Persistent Digital Service Encounters –

Challenges of organizational use of social media in a hotel chain

Karin Högberg
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ISBN electronic 978-91-87531-95-8
Acknowledgements

Many times throughout the past five years I have imagined writing these lines since they represent the completion of this PhD project. When finally sitting here, I realize in retrospect that there are so many people I would like to thank for participating and encouraging me during this journey. First of all, I would like to thank the employees at all the hotels I visited for participating in this study. Your generosity and patience have been crucial for my work with this thesis. I hope you will find my findings useful in your daily work!

I would like to thank my supervisor Kerstin Grundén for your encouragement, feedback and support throughout this process. A warm thank-you to my former teacher, colleague and now close friend, Anna Karin Olsson, for your care, never-ending support and constructive feedback.

A special thank you to Lars Svensson and Carsten Sørensen. Lars, thank you for your strong encouragement and for sharing your broad expertise in the IS field, and not least, your critical reading. Carsten, thank you for sharing your broad theoretical knowledge, for valuable discussions, constructive critique and energy boost!

A warm thank you to Ulrika Lundh Snis, Niklas Eriksson and Ulf Melin for reading and discussing the thesis in its different phases. I would also like to thank Lena Pareto, Per Flensburg, Kristina Johansson, Martin Gellerstedt and Irène Bernhard for readings and discussions throughout the years.

A warm thank you to my colleagues at the Department of Business Administration.

Many thanks to Kristina Lindh for giving me that final push to apply for the PhD program. Thank you, Elisabeth Jansson, for supporting my project in its initial phase. Many thanks to Eva Erkmar, Rebecca Olsson, Ann-Charlotte Bandgren, Morgan Andersson and Gunnar Peterson.

In particular, I want to thank my fellow PhD candidates Amir, Anne, Annika, Annika, Catarina, Camilla, Charlotte, Helena, Linnea, Livia, Loa, Masood, Marie, Monika, Said, Tuija and Ville. Thank you for always being supportive and in the mood for a coffee or falafel… Also, a warm thank you to my Finnish colleague Susanna Fabricious for your support and many good talks over the years.

A special thank you to my dear friend and colleague Martin Ljungdahl Eriksson for your great support, especially during the past six months. I would not have passed that last PhD course without you, I owe you big time! Also, a special thank
you to my sister from another mister, Sara Willermark. Thank you for your sharp analysis of both the thesis and of life itself, but most of all, for all the good laughs and good memories! I would not have wanted to make this journey without you.

A huge thank you to my friends and family, for your patience and never-ending support. A huge loving thank you to Mom and Dad, for supporting me in all kinds of ways, you are the best!

At last, thank you, Peter, my love. Your support and patience has been overwhelming and I cannot thank you enough. Thank you for literally driving me through Europe when collecting data and for always reminding me of the good things in life. I love you to the moon and back.

Karin Högberg

Mollösund, March 2018
Populärvetenskaplig Sammanfattning

Nyckelord: sociala medier, organisationer, serviceorganisationer, hotell, IT och förändring

Avhandlingen fokuserar på de utmaningar som användandet av sociala medier i en organisatorisk kontext kan medföra. Sociala medier har kommit att användas av miljoner människor runt om i världen och har i stor utsträckning ändrat hur vi kommunicerar, interagerar och konsumerar på internet. Den omfattade användningen av sociala medier bland privatpersoner har medfört att organisationer kommit att se möjligheter, men även en press på att befinna sig i sociala medier där deras kunder och intressenter finns. Således har det uppkommit ett ökat vetenskapligt behov av att undersöka och förstå varför och hur organisationer använder sociala medier och vilka organisatoriska effekter användandet kan få.


Varför och hur medför införandet och användandet av social medier organisatoriska utmaningar?

Genomgående har kvalitativ metod använts och i huvudsak har empirisk data från intervjuer används. Totalt har 47 intervjuer gjorts. Dessutom har även observationer från social medier, fältobservationer och skrivna dokument använts.

Tidigare studier har i stor utsträckning fokuserat på fragmenterade delar av organisatoriskt användande av social medier, t.ex. användandet av social medier i
marknadsföringssyfte. Genom att anlägga ett bredare perspektiv för användandet av sociala medier i organisationer (Van Osch och Coursaris, 2013) har avhandlingen tagit hänsyn till ett mer generellt användande av sociala medier i den studerade hotellkedjan. På så sätt har både internt (t.ex. internkommunikation) och externt användande (t.ex. marknadsföring) av sociala medier tagits i beaktning. Detta för att få ökad förståelse för hur sociala medier används i dagliga arbetssituationer.

Abstract

Title: Persistent Digital Service Encounters – Challenges of organizational social media in a hotel chain.

Keywords: organizational social media, IT change, IT use, hospitality, digital service encounters

ISBN electronic 978-91-87531-95-8

The emergence of social media has in many ways changed how individuals interact, communicate and also consume online. Due to the massive, worldwide use of social media, organizations are starting to use social media in order to be present where their customers are. Earlier research has studied social media from different, rather fragmented perspectives such as social media use for marketing or for internal communication. However, research on the organizational implications and challenges from a more general organizational social media use is lacking. This thesis explores organizational implications and challenges of social media use over time. Hence the focus lies on both internal and external organizational activities related to social media use. The consequences of social media have been particularly striking in service industries, e.g. banks, restaurants and travel agencies. Social media has fundamentally changed how we (can) buy services, and also how service is provided. For example, we can ask a question or make a complaint directly on a specific social media platform. Hence, social media have had implications for the relationship between service organizations and their customers and thus changed the context in which service is delivered and experienced. The service encounter, i.e., the actual meeting between the customer and employees, has come to take place on social media platforms. The expansion of social media has affected the hotel industry in several ways. Hotel guests are using social media platforms in order to review and share experiences about hotels, and hotel organizations use social media to keep up with competitors and customer demands. The aim of this thesis is to describe and understand the challenges social media use brings to organizations in the service industry, in particular hotel organizations. The following research question is addressed:

Why and how does the use of social media platforms represent organizational challenges?

The empirical data focuses on the introduction and use of social media in one international hotel chain over a four-year period. Furthermore, data was collected from other, independent hotels. The empirical data was collected through interviews, online observations, workplace observations and written documents.
A multifaceted theoretical framework was used, including the Technology-Organization-Environment framework, the concept of technological frames, and the concepts of functional simplification and closure. These theoretical frameworks capture the drivers behind organizational social media use and how individual employees interpret and use social media, but also how social media attributes create the need for new organizational routines and management of social media content created outside organizational boundaries.

The analysis illustrates how social media use creates challenges for the studied organizations. Five main organizational challenges have been identified: the nature of social media versus organizational structure; how organizations and individuals make sense of social media over time; how private use of social media has implications for professional use; how social media creates stretched service encounters; and pseudo-relationships and roboticization of service.
Appended Publications

This thesis is based on research described in the following appended publications.


**Paper 6:** Höberg, K., Sorensen, C., and Svensson, L. (Manuscript). The quantification of service: Exploring customer online reviews through a functional simplification and closure perspective.
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1 Introduction

The impact of social media in our society and on our daily lives is hard to survey. We use social media platforms for a variety of reasons, to get the latest news, buy anything from clothes to travel, and keep in touch with friends and not least, for purely recreational purposes. The adoption of social media by individuals is enormous and worldwide. In 2017, Facebook reached two billion monthly users and platforms like Snapchat and Instagram continue to evolve and attract users with their different features. A common description of social media is that they are Internet-based communication and collaboration platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram often come to mind when discussing social media, but the field is constantly changing and new platforms are developed and emerging. Although social media were initially designed to be used for leisure activities, the great worldwide use has created great pressure for organizations to use social media, not least since it gives them opportunities to be present where their customers, stakeholders and even competitors are (Aral et al., 2013). A large number and range of organizations, from political parties, schools and charity organizations to clothing brands being present on social media platforms. Hence, a new context has been added in which social media platforms are used, that is, from private contexts to professional, organizational contexts. Individuals are often introduced to social media outside of the workplace, and thereby often create their own assumptions about social media use outside of an organizational context (Treem et al., 2015). Compared to other Information Technologies (IT) used in an organizational context, such as email-systems or intranets, social media does not serve a specific purpose (Kruse and Baumöl, 2016). That is, they are flexible in form of use and content, and their usefulness is dependent on how the users make sense of it. Social media platforms and their surrounding organizational and managerial structures create “social information systems” (Germonprez et al., 2011). Hence, the use of social media calls for changes of work practices, skill requirements, routines, professional identities and as a result, the nature of many industries and organizations is changing. This also includes the need for new organizational knowledge and organizational learning and therefore requires that organizations are able to adapt to new IT.

IT is deeply embedded in the daily work practices of organizations (Zammuto et al, 2007). In recent decades digitalization has had profound effects on and transformed daily organizational activities that range from accounting to internal communications, and marketing. In this thesis, digitalization is referred to a major change, for example changing existing services into digital alternatives. This to be compared to digitization that refers to digitizing already existing organizational work processes, e.g. transforming analogue data to a digital form (Henriette et al, 2015). The Information System (IS) research field has a long tradition of
investigating the relationship between IT and organizations and how organizations change and adapt in order to keep up with IT developments (Zammuto et al., 2007). That is, how IT has been an enabler of change or induced change in organizations is widely studied. Earlier IS research often concluded that the effects of technology use in organizations are difficult to both control and predict (Ciborra, 2002). Furthermore, IT innovations are sometimes discussed in terms of being non-disruptive or disruptive. Sherif et al. (2006: 341) define a disruptive IT innovation as “a novel idea or behavior that when introduced in organizational settings, causes dramatic changes in the structure of work processes”. Non-disruptive IT has been the object of many IS studies over a long period of time. These kinds of non-disruptive technologies still offer organizational challenges, but the technology itself is not inherently alien. The same, however, cannot be said about disruptive IT systems, such as social media, since they are designed and often introduced to individuals in a private setting, not in a professional one. It is also suggested that when the technology is disruptive users do not behave in a predictable manner, which might also have implications in the workplace (Lyytinen and Rose, 2003). This can be compared to “sustaining” technologies that supports (Christensen, 1997) or automate (Susskind and Susskind, 2015) existing ways of operating in an industry. Disruptive IT is in this thesis understood as IT that fundamentally changes organizational work practices, in particular organizational social media.

The work with this thesis started with an interest in studying social media in an organizational context. Owing to the possibility of following the introduction and use of social media in an international hotel chain over several years, this thesis focuses on the challenges of introducing and using social media over time in an organizational context. Hotel organizations constitute the empirical domain and the empirical data is primarily collected from organizations within an international hotel chain and follows the introduction of social media and use over a period of four years, from 2013-2017. The studied organizations are located in seven European countries. The thesis focuses on social media use in the organizational context, which is an uncommon approach since it focuses on a more general use of organizational social media use and its implications (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). It has given me the opportunity to study social media implications for organizational change and routines and need for new organizational knowledge and organizational learning. Due to the nature of the hospitality industry, these processes are closely related to service processes. Recently, social media has attracted numerous research from perspectives such as IS, computer science, business administration, marketing, communication and public relations. To date, studies of social media use in and by organizations both within the IS research field and other fields, is rather fragmented and sometimes contradictory, as they provide insights about a specific social media platforms, used for a specific purpose (Schlagwein and Hu, 2017) e.g. marketing (Sigala and Gretzel, 2017), internal communication (see Treem and Leonardi, 2012), interactions Kaplan and
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Haenlein, 2010), and changed consumer demand and interaction between organizations and customers (Verhoef et al., 2015). Furthermore, the transformative nature of social media is highlighted, e.g. in terms of being able to improve organizational knowledge sharing (Treem and Leonardi, 2012), flatten organizational hierarchies (Ford and Mason, 2013), and democratize the flow of information (Stenmark, 2008). Also many definitions of social media, that overlap are used in earlier research (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). In addition, a large amount of research has focused on individual acceptance and use of social media rather than organizational use (Shin, 2013). Studies with an organizational level of analysis have largely focused on internal use of social media such as internal organizational communication (see Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013).

The implications of customers’ use of social media has been particularly striking in the service industries, e.g. banks, restaurants and travel agencies (Larivière et al., 2017). Social media has changed how we (can) buy services, or interact with organizations. For example, we can ask a question or make a complaint directly to the provider of service on a specific social media platform. Hence, social media have had implications on the relationship between service organizations and their customers and thus changed the context in which service is delivered and experienced (Ostrom et al., 2015). IT in general, and social media in particular, are changing how services are conducted and how customers act before, during, and after purchase, and is consequently changing the nature of service relationships (Rust and Huang, 2014). For service organizations service of some type is obviously the core activity on which organizational activities are based. Service encounters are often described as “critical moments of truth” (Bitner et al., 2000), and are of great importance for service organizations. Furthermore, the service encounter, i.e., the actual meeting between the customer and practitioners of the service organization, has come to expand also into social media platforms (Benson et al., 2016). The environment in which hotels function is characterized by constant change, since new actors focusing on specific groups of guests or e.g. design hotels are entering the market. Hotel guests are described as very flexible and sensitive to trends, hence the hotel industry is dependent on creating a long-lasting relationship with customers in order to stay competitive (Singal, 2015). In general, hotel organizations also have high staff turnover (Chen and Wu, 2017). The development of social media has been particularly striking in the hotel industry, where hotels are using social media in order to increase their chance of survival and adapt to customer demands (Law et al., 2014). However, compared to other service industries, such as the airline industry, the hotel industry has been restrictive in the adoption of social media. Researchers point out several factors that have caused this restraint, such as fear of the unknown, losing control over brand and its impacts, and lack of organizational readiness (Vuori, 2011; Sigala et al., 2012). The relationship between social media and the hotel industry may be described as a synergistic interaction that has transformed the nature of the industry and its products, processes and competitiveness and hence changed how
service is delivered and performed in hotels (Law et al., 2014). Social media has furthermore changed the customers pre- and post-travel behavior, and has also affected how the industry as a whole practices marketing, service, and customer complaints. One example is the development of new competition from the digital platform Airbnb, which has challenged the core basics of the hotel industry and the services it offers. By making it easy for individuals to rent out their home or spare room to travelers, Airbnb has created a digital platform for alternative accommodations. The idea can hardly be described as new, however the features provided by social media such as transparency, the possibility of sharing experiences and rating hosts has enabled a mutual feeling of safety and trust for both travelers and hosts and created a competitive challenge to hotels. Hence, social media have played a disruptive role in the hospitality industry and the organizations within it and interrupt the normal trajectory of the industry (Aral et al., 2013), thereby causing marketplace disorder (Susskind and Susskind, 2015).

The IS research field lacks research on more general organizational activities and implications related to social media use in organizations (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013; Schlagwein and Hu, 2017). Although organizational interest in social media has risen in recent years, there is still a lack of research focusing on understanding the implications of social media use in organizations over time (McFarland and Ployhart, 2015; Schlagwein and Hu, 2017). Van Osch and Coursaris (2013) point out that research in the area of social media has “largely ignored the more general use of social media by and within organizations” (p. 703). Aral et al. (2013: 3) argue that “social media represent one of the most transformative impacts of information technology on business, both within and outside firm boundaries.” It is not yet clear why so many organizations use social media and what implications the use of social media has for the organization. Therefore, there is lack of understanding of the organizational challenges surrounding social media use (Durkin et al., 2013). Also, Aral et al. (2013) argue that due to lack of an empirical foundation, it is unclear how social media technology differs from existing technology used by organizations concerning their ability to produce new behavior. Due to the features of social media the design of social media platforms has not been adaptable to organizations, instead, organizations using social media must adapt to the technology. This can be compared to other IT introductions, e.g. Customer Relationship Management systems (CRM systems), e-mail or intranets that are designed for organizational use and with the aim of making organizational work tasks and procedures more effective. Some of the social media platforms used by hotels, e.g. Facebook are platforms that were not specifically designed for the hotel industry or organizations within it. However, TripAdvisor, the platform where people can both review and book hotels is for example designed as a digital platform implementing multi-sided markets (Evans and Schmalensee, 2016; de Reuver et al., 2017). It is also relevant to note that social media platforms are owned, designed and controlled by large international corporations and hence, the organizations and individuals that are using them are
not in charge. Still, platforms need to cater to all sides, as opposed to a CRM system, for example, not just one side.

The overall aim of this thesis is to generate knowledge that contributes to the IS research field concerning the more general use of social media in an organizational context. In order to do so, in the theoretical framework of the thesis I have drawn on key concepts from research on IT and organizational change (Zammuto et al., 2007), social media research from different domains (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013), theories concerning technology adoption and implementation (Kwon and Zmud, 1987; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990), Technological Frames (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994), and the concept of functional simplification and functional closure (Kallinikos, 2005). Valuable insights have also been gained from other disciplines such as relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994) and service research (Larivière et al., 2017). This thesis adopts a hermeneutic approach (Cole and Avison, 2007) and the research design is a longitudinal case study, focused on understanding social media use in and by organizations over time. The formulation of the research problem and aim is quite open in character and allows for an explorative approach (Cole and Avison, 2007). The definition of social media in an organizational context by Van Osch and Coursaris (2013: 703) has been used (further elaborated in Sections 3 and 6, see Figure 3):

Organizational Social Media are technology artefacts, both material and virtual, that support various intra- and extra-organizational actors—including management, employees and external stakeholders—in a multiplicity of organizational communication activities for producing user-generated content, developing and maintaining social relationships, or enabling other computer-mediated interactions and collaborations in the context of a specific organization and its environment.

Use is understood in this thesis in terms of duration and regularity (Venkatesh, et al., 2008), and the term introduction in this case refers to the start-up process and social media being introduced into an organizational setting, as compared to terms like implementation and adoption process (see Section 4).

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to describe and understand the challenges use of social media brings to organizations in the service industry, in particular an international hotel chain. The following research question is addressed:

Why and how does the use of social media platforms represent organizational challenges?

Answering this question is relevant for several reasons. Despite the extensive use of social media in individuals' private lives and its increasing use in organizations, the research field of social media in organizational contexts is still in its infancy. Also, we know little about more general organizational social media use over time.
As more organizations use social media, an understanding of the factors that influence organizational responses to IT change is increasingly important in both theoretical and practical terms. With the introduction of social media platforms in organizations, the context in which products and services are designed, produced, and consumed is also changing at a frenetic pace. This rapid change is altering the interplay between customers and organizations, thereby changing the roles of all involved actors and forcing organizations to be flexible and adapt to a new digital environment and new digital platforms. By taking an explorative approach and focusing on the organizational use of social media in hotel organizations, this thesis provides insight into the organizational changes and challenges related to social media use in an organizational setting. The empirical context mainly builds on the hotel chain and provides an illustration of how a large, international hierarchical organization with many “sub-organizations” within the organizations uses social media. Furthermore, empirical data has been added from what I refer to as “independent hotels” (see Section 2). The composite analysis presented in the thesis draws on studies presented in six research papers based on empirical data on hotels mainly within an international hotel chain’s use of social media over time. The papers seek to explain why the hotel chain made the decision to use social media (Paper 1), how they have used it in the beginning of the introduction (Paper 2) and over time (Papers 3 and 5), and individual employees’ use and sense-making processes and its implications on organizational use of social media (Paper 5). In Paper 6, both the international hotel chain and the independent hotels’ management of online reviews is studied. Furthermore, the thesis includes one theoretical paper in the form of a literature review on organizational social media (Paper 4). Here it should also be noted that the customer’s point of view is excluded. This is obviously important in order to understand the disruptive forces of social media in the hospitality industry but does not fit into the scope and aim of this thesis. However, in Paper 6, the voice of guests is heard through quotes from online reviews and the hotels’ handling of them with data collected from respondents at the hotels and online observations.

The thesis is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a presentation and discussion of the method used in this thesis. Section 3 provides an introduction to relevant related research on IT-induced change and a literature review of social media research. Section 4 present the theoretical framework. Section 5 summarizes the six research papers included in the thesis. Section 6 discusses the findings and key contributions of the thesis, its practical implications and limitations, and then suggests directions for future research. Finally, Section 7 presents my conclusions.
2 Research Design

In this section the research design is presented and discussed. I will explain my assumptions in order to clarify the choices I made in terms of both the nature of what I study and how I have studied the introduction and use of social media in organizations. First, the interpretive research strategy and the choice of using a qualitative case study as research design are discussed. Thereafter, the context of the case study and the analysis process throughout the research process is discussed. Next I discuss the evaluation of qualitative interpretive studies. Finally, a list of publications that have not been included in the thesis but which have had an important role in my evolving understanding of both the data and theoretical concepts is presented.

2.1 Research Philosophy

This thesis focuses on investigating and understanding the use of organizational social media. In order to do so, an interpretive standpoint has been used, which includes a view that our knowledge of reality is a social construction by humans (Walsham, 1995; Klein and Myers, 1999). Hence, researchers using an interpretive perspective assume that knowledge of reality is gained through social constructs and that social phenomena's can be understood through the meaning that individuals ascribe to them (Klein and Myers, 1999). Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991: 5) point out that interpretive researchers “attempt to understand phenomena through assessing the meanings that people assign to them.” Furthermore, interpretive researchers investigate the phenomenon in a real-life setting, which has also been done in this thesis (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Klein and Myers, 1999). Hence, interpretative researchers assume that individuals create meaning about the world. Therefore, by taking an interpretive standpoint, I believe that knowledge and meaning are constructed socially in specific contexts (Klein and Myers, 1999; Porra et al., 2014) and expressed through artefacts, language and meanings as suggested by Klein and Myers (1999). As pointed out by Henfridsson (1999: 9), it is not relevant for an interpretive researcher whether these meanings related to the studied phenomena are a “correct” description of the world, instead, what is relevant is the extent to which these meanings can help the researcher understand “why people act as they do”. By taking this standpoint, I also emphasize that there is no empirical data that is free from value and also acknowledge that my interaction as a researcher with respondents and data collection is not free from my preconceptions of e.g. language or artefacts (Walsham, 1995; Klein and Myers, 1999). Hence, I also emphasize that researcher must take on a reflexive stance of the respondents’ statements and in his or her role as a researcher in the process of collecting and analyzing data (Hemmersly
and Atkinson, 1995; Barry et al., 1999). By reflexive, I refer to the researcher’s awareness of his or her own presence in the research process and how the choice of methods and choice of what questions to ask have an impact on what knowledge the researcher can claim to have gained (Barry et al., 1999; Macbeth, 2001). Also, it is relevant to emphasize self-reflection of one’s biases, assumptions and theoretical predispositions (Barry et al, 1999). The discussion about the reflexive researcher in the IS research field has been intertwined with discussion about the use of theories within the field. Weber argued (2003) that the IS research field relied heavily on theories borrowed from other research disciplines and therefore called for more IS research with a reflexive stance. Avison and Malauurent (2014) argue that there is too much emphasis on the necessity for theory use and theory building in qualitative research in the IS research field. One of their arguments is that the choice of theory has an influence on the way research is carried out. This is also emphasized by Walsham (1995: 76), who suggests that “there is a danger of the researcher only seeing what the theory suggests, and thus using the theory in a rigid way which stifles potential new issues and avenues of exploration.” To conclude, an interpretive approach was chosen in order to study organizational social media. In the next section I present the chosen research design and reflect upon the methodological and theoretical choices made and its implications.

2.2 A Longitudinal Qualitative Case Study and Empirical Context

In order to understand the presented research problem, a qualitative, explorative approach has been employed. This due to that exploratory studies can be used to explore those situations in which the phenomena being evaluated have no clear, single set of outcomes, such as organizational social media (Yin, 2009). The exploratory approach appears in the broad, overall research question of the thesis but also in the way theory has been used (see section 2.8.3). The exploratory approach has also affected how the main data, from interviews, was collected. That is, the interview questions have been both open and rather unstructured, which helped explore organizational social media use in the specific case (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), (See further discussion in section 2.4). Qualitative studies can be used to understand what meanings individuals associate to the things they do in their natural context, e.g. the usage of social media in the organizational context. The research that has been conducted mainly has the form of a case study, that is, an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, which e.g. can be a single organization (Yin, 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2015). Yin (2009: 13) defines case studies as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. The case study design can be appropriate in studies that intend
to answer questions like “why” and “how” and are descriptive in nature, hence it has been applied in this thesis. As pointed out by Eisenhardt (1989), questions like this could not be answered without the context, in this case the hotel organizations, where decisions, actions, and interaction with stakeholders and customers take place.

The research in this thesis is based on data collected with qualitative methods that have provided the opportunity to interpret and make sense of the meanings connected to the use of social media in organizations. Data have been collected from two slightly different empirical settings within the hotel industry. The thesis mainly builds on empirical data collected in 14 hotels in seven European countries within an international hotel chain (referred to as “international hotel chain”) during 2013-2017. The data collected from the international hotel chain can be viewed as one case with embedded cases (Yin, 2009). In 2013 I had the opportunity to follow an international hotel chain that was just beginning to use social media. The hotel chain had forbidden the use of social media in all hotels before then. I initiated the project in 2013 and have been the contact person for the respondents and conducted the interviews and data collection alone from 2013-2017. The research project, the aim and research question go hand in hand. I found that the case was interesting because the hotel chain had just made the decision to use social media, hence all of the hotels were in the very early stages of using social media. In order to develop an understanding of organizational social media a longitudinal case study design has been used. This design is directly related to my broad research question and in order to answer it I found it relevant to develop both short-and long-term understanding (Saldaña, 2003) of how the use of organizational social media proceeded in a real-life work context. Data from the international hotel chain was used in Papers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 (See Figure 2). Data has also been collected from ten independent hotels in eight European countries (referred to as “independent hotels”). The hotels in this group were of the same size as the hotels in the international hotel chain but belonged to a variety of different brands, located in major European cities. The data from these hotels have mainly been used in order to get indications of the transferability of the findings in the longitudinal case study and are used in Paper 6.

The strength of a case study is that it lets the researcher use different kinds of empirical data such as interviews, observations and documents (Yin, 2009). Qualitative case studies are often criticized for their small samples, which are not suitable for generalization. Yin (2009) points out that in contrast to survey research, case studies rely on analytical generalization. In analytical generalization, the researchers are striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory.” Furthermore, it should be pointed out that, although highly recognized
by both qualitative and quantitative researchers, Yin (2009) has a positivistic standpoint. This is for example emphasized in his criteria for evaluating case study research. Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative researchers do not discuss the concept of generalization in terms of statistical power but rather in terms of analytical generalization. In terms of qualitative case study research, there are also additional types of generalizability, depending on the researcher’s epistemological stance (Lee and Baskerville, 2003). Scholars with varying epistemological and ontological stances use qualitative case studies as a methodological approach. To this end, both Yin (2009) and Eisenhardt (1989) lean towards a positivist stance in discussing how qualitative case study results can be generalized. In my case, the interpretive stance has particular consequences, primarily regarding my perception of the generalizability of my findings, which I elaborate further in section 2.8.2.

![Figure 1 - Overview of the hotel chains organizational social media structure](image)

**2.3 Data Collection**

The longitudinal research design of the study of the hotel chain in this thesis builds on several data sources. The data was collected during 2013-2017. The main data source has been semi-structured interviews and in order to follow the organizational social media use over time, follow-up interviews have been conducted (see section 2.4). Using multiple data sources on the same phenomena strengthens the reliability of the findings (Yin, 2009). Although the interviews provided rich descriptions and were relevant for interpretation of the organizational use of social media, my understanding of the phenomenon of organizational social media was increased by using additional data sources (Walsham, 2006). Therefore, besides interview data, online observations of social media content have been regularly conducted during the four years (see section
2.5). Observations at real-life work context (the hotels) have also been made and written documents and field notes (see section 2.6) have been used in order to develop an understanding of the organizational social media use (see Table 2). This also reflects the approach of using organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013), which includes organizational actions, artefacts and actors such as employees, management and stakeholders (see Figure 3).

2.4 Qualitative Interviews

The purpose of using interviews was to be able to get insight into the respondents’ own experiences, knowledge and interpretation of organizational social media use. Interviews can be helpful when trying to understand a phenomenon from the individual’s perspective and to make sense of the individual’s interpretation of that phenomenon, e.g. social media (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In total, 47 interviews were conducted from 2013-2017 (see Table 1). Of that number, 37 interviews were conducted at the international hotel chain and included nine follow-up interviews. Furthermore, ten interviews were conducted at independent hotels. In the case study (international hotel chain), 22 interviews at 14 hotels in seven European countries were conducted in the first round of interviews. These interviews took place in 2013-2014. During the following two years, nine follow-up-interviews was conducted. These follow-up interviews took place from December 2015 to November 2017. The follow-up interviews with respondents from the hotel chain were carried out in order to be able to understand and analyze the ongoing use of social media and what organizational changes had (or might have) occurred. The selection of respondents was based on their role within the organizations and their involvement and responsibility concerning social media. All of the respondents are responsible for organizational social media use in their hotel and have different titles such as e.g. hotel manager, marketing manager or sales manager.

The respondents were found based on their positions at each hotel and recommendations from other respondents at the hotels, so called “snowball sampling,” (Kvale, 1996). The sample of the follow-up interviews was highly affected by which respondents were still available at their positions at the hotels. The hotel industry has high employee turnover (Chen and Wu, 2017) and 13 of the respondents interviewed in the first round of interviews had changed positions or workplace a year after the first interviews were conducted. This had organizational implications, for example, not all the hotels in which these respondents had worked had replaced them. Some major structural organizational changes were also made during the four years, which had implications both for the studied hotel chain and its hotels but also for the research project. These changes mainly consisted of introducing new social media offices and increasing the number of managers and employees working with social media (see Figure 1). Hence, additional six interviews with social media managers and E-commerce
managers were conducted in 2017 (see Figure 1 and Appendix 1). These interviews were helpful when understanding the organizational changes and ongoing organizational social media use in the hotel chain, not least for how both the hotel chain and the organizational social media use were structured and managed. Furthermore, from a research design perspective, it was important to focus on the organizational use of social media and not only focus the data on specific individuals’ use of social media, which could have resulted in the original phenomenon of interest (organizational social media) becoming the context and not the target of the case study (Yin, 2009).

Five of the interviews was conducted over the phone, and the rest of the interviews face-to-face at the respondent’s workplace (hotels). The interviews have been conducted in Swedish and English. Since the respondents’ first language is not always English and the fact that there have been some language barriers, it has been valuable to meet the respondent in person at the different hotels. Each interview lasted from 50-60 minutes and was recorded and then transcribed (Bryman, 2008). The interviews have been semi-structured with a degree of flexibility. Two interview guides were used, one for the initial interviews and one for the follow-up interviews (see Appendix 2 and 3). The interview guides covered a range of issues with more open and descriptive questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) related to organizational social media use such as: “Can you describe how your hotel uses social media?”, but also more specific questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) focusing on organizational challenges and changes such as: “What do you experience as the biggest challenge of working with social media?” The interview guide used at the follow-up interviews included questions like: “Can you describe what has happened with your social media use since we met last time?” and “Have you made any changes in your use of social media compared to last year?”. Hence, my aim was that the respondents should use their own terms and choice of words when describing social media usage in their work situation, which would give me the possibility of interpreting the organizational social media use from their point of view, e.g. through their language, and how they made sense of social media (Klein and Myers, 1999). It was important to both understand and acknowledge how the respondents described their social media use in their workplace in terms of facts, e.g. how social media were actually used but also to make an effort to embrace what meaning (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Klein and Myers, 1999) the respondents ascribe social media both in their private lives and in their workplace and in relation to their everyday work tasks. In order to do so, perceived irony, facial expressions and body language were noted. In cases where I wasn’t clear about whether the answer was ironic or not, the respondents were also asked to clarify what they meant. Embracing both the private and professional use of social media made it possible to understand the novelty of social media compared to other ITs used in a workplace context, but also to develop an understanding of how the respondents made sense of and used social media at work (see Paper 5). Furthermore, the
understanding that was gained in the first interviews and also through online observations, written documents and workplace observations (further elaborated in section 2.5 and 2.6) was important during the follow-up interviews since it helped gain a deeper understanding of changes made and how social media had actually been used. For example, discrepancies between the social media guidelines and actual social media use could be discussed which sometimes led to the respondents discussing challenges related to social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Year of creation</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel chain</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent hotels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total 47 interviews.

Table 1. Overview of all interviews

### 2.5 Online Observations

In order to understand and follow the organizational social media use, I continuously followed social media platforms used by the studied hotels during 2013-2017. These online observations were also inspired by Kozinets’ (2010) “Netnography” method, an ethnographic approach adjusted to the online world such as social media environments. Kozinets (2010) emphasizes that “netnography” can give researchers important insights into online worlds by having the “voyeur’s gaze” (Kozinets, 2010: 55), which was the case in the present study. The online observations were made to gain more insight into how the hotels use social media, and what kind of material they publish, without my participation. By being a “follower” on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, I could continuously follow and study content posted by the hotels and the hotel chain. The posts were documented with comments in a logbook. For example, posts that contained marketing material or ads was categorized as “marketing” and more personal messages such as pictures of the staff were categorized as “staff.” Pictures taken behind the scenes were categorized as “behind the scenes.” The online observations was especially important while following the hotel chain over time and the observations played an important role when conducting the follow-up interviews. Online observations were also made at TripAdvisor pages for each hotel (both independent hotels and hotel chain) (see Paper 6). Here both the reviews posted by guests and the hotels’ answers were observed.
2.6 Observations, Field Notes and Written Documents

Observations were also conducted at 20 hotels (hotels within the international hotel chain and the independent hotels) before, during and after interviews (Veal, 2011). The observations were different in nature depending on the situation. For example, I made non-participatory observations (Bryman and Bell, 2015) while I sat in the hotel lobbies before and after the interviews and also in the offices at the hotels. During these observations I could observe the work performed such as the reception of customers but also when more serious situations arose, such as managing customer complaints and issues raised during informal conversations. There were also observations that contained more participation from my side. For example, during the interviews the respondents often used their smartphones or tablets to show how they use social media, which gave insight into the actual organizational use of social media and the respondent’s daily work practices (Bryman and Bell, 2015) and helped create a developed understanding of the social media use (see Appendix 4). Furthermore, by travelling to a majority of the hotels in eight European countries I also got the possibility of observing the hotels and the social media use from a hotel guest perspective. For example, I experienced real-life situations such as trying to find directions to a hotel by using the hotel’s social media channels or book a shuttle from the airport by using Facebook. These observations were unstructured (Bryman and Bell, 2015), but contained a high degree of participation from my side. Also, my experiences as a hotel guest were helpful during the interviews as I could connect to my experiences and ask questions based on these. The meetings with the respondents at the hotels also gave me opportunities to have informal conversations over coffee with the respondents that also enabled a deeper understanding of their personal opinions and work practices and gave an understanding of what it meant to be working with social media at the hotels. During the meetings with the respondents I also got the possibility of studying written documents such as parts of social media policies, including strategies and guidelines. For example, the hotels had directions concerning how many posts per week should be published in social media and also instructions on how and when to report numbers related to “likes,” “shares” and number of followers. Some of the hotels also showed documents on how they had tried to report return on investment to the hotel chain. Due to confidentiality, copies of the documents are not included in the thesis. Both the access to written documents and the observations made in connection with the interviews served as additional properties of richness (Weick, 2007) to the primary data sources of interviews. The possibility of direct observation of work practices was, however, not possible.

During the observations, I took field notes, i.e., detailed notes with information (Lofland and Lofland, 2006), e.g. about customer information at the hotels (see Appendix 4) about what hashtags to use related to the hotel or information on
what social media platforms the customers could follow. The field notes were based on observations and reflections of hotel environment, reception and service as well as participatory observations at the respondents’ hotels in order to better understand the respondents’ behavior in their social context, see through their eyes and encounter the unexpected topics of social media, e.g. respondents showing policy documents, strategies, posters or examples of social media activities on their screens (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Furthermore, jotted notes were taken during the interviews, i.e., brief notes such as keywords and phrases, in order to ask follow-up questions (Lofland and Lofland, 2006). The field notes and social media content functioned as background information of data at the follow-up interviews in order to grasp social media use over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Gain insights into individual employees’ and manager’s perceptions and use of organizational social media.</td>
<td>47 semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online observations</td>
<td>Gain insights into the work practices and follow social media content over time.</td>
<td>Published content on social media such as Facebook and Instagram. Answers and comments published on TripAdvisor by the hotels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations and field notes</td>
<td>Obtain insights into the hotel environment before, during and after the interviews.</td>
<td>Approximately 50 hours of observations and reflections of hotel environment, reception and deeper understanding of how the employees use social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written material</td>
<td>Gain insights into hotel chain policy and social media strategy</td>
<td>Social media policy documents. Hotel chain’s own charts of social media planning and strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Overview of data sources

2.7 Data Analysis

2.7.1 A Hermeneutic Approach

Due to the interpretive nature of my research, I have used the hermeneutic circle (Klein and Myers, 1999) when analyzing the empirical data. The hermeneutic circle is one of the core principles of hermeneutics and is considered a foundational principle of all interpretive work of a hermeneutic nature (Klein and Myers, 1999; Cole and Avison, 2007). In order to apply the hermeneutic circle when analyzing empirical data the researcher must include a number of cyclic repetitions that help in understanding “a complex whole from the preconceptions about the meanings of its parts and their interrelationship” (Klein and Myers, 1999: 71). By going back and forth between the parts and the whole, researchers can create understanding of the studied phenomena (Klein and Myers, 1999). By
using the hermeneutic circle in the interpretation of my data I focused both on understanding the overall aim of the thesis and the aim of the six papers as well as the interrelationships between them (Klein and Myers, 1999). The longitudinal design of the case study was helpful in both the overall analysis made in the cover paper but especially in Paper 5. By continuously doing online observations and follow-up interviews, the process of going back and forth through the empirical data was an ongoing process (Cole and Avison, 2007). Therefore, ongoing iterations has helped me analyze the different parts of the organizational challenges in the different papers but also analyze them as a whole in the cover paper. It helped me develop an understanding and interpret the meanings of the organizational social media use (Cole and Avison, 2007). This also led to a theoretical contribution which will be further discussed in Section 6.

Walsham (1995, p.6) argue that, “theory is both a way of seeing and a way of not seeing”. A multifaceted theoretical framework has been applied in this thesis when interpretatively analyzing the data in the six research papers which focuses on different parts of the organizational social media use in the studied organizations. Walsham (1995) discusses the use of theory in interpretive IS research and identifies three main ways in which theory can be used. First, as an initial guide to design and data collection where theory is essentially used to create a framework or basis that recognizes existing and relevant knowledge in a specific area. Second, as part of an iterative process of data collection and analysis, and third, as a final product of the research. Walsham (1995) also discusses that theory can provide the researcher with potential topics and themes that can be useful to begin the empirical work with. This way of using theory was applied in Papers 2 and 3. No specific theory or framework was used in these papers, instead I used related research on social media marketing and knowledge management (Paper 1) and related social media research (Paper 3). Theory in the other three papers included in this thesis (Papers 2, 5 and 6) was used as part of an iterative process of analyzing data. So, theory has mainly been used in order to develop relevant topics and themes relevant to study and analyzing the data.
2.7.2 Organizing the Data – Categorization and Coding

The concept of the hermeneutic circle (Klein and Myers, 1999) can also be used to describe the process of my empirical data analysis. Throughout the analytical work with the empirical papers, I have used transcripts from the interviews and observations and used open coding to organize the data and categorize it. The initial work started by reading each interview transcript several times and identifying and studying parts of the data based on their importance and relationship to the main focus of the study. For example, some of the parts were descriptive in nature, which included the respondents’ statements about their work tasks, work experiences, and their view on the hotel industry, while other categorizations were more specific and focused on knowledge, learning opportunities, service, organizational changes and new routines. Then I used open coding in order to develop codes or themes that could describe the main meaning of the interviews. For example, I used codes like “social media usefulness” when analyzing how and why the organizations used social media as they did. Finally, I (occasionally with my co-authors) went back and forth across the codes in each transcript and eventually drew more overall themes related to the specific aim and research question. The coding was an iterative process and inductive in nature and focused on statements from the respondents that recurred in the interviews. As argued above, theory has been applied differently in the different papers. This is for example illustrated in Papers 2 and 3, which are more explorative in nature while Papers 1, 5 and 6 are more driven by the theoretical framework, which is also reflected in the analysis and categorization of the data. One example of this is Paper 1 in which the TOE framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) was used as basic categories for the analysis. The empirical data was coded by using the categories of “technology,” “organization” and “environment.” This categorization also led to being able to identify future research questions and also led to insights about the limitations of the chosen frameworks and discussions of theoretical frameworks better suited for this
purpose. On the other hand, in Paper 3 the data analysis involved coding the data in order to reveal how social media are used in the hotel organizations (Bryman, 2008). Here the coding process was focused on identifying what social media platforms the organizations used, how the platforms were used and for what purpose. By going back and forth through the data (Cole and Avison, 2007), eventually six categories were defined. Furthermore, the analytical processes allowed the identification of categories of organizational social media use and employees’ interpretation of the daily work practices related to social media (Klein and Myers, 1999; Bryman and Bell, 2015). Due to the longitudinal nature of the data collection I also had the possibility of reevaluating the data as both my theoretical understanding and interpretation of the data shifted and developed during the four years of data collection. This process is illustrated in Paper 5 where I discuss how individual employees’ understanding of social media affects organizational use. In Paper 5, Nvivo was used in order to code and categorize the data. During this phase, I modified some categorizations, such as “learning” and “knowledge,” and developed new ones such as “un-learning” and “non-learning.” This was because the longitudinal data gave new insights and patterns (see further discussion in section 2.8).

2.8 Methodological Reflections

As interpretive research has been conducted in this thesis, it is relevant to discuss how the research can be evaluated and also reflect upon the research process. First, the evaluation of interpretive qualitative research is discussed, followed by generalization and reflexivity.

2.8.1 Evaluating Interpretive Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is often criticized for being too subjective. That is, the findings rely too much on the researcher’s views of what is important, but the close personal relationships that can develop between researcher and respondents can also be problematic (Klein and Myers, 1999; Bryman and Bell, 2015). It is important for interpretative researchers to describe the results and conclusions drawn and it is up to others to decide if the research has generated new understanding or not (Walsham, 1993). Furthermore, qualitative research is also often criticized for its lack of transparency, which is also related to the researcher’s knowledge claims (Bryman and Bell, 2015). By interacting with my respondents and being present in their actual workplaces I have tried to increase my understanding of the context in which the phenomena I am studying take place (Klein and Myers, 1999). Hence, the actual visit at the respondents’ workplace and the opportunity of socializing with them (see section 2.6) increased my knowledge and understanding of the studied phenomena.
Some researchers argue that instead of using concepts of validation and reliability when discussing qualitative research it might be more relevant to discuss credibility and trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These refer to four basic principles to ensure reliability in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is related to internal validity (Bryman and Bell, 2015) and is ensured by providing suitable documentation for data collection and analysis. In my process of analyzing the data this has been done by transcribing the interviews and sharing the data with co-writers, and by the use of a logbook of online observations and documentation of field notes (see Appendix 4). In Paper 5 the use of Nvivo helped me keep track of collected data and its connections to my theoretical frameworks. Transferability is related to external validity and the degree to which the findings can be generalized across contexts (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In this thesis I pursued this by gathering data in order to reach “thick description” of the studied phenomena (Miles et al., 2013). Dependability is related to reliability (Miles et al., 2013). Because a case study design has been used it can be argued that the study is almost impossible to replicate, since how I as a researcher collect data and what data I interpret is a product of my own preferences and assumptions (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Miles et al., 2013). This affects the external reliability and external validity (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The dependability has been increased by using multiple sources of data and comparing data from transcribed interviews, notes, parts of strategy documents, on-site observations and online observations. The longitudinal nature of the case study enabled comparison across time in which e.g. interviews conducted early in the process could be compared with the documents and interviews that were collected later and also discussed with respondents that participated in the follow-up-interviews. This process also made it possible to follow up how social media have been used (through the online observations) compared to the respondents’ experiences.

The multiple data sources also helped develop follow-up questions and follow the process of social media use over time between the interviews. Pettigrew et al. (2001) argue that studies that focus on change are often criticized for the bias that can arise when respondents reconstruct the past. By having the online observations in mind during the interviews, especially the follow-up interviews, this bias could be limited. Using a longitudinal approach and multiple data sources has also helped me have a critical approach (Klein and Myers, 1999) when interpreting the respondents’ statements and when conducting the follow-up interviews. For example, by having knowledge of the hotel chain social media guidelines and the actual social media use I could question the discrepancy between the guidelines and the actual use which often resulted in an insight into organizational and individual challenges of using organizational social media. Klein and Myers (1999) argue that researchers should acknowledge and confront
contradictions in interpretations made by respondents. This has been an important element in the entire research process, which has shaped how I present my findings in this cover paper. These conflicting interpretations have been widely acknowledged in the different papers (see Papers 1, 2 and 5). One example of this is the conflict between hotel management and the individual employees based upon different interpretations of the usefulness of organizational social media (see Section 6 for further discussion). Finally, confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the researcher has acted in good faith and not allowed personal values or theoretical preferences to influence the research findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Klein and Myers (1999) lead a similar discussion and refer to this as dialogical reasoning in which they relate the researcher’s theoretical presumptions in relation to the actual findings. That is, beliefs, assumptions and interests can guide the researcher. By continuously discussing the interpretations made in the papers and the cover paper with supervisors and co-writers I have been able to reflect upon the trustworthiness of my interpretations and also question theoretical preconceptions (Klein and Myers, 1999). Furthermore, I have made an effort to be reflective and “drop” some theoretical frameworks, which will be further discussed in section 2.8.3.

2.8.2 Generalization

Due to the fact that the thesis is an interpretive case study it is important to discuss the concept of “generalization.” Case studies are often challenged due to the fact that the findings are not generalizable to other settings (Tsang, 2014). Interestingly, IS researchers have had different views on the generalizability of case studies. To mention a few, Walsham (1995) suggests that in interpretive studies that apply case study methodology, there are four possible types of generalization: development of concepts, generation of theory, drawing of specific implications, and contribution of rich insight. However, some researchers (see Denzin, 1983) deny the possibility of generalization in case studies. Here I draw heavily on Walsham’s (199: 79) view on generalizations in interpretive studies as “explanations of particular phenomena derived from empirical interpretive research in specific IS settings”. My contribution to the IS research field is that my thesis gives insights into how social media are used in the international hotel chain organizations and the implications that use has on organizational processes in this context. Also, it can be argued that my findings contribute to a theoretical generalization (Sharp, 1998) or what Yin (2009) refers to as analytical generalization. Hence, the findings in this thesis should be understood as generalizable in relation to theory rather than a large population.
2.8.3 Reflexivity and Choice of Theory

Qualitative researchers often begin with broad, exploratory research problems which are gradually narrowed down (Bryman and Bell, 2015) and my own research and analytical problem can be described in a similar way. I have not been driven by a single theory or theoretical lens from the start of my work with the thesis. In order to answer the research question asked in this thesis a multifaceted theoretical approach has been used (see Table 3). The initial phase and my theoretical approach were highly influenced by social media research, which was categorized into internal and external use of social media (see Leonardi and Treem, 2012; Sigala et al, 2012). Also, I started my research project with the belief that I would study social media used for marketing purposes and what organizational challenges those activities brought. However, as I collected the data and made follow-up interviews I started to notice that only looking at marketing activities was missing out on an important part of social media use. A number of IS papers caught my attention and increasingly raised an area of concern that my research should focus on the actual, more general organizational use of social media without categorizing the use between internal and external use. These papers include Aral et al. (2013) Van Osch and Coursaris (2013) and later also Van Osch and Coursaris (2017) and Schlagwein and Hu (2017). Taken together, these papers introduced me to a new perspective on social media use in organizations, which I had earlier not found in social media research, and that also resonated well with the challenges I had identified in the introduction and use of social media in the studied hotels. Furthermore, these papers also challenged some of the dominant theoretical assumptions underpinning the contemporary social media literature such as the need for a more general approach towards social media use in organizations (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013) and the need for empirical knowledge concerning how organizations use social media (Aral et al., 2013; Schlagwein and Hu, 2017). The research process has also involved reflections concerning “dropping my tool” which Weick (2006) argues is the importance of “update your concepts frequently” in order to be flexible and adaptive throughout the research process. For me, the process of “dropping my tools” was driven by my literature review (see Paper 4), which both draws on and seeks to add to the literature review made by Van Osch and Coursaris (2013) and also helped me to define a research gap. This led to me drop the concept of marketing and instead focus on a more general social media use, not predefined by internal or external communication.

As data has been collected over the last four years I found that my interpretations and understanding of the organizational use of social media have changed. I have moved away from using concepts of “implementation” and “adoption,” and instead use concepts of “disruptive IT” and “IT-induced change” in order to describe the introduction and use of social media in an organizational context. When I first started to collect data and analyze it I used the concept of
implementation and adoption processes (see Paper 1) (Kwon and Zmud, 1987) since I had the aim to follow the implementation process over time and relate it to both individual and organizational learning processes. However, the concepts of implementation and adoption are closely related to processes and projects with a clear launch date, a clear aim and an end date. That is, implementation is often described as the transformation from policy to actual use with clear instructions and purposes. The concept of adoption is also related to a dichotomy of adoption versus “non-adoption.” This was not the case with social media, and therefore I dropped these concepts and replaced them with the concepts of “introduction and use” when discussing the use of organizational social media over time. As I conducted the follow-up interviews and went back and forth through my data I noticed that other uses of social media such as internal communication tool (see Paper 5) and the management of online reviews and User-Generated Content (see Paper 6) were of great importance for the hotels and highly affected their more general use of social media. These insights led to an extensive literature review where I searched for research that focused on a general perspective on social media use and found a research gap (see Paper 4). I also found that social media use in organizations was classified using traditional communication categories of internal and external communication channels. These insights led to a slight change in my research aim and questions. Consequently, I let go of the concepts of “learning processes” and “implementation and adoption processes” to focus instead on “organizational challenges” related to the use of social media in an organizational context. The reason for letting go of the aspects of learning process were twofold. First, I found that I had an oversimplified approach to learning, and almost added it “on top” of everything else. Second, I also believe that I more or less assumed that the studied organizations would have a learning approach towards social media, but I quickly found that that was not the case.

As my theoretical views broadened, I also understood that, compared to other IT, there is no “right or wrong” with social media, just a very broad grayscale of “dos and don’ts”. In addition, the studied hotels had very vague guidelines and flexible and ever-changing goals with social media. So the question that arose was how to study learning if there is no certain purpose towards what to learn. I also found my approach towards knowledge and competence to be over-simplified, and similar to the learning processes I started to question how I could analyze these kinds of themes from my empirical material. I found that the respondents’ use and understanding of social media was too complex to simply be translated into “right” and “wrong” or whether or not they had the knowledge or competence. Instead, I found that aspects like motivation, assumptions and time were important aspects to consider when analyzing employees’ use of social media (as discussed in Paper 5). Also, my rather deterministic interpretation of social media was transformed into a more critical one and the term “disruptive” was introduced in order to describe the relationship between social media and organizations.
### RESEARCH DESIGN

**Overall research question of the thesis:** Why and how does the use of social media platforms represent organizational challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Theoretical framework</th>
<th>Data Sample</th>
<th>Analytical approach</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Technology-Organization-Environment framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990)</td>
<td>22 interviews International hotel chain. Field notes Online observations Written documents</td>
<td>Hermeneutic circle and coding.</td>
<td>1) What technological, organizational and environmental aspects influence social media adoption in hotel organizations? 2) How does the hotel chain versus the hotel managers at the local hotels describe the process of adopting social media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994, Gummesson, 2008), Social media marketing (Minazzi, 2015)</td>
<td>22 interviews International hotel chain. Field notes Online observations Written documents</td>
<td>Hermeneutic circle and coding.</td>
<td>1) How do hotels adapt social media into their organization and their marketing strategy? 2) What challenges can be identified concerning hotels' adaptation to social media marketing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013)</td>
<td>22 interviews International hotel chain. Field notes Online observations Written documents</td>
<td>Hermeneutic circle and coding.</td>
<td>1) How can social media use and purpose in a hotel chain be described and categorized? 2) What organizational effects does social media use have on the studied hotel organizations?</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013, Schlagwein and Hu, 2016)</td>
<td>46 articles from ten IS journals</td>
<td>Thematic coding</td>
<td>1) Which definitions, terms and categorizations referring to social media does the IS research field apply? 2) What topics are currently addressed in the IS research field concerning organizational use of social media? 3) What topics can be identified for future research on organizational use of social media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Technological frames (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) Sense-making (Weick, 1990)</td>
<td>37 interviews, including follow-up interviews at international hotel chain. Field notes Online observations Written documents</td>
<td>Hermeneutic circle and coding.</td>
<td>1) What are the technological frames of individual employees and groups within the hotel organizations? 2) How do these technological frames shape organizational use of social media over time?</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Functional simplification and closure (Kallinikos, 2010), organizational routines (Feldman and Pentland, 2003)</td>
<td>47 interviews International hotel chain and independent hotels. Online observations Field observations</td>
<td>Hermeneutic circle and coding.</td>
<td>1) How can hotels' social media interaction and management of online reviews be understood through a functional simplification and closure perspective?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Table 3. Overview of papers, research questions, data used and theoretical frameworks**
2.9 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process of writing the thesis I have intended to be a passive observer and not interact in my respondents' workplaces. However, since my main data is collected through interviews, I have met and interacted with individuals working at hotels. When seeking knowledge and being present in actual workplaces it is important to understand that a number of ethical issues arise (Hemmersley and Atkinson, 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) identified five major ethical issues concerning how to deal with the ethics of research. These issues include: informed consent, privacy, harm, exploitation, and consequences for future research. Informed consent is a principle that implies that each research participant must have the right and freedom to consent to being researched in an unconstrained way and with full and accurate knowledge of what the research is about (Hemmersley and Atkinson, 1995). It also implies that any research participant should be free to withdraw at any time. All of my respondents had a management position, and I contacted them directly when asking for an interview. That is, they were not told to participate by someone else in the organization. All of the interviews were scheduled over the phone, and afterwards an email was sent out with confirmation of time and place for the interview. At the beginning of each interview with my respondents I first informed them about my research project and what the information I gained from them would be used for. I also asked them whether I could record the interview. I also explained that they would all be anonymous, which is the second principle of privacy discussed by Hemmersley and Atkinson (1995). Furthermore, I informed them that they could see the transcribed interviews afterwards. Most of the respondents had no problems with revealing their identities, however, and in fact only one asked me to keep their identities confidential. Also, they were not concerned about how the data was used. When using the data from the semi-structured interviews in the research papers, I have anonymized names and excluded details that might make it possible for others to identify the respondents, such as detailed descriptions of the specific hotel.

Written documents such as social media policies and strategies have not been published in this thesis due to confidentiality. Furthermore, content published on social media platforms by employees has not been published due to anonymity (Kozinets, 2015). The discussion of whether content published on social media should be considered public or not is an ongoing discussion, along with what role third-party corporations such as Facebook have in the discussion of using published content from social media platforms (Kozinets, 2015). Although social media content can be regarded as public in many ways, especially when published in an account owned and managed by an organization, the respondent’s right to anonymity has been regarded as important to maintain. Hence, I have not published snapchats or content from social media platforms published by employees.
2.10 Additional publications

There are papers related to the thesis that were also written during my research process as a PhD candidate. Some of them are conference papers that have been revised and developed in order to fit into the scope of my aim with the thesis. These papers have been important springboards towards both my empirical and theoretical understanding and also my process of “dropping my tools” as described in section 2.8.3. The papers are listed below:


3 Related Research

This section presents research related to the introduction and use of IT in organizational settings. It starts with a discussion of IT and change and then discusses organizational routines in relation to IT. Next follows a discussion of service encounters and IT. Then a review of social media research is presented. First different definitions of social media are discussed followed by a review of categorizations of social media research such as social media for marketing and enterprise social media. Furthermore, organizational use of social media is discussed along with research from several research fields such as marketing and service. The section concludes with a recently conducted literature review from the IS research field (see Paper 4) that defines how social media have been studied, defined and categorized in the IS research field during 2013-2017.

3.1 IT-induced Organizational Change

The research on IS has been influenced by a number of views on the relationship between IT and organizations since the 1950s. While the deterministic view of technology in organizations dominated IS research in the 1960s and '70s, a more constructivist stance emerged in the 1980s when IT was mainly used to automate existing processes and increase the speed of communication. Organizational automation meant that routine tasks such as information storage were replaced by IT. However, the replacement of e.g. paper and people with IT did not fundamentally change the way work was done (Zammuto et al., 2007). Work tasks remained understood as clearly defined and controlled though managerial hierarchies. Furthermore, organizational hierarchy was important since it controlled how the communication enabled by IT flowed. Furthermore, Zammuto et al. (2007) noted that since IT during this period was only used to automate existing organizational practices, the role of IT was often considered less important, and hence black boxed, in understandings of organization theory. During the 1990s, IS researchers’ view of IT started to change when IT computing capabilities became more powerful, replacing the role of hierarchy in organizing and controlling organizational activities. With the introduction of IT in organizations during the 1990s work tasks were also changed and resulted in new forms of organizing and supplanted hierarchy’s role in controlling activities in organizations and hence IT “is the thread from which the fabric of organization is now woven” (Zammuto et al. 2007: 750).
It is widely recognized within IS research that IT has a persistent role in mediating organizational practices which will continue (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008). Also, how new IT changes organizational routines and activities has been an important research venue for the IS research field (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977; Markus and Robey, 1988; Orlikowski, 1992; Zammuto et al., 2007). The introduction of IT into an organization is usually accompanied by organizational changes in form and function (Volkoff et al., 2007). Change can be related to both positive and negative organizational effects depending on whose perspective is taken into consideration. For example, change can be forced upon employees by management or be an effect of the use of a new IT (Klaus and Blanton, 2010) e.g. organizational social media.

Today’s organizations rely heavily on IT systems both for making work tasks more effective and in order to remain competitive (Fadel and Brown, 2010). Furthermore, IT in organizations has been described as both an *enabler* and a *driver* for change (Iveroth, 2010). IT-driven change is often referred to as “technochange” (Markus, 2004; Barrett et al., 2006) related to organizational projects where IT is used in order to create change. Markus (2004) discuss that deliberate technochange is the use of IT to drive developments and improvements in organizational performance. Also, he observes that technochange involves both IT and organizational changes, hence it differs both from IT projects and from organizational change programs. Furthermore, he suggests that what is needed for successful technochange is an integrated technical and organizational solution characterized by completeness and alignment between the technochange solution and organizational processes. However, the IS field has also been criticized for having a preoccupation with planned change related to IT use (Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001; Avgereou and McGrath, 2005; Ciborra, 2006; McGrath, 2006; Iveroth, 2010). The critique is based on the approach that IT is viewed as consisting of stable and reliable artefacts that are easily spread and used in organizations, but also that employees and organizations easily adapt to the new IT. Or as Iveroth (2010: 45) summarizes it: “The IT will take care of itself.” On the other hand, other streams in IS research take the opposite approach and have therefore been criticized for overstating social issues (Avgereou and McGrath, 2005). The present thesis takes introduction and use of IT (in this case social media) from the perspective that IT projects are difficult to predict and that many of them have failed (Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001; Ciborra, 2002; Markus, 2004). Also, researchers have pointed out that in order for organizations to gain the most possible benefits from IT investments, complementary organizational changes are necessary (Zammuto et al., 2007). That is, organizations have to change, more or less, in order to benefit from the IT-enabled benefits (Iveroth, 2010). Hence, disruptive IT events in work settings are of particular interest to both IS researchers and practitioners. IS researchers (see Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001; Zammuto et al., 2007; Akhlaghpour et al., 2013) have also expressed concerns that the IS research field has frequently neglected
3 RELATED RESEARCH

the role that IT has in organizations. Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) discuss the “blackboxing” of IT in IS research and argue that IT artefacts are often taken for granted and are “presumed to be unproblematic once it is built and installed” (p. 121). Agarwal and Lucas (2005) argue that IS researchers should embrace a broader view of the IT artefact in organizations. With social media in mind, it is interesting to note that some researchers have also argued that it will be necessary to extend the boundaries of the IS research field beyond organizations (Hirschheim and Klein, 2003; Wattal et al., 2010a). One example of this is Wattal et al.’s (2010b) study of the 2008 U.S presidential primaries and how IT affected the nature of competition in politics. This is especially interesting to take into consideration when studying social media platforms, and also points to the importance of acknowledging the features of social media and how they differ from earlier studied IT artefacts, which will be discussed in section 3.5.

The individual’s role in the meeting between organizations and IT has also been widely acknowledged by IS research when studying how organizations adapt to new IT (e.g. Orlikowski and Gash, 1994; Orlikowski, 2000, Beaudry and Pinsonneault, 2005). Hence, the benefits of IT-enabled organizational changes, such as new organizational IS, depend on the degree that system users adapt by proactively changing themselves, their work routines, and the technology itself in order to reap its strategic capabilities and advantages (Tyre and Orlikowski, 1996; Beaudry and Pinsonneault, 2005). IT in organizations can also be said to both enable and restrain organizational and individual behavior. Hence, it is also essential to learn how employees adapt to radical technological advancements in work settings so that their needs can be better understood and addressed. Organizational members adapt to changes in the workplace by negotiating, learning and enacting, but also by maintaining the appropriate behaviors for a given organizational context. For example, Beaudry and Pinsonneault (2005) proposed that actors adapt to new IT systems as part of their cognitive and behavioral coping. Orlikowski (2000, 1996) also proposed a practice view of IT adaptation, perceiving use as enacted through situated practices. Furthermore, Balogun (2006) argued that strategic change often results in unexpected outcomes because top management control is tenuous at best. Furthermore, IS and strategy-as-practice research show a shared appreciation for how change recipients influence change outcomes and the role cognitive schemata and framing (sense-making) play during this process (Weick, 1990; Orlikowski and Gash, 1994).

The rapid pace of organizational IT-induced changes, not least due to the rapid development of social media, and the fact that many organizational tasks strongly depend on IT, the degree to which organizations and organizational members adapt to a new IT system can have major influence not only on the effectiveness of the operations that are directly based on IT but indeed on the performance of the organization as a whole (Bruque et al., 2008). Tyre and Orlikowski (1994) confronted existing research in their study of technological adaptation in
organizations. Instead of showing a gradual and continuous process of adaptation, as suggested by earlier research, their study reveals a pattern of adaptation that is distinctly discontinuous. Furthermore, they point out that while full integration of a new technology may take several years, adaptation is not consistent on an everyday basis over that period. Instead, it is concentrated in short spurts. Researchers have also questioned the traditional research on technological change focused to a great extent on organizational processes that were simplified and described as “unfreezing,” “change” and “refreezing” (Orlikowski and Hofman, 1997, p. 11) which refers to the fact that organizations prepare to change, conduct the change and then quickly attempt to create stability. For example, Orlikowski and Hofman’s (1997) study shows that change occurs in a more ad hoc way and that there is a discrepancy between how individuals think about IT change and how they actually use it.

3.2 Organizational Routines

In the case of hotel organizations, which is the focus of this thesis, routines reflects how the hotels perform and deliver service. Routines are a core component of any organization, so they embrace a natural focus for studies of IT impacts on organizations. Hence, studying routines can provide insight into what change is, on an organizational level, and what drives the change (Becker et al., 2005). Earlier research in the IS field has focused on organizational routines when studying organizational change related to IT use (Becker, 2004; Volkoff et al., 2007). For example, Leonardi (2007) emphasized how organizational routines were changed in order for computer technicians to learn from colleagues. Gardner et al. (2017) examined how clinical care quality was affected by organizational routines and IT adoption and its implications on organizational performance. Feldman and Pentland (2003) define organizational routines as repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions carried out by multiple actors. Studies of organizational routines are often categorized by two approaches. The traditional view of routines regards them as standardization (March and Olesen, 1975). However, more recent research emphasizes their flexibility and their ability to generate new practices and patterns of action (Pentland and Reuter, 1994; Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Pentland and Feldman, 2005). While the traditional view describes routines as static objects, the new perspective views routines as ongoing processes and practices accepted by human agents. The second wave of research on routines has also put more focus on artefacts and on explaining how routines are “brought to life” (Cohen, 2007; Pentland and Feldman, 2008) which is the approach used in this thesis. A routine may contribute to organizational inertia if it re-enacts an established pattern of action, but each performance of a routine may generate new patterns of action (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). Environmental changes and pressures, such as the pressure to use and be reactive in social media, create challenges to organizational
3 RELATED RESEARCH

routines since they can disrupt existing understandings of appropriate actions (Weick, 1993). New IT can also be a threat to existing routines that are taken for granted (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Though IT is often intertwined with organizational routines (Volkoff et al., 2007), Pentland and Feldman (2008) exclude them from the definition of organizational routines and therefore downgrade the material aspects of IT artefacts (Robey et al., 2013). According to Pentland and Feldman (2008), IT artefacts can have the ability to affect routines but do not have the ability to become part of the generative system. Argyris (1990: 25) discusses organizational defensive routines as “actions or policies that prevent individuals or segments of the organization from experiencing embarrassment or threat.” This can be compared to Kallinikos’ (2005) thoughts on organizational routines as enablers and creators of a protective cocoon, which will be further discussed in section 4.3.

3.3 Service Work and Service Encounters

Since the data analyzed in this thesis derives from the context of hotel organizations it is relevant to understand and describe the actual work tasks that are being conducted within this industry. With the introduction of social media, the context in which service is delivered and experienced has changed in several ways (Ostrom et al., 2015). The service encounter, or “the moment of truth” (Bitner et al, 2000), one of the foundational concepts in service research, is changing due to rapid developments in technology (Bitner and Wang, 2014). The service encounter happens every time a customer interacts with an organization. With the explosion of social media platforms, service encounters are challenging for organizations, because technology extends the distance between the parties in the interaction and increases customer input in the service process. As a result, the interaction process becomes potentially more complex. Consequently, it becomes more challenging for the organizations to influence customers’ perceptions of the organization through the service encounter (Ostrom et al., 2015).

As in many other industries, customers’ expectations of experiences and service are escalating and hotels focus on offering holistic experiences. The services offered by hotels cannot be reduced to offering a bed to sleep in, instead hotel organizations offer a multiple set of service activities and encounters in which the customer can participate to varying degrees. A hotel stay can for example vary from a minimal service encounter to many interactions between hotel staff and guests with added service experiences during the stay (Den Hertog et al., 2010). Researchers argue that social media is all about relationships and interactions (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Berthon et al., 2012) and that it has changed consumer demand and behavior (Leimeister et al., 2014) and also transformed the interaction organizations have with their customers (Verhoef et al., 2015). From a service research perspective, relationships between customers and organizations are built from a series of encounters with an organization (Voorhees et al., 2017),
and organizations today are escalating their strategies to design and manage the entire process the customer goes through to have a good experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2015). Early work on the service encounter defined it as “the dyadic interaction between a customer and a service provider” (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987: 87). The focus was on “dyadic, human and role-driven” interactions between customers and employees (Solomon et al., 1985). Hence, the service encounter was mainly considered to be “a game of people” driven by specific learned behaviors appropriate for the situation (i.e., roles) (Suprenant and Solomon, 1987). Later work on service encounters does not refer to distinct moments where customers interact with a concrete service interface. Instead, encounters are described as integration of people (i.e., employees, other customers), the physical environment, service processes and technology (Patrício et al., 2011). As such, service encounters also encompass customer interaction with company elements other than human actors such as self-service technologies. Wünderlich et al. (2013) point out that these encounters range from simple dyadic interactions to complex interactions that bring together multiple entities (human and nonhuman) through various interfaces. They entail human-to-human, human-to-technology and technology-to-technology interactions.

3.4 Social Media Research

The concept of social media is widely used as an umbrella term for a variety of technologies. When we discuss social media, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat often come to mind. Of all the social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are among the most popular, ranking within the top 10 of a list of most heavily visited sites on the web (Alexa.com). The usage of image-based networks such as Instagram and Snapchat is also increasing, especially among young users. Different social media platforms play different roles in sharing information, connecting people, and creating knowledge. What all these platforms have in common is that they are driven by User-Generated Content (UGC) and have become very influential in numerous settings, such as marketing, sales, politics and service (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

However, a wide range of definitions of social media are used in different research fields. A general definition is almost impossible to find. There are many definitions trying to embrace the actual meaning of the concept of social media. For example, Lundmark et al. (2016: 3) suggest that “social media, is a unique form of communication, integrates multiple sources of legitimacy, and as a result, presents a unique and important context through which to study the topic. Indeed, social media are a means for the dissemination of both internally and externally generated information pertaining to firms, industries, and society in general.” Xiang and Gretzel (2010: 61) suggest that social media can be viewed as free broadcast platforms, which “have lowered the barriers to self-publishing on
3 RELATED RESEARCH

the web.” Wakefield and Wakefield (2016: 40) describe “social media technologies as an ensemble IS artefact composed of technical, informational, and relational subsystems that interact distinctly according to the context of use.” Mangold and Faulds (2009) point out that social media is represented by a long list of delivery platforms, from blogs and social media websites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace) to e-commerce communities. Social media can be defined and understood from different perspectives. For example, a social media site can represent what Shin (2010, p 428) defines as “a virtual community in which people with shared interests can communicate by posting and exchanging information about themselves.” Xu and Zhang (2013) refer to social media as a set of Internet-based technologies/applications, which are aimed at promoting the creation, modification, update and exchange of user-generated content, while establishing new links between the content creators themselves.

One of the most commonly used definitions of social media is by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 60): “Social media platforms are a group of Internet based applications built on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0, that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content.” Another definition is offered by Ellison and Boyd (2007: 2), who define social media as “web-based services that allow individuals to: construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” They emphasize that the uniqueness of social media is not that this new phenomenon provides a platform to meet strangers, ‘but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made” (p. 211). Much research on social media has focused on the possibility and revolutionary changes in ways to create content and social connection offered by social media. Frequently cited and influential conceptual papers such as Mangold and Faulds (2009), Kietzmann et al. (2012), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Leonardi and Treem (2012) suggest and discuss how social media can and should be used. However, as noted above, there is a lack of empirical understanding of how social media is actually used in organizational contexts (Aral et al, 2013). Researchers often emphasize the role of the user as producer as closely related to democratization, empowerment and social change made possible by social media (Koch et al., 2013; Alaimo, 2014.) Mandiberg (2012) argues that users of social media are pushed to produce content since the social media sites are pointless without participation from the users. Researchers also often point out that social media is interactive in nature, giving organizations and customers a possibility to interact and co-create value while also helping organizations identify customer needs in order to improve service, products and competitive advantage (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).
3.5 Social Media Attributes

The definitions described above represent a large body of research that has studied how individuals use social media and changes in their behavior related to its use. These studies often aim at understanding the “social” or behavioral part of social media, which is how people interact with social media and the consequences of that use (Kwon and Wen, 2010). Many organizational challenges associated with social media platforms are consistent with those recognized in earlier IS research, e.g. as described in section 3.1 and 3.2. However, the attributes of social media allow members in organizations and stakeholders to interact with each other in new ways that were not possible in earlier online or offline settings (Kane et al., 2012). Hence there is a need to open up the black box of the attributes of social media but also to discuss how social media has been studied. With increased use and as social media have become increasingly entangled with various aspects of social life, researchers point out the need to move beyond studying the actual use and focus more on analyzing social media as a socio-technical system in which specific features of social media are intertwined with the practices of users of the technology (Niederer and van Dijck, 2010; Treem et al., 2015). For example van Dijk (2013: 6) emphasizes the need for studying how “technology shapes sociality as much as sociality shapes technology.” Social media also influences organizational processes and organizing in people’s socio-cultural life (Van Dijk, 2013; Alaimo, 2014). Researchers often point out Web 2.0 technologies as an essential platform for social media. Papacharissi (2010) discusses that social media juxtaposes earlier divided times and spaces of communication and have created a continual flow of conversation. Social media platforms also contain two levels of dialogue, the asynchronous one-to-many and the synchronous one-to-one, and these are intertwined. The boundaries between public and private communication and stages are also disappearing (Koch et al., 2013). Hence, a growing body of research has taken an approach driven by technology in order to investigate the mediation capabilities of social media. Researchers have studied how social media algorithms have the power of shaping our daily lives (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011; Berry; 2013; Gillespie, 2013). For example, the algorithms of Facebook are designed based on the participation of users, that is, in order to become visible, the users must participate (Bucher, 2012).

Alaimo (2014: 31) argues that by only treating social media as a communicative tool, that is, focusing on the social and individual behavior of social media, researchers risk determining that “there is nothing fundamentally new” about social media. Hence more research is needed on the “media” part of social media, that is, the technological aspect, which enables online interaction. In this thesis this is especially emphasized in Paper 6. In order to point out the technological features offered by social media, Leonardi and Treem (2012) identified four key affordances that represent these new characteristics connected to social media: visibility, persistence, editability and association. Visibility refers to individuals’
ability to make their knowledge, preferences and connections visible to others in the organization. Persistence refers to the visibility of the content published in social media and the fact that the content is available to others independent of the presence of the individual that published it. Editability refers to individuals’ ability to alter (edit) posted material before it is viewed by others, which gives individuals a possibility of correcting errors. The fourth affordance is association, which according to Leonardi and Treem (2012) exists in two forms. First, association can occur between one person and another, for example the nature of their relationship is revealed in their Facebook profile. Second, associations can occur between an individual and information material e.g. in the form of a blog post. Similarly, Kietzmann et al. (2012) discuss seven building blocks of social media that define the functions of social media: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups.

As discussed earlier, social media initially started as a medium of interaction that allowed Internet users to create, generate and exchange content between users (Cooke and Buckley, 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). It should be noted that compared to other communication tools like email or instant messaging, it is more difficult to define who the audience is that receives the social media communication and it is therefore more difficult to communicate, due to the fact that it is more difficult to appreciate what messages and content will be appreciated by the imagined audience (Poole and Grundin, 2010; Litt, 2012). Social media users therefore often use social media with an imagined audience or what Litt (2012, p. 331) calls “the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating.” Alaimo and Kallinikos (2014: 2) argue that one of the distinctive attributes of social media is that they “shape online interaction and communication in ways that leave a countable data footprint.” As communication and interaction take place online the social media produces data based on the users’ activities in standardized activities such as “liking,” “tagging” or “following,” all of which leave a computable data footprint. This social data refers to data produced through the social media platforms. How technology can quantify human behavior is also discussed by Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013), who refer to this phenomena as “datafication.” This kind of material has been of certain interest to marketers when trying to understand consumer behavior and produce customized ads (van Dijk and Poell, 2013). As pointed out by Driscoll and Walker (2014), one of the challenges for researchers is to understand how data collected from social media was collected, stored and analyzed in order to understand the validity of the data. As Alaimo and Kallinikos (2014) argue, these ideas are in contrast to the widespread view that social media platforms are mainly sites of networking, self-presentation and social interaction (see Elisson and Boyd, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). As emphasized by Alaimo and Kallinikos (2014: 3), the interaction that occurs in social media platforms in the form of “sharing” or “tagging” is an interesting characteristic of
social media since it “recreates the online conditions through which interaction and communication can be performed and directly translated into computable forms.” This data is referred to as social data and is produced through the encoding of interaction and user participation in social media. Similarly Gerlitz and Helmond (2011) describe how features provided by Facebook such as the “like” or “share” button encourage users to interact with content. However, this feature also creates ways for Facebook to both track and quantify the user’s online behavior.

3.6 Categorizations of Social Media Use in and by Organizations

This thesis focuses on social media in an organizational context. Researchers often categorize social media depending on whether it is used for internal or external communication. Organizational communication scholars such as Treem and Leonardi (2012) have been widely influential in these categorizations. Social media used internally by organizations is often referred to as Enterprise Social Media (ESM) (Treem and Leonardi, 2012) and describes social media used for example in knowledge management or knowledge sharing within organizations (Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Mansour, 2013). In contrast, social media used by organizations for external communication often goes under the term Social Media Marketing (SMM) or public social media and refers to marketing activities and communication conducted by organizations through social media channels (Minazzi, 2015). The two categorizations and research conducted within them will be discussed in the following section. Thereafter a literature review on “organizational social media” is presented and discussed (see full version in Paper 4).

3.6.1 Social Media Marketing and Public Social Media

The possibility of using social media in marketing activities is often described as a paradigm shift in external communication with customers and marketing (Minazzi, 2015; Plume et al., 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Organizations participate in social media generally with the aim of communicating with customers and stakeholders (Phang et al., 2015). It is argued that social networks like Facebook have made it easier for organizations to establish and maintain relationships with customers but also made it easier to interact with customers online (Sigala et al., 2012; Luck and Lancaster, 2013; Minazzi, 2015). Today’s customers are taking an active part in and co-creating organizations’ marketing processes, by spreading the word by electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and can no longer be seen as passive receivers of marketing messages (Hanna et al., 2011). Characteristic for interaction and marketing in social media is the two-way communication or dialogue that has replaced the static one-directional
communication in traditional marketing. However, the interaction enabled by social media has also created challenges for organizations. The social media-based conversations between customers are outside managers’ control. This stands in contrast to earlier marketing which to a high extent was controlled by organizational management (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Many researchers have addressed questions concerning what impact word-of-mouth has on sales. Kavoura et al (2014) examined social media’s role for the creation of the sense of an online community for customers. García-Crespo et al. (2010) studied how social networks were used to create interaction between organizations and their customers and what effect these interactions had on product development and marketing. Lee et al. (2015) studied if Facebook increases sales and drives traffic to the digital market place and found that Facebook both drives traffic and increases sales. They found that language, similar interests and interactions among customers created a sense of belonging. Gu et al. (2012) analyzed the impact of external and internal WOMs on retailer sales. Their results suggest that a WOM from retailers has limited influence on sales. However, external WOM has an important impact on the retailer’s sales. Aral and Walker (2011) used a field experiment to study how organizations can create word-of-mouth influence by designing viral structures into their marketing campaigns.

Another characteristic of this new digital era is the power shift from organizations to users (Schegg et al., 2008) and as a result, online reviews have been a widely studied sub-category to WOM. Researchers have also emphasized that UGC can provide valuable information to the organizations about their customers, and contribute in-depth knowledge of customers and their needs and values (Kavoura et al, 2014). Dhanasobhon et al. (2007) studied online reviews by using data from Amazon. The analysis show that more helpful reviews and reviews that are highlighted have a stronger influence on sales than other reviews do. Similarly, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) also found that reviews of a positive nature have positive effect on sales. The importance and implications of responding to online reviews was studied by Litvin and Hoffman (2012). Their experimental study suggests that potential hotel guests react more positively when other guests answer and question a negative review posted by another traveler than they do to a response posted by the hotel management. Levy et al. (2012) also studied negative reviews and the responses to them. A number of studies (see e.g. Pantelidis, 2010) suggest that customers’ loyalty is affected depending on how managers respond to negative reviews. Van de Belt et al. (2012) used a longitudinal approach when studying hospital use of social media for external communication with patients. A longitudinal approach was also used by Williamson and Parolin (2013), whose study followed local government’s use of social media over a three-year period. Mergel (2013) investigated the adoption of social media usage in the U.S Federal government and the results show that the adoption was mainly driven
by two factors, the network among social media practitioners and formal guidance from the top management.

Researchers have pointed out that social media can help organizations engage with customers and build relationships while they also have the possibility to learn more about customers’ expectations (Papasolomon and Melanthiou, 2012). Also, with the introduction of social media, researchers argue that by using social media, many parts of an organization’s external communications are affected, such as sales, customer, service, not just marketing (Garcia-Crespo et al., 2010).

Researchers have also studied the relationships between Relationship Marketing and Knowledge Management and how organizations and customers can learn with and from each other (Rowley, 2004; Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2012). This is because relationship marketing to a large extent focuses on relationships, communication and interaction that both require and create knowledge (Rowley, 2004; Sivaramakrishnan et al., 2012). Previous attitudes towards the purpose of knowledge management involved centrally managed knowledge depositories, often with structured and controlled access (Von Krogh, 2012). The trend and approach towards knowledge management today is more focused on social media that has made it possible to provide knowledge openly and inexpensively, which some researchers refer to as social media–supported knowledge management (SMKM) (Zhang et al., 2016).

### 3.6.2 Enterprise Social Media

Recently, researchers have begun investigating the use of internal social media in the workplace. Internal social media use in workplaces has often been studied with focus on a single technology, often with the aim to use the benefits of social media such as informal collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees (Brzozowski et al., 2009; Leonardi et al., 2013). Researchers point out that unlike other organizational IT tools, such as email, social media does not have to be targeted to a specific recipient but can communicate with organizationally or geographically distant readers (Brzozowski et al., 2009). A large amount of research on social media use in organizations has focused on internal communication and knowledge sharing with blogs and microblogs (Efimova and Grudin, 2007; Riemer et al., 2010; Leonardi and Treem, 2012). Huh et al. (2007) investigated the effects of internal corporate blogs on work processes. Their findings suggest that blogs give access to tacit knowledge and contribute to the development of collaboration across a broad range of groups within the organization. A similar study was made by Wattal et al. (2010a), who found that blogging and network effects are stronger for younger employees and that women also experience a stronger effect from the networking than men. The implications for organizational hierarchies were studied by Kolari et al. (2007). They found that the characteristics of a blog can help flatten organizational hierarchies. Zhang et al. (2010) studied the use of microblogging with the aim to understand how and
why employees use Twitter and what implications on informal communication at work the tweeting might have. Researchers have also emphasized that social media can make workplace communication visible and hence share knowledge (Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Majchrzak et al.’s (2006) study of wikis revealed three types of benefits: improved reputation, work made easier, and improvement of organizational processes. On the other hand, Mansour (2013) points out that the use of wikis in the organizational setting is not as social as might be expected. Recent research suggests that the organizational use of social media is different from use of other enterprise IT systems as its voluntary participation characteristics lead to an acceptance process that focuses mainly on convincing users of its benefits (Raeth et al, 2010). It is also interesting to note that features of social media such as transparency and the possibility of sharing are often viewed in a positive manner, especially from the customer’s point of view. However, these features create both challenges and restrictions for use in organizational contexts. This is emphasized by Leonardi (2017) who pointed to the “leakiness” of social media, that is, knowledge shared in social media is visible and might “leak” to many, unexpected individuals and hence restricts individual employees use of social media.

As a social technology, social media has characteristics different from other IT. For example, an organizational email system might not collide with organizational or societal cultural values while social media platforms that create transparency, sharing and UGC might collide with such values (Raeth et al., 2010). The nature of organizations and social media are often described as fundamentally different. When organizations introduce social media, or any technology, the structure of the technology meets the structure of the organization. In the case of social media in an organizational setting, some researchers argue that they might seem like an unlikely fit (Hemsley and Mason, 2013; Mansour, 2013). Mansour (2013: 4) uses the metaphor of “immiscibility, or two liquids that do not mix or blend together,” like water and oil, when describing the relationship between an organization and social media. Similar ideas are discussed by Hanna et al. (2011: 265), who emphasize that social media technology are treated as “stand-alone elements rather than part of an integrated system.” Researchers have also emphasized that while organizations often consist of top-down, hierarchical structures, social media offers a bottom-up, flexible, open, non-hierarchical structure (Grudin and Poole, 2010). Some researchers also discuss that social media technologies have changed the “knowledge eco-system” in organizations and challenge earlier conventional organizational structures like roles, responsibilities, control and hierarchy that need to be redefined with the implementation and usage of social media in the organizational context (Hemsley and Mason, 2013; Ford and Mason, 2013). It is interesting to place these discussions in relation to earlier IS research concerning IT and organizational change, e.g. Zammutos et al.’s (2007) discussion about IT as the new thread that that organizations are woven of, instead of organizational hierarchies.
3.6.3. Social Media in Service and Hotel Industry

Social media have also transformed how organizations provide service and create service relationships with customers. Furthermore, social media is changing the core of all service industries, the service encounter (Benson et al., 2016; Larivière et al., 2017). Traditionally, the service encounter is provided by a physical meeting between humans. With social media, a new context has emerged, and the encounter can still be managed by humans, that is, these are not roboticized service encounters, but the context in which the service is provided is a social media platform (Benson et al., 2016). As part of the global tourism industry, hotels are affected by the fact that travelers use social media to a great extent to get information and choose hotels (Burgess, 2012). A large part of research has focused on the consumer perspective (Huang et al., 2010; Yoo and Gretzel, 2010). A broad stream of research has also focused on word-of-mouth and its implications for consumer decision-making (see e.g. Murphy et al., 2007; Litvin et al., 2008; Casaló et al., 2011; Sigala and Gretzel, 2017). From the supplier’s point of view, research has focused to a great extent on the possibilities of market services and products with social media (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Chan and Denizci Guillet, 2011). Huang (2011) explored blogs and marketing strategies from the supplier’s perspective. It is the first attempt to evaluate the external environment forces of adopting a travel blog marketing channel and to discern the motivations for investment in a travel blog marketing channel. Furthermore, the use of specific social network sites, Facebook in particular, have been of great interest to the research field. (Dipelreiter et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2010).

A number of researchers have pointed out that social media presented an exceptional opportunity for genuine interaction between suppliers and consumers (Pantelidis, 2010; Schmallegger and Carson, 2008). The management of customers’ online reviews in also an important venue in the research field. De Ascaniis et al. (2015) studied interactions between guests and hotels related to how the hotels replied to customers’ online reviews. Similarly Boon et al. (2013) measured hotels’ service quality in online reviews and ratings. Aureli et al. (2013) specifically studied content from online reviews in four and three-star hotels in Italy and found that traditional core services such as quality of room and interaction with the hotel staff characterize key factors when reviewing. Furthermore, the development of social media and digitalization can be said to have profoundly changed the core of hotel services and today, most of the booking of rooms is done online and guests also give reviews and ask questions online, e.g. on TripAdvisor (Sigala et al., 2012). Being present in social media has also extended the service that hotels provide (Minazzi, 2015). Guests use social media channels to seek information but also to ask questions and the service that the hotels provided has therefore changed, or been reconstructed. The hotel
organizations are becoming more and more knowledge-intensive because of heavy use of technology and in the creation of service, which is based on interaction between hotel employees and guests.

3.7 Literature Review on Organizational Social Media

Despite the widespread use of the above-described categorizations of social media, some researchers are critical towards this categorization and research focus of specific usage of social media in organizations (see Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). The main argument behind the critique is that the organizational use of social media in the IS research field has focused to a large extent on individuals as level of analysis and their acceptance and use of social media. Hence researchers argue that the research field of organizational use of social media is still in its infancy (Aral et al., 2013; Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013) and that social media “represent one of the most transformative impacts of information technology on business, both within and outside firm boundaries” (Aral et al., 2013: 13). A number of social media literature reviews have been conducted on specific areas of research such as marketing, advertising, public relations, and communication (Chung et al., 2017) or the use of social media in specific industries such as healthcare systems (Miller and Tucker, 2013) or the hospitality industry (Leung et al., 2013). Furthermore, many studies have reviewed literature on enterprise social media, referring to internal use of social media (Wehner et al., 2017; Nolte et al., 2017). The large focus on social media marketing and enterprise social media in research was pointed out by Van Osch and Coursaris (2013). They argue that it is possible that organizations will use social media for purposes other than marketing and advertising in order to support other organizational activities such as learning and innovation. Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) literature review includes research articles published between 2003 and 2011. Their review included journals regardless of the primary domain of research. However, only three articles were found in the “Basket of Eight” (European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS), Information Systems Journal (ISJ), Information Systems Research (ISR), Journal of AIS (JAIS), Journal of MIS (JMIS), MIS Quarterly (MISQ), Journal of Strategic Information Systems (JSIS), and Journal of Information Technology (JIT). Their overall result revealed that 19 articles covered a more general use of social media in organizations.

Due to the rapid development of social media use by both individuals and organizations, and the large amount of social media research in many research fields, I found it necessary to investigate the present status of IS research on organizational social media use. The literature review proceeds from Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) literature review, however, instead of covering a large and interdisciplinary research on organizational social media, I restricted my review to ten MIS journals including the “Basket of Eight,” and Information and Organizations...
(I&O) and Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication (JCMC). Hence, the review complements previous literature reviews with recent IS research on organizational social media and also gives an analysis of how the IS research field to date defines and studies social media in organizations. Most literature reviews in the IS research field are based on the methodology of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) (Boell, and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015; Schultze, 2015), which includes covering a wider range of research, since it aims to find as many research publications as possible pertinent to the research questions (Schultze, 2015). Yet, the IS research field has criticized SLR due to the lack of aim to provide valuation of a state of knowledge in a specific problem domain and hence also failure to identify research gaps (Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson, 2013). Furthermore, the IS research field has called for literature reviews with “good or reasonable coverage rather than a comprehensive one that would make a review process at best ephemeral if not unachievable” (Rowe, 2014: 246). Hence, in order to identify research gaps on organizational social media it is relevant to identify recent research published in highly ranked IS journals. The literature is hence not exhaustive in nature (Williams et al., 2009), and does not seek to identify all existing literature in the subject. Instead, it focuses on identifying path-defining studies, or “a few authoritative summaries of the literature or a handful of recent, influential and well-respected articles” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). In order to accomplish this, three research questions were asked: RQ1: Which definitions, terms and categorizations referring to social media does the IS research field apply? RQ2: What topics are currently addressed in the IS research field concerning organizational use of social media? RQ3: What topics can be identified for future research on organizational use of social media?

The following keywords were used in the literature search: social media, social network site(s), social networking sites(s) and online social networks. The main criterion for an article to be included in the review was the use of the term “social media” or any of the above terms as the primary technology analyzed. The identified articles were categorized and analyzed according to Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) research framework, which includes the identification of three elements of OSM: artefacts, actors and activities and three central actors: management, employees and external stakeholders. In total, 46 articles were found and reviewed. In the following sections, selected parts of the literature review will be discussed, see Paper 4 for full review.

### 3.7.1 Terms, Definitions and Categorizations

Overall, 47.8% of the identified articles had the organization as level of analysis, compared to 5.45% in Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) review. Furthermore, 67.5% of the articles focused on internal organizational activities, which is similar to results from earlier reviews of IS research interests, while 17.4% of the articles focused on social media used for external communication and 15.1% focused on
the use of social media for both internal and external activities. The results also revealed that a broad range of definitions, terms and categorizations of social media were used. The most common term used was “social media,” while 19.6% used the term “social network” or “social network site(s).” However, other terms were used as well, such as Social Media Platforms (SMP) (Beck et al., 2014), Social Media Sites (SMS) (Khansa et al, 2017), and Social Technologies (ST) Martini et al., 2013. Furthermore, the term Enterprise Social Media is widely used and describes social media used for internal communication in organizations. “Subcategories” describing ESM were also found, e.g. Koch et al. (2012) use the term “Digitally Enabled Social Networks” and Mettler and Winter (2016) use Enterprise Social Systems (ESS), when discussing social media used for internal communications.

3.7.2 Internal Use and Knowledge Sharing

A large part of the articles that were identified focused on internal use of social media, i.e., social media used for internal activities such as communication. Theories of knowledge management were widely used when describing organizational use, e.g. theoretically by Majchrzak et al. (2013). Von Krogh (2012) studied how knowledge management activities can be changed and improved with social software. Knowledge sharing and knowledge demand was studied by Beck et al. (2014). Karoui et al. (2015) studied how the use of EMS can create social capital for employees. Leonardi (2014) studied reasons for why employees don’t want to share knowledge through social media. Knowledge sharing was studied by Oostervink et al. (2016). By using the affordance lens, they discuss how ESM can be used for the purpose of sharing knowledge in organizations. An affordance lens was also used by Vaast and Kaganer (2013), who studied social media policies in organizations and how organizations react to employee use of social media. The study reveals that employees’ use of social media is perceived as a risk rather than a value by organizations. A number of articles studied the transparency that social media brings and its effects on internal communication and knowledge sharing in organizations (see Fulk and Yuan, 2013; Leonardi, 2015; Huang et al., 2015). To mention some, Leonardi (2017) studied the implementation of Jive, an Enterprise Social Network technology, showing how visibility has implications for work and knowledge sharing in the studied organizations.

3.7.3 Performance and Motivation

The review also revealed a large interest in employees’ use of social media and implications such as blurred borders between private and professional use of social media (Koch et al., 2012; Mettler and Winter, 2016), effects on work routines (Wu, 2013), and work performance and motivation related to social media use at the workplace (Salehan et al., 2017). Both Kuegler et al. (2015) and
Ali-Hassan et al. (2015) studied the impact social media use has on routine and innovation job performances. A number of studies also emphasized the relationship between organizational hierarchical matters and social media use (see Choudrie and Zamani, 2016; Huang and Zhang, 2016). A study by Van Osch and Steinberg (2016) showed how internal group members interact with stakeholders by using ESM. The study revealed a relationship between organizational hierarchy and blogposts made by employees. While employees in a leadership position were more likely to create posts that represented the organization, team members were more likely to use social media for information search.

3.7.4 External Communication and Knowledge Sharing

In total, eight of the 46 articles focused on social media use for external activities. Both Zhang et al. (2016) and Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) emphasized social media use for stakeholder engagement while Lu et al. (2015) studied how social media used for relationship management can create knowledge sharing structures. Zhang et al.’s (2016) study gives awareness into how Facebook pages can be used by organizations in order to create brand engagement, and Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) studied how Twitter can be used in order to create engagement for non-profit organizations. Benthaus et al. (2016) studied User-Generated Content (UCG) and word of mouth enabled by social media and how it can be used by customers to share information about organizations and their products and services. Dou et al. (2013) pointed out how social media can be used by organizations in order to create innovation by crowdsourcing. Similarly, Martini et al.’s (2013) studied how organizations can use social media in order to gather innovative ideas from their customers.

![Figure 3. Illustration of Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) framework of organizational social media.](image-url)
4 Theoretical Framework

This section provides an introduction to the concepts that have been used as analytical tools, such as adoption and implementation. Furthermore, I describe the theories of Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, the concept of Technological Frames and finally I discuss the framework of “functional simplification” and “functional closure.”

4.1 Adoption and Implementation of Organizational IT

There is a long tradition in IS research with the aim to understand why and how individuals and organizations adopt and implement technology, IT (e.g. Davis, 1989; Kwon and Zmud, 1987; Rogers, 1995). Throughout the process of writing the articles and the cover paper I have used both the terms “adoption” and “implementation” when discussing the introduction and use of social media. Since these terms have overlapped and both are used to describe why and how technology is introduced and used in organizations (Mandal, 2015), it is relevant to describe how I have used them. The term adoption has been used in several ways in IS research. Venkatesh et al. (2003) use the term to describe the intention to use technology while Veiga et al. (2013) use the term to describe a predicted usage of technology. Other researchers also use the term to describe both individual and organizational acceptance of technology (Hall and Kahn, 2002). Hence, adoption theories often focus on change in a specific context. The term adoption is closely related to the term technology implementation. The IS research field has used the term to describe the ongoing process of technology use, often in an organizational context (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Bruque and Moyano, 2007). The implementation of technology can also be seen as a process of introducing change to the organization (Zammuto et al., 2007), and the effect of the change is determined by the nature of the technology. Kwon and Zmud (1987) describe the process of implementing technology with six stages: initiation-adoption-adaption-acceptance-performance-incorporation. In Papers 1 and 2 the term adoption was used to describe why organizations take the decision to use social media and the term implementation to describe how social media is used in the organizational settings over time.
4.2 Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework

Guided by my explorative research question, I wanted to investigate both why and how the hotel chain and its local hotels used social media. In order to theoretically analyze the “why” question from an organizational perspective I used a theoretical framework that has been used in organizational technology adoption studies, the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). The framework explains the process of organizational adoption of innovative IT technology and hence focuses on the organizational level of adoption. The framework is consistent with Rogers’ (1993) Diffusion of Innovation theory, and both frameworks take technology and the organization into consideration when studying adoption. However, the TOE framework adds the environmental aspect to the analysis. The framework of TOE establishes that three aspects (technology, organization and the environment) determine the organizational decision maker’s adoption process of new innovative technology. These three aspects also relate to both restraints and opportunities and influence organizational adoption of technological innovation (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). The technology aspect involve two parts, external and internal technology that are accessible and relevant to the organization. The framework includes both technologies that the organizational already use and new technologies that are not in use (DiPietro et al., 1990). The organizational aspect refers to organizational features such as size and hierarchical structure. The environmental aspect refers to the organization’s environment such as marketplace and competitors that are influential and beyond the control of the organization.

A large amount of IS research has used the TOE framework as the theoretical foundation. To mention some, Zhu and Kraemer (2005) investigated e-commerce and found that a number of factors supported the organizational use of e-commerce. For example, factors such as firm size, competitive pressure and technology competence were emphasized. Swanson (1995) pointed out that the adoption of IT innovations by organizations requires a strategic technology portfolio but also a supportive organizational structure. The importance of top management support in technology adoption was also pointed out by Lin (2014), who studied organizational adoption of electronic supply chain management systems. A few studies have used the TOE framework when studying social media in organizations. For example, Tajudeen et al. (2017) studied the determinants of social media use, to what extent social media was used in the organizations, and implications on organizational performances. Bhardwaj and Bharadwaj (2017) studied social media marketing strategies and identified key factors that led to organizational adoption of social media by using a combination of the Technology Acceptance Model, Users and Gratification Theory and the TOE framework. The use of social media in local government organizations was studied by Sharif et al.
(2017), who found challenges concerning how compatible social media is with organizational infrastructure, strategy and values.

4.3 Functional Simplification and Functional Closure

Since social media is a new phenomenon I found it relevant to theoretically analyze the “newness” of social media related to organizational use. Here the theoretical lens of functional simplification and closure (Kallinikos, 2005) was used as an analytical device that provided an understanding that the essence of an IT is when it is contextualized within a social system where it is deployed. Similar to the TOE framework, the concept of “functional simplification and closure” offers tools to analyze IT use from an organizational perspective. Kallinikos (2004, p. 148) uses the metaphor of functional simplification as an automobile freeway. “Functional simplification here is expressed in the speed by which long-distance traffic is organized, and it is instrumented in through broad, multiple, direction-separate lanes that entail functional closure as a mean of excluding incidences that may disturb traffic flows.” Hence, functional simplification and closure imply that the freeway system admits only certain inputs and behaviors; walking, biking, or driving at low speed are examples of inputs and behaviors that violate the premises of the technology of freeways. Technology is designed to perform certain functions, in the case of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram the purpose is to create online social networks, giving individuals opportunities to create, publish and share content.

The concept of functional simplification and closure helps to explain the performative logic embedded in a technology and how the operations of standardization and automation of tasks are modeled to allow technology to perform the functions it has been designed for. Social media was not originally designed for organizational use, in contrast to CRM systems or groupware systems. Defining functional simplification of social media or any IT involves explaining the segments of operations that the information technology embeds, performs and standardizes. Furthermore, standardizing the sequence of operations is an attempt to reduce the complexity of the world by capturing the essential causal chains needed to produce an output into its functionalities (Kallinikos, 2006). Functional closure is a necessary complement to functional simplification and involves “the construction of a kind of protective cocoon (from fences to social practices) that is placed around the selected causal sequences of processes to safeguard undesired interference and insure their repeatable and reliable operation” (Kallinikos, 2006: 33). The essence of an IT is described by the two elements of functional simplification and closure and not by either one of them alone. Only seen as a dyad are the two concepts able to define
an IT in action. Kallinikos (2006: 36) argues that the result of analyzing IT through the lens of functional simplification and closure has consequences for organizational settings, e.g. that functional simplification and closure separate the technical system from the organizational and social action, processes and practices that are executed by the same system. That is, when the organizational tasks or procedures have been delegated to technological automation the abstraction produced by functional simplification and closure is to some degree isolated from the organizational setting they originated from.

4.4 Technological Frames

In order to understand the role of social media in an organizational context, and specifically in a hotel context, I found it relevant to look at how individual employees use and make sense of social media in their daily work. Hence, I also emphasize the importance of taking the context into consideration when trying to understand how social media make sense in an organization. By using the approach of organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013), my analytical interest also pointed towards the employees in the case who were actually using social media in their daily work activities. Orlikowski and Gash (1994) emphasize that individuals create expectations and assumptions of what the technology can be used for and call this “technological frames.” The technological frames are social constructions which makes them different depending on the individual that uses the technology, in other words, the same technology can be viewed or experienced differently (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994). Orlikowski and Gash’s (1994) theoretical lens of “technological frames” focuses on the interpretation of technology specifically and the role it has in organizations. They point out that since technology is a core element in organizations, the member’s organizational frames will affect the usage of technology in the organizations. The term “technological frames” is used to identify the assumptions, expectations and knowledge members of the organization use to understand technology in organizations. Different groups in the organization have different frames, e.g. technologists may be likely to treat technology as a tool that is supposed to achieve a particular task, managers’ interpretations are more strategic and expect financial returns while the users might look upon the usage of technology as a tool for instant assistance of some kind. Also the idea of sensemaking (Weick, 1995), has been used to study how the interpretations of IS are created in everyday work-practices (Henfridsson, 1999). Weick’s (1995) theory on sense-making that addresses cognitive and social mechanisms when individuals are faced with unknown phenomena, such as social media in the workplace. When introducing new IT, or social media for that matter, into an organization, the everyday work of professionals can be changed. For example, existing work activities and routines might be disrupted and employees might face new responsibilities. Hence, the introduction and use of the new IT can cause a “shock” and uncertainty among those employees involved in using
4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

the new IT (Weick, 1995). The first question of sense-making is, according to Weick et al. (2005) “What’s going on here?” and the second is, “What do I do next?”

A large number of studies on organizational adoption and implementation of technology have examined why and how individuals within the organization make sense of and react to new technology (Blegind Jensen and Aanestad, 2007). However, there is a need to get deeper insight into how individuals as employees use and make sense of social media in their day-to-day work practices over time (Aral et al., 2013; Treem et al., 2015). Existing studies of individual technological frames may be viewed as snapshots in time (Davidson, 2006; Olesen et al, 2013), since they generally focus on adoption rather than longitudinal use of technology (Olesen, 2012). The framework of technological frames has been applied in many studies to examine the usage, development and adoption of Information Systems and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in organizations. Most studies have focused on how frames are created with the introduction of new technology in a workplace setting (Blegind Jensen and Aanestad, 2007; Davidson, 2002; Aanestad and Blegind Jensen, 2016). However, the frames of social media are often created outside the workplace and there are limited studies of the development of these frames (Treem et al, 2015). Furthermore, scarce attention has been given to the sense-making process when individuals and groups create their frames (Davidson, 2006; Young et al., 2016).
5. Summary of the Papers

In the following section I summarize the six papers that are included in this thesis and present how they are related to each other as well as how they contribute to the thesis as a whole. The strategy of choosing journals and conferences was made in relation to the context in which the data is collected but also in relation to the IS research field. Hence, Papers 1, 2 and 5 are published in journals related to IT, marketing, and tourism and hospitality, while Papers 3 and 4 are published in proceedings from IS conferences. Paper 6 is planned to be submitted to an IS journal. The papers are related to the framework of organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013) and sometimes overlap, but also focus on different parts of the framework. For example, Paper 5 focuses on individual employees’ interpretation of social media while Paper 6 emphasizes the management of stakeholders’ use of social media (see Figure 4).

5.1 Paper 1

The first paper addresses the question of why the international hotel chain decided to adopt social media, what factors affected the decision and how this decision was interpreted by hotel management and the employees at the local hotels. The following research questions were asked: 1) What technological, organizational and environmental aspects influence social media adoption in hotel organizations; and 2) How does the hotel chain versus the hotel managers at the local hotels describe the process of adopting social media? In order to analyze the factors affecting the adoption decision at the hotels, the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) was used. The framework of TOE establishes that the decision maker’s adoption process of new technology is determined by three aspects, the technology, organization and the environment. Empirical data from interviews, online observations, observations and field notes were collected from the international hotel chain and analyzed. The study contributes by identifying technological, organizational and environmental aspects perceived from different organizational levels that can explain the social media adoption in hotel organizations. First, the technological aspect suggests that social media technology is not interpreted as technology as much as it is a communication tool by the respondent. Second, the organizational aspect points out that a conflict can be identified between the hotel chain and the local hotels due to the fact that the usage of social media needs organizational space and structure as well as economic resources in order to be
used properly. Third, the environmental aspect points out that the decision is affected to a high degree by pressure from competitors and customers. This contribution was an important stepping-stone when conducting the follow-up interviews, but also when writing Paper 5.

5.2 Paper 2

The second paper is explorative in nature and not driven by a specific theoretical framework. Instead, related research on social media marketing, relationship marketing and knowledge management are used to frame the paper theoretically. The aim of the study was to develop increased understanding of the challenges concerning how hotels adopt social media into their marketing activities. This stage includes the usage of social media in marketing activities and is closely related to knowledge capturing and interpretation and learning of new technology. Two research questions were asked: RQ1: How do hotels adopt social media into their organization and marketing strategy? RQ2: What challenges can be identified concerning hotels’ adoption of social media marketing? Similar to Paper 1, the data was collected from the international hotel chain and consisted of 22 interviews from 14 hotels and focused on the use of social media for marketing purposes. The data was collected in relation to the decision to start using social media in the hotel organizations, hence it describes the very beginning of the organizational process of using social media. The paper contributes by identifying several organizational challenges. First, the study shows that the hotels’ social media use is focused on being present rather than on creating interaction with customers. Second, the empirical data also reveals challenges concerning knowledge capturing and spreading in the hotels that are trying to identify individual knowledge in the organizations by creating social media teams. Third, the data also revealed that there is a concern from the hotels about losing control over their brand and marketing content when using social media, and there also seems to be a concern from the hotel chain’s point of view about losing control over each hotel’s social media usage.

5.3 Paper 3

The third paper is, like Paper 2, explorative in nature with an organizational perspective on the use of social media. The article focuses on more overall social media use and is not restricted to a fragmented piece of the organizational use as in Paper 2. Based on 22 interviews from 14 hotel organizations within the international hotel chain as well as online observations, observations in hotels and studies of written documents, Paper 3 examines social media use in and by organizations. Two research questions were asked: 1) How can the use and purpose of social media in a hotel chain be described and categorized? 2) What organizational effects does social media use have on the studied hotel organizations? The study has revealed how hotel organizations use social media
and found that social media is used both for internal and external communication. However, the hotels focus on social media used by customers, i.e., User-Generated Content, to a great extent, which also indicates the disruptive nature of social media in the hospitality and tourism industry and the changed relationship between the customers and the industry. The analysis of social media use by the hotel organizations reveals six different social media use types: marketing, information sharing, service, inspiration and brand values, collecting information and knowledge, internal communication and management of User-Generated Content. The empirical data illustrates two major organizational effects of social media. First, the need to control what is published in social media owned by the organization’s channels and by whom. Second, there is a need to manage User-Generated Content since this material is beyond the control of the organizations, and thereby also can damage the organizational brand.

5.4 Paper 4

The fourth paper contributes to the thesis by reviewing existing literature and research on organizational social media in the IS research field. By reviewing 46 articles from ten influential IS journals the review reveals topics related to social media that have been of interest for the IS research field. The following research questions were asked: 1) which definitions, terms and categorizations referring to social media does the IS research field apply? 2) What topics are currently addressed in the IS research field concerning organizational use of social media? 3) What topics can be identified for future research on organizational use of social media? The first question revealed that, just like earlier reviews on organizational social media, the IS research field uses a varied and myopic use of definitions, terms and categorizations concerning both social media and social media use in organizations. The second research question revealed that the 46 articles reviewed showed that social media used for internal organizational communication (e.g. enterprise social media) still has the main interest within the IS research field. Out of the 46 articles, 29 studied social media used for internal activities such as internal communication. The IS research field also has a preoccupation with internal actors’ use of social media such as employees and managers and little focus on external stakeholders such as customers. Furthermore, few studies highlight that social media can be used to gather knowledge from outside the organizational boundaries, e.g. from stakeholders. The third research question identified a research gap and hence some areas that can be further explored were suggested, for example, how private social media use affects professional and private roles or how organizations can gather knowledge from User-Generated Content and in that way both collect and share knowledge, but also support innovation.
5.5 Paper 5

The fifth paper focuses on how the individual employees and groups within the organizations make sense of the use of organizational social media. Furthermore, it focuses on how individual interpretations of social media have implications for the organizations. The paper proceeds from Paper 1 and 2 and develops the understanding of social media use over time in the studied international hotel chain. Prior research has shown that a key understanding of IT use in organizations is how individuals adopt, use and make sense of technologies. Despite the increased use of social media in hotel organizations, there is a research gap and little is known about the implementation process and how individuals' sense-making affects organizational use over time. Two research questions were asked: 1) What are the technological frames of individual employees and groups within the hotel organisations? 2) How do these technological frames shape the organisational use of social media over time?

The interpretive case study followed social media use in 14 hotel organizations within an international hotel chain in seven European countries over four years. The data was analyzed by using Orlikowski and Gash’s (1994) theoretical framework of Technological Frames. The study finds incongruence, that is, different interpretations of social media between different organizational groups such as managers and employees but also lack of dominant frames. A high degree of inconsistency was also found, which refers to the fact that different individuals within a group have different interpretations of the usefulness of social media. The paper contributes by showing that the organizational use of social media was highly affected by both inconsistency and incongruence, which led to large variations in use of social media at each hotel. As a consequence, the hotel chain decided to centralize the entire social media use.

5.6 Paper 6

The sixth paper explores the organizational management of online reviews produced by stakeholders. The aim of this paper was to analyze how social media and online reviews affect organizational work tasks and existing routinized service relationships. Hence, two research questions were asked: How can hotels’ social media interaction and management of online reviews be understood through a functional simplification and closure perspective? The empirical data was collected from both the international hotel chain and the independent hotels. In total, data from 47 interviews was used as well as online observations and field observations. These issues of managing online reviews are discussed and analyzed through the theoretical lens of functional simplification and closure (Kallinikos,
5. SUMMARY OF THE PAPERS

The article explores how the studied organizations rewrite and rearrange procedures such as organizational routines in order to recapture control over their service relationships. The result also shows that social media platforms such as TripAdvisor and Facebook make it possible for customers to quantify, or codify their experiences, e.g. by ranking their experiences (simplification). Similarly the technology creates new challenges for organizations in order to gain control over the service relationship (closure). The organizations are also quantifying their routines and processes related to online reviews. Despite the possibility of creating flexible and more individual service relationships, the study reveals that the organizations instead create a more quantitative approach in order to manage and create a “cocoon” and thereby make the effects of online reviews more controllable.

The following figure visualizes the scope of the papers in relation to the papers in relation to Van Osch and Coursaris’ (2013) frameworks on organizational social media.

![Figure 4. Visualization of the scope of the papers in relation to organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013)](image)
6 Discussion

Social media in organizational contexts is a research field still in its infancy and hence there is a large interest from a variety of research fields to understand how social media are used in and by organizations and how the introduction and use affects work practices. There are numerous approaches to be used in order to grasp these questions. This thesis encompasses how organizations use social media for both internal and external communication (Papers 1, 2, 3 and 5), but also how they manage social media content created outside organizational boundaries such as online reviews and customer complaints (see Paper 6). Furthermore, this also involves the analysis of both the organizational use (see Papers 2 and 3) and also individual employee understandings and interpretations of social media (see Paper 5). This approach is directly related to the aim to contribute to the understanding of organizational social media use (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). That is, the interest in this thesis is focused on the challenges of introducing and continuously using social media in an organizational context over time. The intention with this focus is to embrace why and how social media are used by organizations over time in real-life work contexts. This approach differs from the broad research stream focusing on social media that traditionally has separated the studies of the two categories of internal and external organizational use.

Furthermore, the interpretive approach enabled me to expose how organizations use social media over time and how they interpreted its usefulness in their specific context. The longitudinal case study design was a rewarding method as it allowed me to study organizational media use and its development over time in an organization’s context. This approach also enabled me to trace how patterns of use and organizational change related to the use emerged and unfolded over time. This is also one of the central contributions of the thesis, to offer a longitudinal observation, not just snapchats in time (Davison, 2006). The findings in Papers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 revealed that social media is a driver for change that has fundamental effects on organizational day-to-day work practices. However, as illustrated in Papers 1 and 5, the change was not planned, for example with the aim to provide faster or improved service, etc. Instead the change was a result of the decision to introduce and use social media. That is, in order to manage social media presence organizational changes have been necessary, for example new organizational routines as suggested in Paper 6.

By not solely taking the internal or external use into consideration, this thesis provides several examples of how social media extends beyond organizational borders and that both organizational social media use and stakeholders’ social media use have implications for the organizations. This approach was also helpful.
when trying to identify the “newness” of social media compared to other ITs in organizational contexts. The approach of analyzing the role of social media as a new technology (Alaimo, 2014) and not merely treating it as an organizational communicative tool (see Leonardi and Treem, 2012), runs through the entire discussion. Hence, the thesis make an effort to point out the newness of social media and the organizational challenges this brings. In doing so the concepts of user-generated content, transparency, sharing and persistence surfaced as important concepts when analyzing the challenges of ongoing organizational social media use. These four concepts are used through the following discussing of the organizational challenges found in this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis suggests that the challenges related to social media in an organizational context can be derived from the design of social media platforms. That is, platforms such as Facebook or TripAdvisor are multisided (Evans and Schamelensee, 2016; de Reuver et al., 2017), not one-sided as e.g. a CRM system, which also forms the foundation of some of the organizational challenges found in this thesis. The organizational challenges are also inherent within the need to cater to all sides (see Paper 6). For the studied hotels, this means controlling and managing the users within the organizations but also the users outside the organization such as customers. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, as social media platforms are designed and owned by third parties, they differ from other IT in organizations as they are not customized for organizational use, or designed to make sense in an organizational context, which in itself creates an organizational challenge.

There is a large number of theoretical frameworks that can be used in order to understand and interpret the introduction of new IT in an organizational context and the change it (might) bring. Also, social media research does not constitute a research field in itself, but rather should be considered a domain within a broad range of research fields with different interests such as business administration, organizational communication, and marketing (Kane et al., 2012). I have used a multifaceted range of theoretical frameworks when analyzing the different papers, which also goes hand in hand with the approach of exploratory study of organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). However, the theoretical frameworks all have in common that the theoretical lens highlights the introduction of new IT in the organization, but from different perspectives. Frameworks such as the TOE framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) and functional simplification and closure (Kallinikos, 2005) were useful when identifying and analyzing organizational perspectives of social media use. Similarly, the framework of Technological Frames (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) was useful when focusing on the employee perspective and interpretations of social media use. I have also used concepts from a variety of related research areas. I found valuable concepts in the marketing (Grönroos, 1994) and service research (e.g Bither et al., 2010; Larivière et al., 2017) such as relationships and service encounters which theoretically helped me analyze implications of social media use. Another set of valuable concepts was offered by technology innovation management research
6 DISCUSSION

(e.g. Christensen 1997; Susskind and Susskind; 2015). Against the presumption that the newness of social media creates changes for both the hotel industry and hotel organizations the concept of disruptive IT was useful when pointing out the transformative force of social media.

In the following sections I further break down and develop these challenges touched on above. The case study of the international hotel chain presented in Section 2 forms the foundation of my theoretical discussion. However, I will also discuss results given from the data collected in the independent hotels mainly related to the findings in Paper 6. The following section presents a discussion of the contributions made in this thesis that are related to the aim of the thesis, to describe and understand the challenges the use of social media brings to organizations in the service industry, in particular an international hotel chain.

Five main organization challenges have been identified: (6.1) the nature of social media vs. organizational structure; (6.2) making sense of organizational social media over time; (6.3) from private to professional use; (6.4) stretched service encounters; and (6.5) pseudo-relationships and roboticization of service. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study and suggests subjects for future research.

6.1 Challenge One: The nature of social media vs. organizational structure

Many elements of the hotel organizations have been digitalized in recent years. This ranges from booking a room online to opening the room door with a smartphone. Hence, these processes have been automated (Susskind and Susskind, 2015). However, service is still provided in traditional matters, e.g. hotels still have a physical reception and desk clerks available when customers do not want to or have trouble checking in or out online. However, as suggested by the findings in this thesis, social media should not be viewed as a tool for automation, hence the term disruptive is more relevant to use (Christensen, 1997; Susskind and Susskind, 2015). Instead of automating existing organizational routines (Kallinikos, 2005) it is rather the customer interactions that have become automated, which will be further discussed in sections 6.4 and 6.5.

The hotel industry has been restrictive compared to other industries in using social media, e.g. due to the fear of losing control over organizational brands and processes (Sigala et al., 2012), which is also illustrated in Papers 1, 2 and 5. In order to point out and analyze the “newness” and challenges related to organizational social media it was relevant to answer the question of “why” the international hotel chain made the decision to introduce social media. The findings reveal that social media was not introduced in the organizations in order to make organizational routines more automated or efficient, i.e., it is not viewed as an organizational tool that can provide more efficient work routines. These findings contradict earlier research on IT introduction in organizations that has
e.g. had a focus on automation or the aim to make work practices more effective. A large and complex organization like the studied hotel chain is a hierarchical organization stretching over a large number of managers and different levels as well as over a large number of countries across the world (see Figure 1). The introduction of social media implies that the nature of social media platforms meets the structure of the organization, which per se can be viewed as a challenge since existing routines, hierarchies, responsibilities and management meet the nature of social media. As pointed out by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990), many aspects affect why organizations and their IT management decide to use social media. One important aspect here is organizational factor, that is, the hotel chain is a large organization with a clear hierarchy that spread over the entire world (see Figure 1). This aspect restrained the hotel chain’s ability, or motivation, to start using social media. In order to start using social media the hotel chain did not have to invest in technology, that is, they did not have to purchase software in order to start using social media. Instead of being viewed as an asset or investment, social media was interpreted as a phenomenon that cannot be avoided due to the massive adoption and use by customer and competitors. As illustrated by the findings (see Papers 1, 2 and 5), social media is not interpreted as technology that needs to be understood and learned. As illustrated in Paper 5, the employees were assumed to know how to use social media platforms. Instead of the technology, it was the consequences of the use that are of concern for the studied organizations. Hence the environmental (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) factor was the strongest force that motivates the introduction and use of social media. The customers’ expectations of the hotels to be present in social media and the opportunity to interact with customers where they actually are present was the major drive for use. This is also in line with earlier research that suggests that the features of social media such as transparency, sharing, and the ability to create content have increased customers’ power and therefore also the customers’ demand for organizations to be present in social media (Koch et al., 2012).

It should be pointed out that the nature of the IT artefact always meet the structure of the organization, that is not a new phenomenon only related to social media. The restrictiveness of introducing social media can be directly derived from the features of the platforms. The fear of “losing control” points out features of social media such as transparency, the ability to share and the persistence of social media content. All these components are difficult for organizations to manage and one way of managing it is apparently to avoid it. However, user-generated content such as customer complaints and online reviews are also a part of social media that needs to be managed and points towards the challenges of managing the two-sided platforms that social media constitutes. Interestingly, until the introduction of social media, the hotel chain’s policy was not to answer or acknowledge online reviews made on third-party social media platforms. This also point out the newness and disruptive force of social media and the organizational challenges it brings. The blurriness and removal of
organizational boundaries (Koch et al., 2012) creates difficult managerial challenges since they are created both within and outside of the organization and in many ways contradict the hierarchical structure of the hotel chain. That is, important decisions related to social media and the protection of the hotel brand, etc. need to be made fast and flexibly, which is not always possible in a hierarchical organization spread over different countries and cultures (see Papers 1 and 5). The introduction of social media can therefore be discussed in terms of a forced introduction, based on the fear of lagging behind rather than an investment in an IT that can make work routines more effective. This is also suggested by recent research that points out that social media use by organizations is a result of external pressure rather than a rational decision (Aral et al., 2013; Chung et al., 2017). The forced introduction per se constitutes an organizational challenge, especially due to the organizational hierarchical structure, since it is based on external pressure and an abstract idea of what the benefits of using the new IT might be. It is often argued that social media have the ability to strengthen knowledge sharing and information sharing in organizations (Leonardi and Treem, 2012). This was not, however, one of the major driver for the use. The primary understanding of social media as suggested by earlier researchers implies that social media may have the potential to democratize the flow of knowledge and information, reduce established hierarchies through enabling flat and horizontal structures, and enable fluid patterns of collaboration and communication (Leonardi and Treem, 2012; Koch et al, 2012). However, in practice, this was not the case, which makes it arguable whether social media in that sense is different from other IT used in organizations which furthermore point out the newness of social media compared to other ITs.

6.2 Challenge Two: Making sense of organizational social media over time

Many conceptual articles on social media have taken a rather deterministic view of the benefits of social media. As argued by a large number of researchers, especially in conceptual papers (e.g. Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, Berthon et al., 2012), social media brings opportunities to individuals to connect, create relationships, communicate, create and share content which might also occur in organizational settings. These are attributes that are often described as positive from an individual perspective, however, from an organizational one they can be viewed as a challenge. Compared to earlier IT, e.g. groupware or CRM systems, there is no manual or support to call in order to understand the basic features of social media, and the IT artefact is not bought or ordered in order to fulfill certain organizational requirements. Therefore, the use of social media in an organizational context over time can be related to a sense-making process (Weick, 1993) that involves the interpretation of the usefulness of the IT and how the organizations can adapt to the technology. The findings of this thesis suggest that organizational social media does not usually come about as a linear process.
through specific stages. Instead, the findings suggest that the use is heavily driven by exploring and testing ways of using social media that make most sense for the organizations. It should be noted that making sense in this case is more about managing control and risk related to social media than about using social media as a tool of getting close to customers or being present in social media (this will be more developed in section 6.4). Over the four years the hotel chain was studied, social media shifted. In the beginning of the use there was a large emphasis on using social media for marketing and sales activities. Due to the lack of frame of reference on how to use social media, the studied organizations relied on existing organizational activities such as marketing activities, especially during 2013-2014 (see Papers 1 and 2). From an organizational perspective, this makes perfect sense since combining social media with existing work activities such as marketing helped justify the usefulness of social media but was also a possibility of controlling the outcome of what was published in social media. Results from Papers 2 and 5 showed that the hotel chain management put a large emphasis on traditional marketing messages (for example, the same ads were used in newspapers as in social media) and brand marketing of the entire hotel chain which eventually led to a conflict that had major implications for the social media use (see Paper 5). The findings illustrate that the marketing activities were mainly focusing on one-way communication, for example offers. When viewing organizational social media use from a sense-making perspective, it seems logical that the social media use was delegated to marketing and sales departments at the local hotels (see Papers 2 and 5). Previous research has mainly focused on fragmented parts of organizational social media use such as marketing activities or internal communication. However, Paper 3 illustrates that the work practices related to social media were linked to many organizational activities, for example service, information sharing, and communicating brand values. That is, by being present in social media, for example by having a Facebook page connected to each hotel, the use was focused on a much broader range of activities than merely posting content such as pictures and ads. The thesis suggests that being present in social media created a parallel digital service arena. That is, being present in social media platforms contributed to customers turning to the digital arena for service and information. Consequently, a large amount of time was needed to just be present and for example notice questions. The findings hence show that social media is used for a variety of practices related to the hotels’ everyday activities.

In contrast to earlier research in IT implementation the introduction and use of social media in the studied case does not follow a clear plan with a clear goal, definition of use and a destination. Instead, the guidelines provided by the hotel chain are often not used at all by the local hotels, or were interpreted as shallow, focusing on “dos and don’ts” but also quite specifically focusing on quantitative matters such as what percentage of online reviews should be answered and how (see Papers 2, 5 and 6). This can also be attributed to the flexible interpretive nature
6 DISCUSSION

(Treem et al., 2015) of social media. That is, one can ascribe to social media platforms a broad variety of usefulness, hence the flexibility. The usefulness can stretch from using social media as a marketing tool to collecting knowledge and information from customers or managing customer complaints. The thesis shows that the flexibility also has implications for how the process of introducing and using social media is being managed. The hotel chain management was not entirely sure of how to make sense of social media and the use throughout the four years the hotels were studied indicated that the hotel chain management to a large extent tested what could work or not. Hence, the ongoing use of social media in the studied case should not be viewed in terms of good or bad, failure or success. Instead one could understand the use of social media in terms of managing and eliminating risk brought by the new phenomenon of social media (Kallinikos, 2005). This is for example illustrated by the reactive rather than proactive approach to social media use, i.e., a lot of effort is put on being reactive and managing social media content created outside the organizational boundaries by stakeholders such as customers. This descends from the transparency brought by social media and what risk and consequences it brings to not manage this input from customers (see Paper 6), but also from the design of social media as two-sided platforms and the fact that they are owned by third parties. That is, the organizational control and therefore ability to create protective routines and eliminate risk (Kallinikos, 2005) is highly restricted. For an organization, this means that someone else’s decisions and actions, taken externally, outside the organizational boundaries might have great effects on organizational matters. These results are contractionary to many earlier studies on IT implementation, adoption and “technochange” are managed (Iveroth, 2010), but also contradicts earlier studies of social media in an organizational context that often are described as non-hierarchical and built on a bottom-up approach (Berthon et al., 2012). This section has discussed the organizational perspective of organizational social media. In the next section I will discuss the challenges of translating private social media use into using social media in a professional, organizational context.

6.3 Challenge Three: From private to professional use

A result of studying social media use over time is that it was possible to reveal who is actually using social media in the studied case. As illustrated in Papers 1, 2 and 5, the practice of using social media was restricted to a limited number of individuals in management positions, in each local hotel. This thesis points out that this way of managing the introduction of a new IT is clearly derived from the features of social media. That is, as suggested earlier, the reason for not allowing more employees to use social media is a result of the risks that are related to social media use. In other words, by restraining social media use to a limited amount of employees, the risk of using social media, e.g. publishing inappropriate content,
is, if not eliminated, at least limited. In this matter the introduction of social media differs from many earlier studies that have emphasized the implementation of IT in entire organizations or departments that involved a large number of employees in a variety of positions and different work tasks (Iveroth, 2010; Orlikowski, 2000). Two main categories of challenges were identified when analyzing how private use of social media affected the organizational social media use: 1) individual interpretations and 2) the contradiction between individual interpretations and organizational strategies. These factors are developed further in the following sections.

6.3.1 Individual Interpretations

In order to understand the organizational use of social media and the consequences of relying on a few individual employees’ interpretation of social media, the theoretical framework Technological Frames (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) was used (see Paper 5). The theory is useful when trying to understand the cognitive processes of individuals making sense of new IT in the workplace and was therefore used as an analytical tool. However, compared to earlier research in employees’ technological frames, most studies have focused on IT introduced to employees in the workplace. Due to the nature of social media and the fact that they were designed for leisure rather than organizational activities, it is not unlikely that many employees have been introduced to social media in their private lives before they start to use it at work. The interpretive flexibility of social media played an important role when trying to understand the employees’ assumptions, knowledge and expectations related to their social media use at work. The findings and conclusions from Paper 5 suggest that due to the fact that the responsibility of using social media relies on a few individuals in each hotel, the individuals’ technological frames and sense-making process became extremely important in the overall organizational use. Furthermore, the findings in Paper 5 also revealed a high degree of interpretive flexibility when it comes to the individual employees’ interpretations of the usefulness of social media. As pointed out by earlier research, the knowledge and assumptions individuals bring to social media in a work context are highly influenced by their private use (Treem et al., 2015). This is also illustrated by the findings in Paper 5. The private or non-private use of social media had a direct impact on if or how the employees used social media at work. For example, if an individual did not use Twitter privately, that person did not use it at work, despite being expected to manage and use social media in their organizations. Instead, the individuals chose specific social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram based on what platforms they were familiar with outside work. Hence, their choice of platform to use at work was based on technological frames (assumptions, knowledge and expectations) (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) created in private settings. Therefore, the choice was based on the usefulness of social media in private settings rather than what could be the most beneficial platform for organizational purposes.
Interestingly, although the use of social media was mandated or expected of individuals, and despite a lack of personal use of social media, the respondents did not feel the need to get training or learn more about social media. They did not for example use the training offered by the hotel chain. However, they looked outside the hotel chain boundaries for inspiration, for example at competitors’ social media accounts, and some even hired external PR firms to train them and make a strategy. The consequences of this was that individuals’ own sense-making of how social media should be used in an organizational context became more influential than actual organizational goals and visions. This reveals the high interpretive flexibility (Treem et al., 2015) of social media, which led to different levels of knowledge and interpretations both within and between organizational groups (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994). This is not in any way different from the findings made by earlier research on IT use, however, the empirical findings contribute to the understandings of the “newness” of social media used in an organizational context and the effect private use and technological frames have on the organizational use of social media.

The introduction of social media did not just challenge the individuals’ knowledge of how to use social media in their daily work activities but also challenged the relation between their already existing work activities and how they were affected by social media. As illustrated in Papers 2 and 5, the hotel employees relate their work tasks to a great extent with providing service and creating good experiences for the guests, which is the core of the service industry (Lariviére et al., 2017). However, as illustrated in Paper 5, the individuals’ use of social media is not linked to the service context. That is, the employee’s statements tells that they make a difference between providing service at the local hotels and providing it in social media, thereby the parallel digital service arena. I suggest that this indicates a failure of creating organizational logics and service routines (Lariviére et al., 2017) related to social media. Instead of being merged into existing service routines, social media is being put on top of it. In practice, the external pressure from customers for hotels to be present on social media (see Paper 6) indicates that customers use social media as digital service encounters. However, social media is not interpreted as an extended digital service encounter by the hotel employees. Hence, social media become auxiliary and not a part of their service logic (Lariviére et al., 2017). Compared to related studies of IT implementation, e.g. the implementation of digital tools in a hospital (Blegind Jensen and Aanestad, 2007), social media was not merged with existing work activities (hence the parallel digital arena), that is, the hotel chain did not have a clear view of how social media activities could be merged or integrated in existing daily work processes. Instead, the data shows that the activities of being present in social media was “put on top of everything else.” Consequently, the use of social media was irregular and dependent on how much other workload the employees had.
6.3.2. The Discrepancy between Individual Interpretations and Organizational Strategies

One essential finding is illustrated in Papers 1 and 5 and involves a major conflict between the international hotel chain and its local hotels. The conflict was first illustrated in Paper 1, which discusses the question of what factors affected that the hotels started to use social media but also in Paper 2, when the question of what to post on social media is discussed. Over time, the different views of how social media should be used caused a conflict between hotel chain managers and the employees at the local hotels. In Paper 5 this is illustrated by the employees’ statements that the local hotels did not approve of the fact that the hotel chain sent out marketing material that they were obliged to post. The discrepancy between individual employees’ interpretations of the usefulness of social media and the hotel chains’ interpretations are illustrated in Paper 2 where the respondent expressed that they felt that they “destroyed” their own social media channels by posting traditional marketing content they felt did not belong in a social media environment and they also wanted to post material that focused on their local hotel and their customers, not market the entire hotel brand. These discrepancies had implications and resulted in the hotel chain management loosening their guidelines, allowing the hotels to choose what to post. The above described example demonstrates the meeting or rather collision of organizational structures and hierarchies. Even though the hotel chain chose to let each hotel manage its social media use, they still wanted some kind of control of what was published and also use the possibility of marketing the entire hotel chain. The conflict can therefore be derived from a discrepancy concerning the usefulness of social media in an organizational context. The expectations of the benefits of using social media were interpreted differently by the two groups of organizational members, hotel chain managers and employees at the local hotels (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994), hence a conflict arise. The conflict also emphasizes the difficulties of spreading the vision and aim of using social media and points out the complex organizational hierarchy and its communication paths (see Figure 1).

During 2015 the hotel chain introduced an internal blog made especially for internal communication. This can be referred to as Enterprise Social Media (Leonardi and Treem, 2012) and the purpose of it was to spread knowledge, inspiration and social media content internally in the hotel chain. Obviously, this was also a way of trying to manage and communicate a social media strategy internally. However, as illustrated in Paper 5, the statements from the employees show that they had little knowledge of the internal blog or did not read it. As suggested by a number of researchers (Leonardi and Treem, 2012), social media can share knowledge and information in organizations, but that did not happen in this case, or at least not a controlled knowledge exchange. By not managing to create similar expectations, knowledge and assumptions (Orlikowski and Gash,
6 DISCUSSION

1994) of social media, the hotel chain failed to give space for organizational learning to occur. This can only happen when the process of unlearning occurs, that is, that the organization rearranges and makes room for new routines and processes, in order to create organizational learning (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994). Hence, valuable organizational knowledge was lost due to the high turnover of employees in charge of social media as exemplified in Paper 5. Furthermore, due to the fact that the hotel chain does not prioritize the opportunity to collect information and knowledge through interaction with customers, opportunities to learn from and with customers were lost.

The introduction and use of social media in the international hotel chain should not be considered an implementation project with a clear start and end date. It is more realistic to describe it as an ongoing process without a clear goal. The interviews conducted in 2017 revealed massive changes in how the hotel chain used social media, which is exemplified in Paper 5. Instead of allowing all hotels to manage their own social media platforms, the hotel chain centralized the use and therefore went from a de-centralized use to a centralized use. In practice, this means that all communication with social media is managed from central offices, and not at the local hotels, near the customers. Statements from the employees illustrate negative attitudes towards this but also relief, which is mainly an expression that social media took up a lot of their time and effort. A large emphasis was also put on managing online reviews. Papers 5 and 6 show that hotel chain management found it more important to manage social media content created outside the organizations and not the content created inside the organizations. This is important to acknowledge when studying organizational social media since it exemplifies both how organizations actually use social media and how social media bridges and stretches organizational borders, which also challenges the management of organizational activities and structures. What is surprising in the above discussed findings is the rapid process of organizational change (Zammuto et al., 2007). For example, there has not been a lot of time to reorganize and adapt existing work tasks and routines nor for individual employees to learn. This also points to the difficulties of evaluating organizational use of social media since there is no frame of reference and no dichotomy such as right or wrong.

6.4 Challenge Four: Stretched service encounters – persistent and ongoing moments of truth

It is relevant to take the context in which social media is used into consideration, in this case hotel organizations that function in a service industry. As suggested by Walsham (1995), interpretive studies can explain a phenomenon in a specific setting, which is the case in this thesis. Hence, it is of importance to understand
how the studied case uses social media and interpret its usefulness in its own setting. As shown by the data, the context highly affects the use and the consequences of that use. It is therefore relevant, or even necessary, to take the context into consideration when trying to understand the challenges of organizational social media use. When taking the real-life context into consideration, it is significant to acknowledge that the traditional service organization, such as hotels, has historically been grounded on service relationships and service encounters based on human interactions that usually take place face-to-face in a physical environment (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987; Shankar et al., 2016). However, as pointed out by researchers in the service domain (Patricio et al., 2011; Shankar et al., 2016), the way relationships and encounters are created has changed. Although my aim is not to quantify or generalize about social media in the hotel industry, the statements from the employees, both within the international hotel chain and the independent hotels, reveal a changed industry, disrupted by digitalization and social media (see Paper 6). Examples that are highlighted are digital check-in and check-out, questions and bookings made online, service provided in social media platforms and online reviews made in third-party platforms such as TripAdvisor. Not least, the hotel industry’s way of handing out stars to hotels (ratings) has been entirely transformed and thereby their ranking system has been outpaced by customer’s online reviews. This kind of disruption is not specific to the service industry but has recently been acknowledged by researchers who have pointed out the major disruptive transformations on other industries caused by digitalization and social media in particular (Aral et al., 2013).

Instead of contributing to existing categorizations of social media in terms of internal or external communication (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013), the thesis theoretically contributes to both IS and service research by viewing the social media use in the studied hotel organizations as “stretched and persistent digital service encounters.” First, the encounters, or the “moments of truth” (Bitner et al, 2000) where the organization and the customers actually “meet” has changed, or been disrupted due to social media. In an earlier section I referred to parallel digital service arenas and the empirical findings, especially Paper 6, illustrate that new encounters have emerged with social media. For example, before the guests had a possibility to publicly review and rate the hotels, as in TripAdvisor, these kind of service encounters took place face to face in the hotel reception or in an email. That is, these encounters are traditionally viewed as “physical” and happen e.g. when the customer checks in or calls for room service. What is relevant here is that most of the encounters traditionally took place when the customers were actually staying at the hotels. This has also had effects on service relationships. Instead of being close to customers (Grönroos, 1994), the hotels manage their relationships from a distance in order to keep managerial control over them.
Earlier research on service encounters has focused on the physical meeting rather than the digital one, hence the thesis contributes new empirical data. As illustrated by Papers 2, 3, 5 and 6, with social media, encounters can occur anywhere (on social media platforms) and anytime, which has made the distance between the service provider and the customer larger, persistent and more abstract. The empirical data also exemplifies that time and speed related to service routines have changed with social media. Traditionally, encounters have taken place “face to face” and not been viewed by others (Benson et al., 2016). Similarly, digital encounters such as customer complaints on email have not been a transparent process but limited to the customer and the organization. With social media, the encounters that take place are transparent and available for anyone, which also puts a lot of pressure on how it is managed by the organization. The transparency can be directly derived from the attributes of social media platforms, that they enable people to create and publish content but also that they are third-party platforms beyond the control of the user. This is also one of the reasons for the newly gained power by customers. Also, with the ability to share service encounters, e.g. answers and conversations made in social media, the customer has gained more power. Hence, the “moment of truth” (Bitner et al, 2000) is ongoing and transparent and often beyond the control of the service provider.

The actions taken by the studied hotels (both the hotel chain and the independent hotels) reveal that a lot of effort is put on managing these four factors (transparency, user-generated content, sharing, and persistence), for example by using strict organizational routines (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Kallinikos, 2005) (see Paper 6). Kallinikos (2005) points out that organizations use routines in order to create “functional closure” and “protective cocoons.” He also argues that in order to create these closures the organizations seek to have clear beginnings and ends of organizational processes, for example an interaction with a customer. However, with social media the possibility of “ending” or “closing” a service process is almost impossible, since it is transparent and can go on indefinitely and also be spread by anyone. Consequently, this constitutes a challenge for the organizations concerning how to manage service encounters in social media. As argued by Kallinikos (2005), organizational routines can create “protective cocoons.” That is, by having strict protocols and processes related to the use of social media, the organizations try to control the use of social media and avoid making mistakes. Interestingly, Kallinikos’ (2005) framework is often used to describe the “simplification” brought to organizations by IT, for example how an IT can facilitate and automate organizational processes. However, in the case of social media it is rather the customer’s process that is “simplified,” for example by online reviews made by other customers that can make a decision process easier. Instead of creating “simplification,” social media creates an organizational need to create more control in order to make social media use more homogenous, and instead of simplifying or automating procedures it can be argued that the use of social media calls for more organizational control and
human interaction in order to control the content being published and spread in social media. It should be noted that this can be derived from the features of social media platforms, such as transparency and persistence, and the fact that the platform are designed, managed and controlled by third parties, and in the hands of customers or external owners of platforms.

As pointed out in Papers 2 and 5, the use of social media in the workplace demands a constant digital presence that stretches over the work hours, which the employees experience that they don’t have time for. Therefore, they argue that their use of social media at work has come to blur the boundaries between their professional and private time. One practical reason for this is that the respondents use their private social media accounts connected to the organizational accounts and hence, they get alerts when they use their private accounts. In Paper 2 this is illustrated by the respondents who argue that their use of social media has affected their private lives. For example, many of them argue that they always look at comments and answer them, even at night and on weekends when they are not working. The findings of the thesis show that the respondents mainly view this as a problem since it interrupts existing work practices and routines (Pentland and Feldman, 2005) and adds more workload to their responsibilities. This is pointed out in Paper 5, where the respondents explain how they make sense of social media, and in Paper 6, which illustrates how the management of online reviews is prioritized both by the hotels within the international hotel chain and the independent hotels. Interestingly, the empirical data shows that the hotels interpret that the social media created outside the organization is more important to prioritize and manage, which reflects the new power gained by stakeholders and customers.

6.5 Challenge Five: Pseudo-relationships and roboticization of service

The thesis also illustrates the organizational implications of user-generated content or content created outside the organizational boundaries, e.g. by customers. While Papers 1, 2, 3 and 5 emphasize challenges mainly derived from organizational use of social media, or content published in social media by the organizations, the thesis also points out the challenges with online reviews, i.e., content created and published on social media platforms outside of the organizations, see Paper 6. As mentioned above, researchers have argued that social media have the ability to democratize the flow of information and create knowledge sharing and connect people (Berthon et al., 2012; Mansour, 2013). However, the findings from Papers 2 and 6 show some clear consistency in suggesting that the use of social media by organizations is not that social, which contradicts the assumption that dominates research on social media (e.g., Stenmark, 2008; Grudin and Poole, 2010). Instead, the findings in the thesis suggest that the organizations are not interested in creating long-lasting
relationships by the use of social media. This was pointed out earlier in the discussion as the need to “close” organizational processes in order to manage and control them (Kallinikos, 2005).

Furthermore, the findings reveals that the hotels use of social media is “roboticized” and “quantified” due to the need of creating and retaining some kind of management control. Both the roboticization and the quantification are created with organizational routines (Pentland and Feldman, 2003), that is, strict routines and manuals help to make the use and management of social media homogenous and thereby more controlled. These routines also restrict the use of social media and prevent (at least that is the purpose) individual employees from using social media in the wrong way. What could be social or create relationships, such as online reviews (see Paper 6) are not managed with that in mind. Instead, the hotels focus on quantifying the management of online reviews, e.g. by sticking to rules of what percentage of the online reviews should be answered, and thereby also acknowledged. This kind of management suggest that the qualitative feedback is not that relevant to the hotels; what is relevant is how they manage them and how they appear to other readers. The online reviews also created changes in the organizations and enforced new routines in order to manage them (Pentland and Feldman, 2008). Hence, in contrast to what is suggested by marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Minazzi, 2015) and service literature (Larivière et al., 2017), the service provided by the hotels is not more personalized, or more social, but on the contrary, more roboticized. The roboticization of social media use is also confirmed by the findings discussed in Paper 5 which describes how the hotel chain decides to centralize the social media use, that is, removing the use from the hotels and thereby also removing the “closeness” to the customers, and thus creates pseudo-relationships. The quantification of social media use is also illustrated in Paper 1 where the respondents state that the hotel chain emphasizes the need for the local hotels to account for number of “likes” and “shares” on Facebook in order to evaluate the return on investment. However, the employees also state that these numbers say little about economic profits related to social media and that the numbers are more or less “for show.” Paper 2 also illustrates this by pointing out the challenges of creating and maintaining relationships between customers and the hotel organizations. These examples illustrate that the use of social media is highly related to a quantitative approach rather than a qualitative one, e.g. to be close to customers, which is a reverse interpretation of social media compared to what researchers point out to be the “newness” or advantages of using social media in an organizational context (Leonardi and Treem, 2012; Berthon et al, 2012).
6.6 Limitations and Future Research

The findings presented in this thesis have a number of limitations. Given that I have studied hotel organizations in Europe, the relevance of the findings of this thesis might be limited to this context. Other limitations may include that I have used a qualitative method when studying social media use in organizations. The central part of the analysis in this thesis was based on data from interviews while online observations, observations at workplaces and written documents have been used as supplementary data. Hence it can be argued that the conclusions that can be drawn are limited. I have not had the aim to contribute with generalizable knowledge, but to investigate and gain knowledge on how social media are used in a specific context, hotels, and therefore, specific areas of this context have been highlighted, such as service encounters. I believe that my interpretive approach generated empirical insights into organizational social media use. However, these insights and analyses are closely related to my chosen theoretical framework (Walsham, 1995). Therefore, future research can gain from both investigating the service industry in more detail and studying social media use in other organizational contexts in order to develop empirical knowledge and theoretical contributions. The perspectives of customers and other stakeholders have not been included in this thesis. Customers are present by analyzing the organizational management of customer-created online reviews. However, future research can gain from including these perspectives and broaden the understanding of organizational social media. Future research can gain from studying social media use over a longer period of time and also by using both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to draw more generalizable conclusions from collected data.
7. Conclusions

When summing up the process of analyzing the findings and contributions of this thesis, I strongly believe that it corresponds to what Henfridsson (1999: 51) describes as “a retrospective conduct. It is not until you have done it that you see how it all fits together.” In this thesis, I have investigated the challenges of introducing social media in an organizational context and its use over time, which also constitutes a contribution. The following research question has been addressed:

*Why and how does social media platforms represent organizational challenges?*

By taking the approach of organizational social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013), the findings in this thesis embrace both how organizations use social media to communicate and interact externally and internally but also how social media content created outside organizational boundaries has organizational implications and constitutes a challenge.

As illustrated in Section 2 where I describe my research and analytical process the work with this thesis can be characterized by an explorative approach. This is especially illustrated by my multifaceted theoretical lens. As argued in the introduction to this thesis, we still know little about social media use in and by organizations over time and its implications on daily work practices (Aral et al., 2013). Previous research has found that IT introduction is difficult to predict and often causes changes (Ciborra, 2002). In terms of social media research in organizational contexts, the majority of research has analyzed specific areas of social media use, not the more general organizational use (Aral et al., 2013; Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013; Schlagwein and Hu, 2017). The case study presented in this thesis contributes to our empirical knowledge on organizational use of social media in the service sector, more precisely hotels. The thesis contributes to existing research by providing a broader perspective of how to theoretically investigate organizational social media use. This is closely related to the explorative, interpretive nature of the study and the hermeneutic approach (Cole and Avison, 2007). It has not been my aim to generate generalizable knowledge and I believe that it is relevant to consider the organizational context when investigating the introduction of any IT artefact.

I have sought to identify and unpack the challenges related to organizational social media use. The findings of the thesis can be summarized in five organizational challenges: (1) the nature of social media vs. organizational structure; (2) making sense of organizational social media over time; (3) the transition from private to
professional use; (4) stretched service encounters – persistent and ongoing moments of truth; (5) pseudo-relationships and roboticization of service.

The findings of the thesis show that the introduction and use of social media in an organizational context is highly affected by the features of social media such as the ability to create user-generated content, share content, persistence and transparency. Furthermore, the design of social media platforms that makes them two-sided platforms has implications for organizational use since it is not just one side that needs to be managed but two. Hence, the nature of social media and the structure of the organization induce organizational changes such as the need for new routines in order to create control or minimize risk related to social media (Kallinikos, 2005).

Furthermore, the thesis illustrates both organizational sense-making processes (Weick, 1996) and individual interpretations (Orlikowski and Gash, 1994) of the usefulness of organizational social media. Consequently, by letting individual interpretations control organizational use of social media, both the homogeneity and the organization’s ability to learn was affected. Due to the nature of social media and the fact that many individuals are introduced to social media in their private lives, the organizational challenges of social media do not lie within using the artefact itself, instead the challenges lie within the consequences of social media use such as transparency and persistence can have on matters such as service relationships, service encounters and brand reputation. The thesis also shows that the studied hotel chain has a different interpretation of the usefulness of social media compared to how many researchers describe the usefulness of social media (Berthon et al., 2012), which also affects the organizational use. That is, instead of emphasizing the possibility of being close to customers and creating lasting relationships, the organizational use of social media is centralized and managed far from the hotel guests. This creates pseudo-relationships and a roboticization of service. I have also contributed theoretically by pointing out the changed conditions for service encounters (Benson et al., 2016). I discuss this in terms of persistent digital service encounters. This understanding is important to both practitioners and researchers since it differs from earlier research on social media in an organizational context (Koch et al., 2013; Treem et al., 2015) and from earlier research on service relationships and service encounters (Benson et al., 2016).

The general theoretical contribution of this thesis is the longitudinal exposition of the overall organizational use of social media (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2013). The present thesis distinguishes itself by revealing how social media is used over time and that both social media used within the organization and outside of the organizations have organizational implications and therefore also contributes to the IS research field. Furthermore, by acknowledging the disruptive force of organizational media, the challenges and changes that social media brought to the hotel chain have been acknowledged. The theoretical contribution of this thesis
7. CONCLUSIONS

is the description of the ongoing use of organizational social media and the challenges related to social media use. There are earlier theoretical inquiries and descriptions of social media use in organizations but the present thesis differentiates itself by revealing how this use takes place in real-life workplace settings over time. In doing so, the thesis empirically contributes by presenting how organizational social media is affected by individual interpretations and use of social media within the organizations but also by stakeholders’ use of social media outside the organizations.

It should be noted that the study of organizational social media is not just of interest for IS researchers. There are also important insights relevant to other research fields such as organizational studies and service research. From a practitioner’s perspective the thesis contributes by identifying organizational challenges in a real-life context and reveals organizational implications relevant to take into consideration when introducing and using social media in an organizational context.


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REFERENCES


REFERENCES


REFERENCES

544–562.


## Appendix 1 – List of respondents

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
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<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billy</td>
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<td>Carl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
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<td>Karen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 - Interview guide 1

Questions asked at first round of interviews.

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you worked here?
3. What education do you have?
4. How long have you worked in the hotel industry?
5. Tell me about your function in the organization? What are your main responsibilities?
6. When did you start to use social media in your hotel activities?
7. Can you tell me about how you got started?
8. Can you describe how your hotel use social media?
9. Have you gotten any instructions from the hotel chain?
10. What channels do you use? Why did you choose them?
11. What goals would you say that you have with social media marketing?
12. In what ways other than marketing do you use social media?
13. Can you describe your social media activities during an ordinary week?
14. What do you experience as the biggest challenges working with social media?
15. Do you measure your activities or ROI in social media marketing?
16. Did you have any education in social media?
17. How do you handle comments and questions that are asked by customers in social media?
18. Do you use social media in your private life?
19. Is there anything else concerning social media you would like to add?
Appendix 3 - Interview guide 2

Questions asked at follow-up-interviews.

1. Can you describe what has happened with your social media use since we met last time?
2. Do you use the same social media channels?
3. Have there been any changes in you use of social media compared to last year?
4. Have you gotten any new directives from the hotel chain?
5. What have been the greatest challenges of using social media?
6. What have been the greatest advantages of using social media?
7. Have you got any education or training since the last time we met?
8. Are you planning any changes in your social media activities? Can you describe what you experience that you have learned?
Appendix 4 – Example of Field Note

The lounge is quiet and the couches and armchairs are empty. The television behind the receptionist shows destinations where the hotel chain has hotels.

I walk behind the manager through the restaurant and we sit down at one of the tables. He shows me the hotel Instagram account on his IPad and all the hashtags he uses when he posts. He also shows me what hashtags he uses in order to “scan” the internet in order to get information about what guests are saying. He gives me examples of pictures that he has asked the guests to remove or at least remove the hotel chain’s name. Later on, we look at their Facebook page on a large TV screen. They have few followers (less than 100).

We take a break from the interview as one of the receptionists asks for help to manage a guest complaint.

As we walk towards reception, he asks me if I have seen the signs they have put up in order to get guests to follow them on Facebook. I say no and he replies, “Are you blind?”

He shows me the “signs”; they are printed white A4 sheets of paper and the black print says: “PLEASE FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!”
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The worldwide adoption of social media by individuals has created major pressure on organizations to use social media in order to be present where their customers are. The aim of this thesis is to explore why and how organizational social media creates organizational challenges. The empirical setting was mainly an international hotel chain, whose organizational social media introduction and use have been studied over four years in seven European countries. The thesis suggests that there are five main organizational challenges that derive from organizational social media use. These relate to challenges when the nature of social media meets the organizational structure; how organizations and individuals make sense of social media over time; how private use of social media has implications on professional use; how social media creates stretched service encounters; and pseudo-relationships and roboticization of service.