Social media use in B2B context
A multi-case study on the use of social media by B2B companies
Abstract

In the past decade, there has been a transformation in how businesses are done, many business chose to adopt digitization and others were forced to go with the flow. As a part of this digital revolution, social media has reserved a big share of this transformation in how companies do their marketing and communicate their product and brand image to their customers. Social media in a business to customer context has been very common since the birth of social media, companies had realized its benefit, and however, it is still in an early phase in a business to business context. Social media has become an effective marketing tool for B2B companies, yet, there are still drawbacks when companies fail to know how to use such platforms to their benefit and merely have a shy presence or do not have a well-defined strategy to the use of social media in the most effective way. A vital step when incorporating social media in marketing is to create a clear goals and metrics. However, it has been seen that many companies lack the expertise, resources and the know-how, to implement a social media marketing strategy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the practices of B2B companies when they use social media without a clearly defined social media marketing strategy, what they do when they use social media.

Keywords

Social media usage, SM marketing strategy, adoption, Business to Business.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Approximately two billion people are using social media networks a statistical study shows in 2017, these figures are expected to expand with the spread use of smart mobile devices (Statista.com, 2017). Businesses are taking advantage of this technological development to do business differently, where the internet is providing opportunities to reduce cost and digitize their enterprise to reach larger number of customers easily and gain access to the global market (Brink, 2017; Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch, 2016). The interest in using social media as a part of marketing has increased remarkably in the recent years (Keinänen and Kuivalainen, 2015). According to Siagmagka et al. (2015) social media has already achieved reliable results in terms of sales and marketing for the business to customer market, Business to Business firms have begun to investigate the potential of social media platforms as a marketing channel (Keinänen and Kuivalainen, 2015). Which eventually has proven to have advantages and disadvantages (Huotari and Ulkuniemi, 2015). The advantages can range from the ability to reach wider audience and specifically target segment to reducing the cost of promotion and advertising in comparison with traditional media (Holliman, 2014), which can also help in developing an understanding of the audience’s information needs, since it is no longer a one sided interaction (ibid).

The disadvantages on the other hand can range from diffused power and authority to Social media firestorms; where in traditional one-way mass media, the power lies in the hand of the ones who create and broadcasts information: Newscasters, Journalists, Academics and business leaders (Arnaboldi & Coget 2016) while social media although does not cancel this authority but alters it, by giving the audience the power to share and distribute information freely, and have an impact on the original message broadcasted by the company, where often it can be a negative shared message (ibid), such as Social media firestorms where companies commit a blunder and instead of it fading out and solved locally as it was before the presence of social media, now it is shared virtually by many to many and can have a devastating effect on the company’s reputation and brand image in business to business or business to customer (Pfeffer et al., 2013). Business to Business (B2B) defined by Lacka and Chong (2015) as businesses that market their product to other businesses, on the other hand Business to consumer (B2C) are businesses that market and sell their product to individual consumers. According to Hays et al. (2013) And Loredana et al. (2015) many organizations and businesses actively manage and grow their social media presence activities, other companies and organizations simply join social media, however, they lack the support, interest, and knowledge to maintain an effective social media account (ibid).
Many companies see social media as an opportunity to market their products reach and influence the preference and decisions of their clients (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016). Companies that adopt social media without being customer oriented are missing an opportunity to further improve their performance (Trainor, 2014). Hays et al. (2013, p.213) emphasize that ‘what could be more detrimental than not understanding or adopting social media practices is using such practices in a poor manner’. Felix et al. (2016) stresses that most of the studies in this field concentrate on one aspect of the use of social media to companies, such as customer relationship management (Lacka & Chong, 2016), brand management (Holliman, 2016), innovation and recruitment management (Kietzmann et al., 2011). These studies although fill gaps in the literature and provide new knowledge yet, they lack to provide a specific understanding of how B2B companies use social media tools for marketing.

1.2 Problem discussion

‘A problem well defined, is a problem half solved’ Kaoru Ishikawa.

Porter (1998) defines a ‘strategy’ as developing a broad formula for how a business will compete, and what are its goals, and what policies will be needed to carry out those goals(ibid). A social media marketing strategy also has a set of goals to achieve to strengthen business competitiveness in the marketplace (Schaffer, 2013; Kietzmann et al. 2011). According to Schaffer, (2013) and Kietzmann et al. (2011), a social media marketing strategy determines the resources, activity, tactics that a party needs to pursue in social media. Furthermore, implementing an efficient social media marketing strategy (SMMS) can be a necessity to meet overall goals and objectives of the company(ibid). According to Felix et al. (2016, p.2) ‘Strategic social media marketing remains an untested user interaction paradigm with little published academic research. Even if there is scarce research done on social media marketing strategy holistically (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). The existing literature has something of use to say about social media marketing strategy(ibid). Kietzmann et al. (2011) mentions that companies need to be aware of using social media correctly to avoid facing adverse outcomes, by doing so and implementing a social media marketing strategy, it will help to prevent risk of the negative side of social media(ibid). Hanna et al. (2011) argue that there many companies that use social media without any knowledge or appropriate resources.
Therefore, authors discuss different theories according to the implementation of a social media marketing strategy, to understand the various levels of social media functionalities, and analyse its implications (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Schaffer, 2011; Scott & Jacka, 2011; Safko & Brake, 2010). Without prerequisite knowledge of social media marketing strategy, proper measurement of return on investment (ROI) will be difficult, especially when companies start to use paid social media tools to reach a wider population (Hanna et al., 2011).

There are barriers of the use of social media in the literature present such as; lack of knowledge, time and resources, fear of bad reputation, risk to lose customers among other factors (Lacka & Chong, 2015; Järvinen et al. 2012; Gregoire et al., 2015; Safko & Brake, 2010). According to Hayes et al. (2013) it is better not to use social media if a company lacks the knowledge of it. Also, Kietzmann et al. (2011) states that having no (SMMS) can affect the use of different platforms for example; it makes it more complicated for companies to analyse the different social media activities and users. This study therefore, aims to explore B2B companies that are using social media with no (SMMS), and what are the implications of not having an (SMMS), do all companies need an (SMMS)? This study will set a starting point for further research on ‘Social media marketing strategy’, and to understand and deepen the knowledge on the usage of social media in B2B context. Additionally, studies on social media in a B2B context has a call for paper in (Elsevier.com, 2017) since it is a relatively new field in the B2B marketing sector.

It would also be significant to the body of knowledge to explore and understand what do B2B companies do, when it comes to social media marketing, and finding answer to questions such as: How do B2B companies use social media for marketing purpose? What do B2B companies do when they use social media for marketing without a strategic approach? The study aims to compare the finding with the current literature and present gaps, and build a platform for future researches to be able to create new theories and guidelines for B2B companies in using social media to understand what is Social media marketing strategies. Finally, this study will be of interest to B2B companies seeking to implement social media as a marketing tool, by heuristics from the companies presented, and their success and challenges in social media, from companies who choose to use social media or not. Additionally, this study will be interesting for academics who can find it as a platform for further descriptive or explanatory research on the use of social media by B2B companies.
1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore what B2B companies do when they utilize social media in their marketing, lacking a Social media marketing strategy.

1.4 Research question

To fulfill the purpose of this study, following research question needs to be answered:

Rq1: How do B2B companies actively manage and grow their social media presence and activities for marketing purpose?

Rq2: What do B2B companies do when they use social media platforms for marketing purpose, lacking a strategic approach?

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Significance of social media in B2B

Cheverton (2004) defined marketing as “anticipating, identifying and satisfying customers' needs, profitably”. With the development of social media and increased numbers of users, companies are more involved with the usage and see social media as a relevant marketing tool (Siamagka et al., 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012). Social media is being used as an effective tool for B2B marketing activities, and more marketers are using social media to achieve marketing objectives such as; attract new customers, identify business partners and create new business advantages (Siamagka et al., 2015; Guesalga; 2016; Järvinen et al., 2012).

In recent times, social media has emerged as a prominent platform for individuals and organizations. According to Siamagka et al. (2015), social media is being used among companies to help create competencies and higher performances. B2B companies are starting to explore and understand the importance of social media and its consequences (Siamagka et al., 2015; Guesalga, 2016). In recent research Lacka & Chong (2016) pointed out that social media platforms are used as two-way communication between buyer and seller. It has allowed B2B marketers to improve their performances in creating strong relationships with customers and business partners. However, there is still a need
for more research on the use of social media in a B2B context (Guesalga, 2016; Lacka & Chong, 2016; Siagmagka et al., 2015).

Social media platforms are being more used by companies and individuals for different purposes such as; building brand awareness, build deeper relationships, share and exchange information about products or services, advertise, recruit employees, reviews and feedbacks, customer services and build up customer satisfaction (ibid). Every year more businesses and individuals are involved with the adoption of social media (Keating et al., 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2012; Guesalga, 2016). It is clear that many authors pointed out the importance that social media platforms have in different organizations and the consequences of social media usage, either positive or negative, which is why it is crucial for companies to understand how to implement the knowledge necessary in this area. According to (Guesalga, 2016) the different social media platforms are used for various purposes such to improve communication between the buyer and the seller, create word of mouth and increase the customer base (ibid). It has been also shown that social media can influence the decision.

The authors Guesalga (2016) and Siagmagka et al. (2015) argued that the adoption of social media can benefit companies in increasing sales, higher brand awareness and improving their reputation which can be a great opportunity for businesses that want to improve in these different areas. However, Lacka & Chong (2016) argued that social media adoption in previous research has been used in a limited way since there was not enough reliable information, resources and knowledge on how to manage the different platforms (ibid). Even up to date more researchers are perceiving social media as a valuable and effective tool for B2B marketing since it is a two-way communication and increases the interaction between companies, individuals and employees (Guesalga, 2015; Siagmagka et al., 2015).

Hays et al. (2013) argued that many organizations are being part of the growing phase of social media, more companies are being more active and presences in social media. In this research, it is also stated that there exist a lack of knowledge and support to maintain a social media account due to not having an adequate understanding of its usage in and in an efficient manner (ibid), Additionally Järvinen et al. (2012) claims that the academic research on the use of social media is limited and there is a gap that remains between the utilization of social media in a B2B context. Nonetheless with the lack of extensive studies, social media is still an efficient platform that has been used in B2B marketers to
enhance brand awareness, influence in the decision making and create better relationships between customers and organizations (Siamagka et al., 2015). Companies are starting to realize the importance and significance of the use of social media and to see how it has helped other companies by delivering higher performance and by attracting new customers among other actions (Siagmagka et al., 2015; Guesalga, 2016).

2.1.1 What are the social media platforms

Lacka & Chong (2016) states that it is important for B2B marketers to focus on their perception concerning usability, usefulness and utility of social media platforms in the B2B context if they seek to adopt social media sites for marketing. There are a lot of companies that have their presence on social media, the most used platforms are; LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Keating et al., 2015; Guesalga, 2016). The different platforms provide different functions that demand the attention of many companies and the different platforms are used depending on the purpose of the organization (ibid). Why are these platforms important for businesses? Guesalga (2016) argued that businesses that use social media can provide and exchange valuable information in a rapid way, they can develop and increase the chance to deepen relationships and long-term relationship with their clients. This confirms that it can help in a many ways for customers, businesses and individuals to interact in a more direct way of communication and ease the way of interaction (Siagmaka et al, 2015; Keating et al., 2015, Guesalga, 2016).

The different social media platforms are somehow related to each other but they have different capabilities (ibid). According to Järvinen, et al. (2012) Facebook is a networking site that helps individuals and organizations share different content such as; pictures, videos, memories, exchange information from other platforms and provides various details information of products or organizations, customer service through inbox and fan pages for businesses and individuals (ibid). Fischer & Reuber (2010) mentioned that all this type of information that Facebook has can be private or it can be available for everyone as individuals and organizations are able to manage their privacy setting. Moreover, Facebook has the capability to increase brand awareness between organizations, individuals and enhance the customer engagement by sharing posts and experiences between each other (Järvinen et al., 2012; Fisher & Reuber, 2010). Facebook and LinkedIn are the strongest platforms when it comes to B2B, the different platforms can be used to find detailed information when recruiting employees or information about
any prospects (ibid). Both platforms are perceived to increase the possibility to build relationships, meet new customer’s organizations and qualifying prospects (Rodriguez et al., 2012; Järvinen et al., 2012; Fischer & Reuber, 2010).

Twitter is a microblogging site where businesses and individuals have the opportunity to advertise from product to companies, to share news about their business or product, update their customers, respond to comments, and share their thoughts and experiences (Järvinen et al., 2012). These platforms help to increase or can decrease the reputation of companies depending on their experiences that customers or business will share or find depending on the content (Järvinen et al., 2012; Fischer & Reuber, 2010). YouTube is a platform where individuals and businesses share videos for different purposes, for example; advertising, promoting, showing details of a specific product, music, tutorials or any type of commercial for different companies (Järvinen et al., 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2012). LinkedIn is a platform that help businesses to recruit employees and find information of different companies or to find prospects in a professional way (Rodriguez et al., 2012).

2.1.2 Social media monitoring

(SMM) is a process usually performed by organizations or companies to determine their online perception and evaluate reputation by tracking, gathering and mining information from selected individuals or groups online (Desjardins, 2016). For a company to succeed at its social media initiatives, there is a need for commitment to monitoring and measuring conversations concerning stakeholders as it considerably mitigates risk and provides insights (ibid). Additionally, it must be coupled with learning, responding measuring and sharing for a company to maintain relevancy. Lack of effective listening increases risk of disconnection with stakeholders whilst unsuitable communication can cause dissatisfaction and disappointment (Scott & Jacka, 2011). The development of social media monitoring tools and platforms have occurred to meet the need for monitoring customers and to manage the abundance of information online in the form of User Generated content (UGS) (ibid). User-generated content (UGC) is described as publicly available content in different forms of media created by end users, stretching from discussion boards, reviews and blogs, to content on social media (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Moser & Eijkeren, 2016). UCG can help organizations with the ability to provide authentic information (Moens, Li, & Chua, 2014; Siamagka et al., 2015). The social
media monitoring tool with the information that is created by UCG, can provide the ability to listen to users on social media, analyse and measure relative to their brand and view of the business (Fensel, 2012; Moens, Li & Chua, 2014; Siamagka et al, 2015). This information can be leveraged for strategy selection and what course of actions to take when facing customer’s perspectives on the businesses offers at real time and in scalable method (ibid).

2.2 Social media marketing strategy

A social media marketing strategy determines the resources, activity, tactics that a party needs to pursue in social media (Schaffer, 2013; Kietzmann et al. 2011). It helps to realize how to manage social media platforms for the past, present and future activities. Schaffer (2013) argued that establishing an efficient social media marketing strategy will create a social media return on investment (ROI). To obtain and achieve positive social media, it would be necessary to identify the goals and objectives of the company(ibid). Companies need to be aware of how to use social media properly.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that it is relevant to implement a social media marketing strategy before starting to use the different platforms much as Hanna et al. (2011) argue that many companies are using social media without any knowledge, time or appropriate staff. Kietzmann et al (2011) therefore presents the honeycomb framework as a helpful tool for companies that want to implement an efficient social media strategy, by helping companies to examine social media users and to analyse the implications(ibid). However, this does not mean that companies need to implement this framework, it is more a model that allows viewing distinct levels of social media functionality and has its sub-elements to be used in the strategy in accordance and suitability to the company using them (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

In other cases, companies incorporate social media to share a purpose or objectives for example; engaging customers, advertising for new products, events, communicate with company’s initiative or just to improve the way of interaction (Hanna et al, 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010). The authors Safko & Brake (2010) presented other kinds of opinion regarding the use of social media marketing strategy, the authors believes that the four pillars of social media marketing strategy are more relevant. The pillars that can be
applicable for a social media marketing strategy are; communicate, collaborate, educate and entertain (ibid).

2.2.1 The seven functional blocks

The seven functional blocks which is also call honeycomb framework of social media are: identity, sharing, conversation, presence, relationships, groups and reputation. Kietzmann (2011) confirms that companies that want to get thoughtful about social media will discover many well-organized tools in the honeycomb framework. By analysing the seven functional blocks, will give the companies an idea of how to understand social media activities, their impacts and how companies can develop a corresponding social media marketing strategy based on these different elements depending on their company. The honeycomb framework it is also a way of studying the activities of the use of social media by utilizing the different platforms (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2011). According to Taprial & Kanwar (2012) using this framework, has shown to help companies understand and engage with the right knowledge and implications.

Figure 1 The honeycomb framework

![Honeycomb Framework Diagram](source)

Source: (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Taprial & Kanwar, 2012)
Kietzmann et al. (2011) begins with explaining identity. This part of the functional blocks explained identity as disclosing information, location or profiles. However, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that identity can also be related to thoughts, perceptions and opinions, depending on the user or the business information. Hence, the identity is one of the most important parts of the social media platforms since it is presenting the identity of your company or individuals profiles that other people or businesses can perceive. (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Kietzmann et al. (2011) argue that one can analyse some implications in relation to identity when starting to build up a social media marketing strategy. Some of the implications can be privacy. It is relevant for companies to understand what type of content can be shared for businesses or individuals and what kind of identity they are sharing with promotion or branding and to which segments systematically(ibid).

Second functional block is conversation. Kietzmann et al (2011) defined conversation as the extent on how users, businesses and individuals communicates through social media. This is a functional block that helps to improve conversation between one another. For example; using social media platforms to reach out customers, attract new customers, keep in contact with customers, business or employees(ibid). Also Kaplan and Haeinlein (2010) stated that using Twitter is where business partners and individuals share their opinions and create different ways of discussions. It is sort of sharing their messages and to see if it can make any possible positive impact for businesses, employees or consumers. It can be related to any type of content by exchanging short messages, to increase brand awareness with the message they want to provide, it is more of a conversation than trying to find an identity(ibid). Conversation through social media is a way to maintain and create relationships between customers and business partners (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kaplan & Haeinlein, 2010).

Sharing is a way of interacting through social media, and it means any information that can be received or exchanged (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Järvinen et al., 2012). For example; using social platforms with the purpose of sharing videos, photos, location, products and company detail information(ibid). This leads companies, customers and individuals to develop and build relationships and updates their experiences through the different platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Osatuyi, 2013). However, the implication can be encountering copyrights, since before sharing one needs
to understand what type of content is legal to share and if it is the right platform (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This depends on which platforms and in what type of content the company or individual wants to share (ibid). Hence, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) mentioned YouTube as one of the efficient platforms that allows businesses and individuals to upload and share different content and experiences.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) mentioned presence as one of the seven functional blocks. Here is knowing that users are aware if others are available. For example; it can be by sharing the location of the event, how many people has visited their platforms etc. This block can be link or influence to other blocks such as relationship and conversations (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010). However, the companies need to be aware of their users, business partners’ availability and this can be counted as an implication to this block (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010).

Relationship is how users are connected to each other. In this case for example; companies can build up relationships with different customers or business partners through social media by sharing content and exchanging valuable information (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011). The different type of relationships differs with the different platforms. For example; followers that are on LinkedIn are more likely build up relationship by finding jobs, gather information of business partners or to see other competitors and also to recruit employees (Senadheera et al, 2011; Kietzmann et al; 2011). The implications that Kietzmann et al. (2011) argued is about the number of followers. The more followers or connection a company possess the better will be the opportunity for other businesses and individuals to join.

Reputation and groups as the sixth and seventh part of the functional blocks. Kietzmann et al. (2011) states that reputation can have different meanings regarding social media platforms. However, Senadheera et al. (2011) mentioned reputation as a social interaction where users can be engaging and create whether a trust reputation or a negative reputation. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011) and Liu & Munro. (2012) the most common factor related to reputation is trust by using user-generated content to control trustworthiness. The reputation is reflected through the content that companies and individuals share, it could be reflected in ‘likes’ and ‘Views’, comments and experiences. Groups is a way to create communities to share same purposes, ideas and experiences (ibid). Kietzmann et al. (2011) mentioned that the different functional blocks are important to create an efficient
social media marketing strategy, however, the different blocks work for different purposes and platforms. Companies might integrate three or four blocks for example; for Facebook, it is used to create relationship and other platforms possess other purposes, it doesn’t mean that the seven blocks need to be incorporated in each platform (ibid).

### 2.2.2 The four pillars

The four pillars of social media contains communicate, collaborate, educate and entertainment. Safko & Brake (2010) argued that the four pillars supports businesses to develop engagement between customers, employees and prospects. This is usually analysed after having a social media marketing strategy in mind, the authors have a strong belief that utilizing the four pillars can help to steady the platforms and make the strategy more sustainable (Safko & Brake, 2010; Postman, 2009).

*Communication* is part of social media by permitting a conversation among the market or the audience (Järvinen et al. 2012; Safko & Brake, 2010). However, Bovee and Thill (2010) explained communication as receiving and transferring information between each other, and as one of the most crucial factors when sharing data. There are two types of audience, internal and external. Internal audience such as co-workers and employees help social media through communicating, by sharing knowledge or ideas to improve their products or manufacturing procedures (Safko & Brake, 2010).

For an external audience, social media benefits through communication to engage customers and prospects, engage their mindshare, advertise or promote products welfares which can increase the brand awareness, profit and loss statement in the companies (ibid). As for, *Collaborate*, using this pillar can benefit companies to engage customer and their prospects. Also, it can improve the way they interact and influences each other (Safko & Brake, 2010; Postman, 2009).

*Educate*, it is relevant to be able to educate the internal and external audience, or at least one of them to have more opportunities to create a strategy with expertise of the people that have the right knowledge of the use of social media platforms (Safko & Brake, 2010).

This can help to engage businesses with their prospects. The last pillar, *entertainment* is by entertaining the audience (companies, individuals or business partners), finding what
are the companies attributes or knowing how to call the attention, however, it doesn’t mean to be only funny or on the other hand offensive but by being cautious and attractive with the information and content that companies will provide (Sakfo & Brake, 2010; Osayuti, 2013).

2.2.3 Essential components in social media marketing strategy

Schaffer (2013) argues that in order for companies to create a social media strategy they can start by incorporating these four components; objective, customer, share and who. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) objective is the motives on why are companies incorporating social media, the reason why companies want to take part of the different platforms and what companies try to achieve. According to Schaffer (2013) Determining a purpose or objective of using social media will give an insight on how much the companies can gain from it. For example; it can help to measure the return on investment (ROI), increase sales to current clients, increase brand awareness or decrease expenses (by recruiting employees online). Keinänen and Kuivalainen, (2015) and McCann and Barlow (2015) states the need of a well-defined strategy for the use of social media, which includes a clear goals and objectives, and the ability to measure the effect to see if the goals are fulfilled(ibold). According to Järvien et al. (2012) the measurement of social media effect, should be a routinely process to see whether social media is effective or not. Moreover, Schaffer (2013) emphasize that social media marketing strategy is an essential part of any business. Customer is the individuals or organizations that companies want to target through social media, and this can be done by being able to identify to what organizations or individuals the information will be exchanged.

For example; with what group, they want to build up relationship with? and engage or align social media activities (Schaffer, 2013). Also, Keinänen and Kuivalainen, (2015) and McCann and Barlow (2015) states the need of a well-defined strategy for the use of social media, which includes a clear goals and objectives, and the ability to measure the effect to see if the goals are fulfilled(ibold). According to Järvien et al. (2012) the measurement of social media effect, should be a routinely process to see whether social media is effective or not.
Share is knowing what information and content to share with organizations and individuals (Schaffer, 2013). For example; B2B companies could can arrange content or information sharing for prospects or client about news, webinars, seminars and so forth. Stating all the above raises a question of who is the part of deciding who will implement the strategy. According to Schaffer (2013) it can be an employee or it can be an agency that works with creating content for other companies and the same agency can help in creating a plan to build a social media strategy. However, Schaffer (2013) argues that a social media is a way of reflecting the brand of the company. The author believes that companies that have the resources and the knowledge to build up a strategy will be more efficient if the employees implement the strategy instead of hiring external agencies. Since the employees know the objectives and what the companies is trying to achieve and how they want to be perceived. Author also stresses that the brand is the most important part of conversation (Schaffer, 2013). The author mentions that is important to have consistency with engaging the customers, posting, and to keep updating constantly with the quality of the post and consistency, Schaffer (2013) claims that this is a way on how companies can increase and build their brands.

2.3 Social media challenges

Social media can present benefits and challenges among companies and customers (Gregoire et al., 2015; Safko & Brake, 2010). In this research, the author mentioned some of the challenges that companies have presented during the past years. Gregoire et al. (2015) argued that social media can benefit many companies, however, it can also provide negative outcomes if companies don’t have the right knowledge on how to manage it, for example; service failures (ibid). Companies that have been in this situation e.g. FedEx, this is a company presented some challenges with the usage of social media such as; customers complaints and ineffective experiences (Gregoire et al., 2015). However, in this research it is also mentioned that companies can learn from other businesses mistakes and learn to use social media in order for customers or businesses to have an opportunity to share negative or positive experiences (ibid).

Some challenges stated by Gregoire et al. (2015) are; competitors creating better strategies for those customers and businesses that are an unsatisfied clients, in which they risk to lose customers which in turn give a bad reputation for the company (Gregoire et
al., 2015). However, according to Safko & Brake (2010) social media gives the opportunity for different brands to interact with customers by sharing the companies’ contents, creating communities and going viral between businesses and individuals. This benefits many companies to get a vision of innovation and to learn from different businesses and individual’s behaviours (Safko & Brake, 2010). However, the author also stated that there are some challenges to be aware of for example; companies needs to be aware that they need to maintain a constant conversation with the audience, monitor their reputation and users, also respond to insecure comments and questions and this means even off the business hours (ibid). The use of social media without expertise and understanding of it functionality can have a negative impact on businesses, as a negative word of mouth (Leeflang et al, 2015). Moreover, social media challenges can range from the lack of understanding of the use of social media in marketing as B2B context (Lacka & Chong, 2016). According to Michelidou et al, (2011) the main reason behind the slow adoption of social media by B2B is the lack of know-how, and the common belief that social media is a not effective in B2B context.

In the other hand, social media plays a key role for marketing communication by increasingly helping companies to share their ideas, information and products (ibid). Companies have noticed that social media could not only bring positive outcomes since there are businesses that are suffering negative social media impact (Pfeffer et al., 2013). According to Pfeffer et al. (2013), some companies are facing a new phenomenon called online firestorm which means businesses that have negative social media through electronic word of mouth (EWOM) also criticism behaviour against a company or individual and this can affect ORM (online reputation management). Jones et al., (2009, p.927) defines online reputation management (ORM) as ‘the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening as the organization engages in a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various on-line stakeholders’. (ORM) is regarded as a valuable tool in online marketing as comments on the internet, irrespective of their validity, can influence the public perception of reputation for an organization (Hung et al, 2012; Davies & Miles, 1998). Furthermore, Liu and Munro (2012) highlights that centralized online reputation systems are now prominent among companies present online for users to build trust, reduce information asymmetry and filter information. According to Ryschka et al. (2016) reputation of companies is an important asset that cannot be compromised, it has direct effect on competitiveness and financial performance and this
can help companies to avoid any risk with the use of social media platforms. This means that a well-established reputation implies a higher level of appeal, assisting organizations improve their customer loyalty, satisfaction, retention and trust (Ryschka et al., 2016). Under such circumstance, online reputation management has become a challenge to companies, since now the traditional one-to-many model of communication can share information with everyone easily (Stenger, 2014).

Moreover, social media has been used to share negative and positives customer experiences, one example is the recent ‘United Airlines’ firestorm where the airline removed a paying passenger by force out of the plane, and it was shared by millions on many social media platforms, the aftermath was a massive negative impact on their reputation and share price (nytimes.com, 2017). According to Pfeffer et al. (2013), some companies are suffering customer outrage, criticism, complaints and negative interaction between customers. All this encourages businesses to be more careful to prevent such challenging situations and not extend the negativity between other companies and clients (Pfeffer et al., 2013). However, Michaelidou et al. (2011) mentioned that B2B organizations are being more aware of the potential benefits that using social media platforms could bring. Potential benefits argued by Michaelidou et al (2011) are; cultivating lasting relationships, supporting brand, increase awareness and interacting with the suppliers. It can be seen that the author also argued that there are significant barriers that one need to take into consideration regarding the use of social media. For example; employees that are not familiar with the use of social media platforms or have any skills for the use of it, also it requires time and resources (ibid).

Also, Lack of resources, and mainly time is a major challenge to B2B companies employing social media (Mehmeth & Clake, 2016). However, there are companies that are having positive effect with the use of social media, this has help the to increase their corporate identity and brand awareness (Iyambo et al., 2013). Corporate identity is described as the essence, reality and personality of an organization, which in turn determines the perception of its publics (Deveruex et al., 2017; Iyamabo et al., 2013; Balmer & Greyser, 2002).
Moreover, it is inherently connected to the internal and external image and reputation via corporate communication. (Balmer & Gray 1999). This has helped companies with the engagement of followers and this has influence their reputation in a positive way.

Michaelidou et al. (2011) argues that improving the way of interaction through social media can advance the possibilities for organization to enhance brand awareness and avoid any challenge with the use of it. This is important as Homburg et al. (2012) states that buyers are more aware of the actual brand than the product itself. Moreover, there are companies that use social media in order to increase their brand awareness, and this is because it is an essential component through communication (Barreda et al., 2015; Jakeli & Tchumburidze, 2012).

This helps companies to avoid and improve competitive advantage through social media and is an essential tool for communication process that will enhance word of mouth, increase customer engagement and deliver value (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Barreda et al., 2015; Jakeli & Tchumburize, 2012; Siagmanka et al., 2015). Moreover, social media has been used a way where companies can develop a better communication between customers and businesses. In the previous researches, it has been studied that social media is been used as an effective platform to increase brand awareness between customers and suppliers, enhance the number of customers and to increase the reputation of companies and this can bring a lot of positive outcomes, challenges and opportunities for companies that are using social media in a B2B context. (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2009; Siamagka et al., 2015)
2.4 Research model

Social media marketing strategy in first box, where B2B companies build a plan, then decide if it is matching with their companies’ goal by going back and forth to significance and which platforms to be used. Likewise, assessing the benefits to their company. Then they move forward by applying the elements of Honeycomb framework, four pillars, and other elements they choose uniquely as per company needs, they then monitor (ROI) and other features such as: likes, visits, followers, sales, connections and so on.

Then they monitor their reputation simultaneously during this interaction of implementing the elements to see positive and negative behaviours in the interactions with their customers. In this they monitor their online marketing, they see the effect on their image and reputation, are they getting more positive or negative results, and the effect on brand and identity. They also ask this question: is their implementation of the elements parallel with what they want to convey as a corporate identity? Then the final outcome they see the overall challenges. Companies can also, go up to the elements and
see what can be added or removed, increased decreased, or innovated, and there again move up to what significance these new elements provide their companies, and look at the overall strategy maybe if they need to start something outside social media?

3 Methodology

3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline or a study, and what and how we are able to know (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Silverman, 2013; Saunders et al, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Bryman and Bell, (2015) and Saunders et al. (2015) depending on the research question, and what is to be studied and how the data would be collected the researcher can have two epistemological position, as studying the social world with the natural science processes and methods; which is called Social media monitoring/assessing and ORM Corporate Identity and Brand awareness Challenges of social media 18 positivism, seeing the world as objective and real, which also springs from ‘Realism', and what can be measured and sensed with the five senses and the result can be scientifically verified (Bryman & Bell,2015; Saunders et al.,2015). On the other hand, the researcher can study the social world with an interpretivist position a contrasting epistemology to positivism, where interpretivist researchers via social science, people and their institutions as fundamentally different from the natural science, and thus studying the social world requires a different logic of research, which will reflect the uniqueness of humans as against the natural order (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Interpretivism has a position that believes reality is not one and is dependent on individuals and specific circumstances (Saunders et al., 2015). Since we are studying a social phenomenon of ‘What are the practices of B2B companies that implement social media lacking a social media marketing strategy' by interviewing marketing managers responsible for social media at the chosen companies, we try to see from their perspective on this phenomenon, and seek to interpret their words and their meaning and to gain a deeper understanding of the use of social media by these companies.
We do not try to test hypothesis, quantify, experiment or measure by methods of positivist natural science approach, since we try to explore and obtain rich insight into the complex world of social science and gain deeper understanding on the use of social media by these three companies from the position and belief that the social world is much more complex to be studied by definite laws in the same methods of physical science, and thus an interpretivist epistemological position deemed suitable (Saunders et al., 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Moreover, we see ourselves, researchers as tools and a part of this research and our perception and empathic understanding is connected to the overall study and data collection thus cannot be separated from it (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

3.2 Ontology

The questions that ask how things are, and what is reality is related to, ontology, which is concerned with the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2015; Willis, 2007). There are two aspects of ontology; both have their followers in the business and management research, and both are generally accepted to produce knowledge by many researchers (Saunders et al., 2009). The first aspect or position of ontology is ‘Objectivism' which asserts that social phenomena and its meaning exist outside the control of social actors, or independent of it; on the other hand, the second aspect is ‘Subjectivism' holds that social phenomenon are created from the perceptions and resulting actions of the social actors concerned with their existence' (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.21). Saunders et al. (2015) emphasizes that there is a need to study the nuance and details of a phenomena, and grasp the reality behind them, this is often associated with the term ‘Constructivism', which is concerned with an interpretivist philosophy and the need to explore the subjective meanings stirring the actions of social actors to understand these actions(ibid).

According to Bryman and Bell, (2015) and Willis, (2007) Constructivism considers social phenomena as not only created through social interaction but are also in a constant state of revision. Since every social entity is unique and complex, we see that a constructivist approach is relevant and appropriate for our study, particularly in studying a contemporary phenomenon, since certain circumstances may not apply in another future time setting, therefore a constructivist approach is most appropriate because reality in the use of social media is not external to social actors, but it's influenced by them; and thus,
we seek to understand the perception of managers at the three chosen companies and their reasons for using social media.

3.3 Research approach

There are three different research approaches a researcher can take into consideration according to Bryman & Bell (2015) ‘deductive, Inductive and Abductive’. ‘These three approaches are recognized and accepted as the three modes necessary for successful scientific research’ (Mingers, 2012). Deductive approach relates to developing propositions from existing theories and tests them in the real world; on the other hand, an inductive approach, relies on the ‘grounded theory' where the theory is created from ground, or data (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). As for the Abductive approach which has become popular in the recent years, is mainly applied among qualitative researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). According to Dubois and Gadde (2002) Abduction is perceived as a mix of the two approaches, yet, abduction is similar to induction and the ‘Grounded theory', however, it is concerned with the development of concepts not generating new ones. ‘Abduction provides a useful formulating for extending reasoning to incorporate the cognitive aspect' (Mantere & Ketokivi 2013, p.8).

According to Bryman & Bell (2015, p.27) Abduction involves back and forth engagement with the social world as an empirical source for theoretical ideas, and the literature, in a process of dialectical shuttling'. Suddabay (2006, p.639) additionally states that Abduction is" the process by which a researcher moves between induction and deduction while practicing the constant comparative method. Nevertheless, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p.4) argue that ‘it is very important to keep in mind that abduction neither formally nor informally is any simple 'mix' of these nor can it be reduced to these i.e. (Induction, Deduction); it adds new, specific elements. During the process, the empirical area of application is successively developed, and the theory (the proposed over-arching pattern) is also adjusted and refined.”(ibid).

There are few theories on the use and adoption of social media by B2B companies, and, there is a need for further studies(Lacka & Chong, 2016; Rapp et al., 2013) by choosing an abductive approach, we have an inspiration from the present theories since we do not reject previous theoretical preconceptions, nor do we seek induce theories from ground,
however we combine the theories with empirical fact(s) not rigidly on a single case, but as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns that bring understandings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). And by that, we are able to alternate in a dialectical shuttling between (Previous) theories and empirical facts by which both are continuously reinterpreted in the light of each other (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2015; Mantere & Ketov, 2013). Since the studied companies may not have same responses and reasons of the use of social media, each is exceptional and has its unique reasons for using social media, thus there will be a continuous interaction between the theoretical frame being studied and the data being collected, during the data collection, with an abductive approach we can take advantage and treat new information as an opportunity instead of an obstacle (Yin, 2014) thus the abductive approach was considered most suitable for our study.

3.4 Research Method

Quantitative and qualitative are two approaches designed to give the researcher more understanding of the studied field (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Silverman (2015) explains that a researcher must not assume that qualitative method is superior to the other, a quantitative approach may sometimes be more appropriate to a research problem, thus in choosing a method, everything depends on what the study is aiming to find (ibid). According to Williams (2007) quantitative research is driven by the need to quantify data, which involves a numeric or statistical approach to research design, and build upon existing theories, additionally, the research is independent of the researcher and objectively measures reality. On the other hand, the Qualitative research is driven by words and their meaning in the collection of data, rather than quantification of it; where it is connected to the schools of interpretivism, inductivism and constructivism (Bryman & bell, 2015). This study does not seek to quantify nor it is based on previous theories, rather is aims to study a contemporary phenomenon, B2B companies that implement social media without a strategy.

Saunders et al. (2015) emphasize the advantage of qualitative approach gives access to meaning and in-depth understanding of the gathered data and the problem in focus. The data collected from the studied companies is based on perception, beliefs, thoughts, words and their meaning of the manager at the companies, thus the qualitative approach has
provided us with advantage to deeply study the phenomenon in its own context, using the semi-structured interviews which are associated with qualitative data collection method, it gave the interviewee an opportunity to express and speak freely about embedded matters that would not have been plausible to collect such data with a quantitative method. Therefore, a qualitative method is appropriate for this study (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.5 Research design

The logic that links the ‘to be collected data’ and the conclusion which will be drawn, to the initial research question of the study is a research design (Yin, 2014), it provides firm guidance in choosing what data to be collected and the strategies for analysing the data, and embodies a theory of what to be studied (ibid). Bryman and Bell (2015) also states that it is a tool that gives an outline for the collection and analysis of data. According to Saunders et al, (2015) the research design will be the general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question. In this study, we have viewed the five concepts of research design and took into consideration the most suitable research design to answer our research question to help us evaluate our empirical data (Bryman & bell, 2015). The assorted designs are Experimental, Cross-sectional, Longitudinal, case study and comparative. After evaluation of the five different research designs, a ‘case study' was deemed most suitable for this research. A case study research strategy provides us with the advantage to study and investigate empirically data of the contemporary phenomenon with a real-life context using a various source of evidence (Saunders et al., 2015).

Since we wish to gain richer understanding of the context of the research and the processes intended, case study gave us the flexibility in the collection of data, and the ability to generate answers to questions such as what and why; based on our research questions ‘How do B2B companies actively manage and grow their social media presence and activities for marketing purpose?’ And ‘What do B2B companies do when they use social media platforms for marketing purpose, lacking a strategic approach?’ According to Bryman & Bell (2015) The case study approach is a very prevalent and widely used research design in business research and entails a detailed exploration of a specific case, which could be an organization, community or a person, which also favours a qualitative method, and approves interviews which aided our method in collecting the empirical data.
from the companies studied in many in-depth interviews and empirical data presented in the interview by the respondents. A case study is not only one form, and have diverse types according to Saunders et al (2015), additionally Bryman and Bell. (2015) states that there is unique cases, revelatory, representative, typical, longitudinal, single and multiple cases, this will be further elaborated in the next section.

3.6 Case design

Yin (2014) emphasizes two variants in implementing a case study research which is single case and multiple cases, both can be used to address a research question. A case study approach focuses on understanding dynamics within a single setting, and to study a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2014; Eisenhardt, 1989). Silverman (2013) Simply defines a case study in basic words as studying one case or a small number of cases in detail, using whatever method that is most appropriate, with the aim to gain as much understanding as possible about the studied case (ibid). Additionally, Eisenhardt (1989) states that case studies typically combine data collection methods such as interviews, archives, and observations. While single case design is one of the most common designs (Yin, 2014), multiple case design is expected to be stronger than single-case designs, since a multiple case study provides the researcher with the ability to explore similarities and distinctions within and between cases (ibid).

The aim of multiple cases is to replicate findings across cases, where the comparison will be drawn, that is why Yin (2014) stresses the importance that the researcher selects the cases carefully to be able to predict related results across the cases or predicts contrasting result according to the theories (Yin, 2014). A single case and multiple cases both have their advantages and disadvantages (ibid). For this study, a multiple case is deemed most suitable, due to the fact we are studying more than one company and not just one single case, also for the reason that “evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (Yin, 2014, p.70), which for our study can strengthen the external validity, since external validity is difficult to attain in a single case study (ibid). Additionally, studying phenomena such as the use of social media as one aspect across multiple companies who are similar in their nature of B2B context would be of greater significance than studying only one aspect of one single company, which would make the study weak and not transferable to other contexts.
3.6.1 Research Nature

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p.139), "The classification of research purpose most often used in the research methods' literature is the threefold one of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory". Our study is explorative in nature since we are interested in a topic on which very little research has been done (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

And since the topic of our study of B2B companies having no well-defined social media strategy is relatively new, the literature is still scarce, it is, therefore, an exploratory design is very suitable. Saunders et al. (2015) describe the exploratory research as the activity of an explorative traveller; where it has advantages due to its flexibility and adaptability to change (ibid). The author also states that an explorative study is a valuable means of discovering new insights, happenings, and it asks questions and assess phenomena under a new light (Saunders et al., 2009) Since we are exploring the use of social media by companies with no social media marketing strategy, and in what ways they employ social media in B2B context, an explorative study is deemed very appropriate for this phenomenon.

We also acknowledge the limitation of an explorative study and understand that it is typically used as a prelude study for a further research such as explanatory or descriptive, however, due to the lack of literature and previous studies on the studied phenomenon, an explorative study is hence considered best for our research question.

3.6.2 Holistic vs. Embedded

A case study, whether single or multiple both can further be classified as embedded or holistic (Yin, 2014, pp.42-86). The difference between these two variants depends on the nature of phenomenon being studied and the research questions (Yin, 2014). An embedded case study is split into multiple units of analysis, on the other hand, a holistic case study involves one unit of analysis for each case (ibid). For our study, we chose an embedded approach since we study one aspect of multiple companies, which is the use of social media by the studied companies, and not just one unit of analysis for each case, a holistic approach to the multiple cases would not be advantageous since our research involves studying one aspect a subunit of the companies we study.
The advantages of an embedded study are that it gives the researcher a chance to dig deep into one aspect of the company like Social media and gain deeper understanding and insight on that particular aspect. Since studying multiple companies holistically is although possible but not a common practice, nevertheless for our research question and study it is not practical nor appropriate due to the fact, a holistic study on multiple case study does not study only one aspect or subunit of a company but studies the particular case as a whole, and can take lengthy time periods and lead to vast amount of data to be analysed and transcribed by studying each company holistically therefore in our study multiple case with an embedded approach is most suitable.

3.7 Data collection

3.7.1 Pilot Study

Holloway (1997) emphasizes the importance of a pilot study in a qualitative research to assess the acceptability of an interview or an observation of both, that is why we chose to do a pilot study on all the companies we planned to study, to assess the suitability of the research from all aspects. Kim (2010) states that a pilot study is used to assess the feasibility of the study, it can test research protocol, such as data collection method and sample recruitment strategies (ibid). We used the Pilot study to evaluate and prepare our interviews, also to self-evaluate our readiness and capability and commitment as qualitative researchers (ibid). The Pilot study was done to identify if the companies we are studying are Business to Business? Do they use social media as a marketing tool? One company we have excluded in the study due to the fact it cannot be regarded as B2B company since it is a community, they did use social media heavily and had a department responsible for attracting Business to the community, yet they do not bill companies and sell products or services, this we were informed in the first minutes of the interview on the 18th of April 2017, at 13:15, we notified the communication manager, who is our respondent about this pilot study, and she in turn gave us contacts to company B the IT company since her company was not B2B nor a commercial enterprise. Same process was done with the companies we studied and the interviews were carried out after confirming they fit the description of the companies we seek to study.
3.7.2 Data collection method

According to Saunders et al (2015) Data collection is important because it helps the researcher to understand the way they gather data. There are different methods for collecting data such as: Ethnography, qualitative interviews, observation and focus groups (ibid). In our study, we have used semi-structured qualitative interviews to collect our primary data due to the flexibility that it provides the researcher to be able to gain access to in-depth knowledge about the studied phenomena (Saunders et al, 2015). The semi-structured interviews was a major benefit in keeping the flow of the interview in the right direction, and not letting our biases affect the interviewees responses which made the data more reliable (Silverman, 2015) Since the questions are pre-organised according to theory.

Each studied company provided three interviews between 45-60 minute sessions:


The respondent of company A is a regional marketing manager for laundry machines also in-charge for social media, and company B, is the communication manager, where she also takes responsibility of social media as one of her tasks in her job, as for company C the respondent is the company’s senior marketing manager was involved in content marketing and recruitment via social media. The position of the respondents interviewed was based on their tasks and responsibilities, where we had the desire as researchers to interview staff that are responsible for social media marketing strategy and implementation at the studied companies.

During the interview in the respondent’s premises, they have used their personal computers to display their presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. Shortly before and after the first interview the social media presence analysis of the three companies was also performed to gain knowledge about the companies, such as their activities, involvements on Social media platforms.
Also, while transcribing the data to find similarities and differences in the data obtained from respondent in interview and their description in their presence on the platform they mentioned. During the last interviews of each company, we noticed that nothing new was being said by the respondents, and recognised that we reached data saturation. Additionally, the respondents gave us the opportunity to call or email them in-case of further questions regarding the interviews, which was useful with company B where we asked some of the questions by email. The interviews were able to provide the answers relevant to the study.

3.7.2 Sample Selection

According to Saunders et al. (2015) Probability, sampling and non-probability sampling are the two ways of sample selection. Probability sampling is commonly used in surveys and experiments, which are related to researches where data is collected randomly from a chosen population (ibid).

Since our study is a qualitative multiple case study, this sampling method is not an appropriate choice, on the other hand, a non-probability sampling is suitable for qualitative studies since it is used in intentional sample selection where a sample is selected to represent a preferred population (Saunders et al., 2015). Under nonprobability fall many sampling methods and one of them is convenience sampling, where Bryman and Bell (2015, p.200) explains it as ‘convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility’. For our study, we chose convenient sampling at first which lead to snowball sampling unintentionally in the pilot study interviews, where companies introduce other companies to us, where we added a new company that uses social media for marketing and in B2B context and had access to them to gain data with interviews.

All the sample chosen by convenience were unique yet similar in their use of social media in B2B context: Company A, is a large Swedish industrial company that sells major white household appliances, company B is a Swedish consulting service within IT, management and digital marketing and Company C, is a Swedish company that produces plastic packaging for food, chemical, and paints. All the three companies work with B2B marketing and sales, have a social media in their marketing, use social media in varied methods, and platforms, and have a sort of presence with social media. The common
denominator between the three chosen companies is that they all lacked a clearly defined strategic approach with social media marketing.

In our pilot study, we were able to find out that even though they all used social media for some benefit such as ‘Brand awareness, Advertising, and recruitment’, they did not have a strategic plan with clearly defined set goals for social media. This reason made the research more interesting and encouraged us to dig deeper into this phenomenon. The chosen companies have different uses of social media, some claim to be good as company B, and some are still shy with social media as company C, while some are only using social media for brand awareness as company B, nevertheless these three organizations are all striving to increase and improve the use and presence of social media. The reason we chose them is to study their use of social media under the same light of lacking a strategic well-defined plan for social media, this study can be transferable to companies of such characteristics, where they can gain insight of use and adoption of social media strategy in B2B context.

3.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

In social research, there are various forms of interview. The most common of these are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Dawson, 2007). In this study, we chose semi-structured interviews, since the subject of the study is complex in nature of Social media usage which varies from company to company, interviewees would benefit from open-ended questions to reflect on their answers and reach to deeper insights, speak freely about nuances that make their companies use social media and in what way, at same time keep the interview running in the right direction by following pre-chosen question chosen theoretically to suit the researched subject. Silverman (2015) claims that qualitative interviewing is especially useful as a research method for accessing individual’s values and attitudes, matters that cannot be uncovered with formal questionnaires (ibid).

Yin (2014) States that gaining in-depth data from qualitative interviews demands good questioning skills from the researchers, since many confuse symptoms with causes, and do not dig deeper with asking why questions in the interviews and accept the first answer they receive from the respondents as the definitive answer (ibid). Therefore, we were self-reflexive during and after the interviews, to be able to grasp deeper meanings to words,
and read between the lines, we did our best to be empathic listener where we dismissed questions that did not feel comfortable to the respondents we would skip to the next questions. The interviewees we chose were marketing managers at the companies and were also responsible for social media, with the semi-structured open-ended interviews we were able to gain their perspective on the use and plans for social media, which would not have been possible with other methods, since following a semi-structure we kept the interview although flexible to the respondents to speak their mind yet guided by a specified set of questions, so the interview does not drift away from the studied subject.

3.7.4 Data analysis method

‘The goal is to turn data into information, and information into insights’

‘Carly Fiorina’

The Semi-structured interviews in this study have been recorded and transcribed and had a preliminary basic analysis which looked for new concepts to influence the literature and theories in the study to build new questions, and this was done shortly after the interview, so the researcher can remember feelings and interpretation of words in the interview in accordance to body language and tone of the interviewee. Since, first it is an abductive study, the authors saw that it was necessary to transcribe interviews shortly after the interview to keep the data more accurate and discover new concepts, on the other hand if the author would have chosen to transcribe all interviews after acquiring the last interview, it would have not been easy to have an accurate memory of each participant in the interview and influence the present literature, the former gave the author the ability to interpret and perform a primary analysis, which will be built upon with a secondary analysis after reading all data from the three companies, where key themes were identified such as ‘Use of social media and different platforms, No-strategy and challenges, to give the authors the ability to build theories and conclude (Saunders et al., 2015).

And some of the codes used such as ‘Platform, Activities, lack of knowledge, Benefits, Usage, Marketing, Brand awareness, Strategy, Tactics, Positive and Negative’ where we mark the text in different colours or change to different fonts, when we see Company B for example state that ‘we have some kind of a short strategy for one platform’, we mark it in one colour as tactic, and for a short term strategic approaches example, Company A as choosing not to use social media for selling for the last three years and the moment and to use social media only for brand awareness and company image we mark it as another colour.
Likewise, when Companies talk negatively about social media and speak about the challenges we use one colour, where the transcribed material was read over and over to be able to find deeper meaning to words than impartial outer meaning. Later, some codes were dismissed because two codes could fall under one code such as challenges is sometimes not only a negative perception, but a lack of know-how, since the first question asked, some companies talk negative about social media, second ‘Why questions asked’ they state that it is, ‘because we do not have proper staff for it, and this can make our company look foolish on social media if we do mistakes’ (Company C, 2017). Eventually, after reviewing the data and re-reading many times to get familiarized with the codes and themes and patterns, the authors decided to make three main categories without sacrificing the meaning of the transcribed data, by putting the relevant information under three subheadings in a descriptive manner to be analysed in the analysis chapter, the three main categories are ‘: Such as Use of social media and different platforms, non-strategic use of social media and Social media challenges. Where the empirical data from all three companies will be analysed in accordance to the present literature under each category.

There are five main analytical techniques for analysing data; Pattern matching, explanation building, time series analysis, logic models and cross case synthesis (Yin, 2014) The authors chose to analyse data by matching pattern and cross-case synthesis, where it allows the researchers to compare patterns and themes (Yin, 2014). This has allowed the authors to find relationships between the collected data and the predicted patterns found in the data collection, such as major causes to slow and selective implementation of social media by the three companies. Additionally, we have used a within-case analysis as a form of primary analysis where we have analysed all cases first individually before moving on with the cross-case analysis as a form of secondary analysis to the data (Merriam, 2009). The difficulties of data analysis were due to the large amount of data gathered from the three companies, which was difficult to handle at first, however, the author allocated time systematically to be able to take one part at a time and this way the task was facilitated.

The authors have also followed the guidelines of Miles, Huberman and Saldana. (2014) on how to analyse data ethically, by taking the account the first and most important criteria of ‘doing no harm’ to any party who have participated in the interviews, whether
interviewees, or other employees and managers involved in the interviewees answers, by being sensitive and self-reflexive to the data and keeping the anonymity of the respondents.

3.8 Quality criteria

Reliability and Validity are the most important measures for quality criteria in a research, it tries to present the replicability of the study and if the study question and conclusion are connected (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, for qualitative studies some scholars suggest different criteria for testing the quality of the study, different from the quantitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) cited in Bryman and Bell (2015, p.400) propose an alternative approach in testing validity and reliability in a qualitative study, they propose 'Trustworthiness and Authenticity' as two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study.

There are four sub-criteria that fall under Trustworthiness which are: Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). First sub-criterion is Credibility is concerned with the internal validity, the efficiency of the researcher to measure what is planned to be studied and its variables, since our study is qualitative, we cannot assess with the same approach of quantitative study, due to the fact that qualitative study does not intend to measure and quantify like a positivist approach, rather than describe and interpret. Therefore, it would be difficult to judge the credibility due to the different perspective of reality in both approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, we have assessed our qualitative study by depending on theory in our interview, ethics, and by making sure the participants are fully aware of the study and its outcome, also making sure they would receive a final draft. Second sub-criterion is Transferability which is parallel to validity which is also known as generalizability concerns with if the study can be applied in other environments (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Tracy, 2010). For this study, the authors tried to their best limit to pay attention to nuances and details, and compare and contrast with literature, see the social phenomenon from different perspectives by triangulation, as to give a thick, rich description and to be self-reflexive not to base this description only on our own biases. Yet, define and analyse it as it is, and most importantly to make sure that our study can be applied in another environment of same arena (Tracy, 2010). The third sub-criteria is dependability which is also parallel with reliability in quantitative study, where we establish our data analysis with an audit
approach, we have participated in reading and reflecting on the findings, and interpretation, kept the records, transcripts and data analysis in an accessible manner, to be able to improve our dependability in the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The fourth sub-criteria under trustworthiness is confirmability which is concerned with objectivity and since our study is qualitative and subjective, we were self-reflexive in our study, and how we collected our data, acted in good faith and made sure our study does not affect any side negatively, to achieve this criterion we looked at our work from an auditing and critical perspective, how would a neutral auditor look at this study, does this study cause any kind of harm to its participants or the company by any chance? (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

As for the authenticity of our study, which has four key points to be taken into account, these are: ‘Ontological authenticity, Educative authenticity, Catalytic authenticity, and Tactical authenticity. Ontological authenticity is concerned with, if the research has contributed to helping the participants involved in the research gain a better understanding of their environment (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The educative authenticity is concerned, if the research supports members to appreciate better the perspectives of other members of their social setting. And the Catalytic authenticity checks if the research is presented as a motivation to members to engage in action and improve their circumstances, the research does not seek to improve but explore a phenomenon. Finally, the tactical authenticity is, if the researcher has empowered members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action.

To achieve the authenticity in our study we will send our finding to the respondents and they will be able to look at the relevant of literature we have gathered in connection to the empirical data which can be of knowledge to their companies, and grasp a new concept in relation to their milieu (ibid). Additionally, the interviews we have conducted the theoretically chosen question will make the marketing managers of those company ponder and become self-reflexive on new insights from the chosen theories which can eventually benefit in improving their companies in the use social media.
4 Empirical Findings

We will refer to the companies as company A, company B and company C. The respondents will be anonymous and we referred them as Mr. J.G, Mrs. B.C and Mr. R.J.

4.1 Description of Company A

Company A is a Swedish large industrial company that sells major white household appliances. It is a B2B and B2C company but they are mainly focus on B2B electronic professional and semi-professional washing machines. They have strong presence in social media as Mr. J. G (2017) perceives social media as “more and more.” Company A is working on a global scale with different channels such as; LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (Mr. J.G, 2017). By looking at their Facebook page during the interview Mr. J.G (2017) presented their social media platforms, the company has presence on Facebook with more than four million followers, with not less than three post on Facebook per week, and one of the post is Business to Business related, for giving information about washing machines professional and semi-professional.

4.1.1 Use of social media and different platforms

As Mr. J.G (2017) mentioned that “social media is becoming more important for us and we are trying to be more involved with social media since the different platforms can take a big part of our strategy in order to reach out more and build up the brand.” Mr. J.G (2017) states that if we look in their area which they are only focus on Sweden, they are currently using LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube and they are starting to produce content for social media for years back. Mr. J.G (2017) is the responsible of taking over the different channels in Sweden, which have enough knowledge to manage such different channels, however, not as a social media manager responsible but as the manager responsible of all marketing professional (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Company A target small business owners, not professionals but semi-professionals. “We are using social media in order to also target those semi-professional machines owners” (Mr. JG, 2017). They have been targeted a bit differently until now as only retailers home and no other places. Company A is going to launch them for a big wider and then they are going to introduce for small appliances and small business like in LinkedIn and
Instagram and so on (Mr. JG, 2017). Social media help Company A to also attract new customers or keep in contact with their existing customers. It is cheaper for company A to sell to actual customers than go out and find some new customers, they are heavily depending on the existences customers (Mr. JG, 2017). To conclude: “We try to keep the ones we have, we try to do good business and to act professional and keep the customers happy, and not try to fool anyone” (Mr. JG, 2017).

4.1.2 The use of social media by Company A without a strategic approach

Company A don't have any clear defined strategy on mind, however, they are finding ways on how to improve and become better with the usage of social media in a B2B context. For now, Mr. J.G (2017) mentioned “that we are working together with a communication company that help us to produce and come up with the content that is necessary and what we want to provide for our customers.” For example; “the communication company make the content analysis and provide us monthly report of communication but we select the content together and then decide which content will be shared.” (Mr. JG, 2017). Company A also use social media to target their customers. They have 31 relevant content for different segments. For example; social media helps them if they have activities, they produce some content that will attract the followers to join. “If we have events, it is easier for us to create short videos with events information and to keep them updating, we try to reach different segments.” (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Mr. J.G (2017) “We are still in the early stage; however, we are starting to be more involved on social media”. Mr. J.G (2017) believes that nowadays is relevant to learn the use of social media and he stated that “the more you know, the better job you do, it is also something to consider.” Mr. J.G (2017) “We don’t want to be perceived as the company who is too professional”, if it’s not too professional with the content, then you will have some credibility.” (Mr. J.G, 2017). Company A is referring that it is better to naturally improvise and that is how they want to sound for their business partners, to have a natural content for their customers instead of just showing what they have in a superficial technique. Mr. J.G (2017) mentioned “That is exactly what we want to achieve not show money or bring customers to the office, is more for a natural way, understanding the customers.” (Mr. J.G, 2017). Mr. J.G (2017) has himself travelled to Växjo to one of their customers a hotel, and improvised a video which he showed us in the interview, it looked very natural with all sound in the background, and asked the manager of that hotel about
their real views on Company A products, and the manager also spoke in simple improvised language, about the benefits of Company A’s products sounding credible.

“We want people to think that company A are the guys who listen to them, when they have any questions about laundry and so on.” (Mr. J.G, 2017).

“We try to have the voice of the customers, we try to use references as much as possible. It is important to have references is more credible.” (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Mr. J.G (2017) mentioned “we are trying to build up the brand since we are not trying to sell through social media for now.” Company A has 4.2 M followers on Facebook, the responsible is in the head office in Italy, and they don’t use Facebook in Sweden. According to Mr. J.G (2017) “the reason why we don’t use Facebook in Sweden is because of the lack of resources.” They need somebody with the right knowledge and efficiency on how to manage Facebook in order to avoid any risk. Furthermore, company A would like to link their content to different channels like Instagram link to YouTube, in order to create consistency in other platforms. However, for this Mr. J. G (2017) mentioned that they will need a strategy in order to organize and provide the best quality content, information and an overall aim in order to improve brand building and awareness. “It means not only 32 to reach out for selling, it is more to follow up on things, create different contents, etc.” (Mr. JG, 2017).

Mr. J.G (2017) “We are more aware of brand building and brand awareness other than just reaching out customers and selling, of course it plays an important part of it too.” However, Company A is trying to focus on only building up the brand without any specific strategy but they are aware that they are not trying to sell through the use of social media (Mr. JG, 2017). This is because Mr. JG (2017) argued that they try not to have content such as; “Offers, not even product specific information. It is more about sharing the content that it would be more relevant for our followers.”

Company A gave us a small booklet in the interview and spoke about working on a project in Gothenburg universities housing and some members of different companies (Mr. JG, 2017). This is about a laundry studio in that housing has sensors that monitor everything it will be installed in those student apartments to make washing cloths not a scary thing,
where you must go down a narrow corridors alone in a building, but they want to make it full of light, and add a coffee machine where students can chit chat waiting for their cloths to be washed (Mr. J.G, 2017) he also stated that it will evaluate, look for responses to different things. Mr. J.G (2017) also said that we look forward to see how students share their experience on social media. It is explaining more about our products, how to use electricity and to be more environmental friendly (Mr. JG, 2017). This is an ongoing research for the last decades, the grand opening was on September 2016 and they post it in social media. Company A had a lot of presence in social media by then and local media. “It was a project that was cover by medias in a national level and we also tried to involve their social media channels to reach more customers.” (Mr. JG, 2017).

As Mr. J.G (2017) assure that “we don’t want to reach customers from TVs and so on only professional level.” This project is trying to do that and company A can benefit from it. Mr. J.G (2017) also mentioned that “we can try to repost it, and this might help to increase the brand awareness of our company.” For example; sharing relevant openings with big experts in some directions and try to communicate to the customers, and all positive publicity will be welcomed by our clients in B2B domain.

4.1.3 Social media challenges

Mr. J.G (2017) argued that one of the problems by using social media can be “negative online reputation, negative feedbacks or negative comments.” However, for company A is not a problem: “We have the luxury to have quite good reputation and of course we need to maintain that position, we are trying to keep the tone of voice, to keep the position as the leader of the market and to be the guide of all the experts.” (Mr. JG, 2017). Company A is trying to follow and analyse every content regardless been to and the number of followers, to improve customer engagement. Mr. J.G (2017) “This is one of the goals for the next year.”

Some of the challenges that company A is presented is that their website is not connected in a good way with their social media platforms and that is why they are launching a new site this month in April 2017. In order to be more integrated with the use of social media and a site that would be better function on mobile devices “(Mr. JG, 2017, 1). Mr. J. G (2017) mentioned “It is important because if you provide the link for the website and it doesn’t show in the mobile screen or it looks different as the website, it can create bad
experience for the users and business partners.” (Mr. JG, 2017). Moreover, Mr. J.G (2017) argued that it can create bad reputation and can affect people in the way you think about the company. When we looked at their Facebook page we saw many followers but a fraction only comment and interact with positive ‘Love’ ‘Like’ ‘Amazed’ emoji’s on Facebook, (Mr. J.G, 2017) said that it is because we are look for quality not quantity, if only half of the likes are happy B2B customer then we are happy.

To create positive outcomes with social media, Mr. JG (2017) mentioned that they need to keep it professional which means to try to keep as organic as possible, and by organic he explained further that in a natural state, where they show they are good without pushing it on a customer, the customer feels and understands it themselves(ibid). Also to keep posts on social site in a professional way, and it is very important for company A to know what to say and show the reality not to go out and say, for example; “this is a super great machine and then it turns out that not” (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Mr. J. G (2017) also mentioned that when using social media “We don’t try to exaggerate, we always try to be prepare to proof and sometimes we try to use humour, surprises, sometimes it works but you have to be delicate in humour because you might offend somebody and it can turn a little bit corny. You have to be professional funny.” This can avoid any kind of misunderstood when using social media and it might help to attract more customers depending on the type of information you will share or the way is written (Mr. JG, 2017). He also stated that they send candies to their B2B companies in a box that he showed us in the interview had a beautiful colourful chicken on it, in Easter telling wishing their customer happy Easter and they said that he noticed some shared their experience on Social media and tagged them(ibid). Shortly after the interview we browsed their Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn presence, the interview answers were very congruent with what they say about themselves, however Facebook was very weak in terms of interactions, where four million followers and an average of 50-80 likes on posts, and 30-45 comments on posts, there was no complains, but small concerns on posts and they were handled professionally by the Company A.
4.2 Description of Company B

Company B is a Swedish consulting service within IT, management and digital marketing. As Mrs. B.C (2017) explained that “we want our customers to get the best service by taking advantages of the digital possibilities.” Company B has offices in all around Sweden delivering the best highest quality with their services and putting their customers and employees in the first place (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Mrs. B.C (2017) “we are growing fast and we are still growing within all the IT companies.”

4.2.1 Use of social media and different platforms

Few years ago, company B did not use social media at all. They are a company that grows very fast and do a lot of interesting things, and they thought “that it was pity not to tell the world “- the clients and potential new employees about everything we do.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B is aware on how important is becoming social media for their company, therefore started using social media to improve communication. Mrs. B.C (2017) mentioned that “there has been a lot of changes since we implemented social media, we have strengthened the brand in several ways and the brand awareness is much higher.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B is using different platforms in order to improve the communication between their customers, platforms such as; LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter and Instagram (Mrs. B.C, 2017).

The purpose of using social media it is more to share all their content with their followers. It is a company that measured monthly developments and reach through the different channels tools such as Facebook analytics, LinkedIn Analytics and so on. Mrs. B.C (2017) “The most common subjects that we used to share in social media are news about new clients, cases, marketing campaigns and other things that happen at the company” (Mrs. B.C, 2017).

The advantage of using social media is that they can noticed where their customers and suppliers are (Mrs. B.C, 2017). They are using social media platforms in different ways depending on the type of the industry they are in. for example; Mrs. B.C (2017) “our municipal customers use the channels for information sharing while a customer who sells trailers use the channels to market their products”. (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B make sure to monitor all their customers and suppliers this is in order to keep a control of all
the customers that they are gathering. For example; “through monthly measurements of developments regarding the number of followers, dedication and reach of social media.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). It is important for companies that use social media monitoring in order to find different information, content and track different social media platforms, and that is the reason the company used it.

4.2.2 The use of social media by Company B without a strategic approach

Company B is aware on how social media can benefit their company through communication. “We use social media everyday but we don’t have any specific strategy set up” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B perceives social media as a platform where they can collect and share everything, that is really relevant for the company since their target groups are there (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Mrs. B.C (2017) mentioned that “we only have positive experiences by using social media, more people knows about us and it is also important channels for our employees”. (Mrs. B.C, 2017). The main purpose for Company B by using social media is to share their news and content with their audience which they think is it's absolutely necessary. As B.C (2017) mentioned “We want the audience to perceive the company image as a fast-growing company and the best employer there is.”

The vision that company B has for future plans is to extend their companionship in social media channels so that their messages will reach out to more of their clients, potential clients, employees, potential employees and other stakeholders (Mrs. B.C, 2017). They don’t have a well-defined strategy to follow, however, there are future plans that they want to implement. The way they are implementing social media as Mrs. B.C (2017) states “We carefully plan which posts to be made in our different channels for the coming weeks and months.” However, they also must be flexible and fast-paced because of the rapid changes in today’s market, therefore they keep the agenda partially open for changes and additions (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B is conscious on how much social media can help their company to grow; “For us, it is primarily about building a strong brand, which is crucial for building a strong business. The stronger your brand, the better the conditions you have to grow.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B wants to improve the way they communicate with their suppliers and customers, and it would be positive if they could communicate even more with them via social media platforms.
They are “*eager to find new ways to make eye-catching things and campaigns that stand out on social media*” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). According to Mrs. B.C (2017) this will help company B to get a natural attention form their stakeholders. Moreover, social media is helping company B to reach more people that will get to know their business better and this hopefully, we help them to grow their brand awareness. Also, company B believes that social media will play an increasingly important role in finding new customers, for example. “*The more the channels develop, the more appropriate I think they will be for even more types of companies.*” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Eventually everything that Mrs. B.C (2017) tried to tell us is, they use tactics, and have short term strategies for one platform at a time, but not a holistic strategy that encompasses their presence on all platforms, since so many other things are taking her time in the company, and it is not easy to dedicate much more time only for social media in a B2B company (ibid).

### 4.2.3 Social media challenges

According to company B there are always positive and negative consequences when using social media (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Mrs. B.C (2017) mentioned “*that the main pitfall is the huge noise that exists in today's media landscape. You really need to stand out to reach through the noise of this type of customers.*” however, company B believes that social media even it can provide negative outcomes, it also helps to keep relationships and build long relationship with other corporations (Mrs. B.C, 2017). As Mrs. B.C (2017) states that “*I find that a channel like Instagram is a simple, down to-earth way of keeping in touch with customers or corporations by simply commenting and recommenting on their posts.*”. Since the company started using Instagram, they did get benefit from this platform (Mrs. B.C, 2017). For company B there is nothing that can prevent them from using social media in a greater extent. Mrs. B.C (2017) mentioned:

“No, not that I can think of, in that case, it would have to do with our employees' involvement - if they were even more involved in social media we would get even more spread of our posts.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017).

There are also some challenges that company B takes into consideration. One of them is either increasing online reputation or decreasing it (Mrs. B.C, 2017). According to Mrs. B.C (2017) “*the way you communicate influence your reputation, regardless of whether it is in social media or other contexts*”. The company is aware that, if you are good at
communicating then your values in social media, your reputation will be affected and hopefully they believe it in a good way. However, company B has noticed that social media has brought them many benefits, for example; “shared channels to communicate everything they do.” (Mrs. B.C, 2017). Company B is aware of all the disadvantages that social media can bring as a marketing tool, however, they have not experienced any major disadvantages yet (Mrs. B.C, 2017). The only disadvantage is time one cannot do everything at same time she says, since she is a communication officer and not only involved with social media marketing, since social media can take a lot of attention to control (ibid). At the office or Mrs. B.C showed us the companies Facebook pages, which has proved her words, they only have positive experience, and we also saw that the interactions are few in comparison with Company A. Shortly after the interview we explored their online presence further, we have noticed that although it shows positive experience, their content has only likes and happy comments, yet they are very small in number, which can be explained by their website, they are a small to medium IT company.

4.3 Description of Company C

Company C is a Swedish company that works with injection moulding of packaging. Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “Our production method is injection moulding, and we make plastic packaging”. (Mr. R. J, 2017). Injection moulding is how you process the plastic to achieve a packaging. There are many ways to make plastic for example; one can use injection moulding, blow moulding, Rotation, Inject plastic mass among others. Company C is a packaging manufacturer were the company produce different types of packaging. “We are present in the Scandinavian market, and that is because our products are throwaway packaging and fairly inexpensive” (Mr. R. J, 2017.). This means if one travel further than fifty Swedish miles, the shipping cost becomes too expensive, making it difficult to achieve profitability on the product. Mr. R. J (2017) also mentioned “We sell to many different countries because our packaging is a little special which makes people want to buy. “Company C is growing the most internationally.

For example; Poland is 2016’s most expansive market for company C and the reason is that company C make special packaging that is desirable in Poland. Company C has their secret recipe that they believe it should not be leaked out, otherwise they will no longer be a unique company (ibid).
4.3.1 Use of social media and different platforms

Company C decided 5-6 years ago that they do not want to master social media, therefore. They decided not to work fully with it, however, the company uses some platforms and a program called ‘Observify’, they use it in their own way (Mr. R. J, 2017). Observify allows them to track everything what is said about them and their competitors on most social media platform, if one customer is unhappy with their competitor they make sure they contact that customer after studying about his need by looking at his company, they also mitigate anything being said negatively about them, by owned accounts of those platforms, sometimes as anonymous users which the company Observify allows them to use, and sometimes they use their own username as a representative of the company (ibid). Mr. R.J (2017) said, we make sure to always say the truth, and not only contact unhappy customers we see how they interact on our webpage, how long they stay which links they click by their IP address (ibid), then we build a message in accordance to their interest and contact them.

Company C as stated by Mr. R.J chose to position themselves that way, that is because of the lack of competence and communication in the organization in that realm and fail to see a need for it. Mr. R.J (2017) stated “We send questioners and meet in person, so we don’t sell over phone or online video conference”. Company C rather visits their customers and provides them with a lot of knowledge when they decide to use the company as their vendor. Regarding the use of social media in Company C, the decision not to be active on social media was for efficiency purposes (Mr. R. J, 2017). Since Mr. R.J (2017) explained “we had an older generation in the company that did not possess the knowledge to manage the platforms.” (Mr. R. J, 2017).

Since company B is not that related with the use of social media, they use different methods on how they advertised their product. They don’t use social media for advertising instead they pay to other companies to make their advertisement. However, Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “but we rather want to be in media for doing something good instead of paying for ads, Ads in magazines are basically zero or non-existent.” (Mr. R. J, 2017).
Company B rather to have a reportage in the magazine regarding people and community, instead of paying for a blank space or by using social media and paying by clicks. The Ads are too expensive for this type of company, they will pay around fifty thousand crowns for one Ad on newspapers (ibid), so they recognize there is a problem too (Mr. R. J, 2017). Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “there are other cheaper alternatives to advertise and reach a large target group.” ‘We also believe that is it much better to have public relation dealing with our publicity, and get positive publicity on social media shared by other that we did something good for the community, instead of us paying for adverts.’

Company C has knowledge about the different platforms however, they don’t implement them in their marketing strategy, and Mr. R. J (2017) said “we do it in our own way.” They think LinkedIn is good but the best option that they think is better is twitter. Since there they can portion the newsfeeds for those who are interested with shorts text or product groups and keep it simple with information (Mr. R. J, 2017). However, company C uses other type online platform or a program, they are related since couple of years ago with ‘Mynewdesk’ this program has a lot do with B2B customers and it works well for the company. It helps to publish news surrounding a business, journalist and other writers. They use this program more to attract new B2B customers.

“However, we are aware of all the customers that have presence in social media and we try to keep full watch on them.” (Mr. R. J, 2017).

Company C even if they are not active on social media they keep watch, they can track their competitors by the program Observify which it was mentioned before (Mr. R. J, 2017, 3). The company can observe and they can see, rearrange, filter things and then take action on it. Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned. “Here we can see if someone is talking bad about our company, we can through this tool enter a discussion and create an alias to enter discussion and answer positively, negatively, steer the discussion it in the direction we want.”

Company C wants to enter social media but they want to do it carefully, and use it first for finding young competent employees, and spread positive publicity, and not go in for ten likes and show poor presence (Mr. R.J, 2017, 2). After the interview, we went to look at the platform R.J has mentioned we saw that indeed on LinkedIn there are many of their
employees and it shows on their profile they work for Company C, and have no official page, but few shares about them, also their presence as a company is more as a Facebook Wiki, not active but informative.

4.3.2 The use of social media by company C without a strategic approach

Company C does not perceive social media as a strong way of interacting with customers or increasing brand awareness, they do not have a strategy and they do not use social media as a full way of interaction like other type of companies (Mr. R. J, 2017). They use social media in unique way (Mr. R. J, 2017). Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “when we go out in the middle of a recruiting process, we search for a seller, a leader, then we use Facebook and that type of social media”. However, they haven’t used LinkedIn but they are trying to think in new ways to use social media and being more active in order to reach the youth and personnel (Mrs. R. J, 2017). Company C looks at social media as an effective tool in finding young talents such as business educated individuals and young generation, ‘we do use social media for finding talented individuals to work for us’ (Mr.R.J, 2017).

Moreover, Mr. R. J (2017) also mentioned that “We are going to put energy into creating a social media strategy.” Their strategy at the moment is not to be active in social media since they don’t see their product selling through social media (Mr. R. J, 2017). However, Mrs. R. J (2017) mentioned “that you can trigger or shift the market with certain good news and reach a target group that absorbs the information if they are interested instead of receiving it through e-mail etc.” Company C is also aware that when using social media in their marketing strategy, they would have to think about how much budget they will spend and how many resources it would take (Mr. R. J, 2017). The most important thing that they are trying to figure it out is as Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “we need to know what we get out of using social media in our business? That has always been the danger. If you are going to be on social media, you have to have people taking care of the feed.” Company C will be limited when they create a strategy, and with the platforms they will focus on. He also stated that he and the other top management believe in measurable results, something substantial that shows results that can be shown with graphs to our CEO and stakeholders, and not just saying we got twenty ‘likes’ or new followers that means nothing to us (Mr. R.J, 2017). And therefore, they are threading carefully with using social media for now without proper knowledge(ibid).
Company C would like to be in future present on social media since they don’t have Facebook or LinkedIn. They only use YouTube but for private purposes or to show films that a customer’s needs to watch, the customers have a private link where they can see all the videos form the company (Mr. R. J, 2017). Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “Because many of our sales argument are based on knowledge and that we do not want to share with our competitors, because we know we have extra knowledge.” Company C has a say that if they are on social media, they would be not unique and they we lack arguments. They want to go to the customers and meet the customer where they can establish a relationship as a customer face to face and capitalize on that (Mr. R. J, 2017).

Also, company C is aware that they could share all their material on their website or YouTube and then most of their customers can manage by themselves with that guidance. Mr. R.J (2017) argues “but we don’t build a relationship if we share all our information online, if we lose that relationships building then the risk is that when the customer find other information then they choose to buy from someone else.” He also said ‘We believe that most of our customer need a personal interaction where we meet face to face, and not through digital platforms’. When Mr. R.J (2017) was asked if he is aware that being present on some platforms like LinkedIn could present new opportunities where IT, Production, and Logistical companies can contact them to improve their product and service or production? He said he is aware and our employees have their presence, they do get contacted by sellers, and sometimes we deal with them, and procure from them (ibid). Company C has a perspective that if they want to begin using social media they must have full expertise otherwise they would rather not involve as Mr. R.J (2017) stated ‘either go big or nothing at all’.

4.3.3 Social media challenges

Company C can see that there are benefits and challenges by using social media for example; to spread the local connection around the company, the contribution to the community and to show the good side of the company and to share information for customers and suppliers (Mrs. R. J, 2017). Mr. R.J (2017) assure that “we can get people to work here and speak positively about us. There you can reach a large target group through social media”. This can be for a positive or negative way depending on the company (Mr. R. J, 2017). Company C is presenting problems with ‘LEAN’ communication and communication tools at the problem, and they think that social media
might solve this challenge that they are presenting and as Mr. R.J (2017) mentioned “we are trying to think differently as a company”. They think Twitter could help them to improve and to be more involved with social media. He also stated that ‘Twitter is where our management can share important information in short, and links to where we want our customers to go, new products techniques, events, and so on, however we are yet to start using this platform professionally, we had a meeting recently and talked about it, so it will come soon, after we figure out how to run it professionally’. (ibid)

5 Analysis

The empirical findings and theoretical framework will be analysed, to reach the aim of this study and answer the research question. It will be divided into parts: Such as; use of social media and different platforms, non-strategic use of social media and Social media challenges.

5.1 Use of social media and different platforms

The companies in this study use social media in similar ways, yet for a different purpose, all the studied companies look at social media differently and acknowledge the need for a well-defined strategy. From a company perspective, there are many ways on how to use social media and the different platforms and this depend on the organization. Lacka & Chong (2016) stated that social media platforms are used in a way to help improve the interaction and communication between the buyer and seller. B2B companies are starting to see the benefits and consequences that social media can bring for the companies as a way to improve and create relationships with business partners and customers (Lacka & Chong, 2016; Siagmaka et al., 2015). From company A perspective social media help them to create stronger relationships by attracting new customers and by keeping in contact with their existing customer (Mr. J.G, 2017). This makes companies to have an efficient way of interaction with their customers and business partners. However, social media is not only used for those purposes, as Järvinen et al. (2012) and Guesalga (2016) stated that social media platforms can help companies for different marketing purposes. For purposes such as; share and exchange information, recruit employees, increase brand awareness and create an online reputation. These different purposes have been developed since Guesalga (2016) mentioned that more companies are being involved with the use
of social media and companies are starting to create their own way of using it. Not all purpose can fit for all companies, it depends on the way companies want to implement social media platforms (Guesalga, 2016; Järvinen et al. 2012). This has increased the numbers of companies involved with the use of social media. As for example; company A is using their platforms as LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram, mostly to keep updating their existing customers and it has become more important during the past years since they have been using social media (Mr. J.G, 2017). Company A is also aware of all benefits that social media can bring for their company, as helping them to build their brand and create brand awareness (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Different authors pointed out how companies can use social media depending on the organizations and it is important for companies to understand the knowledge of implement it (Järvinen, et al., 2012; Rodriguez el al., 2012; Guesalga, 2016). However, Company B did not use social media at all, until they realize that they could tell their clients and potential customers everything that the company is doing (Mrs. B.C, 2017). As Siamagka et al. (2015) mentioned that companies are starting to notice that social media, can have negative side effects and can also bring positive outcomes for the company. Such as; increasing customer base, word of mouth and influence in the decision making. However, company B is using social media as a way to improve the communication between their customers, there has been a lot of changes since they started using social media and they can see how it has improved and strengthened their brand.

As company B stated that they are using different platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is because this platform brings the option to share any information for their clients and news related to their company (Mrs. B.C, 2017). According to Hays et al. (2013), this is one of the reasons why the companies are starting to have more presence in social media. However, there is still a lack of knowledge and an efficient understanding of the usage. Additionally, company C believes that social media is important, but they are not a master of it. Therefore, they don’t use social media as other companies do, they use social media in their own way, and with a program called Observify to track what customers of similar products are saying about them and their
competitors on the different platforms, which it is more efficient for Company C (Mr. R.H, 2017).

As Fischer & Reuber. (2010) Mentioned that this depends on the type of organization and the message that they want to transmit to their customers. Some companies will use different platforms and some other will not want to be on social media for different purposes(ibid). Rodriguez et al. (2012) and Fischer & Reuber (2010) also mentioned that when it comes to B2B the most common ways are to recruit employees and find information about prospects, but still there are companies that they are cautious about the use of social media. Company A, B and C although use various social media platforms for different purposes, however, company A lacks the expertise but not the funds, Company B lacks the time and funding and expertise, but claims to be satisfied with certain platforms, company C lacks the enthusiasm in social media in B2B context, resources and time (Mr. J.G, 2017; Mrs. B.C, 2017; Mr. R.H, 2017).

5.2 The use of social media without a strategic approach

Social media marketing strategy is a way to control the resources, tactics that need to be done when using social media (Schaffer, 2013 kietzmann et al, 2011). From a theoretical perspective, it is relevant for companies that use social media to build up a strategy and to know how to manage different platforms in order to become more efficient in this area (Schaffer, 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011). This will make companies to generate an ROI (return on investment) and to achieve the goals and objectives that they want to present in future activities and to their customers (Keinänen and Kuivalainen, 2015; Järvien et al., 2012; McCann and Barlow, 2015; Schaffer, 2013). However, there are many companies that are not using social media with any strategy when they want to implement social media into their marketing plans. This can be seen for example in company A, company A does not have a well-defined strategy for the use of all social media platforms for marketing purpose, nor do they have a well-defined objective plan with measurement and assessment for different social media platforms (Mr. J.G, 2017). As it seems that in other cases as Hanna et al. (2011) and Kaplan & Heinlein (2010) mentioned that companies integrate social media to share their objectives with their customers, business partners or individuals. By doing so they are able to share events, communicate with the company’s initiative and engage their customers to be part of their advertisements and events.
Kietzmann et al. (2011) presented the seven functional blocks as honeycomb framework. Different authors mentioned that this honeycomb could be one of the easiest ways for companies to identify and understand social media activities with a depth knowledge. This is a way to see how companies can develop a social marketing strategy and avoid their implications or any risk that can damage company’s identity, online reputation and brand awareness (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Osatuyi, 2013).

However, company A still in an early stage when using social media into their marketing, but they are aware of starting to be more involved in this area since they have acknowledged that social media can be a way to develop opportunities into their company (Mr. J.G, 2017). For company A, their way of using social media is only to provide natural content for their customers and business partners without impressing anyone, and this helps them to gain credibility and to be more unique in this area. According to Taprial & Kanwar (2012) and Kietzmann et al. (2011), knowing the seven functional blocks can help to understand companies to engage more with the customer through social media and to understand what and why is it important. However, company A is still aware of the various elements of social media, and their use for marketing purpose, and acknowledge their companies deficiency in correct staff to run, manage content and measure the effect of social media such as Facebook for their company (Mr. J.G, 2017).

Company B actively manages and use social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter and Instagram (Mrs. B.C, 2017, 1). However, lack to have a defined strategy to use social media tools as a whole, due to lack of time. Company B also lack the professional expertise to employ social media holistically and do not see a need to have a social media manager for the job. However, Schaffer, (2013) and Kietzmann et al. (2011), states that it is imperative to have staff who have expertise in social media to know how to target and analyse ROI, and use social media as a marketing tool. Moreover, Company C is also a small company that can have a lack of resources to employ staff specifically for social media marketing, therefore a communication manager does the job as a task on the side of other traditional marketing endeavours. Company C are still slow with B2B social media; their strategy is not to use social media, for now, believing that ‘either go big or nothing at all’ (Mr. R.J, 2017). As schaffer (2013) states that social media marketing strategy is an essential part for all businesses and it would be necessary to implement when using social media to avoid risk as; lack of knowledge, resources or
staff in their company. Moreover, the way of using social media and having an appropriate strategy for it, will facilitate the way customers or business partners target they’re through a better way of communication and to plan activities that can help to engage more and more customers (Schaffer, 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Also, it is relevant for companies to educate their internal and external audience talking about expertise and employees, this will generate a strategy with a better knowledge of the use of the different platforms (Safko & Brake, 2010).

The honeycomb framework is composed by identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Kietzmann et al (2011) mentioned that identity is important for businesses, and by sharing the content, disclosing information and perceptions they will gain an identity for their customers. For company A they want to gain the identity that people think ‘the guys who listen to them, when they have any questions about laundry and so on.” (Mr. J.G, 2017). This is because they want to gain an identity where businesses can see how well the company is doing and why not share that in a platform where customers, competitors and business partners have their presence on (Mr. J.G, 2017). As Kietzmann et al. (2011) and Taprial & Kanwar (2012) also argued that companies need to be aware on how individuals will perceive their identities through the message they share. As company A is trying to have the voice for their customers and be more credible through their use of social media, this help their identity that they want to gain (Mr. J.G, 2017). Conversation and sharing can help to improve the relationship between, customers and employees. By sharing it can help the way of interaction through social media and using the different platforms for different purpose exchanged (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Järvinen et al., 2012). The content that companies shared is also connected with the identity of the company, what they are sharing is how they want other businesses to perceive them.

As Company B believes that sharing and engaging conversation will their followers helps the way of gaining more customers and the opportunity to create content and share it in different platforms (Mrs. B.C, 2017) For example they share on social media different type of content in order to attract more customers and keep their customers updated they share from; cases, news about clients, campaigns through LinkedIn and Facebook and this help them to target customers and to create content for different segments (Mrs. B.C, 2017). As for company A they share their contents and interact through social media by
sharing short videos and producing content that will attract their clients and try to avoid sharing content of product specific information to avoid competition (Mr. J.G, 2017). As it can be seen that companies have their own reason of sharing their content on social media. Moreover, Presence is also important when sharing events, to visit your platforms and influence the relationship and conversation between business partners and individuals (Sadanheera et al, 2011; Kietzmann et al; 2011 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010).

By using social media it can help by building long last relationship and to increase the relationship when recruiting employees, finding jobs and this help companies to gain more followers since other businesses will like to join too (Sadanheera et al, 2011; Kietzmann et al; 2011 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010). However, company C wants to go to the customers and meet the customer where they can establish a relationship as a customer and capitalize on that, face to face and not us social media in a way of avoiding meeting each other personally (Mr. R. J, 2017). Company C wants to use social media carefully, and the reasons mentioned above are not for this company, they don’t want to build relationship neither increase their brand awareness (Mr. R. J, 2017). As Lacka and Chong (2016) agrees that B2B companies often require a face to face contact with their clients and stake holders, which in not possible with social media(ibid). Also, company B wants to establish relationship with the customer and they want to show their audience the best customer service (Mrs. B.C, 2017), which implies they are using social media as a customer relationship tool and also to gain more customers and to keep their existence customers (Lacka & Chong, 2016; Sadanheera et al, 2011).

As for company C, they believe if they have too much of their information on social media, customers can easily compare and get too much information to be able to seek their competitor, so for them it is better to have a customer come to their office and be persuaded to buy from them face to face then compare their product and service from information spread on social media and skip the meeting process where Mr. R.J (2017) emphasize as the most effective method of selling and marketing. Where some companies have real complexities when it comes to spreading their product information online, unlike company A who can boast their extensive experience and unique quality and brand name on social media, which translates to how companies can have unique need and different use of social media platforms (Mr. R.J, 2017). Which in a theoretical perspective it is argued that social media can be used as a way of improving the interaction with
customers, engage customers and it could be a rapid way to communicate with the customers instead of waiting until the face-to-face meeting (Kietzmann et al; 2011 2011; Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010; Senadheera et al, 2011).

As for company B, Mr. R.J, (2017) stated that they have a very traditional marketing activities for now which work for them well, and do not have the budget nor right staff to start using social media with a clear well-defined strategy, which is agreed by Leeflang et al, (2015) that the use of social media without expertise and understanding of it functionality can have a negative impact on businesses, as a negative word of mouth, negative online reputation management, decrease of brand awareness and corporate identity. Mr. R.J, (2017) is a sceptic in the use of social media, and wants to see concrete measurable results directly from the use of social media or not use it at all (ibid). Nonetheless, Lacka & Chong (2016) states that it is important for B2B marketers to focus on their perception concerning usability, usefulness, and utility of social media platforms in the B2B context if they wish to adopt social media platforms for marketing. Which is why company A has been using social media and learning on their way to improve themselves and to be more involved with it since Mr. J.G, (2017,1) stated that they have nothing to fear, their reputation is solid the past decades since they have a luxury reputation, and they have great relations with their existing customers which makes them even better when using the different social media platforms(ibid).

Reputation and groups, have different purposes in the platforms one can gain negative or positive reputation and also by gathering people to join groups it helps to increase communication between communities, individuals and assists in sharing experiences (Hanna et al, 2011). However, not all companies have this type of blocks into their mind, but some companies are implementing it without having the knowledge of it (Hanna et al., 2011). And this is one of the consequences for this kind of companies for example; according to company B they want to get a reputation where they get a natural attention from their stakeholders and this will help them to grow their brand awareness, but they don’t have any strategy to know how to implement it (Mrs. B.C, 2017).

According to Safko and Brake (2010) & Postman (2009) apart from honeycomb framework, there are four pillars to take into consideration which is Communicate, Collaborate, Educate and Entertainment. This helps to analyse the different platforms
and to plan the strategy more maintainable. According to company A they don’t want to collaborate or create a strong engagement for customers that are on TV they are just focused on a professional level. This way they can increase their brand awareness of their company (Mr. J.G, 2017). For company A, is missing staff that can manage social media in an efficient way, the lack of resources is needed, and they need employees that have the right knowledge to avoid any risk and for this they need an strategy in order to come up with some solutions for the lack of resources (Mr. J.G, 2017). As for safko and brake (2010) this can help to engage more with their prospects, which is a positive way for company B that wants to create long lasting relationships and keep their existing ones. Moreover, entertainment is also important for companies and individuals when sharing their content. As for company A creating events, relevant openings and videos for their customer with a suitable content (Mr. J.G, 2017). As mentioned we try to use humour, surprises, sometimes it works, but you have to be delicate in humour because you might offend somebody and it can turn a little bit corny. You have to be professional funny (Mr. J.G, 2017). As Sakfo & Brake (2010) and Osayut (2013) states that using humour in a positive way can help to attract customers, however, it needs to be sure that is not a content that could be offensive to their customers.

There are components that companies need to take into consideration when implementing a social media strategy. As Shaffer (2013) stated that companies must to set objectives on what they want to achieve by using the different social media platforms. Determining their objectives will help increase their brand awareness and increase their corporate identity as mentioned above (Deveruex et al., 2017; Iyamabo et al., 2013; Balmer & Greyser, 2002). However, company A didn’t set any objective goals but they are aware of using social media for building their brand to be able to reach out more customers (Mr. J.G, 2017). By sharing that is one of the component Schaffer (2013) mentioned that if there is an employee that can manage the use of social media will be more effectively than hiring some extra agency that help with the content. As company B is following the right direction by having some kind of knowledge in this area, however, company A is hiring a marketing communication company in order to create their content and to help them monitor their users. (Mr. J.G, 2017; Mrs. B.C, 2017). This can be one of the drawbacks for company A since Kietzmann et el. (2011) mentioned that is better that employees or expertise within the company oversee using social media instead of hiring an external agency. Since employees and expertise are more aware and know more the
material of the company than the agency. As for company C, they use sophisticated online software called *Observify* for tracking and watching what clients are talking about companies of their sector, themselves, and their competitors, they do target dissatisfied clients by these tools. Moreover, company C even has tools to show how long and where did their clients click on their websites by their internet-protocol addresses (Mr. R. J, 2017). Yet, this software does not translate to being present and active on social media platforms, and more as a ‘peeping’ or ‘scouting’ platform.

5.3 Social media challenges

From a company perspective, there are a lot of challenges when using social media. Company A is facing the challenges of not having the right staff for Facebook, lack of time, lack of internal communication from right content (Mr. J. G, 2017). Also, dependence on external expertise who do not understand the company mission, and just market what they are given from the marketing manager who is also not an expert on social media marketing (Mr. J. G, 2017). Other challenges can be seen the lack of holistic strategy which involves the use of all the relevant social media tools with synergy and efficiency, and a well-defined with measurable goals, lack of unified strategy for all companies nationally and internationally, or at least congruent work with marketing manager in Stockholm branch for company A.

Moreover, Greigoire et al. (2015) mentioned that social media could bring benefits and challenges among businesses and their clients. Some of the challenges presented are service failures, companies that don’t possess a right knowledge and customers complaints with ineffective experiences (Gregoire et al., 2015; Safko & Brake, 2010). For the company, B challenges are presented such as lack of time, funds, expertise, myopia in seeing social media only as two tools (Mrs. B. C, 2017). Also, lack of interest from upper management to employ social media holistically with clear written objective and defined plans that can have their effect measured (Mrs. B. C, 2017). Also, Lacka and Chong (2016) mentioned that social media challenges could range from the lack of understanding of the use of social media in marketing as B2B context, While company C is facing the negative perception they have towards social media, their attitude to only watch and wait for others results, and seeking to measure professionally without having the proper staff who can measure or market using social media and using social media on a small scale only for recruitment and internal video sharing on YouTube (Mr. R. J, 2017).
Gregoire et al. (2015) state that to avoid the different challenges of social media, it is relevant to create better strategies for their customers and businesses. This will prevent bad online reputation and risk of losing customers by the lack of knowledge, staff, and others (Mr. J.G, 2017). Furthermore, Liu and Munro (2012) mentioned how important is online reputation management for some companies, the authors argued if companies know how to manage ORM they will create opportunities where users can build trust and avoid filter information. This can be good for companies to avoid having any judgment on their company’s reputation and their corporate identity. As Ryschka et al. (2016) and Stenger (2014) states that establishing a good online reputation will help to increase the level of appeal and improve customer loyalty and satisfaction, identity and brand awareness.

However, social media also have challenges, and benefit that generate company vision and the opportunity to create content and interact with the different brand, customers, and individuals (Safko & Brake, 2010). The three companies all seek to improve their social media presence and activities; all seek to be able to market themselves by this tool. However, the three companies have some smoke screen excuses such as company C claim that social media is not for them at first, eventually, in later interviews, company C says otherwise by acknowledging that social media can be useful but needs to have the right expertise to start right and big (Mr.R.J, 2017) which they lack at the moment.

The challenges presented in theories such perceived barriers as limited resources and time, negative views of its practicality, and the training with unfamiliar technology (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Also, factors that are challenges to companies such as lack of innovativeness and perceived usefulness, lack of human resources and expertise (Järvinen et al.,2012). As for Safko & Brake. (2010) there are some challenges to take into account example; companies needs to be aware that they need to maintain a constant conversation with the audience, monitor the reputation and respond to negative comments and concerns and this means even off the business hours(ibid). Company C argued that it can be very complex to take care of social media for their business outside the business hours, keeping watch of the feeds and interactions (Mr. R.J, 2017).The above factors affect all three companies, they might vary in extent and influences, yet, all share in common lack of
expertise, since we have not met one marketing managers, or communication manager who has good education on social media usage, and the biggest company of them which is spread internationally is employing an external social media communication company, which is also seen as a challenge by Mr. J.G (2017) since, they only help to market and analyse what they receive from the marketing department of company A, and are not present on the inside to observe and build content accurately, but get paid to market whatsoever they receive from Mr. J.G (2017).

This has confirmed the previous studies that the major obstacle in usage of social media by B2B companies is lack of know-how, time and resources (Lacka & Chong, 2016; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Leeflang et al., 2015; Safko & Brake, 2010) and these challenges can be the reason why companies with no expertise or resource and time, can be able to build a well-defined strategic plan with measurable results for their companies (Schaffer, 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011). However, the use of social media by the three companies, whether for brand awareness as company A and B, or recruitment as company C as this usage is personal endeavours by marketing managers as a task besides other traditional offline activities. Where Hayes et al. (2013) states that many businesses actively grow and manage their social media presence and efforts, some companies simply participates. Moreover, Michaelidou et al. (2011) mentioned that social media can improve the way of interaction with their customers and this lead to the opportunity that companies increases their brand awareness and avoid any challenge with the use of it. Nevertheless, they miss the support, expertise to maintain an active and strategic presence (ibid). Therefore, many B2B company’s marketers are yet to recognize the importance and share the expertise and strategic approach to social media by their counterpart in the B2C sector (Lacka and Chong, 2016).
6. Conclusion.

It can be clearly concluded that the companies studied are relatively satisfied with their social media presence and activities. All companies acknowledge the need of correct expertise to strategically actively manage and grow social media presence and activities for marketing purpose. They also agree to have a well-defined plan and set up objectives, with measurable results. All three companies agree that lack of resources and expertise can have a key effect on not being able to implement social media strategically. Some companies start with social media and learn by trials and error, some use specific platforms for a specific purpose such as public relation and customer relation management, and others only use social media for recruiting young employees in their companies.

The previous literature emphasizes the need for a social media manager, and right staff, knowledge and resources in order to implement social media professionally, also stresses that, it is rather better not to use social media, then to use social media incorrectly. Which is why some companies do not use social media for their marketing. While some literature encourages B2B companies to start using social media and emphasize the benefits it can bring to their companies, which is also why some companies are using social media and are satisfied with results.

There are also studies done on reputation management (ORM) which is one of the element of a social media marketing strategy, since the studied companies did not have a holistic social media marketing strategy, all of them did not professionally manage their online reputation with social media platforms, but improvised a form of customer management by answering some queries that client ask on some of the platforms. One of the studied B2B companies did use an online software that tracks social media platform post on particular sectors seeking specific key words. However, that is not a direct interaction from an official company page to customers where there can be customer satisfaction, and attending to customer needs or informing customers about new launches, activities, and promotions.
Looking at companies which hardly use social media as a marketing tool and enquiring deeper about the success of their company according to their income and expansion in Europe, it can be concluded that social media is not a must have for success but good to have. Moreover, the previous literature stresses that companies must keep in mind the risk that can come with social media, and assess in a scale the benefit and risk that social media can bring, since some companies can have a very negative experience with social media, which is why one of the studied companies chose to take time and assess risk before adopting social media.

It is also clear that time, resources and expertise play a major role in the implementation of social media in B2B sector. Moreover, the content to be advertised involved teamwork and attention to corporate identity, so companies do not post what does not match their brand identity. Firestorms are dangerous, yet the positive side of social media outweighs its negative side, especially for companies like A where they have decades of positive track records, being there on social media can bring positive results. However not all B2B companies can follow the exact footsteps of company A since not all B2B companies have a long-lasting reputation of quality and a positive image.

Some companies do not have the resources to employ a professional social media advertising company, some see that few tools and platforms are enough to be done aside as task by marketing or communication manager beside their conventional marketing activities. As for example; company C believes that such a step needs the right time, resources and correct staff to handle the feedbacks not just at business hours, but after business hours, which can be difficult and costly. This can show the amount of fear of risk of what can happen on social media platforms after business hours, where no one will reply to negative interactions and can cause negative effect on company identity.

Finally, social media is not a one size fits all, different companies have different needs, and use social media in accordance to that need. Yet, as presented by many scholars in understanding and employing social media strategically can prove to be useful to companies, then simply improvising with social media as a marketing tool. One crucial factor in the use of social media and its measurement is that the benchmark for social media success is set mostly by their management or their marketing department, which can be concluded that success in social media is related to the company’s need and uniqueness, some companies are satisfied with using social media selectively for
customer satisfaction and public relations, some are planning to use social media holistically and strategically with experienced staff. However, companies have unique needs, budget and resources when it comes to social media usage, therefore, social media usage in B2B companies is versatile and does not have one specific way to utilize it. Yet it is advised by scholars in previous literatures that companies that do not employ social media strategy cannot easy access and measure social media benefits, they miss to employ other tools and platforms of social media. Which is also agreed upon by marketers at the studied companies. That using social media for marketing in B2B context would greatly benefit from a well-defined Social media marketing strategy. Where the strategy is plan and designed to have synergy, measured and assessed by staff in implementation. Also, where the posted message on social media has connection to the previous message and the future to be posted message on all platforms. The message is also, unified in all branches, and executed in according to that strategy with time frame and in accordance to situations, such as festivals, holidays, and business promotion programs and product launches. This is done by all the applicable tools and platforms which suite the uniqueness of each B2B companies.

7. Further research

This study has explored how three B2B companies actively manage and grow their social media presence and activities for marketing purpose by their own pace. Also, how they employ social media platforms for marketing without a strategy. A further selective study on successful B2B companies in social media, investigating how social media managers, with social media expertise, successfully use social media strategically; would be very interesting to marketers new to social media or use social media basically and selectively for the past years. To understand and learn from the success and see how social media benefits can be measured in terms of (ROI) and its effect on brand awareness, (ORM) and corporate identity. Additionally, a further holistic research on B2B companies that do not employ a social media marketing strategy integrally to see the effect of each department on companies management decisions in employing few platforms or not at all, and investigate reasons beyond marketing and communication managers that can lie deeply hidden in black boxes in companies and bring forth the real reasons for B2B companies to be able to see and learn to overcome what some scholars call ‘Functional stupidity.'
References


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