How & Why Social Media is Used in B2B Marketing

A qualitative study seen from marketing managers’ perspective

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Abstract

The digital landscape is rapidly changing and provides business-to-business companies with new digital tools and channels to conduct their marketing work e.g. social media networks. Business-to-consumer firms have been previously research in the topic of social media and digital marketing. However, there is a lack of research in the business-to-business area (Elsevier, 2016). This bachelor thesis aim to contribute to the field of marketing when it comes to social media and digital marketing activities in business-to-business companies. This through examine and describe how marketing practitioners e.g. marketing managers; experience and think about social media adoption and usage for digital marketing purposes. Two research questions are presented in the report; (i) how is social media adopted and used in digital marketing within international business-to-business companies, and for what purpose, according to marketing managers? and (ii) how can social media adoption and usage be improved for marketing purposes in international business-to-business companies, according to marketing managers? To answer the RQs the paper took a qualitative approach through conducting semi-structured interviews with eight Swedish business professionals whom work with social media for marketing purposes. The research concluded that social media is adopted either due to the assumption that B2B firms simply should, or the reckon of its low cost of usage, viral reach, ease of usage and accessibility. The usage itself were conduct marketing activities e.g. market business offerings; but also, to promote the business itself and its accomplishments. Regarding improvements, marketers’ states that digital marketing through social media needs to be further integrated in the overall business and marketing strategy. They also suggest management to provide training and/or education for the employees to increase the efficiency of the usage.

Keywords

Digital Marketing, Social Media, Business-to-Business, Qualitative Research
Thanks

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................................. 5
  1.1 Background ........................................................................................................................................... 5
  1.2 Problem Discussion ............................................................................................................................... 7
  1.3 Purpose & Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 9

2 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................................. 10
  2.1 Background of the Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................... 10
  2.2 Digital Marketing ................................................................................................................................. 10
    2.2.1 Communication ............................................................................................................................... 12
  2.3 Social Media as a Digital Marketing Tool ......................................................................................... 13
    2.3.1 Social Media Adoption & Usage ................................................................................................. 14
    2.3.2 Technology Acceptance Model – TAM ..................................................................................... 15
  2.4 Theoretical Research Model ............................................................................................................... 16

3 Methodology ............................................................................................................................................... 18
  3.1 Research Approach .............................................................................................................................. 18
  3.2 Qualitative Methodology .................................................................................................................... 19
  3.3 Research Design ................................................................................................................................... 20
  3.4 Sampling Process ............................................................................................................................... 21
    3.4.1 Snowball Sampling ...................................................................................................................... 21
    3.4.2 Sample Size ................................................................................................................................. 22
    3.4.3 Sample Selection ......................................................................................................................... 22
  3.5 Research Method .................................................................................................................................. 24
  3.6 Analysis Method ................................................................................................................................... 26
    3.6.1 Analysis Model .............................................................................................................................. 26
  3.7 Quality Criterias .................................................................................................................................... 27
    3.7.1 Credibility ...................................................................................................................................... 27
    3.7.2 Transferability .............................................................................................................................. 28
    3.7.3 Dependability ............................................................................................................................... 28
    3.7.4 Confirmability .............................................................................................................................. 28
  3.8 Ethical Considerations ......................................................................................................................... 29
    3.8.1 Discussion of Methodology Selections ....................................................................................... 29

4 Empirical Findings ..................................................................................................................................... 31
  4.1 Interviewees .......................................................................................................................................... 31
1 Introduction

Following sections aim to provide an introduction of the bachelor thesis. The chapter will provide an overview regarding the research topic; social media and digital marketing; a problem discussion surrounding it that will emerge into the specific purpose of the study and hence present the research questions that the paper will aim to answer.

1.1 Background

The fast growth of digitalization has advanced from what was known as Web 1.0, to what we now refer to as Web 2.0, which is a new digital area, a digital landscape, where online communication has changed from a one-way communication setting (i.e. active sender and passive receiver), to a two-way process (i.e. two interactive parties). The process is now transforming into a network communication process through social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (characterized through content creation by several parties) (Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, 2011; Siamagka, Michaelidou, Christodoulides and Valvi, 2015; Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu and Krush, 2015; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016). Through social media networks we have the possibility to interact and create content with each other wherever and whenever we want. We also have the possibility to share, like and review content that may not even were intended for us in the first place (Safko and Brake, 2009; Agnihotri et al., 2015). Another characteristic of Web 2.0 and the current digital landscape that we are now a part of - is that it goes beyond Internet itself. We are now talking about different digital channels and digital tools such as mobile applications, social media networks, wireless and offline networks (Järvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluoto, and Jayawardhana, 2012).

With the development of the digital landscape and hence the creation of social media networks, there has been an increase of social media usage both in the individual and the business sphere (Järvinen et al., 2012). Today, we spend more time online at social media sites than ever before (Siamagka et al., 2015). Individuals are communicating with their friends and family, watching videos and uploading cover
letters and resumes on social media platforms - basically, sharing large parts of our lives online (Safko and Brake, 2009).

Business-to-consumer (hence referred to as B2C), meaning firms that sell products towards consumers, have been researched before regarding their social media adoption and usage (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012). However, business-to-business (hence referred to as B2B), which includes companies selling and buying to and from other companies, have not been as widely explored as B2C firms (Michaelidou et al., 2011). The studies that have been conducted states that B2B firms have had problems to identify potential benefits (Siamagka et al., 2015), of adopting digital technologies such as social media and issues to integrate the usage of digital tools to their overall business objectives (Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016). Studies have reckoned that there is in fact several positive aspects of adopting and using social media to increase business performance e.g. customer engagement (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016; Guesalaga, 2016), customer satisfaction (Agnihotri et al., 2015), increase sales (Agnihotri et al., 2015) and measure business activities (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016).

One example of a case that have been considered to be successful it the case with the Danish company Maersk Line, a worldwide container shipping company (Katona and Sarvary, 2014). It is a B2B company that increased marketing efficiency and business performance within their marketing and communication activities through social media networks. Their story includes social media network like Facebook where they created the group *Maersk Line* which gained 1 million followers within two years, their Twitter account that generated 40’000 followers and their Instagram account which received 22’000 followers; this with a budget of $100’000. Maersk Lines story regarding their digital marketing activities and presence in social media networks are now known in their industry and beyond it. Maersk Line and their former head of Social Media, Jonathan Whichmann, is now considered to be superstars when it comes to digital marketing work through social media channels (ibid).
Hence, social media as a digital marketing tool for B2B firms have also been seen to have beneficial aspects e.g. reduce costs, easier access to potential target segment and possibility to measure digital marketing activities in a larger extent than offline marketing (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Järvinen and Taiminen, 2016). As mentioned, previous studies regarding social media adoption and usage for various B2B objectives have been conducted through the last decade but not in the same extent as social media in a B2C setting (Siamagka et al., 2015). Research regarding social media and digital marketing has been conducted in both in Europe, Asia and North America (Järvinen et al., 2012; Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). The focus of previous research has been on brand building (Siamagka et al., 2015), customer engagement (Mehmet & Clarke, 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2015; Guesalaga, 2016), improving the sales process (Järvinen and Taiminen, 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2015) and digital marketing (Järvinen et al., 2012; Cawsey & Rowley, 2015; Wang, Pauleen and Zhang, 2016). However, with the digitalization’s development, new studies in the area are required. What characterizes social media today, how it can be used and how business practitioners are using it to communicate has changed as well (Järvinen et al., 2012; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2016).

1.2 Problem Discussion

As mentioned in previous section, former studies has shown that B2B companies are slower in their adoption and implementing processes of social media and digital tools than companies are in the B2C market (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015). Lacka and Chong (2016) discusses that one main determinant of social media and digital adoption among B2B firms is the perceived usefulness - if failing to get a clear picture of how social media can improve the business, less is the chance of its adoption and usage from a beneficial perspective. The study confirms the research by Siamagka et al. (2015) that also concluded that perceived usefulness, as well as the perceived ease of use, are two main factors for successfully adopting social media as well as having the human resources and knowledge of the technology. Järvinen et al. (2012) argues for that an underlying factor for the problematic with adopting social media is that B2B companies realizes that the digitalization is rapidly growing and may want to adopt and implement it, but
they do not know in what way it can be used or how to apply it on their businesses (Järvinen et al., 2012; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). Hence, studies have presented that adopting and use social media for marketing purposes comes with several potential benefits e.g. possibility to measure marketing activities (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012), improving the sales process through marketing (Agnihotri et al., 2015; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016) and in the end increase overall business performance (Järvinen et al., 2012).

As stated, according to previous research, social media usage in can have a positive effect on the firm's overall business performance though e.g. increase sales, reducing costs and create more efficient marketing work (due to measurement practices) (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). By being able to identifying customer activities through collecting, processing and analyzing data, marketing managers can for example create content-driven marketing activities, meaning creating the content accordingly to the customers’ online activities and interests (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015).

There is a lack of research in this topic according to academics (Michaelidou et al., 2011). Academics have for the past five years highlighted that there is a need for further research when it comes to social media and B2B companies (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Järvinen et al., 2012; Siamagka et al., 2015; Agnihotri et al., 2015). As mentioned, more extensive research has been conducted regarding the B2C market (Siamagka et al., 2015). The accessibility of the B2C market gives us a greater understanding of how companies working within it use digital platforms, but the research within the B2B market does not provide us with the same information. Therefore, the B2B organizations that implement social media and digital tools remains in some senses unclear and can hence be further studied (Michaelidou et al., 2011). In a call for paper in the scientific journal Industrial Marketing Management, the researchers Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides, addresses the need for additional research in social media in a B2B context, confirming the need for this paper (Elsevier, 2016). Further, except contributing to the topic of social media and digital marketing in an academic context, this bachelor thesis paper also aim to be found relevant for business practitioners in B2B corporations, that are thinking about adopting social media as a digital marketing tool or who already has adopted it but
not been able to use it in the desired way. This due to that previous studies have shown that the B2B firms (and its employees) perceived usefulness is one of the key factors of using a new technology in a positive (referring to behavior and attitude) and beneficial way (Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016). Hopefully, this paper can present additional ways of adopting and using social media or perhaps improvements for current usage.

### 1.3 Purpose & Research Questions

The aim of the study is to examine, interpret and describe how and why social media is used by marketing managers in international B2B organizations. By interviewing B2B marketing practitioners e.g. marketing managers; the purpose of the study is to describe how social media is adopted and used in digital marketing, and hence could be improved; according to marketing managers. Following questions have been created to reflect the purpose and contribute to the academic field of social media and digital marketing in an international B2B context, and as well as for marketing practitioners using, or aim to use, the technology:

- How is social media adopted and used in digital marketing within international business-to-business companies and for what purpose?

- How can social media adoption and usage be improved for marketing purposes in international business-to-business companies?
2 Theoretical Framework

The chapter aims to present and discuss the selected theoretical framework of the research and define key concepts that will be used in the report. The chapter will start by presenting a background of the theoretical framework and hence present the actual content. In the end of the chapter a theoretical research model will be presented to show how the concepts are linked with each other.

2.1 Background of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework has been selected based on three parameters; (i) relevance to the topic; (ii) publishing date; (iii) and quality ranking (of scientific journals). The reasoning for selecting scientific articles that have been published between 2014-2016 is because they need to be up to date since social media, as a technology, has been developed the last decade due to the digitalization. Hence, scientific articles written before 2014, that has been cited numerous of times and been considered valuable by other academics will be used e.g. the research by Michaelidou et al. (2011) with over 437 citations (to this date). Further, the quality list by Harzing (2016) has been used to ensure the quality of the scientific journals used in the report. The following theoretical section will have a concept centric approach, per the guidelines of Webster and Watson (2002), meaning that the theoretical framework will be discussing concepts rather than discussing the different academics theoretical approaches. The chapter has been divided into two main parts; (i) digital marketing; and (ii) social media as a digital marketing tool. Both main theoretical parts will emerge into smaller sub-sections to create a solid understanding of the theoretical topics.

2.2 Digital Marketing

Marketing is described in several ways. Kotler, Armstrong, Harris and Piercy describes marketing as “the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships to capture value from customers in return” (2013:5). Meaning that the aim for marketers (could also be referred to as marketing managers, marketing coordinator amongst other titles), meaning that professionals working with marketing as a business task, is to create value propositions for their
target market segment and customers, communicate it towards them and to be able to build profitable relationships with them. However, some marketers tend to focus on the product and/or service features instead of the potential value for the customer. When doing so marketers falls in what Kotler et al. (2013) calls marketing myopia. Hence, marketing can be described in other ways depending on who is asked about it. In this study the focus will lay upon the new type of marketing or the extension of marketing, that the digitalization has brought with it – digital marketing (also in some cases referred to as online marketing) (Järvinen et al., 2012). In this case, it must be determined what digital refers to as well as digital marketing. According to Kotler et al. (2013) the digitalization has brought new ways for businesses to create value and marketing their business offerings and this through digital technology or digital tools – hence digital marketing. Digital marketing can also be described as the marketing activities that are performed by or through digital tools and/or channels (Järvinen et al., 2012). The internet itself has been playing a crucial part for the ongoing development of what is called Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (and Web 3.0 when discussing future development and digital landscape) (Kotler et al., 2013; Järvinen et al., 2012). However, internet is not only referring to the technology itself and computers but also the various channels that it is connected to such as wireless networks and mobiles (Järvinen et al., 2012). Former research papers have been mentioning several digital marketing activities possible due to internet e.g. online newsletters, emails, social media networks and websites (Järvinen et al., 2012); and according to Kotler et al. (2013) digital marketing is the marketing form with the most rapid growth.

As mentioned, the digitalization has brought new possibilities to conduct marketing work (Järvinen et al., 2012). Two positive aspects are the fact that there is now a new set of tools that marketers can use for marketing purposes e.g. digital tools such as social media networks; and further that there is an increase in effective measuring marketing activities through the possibility to collect, process, analyze and evaluate digital data (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). Social media as a digital tool or technology for marketing activities have been growing in usage (Wang et al., 2016). Also, the actual usage of social media for digital marketing purposes have in studies shown having beneficial effects in terms of business performance when it comes to reaching marketing objectives and communication issues (ibid).
2.2.1 Communication

An essential part of marketing is how marketers communicates out their intended messages to their targeted market or audiences (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). Communication has been described in the past as a one-way process, meaning that the previous view of the communication process has been from sender (with a message) to receiver (receiving the message). The process however developed by time and the concept of two-way communication process emerged. Defined by the possibility of the receiver responding or giving feedback of the message send by the initial sender, the two-way process where applicable into the new digital landscape as well where information could not only be seen but also comment about (Agnihotri et al., 2015; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). Further, from the digitalization and the Web 2.0, social media networks were created and gave individuals a new way of communicating (Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi and Mälläskä, 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012). Through social media networks individuals could upload information, comment and share it with others time after time (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2015). The communication process can no longer in this sense be seen as a linear process but more of a networking process with information having the potential to going anywhere at any time to anyone (Järvinen et al., 2012).

According to Huotari et al. (2015) the communication aspects within marketing activities has been an increasingly important area for B2B corporations. Further, the communication through social media has provided business professionals to interact and communicate in a more personal way with current and potential customers then they have before through traditional channels e.g. e-mail, websites and newsletters (Järvinen et al., 2012). The former way of interaction was more of an one-way communication process where the customer was passive where they now are interactive with the seller and have a give-and-take relationship between them and the customer can be a part of the actual creation of the marketing content (Huotari et al., 2015; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016). The concept of having the audience being actively part of the content creation is also known as user-generated content, which is one of the characteristics of social media networks (social media characteristics are further discussed in Section 2.3) (Huotari et al., 2015; Järvinen and Taminen, 2016). This have been considered as a positive aspect for the overall marketing objectives –
to build strong customer relationships (Huotari et al., 2015; Kotler et al., 2013; Agnihotri et al., 2015).

2.3 Social Media as a Digital Marketing Tool

Social media is in some cases referred to as a social platform or network, a social technology and in some cases as a digital tool (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015). Depending on the context it could be viewed as a numerous of things. However, social media in a marketing setting is an extension of digital marketing, because of the development of Web 2.0 (Järvinen et al., 2012; Siamagka et al., 2015). Firstly, to describe social media in a marketing context, digital marketing needs to be defined (for further discussion see Section 2.2). Digital marketing is defined as marketing that is conducted through digital channels such as Internet, wireless or mobile networks (Järvinen et al., 2012). Digital tools are further seen as the different technologies, applications or networks, that makes it possible for the marketer to conduct their digital marketing work through e.g. e-mail, websites, online newsletters and social media. Social media is hence seen as an extension of the more traditional digital tools e.g. e-mail, online newsletters and websites (ibid). The technology has its own distinct characteristic of being more interactive in the sense that the content within it can be shared and reviewed in such a large extent that it creates a network of communication - what we refer to as a network communication process (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Järvinen et al., 2012). This while online newsletters are consider as being a one-way communication process since it has the purpose of a sender giving information to a receiver without any concerns of receiving feedback from it (Agnihotri et al., 2015). Further, e-mail for example, is a two-way communication process between a sender and a receiver who share information and feedback between each other (Järvinen and Taiminen, 2016). In this paper, the definition of social media as a content delivery channel will be used, based on the study by Järvinen and Taiminen (2016). Meaning that social media is a digital channel where content (information) can be created, delivered, shared and reviewed; e.g. marketing through LinkedIn, Facebook or YouTube as a few examples (ibid).
2.3.1 Social Media Adoption & Usage

Adopting social media in a B2B company can be beneficial for various reasons e.g. easier to measure marketing activities, targeting market segment and decrease in cost (Järvinen et al., 2012). However, studies have shown that implementing social media in B2B firms are not necessary a straightforward process (Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). By applying the social media adoption process in B2B companies with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM, further discussed in Section 2.3.2), a model which determinants factors for technology acceptance in an enterprise, research has identified the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use as two main barriers for adopting social media in a beneficial way (where perceived usefulness were considered crucial and ease of use not as alarming as the previous mentioned factor) (Cawsey and Rowley, 2015; Siamagka et al., 2015). In another study, conducted by Lacka and Chong (2016), they apply the adoption process to both TAM and Nielsen’s model of Attributes of System Acceptability. They concluded as well that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use where indeed to important determinants for adopting social media, like in other studies, but that there were two additional factors, the usability and utility (factors in Nielsen’s model), were important, like in many other business investment (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). This lead to the assumption that some B2B firms has not yet realized what benefits that social media have for their marketing work (low perceived usefulness) and, how themselves could and/or should use the technology for overall business objectives (low perceived ease of use) (Siamagka et al., 2015). Further, an overall lack of human resources and the company's own competence and knowledge regarding the social media, are other important and noticeable barriers in previous studies. It also indicates, that especially in larger B2B enterprises, higher perceived usefulness exists, but comes with greater resistance from management for adopting and implementing social media in their marketing strategies and objectives (Bernard, 2016; Siamagka et al, 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012).

The companies that have implemented social media in their business work have started to use social media for several different marketing activities e.g. create brand awareness, promote business offerings and increase the interactivity and hence relationship with customers (Järvinen et al., 2012; Agnihotri et al., 2016). However,
implementing the actual usage of social media into the business objectives is occasionally problematic and the usage of social media is simply because they should (and that others use it) (Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). Further, B2B organizations that have adopted and implemented the social media into their marketing work and started to measure the marketing performance using web analytic measurement practices have seen an increase in meeting the marketing objectives (Järvinen and Karjlauoto, 2015; Järvinen and Taaminen, 2016). Also, studies regarding using social media applications (also referred to as apps) for marketing has been beneficial for the overall marketing work (Wang et al., 2016).

### 2.3.2 Technology Acceptance Model – TAM

The Technology Acceptance Model, also referred to as TAM, is a model built upon two main pillars that are set to determine how an organization will accept a new technology e.g. social media networks, CRM software or likely (Siamagka et al., 2015). The pillars include; (i) perceived usefulness; and (ii) perceived ease of use. The two variables are external factors that influences the attitude and the behavioral intention to the usage of the technology which ultimately leads to the actual way that the technology will be used (Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015).

Previous research has used the model when analyzing and discussion marketing and brand building (Siamagka et al., 2015; Lacka and Chong 2016; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). The studies have been conducted both in the Chinese market (Lacka and Chong, 2016), the UK market (Siamagka et al., 2015) and in a cross-sectional study where the French, the UK and the market in USA were included (Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). The model was used to determined key factors for adopting technology and to see how the firm respond to the perceived usefulness and ease of use and what influences the two variables (Siamagka et al., 2015). All the studied concluded that B2B firms’ main barriers when adopting social media and digital tools for brand building or marketing purposes is the perceived usefulness, which is often low, and perceived ease of use, which is often underestimated (Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015; Lacka and Chong, 2016). Meaning, firms tend to believe that social media is an easy way of conducting marketing and brand building activities, while its in fact the in-house knowledge of the actual usage that effects the
adoption in a negative way which lead firms to not be able to reach the full potential benefits of social media usage e.g. increase business performance, sales and marketing efficiency (ibid).

Model - Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

![Technology Acceptance Model](image)

Source: ResearchGate, 2017.

2.4 Theoretical Research Model

Marketing is the concept that concludes how corporations communicates their business offerings and value propositions to their target customers and through that build customer relationships. The traditional term of marketing has now got an extension through the concept of digital marketing through the development of what is called digitalization (discussed in Section 2.1). Digital marketing refers to marketing activities, objectives and strategies that are conducted through digital channels or digital technology e.g. social media networks, websites and online newsletters. As mentioned, social media networks can be used for digital marketing purposes (Järvinen et al., 2012). The theoretical framework shows that B2B firms have started to adopt social media for this reason and hence increased their usage of it. Lacka and Chong (2016), Casey and Rowley (2015) and Siamagka et al. (2015) illustrates how corporations adopts social media as a digital marketing technology into their businesses through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The adoption is according to previous research (Siamagka et al., 2015), effecting how the actual usage of social media is conducted in B2B firms (Section 2.2.2).
Hence, we will argue for that marketing can be seen as the foundation where communication and digital marketing is included, are related to social media. When studying social media through digital marketing (and hence therefor overall marketing) the previous research states that adoption and usage are two aspects that still needs to be studied (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Siamagka et al., 2015; Järvinen et al., 2012; Elsevier, 2016). One of the models that could be applied on social media adoption is TAM (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015; Siamagka et al., 2015).

The concepts discussed is seen to suite the purpose and research questions (RQs) stated in Section 1.3. Following table aims to illustrate the theoretical framework and how the different sections integrates with each other; starting with marketing itself as a foundation.

Model – Theoretical Research Model
3 Methodology

Following chapter will present the selected research methodology and methods - how the research was conducted. The section will start by presenting our own ontological and epistemological positioning, the selected methodology and method choices as well as how the research have worked with ensuring quality in terms of reliability and validity and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

Ontology and epistemology are two central concepts when conducting business research according to Bryman and Bell (2015). Ontology refers to how the researcher view the world while epistemology handles the issue of what knowledge is. When researchers position themselves regarding their ontological and epistemological perspective, how the research will be conducted in terms of methodology and methods are in some extent pre-selected. Meaning that certain positioning’s are more suitable for quantitative research and other for qualitative studies. Hence, it does affect the choices made regarding methods such as quantitative methods through online surveys or in-depth interviews from a qualitative approach - as an example.

When it comes to the ontological view of this study, the perspective undertaken was from a constructivist positioning which means that the world is a social construction and a place that is undergoing constant change by time by individuals (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The speed of development of social media is very rapid which motivates us to apply this positioning to our study, as well as the term of marketing is something that during the previous half century has been constructed and developed and is today part of overall businesses.

From the epistemological point of view, interpretivism was the positioning selected and appropriate for the research, which has a focus on interpretation and understanding. It is suitable since we wanted to understand how marketing managers at international B2B companies see the marketing world and thinks of digital marketing, and social media usage, with the realization that their words would be interpreted by ourselves and hence affected of our own point of view, knowledge and
experiences, even though we tried to remain as objective as possible (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The research has been taken an abductive reasoning due to its ontological and epistemological approach and hence reasoning of the selected topic of the study. An abductive reasoning has been known as the third type of reasoning in research when it is neither deductive (theory testing) or inductive (generating theory) (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Abductive reasoning has the characteristic of being an ongoing process, or a puzzle as Bryman and Bell (2015) calls it. This research has been going back and forward from initial thoughts from noticing and if some B2B companies did not seem to have a strategy when using social media. This thought was later tested when conducting research of scientific articles with the keywords; (i) social media; and (ii) business-to-business. After finding several articles regarding the subject, we conducted a pilot interview with a product manager who worked with marketing at an international corporation. Both the interview and a few academic papers supported our initial thought, and yet some papers said the opposite (Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). Hence, we decided to conduct this paper in particular – to keep puzzling and hence having an abductive reasoning. Due to the ontological and epistemological perspective, and the abductive reasoning, which is according to Bryman and Bell (2015) three suitable parameters for selecting qualitative methodology as a research approach – we decided to take their advice and do the same – conducting a qualitative research regarding social media usage and adoption and digital marketing through the perspective of marketing managers.

3.2 Qualitative Methodology

The aim of this paper was to study how and why marketing managers at international B2B organizations adopt and uses social media for their marketing work and what potential positive and/or negative aspects could occur from the implementation and usage. To gain that knowledge and understanding of how to use social media in marketing and for what purpose, a qualitative methodology approach was selected. A qualitative approach is suitable if the purpose of the study is to interpret and understand the perception of individuals and collecting in-depth, thick and rich findings rather than generalizable data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). By selecting the
qualitative methodology as a research approach the words of the interviewees have been studied and interpreted. Studying words rather than numbers is another typical characteristic for qualitative research (ibid). This study focused on collecting that in-depth knowledge and understanding by interviewing and hence interpreting marketing managers own thoughts and experience regarding their social media usage.

The study aimed to describe how social media are utilized in digital marketing according to the marketing managers that are using the technology. Previous studies regarding the topic of social media in business-to-business contexts have been studied from several geographical and market perspectives e.g. size based, national or international businesses, B2B organizations in Asia, the UK and the USA amongst others (Wang et al., 2016; Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). The previous research has also been conducted from both qualitative and quantitative methodology approaches (Järvinen et al., 2012; Siamagka et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016).

3.3 Research Design

The study has taken a case study as a research design since the research did delimitate itself to study one type of business professionals in a single context – marketing managers in Swedish international B2B companies (referred to as Company A and Company Y in this report). Yin (2003) refers to case studies as the studies that conduct the research at a single locations, company, or person. The most common association of what a case is, is due to its geographical setting, in this case a business corporation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). By selecting a case study as a research design, we choose a design that were aiming to study one single case intensely and in detailed – which suites also or purpose of gaining in-depth understanding and rich knowledge and our selected method (see Section 3.4) (ibid). There are also different types of case studies, which representative studies is the type of case study selected for this research. Meaning that the research studied common aspects (representative) e.g. digital marketing activities through social media usages (Yin, 2003; Bryman and Bell, 2015).
3.4 Sampling Process

The sampling process of this report has been according to what is known as purposive sampling - a type of nonprobability sampling (Bryman and Bell, 2015:429). Purposive sampling are conducted when the researcher does not aim to select the sampling frame randomly, instead the sampling process is a strategic matter of selections. These choices of sampling aim to fit the purpose of the study and hence the research question(s) to provide suitable and relevant material for the section of empirical findings (Ahrne and Svensson, 2017). Meaning that the researcher select their sampling and in this case, potential interviewees, based upon created criteria that tend to provide information to the research questions to ensure that it will be answered (ibid). With our research questions, the focus on social media usage in marketing activities by marketing managers; we interviewed marketing managers that were currently using social media for marketing purposes and hence have done so for the last two years. Another criterion regarding the job title and the job tasks of the interviewees is that we also selected to interview people with other titles than marketing manager. This due to that other job titles might also include the task of working with social media for marketing purposes e.g. product managers and digital develop managers (which are two other titles the interviewees have in this report). Another criterion for the interviewees was the ability to conduct the interview in English due to be able to transcribe the interviews later without having to translate the interviews from Swedish to English which could potentially lead to translation issues and non-correct information.

3.4.1 Snowball Sampling

This study has characteristics of the purposive sampling method, snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is described as a snowball (hence the name) that rolls from one person to another and increases it size (Ahrne and Svensson, 2017; Bryman and Bell, 2015). This is translated into how the researcher begin to select an interviewee (due to his/her knowledge regarding the subject) and interview others that the first or second interview recommend, to increase the number of empirical findings (the snowball) (Ahrne and Svensson, 2017). In this case, we started by using our own contacts and access to an organization where we are aware of that they work with social media for marketing purposes. The first interviewee provided us with a list of
potential additional interviewees that would be suitable for the study. We made contact to all the potential interviewees on that list, presented our study and that their participation would be valuable both for us as researcher, but also hopefully for the academic field and for business practitioners. To get rid of potential doubts and due to ethical considerations, we explained directly the issue of anonymity – which covers name, personal data and the interviewees work place. The only thing that will be mentioned in the report is their work title. Meaning we were only interested in the interviewees thoughts and experience rather than who they are, as stated previously in this report.

### 3.4.2 Sample Size

Further, the issue of sample size is widely discussed in literature and there is in some sense problematic when it comes to qualitative research. As Bryman and Bell (2015) states that when theoretical saturation is achieved, meaning that no further information can be provided, the sampling size is large enough. This research aimed to interview at least ten business practitioners according to our criteria of work title, work tasks, minimum years of using social media and workplace characteristics. However, the research concludes eight interviews. Further, we would claim that in this case that is not an issue due to the length and the substance of the interviews (all interviews were approximately between 1 hour to 1 and a half hour). This is concluded due to that we see patterns in the transcription and nuances, also that not all interviewees agree with each other and have different perspective in certain areas of the topic. Meaning that the empirical findings provides rich and in-depth information that we aimed to find and that we received a wider spectrum of thought and experience regarding the matter which we conclude makes the report interesting.

### 3.4.3 Sample Selection

The overall population for this study was marketing managers in Swedish-based, international, B2B companies. This due to that previous research in the field have been focusing on market such as China, the UK and the USA (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). The closest research that have been widely accepted (based on citations by others in the field) is the studies conducted by Järvinen and his colleagues in Finland (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen
and Taminen, 2016; Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). Hence, we have reckoned that previous research that has been used in the theoretical framework, have been targeting international B2B firms as well, which is the line of research we would like to make contribute to with this study. Hence, the sampling in parallel with the population description has been to interview marketing managers and/or practitioners that have marketing tasks in their work description, that are currently using social media for marketing purposes (and have done so for at least the last two years), that work in Swedish-based, international B2B companies.

The sample frame was selected based on access, meaning utilizing the contacts that we already should ensure that we would be able to interview as many marketing managers as possible. However, we did realize that we could interview several others, but based on our own time schedule we aimed for interviewing ten individuals that suited or sampling variables and strived to achieve theoretical saturation, meaning to reach the feeling of that there is no more additional information to get (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In the end, we managed to interview eight business persons, this due to not realizing the problematics and hence risks of time and schedule changes.

Further, the interviewees were working in two different companies, which can lead to the assumption that their information alone is not enough to explain how and why social media is used. However, the aim is as mentioned, not to make any generalization of the issue but rather show different nuances of how these marketers thinks and have experienced the usage of social media for marketing purposes. Also, the issue of theoretical saturation is also something that can be discussed. We realize that more information would be possible to gain if interviewing marketing manager from different markets and companies. Hence, we believe that theoretical saturation at our two companies have been achieved based on the experience of gaining already existing empirical findings (from the first interviews) from the last interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Following table shows the various interviewees (or informants as they also can be called), the company, when the interview were conducted and the time of it.
However, due to ethical considerations (further discussed in Section 3.8) the real name of the interviewees and the company that they work at will be anonymous and hence all the names are fabricated.

Table - Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Work Title / Company*</th>
<th>Day of Interview</th>
<th>Time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magnus</td>
<td>Product Manager / Company X</td>
<td>10th of April</td>
<td>1 hour 33 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Product Specialist Manager / Company X</td>
<td>12th of April</td>
<td>1 hour 14 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Marketing Manager / Company X</td>
<td>22th of April</td>
<td>1 hour 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikael</td>
<td>Digital Developer Manager / Company X</td>
<td>4th of May</td>
<td>56 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>Product Manager / Company Y</td>
<td>4th of May</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Marketing Coordinator / Company Y</td>
<td>4th of May</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par</td>
<td>Product Development Manager / Company Y</td>
<td>7th of May</td>
<td>49 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Digital Content Manager / Company Y</td>
<td>7th of May</td>
<td>52 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Name and company name are fabricated due to ethical reasons. See Section 3.8.

3.5 Research Method

As a method selection in this qualitative research, we have selected to conduct interviews to be able to ask the questions of how and why, to reveal the meaning and reasoning by social media adoption and usage according to marketing managers at international B2B companies. We decided to aim for face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with all interviewees (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Meaning that we wanted to physically meet the interviewees and creating one interview guide, applicable on all interviews (see Appendix A – Interview Guide). This to be able to not only listening but to view and interpret face and body language. Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2012) discusses the various advantages and disadvantages of conducting face-to-face interviews contra phone interviews in their study. Even though phone interviews have been increasing and they have a decrease in cost, it is still argued for that the physical setting and ability of the participants seeing each other is a strong advantage. The possibility to see face and body language is a valuable characteristic (Irvine et al., 2012). Another advantage of face-to-face interviews is according to
Harvey (2011) that it usually provides more nuanced and deep answers than what answers through phone interviews would have.

Hence, not all interviews were able to be conducted face-to-face in a physical setting, meaning that some of the interviews were made via Skype. Even though our goal were face-to-face, we had to accept that some of the marketers we wanted to interview did not have that possibility. Four interviews were made face-to-face at the interviewees company. In advanced we created an interview guide to ensure that we collected relevant information as well as aiming for the same basic information from all interviewees (see Appendix, A. Interview Guide) (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The study had four main parameters to follow when selecting interviewees as the targeted company; (i) marketing manager title (or other title with marketing work task); (ii) works continuously with social media for marketing purposes; (iii) work with marketing internationally; and (iv) speaks English. This since we aimed to study marketing managers who works with social media, and further that feels comfortable of conducting interviews in English. The importance of language is due to that we did not want any translations errors in our reports. However, the negative aspect of conducting interviews in English with individuals which have Swedish as their native tongue, is that they might have felt even more relaxed or been given more personalized answers if the interview were conducted in Swedish.

Hence, the interviews started by explaining the purpose of the study, how it aimed to contribute to the academic and practice field of marketing. We continued by explaining how we would record, transcribe and handle the material as well as the ethical considerations regarding anonymity of the interviewees identities and workplace (Bryman and Bell, 2015). After presenting previous mentioned facts, we started to record and once again, on recording, explaining the subject and the issue of anonymity. The interviews took approximately around an hour. Some of the interviews took a bit longer time, up to one and a half hour and the shortest around 45 minutes. The reasoning, except that we felt that the interviews provided new and interesting information, was that we wanted to ensure that we got in-depth knowledge and understanding. We finished the interviews when we felt that the interview itself had reached theoretical saturation, meaning that there was nothing
more to add in terms of new information from the participant (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

### 3.6 Analysis Method

The report will only use primary data, meaning that all material presented in Section 4 and used in Section 5, have been collected by ourselves through the semi-structures interviews that were conducted (Bryman and Bell, 2015). After interviewing eight different marketing practitioners that suited our sampling variables (Section 3.4.3), we had eight audio files with almost 9 hours of material. The audio files were after he conducted interview transcribed. Meaning that the sound was transformed into text to make it easier for us to handle the material and hence code it (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Ahrne and Svensson, 2017). The process of coding the material were in the beginning confusing due to the amount of text that we had after transcribing, what Kvale and Brinkmann refers to as the “thousand pages’ question” (2009:203).

After the transcription were accomplished we started to code the transcript by drawing keywords from the transcript e.g. *generation, training* and *easy* (Ahrne and Svensson, 2017). From those keywords, we tried to draw relations to come up with overall themes that also would suit the selected theoretical frame, for example, the three-previous mentioned keyword could be drawn to the problematics in the adoption process which hence will be included in one of the themes in Section 4.5 called *Improvement of Social Media Adoption & Usage* (ibid).

#### 3.6.1 Analysis Model

The model below visualizes how the transcribing and coding were conducted. First, we conducted the interviews and recorded them. Afterwards we took the audio file and transcribed it i.e. put the sound into text. When the transcription was clear we read through the material and categorized the interview in keywords that we later made relations between to be able to make overall themes. When constructing the themes, it was important for us to go back to the theoretical framework to see that the themes would be understandable in comparison with the theoretical sections. After
the themes were created highlighted all the material based on which theme it would
go into as well as selecting suitable quotes to provide examples of experience and
thoughts from the marketers.

Model – Analysis Process

![Diagram of Analysis Process]

3.7 Quality Criteria

To ensure that we had the proper quality of the study, we have aimed to follow the
guiding principles or concepts, discussed by Bryman and Bell (2015). The authors
discuss both the concepts of reliability and validity and hence transforming the two
into four different concepts that reflects the qualitative methodology approach;
credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability. By discussing each
principle, the study aimed to show potential readers that the research has been
conducted in a professional and suitable manner that any research would follow or
aim to follow.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined by Bryman and Bell (2015) as the substance in the findings of a
research project. One way to ensure to have a credible result from the findings of a
research project is to have the findings verified by the respondents - the participants
of the interviews in our case (Tracy, 2010). This approach is called respondent
validation and is according to Bryman and Bell (2015) a practical way to make sure
that what was transcribed from the interview reflects what the participant meant to
say. After our interviews, had been made and transcribed the participants were given
the results for them to give us feedback and approval to use it in our research. By
using this approach, we believed that the credibility of this research will be higher.
3.7.2 Transferability
Transferability is defined by Bryman and Bell (2015) as if the findings from a research project can been applied to other contexts and situations as well. When performing a qualitative research the focus lays upon acquiring depth within a desired area and the findings of the study are often connected to that certain area. Quantitative research on the other hand, usually put the focus on breadth and the findings may therefore be easier to generalize (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It is suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015) that when performing a qualitative research, a guideline of the study should be to create a in depth description of the phenomenon that can be used as a database for both academics and practitioners. The database can then be interpreted through their eyes and they can evaluate if it fits with their topic and can be transferred to the area that they are researching. The main goal of this research was to gain a in depth understanding the adoption and usage of social media in a B2B context according to marketing managers. It may be difficult to generalize the result of due to the scope of interviews. However, the findings may be used as a foundation for ethnographic research to examine if there is a connection between theory and practice - what marketing managers say they do and what is being done. Further, the aim of this study is to present nuances rather than generalizable explanations.

3.7.3 Dependability
Dependability is defined by Bryman and Bell (2015) as if the findings in a research project are likely to be the same if the study would be carried out at another time. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggests that the dependability can be increased if all the steps in the research project is monitored by auditors who can observe and eliminate mistakes and suggest improvements. This bachelor thesis was audited by our supervisor and examiner through several steps and with their feedback the quality of the research increases along with the dependability.

3.7.4 Confirmability
Confirmability is defined by Bryman and Bell (2015) as if the values of the researcher has affected the research in a way so it cannot be neutral. Bryman and Bell (2015) says that to be completely objective as a researcher is almost impossible,
but Guba and Lincoln (cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015) suggests that external auditors can be used as a devil’s advocate whom can confirm that the research is not biased. Since this research was co-created by two researchers and has been shaped after receiving feedback from our supervisor, examiner and opponents, the risk of a single biased result is lower.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The issue of ethics is something that has been having an increase of its awareness. Arguably, ethical and moral issues are relevant and of importance of any research when it comes to its validity and reliability, but also when studying any social context - in this case a B2B context where the study is reflecting upon human actions. Bryman and Bell (2015) mentions that researchers need to consider how the people whom participates in the research should be treated. The participants of this research have been treated with an anonymous approach to encourage an honest and open discussion during the interviews.

3.8.1 Discussion of Methodology Selections

There are a few arguments regarding why a person not should use a qualitative approach when conducting business research. One argument is that qualitative research cannot contribute with any real data that can be generalized into larger context (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This due to that qualitative methods such as ethnographies or interviews cover a small context or a small number of individuals, participating in the research in contrast to quantitative research. When conducting online surveys for example as a quantitative method a larger sample is often use (larger than the sampling in a qualitative research). Another criticism is that it is too subjective since the focus lies upon collecting words rather than quantifying numbers (ibid). Since qualitative research demands that the researcher him or herself participates when collecting the empirical findings, it can hence be argued that the interpretation by the researcher and hence him or her perception, might not be in line with the actual happenings/sayings.

Further, by having interviews as a selected method, it could be argued that interviews will not receive the whole truth and is subjective as well as non-generalizable (ibid).
Criticism goes both direction in terms of interviews, the interviewer could be claimed to steering the interviewee in the direction desired and suited for the research and that the interviewees responses might not be truthful and/or not be cohesive with what is happening in the context (ibid). Hence, this paper does not aim to be the one truth of how social media is adopted and used in international B2B organizations. The research desire to be a contribution to an existing field and provide additional nuances of marketing, when it comes to the topic of social media. However, we hope that the conclusion of the report could serve as a potential foundation for further research – both quantitative and qualitative. Our own suggestion for further research in this field would be to conduct an ethnographic study in terms of participating and observing what marketers do when conducting digital marketing activities through social media.

Hence, regarding this study’s subjectivity, we argue that asking questions through surveys or interviews (both quantitative and qualitative) is a good way to gain understanding regarding a phenomenon. However, the possibility to ask follow-up questions, clarification questions and hence asking why is even better to gain that in-depth knowledge and rich understanding that the report desire (Irvine et al., 2012; Berger, 2015). This we would say is easier from a qualitative approach. Regarding having interviews as a selected method, the report has as mentioned been using semi-structured interviews and an interview guide as an interview tool. By having this type of structure, the interview has already a predetermined through on the overall topics and certain questions that we wanted to address (Bryman and Bell, 2015). By asking this open questions and adding follow up questions and the why – we seek deeper knowledge, without steering the interviewee in an unsuitable direction (Berger, 2015). This also to make the interviewee explain their saying and give examples to access truthful and fruitful empirical material.
4 Empirical Findings

In following section the empirical findings will be presented that has been collected through conducting eight semi-structured interviews. The chapter will start by presenting an overview of the interviewees and further present the material in following topics; (i) Digital Marketing; (ii) Adopting Social Media; (iii) Using Social Media for Marketing Purposes.

4.1 Interviewees

The interviewees, also known as informants, that have been selected for this report, are all working with social media for marketing purposes. The interviewees come from two different companies, hence referred to as Company X and Company Y. However, the focus will not lie upon the different companies, but on the common factors that all the informants in this report work with marketing tasks in international B2B corporations. As stated in Section 3.4, one of the criterions was also that the participants would have been working with social media for marketing purposes at least for two years. This was valuable in terms of being able to provide concrete examples and identify how the digital development in terms of marketing have been experienced. To view the interviewees, their work title we refer to see Table - Interviewees. We will hence highlight once again that all the names are fabricated due to ethical reasons. The references will hence provide information of the fabricated name, the interview and the date of it.

4.2 Digital Marketing

The essence of marketing is to communicate what a firm's product and/or service can provide for their customers (Marie, 2017). Traditional marketing has previously been conducting during fairs and exhibitions by marketers working with B2B (Magnus, 2017; Andreas, 2017). Today marketing activities are conducted both through the traditional channels e.g. fairs and exhibitions; as well as through digital channels e.g. websites, online newsletters and social media networks (ibid).

“Some years ago, we showcased our products only using fairs and exhibitions and that was sufficient. But in recent years we have seen a decrease in the number of
visitors. There are more efficient and cost saving digital solutions nowadays to reach out to potential customers and we have needed to adjust to this reality.” – Andreas, 2017.

Digital marketing is today a must for international corporations, but the digital channels and technology of conducting the digital work varies between corporations and business fields (Magnus, 2017; Marie, 2017; Andreas, 2017). Conservative business fields such as industrial ones e.g. steel industry, material handling industry and concrete industry; in almost every case, marketing work is conducted through webpages and online newsletters, but have not yet adopted newer technologies such as social media networks (Marie, 2017; Andreas, 2017).

"'Social media is a topic that we often discuss during our management meetings. However, when someone pops the questions it is like an elephant walked into the room. Nobody wants to touch it. It is a new and moderately unexplored area in our industry, and maybe that’s why people just want to sweep it under the rug.” – Andreas, 2017.

Just a decade ago, e-mail and websites with business offering information were enough as marketing activities (Magnus, 2017). Five years ago, when marketers started to push on the importance of digital development at management level they did not see it as necessary (Marie, 2017). Today everyone needs to be digital, otherwise they don’t count (Marie, 2017; Magnus, 2017; Sara, 2017; Kim, 2017).

“It just itches in me. How the industry can be so slow on realizing the benefits of digital marketing. I don’t get it. Three years ago, it wasn’t considered important. Suddenly it should all happen at once.” – Marie, 2017.

Kim (2017) although says that sometimes this ‘necessity’ is not recognized by everyone:

“This position and area is new, and some people at my work questions the need for a Digital Content Manager. I bet those people were the same ones the doubted the Internet.” – Kim, 2017.
Digital marketing could be an extension of digital marketing, but in many cases digital marketing is the way of conducting marketing work amongst with the traditional way (Magnus, 2017; Nina, 2017). However, the benefits of digital marketing such as decrease cost and easy access has created problems in the actual marketing work (Sara, 2017). While both individuals, private persons, and businesses receive more information than ever, the importance of content have increased as well (Sara, 2017; Marie, 2017). People have become more sensitive towards information and their expectations have increased on the marketing work they are exposed to (Sara, 2017). People, and hence businesses, don’t want to work to get information, they want to have it served (ibid). Further, this becomes problematic since marketers tends to forget about the value of proper content when conducting digital marketing work (Marie, 2017; Kim, 2017). Today marketers often share the business offerings features and accomplishments rather than focusing on the value proposition itself – what the actual product and/or service do for the customer (ibid). One of the challenges that marketers has today is to be able to capture interest and being noticed in an ocean of information, hence the importance of value and content (Marie, 2017).

“Marketers need to go back to basic. What is our target market? And what value can we offer them?” – Marie, 2017.

“Sometimes it feels like content has just been added because that is what companies should do and not with a clear intention of what it actually brings to the customer.” – Kim, 2017.

Marketing is today conducted through the traditional platforms such as fairs and exhibitions (Magnus, 2017; Andreas, 2017). Hence, the digital marketing includes both marketing the own business offerings as well as promoting marketing activities such as those exhibitions and fairs a company attends to. The reasoning why the traditional marketing activities still exist is international B2B is due to that the global digital development differs between markets. Even though the western world has been digitalized rapidly, certain markets e.g. India and African countries; don’t have the same possibilities for conducting and receiving digital marketing (Magnus, 2017). Another problematic with digital marketing occurs when marketing towards countries with laws and regulation regarding censor (Sara, 2017). Marketing work
must at this point go back to the basics again, identifying what the target market and how can they be reached. Digital marketing might be described as viral but is however still not accessible for everyone (ibid). Hence, digital marketing is a phenomenon that will in the future just be the typical way of marketing (Mikael, 2017). The digital development pushes companies and challenge them to try new ways to reach their customers. Social media is one of those digital marketing channels (Mikael, 2017; Pär, 2017). The low cost of using social media, the viral effect of it and hence the easiness of using it is three variables for using the technology. Still, how to conduct marketing work through those networks is still under trial since there is not ‘one’ right way to use it (Mikael, 2017).

4.3 Adopting Social Media

When a company decides to adopt any new technology, it is determined on management level (Mikael, 2017; Magnus, 2017; Andreas, 2017; Nina, 2017; Pär, 2017). The management decides after evaluating if a technology seems to be beneficial and for what purposes. In the case of social media adoption is does however differ (Magnus, 2017). The digitalization has developed with such a speed that management decides to adopt it without integrate it fully in, for example, the marketing strategy (Sara, 2017; Kim, 2017). The adoption becomes a direct adoption, occasionally without any explanation of why and how (ibid). The fast decisions and lack of integration leads to problematics when it comes to the actual usage (Sara, 2017; Magnus, 2017; Nina, 2017).

“Management takes all decisions about new things. Adopting social media is therefore nothing we decide. Of course, we can come with input about it, but in the end the management, the top level, decides.” - Magnus, 2017

Magnus (2017) continues that social media has however been adopted rather smooth. He states that the technology’s presence in the everyday life can be one of the reasons why it went so easy then Company X adopted it approximately 4 years ago. Marie however, does not agree. She states that Company X was not interested in putting more efforts on digital marketing activities at all and claims that adopting social media and realizing the possible benefits of social media, is something the company and hence the management just the last year reckoned (Marie, 2017).
One factor that creates issues is the assumption that social media is easy and something everyone can use (Mikael, 2017; Magnus, 2017). However, there is a difference between using social media private and for business purposes (Sara, 2017). The first issue between of regarding social media as an easy technology adoption is that not everyone uses it private and has therefore no clue on how to use it properly and beneficial when conducting business (Sara, 2017). However, Marie (2017) states that everyone in fact is online, even though not every single person is on social media networks today, they will probably be in the next five years.

“Everyone is online today. We work online, we watch YouTube videos with kittens online and we talk to our friends and family online. It’s really insane but – it’s the truth!” – Marie, 2017.

Another aspect of adopting social media is that there is a difference between generations when it comes to knowledge of the technology; the once that grew up in the digital era; and the once who saw the development before the internet bloom in the 21st century (Magnus, 2017). The adoption process of most technologies has been having some type of training, but the adoption of social media into the business work did not (ibid). The lack of training and education, together with the lack of integration with overall business and marketing strategy makes it difficult for a proper adoption (Sara, 2017; Magnus, 2017). Further, it creates problems with usage contra responsibility, when the lack of integration in strategy more than often affects the integration in activities and further marketing tasks in a negative way (Sara, 2017).

“With no real explanation of why we use it, social media tends to fall between two chairs. No one has an actual responsibility for it.” – Sara, 2017.

4.4 Using Social Media for Marketing Purposes
Social media networks can be used for several marketing activities, the most traditional one, marketing the own business offerings is one of the most common (Magnus, 2017: Kim, 2017). Companies can today share business propositions through social media networks such as LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook (ibid). Another aspect of marketing through social media is to market the own company,
meaning creating brand awareness (Marie, 2017; Pär, 2017). Further, these two aspects that can be described as two separate activities with various objectives, shares through the digital marketing and hence marketing through social media, common and integrated goals. Through the social media usage and marketing conducted there, brand building and marketing business offerings goes hand in hand. By sharing on social media, communication goes viral and affects both businesses and private persons’ perception of the company and their business offerings (ibid).

Using social media for marketing purposes are mainly for three reasons; (i) it’s cheap; (ii) its viral; and (iii) it’s easy. International company which have a need for global reach can benefit from all three variables (Mikael, 2017). However, conservative businesses can have problematics with (as stated in Section 4.2 and Section 4.3) with the easiness of it (ibid). Further, as Sara (2017) states: “Of course social media should be used in marketing, but as a complement to other marketing tools.”; meaning that even if there are hard evidence of social media’s benefits, it should not be used as the solo marketing tool in international B2B. For example, social media should be a complement to increase a B2B firms rate in various SEOs (search engine optimization) and a complement to the firm’s own website (ibid). Mikael (2017) sees the social media opportunities differently and states: “Social media is the digital future. Why? Because this generation is online on those channels around the clock!”; Magnus supports the claim by identifying the younger generation as main users of social media and hence the future generation for business, concluding that social media is and will be of importance.

The accessibility of social media is something that is highlighted when adopting the technology (Mikael, 2017). However, the actual important of accessing it anywhere, is divided:

“The best thing of social media is that you can work from home, your office or on vacation. With just a ‘click’ you can do anything.” – Mikael, 2017.

“Social media can be a fantastic tool, easy accessible from anywhere on the planet just by using your phone. But on the other hand, it can affect your personal life, since social media tends to be a huge part of everybody’s life these days. Maybe it is a
good thing to be able to leave work at work and separate private-life and business-life? ” – Pär, 2017.

“Separating my business-self and my personal-self is not hard. I would never integrate my business life with my Facebook page or scroll down on LinkedIn to see the latest news.” – Marie, 2017.

B2B firms today tend to use social media with the assumption that it is just as easy to market themselves through social media as it is to use the technology in the private life. Uploading, sharing and commenting are done daily. However, the valuable content of marketing work that are uploaded through social media is not as continuously used (Marie, 2017). Marketers tend to have a lot of peaks in their digital work through social media and at occasions with no value-based content. Instead of conducting content-driven marketing, which should be utilized when using social media, product and service features and corporation accomplishment are more usually to see uploaded by marketers (ibid).

Mikael (2017) outlines the various aspects of the marketing work conducted in his firm through social media. Whenever there is a new product release, a fair that has been visited or an automation service provided to an existing machine, they let their market know through social media updates. Through the usage of social media, they can monitor what their different customers are interesting in to create future content that would be relevant for them. Another aspect of using social media that is beneficial is the transparency. Transparency and the amount of information that is accessible for customers looks good according to Mikael. Further, the possibility to use that transparency to see competitors’ propositions and business offerings create another competitive advantage, if the information is utilized in the correct way (ibid). Further, the usage of social media for marketing activities decreases the distance between seller and buyer, which according to Magnus (2017), is one of the cornerstones in marketing. Hence, the closeness of the relation erases the line between marketers and salesmen in some extent, making it more common today to have employees with both sales and marketing within their work tasks (ibid).
The issue of using social media to create content is somewhat two-faced (Marie, 2017). While some marketers tend to forget the vary basics of marketing e.g. value proposition and customer relationships; other sees social media usage in marketing as a great opportunity to utilize content-driven marketing. Through using measurement practices such as Google Analytics or the basic measurement tool of Facebook, marketers can create content, designed to be based on customers’ interest and needs (Marie, 2017; Nina, 2017). However, B2B organizations, especially in the industrial sector, have a long way to go before content-driven marketing will become the norm rather than the exception (Marie, 2017; Magnus, 2017).

4.5 Improving Social Media Adoption & Usage

Social media is still something considered to be new in industrial B2B corporations (Marie, 2017; Sara, 2017; Andreas, 2017; Nina, 2017; Pär, 2017; Kim, 2017). The extent of information that management and employees receiving of ‘how good it is’ is more than enough. However, how to adopt the technology with current business and marketing strategies have been problematic and will probably be for the next few years (Mikael, 2017; Andreas, 2017). Further, there are several possibilities of changing the adoption and actual usage of social media to increase its productivity and efficiency.

Pär (2017) says that social media can open doors that were closed or that the company did not even know existed. He says that he has acknowledged potential prospects and clients just by being exposed to customer’s social media activities online. The management need to have an open mind thinking and accept the rapid and ever changing business environment (ibid).

Kim (2017) believes that the companies that adopts social media strategies, especially in the B2B markets, will have an advantage over their competitors since there’s a trend for more activities online on these platforms. She also says that since the platforms for social media get more user-friendly interfaces, there may be a boom in the adoption and usage in the upcoming years (ibid).

Sara (2017) states that the most important aspect of improving the adoption process of social media and make the usage of it more profitable is to put more focus on
integrating it with the overall business strategy, the marketing strategy and the marketing activities and objectives. She feels that today there is a big gap of knowledge amongst employee regarding the knowledge of how and why social media should be used. She also believes that this issue goes for the management at most B2B as well. Management want to adopt social media and start using it but they can’t define the actual purpose of it. This also seen in the lack of established management and responsibility regarding the marketing work. More than often marketing tasks involving social media tends to be shipped around marketing staff without anyone having the main responsibility. The lack of responsibility leads to non-consistent marketing flow and the quality of the marketing work (ibid).

Magnus (2017) continues with highlighting the importance of realizing that social media is not an easy tool to use for everyone. Certain industries could have marketers working with digital marketing for a long time, but not through social media networks and can hence occasionally not implement their current knowledge and skills of marketing into the technology. He continues with discussing the issue of generation based knowledge, stating that it is easy to define social media as an easy digital tool, when it is for many, rather hard. Social media demands training and education and could be managed by the younger generation and/or also the once educated in digital marketing or media and communication could work as guides for the rest of the business team. (Magnus, 2017). Nina (2017) although thinks that the older generations are ready:

“I think it is easier to implement a social media marketing strategy today than 5 years ago, Age may of course be a barrier since the older generations are used to other tools, but mention anyone that does not have a smart phone today? I think it can be a question of fear of the unknown too.” – Nina, 2017.
5 Analysis

Following chapter will present an analysis based on the theoretical framework and the empirical findings regarding the topic social media and digital marketing. The section has been divided into three part; (i) Polarization Amongst Marketers; (ii) Communication & Information; and (iii) Integration. The chapter will finish with an overall discussion.

5.1 Polarization Amongst Marketers

Marketers are divided by their thoughts and experience of social media adoption and usage in digital marketing, at several levels and could be seen to be part of two different groups; hence the name of the title – polarization amongst marketers. As concluded from the empirical findings, there are those marketers who welcomes the digitalization and the new ways of digital marketing work that comes with it and identifies possible benefits, current and future once; but also, those who admits to the digitalization potential benefits but identifies B2B firms’ current problematics of adopting and using digital technologies e.g. adopting and using social media networks for digital marketing activities.

“Social media is the digital future. Why? Because this generation is online on those channels around the clock!” – Mikael, 2017.

“Of course, social media should be used in marketing, but as a complement to other marketing tools.” – Sara, 2017.

Some marketers’ states that the digitalization and hence the usage of social media for marketing activities brings opportunities that could not be reach in any other way e.g. instant communication, access and a wider spread. They believe that digitalization and using these new digital tools comes with beneficial aspects for the business, such as the technology is easy for to use, this due to that it is used in the business practitioners’ private life as well (Mikael, 2017). Another aspect is that it is viral and can reach a larger audience (ibid), where it’s easier to connect to potential customers which is something that was not possible through the traditional marketing channels e.g. fairs, exhibition and websites (Magnus, 2017; Andreas, 2017).
“Some years ago, we showcased our products only using fairs and exhibitions and that was sufficient. But in recent years we have seen a decrease in the number of visitors. There are more efficient and cost saving digital solutions nowadays to reach out to potential customers and we have needed to adjust to this reality.” – Andreas, 2017.

Andreas (2017) has acknowledged that their current channels are not longer providing them with the desired conversion rate as they wish for, therefore they have been “forced” to move on to finding new ways of reaching out to their customers. This tells us that the business environment in this particular situation has changed and that the company does what it can to maintain their relationships and stay updated on the market conditions.

Further, it is being cheap in terms of costs of usage (Mikael, 2017; Andreas, 2017). The other side of the scale are those marketers that agree that there are possible benefits of adopting and using digital tools and social media for digital marketing purposes, but hence highlights the current way of adopting and using the technology – and they are not as satisfied as their counterpart (Marie, 2017; Kim, 2017). Marketers on this side identifies several problems when adopting and starting to use social media for digital marketing activities, such as lack of integration in overall marketing and business strategies (Sara, 2017), lack of knowledge in how to properly use the technology for the intended activities i.e. marketing (Marie, 2017); and lack of responsibility in terms of having a person or a specific team (Sara, 2017), managing the adoption and the usage of digital tools and social media for marketing purposes (ibid).

"Social media is a topic that we often discuss during our management meetings. However, when someone pops the questions it is like an elephant walked into the room. Nobody wants to touch it. It is a new and moderately unexplored area in our industry, and maybe that’s why people just want to sweep it under the rug.” – Andreas, 2017.

Andreas (2017) tells us about how social media is a hot potato that no one want to touch at his company. He mentions that the area is relatively new in their industry
and that could be a reason for why it has not been adopted to a wider extent. Previous cases of social media adoption at other companies have told us that it can be determined by perceived usefulness and ease of use (Siamagka et al., 2015; Gueslaga, 2016). This tells us that since the topic is brought up it is something awakes the interest at the company, but there may be some kind of resistance as an obstacle since the topic stays in the meeting room and not is being put into reality.

Another issue according to these marketer is that marketing works tend to be more like brand building activities (Marie, 2017). This according to the content of the supposed marketing work – which includes more information about product and/or service features and accomplishments than being about potential value for customers (Marie, 2017; Kim, 2017). This is what Kotler et al. (2013) calls marketing myopia – when focus lies upon product features rather that creating value for customers and gaining customer relationships in return.

“With no real explanation of why we use it, social media tends to fall between two chairs. No one has an actual responsibility for it.” – Sara, 2017.

Previous research has also identified these types of aspects from using the Technology Acceptance Model; (i) perceived usefulness; (ii) perceived ease of use; and (iii) knowledge (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Siamagka et al., 2015; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015). When adopting and using technologies such as social media networks for marketing purposes its concluded that these three variables should be identified to provide an efficient adoption process of the technology and hence beneficial usage (ibid). Hence, it could be concluded that even though all of the marketers interviewed in this report could identify the usefulness of social media and even identify benefits of it contra former ways of conduct marketing activities and meet marketing objectives, the ease of use varied between most parties. It was stated that social media is seen as something everyone uses, referring to individual usage, and should then not be hard to use for business purposes. However, three marketers said that there is a variety between the different generations knowledge in terms of how to actual use the technology for more the personal matters (Mikael, 2017; Sara, 2017; Magnus, 2017); what is called perceived ease of use in TAM (Siamagka et al., 2015). One of the marketers stated that training or education is lacking when it
comes to these types of technology i.e. social media (Magnus, 2017). By including some type of education when adopting a new digital tool, management increases the possibility of efficient usage and are hence not presenting an assumption that everyone already has knowledge of how to use, and for what purpose, the technology.

Hence, it could be questioned whether social media is so ‘normal’ in an everyday sense and hence not reckon to be different when it comes to business usage or if there just have been a lack of fully integrated work in those cases this report have studied. Either way, the issue of adopting and using social media seems to divide marketers in two different corners; those who embrace the digital age and hence social media and see a bright present and future; and those who see problematics in the present adoption and usage of it but also identify possible solutions for creating a more efficient future for those type of digital marketing activities.

Another issue discussed where the marketers were divided by their opinions was in what extent digital marketing through social media should be considered as its own marketing activity. Sara (2017) states that marketing through social media networks should be seen as a complement for other marketing tools. Even though social media has the potential benefits of improving business performance through being able to measure marketing activities through measurement practices e.g. Google Analytics (Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Taminen); Sara still holds on to that social media should be a complement to marketing work through a B2B firm’s website and improving their rate at SEOs e.g. Google.

If marketers are this divided in their opinions of social media for marketing purposes, have the management truly been able to adopting the technology in a proper way? Meaning, if employees at for example Company X, that all work in some extent with social media for marketing purposes, sees the adoption and usage in various ways, have the management really thought through the process? It is presented in the research by Järvinen et al. (2012) and Bernard (2016) that the first resistance often comes from top level management itself e.g. Chief Marketing Officers (COM), but it is also seen from employees if not management succeed with justifying their reasoning and reckon their employee’s perspective on the matter according to the
marketers interviewed (Sara, 2017); which could be applied to the TAM perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Lacka and Chong, 2016). If a firm cannot argue for the reasoning behind adopting a new technology, it could have the potential to increase problems of accepting the technology from a behavioral and attitude point of view and hence for the future usage of it (Lacka and Chong, 2016; Siamagka et al., 2015).

5.2 Communication & Information

“The best thing of social media is that you can work from home, your office or on vacation. With just a ‘click’ you can do anything.” – Mikael, 2017.

The communication process has gone from a one-way communication process, to a two-way process and today, in certain contexts i.e. social media networks; it could be considered to be a network communication process (Agnihotri et al., 2015; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). A network communication process has its characteristic of having the communicated message going several ways i.e. through a network, rather than being linear. This is relatable to Järvinen and Taminens (2016) definition of social media as a digital content channel, which refers to that content (information and hence communication information) can be created, shared and reviewed as previous mentioned. This is concluded also in this study, that social media and other digital tools e.g. websites and online newsletters; have the characteristics of being able to create information, distribute it virally and access it wherever and whenever by whoever (Mikael, 2017). Marketers argue for that information reaches target markets, potential markets and a wider audience with utilizing marketing work through digital tools and social media. The connection issue which in the Western world is around the clock accessible, seems to be the highlight for marketers. The possibility to be active and accessible wherever, whenever and by whoever, is an aspect that is a competitive advantage and hence a necessary in the digital age (ibid). The information send or received could be gained in a matter of seconds or less which is an advantage both concerning competition, time management and hence cost efficiency (ibid), something that is presented by Järvinen et al. (2012) as well.

“Social media can be a fantastic tool, easy accessible from anywhere on the planet just by using your phone. But on the other hand, it can affect your personal life, since
social media tends to be a huge part of everybody’s life these days. Maybe it is a good thing to be able to leave work at work and separate private-life and business-life?” – Pär, 2017.

Pär states that social media is a convenient and useful platform, but that its accessibility can erase the line between private- and business life. Purely technical, social media can be shut down after business hours with a few taps by your finger. But this opens up doors to a new untouched area - the psychological factors. Can they brain be controlled when the accessibility increases? Maybe this can effect the adoption and usage of social media.

However, marketers also conclude the other side of having on going and viral access is the issue of transparency (Mikael, 2017). Issue in that sense that marketers should be aware of their messages of information since its accessible for more than a certain targeted market segment, but also for direct and indirect competitors. Further, the positive side of the transparency is according marketers that it increases credibility (ibid). This could also have been seen in the previous study by Järvinen et al. (2012).

Hence, today customers and hence individuals are receiving tons of information everyday through their computer and smartphone and have gotten more sensitive to the information that they receive (Sara, 2017; Marie, 2017). Meaning, information uploaded on social media or other digital channels needs to be specified and analyzed closely to be considered interesting for the customer (ibid). This relates with the very content of the marketing message. According to the definition of social media by Järvinen and Taminen (2016) social media is a content creating channel – where content can be created, reviewed and shared; and the basic of marketing according to Kotler et al. (2013) is a process of creating value and build customer relationships. Meaning that when creating and/or communicating marketing work and/or messages, marketers must have in mind Kotler’s basics of marketing (Marie, 2017). However, having value based content in mind is not something that always comes easy (Kim, 2017).
“Sometimes it feels like content has just been added because that it was companies should do and not with a clear intention of what it actually brings to the customer.” – Kim, 2017.

According to Marie (2017), marketers tend to forget about the actual content when using social media channels, even though some marketers claims that they are conducting content driven marketing through social media marketing activities. The content creation is as Marie said - two-faced. On one hand, marketers promote and embraces the term of content driven marketing, meaning creating content according to customer’s interest and needs according to digital measurement practices used – but on the other hand they fall in marketing myopia (Kotler et al., 2013), and seems to forget the basic reasons of conducting marketing work (Marie, 2017). While marketers are aware of the term and benefits of content driven marketing, they are not utilizing it (Marie 2017; Magnus, 2017).

“Marketers need to go back to basic. What is our market? And what value can we offer them?” – Marie, 2017.

In the new digital landscape where information is constant and everywhere, will the future marketers have any choices regarding using content-driven marketing? Meaning, how will a firm stand out from the crowd if not presenting well thought value propositions that can be noticed in less than a second when a potential customer scroll down on their feed or going through the mail box with for example 30 different news letters from various businesses? With the thought in mind, if individuals get more information sensitive (Sara, 2017), should not the potential customers be more sensitive to marketing work as well? Will it even be possible for marketers to fall into market myopia (Kotler et al., 2013) and stay noticeable and even more important, profitable?

5.3 Integration

Social media adoption and usage for digital marketing activities have created new issues for B2B firms to deal with. One of them is how to integrate the digital marketing activities through social media networks with the overall marketing strategies and create clear business objectives. The other one is how the firm can
separate the different digital activities from each other when conducted in the same digital sphere.

**5.3.1 Integrating Social Media into the Marketing Strategy**

“It just itches in me. How the industry can be so slow of realizing the benefits of digital marketing. I don’t get it. Three years ago, it wasn’t considered important. Suddenly it should all happen at once.” – Marie, 2017.

The digitalization’s rapid evolution has given marketers new ways to conduct marketing work (Järvinen et al., 2012). However, some B2B firms in previous studies (ibid), have not been able to fully integrate the new digital ways of using e.g. social media and digital measurement practices. According to Marie (2017), it is strange that certain international B2B corporations have not been able to realizing its potential development and benefits a few years ago, but suddenly all B2B firms want to adopt it, but without knowing in detail why or how. Even though, today being digital is not considered to be optional (Marie, 2017; Sara, 2017; Kim, 2017; Magnus, 2017).

As stated in Section 5.1, one of the problematics is the lack of integration of social media activities into current business and marketing strategies (Sara, 2017). By not integrating the technology into business and marketing strategies the creation of social media networks own objectives and goals becomes confusing or non-existing. Another issue connected to the lack of integration in strategy and hence marketing objectives is to whom should be having the responsibility and managing the work through digital channels i.e. social media (ibid). As mentioned by Sara (2017), social media tends to fall between two chairs, meaning that no one have full responsibility or acts like a manager for their potential/or lacking digital marketing objectives and goals through social media.

According to precious research, when there is a lack of integration and hence reckon of the purpose of using digital tools such as social media for marketing activities – it creates a barrier, which decreases the perceived usefulness of the technology (Siamagka et al., 2015). According to the TAM model (ibid), the perceived usefulness effects the attitude as well as the behavior towards the usage, leading to
that actual usage of the technology in the end will be affected of it (depending on the level of it). If the perceived usefulness is high, the effect on behavior and attitude will become more positive than the opposite (ibid). Meaning, that if a B2B firm like Company X or Company Y, do not have a high perceived usefulness amongst their employees i.e. realizing potential benefits and understanding the purpose of the usage; this will affect the usage of social media for marketing activities in a negative way.

“This position and area is new, and some people at my work questions the need for a Digital Content Manager. I bet those people were the same ones the doubted the Internet.” – Kim, 2017.

Kim (2017) tells us about how some of her co-workers are questioning her position as digital content manager. She also states that her position itself is new and so is the area of where she is working. Previous research within the area of social media and digitalization has shown that there may be resistance on a management level (Bernard 2016; Siamagka et al, 2015; Gueslaga, 2016). Another thing here could be that the company have just created the position since it is consider a ”must-to” in the new B2B environment and the management does not understand the perceived ease of use, which can be the reason for some of her co-workers reactions.

5.3.2 Integration of Business Activities in the Digital Landscape

Another aspect of integration according to the marketers using social media for marketing purposes in the fact that marketing activities tend to go towards branding activities i.e. uploading information about the corporation itself and overall accomplishments. Marketing activities is as mentioned a process of creating value and relationships with a firms’ customers (Kotler et al., 2013). But according to marketers, the content of the communication message which marketers upload on social media tends to be about both marketing related and brand building issues (Marie, 2017). While digital marketing is seen as an extension or just a part integrating part of traditional marketing (Järvinen et al., 2012; Kotler et al., 2013), has the digital business activities overall become more integrated? If a marketer uploads both brand building relating content, marketing content and hence present accomplishments when it comes to sales and management news, has the digital landscape created a new, integrated digital business sphere for several business
activities? Or can we still state that digital business activities still are divided in different groups even though business practitioners tend to work with several tasks?

5.4 Discussion of Analysis

The analysis was divided and presented in three various themes; (i) Polarization Amongst Marketers; (ii) Communication & Information; and (iii) Integration. The first section shows that marketers perceived digital marketing and hence the social media usage for marketing purposes, differently. Even though all marketers concluded that digital marketing and social media usage for that purposes comes with its advantages, they saw the adoption process of the technology and the usage of it differently. However, two of the main reasons for the various opinions amongst our interviewees was connected to how the adoption and usage of social media was argued for from management as well as the integration in the current work though other marketing channels and activities.

The second section provides information regarding the importance of the content in the marketing work. This due to the increase of information that individuals and hence business practitioners now are available to which has led to that individuals are now more sensitive to the information that they are exposed to. The marketers stated that content driven marketing is one of the things that social media and digital tools enables them to conduct, but however it is not very common that they do.

Regarding integration, we could see that there were two main parts; (i) problems in integrating social media in the overall marketing strategy; and (ii) marketing and brand building becomes more integrated when conducted in the digital landscape. Meaning that as stated in Section 6.1, the lack of integrating social media usage into the present digital marketing activities, objectives and goals are affected of the lack of integration in the overall business and marketing strategy. This created also the issue of that the marketing activities conducted through social media does not have any specific management. When it comes to the integration between the two business activities – marketing and brand building. It was reckoning that marketers tend to conduct both marketing work and brand building activities and regard them as the same thing – digital marketing. The question then arises whether the digital sphere blur out the lines between the different digital activities.
6 Conclusion

Following sections aims to reflect the purpose of the report and hence answer the research questions stated in Section 1.3. The chapter will be divided in two parts, one for each research question, and state three main conclusion for each question based on the material presented in the empirical findings (section 5) and analysis (section 6).

6.1 Answer to Research Question 1

“How is social media adopted and used in digital marketing within international business-to-business companies and for what purpose?”

The empirical findings concludes that the overall reason for adopting and use social media is due to that B2B organizations management assumes that they must have it. According to the marketers interviewed that creates problems when adopting the technology starts due to the lack of reasoning of why they adopt it or how they should do it. However, the marketers interviewed states that there are other factors that indicates that B2B companies should adopt and use social media such as; (i) cost efficiency; (ii) viral spread; (iii) accessibility; and (iv) the technology is easy to use.

The actual usage of social media comes in various forms such as presenting current business offerings as well as promoting the organization and its brand. By using social media for these activities, marketers can reach a wider audience where both current and potential market segment exists for a lower cost than conducting these activities through e.g. exhibitions and fairs. Another aspect of social media usage is the possibility to measure the conducted marketing activities. Marketers can now see what their target segment are interested in and hence develop content to satisfy their need - what is called content-driven marketing. However, this type of marketing is not the standard today according to marketers interviewed.

Based on the empirical findings (section 4), we could establish that there were three main conclusions to the first research question.

- **Polarization** - the marketers were divided in their experience and thoughts regarding social media adoption and usage. They stated that the reasoning for determining if the organization should adopt and start to use social media as a
digital marketing tool was made mainly on assumption that the company simply needed to. This has created problematics in the adoption process when marketers don’t know why or how they should adopt and use the technology. The problematics have hence created divided opinions about the technology itself; some marketers states that the technology has several benefits and is the future while other sees the current issues of not having any specific employee managing the digital marketing work through the social media networks and hence the uneven usage of it.

• *Information* - the usage of social media includes getting into a digital channel that consist of more information than a company’s own website. Social media is today used both for private and business reasons and has hence a content of both. This creates marketing sensitivity according to the marketers and they highlight that the content of the created marketing messages importance increases. Meaning that marketers today have to be able to create unique message that can be noticeable amongst an ocean of information. However, the issue of content-driven marketing is not the norm according to the interviewees. Instead, some of the interviewees states that the marketing content goes on the border between value-based marketing and marketing myopia - meaning focusing solo on marketing features rather the value the business offerings created for the customer.

• *Integration of business activities* - as stated social media is adopted and used both for promoting business offerings as well as the own company and brand. Meaning that marketing work and branding integrates with each other. The question arises from the analysis - have the digital landscape blurred out the line between marketing and branding and are they now the same in the digital sphere? The marketers states that it could be the case and if so, the importance of having a strong internal brand increases so that all employees involved communicates the same brand identity to their customers.
6.2 Answer to Research Question 2

"How can social media adoption and usage be improved for marketing purposes in international business-to-business companies?"

The empirical findings concludes that there are areas that can be improved when it comes to social media adoption and usage at B2B companies. According to the marketers interviewed a need for digital tools has been acknowledged, but the adoption, integration and usage is still in the development phase. Marketers that were interviewed states the importance of digital tools, but that it is not working perfectly straight "out of the box". The improvement suggestions from the marketers are related to the Technology Acceptance Model. All the suggestions support either the variable of perceived usefulness or the perceived ease of use, which are two important factors when adopting and using a new technology in a firm. By increasing the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, B2B corporations are more likely to receive a positive attitude and behavior towards the technology adoption and usage. This could increase through the suggestions presented by the marketers.

Based on the empirical findings (section 4), we could establish that there were three main conclusions to the second research question.

- **Integration in current strategies** – marketers states that if social media is not integrated properly into the current business strategies and just works as a ’’add-on’’, the goals and objectives can be confusing and even non-existing. By having the management focusing on the integration of social media into current business strategies, the companies can avoid facing issues when the employees are using social media, since its purpose is more clear for the users.

- **Management & responsibility** – it is discussed by marketers that if no one is fully responsible for social media, who will then apply the necessary modifications in order for it to generate the desired outcome? By assigning someone to be responsible for social media at the company, the issue of having social media falling between two chairs can be avoided since social media will be handled with a more consistent approach by someone at the company.
• *Training & education* – marketers states that social media is something that most people use, but that e.g. generation factors can play a part on its ease of use. By giving the employees proper training and education on social media, the employers would be ensured that their employees would be able understand how to use social media, not just assume that they do, and also what it can contribute with to the company and brand.
7 Discussion & Future Research

Following chapter will present a discussion of the papers theoretical and practical contribution in the field of marketing as well as a section regarding suggestions for future research in the area.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

As stated in Section 1.2, a call for paper in the scientific journal *Industrial Marketing Management*, reached the need for additional research within the topic of social media and digital marketing in B2B corporations. This paper contributes to the gap stated in the call for paper by Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (Elsevier, 2016). Further, the findings in this paper showed a variation in the perception of adopting and using social media for digital marketing purposes. The interviews suggested that marketers are aware of the outcome of the digitalization when it comes to business but divided by their experience of how social media is adopted and used in a beneficial way and for what purpose.

Another aspect discussed is the issue of content and information in the new digital landscape. The marketers stated that they believe that individuals and hence therefore customers are getting more sensitive to the information that they are disposed to since they gain more information from e.g. social media networks; than ever before. This due to the digital development of internet and further, the increase of internet accessibility. Since the digital environment changes constantly, research regarding marketers’ assumptions of content driven marketing and its effects and customers’ actual thoughts regarding digital information received through social media networks would be interesting to read.

These aspects show a wider nuance of marketers’ perception of the issues than presented in the research by Järvinen et al. (2012), Siamagka et al. (2015) and Michaelidou et al. (2011). The hope for the study is that it will provide new insights in the academic field and hence provide additional knowledge that can be used as a foundation for future research (further discussed in Section 7.3).


7.2 Practical Contribution

For the business field and hence the business practitioners working with digital marketing and social media, we hope that this paper could be of use. This through being able to see marketing practitioners experience and suggestions for improvement when adopting and using social media in digital marketing – to gain the full beneficial effect possible. The marketers interviewed presented their own experience and thoughts which also lead to the creation of RQ2 (see Section 1.3), regarding improvement of social media adoption and usage. This part itself we hope to be valuable for other marketers, managements and B2B firms. By identifying the different aspects that marketers with experience realizes can be improved for themselves, for the overall efficiency of the usage and hence for profitability, B2B firms now have an opportunity to alter their adoption and usage of social media for digital marketing purposes.

7.3 Future Research

Further, this research has a rather narrow sample compared to some of the previous studies in the area e.g. Järvinen and Karjaluoto (2015) who interviewed employees from 7 companies; however smaller studies have also been conducted e.g. the study by Cawsey and Rowley included 14 interviewees; and compared to others a smaller time frame e.g. Järvinen and Karjaluoto (2015) who conducted their study under 2 years. However, this report could be used for further research and hence elaborated. The research questions in the paper were made to provide descriptive information to present findings of how marketers sees and experience their digital marketing work through social media networks. We are realizing that this report is only touching a small part of the marketing and digital world. Hence, we believe that further work in the area would be both rewarding for both the academics in the field of marketing, due to the digitalization’s effects of marketing and communication, and therefor also for B2B professionals, adopting and using the technology in various ways.

It would be interesting to see in further research to see if these findings are presence in larger samples; either through conducting a more extensive research through more in-depth interviews with interviewees from various industries and geographical markets or through an ethnographic study, to see if the findings are presence under marketers’ everyday work. Also, we see the potential of conducting a quantitative
research as well since previous studies have conducted both qualitative (Järvinen and Taminen, 2016; Cawsey and Rowley, 2015; Wang et al., 2016), and quantitative research (Siamagka et al. 2015; Lack and Chong, 2016; Järvinen et al., 2012).

This research also gave us a whole new viewing point of the social media adoption – the effects on the private life and integrity. Pär (2017) discloses his thoughts on how the lines between business- and private life can be blurred out when the accessibility to your job is in the palm of your hand more or less 24 hours a day. It would be interesting to follow this up and research it more thoroughly and see whether its more of a rule than exception.
References


Appendices

Appendix A Interview Guide

Following topics and hence questions have been used in the conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interview to ensure that all interviews refers to the same topics and also that a few main questions are asked and answered upon. Further, the conducted interviews have been having the characteristic of a conversation, meaning that there has been a lot of follow-up questions and asking why to gain that in-depth understanding that we are aiming upon. Hence, all interviews have been started off by explaining the research purpose, what it is for, how it will be distributed and handled and also that anonymity will be ensured both for the interviewees and their work places. Finally, all interviewees have been notified and agreed with that the interviews were recorded, transcribed and interpreted by us.

Marketing

- How long have you been working with marketing?
- What is the main thing to have in mind when conducting marketing strategies?
- How do you at your company plan and conduct marketing activities?
- How do you think marketing has changed over the last one-two decades?

Digital Marketing

- When I say digital marketing, what comes to your mind?
- What would you say is the difference between marketing and digital marketing?
- How do you work with digital marketing?
- For what purpose are you working with digital marketing?
- How is the digital marketing activities integrated with the overall marketing strategy?
- What is the main digital marketing tools for business-to-businesses?
What is the main digital marketing tools at your company?

Social Media

- What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say social media?
- How do you think business-to-businesses can use social media?
- Which social media networks would you say are most suited for business-to-business marketing?

Adoption

- Why has social media been implemented at your company?
- What did you think would be the potential benefits of starting to use social media?
- What did you think would be the hardest part of implementing social media?
- How has social media been integrated in the overall marketing strategy?
- How has social media been integrated in digital marketing activities?
- What actions could a company take to make the implementation of social media as efficient as possible?

Usage

- How do you think business-to-business can use social media when it comes to marketing?
- For what purpose, could social media usage in terms of marketing be useful for a business-to-business organization?