have come anyway but in this respect corona accelerated this organizational change” Employee on effects of the pandemic on organizational change

The effects of EU regulations, automatization and technology and globalization were mentioned the most when asked about the reasons why they think the growth has been so big and in the last decade. These factors have pushed the organization to make changes and the people in management positions have been taken in their positions to do so. These forces naturally apply to other organizations in the industry as well, and the force to implement change mainly comes from the organizations own customers, which in part are in direct communication with the consumers as their customers.

“The idea has been incubated for a very long time. Our satisfaction surveys and staff surveys, it has been brought up strongly in many questionnaires and in general that internal communication and flow of information need to be improved. The project and investment in the future is fortunately underway. But there is always a risk with these changes and new projects that we don't want to just create something new on top new. Even the last year, we have a lot of new things, new tools like Microsoft Teams and a couple of years ago a whole new ERP system. So the fact that an intranet is expected but that it's not too much or the things becoming even more siloed with that information. But it's just that it's important that all the departments are involved in the development process so then you will definitely get the best possible result” Employee on process development projects and importance of removing silos

“There has been very little transparency, for example throughout the organization, and every department or unit have been a bit their own islands. Now we're striving for that transparency, and it is done smoothly in all respects, then this organizational change what has been done at the turn of the year, so it sheds even more transparency” Employee on creating transparency and organizational change contributing to that

“When I came into to the organization it all worked like silos. For example, in the previous parts of the current department, X and Y they never talked to each other. They didn't have meetings about what's going out and what's coming in tomorrow. They were working in their own compartments. So now what I was trying to do even before this organizational change is to start going through it like in a team game. Figure out how to solve this together, because in the past they were there, but like in their own silos” Employee on the organizational silos and the change to that

What was mentioned a lot in the answers to the questions about the organization and the change in the last decade, is that especially in the beginning of the millennium before the time Finland and the consumer goods industry had this much pressure from factors like the EU puts on now, these organizations were formed so that the parts of the organizations were like “silos”. Many if not all parts of the organization were focused on their own processes and communication within their own silos, and it was rarely known how each task and process affected other parts of the supply chain and their own organization as a whole. There were not as much organized meetings for the employees as

there have been in the last two years and all communication happened at the offices and was localized.

What came to the employees mind as well, is that the hierarchy has been quite low in the organization and as a family company it has always felt like the management can be approached like a friend and this applied to customer relationships as well. However, the difference to this day is that the decision making has been mainly focused on the management members and now to the board members as well. The board is quite new concept to organization as it has been formed in the last 10 years. The inclusion of employees from outside of these groups has been quite low and their effect on decision making has been low. Before forming the board and inviting members from outside of the organization the decision making has been done inside the same family for decades which also has had an effect on how and what kind of decisions are being made. At the moment after many changes in this sector, the inclusion of employees and members outside of the company family in the decision-making process has made the organization to move to another direction completely.

“Well, it has not been possible to influence this actual decision to change, but how the change will be made yeah. I feel that I have a lot of influence on how the change is done. To me at this operational level it is really important that I know the people who will do the work for the change, so it was really important to me that I was able to make an impact at that point. And I felt that the board/management level decision to make an organizational change, I don't know if I would have had much more to give to the decision making because I feel I had a lot more to give to put it into practice” Employee on their ability to influence the decision-making process

Although it has to mentioned that even though the employees didn't have an effect on the process when making changes it was mentioned that the supportiveness towards the management and family's decision-making skills has been high so that the employees rely on the rightness of the decisions that are being made without consulting them. In the past few years, the inclusiveness of regular staff and people who are most likely to be affected by the made decisions are being consulted and being included into the decision-making process and executing the actual change projects.

6.3 Impact of Covid19 pandemic

Being asked about the effects of the pandemic on the employees daily tasks and ways of working, it was conclusive that many things had changed or were somehow affected by it.

“Our department has been working remotely before the pandemic, on average 1-2 days a week, but when this situation came up, I called everyone on my team that if you have a laptop at home, don't go to the office again. It was like that probably for 3 months so that it was as real a shock when suddenly you don't see those people and that as a supervisor you have to think about how I can stay updated on how my employees are” - Interviewee on first impressions of the pandemic

“Basically, whenever there was a situation that OK well just get through this and then there comes something else. For example, that cargo ship gets stuck there in the Suez Canal or there always came something like that. And then people have had to be terribly flexible, and the challenge has been to see how they can handle and manage that. In meetings when we are on Teams and then they are not necessarily talking there. And me not seeing their facial and body expressions and gestures what you can show at the office like okay now there’s something that something is on their mind. That’s the thing they don’t necessarily even tell that they are just like that “now I struggle so much that I don't survive” – Employee on the effects of Covid19 on their team communication and performance

“A lot has changed. Some people that have been here for ages at the office sitting there every day, so to speak, and now they had to work at home or from anywhere. When corona started there was so much anxiety, and some may not have been able to do sensible decisions. It was thought that the world would end and then some were able to take a step back and reassured people. It was pretty interesting” employee on different reactions to the start of the pandemic

“There have been new situations all the time and in a way that you are switching on the fly the way you operate with small bit of background information. We had to lay off staff quite quickly, and the staff had never been laid off before. If we had more basic information in place at that point yet we probably wouldn't have laid off the employees if we had known what the workload it would cause after layoffs” Employee reflecting the impact of decisions made when the pandemic first hit

The pandemic has been affecting the industry in waves of infections and the first wave problems and changes caused by the pandemic forced all companies to face the unknown and make decisions based on intuition and what they thought would happen. Thus, organizations had to explore all possible solutions to survive instead of relying on experience and institutionalized processes. The initial thoughts of almost all interviewees had been about what’s going to happen and how their subordinates were doing when there was no possibility to ask or see these things face to face. Anxiety and uncertainty were themes that came up in almost every interview.

“I don't know if it accelerated it, but it challenged it, at least yeah that it hasn't been necessarily easier to execute things. But it was not an obstacle for sure” Employee on the pandemic being an accelerator of change

As the pandemic has been continuing for the last two years many have adjusted to the thought of pandemic in their own ways. After the first shocks to the ways of working almost all teams found their way of continuing work and the changes made to for example continuing communication had been learned within a few weeks even though there had been some resistance to keep up communication via digital devices between the teams physically present and the ones remotely working which of course would then divide and make silos inside the organization to complicate information and knowledge flow from department to another.

As it has been common for organizations in the consumer goods industry to start taking steps towards automatization and digitalization the switch to remote work wasn’t the most difficult process to change but this was dependent on the organizations state in the digitalization process and for example if they

had any employees who had been driving the process of digitalization of the company's processes forward. At that moment when the decision was made that employees should move to remote working not too many had the possibility to do so without coming to the office and pick up their laptops and other devices. Hence, the resources to continue working outside of the office had been there but never taken advantage of.

Before the pandemic for some parts and teams in the organization it hadn't been "allowed" to work remotely and it had been required to come to the office but were then forced to stay home. For the type of work where employees could not work remotely (e.g. logistics) had to continue work as usual. There came sort of a division between employees that had used remote working before and weren't as shocked about this way of working, the ones who were forced to do so and learn the basics of it and then the ones that had to continue working at the office or in the warehouse.

"It was like a really hard change, as you said you needed to learn how to use Teams or other platforms as those things can no longer be handled only talking by a coffee machine. You have to turn on the phone and call someone or to put a message. So we notice and see it here, but for example in the warehouse they have been working on site all the pandemic time and they are still in the culture that those things are agreed face to face" Employee on the division between remote workers and employees on-site"

The impact of remote work then did have impact on the learning processes as people were not able to share their daily experiences and what they are going through unless there was a scheduled meeting between different employees or teams. This organizing and scheduling of meetings also forced people to only focus on the things they thought was the most important to mention and because of the time limits and other barriers many things may have gone unnoticed and silent knowledge hasn't been shared compared to meeting people at the office.

Alternatively, what was mentioned to be the benefit for the organization and having meetings is that now the meetings had an agenda, and no time was wasted in other things than seeing the big picture of things, which for years may have been lost somewhere due to the short sightedness of the processes and ways of working.

"The management has built their operations striving for more systematic communication and that the information flows but yes it certainly needs to be further developed. Communication is not just that we decide and then we communicate it but that we involve the right people to make those decisions and then we make the decision and then we communicate it then we consider those changes like it's implementation schedule with the available resources. As if everyone has their desk already full, something has to be left undone to be able to do something new. The communication needs to be two-way so that the employee level is being heard and that information goes to the management and then the management is able to make decisions based on the right information" Employee on organizations flow of information

There has been intense focus to improve these problems before and some of them are related to the projects and plans to make organizations less like silos, hence

the pandemic mainly forced to execute and start making these changes at a faster speed than what the organization probably was planned to follow. What comes to seeing things in the bigger picture helps the organization with their plan to change operations to work in the longer haul and in the bigger picture as well as following a common strategy shared by all parts and departments of the organization.

Changes have been made to improve knowledge share and this way create organizational learning by creating transparency among the organization doing different tasks and in different teams. This way the company helped the members of the organization to become aware of the organization's and the industry's state in the form of information exchange. Thus, as the pandemic has forced organizations to work partly remotely and find ways to communicate when knowledge exchange and organizational learning requires more organizing and is more structured and timed. This has had its negative influence on one's ability to come up with creative solutions but has been the only way to function and continue doing business amongst the pandemic.

"When you now look at it, big things were done in the short term and there was no proper strategy, no proper goals and the budget was made while looking only how we could improve a little from the previous year. There were some really good people making the decisions then, but after a little time we started to look for more knowledge on how to execute things. Back then we did big things too much and things were attached to the flower stalks and the overall effect went unnoticed. This probably is what it was at that stage back then" Employee on the change of management of the organization and how changes and decisions were made before

One thing that was mentioned to unite the things the organizations in the industry have experienced is that the pandemic does not only include the communicational changes but also operational changes in the big picture. It has been quite common for organizations from retailers to wholesalers that do business together, operate without too much planning or budgeting. What the pandemic did is that as it required more planning related to purchasing and ordering goods than before the pandemic the organizations were forced or pushed to become more strategic. In many organizations in the consumer goods industry budgeting or forecasting future needs for resources hasn't been as common as one could have thought.

"Once a week the team holds a weekly meeting and yeah and we have been and are very active especially now. Maybe earlier when the group has been present but now that we are using more technology, electronic communication is very heavily used and also with our organizational change that now we are no longer a team located in this city, but half of our team is based in another location" Employee on organizational change and its effect on information flow between locations

Naturally this requires all departments of the organization to come together and see how they can function more appropriately and the process to flow better in case there are problems in some part of the supply chain. It was mentioned that combining different organizations e.g., customer service, logistics and warehouse

and purchase under one supply chain organization this goal to follow one strategy and unite processes has become easier.

Other things mentioned that have happened during the pandemic but not necessarily because of it were that the organizational changes and recruits have formed the processes towards the direction the management wants. New knowledge is now being created inside the company with the help of old employees as well as new employees and in addition board professionals outside the operative organization.

6.4 Organizational learning process in the future

At the time of the interviews the employees see the state of the company and the industry in the post pandemic era quite bright. It is evident that the organizations that survived these first two years of the pandemic could be declared as the “winners” to those who didn’t make the difficult decisions and thus had to shut down their businesses and operations.

“We made a record year in a very high-risk situation so kind of that positive belief that we can react, and we can change in situations of change it would be good to harness as such a positive driver and to take those elements in a way that whenever a hill appears so that we know it's so good to act. We haven't analyzed why we succeeded in the beginning. What did it mean? Did it mean that the CEO would immediately call a meeting or that something else would be done right away. We should make it a lesson how we figured out what those key points were and what it requires (to survive)” Employee reflecting the future and what the pandemic taught

“We changed weekly meeting practices and others specifically combining that it works together i.e. we now have one kind of joint meeting where there is one person from three different parts of our organizations and they are involved saying that okay what the next weeks look like, telling the next material arrivals and then the functions of the warehouse saying that okay how we will cope for the next couple of weeks. We will try to turn it into something that doesn't look like previously when we looked at how it went in the last few weeks but now it's about what's in the whole supply chain tube in the longer run. What's coming and what is leaving and how about our capacity in the logistics center to tackle it and it's also like a one big change now what to do” Employee on changes made to remove silos and create transparency

What the pandemic did to the organizations and their learning processes is that as it forced people to organize communication, was it remotely or not, the sharing of information is now more structured and sometimes even more punctual and organized than before. This created a more transparent approach within the organizations and thus the learning processes become more fluid as employees are now encouraged and interested to be involved in the decision making and influencing processes of the organization, not only in their own departments but the organization as a whole.

Additionally, this has helped in learning about what processes work and how one’s work influence other parts of the organization, parts of the processes and the value chain. Hence the whole process becomes more holistic and understood

and organizational learning in the organization has become more collaborative between different groups of learning and the stages of learning fluidly compared to what the situations was in pre pandemic era.

6.5 Coded data

Manual working methods to increased automatization of processes
 One's focus on current position to sharing knowledge, thoughts and wishes
 Following orders and exclusion from decision making to participation and inclusion
 Exploitation of previous knowledge and one being the product shaped by previous organizational experience to exploring new interests and following new career paths
 Localization of knowledge (shared learning only centralized to certain locations) to remote work
 From unformed communication (dependent on place and time) to transparent, scheduled and clear share of information
 Silos with no organizational transparency to transparent, cooperative and coherent processes
 Exploitation to more exploration and ambidexterity
 Silos to open communication
 Low employee turnover (no new knowledge and experience coming in but old knowledge staying and implementing and affecting processes) to increased turnover
 Manual labor to data driven
 Low employee involvement to two-way communication and involvement in the process
 No strategic planning/ budgeting to analytics and forecasting
 Progress measured in working hours to common indices to all parts of the organization
 From reactivity to changes and challenges to planning and following a common strategy
 Connections, networks and referrals creating mutual knowledge between organizations
 Low employee turnover outside of consumer goods (slowing down knowledge spillover between industries)
 Industry learns from foreign organizations and knowledge flows from there to retailer chains to other operators
 Low employee involvement in decision making (in many organizations which makes organizational changes all over the industry management driven and dependent on their willingness for change)
 Complex decision-making processes (slowing down change)

FIGURE 8 Coded data: First order codes

Pre pandemic

- Silos
- Focus on fast growth and exports
- Manuality
- Low employee turnover
- Long employment relationships
- Retention of knowledge in processes
- Information flow feedback from organizations to individuals

Covid19 pandemic

- Survival mode
- Flexibility
- Creation of knowledge
- Anxiety and uncertainty
- Digital leap
- Focus on employee satisfaction and health
- Constant change
- Information overflow
- The Great resignation: increased employee turnover
- Increase in feedforward information flow (individuals to organization)

Post pandemic

- Transparency
- Resource and investment prioritization
- Automatization
- Best employer image
- Organizational change
- Division of responsibilities
- Communication, proper information and Intranet
- Balance direction of information flow to two-way (individuals to organization and back)

FIGURE 9 Second order themes

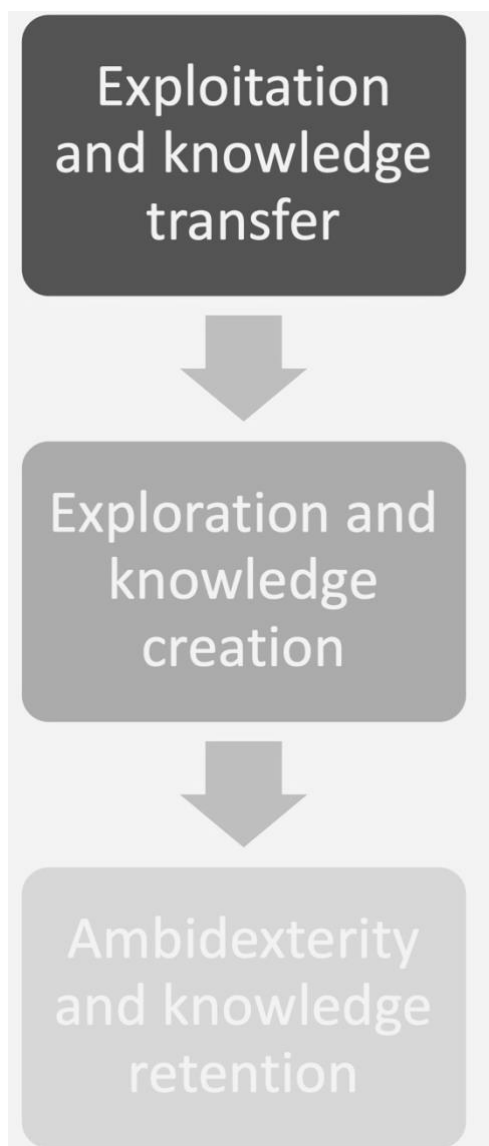


FIGURE 10 Aggregate dimensions

Transcribed data was coded into first order codes where the first set of pointed out themes can be seen. The figure 8 shows the first order codes and does not separate the timing of each characteristic of organizational learning that these codes represent. The second order themes in the figure 9 combines the first codes into a more solid set where the themes unite the things that were brought up in the interviews. The second order themes were analysed so that the themes that were brought up were connected to the previous theories on organizational learning and how the things could be related in the context of what was said.

The aggregate dimensions that the analysis gave from the data are shown in the figure 10. The flow from exploitation to exploration and in the bottom to ambidexterity represent flow through each stage from pre-pandemic era to living with the pandemic and finally to the world where there is no presence of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Each of these dimensions are familiar from the earlier research on organizational learning and introduced in the theoretical background of this study.

7 ANALYSIS

Based on the summary of the results I analyze the answers by giving them a backstory and trying to understand their more meaningful purpose that give a ground for a theory. Based on the data and the aggregate dimensions we can make a grounded theory on how the pandemic has affected the different groups and stages of the organizational learning process in the consumer goods industry.

Considering the fact that the same family has been controlling the majority of ownership in the company for all its existence it seems that the company has also learned a lot from the family members during its first 60 years at the hands of the company. It seems that as it is common for the companies in the industry to have long roots in the Finnish society and economy. The organizations operating in the industry have created institutionalized processes that they have long been exploiting thus changing the ways the organizations function may have been difficult for individuals or teams to change at a fast pace. The pressure from globalization and digitalization in other industries is hard for the consumer goods industry as they need to evolve in order to survive and compete against and among other operators in the value chain.

What makes the most influence on the organizational learning despite the pandemic is the pressure from end consumers and the EU. Consumers are demanding more data and information concerning the products they are purchasing especially after the pandemic forced many shopping online instead of visiting stores at site. Hence the EU is also putting pressure for manufacturers and traders to provide enough information and so the external pressure has been affecting and forming the industry for a while now.

However, as many of the organizations in Finland have been operating for decades many of them have formed very institutionalized ways of functioning and these processes have been used the same way to do business. According to the data from the interviews organizations in consumer goods wholesalers have been siloed for decades which has been slowing down the process of organizational learning moving from exploitation to exploration. There are many advantages of the organizations' ability to exploit their history and knowledge however in the changing environment where sometimes faced challenged cannot be combatted with previous knowledge the only way is to explore new ways of doing tasks.

Similar to the studies on organizational learning and difficulty for organizations trying to reform and respond to new challenges, consumer goods organizations that have been commonly relying on exploitation and previous knowledge these companies struggled to combat the issues brought by the pandemic as some had not tried to reform before they actually had to.

7.1 Individuals in the organizational learning process

Based on the analyzed data there are a few aggregate dimensions that describe the changes in the organizational learning process that in their own way affect all groups of learning. The change in the way individuals learn in organizations was affected quite a bit. The learning process before the pandemic had been mainly driven by the organization as the leading group with its existing processes and the flow of communication and knowledge being feedback rather than feedforward. The individuals in the organizations were learning among the organizations processes that exploited its previous knowledge. Feedback flow did not allow individuals to create knowledge that would become institutionalized and hence the only way the organization learned was if earlier knowledge had been transferred or retained.

The pandemic had an effect on individuals in the way that it forced them to work and see things in solitude for the first time in history. There were a lot of anxiety and uncertainty that affected the individuals creativity and focus on daily tasks and therefore for a while these things affected the ability to create or transfer knowledge but with time things got better as teams found ways to communicate together and share thoughts about what they had been through and what could be done better, together. Working remotely was not familiar to most employees as working had been done on site together with other people and mainly doing tasks manually. When employees got used to digital devices and found their own ways to finish tasks digitally, things started to flow smoother and communication using technology for some made the barrier to contact other people easier and for some characteristics communication and share of thoughts became more difficult.

As a lot of time was spent alone, many came to conclusion that there were other things in life than what they are doing now so employees learned a lot about themselves and about their skills that may have been not realized before. The Great Resignation phenomenon that has been seen worldwide, is the outcome of these learning and personal realizations.

All in all, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the organizational learning process in many ways and the individuals as the learning group were the ones that had effects in the psychological level the most.

7.2 Teams in the organizational learning process

In the pre pandemic era in the consumer goods industry the teams have been the most learning focused group as knowledge creation and transfer has been happening mostly inside the organizations different teams and other smaller parts inside the organization. As much as the sudden change from offices to remote working on not being able to communicate as normal affected individuals, it did teams as well. Before the pandemic it was quite normal that daily tasks and

processes were executed and planned inside your own team and information was shared daily face to face and what the team members were going through could be easily shared directly on site.

When the pandemic forced people either working at home or for example members of the logistics department were the only ones who stayed working on site, there were a big communication gap between different teams. All communication was moved to remote video conferencing or chatting, however there were minimal amount of information shared between remotely working teams and those on site. Inside teams the communication became focused on weekly meetings that became regularly organized. This organizing of meetings required all to reserve a time spot for each meeting which for some team members meant that there were more scheduled meetings than ever, even if the actual needed time to solve problems had not in fact increased.

The managers mentioned that keeping the teams unified was now more problematic as seeing the members face to face wasn't possible. One solution to this was that team members tried finding solutions to keep the team spirit up and maintain social connections with daily or weekly coffee breaks together online.

After the first months of living in a different world with the pandemic and performing tasks in the world where many things had to be done remotely, teams and their members somehow familiarized themselves with new ways and didn't question these changes as much as some may have done before the pandemic or in the beginning of it. This of course affected the dynamics between the individuals who were used to working remotely and with more modern working practices and the ones who needed to adjust to these forced changes.

Now in the year 2022 when 2 years have passed with the pandemic all teams are using or are able to use some kind of technology in their tasks and their processes are being analyzed in order for the parts that can be, are automatized. Individuals are encouraged to share their thoughts and are interested to become more involved in the decision-making processes that affect them directly or indirectly even. Some of the teams are being reorganized with the organizational change and thus the communication has been enhanced compared to before. The silos and lack of transparency have been acknowledged maybe even before the pandemic, but it forced something to be done to these. Hence teams have better conditions to learn together, create knowledge and have the created knowledge retained in the organization.

The retention of knowledge is one the things where organizations want to head to with their processes and this needs many changes in processes and learning. Exploitation of old knowledge but also creating new knowledge is what is needed, and hence the organizations need to maintain this new momentum in exploration of new and remember what they have gained from their history and especially this pandemic era that changed many ways how things are done. Therefore, the teams should continue finding ways to work together and share information on almost everything they encounter . This requires everyone to remember the connectivity and importance of each part of the supply chain to work smoothly and focusing on to keep the transparency in their processes.

7.3 Organizations' learning process

The consumer goods industry mainly consists of chains and organizations that have been in the business for decades. The companies until today have gained an incredible amount of knowledge and shaped their processes along the way exploiting their immaterial and physical resources to become better and grow year after year. The processes and ways of working in many of these organizations hence have stuck through the years and regardless of smaller changes the ways these organizations learn is and hasn't been an easy change to execute.

The changes in the environment, especially in the way consumers behave and change their buying behavior are the biggest effect on these organizations and how they need to affect their own behavior. Watching what other organizations do and react to the requirements from the consumers through the EU, consumer goods companies react accordingly but with a small delay due to the nature of the supply chain that works seasonally.

When the virus started rapidly spreading there weren't as much for organizations to react to these changes in their environment and competitors and hence almost all organizations were required to make quick decisions and come up new solutions to continue business, whatever there was to happen. The anxiety among teams and individuals affected all organizations and became more important to care about how the organizations inner practices were holding up in order to maintain functions working.

As working remotely allowed business to function almost as usual the organizations started including and learning more from the teams and individuals in their organization. Hence the information flow had somehow at least for a little while changed its direction, now being feed forward from individuals to organizations. When the pandemic continued still after two years the new ways of doing things teams being more aligned inside the organization have stayed. The pandemic has clearly given organizations a push forward in the things and plans that have been in the organizations to-do list for years or even a few decades, but just haven't been started as there hasn't been the needed force to do so. It is clear that this stage where our case company does not apply to all organization and such a big push wasn't needed to all organizations.

For example, in the chain organizations that have had a leading position in Finland for decades, these organizations have taken the first steps towards improving processes and finding new ways to do tasks, but it is clear that they were not finished with their projects as well when the pandemic hit. In bigger organizations they decision making process takes such a long time and changing heavily institutionalized ways of doing things takes more than a few years or courses where to teach how to use a software for example. The old processes stick in the employees and in their ways of working and therefore there is a long way before the effects of the pandemic on the organizational processes are finally integrated.

The pandemic affected the ways employees ways to work but also the dynamics inside the organizations as some of the employees realized their talent or will to do something else in life, and this shift in employees affected organizational learning presumably. Employees may have changed positions inside the organization which causes changes in all parts of the organization when new knowledge steps in or there have been loss of employees and their personal knowledge which affects the organization either in a way where the knowledge has been retained or the organization has experienced corporate amnesia if the knowledge is then gone. Also, new employees may have been hired to bring in knowledge and affect the organizations creation of knowledge.

7.4 Interorganizational learning process

As the world became together especially in the first weeks and months of the pandemic many organizations tried to maintain communication between and also learning from other organizations was emphasized in many industries. As some organizations became more explorative and found functions that would work in a world where consumers were not able to visit stores on site, wanted to purchase goods that would benefit their life at home and improve their quality of life in a world where there are a lot of anxiety and uncertainty these processes and changes were also noticed elsewhere. Learning from other organizations probably was a way for some organizations to cope as they didn't have the resources to explore or hadn't been used to conduct these practices as their way of learning has been exploitative. These organizations may have been able to survive only due to the fact that interorganizational learning helped them to change their processes.

As the pandemic proceeded and organizations had survived the first months interorganizational learning may have become more moderated. There were not as much talk on interorganizational communication with the employees, but it became evident that the industry is very closed in a way that there are only a number of competitors and somehow very well connected. Hence the interorganizational learning probably will be on the increase as the employee turnover rate may probably result to many employees change organizations within consumer goods industry and bring their own individual knowledge to other organizations and therefore affecting the interorganizational learning.

7.5 Effects on process stages

The different stages of learning that have been explored by organizational learning were kept in mind while exploring the data and creating a theory on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the learning of organizations in consumer goods industry in Finland. The stages introduced for example in the 4I

framework by Crossan et al. (1999) that include intuiting, interpreting, and integrating or the framework by Argote and Ingram (2000) where the stages are seen creation, transfer and retention of knowledge are naturally affected by the pandemic as well.

When the organizations began changing their practices and had to make quick decisions based on what they knew at that time, the learning went at a fast speed through almost all stages. It still to be explored whether all the things that for example individuals and groups learned in short time period will be integrated and retained in organizational processes but for the time being it is evident that decisions that were made created knowledge that affected organizations (Argote & Ingram, 2000; M. M. Crossan et al., 1999).

7.6 Evaluation of the study

Each study contributing to the academic research needs to be carefully structured and evaluated in order for it to be valuable for the community or considered to be convincing enough. The reliability and validity of this study are being considered so that this study would make the best contribution in the academic community and help organizations in every industry understand the organizational learning process and the effects of the pandemic on it.

7.6.1 Reliability

The study needs to be reliable and thus in this part I will go through the facts that makes this study either reliable or unreliable. One thing that makes the study on the effects on consumer goods industry reliable is that the interviewees represent a midsize company working in that industry. There are not that many wholesalers of consumer goods the same size in Finland. Also, as it is a wholesale company it has quite a good position in the value chain to provide insight on the issues that have affected the whole chain. Thus, this study can be applied to the whole industry in Finland quite well as the company where the interviewees work at is a midsize company and thus can represent the whole market quite well when it is not from either extremity of the market.

7.6.2 Validity

The study needs to be valid. Thus, to see whether the answers that our interviewees have given would be valid to represent other companies working in the same industry, we need to consider how well this type of study and interview as a data collection method answers our questions. Semi structured interview questions give space to the interviewed individuals to describe their experiences in the organization with their own words which gives a more valid impression on the situation as if the questions were strictly formed and the only given answers were either yes or no. The timing of the study makes it a valid

study as well because the experiences of the pre pandemic era and the early stages of the pandemic are in close memory compared to if the study was executed later.

8 CONCLUSIONS

In this master's thesis research, the focus was on the perspective of organizational learning, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced it especially in the consumer goods industry in Finland. This part has a gap in research which was the reason this study was conducted in the first place. Organizational learning as a concept has been widely studied and has a number of good theories on it, but the effects of the pandemic hasn't been generally studied yet.

The consumer goods industry has long been consisting only a few bigger and a small number of tinier organizations in Finland. Most of the market is dominated and being led by chains such as Kesko Group and S Group. These chains own most of the market share in the consumer goods sector in Finland and what these organizations decide to do will eventually lead many other organizations to follow their lead.

However, the problem in the industry has long been the difficulty to renew processes at the same speed the world around them changes and hence many organizations, especially those with longest history suffer because of their silos where process and information flow is focused on separate departments or parts of the organization. The external forces such as new demands, customer needs and consumer behavior changes affect organizations' learning as they try to cope and adjust their existing processes but because of the information gaps between groups exist this change takes more time compared to those organizations where the gaps don't exist. This study wanted to research on the possibility if this way of organizational learning had been affected because of the pandemic and therefore a grounded theory was needed to explain the possible phenomenon.

Data to construct a grounded theory was collected by interviewing management level professionals from a consumer goods wholesale company. It was found that according to the case company employees the organizational learning in their company has had multiple barriers that the management of the company has been trying to take out but somehow it has taken years to execute the things that the pandemic forced them to do in a few weeks. Before the pandemic there were no pressure to make these resource requiring changes but when the need was so high that the company wouldn't survive otherwise, they were executed which then in the long run helps the organization to survive.

The organization has been relying on their retained knowledge and hence exploited what has been learnt along the way. Before the change of CEO, the organizations processes, and formation didn't allow too much exploration of new options and strategies and rather relied on the processes that had worked just fine but wouldn't be sustainable keeping in mind that there has been a lot of growth that would have needed more efficient processes.

As the industry and organizations operating in it, experienced the first weeks of this traumatic pandemic and kept going by changing the way they work and plan their operations the organizational learning process turned upside down as well. The organizational learning was affected from the pandemic so

that many processes and structures were disassembled and built again from scratch to work in the new environment they were operating now. However many of the old organization's processes and individuals that are struggling to cope with the changes are slowing down the process. Another effect of the pandemic is that the workload has become bigger to be conducted at the same time so the organizations need to figure where to allocate their resources and execute first so that the workload wouldn't be unbearable and would require resources too much.

Regardless of internal resistance, the changes in processes and in the organization have allowed more internal flow of information and thus helped individuals and teams to learn more from each other and this way the pandemic affected the organizations processes in a way that had not happened before the pandemic. The silos between different parts of the organizations are now understood to have been the barriers to exploration and development of processes that could be exploited. Therefore, could be said that the organizations who survived the pandemic have taken action to take apart their own silos to improve their organizational learning with the help of their already existing resources which is their current employees and teams but with better flow of information and two-way communication which creates knowledge.

The pandemic sped up starting some of the change projects to processes but made them more difficult to execute which also turned the ways of organizational learning upside down; many organizations including the case company were exploiting their knowledge and institutionalized processes to find opportunities but as the pandemic changed the operating environment radically, they had to break down all known processes and explore new ways to function and for example do business remotely which hadn't been done before.

Many interviewees stated that the whole industry has lived through many stages together and that their experiences do not only apply to the case company but the whole world had to move from working at the office to working remotely from home and cope to new ways of living. As the case company operates in the hub of supply chain in between wholesalers and manufacturers, they have had a good insight to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and by analyzing the data from their answers it is easier to say how their learning has changed compared to the time before the pandemic.

Similar to earlier research on organizational learning and the evolution of the consumer goods industry it is evident that the organizations of the industry that have been able to combat issues and challenges by being flexible during the pandemic continue to succeed in the future by doing so. The global field of business will be ever changing; hence companies need face new challenges and reform when needed. Therefore, they need to know their organizational learning routines and to know when they need to make decisions, when to drop old ways of doing processes and acquiring new ways of doing them.

8.1 Limitations

This research as any has its limitations. One is that there is a chance that as the researcher herself is employed at the case company used for the interviews it might be that she is working too close to the object and phenomena that are being studied. There is not fully outsider perspective in this study. In the context of working in the industry it is possible that some things understood by the people working in the company may not be easily understood by people not working there and thus total transfer of understanding may become a limitation.

8.2 Suggestions for future research

It is clear that the research on organizational learning and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on different parts of the society and economy will not end in this study, thus there will be suggestions for future research and how this topic could be further elaborated.

This study was executed with the help of interviewing management level experts of one wholesale company based in Finland. Possible alternatives could be doing the interviews with professionals from different companies or from different parts the value chain, for example the organizational learning in companies in newly established companies that survived the pandemic. These would give even more insight on the problems of learning in individual knots in the chain apart from the wholesalers. Another interesting suggestion is to explore the organizational learning of family companies that have only recently started to expand internationally and for example what encounter in the past have led to this decision.

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APPENDIX 1 Interview questions

Taustakysymykset

- Kuvailisitko lyhyesti koulutustaustaasi?
- Entä työkokemuksesi ennen yritykseen tuloa?
- Mitkä ovat nykyiset työtehtäväsi?
- Miten päädyit tähän tehtävään?
- Onko kyseistä työtehtävää hoitanut joku ennen sinua?
- Millaisen ”perinnön” koet hänen jättäneen sinulle?
- Miten kuvailisit nykyistä päivittäistä työskentelyäsi?
- Miten koet koulutuksesi ja työtaustasi auttaneen nykyisessä työssäsi?

Organisaatio ja sen prosessit

- Miten kuvailisit organisaatiota ja esimerkiksi kokoa, kun aloitit verrattuna nykyiseen
- Entä organisaation mallia silloin kun aloitit?
- Miten organisaatio on mielestäsi muuten muuttunut esimerkiksi viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana?
- Minkä asioiden koet vaikuttaneen näihin muutoksiin?
- Oletko ollut mukana vaikuttamassa tai viemässä näitä muutoksia eteenpäin?
- Miten jaatte tietoa tiimissäsi/ organisaatiossanne?
- Entä miten kommunikoitte organisaation muiden osien kanssa?
- Kuvailisitko organisaation päätöksentekoprosessia eli miten päädytään tekemään ratkaisuja tai muutoksia toimintaan?
- Miten yrityksen arvot esimerkiksi perheyriksenä näkyvät mielestäsi toiminnassanne?

Koronapandemia

- Koetko että pandemia olisi vaikuttanut päivittäiseen työhösi?
- Entä tiimisi tapaan työskennellä?
- Entä organisaatioon sen toimintaympäristön muutoksien kautta?
- (Millä tavalla koet, että nämä ovat vaikuttaneet organisaatioon tai toimintaympäristöön?)
- Mitä muutoksia olet havainnut vaikkapa kilpailijoiden ja alan muiden toimijoiden keskuudessa?
- Näetkö organisaation toimintatapojen muuttuneen koronapandemian alettua?
- Miten erityisiin koronapandemian tuomiin haasteisiin on vastattu esimerkiksi juuri ostossa?

Yhteenveto

- Millaisena näet yrityksen tulevaisuuden muutostarpeet organisaation näkökulmasta?
- Entä oman tiimisi näkökulmasta?
- Entä oman työsi?