

Accounting Information and Managerial Work

How is accounting information being used by store managers in practice?

Abstract

This paper intends to increase the knowledge and understanding of how store managers' use accounting information in practice by testing and developing a framework originally formed by Hall (2010). The study was conducted as a case study of a Swedish retail company operating in over 40 stores and our discussion is based on the contrasting and comparing of our findings to Hall's propositions. The results showed that managers use accounting information for three major purposes, as anticipated by previous research; for controlling and understanding their work environment, for evaluation purposes and to empower their subordinates. Further, we found that accounting information is only one source of managers' information repertoire and that one of its strongest features was its ability to translate operational activities to one single, financial dimension. Lastly, the managers showed a strong preference for face-to-face communication for discussing accounting information. These findings were to a large extent in line with what was argued by Hall, apart from that managers' favored informal written communication to a greater extent than what was proposed.

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1. Introduction

In his paper, “accounting information and managerial work”, Hall (2010) highlighted that contemporary research has failed to address how management accounting is related to managerial work. This issue was addressed ten years earlier by the Swedish scholar Jonsson (1998). He called for stronger links between management accounting research and managerial work and explicitly encouraged future research to develop and analyze a body of empirical evidence. He concluded:

There is clearly a lack of empirical input into the theorizing which is increasingly drawn towards “clean” ontological assumptions suitable for rigorous analysis. Empirics tend to be limited to quick studies which fit into the publication requirements of the main stream.

Jonsson, 1998, p. 411.

Instead of focusing on how accounting information is actually being used, previous research has often focused on how management use accounting information to make decisions in well-defined scenarios (Hales, 1986; Kotter, 1982). Many of these scenarios are undoubtedly important, but as Hales and Kotter also noted in the previously mentioned studies, they form merely a small portion of the overall managerial work and is maybe not as critical (Hales, 1986; Kotter, 1982). A too strong focus on how managers use accounting information in specific decision problems might therefore limit the considerations of other ways managers use accounting information in their work (Hall, 2010).

Further, there are few studies concerning what information managers actually use (Anderson, 2008). Many of the conducted studies have focused on organizational-level issues, which might be limited in scope since they are often based upon assumptions about the managerial behavior rather than being based on thorough studies of how managers actually work (Hall, 2008). Therefore, much is still to be examined within the field and today the greatest need could well be argued to lie in understanding how accounting information is used by management, so that future research can develop systems adapted for the complex, ever-changing reality. Based on the recognition of an existing gap within the field of research, Hall (2010) developed a theoretical framework, which he argued should be tested in different organizational contexts. He focused his literature review on studies performed in production units (see for example Simon et al, 1954, Preston 1986, Hales, 1986 and partly McKinnon &

Bruns, 1992) and it is thereby interesting to empirically test the developed framework, especially in an organizational context that was overlooked in the literature review.

This paper presents a case study of the usage of accounting information by store managers in a Swedish company operating over 40 stores in the retail industry. The company is one of three subsidiaries owned by a company group. Since the structures of the subsidiaries differ in significant ways management at each of these subsidiaries are highly autonomous. Moreover, the autonomy of the subsidiaries and the associated management bodies are furthered by the fact that there is little interaction between the three companies' individual functions. Some functions are however shared by the different subsidiaries and therefore supplied by the company group. These centrally provided functions are mainly those related to logistics and IT and the costs associated with these functions are proportionally distributed based on the subsidiaries usage. The case study focus on the sales division of the subsidiary's business, that operate stores which vary greatly in size as well as in the consumer offering and product lines.

The purpose of this study is to attain an increased knowledge of the usage of accounting information in practice by store managers. The paper aims to contribute to the testing and development of the framework originally molded by Hall (2010) by comparing and contrasting our result with the hypothesis proposed in the framework. The research was conducted through a case study of a Swedish retail company. Based on the purpose of our study the research question was formulated:

How is accounting information being used by store managers in practice?

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section two presents the case study's relevant terminology. Section three thereafter provides a literature review and the theoretical framework applied. In the fourth section the research method used is being presented. In the fifth section, the findings from the case study are presented. In section six, those findings are analyzed, compared and contrasted with what has previously been written within the field. Finally, our conclusions and a summary are presented.

2. Defining accounting information

Hall (2010) has built his conceptual framework on the definition presented by McKinnon & Bruns (1992). It could therefore be considered appropriate to likewise employ that definition in this case study. The definition is as follows:

Accounting information is quantitative, and is prepared according to rules. Data and information that do not meet these tests are not accounting information but may be used by managers and may be important in management information systems.

McKinnon & Bruns, 1992, p. 4.

In other studies (see for example Robert et al, 2006; Miller & Power, 2013 & Gerdin et al, 2014) a less strict definition of accounting information has often been applied. The reason is primarily that much of the information used by managers do not meet the stated criteria for accounting information but is still used in a controlling purpose. They stressed that with a mere focus on numbers there is a severe risk of missing out of important information.

These broader definitions of accounting information are without a doubt interesting as they can accommodate a much more comprehensive and complex picture of the role that accounting plays in managerial work. Nonetheless, we have still decided to employ the definition presented by McKinnon & BrSuns (1992), since a stricter definition makes it easier to demarcate and narrow down what accounting information is.

To conclude, this thesis regards everything that is quantitatively measureable and prepared according to standards and rules as accounting information. This means that the grades retrieved from mystery shopping tools which measures service performance and provides a quantitative rating based on predetermined standards are included in the definition. Information that does not meet these criteria, such as information concerning employees' wellbeing, schedules, order reports, price negotiations, competitor actions or customer needs is not considered being accounting information. Some of the mentioned metrics are quantifiable but as they do not fulfill all criterion they are not considered accounting information.

3. Theory

At the end of the last century Jonsson (1998) proclaimed, in the very title of his paper, the need to relate management accounting research to managerial work. In the paper, Jonsson offers a comprehensive review of previous research concerning managerial work and concludes that most previous studies have failed to explain how managers actually operationalize the strategic tools or assumptions put forward. Ahrens & Chapman reflect over previous studies and adds the following remark:

The emphasis on accounting as a social and not equally strategic and commercial technology has left an important gap in our understanding of the interactions between accounting and other organizational practices

Ahrens & Chapman, 2007, p. 3.

They continue their discussion by establishing that the contemporary discussion one-sidedly has focused on addressing strategic concerns whereas few or no attempts has been made to elaborate what actions are necessary to fulfill the strategy. To exemplify their point of view, they mention Kaplan and Norton 1996, whom stated that the balance scorecard would be “the cornerstone of a new strategic management system” (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, p. 75), without giving any examples on how managers would actually do that.¹

Hall’s (2010) intention is to turn attention to the prevailing gap within management accounting research, hence repeating the call made by Jonsson (1998). In his paper Hall develops a series of propositions, which in turn focuses on three major insights on how and why accounting information is used by managers in their work. These propositions will be the base of the theoretical framework applied in the case study. The propositions are

- (1) Managers primarily use accounting information in order to develop a thorough understanding of their work environment rather than to solve specific decision-making problems.
- (2) Accounting information must be considered, not to be an isolated source of information but rather one of many in a complex web of information sources.
- (3) Managers mainly interact within the organization using verbal rather than written information.

The remaining part of the theory section is divided into three parts in which we deal with each proposition individually.

3.1 Accounting information and its role for understanding the work environment

Hall (2010) concludes that accounting information has a much more complex role than just forming the base for specific decisions in well-defined contexts. Rather, he believes that there

¹ Based upon the reflections made by Ahrens & Chapman (2007) a few new studies have focused on the linkages between accounting information, decision making and strategic and visionary development in organizations, see for example Carlsson-Wall et al, (2015).

are potentially much more important ways in which accounting information can be used by managers. Building on prior research (see for example, Simon et al, 1954, Preston 1986, Hales, 1986 & McKinnon & Bruns, 1992) Hall formalizes the following theoretical propositions:

Proposition 1: Accounting information is used by managers to develop knowledge of their work environment. This involves using accounting information to test assumptions and expectations about the organization's operations, and to identify problems, opportunities and potential surprises.

Proposition 1a: Accounting information is more (less) helpful for knowledge development when a manager is further removed from (closer to) operational activities, the time horizon of the issue under consideration is longer (shorter), and the number of operational factors are larger (smaller).

Managers do without question take a lot of decisions but empirical research shows that these decisions are just the top of a much larger iceberg. Decision making in well-defined scenarios is only a small part of managerial work (Hales, 1986; Hales, 1999). In contrast, much managerial activities are characterized by contradictions and conflicts and a large portion of managerial work has a nature of “frenetic, ad hoc, practical ‘fixing’” (Hales 1986, p. 98).

Further, managerial work is varied to its nature which means that managers do not deal with a couple of problems but rather a whole portfolio of issues related to each other in a complex manner (Hanaway, 1989). Therefore an important issue to address in conjunction with managerial work is how managers ought to deal with ambiguous and uncertain situations where there is a risk of error or radical change.

Equivalent arguments are put forward by Anderson (2008) and Jonsson (1998) in their studies. Anderson states that managers with superior access to relevant and diverse information are better prepared for making sense of events in their environment, notice emerging problems and to achieve higher performance. Jonsson on his part concludes that the relevance of accounting information will depend on its ability to relate to the work managers actually do.

The roles of accounting information for managers is numerous. Accounting information can visualize otherwise overseen problems by turning attention in the right direction. By relying on the principle of exception under an agreed standard or practice, accounting information can point out if something deviates from that particular standard (Simon et al, 1954). Accounting information is also useful as an independent reference point for management and can

successfully be used as a tool for higher level management to keep their subordinates alert (Simon et al, 1954).

Further, access to accounting information is key to empower the work-force. The information's capability of empowering employees is, however, not a function of whether employees feel a sense of owning the information but rather whether they feel entitled to freely access it (Lind, 2001). In the article, one foreman states that "ownership of information is not a problem, we are closest to the operations and therefore have a better understanding of the reality of the numbers" (Lind, 2001, p. 66).

Simon et al, (1954) concludes that information from accounting reports mainly reminds managers of what they already know rather than bringing new information to the table. Hall (2010) states that three factors determine the usefulness of accounting information in developing knowledge of the work environment (1) closeness to operational activities; (2) time horizon and; (3) the diversity of operational factors under consideration.

Managers that are closer to operations use informal information and physical observations to develop an understanding of their work environment to a larger extent than managers that are distanced from operations (Preston, 1986; Simon et al, 1954). The reason why different management levels require different types of information for their monitoring is that lower level management can observe processes and use their operational measures directly (Van der Veeken & Wouters, 2002). In their study of operations managers in a project company Van der Veeken & Wouters found a large discrepancy between how operating managers versus non-operating managers used accounting data on budgeted versus actual product costs. The operating managers put little emphasis on the accounting data and gathered information instead by foreseeing operational activities and by studying a few non-financial metrics. In addition, Preston's research portrays that managers' express an understanding that official documented information might be useful to senior level management distanced from operations.

Daily operations are facilitated in the most effective way by using non-financial information since it is more closely related to the actual work and because it is available within seconds, in contrast to most financial reports (McKinnon & Burns 1992; Lind, 2001). However, as the time horizon lengthens, the financial information gets increasingly important for the overall assessment of effectiveness and performance and as a mean for highlighting potential problem areas (McKinnon & Bruns, 1992; Preston 1986; Simon et al, 1954). Moreover, the relative usefulness of financial information also rises when the scope of factors to be overseen by managers increases. This is because financial numbers can translate different factors to the

same dimension which makes it possible to compare and assess (Van der Veecken & Wouters, 2002).

Hall (2010) reflects that many previous studies have focused on developing comprehensive accounting measurement systems and refers to the balanced scorecard. However, in contrast to these developments, research has shown that accounting information does not need to be complete or even accurate to be useful for developing knowledge of the organization (Hall, 2010). McKinnon & Bruns (1992) found in their study that it was far more important that the information was easy to understand and to communicate.

3.2 Accounting information as one source of a managers information repertoire

McKinnon & Bruns (1992) found that successful managers develop an ability to collect data and information from other sources than the firm's accounting system. They develop the ability to know where and when to ask crucial questions to get information. Managers must, in order to be successful, collect and use ambiguous and sometimes contradictory information efficiently and effectively. Hall (2010) elaborates further on McKinnon & Bruns' findings and formalizes the following propositions:

Proposition 2: As accounting information is just one part of a manager's information set including direct observations, informal reports, industry/market/economic data, other specialist information, its strengths and weaknesses are determined not in isolation but relative to other sources of information at the manager's disposal.

Proposition 2a: The primary advantage of accounting information vis-à-vis other information is its ability to translate operational factors into a single financial dimension. A single, financial dimension allows managers to compare operational factors and provides a common language to facilitate managerial discussions.

Hall (2010) argues that accounting information has two major strengths compared to other information sources, namely its aggregation effect and its role as a facilitating language for managers with various backgrounds, experiences and knowledge. However, managers must use accounting information, not in isolation, but together with other sources of information such as gossip, chit-chats and reports of events from subordinates and peers.

It can be concluded that the information repertoire available for managers is massive (McKinnon & Bruns, 1992). In their study, one of the interviewed sales managers mentions that

except for using accounting information he also uses number of orders received, call reports, competitive prices, inventory levels and economic news. Ahrens and Chapman (2007) point out another important way of gathering information; learning by doing, a process which is described as follows:

Of course over the course of their careers restaurant managers built up their own understandings of restaurant operation which provided them with a ready source of ideas on how to manage their restaurants.

Ahrens & Chapman, 2007, p. 21.

Studies (see for example Simon et al, 1954, Preston 1986 and Clancy & Collins, 1979) have emphasized that much of the information used is kept secret and informal. Preston (1986) concludes that managers prefer using informal sources of information rather than formal information, since informal information such as observations, personal record keepings, meetings and accounting information, facilitate sense-making of the managers world. Clancy & Collins (1979) describe how managers often kept informal, non-legitimized sets of records concerning quantitative, economic activities. The information could be kept on anything from a simple piece of paper to extensive, secretive computer files. Simon et al, (1954) found that many of the companies they studied had a specific term for these informal information reports:

Almost every company had some colorful term to describe the unofficial reports kept by operating executives - 'black books', 'bootleg reports', and 'butcher books'. Invariably when such records were kept, they showed evidence of constant use.

Simon et al, 1954, p. 341.

Accounting is therefore just a small part of the managers information repertoire and not all information is formally stated, or as Hopwood noted; "Accounting, in other words, is part of a wider whole" (2007, p. 1376).

Potentially, the strongest feature of accounting information is its role in assigning financial numbers to operational activities and then combining and comparing them through an aggregation process. Managers can, by studying accounting information, identify how all operational activities add up and connect and thereby develop knowledge about the work environment (Simon et al, 1954; Van der Veecken & Wouters, 2002).

Accounting information convert diverse operational information to a common language, which facilitates communication for managers with different requirements, backgrounds and functional experience. The importance of this accounting language increases in settings where

managers need to communicate across functional boundaries; for example a research and development manager that communicates with a marketing manager (Hall, 2010). Thus, prior research (see McKinnon & Bruns, 1992) indicates that the use of accounting information do not depend on its completeness but rather on its functionality. McKinnon & Bruns (1992) highlight six characteristics of a useful report: (1) The report must directly relate to actionable managerial tasks and eliminate uncertainties about status and results of activities for which the manager is responsible; (2) A useful report match the scope of information to the manager's area of responsibility; (3) It is simple and straightforward and only presents a limited amount of data; (4) The report is available on a timely basis; (5) The content is familiar to the manager and it is well-organized for judgment and action; (6) Finally, a useful report have a reputation of reliability.

3.3 Accounting information and means of communication

Instead of just assuming that accounting information goes directly into decision making models it would be preferable to assume that it is first used in some communicative context (Jonsson, 1998). Accounting information can be communicated in either verbal or written form and much of the prior research has focused on written documentations such as periodical reports, analyses and performance systems (Ittner & Larcker, 2003). In contrast to the previous focus Hall (2010) argues that there are some considerable aspects in favor for the verbal form; it allows managers to tailor information to specific operational concerns and provides a context for debates. He formalizes his thoughts in the following propositions:

Proposition 3: The relevance of accounting information for managerial work is determined primarily by how managers use and interpret accounting information in verbal communications and discussions.

Proposition 3a: Managers use verbal forms of communication to relate accounting information to specific operational concerns and to discuss and debate the meanings and implications of data and can prompt verbal discussion by signaling that an issue must be investigated.

Much managerial activity consists of communication such as asking questions or trying to persuade others to do things, which thereby introduces managers to face-to-face communication under varying duration (Hales, 1986). There is therefore a strong preference for verbal communication such as meetings, informal discussions and telephone calls (McKinnon & Bruns, 1992). The same findings were made by Preston (1986), whom identified the existence

of a continual interchange between managers. The managers talk to each other during the coffee or lunch break, on the shop floors or in the corridor. Communications mostly circulated around things that had taken place in the company or were to take place in the near future. The managers viewed this communication as their main source of information about the company's current affairs. Since the information exchange was thought of as vital for the managers' performance, the rule of reciprocity was very important for most of them. If you got a piece of information, it was taken for granted that you passed it forward to your colleagues (Preston, 1986).

Verbal communication makes it possible to bypass formal organization charts and seek information directly from people who have it rather than waiting for the information to arrive through the formal channels (McKinnon & Bruns, 1992). It should be no surprise that word-of-mouth information usually precedes computer printouts and is therefore frequently used by managers in order to check outcomes and reveal inaccuracies (Preston, 1986).

Accounting information can, when mobilized in an organizational system, prompt discussions by signaling that something needs further attention (Simon et al, 1954). For example, Ahrens & Chapman (2007) noted that accounting information was used to identify areas where performance was below standard and prompt a discussion why that might be the case. By using word of mouth as the primary communication tool, managers also optimized the opportunities of obtaining tacit, speculative and informal information which often is more valuable than formal information (Hales, 1986).

Ahrens (1997) noted that verbal communication of accounting information is not limited to the exchange of information, but works as a process through which accounting information is related to specific issues or managerial problems. The information itself does not even need to be relevant for the manager's work, the verbal discussion can still facilitate the addressing of important issues. Thus, it is not the design of the accounting information that determines its value but how managers interpret and use the provided information.

However, with the rapid development of technology, there has been a change in communicative behavior in many organizations where text messages and even emails through smart phone applications provides a substitute for word-of-mouth communication (Caleb & Stefaniak, 2012).

4. Method

4.1 Research Method

Hall (2010) argues that the theoretical framework could successfully be tested through either process-based experimental studies or field studies. The first of these studies, the process-based experimental study, aims to analyze the processes the studied individuals engage in when performing their activities and tasks. The focus of such a study is thus not on the outcome but rather on the methods, processes and activities the participants employ and take part in. The second of the aforementioned studies, the field study, aims to observe how individuals interact and use accounting information in the organization. Hall states that the primary advantage of using field studies is the potential for interaction between the researcher and the participants. By employing open-ended research questions, such as the interview set designed by McKinnon & Bruns (1992), Hall argues that the research will allow the formation of new insights concerning management behavior and interaction with accounting information. He suggests that the field study is preferable due to its intrinsic capability to expose how management actually *uses* accounting information.

4.2 The case study as the research approach

A few factors determine which research method that ought to be considered the most appropriate one; the nature of the research question, knowledge maturation within the research field and the prevailing possibilities for conducting a successful study (Yin, 2014). Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that the case study constitutes a proper research method when the research question includes a “how” or a “why”. The case study can thus be argued to be an appropriate vehicle of information collection in the light of the thesis research question: “How is accounting information being used by management in practice?”.

Lind (1996) applies the case study as research method in his study of how the usage of management accounting has changed in relation to the developments in modern industrial companies, although he stresses the importance of evaluating other potential research methods as well. He, for example, discusses the possibility of using surveys to retrieve information, but suggests nonetheless that the depth of the result had not been the same by merely using a survey. As Scapens notes, it is questionable whether one can reach the same understanding of intricate organization dynamics and events by using surveys:

[Surveys] can only [give] a very superficial view of management accounting practice and that more intensive fieldwork and/or case studies were required.

Scapens, 1990, p. 259.

We have therefore concluded that the case study is the most suitable research method.

4.3 Choice of case study subject

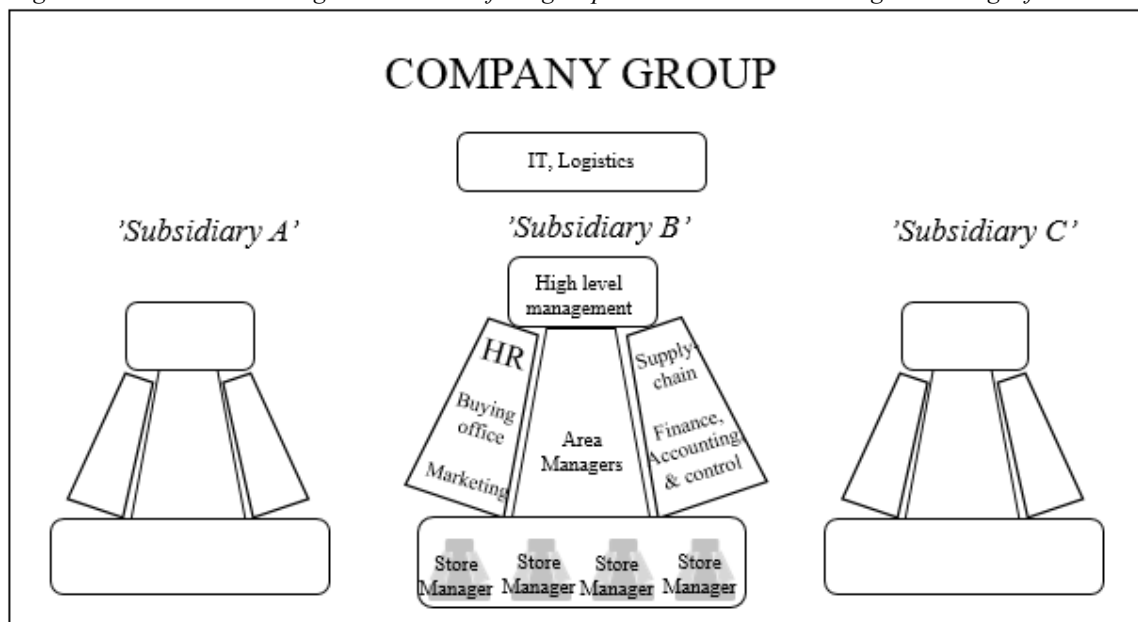
Lind (1996) stresses the importance of choosing a suitable case subject for the study. By doing a well-founded choice of case subject, the risk of just randomly exploring a case without any reason is mitigated. A case can be chosen based on three scientific bases: (1) the case is atypical which means that the company is either innovative or “problematic” in comparison to previous studies, (2) the researchers states some characteristics that the company must fulfil and choose a subject thereafter, (3) the researcher has no explanation to why the subject is chosen, this might mean that he just accidentally fell into the case (Lind, 1996).

In order to avoid just falling into a case, we focused on the second alternative. The characteristics we defined as requirements was based on Eisenhardt’s (1989) argument that a case can be chosen either to replicate previous cases or to fill theoretical categories and provide new examples of polar types. She recommended to choose a case that is likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory. Since Hall (2010) has built his framework on general thoughts of all industries and has focused the literature review on studies performed in production facilities (such as Simon et al, 1954 & Preston 1986) we argue that it is possible to extend the theory. It would therefore be interesting to choose a case subject that is not an industrial company or deals with production units. Since less studies have been conducted on sales divisions in the retail industry (Hall, 2010), a case subject of this type could hence expand the empirical base for his research.

Considering the format of the research study, an additional strong motivator for choosing the selected company was that we were granted extensive access to information relevant to our study. The company is, as previously mentioned, one of several highly autonomous subsidiaries that is owned by a company group operating in the Swedish retail industry. Initially, the company group was identified to express the characteristics of Mintzberg’s fourth structural configuration; the divisionalized form (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In a divisionalized organization the majority of work is done in quasi-autonomous units and it offers economies of scale, resources and responsiveness while controlling economic risk.

By using Mintzberg's model as a blueprint we depicted the group's organizational chart, as illustrated in figure 1. The case study is conducted solely on 'Subsidiary B'. The company consist of three levels of management in its operations. The high level management consist of the subsidiary CEO as well as the managers of the different divisions. The subsidiary has its own support functions with HR, a marketing division, a buying office, a supply chain division as well as a finance division. The by far largest division is the sales division that is governed by the sales director whom is included in the high level management and responsible for three area managers and 31 store managers.

Figure1: Illustration showing the structure of the group and its subsidiaries using Mintzberg's framework



4.4 Case study design & implementation

The case study set out from the theoretical framework put forward under section 3 which means that the usage of accounting information by store managers is studied in the light of: (1) accounting information as a tool for managers to develop knowledge of the work environment, (2) accounting information as one source of the managers information repertoire and (3) accounting information and its means of communication. By building the case around the theoretical framework it is easier to analyze the result and draw conclusions (Yin, 2014).

One of the primary advantages with the case study as a research method is that it provides possibilities for the researcher to use multiple sources of information when gathering the data (Yin, 2014). Scapens (1990) mentions four common sources of data gathering: interviews, documents, direct observation and participant observation. The trustworthiness of the case

studies increases if different sources verify the data, this is referred to as the triangulation effect (Yin, 2014; Scapens, 1990). The ambition has been to use at least two sources of information to verify the data, the two data sources that has been used is interviews and documents.

The interview is widely regarded as a cornerstone of all case study research and the thesis' primary vehicle of data collection is thus the qualitative interview. Knowing this, one realize that much of this study's credibility and robustness is dependent on the quality of the interview process and methodology used. There are many factors that need to be carefully considered when designing the qualitative interview process, such as the number and position of interviewees, type of interview that should be conducted and how the data obtained eventually should be analyzed (Doyle, 2004).

The purpose of the study is to investigate how store managers use accounting information in practice. It is therefore logical to conduct interviews with a heterogeneous mix of store managers responsible for a divergent set of stores and their closest superiors, the area managers. Although the focal point of the study is the work of the store managers, the choice was nonetheless made to conduct complementary interviews with higher level management. The group CFO was interviewed in order to get a better understanding of the structure, the strategic objectives and governance of the company. Furthermore, the Subsidiary CEO and sales director were interviewed, which makes it possible to compare and contrast how the interaction between accounting information and managers differs between the levels of management. An overview of the conducted interviews, which all took place under a three-week period at the head office in Stockholm (where all interviewees are stationed), is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of interviews conducted

<i>Subject of interview</i>	<i>No. of interviews conducted</i>	<i>Interview format</i>
Group CFO	1	Semi-structured
Subject company CEO	1	Semi-structured
Subject company sales director	1	Semi-structured
Subject company area manager	2	Semi-structured
Subject company store manager	6	Semi-structured

The interviews with store managers and area managers were designed using the framework by McKinnon & Bruns (1992), although the questions have been translated to Swedish by Lind (1996). One could argue that the interview guide is old and out of date, but as the core of managerial work has not changed, we found that the major part of the interview guide was of

highest relevance with questions considering technological devices as the only exception. The interview guide can be classified as semi-structured as it involves prepared questions according to predetermined themes in a systematic manner (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The usage of semi-structured interviews is especially valuable if the researcher aims to develop an understanding of what ways managers create meaning and understanding of their work environment (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The applied interview guide should be considered as highly scripted since all questions were predetermined and their individual order set. However, some of the questions were open-ended and the interviewees had the possibility to elaborate their answer. If necessary we asked them to clarify an answer or point they made. The usefulness of the interview guide could be argued to be demonstrated by its successful application in studies performed by among others McKinnon & Bruns (1992) and Lind (1996).

For the interviews with higher level management, we decided to diverge from the interview guide to various degrees depending on the purpose of the interview. Since the purpose of interviewing the group CFO was to attain an understanding of the company structure and strategy we decided to focus that interview on corporate governance, even though the major themes from the interview guide such as information gathering, means of communication, reports and documents and performance evaluation were also included. The interviews with the subsidiary CEO and sales director differs in a slight fashion from the interview guide as the decision was made to include some questions concerning higher level management thoughts of the store managers' actions. By doing so we strive to ultimately and thoroughly decipher whether there is a discrepancy between the store managers actual running and control of the store versus how it is perceived by the higher levels.

In order to secure a high retrieval rate of qualitative data from the interview subjects we employed complete anonymization and special interviewing techniques. The employed techniques and tactics on retaining as much robust information from the subjects as possible was suggested by Marginson (2004):

- At the outset of the interview the interviewer clearly communicated to the interviewee that the aim of the interview was not, in any way, to provide a basis for any specific research conclusion by the interviewer. The interviewee was told that he or she in no way could provide a 'correct answer'.
- We tried to make sure that the interviews were not squeezed into a tight schedule and that the atmosphere aired 'no rush'. In alignment with that, we continuously allowed the interviewee sufficient time for pauses and reflection.

- Interviewees were continuously asked to elaborate on their answer. We encouraged them to do so by using phrases such as “that’s interesting, could you please provide an example or elaborate a bit more?”.
- In an effort to expand our knowledge of the interviewees’ understanding of things, their role and the organization we often followed up questions by asking how they knew something: “what leads you to believe this?”.

4.5 Limitation of the research method

The study has some major limitations which is addressed below, under their respective headlines.

4.5.1 The limitations of the case method

Case studies are sometimes looked upon as small and irrelevant studies that have little scientific significance (Scapens, 1990). It is occasionally argued that case studies are particularly suitable in areas where theory is not well developed and that “they are a precursor to ‘scientific’ research and as such, the use of case studies reflects an immature or ‘pre-science’ subject area” (Scapens, 1990, p. 269). Scapens own reflection however is that such approach is far too narrow and that much scientific development has been based on experimental work such as case studies. He concludes that a reasonable way of using case studies is to apply the law of replication. To test the results repeatedly and to retain the theories which promote convincing explanations and use them in new case studies, whereas no explanatory theories must be rejected. It is therefore our hope that this study could constitute a contribution to the growing body of research on the practical use of accounting information.

4.5.2 Limited scope and time frame

One potential limitation of the method is the fact that it has been delimited to merely include the study of one single subsidiary company. Eisenhardt (1989) argues that studies involving fewer than four cases run the risk of being founded on empirically insufficient material and that the resulting conclusions and theory is likely to be rather simple and uncomplicated. On the other hand, Dyer & Wilkins (1991) stress that such a view is at odds with the traditional view of case studies within the field. They point out that some of the most celebrated and novel research articles produced during the 20th century have been the result of single case studies. They point out that by adding up to ten cases in one study as recommended by Eisenhardt (1989)

the very essence of the case study as research method is lost. According to them, a case study is “a careful study of a single case that leads researchers to see new theoretical relationships and question old ones.” (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991, p. 614). The decision was consequently made to delimit the research of the thesis to a single case. Adding more cases without expanding the time frame of the research project would after all simply mean that the cases would be studied in a comparatively superficial manner. This would in turn be counterproductive in terms of fulfilling the thesis’ purpose as the result, given the time frame we have at our disposal, probably would be a weaker empirical foundation than a single case study. The primary limitation could be argued to be the depth of the case study performed. The time frame of the study and the practicalities at the site of the company office did not allow us to pursue field observations and associated shadowing, which could have strengthened the trustworthiness of the thesis’ empirical section.

In terms of the number of interviewees it has been considered that the number of individuals interviewed at each position is sufficient, taking due regards to the limited time frame for the thesis. Of three area managers two was interviewed and out of thirty-one store managers six were interviewed. Intuitively, it would be easy to assume that conducting more interviews should be better than less. On the other hand the amount of information obtained from qualitative interviews run the risk of quickly expanding into an inapprehensible and incalculable mass of information that cannot be analyzed within the time frame and scope of the project in question.

Moreover, each manager was interviewed once and all interviews took place during a three-week period. Thus, the answers supplied by the managers are likely to be affected by the current business cycle. The validity of our study would hence perhaps increase if we would have studied the company during a longer period of time so that the effects from business cycle variations could level out.

4.5.3 The difficulty in analyzing qualitative interview data

It is clear that qualitative empirical data does pose a serious research problem since it is, for obvious reasons, rather more difficult to conduct analysis of such data with the same high research validity and objectivity as quantitative data. The recommendation for how to best analyze the data is to use the theoretical framework as a point of reference both when gathering the data and when structuring the empirical section (Scapens, 1990; Yin, 2014)

In addition to the stated limitations of data gathering and data analyzing, there are some risks associated with interviews as the major research tool. The primary concern is selection

and analytical biases or interviewees not being truthful or trustworthy. To at least somewhat mitigate the risk of selection and analytical biases we have consistently employed a specific interview design with a distinct thematic approach as used by McKinnon and Bruns (1992) which is outlined under section 4.4.

5. Empirics

This section presents the case study's result in terms of the store managers' usage of accounting information. The results are organized around the propositions put forward in the theoretical framework, in addition to the three propositions there is an introductory part in which the accounting information reports available are presented and described.

5.1 The accounting reports available

We identified seven different reports and tools that satisfied the definition for accounting information. These were used by all levels of management but the frequency in which they were used differed. The accounting reports are summarized and briefly described in table 2 but most of them will be discussed and evaluated in much further detail later in this section.

Table 2 shows a description of the accounting reports available

Accounting information report	Description	Usage
QlikTech	Data visualization tool (rather than a report) that makes it possible to build sales reports and key ratios on a detailed level.	The tool is frequently used by all interviewed managers every day.
Daily Sales Report	The Daily Sales Report (including all key figures) is sent by the business controller every morning before opening.	The report is daily used by managers who study the sales outcome compared to previous years and the budget year and benchmark the result against comparable stores.
Weekly Sales Report	The Weekly Sales Report is a detailed sales report, which is only distributed to the stores with the most extensive product portfolios.	The report is studied and analyzed when it is distributed, but the managers generally use it less in the daily work.

Monthly Income Statement	The monthly Income Statement is the only report provided that gives an overview of the business since it includes cost and net profit.	The managers disagree on the usefulness of the report, but they all state that they use and analyze the report when it is released.
Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Report	The KPI report is distributed every month and it summarizes 10 key performances (sales, visitor count, number of paying customers, hit-rate indicator, price reduction rate, average receipt, average price, average number of products per customer, staff hours and sales per worked hour) and includes information about previous year, current year and budget year.	Most managers believe the report is useful for analyzing and determine where to put focus the upcoming days.
Mystery Shopper	A service quality tool, an anonymous, trained person test the service according to some predetermined areas of interest and grade (quantitative) the store.	The usage of the Mystery Shopper Report differs among the managers, and differ from thorough analysis to completely neglecting it.
Best Standard	An evaluation summary report of the performance of the store managers, focus is on sales and key figures but also on service, it is provided on a monthly basis.	The report is commonly referred to as the least useful report amongst the accounting information reports available and is therefore less used.

5.2 The role of accounting information for managers at different hierarchical levels

Accounting information was used in numerous ways by all managers at Subsidiary B and most managers, regardless of hierarchical level, mentioned at least a couple of accounting information reports as the intuitive response for how they successfully control their area of responsibility. We found that the managers mainly used accounting information for three purposes; for controlling and understanding their work environment, for evaluation of the work-force's performance and to empower their subordinates.

5.2.1 Store managers usage of accounting information

As previously stated, the store managers have a large portfolio of accounting information reports available out of which many is considered crucial for the everyday managerial work. Most store managers stressed that the accounting reports were essential for providing guidelines and an understanding of what is expected by the manager, the employees and the store. The most common accounting information referred to in this context was the budget and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The monitoring of the KPIs and the budget was crucial for controlling each individual store since these sets of information clearly shows which actions that should be prioritized by the manager. Simultaneously it provides concrete data on the level of effort required by employees and the manager to achieve the established sales objectives. The accounting information reports generally mentioned as the most useful in retrieving this data were the Daily Sales Report, the QlikTech tool, the monthly Income Statement and KPI report.

The Daily Sales Report was, by most of the store managers, considered by far the most important report since it provides a comprehensive picture of how the core business is doing. The usefulness of the report was described by the following statement:

It's in the spine that we need to see how the day was [...] first we look at the budget but if the sales during that period haven't been successful we compare with previous year instead.

Another store manager says that she only uses the Daily Sales Report to compare herself with her peers as she insert all the numbers into her cash register. A third store manager discusses the Daily Sales Reports role as a great litmus paper for perceiving a better understanding for external factors. It provides information of sales and KPIs of all stores from which trends that are not related to the individual stores performance can be spotted

New competitors entering the market, renovations, increased terror threat - it is not solely our performance that affect the result.

Most managers expressed that the usefulness of the Daily Sales Report was to a large extent determined by its timeliness and regularity.

[It] was a large problem last year as it was sent to the area managers but didn't get sent forward, and it doesn't help me if I receive the report at 10:30 am.

QlikTech is rather than a report a tool where the store managers can conduct analysis on their own which can be set at a more detailed level compared to other reports distributed. For instance it allows the store managers not only to be updated with their key performance indicators on a total level but also to retrieve a break down for specific brands, product categories and even articles. As one of the store managers stated “I can find everything and play around with the tool”. By doing so she felt that she got a deeper understanding of the numbers and a better connection between them and operational activities. The usefulness of the tool increases further for the stores that work with a large range of brands since the QlikTech tool is useful for finding what specific products or brands that need extra exposure. The weakness of the tool is that creating new reports require comparably more time and technological skills.

The third report mentioned as useful was the KPI report that is distributed at a monthly basis. Its usefulness seems to be comparable with that of the QlikTech tool:

That’s where I get all information assembled, where we have sales, working hours, hit-rate, everything [...] that report is overall the most comprehensive as it provides me with all the key numbers, not too messy, and then I can choose to focus on something within the store during that month, take an action at whatever parameter we’re struggling with at full speed.

The major difference between the two reports seems to be that QlikTech offers the user the ability to dig deeper into details whilst the KPI report offers an oversight of all KPIs including working hours and sales per worked hour (information that cannot be retrieved in the QlikTech tool). Even though they mentioned that the primary way in which they evaluate their subordinates is by overlooking their operational performance a number of the store managers told us how they use the KPI’s as an additional evaluating tool. The strength of using KPI’s is that they are quantified on predetermined rules, they are easy to communicate and it is easy to follow the sales employee’s individual progression.

All store managers share the view that the least useful reports are Mystery Shopper and Best Standard. These two reports were often referred to simultaneously which indicated that many store managers saw them as the same report. Managers uttered that certain measures in the Mystery Shopper assessment are vaguely defined and consequently hard to execute improvements on. Moreover, the value of the feedback was deemed to be reduced by the delay between the assessment and the briefing of the result, which usually was about three weeks. One store manager left the following remark:

Mystery Shopper is something I read, but find it difficult to use as a motivating tool [with my employees] when even I as the manager feel uncertain in what sense we are being measured.

With regards to the Best Standard Report, another store manager said:

[We] don't work actively with it, the report is delivered sporadically and reading it is one of those tasks that you have to do. I keep track on all the different parts anyway as I work consistently with its different parameters [...] sure it is a summary, but a complicated one – with these scores of which you don't remember – ok, was 2 points or 3 points maximum for this specific part. No, I find that if you read our other reports properly, you will attain this information anyway.

A number of the interviewed store managers expressed how the stores' heterogeneity made the performance evaluating part of the report misleading. One of the interviewed managers openly described her resentment:

I have criticized Best Standard from the day it was launched, I don't find it fair so we never look at it. Or I never read it. You get a score, but you don't remember what the maximum score is for each section of the report.

5.2.2 Higher level management's usage of accounting information

The two area managers have fundamentally the same ideas and behavior as the store managers when it comes to the usage of accounting information. They reckon that the primary report to understand the organization's current status is the KPI report. Both area managers state that they use it in order to gather information on both targets and current results and compliments it for being easy to comprehend, simple, yet exhaustive. A second report that is stated as being thoroughly used is the Income Statement. It is compiled and distributed on a monthly basis - and as one of the area manager states "This is what it all boils down to; it shows what's left on the bottom line". She continues by saying that her team devotes their attention to the accounts they can affect, which apart from sales is labor costs, cost of goods sold and related costs such as level of obsolescence, waste and price reductions. A third report mentioned as very useful is the Daily Sales Report, much thanks to its simplicity:

The Daily Sales Report is simple and good with some nice colors, everybody gets it [...] when I walk through my stores in the morning, everybody talks about it ...

The area managers share the store managers' view that the report they use the least is the consolidated report for measuring performance named Best Standard together with the service tool Mystery Shopper. The interviews thus showed that the two reports were studied superficially. Moreover, the area managers emphasized the store managers' responsibility to explore them further.

The sales director sides with her subordinates when expressing that the KPI report is important for the purpose of controlling but that the Daily Sales Report, nonetheless, by far is the most important report. It does not only include number of sales but also the daily and weekly KPIs. A second important report is the Income Statement which they indirectly work with every day. Thirdly, she highlights the importance of the staffs' schedule and hours as a change in the schedule affects the staff composition and forces them to decide whether to employ more expensive staff from an agency.

The sales director believes the Best Standard service report adds the least value. A number of store managers has provided her with input that essentially says that the report contains some parameters measured that are unreasonable and inappropriate. The sales director still believes that the report is a good guideline and that the idea of a summarizing report is good, but that the current structure of it does not promote and encourage ongoing activity from store managers. They simply look at it once a month.

In addition to what has previously been said, the CEO considers the Income Statement as the single most important report. The company's version of the P&L report does after all include a couple of the most important KPIs that are stated in the KPI report. With the extensive number of performance indicators measured in the KPI report she stresses that the report loses focus on what is key, the CEO simply finds the KPI report in current format too excessive. When studying the Income Statement her primary focus is on the bottom line as she is responsible for the company's overall performance and this is what matters in the end.

5.2.3 Accounting information is used for evaluation of managerial performance

The CEO states that area managers and store managers are mainly evaluated against the literal results they achieve on the Income Statement. Their performance is being measured by comparing the outcome with targets either set in a specific budget or in comparison to the previous year. Concerning the Income Statement, managers are evaluated against earnings before interest and taxes, something that the CEO finds slightly problematic since there are lots of centralized areas over which the store managers cannot exert any control. Thus, the store

managers are responsible for the results stemming from areas they cannot control or impact. Many store managers found this system disconcerting, demotivating and unfair and that this system makes it harder to understand the connection between operational activities and the store's performance. As the problem is recognized by higher level management they are currently evaluating ways to improve the correlation between the assessment of performance and what managers can actually affect, such as personal costs and the price reduction rate. Furthermore, there is a demand from the CEO and sales director to find efficient ways to measure the individual's capability to successfully lead. In the absence of a clearly defined parameter that assess leadership in a quantified way the CEO address the importance of using accounting information in the KPI report as the best available information when measuring just how successful the manager in question has been.

5.2.4 Accounting information is used for empowerment

Accounting information is frequently used to empower the work-force and many of the store managers describe how they actively seek to delegate various areas of responsibility to the employees. One of the store managers describes how she controls her stores:

I'm out on the floor as much as I can, but I delegate, I lead by delegating. I try to raise the level of engagement and my experience tells that if they get more responsibilities they care more and work harder. I don't just want to have cashier personnel that only do what they are told, they should be able to take decisions on their own.

She continues by describing how she, as often as possible, send them to various educational forums and encourages them to learn by doing. As their manager, she always takes their stand even if they made the wrong decision and saves the eventual critique until there is time for an individual meeting. Her salesforce can be described as highly independent as they "control the place when I leave for four weeks' vacation in Greece every summer". Another store manager describes how her salesforce is always updated with the accounting reports and that the first thing all employees do when they start for the day is to check the Daily Sales Report that is kept behind the cashier. She stresses how important it is for her employees to have access to the reports as it increases their feeling of being implicated in the stores performance. Further, she has noticed how they set individual sales targets for themselves with the goal to outperform the budget.

In addition to the usage of accounting information to empower the work-force, she has initiated a new project in which one employee is responsible every week for learning something new and then inform the colleagues. She describes the project:

Every week, some of the girls are responsible for learning something new, to write a short text and give a presentation in one of the morning meetings. After a day or two we have a quiz, and the one who scores the highest gets a small gift. The purpose is of course both to delegate responsibility to the staff but also to have fun together.

The same empowering focus is shared by higher level management and the sales director highlights that much time and money is invested in training, evaluating and coaching employees. The training concerns anything from learning more about specific products or materials to interpretation of financial reports or leadership style. The result is loyal and knowledgeable employees who often stay for many years, manifested by the fact that many of the store managers started as sales assistants on the shop-floor more than a decade ago. The sales director states that “Most of our employees, no matter which store they work in, are very good at what they do and they have high level of experience and professional knowledge”.

One effect of the store managers being so experienced is that many of them works very independently. They have established relationships with the company’s stakeholder and are used to the company’s working routines. The sales director describes them as entrepreneurs that run their stores as if they owned them; some follows the rules/guidelines whereas other do it their own way.

5.3 Accounting information and the information repertoire

In the previous section store managers’ usage of accounting information was thoroughly described, accounting information is however not the only source of information used by store managers. Their information repertoire is a synergetic mix of all the daily interaction that take place between him or her and the employees, the closest superior and other store managers. Despite that this information is, logically enough, not quantitatively measurable and by nature relatively vague, it is considered highly important by the store managers to be able to stay at the top of the game. They acquire this informal information by being present every day in the store. Examples of other information sourced include information related to external factors such as the weather, competition and the economy as well as information related to internal factors such

as human resources. To be in tune with staff and their current situation, often on a rather deep personal level, was argued as the most important source of information by several store managers. It was simply identified as a necessity in the establishment and running of a well-functioning team, which in turn is an essential component in achieving the predetermined economic objectives.

Further, all store managers' use all kinds of operational information which they get and process immediately as a part of the daily business. An example of such operational information is customer needs in terms of what products they currently demand. The store managers get this information, not via any report, but by being present in the store, acting and listening to the customers and the salesforce. It was also mentioned that they receive quite a substantial amount of information directly from their suppliers, the buying department and other stakeholders both in terms of reports as well as more tacit information regarding the business climate. This could for example be information considering what products are slow moving goods and consequently need to be lifted to a more attractive spot in the store.

Another important source of information is the store managers own professional knowledge. We found many examples of how they took intuitive decisions based on previous experiences. One store manager described how she immediately, at the arrival of new products to the store, runs to check their quality and if they could match her customer base. If she is unsatisfied, she bypasses her superior and sends them back to order another stock of goods. Amongst all interviewees there was an evident pride in the general level of expertise amongst the store managers.

5.4 Accounting information and the means of communication

Since information is shared both in formal and informal settings and from managers to their subordinates as well as from manager-to-manager we have sought to establish a comprehensive picture of the various communication channels below by structuring the section according to which levels in the hierarchy that information is being shared.

5.4.1 Vertical communication: From manager to subordinate

All store managers give a similar description of how they communicate with their employees. They all stress that they communicate daily with their employees and mainly face-to-face, both in formal and informal situations. There are mainly three formal forums for communication between the store manager and the salesforce: a morning kick-off meeting just before the store's open for the day, a weekly meeting that focus on the weeks sales and a monthly meeting where

the economic performance is discussed and evaluated. Informal communication takes place all the time and can be about anything related to the business such as suppliers, products, work-force related issues or accounting information.

The preference for verbal communication can partly be explained by the physical condition as they all work very closely together in a limited area. The only store manager that mentioned that a day could pass without talking individually to all employees was the one with a comparably larger store. Other reasons put forward for why verbal communication (primarily meetings and face-to-face conversations) is preferred is that much of the discussed topics concern either soft and sensitive values or the conceptualization of accounting information. The most common soft values brought to the table are questions concerning the employees such as vacations, health issues, salary negotiations or the week's schedule. When accounting information is discussed, the purpose is not to describe the numbers but rather to put them into context. One of the store managers describe what they talk about in the morning meeting:

They [the sales staff] can study the numbers themselves, we focus on how we should use it, that is important and complicated, what does it mean and how should we work with it [the information].

Except for the formal meetings, most communication is conducted through emails, mobile phone text messages or by chit-chatting a few minutes in the office. The emails can concern both informal and formal information, as mentioned by a store manager: "it can be anything, high and low". The store manager continues by describing how the emails can both act as a communication channel for major issues concerning for example renovations or staff as well as a simple mean of updating a colleague on day-to-day operational activities. Text messages were used for the sole purpose of updating peers:

I use text messages to check how they (the salesforce) are doing, I like to know what they sold for even when I'm not there, so I email or text them and they usually respond with a short update and a smiley.

When chit-chatting, the conversation usually took place in an informal setting with the purpose of providing the store manager with an instant update of the current operational situation:

We talk daily in the office, in the elevator, the corridor and the stockroom, we talk about how different stores are performing, if some store did very well or poorly last week we can

elaborate on what the reason for that might be, was it a large shipment of tourists visiting or were the new products below standard.

One of the store managers expressed the usage of informal chit-chatting as an initiator for formal communication and described how she instantly could see if one of her employees was out of tune and in need of a rather more formal and private briefing.

5.4.1.1 Communication between area managers and store managers:

In terms of vertical communication, the store managers can be clustered in two groups with significantly different opinions about how, why and when the communication takes place. One cluster concludes that communication is almost daily with lots of face-to-face contact whereas the other cluster stress that there are almost no interaction at all.

The store managers in cluster one describe both informal and formal platforms for communication, discussion and interaction. The major formal forums are one weekly meeting that focuses on accounting information, primarily on KPIs compared to budget and previous year. The purpose of the formal meeting is to evaluate and discuss appropriate actions rather than to walk through all the reports. One of the store managers remarks the following:

I find the economic figures myself, in the provided accounting reports, or by contacting the economic department or the business controller, on the meetings we talk actions.

Another store manager stresses that the meetings are used not only to discuss the results but rather to determine where to put attention and focus, she exemplifies:

For example, I thought we did great one month, sales was way better than budget, but the bottom line in the Income Statement was a disappointment. The reason for this was remarkably high personal costs and we had a discussion about why it could be so high.

Beside these formal meetings, most of the communication is informal, a few minutes talk when they run into each other in the office or elevator, a short telephone call or by email. All things that can be handled by email such as providing information or updates are dealt with this way.

The second cluster consists of the store managers who state that they almost never communicate with their area manager, one of them cannot remember having a formal meeting in over a year. It is underlined that the store managers feel abandoned without anyone to discuss with, a fact that stands in contrast to the words of the area manager in question who agrees that

there has been a turbulent period but states that they over the whole period have had informal contact on a daily basis.

Additionally there is a collective, formal meeting for each geographical area where the area managers meet up with all store managers on a monthly basis. The formal monthly meetings mainly focus on accounting information such as the Income Statement, the monthly sales or the Best Standard Report, comparing and contrasting the outcome with the budget and the previous year. These meetings were frequently criticized for being repetitive and a waste of time since nothing new was thought to be brought to the table. However, numerous store managers mentioned that they find a monthly forum being very important but wishes that the time would rather be used for inspirational purpose or for developing a better understanding of the overall business. One of them states:

I would like them to be more inspiring, it would be so interesting if the business controller, the CEO or maybe someone from the purchasing department came and shared their thoughts, something from the organization that would give us a more comprehensive picture.

5.4.1.2 Interaction between high-level management and area- and store managers:

There is no formal individual meetings between the CEO and the store managers or between the sales director and the store managers since all important information should pass the official channels, which is via the area managers. However, both the CEO and the sales director try to visit them almost every day in the morning or by lunch to give the employees a sense of presence and inclusion.

The channel of communication has recently been further formalized by the sales director as a weekly formal meeting with the area managers has been introduced. The meeting focuses on all activities, operational and external, that may affect weekly sales. To identify all relevant information before the weekly meetings, it is intended that the area managers have one-to-one meetings with their subordinates where they capture important issues. This allows the sales director to get a complete picture of the ongoing business as well as being able to focus on the issues that need her attention the most. She describes the information flow in the following way:

In practice I think the information flow will initially be from the store managers to the area managers and then from the area managers to me. I have recently organized sales meetings every week for this to happen and of course we won't be able to walk through over 40 stores, but we will be able to look at, analyze and take actions on deviations.

5.4.2 Horizontal communication: From manager to manager

Most of the communication is informal and many of the store managers refer to it as “chit-chats” in the office or in the kitchen. They can discuss everything from sales, to schedule and suppliers and they are, in general, eager to help each other. The store managers share a lot of their information via mail. This is a useful communication vessel, especially if the information shared requires an action. One of the store manager’s remarks: “if it’s not in written form, it’s not considered to exist”. If documentation is required or if several store managers or other stakeholders need to get informed, e-mail is both considered useful and efficient. The sales director does however stress the need to carefully consider the amount of e-mails being sent to store managers, their main focus is after all operations and they consequently need to spend their time participating in activities on the shop floor, not by replying emails.

6. Discussion

Hall (2010) argues that accounting information is primarily used to develop an understanding of the work environment and states three factors that determine the usefulness of accounting information in this purpose. Further, he argues that accounting information is only one source of the information repertoire and that its usefulness to a large extent is determined by how managers use accounting information in verbal communication. In this section, these propositions will be tested by comparing and contrasting our empirical findings with the theoretical framework.

6.1 Is accounting information useful to develop knowledge of the work environment?

Hall (2010) argues that managers use accounting information to test assumptions and expectations of the organization and to identify problems, opportunities and potential surprises. Simon et al, (1954) emphasize its role as an attention directing item whereas Lind (2001) highlights how it can be used to empower the work-force. It is evident from the case study that accounting information is vital for the store managers at Subsidiary B and that they use accounting information in several ways. The three main purposes identified are for controlling and understanding the area of responsibility, for evaluation purpose and for empowering the work-force which aligns with much of the previous studies.

Most store managers stress that they frequently use accounting information such as the KPI:s or the Income Statement for providing guidelines and an understanding of what is

expected by the manager and the store. The KPI:s were also used according to the rule of expectation as it helps the store managers to detect if they were underperforming or if there were unseized opportunities. They also express that the reason for why they so frequently use the Daily Sales Report is that it provides a clear measurement and overview of how the core business is doing. One store manager expressed that the best thing with QlikTech is that it allows her to play around with the numbers and really get an understanding of how they link to each other and how they connect to the operational activities and the result. Thus, the case study shows similar results concerning how accounting information can be used to develop an understanding of the work environment as indicated by Hall (2010).

Simon et al, (1954) argued that one of the three most important functions for accounting information is its role as an attention directing item. This function was evident in the case study. The KPI:s was used to identify areas in which actions should be prioritized by the manager, one of the store managers stated that after she studied the report she could “take an action at whatever parameter we’re struggling with at full speed”.

In the study, managers at various hierarchical levels frequently used accounting information in the evaluation purpose. The sales staff are primarily evaluated on sales related performance indicators and the store managers are evaluated by their performance on several KPI:s and the Income Statement. The usage of accounting information to evaluate the performance of executives has been dealt with in numerous studies throughout the decades as it is one of the most classical and important roles of accounting. This is for example emphasized in the work of Simon et al, (1954) who investigate the role of score card keeping in order to evaluate whether the manager is “doing well or badly?” (Simon et al, 1954, p3) and Lind (1996) who investigates stewardship as well as score card keeping. Our findings is therefore just another confirmation of accounting information being used for this purpose.

Lind (2001) argues that accounting information can be used to empower the work-force and that ownership of the information is not crucial for the empowering process. In the case study, we found that managers used accounting information in this purpose which resulted in an entrepreneurial spirit within the work-force who genuinely felt ownership of their area of responsibility. Both store- and area managers as well as the sales director highlighted how the salesforce is one key resource for the company and that much time, effort and money therefore are invested in them. One store manager described how she controlled her store by delegating responsibility to her salesforce who took care of everything from accounting reports to order reports and schedules during the summer vacation. Another store manager described how her employees started every day by looking at the Daily Sales Report and how they thereafter set

individual sales goals in order to outperform the budget. This behavior implicates that the employees were empowered by being granted access to accounting reports rather than having ownership of them which aligns with what has been argued by Lind (2001).

6.1.1 Determining factors for the usefulness of accounting information

Hall (2010) argues that there are mainly three factors that determines the usefulness of accounting information to develop knowledge of the work environment: (1) closeness to operational activities, (2) the time horizon and (3) the diversity of operational factors under consideration.

In the study, the store managers used considerable amount of operational information to control their business and to update themselves with what was currently going on in the store. They mentioned reports from suppliers and buyers as well as external reports concerning macro-events and information about the employees. Further, the store managers spent a significant part of their working day on the floor together with their work-force which generated a constant flow of information of non-quantitative characteristic. Their superiors, the area managers, also used quite some operational information, particularly information concerning local activities and personnel related questions. However, one of the area managers clearly stated that she thought that the store managers to a larger extent needed to updated themselves on operational issues and activities than the area managers. She exemplified her opinion with referring to the Mystery Shopper report and suggested that the area managers needed to think what operational activities that was behind their scores.

The sales director, whom was distanced from operations, had another perspective when relating to the accounting information reports. She preferred the same reports as her subordinates, but she used them for other purposes. For her, the KPI report was for example a tool for evaluation of performance in addition to its role as an attention director. Since she did not have the possibility to be in the stores more than a few minutes during lunch break, her only way to get a picture of the business was to look at the reports and then discuss them with the area managers. Nevertheless, she mentioned an operational source of information as the third most important report and that was the schedule and working hours of the sales people.

The CEO, which is the highest executive in the company, partly disregards the KPI report and primarily focuses on the Income Statement. In her opinion, this is what matters the most, the bottom line is the one key thing for her to know. When comparing her usage of the Income Statement with the area managers it is evident that she has a less-operational point of view. The area managers did not care that much about the bottom line, instead they focused on the

accounts they could affect, whereas the CEO had a more comprehensive focus. Thus, the case study showed that higher hierarchical level managers, distanced from operational activities, used accounting information to a greater extent than managers closer to operations. This observation does indeed correspond to Hall's (2010) proposition. However, it is questionable whether the store managers' use less non-accounting information for their daily operations than what we interpreted being stated by Hall. The store managers were dependent on getting their financial reports on a timely basis and many stated that it was a problem when the Daily Sales Report could not be discussed at the morning meeting in the store. Sales is the spine of the business and the accounting reports provide an accurate and timely snapshot of what is happening. Therefore, one potential reason for why accounting information might be used more frequently in the case study than suggested by Hall is that most of the previous studies he refers to is done on production units where it might be more useful to get non-financial information such as reports of production volume, lead time, delivery dependability and working productivity.

Simon et al (1954) argued that accounting information mainly reminds the managers of what they already know. The case study results partly contradict this argument. In some cases the accounting information works as a reminder, for example the store managers often knew how the sales were before they got the Daily Sales Report, but it was also evident that accounting information brought new information to the table. One store manager described how she got a shock when looking at the Income Statement and realized that the bottom line was red. Her sales had been good but the costs for personnel were way too high. A potential reason for why accounting information more frequently added new information for management than as argued by Simon et al (1954) is that store managers in their daily work need to handle an ever-changing climate as the nature of operating a store is filled with ambiguity. The consumer market relies on smaller purchases on a more ad hoc basis which is more affected by changes in the surrounding environment. This also aligns with the argument put forward by Hall (2010), as operational complexity increases so does the usage of accounting information.

6.1.2 Determining factors for the usefulness of economic reports

McKinnon & Bruns (1992) conclude that the most important aspect for accounting information to be useful is not that it is comprehensive or accurate, rather it should be easily understood and communicated. Further, they state a handful of characteristics of a useful report which concern

both its ability to translate operational activities to a calculative dimension and its physical layout.

To be easily understood there must be a clear cut connection between the operational actions and the performance output in the report. Moreover, McKinnon & Bruns stress that the report must match the scope of information to the managers area of responsibility and have a reputation of reliability. A perfect example of a report that clearly connects operational activities to performance output is the complemented Daily Sales Report. The report offers feedback, in a concise fashion, on a daily basis of the stores performance compared to the budget and previous year as well as compared to the other stores in the subsidiary. It provides a clear cause and effect relationship between the personnel's actions taken for providing good service and the output in terms of sales. The Mystery Shopper report failed to communicate that relationship and was consequently criticized. This was articulated by the store managers as they did not understand how certain parameters measured were being evaluated.

Considering the physical layout, McKinnon & Bruns (1992) argues that the report must be simple and straightforward, well-organized and available on a timely basis. The importance of the communicative factors were evident in the case study as the managers showed a preference for accounting information that was clear, timely and easy to understand. One of the area managers even mentioned the nice coloring in the KPI report as one of its strongest features. In contrast, the seldom used reports were those that was considered complicated, hard to understand and messy in its layout. In particular the Best Standard Report was criticized for its inconsistency in the grading system since different areas had different maximum scores which made it hard to remember whether a given point was to be considered positive or the contrary. Thus, the findings in the case study, both concerning the reports understandability and communicativeness, is very much in line with McKinnon & Bruns (1992) conclusions.

6.2 What did the managers' information repertoire look like?

Hall (2010) argued that accounting information is only one source of information in the manager's information repertoire and that its usefulness is determined in relation to the other sources of information at the manager's disposal. Further, he argued that the primary advantage of accounting information vis-à-vis other sources of information is its ability to translate operational factors to one single financial dimension. In the case study, the managers had numerous sources of information available. First of all, the daily interaction is thought of as a great source of information and all store managers emphasize the importance of being present

in the store every day to get this very informal exchange of information. It allows them to access information regarding their subordinates' well-being, potential staff issues and how well the team is functioning.

Other important sources of information the store managers mentioned was related to external stakeholders such as supplier or buyer reports, competitor actions, marketing efforts, macro-trends and human resource related questions such as the schedule or vacancies. Further, many store managers intuitively mentioned that they often relayed on their own experience and professional knowledge. One store manager described how she immediately knew if a new delivery of products would be a success or if she needed to send it back to the supplier. She did not need to confirm it with anyone, she based her decision solely on her own judgement. The usage of own professional experience, a result from 'learning by doing', was also found by Ahrens & Chapman (2007).

In the case study, store managers stated that the Daily Sales Report was useful since it put numbers to the operational activities that was the spine of the business, it put an economic dimension to the sales. Another store manager talked about how it worked as a litmus paper for external factors. In this way it assign a quantitative and common dimension to various sorts of operational information. Thus, in the case study we found results that are in line with the arguments put forward by Hall (2010).

Many previous studies (Simon et al, 1954; Preston, 1986 and Clancy and Colins, 1979) have argued that much information is kept secret and informal as a "black book" and that this facilitate sense-making of the manager's world. In the case study, some managers mentioned that they preferred keeping some information for themselves in secret, personal computer files. One store manager described how she, when she got the Daily Sales Report, inserted the numbers in her own computer file in order to compare herself with her peers. She knew which parameters that was most suitable for doing a fair comparison and used her self-made report as a substitutable performance measurement.

6.3 How was the means of communication?

Hall (2010) argued that there are some considerable aspects in favor for the verbal communication form and that managers use verbal communication to relate accounting information to specific operational concerns and prompt further discussion. Simon et al, (1954) highlighted that accounting information can, when formalized in an organizational context

prompt discussion and actions. McKinnon & Bruns (1992) argued that the verbal communication makes it easier to bypass the formal information channels.

In the case study, most store and area managers expressed a strong preference for face-to-face communication since many of the discussions concerned either soft values or the conceptualizing of accounting information. One store manager described how they during the daily morning meeting focused on trying to understand the accounting information, the daily sales, and focus on actions. A second store manager described a meeting with her superior, the area manager, when they studied the Income Statement and discussed how the bottom line could be red when sales was so good. They discussed and could conclude that the problem was to high personnel costs. In this way the face-to-face communication helped the understanding of the accounting information and prompt a discussion resulting in directed actions.

Another reason brought forward for why verbal communication was so frequent was the physical conditions. Many of the store and area managers worked close together within a limited area and it was therefore natural to talk rather than to communicate in written form. The communication was often ad hoc and informal between all different levels of management. Thus, the findings are in line with those of Hall (2010) and Simon et al, (1954).

However, in contrast to these findings, many managers also expressed that they used email and text messages to a large extent and one of the area managers stated that she used email as often as she could. One of the store managers described that her main form of communication with her salesforce was text messages since it was easy and fast. A second store manager felt that the information could only be valid if it was communicated in written form. Further, the sales director describes an email culture where far too many emails is sent to far too many people. Thus, the preference of face-to-face communication is partly set aside for this type of short, fast and often informal written communication. One potential explanation is the rapid technology development which has made it much easier to read emails in the mobile telephone or to have various group conversations as argued by Caleb & Stefaniak (2012).

In the study, we could see some signs of store managers trying to bypass the formal organization. The sales director often visits the stores to exchange information directly with the store managers and could bypass the area manager if the matter was urgent or concerning staff issues. However, she felt that this could give rise to conflicts since the area manger then was excluded and might feel overlooked. Therefore, one might argue that the findings is partly in line with what was argued by McKinnon & Bruns (1992).

7. Conclusion

Let us initiate the conclusion of the thesis by reiterating the research question:

How is accounting information being used by store managers in practice?

In an attempt to answer the question a case study of a Swedish retail company operating in over 40 stores was conducted. By contrasting and comparing the results with a framework formulated by Hall (2010), this paper seeks to add a piece to the puzzle that form an empirical base of research studying the usage of accounting information in practice.

The first proposition stated by Hall (2010) is that managers' use accounting information to test assumptions and expectations of the organization and to identify problems, opportunities and potential surprises to get an understanding of the work environment. Other scholars have emphasized its role as an attention directing item and its usefulness for empowering the work-force. In the study we found that the store managers use accounting information for three major purposes; for controlling and understanding the area of responsibility, for evaluation purposes and for empowering the work-force. Since these activities to a large extent is in line with the ones proposed by Hall our conclusion is that the first proposition can be confirmed.

The second proposition concerns the manager's information repertoire. Hall argues that accounting information is only one source of information amongst many and that its primary advantage is its ability to translate operational factors to a single financial dimension. We found that the store managers exploit daily interactions in operations as an important source of information and that reports such as the Daily Sales Report put a financial dimension on operational factors. Other important information was sourced in the interaction with stakeholders such as suppliers as well as via buyer reports and situations related to staff. Additionally, store managers own professional experience and the intuition developed from learning by doing was identified as an important source of information. Conclusively, it is therefore evident that information other than accounting information is important to the store managers and that accounting information translate operational factors to one single dimension. Hall's second proposition is thereby confirmed.

Hall argues in the third proposition that there are some considerable aspects in favor of the verbal communication form and that it is used to relate accounting information to specific operational concerns and prompt further discussion. In the case study most store managers express a strong preference for verbal communication as the weight of the communication concern soft values or the conceptualization of accounting information. However, in contrast to

the proposition many managers voiced that they use text messages and emails to a great extent something that arguably is explained by a rapid development in technology where these vessels of communication can be both informal and fast. By this means we find proposition three moderately confirmed.

7.1 Validity, reliability and generalizability

The research form of a case study is by its nature harder to proof valid than quantitative methods and there are possibilities of misunderstandings and informational and analytical bias. Therefore, to increase the validity of the study, we used heterogeneous interview subjects from different hierarchical levels and established interviewing techniques as proposed by Marginsson (2004). The trustworthiness of the results are further improved by using the triangulation effect as suggested by Scapens (1990) and Yin (2014). We therefore used two different data sources to confirm a piece of information. Additionally, the risk of becoming bias is present if spending too much time at the company socializing (Lind, 1996) why we limited the contact to the minimum possible. We believe that the results presented in this report is valid and trustworthy considering the premises of the report.

On the subject of reliability, the most important factor is that there are no single guidelines or directions for how a case study should be conducted. Therefore the execution and methodological decisions of the study is of highest importance for achieving reliable results. We followed the established framework by Hall (2010) and the interview guide originally formulated by McKinnon and Bruns (1992) and designed the study and data gathering by continually linking the empirics to the theoretical framework. We argue that the reliability of the study is satisfactory and that other researchers should be able to replicate the performed study by using the same methods as we have done in this study and by doing so contributing to the collection of empirical studies.

Authors of case studies frequently apologies for their inability to generalize the findings as the case study is interpreted as a very small sample of the population, from which it is hard to make any statistical generalizations (Scapens, 1990). However, the case study can be used for a theoretical generalization and the attempt to “generalize theories so that they explain the observations which have been made” (Scapens, 1990, p.270). If the case study results to a large extent align with the theoretical framework, the generalizability is thought to be better than if the results had deviated from what was expected (Lind, 1996). Since the result of the case study to a large extent align with what was suggested by theory, the generalizability of the study

increases. Nevertheless, due to the limited size and scope of the study and to business peculiarities it would be unreasonable to believe that the findings are generalizable outside of a Swedish retail organization.

7.2 Suggestion for future research

This case study identified support for Hall's (2010) framework, therefore we encourage further studies to strengthen the empirical base by using the law of replication (Scapens, 1990). A replication study could either focus on another industry or/and geographical location in aim to compare and contrast or focus on a similar setting in aim to validate/reject our findings.

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Appendix

Frågeformulär till store managers och area managers

(Ursprungligen utformat av McKinnon & Bruns, 1992, översatt av Lind, 1996)

Bakgrundsfrågor:

1. Vilken befattning har du?
2. Hur många år har du varit anställd på din nuvarande befattning?
3. Försök att sammanfatta din befattningsbeskrivning.
4. Vilka befattningar har du haft tidigare?
5. Hur många år har du arbetat inom företaget?
6. Vem är din närmaste chef?
7. Vilka är dina närmaste underordnade?

Återkommande aktiviteter och informationskällor:

1. Hur styr du din verksamhet?
2. Vad är viktigt för att din enhet ska nå ett bra resultat?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Nu går vi igenom hur du skaffar dig information angående sakerna du nämnde. Tänk efter. Vilka tre typer av information tycker du är viktigast för att styra verksamheten?

Den första saken du nämnde..... Låt oss diskutera den

Information 1.1

- A. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- B. Hur ofta uppdateras informationen?
- C. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 1.2

- A. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- B. Hur ofta uppdateras informationen?
- C. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 1.3

- A. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- B. Hur ofta uppdateras informationen?
- C. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Finns det någon information som du inte får eller har tillgång till som du anser att du behöver för att styra den första saken du nämnde?

Den andra saken du nämnde....

Information 2.1

- D. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- E. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- F. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 2.2

- D. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- E. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- F. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 2.3

- D. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- E. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- F. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Finns det någon information som du inte får eller har tillgång till som du anser att du behöver för att styra den första saken du nämnde?

Den tredje saken du nämnde....

Information 3.1

- G. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- H. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- I. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 3.2

- G. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- H. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- I. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Information 3.3

- G. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- H. Hur ofta uppdateras information?
- I. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Finns det någon information som du inte får eller har tillgång till som du anser att du behöver för att styra den första saken du nämnde?

Användning av befintliga ekonomiska rapporter:

(Rapporterna kommer att studeras noggrant innan intervjuerna genomförs.)

1. Vilka rapporter får du?
2. Vilka två rapporter använder du oftast?
3. Vilka förklaringar finns det till att du använder... rapporten?
4. Vilka förklaringar finns det till att du använder... rapporten?

5. Vilka två rapporter använder du minst?
6. Vilka förklaringar finns det till att du inte använder... rapporten?
7. Vilka förklaringar finns det till att du inte använder.... rapporten?
8. Hur ofta har du tagit del av rapporten den senaste månaden?
9. Kommer du ihåg varför du studerade rapporten?
10. Frågor kring de rapporter som inte diskuterats tidigare
11. Situationsspecifika frågor som varierar mellan intervjuerna.

Kommunikation mellan chefer:

1. Hur ofta kommunicerar du med din överordnade kring frågor som rör ditt ansvarsområde? (Dagligen, varje vecka)
2. Hur sker den kommunikationen?
3. Vilka är de vanligaste frågorna som du och din chef diskuterar?
4. Hur ofta diskuterar du med dina underordnade kring frågor som rör deras ansvarsområde?
5. Hur kommunicerar du och dina underordnade med varandra? Dvs på vilket sätt sker kommunikationen? Telefon, brev, email, ledningsmöten, personliga möten och/eller formella rapporter.
6. Vilka är de vanligaste frågorna som du och dina underordnade diskuterar?

Prestationsutvärdering:

1. Hur ofta sker utvärdering av dig och din verksamhet?
2. På vilket sett sker utvärderingen? (Via rapporter eller muntligt?)
3. Hur reagerar han/hon på negativa differenser?
4. Vilka tre saker upplever du som mest centrala när din överordnade utvärderar dig?
5. Gör du någon skillnad på utvärdering av den utvärderades individuella prestation och enhetens prestation?

Avslutande frågor:

1. Vilka kontakter har du med ekonomifunktionen?
2. Har du själv någon ekonomiutbildning? (internt eller externt)

Frågeformulär för CEO och sales director

(Frågorna är framtagna med utgångspunkt i McKinnon & Bruns (1992) intervjuguide)

Återkommande aktiviteter och informationskällor (fokus på store managers agerande)

1. Hur upplever du att dina store managers styr sin verksamhet?
2. Vad anser du är viktigt för att avdelningar ska uppnå ett bra resultat?
3. Vilka tre typer av information är viktigast för att store managers ska kunna uppnå bra resultat?

Om vi fokuserar på de tre områden som nämnts, hur tror du att store managers arbetar med följande punkter inom respektive område:

- A. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
 - B. Hur ofta uppdateras informationen?
 - C. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?
4. Hur styr du själv din verksamhet?
 5. Vilka tre typer av information är då viktigast för dig och hur arbetar du med:
 - A. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
 - B. Hur ofta uppdaterades informationen?
 - C. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Ekonomiska rapporter

1. Vilka rapporter använder du dig av mest (minst)? (följ upp med att fråga varför/varför inte)
2. Vilka rapporter upplever du att store managers använder sig av mest (minst)?

Kommunikation mellan chefer

1. Hur inhämtar du information som berör försäljning?
2. Hur ofta kommunicerar du och hur, med area managers?
3. Hur ofta kommunicerar du och hur, med store managers?
4. Vad handlar kommunikation om? Vanligaste frågorna?

Prestationsutvärdering

1. Hur tänker du kring utvärdering av prestation generellt med fokus mot försäljningsbenet?
2. Hur ofta och på vilka grunder utvärderas store managers och area managers?

Avslutande

Något annat du vill tillägga?

Frågeformulär till CFO

(Frågorna är framtagna med utgångspunkt i McKinnon & Bruns (1992) intervjuguide)

Återkommande informationskällor

1. Hur ser du på bolagsstyrning i stort på Subsidiary B? (jämför gärna med tidigare erfarenheter)
2. Vilka tre typer av information är viktigast för dig i ditt arbete?
 - D. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
 - E. Hur ofta uppdaterades informationen?
 - F. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?
3. Vilka tre typer av information tror du att försäljningsorganisationen tycker är viktig för att kunna uppnå de uppsatta resultaten?
 - A. Hur tror du de skaffa sig den informationen?
 - B. Hur ofta tror du att de uppdaterar den informationen?
 - C. Tror du att de gör någonting utifrån den informationen?

Om vi fokuserar på de tre områden som nämnts, hur tror du att store managers arbetar med följande punkter inom respektive område:

- D. Hur skaffade du dig den informationen?
- E. Hur ofta uppdateras informationen?
- F. Gör du någonting utifrån den informationen?

Ekonomiska rapporter

3. Vilka rapporter använder du dig av mest (minst)? (följ upp med att fråga varför/varför inte)
4. Vilka nyckeltal tycker du är viktigast (minst viktigt) att mäta?

Kommunikation mellan chefer

1. Hur ofta kommunicerar du, och hur med dotterbolagen?
2. Hur ofta kommunicerar du, och hur med business controllers i dotterbolagen?
3. Vad handlar kommunikationen om?

Prestationsutvärdering

3. Hur tänker du kring utvärdering av prestation generellt med fokus mot försäljningsbenet?
4. Hur ofta och på vilka grunder utvärderas store managers och area managers?

Avslutande

Något annat du vill tillägga?