Sharing is Caring – When Done Properly

A study on customer knowledge transfer between dealers and distributors and the impact of GDPR

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PREFACE

It is with great sincerity that we want to thank all of the people that helped us along this journey. Firstly, a big thank you to our engaging supervisor Aku Valtakoski for valuable insights, feedback and constant support. Secondly, we want to thank our interviewees for wise and valuable insights, we are so grateful that you allowed us to take up your time. Thirdly, we also want to thank our opponents for helpful feedback along the way. Without all of you mentioned, this study would not have been possible - we are forever grateful!

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[Signatures]

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ABSTRACT

Title: Sharing is Caring - When Done Properly: A Study on Customer Knowledge Transfer Between Dealers and Distributors and the Impact of GDPR

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Background: The globalization has made organizations knowledge based and knowledge as a key resource in order to keep up with the changing market. Therefore, knowledge management became increasingly important which also was customer-centric throughout the whole supply chain in order to create customer value. With knowledge management being important, transfer barriers arose and as the increased collection of customer data was also evident as a result of organizations becoming more customer-centric and the rapid changes in technology. As a result of this, privacy issues about the data of the customer arose which lead to the implementation of GDPR.

Research Questions: What are the challenges and possibilities of the processes of customer knowledge transfer between organizations in a distributor-dealer relationship? In what way has the implementation of GDPR affected the transfer of customer knowledge between a distributor and a dealer?

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine how customer knowledge is maintained and transferred between organizations within a distributor-dealer relationship. In addition, the paper aims to investigate what forces affect the processes of transferring customer knowledge within these types of relationships. Furthermore, the study investigates what effects transfer barriers and the implementation of GDPR has on customer knowledge transfer within a distributor-dealer relationship.

Method: The paper investigated two cases. One case entailed one distributor and one dealer which had a relationship through a common supply chain. The qualitative data was obtained through 13 semi-structured interviews.

Conclusion: This study proves that customer knowledge transfer has both challenges and possibilities in a supply chain with a distributor and dealer relationship. Furthermore, there are several factors that affect this transfer such as communication, customer relationship management and transfer barriers. In addition, GDPR has barely any impact on the customer knowledge transfer. However, it does have an impact on the processes of organizations and can be seen as an opportunity for organizations even if organizations sometimes choose to see the negative aspects.

Key Words: Knowledge Transfer, Customer Knowledge, GDPR, Transfer Barriers, Customer Relationship Management, Organizational Culture, Communication, Inter-Organizational Collaboration, Supply-Chain
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 7
   1.1. Background .................................................................................................... 7
   1.2. Problematization .......................................................................................... 9
   1.3. Purpose .......................................................................................................... 10
   1.4. Research Questions ...................................................................................... 10

2. Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................... 11
   2.1 Collaboration within the Supply Chain ......................................................... 11
   2.2 Knowledge and Information .......................................................................... 11
   2.3 Knowledge Transfer ....................................................................................... 13
   2.4 General Data Protection Regulation ............................................................. 19
   2.6. Analysis Model ............................................................................................. 21

3. Methodology .......................................................................................................... 23
   3.1. Research Method .......................................................................................... 23
   3.2. Scientific Approach ....................................................................................... 23
   3.3. Research Design ........................................................................................... 24
   3.4. Case Selection ............................................................................................... 25
   3.5. Data Collection ............................................................................................. 29
   3.6. Processing Collected Qualitative Data ......................................................... 32
   3.7. Quality of Research ...................................................................................... 33
   3.8. Ethical Aspects ............................................................................................. 34

4. Empirical Study ...................................................................................................... 35
   4.1. Organizational Culture .................................................................................. 35
   4.3. The Organizational Systems/Processes ......................................................... 38
   4.3. Customer Knowledge .................................................................................... 41
   4.2. The Processes of Communication Between the Organizations ................. 45
   4.5. The Implementation of GDPR ..................................................................... 52

5. Analysis .................................................................................................................. 58
   5.1 Customer knowledge ...................................................................................... 58
5.2. Customer Knowledge Transfer ........................................................................ 60
5.3 Transfer Barriers ............................................................................................... 64
5.4 GDPR .................................................................................................................. 69
5.5 Successful Customer Knowledge Transfer or Not ............................................. 71
6. Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 73

What are the Challenges and Possibilities of the Processes of Customer Knowledge Transfer Between Organizations in a Distributor-Dealer Relationship? ......................................................... 73

In What Way has the Implementation of GDPR Affected the Transfer of Customer Knowledge Between a Distributor and a Dealer? ........................................................................... 74

6.1. Future Research ............................................................................................... 74
References .................................................................................................................. 75

Appendix .................................................................................................................... 81

Annex 1 - Interview Guide Used for Dealers ............................................................... 81
Annex 2 - Interview Guide Used for Distributors ......................................................... 83
List of Figures

Figure 1: Analysis model based on theoretical framework - own elaboration ........................................... 22
Figure 2: Summary of the cases’ structure - own elaboration ................................................................. 25

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of the interviewees of Case A - own elaboration ......................................................... 28
Table 2: Summary of the interviewees of Case B - own elaboration ........................................................ 28
Table 3: Summary of the General Findings of the Organizational Culture of Case A and Case B - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 35
Table 4: Summary of the Systems and Processes of Managing Customer Knowledge within Case A - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 38
Table 5: Summary of the Systems and Processes of Managing Customer Knowledge within Case B - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 39
Table 6: Summary of Customer Knowledge within Case A - own elaboration ........................................... 41
Table 7: Summary of Customer Knowledge within Case B - own elaboration ........................................... 43
Table 8: Summary of the Forms of Communication within Case A - own elaboration ............................ 45
Table 9: Summary of the Forms of Communication within Case B - own elaboration ........................... 46
Table 10: Summary of Knowledge Transfer Between the organizations of Case A - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 47
Table 11: Summary of Knowledge Transfer Between the organizations of Case B - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 50
Table 12: Summary of the Perception of the Implementation of GDPR of Case A - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 52
Table 13: Summary of the Perception of the Implementation of GDPR of Case B - own elaboration .................................................................................................................................................. 55
1. Introduction

The aim of the introduction chapter is to introduce the phenomenon and acknowledge the significance of studying it. This will be made by establishing background information and problematize the subject which in turn motivates the purpose and research questions.

1.1. Background

The end of the nineties was the starting point of the globalization that we know today. It got easier to connect with one another and the geographical factor was no longer an issue when communicating with people from all over the world (Becerra-Fernandez, Leidner and Leidner 2008). As globalization spread, companies had to adapt to the new market landscape in order to keep their competitive advantages (North and Kumta 2014), which is a concept Porter (1985) explains as when an organization achieves greater profits compared to its competitors. As a result, organizations had to use their creativity and knowledge within the organization and use this to evolve the company rapidly (North and Kumta 2014). Correspondingly, the business environment adapted and had to become knowledge based. This was a result of the faster market and innovation changes which resulted in products getting a shorter life cycle and their prices to fall faster (North and Kumta 2014). These changes in the market resulted in knowledge becoming a key resource (Arnett and Wittmann 2013) instead of the physical resources as before (North and Kumta 2014)). Consequently, this made managers in the nineties started to discuss the-so-called Knowledge Management (Hansen, Nohria and Tierney 1999), which North and Kumta (2014) can be defined:

“Knowledge Management enables individuals, teams and entire organizations to collectively and systematically create, share and apply knowledge to achieve their strategic and operational objectives.” (North and Kumta 2014:xxiii).

Furthermore, it is not only crucial within the single organization to gain and manage knowledge, Esper, Ellinger, Stank, Flint and Moon (2010) also explains the importance of implementing knowledge management that is customer-centric throughout the whole supply chain in order to create customer value. Harrison and van Hoek (2008) defines supply chain as the collaboration between organizations that work together to create an end product. Each organization contributes with a part of the chain, somewhere from the state of raw material to the customer purchase (Harrisonson and van Hoek 2008). Moreover, there has become a greater need for organizations to collaborate throughout the supply chain and exchange, for example, knowledge (Huxham, 1996). Huxham (1996) explains that collaboration between organizations therefore creates competitive advantages. Hence, for
knowledge to be effectively transferred within a supply chain, a form of communication between the organizations in the chain is needed (Buko and Wagner 2005; Chen, Lin and Yen 2014). Therefore, since the supply chains have become more complex there has been a need for greater collaboration between the organizations and this has required a more refined communication (Millar 2015). As knowledge processes needs to be managed, there can also appear transfer barriers, which prevents knowledge from being transferred (Krogh et al 2000 cited in Bounfour 2003, p. 160). There are seven different types of transfer barriers, one of those being the technological barrier. Bounfour (2003) states that the technologies of a company can be a transfer barrier if they are not compatible with the processes within the company. For collaboration between organizations to work, applicable information technologies need to be implemented, for example systems to manage customer information (Gou, Li, Lyu, Lyu and Zhang 2018).

Blattberg, Kim and Neslin (2008) argues that organizations are becoming more customer-centric, meaning that the organization revolves around the customer by organizing the company around fulfilling the needs of a customer instead of focusing on how a product should please a customer. This results in organizations being more customer oriented than product focused (Blattberg et al. 2008). Moreover, meeting the needs of the customer is essential to organizations to create a competitive advantage (Kumar and Reinartz 2012). Shieh (2011) define customer knowledge as:

“...the information that describes the customer’s behaviour, which includes their consumption preference, the consumption behaviour features, the contact channels preferred, and so on.” (Shieh 2011:791)

The importance of customer knowledge is evident with the increased collection of customer data. Organizations today have access to detailed data of customers, such as their habits of consumption (Anand and Shachar 2009). Collecting and sharing personal data of customers is something that has increased among organizations due to the evolution of advanced technology and globalization. Undoubtedly, this has allowed organizations to manage considerably more personal data (Regulation 2016/679:6). De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den bergh (2017) points out the value of managing customer information for marketing to individuals and even suggest that it is fundamental for organizations. Nevertheless, with information being this easily accessible to organizations, many customers perceive it to be harmful to their privacy (Krafft, Arden and Verhoef 2017). Furthermore, due to organizations processing personal data, protecting the privacy of individuals has become an important issue for the European Union (EU). The European Data Protection Directive (Directive
95/46/EC) was already adopted in 1995 (EDPS, 2018). However, at the time it was implemented, the internet was not used by the general household as it is now. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was finalized on the 27th of April 2016 as a repealing of Directive 95/46/EC with the aim to protect the individual in regard to the handling and free flow of personal data. This regulation was implemented by every state of the EU by the 25th of May 2018 and thus came into action (Official Journal of the European Union, 2016). This legislation arose to fit the contemporary usage of technology and to protect individuals against privacy issues that may arise from it (EUGDPR 2018).

1.2. Problematization

A study created by Krafft, Arden and Verhoef (2017) explains that a big challenge for companies today is how to contact and interact with potential customers. They further explain that this is due to the fact that customers often perceive messages that are individually reached to them as an interference of their privacy. Furthermore, Dolnicar and Jordaan (2007) highlight the concern among consumers regarding their privacy when leaving private information to organizations. Still, Greengard (2018) addresses that organizations have expressed resistance to implementing GDPR as many organizations profit from customer data. Axinte, Petrica and Bacivarov (2018) also explain the issue that organizations may not understand what impact GDPR may have on their processes.

North and Kumta (2014) describe how effective processes are crucial in order to be able to transfer knowledge within an organization. In addition, understanding how the processes works is also important for organizations within a supply chain in order to gain a competitive advantage (Fawcett, Ellram and Ogden 2014). Furthermore, as already mentioned, it is important for organizations to collaborate and exchange knowledge within a supply chain (Huxham 1996). By using the relationships within the supply chain, organizations have access to more resources and capabilities which makes it easier to meet the customer needs (Fawcett et al. 2014). However, Harrison and van Hoek (2008) explain that communication issues within supply chains often originates from a traditional thinking pattern of functional structure. This is an issue since supply chains is more crossfunctional today and therefore more complex. In addition, another issue that Davenport and Prusak (1998) argue for, is that the day-to-day knowledge transfer mainly occurs between employees within a convenient distance. Hence, employees that have problems and need to ask questions to solve them does not always reach the people with the right knowledge on the matter. Accordingly, there is a problem with knowledge transfer as it does not extend far in an organization. This result in that employees in possession of most knowledge on a matter, not being able to share their knowledge to those in need of it (Davenport and Prusak 1998).
Sales functions work closely with customers of the organization with the purpose of creating value to their customers in order to create organizational profit (Grant, 2016). Le Bon (2014) explains that salespeople have several tasks to focus on and are therefore not as committed to all of them due to a limited amount of time in a workday. Therefore, they choose to prioritize their time on customer interactions instead of sharing the customer knowledge they obtain. This results in a problem as the sharing of the competitive knowledge acquired through these interactions are not transferred to the other departments within the organization (Le Bon 2014).

To conclude, we see a lack of studies on customer knowledge transfer between dealer and distributor and what processes help or challenge these processes. In addition, we also believe that there is little knowledge of how GDPR have affected these processes as it is a new regulation. Therefore, we want to fill this gap.

1.3. Purpose
The purpose of this study is to examine how customer knowledge is maintained and transferred between organizations within a distributor-dealer relationship. In addition, we aim to investigate what forces affect the processes of transferring customer knowledge within these types of relationships. Furthermore, the study investigates what effects transfer barriers and the implementation of GDPR has on customer knowledge transfer within a distributor-dealer relationship.

1.4. Research Questions
Our purpose has resulted in following research questions:

- What are the challenges and possibilities of the processes of customer knowledge transfer between organizations in a distributor-dealer relationship?
- In what way has the implementation of GDPR affected the transfer of customer knowledge between a distributor and a dealer?
2. Theoretical Framework

The aim of this chapter is to present theories based on relevant sources in order to fulfill the purpose of this paper. At the end of the chapter, an analysis model is established based on the theories presented with the purpose of creating an overview of how the theories are connected and thus facilitate the analysis.

2.1 Collaboration within the Supply Chain

Nandonde (2019) claims that there is a general understanding that companies can benefit if they establish relationships within the supply chain. These benefits can be everything from financial resources to information, this creates a competitive advantage as they help reaching out to the customers (Nandonde 2019). Furthermore, collaborative relationships can also lead to competitive advantages through the flexibility as it can generate distinctive capabilities such as innovation (Mircea 2015). Grant (2016) states that this is why companies engage in these relationships, to take advantage of the other companies resources and capabilities. Even though all of these benefits, the collaborative relationships are very uncertain arrangements as they are often very unstable, and unorganized as a response to the size of the relationship (Klein and Poulmenakou 2006).

2.2 Knowledge and Information

Information can be described as a flow of messages (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Davenport and Prusak 1998) and Davenport and Prusak (1998) states that when commitment and beliefs are added to a flow of messages, knowledge is created. Additionally, Davenport and Prusak (1998) further addresses that knowledge is very much connected to the human factor as it is a part of the human complexity and unpredictability. Information and knowledge are undoubtedly interconnected to each other (North and Kumta 2014). Davenport and Prusak (1998) states that information and knowledge is similar in the sense that contextual information is a part of knowledge. Thus, these concepts are similar when it comes to meaning, in the sense that they are both context explicit and relational. In addition, information and knowledge are both dependent on the context considering their situational dependency as well as the fact that they are created in social interactions between individuals (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

According to Grant (2016), there are two different types of knowledge that are essential to knowledge management: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowing about whilst tacit knowledge is about knowing how. Furthermore, tacit knowledge is especially valuable for
organizations as it is inimitable and hard to transfer which is also the reason to how it can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Grant 2016). When tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge, the knowledge can be shared with others (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

2.2.1. Customer Knowledge

Bank (2000) states that customers are the most important component for businesses survival and mean that customers are the reason to why businesses exist. Organizations that put their customers first are called market- or business oriented and are also considered to be customer-centric. These types of organizations

“collects, disseminates and uses customer and competitive information to develop better value propositions for customers.” (Buttle 2009:5)

Businesses are in need of customers and therefore, the customers are doing the companies a favor when they purchase their products or services as they have the choice to purchase somewhere else (Bank 2000). Furthermore, for organizations to achieve competitive success, there needs to be an understanding of the customer needs (Grant 2016) and as a result, when obtaining knowledge of the customer, a greater value for the customer can be generated (Sain and Wilde 2014). Shieh (2011) define customer knowledge as

“the information that describes the customer’s behaviour, which includes their consumption preference, the consumption behaviour features, the contact channels preferred, and so on.” (Shieh 2011:791)

2.2.2. Knowledge Management

Bounfour (2003) states that knowledge is an intangible asset as it contains information, ideas, concepts and what they become when they are combined. This means that it is not possible to measure it as a tangible asset (Bounfour 2003). Therefore, it is hard to estimate the value of knowledge which results in that it is hard to manage (Pasher and Ronen 2011). Still, knowledge is a resource which is crucial as it helps obtaining and keeping a competitive advantage (Bounfour 2003). The concept of knowledge management as earlier explained by North and Kumta (2014):

“Knowledge Management enables individuals, teams and entire organizations to collectively and systematically create, share and apply knowledge to achieve their strategic and operational
The aim of knowledge management is to transform obtained information into knowledge to reach the competitive advantage it generates (North and Kumta 2014). Furthermore, North and Kumta (2014) explains that knowledge management contains following parts: creating, acquiring, sharing, using and protecting knowledge as well as learning. The challenge is to succeed with the management of these parts, to implement fitting processes (North and Kumta 2014). The management of knowledge is conducted through information systems (databases, intranets, CRM systems etc), educational sessions, lessons they learned during different activities and other ways to manage intellectual assets (Grant 2016). Davenport and Prusak (1998) explain that even though the knowledge management entail a structured form of transferring knowledge within a firm, it is important that organizations develop processes that encourages more spontaneous exchanges of knowledge. These spontaneous exchanges can happen when having open workspaces or “chatting by the water cooler” (Davenport and Prusak 1998). When knowledge management is implemented correctly individuals, teams and whole organizations can share and use the knowledge within the organization (North and Kumta 2014).

Inter-organizational knowledge is knowledge that has been obtained externally, explicit knowledge that has been transferred from other organizations (Leung, Lau and Fan 2007). The management of inter-organizational knowledge needs a vast set of processes such as technologies, support infrastructure and intellectual assets such as collaborative competences (Mircea 2015). Mircea (2015) stresses that the challenges with inter-organizational knowledge management is to share the knowledge within the relationship. They mention several factors such as the safety of the communication channels, the organizational culture and structures, the information technologies as well as the roles of the participants. Furthermore, Mircea (2015) mentions that some systems are not able to communicate properly between the organizations and this leads to problems as they are not able to reuse the transferred knowledge.

2.3 Knowledge Transfer

Davenport and Prusak (1998) explain that knowledge transfer occur when employees communicate with each other as Wilde (2011) confirms by also stating that the central necessity for the process of knowledge transfer is communication. In addition, Knowledge sharing is favorable for companies since it generates greater productivity and improves the organizational performance (Broedner et al. cited in Wilde 2011:34). Furthermore, Davenport and Prusak (1998) states that knowledge is always transferred in organizations regardless if there is an implemented process to manage the knowledge
transfer or not. Everyday knowledge transfers often occur between employees that are in a convenient distance to reach, even if the person in question may not be the right subject to ask. Davenport and Prusak (1998) further point out that this explains why employees contact coworkers that does not have the greatest knowledge of the matter. Hence, the bigger and the more complex the organization is, the greater problems employees will have finding people with the right competence to ask questions as well as to share relevant knowledge with. As mentioned before, knowledge is a crucial asset to an organization which cannot be easily bought and even though the right knowledge exists within an organization, it does not guarantee that it will be used (Davenport and Prusak 1998). Therefore, knowledge sharing should be encouraged by the organization and the organizations should create forums where employees can interact informally which enhances knowledge sharing between departments (Davenport and Prusak 1998). Furthermore, Le Bon (2014) expresses how sharing customer knowledge is not prioritized by sales people since they have a lot of tasks within their role which does not leave for any time to focus on transferring their obtained customer knowledge.

In addition, regarding knowledge sharing between organizations, Bukó and Wagner (2005) and Chen, Lin and Yen (2014) claim that there needs to be communication between organizations within a supply chain in order for knowledge to be shared between them. Chen et al. (2014) further states that trust is an important factor that enhances inter-organizational knowledge sharing. Trust can be achieved between the organizations by having a common goal. They further explained that sharing knowledge between organizations within a supply chain can create a sustainable competitive advantage. Buko and Wagner (2005) clarifies that more diverse knowledge will be created if it is shared between organizations compared to if it is shared within one organization. However, North and Kumta (2014) states that in most cases, there are no systematic processes that allow knowledge to be transferred outside of the organization.

2.3.1. Factors that affects the transfer of knowledge

There are factors that will enable and facilitate the transfer of knowledge within an organization and between organizations. However, there are also factors such as transfer barriers which will obstruct the transfer of knowledge. The following paragraphs will focus on what different factors affect the transfer of knowledge within an organization and between organizations in both a positive and negative way.

*Sense Making*

Organizations react differently to different situations as they do not have the same perception of information and what its value is (Bounfour 2003). Similarly, Choo (1998) discusses the concept of
sense making, which is when people try to adapt to a change or disturbance in their organisational environment. In addition, employees need to understand why the change occurred and what variables are necessary as a result of the change. This mutual understanding among co-workers creates a form of cognitive framework. Moreover, this framework works as a guideline for the employees in the matter of how they should act after the change has been implemented. The framework therefore helps when there is a lack of information. As a result, the shared beliefs and assumptions created from the framework is then used to fill the gaps or make the employee able to take action. Furthermore, this framework also helps to assess new information and find opportunities or threats with the change (Choo 1998). Additionally, employees acquire the same behaviors when they share information and meaning. When shared meaning and understanding is developed, the behaviors makes sense to the employees (Weick 1979 cited in Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Regarding change, in order for it to affect the organizational culture, it has to be phased and managed for years as that is what it takes to impact new behaviors and different practices (Laycock 2005).

**Organizational Culture**

The method of knowledge transfer must suit the culture of the organization for knowledge to be shared (Davenport and Prusak 1998). Furthermore, shared knowledge is derived by shared values (Furthermore, North and Kumta 2014) and the organizational culture has a great influence in the sharing of knowledge (Song-Qing 2011). Organizational culture can be described as following:

“A pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them with the norms for behaviour in the organization.” (Despandé, Farley and Webster cited in Buttle 2009:75)

Grant (2016) explains that organizational culture may also be called an intangible asset as it is seen as a crucial resource, it affects the efficiency and the capabilities within the organization. Culture can create cooperation and coordination within the organizational processes as a strong culture creates a form of identity within the company (Grant 2016). North and Kumta (2014) explains the ideal form of organizational culture for knowledge transfer is shared values, teamwork and coloured by an open and trustworthy environment. Furthermore, the company needs mature information systems and collaboration to enable a good environment for knowledge transfer. Song-Qing (2011) further states that in order to form an organizational culture that is focused on sharing knowledge, it is important that the top-management influence all the employees by manifesting the importance of knowledge sharing in their behaviors. Without a clear statement from top management about knowledge management processes, success will be hard to reach (Bounfour 2003). The culture of a supply chain...
derives from the integration and coordination of the organizational culture of the companies involved. Knowledge will be transferred between organizations if the supply chain culture is coordinated and balanced by communication and the acceptance of cultural differences (Song-Qing 2011).

Communication and Culture
Organizational culture is an important part of communication and there are several ways of communicating. Organizational culture provides structures on how to communicate in an effective manner. In addition, cultures can differ substantially, and each type creates different possibilities (Trenholm and Jensen 2013).

FitsPatrick and Valskov (2014) describes internal communication as:

“The planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees.” (Chapter 1, 2014).

Moreover, Boynton and Mishra (2014) explains that in order to build a culture of transparency within departments is dependent on the internal communication. They further clarify that effective internal communication is a tool to increase the trust of the employees which in turn is favorable to both the organization and its employees since the employers gain more motivation to build relationships with their customers (Boynton et al. 2014). Furthermore, regarding organizations within a supply chain, if there is little trust between the organizations within a supply chain it could be harmful for the organizations involved in the sense that it would make the supply chain inflexible and create risk. Furthermore, if there is trust between organizations in a supply chain, information can be transferred more quickly because of the increase of communication and the visibility and transparency which is derived from the trust (Waters 2011). Song-Qing (2011) explain that communication which occurs frequently between organizations within a supply chain will help creating a supply chain culture that encourage knowledge sharing between the companies.

Customer Relationship Management
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) have several definitions, in this thesis, we will base our theoretical framework of the following definition:

“A set of tools, techniques, and methodologies for understanding the needs and characteristics of customers in order to better serve them.” (Grant 2016:728)
Kumar and Reinartz (2012) states that the organizations gathered customer information can increase the efficiency and accuracy of the knowledge management processes that helps employees have a relationship with customers. The information within CRM also helps optimizing the customer experience. As this kind of information increase efficiency it is important to be able to identify the individual customers with processes that will attract them (Kumar and Reinartz 2012).

Kumar and Reinartz (2012) believes that in order for an organization to become customer centric, CRM must be perceived as a tool. CRM must be used and reinforced by all of the departments of a company as it does not belong to only one function. Buttle (2009) claims that the organizational culture could be an indicator to the success of CRM. The organizational culture that is most beneficial for an organization in relation to CRM is Adhocracy, which can be achieved if an organization has flexible, creative and risk-taking characteristics. (Buttle 2009).

2.3.2. Transfer Barriers

As the main goal of knowledge management is to share the obtained knowledge, by implication this means that it is not something happening at random. Hence, there is obstacles that needs to be overcomed in order to transfer knowledge, these are called transfer barriers (Krogh et al 2000 cited in Bounfour 2003, p. 160). The focus are kept on following barriers: ignorance, the intrinsic nature of knowledge, the individual barrier, the strategic barrier, the organizational barrier, cultural barrier and the technological and process barriers.

Ignorance

Bounfour (2003) states that knowledge sharing are used as a tool to reduce the ignorance of the employees and within the organization. Roberts (2012) explain that ignorance can be defined as shortage of knowledge or information. Hence, being ignorant means having a shortage of knowledge or information (Roberts 2012). In addition, ignorance is seen as a barrier to knowledge transfer as the knowledge first and foremost must be detected in order for it to be able to be transferred (Bounfour 2003). Furthermore, there are many reasons to why a person do not detect knowledge or stays ignorant, for example, being fearful of change or the unknown (Witte et al. 2008).

The Intrinsic Nature of Knowledge

Bounfour (2003) states that knowledge have different natures as knowledge management contains data, information and knowledge. Moreover, this means that knowledge is hard to manage and hence,
hard to transfer. Furthermore, knowledge also gets coloured by the one in possession of it, and therefore have an even more unforeseeable nature (Bounfour 2003).

The Individual Barrier

Von Krogh et al. (2000) cited in Bounfour (2003:161) writes that individual barriers entails the new relations a person gains when changes occur. A person's beliefs, position and identity is reflected on the knowledge he or she possess. That means that every time a person transfers knowledge they expose a bit of themselves, hence, it is crucial to build some sort of confidence within the organization to enable knowledge transfer (Bounfour 2003). Furthermore, Chen et al. (2014) explains that trust is a crucial factor for knowledge transfer in the inter-organizational environment as well. In addition, the fact that the person receiving the knowledge also asses it depending on the giver of the knowledge, makes this barrier even more significant (Davenport and Prusak 1998).

The Strategic Barrier

Bounfour (2003) states that the strategic barrier includes the crucial part of making employees recognize the importance of the development and transfer of knowledge, as it generates an increase in efficiency. This integration can be observed through both formal and informal activities by observing how the processes targeted at knowledge sharing are being received (Bounfour 2003).

According to Kumar and Reinartz (2012), if there is a function within an organization that believes that the customer is theirs and does not believe that they share the customers with another department, then this is considered that they would have a silo mentality. A silo mentality could be harmful for an organization as it prevents information from being shared within a company (Kumar and Reinartz 2012).

The Organizational Barrier

The organizational barrier are described by Bounfour (2003) as follows

“The procedures, standards and routines learned and actually applied, can constitute obstacles to the exchange and development of cooperative behaviour.” (Bounfour 2003:162)

Additionally, Bounfour (2003) means that here are several different factors that can be a barrier for any exchange between employees. Furthermore, even the implemented structures and processes employees act on can be obstacles for the transfer of knowledge (Bounfour 2003). Davenport and
Prusak (1998) states that a crucial part of knowledge management is also the spontaneous exchanges of knowledge for a company to be successful. This happens for example by the water cooler, company cafeteria or other places where informal communication takes place and result in people exchanging ideas. Therefore, it is important for companies to encourage informal interactions as well as create opportunities for it (Davenport and Prusak 1998).

The Cultural Barrier
Bounfour (2003) explains that there are cultural barriers which can negatively affect the organizational processes, such as communication, that in turn allows the transfer of knowledge. These cultural barriers are for example the lack of trust, different cultures, vocabularies, different ideas of what productive work is, intolerance for making mistakes and more Bounfour (2003). Davenport and Prusak (1998) means that there is a lesser chance for people to transfer knowledge if they do not understand or respect each other as people judge the information obtained depending on the person who present it, like in the individual barrier. Hence, companies should try to implement a culture that encourage knowledge transfer (Davenport and Prusak 1998).

Furthermore, Song-Qing (2011) explains that cultures may clash within a supply chain because of the differences in culture in the different organizations within the supply chain. This cause a barrier for transferring knowledge between the organizations which can be harmful for the organizations within a supply chain (Song-Qing 2011).

The Technological and Process Barrier
Bounfour (2003) states that the technological infrastructure and the processes within an organization can be transfer barriers if they lack necessary parts or if they do not support certain activities or functions. The technological solutions that an organization use might also be incompatible with the organizations dynamics such as the actual processes for transferring knowledge, which would make the technological infrastructure a transfer barrier (Bounfour 2003).

2.4 General Data Protection Regulation
The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679, also called GDPR, is a regulation within the law of data protection and privacy by the European Union. As mentioned in the background, this regulation was implemented the 25th of May 2018 by every state of the European Union. Consequently, GDPR had to be followed by this date and made enterprises take action (Official Journal of the European Union, 2016).
As a result of the increased advancement of technology and the increased globalization, the collection and sharing of personal data has increased significantly. This has made it possible for organizations to use personal data to a greater extent (Regulation 2016/679:6). Therefore, GDPR was created as a protection for individuals regarding the treatment of personal data and the free flow of these records (Regulation 2016/679:3). The treatment of personal data should be in favor to the people (Regulation 2016/679:4). The goal of this regulation is to create freedom, security, justice and thus the well-being for individuals. In addition, the purpose is also to strengthen the economies within the internal market (Regulation 2016/679:2).

GDPR require that organizations show how the individual’s personal data is collected and to what extent this data is used and to what reason they are used. This information needs to be clear and easily accessible to the individual whose data is being processed (Regulation 2016/679:39). In order to collect and use personal data legally, the individual whose data is being collected and used by another party needs to give consent for this (Regulation 2016/679:40). The consent needs to be given actively and voluntary through an affirmative action which shows the explicit consent of the individual whose personal data is being used by another party. This can be done by, for instance, actively clicking a box when visiting a webpage (Regulation 2016/679:32). In addition, the personal data of an individual that has been collected and used must be considered to be needed for the purpose of its usage which entails that the data in question needs to be stored to a strict minimum. To ensure that this requirement is upheld, it is necessary that there is a regular check implemented for deleting unnecessary personal data (Regulation 2016/679:39).

2.4.1 Opportunity or Threat
Garber (2018) discusses whether GDPR will be a challenge or opportunity for organizations. An argument that strengthens the latter is the fact that organizations will be forced to have a better overview of all the data and thus facilitate the analytics within the organization as a result of the implementation of GDPR. Garber (2018) further explain how this can be seen as an opportunity for enterprises:

“This will enable businesses to implement more effective analytics to pinpoint trends, predict future activity, inform changes to business processes and even identify new market opportunities” (Garber cited in Elsevier Ltd 2018:14).
However, Garber (2018) also highlights the fact that it takes a lot of time and resources for organizations to apply suitable actions for implementing a process that handle GDPR since the regulation does not explain how to do it. This can in turn be harmful for the day-to-day performance of an organization.

2.4.2 Privacy Interference

A study created by Krafft, Arden and Verhoef (2017) explains that a big challenge for companies in this day of age is how they contact and interact with potential customers. They further explain that this is due to the fact that customers often perceive messages that are individually reached to them as an interference of their privacy (Krafft, Arden and Verhoef 2017). In addition to this, the study of Dolnicar and Jordaan (2007) explain that there is a high concern among consumers regarding their privacy when leaving private information to organizations. In addition, privacy concerns arises from customers regarding their personal information in relation to the growing number of organizations that collect individual data from customers (De Pelsmacker, Geuens and van den Bergh 2017).

Europe’s competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager expresses in an interview for the Recode (2017) how individuals now have started to understand that their personal data have value. Furthermore, Greengard (2018) address that organizations have expressed resistance to implementation GDPR since many organizations profit from collecting data from individuals.

2.6. Analysis Model

To be able to answer our research questions, the following model will be used for the analysis. The model has been created based on the theories of knowledge transfer and GDPR. The model focus on how customer knowledge can be successfully transferred in a distributor-dealer relationship. Furthermore, communication and organizational culture acts as mediums for successful knowledge transfer to happen. Transfer barriers and GDPR are the factors that affects the communication and organizational culture in the processes of transferring knowledge. In addition, “Transfer Barriers” is a collective name for the seven transfer barriers covered in the theoretical framework: Ignorance, The intrinsic nature of knowledge, the individual barrier, the strategic barrier, the organizational barrier, the cultural barrier and lastly the technological and process barrier.
Figure 1: Analysis model based on theoretical framework - own elaboration
3. Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the different approaches taken in the process of conducting this paper. Topics such as approaches, nature of the phenomenon, how empirical and theoretical data was conducted as well as quality and ethical aspects are covered.

3.1. Research Method

As our paper are focused on customer knowledge and knowledge is not easily measured (North and Kumta 2014), the research method of this paper will be that of a qualitative one. There are two methods, *qualitative* and *quantitative*, that are used for business research. The qualitative approach focus on words rather than numbers as a result of the more explorative nature when analyzing a phenomenon rather than keeping an objective viewpoint through numerical data like with the quantitative method (David and Sutton 2016). As the aim of this paper is to explore and get a deeper understanding of our chosen phenomenon the research strategy will be qualitative. Furthermore, our data collection will be obtained through qualitative interviews and words will therefore be analyzed instead of quantitative measurements. As our research questions are general in the aspect of asking “how”, the paper will explore the different aspect of this knowledge phenomenon and ad to a better quality. By using the qualitative method the paper will have the chance to change as the collection of data will provide with new theories (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019).

3.2. Scientific Approach

In this paper, theories will be collected before the gathering of data but after analyzing the data theories will arise from the responses from the interviews that will be conducted. Therefore, this paper will be conducted with an *abductive* approach. The abductive approach is a combination of the two main approaches of how to view the relationship between theory and research, which are called *deductive* and *inductive* approach. The deductive approach needs a more structured way of processing data (David and Sutton 2016). Therefore, the gathering of theory will take place before the empirical study in a deductive approach, as the theories will be the base for the data collection and analyzation. The method usually test a hypothesis/hypotheses and they then test the theory in the empirical study (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). Controversially, the inductive approach explore a phenomenon rather than observing it (David and Sutton 2016) and when the empirical study is finished, theories are then based on the collected data (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). The advantages with analyzing existing research before the data collection, is that we could base our interview questions on the research, enabling better responses for our empirical study. Furthermore, the deductive approach is visible through the gathering of theoretical material before our gathering
of qualitative data, as we structured our interview guides accordingly to those theories. The inductive side of the paper took place during the interviews and while going through the collected data and finding new ways to tackle our problem. Our abductive approach however, is more deductive than inductive, as most of our theories were collected beforehand and worked as a foundation for our interview questions. On the other hand, our paper is also inductive in the sense that some theories were chosen after the interviews took place in order to refine our paper.

There are different ways of how to relate to the reality and in this case, the nature of reality of the phenomenon. One way is through phenomenology, this means that this paper will be concerned with how individuals understand the world around them and how they interact in it (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). As this paper seek to understand the ongoing phenomenon and how the interviewees have experienced it, the meaning of the paper lies in their actions and thoughts. As this paper will explore the experiences of the interviewees this paper takes a constructionist position as the phenomenon would not be able to be interpreted without the interviewees reality which is created through the interviewees interactions and actions. Furthermore, this leads to an epistemological position of an interpretivist, this means that this paper will obtain knowledge through the understanding of the interviewees actions and experiences. Thus, understanding the phenomenon on a deeper level through making interviewees answer “how” and “why” is how the data will be gathered (Bryman et al. 2019).

3.3. Research Design

There were two research strategies that were considered before we chose the multiple-case study. This research paper will analyze two distributor-dealer relationships, whilst also looking more in depth in the dealers’ processes. This means interviewing a wide range of interviewees which holds different positions within the four organizations. The research will be conducted in such a way that a dealer together with their distributor is one case. Why we chose to use a multiple-case study design instead of a cross-sectional study was because of the depth we needed and the context our phenomenon was a part of. As GDPR was implemented recently and is still in a reformable stage, a cross-sectional design was not the optimal choice as those designs are mainly focused on a single point in time. Furthermore, in cross-sectional designs, the type of collected data is preferably quantifiable and are optimally used for surveys which is not applicable for this paper. This is because, to obtain the data needed to conduct this research there needs to be a detailed and intensive analysis of the two cases since it will be built on the actions and experiences of the interviewees (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). Therefore, a cross-sectional study is not optimal as the focus is then on the relationships between variables and to find differences between them. Furthermore, the
crosssectional study needs a more systematic and standardized method to obtain results. Even though they are similar in many ways, a case in the multiple-case study can be a process which then will be analyzed more in depth (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019).

To choose semi-structured interviews came rather naturally following the qualitative research method, the abductive approach and our multiple-case study as we wanna explore the phenomenon in depth. The qualitative interviews is not only about asking questions and getting an answer back, but to listen and understand the interviewees experiences (David and Sutton 2016). As it is at the core of this research paper to interpret and explore the phenomenon, semi-structured interviews with their interview guide is a great way of collecting data. The interview guide simplifies the process for the interviewer by keeping important topics and questions ready but still letting the interviewees talk very freely as the interviewees emotions and actions are in focus. With this kind of interview, the process can be flexible as new questions might be made up as the interview go on to find new interesting aspects (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019).

3.4. Case Selection

The dealers and distributors were chosen through the so called snowball sampling as the two cases were chosen through acquaintances and thereafter through accessibility (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). Through initial contact with an acquaintance within the potential company we were directed to the right person to talk to, through them we were connected with their counterpart, dealer or distributor and the potential interviewees for our interviews. As the sampling is dependent on the knowledge and the extent of contacts that our acquaintances have, the sampling might be coloured by their opinions about the organizations and interviewees (David and Sutton 2016). At the same time, since these acquaintances have more knowledge about the organizations and interviewees compared to us, they were suitable to help us connect with the suitable organizations and interviewees. Furthermore, the chosen cases are referred as Case A and Case B in this research paper and the structure of these cases are demonstrated underneath:

![Figure 2: Summary of the cases’ structure - own elaboration](image-url)
Furthermore, within each case there are two different organizations, a dealer and a distributor, that operate in the same supply chain. Accordingly, there are four organizations covered in this paper that operate in two different supply chains. Therefore, when referring to a distributor-dealer relationship, this alludes to two organizations within the same case. In addition, both cases have sales departments, marketing departments and after sales departments. Regarding the organizational structure of the two cases and how the communication is conducted between them, there are some slight differences between them. In Case A, there are regional managers in Distributor A that have the most direct contact with Dealer A. In Case B, there are regional managers that works like a middle man between Dealer B and Distributor B, but they do not work in the same organization as Distributor B. Hence, there is a slight difference in the organizational structure between the organizations. We did unfortunately not have the option to interview the regional managers in both cases, however, both cases were capable of answering how the communication was between the organizations and they also had the most knowledge about the implementation of GDPR, which is a big focus in this paper.

Both of the cases do not operate in the same exact industry, however, they do operate in similar industries in the Swedish market that involves bigger purchases of motor vehicles. This paper will not focus on the industries but more on the inter-organizational processes of the organizations. Nevertheless, the fact that they operate in slightly different industries affects the paper in regards to the fact that the industry has an effect on the organizational culture of the cases according to some of the interviewees. We believe that this does not discredit our paper as our main focus is on the internal knowledge transfer process and not how the industry is connected to it.

There were more people interviewed from the dealers compared to the distributors. This is not because we consider the dealers to be more important nor is it because it is the types of organizations we focus on. We chose to interview more people from the dealers in order to get closer to the source of customer information as we believe that most customer knowledge is obtained in the customer meeting. For example, the interviews of the distributors had a longer duration as these interviewees had more responsibility in the organizations and had more knowledge about the phenomenon. We interviewed more people from dealers as we had an easier access to interview more people in these organizations. These interviews were not as long as the interviews of the interviewee from the distributors. Looking at the distribution of the conducted empirical data from each interviewee, it is even except for minor deviations. Not as much empirical data was gathered from interviewee A6 since this person was quite new to the job and were in the process of taking over responsibilities from
interviewee A5, who was mentioned some more compared to the rest of the interviewees from the same dealer.

We chose to cover two different cases as this would increase the credibility of our findings in comparison to solely investigating one case. Moreover, the decision to investigate two cases was also based on the limited amount of time and the nature of our phenomenon. There was a desire to create a deep understanding of the phenomenon which resulted in the collection of in depth qualitative material from two cases which were the amount of cases the time frame allowed. In addition, we believed that it would be interesting to see if there are any differences between the cases and if they have handled the processes differently. Furthermore, two cases gives the study a better credibility. Through email contact and telephone meetings with the distributors, the phenomenon were discussed and they confirmed the relevance of the topic to us before we fully chose to use them as empirical data.

3.4.1 Case A and Case B

The following tables of each case show the different positions and responsibility each interviewee has. In addition, each interviewees have been given an alias for anonymity reasons. Important to acknowledge is that Dealer B had more than one distributor while Dealer A has solely one.
The positions of the people in Distributor A and Distributor B were very similar as they had mostly the same tasks and responsibilities in their roles. However, when comparing Dealer A and Dealer B, the positions of the interviewees were quite different. For example, at Case B we interviewed a
financial manager which was not the case at Case A since we did not have the intention of looking into questions regarding the responsibilities of a financial manager. However, the reason to as why we interviewed a financial manager at Case B was because that person was responsible for the implementation of GDPR at that dealer. Moreover, it was crucial for us to interview a person at Dealer B that was in charge of GDPR as that topic is a big part of our paper and we interviewed a person with that responsibility at Dealer A. In addition, we wished to interview a marketing manager and a brand manager at Dealer B which was planned. However, the person we were supposed to interview was not able to be present at the time we held the interviews. This could have resulted in a negative impact of our paper since we might have lost comparing views as we had interviewed people with those positions at Dealer A. However, interviewee B4 assured us that they had similar insights as the individual that could not attend, since B4 had worked at Dealer B for a long period of time and also had similar responsibilities but in different fields. This might result in that the answers of the interviewees have different view as they are explaining from their respective position at their companies. Still, there should be a correlation between the positions as we described what we wanted to investigate to our contacts. This resulted in different roles but to explain how it can also work, one position can involve GDPR responsibility but at the corresponding company the GDPR responsibility can lay on a different position within that organization.

3.5. Data Collection

3.5.1. Pre-study
The process of finding a suitable research subject emerged from our personal interest in Knowledge Management and customer relations. The first challenge of finding a relatable phenomenon was made by studying a substantial amount of sources related to the subjects, taking notes and making mind maps of keywords. Coming across the article Improving marketing success: The role of tacit knowledge exchange between sales and marketing by Arnett and Wittman (2014) that explained that customer knowledge within the sales department did not get shared to other departments which was a problematization we took an interest in and wanted to research this further. In addition, to examine the viability of our potential research topic, we made a pre study that involved contacting organizations that we questioned to examine if they found this problematization relatable or not. The response to the possible research question was mostly positive, however, the second organization we contacted explained their problem with knowledge sharing and how they would handle customer data in relation to GDPR. We found this problematization both more interesting and relevant compared to the first phenomenon we were considering. Therefore, we took the new topic proposition in consideration and contacted two other organizations to see if they also had experienced issues with
this phenomenon, which they had. Therefore, we chose this topic based on our personal interest, the relevance of the problem and the positive response of the organizations.

3.5.2. Secondary Data  
Secondary data is the type of data which originally was conducted for another purpose than for this thesis, but can be reused in order to support arguments of this thesis (Hox and Boeije 2005). Secondary data was collected early on in order to get a thorough literary understanding of the phenomenon concepts we were going to cover. The secondary data in forms of articles was collected using the databases UniSearch provided by Linköping University as well as Google Scholar. When searching relevant secondary data, keywords related to our thesis such as “Knowledge Management”, “GDPR”, “Knowledge Transfer”, “Supply chain”, “Customer Knowledge” et cetera. were used. In addition to this, textbooks provided by the library of Linköping University were also used as secondary data.

3.5.3. Primary Data  
Primary data can be defined as the data collected by the researcher for a particular purpose which could be conducted in different forms such as observations and qualitative interviews (Hox and Boeije 2005). The primary data collection of this thesis is semi-structured interviews, where the transcribed answers from the interviews were used in the paper. Semi-structured interviews is a type of interview where the questions asked are in a general form compared to a structured type interview. In addition to asking general questions, the interviewer also has the authority to ask follow-up questions to gather relevant replies during a semi-structured interview (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). This type of interviewing was chosen as primary data primarily since it provides open-ended answers (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019) that are of importance to this thesis for in-depth answers. It allows for an exploration of the individual experiences regarding the implementation of a GDPR strategy, which is what we are looking for in order to answer the research questions.

3.5.4. Preparation of Semi-Structured Interviews  
When preparing for the semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was created, which is a document with questions to the interviewee that we would follow during the interview (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). We chose to do two slightly different interview guides, one for the dealers and one for the distributors to make them applicable for each type of organization. However, the people within the same organization got the same questions. The purpose of this guide was to make sure that we asked relevant questions to obtain the material we needed for our study. We took into consideration that there may be situations where the interviewer reacts to something that the
interviewee says, which in that case the interviewer has the permission to ask follow-up questions. Furthermore, the individuals we chose to interview and the questions we asked were based on the problematization, the research questions and the theoretical framework. The questions were categorized into sections that were divided into the covered subjects in the theoretical framework, which made sure that all aspects of the research questions were covered.

In addition, the interview guides were conducted in Swedish as it is the first language of us as well as the interviewees. Hence, we wanted to make sure that all the interviewees understood our question and would be able to answer thoroughly in a language they feel comfortable in. By having our interviews in Swedish we made sure that there would be no loss in the understanding between us and the interviewees during the interview.

3.5.5. Realization of Semi-Structured interviews

As the interviews were semi-structured we asked open questions but in times when the interviewee started to get off topic, we would ask follow-up questions in order to make sure that the interviewee answered our question and to make sure that the answers were relevant to our purpose. When interviewing the subjects, one observed as the other asked the questions, we were always two so we would be able to fill each other in if someone forgot something. Furthermore, the interviews were held in Swedish.

The interviews of case A and B took place at their respective workplace. The interviews were between approximately 20 minutes to 80 minutes and, depending on the interviewees position within the company. Salespeople took shorter time to interview while the interviewees from the Distributors all have a time over 60 minutes. The aim was to get enough qualitative material for our empirical data and concurrently not take too much time from their work day. Furthermore, all interviews were recorded with consent from all interviewees. We chose to record the interviews for two reasons. Firstly, this allowed both interviewers to be fully present during the interview as there will be no need to write down everything that the interviewee is saying. This is necessary because of the importance of being able to follow up on interesting points and being completely alert (Bryman and Bell 2016). Secondly, recording the interviews made sure that we could transcribe the interview which in turn would facilitate the coding and the conducting of empirical data for our research paper (Ibid).

Important to address is also that the interviewees answers regarding knowledge. They did not always understand the difference between knowledge and information. Thus, many times the answers
entailed information but as information is a part of knowledge, this paper will handle it the same way as they are often linked in some way.

3.6. Processing Collected Qualitative Data

The interviews held was recorded which was helpful in the processing of our collected information. With the assistance of these recordings we transcribed all of the interviews by writing down every word that was said except for “filler sounds” like for example “um” and “like”. This was extremely time consuming considering that 13 interviews were transcribed. After all of the interviews were transcribed, we read through all of the transcriptions in order to detect any mistakes and to make sure that the questions were written down. Thereafter, the process of coding the answers begun by making four tables, one for each organization. These tables consisted of the questions and the most important part of what each interviewee answered which gave us a clear overview of all the answers and was very helpful when conducting the empirical data. When the relevant data for our study had been detected we wrote the empirical part of this research paper. As the interviews were held in Swedish we had to translate the material into English as we were writing the empirical chapter. This might change the meaning of the responses but we were very aware of this fact when translating and stayed as true to the original responses and interviewees as possible. Furthermore, the transcriptions and coding were made in Swedish but the data was translated into English the empirical data was written based on the collected material. This was done as carefully as possible to make sure that there were no mistranslations that could change the meaning of what an interviewee was saying. Both of us were present and the interview guides were translated jointly to minimize the personal bias and changing the meaning of the questions.

3.6.1. Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The analysis was based on the theoretical framework. Since the theoretical framework is quite large, an analysis model was made with the purpose of facilitate the understanding of our theoretical framework as well as working as a foundation for the analysis. The analysis was constructed after the analysis model in order to get the clearest structure possible to be able to follow the same line of argument. The analysis was conducted through mind maps and extensive discussions around how to tackle the theories and collected qualitative data. In the end we followed our tables from the empirical study and used them to concretize our analysis in relation to our analysis model.
3.7. Quality of Research

The quality of our research will be evaluated in relation to the two criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) which is cited in Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019:363) as they believe that qualitative research should be evaluated differently from quantitative research. These criteria are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness entails following four criterions: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019).

Firstly, the credibility of the paper will be analyzed. This criterion entails the ensurement of that the research has been performed with good practice in mind and ensuring that the findings of studied social world are valid (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). This research has handled this phenomenon by gathering qualitative data from several different perspectives to understand the phenomenon’s surrounding. Through 13 performed interviews we have gotten the same perspective on some findings. This is visible in Case B since we after Case A saw that the seller had deviant opinions which resulted in that we interviewed two sellers on Case B to see if it was a recurring phenomenon among sellers. Through transcribing and then dividing the questions, we tried to make it easier for us to evaluate the responses together to keep the credibility. Controversially, it can be argued that we should have sent the qualitative findings of the interviews to the participants and done the so-called respondent validation (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). This has been evaluated but due to the limited time and the negative aspects of this approach we did not the validation. Secondly, our research can be transferred to our businesses as the distributor-dealer relationship can be seen throughout the markets. Furthermore, for companies to stay relevant they need to manage customer knowledge and as GDPR affects all companies within the markets of the European union this research paper can be applied to other businesses which is what the criterion of transferability entails (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). Thirdly, the dependability criterion involves the possibility to depend on the research and trust it, this means for example that external parties evaluate our paper and that the procedure of the paper is held transparent (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). The chapter of the methodology has been kept as transparent as the description of the processes of this paper has been described in depth. Furthermore, the paper has been evaluated at several occasions during seminars and sporadic exchanges of information with classmates where the paper has been questioned. By doing this, we can further depend on the findings in this research. Fourthly, the confirmability criterion of trustworthiness focus on how personal values and other factors affect the findings. As we were two writers of this paper, all steps were discussed and performed together which eliminates the individual bias of one person. During the interviews both attended to gain a better understanding of the interviewee to gain qualitative data with no personal values as both asked and reacted to questions.
The last criterion, authenticity, focus according to Bryman, Bell and Harley (2019) on the bigger picture of the research quality, that the research should be fairly represented through different perceptions of the phenomenon. Hence, the interviewees should be able to understand their settings better and be able to change them (Bryman, Bell and Harley 2019). We described our purpose and process of the research to our interviewees before every interview and answered their questions so that they would know how we would go about. The participating interviewees and organizations will be provided with a copy of this study.

3.8. Ethical Aspects

It is important to not cross any lines or intrude on an individual's privacy according to David and Sutton (2016). There needs to be respect for the interviewees and the findings they provide, therefore there are several ethical codes to follow. This section will discuss the following criteria: informed consent, integrity, confidentiality and anonymity (David and Sutton 2016).

The first criteria, informed consent means, according to Berg (1998) cited in David and Sutton (2016:51), that the individual participating in the study has chosen freely to participate with no form of blackmail or manipulating and so on behind it. The interviewees were informed about the study and the interview and were then asked if they gave consent to their responses being used in the study. The second criteria, integrity involves the interviewees personal integrity and that it cannot be aggrieved (David and Sutton 2016). The requirements for this criteria will be met as the obtained qualitative data will be erased when the research study is finished. Hence, we can assure that the material does not end up in the wrong hands. Furthermore, the interviewees gave consent and were fully aware that this material would be used for this thesis. The third criteria of anonymity focus on the privacy of the interviewees (David and Sutton 2016). At the beginning of every interview the participants were informed about their anonymity in the study as personal details and names are not included in the study. Lastly, the fourth criteria of confidentiality entail the fact that no information obtained about the interviewees can be revealed (David Sutton 2016). To keep this criteria, the interviewees has been given new aliases such as A1, A2 et cetera. Moreover, to make sure that nothing can be traced back to an interviewee, no names for either organization or employees has been stated.
4. Empirical Study

The aim of this chapter is to present the empirical data gathered from the interviewees at Case A and Case B, in a structured manner. The chapter is divided into the topics of organizational culture, the organizational systems/processes, customer knowledge, the processes of communication, knowledge transfer and lastly the implementation of GDPR.

4.1. Organizational Culture

Table 3: Summary of the general findings of the organizational culture of Case A and Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>General Findings</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>General Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Case A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Case B</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Distributor A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Distributor B</strong></td>
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<td>A1</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Familiar</td>
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<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
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<td>Product Oriented</td>
<td>Short Decision Paths</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
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<td>A2</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Flat Organization</td>
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<td>Traditional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Customer-Centric</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Self-Responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
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<td><strong>Dealer A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Dealer B</strong></td>
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<td>A3</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Personal Commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Customer-Centric</td>
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<td>Mutual Respect</td>
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<td>A4</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Well-Being</td>
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<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Customer-Centric</td>
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<td>Familiar</td>
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<td>A5</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Personal Commitment</td>
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<td>A6</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Customer-Centric</td>
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<td>Well-Being</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above covers the most important findings gathered from the interviewees’ responses to the question “How would you describe the organizational culture?”. Correspondingly, the interviewees solely answered in regard to the organization they operate in, therefore, the culture mentioned is not considering the culture of the other organization within the same Case. For example, the response of interviewee A1 describes the organizational culture of Distributor A and not of Dealer A.

4.1.1. Case A

The organizational culture at Distributor A is described by both interviewees as positive where the employees support and help each other with problems. Furthermore, the organizational culture is also...
explained as open where the employees have mutual respect for one another and you are not afraid to ask questions. Interviewee A2 explains that the environment is considered to be safe and that the employees tries to highlight the positive qualities of each individual. However, both of the interviewees of Distributor A also highlights the fact that the industry they operate in affects their organizational culture in the sense that it is traditional and is not up to date with the today’s market. Both interviewees mean that this more hierarchical structure is a negative aspect of their organizational culture. Interviewee A1 states:

“There is a need of another way of thinking. Our industry is of tradition and therefore of natural reasons very product-oriented. We have very talented engineers that of course have a lot of customer insight in how the product should look like and how it should be launched into the market, but the organizational culture over years and decades is built upon a certain flow. To change that thinking pattern and to be totally customer-centric in the development and in the everyday operations is not that easy. This is noticeable since there is no ruling from the top that encourage the implementation of a holistic view around the customer.” (Interviewee A1 2019)

Regarding the organizational culture of Dealer A, it is similar to Distributor A in the sense that the employees help each other. All of the interviewees mentioned their own company spirit that entailed an open atmosphere where interviewees A3, A5 and A7 explained that they all help each other. The organizational culture is very familiar and the employees trust each other. Furthermore, there was a big focus on the well-being of the employees which in turn generates happy customers. Interviewee A4 explains that:

“We believe that if we have a happy staff, we will get happy customers which in the best case generates to a sensible profit to us.” (Interviewee A4 2019)

4.1.2 Case B
Interviewee B2 describes the organizational structure within Distributor B as flat and describes further that the organizational culture entails a lot of self-responsibility. B1 confirms this by explaining that the organization is very transparent and flexible with short decision paths. However, interviewee B2 explains that they work towards an objective goal but do not have certain structures to follow. The flat structure is further confirmed by interviewee B1 who discuss that as the company is very big employees tend to focus solemnly on their own task, does not think about how their decisions affect the end-customer. However, interviewee B2 still states that the organization is customer-centric. Furthermore, the interviewees of Distributor B explains the organizational culture
as familiar and helpful. Interviewee B1 is still relatively new at the company and explains the feeling of familiarity as warm and friendly within Distributor B. Moreover, the organizational culture of Dealer B is generally explained as customer-centric, interviewee B5 explains that it is not only to sell the product but you need to help and follow up on what they think about the product. Furthermore, most of the interviewees mentions their personal commitment in the organization and its customers. The concept is explained by interviewee B4 bellow

“...that all employees should feel that the little extra I do, it affects all our customers and that allows us to keep them and gain more customers’.” (Interviewee B4 2019)

Interviewee B3 explains the organizational culture as very familiar where there is a sense of wellbeing and the employees enjoy each other’s company outside of work as well. The interviewee also states that the organization is very flexible with short decision paths. However, interviewee B6 states that the company can not be too flexible as there are many employees within the organization. Furthermore, interviewee B4 explains that the organizational culture is divided and that the different facilities have different cultures. This is further explained as they have grown as a company they have a hard time becoming unified. Interviewee B4 still hopes that the personal commitment is well integrated in all parts of the organization.
4.3. The Organizational Systems/Processes

4.3.1. Case A

Table 4: Summary of the systems and processes of managing customer knowledge within Case A - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Used Systems</th>
<th>Functionality of Systems and Processes</th>
<th>Opinions on the Systems and Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>• Managing customer journey&lt;br&gt;• Following the products journey</td>
<td>• Wants to extend the current sales system&lt;br&gt;• The sellers need to understand the process of knowledge transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>• Helping the sales process from the state of “lead”&lt;br&gt;• Loyalty program</td>
<td>• Dealers choose what knowledge to transfer to Distributor A as they do not actively search for it&lt;br&gt;• Challenging to get dealers to use the system actively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distributor A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Used Systems</th>
<th>Functionality of Systems and Processes</th>
<th>Opinions on the Systems and Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>• Managing customer journey&lt;br&gt;• Follow employees interactions with customers</td>
<td>• Challenge to make employees use the processes of managing customer knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>• Managing customer journey</td>
<td>• Challenging to follow the changing needs of the customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Mentions CRM system</td>
<td>Expresses no knowledge</td>
<td>• Express that A5 solely work with internal support functions and does not need knowledge about the customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>Expresses no knowledge</td>
<td>• Wants a unified system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>A sales system with functions of a CRM system</td>
<td>• Managing customer journey</td>
<td>• The system is very slow&lt;br&gt;• The system is invaluable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To manage customer knowledge Distributor B uses a sales system with functionalities of a CRM system. Interviewee A1 explains that the system is used to manage the customer journey and follow the product journey. Furthermore, interviewee A2 states that the system also entails a loyalty program and support for the sales process. Interviewee A1 wants to see that the sales system are expanded. Moreover, both interviewees from Distributor B expresses challenges with dealers in regards of the systems. Interviewee A1 states that the sellers at the dealers need to understand the process of transferring knowledge, while interviewee A2 sees the difficulty in that the dealers choose what knowledge should be transferred to Distributor A. This becomes an issue as the sales system is used by the dealers but according to A2, the dealers do not use it actively as the system is rather complex. Distributor A in turn does not search actively for the knowledge themselves which result in a gap.

Within Dealer A they use the same sales system as within Distributor A and a register to find potential customers. In the system they manage the customer journey and interviewee A3 states that they follow the employees’ interactions with the customers. A3 further explains that they obtain
knowledge about the satisfaction of the customer and the customers’ perception of Dealer A. Still, the interviewee confirms Distributor A’s stated challenges, to make the employees use the processes of managing customer knowledge. Furthermore, interviewee A6 wants the sales system to encompass all of their activities in other systems, into the mainly used, sales system. Interviewee A7 states that the system is slow but states that it is invaluable to their position as a seller as it helps managing the sales process. Moreover, according to interviewee A4 it is challenging to meet the customers ever changing needs which A4 explains as follows.

“...aim at the right customer which we may had a relation to three years ago when his or hers living situation looked like this /.../ and then you change job and in three years you have met both life partner and had children and you may have moved, it is a movement all the time”

(Interviewee A4 2019)

4.3.2. Case B

Table 5: Summary of the systems and processes of managing customer knowledge within Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems and Processes of Managing Customer Knowledge in Case B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distributor B</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Dealer B</strong>                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Used Systems</th>
<th>Functionality of Systems</th>
<th>Opinions on the Systems and Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Sales system</td>
<td>Can follow both product and customer</td>
<td>Pretty good system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not connected to Distributor B</td>
<td>Means that it contains all information needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Sales system</td>
<td><strong>Mentions none</strong></td>
<td>Wish the system entailed customer segmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Sales system</td>
<td>Entails customer and product information</td>
<td>Old system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wants it to entail additional features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td><strong>Mentions none</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mentions none</strong></td>
<td>Solely relies on memory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distributor B use a CRM system to manage their customer knowledge, the system is connected to the subsidiary companies and the dealers solely through an internet portal. The CRM systems manage the customer and product journey. Interviewee B2 also mentions a system handling support issues which for example covers product defaults. Interviewee B1 further explains that the CRM system is
used to obtain customer information that the salespeople possess. Furthermore, the CRM system is mainly for managing potential customers but it also entails recurring customers as well as a connection to sold products. Moreover, B2 mentions a system handling active cases too. The systems are explained as not user friendly, hard to use, not complete and as a whole, not suitable for their company. Furthermore, interviewee B1 explains that there is not a lot of information in the system and continues by saying that they are generally bad at following up on lost customer, customers that choose not to buy a product in the end. Interviewee B2 confirms this by stating that the CRM system is used too sparsely and that if the system was used more they could work more proactively with the customer knowledge. Moreover, interviewee B2 explains that when they implement new systems or processes they try to think about the customers’ perspective.

Within Dealer B a sales system is used to manage the customer knowledge, the system allows them to follow both customer and product journey. The system else entails information about customer and product. They also use an additional register to find potential customers which interviewee B6 states is hardly used by the sellers. There are different opinions on the systems, B3 states that the system entails all the information needed and is pretty good while interviewee B5 explains that it is a very old system and would want it to entail additional features. Furthermore, interviewee B4 would want the system to be able to segmentate the customers as some customers affects the company more, B4 explains

“...would want to categorize the customers, at the same time, all customers are equally important but, you usually say that 20% of the customers equals 80% of the revenues. Those 20%, i know who they are or I try to know who they are, if there is any problem there, then I need to fix those problems.” (Interviewee B4 2019)

Interviewee B4 sees a challenge in the fact that they do not know how to transfer the knowledge as they do not have a CRM system in that sense. Furthermore, interviewee B6 means that the customer knowledge stays in the head and that they do not write it down.

Interviewee B6 argues for that the company has grown and that there is no real process taking care of customer knowledge which result in that people miss important information. Interviewee B1 argues that they are bad at following up on the collected information about customers, about what they do right and wrong. Furthermore, B2 agree as they claim that they work more reactive than proactively which means costs that could be avoided by having a few people analyzing the information and try to see trends. Interviewee B4 confirms the reactive way of thinking in the branch
of industry, but in this case, in how the sales personnel have waited for the customers to come to the facility. Interviewee B2 also says that the negative aspect of the processes or systems is “non-existent systems” and that the existent ones are used poorly. B1 also argues that a CRM system that is not continuously used will never become efficient, it does not matter how good the CRM system is. Interviewee B1 also means that the knowledge about the CRM system is questionable since the people that implemented it is now gone, therefore, many does not understand the system and how to fix it if somethings happens to it, this leads to a lesser documentation.

4.3. Customer Knowledge

4.3.1. Case A

Table 6: Summary of customer knowledge within Case A - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Believes it is Important in their Position to have Knowledge about the Customer</th>
<th>How Knowledge about the Customer is Obtained</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect Communication with Customer</th>
<th>Believes Customer Knowledge should be Transferred to Dealer A</th>
<th>Discusses Customer Knowledge with Dealer A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Input from customer service</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Input from regional managers</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyzing customer behaviour on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Communication with the customers</td>
<td>Some direct but mostly indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Input about customer segments from Distributor A</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>• Has no main source of obtaining customer knowledge</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Unsure</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Communication with the customer</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviewees of Case A believe that it is highly important for them to have customer knowledge except for interviewee A5 that said that they do not work towards customer as they work with internal projects. Furthermore, the seller of Dealer A explains that having knowledge about the customer and listening to their needs is important in order to find the right product for them. However, interviewee A6 said
“I usually joke and say that one thinks inside and out. That one does not think about what the customer wants but rather what one’s self want, where there is gross profit.”

(Interviewee A6 2019)

Moreover, A7 highlights that personal chemistry with the customer is crucial for them to sell a product. In addition, A1 believes that it is important to make decisions based on what the customer wants and not what one believes that the customer wants. They further explain that it is dangerous if you try to develop new elements without considering the customer since it risks not being what the customer needs or wants. Further A1 explains that they are bad at making business decision based on the customer demands.

“I like when organizations think of what the customer thinks and develop products and services based on what the customers’ likes and needs for making their life easier. And that you do not sit at home and figure out a lot of things that misses the ball. That you are in dialog with the customer, I believe that is very important. Are we good at that? No, we probably aren’t...”

(Interviewee A1 2019)

In addition, interviewee A1 explain that Dealer A have a better understanding of what the customer wants since they are closer to the customer in real time. Both respondents of Distributor A explain that they gain most of their customer knowledge from inputs and feedback from Dealer A. A2 also claims that they get customer knowledge from online comments made by their customers and analyzing their behaviour online. Regarding how Dealer A obtain customer knowledge, it is different between the employees. The interviewees A3 and A7 answered that they get it from the personal meetings with the customers - talking to the customer, asking questions and by listening to the customer and see what they want and demand. Whilst interviewee A4 said that they get the knowledge about the customer from the distributor by lists that they provide which shows what customer segment is more inclined to buy. Interviewee A3 says that Distributor A does not get all the information about the customer that they get at the dealer except for when the customer themselves contact their customer service at the Distributer. Most of the interviewees of Dealer A have direct contact with the customers, with the exception of interviewee A5 as it is not a part of their responsibilities, they only have indirect contact with the customers. Interviewee A7 handle the selling processes and has the main direct contact with the customers as that is part of their daily work.

Both interviewees of Distributor A expressed that it is important for them that customer knowledge is transferred between the distributor and the dealer since no one of them at Distributor A have direct
contact with the customers. All the interviewees from Dealer A except for the seller, interviewee A7, believe that knowledge about the customer should be transferred between them and the Distributor. For example, interviewee A4 believes that it would help with getting a common goal during marketing to a customer segment. On the contrary, interviewee A7 explains that they have a hard time seeing what they should use that information for as the distributor do not construct the products.

4.3.2. Case B

Table 7: Summary of customer knowledge within Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Believes it is Important in their Position to have Knowledge about the Customer</th>
<th>How Knowledge about the Customer is Obtained</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect Communication with Customer</th>
<th>Believes Customer Knowledge should be Transferred to Dealer B</th>
<th>Discusses Customer Knowledge with Dealer B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Does not directly answer the question but mentions fairs</td>
<td>Indirect and direct (during the yearly fairs)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Actively asking questions to regional managers</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Believes it is Important in their Position to have Knowledge about the Customer</th>
<th>How Knowledge about the Customer is Obtained</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect Communication with Customer</th>
<th>Believes Customer Knowledge should be Transferred to Distributor B</th>
<th>Discusses Customer Knowledge with Distributor B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Word of mouth • Customer data base</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Direct communication with the customer • Customer data base</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Yes, but to a certain extent</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Direct communication with the customer</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• Direct communication with the customer</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can observe from the table above, all of the interviewees from Case B stresses the importance of having customer knowledge in their position of work. Interviewee B2 explains that they always try to put the customer first and that they always strive for simplicity for the customer. Furthermore, B2 explains that if they do not follow the changing needs of the customer, they can risk not meeting the customers’ requirements. However, they also state that the customer does not always knows best either but that it is important to listen to the changes in the market and customer needs. All of the interviewees of Distributor B claim that they need knowledge about the customer in order to be able to do their job. Furthermore, the salespeople, B5 and B6, needs knowledge about the customer to be able to meet the customers’ needs and they also stress the importance of having a good relationship with the customers. In addition, B4 claims that they need to know what customers
are the most important to the business for strategic reasons and that this would be good to be able to see this in system so they can target the customer in the right manner.

“20% of the customers are approximately 80% of the revenues” (Interviewee B4 2019)

All of the interviewees of Dealer A has direct contact with the customer whilst the interviewees of does, not except for B1 that has direct communication during the occasional fairs that have been mentioned before. Interviewee B2 explains that they are pretty far up in the organization and therefore it is pretty far from the salespeople, thus making it hard to gain customer knowledge. Interviewee B3 has most interactions with customers through the phone but sometimes the customers come visit the facility. Furthermore, B4 mainly interact with customers when there are problems while interviewee B5 has spontaneous visits from the customers where they just chat and drink coffee. B5 and B6 also do customer visits where they leave the facility and talk with the customers through phone calls. Furthermore, B2 strongly believes that it is important that customer knowledge is transferred between them and Dealer B. When asked why they believe that it is important, they responded that there is a risk of not meeting the expectations of the customers if it is not transferred.

“It is very important that we get information about customer behaviours, customer expectations, the current requirement of the customer, how they see us and how they see the world. If we cannot change quickly there is a risk that the expectations of the customer or what it may be, is not met.”

(Interviewee B2 2019)

In addition, B1 explains the importance and the value of meeting and having a relationship with the dealers but does not directly answer the question if knowledge about the customer should be transferred between the organizations. The same question was directed to Dealer B but if the customer knowledge should be transferred to Distributor B, interviewees B5 and B6 says no as they mean that Distributor B has the knowledge they need and they cannot contribute with new information. Interviewee B4 means that some information should be transferred but stresses that the competing dealer makes the exchange harder as they do not want to share information and experiences that can help them. Interviewee B3 do believe that customer knowledge should be transferred to them in regards to service and market but not in regards to their role as a financial manager.
4.2. The Processes of Communication Between the Organizations

4.2.1. Case A

Table 8: Summary of the forms of communication within Case A - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect of Communication with Dealer A</th>
<th>Form of Communication with Dealer A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A1          | Direct                                        | ● Occasional contact with reference groups  
|             |                                               | ● Occasional conferences              |
| A2          | Direct                                        | ● Frequent contact with reference groups  
|             |                                               | ● Occasional conferences              |
|             |                                               | **Distributor A**                      |
| Interviewee | Direct/Indirect of Communication with Distributor A | Form of Communication with Distributor A |
| A3          | Direct                                        | ● Frequent contact with different departments and the regional manager |
| A4          | Direct                                        | ● Frequent contact with regional manager |
| A5          | Direct                                        | ● Occasional conferences              
|             |                                               | ● Occasional contact with old contacts from Distributor A |
| A6          | Direct                                        | ● Frequent contact with the marketing department |
| A7          | Direct                                        | ● Frequent contact with the order department  
|             |                                               | ● Occasional encounters with the regional manager |

As one can observe from the table above, all of the communication between the organizations of Case A is direct. Most of the direct communication between Dealer A and Distributor A is happening via a regional manager that work like an intermediator. However, the direct communication that the interviewees of the distributor have are through different reference groups where representants from dealers give input about specific features in their CRM system. Furthermore, A2 discuss the problem of having regional managers as that role could improve in the sense that it should focus more on helping and support the dealers:

“...one would probably have to review that role, that function /.../ I believe that it is not enough focused on supporting, helping a dealer forward. To tackle challenges and improve, develop action plans for how we can remediate different things...” (Interviewee A2 2019)

Many of the interviewees from Dealer A communicate with the regional manager. In addition, the communication that the employees have with the distributor is frequent. Regarding conferences, they are described as educational and covers for example new requirements of a product. The interviewees from Distributor A sees conferences as a good way to interact with people from Dealer A. Especially interviewee A2 emphasizes the value of meeting people from Dealer A face to face in conferences where you can have a dialog and discussions. However, A5 claims that the conferences is more of a one way communication where one has to absorb a huge amount of information instead of a dialog.
A1 describes that when they want to communicate with Dealer A, they have a reference person that they usually contact that they have come to know in an informal context. Interviewee A5 also mention that they contact Dealer A by using old contacts that they have made in an informal context. Hence, A1 explains there is no systematic forum where they easily know who to contact.

4.2.2. Case B

Table 9: Summary of the forms of communication within Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect of communication with Dealer B</th>
<th>Form of Communication with Dealer B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| B1          | Indirect + Direct                           | • Occasional contact with regional manager  
|             |                                             | • Occasional contact in person       |
| B2          | Indirect                                    | • Frequent contact with regional manager |

Distributor B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Direct/Indirect of communication with Distributor B</th>
<th>Form of Communication with Distributor B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Does not communicate with Distributor B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B4          | Direct                                       | • Yearly educational sessions                 
|             |                                               | • Frequent contact with order manager       |
| B5          | Direct                                       | • Frequent contact with regional manager   
|             |                                               | • Yearly educational sessions              |
| B6          | Direct                                       | • Frequent contact with order manager       |

Dealer B

Both interviewees from Distributor B states that they continuously have an indirect communication with Dealer B. Moreover, B1 has mostly indirect communication but also mentions fairs that occur every other year where they come in direct contact with some dealers and customers and have valuable informal discussions. Interviewee B1 states that the connection they create with the dealers during the fair is incredibly important. The purpose of those fairs is to preserve and nourish Distributor B’s relationship with their dealers and end-customers. However, when asked what type of communication that B1 has with the dealers they say that it is indirect via regional managers and does not explain that these fairs are a main source of communication between them and the dealers as they happen so rarely. In addition, B1 also explain that representatives from Distributor B go to Dealers to educate them which is a way for them to meet and communicate formally which both B4 and B5 states that they take part in. In addition, as interviewee B2 are in charge of GDPR, they state that they have frequent indirect contact with the dealers as they have close contact with respective regional managers that are in charge of GDPR that in turn communicates with the respective dealers. Furthermore, the interviewees from Dealer B states that they communicate with various people from
Distributor B as one can observe from the table above. However, respondent B3 explains that the communication with Distributor B is handled by the purchaser and sellers of Dealer B. Hence, B3 do not have any communication with Distributor B since their position does not require that.

Furthermore, B1 explains that there needs to be an understanding among employees as of why they do things. In the end every organizational action is for the sake of pleasing the end-customer. So this understanding is important as the dealers are the ones who are supposed to convince the end customer to make a purchase.

“sometimes I feel that with a company as big as this one, people are so focused on their own thing (...) I mean, a delay of a supplier might not be understood, ‘OK that was bad’ but the consequences in the end for the individual customer might not be understood” (Interviewee B1 2019) 4.4.

Knowledge Transfer

4.4.1. Case A

Table 10: Summary of knowledge transfer between the organizations of Case A - own elaboration
Knowledge Transfer

When referring back to when a new service was implemented, interviewee A1 expressed the great value of having a knowledge exchange and dialog they had with the dealers in a reference group. Furthermore, A2 describes how knowledge is transferred to them from the dealers as the dealers are spokespersons to Distributor A and that A2 has gathered customer requirements and feedback through them. They further explain that the responsibility lays on the dealer to deliver feedback from customers, which is something that Distributor A also tries to mediate to them. Furthermore, interviewee A3 explains that the dealer and the distributor has a very open relationship and that there is a lot of give and take and not unidirectional. However, interviewee A5 believes that there is a lot of unidirectional communication from Distributor A through the mutual conferences and in order to get a dialog with them is by having old contacts and through the visits that they make once a month. Interviewee A5 does not believe that more knowledge needs to be transferred between the organizations as they believe that it already is. In addition, the importance of transferring knowledge is discussed by respondent A4 as they argue how Distributor A give them the information regarding what customer segment they need to target with certain products and that this knowledge transfer is crucial to meet the customer needs accurately.

Problems with knowledge transfer

Before the implementation of GDPR, all the interviewees of Dealer A said that there was no problem with knowledge transfer. As mentioned above, respondent A4 describes how Distributor A gives Dealer A the suitable customer segment to a certain product. However, the same interviewee also express that the Distributor sometimes are wrong regarding the customer segment and that it turned out to be a completely other segment that was drawn to that specific problem. A4 also claimed that that type of knowledge that they gathered at the dealer is transferred to the Distributor. In addition, A1 explain that that customer knowledge usually is stuck at the dealer and does not transfer to the Distributor A due to the fact that there are no forums other than the occasional conferences. Furthermore, there is no systematic way for Distributor A and Dealer A to easily contact each other besides the conferences or old contacts. Likewise, interviewee A2 also says that it is hard to find forums or communication channels where the Dealer easily can contact the Distributor. A2 further explains that there is room for improvement regarding this, they also say that it would be optimal if there was a natural way for the Dealer to contact Distributor and that it should be a part of their organizational culture - which it is not at the moment.

Interviewee A1 does not only say that customer knowledge gets stuck at the dealers but that the dealers also gain a lot of data which is not used. A1 also believes that this is a problem at the
distributor because there are people within the organization that does not think one step further regarding who could benefit from the knowledge or information that they possess. Interviewee A2 further explain

“One does not take the customer as a reference point in the same way as maybe a dealer would when they meet customers over the counter. You are in a box, organizationally. Thus you may not be thinking of who should have this information, who needs to know that this is happening. Therefore I believe that there are such variants and that it is very human. And then there are those who think about it a lot and are very good at informing dealers /.../ it is a very typical big organization thing, that you lose who you are there for.” (Interviewee A2 2019)

In addition, interviewee A5 from Dealer A also claimed that their biggest challenge regarding the transfer of customer knowledge is the fact that the knowledge gets stuck because there are so many links in the chain. A5 also said that there is a problem that you do not think that you have to pass on the information and that it is not important where the information goes.

Furthermore, both A1 and A2 believes that the organization would benefit from having a more cohesive outlook on the customer data and information and how to use that information - that all functions work together so all parts understand the whole picture. A2 describes that the different functions now work separately which loses the understanding of the whole picture regarding customer management. A2 also believes that this is an issue, that they need to work more cross-sectional to get a more customer-centric organization. Interviewee A3 from Dealer A also believes that the main problem with transferring knowledge within the company is the fact that they do not work across functions and further explains that is important that you have a good relation with the different departments and a culture that encourage this. A3 also claimed that it would be a harmful barrier for the company if they did not have the culture of talking cross-sectionally, however, A3 also said that this have started to gradually become less of an issue for them as they are getting better at working between the departments. Furthermore, interviewee A6 says that the way that they share knowledge within the organization is notably different compared to how it is shared with the distributor. For example, A6 describes that the way that they talk about customers is completely different to how customers are discussed with Distributor A as there is barely any discussions with them.
4.4.2. Case B

Table 11: Summary of knowledge transfer between the organizations of Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>General Opinions Regarding the Knowledge Transfer between the Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distributor B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge transfer about product price is a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Distributor B has a tight relationship with their dealers as they have a lot of joint marketing campaigns and activities with their customers. Knowledge is not transferred enough because of the lack of time and forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dealer B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Does not believe it is important for their position to transfer knowledge to Distributor B as they are the customer of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Competing with another dealer causes problems with transferring knowledge to Distributor B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Open knowledge transfer between the organizations because of the competition with another dealer, Express that they share limited knowledge about the customer with Distributor B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Distributor B gets knowledge about the customer through the communication between the organization, Expresses that Distributor B has more knowledge about customers compared to them, Employees miss important information because of the lack of processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Knowledge Transfer**

Interviewee B6 explains that they talk to the regional sales manager which they claim is how Distributor B gets their customer knowledge from the dealers and B2 explain that the relationship between the organizations is tight because of the joint marketing campaigns and activities they have with the customers. In addition to this, B2 says that they sometimes invite Dealer B and the endcustomers to them as they are the customers of the distributor as well. Furthermore, interviewee B3 means that a knowledge exchange happens when they have shows for their new products and a representative from Distributor B comes to visit Dealer B. Both interviewees B4 and B5 sees the educational sessions as a way of exchanging knowledge with Distributor B and B4 explains that a representative comes to Dealer B every quarter where they have a reconciliation. Furthermore, interviewee B4 explains that knowledge is transferred during educational sessions hosted by the distributor when one representatives from Dealer B is there that later is supposed to transfer the knowledge to the other in Dealer B.

**Problems of Knowledge Transfer**

Interviewee B2 states that there is no communication channel and that there is no spontaneous knowledge transfer between the organizations where you can ask and get the information needed. They further explain that they are further away from the customer compared to the dealer and that the knowledge does not flow all the way to B2.
“It is not always that the knowledge flows down to me because I am a bit further down in the organization. It is a bit from those who are closest to the customers - the sellers and maybe service and support. It is missing, some communication platform or forum or what you should call it. /.../
There is no structured arranged way with the fact that this customer information, that we believe that the organization further down needs in some way. We lack this.” (Interviewee B2 2019)

Interviewee B2 also argues that a challenge to the transfer of customer knowledge is time. Meaning that there is not enough time as some are sitting on a lot of information and think they have transferred the knowledge but the receiver might sit on a lot of information too and so the information gets stuck. B2 continues explaining that only transferring it to a few people are not always enough as a result. Interviewee B2 argues that the development of their products goes through following process a lot; the salespeople experience that customers are interested in a certain thing for a new product, the seller heares this several times and transfer this to a superior. B2 continues explaining that this is not always the case and that it might be the truth for that certain region but maybe not for the rest of the customers. B2 calls this “trial and error”.

Interviewee B4 agrees that the communication would have been easier if they did not have a second dealer in the area and they would not have to compete. Interviewee B4 continues talking about the difficulty of not wanting to give too much information to Distributor B about the customer since they have other dealers in the area, selling the same products as Dealer B. Dealer B do not want their customer knowledge to be transferred through Distributor B to another dealer according to interviewee B4. Furthermore, Interviewee B4 sees a challenge in the fact that they do not know how to transfer the knowledge since they do not have a CRM system in that sense. Furthermore, interviewee B6 means that the customer knowledge they obtain is kept mentally and thus does not write it down anywhere. B6 sees this as an advantage as it is only that seller that possess the knowledge. Moreover, they express that the negative aspect of it is if the employee in question quits they bring the knowledge with them as the knowledge is not documented anywhere. Furthermore, the customers are faithful to the sellers not to the company or brand according to interviewee B4. The same interviewee also claims that the information gets stuck with the salespeople.
4.5. The Implementation of GDPR

4.4.1. Case A

Table 12: Summary of the perception of the implementation of GDPR of Case A - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Received Directives from Distributor A Regarding the Implementation</th>
<th>Opportunities in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Challenges in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Expresses Knowledge of GDPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Yes, mainly informational letters and suggestions to contact consultants</td>
<td>• More explicit framework that facilitates the handling of customer data</td>
<td>• The worry that arose with the implementation</td>
<td>Yes, some involvement in the implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Yes, but not how</td>
<td>• Better overview of the internal processes</td>
<td>• The worry that arose with the implementation</td>
<td>Yes, in charge of the implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Does not know</td>
<td>• Sees none</td>
<td>• Contacting and gaining new customers</td>
<td>No, states they are not fully read on the matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Did not work at Dealer A at the time</td>
<td>• More organized data</td>
<td>• Many systems to go through</td>
<td>Yes, but not involved with the implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Yes, acquired a message through the CRM system</td>
<td>• Does not know</td>
<td>• Does not know</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directives and Changes in Connection with the Implementation of GDPR

The interviewees from Distributor A are both in close contact with the management of customer data which have made both involved in the implementation of GDPR. Hence, Distributor A has given the dealers directives regarding how to act, what they can do and what applies for their organizations. The dealers confirm this and interviewee A4 explains that they have gotten suggestions to hire an external consultant to help them but also the dealers have also gotten continuous information on what they can and can not do in their sales system after the implementation of GDPR from Distributor A. This information has mainly been obtained through informational letters. However, interviewee A5 who is in charge of the implementation of GDPR at Dealer A states that the obtained directives were that they needed to get to work but not how. Still, A5 means that it is Dealer As own responsibility to follow the regulation.
In the light of the implementation of GDPR Distributor A has cleaned up and organized all of their customer data, gone through and updated all of the text that is received by the customer to make sure that both the text and their policy is clear, easily accessible and states its purpose. Interviewee A2 states that they have had to put together contracts regarding the handling of customer data and made the system able to take the customers agreement into account. At Dealer A they have also had to made changes in the systems, organized the data and made the system able to delete data that has not been used in a certain amount of years. Interviewee A3 acknowledges that Distributor A has organized the customer data within their sales system. Furthermore, interviewee A4 explains that they at Dealer A have had continuous interactive workshops to educate the employees about GDPR. These workshops were held in collaboration with the external consultants that Dealer A hired according to interviewee A5.

When the question if the implementation has affected the organizational culture was asked, the interviewees of Dealer A had some mixed views. Interviewees A3, A4 and A7 said that the organizational culture had not changed by the implementation of GDPR. However, A5 stated that the organizational culture had changed in the sense that employees are more prone to ask questions now, that it has created an environment where one is not afraid to ask a question, which could happen before the implementation of GDPR. A6 said that the organizational culture has changed in the sense that employees are now more careful when it comes to handling data. Both interviewees of Distributor A did not acknowledge any changes in the organizational culture due to the implementation of GDPR.

**The Challenges**

One of the biggest challenges with the implementation of GDPR according to the interviewees of Distributor A is to communicate to the dealers how to handle customer data and to make them act accordingly to the regulation. Interviewee A2 states the challenge of convincing the dealers that Distributor A needs access to all customer data to help them. The dealers means that the customer is theirs and therefore it does not belong to Distributor A. Hence, when GDPR arrived it was easier to reason with them as the distributor said they would take care of customer data in relation to GDPR. For Dealer A one of the big challenges was the worry about the implementation, how it would affect the processes within the company. This resulted in the employees becoming more passive in their work, interviewee A4 explains that the employees thought that they would not be able to save any customer data at all. In addition, interviewee A5 also explain the worry in relation to the implementation of GDPR in regards to making employees or customer disappointed or angry.
Therefore, A5 explains that they are not primarily scared of the consequences of breaking the regulation, but rather of a negative response of customers and employees if Dealer A handle their customer data unfairly. Furthermore, A4 states that everything was easier before the implementation, however interviewee states that there was no change in the transfer of knowledge. Interviewee A3 and A4 claimed that the implementation of GDPR has hindered them in their position as there has been a challenge to reach new customers as the obtained register of potential customers only covers the home addresses. Furthermore, A3 states that it is hard to know what is allowed and not, regarding the one-to-one marketing. It is better to be safe than sorry but at the same time, they need to reach potential customers.

Interviewee A2 states that there is a challenge in making sure that the top management of Distributor B continues to see the importance in GDPR as A2 thinks that it is easily forgotten as they have done their part. The interviewee means that they are not done with all aspects of the regulation yet and that the regulation requires continuous work. Furthermore, interviewee A5 argues that a challenge is to make all employees have the same outlook and the same basic competence level on GDPR.

The Opportunities

Within Distributor A they have seen opportunities and positive aspects as the customer data has been forced to become more organized and centralized. This has resulted in that the communication with customers has become more streamlined and the data obtained is more useful. Interviewee A2 sees an opportunity as explained below

“...I believe that it has rather created a better understanding for the internal flows, processes for managing customers, but if we talk about the understanding of the customer, yes in one way since we have collected everything to one place, so that we have obtained an overall picture which is bigger than before.” (Respondent A2 2019)

Furthermore, A1 states that employees are now forced by the regulation to understand if the obtained knowledge is relevant to save and customers are now able to choose what information organizations can keep about them. As a result, A1 states that the products developed are more in accordance with what the customer wants. At Dealer A, they see the benefits regarding the customer data as it has become more organized. Interviewee A4 states that GDPR has resulted in a more explicit framework to follow regarding how to manage the customer data and a more unilateral way of managing the customers. Moreover, interviewee A5 argues that the employees have started to think one step further which the interviewee has noticed in the employees questions.
4.4.2. Case B

Table 13: Summary of the perception of the implementation of GDPR of Case B - own elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gives Directives to the Dealers Regarding the Implementation</th>
<th>Opportunities in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Challenges in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Expresses Knowledge of GDPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>No, but adjusted the systems according to GDPR</td>
<td>• More organized data</td>
<td>• Contacting customers</td>
<td>Yes, involved with the systems handling customer data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>No, not given directives dealers yet</td>
<td>• More organized data</td>
<td>• Lack of processes makes the implementation harder</td>
<td>Yes, involved with the implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Received Directives from Distributor A Regarding the Implementation</th>
<th>Opportunities in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Challenges in Connection with the Implementation</th>
<th>Expresses Knowledge of GDPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Does not think so</td>
<td>• Does not see any opportunities</td>
<td>• Took a lot of time</td>
<td>Yes, worked with the a policy and is responsible for the implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>• Does not see any opportunities</td>
<td>• Processes takes more time</td>
<td>Yes, worked with solicitors to create new contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Does not think so</td>
<td>• Does not see any opportunities</td>
<td>• Contacting customers</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Does not think so</td>
<td>• Does not know</td>
<td>• Does not see any challenges</td>
<td>No, do not see that the position require it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directives and Changes in Connection with the Implementation of GDPR

The interviewees of Distributor B both has knowledge about GDPR and B1 is also responsible for their CRM system and handling their customer data. The dealers have not received any directives from Distributor B but interviewee B2 states that they are still interpreting the regulation and will turn to the dealers with directives when they are done. Interviewee B1 explains that they informed the subsidiary companies on how to manage GDPR, these companies are the ones to inform the dealers on the matter. Furthermore, GDPR is still being interpreted and therefore the interviewee means that they will have to conform to what the court cases will say in the future. The project leader for GDPR at Distributor B, interviewee B2, thought they would be done by the implementation of GDPR, but states that there is almost as much left as before the implementation. Furthermore, interviewee B1 said that they had to discuss what customer information to erase so it would not affect the sales of the product or the relationship with the customers, but still be in line with GDPR.

When Dealer B was asked what changes was necessary at the time GDPR was implemented the general answer was that there were not many changes if even any. Interviewee B3 was named responsible for the implementation but felt like they just needed someone to be responsible for the
GDPR implementation. B3 recognize the change in the form of a policy that took a long time to compose. Furthermore, the sellers stress the fact that they now have to send text messages instead of doing the previous mass communication as a result to the fact that you need to have a relationship with the customer. Interviewee B4 explained one change as a checkbox in their sales system which you check-off if the customer has approved. B4 further states that they had to get help from a legal practitioner and that the implementation has meant more work as they have needed approvals from customers. Moreover, interviewee B6 states that they have changed much since the implementation and that the regulation has probably not been followed properly.

Interviewee B1 answered to the question “Has the implementation of GDPR affected the organizational culture?” that there has been no change since the implementation in the organizational culture at Distributor B, but stresses that the reaction should have been greater. Interviewee B2 answered that there might have been a slight change as the personnel has become more scared of sharing personal information and do wrong, they need to think more before talking. Similarly, the general answer within Dealer B was that there has been no change within the organization. B4 does not believe that the organizational culture has changed and that they still make sure to have the personal commitment with their customers.

The Challenges

Both Distributor B and Dealer B thought that the implementation of GDPR would have a greater effect than it has had yet. Interviewee B1 argues that one of the challenges with the implementation is that it is hard to understand, what is Distributor B obliged to do and what can they ask of other parties. The interviewee further explains that even though the organizing of customer data is positive, GDPR is a rather unclear concept with the different contacts to strike regarding the managing of customer data. Furthermore, interviewee B5 recognize the difficulties with the implementation and explains that they think that if a customer has left their information once and chosen to become a customer they should be able to keep the customers information. Interviewee B2 agrees that it has become harder to manage customer relations as they have very old products that are still being used, this creates a problem since they now use the time of the warranty on the product as an indicator for their relationships. Interviewee B5 argues for the customers who may have not bought something in the store for many years but still wants their customer number since it is easier if they would want to buy a product or service. Both interviewee B4 and B5 sees that some processes now takes longer time as there needs to be a stated agreement from the customers to be able to go about their processes and routines.
According to B2 people are generally uninterested in GDPR and wants to keep it away from themselves and only perform the absolutely necessary parts. Interviewee B6 confirms this by saying they do not care about GDPR. Furthermore, B2 acknowledge that if the dealers collect data the wrong way, Distributor B might be charged. Moreover, interviewee B2 sees a problem in their lack of processes within Distributor B, B2 explains:

“The challenge is that Distributor B is not a company with strictly governed processes and routines but rather, as I said in the beginning, we work towards an overall goal /.../ but when the departments lack processes for the collection of customer data or does not know how you work, or work very differently as we do /.../ it becomes very difficult to implement GDPR, as there are no one who can explain how to work, as they themselves do not even know” (Respondent B2)

B2 means that this in turn can be seen as an opportunity instead, as they then need to shape up their processes and routines.

The Opportunities
Within Distributor A they have seen opportunities in the more organized customer data that followed the implementation. The customer data is more up to date and as mentioned above, this regulation has assisted in creating more streamlined processes so they can reach a working method of best practice. Hence, not keeping or collecting unnecessary data that can affect the customer or Distributor B. The general response was no to the question if the interviewees at Dealer B could see any positive aspects or opportunities with the implementation. However, interviewee B4 sees value in a new register they acquired after the implementation to find potential customers. Interviewee B6 does not know if there were any positive aspects, which may be a result of the fact that the interviewee does not see why possession of knowledge regarding GDPR would help in B6’s position.
5. Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the phenomenon by applying the theoretical framework in order to explain the empirical findings. Furthermore, the chapter will be structured after the analysis model presented in chapter 2 in the following order; customer knowledge, customer knowledge transfer, transfer barriers and lastly GDPR.

5.1 Customer knowledge

It is important to understand the customers since they are the reason to why companies exist (Grant 2016). Moreover, this explains why employees need to understand the importance of customer knowledge. In Case A, all interviewees except A5 believe that customer knowledge is important for their position. This interviewee do not see a need for this as they do not work towards the customer. Furthermore, all interviewees in Case B see the importance of customer knowledge as well. Interviewee B2 means that customer knowledge is important to make appropriate decisions to meet the customers’ needs, even though B2 also claims that they are not good at it. Since Interviewee B2 is far up in the organization they explain that they therefore have a hard time gaining customer knowledge. Moreover, the interviewees of Distributor A also explain that they want to become more customer-centric. A1 explain that they wish to develop products based on the needs of the customer. Accordingly, this explains how all of the organizations in Case A and Case B want to become more market-oriented and customer-centric which Buttle (2000) describe as when organizations put the customer first and work towards creating value for customers. However, interviewee A6 from Dealer A jokingly claim that they rather think about what the organization wants instead of what the customer wants, however, this does not seem to be the general opinion at Dealer A.

Regarding the contact that the distributors have with the customers, both interviewees from Distributor A states that they have no direct communication with customers. The interviewees of Distributor B have also mostly indirect communication with the customer, except for B1 that have direct communication with the customer during their yearly fair. However, this communication is described by B2 to be to a small extent. Furthermore, the interviewees A3 and A7 at Dealer A gain their knowledge about the customer through the personal meetings with them. A7 is a seller and therefore interacts with customers daily since meeting the customers’ needs is A7’s main responsibility. Similarly, the sellers of Distributor B need to create relationships in order to meet their customer’s needs. Furthermore, their communication regarding customers mainly take place through a regional manager in Distributor B. However, interviewee B1 sees an issue in that employees within
Distributor B only focus on their own tasks and do not look at the bigger picture, how it affects the customer in the end. Furthermore, Bank (2000) stresses the fact that customers are the reason to the existence of businesses and Grant (2016) claims that there needs to be an understanding of the customer needs in order to achieve competitive success for the organization. Even though the interviewees of both the distributors and the dealers understand the importance of customer knowledge, it is the interviewees of the distributors that have talked most about how the actions in the organization needs to be in line with the customer's point of view. Interestingly, it is the distributors and not the dealers that states this even though they have less communication with the customers.

Moreover, Nandonde (2019) explains that companies can create competitive advantage if they create relationships within the supply chain and Grant (2016) further explains that the collaboration enables companies to use each other's resources and capabilities. Interviewee B1 states that the connection with their dealers are important as they are the ones in direct contact with the end-customers. Klein and Poulymenakou (2006) explains that collaborative relationships can become very unorganized and unstable as the size of it makes it hard to manage, which is evident in Case A. In this case, Distributor A does not obtain sufficient customer knowledge to be able to optimally help Dealer A reach the right customers. For example, A4 explained a problem of marketing directives that Distributor A provided to Dealer A which unfortunately did not correspond with their customer segment. A4 further explained how they learned that it was another type of customer segment that bought that specific product compared to the directives sent by Distributor A. Furthermore, Grant (2016) explains that the capabilities and resources gained from collaborative relationships within the supply chain generates a competitive advantage for the organization. Therefore, the knowledge gained at Dealer A about the customer segment is valuable for Distributor A, as it can help generate a competitive advantage. As mentioned above, it is not unusual that the relationships are unorganized because of the size of it (Klein and Poulymenakou 2006) which is evident in this relationship between Distributor A and Dealer A. Interviewee A2 means that it is the dealers responsibility to provide them with customer knowledge which they try to mediate to the dealers. However, at the same time they give directives to Dealer A regarding what customer segment they should target, which shows how the distributor provided them with customer knowledge and not the other way around like A2 claimed. Furthermore, interviewee A1 confirms that there is no systematic forum for the organizations within Case A to communicate. The complexity of this situation is described in the theory by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) which explains how knowledge is dependent on the relational context of the matter and the situational dependency. In this case, Distributor A’s knowledge about the customer segment was not accurate in that situation and the customer knowledge was therefore
not synchronized between the organizations until the damage was done. This proves an unsystematic way of managing customer knowledge between the organizations in Case A.

Conclusively, the cases covered above show that there is a challenge in making sure that all of the employees within each organization are knowledgeable about customers even if these employees understand the importance of having customer knowledge. The situation above where the marketing directives from Distributor A did not correspond with the correct customer segment proves how important it is to have synchronized customer knowledge between the organizations. North and Kumta (2014) states that this is the challenge with knowledge management, implementing fitting processes. Without fitting processes, the knowledge will not be transferred.

5.1.1. Customer Relationship Management system

A CRM system is important in order to better serve customers (Grant 2016; Kumar and Reinartz 2012) which helps improving the knowledge management and also improves the relationship with customers. A big difference between Case A and Case B is the fact that Case A have a joint CRM system and Case B does not. The fact that Case A has a joint CRM system is beneficial for both organizations as, according to the theory, this would imply that Case A has a stronger efficiency and accuracy regarding the processes of knowledge management (Kumar & Reinartz 2012).

5.2. Customer Knowledge Transfer

The transfer of customer knowledge is important for organizations since it generates and boosts the productivity of an organization (Broedner et al. cited in Wilde 2011:34). It is also important that knowledge transfers inter-organizationally (Chen et al. 2014; Davenport and Prusak 1998). In case A, all the parties express that it is important that customer knowledge transfers inter-organizationally, except the seller at Distributor A. Furthermore, in Distributor B, both interviewees express the importance of listening to the distributors and having a relationship with them. Interviewee B2 believes that customer knowledge should be transferred between the companies as knowledge about demands, behaviour and expectations from the customer is important knowledge from the dealer. However, the interviewees of Dealer B are not as positive to the idea of transferring customer knowledge to the Distributor B. In addition to this, the seller at Dealer A does not understand how Distributor A would benefit from the customer knowledge which they obtain from the dealer, which is also the case for the sellers at Dealer B. The theory above states that knowledge transfer generates productivity (Broedner et al. cited in Wilde 2011:34), which is something that organizations strive for. Therefore, if the interviewees understood that the transfer of customer knowledge can generate productivity, they would understand the value of transferring it. However, the reason as to why
Dealer B do not believe it is important to transfer knowledge to Distributor B mostly depends on the fact that there is another dealer in the area that they do not want to share their information with.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) claims that knowledge transfers happens daily in organizations via communication which Wilde (2011) also states that it is one of the most important parts of knowledge transfer. Both Buko and Wagner (2005) and Chen, Lin and Yen (2014) explains that in order for knowledge to be transferred between organizations within a supply chain there has to be communication between them. In Case A and Case B, the distributors and dealers are communicating with each other which, according to theory, allows them to have knowledge exchange between each other. Most of the interviewees have some sort of communication with the other organization within their case. For example, the interviewees of distributor A explain that they have communication with reference groups that contain representatives from dealers, which is a form of communication and knowledge exchange that the distributor value. However, in both of the cases the distributors express a desire to obtain more customer knowledge from the dealers which indicates that there should be more inter-organizational communication than there already is. The problem here is that the sellers of both dealers do not think that knowledge about the customer should be transferred to the distributor. Even though there was communication going on between the organizations of some form in the respective cases, not all of the interviewees communicated with the other organization within the same case. Comparing the dealers, Dealer B’s interviewees has more communication with the distributor compared to Dealer A. However, our empirical findings goes against the theory which claim that knowledge transfer happen when communication happens. Our empirical data shows that even though there are communication between the two organizations, this does not mean that knowledge is transferred. Accordingly, there is a difference in how knowledge is transferred in the two cases. For example, in Case B, all of the interviewees from Dealer B have some sort of communication with Distributor B, with the exception of B3. However, there is less knowledge transferred to their distributor compared to Dealer A as their interviewees has less communication with Distributor A.

North and Kumta (2014) states that in most cases there is no systematic process that enables knowledge to be transferred to other organizations. This statement is relevant in both Case A and Case B as interviewees from both distributor brought up this issue. For example, interviewee A1 from Distributor A states that there is no systematic way for them to communicate easily with Dealer A and that they have to rely on old contacts which they have obtained from previous conferences. Interviewee B2 also states that there is no natural way of transferring knowledge between the organizations within Case B as well as they have no communication channel that facilitates this.
They state this even though there are communication going on continuously between the dealers and distributors in both cases. However, the communication is via a regional manager and the contact that they have beyond the regional manager is with people from the other organization are old contacts from informal settings. In both cases, there are settings where employees from dealers and distributors do meet each other, such as fairs like in Case B or conferences and educational sessions in Case A. Despite this ongoing communication, both distributors express that they want a forum that helps knowledge to be systematically transferred between the respective organizations even if both cases do communicate with their dealer/distributor in order to facilitate the process of gaining customer knowledge from the dealer.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) do promote the idea of establishing a process that encourages spontaneous knowledge exchange. They also mention the problem of employees that have questions about a matter, does not always reach the employee with the correct knowledge when looking for answers as they contact the employees which are easiest to reach. These empirical data shows the fact that there is not a forum which allows for systematic communication between distributors and dealers in both Case A and Case B that is easily used by all parties and would encourage the transfer of customer knowledge. If the organizations of both cases implement a forum that allows for spontaneous knowledge transfer between the organizations, it would be beneficial for them as knowledge transfer as mentioned before, boosts productivity (Broedner et al. cited in Wilde 2011:34). Furthermore, it would also be beneficial for the organizations if a forum like this encouraged knowledge to be transferred since Davenport and Prusak (1998) express that it should be encouraged since it enhances the transfer of knowledge between departments. Mircea (2015) also explains that processes needs to be set from the management of companies that work inter-organizationally, the processes could for example be in the form of support infrastructure for example. Since it is the distributors that promotes the idea of implementing a forum for knowledge sharing, according to the theory of Mircea (2015), it is them that need to implement the system as they are in a management position compared to the dealers.

Furthermore, one interviewee from Dealer A believes that transferring knowledge between them and the distributor would help them to have a common goal for both of the organizations when marketing to a specific customer segment. Chen et al. (2014) explains that a common goal will help create trust which is a factor that enhances the transfer of customer knowledge between companies. Thus, a common goal can act as an incentive as to why customer knowledge should be transferred between the organizations.
5.2.1. Organizational culture

All of the interviewees within each organization have a similar outlook on the organizational culture within their organization. The fact that the organizations have the same outlook on the organizational culture creates more opportunities for knowledge transfer as North and Kumta (2014) highlights the importance of shared values and teamwork within the organization. In addition, Grant (2016) claim that a strong culture within an organization create cooperation and coordination. One can see that within each organization, they have a synchronized outlook on their organizational culture which implies that they have a strong organizational culture that supports cooperation and coordination. However, regarding the organizational culture within organizations in a supply chain, Song-Qing (2011) explain that if the culture is both balanced and coordinated, there is a greater chance that the knowledge will be transferred between them by communication. Our empirical evidence show that there are a lot of communication between the organizations in each case. However, when each interviewee was asked to describe their organizational culture, the organizational culture did not always match the the other organization within the same supply chain. For example, the organizational culture in Distributor A is described to be quite different compared to Dealer A as the dealer is described to be more open compared and helpful compared to the more traditional distributor. This shows that even though they have the communication between them, the organizational culture is not necessary synchronized, like the theory of Song-Qing (2011) suggested.

Furthermore, when talking about the perceived familiar oriented atmosphere, Distributor A is the organization that differs compared to the other organizations as it is the only one that did not mention that they have a familiar oriented atmosphere. In addition, a difference between Case A and Case B can be observed regarding how customer-centric they are since it is solely interviewees of Case B that describe their organizational culture as customer-centric. However, an interviewee from Dealer A explained that if the employees of their organization are happy, the employees will be to, which entail that they are customer oriented. In contrast to the interviewees of Case B, interviewee A1 do explain that they have a more traditional culture that is endorsed from the top which hinders the organization to be completely customer-centric. This is way of resonating is supported by theory as top management need to be able to influence the employees by manifesting the importance of the sharing of knowledge for a proper culture to be formed (Song-Qing 2011). In addition, Buttle (2009) explain that if an organization is risk-taking, flexible and creative, the organizational culture is beneficial for an organization regarding CRM. According to our empirical data, Case B should have the most beneficial organizational culture in relation to CRM as some interviewees from both Dealer B and Distributor B explain their organization as flexible. This entails that Case B has the organizational culture it takes for a successful CRM.
5.3 Transfer Barriers

5.3.1. Ignorance

Robert (2012) writes that being ignorant means having a lack of information or knowledge about something. There is an issue of ignorance in Dealer A since interviewee A7 can not see why the customer knowledge should be transferred to Distributor B. Furthermore, A7 believe that Distributor A do not need to obtain the knowledge transferred from Dealer A since the distributor produce the products. Broedner et al. (cited in Wilde 2011:34) states that knowledge about the customer should be shared because it increases productivity, which is something A7 does not take into account. As a result, ignorance grows as it is hard to detect when A7 stays ignorant to why the Distributors can have use for the knowledge. Bounfour (2003) states that for knowledge to be transferred it needs to be detected. Furthermore, A1 also states that there is an ignorance within Distributor A as well as they do not think about who could benefit of the knowledge or information they possess. Similarly, B1 explains that the connection with Dealer B is important as it is the employees there who interact with the customers and are supposed to convince them to buy their products. However, the sellers of Dealer B mean that Distributor B has no use for their customer knowledge. The argumentation is similar to Case A, that the sellers of the dealers stays ignorant to why they should transfer the knowledge interorganizationally and therefore knowledge cannot be detected and transferred (Bounfour 2003). Furthermore, Dealer B choose to stay ignorant as they do not see the benefit of transferring knowledge to the distributor.

5.3.2. The Intrinsic Nature of Knowledge

Knowledge has many forms which makes it hard to define and as a result, knowledge is hard to manage and therefore transfer (Bounfour 2003). In Case A, interviewee A2 explains that they have multiple ways of communicating with Dealer A, for example, they both gather knowledge from personal meetings and through data systems. The multiple ways used to transfer knowledge shows the variation of the many forms knowledge can take. Furthermore, interviewee A5 explains that there has always been a problem with lack of information within the organization. Still, they share as much knowledge as they can but people still do not know enough about the matter at hand. Interviewee A6 also states that they do not discuss customers across borders and rather focus on what they themselves want and not what the customer want. Furthermore, knowledge has an unforeseeable nature and as it gets colored by the possessor (Bounfour 2003) it is hard to understand what might be knowledge and not and as a result, that might be the reason as to why they feel like they have a lack of information.
Both interviewees from Distributor B see the importance in Dealer B’s knowledge of the customer. Still, interviewee B2 states that as they are far up in the organization they are far from the salespeople and thus, it is hard to gain the knowledge that the salespeople possess. There are many reasons to why employees need to have customer knowledge but in the end it is about meeting customer needs and gaining a competitive advantage. These different views on how the knowledge should be used within the companies makes the knowledge, yet again coloured by the possessor and so it is hard for all employees to understand it (Bounfour 2003).

5.3.3. The Individual Barrier

Von Krogh et al. cited in Bounfour (2003:161) explains that when people transfer knowledge, they transfer a bit of themselves as a person's beliefs, position and identity is reflected on the shared knowledge. As the salespeople in both cases are the ones with the most customer knowledge but do not understand why they should transfer knowledge, this is form of individual barrier as this entail that the knowledge they obtain is highly connected to them as individuals. For example, the seller B5 explained that the customer knowledge that they contain is kept mentally and therefore, if they leave, the knowledge leaves with them. Hence, they identify with the knowledge that they obtain in their position as a seller which explains that can be considered to be a individual barrier.

5.3.4. The Strategic Barrier

Bounfour (2003) explains that the strategic barrier focus on making employees understand the importance of knowledge transfer processes. This barrier can be seen in Case A as all interviewees of Dealer A, except for A7, answered that knowledge should be be transferred to Distributor A as mentioned before. Furthermore, interviewee A5 states that you do not think about that the knowledge should be transferred or where the knowledge ends up. Moreover, interviewee A2 stresses that they obtain most of their customer knowledge from the dealers and that it is the responsibility of the dealers to transfer the customer knowledge to Distributor A. When they do not see why the knowledge should be transferred it makes the company less efficient in their processes (Bounfour 2003) which could be considered to be a strategic barrier since there is a lack of understanding why knowledge should be transferred among the employees of Dealer A. Hence, they do not understand that Distributor A sees a great value in customer knowledge. Distributor A also has a problem with the dealers thinking that the customers are theirs and that Distributor A should not be able to use the information in the same way. According to Kumar and Reinartz (2012) this is called a silo mentality, which they explain is when a function is unwilling to transfer knowledge about customers as they believe that the customers are solely theirs, which the dealers believe in this case. This in turn can
lead to that knowledge is not being shared within the company (Kumar and Reinartz 2012) which in turn can lead to a lack of efficiency (Bounfour 2003).

Within Case B, the dealer means that they do not want to share too much customer knowledge with Distributor B because of the other dealer in the area. This has resulted in a less transparent communication between Dealer B and Distributor B as they do not want the other dealer to gain their customer knowledge through sharing the knowledge with their distributor. This can also be seen as a silo mentality, which is the phenomenon Kumar and Reinartz (2012) described. This prevents the transfer of knowledge between the organizations and so they are not able to access all the customer knowledge available within Case B. At the same time, interviewee B2 stresses the importance of the transfer between Dealer B and Distributor B so they can meet the customer needs. Furthermore, B6 means that the customer knowledge they obtain is kept mentally and is not documented anywhere and further explains that the customer knowledge obtained therefore disappears if a seller quits. Interviewees B5 and B6 also stated that they do not see why Distributor B would need their knowledge as they can gain their own. This shows the lack of understanding for the importance of knowledge transfer as they do not see why Distributor could have use of their knowledge (Bounfour 2003).

5.3.5. The Organizational Barrier

The organizational barrier is, according to Bounfour (2003), the organizational procedures, standards and routines for exchanges between employees which then becomes obstacles for the knowledge transfer as they are not compatible with the process for it. Interviewee A1 mentions this topic by explaining that there is no systematic way of keeping contact between Dealer A and Distributor A. Additionally, this statement is strengthened by A5 who states that they communicate with contacts they have gained in an informal manner. Furthermore, A5 also states that one of the biggest challenges with knowledge transfer is that the knowledge gets stuck because of the many links within Case A. These all stress that there is no structured way to transfer knowledge within Case A which in itself is an obstacle to the transfer of knowledge according to the organizational barrier (Bounfour 2003). However, interviewees from distributors have expressed a desire to have a systematic forum that facilitates the communication and knowledge transfer between the organizations within their respective case. Similarly, interviewee B2 states that there is no natural way of working or communicating to transfer knowledge since they need to ask for knowledge when they want it. B3 confirms this by stating that they miss important information as there are no real processes for transferring customer knowledge. Furthermore, B2 continues mentioning time as another challenge with the transfer of knowledge. Moreover, B2 means that the possessor of the knowledge might not
have time to transfer it, but even if they do, the receiver might not have time to transfer it further. As a result, the knowledge gets stuck. Similarly, Le Bon (2014) also mention time as a barrier for transferring knowledge. They explain that sellers cannot focus on transferring customer knowledge as they have to focus on their tasks as a seller (Le Bon 2014). Hence, the fact that B2 mentioned that time could act like a barrier for transferring knowledge is confirmed, especially regarding sellers. As mentioned in the paragraph above, these can be seen as obstacles according to Bounfour (2003). Moreover, some of these obstacles creating organizational barriers could have been avoided through spontaneous activities (Davenport and Prusak 1998) as they would exchange knowledge without, for example, feeling like it takes too much time or being another task to do.

5.3.6. The Cultural Barrier

When an organizational culture entails processes or routines which are not supportive of the knowledge transfer, a cultural barrier might arise (Bounfour 2003). The type of organizational culture which might hinder the transfer of knowledge can for example be a lack of trust, cultures within the organization that do not match or different vocabularies et cetera. Regarding the organizational culture, the biggest deviation in Case A where the fact that they are more traditional with a more hierarchical structure compared to Dealer A. This could affect the transfer of knowledge negatively as Song-Qing (2011) highlights the fact that if the organizational culture is different in the organizations within a supply chain, this could act as a transfer barrier within the organizations of Case A. In addition, Distributor A claims that the traditional and hierarchical organizational culture is caused by the industry that they are in. Since Dealer A is in the same industry as them and since they are a part of the same supply chain as Distributor A, these negative effects of a traditional structure could also apply to Case A. However, the fact that Dealer A have a traditional organizational culture was not something that any interviewees from Dealer A mentioned when they were interviewed.

Another factor that can determine and affect if the organizational culture can act as a transfer barrier is trust (Bounfour 2003). In addition, Waters (2011) explains that knowledge can be transferred in a more effective manner between organizations in a supply chain if there is trust between them. Interviewee B4 of Dealer B explains that they are reluctant to share knowledge with their distributor because of the competition they have with the other dealer that Distributor B have which operate in the same geographical area as Dealer B. They further explain that they are afraid that the customer knowledge that would be transferred to the distributor would be shared with the other dealer which would be disadvantageous for them. Thus, there is a lack of trust to the distributor which hinders knowledge to be transferred to them.
In addition, there seems to be different beliefs on the importance of customer knowledge transfer within the cases which is a matter of organizational culture issue since beliefs that affect behaviors is a part that forms organizational culture according to Buttle (2009). The fact that there are different beliefs between distributors and dealers therefore implies that there is a difference in their organizational culture which in turn affects the transfer of knowledge between them. Song-Qing states that there is a lesser chance of knowledge to be transferred if there is a clash between the organizational culture of the organizations, this harms the transfer of knowledge between organizations in a supply chain. Therefore, the fact that sellers of both dealers do not believe that the knowledge of the customer that they obtain is needed by the distributors results in customer knowledge getting stuck at dealers and not getting transferred to the distributors.

5.3.7. The Technological and Process Barrier

As mentioned before, a big difference between Case A and Case B is the fact that Case A have a joint sales system and Case B does not. Bounfour (2003) explains that a technological infrastructure or information system, can be incompatible with the processes of knowledge transfer by lacking parts or not supporting activities, this in turn can then act as a transfer barrier. This is evident in Case B where there is a lack of technological infrastructure that supports the transfer of customer knowledge between the organizations since they do not have a joint information system, which they do have in Case A. However, interviewee A2 argues that there is a lack of communication channels to connect between the dealer and distributor in Case A as there are no systematic way of doing it. Furthermore, interviewee A5 believe that they are sharing as much information as possible within the organization but also argues that despite this, people do not have the correct information for the matter at hand. This could be considered to be a barrier since this problem of employees not having the right information entails that even if people are sharing knowledge, it does not reach the potential recipients of the knowledge. Hence, there might be a lack of technological support or lack of process which could support knowledge getting properly transferred. Furthermore, both interviewees A1 and A2 argue that the organizations would benefit through having a shared view, on customer data and information throughout the company and how it should be used for the employees to be able to work in a synchronized manner. A2 further explains that at this moment, the functions do not work accordingly which could be a process barrier that blocks the transfer of knowledge.

Moreover, In Case B, the main problem of their CRM system is explained by interviewee B2 who means that it has become too complex. The interviewee further explains that the CRM system is not properly used by the sellers either. Furthermore, interviewee B1 claims that it is through this CRM
system that Distributor B obtains their customer information which is an issue since Dealer B does not actually use the system according to B2, as the dealers are connected to it through an internet portal. Another issue that disturbs the processes for knowledge transfer is that the knowledge stays with the seller and that when the seller quits, the knowledge is gone too according to as explained before. Furthermore, B4 states that they do not know how to transfer knowledge as they do not have a CRM system at Dealer B. Interviewee B2 stresses that the negative aspect of their processes of transferring knowledge is mainly that they do not have sufficient systems and the ones they have are used poorly. As stated earlier, the lack of necessary technological infrastructure and processes to share knowledge is a barrier. As especially Case B do not have supportive functions for the processes of sharing knowledge, transfer is not as easy to manage (Bounfour 2003).

5.4 GDPR

5.4.1. The implementation of GDPR

All four of the organizations in the two cases has changed their way of handling customer data in relation to the implementation of GDPR. However, Case A has come further in the process of implementing GDPR compared to Case B. In addition, many sellers of both the dealers do not have knowledge of GDPR nor understands why it should be implemented. Choo (1998) explain that when a change occurs, employees need to understand why it occurred in order to be able to adapt to the change. Furthermore, the empirical findings show that some interviewees have not been able to adapt to the change since there is a lack of understanding of the regulation. Additionally, the organizations within Case B do not have as much knowledge about GDPR compared to the organizations of Case B. However, both Cases hired external firms to help them with GDPR. Furthermore, most of the interviewees from both of the the dealers express that they do not understand why GDPR is important or why they have to follow the regulation. Additionally, this mindset derives from the lack of knowledge of GDPR. Moreover, Interviewee B2 states that they are still trying to interpret the regulation and explain that future court cases will give them guidance in how to properly interpret GDPR. There needs to be an understanding of why the change has occurred and it only makes sense when a shared meaning among the employees has been made (Choo 1998; Weick 1979 cited in Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Therefore, since there is not a shared understanding of GDPR between the employees within the distributors, it explains why the implementation of GDPR does not make sense to the sellers. The knowledge has not been transferred properly to the salespeople and therefore they act according to their own sense making of what GDPR implies. Choo (1998) means that there is a cognitive framework in organizations which makes employees act accordingly to their shared
beliefs and assumptions about their tasks at hand. This is how they can fill the gaps when there is a lack of information.

Dealer B explained that they did not receive a lot of directives from Distributor B. Controversially, interviewees from Dealer A states that Distributor A did express that actions had to be made in order to follow the regulation but they did not explain how they were supposed to implement GDPR. Garber (2018) states that the regulation does not state how GDPR should be implemented. One can question whose responsibility is to make sure that the regulation gets properly implemented in an organization, when the regulation does not explicitly state how to implement it. Additionally, interviewee A5 argues that it is not the responsibility of the distributor.

Regarding the organizational culture, there is little empirical data that suggest that it has been changed as a result of the implementation of GDPR. Nevertheless, the processes has definitely changed since the organizations are more cautious of how they handle customer data and employees actively think about customer privacy. According to Smith (2005), a change needs to be managed for years before it creates a change in the organizational culture. Since the regulation was implemented last year, not enough time has gone by for it to impact the organizational culture of the companies. Garber (2018) also means that it is very time consuming to implement GDPR which in turn is harmful for the business.

5.4.2. Challenges in connection to the implementation of GDPR

GDPR was created as an answer to the development of technology and globalization. One interviewee from Distributor B discusses how they as an organization are behind in regards of the globalization and are working on developing their technology to keep up. This might explain why they are not as far in to the process of implementing GDPR compared to Case A. Furthermore, as they are obligated to follow GDPR, it may help them catching up to the globalization as the regulation has helped them start this process. According to Greengard (2018), resistance has been expressed from organizations regarding the implementation of the regulation. Some of the interviewees did have a negative attitude towards the regulation and the majority of the interviewees did express a great fear before the implementation of GDPR. This was harmful to them as it led to both of the dealers becoming rather passive regarding contacting potential customers because of the fear of making mistakes. Interviewee A5 expressed that the fear derived from not wanting to cause any pain to the customer or employees rather than getting punished by law. This is probably a result from their organizational culture as the interviewees of Dealer A have previously expressed that they truly care for their customers and employees. Another challenge with the implementation of GDPR which
interviewees from Case B expressed was the fact that it took a long time to implement and the fact that various processes are also more time consuming now. Kraft, Arden and Verhoef (2017) claim that because of organizations not wanting to interfere with the privacy of customers it has now become a challenge to contact customers. Many of the interviewees confirms this statement, especially interviewees from respective dealer as they believe that it was easier to reach out to customer before GDPR was implemented. Customers often have a high concern regarding giving organizations their personal data (Dolnicar and Jordaan 2007; De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh 2017) and during recent years customers have started to understand the value of their personal information (Margrethe Vestager cited in Recode 2017).

5.4.3. Opportunities in Connection to the Implementation of GDPR

It is in the favor of both customers and companies that organizations are more careful regarding how they handle contact information, since this is in the favor of the customers and the fact that meeting customer needs result in a competitive advantage (Grant 2016). This also explains how GDPR works in favour of both customers and organizations regarding the privacy of customers. Furthermore, Garber (2018) highlights the opportunities of implementing GDPR by arguing that it makes organizations get a better overview of their customer data which in turn is good for analytics analysis. This is supported by our empirical evidence as both distributors explain that their data has become more organized and more understandable which in turn has made it more useful. Interviewee A1 also states that this has allowed their communication to become more streamlined towards their customers. Interviewees from Dealer A agrees with these statements while Dealer B could see no positive aspects or opportunities with the implementation of GDPR. The earlier mentioned theory of Garber (2018) has therefore been confirmed by all of the organizations except for Dealer B, they see the opportunities that the regulation has generated and have therefore helped the organizations to acknowledge the customer and their integrity.

5.5 Successful Customer Knowledge Transfer or Not

Regarding the transfer of customer knowledge and whether it is successful or not within a supply chain depends on many factors. We can conclude that communication and organizational culture are factors that allow for customer knowledge to be transferred both within an organization and interorganizationally. However, there are some factors that also affect these processes which complicates the process of knowledge transfer. According to our findings, transfer barriers are evident and they affect the organizations to the point that it hinders knowledge to be transferred. The main transfer barriers were the strategic transfer barrier, the organizational transfer barrier and the technological transfer barrier. The barrier of ignorance, the individual barrier and the intrinsic nature
of knowledge also affected the knowledge transfer but not to the same extent. Furthermore, the matter if GDPR affected the transfer of customer knowledge negatively were not supported as it did not have a significant effect on the transfer of customer knowledge. Controversially our findings suggest that the implementation of GDPR has a lot of opportunities as it helps organizing the customer data. However, the challenge with GDPR is first and foremost to communicate the managing of the regulation and to understand the importance of it.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to answer the research questions. Moreover, the contributions of the paper and further research will also be covered in this chapter.

What are the Challenges and Possibilities of the Processes of Customer Knowledge Transfer Between Organizations in a Distributor-Dealer Relationship?

The possibilities that a distributor-dealer relationship generates is competitive advantage and this is achieved when a fitting knowledge transfer process has been implemented. The shared advantages in a distributor-dealer relationship are accessed when there is an exchange of knowledge and capabilities. This is something that both Case A and Case B recognized and strived for. There are great possibilities of a good knowledge transfer if there is a synchronized culture between the organizations and technological processes that allows the organization to communicate with each other without hardship. Furthermore, there is a desire among the distributors of both cases to have a way to systematically communicate with the dealers as they highly value the input of dealers. However, there is still improvements to be made as the salespeople of both companies did not know the importance of transferring customer knowledge which has hindered knowledge to be transferred. The challenges of knowledge transfer were mainly lying in the transfer barriers that Bounfour (2003) covers. The most prominent transfer barriers were the strategic barrier, organizational barrier and the technological barrier that negatively affected the transfer of knowledge between the two cases. In both cases the lack of understanding of why customer knowledge should be transferred was evident, especially among the salespeople which is an issue as they are the ones in possession of the most important customer knowledge. Furthermore, this was complemented with the lack of processes and structures to transfer the knowledge which result in the challenge to find processes that will increase the customer knowledge transfer. In summary, it can be discussed that the process of customer knowledge transfer is different in the cases. We do believe that the process of customer knowledge transfer is more successful within Case A since they have more advanced technologies that enable communication to occur between the organizations which is not as evident in Case B. Moreover, another reason as to why Case B was not as successful as Case A regarding their transfer of customer knowledge is the fact that their distributor had another dealer in the same area as them which is competition to them.
In What Way has the Implementation of GDPR Affected the Transfer of Customer Knowledge Between a Distributor and a Dealer?

Interestingly, our findings indicate that the implementation of GDPR has barely affected the transfer of customer knowledge among Case A and Case B. Accordingly, our findings show that in relation to the implementation of GDPR, the communication between the organizations and how they transfer knowledge between each other has not changed. However, the implementation has affected the processes within the different organizations since all of the organizations have had to look over how they handle their customer data as well as how they interact with customers. In addition, there was a lot of negative light shed on the implementation of GDPR from some of the interviewees in the distributors in regards to the fact that it is time consuming and harder to reach out to new customers according to some. Intriguingly, the implementation has led to a lot of positive changes in the organizations. Since the management of customer data has been managed in the favour of customer’s privacy, this has led to the organizations having a better overview of the data which in turn probably will facilitate the transfer of customer knowledge in the long run.

6.1. Future Research

Regarding future research, it could be interesting to analyze channel captainship and see if an organization in power affects the transfer of knowledge. Furthermore, it might be of interest to do a case study on solely one case that involves a distributor and dealer in a business with a visional omnichannel strategy. By using the methodology of studying one case one could go more in depth regarding the processes of knowledge transfer by conducting a greater number of interviews in one organization. Moreover, investigating the impact GDPR has on knowledge transfer might give more material after one or two years when the companies are done with interpreting the regulation.
References


Grant, R. M. (2016). *Contemporary strategy analysis: Text and Cases* (9th ed.). Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley


Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 about on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)


Appendix

Annex 1 - Interview Guide Used for Dealers

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<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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- Do you consent that your answers in this interview will be used as empirical data for our thesis? You will remain anonymous.

Personal Question

What is your name and what position do you have in the organization?
What are your main tasks and responsibilities?
Do you communicate with your distributor in any way?

- How?

Organizational Culture

How would you describe the organizational culture?
How would you describe the informal knowledge exchange you and your distributor? ➤
- Do you discuss customers?
How would you describe the informal knowledge exchange between you and your employees within the organization?

➤ Do you discuss customers?

Customer Knowledge / Knowledge transfer / CRM

In what way is it important for your position to have customer knowledge?
How do you interact with your customers?
How do you obtain knowledge about the customer?
Do you believe that customer knowledge should be shared between you and the distributor?

➤ Why?
What processes and systems do your organization use to handle knowledge about the customer?

➤ What are the advantages with the systems/processes?
➤ What disadvantages do these systems/processes have?

GDPR

What did you experience to be the major challenges with customer knowledge transfer before the implementation of GDPR?
What changes were required in connection with the implementation of GDPR?
How has the implementation of GDPR been of help to your organization?
How has the implementation of GDPR been a challenge for your organization?
What have you experienced to be the major challenge with customer knowledge transfer in connection with the implementation of GDPR?
Has the implementation of GDPR affected the organizational culture in any way?
Have you gotten any directives from the distributor in connection with the implementation of GDPR?

_Closing question_

What do you consider to be the biggest challenge with the transfer of customer knowledge in organizations in general?
Lastly, do you have any additional thoughts on the topics we have covered in this interview?
Annex 2 - Interview Guide Used for Distributors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>START TIME</td>
<td>END TIME</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do you consent that your answers in this interview will be used as empirical data for our thesis? You will remain anonymous.

Personal Question
What is your name and what position do you have in the organization?
What are your main tasks and responsibilities?
How do you communicate with your dealers?

Organizational Culture
How would you describe the organizational culture?
How would you describe the informal knowledge exchange you and your distributor?
Do you discuss customers?

Customer Knowledge / Knowledge transfer / CRM
In what way is it important for your position to have customer knowledge?
How do you interact with your customers?
How do you obtain knowledge about the customer?
Do you believe that customer knowledge should be shared between you and the dealer?
Why?
What processes and systems do your organization use to handle knowledge about the customer?
What are the advantages with the systems/processes?
What disadvantages do these systems/processes have?

GDPR
What did you experience to be the major challenges with customer knowledge transfer before the implementation of GDPR?
What changes were required in connection with the implementation of GDPR?
How has the implementation of GDPR been of help to your organization?
How has the implementation of GDPR been a challenge for your organization?
What have you experienced to be the major challenge with customer knowledge transfer in connection with the implementation of GDPR?
Has the implementation of GDPR affected the organizational culture in any way?
Have you given any directives to the dealers in connection with the implementation of GDPR?

Closing question
What do you consider to be the biggest challenge with the transfer of customer knowledge in organizations in general?
Lastly, do you have any additional thoughts on the topics we have covered in this interview?