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# Value creation through strategic social media use in HR management

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Business, Economics and Informatics

Birkbeck, University of London

2018

## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled 'Value creation through strategic social media use in HR management' represents the results of my own work except where specified in the thesis.

Maxim Viktor Wolf

*For Maggie*

## Abstract

The aim of this research is to understand how social media use is impacting communication processes within organisations. This study focuses on the HR communication process: traditionally, a one-way broadcast from management to employees with limited feedback mechanisms and limited employees' participation in content creation. Social media, as a current IT phenomenon, penetrates personal, professional and political lives. One of the hallmarks of social media is its embedded democratisation: access, means, and ability to "speak" for everyone. Social media's democratic approach to communication challenges established top-down organisational communications.

This research analyses social media use in organisations to identify under which conditions social media use becomes strategic and leads to the development of new capabilities. The source data for the qualitative comparative case study is collected in a series of one-to-one and group interviews and is then analysed within the framework of three major theoretical lenses. First, the view of HRM as a communication system is used as a setting for the data analysis. Second, rhetorical practices for internal communications were used for describing how social media is used within HRM. Finally, Resource Based View is used as an explanatory lens for the impact and value of social media use in the intra- and inter-organisational communication process.

The research has theoretical and practical implications. The findings challenge the top-down approach to organisational communications and show that democratised social media use can lead to improved relationships within organisations. Contingent on the *purpose* and the *level of embeddedness* in the business processes, social media use can lead to the development of capabilities, and thus become strategic. The practical implications stem from the recognition of the potential of social media to (1) establish new and unexpected relationships between employees and (2) support the emergence of new capabilities to combine and deploy human and information resources.

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# 1 Research Project Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the thesis. The general research introduction includes descriptions of the basic concepts which are building the foundation of this research. Further, motivations for the research project and the contributions are made explicit. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the research structure, the thesis' summary and a synopsis of each chapter.

## 1.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to help our understanding of how social media use impacts internal communication processes within organisations. The study focuses on the HR Communication Process: the conversations between the management and the (potential, current and former) employees. The study builds upon the top-down view of the HR communication process (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) and extends it to include a bottom-up perspective as an explanation how communications between the management and employees can contribute to organisational performance.

Within the context of the HR communication process between managers and employees, and between employees on social media, the research questions are:

- Q1. Who are the actors?
- Q2. How is social media used for management/employee communication (*practices*, directions of communication)?
- Q3. Is social media use for employee communication strategic?
- Q4. When does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

Social media as an emergent phenomenon (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; DesAutels, 2011; Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfeld, 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013) challenges established vertical communication flows (Huang, Baptista, & Galliers, 2013) within organisations and offers new opportunities for value creation (Griffiths & McLean, 2014; Lucas Jr, Agarwal, Clemons, El Sawy, & Weber, 2013; Qiu, Tang, & Whinston, 2015; Ransbotham, Kane, & Lurie, 2012).

The definition of an “organisation”, specifically in a business setting, is a contentious affair (Hatch, 2012). Does it include employees and managers only? Do owners count? What about customers, suppliers, partners? Whenever possible and necessary to avoid

ambiguity, this thesis refers to groups of people, e.g. “managers and employees” rather than to the abstract construct of an “organisation”.

This study adopts the Resource Based View (RBV) of organisations as an explanatory lens (Barney, 1991; Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011; Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Kaufman, 2015; Santhanam & Hartono, 2003). The RBV, as a theoretical framework, offers several advantages when analysing strategic exploitations of IT within organisations. First, it allows the researchers to look "within" organisations, assuming that strategic competitive advantage is gained from idiosyncratic firm capabilities to combine and deploy resources, rather than being driven by "external" market forces and organisations' environment (Wade & Hulland, 2004). Second, through the notion of capabilities, the RBV focuses the investigation and analysis on firm internal processes, on the continuous process of generating of value and thus on the transformational qualities of IT use (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Lucas Jr et al., 2013). Third, this cross-disciplinary study investigates Information Systems-use within the Human Resource Management domain. The RBV has been adopted as a dominant research lens by Human Resource Management scholars (Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Paauwe & Boselie, 2003; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001) and Information Systems scholars (Mithas & Rust, 2016; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Wade & Hulland, 2004) and provides a common framework and terminology to communicate the research findings to both audiences. The analysis of the strategic value of social media use is made under the assumption that higher levels of IT embeddedness into the business processes lead to higher benefits from IT use (El Sawy, 2003).

The study adopts a multiple case study design (Yin, 2009) and applies within-case and cross-case analysis to build theory from the data collected through semi-structured interviews. A dedicated case selection methodology (addressed in Chapter 4) has been developed as part of this study to aid theoretical sampling and to identify cases which represent different manifestations of social media use in organisations (Creswell, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). The comparative analysis of the qualitative data was then carried out at two different levels. First within-cases, to identify, validate and adjust themes and concepts emergent from individual participant's contributions. Second, cross-case analysis compared the themes and concepts across cases to re-evaluate the concepts, support transferability of the

findings, and to detect any similarities and differences in the concepts' make-up, shape and appearance (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009; Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2009).

The findings from the study have practical, as well as theoretical implications. The study informs our understanding of social media use in organisations and shows that higher levels of embeddedness of IT, specifically social media, can be strategic for organisations. It further challenges the extant view on management-employee communications as a top-down process with incorporated feedback loops. Instead, the findings indicate that a "democratised", free access to communication media and information, contrary to controlled and regulated communications, can lead to the development of new capabilities. The practical implications are rooted in the recognition of the potential of social media use to (1) establish new and unexpected relationships between employees and (2) support emergence of new capabilities to combine and deploy human and information resources.

## 1.2 Social Media as Phenomenon

Social media is a recent phenomenon which has drawn much attention in the academic world and has changed and challenged many organisational and societal practices, including private, political and work life, governments, commercial and third-sector organisations (Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Lim, 2012; Lu, Guo, Luo, & Chen, 2015; Lyytinen & Rose, 2003; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013; Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007; Qiu et al., 2015; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Academic conferences such as BAM, ECIS, UKAIS, MCCSIS have dedicated streams for research on social media (BAM, 2017; ECIS, 2017; IADIS, 2017; UKAIS, 2017).

Internet-based technologies have attracted attention for several decades (Freeman, 1984; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Lyytinen & Rose, 2003). But it is due to a rapid technological change of Web 2.0 technologies and, arguably, the growing popularity of online social networks such as Myspace (est. 2003), Facebook (est. 2004) and Google+ (est. 2011), online logs (blogs) such as Twitter (est. 2006), online media sharing platforms such as YouTube (est. 2005) and Instagram (est. 2010), and professional online communities such as LinkedIn (est. 2002) that social media became a wide-spread societal phenomenon (Leonardi et al., 2013). The Literature Review chapter deals extensively with definitions of "social media" and the current

state of research into this phenomenon. This section aims at providing just a brief overview of social media history and definitions.

The potential for using internet-based technologies for communication and relationship building has been recognised long before any of today's popular social networking sites were available. Kent and Taylor (1998) estimated the expected number of internet users to reach 200 million by 2000: juxtaposing this with 1,600 million active Facebook users in Q4 2016 (Statista, 2017) makes the "enormous potential" mentioned in their article appear rather small in comparison. The development of platforms and technologies, which are now widely grouped under the "social media" umbrella, is rooted in the emergence and development of "Web 2.0" (Hauptmann & Steger, 2013). The notion Web 2.0 refers as much to technological as to ideological changes (DesAutels, 2011). Development and availability of technologies such as CSS, JavaScript, Ajax, MP3 and MP4 music and video formats, development platforms such as Adobe, Visual Studio and Eclipse allowed for (rapid) development and distribution of new web-based software solutions. At the same time, access to the internet became more affordable and more available, specifically, access via mobile networks (WorldBank, 2017a, 2017b). Finally, availability of internet-enabled devices such as smart-phones and tablets significantly contributed to the success of social media (Figure 1). The ideological change accompanying the web 2.0 technological changes encouraged a move from proprietary, closed code software to open source software, open access to information, and information and value sharing society (DesAutels, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Weber, 2004).

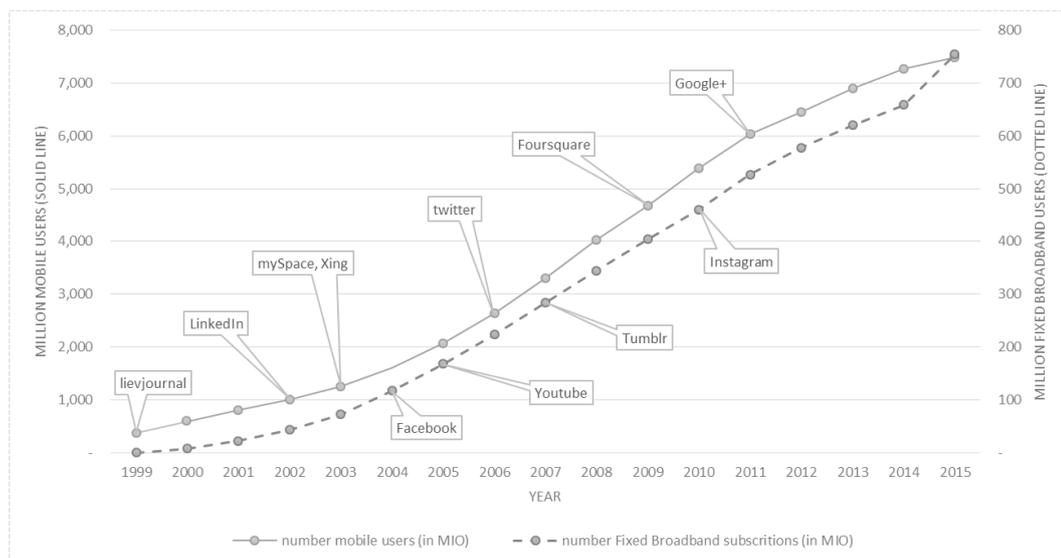


Figure 1 - Internet Users and Emergence of Social Networking Platforms

There is no fixed and agreed upon definition of social media (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013), possibly because "social media" in itself is a developing and changing phenomenon. One of the earlier definitions was provided by (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) who argue that a social networking site (SNS) is qualitatively different from other computer-mediated communication platforms in that they allow users to make their existing social relationships explicit. From that perspective, an SNS is *bounded* and has three main qualities: (1) it allows users to create and maintain their profiles, (2) users can articulate their relationships, and (3) users have the ability to traverse each other's relationship networks. One important quality of Boyd's definition is that an SNS is considered to be a bounded system. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) take a more generic approach to the definition of social media and go beyond the concept of a "bounded system", grouping all internet-based applications which support creation and sharing of user generated content into the overarching concept of "social media". Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) follow this definition and define social media as an internet- and mobile-based set of technologies which enable user generated content. Other definitions of social media include web-based platforms for content generation and sharing, communication and collaboration (Kane et al., 2014; Leonardi et al., 2013). There is a broad agreement, that "social media" implies internet- or web-based technology. There is a further agreement in all definitions that relationship building between users (explicit or implicit) is another necessary property of social media. Finally, all definitions agree that social media supports and enables users to generate, share and modify content. The methodology chapter discusses this subject further and defines social media as

*A set of technologies which can be combined by the user into unique valuable configurations and so support relationship building through information exchange, content creation and sharing.*

Current research on social media in the IS and HRM literature is one of the focal points of the literature review chapter. Adoption of social media is not yet widespread in organisational life and even less so in academic literature (Kane et al., 2014). The research potential on the impact of social media on societal and organisational life is great, with many areas of social media use, including transformational impact of social media use on organisational communication dynamics, being under-researched

(Leonardi et al., 2013; Maruping & Magni, 2015; Miranda, Kim, & Summers, 2015; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). One of the organisational areas which have a strong focus on interactions and communications is Human Resource Management. The next section first discusses the frameworks of HRM which allow the research to focus on communication processes and flows, and then introduces social media as a distinctive set of technologies which can impact, challenge and transform these processes.

### 1.3 HRM as a process

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is an academic discipline concerned with linkages between HR practices, processes and systems, and organisational performance (Guest, 2011; Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). The discipline is relatively new – the leading "Human Resource Management Journal" was only established in 1990, shortly after first linkages between HRM and organisational performance were established in 1980's (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016; Guest, 2011).

HR Management is commonly presented as something organisations "have" – a set of procedures, practices, strategies and tools (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016; Doherty & Norton, 2013; Guthrie, 2001; Kaufman, 2015; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). These tools are argued to lead to higher performance (Boxall & Macky, 2009) and higher commitment (Walton, 1985). A differentiation is sometimes made in the argument whether there exists a universal "best practice", or whether HR Management requires a context-tailored "best fit"-approach (Kaufman, 2015).

An alternative view of SHRM is that of a "process" - something that organisations "do" (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Ostroff and Bowen (2016) apply the definition of a "strong system" to a communication process between the management and the employee. Based on their definition, the setting for this research is

*a continuous process of communication between and among managers and employees with the aim of delivering consistent, distinctive messages and foster agreement about expected performances, behaviours and contributions, and corresponding benefits, compensations and sanctions.*

They add a spatial and temporal dimension to HR practices and argue, that a strong (communication) system would be high on distinctiveness, consistency and consensus. Distinctive messages would be delivered from "recognisable" and "important" people ("management" who have the authority and the ability to create, maintain and enforce practices). Consistent messages would be delivered at different managerial levels (vertical alignment of strategic, tactical and operational management). Further, consistency of message would be achieved in the temporal dimension for example in the selection criteria, performance evaluation, promotion criteria, training and development, and even off-boarding practices (horizontal top-level alignment between practices across departments and business areas). Consensus, too, is two-dimensional: an agreement and shared understanding about the content of the message are required horizontally among managers and among employees, as well as vertically between managers and employees (top-down alignment of communications with centralised feedback evaluation mechanisms to ensure the message content was understood).

This top-down view of controlled, managed and directed communication process finds reflections in Huang et al. (2013) investigation of rhetorical practices in organisations. Social media – as communication technologies which are residing "outside" organisation's control and are freely available and accessible challenge and change organisational rhetorical practices. Where, traditionally, organisations could control internal communication media and channels (e.g. announcement boards, newsletters, town-hall meetings etc.), social media are a platform which cannot be controlled in a traditional way by denying access or by applying censorship. These new rhetorical resources simultaneously offer challenges and opportunities for organisations. Within the context of HRM, several pathways of utilising social media for HRM practices have already been explored. For example in recruitment and attraction space (Robb, 2014; Weathington & Bechtel, 2012) or employee voice (Miles & Muuka, 2011).

The next section briefly discusses the gaps in current research and provides an overview of the research motivations.

#### 1.4 Research motivation

To become strategic – lead to creation or sustainability of competitive advantage, IT systems need to be embedded into the business processes (El Sawy, 2003). Much of the research in social media use in HRM sees social media as a "tool" which enables

new processes or supports existing processes (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016). For example, social media is represented as another advertising channel when companies are replacing job board advertising with social media job postings (Robb, 2014). Alternatively, social media is acting as a "source of alternative information" for hiring decisions (Weathington & Bechtel, 2012). Even when social media use is seen critically, for example, by Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, and Thatcher (2013) who question social media use as a "tool" to support candidate's assessment decisions – it is seen as an "external thing", something that exists alongside the business process and is not (does not need to be) embedded into the process itself.

*There is a lack of research into how social media use can be embedded into the business processes to become strategic.*

Other research in social media use recognises the potential for community building, however at the same time warns against the democratisation of communication media access and information exchange contrasting transparency with data leakage, employee voice with illegal campaigns and riots, and collaboration and innovation with information overload and time waste (Hauptmann & Steger, 2013). Another notable theme is the call for organisations to "learn how to use social media", with an implied threat that organisations who allow "organic" use of social media will lose out (Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Hauptmann & Steger, 2013; Holland & Bardoel, 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; McDonald, Thompson, & O'Connor, 2016). This desire to control social media use is in high contrast with the apparent bottom-up use of social media in public, work and private lives (Mabey & Zhao, 2017; Mergel, 2012).

*There is a need to understand how organisations deal with bottom-up emergent social media use and how organisations adapt their processes to benefit from these new technologies.*

The researcher was involved in the development, implementation and maintenance of a semi-public professional social network for the London 2012 Organising Committee for Olympic Games (LOCOG). They faced a unique challenge in recruitment and off-boarding terms. At the beginning of 2012 LOCOG employed around 6,000 people who were responsible for "running the show" - from physically opening the venues on time, over organising events for foreign dignitaries, to managing logistics (imagine a game of football without the balls or nets), to securing food and accommodation for

the sportswomen and men. LOCOG were aware that their raison d'être would cease to exist in September 2012 as soon as the Games are over. As an organisation, they faced a unique challenge: retain the workforce up to the last minute (someone giving notice in July or August when the Games were running was a worst-case scenario), and keep the workforce motivated, all that while everyone knew that on September 9<sup>th</sup> everyone would be out of the job. To achieve these goals (retain and motivate), LOCOG put in place a three-pillar HR programme. The first pillar was a financial bonus only payable if the respective employee remained on board until after the Games. The second pillar was an extensive support and employability training programme including CV and interviewing skills training. The third pillar (and the personal motivation for this research) was the introduction of "the network" - a semi-public social two-community digital platform where all employees were able to create their professional profiles and upload their resumes. The other community on "the network" consisted of over four hundred employers – official sponsors and partners of the Games including corporations such as British Airways, Sainsbury's and Coca-Cola. The advantage of "getting in touch" with each other was obvious for both groups: employees had access to recruiters from top international firms (note: recruiters, not jobs! When the Network went live in October 2011, there were no open vacancies for September/October 2012, there were no jobs to apply to). The recruiters had access to 6,000 highly skilled brilliant people who were "good enough" to represent the UK on the world stage. The condition for gaining access to this exclusive candidate pool was that no job-offer would be made to start work before September 2012. Most of the time from October 2011 to July 2012 (there was little activity during the Games themselves) was taken by recruiters introducing their companies, live Q&A sessions, and personal online conversations between LOCOG employees and recruiters. Over four hundred employees had a job offer before the Games started in June and could concentrate on delivering the show without fears for their future.

*By the end of September, over 40% of users on The Network were offered a job with one of the partners who spent ten months building and maintaining recruiter-candidate relationships online.*

This anecdotal, specific and unique case in which the researcher was personally involved from inception to the shut-down of The Network at the end of 2014 prompted

the desire to look further into the mingle of technology and human relationships and the effects this fusion on work life and business processes.

The next section outlines in how far the goals of (1) understanding the strategic value of social media use; (2) understanding how organisations deal with bottom-up introduction and integration of technology into internal business processes; and (3) how organisations can harvest the benefits of online relationships.

## 1.5 Contributions

This thesis contributes to the ongoing debate of the role of social media in today's societal, political and work life. From the theoretical perspective, the impact of social media on organisations represents an area of research deserving attention (Kane et al., 2014). Specifically, social media use in intra-organisational communications and their strategic consequences are of interest to Information Systems researchers (Leonardi et al., 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). Likewise, the impact of social media use on Human Resource Management practices, policy and strategy deserves further attention (Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Haar & White, 2013; Roth et al., 2013). This study addresses social media use in HR setting, answering calls for contributions from both IS and HR communities. The study further contributes to general development and application of theory in Management research.

From the HR point of view, the study argues that HRM can be theorised as a communication process (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016) and that social media use can affect the consistency and distinctiveness of messages within the HR communication process, thus also affecting consensus about the message content. This study untangles the practices of social media use and analyses how social media use is being integrated (sometimes with lesser success) into HR related internal communication practices.

From the IS point of view, the study builds on the socio-material ontology (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), showing that successful *use* of technologies, the fusion and integration of IT into the business processes (El Sawy, 2003) can lead to business scope redefinition and result in competitive advantage (Venkatraman, 1994). Adopting the Resource Based View (Barney, 1991), the findings provide an insight on how social media use can lead to the development of new capabilities through a purposeful deep integration of social media and business processes.

Technology is often seen as a supporting tool with the main focus placed on practices, content and systems of engagement and control (Hauptmann & Steger, 2013; Miles & Muuka, 2011; Roth et al., 2013; Stone, Lukaszewski, Stone-Romero, & Johnson, 2013). This study introduces technology as an integral part of HRM process, applying the “integration”-view of technology and business process (El Sawy, 2003) and thus extending current HR literature.

From the Resource Based View perspective, the contributions of the study are threefold. First, the study shows the application of the RBV as a cross-disciplinary framework which allows us to communicate theory to other HR and IS researchers using the same vocabulary, opening ways for multidisciplinary collaboration and exchange. Second, the study explores under which conditions social media use supports the creation of new capabilities and a competitive advantage, and becomes strategic. Finally, this study evaluates the relationship between expected benefits from social media use and the levels of embeddedness of technology and business process.

The study employed a multiple-case study method with theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989; Silverman, 2013). The assessment framework for social media-activity developed in the process of case selection and data collection for this thesis (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2015b) can be applied in other studies which require a topology of participant-organisations based on their activity on social media.

The findings suggest that social media use creates value not as a communications or information-dissemination tool, but as a platform for establishing and maintaining relationships. This has theoretical and practical implications. Practitioners in the HR space can (re-) evaluate organisation’s strategies for social media use. Theorists are encouraged to further the research on social media use and validate, improve and challenge the findings in longitudinal, quantitative and replication studies.

## 1.6 Thesis Structure

This section provides an overview of the structure of the thesis and briefly notes the contents of each chapter.

The structure of this thesis follows the research project path (Figure 2). Albeit many of the activities were recursive, for example, data analysis overlapped and informed data collection, over the entire project timeline there is some linearity in the project execution. This linearity is reflected in the order of the chapters in this thesis.

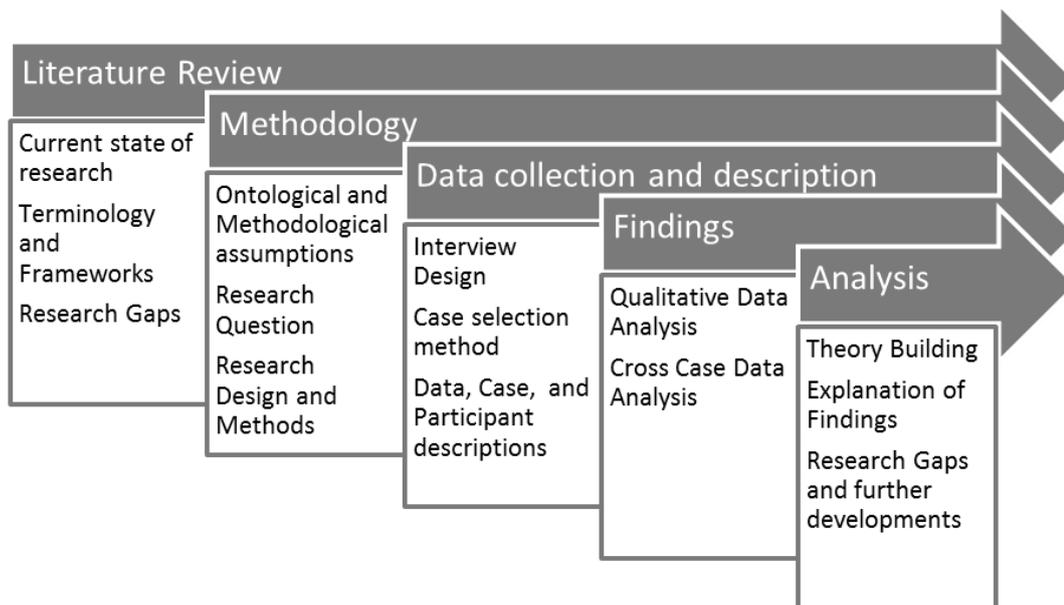


Figure 2 - Research Process Preview

The research process sets off with a general interest in a “phenomenon”. Often, the scope will be too broad and vague to formulate a research question. Literature Review is a first step to establish what is currently known about the phenomenon as well as what additional new knowledge can (and should) be acquired to deepen our understanding. In addition to the review of the literature on the subject matter, ontological and epistemological questions must be addressed to inform the research approach, design and methods. The Methodology shapes the research design, data collection and analysis. It requires re-visiting some of the literature, which already makes the research path recursive. The Data Collection, following the research design path, unveils unexpected problems, issues and new questions, which might require re-visiting the literature and re-evaluating the methodology and design. The more data is collected and analysed, the more clarity (or maybe more obscurity through new emergent realisations) might present themselves, informing further data collection and additional analysis. Finally, reflections on the research help identify gaps in the research itself, assess to what degree research questions have been answered, highlight lessons learned, and suggest further research opportunities.

Despite the recursive nature of the research, this thesis is compiled in a linear manner, with each chapter corresponding roughly to each of the research project phases. Figure 3 highlights the separation of research phases into Research Design and Research Method. This figure is used in each chapter to highlight its relative position to other chapters in the thesis and its contribution to one or more areas of the research process.

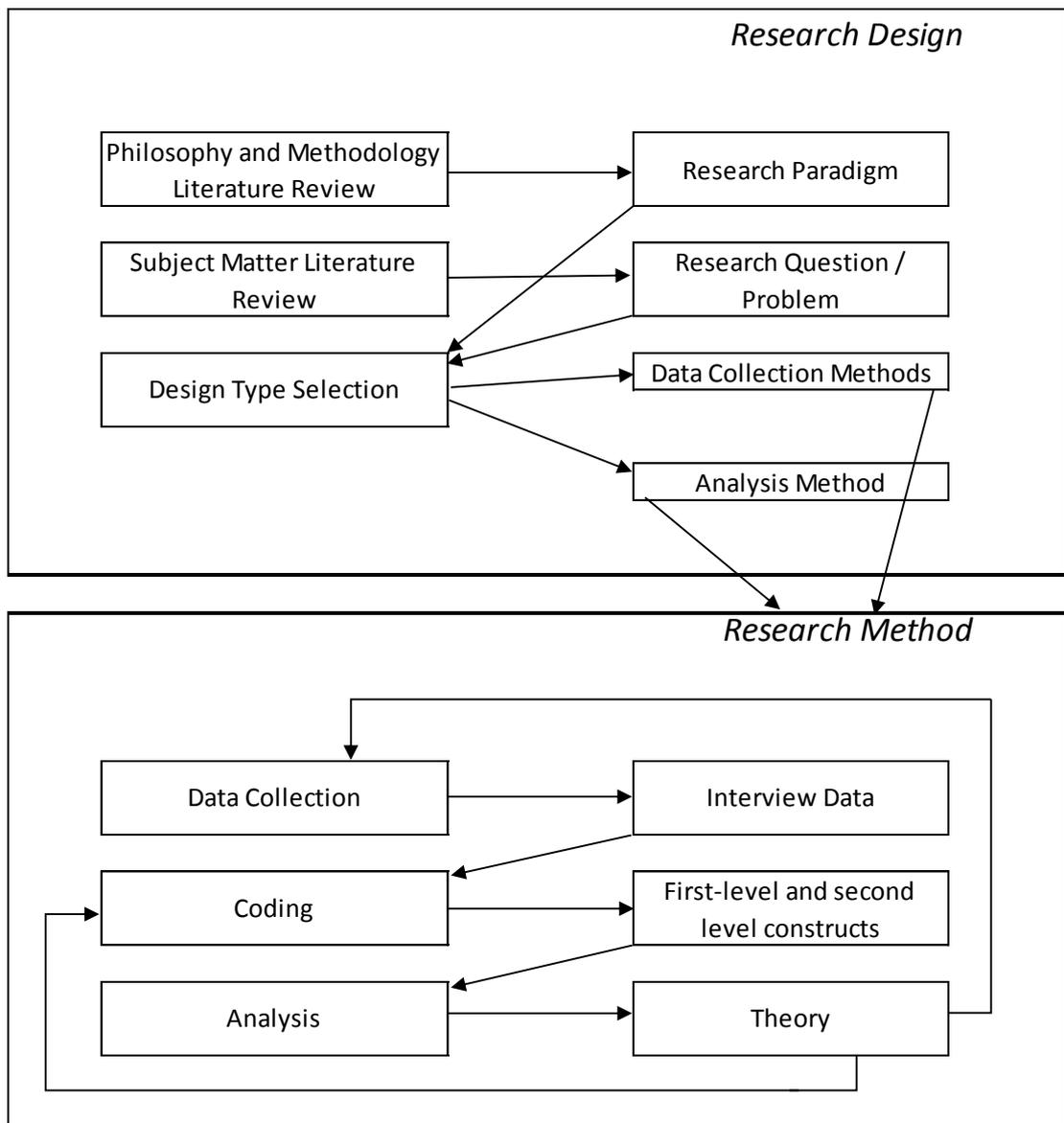


Figure 3 - Iterations in the research project

Each chapter starts with an introduction of the chapter's aims and objectives, followed by the main content and closing with a summary of issues discussed in the chapter and conclusions.

### 1.6.1 Research Project Introduction Chapter

This chapter introduces the thesis, the research theme, area and phenomenon of interest: social media use in organisations. It further explains research motivations and contributions. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure and a brief synopsis are provided.

### 1.6.2 Literature Review Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to record the status quo of IS and HR Management research at the time of research, and to highlight research gaps and discuss explanatory theories which are used to analyse the data and draw conclusions.

The chapter sets off with an overview of HRM literature, focusing on current concepts, theories and frameworks. Next, IS literature is reviewed focussing on two areas: (1) social media definitions and framing social media as a distinctive IS phenomenon, and (2) IS terminology and frameworks for researching Information Technology-use in organisations.

### 1.6.3 Methodology Chapter

This chapter is one of the first chapters drafted for thesis and is, together with the literature review, the foundation for the research method, data collection and analysis. It states the research questions, discusses possible methodological approaches to address and answer these questions, and, finally, provides a clear path for project execution from preparation, to data collection, and data processing and analysis.

The chapter begins with postulating the research questions for this thesis, followed by a discussion of possible ontological and epistemological views, as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. The chapter concludes with the description of the selected approach, the research design, the case selection method, the data collection and processing methods, and theories and methods for data analysis.

### 1.6.4 Data Collection, Interview Data and Case Description Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what data were collected, how, where and when. The chapter provides descriptions of data collection tools, procedures and sources. Specifically, it describes the data collection method, case selection method, provides some descriptive statistical data about the participants, as well as procedures for selecting and transcribing the data prior to analysis.

The chapter begins with the introduction of ALIAS: a case-selection methodology developed specifically for this study. It then provides detailed descriptions of how the methodology was applied to the theoretical sampling of cases covered in this research. Finally, the chapter introduces and describes each of the case organisations and all participants, before closing with the detailed description of the interview process: questions, recordings, transcripts and logs.

### 1.6.5 Findings Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to provide description and comparison of themes and concepts emerged from the data, and how these differ across the case studies.

The Findings chapter refers to the data analysis process – descriptions of the coding procedures, nodes, themes and concept discovery which is provided in its entirety as Appendix C. The chapter starts with an overview of findings in each case, and concludes with a comparative representation of findings across all cases.

### 1.6.6 Analysis and Discussion Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the “why” question. While the previous findings chapter states the What, Where, When and How, the analysis chapter provides explanations of why the findings are as they are, framing the newly discovered concepts and the relationships between them within existing theoretical frameworks.

The chapter starts with the introduction of the Resource Based View (RBV) as a theoretical lens for explaining the findings, focusing on the development of new capabilities as a source of competitive advantage. It then continues to analyse the potential of social media use for development of capabilities. Findings from each of the case studies are then analysed through the lens of RBV and conclusions from this analysis are drawn.

### 1.6.7 Thesis Summary and Reflections Chapter

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a summary of the entire research project. This chapter is aimed at providing a summary of work done, theoretical and practical lessons learned, and identifying areas of further development and research.

Starting with a review of the contributions and shortcomings of this research, the chapter identifies further research areas and questions. Following that each part of the research project is reflected on and major learning points are highlighted. The PhD process as a personal education and development process is reviewed and lessons from the PhD project together are presented at the end of this chapter.

## 1.7 Summary

This chapter introduces the research project and provides an overview of core frameworks, terminology and themes. HRM Communication Process is introduced as a distinctive sub-set of business processes. Social media is theorised as a distinctive

sub-set of Information Technology. The focus of the research is placed on IT use effects on business processes, specifically, social media use within the framework of HRM Communication Process. Motivations for this research based on literature review and personal experiences are stated in the central part of this chapter.

The chapter then provides a brief overview of contributions to theory and praxis, and concludes with an overview of the thesis structure including descriptions and aims of each chapter within the thesis.

## 2 Literature Review

The main contribution of this chapter is to the Research Design Phase of the project, although, concepts and theories identified in this chapter are also applied during the analysis and discussion steps (Figure 4).

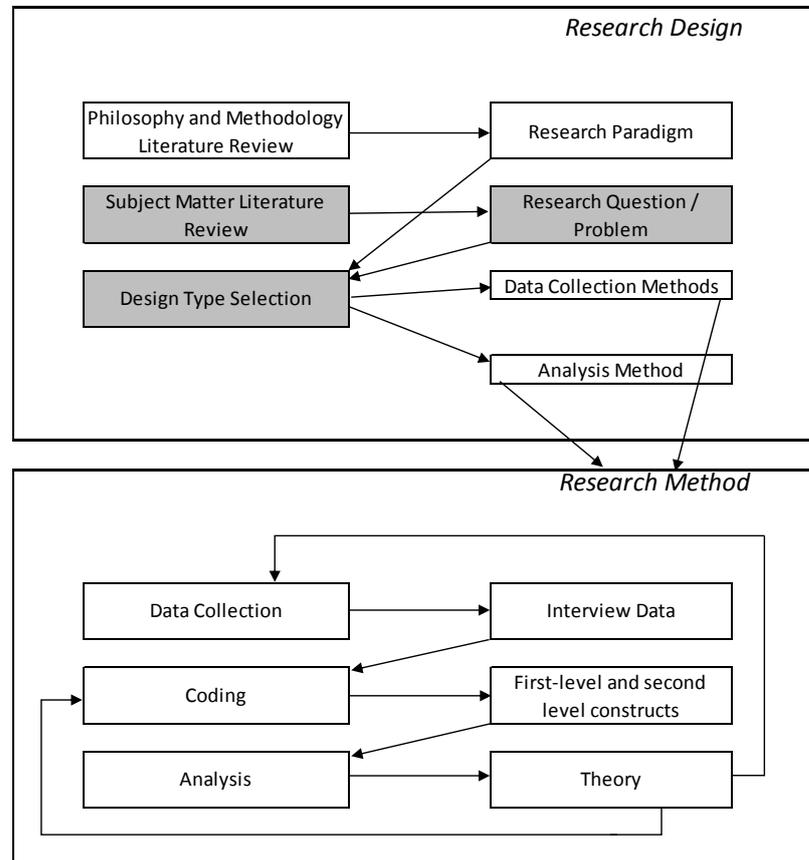


Figure 4 - Literature Review Chapter relative to overall Research Design

The aim of this chapter is threefold. First, the chapter aims at providing an overview of the current state of research in Human Resource Management and Information Systems. The literature review establishes a set of frameworks, theories and terms which will be used throughout the research project and this thesis. Second, the chapter aims at identifying possible approaches to conduct multidisciplinary research across the IS and the HRM fields. This provides input into methodology section and the design of data collection methods. Based on the analysis of the literature, the chapter aims at highlighting research gaps in social media use in organisations. These gaps identify the “known unknowns” and allow us to postulate one or more research questions. Finally, the chapter closes with a review of the Resource Based View and the Capabilities Development literature as explanatory lenses for value creation through IT use in organisations.

## 2.1 Introduction

Information Systems research addresses a plethora of Information Technology (IT) applications in a variety of fields (Figure 5).

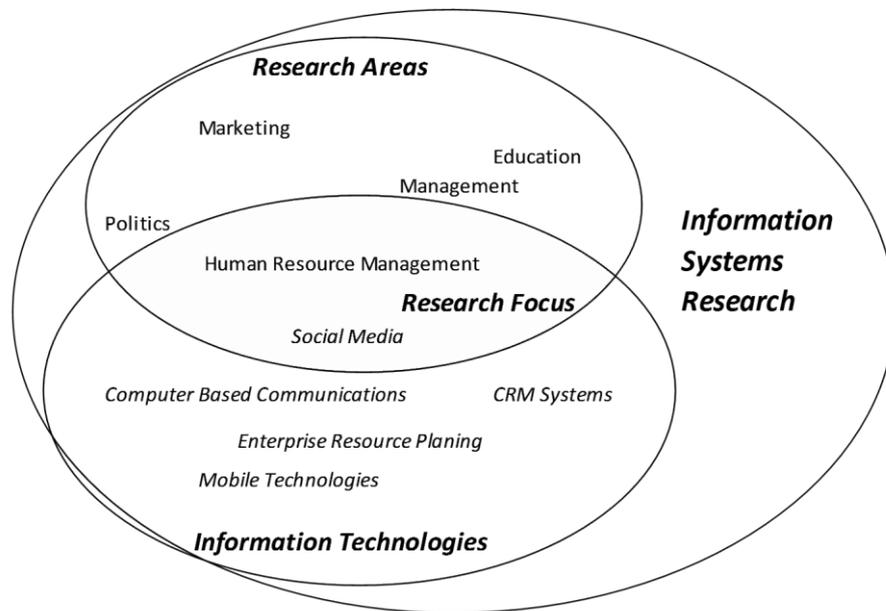


Figure 5 - Research area and focus

The chapter starts with the introduction of the HR Management communication process as a *setting* for this research. Next, the *focus* of this research on social media as a specific and distinctive sub-set of Information Technologies. This is followed by an analysis of different theoretical and methodological approaches to studying IS and, specifically, social media in organisations. The final section *positions* the overall research into the broader contemporary IS research field. Based on the position, focus and the specific framing/setting of the research, this chapter concludes with the identification of research gaps.

## 2.2 Human Resource Management Literature

This section is dedicated to the analysis of the Human Resource Management (HRM) research literature. The aim is to define the setting for this research and to provide an overview of current trends in HRM research, which is a relatively new distinctive discipline established in 1980's and continuously gaining strength in replacing Industrial Relations as a focal point for Organisation-Employee research (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016). The theory and research in the field of HRM have undergone significant developments in the past twenty years (Guest, 2011). The main research streams focused on establishing linkages between HRM and organisational

performance. Guest (2011) identifies three different directions from which these linkages were investigated: one focusing on HR practices, another applying the resource based view to HRM, and lastly a focus on the implementation of a set of HR practices. The common denominator of these approaches is the search for the source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Guest, 2011; Miles & Muuka, 2011; Wright et al., 2001). Figure 6 broadly summarises the lenses in (Strategic) HRM research which are discussed in more detail in this section.

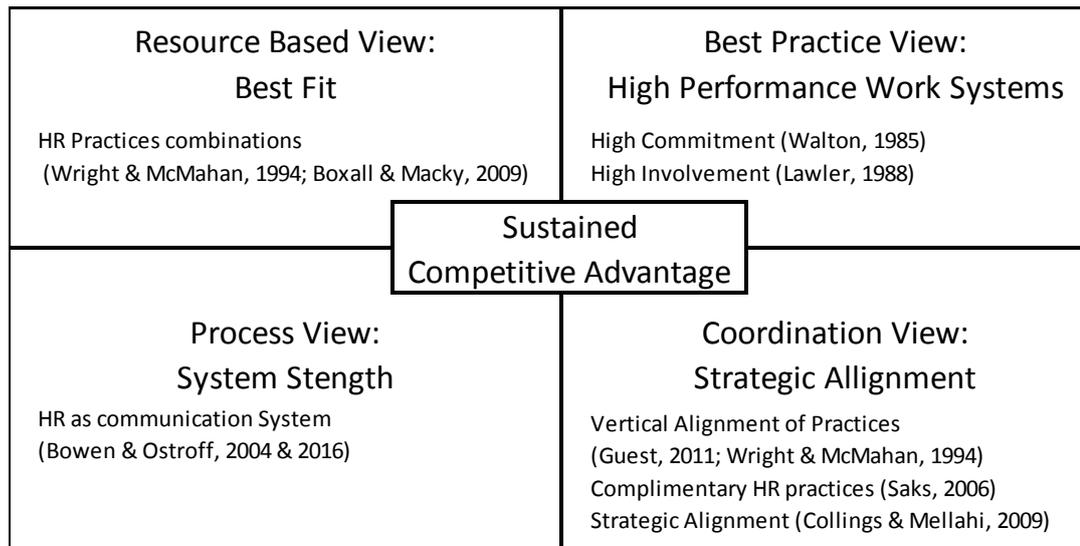


Figure 6 - (Strategic) HRM Lenses

Guest (2002) identifies three key models which link HRM to improved organisational performance: High-Performance Work System; High-Commitment; and the Strategic Fit model. All of the models identified by Guest (2002) view HRM as something organisations “have”: structures, policies, practices... This chapter sets off by introducing some of the HR terminology against the backdrop of the three prevalent models. An alternative view of HRM as a process, something organisations “do” rather than “have” is then introduced. A review of the current literature focusing on evaluation and investigation of how technology is introduced, implemented and used in the field of HRM concludes this section together with the identification of under-researched areas.

### 2.2.1 Concept introduction: High-Performance Work Systems and Fit-Models

Research in HR domain has been guided by the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Chowhan, 2016; Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Wright et al., 2001). The focus of research in HRM has for a long time been on establishing the link between HR strategy and practice and sustained competitive advantage (Guest, 2011).

Approaches to HR Management which result in superior organisational performance are grouped under the umbrella of “High-Performance Work Systems” (HPWS) (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Boxall and Macky (2009) argue that different approaches and implementations of HR and management systems, practices and processes can lead to positive outcomes in different contexts. They differentiate between two main streams within HPWS literature: “high-involvement *work* practices” (HIWP) and “high-commitment *employment* practices” (HCM) (ibid, p. 8, emphasis added by the author) (Figure 7).

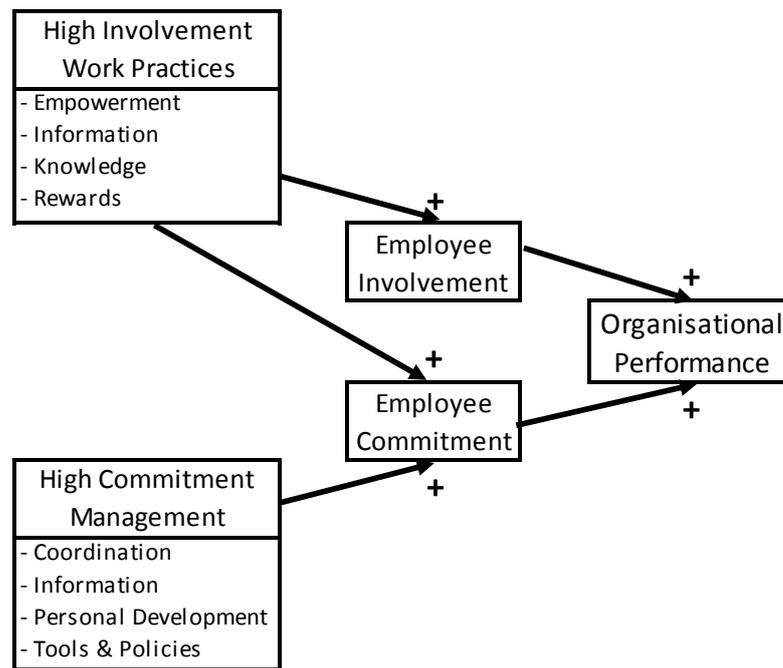


Figure 7 – High-Performance Work Systems

HIWP refer to attempts to include employees in the problem-solving process and decentralization of decision making. HCM refers to practices that are designed to reduce employee turnover and enhance behavioural commitment. Notable is the assumption that, whilst HIWP imply and lead to high-commitment, HCM does not necessarily require high-involvement (for example perceived job security, fairness of reward and promotion etc.) (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Guthrie, 2001).

#### 2.2.1.1 High-Commitment Management (HCM)

In his work on High-Commitment Management, Walton (1985) describes management practices that are “radically different” from what he calls traditional practices of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The HR focus shifts from top-down control of

employees to a creation of a bottom-up commitment model, which is distinguished from the control-model through:

- Organisation's commitment to inform employees about the business to encourage participation from everyone,
- Coordination and control depending on shared goals,
- Boosting all workers understanding of the business, and
- Promotion of personal development,
- Provision of means to be heard on issues such as production methods, problem solving, and HR policies and practices
- Effective Technology as part of commitment strategy

The emphasis is placed on education and encouragement of employees, and fostering of participative behaviour in order to create strong (emotional) ties to the organisation.

#### *2.2.1.2 High-Involvement Work Practices (HIWP)*

Employee involvement focuses more on the realisation of employee's creative potential in problem-solving rather than long-term commitment. The High-Involvement strategy formulated by Lawler (1988) is characterised through four main features:

- Power to make decisions to influence organisational direction and performance,
- Information about organisation's performance,
- Knowledge that enables the understanding of and contribution to organisational performance, and
- Rewards based on organisational performance.

A PIKR-model (Power, Information, Knowledge and Rewards) based on these features is used for evaluation of high-involvement systems, focusing on the correlation between PIRK features and HR outcomes (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Saks, 2006).

The emphasis of this model is placed on the (short-term) employee performance through better communication of expected outcomes and corresponding rewards.

### 2.2.1.3 High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)

Whichever model is considered: high-involvement or high-commitment practices (Lawler, 1988; Walton, 1985) there are common themes in both views (Table 1).

High-Commitment	High-Involvement
Company's commitment to inform employees about the business to encourage participation from everyone	Information about organisation's performance
Boosting all workers understanding of the business	Knowledge that enables understanding of and contribution to organisational performance
Provision of means to be heard on issues such as production methods, problem-solving, and HR policies and practices	Power to make decisions to influence organisational direction and performance

*Table 1 - High-Commitment and High-Involvement Model comparison*

*Both models consider and highlight the importance of relationship-building between the employee and the organisation, and the importance of effective communication between the management and the employees be it to create long-term commitment, or short-term performance boosts.*

In this thesis, the term “High-Performance Work System” will be used indiscriminately for any particular implementation (or combinations of) High-Commitment or High-Involvement practices which (1) provides appropriate channels for employee-employer communication; (2) facilitates employee’s contribution to (re-) definition, implementation and execution of company’s strategy, policy and operational activities (bottom-up communication); and (3) informs employees about organisational performance, strategy and individual contributions (top-down communication) (Andreeva & Sergееva, 2016).

The theories from High-Involvement and High-Commitment streams have successfully been replicated in later, more recent studies, confirming the positive effects of consistent and honest communication (Lockwood, 2007) and the (especially the younger) employees’ desire to get involved in the problem-solving process (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012).

### 2.2.1.4 Strategic fit and alignment models

HRM practice is commonly differentiated in three hierarchy levels: (1) organisational strategy, (2) organisational level leadership, and (3) issue resolution and processing

activities (CIPD, 2013). HRM research is focused on practices (policies, strategies, and combination of those) along the hierarchical or activity dimensions (Figure 8).

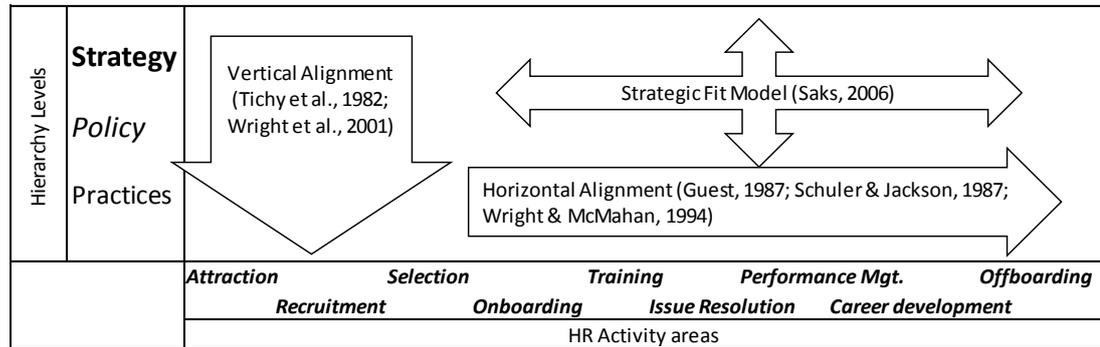


Figure 8 - HR Practices Alignment Models

The research of HRM practices and strategies resulted in a number of models establishing and explaining links between HR activities and organisational performance (Guest, 1987; Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Wright & McMahan, 1994). Earlier models, e.g. Wright and McMahan (1994), suggested that HRM *practices* directed towards the human resource capital pool and behaviour will result in a sustained competitive advantage. This model does not differentiate management levels; however, the need for vertical alignment was implicit through the attribution of strategic importance to the HR activities and the focus on actual practices at the same time. An alternative stream of research focused explicitly on the alignment of HR strategy and operations (Tichy, Fombrun, & Devanna, 1982; Wright et al., 2001), summarised in the strategic fit model by Collings and Mellahi (2009). The elevation of HR to the strategic level of an organisation is also being made explicit in the call for a horizontal alignment of HR practices and the resulting need for coordination of these practices at a higher management level (Saks, 2006). Complimentary HR practices result in increased productivity (Boxall & Macky, 2009) and are seen as a “necessary condition for the maximal effectiveness of the HR capital pool” (Wright & McMahan, 1994, p. 320). At the same time, divergent and conflicting HR practices could have a negative impact on performance (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016).

*Strategic fit models argue for a vertical strategy-practice alignment or horizontal practices-mix alignment. Either approach requires coordination between the hierarchical levels of the organisation to link HR outcomes to organisational performance.*

Current HR literature argues for a top-down approach to HR Management strategy and praxis. Established models link organisation-employee relationships and effective management-employee communication to improved organisational performance.

#### 2.2.1.5 Employee Life Cycle

HR literature commonly refers to “employees” as people who are currently working for a firm, put plainly: the period from “hire to retire” (Graf, 2011; IBM, 2011). However, the contact between the employee and the organisation, the employee’s exposure to HR practices, starts long before they are hired and continues after the employee has left (Figure 9).

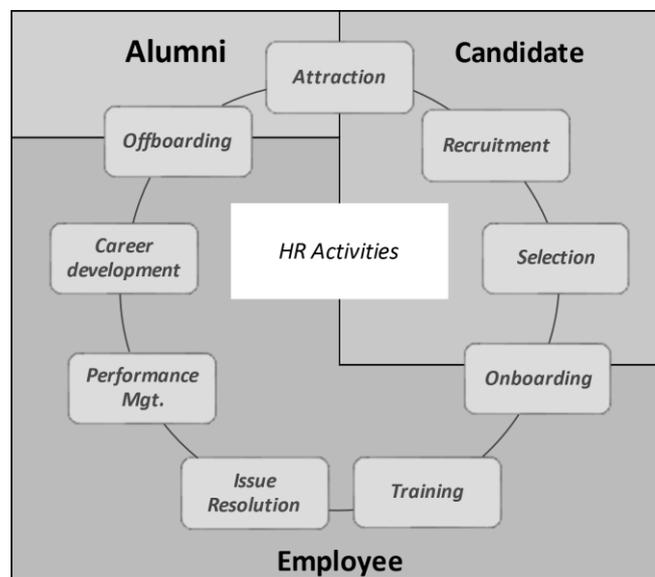


Figure 9 - HR Activities during the Employee Life Cycle

The attraction and selection process, before a candidate is moved to apply for a position at the firm and before they are offered an employment contract, is still part of HR activities (Edwards, 2010; Lockwood, 2007). Alumni keep contact with their former colleagues and in some instances remain in contact with their ex-employer as suppliers, customers or partners (Lockwood, 2007). In this thesis the employee life cycle will, therefore, include (1) potential and future employees (applicants, people in the selection and onboarding process, graduates in final year, etc.), (2) current employees (going through the introduction, training and development, promotion and succession planning, reward process etc.), as well as (3) former or retired employees (maternity, retirement, leavers). When referring to “employees”, individuals at all stages of the employee life cycle are considered.

### 2.2.2 HRM as a communication system

Growing complexity and sophistication in HRM research required a stronger focus of HR process (Guest, 2011). From a strategic fit perspective, HRM process influences and is influenced by the organisational culture, values and employee motivation (Schalk, Timmerman, & den Heuvel, 2013). Putting the HR practices into a context Bowen and Ostroff (2004) focus on the implementation of HR practices which constitute this process. They consider HRM as

*a socially constructed system which is constituted by and facilitates communications between the employees and the employer (Figure 10).*

In a communication system messages are sent by the sender (rhetor) and are interpreted by the recipient (audience) (Huang et al., 2013; Kent & Taylor, 1998). A communication system gains its strength from facilitation and encouragement of a symmetric two-way communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998) – allowing the sender and the recipient to switch roles and providing level access to communication media.

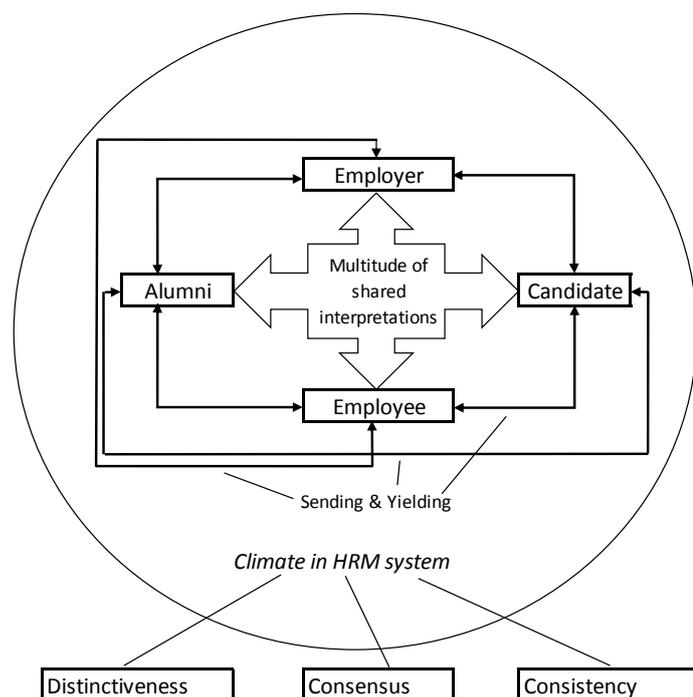


Figure 10 - HRM Presentation as a communication system

HRM, as a communication system, negotiates expected employees behaviours and contributions, and corresponding sets of psychological and economic benefits offered in exchange (Edwards, 2010; Mosley, 2007). Bowen and Ostroff (2004); (2016) define a strong communication system as a distinctive, consistent and high in consensus.

### 2.2.2.1 *Distinctiveness*

A distinctive message stands out among other messages. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue that a message coming from a higher hierarchy level will be perceived as distinctive. Additional factors such as utilisation of the appropriate media to reach relevant audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), perceived subject matter expertise of the sender (Fieseler, Hoffmann, & Meckel, 2010), or strong emotional binding to the rhetor (Leonardi et al., 2013) have been identified as contributing factors of increased *distinctiveness* of the message. Studies adopting the communication lens show that businesses seek to utilise communication capabilities of new technologies to increase effectiveness and provide a more distinctive message to target audiences (Billington & Billington, 2012).

### 2.2.2.2 *Consistency*

A (distinctive) message needs to be interpreted and understood by the audience. The message can be reinforced if it is consistent. *Consistency* in this context implies consistency in space and over time. Consistency over time refers to the messages employees receive at different times during their employee life cycle (e.g. attraction, appraisal, reward and promotion), and requires the same content to be presented to potential, current and former employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; 2016). Spatial dimension of consistency refers to the hierarchical consistency, i.e. definition of goals and values by higher levels of management and communication and implementation of practices that underline these goals at the shop-floor-level, as well as horizontal consistency across complimentary HR practices (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016; Boxall & Macky, 2009; Wright & McMahan, 1994). Consistent messages would carry the same content in all HR activities across different hierarchical levels of the organisation towards potential, current and former employees.

### 2.2.2.3 *Consensus*

Organisational performance increases when employees' understanding is consistent with the organisation's understanding of expected outcomes (Sanders & Yang, 2016). *Consensus* is a shared understanding of a message (Edwards, 2010). The consensus is established at two levels – at inter-personal level among senders and recipients (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; 2016) and at the process and structural level, through integration of the message content into activities (e.g. perceived distributive fairness), and provision of feedback mechanisms (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Lawler, 1988; Walton,

1985). Bi-directional communication and information exchange, including provisions for employee voice, are paramount for consensus building (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Holland, Cooper, & Hecker, 2016; Miles & Muuka, 2011; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016).

### 2.2.3 Technology focus in HRM literature

HRM literature in general lacks technology focus. Very little attention is being paid to technological advances and enabling/restricting properties of IT in the domain of HR management. The search for Keywords and titles with words “IT” and “Social Media” yielded in ABS List 4\* HR journals for the past five years (2012-2017) yielded less than twenty articles which engaged directly with effects of IT on HR practices, policies or process. From those results, after excluding all papers which are directed to e-HRM systems, the papers which directly address IT and social media use are collated in Table 2. The articles cover areas of

- Employee voice
- Employee Wellbeing
- HR operations
- Industrial relations
- Knowledge management
- Recruitment

However, most prominent the research is focused on Recruitment and Selection practices using social media for attraction and candidate selection (six out of thirteen papers (cf. HR-Area column)). This indicates that additional research in HR activities and processes influenced by IT use is required.

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>HR Area</b>	<b>Findings/ Conclusions</b>
JABR	(Miles & Muuka, 2011)	Media for employees' voice: Ways in which employees decide to communicate	Employee voice	Organisations are no longer in control of "employee voice"-media and must adapt
IBAM	(Weathington & Bechtel, 2012)	Social media use for selection: Using public social media to evaluate potential employees	Recruitment/ Selection process	Negative information on public social media is linked to negative selection outcomes
JLAE	(Billington & Billington, 2012)	Social media strategies for business leaders: Reasons for adoption of social media in organisational settings	Activities supported by social media	List of activities (e.g. Marketing, Collaboration, etc.) which can be supported by social media
JLAE	(Holt et al., 2012)	Engaging the Millennial workforce: Motivations in communicative exchange for the Y-generation	Recruitment / Retention	Instant communication and feedback are strong influencing factors for the motivation
MCS	(Van Dijck, 2013)	Shaping of professional online-persona: User-interface restrictions and potential in presenting users' "self"	Recruitment/ Selection process	Online networks influence the representations and the assessment of individuals by organisations
HRMag	(Robb, 2014)	Recruiter "networks": Using social media for candidate location and attraction	Recruitment	Social media allows organisations to "connect to the right people"
NJIR	(Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015)	Social media for Trade Union engagement: Social media use for Trade Union/Members engagement	Industrial relations	Unions successful in utilisation of social media to establish stronger relationships with their base
HRMJ	(McDonald et al., 2016)	Social media use for selection: Using public social media to evaluate potential employees	Recruitment/ Selection process	Blurring boundaries between professional and social lives
IJHRM	(Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016)	IT use in HRM: How HR practices can utilise IT	HR operations	Descriptive positive outcomes of e-HRM systems
IJHRM	(Holland et al., 2016)	Use of social media for employee voice: benefits for HR through "listening" to employees on social media	Employee voice	Little evidence that employees use social media to exercise their voice
IJHRM	(Holland & Bardoel, 2016)	IT effects on Work/Life balance: Positive and negative effects of IT on employee wellbeing	Employee Wellbeing	List of effects of IT-enabled work on employees' work-life balance, suggestions for further research

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>HR Area</b>	<b>Findings/ Conclusions</b>
HRMJ	(Mabey & Zhao, 2017)	IT use for collaborative knowledge exchange: Building online relationships in knowledge-intensive projects	Knowledge management	Practical steps to encourage knowledge-sharing and distribution
IJHRM	(Becton, Walker, Schwager, & Gilstrap, 2017)	Social media use for selection: Is behaviour exposed on social media transferable to workplace	Recruitment/ Selection process	Calls for caution when inferring work ethics from posts on social media

*Table 2 - IT focused HR literature*

Legend: JABR: Journal of applied business research, IBAM: Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management, JLAE: Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics, Legend: MCS: Media, Culture & Society, HRMag: HRMagazine, NJIR: British Journal of Industrial Relations, HRMJ: Human Resource Management Journal, IJHRM: International Journal of Human Resource Management

#### 2.2.4 HRM Literature review summary

Different HRM models including HPWS, Strategic-fit, and Process view (Figure 6) place emphasis on the importance of effective communications and relationships. Strong relationships and communications have been linked to improved organisational performance. The approaches differ in their interpretations *how* relationships are built and *how* communications become effective. The models agree on the necessity of a top-down coordination of HR activities and practices.

HR literature lacks IT-focus. Information technologies are often viewed as “supporting” but not “driving” technologies. Large proportion of IS-related research in HR is focused on one specific area, majority of these papers are dedicated to recruitment and selection practices.

### 2.3 Social Media in Information Systems Literature

This section focuses on social media as a sub-section of Information Systems research. The aim is to define social media and to introduce research trends and gaps in this area. Social media is a contemporary social phenomenon that is yet to be explored (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013; Roth et al., 2013). In the following section, social media is placed within the framework of contemporary research and juxtaposed with the concepts of Web 2.0, Social Networking Sites, and User Generated Content/ User Generated Information Systems. As an Information System, social media is built upon a set of (available) internet, communication and computing technologies, as well as a set of ideological beliefs about how information should be created, accessed and distributed (Figure 11).

Social Media									
Social Networking Sites, Blogs, MMORPG, Virtual Worlds, Knowledge Sites, Online Communities of Practice, Corporate In-House Platforms...									
Web 2.0 Technologies			Web 2.0 Ideology			IT Technologies and Market			
Media Richness	Interactive Applications	Content Creation	Transparency	Information Availability	Tools Availability	Smartphones fast CPUs and GPUs	Affordability	Fiber Broadband, WiFi, 4G	GPS

Figure 11 - Technological, Ideological and Market foundations of Social Media

To date there is still no clear definition of “social media”. Kapoor et al. (2017) refer to social media as a collection of websites which facilitate relationship building. Earlier definitions were vague too. Kaplan and Haenlein use a somewhat technical description: “Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the

*ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).*

Boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 211) take a less technical approach and define “*social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*”. Kane et al. (2014) extend this definition by adding that users should also be able to *create and access digital content*.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) define social media based on seven functional facets: Identity, Sharing, Relationships, Presence, Conversations, Groups and Reputation.

Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013) employ the term “social computing” as a placeholder for online IT technologies which enable and facilitate social interactions and are deeply embedded in day-to-day human interactions.

Leonardi et al. (2013) differentiate between public and private social media, and introduce the notion of “Enterprise Social Media”. They differentiate the types of social media based on the direction of the communication. The first type is used for communication with external parties, whereas the second type is used for internal communication and social interaction within an enterprise. In this thesis, an attention will be paid to both internal and external social media platforms indiscriminately.

One common theme in all definitions is the direct involvement of users in the content generation and information exchange. This calls for focus on “user” or “usage” in research aimed to understand the social media phenomenon. In the context of this research, social media will be defined as

*an Information System that has the properties as defined by Boyd and Ellison (2008): profiles, connections and ability to traverse the connections. This definition is further extended to include the user’s ability to actually generate content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Leonardi et al., 2013).*

The ongoing discussion on what is social media and how to define it has been highlighted in literature (Kapoor et al., 2017) and alternative definitions, using a performative lens, relationship-based approaches, and social presence lens have been

proposed and discussed (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2018). In this research the “systems view”–definition of social media as a “flexible, extensible and *integrated system* of online based applications and web sites”, is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### 2.3.1 Web2.0 and User Generated Content

The term “Web 2.0” refers to the set of technologies and ideologies that enable and drive media rich content creation on the internet. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) provide a comprehensive overview of technologies that form the basis of Web 2.0. The notion of “foundation” and “platform for the evolution of social media” as proposed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) will be adopted here. The ideological foundation of Web 2.0 is rooted in the open source ideology, whereby users have free access to information and tools and can create and expand the available resource base in collaboration with other participants (ibid). Major open-source projects include apache web-server and MySQL database management system – tools created by the community for the community. Another source of openness and interoperability traces back to the very foundations of the internet with simplicity, modularity, interoperability at its heart (DesAutels, 2011).

Technological advances in Web 2.0 and open ideology allowed User Generated Content (UGC) to emerge as an internet phenomenon. A metamorphose of content producers and content consumers into “prosumers”, whereby the traditional producing enterprises become providers of services and traditional consumers become producers is at the heart of this phenomenon (DesAutels, 2011). Social media is one of the manifestations of UGC capabilities built upon Web2.0 foundation.

### 2.3.2 Social Media as Information System

Philip DesAutels (2011, p. 186) definition of User Generated Information System as

*“a set of component services, integrated by the user into a novel configuration such that the resulting information service is (1) qualitatively different from its components and (2) offers unique value to the user over and above the value of its inputs”*

goes beyond a single application, website or technology.

Using a mobile phone tweeter-app to take part in a discussion in a LinkedIn group whereby the posts simultaneously appear on a Facebook-wall and the discussions spread across social network sites' borders demonstrates how different technologies, services and platforms can be combined into new communication systems. Social media as is not a specific single application such as a social networking site providing functionality for users to interconnect and create their own content. Social media, when understood as a set of interconnected and (however loosely) integrated information technologies, is an *Information System* formed through unification of single components to offer its users unique value.

### 2.3.3 Functional Blocks of Social Media

Kietzmann et al. (2011) specify seven functional building blocks of social media which are present to a greater or lesser extent in many popular social media sites and even more so in social media as an Information Systems in which missing building blocks of one application can be replaced by another application through integration of various technologies (Figure 12). For example, Four-Square application combined with mobile-phone's GPS capabilities and Twitter integration brings together and enhances the building blocks of *Presence*, *Reputation*, *Conversation* and, if Twitter now integrates with Facebook, *Relationships* and *Identity* building blocks are expanded too.

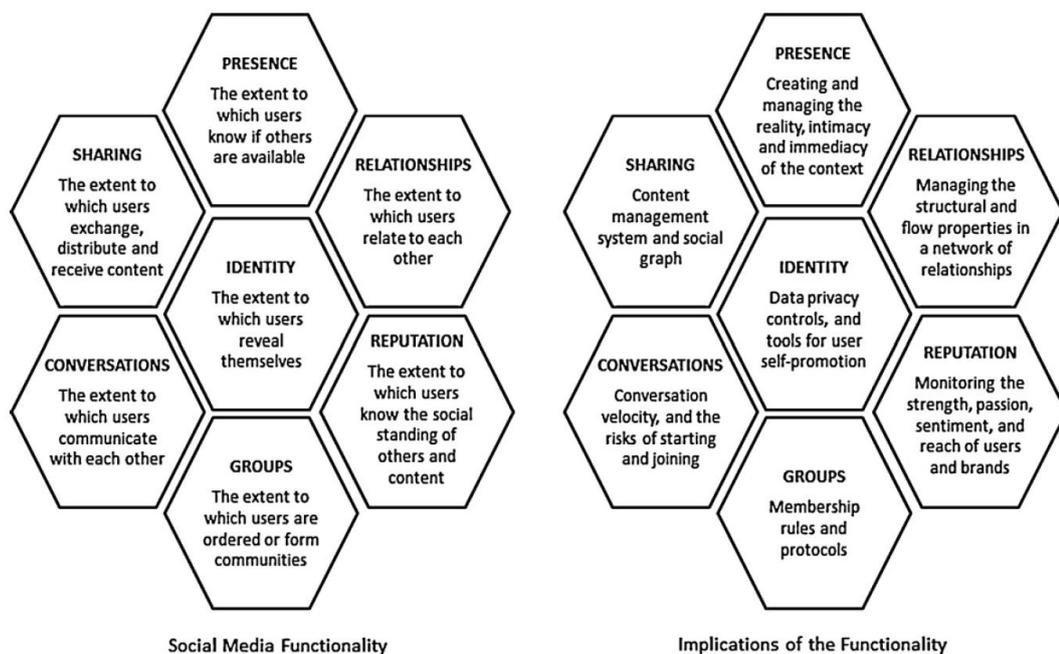


Figure 12 - Building blocks of Social Media (Kietzmann, 2011)

The properties of each building block are related to (1) the functionality offered by a platform, (2) properties of other building blocks and, potentially, (3) the ability to substitute missing blocks by integrating with another platform.

*Identity* refers to the representation of the user in the virtual world and could be as vague as an imaginary pseudonym (e.g. comments on a blog) or as precise as full name, date of birth, contact details and real-life visuals such as photographs or videos (e.g. Facebook).

*Conversations* allow users to interact in a broadcast or dialogue manner in real-time (e.g. Skype) or with major time laps between statements (e.g. Stack Overflow).

*Sharing* refers to activities through which existing content is spread (and possibly enhanced) through the social graph.

*Presence* allows users to know where other community members are. This could be a simple online / offline indicator or a precise GPS location on the map (e.g. Foursquare) revealing an actual physical location of a user and blurring boundaries between virtual and physical worlds.

*Relationships* are seen by Boyd and Ellison (2008) as one of the key differentiating factors of Social Network Sites as they “enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks” (p. 211). Relationships allow community members to visualise their networks in a number of ways, ranging from “likes” and “followers-followed” (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) to virtual representation of their real-life relationships such as “married”-status on Facebook.

*Groups* refer both to membership groups where users can articulate their affiliations with or interest in a specific subject, and groups utilised by users to manage their relationships. Membership groups, such as professional interest groups on LinkedIn, University Alumni Groups on Facebook etc., could impose certain entry-requirements (e.g. BCS Group on LinkedIn requires the members to provide a valid membership number) or allow free entry. Membership in such groups is initiated by the group member. User-defined groups are managed by the group-owner and group members are (often) not aware of their belonging to one or several groups.

*Reputation* allows to qualify the content provided by a user and establish trust-levels among community members. Reputation levels can be as simple as mechanistic

indicators e.g. number of views on YouTube, number of followers on Twitter, or include more interactive vote-up/vote-down mechanisms such as number of helpful votes on amazon reviews, “preferred answer” on stackoverflow.com, or combination of all and any of those (e.g. reputation index on TripAdvisor is based on the number of published reviews and the number of helpful votes).

#### 2.3.4 Uniqueness of Social Media in organisational context

Social media is a unique phenomenon quite distinct from previous computer mediated communication systems (Leonardi et al., 2013).

*The ability to perform different activities, namely communicate, manage and visualise relationships and create and edit content, in a single place combined with the fact that this information is stored and kept (semi-) publicly accessible over a long period of time is seen as a key feature of (enterprise) social media.*

Through its democratised approach to information and content creation, social media has the potential to influence (support as well as disrupt) existing intra-organisational communication processes as it lowers the barriers of entry into the communication process and provides alternative (access to) communication resources (Huang et al., 2013). Chapter 3 adds more focus on the disruptive potential of social media.

There are other features of social media that make it different from (1) traditional media (e.g. radio, print and TV broadcast), (2) communication platforms (e.g. GSM, email or chat), (3) offline social networks and communities (e.g. sports clubs, political parties etc.), (4) internet-based information services (e.g. Duden, Encyclopaedia Britannica, yell.com), and (5) predecessors of social media networks (e.g. Online Forums and Mailing Lists). Based on the literature discussed and reviewed in the previous sections, seven key differentiating factors of social media have been highlighted.

*Availability* – social media applications and services are commonly delivered through the World Wide Web (WWW) (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Leonardi et al., 2013) and are accessible on a variety of devices such as mobile phones, email, websites accessed through desktop and portable computers, desktop applications, mobile websites and smart-phone apps. Information can be sent and received via multiple independent channels such as GSM networks, mobile internet,

public WiFi, private/institutional broadband connections etc. allowing access from virtually anywhere on the planet, or even way above it on the International Space Station (Gaudin, 2010). Utilising modern Information Technologies, most social media are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without interruptions to service and time-zone dependencies, allowing access any time of the day.

*Accessibility* – content created on social media is (semi-) public and accessible by other members of the wider network. Through integration of different network sites content can be effortlessly spread across multiple platforms potentially allowing even wider audiences to consume and enhance it. Persistence over time and accessibility by a broad scope of users enables “leaky-pipe” communication whereby third party users for whom the content was not initially intended become aware of it and discover valuable information (Leonardi et al., 2013). In the context of organisational research, public dialogue and discussion can support democratic decision-making and commitment towards goals (Hauptmann & Steger, 2013).

*Affordability* – many public social media, certainly the most popular ones, are free to use: “Facebook is free and always will be”. There is no entry cost and no cost associated with creating and sharing content. Contrast that with e.g. the cost of traditional printing and distribution of flyers.

*Ease of Entry* – anyone can join. There are no restrictions on who can join – sign up and tweet away, no recommendations or CV checks which are required when joining many traditional offline networks e.g. the British Computer Society or UK Academy for Information Systems. Some social media might restrict the population consciously or subconsciously e.g. Facebook membership was consciously limited to Harvard-students at launch (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) or the Russian Social Networking Site “odnoklassniki.ru” was initially only available in Russian, (subconsciously?) limiting the population of potential members to Russian language speakers.

*Speed of delivery and global reach* – content is delivered to (intended) recipients immediately. Online and offline social networks allow the content to spread further, e.g. when created, the “Youth Movement for Egyptian Opposition” group on Facebook in 2007 had 300 users who were invited via email. Within three days the awareness grew and the number of group members increased tenfold, reaching 3000 (Lim, 2012). The content is spread along the social graph and is crossing virtual

platform borders, political and geographical boundaries, and the boundaries between virtual and real worlds.

*Association* – The ability to articulate personal relationships is one of the key characteristics of social media. The content of messages delivered through implicitly trusted (or mistrusted) relationship-networks, tied in with the senders identity is implicitly attributed with similar level of trust as the sender (Hauptmann & Steger, 2013). For example, a hotel critique posted by a Facebook-friend on TripAdvisor is more “trusted” than the hotel owner’s description. Openness and transparency of the content and source of information contribute to trust (Fieseler et al., 2010).

*Community Censorship* – anyone can say anything. The users communicate whenever, wherever and about anything they want (Fieseler et al., 2010). The (corporate) communication has been democratised (Kietzmann et al., 2011), traditional censors – corporates (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and governments (Lim, 2012) have little control over the content and information about or concerning them. Instead, all community members utilise the “reputation”-building block and punish inappropriate behaviour as well as encourage valuable contributions – censorship becomes more democratic, empowering users. The owners of the social media platforms, however, too have the power of censorship, and despite some claims user do not control (all) content or communication on social media (Stein, 2013).

Social media is an Information System which, contrasted with other Information Systems such as email, ERP etc., exhibits all of the properties of Availability, Accessibility, Affordability, Ease of Entry, Speed of delivery and global reach, Association, and Community Censorship in one system.

### 2.3.5 Social Media use and value creation

Social media is, by definition, a “social”: inter human system of communications. When assessing the value of “communications”, several frameworks are available. One of the frameworks is defined by properties of a communication system: (a) *Dialogic* communication, (b) *Accessibility* of information by all parties, (c) *Risk-benefits* balance from the participation (added value for all participants), and (d) *Transparency* of information provided and available to the participants. With the DART framework, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b) provide a tool for explaining

how communication platforms can contribute to value creation through co-operation of consumers and producers.

*Dialogue* is a conversation in which a power balance between all participating parties is maintained (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Dialogue, according to Habermas' ideal speech situation, requires all parties to be true to themselves, have the same opportunity to participate and equal power to influence others, and allows every statement to be questioned and debated (Leeper, 1996).

*Access* to social media is fairly unregulated and egalitarian – firms and individuals often have access to the same set of technologies (Boyd & Ellison, 2008), however the organisations (as well as individuals) can often control access to “their” pages; platform providers further limit access through terms and conditions of service (Stein, 2013). In addition, in case of enterprise social media, the organisation has a far higher level of access control (Leonardi et al., 2013).

The balance between *Risk* and *Benefits* is closely linked to the balance of power and dialogic communication – the ability to “influence” products and brands is valued by consumers (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011), and at the same time presents organisations with the risk of being “relegated to the side-lines” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). An engaged and continuous conversation between all participants helps to maintain the risk/benefit balance.

*Transparency* is related to access and dialogue. Allowing transparent access to information levels the knowledge/power field and contributes to dialogue.

The better performing organisations within the DART-framework have (1) a higher level of dialogue and access, (2) higher transparency and (3) few exclusions.

## 2.4 Information Systems research in Organisations and HRM

This section uses the definitions of social media and HRM from previous sections and focuses on the IS literature which provides examples of research approaches and trends. The aim of this section is to (1) identify current and former IS research methods and (2) identify research gaps which can be filled by this research.

The literature review is based on four types of articles: first, two literature reviews from 2008 with focus on interpretative research in information systems (Jones & Karsten, 2008) and focus on technology in organisation research (Orlikowski & Scott,

2008) were consulted to identify trends in current research. Second, contemporary articles with significant numbers of citations on google scholar published between 1990 and 2013 in Organisation Studies or HR Management were selected based on year of publication and number of citations. Third, articles published in 2013 in HR and Business journals with focus on IS or social media were used to describe latest research interests. Finally, the literature review was re-visited and updated in 2017 to include most recent papers which were published while this research was undertaken.

#### 2.4.1 IS research history

Research on technology and technology in organisations underwent significant changes in the past thirty years (Table 3). The focus shifted from identifying IT’s external and internal features (i.e. considering IT as an artefact) to analysing how the IT-use is changing individual, organisational, and societal behaviours, processes and norms (cross-disciplinary research of IS and organisational, political, management, psychology and other sciences).

Theory	Separation of Technology and User Affordances of IT	Structuration Theory & Sociomateriality; Business Scope Redefinition	Resource Based View; IT Practices & Structuration; Acceptance Models	Mix of theories from IS and other disciplines: ANT, RBV, TAM... Fusion of IS and Organisational research
Authors	Cooper & Zmud, 1990	Giddens, 1984; Orlikowski, 1992; Venkatraman, 1993 & 1994	Orlikowski, 2000; Dewett & Jones, 2001; Jones and Karsten, 2008	Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Racherla & Mandviwalla, 2013; Roth et al., 2013
Focus	IT as Artefact	Interplay of IT and Organisational Structures	IT implementation and acceptance; Efficiency gains through technology	IT adoption & impact on organisations, society, decisionmaking etc...
Time period	pre 1990	1990	2000	2010 ...

Table 3 - IS Research Focus timeline

Pre 1990’s – technology was viewed by researchers as an artefact (Cooper & Zmud, 1990) and considered separately from the user. From early 1990’s the Structuration view introduced by Anthony Giddens (1984) became more popular among technology researchers (Jones & Karsten, 2008). One of the core implications of Structuration Theory for IS research is that technology in itself only becomes relevant when it is being used by humans. Therefore, the actual usage and not the mere “existence” of technology should be the focus of IS research. Similar conclusions were drawn by Orlikowski (1992), who suggested uniting the objectivist view of technology as an

external force and the subjectivist view of technology being formed by strategic decisions and human action into an integrated model of the organisation and technology interdependence. Orlikowski (1992) identifies two prominent views on the scope of technology: first one concerned with the “hardware”: the actual machines, information systems, equipment, etc. used by humans in their productive activities; the second view focuses on “application”: the processes, tasks and knowledge of the humans involved in the production.

In the early 1990’s a reconceptualization of IS research focus took place. Robey, Boudreau, & Rose (2000) summarise the developments of IS research in 1990s as a convergence of two distinctive research streams: one which focused on *availability* and *existence* of IT as an artefact, the other investigating IT *adoption* and *application*. Their conclusion is to proceed in a “more integrated fashion”. Henderson & Venkatraman (1993) view IT in its duality, stating that a technology is an entity influencing organisations as well as an entity formed and influenced by organisational structure and strategy. The effects of technology adoption in business processes are summarised by Venkatraman (1994) in the “Business Transformation Model” which is based on the combination of IT availability (i.e. existence of a technology) and level of adoption (i.e. the extent to which the technology is being utilised by the users) linking IT use to organisational transformation.

At the turn of the century Dewett & Jones (2001) focused on two main contributing features of IT – Information Efficiencies (enabling people to perform better) and Information Synergies (enabling people to collaborate or share resources and knowledge). In their review of the then recent literature they recognised the influence of organisational factors such as structure, culture and size and the impact of IT on organisational performance as well as the fact that “simply serving a technology does not necessarily predict positive impact”. The actual usage and the acceptance of a given technology need to be taken into consideration when studying IT phenomena; this view was strengthened by Orlikowski (2000) with the introduction of the “Practice Lens”. The “Practice Lens” allowed to see how technologies are (1) intended to be used, (2) are being used in certain situations and (3) how the application of technologies is enacted – in other words, placing a focus on reciprocal dependency between technology and structure and reinforcement or transformation of one through the other.

In 2000's the influence and importance of IT in commercial organisations continues to grow, with US companies spending more on IT than on any other form of investment and so does the trend moving from objectivist view of IT towards a constructivist view (Dewett & Jones, 2001). Simultaneously, the constructivist view overtakes the objectivist view in IS research (Leonardi & Barley, 2010). Jones and Karsten (2008) review of 331 IS articles published in 1983-2004 identified 145 articles which used Giddens's theory. Orlikowski (2001) promotes a greater interaction between the fields of IT and Organisation research, introducing more interpretative methodologies into IT research and shifting the focus of research on technology in organisations towards the inclusion of the actual properties of a given technology. This firmly places

*the focus of IS research on how IT are deployed into organisations  
and are used by humans (Grover & Lyytinen, 2015)*

Currently, Information Systems research is transformed to a cross-disciplinary subject spanning a plethora of management research fields including Marketing, HRM, Organisational Psychology etc. (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Majchrzak, Markus, & Wareham, 2016; McDonald et al., 2016; Miranda et al., 2015; Nunamaker, Twyman, Giboney, & Briggs, 2017; Wu, Straub, & Liang, 2015).

#### 2.4.2 Interpretative turn in current IS research

Current research focus on technology in organisations is adopting the interpretative approach and is considering the usage of the technology rather than separating the human and the "hardware" factors. The term "Sociomateriality", introduced by Scott and Orlikowski, arguably moving "beyond separation and towards fusion" of different technology research streams (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008) is now a common terminology among IS researchers.

Leonardi and Barley (2010) provide an overview of contemporary research on technology and organisations conducted through constructivist lens. They identify five coherent perspectives which they label perception, interpretation, appropriation, enactment, and alignment. The studies on perceptions focus on the implementation and adoption phases of technologies in organisation. Interpretation studies focus on the actual use of IT in organisations. Appropriation studies focus on how users adopt technologies and whether technologies are used as intended by their designers.

Alignment and enactment studies focus on similar issues and are grounded in similar assumptions about the role of user as an agency and the reciprocal influence between technology and organisational structure. Whilst enactment can be seen as continuation of appropriation studies and uses the user-perspective, alignment assumes a slightly different perspective, viewing technology imposed changes and changes imposed on technology from a wider, organisational level.

#### *2.4.2.1 Technology Research Trends*

The importance of adoption and use of technology has been a focus of many recent articles (Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Racherla & Mandviwalla, 2013; Roth et al., 2013).

Despite a clear topology of research perspectives, many empirical IS studies apply multiple lenses and theories simultaneously. Adoption studies consider enactment and alignment (Racherla & Mandviwalla, 2013), and require attention to be paid to interpretation and perception (Zorn, Flanagin, & Shoham, 2011).

#### *2.4.2.2 Social Media Research Trends in HRM*

The expanded use of social media in and around organisations forces organisations to focus on new ways to use, monitor, and control social media (Billington & Billington, 2012). Acknowledging that technology changes organisation's structures, work processes and the competitive environment, one of the question raised is in HR literature is whether organisations are "changing their HR policies, practices and processes?" (Boudreau & Lawler III, 2014, p. 232). The effects of social media use in and for HR purposes have attracted attention of scholars in many HR-related areas (Barry & Wilkinson, 2016; Becton et al., 2017; Holland et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2015; Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015). Social media impacts not only external, but also internal environments, and has a direct impact on the HR communication practices (Miles & Muuka, 2011). Recent studies cover a variety of discrete HR activities affected by technology in general and social media in particular ranging from Employer Branding (Mosley, 2007), over selection (Roth et al., 2013) and hiring (Brown & Vaughn, 2011), towards decision making process (Schalk et al., 2013) and IT misuse (Weatherbee, 2010). These studies represent a variety of methodologies and lenses directed to expanding theory on IS use in organisations. From the review of the current literature, no research theorising the influence of social media use on the entire HRM process has been identified. The extant research focuses on specific steps within

HRM activities, neglecting parts of HRM process prior or following an individual activity (e.g. recruitment or selection).

#### 2.4.3 Research Gaps

There is a recognised need for more and more diverse research in HRM, using multiple sources of evidence and focusing on presence as well as implementation of HR practices (Guest, 2011). HR practices are changing slowly (Boudreau & Lawler III, 2014). This might give theory a chance to catch up with practice; however

*new technologies are bringing new challenges and opportunities, with social media being praised as “extremely” important by practitioners (Martin, 2013).*

New external systems replace the established internal systems for employee voice, presenting organisations with challenges to maintain control over communication media (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Miles & Muuka, 2011).

*Practitioners already recognise the increasingly important role social media is playing in recruitment and attraction (Robb, 2014; Zielinski, 2013), however there is yet a research agenda to be developed for use of social media in recruiting and staffing activities (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Roth et al., 2013).*

These new challenges call for a variety of research methods including qualitative and quantitative research to generate a more complex and sophisticated theory (Guest, 2011).

Research on *human* resource management is lacking technology focus as is the research on management in general. Orlikowski and Scott state that their analysis confirmed that “over 95% of the articles published in top management research outlets do not take into account the role of technology in organisational life” (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008, p. 435). Similarly,

*many HR change studies in the past decade have not considered technology as an influencing or mediating factor in HRM (Baird, 2002; Guest, 2002).*

Guest (2002) identifies three core HRM models none of which considered (1) the required IT/IS infrastructure, (2) IS adoption, or (3) IS practices to support/disrupt the implementations of these models in practice. In a six-year case study of organisation change from the viewpoint of HR practices the technology to support the change and the adoption of such technologies was not considered at all (Baird, 2002). Collins and Clark (2003) focused on information availability to top-management-team and viewed “technology” as a tool for information management, namely to gather, process and distribute information. In their research IT capabilities for building and maintaining social networks were central to emergence and re-affirmation of HRM practices.

*However, the actual use of the IT and concrete features offered were not discussed. Introducing a technology-focus into this body of research would widen the field and provide an alternative viewpoint.*

As information technology continues to play a vital part in organisations more interdisciplinary research is needed (Eppler & Mengis, 2004; Orlikowski, 2001; Roth et al., 2013). One specific field of IS that has not yet been sufficiently explored is social media (Roth et al., 2013), specifically its use by organisations for internal (i.e. employee-focused) communication (Leonardi et al., 2013).

This research addresses the research gaps by

1. explaining and highlighting the role social media is playing in enabling, supporting and transforming HRM as a strong communication system, and
2. answering the calls for
  - a. more sophisticated, process oriented research of HRM practices (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016; Guest, 2011)
  - b. more cross-disciplinary research (Eppler & Mengis, 2004; Majchrzak et al., 2016; Nunamaker et al., 2017; Orlikowski, 2001; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), and
  - c. more research in the emergent domain of social media (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Leonardi et al., 2013; Roth et al., 2013).

As an explanatory lens, this research employs the Resource Based View, which allows to explain value creation processes within organisations.

## 2.5 RBV justification and development of capabilities

The resource based view (Barney, 1991) has been adapted by a variety of HRM scholars to explain the effects of HR practices, systems and processes on organisational performance (Kaufman, 2015; Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). The RBV has also found its application in information systems research to address and explain effects of information system use within organisations (Mithas & Rust, 2016; Wade & Hulland, 2004). This research is concerned with the effects of information systems use on HRM process. The RBV offers a lens which allows the researcher to unify these two disciplines and investigate the phenomenon from a common angle. Because the RBV as an explanatory theory is known in both fields, it has an added advantage of enabling this research to be communicated to HR and IS community.

### 2.5.1 RBV Literature review

The RBV assumes that firms gain sustained competitive advantage through acquisition of *resources*. This view is different from those which consider external: regulatory, institutional or market forces as the sources of competitive advantage. Resources are defined as properties which are rare (limited and difficult to acquire), inimitable (cannot be replicated easily), non-substitutable (cannot be replaced by other resources), idiosyncratic (non-transferable and organisation specific) and valuable (contribute to organisational performance and firm efficiency) (Barney, 1991; Wright & McMahan, 1994). Resources include tangible as well as intangible assets, implicit knowledge, practices, and the ability to combine resources, embed those into processes and routines and so develop new *capabilities* to increase efficiency, provide new services or products, to improve agility in a dynamic marketplace, and are seen as a source of competitive advantage under the RBV (Barney et al., 2011; Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Wade & Hulland, 2004).

*The combination of tangible IT resources and organisational processes can lead to the development of new capabilities (Santhanam & Hartono, 2003).*

*Competence* is the ability to turn capabilities into (sustained) competitive advantage. Some researchers may use the terms “competence” and “capability” interchangeably (Hamel & Heene, 1994 cited in Sims, Powell, & Vidgen, 2016). This research argues that social media use can lead to the development of capabilities as well as

competences. Acknowledging the consensus that both competencies and capabilities conform with the definition of Resources (rarity, quality, immutability) and lead to competitive advantage (Sims et al., 2016), this research is using RBV to explain under what conditions firms develop new competences through social media use.

#### 2.5.2 Competences development as a source of competitive advantage

Capabilities are an organisation's ability to develop products and services, and to deliver value to their customers ahead of their competitors (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Cockburn, Henderson, & Stern, 2000; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). They emerge from internal activities which are performed by the organisation's resources through ongoing interactions and routines (Collis, 1994; Teece et al., 1997). Competences are organisational processes and complex social structures which allow to turn the capabilities into competitive advantage (Sims et al., 2016).

Organisations develop or acquire new capabilities to maintain competitive advantage. In some cases, it is the use of IT systems which enables organisations to develop such capabilities and to radically change the ways in which the business is performed, how relationships within and outside the organisation are managed, and how the internal tasks are performed (Adner & Zemsky, 2005; Lucas Jr et al., 2013; Sherif, Zmud, & Browne, 2006).

The existence and availability of a technology is not yet enough to cause transformation. Two or more competitive technologies often emerge at the same time (Adner & Zemsky, 2005), and it is the *use* and acceptance of a technology which then leads to transformation. The philosophical lens of investigating the technology impact on organisations through observations of practices and *how* the technology is being used has found wide acceptance among IS scholars (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Parmigiani & Howard-Grenville, 2011; Whittington, 2006).

*The analysis of the research findings uses the socio-material lens to understand through which practices and processes the IT use is leading to the development of new capabilities (or inhibiting those developments, or sustaining existing processes and practices).*

IT enabled transformation can be addressed from several dimensions. One dimension of IT enabled transformation is the magnitude of the transformation (Table 4).

Embeddedness Level	Criteria
Fusion Level	IT and Business Process are intertwined and inseparable
Immersion Level	IT is deeply embedded in Business Process
Connection Level	IT is supporting and complementing Business Process

Table 4 - IT Embeddedness Levels

As a framework for analysis of the embeddedness of IT into organisational practices, this research uses three levels of IT use: Connection, Immersion and Fusion (El Sawy, 2003). On the “*Connection-Level*”, IT is supporting existing processes as a complementary tool. For example, using “Word” for writing letters, or maintaining sales ledgers in a database. If the system is removed, the process would continue to function, but some of the benefits, e.g. efficiency gains, may be lost. In the “*Immersion-Level*”, the IT System is embedded into the process. New capabilities are acquired e.g. “home-office” and “remote work” through internet and virtual private networks (VPN), communications through email, embedded CRM systems with customer data shared across departments. The separation of “IT” and “Process” is very difficult, if not impossible at this point. At the “*Fusion-Level*” IT becomes undistinguishable from the actual work process. It is no longer a (however deeply) embedded tool, but rather an integral part of the business and all underlying processes. It becomes impossible to study either just “IT” or “Organisation” – both are so intertwined that study of organisation requires study of IT and vice versa (El Sawy, 2003). IT use creates organisational value at each of these levels. However, it is not always transformational, and does not necessarily lead to business process re-design.

In the other dimension, Lucas Jr et al. (2013) define *transformational technologies* as those which affect individuals, organisations and society as a whole on at least three levels which include Process, Emergence of New Organisations, Relationships, User Experience, Markets, Customers, Disruptive Impact (Table 5).

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Firm</b>	<b>Economy/Society</b>
<b>Process</b>	A change in a personal process of more than half the steps (e.g. digital photography)	A change in a business process of more than half the steps (e.g. book publishing vs. e-books)	
<b>New organizations</b>	Ability to establish new businesses due to availability and usability of new production tools (e.g. Google Play, Apple Appstore)	Creation of a new organization with a value of at least \$100 million (Amazon, Facebook, and Google) or multiple organizations (Health Information Exchanges)	Creation of a new organization that changes at least two hours of individual behavior a day (mobile communications and web)
<b>Relationships</b>	A change in social relations affecting at least half of one's contacts or doubling the number of contacts (e.g. Facebook)	A change affecting at least half of relationships with other organizations or a doubling of the number of relationships (e.g. iTunes for Apple, e-books for Amazon)	A change affecting at least two hours of individual behavior a day related to social relations (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
<b>User Experience</b>	A change in user experience involving at least 2 hours per day (e.g. Facebook)	Interaction patterns with suppliers, partners, customers (e.g. JIT, CRM)	Refocussing of industries, re-alignment of nation-state economies (e.g. from production to service)
<b>Markets</b>	A change in at least half of one's vendors in a particular market (e.g. iTunes vs. CD purchases)	Entering or leaving at least one market served by the firm (IBM from Hardware to Consultancy, Blackberry from Phones to Software)	Creation of a new market with at least \$100 million of transactions a year (music downloading, search advertising)
<b>Customers</b>	A radical change within customer behavior e.g. using comparison websites for all products	A change in which the firm serves at least 50% more customers (e.g. Amazon ebooks, iTunes)	
<b>Disruptive impact</b>		A change that forces at least one competitor to move from a profit to a loss, exit a market, enter into a merger or declare bankruptcy (e.g. Netflix vs. Blockbuster, e-books vs. Borders, digital photography vs. Kodak)	Reduction of at least \$100 million in transactions a year in a market (e.g. print newspaper circulation)

Table 5 - Disruptiveness Criteria and Examples (Lucas Jr et al, 2013)

One of the dimensions of IT enabled transformation is the societal impact – i.e. does the transformation happen at the society/market level (macro), organisational level (micro), or on the individual level (personal). This model is applied in the analysis to argue that social media can be defined as a *transformational technology* in the HR space.

The transformation and development of new capabilities occurs when organisations use IT systems to modify their business processes (Venkatraman, 1994). There are five levels of IT integration and its influence on the business process (Figure 13).

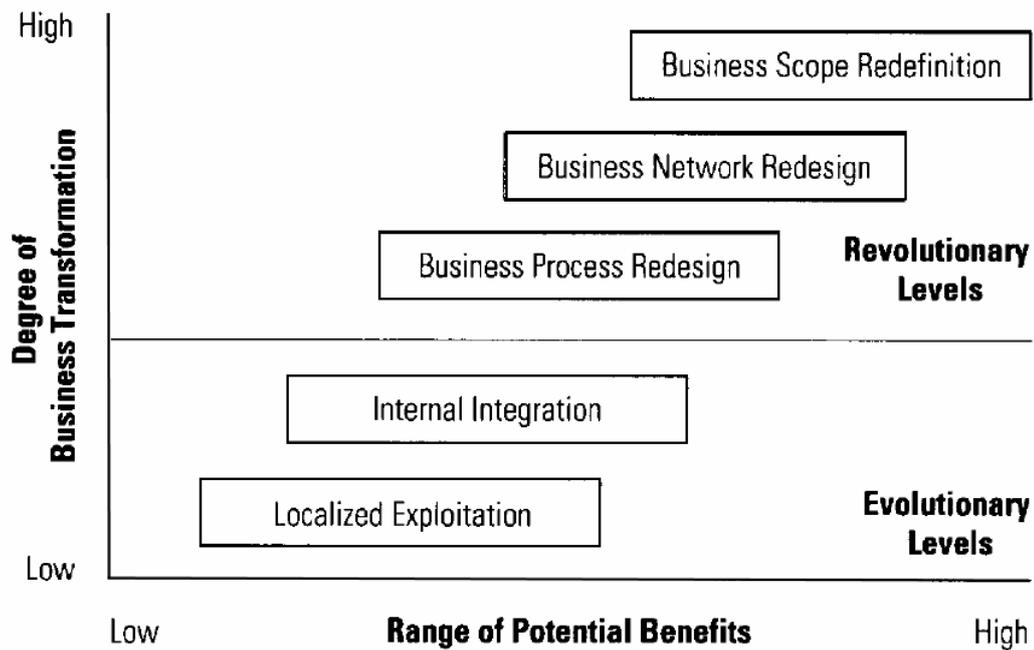


Figure 13 - Transformation Levels (from Venkatraman, 1994)

The first two levels make localised use of IT as a supporting functionality for existing processes, the further three levels leverage IT functionalities to redefine Business Process, Business Networks, or Business Scope. Venkatraman’s model of IT enabled business transformation is two-dimensional. One dimension describes the potential benefits the organisation could expect from IT use. The other dimension is the level of integration of IT and business process. Based on Venkatraman’s model, the potential benefits of IT for the organisation increase with tighter integration of IT capabilities into the business processes. *Localised Exploitation* refers to use of IT systems as tools to improve performance of existing processes by, for example, improving the cost base or increasing efficiency, or as a response to external (market) pressures (Majumdar & Venkataraman, 1993). *Internal Integration* refers to extension of Localised Exploitation and integration of IT processes. At this level, the supporting systems are integrated and aligned, but the corresponding business processes have not or not yet significantly changed. These first two “evolutionary” levels, while offering benefits to the organisation, do not involve any business process reconfiguration. The following three “revolutionary” levels require business process modifications. *Business Process Redesign* refers to changes to some select business processes which allow the IT/IS capabilities to be used to their full extent. *Business Network Redesign* refers to changes to business processes (as in level three) across multiple organisation

and integration of these processes so that IT/IS capabilities are leveraged within a “network” of organisations, e.g. across a supply chain. This integration goes beyond simple system integration (e.g. electronic data exchange) and requires business processes in multiple organisations to be adjusted and (re-) integrated. Finally, *Business Scope Redefinition* triggers a review of what the company does. Transitions from Manufacturing to Services (e.g. BlackBerry) or Software to Consultancy (e.g. IBM) are examples of Business Scope Redefinitions. Leveraging IT capabilities to fully redefine the organisation’s business describes the fifth level of IT enabled transformation. For example, Amazon, starting as an online retailer now moved into Platform as a Service market, providing Data Processing Services on their Amazon Web Services (AWS) platform. Integration levels (El Sawy, 2003) and transformational levels (Venkatraman, 1994) are vertically aligned (Table 6).

<b>Transformation Levels (Venkatraman, 1994)</b>	<b>IT Integration Levels (El Sawy, 2003)</b>	<b>Expected Benefits</b>
Business Scope Redefinition	Fusion Level	Development of new capabilities, products, markets
Business Network Redesign		
Business Process Redesign	Immersion Level	Information flows, knowledge management, transparency
Internal Integration		
Localized Exploitation	Connection Level	Efficiency gains, responses to market pressures

*Table 6 - IT enabled Transformational Levels and Benefits*

The utilisation of IT functionalities leads to changes in existing Business Processes and so increases the potential benefits for the organisation (Sherif et al., 2006). The potential benefits of gaining access to new markets, development of new products and new capabilities can be achieved through higher levels of IT integration into the business processes (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). Thus, the integration of IT and business process also requires an alignment between business and IT strategy (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1993). Arguably, reaching the El Sawy’s “fusion level” (El Sawy, 2003) or “Business Scope Redefinition” (Venkatraman, 1994) does not necessarily mean that new capabilities, markets and products will be developed. However, organisations need to reach these revolutionary levels in order for new relationships, capabilities and markets to be developed (Lucas Jr et al., 2013).

## 2.6 Summary

Strategic Human Resource Management is a multi-faceted discipline. This chapter identifies High-Commitment Management, High-Involvement Working Practices and Process Strength (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Lawler, 1988; Walton, 1985) as leading theories in SHRM (Guest, 2011). Bowen and Ostroff's view of HRM as a communication process between management and employees is selected as the setting for this research.

Information Technologies have long influenced organisational and societal life. Social media, as a sub-set of Information Technologies, are a recent phenomenon which builds upon the technological and philosophical foundation of Web 2.0. These technologies support open, interconnected and media rich information exchange. In this chapter, social media have been identified as a distinctive set of technologies which is qualitatively different from other computer-enabled information and communication systems, and thus commanding special attention from the researchers in IS field.

Current studies of social media use in organisations span a broad area of subjects from politics, over marketing and non-for-profit, to (individual) user-adoption of new technologies. In this chapter, several converging research gaps have been identified to position this thesis within the wider academic effort. First, this research addresses the call for more cross-disciplinary research. Second, this research introduces a focus on the role of IT use in creation, maintenance, and modification of HR processes (Information Systems research). Third, the study answers the call for more research into idiosyncratic HR practices and their consequences (HRM research).

The study is using Resource Based View of the firm as an explanatory lens to investigate when and how value is created through strategic social media use.

### 3 Methodology

This chapter provides the methodological and practical foundation for carrying out the research. Together with the Literature Review chapter, it contributes to the Research Design Phase of the project (Figure 4). The methodological considerations from this chapter and the research questions dictate the research method and provide a framework for data analysis.

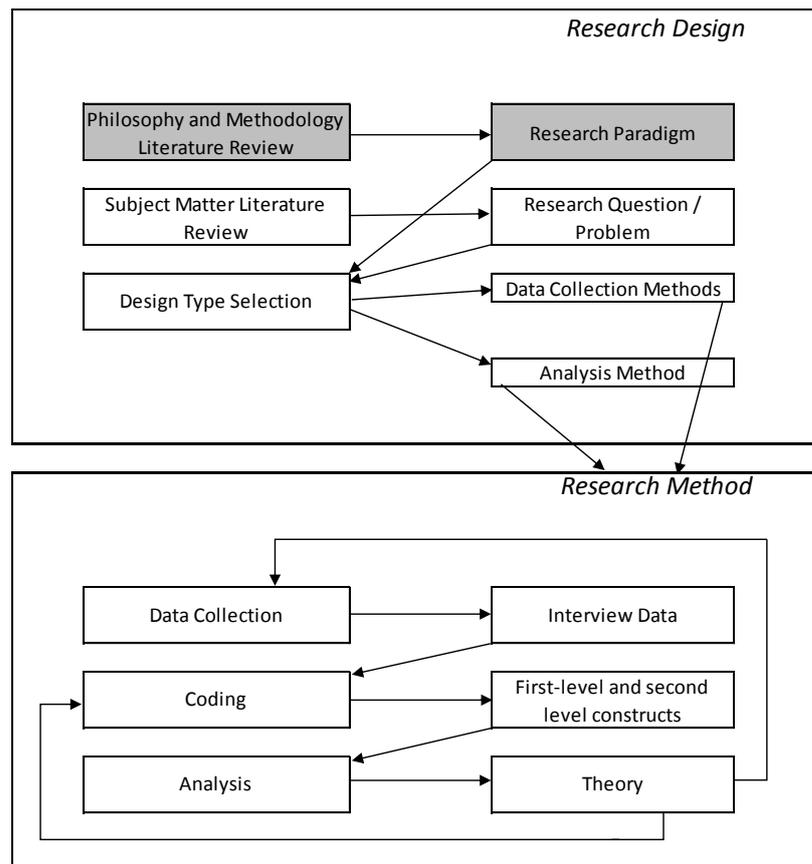


Figure 14 - Methodology Chapter relative to overall Research Design

This chapter identifies and states the research question. Following that, the chapter aims at describing the methodology for the research in addressing the questions. Finally, the chapter explains how and why the selected methodological approach was favoured over other possible approaches.

#### 3.1 Introduction

The choice of methodology for any research project is based on the review of the extant literature, the research question and the personal attitude, training and beliefs of the researcher. The previous chapter provided a review of the current literature and the setting of this research. This chapter focuses on the latter two aspects for choosing

a methodology. The chapter starts with the definition of the research framework, the setting for this research, and explicit statement of the research questions. Thereafter a more high-level discussion about possible ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches is covered in the central part of this chapter. An argument for choosing qualitative multiple case studies over other possible approaches is presented before this chapter concludes with a detailed description of the design for the research project.

### 3.2 Research Framework and Research Questions

This section introduces the research framework based on the Process View of Strategic Human Resource Management. The Process View theorises HRM as a continuous process of communications between the management and the employees. Within this framework, social media use is introduced as a technology which has the potential to modify (strengthen, disrupt or change) the communication process. The research questions arising from the assumed potential influence of social media use on the HR communication processes are stated at the end of this section.

#### 3.2.1 Research Framework

Human Resource Management (HRM), seen as a communication system, represents a set of rhetorical practices applied top-down from the organisation to individual employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; 2016). Bowen and Ostroff argue that in a strong HRM Communication System the expected behaviours and rewards are being communicated from the organisation to its employees in a *consistent* manner; the *distinctive* messages are rich on *consensus* (Figure 15).

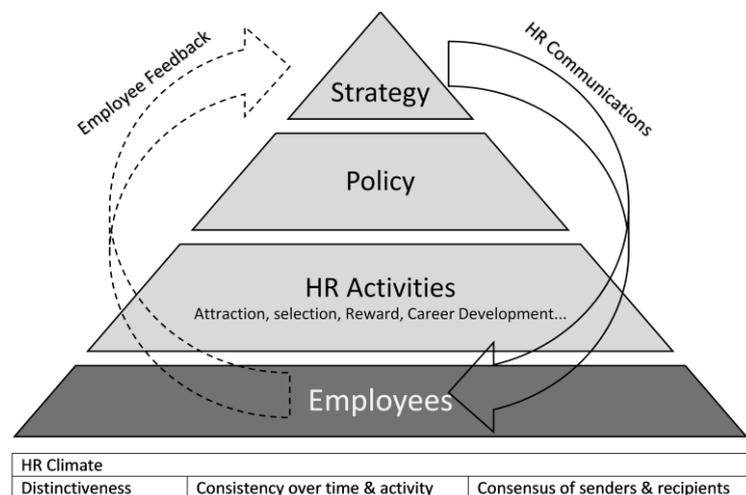


Figure 15 - HRM as a communication system

The *distinctiveness* of message is influenced by higher hierarchy-level involvement (requires strategic formulation of the message), as well as by the relevance and visibility of the message. The *consistency* of message refers to both: the consistency over time, i.e. across different HR activities, and over space, i.e. across departments and hierarchy levels (requires alignment of messages at the strategic level). *Consensus* implies agreement on the understanding of the message; it refers to (1) an agreement at the management level on common understanding among senders (i.e. strategic alignment of HR messages across activities, departments and levels); (2) an agreement on the interpretation of the communication among recipients (employees); (3) an agreement between the sender and the recipient on the understanding of the message: consistency of intended and interpreted meaning (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

The HRM communication process is a multi-level, multifaceted process of social interactions and communicative practices. Traditional models of organisational rhetorical practices assumed a one-to-one, one-way communication between the sender (rhetor) and the recipient (audience) with limited feedback mechanisms (Huang et al., 2013). In this context, the “recipient” is not an individual but rather a group of individuals perceived as homogenous (e.g. “all employees”). Figure 16 shows the HRM communication system in a traditional setting.

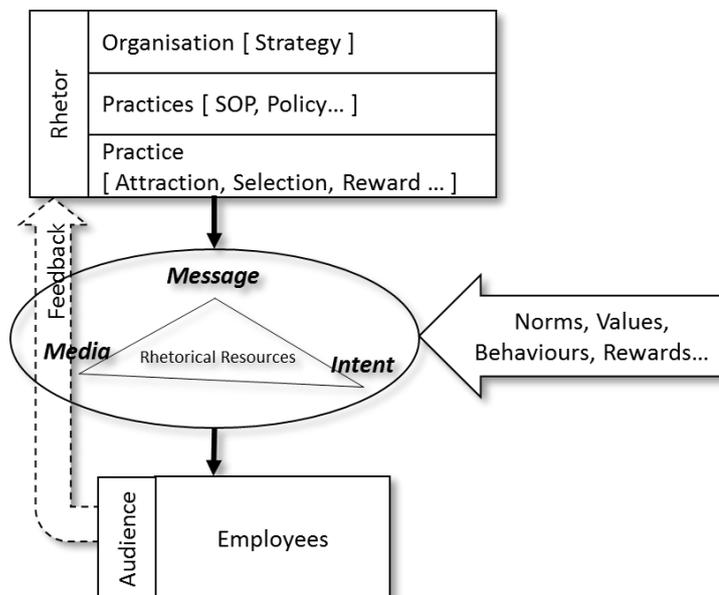


Figure 16 - Internal HR Rhetorical Practices (adapted from Huang et al., 2013)

The organisation’s strategy defines expected behaviours and norms, the practices available are limited through legislation, standard operating procedures, policies,

regulations etc., and the actual practice of communication is a one-way broadcast of organisational messages directed at the employees. The rhetorical resources of *Message* – what is being said, *Intent* – why is it being said, and *Media* – where is it being said are used by Rhetors to communicate with (intended and unintended) Audiences (Huang et al., 2013).

*In a top-down organisational setting, the management acts as Rhetor and the employees act as Audience. The Rhetors execute control over the content (intent and message) and the media (Huang et al., 2013; Nandan, 2005).*

Social media has been identified as having a potential to “increase the number of rhetors and feedback mechanisms”, blurring the border between rhetor and audience and equalising access to rhetorical resources (Huang et al., 2013, p. 120). The new reality of internal organisational rhetoric includes (1) at least two new audiences: external communities of former and future employees, (2) three new rhetors: former, future and current employees, and (3) accounts for organisational norms now being communicated between (future, current and former) employees and other participants without the interference, control or support of the organisation (Figure 17).

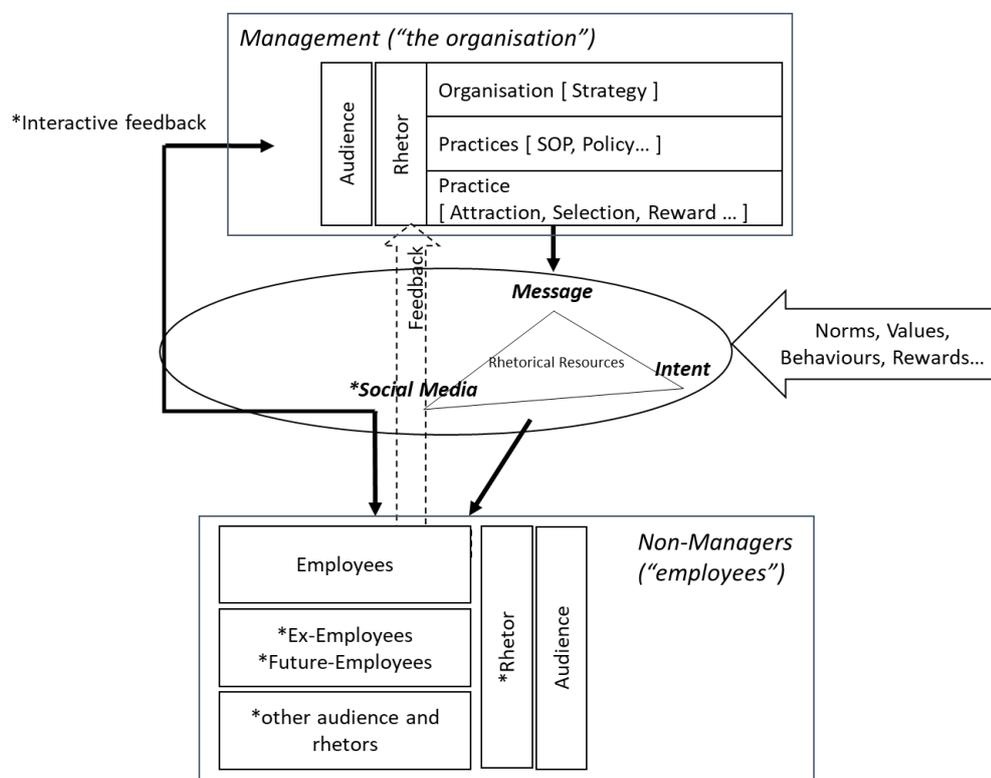


Figure 17 - Rhetorical Practices via Social Media (extension of Huang et al., 2013 adapted to incorporate new rhetors and audiences)

*In contrast to the traditional rhetorical practice, employees now have means to deliver interactive feedback and to become rhetors themselves. New groups of rhetors/audiences acquired access to internal rhetorical resources previously not available to them and participate in conversations from which they were previously excluded.*

What is the impact of new audiences, new rhetors and new practices on the strength of HRM communication system? Targeted information from the management now reaches not “just employees”, but can be accessed by alumni, candidates etc. Employees and other individuals with relationships to the organisation (suppliers, customers, alumni...) gain access to rhetorical resources and turn the management into an audience. The clear-cut boundaries between a rhetor and an audience become blurred. This challenges the HR communication system both at the praxis level and the process level (Figure 18).

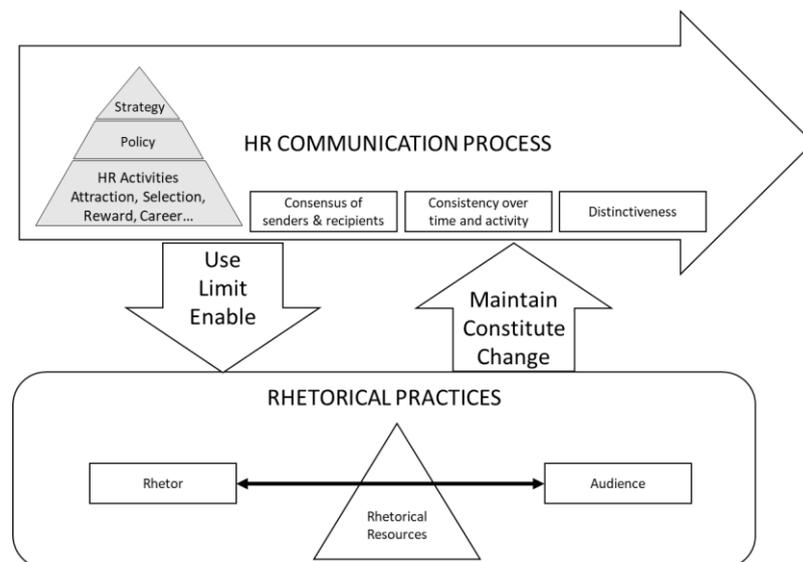


Figure 18 - Theoretical Framework: Duality of process and Praxis

Answering the calls from HRM literature to investigate HR practices in general and those on social media in particular (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Guest, 2011; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Roth et al., 2013),

*the first level of analysis are the day-to-day HR activities with a focus on the communicative rhetorical practices (Giddens, 1993; Jones & Karsten, 2008).*

On the higher organisational level of analysis, the framework addresses the research from communications system viewpoint (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders & Yang, 2016) and

*focuses on the interplay of HRM's structure in the form of policy and practices and the agent's (management and employees) actions.*

The framework developed in this thesis thus allows the research to navigate between the structure and praxis and so investigate social media use from two different theoretical positions (Giddens, 1993; Warnke, 1987; Yin, 2009).

### 3.2.2 Research objectives and questions, unit of analysis

Theorising HRM is a communication system (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) which draws its strength from distinctive, consistent and consensus-reach messages which are delivered via a set of rhetorical practices (Huang et al., 2013), the linkage between practices and the strength of HRM is yet to be established (Guest, 2011). Broadly positioned within the field of Management Studies, this research adopts a technological lens which recognises the influence of IT on organisational lives (Orlikowski, 2001). As many other IS research projects, this research is cross-disciplinary and is concerned with (un-)successful deployment of IT within enterprises and linking the IT use to strategic outcomes (Grover & Lyytinen, 2015; Mithas & Rust, 2016).

#### 3.2.2.1 Aims and Objectives

The research objective of this study is to deepen our understanding of the management practice of HRM, to uncover and to describe the impact of social media use on current HRM process and praxis. This is addressed from two convergent points of view. On the one hand, rooted in the HRM field, this research investigates the emergent and developing HR practices in relation to social media use and their links to HR outcomes. On the other hand, rooted in the IS field, the role of social media use in shaping organisational communication practices is assessed.

*The aim is to understand the interplay of the HRM process and the day-to-day managers' and employees' activities on social media;*

and to contribute to the development of theory of how the HRM process shapes social media activity with regards to communication of HRM messages and how the activities on social media shape the HRM process.

#### 3.2.2.2 *Unit of analysis*

While recognising and acknowledging that social media use has an impact on the everyday lives of employees, stakeholders and society in general, the emphasis is placed on structures, processes and practises from the management point of view: seeking to understand how social media use affects the HR communication process in an organisation, rather than its impact on individuals or stakeholders.

*The unit of analysis for this study, therefore, is an organisation. Specifically, the communication process and ongoing communicative practices between the management and employees, as well as among employees.*

True to the hermeneutic tradition, the focus is placed on both (a) analysing the parts of the process: the participants, the tools (i.e. social media platforms), the directions and types of exchanges and the artefacts, as well as (b) understating the process “as a whole” in terms of consistency, distinctiveness and consensus creation.

#### 3.2.2.3 *Research Questions*

The research questions identified from the theoretical framework and the objectives are thus located at two levels: the HRM *process* level and *praxis* level. Within the context of communications between managers and employees, and between employees (HR communication process) on social media, the research questions are:

- Q1. Who are the actors (rhetors and audiences)?
- Q2. How is social media used for management/employee communication (*practices*, directions of communication)?
- Q3. Is social media use for employee communication strategic?
- Q4. When does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

### 3.3 Theory Building

Much of the research work, certainly at the PhD level, is concerned with building theory and adequately answering the research question.

A theory has to answer a set of questions (as part of answering “the” research question) – the answers to What, How, Who, Where and When questions are necessary before answering the “why” (Freese, 1980). In addition, research questions cannot be too narrow and too specific and need to be formulated with more generic, wider societal implications in mind. For example, instead of asking “how Twitter was used to provide updates during an earthquake”, the question can be expanded to “how interactive social data contribute to disaster management” (Rai, 2017). Table 7 provides a visualisation of the step-wise approach to addressing the research question.

<b>Why</b>	Prediction and Justification of Explanation
<b>How</b>	Explanation of emergence and process
<b>What</b>	Description of the Phenomenon
<b>Where When Who</b>	Context, Setting and Framing, Transferability and Genralisation

*Table 7 - Questions Hierarchy for Theory Building*

*What* – is concerned with the description of the phenomenon, its features and properties (Freese, 1980) as well as comparison of these properties and features to those of other instances of the same phenomenon (van de Ven, 1989).

*How* – describes the process and circumstances of the phenomenon’s emergence. It highlights the changes in the phenomenon’s matrix and describes the patterns of development and emergence (Whetten, 1989).

*Who, Where and When* – are questions of setting and focus. The answers to these questions provide a context for the theory (Freese, 1980).

*Why* – is the question to be answered at the end of theory building process (Sutton & Staw, 1995). The answer to “why”-questions explains the relationships between theoretical constructs and justifies the existence of these relationships.

Before embarking on the (sometimes rather long) quest for new knowledge, the researcher needs to understand what the essence of the knowledge is and where to look for it. The questions of ontological and epistemological stance need to be addressed

and answered. Knowledge in the Western philosophy since the Renaissance has been broadly defined as a “correct depiction of reality” (Rorty, Williams, & Bromwich, 1980, p. 147).

*The observation of the reality – the societal phenomena – and the generation, testing and refinement of coherent descriptions and explanations of the observed is the very process of theory building*  
(Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

Part of the theory building process, next to the data collection through experiments, interviews, observations etc., is the data analysis which provides explanations, hypotheses, or propositions; defines and verifies constructs, and establishes, confirms or measures the relationships between them (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Different schools of thought, discussed further in this chapter, have different definitions of what constitutes valid academic knowledge. The very same object (phenomenon) can (and should be) assessed from a variety of viewpoints, context and theoretical levels. Figure 19 purposefully depicts an object (the horseshoe) as “the truth” with the aim to provoke a discussion whether a comprehensive description of the “true nature” of a phenomenon can be considered “truth” in a philosophical sense.

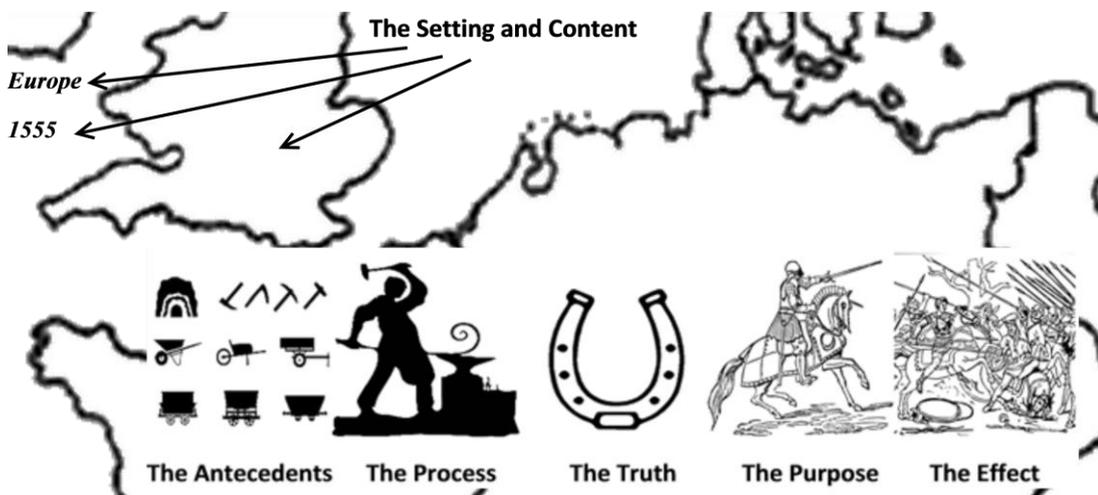


Figure 19 - Focus and Settings of a Phenomenon

Schleiermacher, for instance, focused on uncovering the truth-content (describing the horseshoe itself), whereas Gadamer focused on uncovering the process and circumstances of the truth-content creation (how the horseshoe came into being and why) (Warnke, 1987). While some academics would argue for the discovery of a correct way for representing reality through definitions of relationships and

formulation of a hypothesis, others would suggest that the aim of philosophy lies in engaging in discussion and “keeping the conversation going” (Rorty et al., 1980, p. 378). This research focuses on the “creation process” of the phenomenon of “social media use”. It does not attempt to analyse how the process came into being, nor does it critically question the (un-) intended consequences.

While there is a plethora of possible epistemological and methodological arguments and approaches to building theory, the quality of the end-result needs to be assessed independently of the original assumptions and theoretical stances.

*Common tests for assessing the quality of research and theory are  
construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability  
(Yin, 2009).*

This study adopts the validity framework to assess the usefulness of a method in answering the research questions. *Construct validity* refers to the establishment of correct concepts and measures (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Yin, 2009). *Internal validity*, although more important for explanatory (casual) studies, refers to establishing of relationships between constructs (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). *External validity* tests for generalisability of findings (Yin, 2009); in other words the ability to replicate the findings in another setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). Finally, the test of *Reliability* is closely related to the ability to replicate the findings and to assesses how rigorously the research has been carried out: has the investigator conducted their research thoroughly, following well-documented procedures for data collection and data analysis so that another researcher could follow the same steps and arrive at a similar conclusion (Yin, 2009)? Or, as Miles & Huberman (1984 cited in Eisenhardt, 1989) put it, if “one cannot ordinarily follow how a researcher got from 3600 pages of field notes to the final conclusions”, the research has failed the reliability test.

### 3.3.1 Grounded and Mid-Range Theory

This section focuses on the approaches to generating a theory. The purpose of this section is to describe approaches available to the researcher with the aim of aiding the researcher in choosing a methodological approach for this study. The validity tests from the previous section are applied to each theory building approach to highlight potential strengths and weaknesses.

The differences in the assumptions about the world and knowledge (ontology) and valid ways of obtaining this knowledge (epistemology) find reflection in approaches to theory building. On one side of the spectrum, endorsed by Merton (1957),

*middle-range-theory (MRT) focuses on inferring relationships between pre-conceived variables and creating theory by putting them “to the test of observation by seeing whether these inferences turn out to be empirically so” (Merton, 1957).*

MRT’s emphasis is, on theory-testing, analysing (commonly) quantitative data coupled with rigid and well-structured methods, which contributes to reliability of research. By de-coupling from historical and temporal context, MRT focuses on preconceptions and assumptions that have validity beyond particular cultures and epochs. It is, therefore, universally valid, high on external validity and produces findings that can be extended to other settings (Layder, 1993). The data collection for MRT is conducted based on predefined constructs, and the data are then analysed with the aim to confirm or refute a (casual) relationship between them. The construct validity depends on the theoretical underpinning of a priori concepts applied during the study design, as does the internal validity with regards to assumed relationships between theoretical constructs.

Theory-testing starts with a theory at the conceptual level, and empirical data is sought to prove, adjust or disprove a hypothesis (De Vaus & de Vaus, 2001). Theory-building, on the contrary, starts with observations and empirical data (Figure 20) and has theory as the outcome of an analytical exercise.

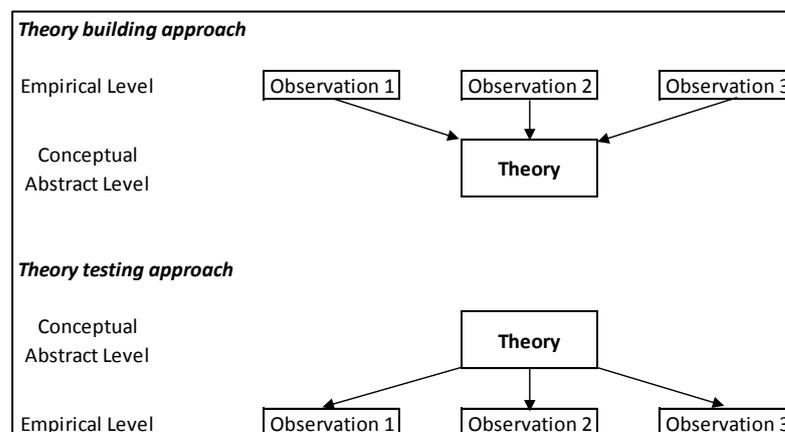


Figure 20 - Approaches to Research (from de Vaus, 2001)

Grounded Theory (GT), famously introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), focuses on the theory-*building* with major emphasis placed on qualitative data and flexible or emergent research design (Layder, 1993; Wiesche, Jurisch, Yetton, & Krcmar, 2017). Unlike MRT, theory building process begins as close to the “ideal of no theory under consideration” as possible (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 536), the researcher enters an iterative process of collecting and analysing data during which the constructs emerge.

*In Grounded Theory, the theoretical constructs and the relationships between them become apparent during the data-analysis and are not preconceived.*

Although GT generates theories with high construct and internal validity (the constructs and their interrelationships are “grounded” in the data and emerge, rather than being theoretically assumed), the generalisability of such findings might be questionable and needs to be addressed during the study design. The flexibility of the design and the potential amount of unstructured qualitative data compromise reliability and rely on the researcher to be disciplined, and to maintain records of data collection and analysis methods while avoiding being “drowned” in data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

Literature reviews are an additional tool to address validity and reliability tests. Extant literature proves not only valuable in formulating the research question, identifying the research framework and the theoretical concepts, but also in confirming and contrasting the research findings. Literature confirming the findings is valuable, as it improves internal validity, i.e. confirms assumed or suggested relationships (Eisenhardt, 1989). Similar findings further contribute to wider generalisability following the replication logic (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). At the same time, literature with conflicting findings is not less valuable. Conflicts help sharpen the generalisability by emphasising the contextual limits of the theory. In addition, the juxtaposition of new and contrasting theories contributes to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and validates constructs (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### 3.3.2 Choosing the path

The choice between MRT and GT almost inevitably was a choice between quantitative and qualitative approaches, and pre-conceived and emergent theoretical constructs. When theory building is viewed as a search for comprehensiveness instead of the

“truth”, a combination of different theory-building approaches could yield the best results (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Theoretical concepts and their relationships, emerged from qualitative studies which follow GT approach, could provide hypotheses to be verified, tested and replicated in MRT using quantitative data and methods (Eisenhardt, 1989). King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) view

*the qualitative and quantitative approaches as interdependent and complementary, arguing that a (quantitative) casual explanation benefits from a (qualitative) description.*

Each study should, however, follow methods from one distinct *paradigm*. Multi-method studies should cross the paradigm borders at a “higher conceptual level” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 587).

Objectivism and subjectivism have been criticised as an appropriate method for studying social phenomena (Deetz, 1996; Holden & Lynch, 2004). It has been broadly acknowledged that there is no “right” approach to the research and that the same phenomena can be viewed through a variety of lenses and from different perspectives (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Hatch, 2012; Silverman, 2010).

### 3.4 The Theoretical Paradigms

This section considers the theoretical paradigms in more detail, adding further complexity to the decisions during the methodology-selection process.

A paradigm is a set of assumptions about the world (Hatch, 2012; Pozzebon, 2004). In an attempt to master the myriad of different ontological and epistemological assumptions Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggested a two-dimensional taxonomy of paradigms which resulted in a four paradigm matrix (Figure 21) which has since been widely accepted and critiqued (Deetz, 1996; Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

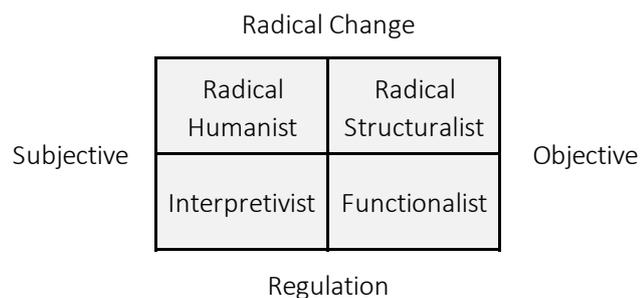


Figure 21 - Burrell and Morgan (1979) - four paradigms

One dimension presents the separation of objectivist and subjectivist views of the nature of organisational phenomena and the knowledge thereof. The other dimension represents the researcher's orientation towards the maintenance of stability or critical attempt to challenge the status quo.

#### 3.4.1 Subjectivist – Objectivist divide

Whether it is (meaningfully) possible to draw a line between Subjectivist and Objectivist ontologies has been discussed and criticised at length (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Deetz, 1996; King et al., 1994). It has been claimed that there is either no fundamental difference, bar “in style” (King et al., 1994, p. 5), that the differentiation is misleading and counterproductive (Deetz, 1996) or that the apparent chasm can be breached at another conceptual level (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Nevertheless, the ontological opposites of Objectivism and Subjectivism do (at least formally) exist and inform much of our understanding of philosophical standpoints (Hatch, 2012).

##### 3.4.1.1 Objectivism

While Galileo Galilei can certainly be called “father of modern science” (Whitehouse, 2009, p. 219), the *scientific method* traces back to Francis Bacon at the end of the sixteenth century (Russell, 1959). Further developed during the philosophical period of Enlightenment and heavily influenced by philosophers from the seventeenth and early eighteenth century,

*the objectivist ontology is based around the belief that the reality exists without our knowledge of it (Hatch, 2012).*

It is seen as a concrete structure which is independent of our perceptions (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Many of the basic assumptions are rooted in the natural sciences (or *Naturwissenschaften*) like physics and chemistry with the natural, physical world being the concrete, tangible structure and source of knowledge (Giddens, 1993; Kant, 1787; Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The scientist's task, therefore, is to understand the *reality* and “uncover” the knowledge by providing correct description of this reality (Warnke, 1987). As a consequence, the epistemological stance often accompanying this ontology is *positivist*.

In their most orthodox position, positivists believe that the world can be ‘unequivocally described in a series of elementary propositions’ (Hindess, 1973). The Management and organisational research has historically been heavily influenced by

objectivist thinking. For instance, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) found that almost 97% of published management studies in the late 1980's were following a positivist epistemology. The picture has since changed, notably IS journals publishing more interpretative research papers (Nandhakumar & Montealegre, 2003). The objectivist worldview and the positivist stance have many compelling arguments for adoption.

First, assuming that there is a correct way of understanding reality, the scientist pursues a "tangible" objective: positivistic science often seeks to provide a precise factual description of phenomena (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Second, influenced by the notion of "real science", positivist research is assumed to be high in external validity thus making the theory and findings more widely applicable. Third, many of the positivist methods utilise well established and recognised quantitative techniques whereby theories and explanations can be measured, quantified and presented in an abstract and universally understandable language of science (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Rorty et al., 1980). Such language system is considered to be superior to the "real" language of the subjects, and so to provide a less ambiguous, universal version of rational knowledge (Deetz, 1996).

#### *3.4.1.2 Subjectivism*

The philosophical position of *subjectivism* could be described as a polar opposite to positivism (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

*Reality is considered to be socially constructed or even to be just a mere projection of human imagination.*

As a result, the epistemological stance focuses more on understanding the *processes* and means by which reality is created. No absolute universal "truth" is sought and the role of a scientist is not to provide a "mirror" of the reality, as Rorty et al. (1980) point out, but instead to continue the conversation. The epistemology of subjectivism focuses on situated practical and idiosyncratic description of socially and linguistically constructed structures and practices (Deetz, 1996; Klein & Myers, 1999; Myers & Avison, 1997). In Deetz's (1996) taxonomy, the Subjectivist dimension corresponds to the "Local/Emergent"-dimension, which highlights the researchers' openness to emergent knowledge, new interpretations and meanings. Although qualitative research is not firmly based on an underlying epistemological position and can be applied by positivist, interpretative and critical researchers alike, subjectivist ontology often

employs qualitative methods (Myers & Avison, 1997). These methods were developed to study complex dynamic cultural and social phenomena that are time and context bound (Myers & Avison, 1997; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). King et al. (1994) argue that the qualitative and quantitative researchers “derive from the same underlying logic of inference” (ibid, p 4). However, the interplay of qualitative methods and the subjectivist worldview of constructed, situated reality allows the researcher to abandon the positivist statistical logic for making inferences. A few observations, one specific case, a single historical occurrence can have a profound impact on theory without being statistically significant. Subjectivist research allows the researcher to focus on the “telling” case and to uncover hidden causal relationships and explanations which would be overlooked through generalisation (McKeown, 1999). Since the early 1980’s the research in organisation theory approaches a more balanced view, moving slowly away from the dominance of empiricism based on quantitative methods (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Pozzebon, 2004). Specifically, in the field of Information Systems, subjectivist research has enjoyed considerable attention with notable journals dedicating special issues to interpretative and critical research (Miranda et al., 2015; Myers & Klein, 2011; Nandhakumar & Montealegre, 2003). There are several arguments for adopting a subjectivist-interpretivist position.

First, the position is better suited to clarify theoretical relationships and causal mechanisms, i.e. addressing the how and why questions (McKeown, 1999). Second, without the need for statistical significance, specific (often unique or outlier) cases can be used to generate insights and theories for example in ethnographies or “critical case studies” (discussed later in this chapter) (King et al., 1994; McKeown, 1999; Yin, 2009). Finally, focus on the *meaning* of a lived social phenomena rather than its measurement allows the researcher to generate comprehensive descriptions of a new or developing phenomenon (Holden & Lynch, 2004; King et al., 1994; Miranda, Young, & Yetgin, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017).

Considering the objectivist and subjectivist views to be two poles of an ontological and epistemological continuum, it needs to be acknowledged that there are a plethora of competing and complementing stances in between these polar positions (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Even more so, some researchers argue for mixed-methods approaches which combine methods and epistemologies from positivist and

subjectivist “extremes” and so breach the chasm between them (Haverkamp, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2005). It is questionable whether or not the objective-subjective divide still holds as a dimension for separation of paradigms. The actual use of “objective” and “subjective”-labels has been criticised as “boring” and “misleading” (Deetz, 1996). Gioia and Pitre (1990) argue that the lines between the paradigms are blurred and there exist “transition zones” that allow for linkages between apparently different viewpoints to be established. The researcher can, therefore, move “up” to a meta-level and assess the subject from different perspectives and so “constitute a multidimensional presentation of the topic area” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 586). The presumed conflict is in reality not as irreconcilable as it might appear, the discourses “pose problems for each other and steal insights across the lines” (Deetz, 1996, p. 199), it is an interplay, rather than a conflict.

#### 3.4.2 Control – Change divide

The second dimension of Burrell & Morgan’s paradigm taxonomy refers to the position of the researcher with regards to “stability” of structure and maintenance of the status quo.

*Interpretivists, as well as functionalists, are concerned with understanding and managing of the change, the status quo and extant structures (concrete or imaginary as they might be) (Myers & Klein, 2011; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).*

In contrast to this “regulatory” position, the Radical Humanist and Radical Structuralist paradigms are positioned at the “Radical Change”-pole of the “Regulation-Change”-dimension.

*Radical Humanist and Radical Structuralist share the theme of “challenge” or “critique” of existing power structures (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Deetz, 1996; Gioia & Pitre, 1990).*

A similar alternative dimension proposed by Deetz (1996) has been labelled “consensus-dissensus” in order to highlight the researcher’s view on existing social order. The “radical change” pole in Burrell & Morgan’s model thus corresponds to the “dissensus” pole in Deetz’s model. The researcher at the dissensus pole focuses on

struggle, conflict and tensions inherent in the natural state and the political dimension of science (Deetz, 1996).

The objective-subjective and control-change axis create four base paradigms of Burrell & Morgan's taxonomy. In the next sections each of the paradigms, starting from the top-left corner (Figure 21) and moving clockwise, is discussed in more detail.

### 3.4.3 Radical and Critical Paradigms

Theories in the radical change or dissensus pole include *Dialogic Studies*, *Feminism*, *Marxism and Critical Theory*. They represent a diverse set of theories and paradigms with a number of common characteristics. While rooted in the realist ontology they

*critique social constructs and structures with the objective to emancipate and highlight inequality with relation to gender, race, social class etc. in the form of narratives, ethnographies, case studies, and action research (Deetz, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Myers & Klein, 2011).*

Critical researchers seek to gain *insight* into existing power structures, to *critique* established social practices and to encourage *transformation* by suggesting ways and areas for improvement (Myers & Klein, 2011). Whilst *radical humanists* focus on individual liberation and emancipation, the *radical structuralists'* primary concern is the "critique of the societal class and industry structures" at a more macro level (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 589). These theories question the legitimacy of existing social order and highlight sources of distortion (Deetz, 1996; Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Both approaches view the transformation of existing structures of domination through education, emancipation or collective resistance as their ultimate goal. In the field of IS, critical studies concerned with issues of "freedom, power, social control, and values with respect to the development, use, and impact of information technology" have to date been underrepresented and are referred to as a "missing paradigm" (Myers & Klein, 2011, pp. 17-18)

#### 3.4.3.1 Radical Humanist

Radical Humanist paradigm is home to a diverse group of critical philosophies. Many critical philosophers focus on the use of language and linguistic practices as instruments of power. Myers and Klein (2011) identify three main streams in critical research, rooted in works of Foucault, Bourdieu and Habermas. Foucault's work is

dominated by the concept of “discourse” – the analysis of (linguistic) practices which normalise the mode of thinking of a particular group (Burrell, 1988; Hatch, 2012; Myers & Klein, 2011). Foucault’s work traces back to works of Nietzsche and Heidegger and is flanked by works of Jean-Francois Lyotard on Grand Narratives and Jacques Derrida on Deconstruction (Hatch, 2012; Myers & Klein, 2011). The second stream, attributed to works of Bourdieu, takes its roots in works of Weber and Marx and is concerned with the understanding of socially conditioned behaviours and norms. Finally, Habermas’ focus on “communicative action” as constitutive agent of social structures can be traced back to Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Marx (Myers & Klein, 2011).

#### 3.4.3.2 *Radical Structuralist*

Karl Marx, considered one of the fathers (along with Emile Durkheim and Max Weber) of sociology as science, is one of the most well-known representatives of Radical Structuralist paradigm (Hatch, 2012). Radical Structuralist research is based on the assumption of a fundamental conflict between labour and capital and is focused on investigating and uncovering suppressed conflicts caused by socialisation of labour and private appropriation of capital (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This paradigm is characteristic of a positivist view and narrowing down of complex societal interrelationships to economic formulae (Hatch, 2012).

#### 3.4.4 *Functionalist Paradigm*

Paradigms at the control or “consensus” pole are concerned with explaining or predicting the status quo (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). The intersection of objectivist and consensus poles frames the functionalist paradigm.

Taking external, independent organisational structures as the departure point,

*the functionalist paradigm seeks to examine and establish generalisable and ultimately universal rules and principles about organisations (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). The aim of functionalist theories is the creation of positivist science with solid methodological and theoretical backing (Deetz, 1996; Morgan & Smircich, 1980).*

Many of the theories are developed by building on existing theories and testing pre-theoretical observations (Hindess, 1973). The role of the scientist is that of a “detached observer”, with the aim of scientific neutrality and establishment of theories which are

free of subjective interpretation (Holden & Lynch, 2004). Such neutral theories require a neutral (as opposed to value laden) language to record and report neutral observations (Deetz, 1996; Warnke, 1987).

One of the critique points of functionalist paradigms is that while theories can demonstrate cause-effect relationships between theoretical constructs, other (potentially more significant relationships) remain undiscovered or overlooked (Daellenbach, 1994). Concentrating mainly on generalisability, external view researchers might not be able to untangle the subtle ways in which organisations vary from each other (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). The expression of complex social phenomena as a set of variables and hypotheses has been branded “reductionism”, further increasing the danger of ignoring important constructs within complex and ever-evolving social settings (Daellenbach, 1994; Giddens, 1993; Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

The functionalist paradigm is not well suited to addressing and explaining the causality between purpose and agency, or in assisting detailed fieldwork-based understanding of complex organisational phenomena (Giddens, 1993; Grover & Lyytinen, 2015; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). In parts this is due to the fact that reducing a phenomenon to a series of elementary logical propositions (when A then B then C) is prone to bias, as these pure “scientific” regularities are subjectively introduced by the researcher in the first place and are then subjectively interpreted by the (same) researcher (Hindess, 1973). In addition to that, purpose and agency are often disconnected. The statements such as “A results in B” are incomplete or plainly wrong in two scenarios: first, a purpose might be achieved by other means, without action (pure luck); second, an action often has other *not intended* outcomes so that A results in B, but also B1, B2, C, D and so on (Giddens, 1993). The attempt to move away from the external view and towards understanding of the action from “within” – focusing on the subjective viewpoint of an agent is undertaken by the interpretivists.

#### 3.4.5 Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm acknowledges the *subjective* bias of the researcher, the theory and knowledge. The paradigm encompasses a wide range of theories which are based on *hermeneutic* approach which in its current form by was endorsed among others by Heidegger and Gadamer in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Warnke,

1987). It is based on the view that *organisational realities are constructed* and sustained in social and symbolic interactions by the people (Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

The interpretivist paradigm is home to a variety of methods and strategies including action research, ethnographies, (in-depth and semi-structured) interviews, case studies and narratives (Creswell, 2013; Layder, 1993).

*The interpretivist researcher aims at generating descriptions and explanations of complex social phenomena by gaining insight and uncovering the underlying systems and structuring processes (Gioia & Pitre, 1990).*

By becoming “involved”, even “intrusive”, part of the phenomena under investigation the researcher attempts to understand the structuring process as it is being experienced by the organisation members (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). By getting into the midst of the phenomena, the investigator can achieve a higher level of understanding, gain access to richer data and so improve analytical possibilities and sense-making (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). Further, under the RBV, resources are firm-specific and idiosyncratic, and thus are best uncovered by looking “inside” the organisations.

The *subjectivist* view is supported by three pillars: *prejudice*, *subjective interpretations* and *historical* dimension. Subjectivists assume that all observations are prejudiced (pre-judged). For example, when we observe a two-dimensional picture on the TV we understand it to be three-dimensional and (rightly so?) *pre-judge* depth into an obviously and objectively flat image. All our interpretations are subjective. They are influenced by the context, preconceptions, and our perspective. Anecdotally, when we see someone attractive in a nightclub, we are unlikely to recognise them in a different context the next day when we see them in traffic warden’s uniform giving us a parking-fine. Our pre-conception about the attractiveness of traffic wardens and our point of view as a “victim” lead to a slightly different *subjective interpretation* of that person’s likeability. Finally, whatever our interpretations and findings are, they are based on previous *historical* knowledge. Whether we are confirming existing theories, e.g. replicating findings in another setting, challenging existing knowledge, or discovering a new dimension – the interpretation is always based on what has been known before and at the point of theory formulation (Warnke, 1987).

*Hermeneutics* attempt to understand not the phenomenon in itself (die Sache an sich), but rather “conditions under which agents acted, spoke and wrote as they did” (Warnke, 1987). The understanding of the subject is achieved through consensus among the participants: in contrast to the objectivistic detached observer role, an engaged and involved researcher establishes understanding *with* the participant and so develops a *common understanding* (Einverständnis) in the process known as the hermeneutic circle (Giddens, 1993; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Warnke, 1987). Through a dialogue with the informants the researchers combine their own meanings with those of the participants, widen the horizons of common understanding, and so allow for new meaning and understanding to emerge. This iterative process is naturally prejudiced (it starts from a standpoint of an existing “a priori” meaning on the side of the participant and observer), it is subjective (i.e. involves interpretations from the researcher and the participant), and is historically situated (Warnke, 1987).

### 3.5 Research at the paradigm crossroad

The interpretivist idea of socially constructed organisational structures has been contrasted with the functionalist view of static, external structures. Structuration Theory formulated and formalised by Anthony Giddens between 1973 and 1984 (Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005) is one of many attempts to reconcile these conflicting views. The core theme of structuration theory is the assumption that social (organisational) structure, while being able to contain, limit and direct social action, has no physical existence and is being (re-) produced through the very social action. Giddens (1993) refers to this phenomenon as Duality Of Structure – the organisational structure is constituted by human agency, but at the same time restricts and frames the same human action which sustains the structures around it. *Structuration* is the dynamic process whereby structures come into being through human agency.

The process of structuring and the structures themselves are, therefore, inseparable and must be understood in conjunction with each other. Objective characteristics of the social world such as societal norms, uniforms, and physical infrastructure are being recognised simultaneously with the assumption that these norms and structures are being generated and maintained by agency action (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Members of a commercial organisation turn up for work dressed in suits – the “normality” of wearing suits to work makes members of the organisation dress up and is being maintained by people actually doing that.

Structuration theory is not intended to provide a methodology or a cookbook-like solution for conducting research. It is meant more as a lens and a way of thinking about a phenomenon and the research design. Different methodological approaches, grounded in the interpretative paradigm provide pathways for conducting research which follows the logic of structuration theory: ethnographic studies, case studies, mixed methods studies involving interviews, ethnographies and participative studies are just some examples of research strategies (Barney, 1991; Orlikowski, 1993; Venters, Oborn, & Barrett, 2014).

While interpretative research strategies often lack (and do not even aspire to) compliance with the call for external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), positivist studies can be criticised for insufficient internal or construct validity (Daellenbach, 1994). The question that arises is – which research strategy would help in addressing the criticism on validity shortcomings in one or another paradigm and allow to conduct research which (1) breaches the glass-wall between subjectivist and objectivist worlds and (2) is supporting theory high on external, internal and construct validity? A close investigation of available methods and philosophical approaches (Figure 22) reveals that only two possible research strategies can be applied in both objectivist and subjectivist realms with the scope to be positivistic or interpretative: (1) case studies and (2) field experiments (Remenyi, 1998 in Holden & Lynch, 2004).

Research approaches	Objectivism	Subjectivism
Action research		Strictly interpretivist
Case studies	Have scope to be either	Have scope to be either
Ethnographic		Strictly interpretivist
Field experiments	Have scope to be either	Have scope to be either
Focus groups		Mostly interpretivist
Forecasting research	Strictly positivistic with some room for interpretation	
Futures research	Have scope to be either	
Game or role playing		Strictly interpretivist
In-depth surveys		Mostly interpretivist
Laboratory experiments	Strictly positivistic with some room for interpretation	
Large-scale surveys	Strictly positivistic with some room for interpretation	
Participant-observer		Strictly interpretivist
Scenario research		Mostly interpretivist
Simulation and stochastic modelling	Strictly positivistic with some room for interpretation	

Figure 22 - Appropriateness of a research method to a philosophical approach (adapted from Remenyi, 1998)

Given the focus of structuration theory on everyday practice, the controlling and artificial nature of an experiment would contradict the idea of a “lived phenomenon”. Case Study, on the other hand, can be used to explain phenomena which are too complex for experiments (Yin, 2009). King et al. (1994) propose universally applicable rules for ensuring data and research quality in qualitative or quantitative studies alike. Thus, the chosen research methodology would not significantly impact on the methods aimed to ensure data quality (Table 8).

Rule	Implication
1) Record and report process by which data is generated	Improves ability to make inferences
2) Collect data from variety of sources and multiple observations	Improves ability to discover patterns, interdependencies, constructs
3) Record observable data and not unobservable or unmeasurable concepts	Improves validity of measurements
4) Record and report data collection procedures and methods	Improves reliability of data collection methods
5) Record and Report data analysis procedures	Improves replicability and transparency

Table 8- Data Quality Guidelines

The chapter on “Data Collection and Interview Description” is dedicated to ensuring that these data quality rules were followed during the research project.

### 3.5.1 Conducting Case Study Research

In the previous section a Case Study has been identified as a candidate for a research strategy. It can be applied to studies conducted under a variety of theoretical lenses and grounded in different paradigms (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Lee, 1989; Miranda et al., 2016; Yin, 2009). This section discusses how Case Study can be applied within the framework of this research and highlights potential benefits and shortcomings of Case Studies. Used as a strategy for answering “how” and “why” questions in a variety of investigative endeavours, case studies can explain presumed casual links, describe phenomena, and illustrate and explore situations with unclear outcomes within a bounded context (Yin, 2009).

*Case studies are useful when the investigation is focused on a contemporary phenomenon in a setting where the investigator has little or no control over the events.*

In the early stages of research on a certain topic, or when a new perspective on an established theory is required, case studies can prove a useful tool to generate testable and measurable constructs and rich descriptions (Eisenhardt, 1989; King et al., 1994).

Depending on the number of cases the study employs a *single*-or a *multiple-case* design (Yin, 2009). Five scenarios suggest a single-case design: A study of a *critical* case – a single case that tests a well formulated theory (Gallivan & Keil, 2003); A study of an *extreme* or *unique* case, such as some cases in psychology or history (Haas, 2001); A *representative case* e.g. the study of the CERN Grid (Venters et al., 2014); A *revelatory* case e.g. the “Tearoom Trade” study of homosexual encounters by Laud Humphrey (Babbie, 2004; Humphreys, 1975); Finally, a *longitudinal* case study investigating the same phenomenon over an extended period of time (Carlsson, 1988).

Although all designs may yield great results, multiple-case studies may be preferred if time and resource constraints allow it (Yin, 2009). Multiple-case studies follow *replication* logic. This can be applied in two ways – a direct replication, whereby findings from one setting are confirmed by findings in a different case; or theoretical replication, whereby findings from one case are contrasted with another study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999; Yin, 2009). The approach to case study selection is not unproblematic, as the sample already predicts the outcome. Which raises the question of whether the outcome was related to the empirical data or

the sampling procedure (Levitas & Chi, 2002). Further challenges are addressed in Creswell (2013) and Yin (2009), but are also acknowledged in empirical research papers such as Edmondson, Bohmer, and Pisano (2001):

*First, there is the question of selecting the “right” case: a case which is worth studying and can provide answers to the research question and at the same time is clearly bounded.*

*Second, the depth of the study itself and the time, effort and variety of data, data sources and collection methods on a case-by-case basis impose demands on researcher’s time and skills.*

*Third, the complexity and volume of data, and the diversity of data sources represent a challenge for analysis.*

The following sub-sections address these concerns from the methodological point of view and highlight consequences for this research.

#### *3.5.1.1 Case Selection*

Case selection for case studies is driven by replication logic rather than sampling logic. Instead of selecting a possibly random and statistically representative sample, a few “relevant” cases are selected (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999; Yin, 2009). The general approach is to select (1) theoretically relevant cases and (2) as many as required to reach saturation.

Theoretical relevancy is driven by two factors. First, the selection of relevant cases allows a certain level of control for environmental factors, for example selecting firms from the same country, industry and of similar size (Eisenhardt, 1989). Second, the process is driven by the desire to select cases which are likely to yield insights. The focus is not on a “typical” case (as it would be with a representative sampling for statistical analysis), but rather on a “telling” case which is likely to “make previously obscure theoretical relationships apparent” (McKeown, 1999, p. 174). Each case in multi-case design represents a single case study so that the consideration for selection of cases for the single-case design apply here too. However, in addition to single-case considerations, the cases are chosen in conjunction with each other. For example, extreme cases of polar types, or similar cases with controlled environmental variation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999).

One of the frameworks to select cases has been introduced by Rouse and Daellenbach (1999). The four-step selection process starts with the identification of the industry and collection of relevant performance data. The firms are then grouped based on a multi-faceted list of strategic attributes into groups or clusters. In the third step, the key performance indicators of group members are compared and, finally, high and low performers are selected for closer inspection (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). In order to be able to identify clusters, performance indicators and select high- and low performers some a priori constructs are necessary (Eisenhardt, 1989). These are, however, not necessarily the constructs which will find their way into the resultant theory.

Another issue of a “multiple case study design” is the “multiple”-prefix. How many cases justify the title? The number of cases is limited by the diminishing marginal utility – while Yin (2009) suggests limiting the number of cases to 6-10, arguments for a smaller or indeed greater number of cases based on theoretical saturation, predicted replicability and contrast of cases can be found (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). The theoretical saturation is reached when every new case is not revealing any new data, insights and constructs. Knowing the number of cases prior to data collection and data analysis is, therefore, difficult and the initially planned number might need to be adjusted.

#### *3.5.1.2 Data Collection*

Case studies can employ a variety of primary and secondary data sources yielding qualitative and quantitative data. The typical data collection methods include interviews and questionnaires, observations, documents and archives, artefacts and statistical data collected by third parties (Eisenhardt, 1989; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2009). The mixture of data collection techniques, sources and lenses improves understanding and, potentially, construct validity (Yin, 2009).

In addition to the collection of empirical and statistical data, the researcher needs to keep a research *protocol* and a set of *field notes*. The research protocol provides a roadmap of each case study. It includes the (a) overview of the project, (b) data collection procedures, (c) case study questions and information sources, and (d) a guide for the case study report (Yin, 2009). The field notes are a living and ongoing

document and consist of two separate parts – (1) the notes and reflections on what is happening during the project, and (2) the analysis of observations (Eisenhardt, 1989).

While a given study may not employ all the available data collection techniques, the investigator should be flexible and adaptive enough to embrace new opportunities for data collection. Research protocols provide a guideline and increase the reliability of studies across all cases. However, adjustments to data collection methods such as the inclusion of additional data sources or questions on a case-by-case basis are not unwelcome (Yin, 2009). This so-called “controlled opportunism” allows the investigator to take advantage of unexpected situations and gain deeper insight and better understanding (Eisenhardt, 1989). Adjustments to data collection methods so recorded in the study protocol and field notes will be helpful in reflection and data analysis step of the project.

#### *3.5.1.3 Case Study Database and Data Analysis*

Organising and documenting data prior to the analysis is a necessary and important part of the research project. The Case Study Database consists of the (1) source (where does it come from), (2) method (how was the data obtained – interviews, archives etc.), (3) study questions (what question(s) can be answered with this data), and (4) metadata (who collected the data, when, ...) for all data collected in the study (Yin, 2009). The data itself can take on a variety of forms and formats – taped interviews, interview transcripts, returned questionnaires, documents and artefacts, researcher narratives and observation notes, collated and tabulated materials. The researcher field notes and reflections form another part of the case study database.

Data analysis is the integral part of theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989). In the initial phase of data analysis it might be useful to turn to the informants for an explanation of what they are doing or why; however, “*there is no obligation to accept the person’s or the society’s explanation*” (Rorty et al., 1980, p. 143). Furthermore, the researcher’s objective is not to report the informant’s perception, but rather uncover patterns and concepts which are not known to and not understood by the participants (Glaser, 2002). The informants’ opinion can also be used at the end of data-analysis activities: key-informants could be asked to review the reports and so confirm interpretations or open avenues for additional considerations (Yin, 2009).

Each case study is to be viewed as a unique complete study in itself. The researcher is to become “intimately familiar” with that case. A study write-up, which can consist of pure description, is then completed before a cross-comparison of cases takes place (Eisenhardt, 1989). The data is analysed based on its source and type; Qualitative data can be used to generate emergent themes and constructs, which could be validated and supported by quantitative data. Relationships between theoretical constructs which are apparent in quantitative data could be attempted to be explained with qualitative data at hand. A variety of methods for the analysis of qualitative data exists and has been discussed in the literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2009). Analysis of qualitative data is an iterative process, during which the constructs and relationships between them emerge, are refined and verified in multiple cycles (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002). Analysis techniques such as pattern-matching, word stemming, word clouds, and semantic matching, supported by computer-aided analytics packages or database management systems, allow investigators to maintain a grip on the volume of data and efficiently compress large texts to manageable lists. The computer-aided reduction and pattern-matching do not replace manual analysis nor remove the need for the investigator to become familiar with the data beyond automated analysis and reduction of the content to a number of higher-level terms, themes and word-stems.

After each step of analysis within the case, the conclusions and the findings from different sources are compared against each other with the view of convergence or non-convergence of evidence (Yin, 2009). Conflicting findings and conclusions need to be addressed and alternative explanations sought. Cross-case and within case comparison allows viewing the data from each case from a different angle (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). When comparing findings across cases, three tactics can be used. One tactic is to compare findings by data source (or by researcher). Another tactic is to list differences and similarities between two or more cases. Finally, the data can be grouped based on selected categories or dimensions; within-group similarities are then listed alongside the intergroup differences (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### 3.5.2 Case study pros and cons

Entering a new field or investigating a fresh phenomenon is likely to produce a novel theory and contribute to the body of knowledge. Case studies allow theory building in new or emergent fields, with a small or no body of theoretical knowledge and are

especially useful for creating initial explanations and descriptions of emergent social phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miranda et al., 2016; Yin, 2009).

Building theories from the “data up” is likely to produce empirically valid theories, grounded in data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002). Because case studies can accommodate a multitude of data collection analysis methods, the resultant theory is likely to be testable and yield constructs and hypotheses which can be measured, validated or nullified (Eisenhardt, 1989). Qualitative case studies have the potential to support further qualitative and quantitative research.

The variety and amount of data and evidence within each case could be overwhelming. There is a danger of the researcher overlooking constructs, relationships and patterns and jumping to wrong conclusions (Eisenhardt, 1989). Several guards need to be put in place to counter data-overload such as reflective notes, case database, and triangulation. These, in turn, increase the amount of data, the number of tools used and variety of tasks to be performed by the investigator. Careful planning and disciplined execution are of paramount importance to a successful case study.

Finally, the resultant theory could be too complex or too narrow. The complexity of the theory is driven by (1) the amount of evidence available and by (2) the researcher’s ability to compress the data and come up with a cohesive and concise explanation. The breadth of the theory is limited by the definition of case boundaries, the specifics of data collected, and context settings under investigation. A careful balance needs to be struck to produce transferable explanations (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### 3.6 Selected Methodology and Design

The literature review and stated research questions frame and guide the selection process for the appropriate research design (Figure 23).

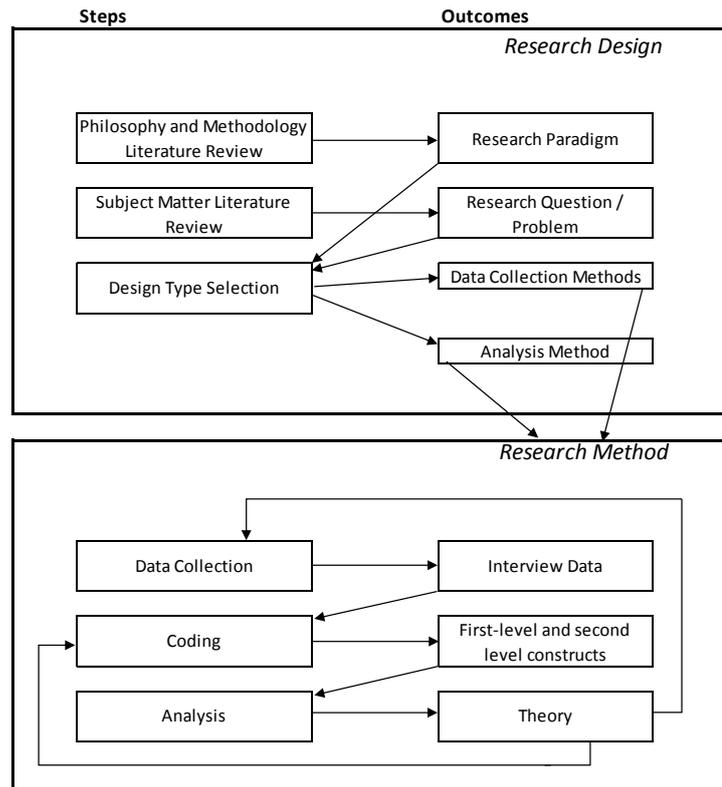


Figure 23 - Research design and research method steps

This study investigates a contemporary and still developing phenomenon of social media use inside organisations. Current theories explain the use of social media in a range of organisation's activities including Marketing (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, & Sankaranarayanan, 2012), Selection (Weathington & Bechtel, 2012), Attraction (Hunter, Cushenbery, & Friedrich, 2012) and Development of products and services (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Leino, 2011). The extant body of research within the HR area requires a deeper understanding of practices (Guest, 2011) and contexts of social media use (Hunter et al., 2012; Stein, 2013). The previous section highlighted two possible candidates for research approaches: (1) controlled experiments and (2) case studies. Controlled experiments would not yield answers to questions which focus on *how* organisations use social media in their day to day activities, or on *how* the actual organisational setting frames this usage: the control of such settings and activities is neither aspired to nor possible. Case studies are chosen as a solid methodology for investigating contemporary phenomena, where there is little control over the events and where the constructs are yet to be described and developed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). It is expected that understanding of the interplay of human agency and

technology in one (or a few) cases will contribute to understanding these relationships in other cases (McKeown, 1999).

*This research adopts an iterative inductive theory building process whereby the data collection and analysis are intertwined: theory emerges from data and guides further data collection to refine theory (Charmaz, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002; Layder, 1993; Silverman, 2010; Wiesche et al., 2017).*

While this research does not follow the process of Grounded Theory as it was developed by Glaser and Strauss in its pure form (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the research design follows the underlying assumption of grounded theory in data collection and theory building: the data collection is a flexible and iterative process. This research consists broadly of four phases: (1) literature review with the aim of developing the initial framework, (2) case selection guided by the logic of theoretical or purposive sampling, (3) data collection in a multiple-case study, and (4) data analysis. The first stage of this research is presented in the literature review and this chapter, phases two, three and four are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### 3.6.1 Case selection

Two pilot studies were conducted in January 2014 (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2014a), to identify the theoretically significant cases before embarking on the main research journey (Eisenhardt, 1989; McKeown, 1999; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999; Yin, 2009). The sampling for these studies first followed convenience logic; the investigators had personal contacts inside each organisation's HR teams at senior levels. Another consideration in the case selection process was the attempt to keep the organisations comparable while still differentiable. Both organisations are publicly listed companies based in the UK. They have a similar number of employees, operate in the same countries and rely on a global, professional workforce. Both organisations, albeit offering very different products and services, rely on a broad, diverse base of private customers and thus are very much exposed to public scrutiny. Thus, the choice of the organisations controlled somewhat for the environmental factors including the political climate, laws and regulations governing employee relations, and cultural

acceptance of practices. Informants in both organisations were senior managers in HR departments: understanding the HR strategy, and yet being close enough to the actual daily practice of HR to be able to describe what the daily activities are and how they are performed.

*The pilot case studies revealed two very different approaches with regards to use and regulation of social media.*

One organisation endorsed social media use for internal and external communication, encouraged social media use between employees and management, employees and candidates and alumni. The second organisation explicitly discouraged use of some social media, endorsed use of certain platforms and discouraged specific activities, by, for example, disabling comments on their YouTube channel. The day-to-day social media use inside both organisations revealed activities on social media which contradicted each organisation’s policy: for example, employees in the first organisation were encouraged to use internal social media tools, but did not, whereas recruiters in the second organisation were not allowed to use social media to source candidates but actively did so. The findings from the pilot studies revealed two dimensions of social media use: (1) the organisation’s structure and (2) the praxis (Figure 24).

		<i>Organisation</i>	
		Encourage	Discourage
<i>Praxis</i>	Engaged	<b>Social Organisation</b>	<b>Social Employees</b>
	Disengaged	<b>Un-Social Employees</b>	<b>Un-Social Organisation</b>

*Figure 24 - Case selection based on social media use by organisations*

In the structure-dimension, social media use may be encouraged or discouraged. In the praxis-dimension, employees either engage or do not engage on social media. The case selection for the case studies focuses thus on four corner cases

Starting at the top-left corner and moving clockwise: the “Social Organisation” embraces social media and its employees actively engage on platforms endorsed by the organisation. “Social Employees” engage on social media contrary to their

organisation's objections. "Un-Social Organisation" is characterised by the rejection of social media by the organisation and the employees. "Un-Social Employees" refuse to engage on social media introduced, endorsed or encouraged by their organisation.

It is acknowledged that there is no clear-cut line between each of the organisation's types. Employees might engage in activities which are different from those encouraged so that the presented topology needs to be understood within a narrowed practices setting. The corner cases of "Un-Social Employees" and "Social Employees" represent the more interesting cases because of a potential conflict between the organisation's structure and the practices, possibly leading to a re-structuring process.

To identify suitable cases, the researcher first identified several potential candidates. The attempt to control for environment has still been made: only UK-based companies with own HR departments were considered. Originally, the researcher aspired to cluster case studies by industry (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). However, after failing to secure sufficient numbers of case studies from any industry, the clustering by industry was not possible. The publicly accessible information on social media platforms which were identified from the literature and pilot studies were assessed with the view on openness, engagement, functionality, frequency of updates. At the start of this study the investigator had contacts to approximately 200 companies in the UK which would potentially be suitable. Initial screening of these companies allowed to reduce the list to 32 large companies – firms employing more than 24,000 employees. These companies were assessed based on their activity on social media.

### 3.6.2 Firm Activity Assessment on Social Media

Prior to developing a case selection methodology (described in Chapter 4), the candidate companies were assessed by the researcher by visiting the corporate websites and LinkedIn and Facebook pages to gauge the firm's "activity" by simply looking at the frequency and content of posts on those public platforms. For each of the thirty-two large companies to which the research has access, the corporate site and the recruitment site has been navigated to in a browser. A mark was given to those companies which linked from their homepage or careers page to pages on social media sites including Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube. Built-in search functionality on Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn were then used to search for "CompanyName", "CompanyName Careers", "CompanyName Employees" and

“CompanyName Alumni”. Depending on existence, activity, and openness of a page or group, points were allocated to each firm. The points given thus were divided into “firm” and “employee” depending on the actors (Table 9).

Company	Employer											Employee								
	Links to SM	comm on FB	comm on YouT	FB exists	LN Exists	Youtub e Exists	Twrt Exist	Other exist	comm on fb	comm on youT	reply on twtr	COMP PTS	Comms on FB	Comms on YouT	Comms on LN	Comms on twtr	Comms other	LN engaged	LN grp own	EMP PTS
1. UKConsulting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
2. Bank2	0.3	0	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	8.3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4
3. FMCG1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	6	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4
4. Retail1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
5. Retail2	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	8.5	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	4
6. Outsourcing1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	8	1	1	0	0		1	0	3
7. UKOutsourcing	0.3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3.3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 9 - Assessment Table Example

Based on the “score” associated with each organisation’s activity, the firms were then compared to each other along the organisation/praxis dimensions (Figure 24). The positioning of the firm along the “encourage/discourage”-dimension was driven by its “employer score”; the positioning along the “disengaged/engaged”-dimension was defined by the “employee score”. This resulted in the allocation of each firm within the four possible quadrants closer to or further from the corners. Firms which are present and active on social media sights and allow other audiences to engage (e.g. comments on YouTube videos, postings on Facebook wall etc.) are allocated the quadrant number 1 or 4; firms which discourage engagement are positioned in quadrants 2 and 3. The level of employee participation is estimated based on the activity of the employees, candidates, and alumni on the firm’s or firm-related sites (e.g. company page on Facebook, alumni group on LinkedIn, Graduate Recruitment channel on YouTube). Some companies did not score any points; these were allocated to the fifth quadrant (acknowledging the oxymoron) indicating that no evaluation is possible. The list of 32 was reduced to 10 companies from quadrants 1, 2 and 4. The list of initial candidate organisations is provided in the Appendix A of this thesis.

The researcher’s personal contacts within those organisations were asked to participate in the study, to agree to a taped interview, and afterwards to provide names and contact details of further managers or employees within the organisation to expand the case study data via a snowballing technique. Following chapters in this thesis provide more detail on the case and participant selection method, as well as difficulties experienced

by the researcher when trying to get sufficient numbers of participants and how these were addressed.

### 3.6.3 Data collection

Initially, data for this study were collected from public social media sites. To make sure that the data can be accessed later, two types of information were saved separately in electronic format: the *content* of the website and the *functionality*. The content was stored in text-format (e.g. the descriptions of videos, the content of the comments). The functionality was stored as screen-shots with supporting descriptions (e.g. enabled comments on videos, request to log in and provide an email address before posting in a forum). All data were saved in files including the organisation's name, date and source platform, e.g. "Birkbeck-20140925-twitter-Times HighEdu Results.txt".

Before the studies were carried out, another electronic resource of data under consideration was the company's intranet. During execution, it became apparent that the participants were neither willing nor able to grant the researcher access to internal platforms so that all descriptions of internal platforms' functionalities and content are based entirely on the participants' descriptions in the interviews.

Permission to conduct the study within the organisation was sought from a relevant representative of the organisation. Semi-structured interviews with select representatives of the HR team were conducted to initially gauge social media use and to identify other actors and platforms. A snowballing principle was then applied to identify interviewees among employees and managers and other participants of the communication process, as described in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, with far less success than initially assumed. The overall number of interviews per case is guided by the number of participants in the HRM communication process and their accessibility. All participants were provided with a consent form informing them about the aims of the research, the researcher's names and affiliation and detailing data handling procedures and ethics of the research. All interviews were digitally recorded, with informant's agreement, and then transcribed. Some of the notes made during the interviews were digitally transcribed and kept alongside the interview transcript to aid analysis.

### 3.6.4 Data analysis

This study uses two types of data – (1) qualitative data collected during interviews and (2) data from social media sites containing text, visual materials such as pictures and videos, and functionality e.g. ability to comment on videos, or to post comments. These types of data required different methods of analysis and will be first analysed independent of each other, and later in conjunction with each other.

#### 3.6.4.1 Interview Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed with the help of Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software package (CAQDAS) NVivo. The advantage of using computer aided analysis is that several versions of analysis can reside next to each other and can be compared and reverted to. Whenever the researcher finds themselves “down a dead-end alley”, they can revert to an earlier version of analysis and start afresh. Additionally, computerisation of data and analysis allows keeping backup copies and so securing the research from accidental losses. All interviews, most interview notes and paper-artefacts are digitally transcribed and added to the data source. The data is then analysed in several steps. First, each research question is answered individually. Then the research questions are addressed as a complex question with the aim of establishing the links between theoretical constructs and emergent themes. The first step of the analysis is the creation of word-clouds, which graphically emphasise words found in a text based on the frequency of their appearance – more frequent words are displayed in larger and more prominent letters (Figure 25). This allows the researcher to quickly see what nouns (themes?) and verbs (relationships?) are dominant in the discourse.

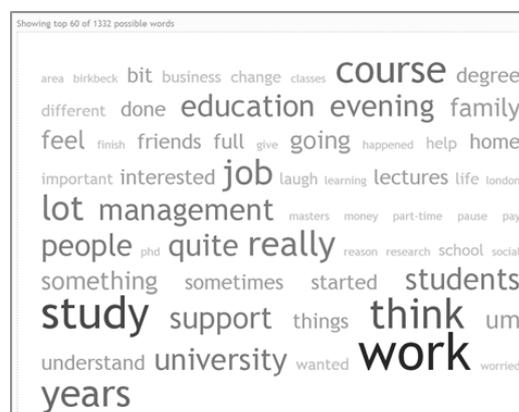


Figure 25 - Tag Cloud: Example from an interview with a Part-Time student

The word-clouds can be built for interview data only, online data only, or for combined data. This procedure would indicate differences or commonalities in themes and relationships in different sources of data. The word-clouds can be built using common dictionaries and word-stemming techniques so that certain words will be combined based on word stems (e.g. work, working); these dictionaries can be further extended to combine words based on meaning (e.g. work, job), this is done manually by the researcher. Creation of word-clouds can be set to exclude certain words (e.g. articles, pronouns, prepositions, or filler words such as “ehemm”, “err” etc.). Repeated application of data-cleaning and word-cloud generation makes dominant expressions visible; hinting at themes, constructs and relationships. After a number of repetitions, no more improvements on the clarity of dominant expression can be achieved, the emerged possible themes, constructs and relationships are recorded and, as a next step, interview transcripts are analysed.

The analysis of the interview data is guided by the constructs identified in the previous step. However, new constructs are identified, existing constructs refined, discarded or replaced. During this step, constructs are placed within a context – when are they mentioned, proximity and relationship to other constructs; simultaneously new constructs and relationships are recorded by the researcher. The identified constructs are then grouped to higher level “themes”. These themes are attributed to the research questions and a theory of themes, constructs and relationships is formulated. The constructs so developed from the analysis of the interview data are then used to analyse electronic data.

#### *3.6.4.2 Electronic Data Analysis*

NVivo software provides administrative help in editing, managing and maintaining the codes, themes and concepts. The software uses the concept of a “node” – a descriptor which can be assigned to a document, sentence, statement or a word. The “nodes” are a multi-level hierarchy and can be created at micro- and macro levels.

Several nodes can be joined to a “super-node”, grouping so that similar themes to more high-level concepts, emulating the hierarchy of Themes → Second Level Constructs → Concepts. The advantage offered by the software is that statements which are assigned one of the Themes (lowest level) can easily be retrieved at the Concept level, thus allowing for quick validation when grouping Themes to Constructs and Concepts.

Further, re-labelling of statements – e.g. when a better/more precise expression is found for a specific Theme is supported by the software across multiple data sources (i.e. interview transcripts).

Finally, re-use of nodes, export and comparison functions allow the researcher to avoid duplication of Themes and support creation of a more concise set of descriptors.

#### 3.6.4.3 *Cross Source Analysis*

The results from the interview and electronic data analyses are compared with each other and later across cases to highlight similarities, expected deviations, or identify unexpected deviations from theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Through this iterative process, new data from original or new cases are collected and the theory sharpened, adjusted or, possibly, abandoned (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2009). A third source of data for identification of theoretical constructs are field notes – consisting of a stream of thoughts of the researcher during data collection. These notes are analysed in the same manner as other qualitative data sources.

#### 3.6.5 Research Design and Method

The methodology chapter, written in the early stage of the research project, provides descriptions of *planned* research design and method. The contents of this chapter have been updated at the end of the research project. However, to provide a reference point, most of the content of this “Research Design and Method”-section has been left unmodified. This section, originally intended as a *plan* for carrying out the research, therefore, contains sentences in present and future tense, rather than past tense as the rest of this chapter.

Following the literature review and pilot studies, this research is based upon the framework of HR as a communication process (Figure 18). The field work includes two stages: case selection and case-study. Incorporated in the case study is the stage of data-analysis (Table 10).

<b>Preparation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Initialisation phase</b>
	1.1	Literature Review
	1.2	Pilot Studies
<b>Fieldwork</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Case Selection phase</b>
	2.1	Candidate selection
	2.2	Candidate assessment
	<b>3</b>	<b>Data Collection phase</b>
	3.1	Case Study Interviews
	3.2	Case Study Social Media Analysis
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
	4.1	Interview Analysis
	4.2	Social Media Content analysis
	4.3	Theme Comparision (by source)
	4.4	Cross-Case comparison

*Table 10 - Research Phases*

The initialisation phase is covered in the literature review chapter. This section provides an overview of the Case Selection and Data Collection, and Data Analysis Phases.

Data Collection and Data Analysis are intertwined and the phases overlap to a large extent. For clarity, the two phases are described separately, it is, however, emphasised that both take place in parallel with results from each phase informing and influencing the other (Silverman, 2010).

#### *3.6.5.1 Case Selection Phase*

The researcher has access to a database of about two hundred companies which participated in re-employment activities of London Organising Committee for Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) employees after the Olympic Games in September 2012. The case-study candidate selection will be initially limited to these companies. This limitation is guided by several considerations. First, due to professional contacts within these organisations, the access by the researcher to these organisations is readily available. Second, all participating organisations are large enough to have dedicated in-house HR departments. Third, the organisations are UK-based and UK-lead. Fourth, the outplacement of LOCOG employees was done over several social media channels so that all companies in the database have some exposure to social media.

*All companies willing to participate will be assessed based on the assessment framework (Figure 24) and the most suitable candidates will be selected.*

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the assessment and the selection process. The suitability is primarily dictated by the quality of “fit” of the firm within the assessment framework criteria. The selection is guided by the logic of theoretical or purposive sampling (Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2009). Up to four most extreme cases are selected first (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999), followed by one or two cases “in the middle” where a clear-cut assignment is not possible or difficult. Permission to conduct an in-depth case study within the firm will then be sought from a suitable representative of the firm.

The research questions:

- Q1. Who are the actors (*rhetors* and *audiences*)?
- Q2. How is social media used for management/employee communication (*practices*, directions of communication)?
- Q3. Is social media use for employee communication strategic?
- Q4. When does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

Are to be answered by comparing the findings from each of the cases. It is hoped that comparison of extreme and “normal” cases will highlight firm-specific factors which influence social media use (research question 4), differentiate effects of social media activity on HRM process (research question 3), and finally contribute to the identification of different practices (research question 2).

#### *3.6.5.2 Data Collection Phase*

Each case will be treated as a separate single-case study and data will be collected and analysed on the case-by-case basis initially (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia & Pitre, 1990). The initial interviews and data collected during the Case Selection Phase form part of the Case-Data. Further Semi-Structured Interviews with representatives of HR and other departments at various levels (top- and middle-managers, executives) will be conducted.

*This will enable the researcher to identify (1) actors of the HR communication process, their (2) individual or collective practices,*

*their perception of (3) HR system strength as well as (4) existing policies and practices that influence social media use.*

Where possible, access to artefacts such as documents containing IT – use policy, social media policy, Standard Operating Procedures, internal memos, internal blog posts etc. will be sought to corroborate and enrich the data available (King et al., 1994). Where hard or electronic copies are available, content (text) and presentation (look and feel) copies will be collected and added to the case database. Publicly available social media platforms will be accessed to identify (1) actors of the communication process and available channels (e.g. can external members comment in groups?), (2) the resultant available and utilised communication practices, (3) the content of HR communication available on public social media platforms, and (4) how the firm internal policies are implemented and enforced on these platforms. These data will provide an alternative source for addressing the research questions. In addition to the direct contribution to research theme, the interviews and public electronic resources will identify other firm external actors whom the researcher will attempt to contact and conduct an interview to provide an outside point of view of the firm’s HR process. The pilot studies indicated two potential groups of actors to be contacted: alumni (former employees) and candidates (potential employees).

#### *3.6.5.3 Data Analysis*

During interviews and online data collection the researcher will be forming an opinion on constructs, expressions used, and emergent relationships. These observations, opinions, and the initial framework will guide the data analysis and help in identification of theoretical constructs and themes.

*The themes regarding actors are addressed from the viewpoint of research questions one and two: who are the actors and how do they manifest their actions. Themes regarding the HR process are viewed with research questions three and four in mind: how do these themes and construct relate to consistency, consensus and distinctiveness of the HR process?*

The theory is formulated and refined in a continuous process and interlinked with data analysis and data collection. The findings are compared within each case by data source and within data source; cross-case comparison happens on data source and

case-basis (Figure 26). The arrows and directions are illustrative, and not all comparison paths are included in the diagram to avoid cluttering.

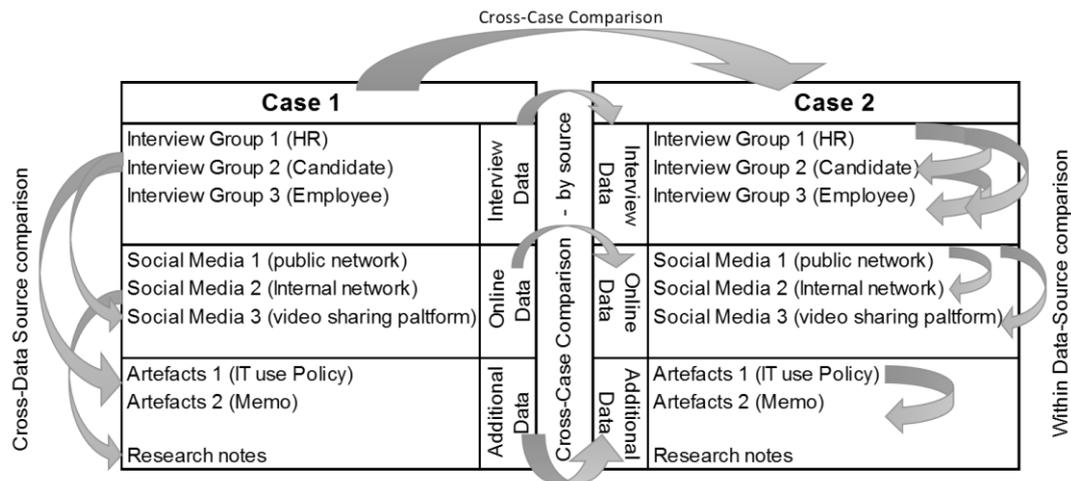


Figure 26 - Data Analysis: cross-evaluation

The analysis will be guided by three main theoretical underpinnings: Grounded Theory (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008; Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002), Comparative Case Study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Silverman, 2013; Yin, 2009), and Duality of Structure – introduced in the Structuration Theory and further developed in Sociomaterial View (Giddens, 1984; Jones & Karsten, 2008; Orlikowski, 1992, 1993; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). For the inductive analysis of the data – the coding of qualitative data, meta-analysis of the first-order constructs and the development of higher-order constructs Grounded Theory will be used as *data analysis method* for discovering the concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2002). The cross-case comparison and *evaluation* will use the methods and steps abducted from Case Study designs (Eisenhardt, 1989; Silverman, 2013). Finally, the analysis will depart from Grounded Theory call for becoming abstract from time, people and place (Glaser, 2002). Instead, the analysis will focus on embedding the constructs back into the situated practices and idiosyncratic settings linking the settings (structures) and the practices (processes) together (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Klein & Myers, 1999; Myers & Avison, 1997; Orlikowski, 2000). The grounding of theoretical constructs will link the research findings back to extant knowledge and practice.

### 3.6.6 Design assessment

Multiple-Case Study has been selected as a research strategy to investigate a contemporary developing phenomenon of social media use in organisations and

answer the research questions. This section applies the validity-tests to critically assess the design and address methodological challenges.

#### *3.6.6.1 Construct Validity*

Case studies, especially those which are trying to build theory and seek to identify emergent constructs in the empirical data, are generally high in construct validity. The constructs are not created a priori based on theory but emerge from within the data. The process of theory building following the Grounded Theory approach as discussed at the beginning of this chapter starts as close as possible to the “ideal of no theory” (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although the literature review and pilot case studies provided an initial framework (Figure 24) and indicated a candidate theory, the constructs and relationships suggested by the framework might not find reflection in the final theory. Multiple data collection methods allow triangulation and so provide another pathway to improve construct validity (Eisenhardt, 1989).

This study employs at least three different sources of information – interviews with HR representatives, interviews with employees and information from the public (and where possible private) social media sites, the findings can be triangulated based on the data source. The interviews are conducted with representatives of different actor-groups (e.g. managers, employees, candidates), and thus the findings are triangulated based on the informant. Comparing data and findings across the cases allows further triangulation across cases. The theoretical constructs, such as the activities on social media and participant groups, are developed from the empirical data and are grounded in the data rather than in theory.

#### *3.6.6.2 Internal Validity*

Comparing findings across cases increases internal validity. Internal validity is further improved through the application of data analysis methods which address rival explanation, and generation of propositions based on empirical data and not solely on theoretical constructs (Yin, 2009).

The relationship between actors (actor groups) and activities is to be established as part of the study. The internal validity is increased through replication across multiple cases. Comparison and location of findings within extant HRM and IS literature is a third strategy to improve internal validity.

#### *3.6.6.3 External Validity*

The multiple-case study is designed with improved external validity in mind, especially in comparison with single case studies (Yin, 2009). The qualitative rhetoric prefers the term “transferability” over generalisability when evaluating external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The definition of study boundaries (e.g. a single industry) initially reduces the settings in which the findings can be transferred, but at the same time sharpens the focus and so improves the transferability of the findings within these boundaries (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). The application of replication-logic during case selection phase, cross-case comparison of findings during the analysis phase, rigorous, transparent and reliable study design and reporting of findings are tools which improve transferability at several stages of the study (Yin, 2009).

This study focuses on a bounded eco-system of large UK firms. The environmental – cultural and legislative structures in the UK frame the population of organisations under investigation. This conscious limitation of potential and actual cases sharpens the theory and helps to specify a population of organisations to which the findings apply.

#### *3.6.6.4 Reliability*

The reliability of findings from multiple case studies depends to a great extent on the discipline of the researcher. The qualitative test for “credibility” is a better-chosen term here (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). What can be (or has been) done to make the findings credible? A detailed case study protocol should allow another researcher to set up a replication study (Yin, 2009). Consistent field notes and a well-maintained database would allow reviewers and colleagues to comprehend the study’s execution and data analysis, and to critically appraise the findings and conclusions (Eisenhardt, 1989). Openness and transparency during planning, execution and analysis of the data reflected in detailed documentation improve credibility.

During the study, several sets of notes are being created and maintained. These notes cover preparation, data collection, over data analysis, theory formulation and reporting. Field notes are taken as handwritten notes and where applicable transcribed for analysis. Interviews are digitally recorded and transcribed, websites are downloaded, and screen-shots are taken. Anonymised (where applicable) data is permanently stored to allow going back and forth between data collection and analysis.

A case study protocol with (a) interview dates, (b) interview scripts and (c) informant's anonymised details as well as (d) content and dates of other information is kept. The protocol also includes a record of actions such as (e) phone calls or correspondence exchanges so that support can be provided for replication studies.

Methods and techniques employed to analyse the data and derive theoretical constructs and formulate theory are also transparently documented to contribute to *reliability* and *credibility*.

### 3.7 Summary

The chapter introduced a process-view of HRM as a communication system as the underlying framework for this study. The research questions, aimed at investigating *whether, when* and *how* social media use in organisations is strategic, are formulated and stated. A presentation and analysis of multiple theoretical paradigms such as subjectivism, interpretivism, and critical realism follows a discussion of different approaches to theory building. Each paradigm is critically assessed as a potential candidate for providing theoretical lenses and methods to answer the research questions.

Selection of qualitative multiple-case study as a research strategy leads to a detailed description of the methodology and design. Each practical step of the study execution – case selection, data collection, qualitative data analysis and interpretation are presented and discussed.

## 4 Data Collection, Interview Data and Case Description

The research project inevitably requires empirical data to be collected. This chapter focuses on the description of the selection process for case organisation, interview method and the study participants (Figure 27).

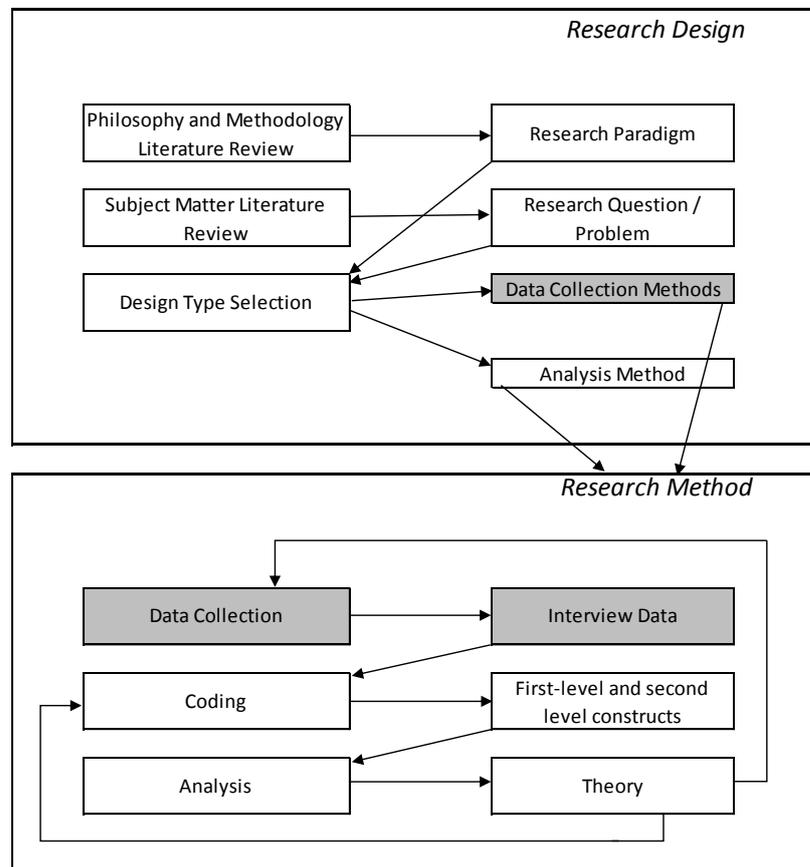


Figure 27 - Data Collection Chapter relative to overall Research Design

This chapter provides detailed descriptions of the case selection and data collection process. First, the detailed description of the analysis process improves the replicability of the research. Second, rigorous notes about the work done add to transparency and make the findings more “believable”. Finally, building up to the data analysis and findings, this chapter provides descriptions of who the participants were, which helps us assessing and understanding individual informant’s statements, motivations and viewpoints.

### 4.1 Introduction

Following the input from Literature Review and the Methodology chapters, this chapter is concerned with the “method”. The Literature review identified the research setting: social media in Human Resource Management, the Methodology chapter

identified the methodological and philosophical basis for this research as a qualitative case study. This chapter is continuing to build upon the previous chapters by providing more detail on *how* the research was carried out in practical terms. As discussed in the “Research at the paradigm crossroad”-section of the methodology chapter, data quality is an essential feature of good research (King et al., 1994). The content of this chapter is structured around the five rules for data quality: (1) recording and reporting of data generation process, (2) collection of data from multiple sources, (3) recording of observable and not observable/not measurable data and concepts, (4) recording of data collection process, and (5) recording and reporting of data analysis process. This chapter sets off with a discussion on different case selection approaches, providing a report on data collection and data generation process. Next, the case selection methodology which was developed specifically for this research is introduced. The application of the selection methodology within this research is then presented and individual cases (the organisations) are described in detail providing a record of data sources and observations. The detailed description of the case organisation is followed up by description of individual interview participants, focusing on the methods and procedures of the data collection process. The chapter concludes with a description of the interview and transcription techniques applied: providing an overview of data analysis procedures which are further described in Chapter 5.

#### 4.2 Case Selection and Data Collection prerequisites

Qualitative methods are better suited to answering research questions of “how”, as opposed to “how much” (Silverman, 2013). Qualitative research *in* organisations allows to uncover properties which competitors cannot or do not replicate, and which can be sources of competitive advantage (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999) and are considered internal idiosyncratic *resources* under the RBV.

The data collection was performed in three iterative stages. The first data collection stage included two pilot-studies (Silverman, 2013; Turner III, 2010). The organisations for these studies were picked “by chance” simply because the researcher had access to these organisations and interviews were possible at short notice. These interviews were transcribed and analysed, providing first insights into the phenomenon and informing further studies (Charmaz, 2006). The findings from these pilot studies were presented and discussed at academic conferences to gather additional feedback and ideas for subsequent research (Wolf et al., 2014a). After the

pilot studies, theoretically relevant organisations were invited to participate in the study. Once three or more interviews from three organisations were collected, the data were transcribed and analysed applying Qualitative Comparative Analysis methods (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). As subsequent interviews were collected in the case organisations, the data have been analysed again, and new constructs and themes were discovered. The findings and data analysis are discussed in subsequent chapters.

In the methodology chapter, Grounded Theory has been identified as the overarching theory for data analysis. Grounded Theory, introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), focuses on the *theory-building* with emphasis placed on qualitative data (Layder, 1993). Theory building process begins without a preconceived theory in mind the researcher enters an iterative process of collecting and analysing data during which the constructs emerge (Eisenhardt, 1989).

*The data collection is guided by the principle of “theoretical sampling” – the most revealing or outstanding cases are selected for closer investigation (Creswell, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999; Yin, 2009). The selected cases have been pre-judged, and a conscious decision by the researcher has been made to include relevant and exclude non-relevant cases.*

The general approach to case selection has been outlined and discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter focuses on the concrete case selection procedures for this study. The selected approach identifies cases based on observed outcomes with the aim of identifying the sources of these outcomes: a “sampling on the dependent variable” (Levitas & Chi, 2002, p. 961). The selected companies represent polar-types of organisations who are (not) using social media in their management-employee communications. Three extremes are selected representing (1) organisations where management and employees use social media for communication, (2) only management uses social media, and (3) only employees use social media.

To select relevant cases for this study, a case selection methodology has been developed as part of this project (Wolf et al., 2015b). The following section introduces the selection methodology used in this study and describes the logic and steps which were followed to select the case study organisations.

### 4.3 Case Selection Methodology

The “*what*” on social media is publicly available and observable (who are participants, who creates the posts, who comments on them and what is the content). However, a large sample study is unlikely to reveal *why* and *how* some firms manage to create a dialogue while others do not. The proposed framework aims at aiding the selection of *theoretically relevant* cases, i.e. the identification of “high and low performers” (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). The question of what is a “high” or a “low” performer needs to be addressed before the start of the selection process. The selection methodology for this research is much more focused than that introduced by Rouse and Daellenbach. It focuses specifically on the value of a *communication process*. The literature review chapter identified DART (Dialogue, Access, Risk/Benefits, and Transparency) framework by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) as a suitable framework for performance assessment of communication activities on social media. DART assumes that the value generated through engagement on digital platforms will be greater if there are higher levels of Dialogue, easy Access to all participants, balanced Risk (Cost) /Benefits from participation, and Transparency of information.

The case selection methodology introduced in this chapter: ALIAS – is a five-step process for identification and purposeful selection of case-study cases (Figure 28). The methodology is built upon the foundation of Case Selection methodology by Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) for the selection process and DART-Framework by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) for the performance assessment (Wolf et al., 2015b; Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2015c).

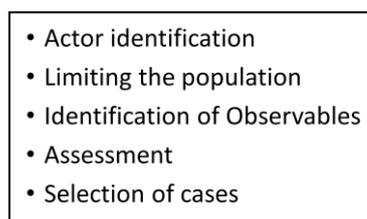


Figure 28 - ALIAS - steps of the case selection process

The steps of (1) Actor Identification: preliminary selection of case candidates, (2) Limiting the Population: reducing the number potential candidates to a manageable number, (3) Identification of Observables: specifying of measures to assess performance, (4) Assessment: measuring the performance, and (5) Selection of cases:

creating a list of suitable candidates based on the assessment are described using an example of a hypothetical research setting investigating co-operative engagement between software developers and corporate customers based on their participation in an online User-Group.

#### 4.3.1 Actor Identification

The selection process starts with the identification of (possible) *actors*, e.g. developers/users. The apriori definition of at least some of the participants is important to address the question “who is excluded”. Notably, the (possible) actors can (and probably will) change during data collection phase (e.g. business analysts might emerge as a distinctive participant group); the preliminary list is used as a guidance during the case selection process only.

#### 4.3.2 Limiting the population

In the second step, the *population* of potential cases is defined, e.g. UK B2B software firms. This (1) aids the limitation of the number of cases, and (2) controls for environmental variations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). It further sharpens the focus of the study and increases potential for transferability of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

#### 4.3.3 Identification of Observables

The third step identifies desired “observables” – the performance indicators on social media, e.g. comments and replies in the user-group. These variables or performance indicators are derived based on apriori knowledge from literature, experience and assumptions. This step is mirroring Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) identification of “performance data” (p. 489). It might be necessary to include the definition of measurements for each of the indicators. While some indicators are binary (e.g. “posting on Facebook enabled / disabled”); others are quantitative (e.g. average number of re-tweets, number of comments per post, number of video views); and yet some are qualitative (e.g. sentiment of product reviews; video content). Each of these indicators might require a different scale. The measurement scales are then used in the Assessment-step. All indicators are ultimately measuring engagement and activity levels in terms of Dialogue, Access and Accessibility, Risk/Benefit balance and Transparency of information. In this example, for simplicity we use just one quantitative indicator: a count of number of comments.

#### 4.3.4 Assessment

During this step participant’s engagement and activity levels are assessed based on the indicators identified previously. Various indicators are then compared across all cases and a value is assigned to the actor-performance to indicate their *relative* performance. The resultant matrix allows arrangement of cases based on each actor-group’s performance (Figure 29).

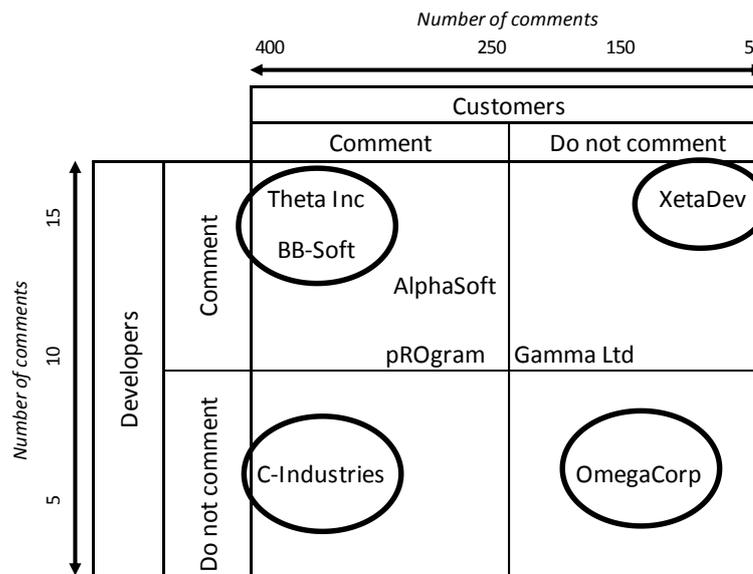


Figure 29 – Example of a theoretical Performance Matrix

In the example used here (developers/customers engagement in a fictional user-group), the evaluation of performance indicators is simple: a count of the number of comments would yield enough data to allow such an arrangement. Real life examples are much more complex than simple “count” on one platform. The actual complex assessment criteria used for this study are discussed and described in detail further in this chapter.

It is important to note that the assessment and topology of organisations can be absolute as well as comparative. For allocation of organisations to one or another section the achieved scores can be viewed as “absolute values” – e.g. organisations scoring less than X-points in one dimension (“comments” in this example) will be considered as “not commenting”, and those scoring more than X-points will be allocated to the “commenting” side. Alternatively, as was the case in this research, the assessment of “performance” can be done comparatively: organisations are ordered according to their scores and “a line is drawn” at the average score. Both methods have

their advantages and disadvantages and, depending on the scale, type of measurement and actual values, the researcher can apply a method suitable for their research.

The qualitative data, as will be demonstrated in the next section, can either be quantified or used by the researcher to adjust the positions. The framework, true to the subjectivist spirit, is intended as a guideline and does not claim universal prediction powers.

#### 4.3.5 Selection of cases

Each firm is now arranged based on their *relative* position to other firms. Along both dimensions (Developer and Customer participation) each company can have a rank assigned (high/low, a linear scale, or any other suitable measure). In our example, Theta Inc would be placed at Developer engagement: high, Customer engagement: high, whereas C-Industries would be placed at Developer engagement: low, Customer engagement: high. These rankings correspond to the coordinates in the Performance Matrix (Figure 29); once the arrangement of firms is completed, the best/worst performers can be visually (and quantitatively) identified. In this example “Theta Inc” and “BB-Soft” display much higher levels of engagement than others; “XetaDev” has actively participating developers, but disengaged customers, whereas “C-Industries” customers are more active than its developers. “Omega Corp” presents another interesting case: because no engagement could be observed, one of the questions to ask is whether there is no engagement or is it an error in observation, are wrong “observables” used, is there another platform where people engage? The selection of “promising” cases is still the task of the researcher, with more confidence and guidance from the assessed performance data.

Notable is the iterative nature of the selection methodology. New cases can be added to the selection matrix at a later stage. As long as the Observables (step 3) remain comparable, a new organisation can be added to the mix at any time, and the assessment and selection steps can be repeated to accommodate new data.

#### 4.4 Applying ALIAS

The ALIAS methodology outlined in the previous section was applied during the case-selection phase in this research. This section focuses on describing in detail how cases for this research were selected using ALIAS method.

Adopting the qualitative approach of comparative case studies (Yin, 2009) and following the comparative method suggested by Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) and formalised by Eisenhardt (1989), the focus is on high and low performers. Since the research focussed on social media use, the “visible participation in the form of content creation and interaction” from organisation and employees formed the dimensions of the assessment matrix (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). The “theoretically interesting cases” are those where (1) participation from organisation and employees is high, (2) employer participation was high, but employees were not engaged, and (3) employees participated, but employers did not (Figure 30).

		<i>Organisation</i>	
		Encourage	Discourage
<i>Praxis</i>	Engaged	<b>Social Organisation</b>	<b>Social Employees</b>
	Disengaged	<b>Un-Social Employees</b>	<b>Un-Social Organisation</b>

1	2
4	3

Figure 30 - ALIAS Case selection based on social media activity

The process started with the identification of actor groups (who are employees and employers), followed by population limitation (which employers were to be considered), the set of variables to gauge “engagement” was then defined, and data for these variables collected. Finally the firms were ranked relative to each other and ten most “promising” firms – those with higher levels of participation from employees, the firm itself, or both – were selected for further study.

#### 4.4.1 Actor identification

Two pilot studies were conducted early in 2013 in large UK organisations. The findings revealed that firms seem to engage with their employees on social media prior to the employment (candidates and applicants), during the employment (employees) and after the employment (alumni). Adopting the terminology used by the informants in the pilot studies, for the selection of cases all employees (former, current and future) are referred to as “employees”. So that the two broad groups of actors identified are Employees (acting as individuals) and Company (acting as an official entity) – in the further context of this chapter “actor” refers to a group of people or individual

undistinguished members of these groups. The term “employer” as substitute for “company” was abandoned, simply to avoid mistakes between the terms “employer” and “employee” when referring to the corresponding groups. The distinction within the “employee” – actor group is, however, essential for identification of observable outcomes. The creation of company pages on SNS, posting of comments and replies on in the name of the company, etc. is, arguably, still done by individual employees. However, these employees are acting distinctly on the behalf and behest of the “Company” and not as individuals.

#### 4.4.2 Limiting the population

Second step involved the definition of the population of firms from which to draw the sample. The population was defined and limited in three steps. Each step addressed one specific issue and helped sharpening the focus of the research.

##### 4.4.2.1 *Step 1 – Only those who do*

The first issue addressed was that of “non-engagement”: if a company and its employees are not seen to engage on social media, is it because they actually do not, or because the researcher is not looking in the right place? How does one observe something which is not there? To address this problem, the initial population of organisations to be reviewed was limited to 408 organisations who participated in the London Organising Committee for Olympic Games (LOCOG) social network during the outplacement of LOCOG employees after the London 2012 Olympics was over. All four hundred organisations did engage on SNS at least once during the London 2012 Olympics. Arguably, if one of these companies was not present on any public SNS, did not link to any SNS from their homepage and careers page, it could be assumed that this organisation has made a conscious decision not to actively engage on public SNS.

##### 4.4.2.2 *Step 2 – Only those who can*

Many of the organisations on the LOCOG network were small and relied on external support to manage their engagement. LOCOG’s network allowed employers to either target individual employees directly, or to set up groups and engage in more general discussions with a broader population of employees. Less than one hundred companies engaged with the employees in this way. Some others used recruitment or recruitment process outsourcing agencies to take on this role. The companies which used third-

party organisations to manage their contacts to candidates were excluded – the research focuses on direct communication between the company and its employees, without the facilitation of third parties. The remaining list contained just over fifty companies most of whom had more than 25,000 employees, although some of the engaged businesses employed as few as 5,000 people.

#### 4.4.2.3 Step 3 – Only those who are accessible

Finally, the list was reduced to thirty-nine UK based companies of which 32 had more than 25,000 employees. It seems an unachievable target to conduct a case study in a company based in Rio de Janeiro or in Moscow – the limitations of time, money and language barriers had to be accepted. In addition, limiting the population to the UK allows to control for environmental factors such as political climate, legislation, workforce education levels, unions etc. For some of the companies no contacts were available so that the final list of assessed organisations included 24 large UK firms.

#### 4.4.3 Identification of Observables

The properties of the Dialogue, Access, Risk/Benefits, and Transparency (DART) framework were used as a guideline for definition of “observables”. The observables for each of the actor-groups differ and not all elements of the DART framework were applicable to each group (Table 11).

#	Actor	Grouping	Criteria
1	COMPANY	Encourage	Homepage LinkedInks to SM
2			allow Comm on Facebook
3			allow Comm on YouTube
4			Facebook exists
5			LinkedIn Exists
6			YouTube Exists
7			Twrt Exist
8			Other exist
9		Participate	do comm on Facebook
10			do comment on YouTube
11			reply on Twitter
12	EMPLOYEE	Engage with firm	Comms on Facebook
13			Comms on YouTube
14			Comms on LinkedIn
15			Comms on Twitter
16			Comms other
17		Engage w/o Firm	LinkedIn engaged
18	LinkedIn non-corporate groups		

Table 11 - Observable Variables on Public Social Media

The pilot studies revealed that HR Employees predominantly used four SNS: LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. Other SNS, notably Google+, Pinterest and Glassdoor, were uncovered during the assessment step, however the activity on those sites was not evaluated in this study. There are several reasons for not including additional platforms in the evaluation process. First, not all employers used all of these platforms so that the comparison would require additional adjustment. Second, the familiarity with Pinterest was limited and it was unclear how engagement on that platform is to be measured. Third, Glassdoor does not allow use of its data for any research without explicit consent. Finally, adding more complexity to the assessment of potential case candidate did not appear justified, as the results of the assessment are intended as a guideline for the researcher for selecting case studies. The selection process does not have the aspiration or the ambition of a fully-fledged comparative study of social media platforms' features and use.

#### *4.4.3.1 Observables for Companies*

*Dialogue* was considered to take place when the company was actively replying to posts or comments on LinkedIn and Facebook, replying or re-tweeting on Twitter, or commenting on YouTube. *Access* was considered to be granted when posting was enabled on Facebook, reviews enabled on Facebook, following was possible on Twitter, comments enabled on YouTube channel and videos, careers and Alumni groups were open on LinkedIn. *Risk/Benefit* value for Companies was assessed as a qualitative variable, guided by *what* the communication was used for (job adverts, brand promotion, marketing etc.) and was recorded in free-text form. *Transparency* of information was considered to be present when posts, tweets and videos carried more than just the corporate message and job-postings and included, for example, generic interview tips, reports about open days etc. In addition, the ease of access across the platforms (i.e. extant cross-links between the company homepage and SNS) contributed to transparency-measure.

#### *4.4.3.2 Observables for Employees, Candidates and Alumni*

*Dialogue* was considered to exist when employees posted updates, videos or comments on any SNS. *Access* was only considered for LinkedIn groups set up by (ex-) employees – based on how open the groups were and if candidates were able to join them. *Risk/Benefit* value was considered higher if the comments were critical, or posed questions, suggesting that the information would benefit the employee (for example

candidates asking recruiters, or an ex-employee critiquing the company). *Transparency* was judged high, when the names or relationship to the company were exposed. In addition, exchanges within employee groups, e.g. candidates / alumni or current employees/alumni were considered to contribute to transparency.

#### 4.4.4 Assessment

The complexity of the actor-group composition and the number of observables posed a challenge. The company actors were assessed in two dimensions: based on their (1) encouragement/discouragement of engagement, and on their (2) active participation/non-participation. The employee actors were assessed in two different dimensions: (1) their engagement/non-engagement with the company actors, and equally (2) engagement/non-engagement within the actor-group. Not only was the amount of information to be collected very high, the data formats were a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The question “can employees post comments on YouTube” is answered with a “yes/no” or 1/0 by just looking at the site, whereas “do videos on YouTube carry an authentic and transparent message?” is difficult to answer even after watching a number of those.

Each of the criteria (eighteen in total) were grouped corresponding to the assessment dimensions: (1) company encourages participation (enabled comments, allows postings), (2) company engages (actively posts, replies), (3) employee engages (posts, replies), (4) employee engages outside company’s SNS (alumni groups, conversations outside firm posts). Each Company-actor could score on 11 criteria and Employee-actor on seven criteria (plus any additional points granted). The scores were recorded in an 18x24 matrix with scores recorded for each criterion for each firm (Table 12).

Organisation														Employee								
Encourage														Participate								
Sector	Company	Links to SM	allow		allow		Youtube			Other		do			Engage with firm			w/o Firm				
			Comm on FB	Comm on Yout	FB exists	LIN Exists	Exists	Twrt Exist	Exist	do comm on fb	comment on yout	reply on twtr	COMP PTS	Comms on FB	Comms on YouT	Comms on LIN	Comms on twtr	Comms other	LIN engaged	LIN grp own	EMP PTS	
1. FIN	UKConsulting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	13	1	1	1	1	1	0	6	
2. FIN	Bank2	0.3	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7.8	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4
3. FMCG	FMCG1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	7	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4
4. RET	Retail1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
5. RET	Retail2	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	8.5	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	4
6. SER	Outsourcing1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	8	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
7. SER	UKOutsourcing	0.3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6.3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
8. TRA	Travel1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	10.5	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	4
9. TRA	Travel2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
9a. RET	Retail3	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
11. COM	Utilities1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5
12. TRA	Services1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	5.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	3
13. FIN	Bank3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	3.5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
14. FIN	Bank4	1	0	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	6.5	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	2
16. FIN	UKBank	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	6	0	0	0.5	0	0	1	2	3.5
17. FIN	Services2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0.5	0	7.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
18. RET	Retail4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	5.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	3
19. COM	Utilities2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.5	0	0	0	7.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	2	1	1	6
20. FMCG	FMCG2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	9	0.5	0	1	0	0	1	1	3.5
21. SER	Outsourcing3	0.5	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	6.5	0	0	1	0	0	0.5	0	1.5
22. TRA	Travel3	1	0	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	8.5	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	1	5
23. COM	Utilities3	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.5	0.5	8.5	1	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	1.5
24. RET	Retail5	0	0	0	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Legend: scores are binary “1”= present, “0”= absent. In some cases, scores were “partial”, e.g. “Links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn” could be score with “0.3” if only one platform was linked. Similarly, if, e.g. comments were allowed on some posts and dis-allowed on others, “Allow comments” was scored as “0.5”.

Table 12 - Social media engagement assessment

Firms then were assigned a *relative* rank based on each criterion, and a combined rank was devised by summing up the ranks for each criterion. In addition to the pre-defined observable performance indicators, reflective and subjective comments were written down next to each set of scores. These were used to support decision making during the selection step.

#### 4.4.5 Selection of cases

Based on the results of the assessment steps, the firms are placed in an assessment matrix, which visually indicated the firms with more active Company-actors, Employee-actors or both. The full matrix contains 24 firms, with only two being placed to the bottom right square 3 – “no engagement” (Figure 31). The firms closest to the corners are more distinctive and, therefore, more “promising”.

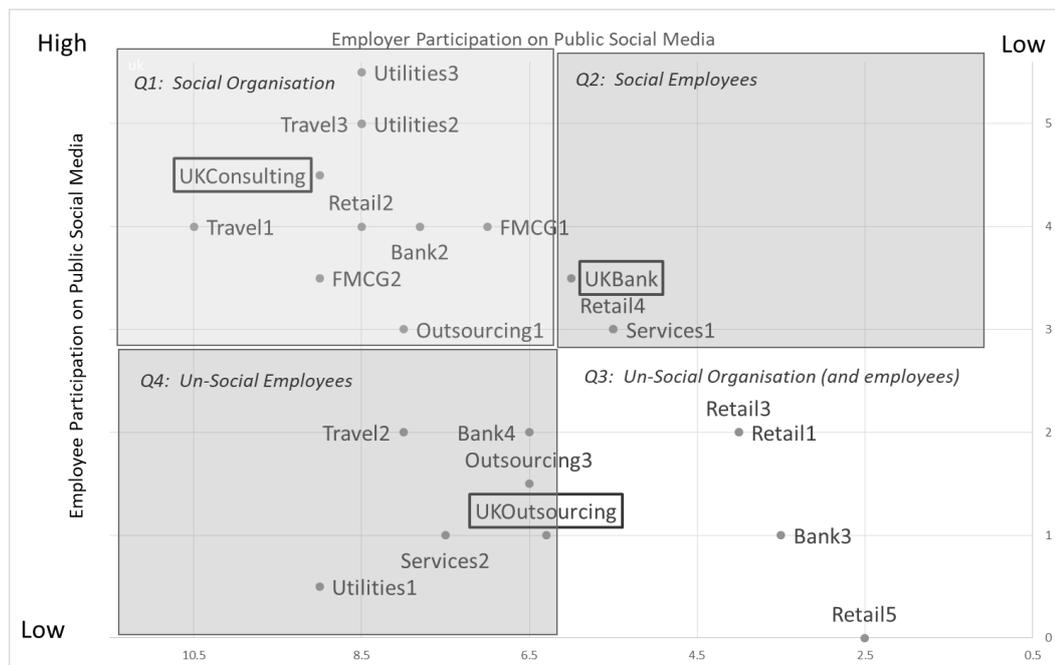


Figure 31 - Social Media Engagement: Selection Matrix

Ten of the “most interesting” firms have been selected. These included five firms from the square 1 (above average firm and employee engagement), three from the square 4 (above average firm, below average employee engagement) and two from the square 2 (below average firm, above average employee engagement). Organisations which do not use social media at all (square 3) have been excluded from the study: the aim is to understand how organisations use social media, and why some firms are successful in building engagement (square 1), whereas others try to build engagement

and are less successful (square 4) or do not try to create engagement when they could (square 2).

All HR Directors, Heads or Recruitment and LinkedIn-group owners were contacted with details of study and permission to conduct a study in their organisation requested. From those organisations which were accessible and “interesting”, ten firms which were either high- or low-performers were contacted by email. Receiving very low response the circle of invitees was widened to include as many organisations as possible. Additional 15 organisations which were not part of the original set of 24 assessed organisations were added to the list. Initially the researcher had access to about 100 organisations who participated in the semi-private network for the London 2012 Games, however some of the organisations proved inaccessible due to the distance (e.g. some Chinese firms), language barriers (e.g. Spanish speaking firms) or time restrictions (e.g. Organising Committee of Russia’s Sochi 2014 Games was simply disbanded in March 2014). Some other organisations were small or medium-size firms (with 200-250 employees) and did not have a formal HR function or formalised engagement processes. The remaining forty firms were contacted with requests for interviews and case studies, after just three of the initial 10 firms replied and only one case study could be completed. From the set of forty organisations, 29 firms did not respond at all; two firms responded negatively with “thank you for your interest, but do not contact us further”; 9 firms responded positively and at least one interview was carried out. Out of these nine firms, one interviewee refused to be recorded; two firms did not reply to follow-ups. One firm (UKSoftware) only allowed 2 interviews then, during a short period, both interviewees left the organisation, third interviewee cancelled and did not reply so that further access proved difficult. This resulted in three completed case studies with five or six interviews in each case, and a partial case study in UKSoftware which was considered in the first round of data analysis and was then discarded in the final round due to lack of data.

#### 4.5 Case Studies

The comparative case study is comprised of three separate case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Two of the case studies were conducted within organisations which belonged to the "London 2012"-pool: the four hundred organisations who participated in the Olympics' outsourcing network. Some interviews were conducted in further five organisations. However, the case studies in those organisations could not be completed

due to lack of participants. The third organisation was added to the pool of potential case-candidates later, when originally planned organisations failed to provide informants or refused to participate in studies. The observables for the UKConsulting were evaluated at a later stage and the organisation was added to the mix of previously assessed organisations landing in square 1 – “Social Organisations”. Its scores were very similar to those of FMCG1/2 and Travel1 – two of those organisations were initially selected for the case studies but failed to provide more than one participant each. However, the late addition of UKConsulting to the mix yet again demonstrates the flexibility of ALIAS as selection methodology and its adaptability to changing real-life situation in ongoing research.

The process of contacting each of the organisations was time consuming and at times frustrating as potential interviewees did not reply to emails or kept changing interview dates to the point where it became apparent that no interview will be given. Each case study included interviews with five to six employees at different levels. Each interview was transcribed and imported into NVivo – a qualitative analysis software which allows coding of the interviews on a computer.

This section provides a short description of the case organisations, and the following section describes the interview, transcription and coding process in detail. The case studies in this and subsequent chapters are listed alphabetically. The real names of the organisations are replaced by their industry.

All three organisations are large corporates trading worldwide. All organisations have headquarters in the UK, employ over 100,000 people, and are comparable in the workforce composition with regards to male/female ratio and education levels.

#### 4.5.1 UKBank

The first completed case study was conducted in a financial services company with headquarters in London which has operations in multiple countries worldwide. Many employees are employed in retail and outside the central office. However, most of the interviews were conducted in and with employees from the head office. The relationships within the company’s headquarters are segmented and team-centric. Even teams sharing the same floor tend not to know the other teams well. The main tools used within the company are Avature (a customer relationship management-like system focused on broadcasting targeted information to large groups of people), and

an internally developed chat client. Avature is used by HR to broadcast information to candidates and alumni without allowing or expecting any feedback. The internal chat client is used for internal communications on department or group level or between individual employees. Externally, LinkedIn is used in a variety of ways by recruiters, employees and alumni for attraction, broadcast and “socialising” (e.g. keeping in touch with former colleagues).

#### 4.5.2 UK Consulting

A technology consulting firm which concentrates on consultancy services in IT technology space and is a part of a US-based group of companies. This case study was the last one to be completed. The case study focused on the UK-based part of the firm which was recently acquired by the mother-company so that all of functions from IT to HR are still present in one London location. The corporate culture and tools are still those of a much smaller UK firm and are not yet adapted to the US-corporate culture. However, the use of (in-house) social media tools and platforms has already been adopted by the employees and is representative of the firm-wide practice. Despite no active enforcement, a plethora of communication tools is available and these tools are being used for sharing information and intra-company communication. The main tools used are LinkedIn and an internal in-house Facebook-like tool “Networking” (the product name has been changed as it is a proprietary UKConsulting tool and would allow identification of the organisation).

#### 4.5.3 UK Outsourcing

The second completed case study was conducted in a Services Company with outsourcing contracts in public and private sectors. The head office functions are distributed across the UK and employees from the South East of England, London and Birmingham were involved in the study. The company is operated as individual companies under a group umbrella with shared central services such as IT, HR, Finance. There is an explicitly stated sense of “comradery” and an actively encouraged atmosphere of “fun at work” even between different companies within the group. An internal communication platform – Yammer has been recently introduced, but is not being used for inter- and intra-team communications to the expected extent. Managers are using Yammer more actively than employees. Externally, it is the company’s policy is to “monitor but not to engage” on Twitter and other social media platforms.

#### 4.5.4 Interviewees

Each case study attempted to engage employees and managers at different levels (Table 13). Each participant was assigned a code at the point of interview, these codes are used in interview transcripts and later in reporting the findings. The number in each participant's ID represents the order in which the interviews were conducted.

#	Case	ID	Level, Job Title, Description
1	1 – UK Bank	UKB1	VP Level, HR Project Manager responsible for selection and implementation of HR Software packages
2	1 – UK Bank	UKB2	Director Level, HR communication's, Project owner for introduction of a new engagement platform
3	1 – UK Bank	UKB3	Associate, HR Admin
4	1 – UK Bank	UKB4	Sen VP Level, Recruitment
5	1 – UK Bank	UKB5	VP Level, Recruitment
6	1 – UK Bank	UKB6	Director, Head of Project Management HR in Head Office
7	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO1	Board Level, Director of Employee Engagement
8	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO2	Director Level, Head or Resourcing
9	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO3	Sen VP Level, Head of Recruitment, Running LinkedIn and Twitter for the firm
10	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO4	VP Level, Community Manager, Responsible for "Employee engagement"
11	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO5	Associate, Recruiter
12	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO6	Associate, Recruiter
13	3 – UK Consulting	UKC1	VP Level, HR Project Manager
14	3 – UK Consulting	UKC2	VP Level, Customer Engagement / Project Manager
15	3 – UK Consulting	UKC3	Associate Level, Project Manager, working remotely and heavily relying on technology to stay in touch
16	3 – UK Consulting	UKC4	VP Level, Customer Success / Account Manager
17	3 – UK Consulting	UKC5	Associate Level, HR Operations
18	4 – UK Software	UKS2	Director Level, Head of Employee Training
19	4 – UK Software	UKS4	VP Level, IT Employee, active on internal social media
20	4 – UK Software	UKS3 (cancelled)	Associate Level, HR Executive
21	4 – UK Software	UKS1 (cancelled)	Board Level, HR Director
22	4 – UK Software	UKS5 (cancelled)	Associate/VP Employee

Table 13 - Study Participants

Levels are following the "grades" within UKBank. The first completed study was in the Bank, and all job titles of the participants included the corresponding level. The

naming convention from UKBank was adopted to make the levels comparable across the board. There is no preference for one or another grading of managerial levels, the decision was purely a practical one. The important distinction is the clear attribution of “Associates” and “Vice Presidents” to “non-managers” and “Directors” and “Board-members” to “managers”, with “Senior VPs” representing the “middle management” layer between the strategic management level and the employees (Boje, 1995; Robey, Boudreau, & Rose, 2000). The levels used are:

- Associate: Professional Employee without personnel or budget responsibility;
- Vice President (VP): some personnel or budget responsibility (e.g. Project Manager, Project Team Leader);
- Senior VP: Team Manager/Team Leader at a mid-management level. Primarily responsible for day-to-day management of the team;
- Director: higher managerial position, responsible for strategic and operational management of a team or a department;
- Board Level: Strategic Leaders, so-called “C-Level” executives such as the CEO, CFO, CIO etc. Directly responsible for setting out the overall strategy and accountable to the firm owners.

#### 4.6 Interview process

All interviews followed an open-ended structured approach (Turner III, 2010). There questions asked in each interview were the same (the interview questions are provided in Appendix). However, based on the answers additional questions going deeper into detail of one or another area were asked so that the emergent picture of the organisation's approach to social media use was described from different perspectives. The initial set of questions has been validated and adjusted after the first pilot studies and then remained unchanged throughout the main study to allow comparison (Turner III, 2010).

##### 4.6.1 Ethical considerations

This study employs primary data collected in series of interviews. The data collection, storage, and processing required ethical considerations to be made, ethical practices and processes to be put in place. For example, interviewees were criticising their employers, managers and colleagues, or reporting breaches of policy by themselves or other employees. Making these behaviours public could lead to punitive actions from

the employer, possibly resulting in job losses. The protection of participants – their identity, their positions and places of work, was taken very seriously.

The identified ethical concerns and steps to mitigate those were shared with the Department's Ethics Officer and discussed with both supervisors prior to the data collection process. The research has undergone the mandatory ethical review.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how their data would be processed, stored and published. The interviewee pack (Appendix B) consisted of an information sheet with details of the study, data processing procedures and right to withdraw, and a consent form. Whenever interviews were conducted face-to-face, the participants were asked to physically sign a consent form stating their right to decline to answer any question, to withdraw from the interview at any stage or to request their data to be removed from the findings at a later stage (if possible). In case of phone interviews, the consent and information form were emailed to the participants before the interview and the right to withdraw read out. The signed consent sheets would allow a link between the participants' signature and their responses in transcribed documents if the electronic copies and the physical forms were found together and the forms could be linked to case organisations. This is an unlikely scenario, and the researcher was accepting the risk while still taking precautions to keep the consent forms safe and not to share them.

The interview recordings were stored encrypted and password protected on two local devices. The file names of the interview records only contain company codes, participant number and the date (e.g. UKB1-20150101). The participant's details (names, positions, names of colleagues) have been removed during the transcription process so that these are not present in any of the analysed data.

#### 4.6.2 Interview execution and transcripts

Interviews were held based on interviewee's preference in person or over the phone. Explicit permission to record interviews was sought. For each recording, two separate recorders were used – as a backup option in case one fails, and as an additional source, in case one recording's sound quality is insufficient. Having two recordings proved extremely valuable during the transcription process, as one of the recordings usually did not pick up the same noise (and voice!) as the other. Availability of an additional

recording allowed validations of any places where participant's answers were acoustically unclear.

The transcription of the interviews for each case study began as soon as three interviews per case were conducted. Therefore, there was a time gap between conducting and transcribing the interviews. Subsequent interviews were transcribed as soon after the interview as practical, usually within a week.

After transcribing the interviews for the pilot studies, it became clear that the researcher's typist skills are far from satisfactory. It took about seven minutes to transcribe one minute of voice. A conscious decision was made to utilise a voice typing software to aid with further transcriptions. Four of the interviews were transcribed using "Dragon NaturallySpeaking" voice recognition software. The software allows to dictate into a PC microphone and transcribes speech into a text processing software such as Microsoft Word.

After four interviews were transcribed using dictation software, the quality and speed of transcripts were reviewed. It was decided to invest time into learning to touch type (a skill still not mastered fully) and transcribe the interviews by hand. Consideration was given to have the interviews transcribed by a third party. However this idea was given up for several reasons. First, ethical concerns had to be evaluated and eliminated: could an anonymous third party be trusted with confidentiality of the interviewees who mentioned their roles, names and organisations when, for example, reporting breaches of IT policies. There would be a need to ensure proper data handling and to gain consent from the interviewees to have the data transcribed by a third party. Second, there was a desire to remain "close to the data", even if it meant that it was necessary to listen to the same chunk of an interview-recording over and over again to get it transcribed and sometimes to "decipher" places where background noise made the replies hard to understand. Despite or maybe because the interviews were played back time and time again by the end of the transcription process the contents were known by the researcher almost by heart. The average speed of 4 minutes for a minute of interview has been achieved, which does not match the speed of voice typing, but is much faster than the initial 7:1 ratio with the added benefit of intimacy between the researcher and the data.

Transcribed interviews were loaded into NVivo – a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software and analysed on the PC within the tool. Qualitative Data Analysis in itself is not theory building (Glaser, 2002). However, the software proved useful in maintaining and visualising codes, themes and concepts. Chapter 5 provides more in-depth detail on the actual data analysis process.

#### 4.7 Summary

This chapter describes theoretical case selection as an approach to select subjects for qualitative comparative case studies. Following a discussion about what “theoretically relevant” looks like, the chapter describes ALIAS – a methodology to create a taxonomy of organisations based on their engagement on public social media platforms. The chapter describes how ALIAS has been used in case selection process for this study – an iterative process which required some flexibility on decision making to deal with the fact that a “great case candidate” might not be accessible for a study and alternative cases must be sought. Each of the selected case organisations is then described in more detail. The case descriptions also include the list and overview of individual study participants. The ethical considerations and the interview process – the techniques for conducting, recording and transcribing the interviews (including anecdotal reflections on the importance of touch-typing for mastering a PhD) are presented as a final section of this chapter.

## 5 Findings

This chapter focuses on the record, report and description of the data and the initial findings (Figure 32). The description of the data and findings build the basis for the Analysis and Discussion.

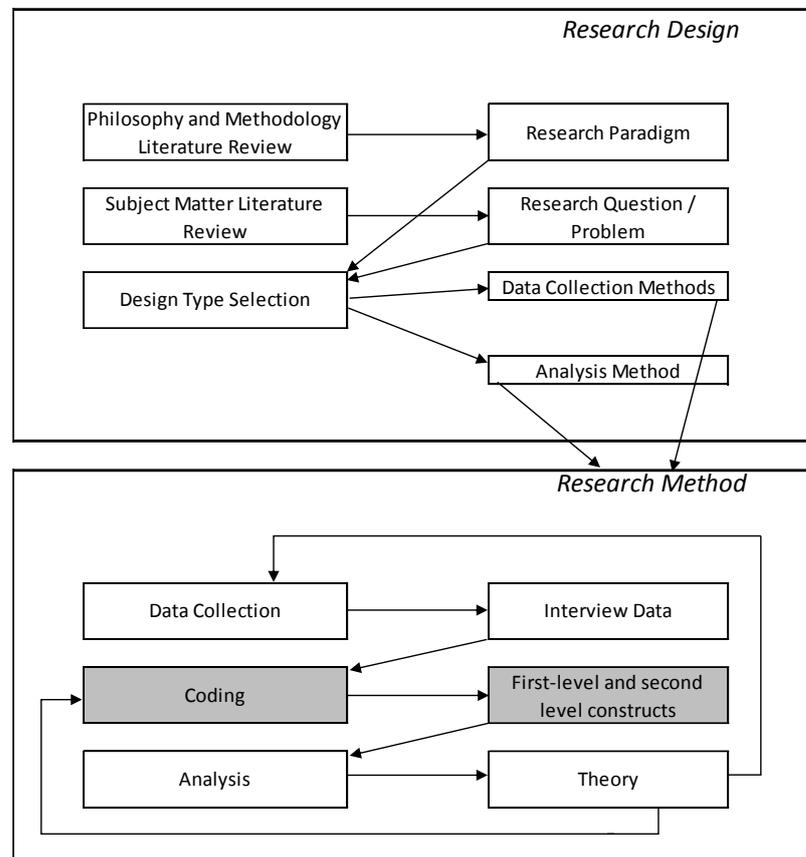


Figure 32 - Findings Chapter relative to overall Research Design

The chapter presents descriptive findings from each case and compares those before conclusions can be drawn in the subsequent chapters. The findings in this chapter build up from qualitative data analysis provided in the appendix.

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter stands on two feet: first, the theoretical foundations discussed in previous chapters: (1) the setting and research gap identified in the Literature Review chapter as “the role of social media in Human Resource Management”, and (2) Qualitative Case Study approach as methodological basis for the research as described in the Methodology chapter. The second footing is the data grounding through (1) careful case selection and data collection method as discussed in the previous Chapter, and (2) the actual empirical data collected from the field. The findings from each case

study are linked to the codes, themes and concepts from qualitative data analysis (Table 14)

Concept	Theme	Questions covered
Evolving social media use	Using social media in Organisations - Practices	What is happening
	Continuous Changing	How the process/practice change
Controlling social media use	Enabling Interpersonal Access	How practices are sustained
	Preventing Use	How practices are sustained
Motivating social media use	Realising value for Organisations	How practices are sustained
	Top-Down Managing of social media use	What practices are enforced Who uses social media
Using social media	Personal Motivations	How practices are sustained
	Emergent Using by employees	What practices emerge Who uses social media

*Table 14 - Concepts and Themes from Interview Data*

The findings presented in this chapter were developed through an iterative analysis process including a comparison of constructs across cases (Appendix C). The initial coding – labelling of statements, started at the word level, then moved on to sentence level and, finally, the constructs were compared and validated across documents (interview transcripts) and cases (Charmaz, 2006). The coding and discovery of second-order constructs were guided by the principles of Grounded Theory using inductive analytic processes to summarise the accounts given by the participants (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). When developing the second-order constructs (Themes), particular attention was paid to define those constructs independent of time, place and people (Glaser, 2002) and to focus on a theoretical level abstracted from the actual practical actors (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008).

The themes and concepts are used to describe

- What social media use practices are observed in each case
- What changes the employees/management interaction patterns are observed and reported
- Who are the active participants in maintenance and shaping of these communication practices and patterns
- How the participants are motivated and
- How these practices are sustained.

Each observation is reported and analysed within the DART-framework: e.g. does a given interaction contribute to Dialogue. Does this policy improve Access? Once the

effects on Dialogue, Access, Risk/Benefits balance, and Transparency in each case are described, the values from the DART-framework are placed within the framework of a strong communication system. E.g. does more “Dialogue” mean more Consistency? Does Access contribute to Consensus? Thus, linking the *Themes* to *Value Creation*.

## 5.2 Case-by-case Findings

The themes in each case have different magnitudes and directions. In this section, the communication systems within each case and the participating parties are described, the themes are placed within these communication systems as a framework. The themes are then linked to DART properties. This section aims to provide a comprehensive report of findings in each case study. The quotes are coded as UK<sub>xy</sub>, where x is the indicator of the case study (B = Bank, C = consulting, O = outsourcing), and y is the Informant’s ordinal number. The quotes in this section are mostly verbatim, with some “filler” words such as “like, you know” etc. omitted for brevity and readability. The author’s comments are provided in square brackets. The informants’ natural speech has been edited to increase legibility, e.g. sentences containing “bad grammar” for example “if you could search site hmm will actually help” will be reported as “if you could search the site – that would actually help”.

### 5.2.1 Case 1 – UKBank

In UKBank the levels of consistency, distinctiveness and consensus were not uniform. Specifically, there is a disjointed approach to social media use by the organisation itself and by the employees (who should use what social media what for). This section discusses DART/Theme relationships in UKBank (Table 16).

The participants in the study represented a diverse range of hierarchical levels within the organisation (Table 15).

#	Case	ID	Level, Job Title, Description
1	1 – UK Bank	UKB1	VP Level, HR Project Manager responsible for selection and implementation of HR Software packages
2	1 – UK Bank	UKB2	Director Level, HR communication's, Project owner for introduction of a new engagement platform
3	1 – UK Bank	UKB3	Associate, HR Admin
4	1 – UK Bank	UKB4	Sen VP Level, Recruitment
5	1 – UK Bank	UKB5	VP Level, Recruitment
6	1 – UK Bank	UKB6	Director, Head of Project Management HR in Head Office

*Table 15 - UKBank study participants*

The quotes are coded in the order in which the interviews were conducted, independent of the actual position in the organisation.

#### 5.2.1.1 What

The practices associated with social media use within UKBank vary between the “sanctioned” and “actual” practices. The sanctioned practices, those which people report as “we should” are encouraged and supported by the management. For example, UKB3’s job was “making sure that recruiters who have [LinkedIn] licenses ... use these to ... full level of functionality”, which included using LinkedIn’s in-mail functionality to send potential candidates job descriptions. The actual practices are different from those sanctioned practices, often contradict those, and occasionally are in direct violation of rules and policies. For example, UKB4 reports that he is using LinkedIn, WhatsApp and emails to contact potential candidates despite (1) physical limitations: “on the Blackberry we ... do not have WhatsApp” and (2) access limitations “[LinkedIn access from the intranet] is blocked, but I don’t know why”.

UKB	Theme	Observations / Data	Dialogue	Access	Risk/Benefits	Transparency
What	Using Social Media by Organisations (Practices )	chat system for communications; email broadcasts; employee surveys off-line; LinkedIn job postings; candidate portal "Avature"	Broadcast only	limited for employees (only recruiters for broadcast and search)	(percieved) control over information flow	limited transparency, segregated systems
	Managing Social Media (Top-down approach )	control social media use; limit access and ability to create content; social media platforms are for broadcast	Two way communication is not desired	limited and segmeted by employee (by team)/ alumni/ candidate	limits on use, ambuguity on permissions	open sharing is discouraged
	Emergent Using by Employees (Bottom-up approach)	use own devices to access social media; create groups on LinkedIn; use LinkedIn to post jobs privately	employee-employer communication is not happening	private devices to access unsanctioned social media	employee-to-employee comms happen outside org. control	transparent for employees/alumni/candidates, not organisation
How	Continuous Changing, Enabling Personal Access (Top-down initiatives / policies / programmes)	marketing to engage on Twitter; candidate platform "Avature" to gather information about candidates; use LinkedIn for recruiters to broadcast jobs	little deviation from comms practice. Avature to collect "data", not feedback	no direct access paths for employees/ managers/ candidates/ etc	compliance with regulations, now new developments	benefits seen as "broadcast", access/comms changes are not aspired
	Realising Social Media Value (Organisational Benefits )	accessing direct candidates; collecting information about potential candidates; improve targeted broadcasts	one way "relevant" and "targeted" information	"read-only"-access for employees/candidates to receive communications	providing more "engaging" information to candidates	controlled flow of information to defined audiences
	Personal Motivations (Personal Benefits)	receive relevant information; keeping in touch with (ex-)colleagues; better personal performance as recruiter	direct communications with peers	availability of social media on alternative devices (e.g. mobile)	maintaining relationships; finding candidates (recruiters)	improve performace by direct hires; find jobs; maintain relationship
	Preventing Use (Inhibitors)	social media platforms are not integrated; legislation/regulation; "fear of wrong thing said"; organisational culture	organisation not seeking dialogue	prohibited access from work computers; not integrated platforms	"saying the wrong thing"; too much information	transparency dicouraged; unclear what sharing/content is permitted
Who, When, Where	Participants / Platforms	employees on LinkedIn and Bank-Talk, candidates on LinkedIn and Avature, alumni on LinkedIn, recruiters as "organisationally sanctioned" on LinkedIn and Avature				

Table 16 - UKBank Findings Summary

#### 5.2.1.1.1 Practices

Internal communication, as well as sanctioned communication flows outside the organisation, are utilising (1) an in-house chat system, (2) LinkedIn for broadcasting pre-defined messages, (3) broadcast news in the form of an HR newsletter, and (4) annual employee surveys where employees' opinions are collected in the form of a questionnaire. None of the platforms encourages or supports open bi-directional communication between employees, managers and former or potential employees.

The organisation is introducing a candidate portal where potential candidates will be able to access and share information. The primary purpose of the portal is to collect speculative candidate's data, but not to engage in dialogue with them. The ability to collect data is also seen as one of the advantages of public social networks, as UKB4 put it "Ability of social media is greater in this respect you can ask them [candidates] quick question makes life a lot easier".

Public social networks are used for broadcasting information about the firm. UKB3 notes that using LinkedIn "will increase their [the job's] publicity". UKB4's is encouraged to use LinkedIn to "advertise roles on there" and create "awareness". UKB1 sees social media used "to attract someone by utilising marketing techniques".

#### 5.2.1.1.2 Top-down approach

The overall impression of the policy and strategy interpretation by the informants is one of a "controlled broadcast". Internal communications, external communications with candidates, and external communications with ex-employees do not allow two-way communication. The general understanding of social media is one of a "broadcast tool". On the practical, individual level these practices unravel, and different forms of social media use emerge.

Internally, communications via traditional email-newsletters and intranet posts are used to inform employees (UKB1, UKB2). UKB1 describes it as "if you're asking whether there is a mechanism whereby something is communicated and you expect any feedback immediately? May happen, but I don't think that's the intention because these comms by their nature are to inform people". The future of management-employee communication is, in the view of UKB1, to "find more about your audience and bring it to them". When talking about communications with alumni, UKB2's assumption too is that the communications are one-way broadcasts: "It has to be

targeted, relevant and timely” and one needs to be “careful not to swamp people with information... because that has a negative impact”. Similarly, UKB3 views LinkedIn as a tool to “reach a wider demographic ... of candidates”. This is confirmed by both UKB4 and UKB5, who have “some roles advertised on LinkedIn” and see posting roles to LinkedIn as the “key” feature of LinkedIn.

Actual dialogic real-time or near real-time conversations are not sought. UKB1 describes the feedback process to policy changes as “unless it’s a something you need immediately to address, we have employee opinion surveys that ask questions and whatnot. They do happen once a year”. A similar expectation is prevalent when addressing “candidate engagement”: the data from the new “social media portal” is to be used “to send targeted communication” according to UKB2. There is no option for the candidates to come back, ask questions or post anything. However, even though it is “not going right now”, the provision of these feedback functionality should be “starting in the near future”. Some of that inability to collect feedback is justified by the fact that there are not enough resources. UKB5 explains that “we don’t have that much capacity to do much other than that [posting jobs on LinkedIn], we would want to do more in the future, right now lot of it is just posting roles and getting as many people out there to see what we have open”. A similar picture presents itself when talking about alumni engagement. UKB6 explains that the aim of an alumni community on LinkedIn is to “make sure they are still engaged in the Bank’s proposition”. Informants in UKBank can imagine sharing information about jobs, new offices etc. to the alumni, but when asked “what would you expect employees or ex-employees to contribute to this community” they do not have an answer.

Overarching the processes, practices and plans is the omnipresent idea of the need to control social media communications. Some of that is explained by the regulatory and legislative needs. UKB6 mentions the “department for ‘information risk management’” who are forming and providing internal policy which is influenced by a number of external and internal forces. UKB5: “Part of it is definitely from external forces, whether it’s UK TRA, whether it is US laws, there are different pieces, especially affecting UKBank is OFCCP which means we are a federal contractor, and as federal contractor there are all sorts of different things that you have to track and report on... And then other pieces are internal “governance” it’s a compliance...” UKB4 describes that the “social media use is heavily monitored” to protect the

UKBank's reputation. There is a need to "have a way [to control] of what people have as part of their [LinkedIn] profiles", and there is a need to "have a decent administrative function there to control it and to feed through it". There are internal roles, such as the former role on UKB3 to ensure compliance with social media use policy, and there is an implicit understanding that social media needs to be managed.

#### 5.2.1.1.3 Bottom-up reality

Actual practices, however, deviate from the sanctioned and intended use. Employees are joining many of the "tens and tens of different [LinkedIn] groups that have been created by other alumni or different people but not really managed by our business successfully" (UKB1). Employees do create and maintain their LinkedIn profiles – UKB4 complains about having access to LinkedIn (apart from licensed Recruiter Access) blocked: "99.9% [of employees] have a LinkedIn profile so that the argument that you would only have [one] to look for jobs [is] not really a relevant argument, as you can have it anyway". UKB2 is also using LinkedIn "...not necessarily for jobs, just to know how things are going in each other's careers, but also using it later on in life. You never know when we may need each other; It is a good way". In another instance, despite the active discouragement, employees are using personal profiles for talking about the firm. When asked, if there was any encouragement for the employees to promote vacancies on LinkedIn, UKB4 reported that "That's not encouraged at all, that's for sure; I mean it is discouraged massively". None the less, UKB5 would "... use personal LinkedIn account to post a link to our roles so that my contacts know about it" to "get more people [to apply]". Similarly, UKB6 was posting jobs on their personal LinkedIn-profile to make ex-colleagues aware because "...we might require their services as external consultants, or some sort of event facilitator might be useful for the company. Depending on what their skill set is, there is always a need for keeping in touch with people". And they were prepared to "sacrifice their own connections for the benefit of the company". Despite physical barriers, UKB6 would "... go [to LinkedIn Groups] on my own personal mobile" to engage in information exchange with former colleagues.

#### 5.2.1.2 How

Several initiatives are taking place at the organisation. Even though the reported expected outcome for each of these initiatives is an enhanced ability to broadcast a

more targeted message to wider audiences, there is a general appreciation of social media's existence and their potential use HRM communications space.

Most interviewees stated that UKBank is “quite behind the curve”, “in our infancy” (UKB4, UKB1) concerning social media use. They would be doing “not as much as we like to” (UKB2) and “would like to do more in the future” (UKB5). UKB6 mentions that the organisation is “reviewing our options in that space from the HR operations perspective”.

#### 5.2.1.2.1 Organisation-driven changes

The first initiative mentioned is the utilisation of LinkedIn for direct sourcing. UKB1 also mentions the “plans to have something on Twitter or maybe other channels, but that's really in its infancy”. Specifically, Twitter is, according to UKB4, used “within the marketing function and I guess within the communication department. This is still an area which is heavily guarded we would not use this within resourcing”.

The second initiative is the Alumni engagement platform in combination with LinkedIn. Mentioned by UKB1 as an initiative to engage with employees and alumni: “for example talking about LinkedIn is only recently that we have created our own page”. UKB6 elaborates on the Alumni Portal initiative and explains that the “New development is the fact that you are leaving a legacy with that person, so they are not leaving with bad feeling in the stomach about the company and they know that the door is open to them if they wanted to come back to the firm”.

Lastly, the organisation has just introduced a social media platform “Avature” to be used for direct sourcing and candidate engagement. UKB2 describes it as a supporting platform for “proactive sourcing. What that means: we have a job, we already got a pool of people ready to hire rather than going to market straightaway”. The platform is due to be open to all external candidates, including leavers. It has not yet been introduced widely with UKB5 reporting that its introduction worldwide is a “long way off”, and UKB6 only having a “helicopter view” of the project.

These initiatives in combination with personal practices resulted in a number of changes to interaction paths and patterns. New interactions emerge through the

- Use of internal chat tool
- Sanctioned and unsanctioned use of LinkedIn

- Introduction of new semi-private social media platforms such as Avature.

Using the internal chat-tool, which also allows creation and participation in group-conversations, is reported as beneficial and “much more informal” and “a lot easier than email traffic” (UKB5, UKB6). Sometimes, email chains are replaced by instant communications. On the other hand, internal newsletters, emails, postings on the intranet and employee surveys are still the dominant ways of communication.

Using LinkedIn for job postings and direct targeting of candidates has primarily not influenced any of the old processes. LinkedIn is being used as another Job-Board – a medium for advertising vacancies. However, new patterns of interactions emerge: UKB3 explains, that recruiters can use direct LinkedIn communication (bypassing the official email channel and the Applicant Tracking System) to collect CVs: “[a recruiter] could say ‘this is the job spec. Would you be interested? Please reply to me with your CV’”; and also to progress applications: “if you have a role on LinkedIn candidates can apply directly with LinkedIn. You can also manage it from LinkedIn ... just as well as you can manage it from internal system”. UKB5 uses LinkedIn to start conversations with candidates: “reach out to all of the people on LinkedIn, saying ‘we have got a role, I am interested in speaking with you’. We are doing that“. UKB4 expands on plans “to have a hiring manager advertising himself” and so to opening a direct communication channel between the candidate and their potential manager.

Access to former colleagues too changes on different levels – on the one hand the organisation is now setting up “official” alumni groups, and is introducing a new social media platform to encourage the employees “to keep in touch with colleagues who left the business and ... that is linked closely with work on Avature” (UKB6). On the other hand, the employees already do have profiles on social media and are using these channels to keep in touch with each other. Everyone is using LinkedIn, Facebook and “conventional” communication channels such as phones to maintain relationships with friends and former colleagues despite the organisation’s attempts to physically block access to LinkedIn and other social media platforms.

#### 5.2.1.2.2 Motivations and assumed benefits

There is a variety of reasons provided by the interviewees for bringing these initiatives forward and for personally participating in organisation-sponsored projects as well as

for personal social media use. Organisationally, there is value attached to social media use, as well as doubts about the usefulness of social media.

One of the quantifiable expected positive outcomes is mentioned by UKB6 in relation to direct money savings on recruitment agency fees: “if you are keeping close to ex-employees, you do not necessarily have to go through an agency to actually spend an agency fee in recruiting that person”. Indeed, the value of direct hires – through referrals, attraction of passive candidates through maintenance of talent pools, direct personal contacts and “boomerang”-hires (employees who left and then come back) has been highlighted in all other interviews within UKBank.

The organisation’s hiring model of getting candidates described by UKB4 as occasionally “direct through hiring manager’s knowing people in the market” already supports referrals. According to UKB6 “having internal referrals does make our life better, easier”.

UKB2 also mentions cost reduction as justification for talent pooling: “we already got a pool of people ready to hire rather than going to market straightaway. Having a proactive pool means we can reduce our hiring costs because we don’t have to go to agencies, and also our hiring times because you don’t have to spend weeks trying to find people”, this idea is echoed by UKB6 in relation to boomerang hires.

UKB4 refers to the value of social media in enabling internal mobility. They suggest that allowing employees to maintain up-to-date professional profiles on LinkedIn, and allowing the recruiters to search for employees with matching profiles for internal jobs would increase internal promotions: “if you knew [that] every single person in the organisation had a profile then you could [...] search [these profiles] which would actually help with internal hires”.

At the same time, there are organisational doubts about the extent to which social media can be utilised. The doubts are in the areas of recruitment, specifically for higher positions, and in the value of communications over social media.

UKB1 claims that hiring “high-end” people requires a different, very personal and targeted approach, which cannot be supported by social media: “[hiring anyone for] the investment banking side: the money-making side, will be pretty much very difficult to find anyone on social media”. UKB3 continues that LinkedIn is only suitable for

specific job types: “some jobs are lower-level ones, a lot more of this type people are looking for those jobs are on LinkedIn”. UKB4 doubts the quality of candidates for higher level jobs as well as the quality of search mechanisms. They give an example of a simple “word match”: jobs being matched to candidates based on the words in their profile taken out of context: “you are attracting the 75% people, not the best [...] so when I get my emails there ... there is a job for quant developer... match me on my profiles because I have got "quant" and "developer". So, from that point of view, I would not use LinkedIn because it is generally so irrelevant”.

#### 5.2.1.2.3 Personal benefits and motivations

The continuous social media use, the participation of employees in accessing, sharing and creating the content is necessary for any form of engagement to take place. Several motivating (or de-motivating) factors which were named.

Personalised and “targeted” *content* was mentioned as a motivating factor. UKB1 states “it has to appeal to the individual” and “the key will be ... getting personalised content”. UKB2, when talking about motivating candidates to engage states “it has to be targeted..., relevant..., and also timely comms”. Finding general work-related (not organisation related) information is an additional driver for using social media. UKB6 notes that their contributions to Project Management forums advance their professional development. Thus, access to “relevant” information motivates them as much as UKB2 who is “... part of some HR transformation groups [and is interested in] what they’re doing, what the new thinking [is]”.

Maintaining *relationships* is another driving factor for continuous social media use. It’s not always the professional motivation, as UKB2 puts it: “...there are still things one is to keep in touch and not necessarily for jobs. Just to know how things are going in each other’s careers”. UKB3 put’s the motivation down to their attitude: “people I work with now they left I will keep in contact. But that’s because the way I am, not because it is necessarily encouraged”. UKB4, UKB5 and UKB6 likewise use personal devices and personal profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook &Co to “keep in touch”. The connections on LinkedIn are described as a way of “keeping in touch” (UKB2), “helpful” (UKB5), “easy to use” (UKB4), even “personal” (UKB6). These connections exist and are maintained independently of the organisation’s initiatives.

The general *ease-of-use*, both in terms of usability and ability to achieve the aims quickly, is another factor mentioned in the interviews. When asked, whether the ease of use drove social media use, UKB4 unequivocally replied: “Yes, 100%”. UKB5 predominantly use emails for internal communications because “email is the easiest form of communication”. Which also explained their unwillingness to use the organisation’s intranet: “I can go onto the intranet every day, read all sorts of stories and find out what is happening, but it takes an extra step for me to go to the intranet”.

Doing a better job, fulfilling their *obligations as employees* was also a motivating factor for social media use. For example, UKB5 was trying to get more referrals to apply because it meant better candidates for the organisation. UKB6’s “biggest drive for keeping in touch” with ex-colleagues or ex-stakeholders is to access their skills and “to use them as consultants in the future” for the organisation. Simultaneously, UKB1 described recruiter’s “sole task is to source people externally from external sources. LinkedIn obviously being the most prominent one”. People in UKB3’s position then ensure the appropriate use of LinkedIn.

At the same time, social media are not seen as the best way of communicating. UKB5 says then when they communicate with colleagues it is “to get something done. And I think the most effective way to do that is either email or phone”. UKB4 prefers to “directly go and have a meeting with relevant people”, as does UKB3 who also notes that “people email a lot here. People also come to your desk a lot”.

#### 5.2.1.2.4 Inhibitors

Every interviewee provided a set of reasons why they would not use social media. There appears to be a variety of tools used by different departments and people for different purposes. The organisation is facing and imposing legislative, policy and physical barriers around social media use. There is a reported lack of experience of social media use and uncertainty about what, how much and with whom can be shared.

*Disjoined tools*: UKB1 points out, that “the way the social media is used in one part of the organisation is totally different to how it is used in different parts”. This statement is repeated by UKB5 almost verbatim: “what my experience at UKBank is, you might speak to a different recruiter and a different recruiter in a different area, even in the same team might feel a bit different”. UKB6 describes that even internal systems are different based on the part of the organisation where they have been used:

“things like that “chat” platform being used by a chunk of a population and then there is another chunk of the population who use the “talk”-tool. So, you have to have a few colleagues on one and a few on the other”.

UKB4 justifies this inconsistency by pointing to the size and diversity of the organisation: “I think smaller organisation is probably able to utilise social media more effectively than the big one. I think that when you get bigger- you have got more diversity... I think you have to recognise it is not going to be one size fit all... Different parts of the organisations have different requirements. While it might work in 60, 70 or 80% of the bank, it is not going to work in the other 20”.

*Legislative and physical barriers:* UKB4 struggles with the fact that “[access to LinkedIn] is blocked” for employees other than recruiters. UKB6 admits that access to (new) social media tools is difficult, as “we are a bit hampered by technology and security because we are quite tight. I think we can access LinkedIn, but some of the browsers that we use [do not support it]”. Many of these limitations are driven by external forces such as US legislation or UK regulation authorities (UKB4).

*Cultural and Educational barriers:* UKB1 brings it straight to the point: “Traditionally we have not really been good at engaging people through social media”. The access or not-access to social media and other communication tools, the strategy behind it, does not appear to be understood by the employees. UKB4 states “I think also everybody should have LinkedIn profile and have access to. I do not understand the point of not having access to it”. And further, when asked why the access is blocked they reply: “I really don’t know why”. UKB3, when questioned about available communication tools, replied: “I’m sure they exist, I’ve never explored because I never had a reason to, but I’m sure they exist”. Similarly, UKB6 who promoted the idea of alumni engagement was not able “to answer the question in that space” about what ‘engagement’ with alumni actually looks like. From the staffing point of view, there are, according to UKB5, not enough capacity to do more than posting jobs and, therefore, no dialogue is taking place on social media.

*Uncertainty:* Given the restrictions and the lack of clear policy, there is reluctance on the side of employees to engage fully. UKB5 says: “when I use social media in my personal life, you want to share pictures and experiences with people, and it’s something I don’t really feel like I will ever want to share with internal people”. This

is underlined by UKB4's "fear of wrong thing said or wrong thing being put out there" and UKB6's call to "tread quite carefully when you are in the public domain". Not just the content, but also the amount of information shared is being questioned. UKB1 finds "there is too much unsolicited content" on LinkedIn. UKB2 cautions to "be careful not to swamp people with information, overloading them with information because that has a negative impact".

#### 5.2.1.3 Who / Where / When

While the interviewees were representatives of current workforce only, several distinctive social media user-groups has been mentioned in the interviews, each utilising a different set of (social) media communication platforms and channels. In UKBank's case the employees, acting as individuals (e.g. connecting with (ex-) colleagues, sharing jobs with their contacts, maintaining their LinkedIn profiles) were different from Recruiters, whose job it was to actively search candidates on LinkedIn and post jobs. The groups from "outside the organisations" are (1) ex-employees, who organise themselves in alumni groups on LinkedIn, maintain connections to employees and act as candidates, as well as (2) candidates. The latter group is twofold – on the one hand, there are the passive candidate's, whose attention to job openings needs to be drawn by the recruiters, on the other hand, there are speculative and active candidates, who are expected to "engage" with the organisation via LinkedIn groups and the Avature platform. Notable is the fact that employees used whatever channels are available – including private mobile phones, to overcome any physical obstacles to accessing social media platforms.

### 5.2.2 Case 2 – UKConsulting

UKConsulting is an IT consultancy organisation operating worldwide. There is a variety of internal and external social media used by the management and employees. The utilisation does not (always) happen consistently or transparently. However, social media tools are being used at different levels and for a variety of purposes. This section discusses DART/Theme relationships in UK Consulting (Table 18).

The participants in UKConsulting (Table 17), unfortunately, did not represent the higher (directorship) level of the organisation. They included only professionals and middle managers.

#	Case	ID	Level, Job Title, Description
1	3 – UK Consulting	UKC1	VP Level, HR Project Manager
2	3 – UK Consulting	UKC2	VP Level, Customer Engagement / Project Manager
3	3 – UK Consulting	UKC3	Associate Level, Project Manager, working remotely and heavily relying on technology to stay in touch
4	3 – UK Consulting	UKC4	VP Level, Customer Success / Account Manager
5	3 – UK Consulting	UKC5	Associate Level, HR Operations

*Table 17 - UKConsulting study participants*

The codes (UKC1, UKC2, etc.) refer to the order in which the interviews were conducted and do not reflect the position of the interviewee.

#### 5.2.2.1 What

There are several internal social media platforms within UKConsulting. Employees and managers use these platforms for internal communications, knowledge sharing, and broadcasting information about the firm and its products. Some platforms allow customer access and so make internal knowledge transparent. At the same time, the use of external social media such as LinkedIn is not limited either by policy or by preventing access and employees do use those networks alongside internal social media tools. UKC5 describes UKConsulting as seeing itself as “social, mobile and cloud”. The organisation is “...pushing social to the clients so they need to be pushing that internally as well”. This push appears to resonate with the employees and the reported social media use covers a variety of areas. UKC3 explains that UKConsulting is positioning itself as a “social media company” and encourages its employees to use social media internally and externally.

UKC	Theme	Observations / Data	Dialogue	Access	Risk/Benefits	Transparency
What	Using Social Media by Organisations (Practices )	"Networking" as unified private social media platform; Blogs; LinkedIn for customer engagement, recruitment, staying in touch	information sharing and exchange on "Networking" (wiki, Q&A)	full employee access, customer access to certain areas; free access to LinkedIn	creation of a "social media company"; too many tools and options	full internal transparency; access to information on LinkedIn
	Managing Social Media (Top-down approach )	encourage social media use on any platform; incentify employee use; provide access to internal and external platforms	Two way communication is inceintified (job objectives)	full access to any platform; cross hierarchy/department access	information and (passive) knowledge sharing; release of control	full transparency is encouraged; nominated employees to maintain content
	Emergent Using by Employees (Bottom-up approach)	employee-to-employee training; disappointment with lack of engagement; continous use of internal and external platforms	employee-employer comms ongoing via passive/active blogs, Q&A, Wiki	managers and employees have access to blogs, personal pages, groups	passive knowledge sharing; LinkedIn for knowledge& Jobs	transparent access to info on internal and external platforms
How	Continuous Changing, Enabling Personal Access (Top-down initiatives / policies / programmes)	new tools (Blue Thanks) introduced; ongoing participation part of personal objectives	all project and product knowledge to be shared;	direct access to employee/manaer personal spaces (profiles/blogs)	employee voice (e.g. new ideas); passive knowledge sharing	ongoing updated and maintained personal profiles on LinkedIn and Connections
	Realising Social Media Value (Organisational Benefits )	project and product knowledge; maintainace of relationships (blue thanks); information dessimination (blog, LinkedIn)	social media as a unified communication and relationship platform	ongoing seamless access to all internal social media	capturing knowledge; increasing collaboration	policy on how to use social media "corporate way"
	Personal Motivations (Personal Benefits)	LinkedIn for Jobs; Knowledge gathering/sharing on internal and external platforms; maintain/build relationships with (ex-)employees	direct communications with peers / managers / customers	avalaibility of platforms on any device	maintaining relationships; access product/professional knowledge; find jobs	additional job related knowledge; access to jobs/help via relationships
	Preventing Use (Inhibitors)	too many tools and options; information overload	exchange might not happen because parties use different platforms	information, people and groups avaiable	too much information; difficult to find the "right" info/person	lack of training/guidelines on what platofrm when to use
Who, When, Where	Participants / Platforms	employees (also on behalf of organisation) on Networking, LinkedIn, Gratitude managers on Networking and Blue Thanks candidates and alumni on LinkedIn customers on LinkedIn and Networking				

Table 18 - UKConsulting Findings Summary

#### 5.2.2.1.1 Practices

Most widely mentioned platform in the interviews was the internal social media platform called “Networking”. Alongside that tool, employees are using LinkedIn for personal connections as well as for following the organisation, expanding their knowledge and engaging with clients. Other internal tools include internal chat-clients and a knowledge-sharing platform which allows sharing information with customers. The traditional means of communication such as emails and phones are, as expected, also being used.

The “Networking” platform is the tool mentioned most widely in the interviews. It offers the ability to share files and content, to create groups and to broadcast questions to the community in the hope to receive answers. UKC3 uses the platform to “communicate with colleagues and sometimes with clients”. UKC5 states that beyond sharing of information, “Networking” acts as a multi-way communication platform: “If someone uploads a document, there is a section underneath where you can chat back and forth”. UKC1 describes the platform as having “different usages”, including an events calendar, file-sharing, and having a “forum so you can post questions and get answers”. UKC4 describes his experience with “Networking” as a tool for “internal interactions within UKConsulting”. Finally, UKC2 uses “Networking” as “an internal tool to be used with the clients to manage day to day tasks”. There is also an option to “send a message to a wider group like you need an answer to a question and none of your peers know”. The wider community in this context extends beyond UKConsulting’s employees and includes customers and partners. The porous boundaries where information is “leaking” outside the organisation and “trickles” from outside in through involvement of customers, suppliers and partners have been recognised in other research (Hanna et al., 2011; Jussila et al., 2011; Saldanha, Mithas, & Krishnan, 2017) and deserve a dedicated attention beyond the scope of this research.

The management at UKConsulting maintain personal blogs. These blogs are advertised via the internal email system. All employees at UKConsulting can maintain profile pages (UKC2, UKC4), which enable other employees to find out about them and engage in direct conversation.

LinkedIn, as public social media, is being used by the employees for personal purposes. For example, UKC2 uses LinkedIn “as a job board, to see what’s there”.

Similarly, UKC1, UKC3 and UKC5 used LinkedIn to get referred to their current positions with UKConsulting. All interviewees also use LinkedIn to maintain contacts with their peers and ex-colleagues.

In addition, LinkedIn is used for professional purposes, for example by UKC2 to find “information about the industry ... to have the technical knowledge” required for their job; and further to participate in the “community that links to our products” and where customers actively engage in discussions with UKConsulting’s employees. UKC4 similarly uses LinkedIn to advance their “professional knowledge”.

#### 5.2.2.1.2 Top-down approach

Overall impression of UKConsulting’s approach to social media use is one of “there is a plethora of stuff out there, go use whichever you like, as long as you are using it”. Social media are used for a variety of reasons and different purposes. The most dominantly mentioned tool was “Networking”, which was described differently by each of the interviewees, according to their use. UKC1 described it as an “internal social media portal”. UKC2 referred to it as “some sort of wiki, and kind of a network”. UKC3 called it a “knowledge sharing platform”, UKC5 referred to it as a place to “share documentation” and to maintain an “event calendar”. Other tools such as a chat-client, document sharing platform and blogs are provided and being used.

Prominent in the interviews is the description of managers’ social media use and top-down support for social media. UKC2 mentions that “CEO of UKConsulting has a personal blog, that is interesting and I read it”. Participative behaviour, even if just by passive content consumption is encouraged, as UKC3 points out: “There are lots of webcasts and blogs and we all get an email ‘go and see my blog there is an update on this’ ...”. These blogs and webcasts are created at all levels “from senior managers to all the way down”. In UKC3 view “It is good to use it, and the management uses that too in a positive way”. When first joining the company, UKC4 was asked to share content of some of their projects so that it became a norm for them to do so for the subsequent projects. Engagement on public social media platforms does happen too. UKC2, for example, mentions a LinkedIn group where employees and customers discuss UKConsulting’s products.

UKConsulting is encouraging dialogue on social media within and outside the organisation. UKC5 explains that some employees have a “social score” which is

calculated based on their activity on internal social media. Increasing that score is used for some employees as “their personal goals” so that “this social score actually affects people’s pay raises”. UKC5 is prepared to share their contacts with the firm so that the organisation has access to a better candidate pool. UKC5 is willing to do that not in exchange for personal benefits (e.g. referral fee), not to help their friends in finding a job, but to help their employer accessing talent. The sole motivation in their case is a virtually constructed “social score”: “I want to give up my connections and get my social score higher so that’s in line with UKConsulting’s goal“. Changes and new content is actively promoted to employees. UKC2 explains that “...sometimes we get an email with new stuff and it looks interesting, for example, there is a change in a policy ...” UKC3 describes that there is a push towards using internal products, UKConsulting do “have a number of [own] social media products ... , so we have to use the products we are offering”. UKC1 described a range of sub-communities on the “Networking”-platform, ranging from team-specific topics, to new feature discussions, to new-joiners’ pages. When talking about the “new joiners”-page on the “Networking”-platform, UKC1 confirmed that “that’s their [the organisation’s] kind of objective to keep this up to date and I’d say the joiner’s one is very good”.

At the same time, there is some uncertainty about how much of the social media activity is visible to top management and whether this is the right channel to engage vertically. UKC4 specifically told that they “do not know the visibility of these tools to the senior managers”, like UKC2 who, when referring to posts on “Networking”, said they “don’t know how much senior managers are looking at it”.

The access to social media does not seem to be limited or moderated in any way. UKC5 explains that “on ‘Networking’ you can comment anywhere, there are moderators, I have never seen myself moderated, but I believe there are moderators”. However, there are conflicting reports from the interviewees about the availability of guidelines and training. UKC4 complained that “there is no training at all and there is no documentation”. Whereas UKC3 explained that “we have [training], you have to go through a corporate way of using social media. Like we should not be saying bad things about the company”.

#### 5.2.2.1.3 Bottom-up reality

UKC4 disagrees with the views of some of their peers on the top-down encouragement of social media use: “So the drive is not necessarily from the organisation but rather from the individual”. They describe that social media platforms are “discovered”, rather than promoted by the organisation. For example, there is an internal platform “Gratitude” to publicly thank colleagues: “I know these tools because someone followed my page too and I got a notification and a colleague mentioned ‘Gratitude’ and I started using it”. UKC4 also believes that there is no corporate-wide strategy with regards to social media use: “I haven’t seen any communications with regard to that and certainly I have not got any communications from my line manager about it. So, I don’t think there is”. UKC4 believe that “It is just up to the individual to explore the existing solutions”. However, alongside the content-creating activities, the interviewees do consume the content provided on internal and external social media platforms. UKC2 and UKC3 report about reading the blogs, UKC5 accesses documentation shared on “Networking”, UKC4 follows people’s activity pages.

Some of the sharing and broadcasting features of the platforms in use are seen with scepticism. UKC1 described some of the posts as a “ Ghost Town. Someone posts a question and no one gets an answer, in the beginning there is a flurry of activity, but after a month or two people become bored of it and it doesn’t stay fresh and you think ‘well it’s waste of time for me posting my question on there’. That’s what happens often”. However, they do “use it a lot actually”. Specifically, they create communities which are relevant to them such as “one for our team, we have one for initiatives that are going on in the company, we have another one for new products, there is all kinds of different communities on there”. UKC2 also voices disappointment with the candidate-engagement attempts on social media: “when you are a candidate we send you to a chatter content where you can do instant messaging, but it is a bit rubbish”.

The “encouragement” of utilising the platforms is also not always reaching the audience. UKC2 finds an unflattering description “I am encouraged to use the one with the clients. Personally, I think it is rubbish. I think its overkill. Before that, we used to use SharePoint for managing this sort of activities. It works better”. The employees deviate from the suggested route and use alternative platforms which they prefer to internally endorsed tools. UKC2 and UKC4 also describe the platform “UKC-Blog”, where employees host profiles and post a updates to be followed by

other employees. However, neither of the interviewees used this platform despite its availability and the fact that everyone has a page “by default”.

Traditional communication methods such as phones, emails and direct chat clients are still being used. UKC2 refuses to use the internal social media: “I would send them an email, or if they are in the same office I would talk to them, or pick up a phone. I would not use any of the tools. I would not broadcast a message and wait for a response”. UKC3 say that they do not like using social media for work, except when it is necessary to share information with the client. Instead, they prefer direct contacts via phone or email.

There is no “lockdown” on public social media. All informants use LinkedIn to connect with colleagues, and to follow (other) company’s activities. Contrary to their refusal to engage on internal social media, UKC2 is happy to use public social media for personal use: “I actually use LinkedIn quite a lot. I follow different companies not only UKConsulting”. UKC1 does not follow the firm on LinkedIn, “but I follow some other companies”. UKC4 used LinkedIn to connect only to external contacts: “since I have joined, I have not been using LinkedIn to connect to alumni. I have been using it to connect to my other professional contacts”.

#### *5.2.2.2 How*

Multiple interviewees explained that UKConsulting is seeing itself as a “social organisation”. Part of its consultancy and product offering are social media platforms. UKC3 refers to UKConsulting as a “social media company” and believes that there is a top-down strategic push towards social media use within the organisation. Maintenance of some areas on internal social media platforms is “enforced”, according to UKC1 “there are people in the organisation whose role it is to maintain that area [new starters], they are not necessarily from HR but they have been nominated by somebody. And yeah, that’s their kind of objective to keep this up to date...”

##### *5.2.2.2.1 Motivations and assumed benefits*

The perceived benefits of social media use for UKConsulting as organisation and for employees as individuals seems to be interwoven at many points. There appears to be a strong organisationally driven motivation to use social media. UKC2 reports that they are “encouraged to use the one [“Networking”-platform] with the clients. UKC3 explains that the organisation has a policy and training on using social media and that

“you have to go through a corporate way of using social media”. UKC5 describe their experience of sharing content as one whereby they were encouraged by other colleagues: “I gave a demo, and I uploaded it to communities so that everyone has access to it. I was asked to do that. But that was around the first time, but I know in the future I would upload it there”. UKC1 notes that using social media is not a taboo, they have “got no fear posting my question on there and hopefully getting an answer”. The only conflicting report was made by UKC4 who maintains that no training or documentation is provided, but they are able to “discover” internal social media platforms because their colleagues are using it.

#### 5.2.2.2.2 Personal benefits and motivations

Public social media (most notably LinkedIn) are perceived by employees to provide value as a job-hunting platform. UKC1’s use of LinkedIn is as a success story: “I have got only one job from applying myself, the rest is all being through referrals from people I know. I have only applied for one job directly and got the job based on my experience and CV and that kind of stuff. Most of the time the feat was somebody referring me”. They also followed their current company on LinkedIn “because I was interested in applying to them”, confirming that as candidates they at least passively sought to “engage” with UKConsulting on public social media. Similarly, UKC2 have got their last job through LinkedIn. And they “use it as a job board, to see what’s there”. While UKC3 finds motivation for using LinkedIn in the ability to “to keep in touch with ex-colleagues and customers alike”, as well as the perceived increased chance of getting head-hunted: “main benefits for me personally is that I am visible to recruiters around the world”, they also confirm that “I have got my job I am doing today via contact on LinkedIn via an ex-colleague”. UKC5 explains that LinkedIn is “not something I use too often”, none the less, “last two jobs I had, came via LinkedIn, so it’s good for new jobs as well as keeping [in touch] with colleagues”. Referrals and employee-candidate communications are encouraged, and also followed through in the attraction and selection process at UKConsulting.

*Maintaining relationships:* Further personal motivation is, indeed, “keeping in touch”. UKC1 finds it “quite useful to understand where your old colleagues are working and what’s going on and where people are now”. UKC4 and UKC3 use their connections to “keep up to date”, but UKC3 goes further and sees the benefits of keeping in touch in becoming more visible: “I also have a lot of peers who I have done work with, so

my profile may come up when a recruiter looks for one of them and they might be interested in my profile”.

#### 5.2.2.2.3 Work-related use benefits

The interviewees see social media use as being beneficial to their ability to perform well in their roles. UKConsulting has customer and product related groups on LinkedIn. These groups are not set up or maintained by the interviewees, however many of them do participate in these groups because they see it as important for their jobs. UKC5 describes these groups as forums where customers and employees can help each other solving problems: “There are LinkedIn groups as well, which clients choose to discuss the functionality of the system and network between each other and find out how everyone is using it, and if there is any way to help them to resolve a particular problem that they have got, so the clients talk to themselves there”. This information, in contrast to internally provided product description, is seen as more relevant, as it reflects on how customers are actually using UKConsulting’s products. UKC2 explains that “LinkedIn is more useful to me than the company in-house social media... It’s more relevant. Much more relevant. It’s kind of introduces other clients who are using the tools”. They also value the quality of conversations which happen on LinkedIn: “Some of my clients are there and other clients who are not using the products are there. And this is really good: they support each other, you can ask questions and you get expert advice and guidance”.

*Acquire Knowledge:* Social media is also used to acquire additional professional and work-related knowledge – as some kind of an open learning platform. UKC2 uses LinkedIn “for information as well about the industry I am in. Articles about HR industry, trends and so on. A lot of them do affect my clients and I need to have the technical knowledge”. They clearly say that using LinkedIn helps them doing their job. UKC4, too, follows trends and posts from companies in the same space. They find the readings “helpful... not for my individual, but rather my professional knowledge”. UKC4 uses LinkedIn for personal development: “I see LinkedIn as a media that allows me to grow my knowledge. This is not related to what I was doing before or what I am doing. But I am just interested in their technology, what they can offer, it is just for my own knowledge, not work-related, not related to what I am doing now”. Arguably, advancing one’s general knowledge could be seen as “work-related”, despite UKC4’s perceptions. Internal social media are being used for knowledge

sharing and self-training too. UKC5 uses “Networking” for advancing their product knowledge for example “for release notes, HowTos – for functionality I am not sure about”. UKC1 participates on communities on internal platforms which are related to new products, team developments and companywide initiatives.

*Relationships in the workplace:* Maintaining and building social relationships on social media is also possible and takes place to a certain extent. In the simplest terms, sharing updates about one’s office days and holidays creates transparency. UKC1 has “to post holidays that we know when people would be in and out of the office”. This ability to see one’s colleagues’ availability is one of the more common uses reported by UKC5 too, who uses “Networking” platform “most often to check where everyone else is and whether I need to cover someone”. Indirect contact by following someone on their profiles or commenting on their post is seen as a way to create deeper relationships. UKC4 explains that initial contacts on social media would enable them to expand these virtual relationships in their work-environment: “For myself, this will be a huge benefit [using internal social media]. For example, I don’t want to contact someone all of a sudden to resolve an issue before I actually have some relationship with that person, if that makes sense”. UKC3, on the other hand, maintains relationships “offline”: “I like to get people on the phone, email. I am using a chat-client a lot, but that’s not social media”.

*Knowledge Sharing:* The employees embrace the wider idea of knowledge sharing. UKC1 describes the search and sharing feature of “Networking”-platform as one of its benefits: “you can search shared files, that’s how we often use it – you can make folders and share files on there”. They go on to explain that it’s not just project related documentation, but also covers a wider range of information, for example, best practices. UKC3’s experiences are similar. Starting with project documentation, they also use the social media platforms as open “log journals” to allow all project team members transparent access to the information: “when we create a project, we put all RFPs there, we put all the details there, put all the deadlines there, calls, but we use the community as something like let’s say a task area, where it completes the task. Where you can manage all the tasks, making sure that all the tasks from all the calls go in there”. Notable is the feature of the system which not only allows document storage but also allows commenting and discussions about a certain document. UKC5 explains that “If someone uploads a document, there is a section underneath where

you can chat back and forth. This is the main one for sharing content”. This drive to share information goes beyond project or team related documentation. UKC5 clarifies: “I have uploaded documents...like notes I have made myself so that people can use that in the future and tools I have created as well so that people can use that in the future”.

The motivation for sharing ideas and information is underscored by the employees’ understanding that their efforts are being seen. UKC1 demands from the management to be “listening but also to show that you have listened”. UKC2 uses an example of an employee starting an initiative on internal social media to use Uber for business travel. This initiative was accepted and “one employee posting a comment changed the entire company’s policy”. At the shop-floor level, there is an implicit understanding that information should be sought on social media first. UKC5 explains that “Personally, I want to share as much information to everyone so that I don’t have people coming and asking me directly, but instead I can just direct them to where they need to go”. The entire notion of creating, sharing and consuming content on social media is underlined by the “social score” concept of UKConsulting, which is being used as one of the goals in performance evaluation.

#### 5.2.2.2.4 Inhibitors

As with any system, there are several issues with social media use within UKConsulting. The major critique points voiced by UKC4 were the lack of clear promotion, training and guidelines. Other interviewees mentioned the complexity and usability of social media, relevancy of the information available, effectiveness of social media as communication channel, anonymity, and differentiation between the personal and professional use of social media as concerns for their use of social media platforms.

UKC4 explains that their social media use is hampered by the fact that “there is no guideline at all”. They would use social media out of “purely personal motivation”. They are under the impression that there is no importance attached to social media use and they do not think that “the organisation is trying to promote it”.

*System Complexity:* The time and effort spent on using social media for achieving goals are also being questioned. UKC2 is explaining that despite top-down encouragement to use social media to engage with clients, other (simpler) tool such as

Microsoft's SharePoint work better to satisfy the requirement to exchange information with customers. They suggest to "simplify it..." and be able to "find the information you need quickly, accurate information you need quickly", claiming that the main factor for social media use is "usability, more organised, make it easy to find relevant information". They use LinkedIn as an example of a "clean" system, stating that "there is too much fuss at the moment. LinkedIn is pretty simple and I think there is many different types of social media. I think I would simplify it". UKC5 follows up on that and explains that the internal social media platform "looks a bit dated". They suggest improving usability by providing a "major facelift, just to make it look something that is not that clunky, and more like Facebook". UKC3 and UKC4 also highlight the lack of time to engage fully on social media.

*Time effort:* When asked if UKC3 reads manager's blocks, they explained that this would impact on their working time and that they would read about "50% of the time... Because we get notifications from all the areas, so reading it all would just impact my productivity on the day". UKC4 has not (yet) explored some of the features of internal social media which they wanted to engage with because they "have not got time to look into it".

*Relevance:* The time issue also links to another issue mentioned by the interviewees – relevance. UKC1 does not follow UKConsulting's activities or pages on public social media because "all my colleagues, most of my colleagues are at UKConsulting, most of the time I see what's going on in UKConsulting anyway". So that additional engagement with the organisation seems not relevant. UKC2 explained that they "...like things simple, easy and clear. And relevant", with a note to highlight the word "relevant" in the transcript. The quality of information available has also been doubted by UKC5, who gave an example of negative reviews on "Glass Door" – a social media platforms where employees and candidates can leave anonymous feedback about their work or interview experiences. UKC5 thinks that "people who think bad of a company are the most vocal. I did find the thing with people who left bad feedback on Glass Door. When I looked at the comments I thought "what am I getting myself into", but then got here and I did not know what they were talking about".

*Effectiveness of communications:* The levels of participation and engagement are also being questioned. UKC2 is uncertain about "how much senior managers are actually

looking at [social media posts]”. They doubt the value of social media as a communication medium: “if you wanted to send a message to a wider group like you need an answer to a question and none of your peers know either or you can share document – we do use it, but it’s not great”. Further, they “would not broadcast a message and wait for a response”. Similarly, UKC1 raised a concern of sub-sections becoming “ghost towns”. They vent their frustration at the questions being posted on internal blogging sites not being answered. Experiences like this make them doubt the effectiveness of social media as a communication channel.

The final two points mentioned by the interviewees are concerns about anonymity and differentiation between work and private social media. UKC1 maintains that it is important for organisations to engage with employees to be “finding out what people actually think”. However, it is “important to make it in an anonymous way so that people feel free to say what they like”. Interestingly, this and the suggestion by UKC4 for the organisation to “promote” social media platforms were the only two suggestions to increase the top-down involvement of the organisation in any of the social media activities.

Some interviewees mentioned that there needs to be a clear line between personal and professional life. UKC2 maintains: “I would want to keep my personal life personal. I definitely would want to separate, not to have a combined personal and work tool”. UKC3 claims that they “personally tend to avoid social media for work” and that “when I am finished with work – I want to go out and go for a walk and play with my kids”. On the other hand, UKC5 are exposing their social media contacts to internal recruiters to help the organisation access talent.

#### *5.2.2.3 Who / Where / When*

All interviewees were currently employed by UKConsulting. However, some of them started their assignments just recently and were able to share some insight into their experiences as candidates. Notable is the use of LinkedIn, mentioned as the most prominent public social media platform, and “Networking” as an internal social media platform. The term “Networking” is a pseudonym for two expressions (“Communities” and the actual product name) used by the informants to describe the internal platform. UKC1 confirmed in a later conversation that “Networking” is the

name of the product which consists of several “Communities” (areas) so that these terms are used interchangeably.

The candidates, employees, and ex-employees are using LinkedIn to stay in touch with each other. Based on the interviews, the communication between employees, the recruitment team and the candidates in the form of referrals for attraction and selection is taking place. The employees utilise internal social media for communication, relationship building and knowledge sharing. The management of UKConsulting is using internal social media platforms to publish updates and blogs, and to encourage feedback in the form of comments on blog-post and shared documentation.

Since access to social media is permitted and even encouraged, it is difficult to see any deviant use of social media by employees. Notable is the fact that, despite the claims of some of the interviewees that they would not use social media and avoid engagement, all interviewees report continuous use of internal and external social media for either work or personal purposes such as job-hunting, or for own initiatives which have a positive impact on the organisation, for example, to learn about new products or to refer candidates.

### 5.2.3 Case 3 – UKOutsourcing

UKOutsourcing is a UK-Based services company providing a variety of outsourcing solutions to government and private businesses across the globe. While each of the service lines (e.g. “Security”, “IT-Services”) is operated as its own business, there is a drive to unify the UKOutsourcing-Brand and to enforce a firm-wide approach to HR and employer brand. Despite a strong top-down initiative to engage employees on internal social media, the expected levels of participation are not being achieved. This section provides a detailed overview of the findings from UKOutsourcing following the established relationships between the themes and DART properties (Table 20).

Participants from UK Outsourcing, like those in UKBank, cover the entire organisational hierarchy from professionals to top-level managers (Table 19).

#	Case	ID	Level, Job Title, Description
1	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO1	Board Level, Director of Employee Engagement
2	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO2	Director Level, Head of Resourcing
3	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO3	Sen VP Level, Head of Recruitment, Running LinkedIn and Twitter for the firm
4	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO4	VP Level, Community Manager, Responsible for “Employee engagement”
5	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO5	Associate, Recruiter
6	2 – UK Outsourcing	UKO6	Associate, Recruiter

*Table 19 - UKOutsourcing study participants*

The interviews are numbered in the order in which they were conducted and do not reflect the position of each participant. There were three interview sessions. A face-to-face group interview with participants UKO1-4, and two individual telephone interviews with UKO5 and UKO6.

UKO	Theme	Observations / Data	Dialogue	Access	Risk/Benefits	Transparency
What	Using Social Media by Organisations (Practices )	internal social media platform "Yammer"; employee surveys off-line; LinkedIn job postings;	two -way communications on Yammer; none on external platforms	parts of organisations have access to Yammer; LinkedIn access unregulated	collaboration on Yammer; Attraction on LinkedIn	transparent information on Yammer
	Managing Social Media (Top-down approach )	enforce social media use by controlling information flow; create and manage content on public platforms	Yammer and LinkedIn for broadcast; dialogue only within groups on Yammer	limited access to Yammer due to license, manager acceptance	alignment on brand/values;	"all about sharing (organisation created) content"
	Emergent Using by Employees (Bottom-up approach)	Yammer introduction; LinkedIn for knowledge access	manager use Yammer for microblogging; recruiter-candidate-manager contact	LinkedIn is accessed freely; Yammer requires registration and licence	Brand creation; relationship building; knowledge sharing;	mainly access to organisation created content
How	Continuous Changing, Enabling Personal Access (Top-down initiatives / policies / programmes)	LinkedIn Professional for Recruitment; Firm-wide Yammer introduction	Yammer as internal comms platform; Dialogue with candidates on LinkedIn	Yammer access requires permission; LinkedIn use by recruiters varies	"Social Media is not work"; Direct hires (price tag)	candidates' access to hiring manager;
	Realising Social Media Value (Organisational Benefits )	Employer Branding on LinkedIn; Direct Hires on LinkedIn; Community Building on Yammer; Knowledgesharing on Yammer	Broadcast information; Use Yammer for Q&A	Access to online platforms limited by license and location/job	Create community feeling; increase "accessibiity" across hierarchy	transparent information on Yammer; controlled on LinkedIn
	Personal Motivations (Personal Benefits)	LinkedIn for Jobhunting; LinkedIn as informaion platform; Relationships on LinkedIn; No benefits on Yammer	Passive content consumption (information , jobs)	availability of public social media anywhere	access information and contacts for career development; job-relevant knowledge	improve performace by better knowledge; find jobs; maintain relationship
	Preventing Use (Inhibitors)	No strategy, policy, leadership; Social means not work; low uptake on Yammer; many employees are not office based	Broadcast features are main focus	licensing costs impact access; Yammer access requires corporate network	cost; participation on social media seen as "not-work"	lack of policy on what can be said/used when
Who, When, Where	Participants / Platforms	Employees (passive) on LinkedIn, Employees (part active) and Managers on Yammer Recruiters on LinkedIn, and some Managers (blogs) on LinkedIn Candidates on LinkedIn Passive monitoring of Twitter				

Table 20 - UKOutsourcing Findings Summary

### 5.2.3.1 *What*

The availability and top-down encouragement of (internal) social media are intended to create employee engagement in conversations among different businesses within the Group. UKO3 calls this collaborative and sharing behaviour a “shrinker” – bringing people together. Employees are encouraged to (at least passively) participate in the creation and consumption of HR-related content. UKO3 refers to the social media platforms as technologies which are “giving someone an avenue to have their say or to ask a question”. Simultaneously, HR employees, specifically recruiters, are encouraged to use LinkedIn as an engagement tool to search for and attract passive candidates and to have a conversation with potential candidates on that platform. There is an expressed desire, to utilise the firm’s high-level managers as “brand ambassadors” and, as UKO2 puts it, “thought leaders” through publishing/blogging activities on LinkedIn and micro-blogging on Twitter. At present, despite efforts to encourage social media use at different levels in the organisation and different stages of the HR activities, most of these initiatives find a “lukewarm” reception.

#### 5.2.3.1.1 Practices

The organisation has recently introduced “Yammer” – a cloud-based social media platform which is being used as an internal social media tool. Yammer is being used for collaboration, content sharing and internal communications. UKO3 describes Yammer as a virtual space where employees “can collaborate, share stuff, we are one company, we are on Yammer and people get to see what I am doing”. As an example, UKO3 points out that they “ended up being here [at the interview session] today because we swapped some information on Yammer”. UKO6 finds that communications on Yammer are potentially “a lot easier than outlook, you can get a lot more people within a group to discuss ideas, it’s more open, it’s more personal”. They also value the reach of Yammer, claiming that they “possibly would not communicate with half of people if I was using outlook”.

Yammer is also being used to create “broadcast” groups where employees are expected to join to consume content created by community managers. However, with the HR’s group being the second largest, UKO1 admits that there are “not many of them”. The total population of employees on Yammer at the time of the research was about 3,000 employees.

LinkedIn is being used to broadcast information about the Group, attract candidates to apply directly, to search passive candidates, and to engage in conversations with the candidates. The candidate attraction and the drive for direct recruitment practices are successful. UKO5 gives an example of a candidate attracted on LinkedIn for whom, if the organisation “were to go out to an agency and look for a specific role”, the company would be charged “20% fee for the base salary”. On the example of a £90,000 salary, the price tag for hiring the candidate directly was “18 thousand pounds to pay to the agency to find that person for you”.

The organisation is not actively using microblogging on Twitter. UKO4 explains that the “comms team passively watch the Twitter-feed about UKOutsourcing, but we don’t proactively post”. UKO1 also points out that the effectiveness of internal micro-blogs is limited: “despite our CEO being on Twitter personally, but they have a very low Twitter profile in the organisation”.

Traditional approaches to “measure employee engagement”, such as an annual employee survey run in parallel to the initiatives to engage and gather employee’s feedback on social media.

#### 5.2.3.1.2 Top-down approach

Overall impression of UKOutsourcing’s strategy is a lack thereof. The organisation “just had a new strategy rolled out”, UKO4 continues to describe that “one pillar [of the strategy] is around people making people proud to work at UKOutsourcing”. The company’s CEO believes that “people don’t understand what [the organisation] is and they are not connected to each other. It is very hard to be proud of a company if you don’t understand or you don’t feel connected to [it].” This strategic point is used as a justification for social media initiatives such as consolidation of LinkedIn groups, and Yammer. UKO2 explains that the organisation does not “have a strategy around social media”. However, “governance guidelines for employees in terms of how you operate on social media personally and professionally” do exist. UKO3 would like to see a “strategy around content creation” and to “align that with market strategy, business development, engagement, employee engagement, all tied up together”. UKO2 would see the owner of such a strategy at the “exec[utive] comm[unications] level who would drive the social media strategy”. This content strategy, ownership and alignments did not exist in the organisation at the time of the data collection for this study.

UKO3 explains that the organisation is “at different places of maturity” of social media use. Branding and broadcasting on LinkedIn were the focus at the time of the interviews, and UKO3 claims that the organisation’s LinkedIn engagement is “quite mature”. The branding activities on LinkedIn are driven by the top-down desire for more direct recruitment. The management is supporting activities which increase direct hires. The strategy on LinkedIn is, according to UKO3, “all about sharing content, sharing the right content, to be more engaging, be thought leaders. Give them [candidates] a lot more nuggets of information which might not be UKOutsourcing related, addressing the target audience we have got”.

The organisation’s page on LinkedIn has attracted many followers. UKO2 reports that “in January this year [2016] we hit 100K followers of the brand and out of these 100K, about 30K are employees”. The broadcasting activities on LinkedIn are seen in the “recruitment context”. UKO3 describes the approach to broadcasts on the LinkedIn group as “share the message ‘this is us’, this is what we do, and by the way, we have got some jobs”. UKO4 also sees the “engagement” on LinkedIn as a broadcast-activity. The organisation maintains “specific finance groups which target people to keep warm, if you like”. There is an attempt to start a dialogue on LinkedIn. UKO3 explains that they “would like to see [that] if you put something in our groups, you will get some kind of response – whether personal or public. So that we get one-on-one interaction”. There is further pro-active LinkedIn use to search and source employees. Managers encourage recruiters to use LinkedIn for direct sourcing. For example, UKO5 is “doing [a] social talent sourcing recruiting course”. They also report positive feedback on direct sourcing activities: “I managed to attract candidates directly, whom my managers seem to like”. Moreover, UKO6 reports that there are “standard template[s which have] been approved by the manager” for job postings on LinkedIn. UKO1 confirms that there is “good ownership from our group HR director” and UKO2 continues: “they love it when you show them success stories [direct hires through LinkedIn]”.

Alternative uses of LinkedIn, which UKO2 describes as offering “really good networking and influencing opportunities with customers or stakeholders” are being noticed, but not yet actively pursued. There is a perceived “opportunity to [use LinkedIn] as a networking tool”. UKO2 have “a sign off to a three-year global partnership deal with LinkedIn, and part of what you get from all of that is they

provide you with traffic drivers and engagement”. UKOutsourcing aims to use the technology and tracking tools to increase their online presence.

Yammer, an internal social networking tool, is used by some employees and managers, but has low penetration in the company yet. UKO4 notes that despite possible access difficulties for some employees who “don’t have access to a computer, [and] might logon once or twice a week, but don’t sit in front of the computer”, it has been noted that these employees still access Facebook and LinkedIn, but not the internal Yammer platform. Some middle managers even refuse their employees’ access to Yammer. UKO4 explains that they are “having difficulties of getting the receptionists onto Yammer – they [their manager] want to block it because it is “social” media”.

#### 5.2.3.1.3 Bottom-up reality

The organisation’s activities on LinkedIn have emerged due to a bottom-up initiative. UKO2 and UKO3 started the consolidation of UKOutsourcing’s LinkedIn presence on their own. UKO2 describes it as “we decided that we take the forgiveness route rather than asking for permission. Likely it worked out”. The general acceptance of social media, specifically those internal initiatives, is facing opposition based on a perception of it being “play” rather than work. UKO3 explains that “People think its LinkedIn, Yammer, even if Yammer is a recognised tool to collaborate internally as well as being social, so is LinkedIn, but it has sort of type of perception that you are playing rather than working. It has got ‘social’ in the title”. UKO2 follows up defending their LinkedIn initiative: “it could be a business tool, it is a business tool: any leader could own it. It’s sometimes when you land it in HR people think it’s an ‘HR social fluffy tool’”. Yet, even at the shop floor level, the perceptions of “serious” versus “playful” are maintained. In UKO5’s view, there is a clear distinction between personal and professional social media. Specifically, LinkedIn use is considered professional and necessary: “the fact that [LinkedIn is by] reputation slightly more serious side of a social media tool, it became somehow expected that most professionals will have some sort of presence on LinkedIn”.

Communications among employees, between managers and employees, and recruiters and candidates take place over social media platforms. UKO3 describes social media use as a connecting technology: “We are in different offices, hundred miles apart, but yeah – but what we are doing: we can share and everybody gets to see”. UKO6 also

finds communications on Yammer valuable for contacting colleagues: "... I only use it in the workplace... it's a lot easier than outlook, you can get a lot more people within a group to discuss ideas, it's more open, it's more personal, and possibly I would not communicate with half of people if I was using outlook". Some of the senior leaders try to be active on Yammer, as UKO4 describes: "... from the internal engagement side, we have got a CEO who is absolutely brilliant on Yammer". Employees, who have access to Yammer, actively exchange information and engage in group conversations. UKO6 describes her conversation with the group's HRD after she liked a post on Yammer: "actually our global head of resourcing typed in my name on Yammer and said "please explain why you liked that", in a funny way – we had various conversations going, we have got various groups on Yammer which I am part of". UKO3 had similar experiences getting in touch and exchanging ideas with another senior leader: "one of our divisional CEOs – she is so active on Yammer. She is always liking things. She posts her audio blogs or video blogs on there. She is always replying to people; she replied to a post one of the HR colleagues wrote, and then I replied, and then we met up and spoke about engagement in her business".

Apart from the top-down driven approach to LinkedIn-publishing, employees, specifically in the recruitment team, are using LinkedIn as a Job-Board for posting vacancies, a search engine for candidates, and to directly communicate with candidates. UKO5 explains that they are not comfortable with communications on social media. However, they "have posted jobs on there and I have done looking around for people". UKO6 is more pro-active. They describe a situation where a hire has been made by building a relationship on LinkedIn: "I did a LinkedIn search for a candidate. We were looking for a very niche person, we needed a very specific set of qualifications and skillset to work on one of our IT contracts, and again in a specific sector. And I contacted that candidate who wasn't looking for work, I've got to know him". Notably, the connections UKO6 makes with candidates for UKOutsourcing on LinkedIn are described by them as "their own" connections: "I would then contact 10 or 20 of them directly and say, you know, introduce myself firstly. I won't go in and do a big sell, but I am recruiting – I always talk about building a talent pool, expanding my network, talking about what they are doing, what their plans are. And this is really to make a connection because ultimately, I am looking for people like them, and at some point in their careers they will need people like me who will ultimately offer

them a position”. UKO3 wants to see more “content” on LinkedIn which is not directly recruitment related, but still creates interest in the firm in general: “it is ok if it is not directly recruitment related, let’s be slightly more subtle, slightly less obvious”.

Many of the engagements and activities on social media, even at the corporate level happen because of the bottom-up initiatives by the employees. UKO3 explains that on Yammer and LinkedIn it is down to UKO3 and UKO4 to maintain the momentum. When asked whether UKO3 is the sole person who maintains UKOutsourcing’s LinkedIn presence, they replied: “it shouldn’t be, but it often tends to be. Despite having some big audiences and having a group manager on there, it’s part of the problem: people have got a day job, and they don’t always perceive that social media part is part of that. Social media is not part of the day-to-day stuff they have always done”. A similar situation is faced by UKO4 who “is the community manager [on Yammer], and owns it, but all along we are looking for this senior stakeholder ownership”. The activities are “sponsored” by the group HRD, but are not driven by the senior team as UKO1 describes it: “He often tells people we are the biggest group on Yammer. We have a sponsor in the group HRD, but we don’t have an owner”.

LinkedIn practices for recruiters are driven by the recruiters’ initiatives. UKO6 would “try and make it [posting on LinkedIn] a little different”. They are using tools to create word clouds of job descriptions and post these along with “very general updates” on their personal walls in LinkedIn to attract candidates: “rather than me putting up text and saying I am looking for this, below are the key essential requirements for the role, I’d rather give them a visual. I create a nice pretty picture of all the different words that are essential for the role. Because I think people would read this rather than a long text”. When questioned if ‘being different’ was encouraged, they stated: “I would not say that it is encouraged to be, I suppose, too individual. So, in that sense, I am bold and I’m brave”. UKO6 also tag the hiring managers in the job posts: “every single role I advertise, I put on LinkedIn so that it comes up as UKO6 is recruiting for a so-and-so tech. I would tag the hiring manager saying “John Doe is currently expanding his team and is looking for a Solutions Architect”.

#### 5.2.3.2 *How*

At the time of the research the organisation was finding itself in a time of change with regards to social media use. Two major social media initiatives were happening almost

in parallel – consolidation and branding of the organisation’s presence on LinkedIn and introduction of an internal social media tool called “Yammer”. UKO4 explained, that “one of our organisational values is ‘being entrepreneurial’”, and thus, both these initiatives were driven “bottom-up”, without an explicit strategy and top-down designed path. Partially this was explained by UKO2 by a lack of marketing experience and knowledge: “... in terms of the organisation it is a very interesting piece because the organisation is usually quite shy in terms of brand... We only recently started evolving marketing roles and not many of those”. UKO4 gives the example of UKOutsourcing’s communications team whose task it is to “passively watch the Twitter feed about UKOutsourcing”, but not to post. UKO3 explains that regarding LinkedIn activities the organisation is now “quite mature, but then there is lots more we could do”. One of the issues the initiatives are facing is the perception of social media being something not serious. UK3 describes that as “Social media and a lot of the elements are still really new, even though it’s been around for a long time it is still new and it is about changing the mindset, perception that its ok to be checking [social media sites] and having a look every now and then, several times through the day, ‘cause it takes a moment to respond to any interaction you’ve got”. UKO6 further outlines the organisation’s understanding that whether it wants to or not, it is being exposed on public social media: “there has been a huge shift, everyone is on their mobile, everyone is using modern technology. ... Majority of people when they think of looking for a new job, or when they think about looking up a potential employer, they would either google it, or if they have got a LinkedIn profile, they would search their potential employer or colleagues”.

Interviewees also suggested new ways in which the organisation could be using social media. For example, UKO2 would like to see the top-level managers producing public content on LinkedIn: “we would have all our leaders engaged on social media in one way or another: whether that’s our CEOs are influencers on LinkedIn alongside with Richard Branson and Barak”. UKO5 suggest that LinkedIn and other social media could be used for deeper and more granular candidate engagement: “with the talent groups, if a vacancy came up we would contact them first and see if they are interested. And if they were, we would put them forward to the hiring managers. And this would allow you to recycle some candidates if you have the technology to do that”. These

and other initiatives have not taken hold at the time of the interviews so that the focus of for the remainder of this section will be mainly on LinkedIn and Yammer use.

#### 5.2.3.2.1 Organisation-driven changes

UKOutsourcing's company-wide approach to social media is one that perceives social media as a communications platform which requires management. UKO2 started the organisation's branding project on LinkedIn because when they "looked at LinkedIn we had about fifteen different paged for UKOutsourcing because it wasn't managed". They believe that "...you cannot get any depth of real management of your brand or any depth of any candidates in terms of engagement" on a free platform without accessing the pay-for features. The approach taken was to consolidate all presences into one: "Because we were there anyway, and we were there in a very sporadic unmanaged way, so it was kind of get it all wiped off and put one page on there". UKO2 further aspires to extend communication's management to other public networks: "because to be able to have someone centrally managing Facebook – you know it would be fantastic, but we don't have that". The drive to "manage" social media is present in other interviewee's opinions. UKO4 suggests radical measures to address the "need to drive traffic to things like Yammer", by making some crucial information only available on these internal platforms: "there has to be a reason to use it [Yammer], and at the moment I don't think we've got that critical reason. You [would] have to log on to find out something you would not find out otherwise".

Neither LinkedIn consolidation, nor Yammer had a senior level owner, and both initiated in the HR department. UKO2 remembers their approach to consolidation of the LinkedIn pages: "it was a quite an opportunistic approach to LinkedIn and that was going back three years. We did actually try to engage with our comms guys who had zero interest because our leaders had zero interest". UKO4 tried and failed to get some senior ownership for the Yammer-introduction: "... I tried thinking long and hard about who should be the owner, and that's when I came up with the senior stakeholder type – people who would be most interested in helping them to achieve their own objectives like engagement, corporate comms, brand and reputation, and also the CIO...". Both social media projects assume that social media can be positioned as part of "people strategy". UKO4 sees the platforms as tools to create a more consistent perception of the organisation: "using social media tools whether it is Twitter or Yammer – actually to me it doesn't really matter, it's about using 'a' tool to be able to

connect people up together so that you are sharing and you've got a common sense of purpose". This "common sense of purpose" should, according to UKO3, result in a better perception of the organisation: "the power of LinkedIn or Yammer is that you feel that you belong to the company and that you feel an affiliation, which means you are likely to speak more positively about it".

*LinkedIn*-project has been going on for three years. The value of investing in LinkedIn can now be monetised and expressed in Pound values. UKO2 explains that LinkedIn is now considered to be a valuable business tool: "we have new leaders who start joining us directly sourced through LinkedIn, so they are already bought into it. When I go through my induction session, I have a section on LinkedIn because for our new CEO in central government, for example, there is a potential for really good networking opportunities and influencing opportunities with customers". UKO3 and UKO4 aspire to be able to have a one-to-one interaction in the form of a post-comment-reply with anyone who interacts on LinkedIn groups: "the more personal element to that and even more engaging again is something I believe strongly in – is that 'responding to'. We monitor tweets. To me, it's great to get some information, but what we do on LinkedIn: if someone responds to one of our posts, we are trying to monitor it as much as possible, that they get a response back so that we get one-on-one interaction".

Most prominently, LinkedIn is being used and pushed in advancing direct sourcing – attracting and hiring candidates. Even Alumni-groups on LinkedIn are seen as potential talent pools: "we have on LinkedIn an UKOutsourcing alumni and employee group, so we encourage everyone to keep in touch through that as well, and ask to keep in touch with all alumni. Because there is no reason if someone leaves you wouldn't want them back one day – they've gone out, got some new experiences and broaden their horizons that they bring back" (UKO2). Another change which happens through LinkedIn use is the removal of barriers between the candidates and the employees. UKO6 does "tag managers into my statuses so that candidates can go and have a look at their potential manager's profiles". Recruiters are being enabled to contact passive potential candidates directly and "really to make a connection" with those candidates on LinkedIn.

UKO2's idea of *Yammer* is one of an engagement platform to gauge employee's feedback: "I do think that if you get employees on Yammer where you are communicating, you can communicate it like that say 'we have tried that before, has anyone got any views on that'. That's the power of tools like Yammer it's starting to solicit opinion from people". UKO4, however, states that there is a "lack of senior buy-in". UKO3 explains that several months after the introduction of Yammer they are still "looking for this senior stakeholder ownership", while Yammer is perceived as an IT project, rather than collaboration, HR, communication or a marketing project. The lack of senior ownership is met with sarcasm, UKO4 describes an earlier IT-project that failed to introduce an internal chat tool "fuse": "a classic example of previous technology we had- it was an IT project, it was put in, and then a community manager propped in, and that's it and that was kind of left to sort itself out. Obviously not!" UKO1 also points out that because senior leadership does not back the projects, "there is that worry [if] a lot of people [start] coming in – lots of licenses will cost". The cost factor is also reflected in UKO2's explanation that they "don't have a dedicated resource... I can't get the resource for a social media manager".

The top-down approach in UKOutsourcing' can be summarised as "it is encouraged". There is a potential benefit of managed social media use. However, the organisation is not (yet) prepared to engage senior stakeholders in the process, or to finance the expansion and exploration of social media.

#### 5.2.3.2.2 Motivations and assumed benefits

The motivations for allowing and pursuing social media use from the organisation's point of view and for accepting and using social media from employee's point of view do overlap on many occasions. However, as with other cases and IT-systems, there is also some deviant uses and inhibitors.

The organisation is relying on and encouraging the use of mainly two social media platforms: Yammer – internal social media, and LinkedIn –public professional social media. The motivations and expected benefits for each of these tools are somewhat different. Specifically, some of the LinkedIn use cases can be associated with a defensible financial saving, which is not at all the case with Yammer.

The value of using LinkedIn for recruitment can be monetised three years after the project start. UKO2 confirms that she is "now able to prove value it [LinkedIn] adds

to us”. The “proof of value”, however, does not seem to inspire more investment or recognition. UKO3 explains that they are the one looking after the LinkedIn groups most of the time because despite “having a group manager on there, people have got a day job and social media is not part of the day-to-day stuff”. The LinkedIn and Yammer teams have a similar resourcing problem of “having UKO3 couple of days a week. And to me that does not reflect the value that all of this can bring us. I suspect you [the Yammer team] have very similar issues” (UKO2). According to UKO1, the group HRD boasts that they “have saved the business 2 million pounds, we have got x number of followers. ... He is very active in that perspective”.

*LinkedIn-Value:* There are multiple perceived benefits of engaging on LinkedIn. UKO1 pictures LinkedIn as a communications tool: “I don’t think he [the group HRD] should own it because it is not an HR tool, it is a brand and communications and marketing tool from which we benefit”. UKO2 recognises the reach of LinkedIn to both internal and external audiences: “The interesting thing with LinkedIn is: we’ve had huge growth. We started with 9,000 followers when we first consolidated the pages, and in January this year we hit 100K followers of the brand ... and out of these 100K, about 30K are employees. So, we have got an interested group of employees”.

UKO2 signed off a three-year engagement deal with LinkedIn, linking the benefits of branding and marketing activities to those of candidate attraction and selection. UKO4 explains that the deal with LinkedIn will help UKOutsourcing to engage the candidates and “to get them enthused about the brand, to make your company the sort of company they want to watch, they want to work for even if you have not got the opportunities now”. This is to be achieved by displaying targeted advertisements with “picture yourself in a career with UKOutsourcing” to people whose profiles match certain keywords and linking them to UKOutsourcing’s jobs page. UKO3 too sees the value of LinkedIn in direct hires: “in LinkedIn terms, there is nothing more frustrating when you see someone joining the offices within the business: before we got so good at direct sourcing, we don’t use agencies much at all now, in those early days someone would walk up to the person and say ‘I didn’t know you were joining us’ – someone is connected to them in LinkedIn, even has got them on Facebook, yet we just paid an agency fee. That’s painful”. The benefits of direct hires are possibly the easiest to quantify. UKO6 presents a simple calculation: “UKOutsourcing pay for a recruiter licence because they see that as value for money, I don’t know how much it costs,

definitely not 18 thousand pounds [which is an agency fee for a specialist role]. Ultimately, I thought my recruiter licence was one hire, and if you think how many people I potentially hire per year on LinkedIn, from a business perspective I definitely see the value for money”. These recruitment activities can also be seen as a part of branding and marketing: “So it’s not only from the recruiter perspective helping us finding candidates and ultimately fill jobs, from the brand, global UK Outsourcing perspective it is getting our name out there: every day, via different channels”.

*Yammer-Value:* The value of Yammer is seen in its use for “internal engagement”. The interpretations of “internal engagement” include knowledge sharing, the creation of communication paths, the establishment of a common sense of purpose, and informing employees of management views. All interviewees, however, had different interpretations of “engagement”. UKO4, who sits in the knowledge team, sees Yammer’s benefits in the ability to share knowledge: “we don’t share knowledge and we have got pockets where people do amazing work, and it just needs to be lifted up and shared with someone over there and we are not reinventing the wheel. That is something we could do quite easily”. UKO3 sees it as a communication tool which allows communications across hierarchies: “the other reason for me something like Yammer is really important – is giving someone an avenue to have their say or to ask a question, and it breaks down the hierarchy of the organisation. It just breaks down the hierarchy and it gives people access to individuals in the organisation to ask questions and to be really open: anyone can ask a question of anybody, and they might not get a reply, but they can ask the question. This drives that accessibility”. They also point out the value of being “connected” it is another “channel to be able to connect with each other and to have their say; and it also puts people on a more level playing field [...] Yammer as a tool - that’s exactly it: we are one big team, in terms of recruitment and resourcing, we should all be in a same room, but we can’t be”. By breaking down hierarchies and allowing people to connect, UKO3 then “can collaborate, share stuff”. UKO6 can “can contact and have discussions with people who are based over in Belgium, who are based in Australia and America and really share thoughts and ideas on that platform”, and so be part of what UKO2 calls a “virtual community [which] is important”. UKO4 explains that building such a community requires a “tool to be able to connect people up together so that you are sharing and you’ve got a common sense of purpose”.

The importance of these virtual communities seems to be appreciated by some of the senior leaders, UKO4's understanding of "engagement" is the leadership by example: "from the internal engagement side, we have got a CEO who is absolutely brilliant on Yammer. And I'd love to see more because if senior leaders are on there, it drives people and sets the example and shows what's important to them, and I think I'd like to see more from them to cascade down through organisation".

The motivations for social media use from the viewpoint of the organisation were clearly stated. However, the question the interviewees were faced with was formulated by UKO2: "we have got 30 thousand employees that are following our brand on LinkedIn. And I don't think we have quite captured 'why are they doing that'? So, what is that they get from doing it on LinkedIn that they do not get from being on Yammer and see what is going on or checking the website every day"?

#### 5.2.3.2.3 Personal benefits and motivations

Many interviewees stated that their personal engagement on public social media, specifically LinkedIn, was driven by the belief that a LinkedIn presence is if not necessary, then at least helpful in for promotion and job hunting. UKO4 explains that "People have learned over the years that recruiters use LinkedIn to find you... If you are in HR, for example, it is really common [to] get a call from a head-hunter saying: 'I've got your details from LinkedIn'". UKO6 calls it "branding" and explains that they would "get people emailing me like I do – asking me if I am happy, I want to talk, if I want to potentially interview for another job. It is helping me to build my personal brand". UKO5, who explain that they are not fond of social media in general, felt that they needed to update their LinkedIn profile to secure a job: "I don't really use it [LinkedIn]. It's just something we were all asked to do when it first started. It's something we were encouraged to do. And when I was going to be made redundant, it was then when I updated my profile because I saw it as a way that people would be able to find me because it's a reputable tool".

Apart from "job-hunting" and being "headhunted", further perceived benefits included the ability to perform better in the current role, expand knowledge, and to maintain relationships.

*Better at my job:* LinkedIn is further seen as a tool which allows access to people and information to extend one's professional knowledge and to help with work-related

activities. UKO5 explains that using LinkedIn saves time: “if you use LinkedIn effectively it may actually reduce the time you spend on each role because you are not sifting through hundreds of inappropriate CVs”. UKO6 provides an example of “effective LinkedIn use” by explaining that they use LinkedIn as a combination of advertising and search platform: “with my niche roles, not only do I advertise, I also do search on LinkedIn. LinkedIn ultimately is free to search for any candidate in the world”. This simple search goes beyond one-off contacts, as UKO6 explains, LinkedIn enables them to find potential future candidates and stay in contact: “the majority of my work is not only trying to find candidates for roles we have now, but to talent pool. So, if I can have a conversation with someone tomorrow who has seen one of my posts and says: ‘I am not looking now, but maybe in a year and a half it may change’ – this means that potentially I have found a candidate for a role which will become available a year late”. This then improves the recruiter’s performance and “makes my recruitment life easier and helps me just to develop a stronger pool of candidates”. Having the ability to find candidates quicker and to engage with them is deemed so vital that UKO5 is motivated to overcome their dislike for social media. They feel that they must be using LinkedIn because they “would not want to be left behind”.

*Professional Knowledge:* In addition to using LinkedIn as a search tool by recruiters, UKO2 explains that from a personal use point of view “LinkedIn now is more about not the networking, but the types of business information you can find... there are interesting things for you to find out... like recruitment practices”. And they are actively participating “in different recruitment groups. I participate in research, you know CIPD put questions out on LinkedIn”. UKO5 uses the information available on LinkedIn to learn about the professionally relevant issues, but also stories which are not directly related to their job: “I don’t mind reading most is about recruitment or challenges in recruiting. Sometimes it’s just funny stories, you know, something more light-hearted. It’s like having chocolate at work – reading something light-hearted. It is sometimes both – something light-hearted or keeping abreast of changes at work”.

Similar “learning” effects – accessing relevant information is expected to happen on Yammer too. UKO2 points out the differences: “LinkedIn is more of the external for me, professional groups and stuff you can find out. It’s interesting to read what other people do with their brand... from Yammer I think it’s the equivalent, but it’s the

internal, so you can learn a lot via your internal groups and best practice and ways of doing things”.

*Maintaining relationships:* The “social” aspects of social media, both LinkedIn and Yammer are being mentioned as motivating factors by the interviewees. UKO4 mentions the Alumni-connections on LinkedIn as a way to maintain relationships: “you are using it actually because everybody joins the company and leaves the company”. UKO6 also values loose connections built on LinkedIn: “you can like and share stuff, and you can connect with people which whom I would not ever connect if I didn’t have LinkedIn”. There is a perception that social networks are more *personal* than traditional modes of communication such as emails and phones. UKO2 explains that they use Yammer groups “to get to know each other and we had some quite fun things posted on our resourcing page”. The resourcing team is spread worldwide; the HR Director is based in Sydney. Conversations on Yammer groups are described as “inject[ing] a little bit of fun and comradery and collaboration”. UKO6 prefers conversations on Yammer “it’s more open, it’s more personal” than Outlook. They see Yammer as an “open platform for discussion” where it is possible to “get a lot more people within a group to discuss ideas”. Both, UKO2 and UKO6 point out that “getting more connections and speaking, and sharing ideas with people who I work with” (UKO6) ultimately “creates excitement about what you do” (UKO2).

*Limits in value:* Not all communications on social media are perceived to be successful and valuable. UKO5 reports that direct emails (so-called In-Mails) to potential candidates on LinkedIn did not always result in desired feedback: “I sent a few in-mails but they weren’t that successful... You are probably better if you can find their email address, it is better to email them directly from your own company account as opposed to LinkedIn [...] it’s all on the tablet, on the phone, what’s wrong with picking up the phone and speaking to somebody?” They also doubt that the time spent on LinkedIn is actually worth it: “the volume of roles I handle sometimes precludes spending hours searching on specific databases. So, the work volume that we are carrying is a lot higher than we would like for a specialist recruiter. So, actually, the time to do that during the working day is quite limited – we are just juggling so many balls [...] there is a time element as well that makes the whole direction probably a little bit dis-functioning”. The communications received by the recruiters are sometimes seen as not valuable at all: “Occasionally people may come across your

details and sort of drop you a speculative ‘I am looking for a job blah’. But, in most instances, I do not respond to these because they are clearly just blanket emailing anyone who has got the word recruiter or resourcing in their job title... I don’t invest the time in these people”. The quality of the content can also be questioned. UKO5 gives an example of someone who has “put an article on LinkedIn about ten tips for interviewing, and I pretty much disagreed with everything they’ve put. Their spelling was poor; their grammar was poor, ... it’s poorly constructed”.

As with other cases, the motivations and the expected benefits of social media use are counter-balanced by time and money constraints and further inhibitors.

#### 5.2.3.2.4 Inhibitors

The focus of UKOutsourcing’s team during the interviews was regularly shifted to the question of acceptance of the in-house social media platform. UKO4 framed the question as “we have got on Yammer 3K employees on Yammer, but ten times as many on our external website using social media. The question is why they are using external social media, but we cannot get them to use internal social media”. The organisation made a similar experience with an earlier in-house system. UKO3 reports that it “was the same with ‘fuse’ which was the predecessor for Yammer – there were few users, and I started asking the question – there were about 11K on LinkedIn and only 3K on fuse”. Despite expected, perceived and actual benefits there are several factors which reportedly dampen the acceptance of social media: lack of overall strategy, perception of social media as not-business, questions about what can be said and how it will be perceived, issues with access, doubts about the value, and the need to separate professional and private life have been mentioned.

*Lack of strategy:* several interviewees stated that there is no strategic approach to social media. UKO1 presented the basis for social media use and the justification for the social media initiatives: “we don’t have a social media strategy, we’ve got people strategy and we have got an approach to engagement which complements people strategy which complements business strategy. And a key element of that for me is around communication, and a key element of communication is social media”. This statement is confirmed by UKO2, who repeatedly points out that they “don’t have a strategy around social media” and that “there is no overarching strategy” for social media use; and it is confirmed by UKO3, who sees the responsibility for Yammer with

“someone like communications function” and justifies it “because Yammer is still communications tool, with technology enabling it”. The lack of an overarching strategy becomes clearer when UKO1 refers to Yammer as a “brand and communications and marketing tool”: there is no agreement on what the purpose of Yammer is. While the organisation did not have any strategic approach to social media, the initiatives landed in the HR function with a focus on recruitment. UKO2 explains that “social media [was] for us a no-go area because there wasn’t really any encouragement to get involved in social media”. Putting LinkedIn and Yammer under the HR umbrella allowed the HR director to take some ownership of these projects, but introduced (or accentuated) the internal perception of social media as “an HR social fluffy tool”.

*Perception of social media at work:* UKO3 explains that access and social media is seen as “Not-work”: “[there is a] perception that you are playing rather than working. It has got social in the title – that’s the perception”. This results in the business not being willing to invest in engagement on these platforms. UKO1 explains the concerns around licensing costs for Yammer: “no one wanted to do a big bang launch campaign because there is that worry a lot of people coming in, lots of licenses will cost”. Similarly, UKO2 complains that “we can only afford to pay for UKO3 part-time”. Employees who are tasked with maintaining LinkedIn groups do fail to do so because social media is considered a non-work-related activity.

*Uncertainty:* Posting on social media is sometimes met with uncertainty. UKO2’s initiative to engage on LinkedIn and consolidate the organisation’s presence was not enforced from the top. They remember that there were no guidelines on what to do: “I could get myself in all sorts of hot water by going and suddenly doing something on LinkedIn on behalf of the corporate”. UKO6 also points out, that it is “safer” to follow standard guidelines for posting anything on LinkedIn: “with the standard template people think that’s what has been approved by the manager, if I am going outside of that a) I am not following the conduct and the rules and the processed, and b) I potentially might be saying something I should not be, for example. I think, again, it’s about being anxious”. The dangers of such deviations are amplified by the durability of the posts: “if you put personal opinion on a social media website for the whole world to see and blueprints of it are there forever, you know – potentially you are getting yourself into a lot of trouble”. This is also linked to uncertainty about what

constitutes public information: "... make a comment, for example, about winning a contract... you know – private and confidential information, but because you are so engrossed in the company you do not realise that this is just internal knowledge and it is not to be shared". So that "people feel that it's more hassle to think about what you are putting on social media than not to be using that at all". The fact that use of public social media by senior leaders is not being promoted inside the organisation, for example, UKO1 reports that "our CEO being on Twitter personally, but they have a very low Twitter profile in the organisation", also reflects on employees' uncertainty about what can and cannot be done. Finally, there is a fear of attracting negative publicity: "sometimes people feel like using Facebook for example, or using Facebook or LinkedIn, because it is linked to you as a person, potentially you could be opening yourself up for criticism [...] Because a candidate who has not had a good experience could potentially write a comment or a reference to a recruiter and could make them look bad in the workplace or [...] in the outside world".

*Accessibility:* some of the issues around accessing social media, specifically the in-house Yammer platform, are arising from plain technical issues. Others from people being prevented access. The technical issues are related to having access to computers and the company's network. UKO4 reports that "the reason which we said lots of people don't use Yammer or "fuse" because they don't have access, but actually, if they have got access to Facebook or LinkedIn, then Yammer is easy to access". Which is not quite right because Yammer requires access to @ukoutsourcing email address, as UKO1 explains: "there are two things they might hold it back a bit one is technical difficulties – like how do people get around the email address issue..." In addition to technical issues, managers are preventing people from accessing Yammer, UKO4 reports "difficulties of getting the receptionists onto Yammer – they [the receptionist's Line Manager] want to block it because it is 'social' media". The middle management, arguably, can do that because there is no explicit top-down permission for social media use. UKO2 argues that they "have the challenge with not having the senior leadership of the social media strategy to set this into a context. Because if you have that driven from the top, it gives the ok to everyone in a way".

#### 5.2.3.3 Who / Where / When

The interviewees in the UKOutsourcing case represented a variety of hierarchy levels within the organisation. The distinctive groups of social media use were (1) managers,

(2) employees and (3) candidates who all use social media to different extents and for different purposes. Social media use by external groups such as the candidates and ex-employees, who were but briefly mentioned is difficult to gauge. The management's use of internal and external social media platforms varies. Some managers are reported to be active on in-house social media, engaging with employees, creating content and replying to comments, other managers are reported to have no interest, and in one case even preventing their staff from accessing in-house social media platforms. On the public networks, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, the presence of senior managers was questioned, and the visibility of their activity was not confirmed.

Those employees who use the external and in-house platforms do so in accordance with the organisation's expectation. LinkedIn is used for recruitment and attraction of candidates. However, some recruiters use LinkedIn beyond the prescribed limit, e.g. re-posting jobs on their personal wall, whereas others only use LinkedIn as little as necessary, trying to avoid it wherever possible.

Notable is the fact that, despite a following of over thirty thousand employees on LinkedIn, the organisation only managed to get three thousand employees to sign up for the in-house social media platform.

#### 5.2.4 Findings Summary

The three cases demonstrate similarities in platform choice and the motivations, yet differ in the use-patterns (Table 21). The social media use in the case organisations is dominated by LinkedIn, as well as by a "private" social media: UKBank's "Avature", UKConsulting's "Networking" and UKOutsourcing's "Yammer".

Concept	Themes	UKB	UKC	UKO
<b>Evolving Social Media-Use</b>	Continuous Changing Using Social Media in Organisations - Practices	focus on broadcast and changing the way content is tailored to audiences; using social media to collect data about the audience and to distribute information	focus on information sharing and co-creation Intorduction of new internal tools, freedom to use any (in-, external) platform	introduction of internal social media platform; dedicated training for recruiters to use LinkedIn low acceptance of internal social media; linkedin for job posting
<b>Motivating Social Media-Use</b>	Realising Social Media Value for Organisations Top-Down Managing of Social Media-use	information to "market" company to potential candidates  controlled creation and release of	creating relationships through co-creation of content  knowledge maintenance through employee participation	employer "branding" & attraction; internal tools as "shrinker" - bringing employees together managers more active than employees
<b>Controlling Social Media-Use</b>	Preventing Use Enabling Interpersonal Access	access to personal information of employees sought;  employee access to create content limited by policy	access to social media platforms is free and encouraged, however the number of available platforms makes use difficult: "too many tools"	no strategy or policy on social media, line managers prohibit access to internal platforms
<b>Using Social Media</b>	Personal Motivations Emergent Using by employees	building and maintaining relationships outside the organisation; receiving organisation-related content; using social media for work despite org. policy	building and maintaining relationships in- and outside the organisation; gaining access to work-related knowledge; using LinkedIn for jobhunting	no value seen in iternal tools; LinkedIn for job and candidate-hunting; public professional social media for self-education

Table 21 - Cross-Case concept comparison

UKBank and UKOutsourcing report their focus on external social media, while UKConsulting focuses more on the utilisation of their in-house platform. Both UKBank and UKOutsourcing voice strong belief that social media requires management, the social media use needs to be controlled, and users must be attracted and driven to those platforms in a defined manner. To the contrary, UKConsulting allows employees free access to social media platforms and much of social media use comes from evolving practices and through “discovery” processes, whereby employees are encouraged to use certain platforms and features because they see those being used by their peers and managers. Despite organisational controls over social media, the external platforms in all three organisations are being used.

*The actual purpose, motivation and actions (even in organisations where there are policy or physical restrictions) deviate from those prescribed by the organisations. The employees are finding ways to overcome these limitations and to justify these deviations.*

The use of internal social media varies too. UKConsulting’s employees embrace internal social networks and make use of them for personal and professional purposes. UKOutsourcing employees only partially accept in-house social media and the organisation is puzzled why so few of its workforce participate (even passively) in the communications on Yammer. UKBank’s employees do not use the internal communication channels on social media.

In all three organisations employees voice their doubts about the value they get from social media use. Major points are usability and the relevance of the information received. Other points include the amount and the quality of the content, as well as the amount of time which is required to separate the wheat from the chaff.

*There is a consistent desire of employees to distinguish between personal and professional social media use.*

This explicit desire to keep the professional-private boundary up-right is re-enforced through the directly contradicting emergent HR practices of breaching the public-private boundaries through social media profiling by organisations (McDonald et al., 2016).

The top-down approaches in all three organisations, the organisational motivations for social media use and the resulting initiatives vary across the organisations. The personal motivations reported by the employees do vary to some extent, notably, in UKBank's and UKOutsourcing's case the personal motivations are different from those outcomes and benefits assumed by the organisation's management. In UKConsulting case, however, there is more consensus on what practices of social media use would lead to expected organisational outcomes and how these outcomes would align with personal motivations.

*The interplay of policy, organisational and personal motivations leads to different outcomes in term of Dialogue, Access, Risk/Benefit and Transparency.*

For example, it has been noted that overwhelming formal management and encouragement of knowledge-sharing can lead to (perceived) enhanced risks (Mabey & Zhao, 2017).

### 5.3 Summary

This chapter described the data analysis process – coding of interview data and development of second level themes and higher-level concepts. Following the detailed description of the iterative coding process, this chapter introduced the DART-framework (dialogue, access, risk, transparency) as an assessment framework for value (co-) creation.

The data from each case are presented and described by establishing links of codes, themes and concepts with the dimensions of the DART framework. These matrixes are used to link the concepts from the data to value creation. Findings from individual cases are compared across the cases to support the researcher's discovery of patterns in concept – outcome relationships.

## 6 Analysis and Discussion

This chapter contains analysis and discussion of the findings. Figure 27 highlights the areas of the research project addressed in this chapter. The analysis and theory are closely linked to the research design phase and are performed with the aim of answering the research question.

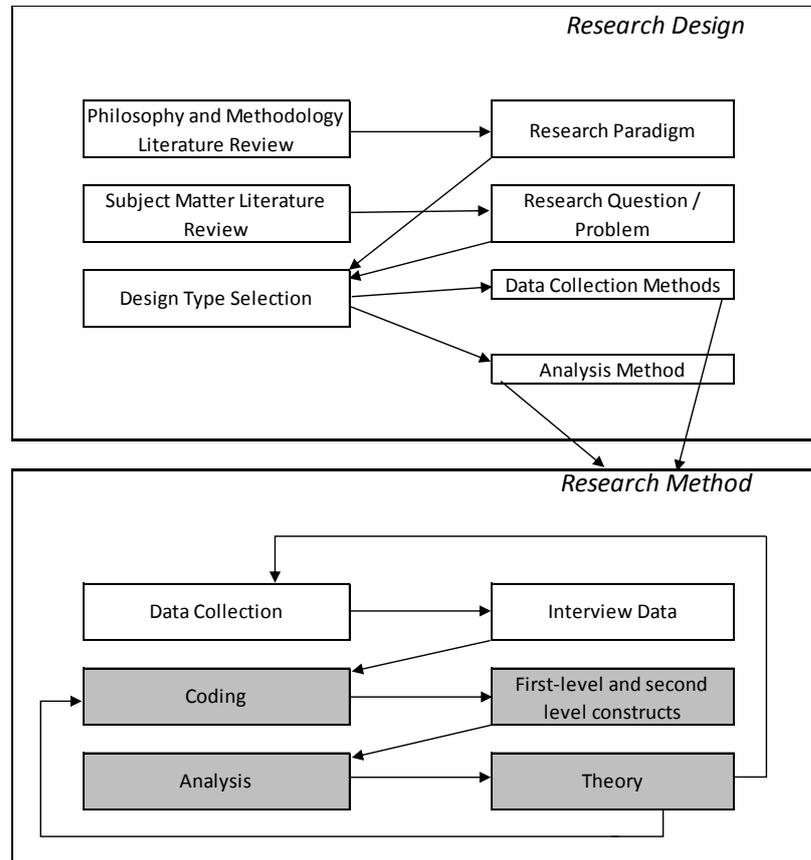


Figure 33 - Analysis Chapter relative to overall Research Design

This chapter aims to provide the answers to the research questions through analysis and discussion of the findings. This chapter uses the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm to identify when and how social media use in organisations can become strategic and applies the RBV to explain how value can be created in organisations through social media use.

### 6.1 Introduction

Within the framework of social media use in HR Management, which was identified in the Literature Review Chapter, a qualitative multiple case-study was selected as the methodological approach to address the research questions formulated in the Methodology chapter. The Case Selection (Method) and Data Analysis (Findings)

chapters described the *how* and *what* of the data collection and analysis process. The findings chapter further described themes and concepts which relate to and describe the effects of social media use on the HR Communication process. This chapter is using these concepts and themes to explain *how* these concepts relate to each other, to the HR communication process, and *why*, *when* and *how* social media use can be strategic for organisations (Figure 34).



Figure 34 - Analysis Structure

This chapter starts by identifying how social media use can impact the distinctiveness, consistency and consensus-properties of the HR communication process – arguing that social media use has the potential to disrupt the HR communication process. Findings from each of the case studies are reviewed and compared from the viewpoint of the development of new capabilities. The findings are then explained through the RBV linking the concepts and themes from the data analysis with capabilities development features of each of the case organisations.

## 6.2 HRM process transformation through Social Media use

The strength and effectiveness of an HR communication system are contingent on its ability to provide consistent and distinctive messaging, and to create a shared understanding – consensus, between the managers and employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Sanders & Yang, 2016). Distinctiveness of a message refers to the recipient’s perception of the importance of the message. A distinctive

message “stands out” among other similar messages, for example, because it comes from a trusted source: a close friend or a high-level manager. Consistency of a message is understood both in a spatial and temporal sense. In the HR communication process, a consistent message would be sent out by managers at different levels and in different departments (spatial consistency), and the message would also be consistent along the time axis – it would be applicable, e.g. to candidates applying for jobs, new starters, experienced employees, and those who are close to or are already retiring. Consensus is affirmed by providing employees with feedback channels which ensure that their understanding and interpretations of management’s message are consistent with the management’s interpretation.

With this approach to HR communications, the organisation needs to maintain control over the communication media and limits the employees’ ability to speak or to create their own message. The ever growing penetration of social media tools and platforms into personal and business environments makes control of communication media difficult (Feuls, Fieseler, & Suphan, 2014; Huang et al., 2013). Based on Lucas Jr et al. (2013) definition of disruptive technologies (Table 5) there are several examples of social media use influencing the HR communication process on the individual or organisational levels (Table 22).

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Firm</b>
<b>Process</b>	- Job search and "one-click apply" on LinkedIn vs adjusting CV and cover letter for each position, applying via application forms	- Application Process on LinkedIn vs proprietary applicant tracking systems
<b>Relationships</b>	- access to colleagues' knowledge and relationships over intranet/LinkedIn/Skype vs departmental and location silos	- Direct access to candidates on LinkedIn vs proprietary candidate pools; - Continuous alumni engagement vs irregular alumni events
<b>User Experience</b>	- Direct access to information and conversation with managers (e.g. CIO blogs)	- Fusion of recruitment and marketing activities on public social networks (YouTube, Facebook)
<b>Markets (Information Consumption/Provision)</b>	- Information about the organisation is received over social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Glassdoor) vs traditional newsletters and internal comms; - Direct feedback and voice on public and private social media vs Employee Surveys	- Direct Sourcing vs Agency Recruitment; - Up-to-Date Skills and aspirations of current employees vs outdated information based on CV at the time of application; - Anonymous instant feedback on Glassdoor vs bi-annual employee surveys
<b>Target Audiences</b>	- making personal profiles available and visible for potential recruitment - targeting specific potential employers by engaging with them on LinkedIn	- Targeting passive candidates and Alumni for recruitment vs only dealing with applications received

Table 22 - Disruptiveness Examples of Social Media in HR Process

A disruptive technology impacts individuals, organisations or society on at least three levels (Lucas Jr et al., 2013). The argument is made that social media *has the potential* of becoming a disruptive technology in the HR space. It is possible that social media

use and its integration into the business processes leads to Business Process, Business Network and possibly Business Scope Redesign and enables development of new capabilities. The original research questions:

- Q1. Who are the actors (rhetors and audiences)?
- Q2. How is social media used for management/employee communication (*practices*, directions of communication)?
- Q3. Is social media use for employee communication strategic?
- Q4. When does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

have partially been answered in the Findings Chapter. The Findings chapter identified the actors and the practices, answering questions one and two. This chapter continues to analyse the findings with the focus on the impact of social media use on the development of new capabilities and its relationship to the overall firm strategy.

### 6.3 Analysis of Social Media use in organisations

Organisations can use IT to different extents and for different purposes. The combination of both these factors allows the researcher to define whether IT use is strategic or operational (Lucas Jr et al., 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013; Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2016). Table 23 presents the matrix of IT-use purpose and embeddedness and the classification as operational or strategic.

Purpose \ Embeddedness	Acquire New Markets	Develop New Products	Support Processes	Enhance Processes
Fusion Level	Strategic	Strategic	Operational	Operational
Immersion Level	Strategic	Strategic	Operational	Operational
Connection Level	Operational	Operational	Operational	Operational

Table 23 - Strategic vs Operational Social Media use

The juxtaposition of purpose and level of embeddedness to define strategic IT use (Table 23) was derived for the analysis process of this research based on existing literature, incorporating different viewpoints on “what constitutes strategic IT use”. Whenever IT is used as a "supporting tool", its use is operational and independent of organisational strategy (Lucas Jr et al., 2013). When IT is used as a means to support or enhance existing business practices, processes or markets (for example to introduce efficiency savings), its use, however deeply the IT products are embedded into the processes, is still operational (Sims et al., 2016). To be strategic, IT-use needs to be

part of a process that redefines business processes, networks or scope and leads to entries into new markets, development of new products and thus development of new capabilities (Venkatraman, 1994), as well as to be an integral part of the business process (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

To be considered strategic, IT use needs to be embedded into the business process. The embeddedness of IT into business leads to the development of new capabilities (Haar & White, 2013). However, social media are different from “traditional” IT systems in that they are a combination of IT functionalities and features as well as a philosophical view on relationships, information sharing and transparency (DesAutels, 2011; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). The fusion of social media and organisation affects not just the business processes, but also business culture and its understanding of value-creation (Kane et al., 2014). To analyse the level of embeddedness of social media systems into an organisation, Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013) propose to assess the value proposition, value creation, value capture, segmentation scheme, the interaction pattern between the organisation and its consumers, and finally between consumers themselves. Adopting their model to HR communication process, the "organisation" - i.e. the HR department and managers speaking on behalf of the organisation are placed vis-a-vis the employees (Table 24).

*Value proposition* refers to what value employees are expected to gain from the HR-communication process. The different propositions can range from seeing the employee as a “consumer” and the employer as “producer” with clearly defined roles (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Durugbo & Pawar, 2014; Huang et al., 2013) to co-creational model, where employer and employees create value together in a co-creation process (Grönroos, 2008; Izvercianu, Şeran, & Branea, 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a).

*Value creation* captures the means of, and the actors in the value creation process (Durugbo & Pawar, 2014; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a).

*Segmentation scheme* describes how the value is attributed to “consumers” – it could, for example, be the organisational hierarchy (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004), personal interests (Leroy, Cova, & Salle, 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013), or levels of participation (Huang et al., 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

*Interaction patterns* between management and employees describe how the access to content creation is regulated and how the communications channels are being used (Huang et al., 2013). These patterns relate directly to the proverbial “ideal speech” situation defined by Habermas, which grants all participants transparent and equal access to media, ability to question and discuss any statement, and freedom to speak with equal power (Leeper, 1996).

*Interaction patterns* between employees, on the other hand, refer to employees’ communicative and thus (value) creative behaviour among themselves, independent and free of employer’s interference (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Huang et al., 2013).

The framework summarised in Table 24 is used in the following section to analyse each of the case studies. The level of embeddedness of social media into HR communication Process is evaluated and explained using the above criteria and the “value” of social media use is juxtaposed with the level of social media embeddedness into the organisations’ “Social DNA” (Kane et al., 2014).

	<b>Traditional HRM (Connection Phase)</b>	<b>HRM with Social Computing (Immersion Phase)</b>	<b>Social Content HRM (Fusion Phase)</b>
<b>Value Proposition</b>	Employees derive value from consuming firm-delivered content.	Employees derive value from consuming firm-delivered content and from interaction with other users on the website via social computing features.	Employees derive value from an ongoing content-based social experience in which they can fulfil different roles in the site and form meaningful relationships.
<b>Value Creation</b>	Created by the firm by producing/delivering content.	Created mainly by the firm by producing/delivering content and also by social interaction.	Created by both firm and employees through a ladder of participation.
<b>Value Capture</b>	Information dissemination	Information dissemination, sharing and archiving	Employee commitment, organisational learning, passive knowledge transfer
<b>Segmentation scheme</b>	Organisational structure (hierarchy and departmental)	Organisational Structure and valuation (via social computing e.g. interest areas).	Organisational Structure and social consumption based on the ladder of participation.
<b>Pattern of Interaction between firm and employees</b>	Feedback in the form of targeted messages or questionnaires (on and off-line).	Interaction throughout various variations of social computing add-ons—talkbacks, forum/blog postings.	Interaction throughout an embedded social platform.
<b>Pattern of Interaction between employees</b>	Not available on site.	Interaction through conversations using social computing features forums, blogs.	Socializing around content, social curation of content through user pages.

*Table 24 - Embeddedness Levels of social media in the communication process*

### 6.3.1 Case Study analysis

Each of the cases analysed in this project was selected based on observable interaction patterns between employers and employees on public social media. At the beginning of the study, it was not clear whether the same patterns will be observed inside the organisations. However, these public interactions provided support for selecting the case organisations by comparing engagement levels of each organisation (Figure 35).

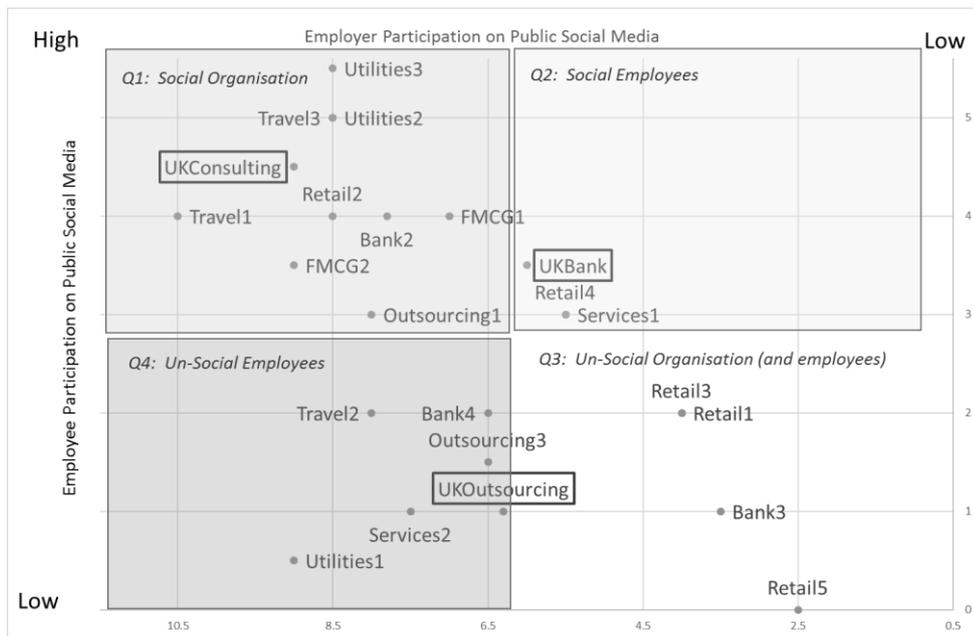


Figure 35 - Employee-Employer engagement levels for case selection

In UKBank the interaction pattern was that of “social employees” – the employees interacted on social media, while the “organisation” was not visible. UKConsulting occupied the space of “social organisations” where both the organisation and employees interactively post on social media. In UKOutsourcing, the pattern was “unsocial employees” – the organisation was visibly more active than its employees.

Each case exhibited different interaction patterns on public social media. As expected, value proposition, value creation, segmentation and internal interaction patterns were different. Following the comparison logic (Eisenhardt, 1989; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009), the differences and similarities of these patterns should explain the different outcomes in development of new capabilities, and creation of competitive advantage.

#### 6.3.1.1 Comparative assessment of social media embeddedness

As expected, the levels of social media embeddedness into HR process varied across the case organisations (Table 25).

	<b>UK Bank (Connection Phase)</b>	<b>UK Outsourcing (Immersion Phase)</b>	<b>UK Consulting (Fusion Phase)</b>
<b>Value Proposition</b>	Consuming firm-delivered content: job postings, firm related content	Consuming firm-delivered content: jobs, manager blogs and Interaction with other users via social computing features on Yammer	Ongoing content-based social experience (Connections, Blogs, Blue Thanks) in which employees can fulfil different roles (creator/commenter/consumer) and form meaningful relationships.
<b>Value Creation</b>	Created by the firm by producing/delivering content.	Created mainly by the firm by producing/delivering content and also by social interaction.	Created by both firm and employees through a ladder of participation.
<b>Value Capture</b>	Information dissemination	Information dissemination and sharing, relationship building across geographies	Employee commitment, organisational learning, passive knowledge transfer
<b>Segmentation scheme</b>	Organisational structure (hierarchy and departmental), some social valuation	Organisational Structure and valuation (via social computing e.g. interest areas).	Organisational Structure, social valuation and social consumption based on the ladder of participation.
<b>Pattern of Interaction between firm and employees</b>	Feedback in the form of targeted messages or questionnaires (on and off-line).	Interaction throughout various variations of social computing add-ons—talkbacks, forum/blog postings and questionnaires (off-line)	Interaction throughout an embedded social platform.
<b>Pattern of Interaction between employees</b>	Not available on public platforms.	Interaction through conversations using social computing features forums, blogs on the internal platform No interactions on public platforms	Socializing around content, social curation of content through user pages.

*Table 25 - Embeddedness Levels of social media in HR process*

This section describes the differences across the cases. Previously, the case organisations have been listed in alphabetical order. In this section, the case organisations are discussed based on their achieved levels of embeddedness to underscore the differences and emphasise the “progress” of each organisation: UKBank at “connection phase”, UKOutsourcing at “immersion phase” and UKConsulting at “fusion phase”.

#### 6.3.1.1.1 Value proposition and purpose (why use social media)

The expected benefits for the employees which would arise from social media use vary across the case studies.

*UKBank focuses on “information content”, UKOutsourcing on “collaboration” and “information and knowledge sharing”, and UKConsulting on “information and knowledge sharing” and on “communication and relationships”.*

UKBank’s focus on social media use is on delivering controlled information. The value proposition for the employees is described as receiving “targeted, relevant and timely communications”. Taking this position as a departure point, additional benefits of social media use are seen in recruitment areas – both for the employees (internal and external candidates) to be able to acquire information about open positions, and for the organisation to access and “attract someone using marketing techniques”.

UKOutsourcing has a two-fold approach to social media use. One initiative: extended LinkedIn presence and the replication of selected LinkedIn’s features on the internal Yammer-Platform is focused on broadcasting information. Thus, the value proposition here is, like in UKBank, to gain access to information about the organisation, open positions, best practices and so on. The other initiative, focusing on promotion of Yammer as an internal social network, goes beyond simple information sharing scenario and is aimed at encouraging collaboration across departments and geographical location as a “shrinker”, as one of the interviewees referred to it: a tool that brings people closer together and creates a “feeling of affiliation” with and within the organisation.

UKConsulting’s value proposition is focusing on collaboration and relationship building. The collaboration element goes beyond internal collaboration and includes employee-customer interactions on public and semi-public social media such as

LinkedIn groups and “Networking”. The significant difference to other two cases is that the “information” or “knowledge” shared and accessed on these platforms is user-generated and maintained, and not broadcast by the organisation. Additional value of social media use is the creation of closer relationships between colleagues inside the organisation. These relationships are established and maintained by employees themselves and are supported by platforms provided by UKConsulting. Finally, the value of accessing broadcast information about the organisation, planned changes and open vacancies is similar to that reported in other cases.

#### 6.3.1.1.2 Value creation and capture (how and who creates the value)

Organisations take different approaches to delivering the value to employees via social media use.

*UKBank provides tools which allow employees to consume the information, UKOutsourcing provides access to communication platforms and access to broadcast platforms, and UKConsulting is offering several public and private social media platforms to allow collaboration and content creation.*

UKBank sees the value realised in delivering relevant information to its employees. Social media (LinkedIn groups and Avature) allow employees easy access to information about the organisation and, specifically, job profiles and openings. The employees are encouraged to register their “interest” on these platforms and so to enable the organisation (e.g. the recruiters) to send out targeted “relevant” information. The communication pattern between the organisation and its employees is “sender-receiver”. Social media are used to enable more efficient targeting of broadcasts. The employees are described as “audiences” to whom information is to be “brought”.

UKOutsourcing attempts to realise the “information value” on social media by taking two approaches. First, they provide “generic” information (something which is not directly UKOutsourcing related) and thus attract a larger audience. Second, information is released on pre-defined social media so that the value of the social media use increases, as there is an artificially created scarcity of information. Employees are encouraged to “follow” their organisation on social media, while at the same time managers are encouraged to create content on these platforms to be seen as “thought leaders”. The traditional roles of Rhetor/Audience are maintained. Value of

knowledge-sharing and collaboration is realised through active participation of employees in Yammer groups whereby user content creation is encouraged.

UKConsulting is using a variety of social media platforms with different aims. LinkedIn is used, like in both other cases, as a recruitment platform to advertise openings and search for candidates. LinkedIn groups and groups on “Networking” are used to facilitate interactions between employees and customers. The content in these groups – be it project or product groups, is user-generated and the organisation allows new rhetors to actively participate in the exchange. Internally, UKConsulting provides several platforms to generate and consume content. These include “Gratitude” (a tool to actively thank a colleague), personal Twitter-style (micro-)blogs, and project/product related pages on “Networking”. Notable is that participative behaviour on social media is a constituent part of employee’s performance evaluation.

#### 6.3.1.1.3 Segmentation scheme (how value is attributed to different consumers)

The value realised by participants was contingent upon different criteria in all cases.

*UKBank focuses value attribution on hierarchies and departments, UKOutsourcing’s segmentation is based on hierarchy and social valuation, and UKConsulting uses segmentation by hierarchy, interests and participation levels.*

UKBank differentiated employees by their stages in the employee life cycle (candidate, employee, alumni) or hierarchy/department, and to some extent by their information content interests (which are still linked to departments or geographies e.g. finance, HR, Asia Markets etc.) for sending out targeted information based on the interests specified by the audience.

UKOutsourcing addresses internal (employee) and external groups (employees, candidates, customers) differently. Internally, the segmentation is done by a mixture of social valuation (interests) and business hierarchy (teams).

UKConsulting focuses on a variety of dimensions including a mixture of social value and hierarchy (projects, products, and teams), relationship groups (employees/customers), and social participation levels (consumer/ commenter/ creator).

#### 6.3.1.1.4 Manager – Employee Interaction patterns

Each organisation’s manager/employee interaction patterns were idiosyncratic.

*UKBank takes a top-down broadcast approach, UKOutsourcing uses a mixed approach between broadcast and content creation on internal platforms, and UKConsulting encourages content creation by employees.*

UKBank's interaction pattern is one of targeted, "heavily monitored" broadcast with limited options for feedback. There is a limited capacity in terms of manpower to collect feedback on social media or to maintain engagement. Employee feedback on HR matters is collected via annual surveys; feedback mechanism for candidates and alumni on the Avatar-platform is not yet defined. Some social media features such as "open profiles" are used by the organisation to tailor broadcast content.

UKOutsourcing's interactions are varying depending on the platform. On public social media, the interactions are one-way. Content on LinkedIn is broadcasted, and no feedback is expected. On Twitter, the pattern is reversed – the organisation "monitors" Twitter-feeds but does not interact. On internal social media, the feedback is instantaneous and interactive.

UKConsulting's interaction between the organisation and employees is characterised by blurred borders. Employees, managers, and customers can (and are encouraged to) generate content and feedback constantly. The feedback between organisation and employees happens through social interaction online and is complemented by off-line actions e.g. implementing employees' suggestions made online and consideration of employee's participation on social media in performance reviews.

#### 6.3.1.1.5 Employee – Employee Interaction patterns

Employees in each of the organisations interact with each other differently, create and share different content. However, similar patterns are recognisable across all cases.

*UKBank employees interact on a personal level on personal matters.*

*UKOutsourcing employees show a mixture of interaction patterns – passive content consumption without active interaction on public social networks, and interaction within organisational structure (e.g. teams) or content topics on in-house social media (e.g. "Yammer").*

*UKConsulting employees interact based on content (product/project groups) and social interactions (microblogs, "Gratitude").*

In UKBank the interactions between employees happen mainly on a personal level and are about “knowing how things are going in each other’s careers” and “keeping in touch”. These interactions take place *outside* of the sanctioned platforms and are not encouraged by the organisation. Notably, LinkedIn access for non-recruiters is blocked. However, employees use their own devices to access it.

UKOutsourcing encourages managers to generate content on public social media and to become “thought leaders”. However, active interaction between employees is not expected (or reported). On the in-house social media platform “Yammer”, on the other hand, employees at all levels are encouraged to interact directly, share content and comment on it so that conversations around blogs and post are possible.

In UKConsulting the interactions around content are encouraged. Light-touch socialising by consuming and commenting on content of colleagues whom one does not necessarily know personally (potentially divided by geographies) creates and enables ongoing “conversation”. Another form of interaction is “passive interaction” by following colleague’s blogs. Finally, more personal and direct interaction is supported by “Gratitude” which allows to send a “thank you”-note to a colleague.

#### 6.3.1.1.6 Cross-case assessment of embeddedness levels

Based on the analysis of the Embeddedness Levels in each organisation, all three phases are represented by the case organisations.

*The connection phase (using IT as supporting tool for existing processes) is observed in UKBank. UKOutsourcing social media use is currently in the connection phase (IT enables and supports new and existing processes). The fusion phase (inseparable merge of IT and process) is observed in UKConsulting.*

UKBank exhibits all properties of an organisation in a “Connection phase”. Social media are used as a platform for creation and dissemination of firm-created content, two-way communication and interactions are neither expected nor supported. Some limited form of valuation of social features – employees’ ability to indicate their areas of interest – is used as part of the segmentation scheme.

In comparison, UKOutsourcing seeks to embed social media use into existing processes and sees relationship-building as part of their value proposition. Content

creation “rights” are partially devolved to employees on internal social media and the value of social media use is, albeit dominated by, not limited to content consumption. At the time of the study, the segmentation schemes and patterns of interactions still exhibited features of connection-phase: segmentation by hierarchy, dominance of organisation- over user-generated content. Furthermore, employees were not expected to interact on public social media platforms. UKOutsourcing reports itself in between the “Connection Phase” and “Fusion Phase”, placing itself into the intermediate “Immersion Phase”.

UKConsulting’s social media use is ongoing throughout and penetrates many areas of organisational life from attraction and recruitment, to knowledge creation and training, customer engagement, and day-to-day project delivery. The employees are encouraged (even financially) to actively participate and to improve their “social score” so that the social media use has an explicit monetary value attached to it. Interactions between managers, employees, and customers take place on embedded social media platforms which, in turn, are so intertwined that some interviewees were not able to differentiate those platforms and their uses. UKConsulting is in the “Fusion phase”, deeply embedding social media into its processes.

#### *6.3.1.2 Assessment of Capabilities Development*

As argued earlier in this chapter the level of embeddedness of an IT system is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for development of new capabilities (Lucas Jr et al., 2013).

*The purpose of social media use as another dimension to be assessed to identify whether the organisation develops new capabilities. Social media use purpose – reported by each organisation overlapped in some areas and differed in others.*

Each organisation used LinkedIn for enhancing their recruitment process – LinkedIn was used to advertise jobs to a potentially wider audience of candidates (comparable to reaching out to larger consumer groups). The supporting processes, however, did vary across organisations. UKBank relied on passive job posting, UKOutsourcing for active candidate searches and targeted job adverts, and UKConsulting used LinkedIn for advertising jobs as well as referrals. In other areas, such as employee engagement and knowledge creation/sharing, the purposes varied too. UKBank did not report any

social media use for knowledge sharing, UKOutsourcing saw the purpose of engagement on social media in the creation of an alignment among employees, and UKConsulting used social media platforms as primary platform for organisation-employee-customer engagement, content creation and sharing.

UKBank's reported purpose of social media use is the *improvement of their information delivery process and their existing recruitment practices*. Social media features such as self-service and ongoing profile updates are seen as beneficial for both the distribution of "relevant" information and for enhancing the recruitment experience (both for recruiters by giving them access to a more refined, yet larger candidate pool, and for candidates, giving them the overview of better matching vacancies).

UKOutsourcing identifies the purpose of social media in two broad areas: *enhancement of current recruitment and attraction processes* and "markets" (i.e. the candidates targeted by recruiters) and the *development of new communication practices* within the organisation utilising the internal social media platform. The first purpose is similar to that reported by two other cases. It enhances current practices and processes and uses certain social media features such as accessible detailed candidate profiles, instant communication and wide reach to improve recruitment processes and communications. The second purpose aims at disrupting current organisational silos which exist due to geographical or hierarchical structures.

UKConsulting's reported purpose of social media use is manifold. Similar to other cases, LinkedIn is used in *support of existing recruitment process*. However, the "traditional" recruitment *process* of advertising-application-selection *has been further developed* to (1) allow LinkedIn referrals (thus replacing or eliminating the "advertising" step), (2) allow applications via LinkedIn (removing the need for the candidates of a tailoring a CV for a specific job), and (3) to extend the selection process based on referral and LinkedIn profile rather than CV and cover letter evaluation. In addition, social media platforms are set to *replace several existing processes* including knowledge creation (wiki), knowledge management (documentation and knowledge sharing), events calendar, blogging platform, and a networking tool to engage with colleagues (e.g. through Q&A threads). These new information exchanges and relationships are aimed at *re-defining existing communication patterns and flows*. For

example, the open Q&A threads allow “shouting out” of questions into wider community without targeting a specific individual or group where relevant knowledge is presumed.

The overall position of the case organisations is summarised in Table 26, identifying each organisation’s purpose and embeddedness level of social media use.

Purpose \ Embeddedness	Acquire New Markets	Develop New Products	Support Processes	Enhance Processes
Fusion Level	UKC - Attraction and Recruitment through engagement and communication	UKC - Knowledge Management / Referral Recruitment/ Communication flows	UKC - Project Management	
Immersion Level	UKO - Attraction and Recruitment through information and communication	UKO - Silo breakdown/ Relationships	UKO - Recruitment	UKO - Information Delivery
Connection Level	UKB - Attraction and Recruitment through better information		UKB - Recruitment	UKB - Information Delivery

Table 26 - Strategic Social Media use in case organisations

The highlighted areas in Table 26 are examples of strategic use as defined at the beginning of this chapter (Table 23). Two organisations (UKOutsourcing and UKBank) expect the “*information*” to be the value of social media use. UKConsulting sees the social media use value in creation and maintenance of *relationships*.

*The focus of developing relationships and re-definition of interaction patterns suggests that social media use is more deeply embedded in UKConsulting than in UKOutsourcing, and more deeply embedded in UKOutsourcing than in UKBank.*

UKConsulting, through developing of new relationships between the employees and the organisation and among the employees, and through fusion of technology and process, develops a “Social DNA” (Kane et al., 2014) which creates a qualitatively different organisational approach to social media use.

### 6.3.2 Explaining Value Creation

The case organisations seek to realise the value of social media use in a variety of ways. UKOutsourcing and UKConsulting focus on the creation of a shared understanding. UKOutsourcing reports that the expected benefits include the “feeling

of affiliation” and a creation of a “common sense of purpose”. Similarly, UKConsulting suggests that distribution of best-practices and alignment on procedures and goals (e.g. within a project) is one of the expected social media use benefits. The shared understanding, or “consensus” as referred to by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), has been linked to increased organisational performance (Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005). The ability of the employees to build and maintain relationships (Robb, 2014) and to develop shared understanding (Sanders & Yang, 2016) can be viewed as capability.

HRM literature identifies High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) as an overarching concept for sets of HR approaches which lead to superior organisational performance (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Short- and long-term views of HPWS require organisations to establish and to maintain relationships with the employees. This research has shown that social media use can support creation and maintenance of such relationships.

The concepts developed in this study can be linked to value created properties of social media use and so explain *when* and *how* social media use can lead to creation of relationships and generate strategic value (Table 27).

Capabilities Development and Value Creation Concept	Purpose and Value Proposition	Value Creation	Value Capture	Segmentation scheme	Pattern of Interaction between firm and employees/ and between employees
Motivating Social Media-Use	The purpose and value proposition are used to "justify" or explain the Motivations for Social Media use	Value Creation and Motivating Social Media-use are self sustaining, with the former encouraging the latter, and the latter being necessary to engage in Value Creation activities	The absolute/relative value and its persistency (long/short term) are impacting the motivation for Social Media-use	Segmentation is used to motivate different "segments" (i.e. user-groups) to use Social Media by providing different value propositions to each segment	Interaction patterns and Motivation are in a close interplay, whereby the Motivations cause patterns to emerge, and the Patterns increase (or decrease) Motivation
Controlling Social Media-Use	Control of Social Media use is explained by the need to "direct" the use to achieve the set Purpose	Controlling Social Media-use implies control over who can generate and who can capture the value	Control of Social Media-use allows to "capture" and direct the value to the recipients designated by the "controller"	Segmentation of users is a way of controlling the use/access and creation of information	Interaction patterns are restricted by controls on Social Media-use, at the same time, new (unsanctioned, unexpected and (possibly) undesired) interaction patterns emerge to circumvent control
Evolving Social Media-Use	Interplay of "bottom-up" changes (through new value propositions) and "top-down" changes to serve the Purpose	value creation patterns change with the evolution of Social Media-use	Through evolution of use-patterns additional value can be captured by e.g. new users gaining access to valueable resources	Interplay of restriction on Social Media-use evolving through segmentation of users and changing Segmentation because of Social Media-use evolving	Interplay of interaction patterns directing evolving of Social Media-use and changing interaction patterns because of Social Media-use evolving
Using Social Media	The Value can only be realised if and when Social Media is being used*	Value is creating by at least one party using Social Media to generate messaging and at least one other party using Social Media to consume those	The value us captured through continuous Social Media-use	Interplay of "enforced" (or existing) segmentation on how soial media can be used, and sustaining/redifining of the segmentation through continuous use	The interaction patterns are an obervable effect of Social Media-use

Table 27 - Linking Concepts from QDA to Properties of Strategic IT use

Participative behaviour (“Motivating Social Media use”) aspired by UKOutsourcing and encouraged by UKConsulting has been linked to higher levels of commitment (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013), improved performance and value generation (Lawler, 1988; Walton, 1985). Repeated interactions (i.e. continuous engagement on social media) support building of trust and increase cooperative behaviour at team level (Bapna, Liangfei, & Rice, 2017; Maruping & Magni, 2015). Dialogic information exchange, rather than broadcast, further contributes to organisational learning and cooperation (Curtis, Dennis, & McNamara, 2017). Through the lens of organisational commitment, social media use can thus be explained as a capability.

Organisational learning and knowledge transfer theory (“Evolving Social Media use”), supports the view of social media use for information and knowledge exchange as a capability to develop new processes (products) and to become strategic (Kane et al., 2014; Tippins & Sohi, 2003). The established link between organisational learning and job performance further supports the claim of a positive contribution of social media use to organisational performance (Huang & Zhang, 2016).

UKConsulting and UKOutsourcing sought to develop new “products” through social media use. UKConsulting, for example, maintains a knowledge management “system” created around an interactive employee-customer platform where knowledge is not just “stored” in the form of documents, but is created and maintained as questions and answers, group discussions, and best-practice conversations. UKOutsourcing encourages cross-departmental collaboration by making department-specific knowledge transparent and shareable across the organisation.

The concept of “Controlling Social Media use” is simultaneously enabling and hindering value creation. For example, abuse of IT systems, specifically social media, can lead to a detrimental value (Weatherbee, 2010). On the other hand, as shown in the case of UKBank and (to some extent) in case of UKOutsourcing, restrictions on social media use can result in users “inventing” new ways of communicating and relationship building which, in turn, lead to creation of new dialogic relationships between parties (Buch, 2015; Sherif et al., 2006; Zorn et al., 2011). These new communication pathways represent new and unique ways of combining IT and Human Resources with a potential to develop new capabilities.

Finally, the concept of “Using Social Media” is an overarching concept which links back to several themes in the research. First, social media use requires the platforms and technologies to be “accepted” by the user and to be “adopted” into existing (and new) organisational processes (Curtis et al., 2017; Haar & White, 2013; Ransbotham et al., 2012). UKBank refuses to accept and adopt the communication processes and patterns (e.g. Recruiter/ Candidate over WhatsApp, Employee/ Alumni on LinkedIn) into their practices and is “missing out” on potential new relationships between (from the organisation's perspective) disconnected groups. Second, the “using” requires acceptance and continuity (hence the –ing suffix) to maintain relationships (Bapna et al., 2017; Stone et al., 2013). UKConsulting’s employees point out that discontinued use/ lack of participation in Q&A-sessions on internal social media are a demotivating factor and reduce value from sharing knowledge. Similarly, UKOutsourcing’s management states that low numbers of employees using social media (internal social media platforms and LinkedIn) are limiting their ability to establish stronger affiliation between employees and the organisation. Thus, “Using Social Media” is a necessary concept to enable *continuous* development of products, relationships and capabilities.

#### 6.4 Summary

This chapter set off with the argument that social media as distinctive sub-set of information technologies has the potential to be disruptive. Integration of new technologies in business processes could lead to the development of new capabilities. Thus, the technology-use could become strategic for organisations. Focusing on social media use in the context of HR communications the research questions are

- Q1. Who are the actors (*rhetors* and *audiences*)?
- Q2. How is social media used for management/employee communication (*practices*, directions of communication)?
- Q3. Is social media use for employee communication strategic?
- Q4. When does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

The Findings chapter addresses the first two descriptive questions and identifies two distinctive participant types: internal and external. Internal groups included recruiters, employees, and managers. External groups are ex-employees and candidates. All participants of the communication and information exchange are using social media differently and are guided by different motivations. This chapter focussed on the two

latter questions: (a) is social media use for employee communications strategic, and (b) does social media use lead to the development of new capabilities?

Question 3, whether social media use for employee communication is strategic, can be answered positively. Following the cross-case analysis of three case studies, the conclusion is that *social media use can be a strategic component of HRM communication process.*

*The case organisations with higher levels of social media integration in their business processes are able to develop new capabilities via creation of new relationships between employees.*

The findings show that deeper levels of embeddedness of social media use into the organisational processes leads to the development of alignment between management and the employees, which improves organisational performance (Kane et al., 2014). While it can be argued that embeddedness of IT in itself can be understood as capability and be strategic (Haar & White, 2013), the analysis suggests that the embeddedness of IT allows new capabilities to be developed.

Question 4, concerning the conditions for social media use to become strategic and to lead to the development of new capabilities, can be answered by analysing the *level of embeddedness* of social media use and the *intended purpose*. Organisations develop new interaction capabilities through social media use – employees can interact with each other, managers and customers in new and qualitatively different ways.

*Emergent information flows allow and support creation of new dialogic relationships. The decoupling of information creation and dissemination processes creates new forms of organisational knowledge and learning, as long as the organisation is not focusing on content management and information control.*

Social media use is strategic and leads to the development of new capabilities when it is used for building *relationships*, *transfer knowledge* (passive and active), and organisational *learning* instead of information storage/retrieval. *Participative* behaviour and organisational *commitment* reinforce the development of new capabilities.

## 7 Thesis Summary and Reflections

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the entire research project. This chapter is aimed at providing a summary of work done, theoretical and practical lessons learned, and identifying areas of further development and research.

The chapter sets off with a discussion of contributions, shortcomings and opportunities for further research (not mentioning a “PhD on writing a PhD” though). It then moves on to review the research design and comparison between the original design in the methodology chapter and the actual design implemented during the research project. Specifically, the methodology, data collection and case selections are analysed from the ‘rear-view mirror’ point of view. The chapter, concludes with reflections on the PhD process itself.

### 7.1 Introduction

Looking back at this research project – a four and a half years part-time PhD which at times felt like six months and at other times like forty years, this chapter consists of discussions and reviews, and aims at giving a post-factum analysis of the PhD process, the design, the paths chosen and approaches taken during the entire project. It would probably be possible to write an entire PhD thesis on writing a PhD, for brevity and because one PhD would already be plenty, this chapter does not go into much detail but provides highlights (and some low lights) of the PhD process, as well as outlooks for further improvements and research opportunities. This chapter also includes personal reflections on the process and programme and is possibly more "interpretative" than any other chapter in this thesis – this summary chapter includes personal views and interpretations of the researcher, his feelings and thoughts during the research process and his aspirations, frustrations and hopes.

### 7.2 Contributions, Shortcomings and Opportunities for further research

The expression with which every PhD student is confronted early in their research is “focus, focus, focus”. Many PhD researchers set off with the aspiration to cure some if not all social plagues like hunger, poverty and corruption. The moment when a slow realisation dawns upon the young researcher that their PhD will be barely more than a grain of sand in the vast body of human knowledge is quite sobering. “Focus” and “framing” – positioning one’s research within a specific context where the phenomenon occurs – are implying limitations to the research. This section discusses

the contribution of the research to theory and praxis, highlights its shortcomings and provides suggestions for further research.

The research was based on three theories – the view of the HRM as a process of communication was the “setting” in which the research was conducted (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016; Wolf et al., 2016), the rhetorical practices in organisations and social media use (Huang et al., 2013; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013) provided a framework for describing social media use and its impact on HRM communication process, and the Resource Based View of organisations (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2011; Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Venkatraman, 1994) was used as an analytical lens to explore the effects of social media use.

The research objective was to deepen our understanding of the management practice of HRM, to uncover and describe the impact of social media use on current HRM process and praxis.

#### 7.2.1 HRM Process and attribution theory

In their influential papers, Bowen and Ostroff (2004; 2016) argue that a strong HRM system is linked to improved organisational performance. A strong system is characterised by three main properties: (1) distinctiveness of a message, (2) consistency of communications, and (3) consensus (a shared common understanding).

*The research findings suggest that all three of these properties are, or can be, affected intentionally or otherwise by social media use.*

Following sections provide an overview of social media use effects on each of these properties.

Distinctiveness of a message is derived from its visibility, understandability, legitimacy and relevance (Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). The *visibility* element of messages and communications on (public and private) social media does not deserve further elaboration and is inherent in most social media platforms “by definition” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; DesAutels, 2011; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). This research, however, shows that social media use influences the *legitimacy* of a message – who can or is allowed to make statements about HR (or organisation) relevant issues. Huang et al. (2013) show how organisations exert top-down control over

communication resources and limit employee's access to these resources. Supporting their model, the findings show that some organisations (UKBank and UKOutsourcing) try to control social media use, thus to undermine the *legitimacy* of any statement made on unsanctioned platforms and to keep control over the communication media. At the same time employees are free to choose what content they are consuming (and creating) on some social media. The content creation and consumption on social media becomes less controlled and controllable as noted by previous research (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In all three cases, the *relevance* of a "sanctioned" or a top-down message from management becomes diluted by other user generated content which is more *relevant* to and better *understood* by the employees.

Consistency of communications requires a top-down strategic alignment of cause-effect relationships (e.g. consistent bonus payments based on performance), the validity of practices, and consistency across employees in time (from hire-to-fire) and space (departments and levels) (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). The findings suggest that social media use has the potential to make any (in-) consistencies in the *cause-effect relationships visible*, e.g. UKConsulting prompting employees for suggestions on social media and then implementing these in openly visible and consistent communication. Social media use supports as well as disrupts Consistency of communications. For example, UKConsulting encourages cross-departmental communication, whereas participants in UKOutsourcing complain about the recreation of already existing silos on social media in the form of closed "groups" based on departmental structure.

Social media use further impacts Consensus, which is based on shared understanding, agreement of rhetors, and perceived fairness of practices (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). The data indicate that when the management is engaged and participates on social media, the understanding of messages can be verified and validated. Employees in UKConsulting can and do comment on manager's posts and blogs, and receive feedback (and even remuneration) for their contributions and participation. In UKOutsourcing managers try to actively engage with the employees in open discussions on (internal) social media to validate messages and thus establish a shared understanding. In UKBank different departments have different approaches to social media use, the management is not participating on any public social media which, in

turn, leads to a lack of a shared understanding among employees on company's policy and strategy.

### 7.2.2 Communications Flows and Rhetorical Practices

Looking at the impact of internal social media use on rhetorical practices in organisations Huang et al. (2013) noted emergence of new communication flows within organisations which complement and support "traditional" top-down controlled communications. The data and findings from this research confirm their findings and extend those.

*This research further highlights the emergence of (1) new rhetors, (2) new audiences, and (3) new flows (practices) between existing rhetors.*

The following examples are focusing on internal social media use only to make this research comparable with that of Huang et al. (2013). UKConsulting invites customers and product users to participate in knowledge creation and sharing on a semi-public social media platform ("Networking"). UKOutsourcing creates "department" groups on an internal social media platform (Yammer) to allow communications between employees across hierarchies and geographies. UKBank uses an "internal" tool (Avature) which is managed and controlled by the organisation to allow employees to connect and engage with candidates and alumni. While in UKBank's case the candidates are conceptualised as "audiences" – recipients of targeted information, UKConsulting perceives the customers not as an audience but as rhetors. In all three cases, new communication flows emerge: between employees and candidates in UKBank, across geographies and hierarchy-levels in UKOutsourcing, and across departments, geographies and hierarchy-levels in UKConsulting. Previous research has demonstrated that social media use enables organisations to develop new communication pathways and to increase the reach and the richness of content (Curtis et al., 2017; Heffernan & Dundon, 2016; Huang et al., 2013; Mabey & Zhao, 2017).

*This research confirms those findings and extends them to a new context of the HR Management communication process.*

Huang et al. suggest that the borderline between rhetors (those who speak and maintain control over communication resources) and audiences (those who receive the message

and have limited access to communication resources) becomes blurred. It becomes more difficult to distinguish between a “speaker” and a “listener”. In addition to Huang et al.’s findings which show new pathways developing in organisational communication practices, this research shows that a more democratised access to rhetorical resources allows new audiences/rhetors to enter the field. Groups of people who were not previously involved in the intra-organisational communication processes now join the conversations (e.g. alumni, candidates, customers).

These new audiences make the communication processes within organisations more complex. Not only through the introduction of new pathways, but more so through the introduction of new (unexpected, uncontrolled, unintended) audiences. For example, companies might have some control over what their current employees say about the organisation but have little control over what alumni, employees’ family members, or unsuccessful candidates say. New IT-enabled and -supported communication practices have been discussed (1) in IS literature as adding value to internal communication and knowledge-exchange processes (Curtis et al., 2017), as well as (2) in HRM literature as supporting the implementation of new HR practices (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016).

*The findings from this research support and extend previous studies, apply to IS and HRM fields, and underline the importance of new (communication) practices in employee/management interactions as a source of successful implementations of HR strategies.*

The effect of these new communication patterns and resulting relationships can be assessed through the lens of RBV.

### 7.2.3 Resource Base View and Development of Capabilities

The resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991) was used as an analytical lens during this research project. Social media use in organisations was analysed towards a framework of purpose and embeddedness of social media in organisational processes which was developed based on El Sawy’s model of process embeddedness and Venkatraman’s Business Transformation Model (El Sawy, 2003; Lucas Jr et al., 2013; Venkatraman, 1994).

This section gives a summary of findings and analysis related to the development of *capabilities* through social media use. These capabilities are theorised as strategic

resources under the RBV. The findings show that social media use can be strategic under certain conditions.

*Social media use is not (primarily) delivering value through information creation/dissemination/storage. Deeper embeddedness of social media into organisational processes allows employees to build relationships which would not be possible otherwise.*

For example, UKOutsourcing employees are “just having fun” on Yammer with their colleagues in Australia and Belgium. The positive effects of these “friendships” are manifold. The recruiters in the UK start promoting job postings in Belgium to help their colleagues (friends) filling the vacancies. This happens without directives, incentives or any other incitement from the management. A similar effect is observed in UKConsulting, with employees are motivated to “help each other out” because they liked each other’s page/post and are now “connected”. The theme of “fun” and “friendship” has not been the focus of this research and was not further explored, but offers an exciting opportunity for further research.

The iterative analysis of developing concepts from the data and developing an analysis framework from literature resulted in identification of (1) a variety of social media use *practices*, (2) social media use *purposes* and justifications from (a) employees and (b) managers, and (3) *conditions* under which social media use can lead to acquisition of new resources or development of new capabilities and thus become strategic for organisations (Table 28).

	UKBank	UKOutsourcing	UKConsulting
<b>Practices</b>	- Advertise Jobs - Broadcast targeted information	- Advertise Jobs - Internal communications	- Referral Process - Publish best practices & How-Tos - Blogs
<b>Purpose/ Value Expectations</b>	- Enhance recruitment processes: content reach & richness - Provide employees with "relevant" HR information	- Enhance recruitment process: reach greater audiences - Relationship building across teams	- Create / maintain Relationships between employees/customers - Knowledgesharing
<b>Development of new Capabilities</b>	- limited - social media as support tool	- moderate - new relationships & interactions - main use: support existing processes	- extensive - new ways of knowledge-sharing - new relationships

*Table 28 - RBV of social media use in case organisations*

The case organisations vary in their development of practices, formulations of motivations and thus the ability to develop new capabilities.

UKBank's social media use is centred on broadcasting information in a "better" way – managers and employees alike focus on using social media to deliver existing information to target audiences in a faster and more reliable way. Main motivations for social media use are ease of use and ability to improve work-related results – e.g. recruit better candidates, reach more hard-to-find talent. Social media is not part of any organisational process and is used as a supporting technology to enhance existing processes.

*Management attempts to tightly control public and private social media use by policing access and putting up physical barriers.*

The scope to develop new capabilities is limited. Employees and management see social media as a "database" and "chat-client" which supports existing processes and practices.

UKOutsourcing is developing new social media use practices while maintaining existing process-enhancing practices. On the one hand, the organisation uses social media in recruitment and attraction activities to send out targeted job adverts (similar to publishing certain job types on specialist job boards or specialist publications) – this is a practice of social media use as a supporting tool for existing processes. On the other hand, the organisation introduced an internal social media platform to enhance internal communications, allow employees to create and share content, and to "break out" of their departmental silos. The vision and intention are there, but the practices of content-creation and sharing are not yet developed. The motivations for social media use are likewise twofold: one is the improvement of current (recruitment) processes. The other is communication process re-design to support (1) relationship building and (2) innovation. UKOutsourcing's approach to social media has the potential to develop new processes and capabilities which has not been realised yet. UKOutsourcing supports their employees in social media use by granting universal access to all employees. However, the choice of platforms and content (currently created and procured by the management) is limited.

*The "bottom-up" use is being forced onto the employees "top-down".*

In some areas, for example the HR team, the employees started using social media to build relationships and to support each other in related projects by sharing information,

looking for candidates for each other's jobs. In other areas, the uptake of these platforms has been low, with e.g. managers in front-office plainly not allowing employees access to the internal Yammer platform. Thus, relationships within other departments are not being created, even less so across departments, and the organisation has not (yet) developed the ability to combine its (human) resources to new productive and creative units through social media use.

UKConsulting's practices rely on and are built around social media use. In some processes, social media are an integral part of the process; some processes are built around social media. The project management and customer-facing communication relies heavily on the participative behaviour of the project team (internal and external). This goes beyond "project management practices". For instance, the platform-use results in a global knowledge base to which other parts of the organisation and other projects have access. Further, formal processes built around social media such as personal spaces, blogs and "Gratitude" encourage collaboration and relationship building. Participative behaviour on these platforms is part of employees' performance reviews and remuneration. The motivations for social media use are not "process improvements", but the building of relationships, and dissemination and acquisition of knowledge. This leads to the development of new processes, connections and, ultimately, capabilities. The employees in UKConsulting, have access to user generated content and benefit from the knowledge accumulated by their peers. Arguably, this is a "competence": an ability to perform certain tasks (Huang & Zhang, 2016; Mabey & Zhao, 2017; Maruping & Magni, 2015). The employees build relationships with each other, thus enabling them to work together on issues which they otherwise would not work on together. Implicitly, this gives UKConsulting the ability to combine (human) resources in new, unexpected and unpredictable ways, making these combinations (almost?) impossible to replicate by competitors. Notable is the observation that these relationships are created, nourished and maintained without direct management involvement.

*The management creates conditions for social media use, encourages  
and supports it, but does not enforce it top down,*

allowing the users (in true Web 2.0 open philosophy spirit) to make use of whatever social media platforms (or combinations thereof) they deem meaningful.

Indeed, the ability to retain knowledge, acquire skills and to combine and re-configure existing intangible assets (such as knowledge, skills and relationships) has long been recognised as a capability and a source of competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997). Organisation's ability to combine skills and knowledge (i.e. create relationships between employees and assets with complementary skills and affordances) to become more effective and efficient meets all tests for the definition of a "resource" – it is idiosyncratic, valuable, rare and difficult to imitate or substitute. Notable is, however, the emphasis on the strategic importance of capabilities development. While "bottom-up" social media use may lead to the development of new capabilities at a local level (e.g. within the recruitment team), centralised strategic "top-down" approach is required to encourage, enforce and foster the benefits of social media use across the organisation – developing new ways of work, communication, knowledge sharing and new combinations of skills (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003).

*This study demonstrated that combinations of bottom-up social media use and top-down strategic approach to social media use were more successful in creating an environment for employees to establish and maintain new relationships, participate in knowledge sharing, and to create spontaneous dynamic teams for ad-hoc problem resolution.*

The findings underscore the *strategic importance* of social media use for the organisations from the viewpoint of *development of dynamic capabilities* (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Teece et al., 1997; Wilson & Daniel, 2007)

#### 7.2.4 Consequences and recommendations for practitioners

The findings demonstrate that social media use takes place in organisations regardless of organisational policy. Organisations are unable to enforce non-use of social media, as little as they can force employees' participation. Legal and physical barriers to access social media are easily overcome by "bring your own device" policy. Forcibly pushing employees to use certain "social tools" in prescribed ways did not yield results in the case organisations. UKBank had to create a "janitor" position to ensure that employees used LinkedIn "as it was intended", UKOutsourcing tried to "only make some information available" on their internal social network to drive adoption. Both organisations failed.

*Best results were achieved when the top-down strategy was supporting existing bottom-up social media use patterns.*

The practitioners should realise that social media use happens bottom-up. It is the policy and strategy which needs to adapt to use, and not the other way around.

*Encouragement and incentives for active social media use for collaboration and knowledge sharing create higher engagement than enforcement and penalties for non-compliance.*

Organisations should create incentives for “desirable” social media use instead of creating policies to regulate and control it.

*Peer-to-peer learning and “social culture” resulted in higher participation levels than management encouragement and participation.*

The visible acceptance of social media use by the management is important (e.g. CEO Blogs). However, the employees use social media for knowledge sharing, internal communications, relationship building, referrals etc. appears to be a stronger motivation for other employees to engage on social media. An organisational culture of productive social media use is created and nurtured bottom-up.

#### 7.2.5 Critique and opportunities for further research

This section aims at providing a summary of weaknesses, lessons learned, and research opportunities. While the research contributed to further our understanding of social media use from a variety of viewpoints, it is also open to critique. Throughout the research project – from the first proposal to the continuous literature review, data collection, analysis and writing, the researcher’s skills, understanding and views developed. Going forward, there are opportunities for further improvement. The research design, methodology and focus had to be “fixed” at some point and, despite the understanding that there is always room for improvement, the project had to move on. This section reflects on some of the points which “could have been done differently” or “would be different if the project was to start afresh” and provides suggestions for further and additional research.

The research was carried out as a multiple case study. Each case presents a snapshot of the state of an organisation at the time when the interviews were conducted

(Doherty, Ashurst, & Peppard, 2012; Silverman, 2007). Given that the research investigates how social media use is impacting organisational practices, procedures and policies, it is logical to assume that these practices (and related policies, expectations, realised and potential values etc.) also evolve over time with increasing social media use. This study describes and analyses the *status quo* of social media use and does not address the *process* of social media use evolution. An additional longitudinal study of an organisation's evolution through social media use would enhance and enrich our understanding of this phenomenon. Specifically, connecting the context and the process of organisational change to time would provide an insight into continuous organisational changes, and to elaborate how social media use is *evolving* over time (Pettigrew, 1990; van de Ven & Huber, 1990). Longitudinal studies can be performed as controlled experiments, for example on the effects of IT use (Walther, Hoter, Ganayem, & Shonfeld, 2015); as field studies, for example on effects of IT use on employee engagement (Carter, Nesbit, Badham, Parker, & Sung, 2016); as empirical ante and post-factum comparative studies, for example measuring employees' citizenship behaviour changes on social media (Bruque, Moyano, & Piccolo, 2016).

The focus of the study was the potential of social media use to bring about changes in HRM communication process and so to lead to (conscious) realisation of benefits through IT-use in general and social media in particular (El Sawy, 2003; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013; Venkatraman, 1994). Only a limited link between social media use and organisational outcomes has been considered. The impact of social media use on profitability, retention, employee motivation, productivity, customer satisfaction etc. has not been measured or addressed. Studies in HR Management rely on linking practices to measurable and quantifiable organisational outcomes (Bruque et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2016; Efimova & Grudin, 2007; Wattal, Racherla, & Mandviwalla, 2009). An additional (possibly quantitative study) would be required to quantify and validate this study's claims about the strategic value of social media.

The cases selected for the study have many common environmental factors including size, workforce composition, legislative and employment regulations. At the same time, all cases present different industries and are exposed to different market dynamics (Krueger & Rouse, 1994). Additional studies within the same industrial sectors would allow narrowing down the frame and validate this study's findings.

One of the findings of the study was that there are different practices, expectations and regulations with regards to internal and external social media, which has already been noted in other studies (Kane et al., 2014; Ransbotham et al., 2012). This study did not distinguish between internal and external social media platforms and their uses. However, additional research into how accessibility and privacy (from organisation's point of view) impact social media use (Kane et al., 2014) would further our understanding of the subject. Specifically, investigating if external social media provide the same degree of potential to acquire new capabilities and resources.

The case studies were set within the framework of communications between the management and employees, and among employees (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; 2016). The focus was on social media use within all HR activities including attraction, recruitment, selection, onboarding, training, performance management, remunerations, workplace design and off-boarding. While the findings provide a broad picture of communication practices in organisations, more focused research within certain activities such as talent acquisition, performance management or employee engagement will help to diversify the findings and provide a more granular understanding of the impact of social media use on HR communication process (Haar & White, 2013; Hunter et al., 2012; Leonardi et al., 2013; Stein, 2013; Weathington & Bechtel, 2012). In addition, many of the identified audiences were only briefly considered in this research. For example, employees' family members, alumni and candidates were not interviewed (due to the scope and focus on "internal management/employee communications"). Studies of external groups and studies identifying and creating a taxonomy of potential new participants in organisational rhetorical practices would further expand our understanding of effects of social media use on organisations.

The finding uncovered a plethora of (potential) areas in organisation's communications where social media use can be (and is being) applied. These areas include knowledge sharing and knowledge management, organisational learning, and transformation. Further studies of social media use in organisations from diverse points of view and perspectives would contribute to transferability of current findings to other areas of organisation research (Allen, Brown, Karanasios, & Norman, 2013; Fortado & Fadil, 2012; Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007). Finally, as social media

use shifts the power balance in organisational communicative practices, there is a potential for critical studies on effects of social media use.

### 7.3 Reflections on Research Process

This section covers some of the aspects of the research process which most influenced the personal and professional development of the researcher (Figure 36). Each section provides a short description followed by personal reflections on what was learned and how the decisions made and new knowledge acquired changed the researcher and the outcome of this very project.

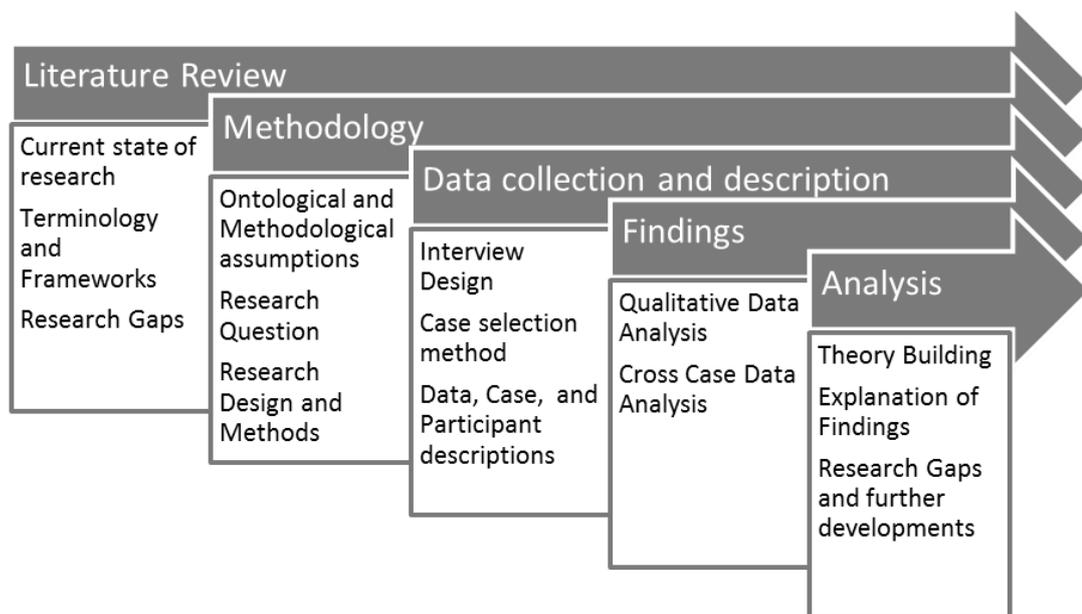


Figure 36 - Research Process Review

This section starts with the discussion of the decision to select interpretative approach as an ontological and epistemological paradigm, then describes and discusses the approaches for case selection, interviewing process, analysis of qualitative data and use of extant theories to explain findings.

#### 7.3.1 Methodology - Research in social media use

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, several research approaches were considered. The initial research proposal assumed a functionalist design with questionnaires, hypotheses and statistical methods applied to validate the hypotheses. Due to the “classical” training and a background in a mathematical discipline the researcher felt most comfortable with this approach. It seemed “proper” and “scientific” to use statistics to explain phenomena.

### *7.3.1.1 Using qualitative study*

This quantitative approach was abandoned due to several reasons. First, the phenomenon of “social media use” is still a developing one (Becton et al., 2017; Kane et al., 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lyytinen & Rose, 2003). There is a lack of common definitions of what social media is and what the common and widely accepted theories to explain the use of social media are (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). This made building a “hypothesis” difficult.

The second reason for turning to the qualitative method is that “information systems-use” or “information technology-use” in organisations is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional issue which is highly contingent on the human. Any interactive information system reaches its potential only through application by humans. Therefore, the subjective, messy, and qualitative experiences of users were best captured in open interviews rather than prescribed multiple-choice questionnaires. After many attempts to “find oneself”, the interpretative paradigm with qualitative methods (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), specifically adopting a Socio-Materialist view (Jabr & Zheng, 2013; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Pozzebon & Pinsonneault, 2005) was selected for a number of reasons discussed at length in the methodology chapter.

### *7.3.1.2 Reflections on methodology*

During this decision-making process, the researcher had to build up his qualitative research skills: much was read on qualitative research methodology from Phenomenology, Ethnographies to Critical Discourse Analysis. During this self-education phase and formal research methodology courses attended as part of the PhD training the researcher’s understanding of different methodological approaches and his appreciation for a variety of research methods grew so that a better-informed decision on what route to take was possible.

There are some reflective questions which will remain unanswered until further research is undertaken. First, the question of “would it have been easier to send out 400+ questionnaires, rather than chase 30+ people for an interview”? It is questionable, whether the response rate to an (online?) questionnaire would have been sufficient to apply statistical methods meaningfully. It is almost certain though that the hours spent transcribing the interviews would have been spent differently, and the

researcher would not have learned to touch type (not that this skill is a mandatory condition for a PhD).

The other question in these series is “would the results be different”? The obvious answer is “yes, certainly”. Starting with a pre-supposition, the researcher would have developed a static questionnaire and used quantifiable answers to (dis-)confirm the initial hypotheses. These hypotheses are then interpreted to build theory. The missing point here would be *why* respondents gave certain answers.

Another “nagging question” would be “did I miss something in the questionnaire”? The researcher feels that by conducting interviews another “fuzzy” data-set has been acquired. Not through transcribed text, but more through being “inside” the organisations: seeing the offices, taking in the audio and visual impressions of the environments where the participants work, being “close” to the participants, listening to their intonations, interacting with them in real-time, asking probing questions and questioning their answers –all these “non-quantifiable” data were not formally used in the analysis, but influenced the way the researcher coded the data.

On the one hand, because the transcription skills of the researcher are “developing” (which is another word for “poor”), each interview had to be listened to several times. By the time the interview transcripts were analysed, the researcher knew the interviews by heart, including intonations, sarcasm, laughs and sighs. On reflection, it is believed that the researcher developed a much more intimate connection with the data than would have been possible if the data were collected in questionnaires.

On the other hand, the personal connection to the environment also formed the researcher’s “gut feeling” about collaboration and interactions within organisations. Whenever these personal impressions were re-affirmed or contradicted in interview statements, the researcher was “fine-tuned” to question and re-evaluate these statements. For example, all organisations work in large open plan offices. UKBank’s offices are very formal and make an impression of a “busy working place”, one of the informants said that over here (literally one row of tables further) is another team, who might be working in a different manner, but the participant would not know what they are doing. On the other hand, people in UKConsulting would walk around the office and chat to people from other teams. Similarly, one of the informants stated that it was important to them to build relationships with colleagues with whom they do not work

directly. By doing an online questionnaire, the researcher would have missed this link between respondent's answers and their environment. It is felt that the personal experience of the actual working environment of the participants helped the researcher to make sense of the transcribed data.

The next methodological challenge was the choice of a theoretical lens for data analysis and interpretation. Data interpretations were made in several attempts. First, adopting a critical view investigating a wide range of standpoints including post-Marxism (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987) and critical realism (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Haas, 2001; Wynn Jr & Williams, 2012). The researcher who finds himself on the left of the political spectre preferred the idea of emancipation, critique and education through research. It was felt, however, that there is not enough understanding of *how* social media is used by employees and managers, and *what* are the desired (and unintended) effects of social media use. Therefore, the decision for a more exploratory approach: first explaining social media use in organisations was adopted. On reflection, after the work has been completed, our understanding of the potential of social media use in organisations improved so that this work paved the way to further, more critical and emancipative investigation of social media use in organisations from the viewpoint of shifting power relationships and control mechanisms.

### 7.3.2 Method - Case selection

The case selection process was based around the idea of selecting theoretically relevant cases (Yin, 2009). Several scholars addressed the question of what a "theoretically relevant" case would be. This study's case selection process built upon Rouse and Daellenbach (1999, 2002) who suggest identifying "high and low performers" within a cluster of potential case study-organisations and focus on those as contrasting cases. The second source of guidance was drawn from Eisenhardt's (1989) seminal work on the process of theory building from case studies. Her model argues for theoretical sampling: a focus on cases which are fitting certain theoretical categories or conform/contrast previous cases. The case selection process set off with defining the clusters of potential case candidates and identifying low and high performance. The process in itself was well defined and previous studies were available as a guideline. For the assessment of each of the organisation's performance, their activities on public social media were used.

Retrospectively, as the study moved on and a clear distinction between private and public social networks became apparent, the qualification as “low” or “high” performer based solely on the public social media use can be questioned. In the three case studies which form this research, the activity on public social media corresponded to activity on private social media: organisations in which the participants reported high levels of activity and high expected benefits from private social media use were also active on public social media. Further research in this area will benefit our understanding if there is a correlation between private and public social media use.

The theoretical selection poses another question – that of timing. The cases are assessed and grouped into buckets at a given point in time. In this research, the qualification happened quite early in the process, but some interviews were conducted two years after the qualification happened. Given the pace with which new technologies are entering the market and how quickly individuals and organisations adapt those technologies, it is possible that initial “low performers” would be “high” performers if assessed today. One possibility to address this question would be a further study within the same organisations to investigate changes in social media use over time. For example, UKBank’s initiative to use Avature as an “engagement platform” for candidate attraction, whereby UKBank’s intention is to use it solely as a broadcast medium, is still ongoing. Revisiting the organisation and evaluating whether the introduction of a new broadcast platform has resulted in a more effective attraction (better candidates, streamlined recruitment process, shorter time to hire etc.) would allow us to observe the effect of social media use over time. Equally, UKOutsourcing, who were struggling with encouraging their employees to join the internal social media platform “Yammer”, could be re-visited and the changes in the number of participants, types of conversation and engagement, levels of (expected and desired) cross-functional information exchange and collaboration could be monitored and evaluated to understand how social media use is *evolving* over time in organisations with (sufficient) management support.

A final issue with the selection of “theoretically relevant cases” addressed in this section is that of access. Identifying an “interesting case” – e.g. a Service Organisation where there is an open dialogue between the organisation and employees on Facebook and LinkedIn – is easily done. However, gaining access to that organisation turned out to be impossible. After an interview appointment with the head of recruitment has

been cancelled three times, and the sole interviewee (a recruiter whose phone number was published on a job add) refused to suggest any other colleagues, and all of the emails to the organisation remained unanswered, this very “theoretically relevant” case had to be de-selected. Thus, the conclusion is that the case selection is not only driven by “what would be good to investigate”, but (probably even more so!) by “what can realistically be investigated”.

### 7.3.3 Process - Interviewing

The data for this research was collected using semi-structured interviews (Turner III, 2010) – using an explicit and persistent structure for the interviews and a script to conduct each interview in a similar manner. Each participant was presented with the same set of initial questions which then developed and led to further questions as the interview progressed. This section addresses some of the problems with the data collection through interviews and reflections on the data collection method.

Initially, interviews aimed at collecting as much "information" as possible – subjective views of the participants and their experiences of social media use in organisations. At a later stage in each case study and throughout the entire data collection process the interviewing – as a process and activity – developed from simple data gathering through questions to verifying information previously received, critically challenging respondent's answers while, at the same time, still recording the subjective view of the participants.

The researcher's skills also developed during the process. The interviewer's confidence grew and the "tingle of excitement" disappeared. The researcher went through several phases during the data collection process which certainly contributed to his professional and personal development. While first interviews were filled with anticipation and positive appreciation of what might be discovered, and even some satisfaction with the fact that someone agreed to take part in the study, the feelings changed. There was a period of frustration when interviews were cancelled and interview requests, even from former colleagues, remained unanswered. Additional anxiety was caused by cases where only one or two interviews were conducted and no further participants were available – a feeling of wasted time and frustration emerged in those cases. There were periods of doubt that the study can be completed at all. As the study progressed, and a reasonable amount of data has been collected (before the

three case studies were completed), the researcher's confidence that sufficient data will eventually be gathered increased, and the feeling of confidence followed suit. Additionally, after conducting double-digit number of interviews, the "feeling" for the subject and the knowledge of the field grew and contributed to researcher's confidence. The interviewing became more routine, professional and efficient – getting the answers to questions posed, rather than digressing into small-talk.

The question of “improved skills” and “professional interview conduct” (such as reducing small talk) is linked to the question of epistemology. Does “focusing on the interview” produce “better data” than having a “chit-chat”? What is “better” data – personal opinions of the informants, themes and subjects which are important to them or precise answers to interview questions which are pre-defined by the researcher? On reflection, interviewees with and without small talk provided answers to all the interview questions. In comparison, the amount of analysable data (in minutes, transcribed pages, or codes assigned) was roughly the same in each interview. Thinking back, the non-research related conversations in earlier interviews provided a way for the researcher to build up confidence to conduct the interview, somewhat like a mantra to get oneself into the “interviewing mode”. This became less and less necessary with growing confidence of the researcher, better preparation (knowing the script by heart, having established a uniform format for the interview notes, and having a “default” greeting and introduction). It is felt that a “professionalised” interview did prove to be as effective as a “social chit-chat”.

#### 7.3.4 Data Collection – Collecting, Transcribing and Analysing qualitative data

The interview script was developed relatively early in the research phase during the literature review and further refined while the methodology chapter was written and pilot studies were conducted. The structure of the interview script has not changed significantly from its inception to the last interview conducted. However, the process of conducting interviews has developed with more experience gained by the researcher and more data available. This section sets off with some reflections on interview design and completes with reflections on interviewing process.

##### 7.3.4.1 *Initial questionnaire design*

Initial interview design assumed that different audiences would receive different communications from the management (Huang et al., 2013). The interview script

included an introduction to the project and a short explanation of the model. The communication flows model covered many aspects and five domains (impossible to draw!). One domain was the IT-in-use to understand *what* tools were used in organisations. Another domain was the use-case of IT use to understand *how* these systems are used. The third domain was concerned with the range of users: understanding *who* is using the IT. The fourth domain covered control of IT-use: *how* and *who can* use the IT systems, how the access is granted, regulated and policed. Finally, the questionnaire covered the existence of a strategic approach, partially covering the *why* IT systems are being used. The audiences were identified in the literature based on the areas of HR engagement (CIPD, 2013) and on the idea of continuity of engagement throughout the employee life cycle (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Graf, 2011). Initial interviews scripts addressed a wide variety of audiences including potential candidates, applicants, new employees, employees, employees on leave (e.g. maternity), and alumni. The researcher assumed from the frameworks in the literature that such division is meaningful. The conceptual model of communication flows within organisations (Figure 37) was used to introduce the research.



Figure 37 - Assumed Communication Flows in HRM

After the pilot studies the structure of the interview script and the focus of the interview script shifted. The pilot studies provided valuable lessons. First lesson learned was that high-level *theoretical models are not helpful in practice*, specifically, if they must be explained within a few minutes as an introduction to an interview. The second lesson was that *visual aids are generally meaningful and yet completely useless in telephone interviews*. Finally, *people are messy*. They do not answer questions; they talk about subjects that they care about. It is easier to guide them by building up questions based on previous answers than based on a pre-defined script. The next section describes the interview script and how it evolved.

#### *7.3.4.2 Validation of interview structure in case studies*

Following the data-gathering strategies from literature, two pilot case studies were conducted to validate the interview design and scripts, and to get a better understanding of the field (Silverman, 2013; Turner III). The case studies were analysed in terms of (1) data and (2) interview process and design (Wolf et al., 2014a).

First, the distinctive separation of audiences into Employee, Managers, Alumni, and Candidates were removed. This was because the participants did not think in these categories. The main differentiator was “internal” vs “external” so that alumni, former colleagues and candidates were treated as one group: “outside the organisation”, whereas colleagues, managers and even customers were treated as another: “inside”. In later interviews, some participants joined alumni and candidates into the same group. Interviewees also made no differentiation between employees who worked for the organisation for a long time and those who just started. Neither was there a distinction between permanent and temporary staff or external consultants working on-site for a fixed period. The “inside/outside” divide was also fluent, e.g. alumni were “insiders” at some point in time and became “outsiders”, and candidates moved from “outside in”.

The second change included the focus of the questions: initial questionnaire aimed at guiding the informants in their responses, e.g. “When you think about social media which you use with your colleagues – what tools do you use?”, the later script was more “open-ended”, e.g. “What social media platforms do you use?”, and following up on the answer “and how do you use LinkedIn”? Only then moving into specific “audiences”, e.g. “You said you are using LinkedIn to look for candidates, do you also use LinkedIn to speak to your colleagues”?

The final adjustment was much more significant with regards to the interviewing process and focus of the interview questions. First, the introduction of the communication model and the theoretical foundations was removed. Instead, the introduction now included a short statement about the observation that many firms are now using social media and that the research aims to understand why organisations and individuals within those organisations chose to use social media. The participants in the pilot studies were overwhelmed by the complex models and the time explaining those models to participants did not help to improve the participant’s understanding

of the models, nor did it contribute to getting more information during the interviews. Second, asking for the informant's *opinion* and personal views allowed the participants to raise points which are more relevant to them. This allowed to uncover issues with, aspirations for, and fears of using social media. This data would not be uncovered if participants had only to give answers to questions around a theoretical model. The third change of the interviewing process and script involved the shift of focus: from "what" and "who" to "how" and "why", for example: "why do you use certain social media applications", "how do you use them", "why is using 'a tool' important for you/your organisation". Thus, the focus shifted from information "gathering" to eliciting the reasons for social media use and the assumed, perceived and anticipated *value* of social media use and the *purpose* of it.

These changes allowed the data collection to be broader and to collect "unexpected" information – data which the researcher could not anticipate in a pre-designed questionnaire. On reflection, because the participants came from a range of positions and jobs within each organisation, the answers of each participant became less comparable. The joy of the messier, more diverse data allowed for thicker, richer descriptions and a richer set of themes and concepts to emerge. One of the pilot studies did not result in a fully-fledged study because the contacts within that organisation left and, unfortunately, the adopted interview script could not be used in further interviews there. However, in UKBank, which was the second pilot study, the modified script was used in five further interviews, providing deeper insights.

Like any other process, data collection and interviewing process in this study faces many problems, and there are several points which on reflection could be improved. The following sections summarise some of these issues.

#### *7.3.4.3 Problems with different themes addressed by different respondents*

The participants for the studies came from a range of levels and departments within the organisations. When presented with the same questions their responses were (as expected) provided from a personal point of view, thus specific to their position within the organisation and to the department (or departments) within which they predominantly worked. On the one hand, it provided a more complete picture – seeing the same phenomenon from a range of perspectives, on the other hand, the sheer volume of views and opinions on the same subject made comparison difficult, but not

impossible. As described in the data analysis chapter, the initial analysis of the interview data produced around 90 diverse "codes" which had to be re-viewed, re-interpreted, grouped logically and data re-coded again. The richness of data did introduce complexity into data analysis and data handling (keeping 90 codes in one's head is difficult), but at the same time provided a multifaceted view of the phenomenon in each of the cases.

#### *7.3.4.4 Problems with access to different levels in organisations*

Interviewing people at different organisational levels posed a challenge in itself. Higher level managers were difficult to reach but could articulate (their) interpretations of the organisation's strategy implementing which was within their responsibility. Lower-level employees were easier to access; however, they were at times reluctant to speak openly and lacked the "bird's eye" view and understanding of the overall firm's strategy. The latter could be argued to be an interesting finding with regards to clear management-employee communication of firm strategy and establishment of consensus.

Another observation on access and accessibility is that snowballing: asking participants to name other potential candidates, did not work off-line. In most interviews conducted at the beginning of the research project, the participants made promises to "think about other colleagues who might be able to participate". This has never happened. On the other hand, interviewees would name one or two colleagues when asked at the end of the interview. With growing experience and confidence of the researcher, the participants were "pressured" at the end of the interview to name one or two colleagues who would be "a good fit" for the research – e.g. people mentioned in the interview who work in the same area, same project etc. This approach of insisting on one or two names "there and then" proved to be much more efficient than relying on the participants to "get back to you".

#### *7.3.4.5 Personal connection: questions of participants' anonymity*

In many cases participants were known to the researcher prior to the research project. With some of the participants the researcher had established a strong working, even personal relationships long before the research project began. With regards to participants' views provided during the interviews, the question of openness and truthfulness of the answers had to be considered during the analysis phase: were those

participants who are personally known to the researcher as open as those who did not have any relationship, or were they (a) more cautious because they felt less anonymous or (b) more open due to previously established trust? Some qualitative studies argue for “personal involvement”, whereas others tend to prefer the more positivist, detached view. In one of the case studies (UKOutsourcing) the researcher did not have any personal connection. In another (UKBank), it was a mixture of existing and new contacts. In the third study (UKConsulting), he knew all participants prior to interviews. The researcher reviewed the notes and the transcripts with this question in mind but could not discover any anomalies.

It is questionable, whether either view would influence the data significantly, especially considering that data from different cases and different participants were used in final findings and analysis. During the analysis phase, the researcher ignored the existing relationships and viewed all data as equally reliable.

### 7.3.5 Analysing Data - Interpretative case study

The selected methodological approach is an interpretative multiple case study. The Methodology chapter describes the methodological considerations in detail. The research was carried out, as planned, as an interpretative case study. This section reviews the decision and critically addresses the decision by providing a post-hoc assessment of the research method against the tests of Construct, Internal and External validity, and Reliability (Yin, 2009).

#### 7.3.5.1 *Construct validity*

This study initially aspired to develop new concepts and constructs from the data up (Glaser, 2002). The construct validity was then “implicit” in the fact that the constructs are emerging from the data and thus are valid for the given dataset. This was not the case when data were collected and the analysis began: in the actual findings and analysis chapter, the themes from the data were combined with existing concepts from the literature and mapped accordingly. This “change of heart” was partially caused by new studies and papers becoming available between 2013 when this research started and 2017 when the analysis was finalised. Other researchers published papers which introduced new concepts into the field of social media. (Huang et al., 2013; Kane et al., 2014; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). These concepts were clear and useful and thus it seemed fit to adopt those. Specifically, the notion of “rhetors” and

“audiences” introduced by Huang was adopted. The data analysis thus was an iterative process during which the researcher went back and forth between the data, their interpretation, reflections findings, and the literature, seeking confirmation of his interpretations and so acquiring a firmer sense of how this research fits into the “broader body of knowledge”. Unlike the initial construct validity which would be “grounded in the data”, the researcher also sought external validation, even justification, of his interpretations in literature. Arguably, this is a deviation from true Grounded Theory. However, finding that one’s ideas resonate with those of others (more experienced and respected) researchers in the field did provide a much-desired level of comfort.

#### *7.3.5.2 Internal Validity*

Establishing and confirming the relationships between theoretical constructs within cases (Yin, 2009) was aspired through (1) comparison of findings within cases (from different data sources), (2) comparison of identified relationships across cases, and (3) relating constructs from findings and analysis to constructs in the literature. The iterative process of data analysis, as well as continuous cross-referencing with extant and emergent literature, allowed this goal to be mainly achieved. The question continuously asked by the researcher during the analysis was “are these people talking about the same thing”? How was it possible to juxtapose the interview data from an employee with those from a manager? Was it “fair”, appropriate, sound to attribute same codes to experiences of different people. For example, when an employee spoke about their motivation for using a particular platform, they would make statements such as “I am on LinkedIn to find a job”. A recruitment manager would reply along the lines of “I am on LinkedIn to find better candidates”. Both statements were coded as “Candidate/Recruiter relationships”. But equally, the employee’s experience was coded as “Personal benefits from social media use”, whereas the recruiter’s statement as “Better work performance through social media use”. The initial plethora of codes was overwhelming. The process of re-visiting and re-evaluating each code forced the researcher to abstract better, to create codes which were not just “stating the obvious”, but allowed to group related events and statements together as concepts. Performing the notions of code-comparison and combining codes to new “über-codes” and concepts developed the researcher ability to think more abstract and to move between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of thought.

#### *7.3.5.3 External Validity*

The ability to replicate the findings from one case in another case – the transferability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) of findings from one setting to another is inherent in a comparative case study. The comparative analysis is built on the idea of identification of similarities and differences across cases and thus in "framing" a phenomenon in its settings, conditions and relationships (Eisenhardt, 1989). The researcher was concerned with the question if the data collection methods and, eventually, the findings would "work" in a different setting. In some conferences and presentations, the suggestion to conduct the case studies within one industry was made. The hard realisation from conducting this research was that beggars cannot be choosers. The research organisations can only be chosen to a degree: once an organisation is identified as a good candidate, the difficulty is in getting access to informants and permission to conduct the studies. The lesson learned is – take whatever data you can, as much of it as possible, and make the best of it. It would have been great to have several studies in one industry – this is discussed in shortcomings and suggestions for further research. However, the experience of this project taught the researcher to be "realistic" about what is and is not possible within a four-years/ one-person research project.

#### *7.3.5.4 Reliability*

The analysis of this work relied on many methods and tools from Grounded Theory. While this project was not ambitious enough to adopt a pure GT approach and establish concepts that would live on for hundreds of years (Glaser, 2002), this research still aspired to establish relationships and descriptions of the phenomenon which would be valid and reliable in the sense of "replicability". The rigour of data collection, recording, and analysis aspired the hallmark of "replicability". It is hoped that another researcher who was to carry out a replication study would be able to follow, understand and justify each step from case selection, data collection and analysis. The interpretation of the findings is the sole step which deserves more attention in this chapter. Replicability of the interpretation is questionable, as with any qualitative data: the data are interpreted twice – once when the data are collected as the subjective, value and opinion-laden view of the interviewees, the second time when the data are interpreted by the researcher. The researcher adds his or her own experiences, guided by the recent events, literature and even mood. This "personal"

touch dilutes the objectivity and thus the replicability of the findings. The reliability is increased, and the thought process of the researcher during the data analysis is made explicit through documentation and detailed description of processes and decisions made. It is hoped that the Data Collection, Findings and Analysis chapter make this process explicit and justifiable. Each of the chapters on Data – Collection, Findings and Analysis was presented at IS conferences to collect feedback from IS researches and validate the thought process as the work continued (Wolf et al., 2014a; Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2014b, 2015a; Wolf et al., 2015b, 2016).

There are two valuable lessons for the researcher and his personal and professional development learned in this process. First, writing a paper which is to be assessed by much more experienced academics, and which requires the literature review, methodology, findings and discussions to be “squeezed into” just 5000-8000 words is a brilliant exercise in focusing one’s thoughts and sharpening the arguments. Second, having your work discussed by researches in similar subjects, getting questions asked about your research, and receiving suggestion on what else to consider, is most valuable to improve the research, the arguments, and the writing style.

#### 7.3.6 Interpretations – Explaining Findings

One of the first things of which a newly accepted PhD student becomes certain is that there is no certainty. Nothing is set in stone and everything is subject to changes, challenges, re-interpretation and critique. There is probably not a single PhD out there who had not had the title of their work changed at least half a dozen times during the research project. The same fluidity applies to the theoretical lens in this project.

Investigations on IT use in organisation allow several lenses to be applied including Actor Network Theory (Cecez-Kecmanovic, Kautz, & Abrahall, 2014; Fox, 2000; Latour, 1996), Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002), Resource Based View (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Vidgen, Sims, & Powell, 2013; Wade & Hlland, 2004), Political Economy (Weber, 2004), Structuration Theory (Jones & Karsten, 2008), Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976; Gerstner & Day, 1997) to name just a few that were considered.

Originally the researcher aspired to use the critical theory approach (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987; Myers & Klein, 2011). This idea was abandoned for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the researcher could not identify himself with the language and force of

the critical paradigm. Second, many of the theories (certainly those in post-Marxism) were focused on macro-level analysis and were removed from the micro-level practices: the "...-in-use" view (Orlikowski, 1992; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). The researcher felt that this approach would be too far "removed" from the actual practices and "facts on the ground" and that focus on local, idiosyncratic practices and implementations would be more appropriate to answer the research questions (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016; Heffernan & Dundon, 2016).

Grounded Theory (GT) in its many forms (grounded in time and place (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and grounded in data only (Glaser, 2002)) were considered, and some of the data analysis methods were adopted in this research. However, the idea of using pure GT was abandoned after a few attempts mainly due to the fact that, like many other writers, the researcher struggled "to be abstract of time, place, and people" (Glaser, 2002, p. 6) and so GT was "down-abstracted to just another QDA with some concepts" (ibid).

Actor Network Theory (ANT) was another theoretical lens applied to understand the findings and to analyse the data. This resulted in a conference paper for Multiconference Computer Science and Information Systems under the auspices of IADIS (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2017), however, did not produce a theory which the researcher found comprehensive and defensible. The attempt to use ANT as a lens was considered a valuable exercise in terms of personal development and the ability to further justify RBV as the finally selected theoretical lens.

The methodology chapter talks at length about the justifications for choosing RBV as a theoretical lens for the analysis. One of the major reasons for RBV in retrospect was its application in both HRM and IS field. It provided a common terminology and consensus on core concepts between the researcher and both supervisors (one of whom comes from the IS and the other from HRM field) and thus, ultimately, between both research fields. RBV allows communication of the research findings to both audiences and is, therefore, a truly cross-disciplinary theory.

By selecting RBV as a theoretical lens, another important observation impresses itself on the researcher: the field of "information systems"-research is spreading out into many other disciplines. This study touches on papers from political studies, marketing, and even medical research. The penetration of IT in all areas of societal and

organisational lives makes Information Systems a truly interdisciplinary subject. Thus, theories for explaining IS phenomena need to be interdisciplinary too. When choosing a theory to explain IS phenomena, the researcher now needs to look not only within the IS research field but also within the related discipline for a theory which not just explains the findings from IS perspective, but also makes these findings “understandable” to the related discipline (Grover & Lyytinen, 2015; Majchrzak et al., 2016; Nunamaker et al., 2017).

The researcher’s development in both professional and philosophical domains was greatest around methodology. The fact that (often through guidance from his supervisors rather than own initiative) the researcher had to address alternative methodological perspectives, greatly improved the researcher’s understanding of theoretical paradigms, philosophical streams, and ontological assumptions. The experience of learning about the history of Philosophy (“a PhD is first Philosophy, then Doctorate” – was the motto of the first two years of the study) left a mark on the researcher’s understanding of scientific work, research, and logic. Through the work of Bertram Russell, ongoing discussions about ontological “chasms”, and different representations of “reality” the researcher formed his own ideas about the necessity, usefulness and applicability of ontological divides into qualitative/quantitative, functional/interpretative and whatever other taxonomies are the flavour of the month (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Deetz, 1996; Giddens, 1993; Hatch, 2012; King et al., 1994; Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Russell, 1959).

During this research project, by touching many of the approaches, the researcher improved his understanding of the suitability of certain paradigms in answering certain questions. His appreciation of mix-methods research and realisation that there is no “one size fits all” methodological solution (even within a discipline) made him more critical and inquisitive. In every new research project, the researcher will start with his apriori knowledge of philosophy and ask himself “is this the best approach”, “is the ontology right for the question”, and, most importantly, “what other methodologies and theories are out there of which I do not yet know”?

#### 7.4 Reflections on PhD Journey

This very last section of the thesis is intended to record reflections on the entire PhD process, the development of the researcher through and throughout the project, and the motivations for starting and, even more importantly, finishing the research.

The PhD process started with a general interest in the subject and some readings on publicly available sites (which mostly happened to be commercial and business oriented, ironically, scientific journals are heavily guarded against non-academics and prices of \$20+ for each paper are not uncommon). Once the broader subject of interest – “social media in HR” (there was no process-perspective, no socio-material “in-use” lens at that point) has been “picked” by the aspiring researcher, a search among University of London faculty in HRM and Information Systems was undertaken using each of the colleges’ websites. The researcher visited an open evening for the post-graduate student at Birkbeck, University of London – only to be told by one of the lecturers in HRM: “you’ll never get a PhD, why don’t you apply for a Master’s programme and leave it at that”. Not discouraged by the first rejection, several scholars were addressed via email with a request for PhD supervision and a short description of the intended project. Only one replied with a single line “we need to talk” – that line changed the researcher’s life for the next four years and certainly changed the researcher’s attitude, abilities to think critically, express himself, listen and digest information far beyond the PhD research project.

At the first meeting with his to-be supervisor the researcher was confronted with another sentence that was destined to change his life: “can you speed read”? Naively, the reply was a “yes”. The researcher received a couple of books and many printed articles to read; the research proposal had to be “rewritten by the end of next week”. After a month of back-and-forth between reading more articles and rewriting the research proposal, it was deemed good enough to submit a formal application for the MPhil/PhD programme at the School of Business, Economics and Informatics in Birkbeck. A few weeks later, when the acceptance letter to the programme was received, the third and most important sentence for the completion of the PhD was formulated: the researcher’s daughter hugged him and said: “Papa is going to be a professor!” – from that point on, there was no giving up, going back or failing.

#### 7.4.1 MPhil/ PhD process

The PhD degree concludes with a submission, the defence of a PhD Thesis and, most likely, corrections. The programme involves much more than producing a final artefact. Birkbeck's Department of Management enrolls all PhD student into an MPhil programme which requires all students to undergo mandatory research training in generic research skills such as qualitative and quantitative research methods, methodology and philosophy of management studies, and at least one subject-related module. The young researcher has access to (and is encouraged to make use of) a wide range of seminars on generic research skills such as writing skills, literature review skills, presentation skills etc. Each student is required to present their work and report on their progress at least once a year at a weekly PhD seminar or the annual PhD conference. The chance to present their work in front of like-minded PhD students is an invaluable contribution to the professional development of the researcher. Other PhD students are likely to be facing similar problems, issues, challenges or, on the contrary, be making similar progress and developing similar ideas: PhD seminars and the annual conference provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, fears and solutions.

After making sufficient progress in the research and completing all mandatory taught modules, the MPhil/PhD student applies for an upgrade to PhD. From that moment on the research becomes much more focused and the main bulk of work is dedicated to the completion of the PhD thesis leaving far less room for generic skills.

Once the Thesis is completed, an internal review and a mock viva are held within the department. The aim of this process is twofold: first, it ensures the quality of submitted work. Second, it prepares the PhD candidate for the "real thing" of the thesis defence.

#### 7.4.2 Ongoing Development

The PhD process was formed and framed by the researcher's views, experiences, knowledge and expectations. On reflection, it is safe to say that it was the researcher, whose views, knowledge and expectations were formed by the PhD process.

Initial research proposal suggested a quantitative, questionnaire-based research. The actual research was a multiple qualitative case study. The view of the researcher on ontology and methodology was heavily influenced and formed throughout the literature review especially by Abdallah, Giddens and Orlikowski (Giddens, 1984; Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Orlikowski, 1992, 1993; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991;

Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). It was an honour and luck to have Chaharazad Abdallah as a lecturer in some of the MPhil modules. The soft guidance from the first supervisor – Dr Julian Sims, has also shaped the researcher’s view. Julian never said “you must” or “you have to”, but his “did you consider” or “would you be able to explain” were helpful and powerful messages constantly improving the research.

The second supervisor on this PhD – Dr Huadong Yang, kept the project flowing. His critique always started with a statement along the lines of “I am very interested in this project...” – any suggestion, improvement and question were to the point and extremely helpful. The personal interest Huadong shown in the research provided incredible encouragement and helped moving the project forward whenever the researcher might have been losing pace.

A PhD is expected to be original, novel and publishable. The literature review was conducted quite early in the research project. However, during the research it was constantly reviewed, and new research articles added to the literature review, ensuring that this research remains original and still provides new insights. Guided and encouraged by both supervisors most of the chapters were worked into conference papers and presented at UK Academy for Information Systems (UKAIS) Conference, British Academy of Management (BAM) Conference, European Conference for Information Systems (ECIS), and International Association for the Development of the Information Society Multi Conference for Computer Science and Information Systems (IADIS/MCCSIS). The reviewer feedback and the feedback at the paper presentations was invaluable in improving the research, but also at showing that the work produced is novel and publishable.

During the PhD study the research skills, language and ontology developed significantly so that it was necessary to revisit earlier chapters of the thesis and re-work those to match the style of later chapters. The iterative process of conducting research was prevalent in all phases – literature review, methodology development, data collection and analysis, and the write-up. The PhD process was an inspirational and highly enjoyable journey.

#### 7.4.3 Final thoughts

The research was only possible thanks to the support from the community. In the immediate vicinity, there was the support of the researcher’s wife and daughter, who

had to put up with lonely weekends, mood swings when the interviewees did not turn up, or papers were rejected. The work would not have been possible without both supervisors with their help, guidance and inspiration. Specifically, the chance to give guest lectures to undergraduate students under Huadong Yang's sponsorship deserves explicit mention. Unknowingly, Karl Weick (Weick, 1995a, 1995b) provided many inspirations for writing, as did Mats Alvesson with his presentation at the BAM Conference 2015 and a private chat later. His book "Triumph of Emptiness" (Alvesson, 2013) influenced some of the researcher's views. The Department of Management at Birkbeck provided a learning and working environment in which the research was completed and this thesis compiled. Many of fellow PhD students within the department, school and from other universities gave their direct and indirect input into the final work, as did many, if not all, members of the UK Academy of Information Systems.

The help of many (unnamed) contributors – in seminars, conferences, editors and reviewers and many more must be acknowledged here. This work, although conducted and produced by the author, is a bricolage of many ideas and thoughts and would not exist without the support of the community. It is the author's deepest desire that this work, the data collected, and the insights gained may repay some of his debt to the community for all the support received while the research was conducted.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A. Case Study Candidates

The cases organisations were selected from an initial set of 39 large UK organisations. These represented different industry sectors (Table 29). The industry sector classification is loosely based on the Companies House Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) (Government, 2017) with some deviations. For example, SIC places Air Travel into “Transportation and Storage”, and Travel Agency and Tour Operating into “Administrative and Support Services” sector. However, entire trips (transfer, air transport, hotel, activities) can be booked via an airline; simultaneously, tour operators have in-house transportation services. Thus, the sector was assigned to allow “meaningful”, rather than “technically correct” grouping.

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Finance	Banks, Building Societies, Insurances
Travel/Leisure	Air-, Rail-, Sea Carriers, Travel Agencies
Utilities	Gas, Electricity, Water
Retail	Wholesale and Retail
Telecom	Phone-, Internet-, TV Providers
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
Services	Professional services: IT, Legal, Road Side Assistance, Health
Manufacturing	Construction, Heavy Industry, Clothing

*Table 29 - Industry Sector Examples*

The potential participants were assigned a “role” based on their job-title (Table 30).

<b>Title</b>	<b>Mapped to</b>
Chief People Officer	CxO
Head of Global Internal Engagement	CxO
Head of Operations	CxO
Director Resourcing	HRD
Employer Brand Director	HRD
Group HR Director / HR Director / Head of HR	HRD
Vice President Human Resources	HRD
Head of / Manager for Resourcing / Recruitment / Online Resourcing / Talent	Recruiter
Social Media and digital queries	Recruiter
Talent Acquisition / Recruitment Manager/Leader	Recruiter

*Table 30 - Job Title Mapping for Interview Participants*

Most of the contacts available at the start of the study were either Recruiters or HR Managers/Directors in each of the organisations (Table 31).

#	Sector	Potential Contact
1	Finace	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
2	Finace	HRD; Recruiter
3	FMCG	HRD; Recruiter
4	Retail	CxO; Recruiter
5	Retail	CxO; Recruiter
6	Retail	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
7	Services	HRD; Recruiter
8	Services	CxO; Recruiter
9	Travel/Leisure	HRD; Recruiter
10	Travel/Leisure	HRD; Recruiter
11	Utilities	HRD; Recruiter
12	Travel/Leisure	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
13	Finace	CxO; Recruiter
14	Finace	HRD; Recruiter
15	Finace	CxO; Recruiter
16	Finace	HRD; Recruiter
17	Finace	CxO; Recruiter
18	Retail	HRD; Recruiter
19	Telecom	HRD; Recruiter
20	FMCG	HRD; Recruiter
21	Services	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
22	Travel/Leisure	CxO; Recruiter
23	Utilities	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
24	Retail	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
25	Services	HRD; Recruiter
26	Telecom	HRD; Recruiter
27	Services	HRD; Recruiter
28	Retail	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
29	Retail	HRD; Recruiter
30	Services	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
31	Travel/Leisure	HRD; Recruiter
32	Travel/Leisure	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
33	Utilities	CxO; Recruiter
34	Telecom	HRD; Recruiter
35	Telecom	HRD; Recruiter
36	Manufacturing	HRD; Recruiter
37	Manufacturing	HRD; Recruiter
38	Services	HRD; CxO; Recruiter
39	Travel/Leisure	HRD; CxO; Recruiter

Table 31 - Potential Case Study Candidates

## Appendix B. Interview Guide

<b>Information sheet</b>	
Department of Management BIRKBECK University of London Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX 020 7631 6000	
<b>Title of Study:</b>	<b>Social Media in Human Resource Management</b>
<i>Name of researcher:</i>	<i>Maxim Wolf</i>
This study is being done as part of my PhD degree in the Department of Management, Birkbeck, University of London.	
The study explores the role that Social Media plays in Human Resource Management in the UK. The study focuses on the utilization of different social media tools by HR departments for the communication and engagement with potential employees, current employees, and former employees, as well as the utilization of these tools by any of the groups outside of the company. During the study several interviews with practitioners working in HR and HR related areas, and with other employees are conducted. The firms invited to participate come from different industries. More than one interviewee may be contacted within each firm. The interview results are used to understand how Social Media is being utilized by HR.	
If you agree to participate we will agree a convenient time and place for me to interview you for about an hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed to aid my analysis. Your participation is highly appreciated and is <b>absolutely voluntary, you are free to stop the interview and withdraw at any time</b> . You are under no obligation to answer any questions. If you change your mind after the interview, you can ask me to discard your interview up to four weeks after the event. I will try to honour your request after this time, but it is possible that some data already contributed to the findings in a publication at that point. At no point in time will your name be made public.	
I am taking the protection of your anonymity very seriously. The first thing I will do is to attach a code to your interview (e.g Interview 1, company A) and store it as a hardcopy separately from the audio. This hard copy is the only link between your name and the data. In the interview transcripts this codes replace your firms and your own names. The voice recordings of the interview will be transcribed and deleted right after transcription. All electronic information is encrypted and password protected. I will analyse interview data by identifying themes across different interviews. I might use some of the quotes from your interview verbatim.	
I will not disclose your name, nor the name of your organisation; however, your position, organisation's size and industry might be disclosed which might allow someone to guess who you are. Except me, only my supervisors and examiners will have access to the interview transcripts.	
The analysis of our interview will be written up in a report of the study for my degree and related research papers which I might produce. I will keep the data after the completion of my PhD project with the aim to produce academic publications using the data. Other participants like you and public will have access to report findings, however no one except me, my supervisors and examiners will have access to the individual interview data or transcripts.	
The study is supervised by Dr. Julian Sims who may be contacted at the above address and telephone number.	
I will answer any questions in regards to the study and your role prior to the interview. Thank you for your participation and support	
<i>Maxim V. Wolf</i>	

Figure 38 - Information and Consent Sheet

## Interview Topics and Questions

What SM tools are you currently using?

Thinking of attraction, recruitment and selection process – describe IT systems and SM tools you are using (What are they? Who is using them? How are they used? How is the usage governed (policy, access control, logs etc.)? What is the strategic decision for using these tools?)

Thinking of on-boarding, training and career development, reward and promotion process – describe IT systems and SM tools you are using (What are they? Who is using them? How are they used? How is the usage governed (policy, access control, logs etc.)? What is the strategic decision for using these tools?)

Thinking of alumni, off-boarding and retiring process – describe IT systems and SM tools you are using (What are they? Who is using them? How are they used? How is the usage governed (policy, access control, logs etc.)? What is the strategic decision for using these tools?)

How do you gather information about (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu?

How do you disseminate information to (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu?

How can (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu contact each other (FAQ, non-real-time, real-time)?

How can (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu contact HR (FAQ, non-real-time, real-time)?

How can (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu contribute to selection/attraction process (referral, sit in interviews, references)?

How can (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu contribute to job design/training/reward process (reputation, commendations etc.)?

How can (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu contribute to alumni/leaver's engagement (referral, business development, etc.)?

Are you aware of any SM engagement outside HR control involving (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu?

Are there any new ways in which you communicate to/with (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu and what are they?

Are there any new ways in which you collect information about (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu and what are they?

Considering SM tools – are there any new services / products you as HR are offering to with (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu?

Are there any strategic changes in response to SM utilization or to encourage/discourage SM usage for HR communication with (a) cand, (b) emp and (c) alu?

What is the future like?



Figure 39 - Interview Questions and Guide

## Appendix C. Data Description, Coding and Concept development

The empirical data for this research has been collected in a series of face-to-face and telephone interviews: six interviews each in UKBank and UKOutsourcing and five interviews in UKConsulting. The selection process focused on the selection of theoretically relevant cases (Eisenhardt, 1989) and is described in Chapter 4. Three cases, representing different types of social media use, were selected and employees at different hierarchical levels within these organisations were interviewed.

Each interview has been transcribed, and the transcripts were then used as input for qualitative data analysis (Silverman, 2007, 2013).

During the transcription process the names of the case companies and the interviewees were manually replaced by codes. Each transcript was then searched (using Word's search and replace function) for the company name and interviewee name to make sure that these were not in any transcript, thereby the company name and the interviewee's name were replaced by codes (e.g. "UKBank" and "UKB5"). The names of other interviewees, e.g. "UKB2: 'you have already spoken to John' ", were replaced with the corresponding code for interviewee John (note: John in this example is a placeholder name and not a real name of any of the participants). Some of the internal product names which would potentially allow identification of the case-firms were removed or replaced by pseudonyms. For example, pseudonyms are used for all internal tools used in UKConsulting and UKBank.

The interviews were transcribed in the same order they were conducted. After 3-4 interviews from each case study were transcribed a first "pass" at analysing the data in NVivo was made. A fourth case study from a software firm "UKSoftware" was included in the first stage of analysis even though only two interviews were available at that stage. However, it was not possible to complete the study in UKSoftware so that it was omitted from the second round of analysis.

Figure 40 illustrates some of the main elements of the coding and data-editing process including using codes for Interviewee and company names, breaking down of each statement into separate sentences and assigning codes to each sentence.

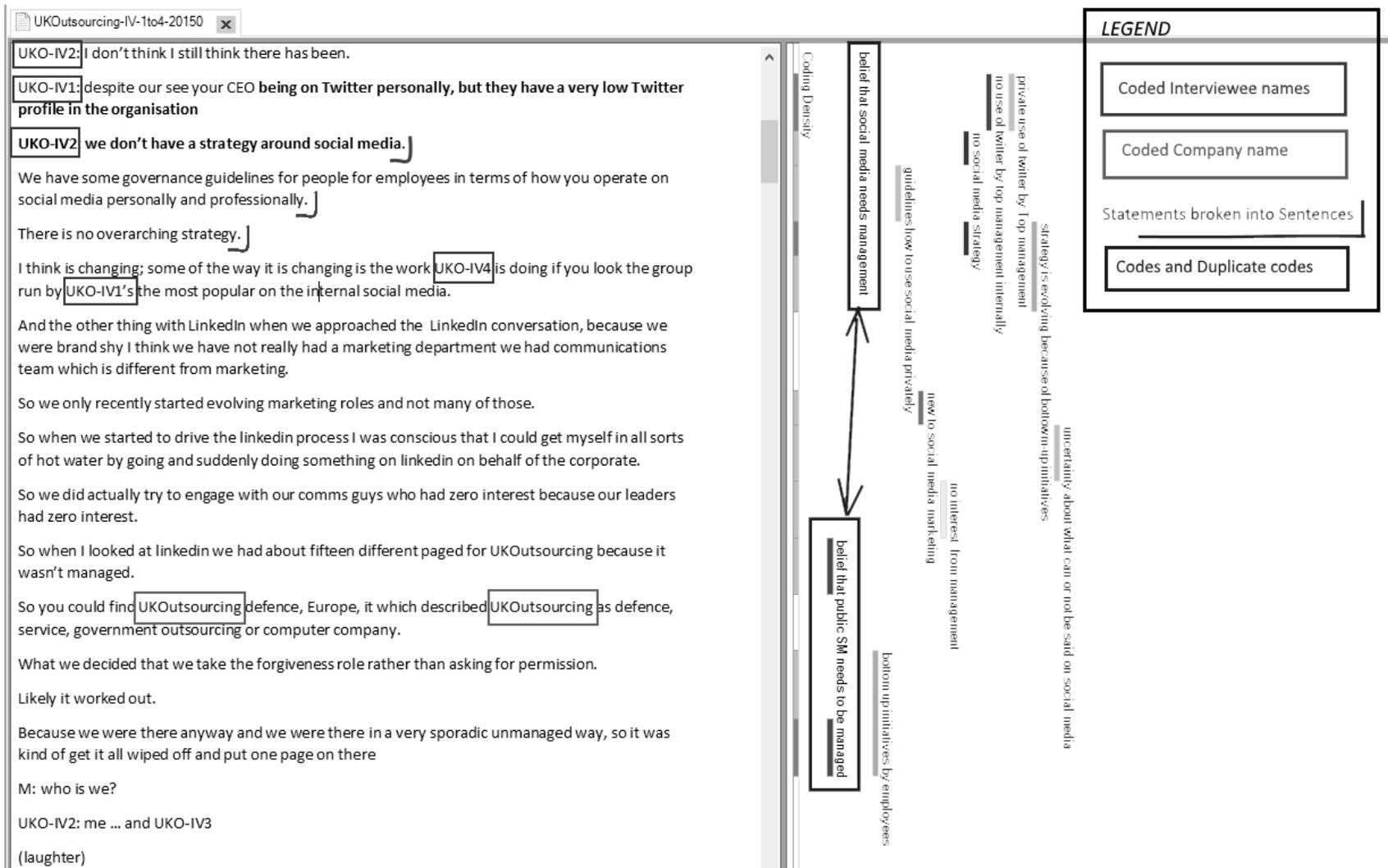


Figure 40 - Interview Coding in NVivo 11

After coding the first ten interviews, it was clear that the analysis would not be complete and would need to be re-done once more data is collected. However, it was deemed to be a worthwhile exercise from several points of view. From the professional development point of view, practising to code qualitative data helped familiarisation with the software and qualitative analysis tools. From the data point of view, the interviews had to be re-read and many transcription mistakes – mostly typos, autocorrect errors and duplications were corrected. From an analysis point of view, the immersion into the data, learning the interviews almost by heart, led to continuous (sub-) conscious evaluation of the data and a much better deeper understanding of the context in which the statements were made (Dilley, 2004). The initial first-order codes and constructs started to emerge during the transcription and editing process (Charmaz, 2006).

#### C.1. First Round of analysis – getting to know the data

Each interview was broken down into sentences, and each sentence was given a code in NVivo. The technical term used in NVivo software for codes, themes and concepts is “node”. NVivo supports hierarchical nodes, thus replicating the code – theme – concept structure. Further in this section the terms “node” (NVivo term) and “code”/ “theme” (academic term) are used interchangeably. Generally, each sentence or statement was coded, following the “Initial Coding” practice (Charmaz, 2006). Hereby the researcher read through the transcripts and labelled each sentence or statement with a “code” or assigned it a “theme”. Occasionally, several sentences would be assigned the same code to maintain the context of a statement or a sentence. The codes were then exported into Excel, sorted alphabetically, reviewed and combined to new codes to replace obvious duplication such as “SM use” and “social media use” and to find a more generic code for related subjects such as “Alumni Connections”, “Alumni Groups” and “Alumni Engagement”. After that, the interviews were re-coded and a new list of codes was exported. The codes were then used to identify “themes” which would combine several codes into a logical group.

Making sense of the themes and codes required linking the findings from empirical data to the phenomenon through the theories identified in the literature review. The guiding theory for this research is the process-based view of HRM communications (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; 2016). In that view, an HRM process gains strength from consistent and distinctive communication between management and employees, and a

dialogue between managers and employees which leads to a common understanding. The strength of such a communication system is dependent on a symmetric two-way exchange (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Adopting this view, the findings from the qualitative data analysis have to be linked to the dialogue creation between the management and the employees (Wolf et al., 2016).

The cross-case analysis of the data was guided by the idea that the conditions under which certain outcomes occur could be identified by comparing similar cases with different outcomes and different cases with similar outcomes, (Figure 41).

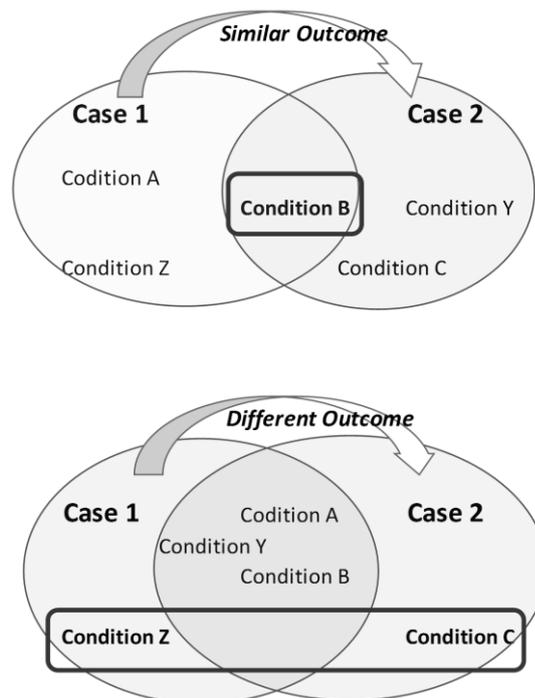


Figure 41 - Methods of Agreement and Difference

The foundations of this method are rooted in J.S. Mill’s “canons” (cited in Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). The method of qualitative comparative analysis used in this study was closely based on the crisp set qualitative comparative analysis (csQCA) as developed by Rihoux and Ragin (2009).

Mill’s method of agreement states that if two instances of the same phenomenon have only one circumstance in common, that circumstance in which both cases “agree” is the cause or the effect of the phenomenon. Similarly, the method of difference looks at two cases which are similar in all but one circumstance. If the phenomenon occurs in only one of the instances, then the circumstance in which the instances “disagree” is the effect or the indispensable part of the cause (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). Following

a short introduction to the csQCA method, the findings of preliminary studies are discussed in the next section. The four selected cases (Table 32) represent different *outcomes* in terms of employee-employer participation in content creation, commenting and sharing activities on social media.

#	Organisation	Code	Outcome
1	UKBank	UKB	Engaged employees, disengaged organisation
2	UK Consulting	UKC	Engaged employees, engaged organisation
3	UK Outsourcing	UKO	Disengaged employees, engaged organisation
4	UK Software	UKS	Engaged employees, engaged organisation

Table 32 - Case Studies and Outcomes

The analysis focuses on the identification of *conditions* which might explain those different outcomes.

#### C.1.1 Qualitative Comparative Analysis: csQCA

The method of crisp set Qualitative Comparative Analysis requires an introduction of specific terminology before it can be applied.

The method employs Boolean logic, and the symbols from Boolean logic representing the AND (\*) and OR (+) operands are used to define and describe configurations and their outcomes formally. The arrow symbol ( $\rightarrow$ ) is used to denote the expression “then”. Finally, the “not sign” denotes negation (i.e. “ $\neg A$ ” means “not A”). For example, the statement “When A and Not B then C” is coded as  $A * \neg B \rightarrow C$ .

The circumstances under which a phenomenon is (not) observed are called “*conditions*”. Each condition is either present (1/true) or absent (0/false) when a phenomenon is observed. A combination of conditions is referred to as a “*configuration*”.

A *necessary* condition is a condition which must be satisfied for the phenomenon to occur, but the presence of that condition alone is not enough so that one or more other conditions must be satisfied too. On the other hand, a *sufficient* condition (or set of conditions) is a condition under which the phenomenon occurs independently of presence or absence of any other condition.

Notable is the “crisp set” in the method’s name. It refers to the necessity of reducing (potentially) reach data to binary “crisp” sets. The method does not allow for

conditions or outcomes to be “somewhat achieved” or “37% existing”. This requires the researcher to draw a mental line and to reduce potentially rich data to binary statements. For example, a statement “There is not much training provided” proves problematic for a condition “Training Provided” – the researcher must decide whether “not much training” means “Training Provided = true” or “Training Provided = false”. Acknowledging the potential of coding certain conditions or outcomes wrongly, the method is simple in its application, configuration and interpretation and is valuable in providing a great first insight into the data available. More sophisticated techniques, e.g. re-coding and multi-set QCA, can be applied to address the shortcomings.

*The purpose of QCA analysis at this stage of research was, however, to gauge the data and to immerse into the data from an alternative point rather than textual analysis (Charmaz, 2006),*

so that the csQCA method’s shortcomings were not perceived as having a negative effect on the ongoing analysis.

The csQCA method involves six distinct steps which result in the identification of necessary and sufficient conditions for the phenomenon to occur (Table 33).

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	Identification of Conditions	Identify "Conditions" which frame/define the outcome
<b>2</b>	Construction of a Truth-Table	For each case note whether a condition is present (true) or absent (false)
<b>3</b>	Resolutions of Contradictions	If Outcome/Condition combinations are ambiguous, add/remove cases (outcomes) and/or conditions
<b>4</b>	Boolean Minimisation	Remove duplicate cases or conditions which are e.g. always "true"
<b>5</b>	Logical Remainders	Add hypothetical cases covering condition combinations which were not observed
<b>6</b>	Analysis	Apply method of Agreement/Difference to analyse the findings and draw conclusions

*Table 33 - csQCA Steps*

The first step of the analysis is the *identification* of all possible conditions which describe the circumstances under which a phenomenon does (not) occur. In the second step, a “*truth table*” is constructed, which lists all observed configurations and the outcomes in a single table. The outcome in this case is also coded as a binary 0/1 representing positive and negative outcomes (“observed” / “not observed”). *Contradictory configurations* (cases with the same configuration leading to different outcomes) are then resolved in the third step by dropping the cases, adding more

conditions or replacing some of the conditions. The fourth step involves “Boolean minimization” – a process whereby conditions which are *logically irrelevant* (e.g. positive and negative outcomes are observable when a condition is both present and absent) are removed, and a more “compact” formula describing conditions under which the phenomenon occurs is obtained. In the fifth step “logical remainders” – *theoretically possible configurations* which were not present in the empirical data are added to the truth table, and final descriptions of configurations which lead to a “positive” or a “negative” outcome are obtained. Finally, the data is *analysed and interpreted* based on existing theories, frameworks and the research question. The following section describes the steps as they were performed in this project.

### *C.1.2 Data Analysis*

The data analysis focused on the identification of descriptive conditions of engagement/ non-engagement and further on establishing links between these conditions and a reported or observed “dialogue” between managers and the employees. The definition of a “dialogue” for this analysis is binary (it either does or does not happen: 1 or 0) and is based on Kent and Taylor (1998) definition of a *two-way conversation*. Whenever there was a reported two-way conversation/exchange between employees and management or an official organisation’s channel for example on Twitter, the “dialogue as outcome” was coded as 1. In settings, where there was just one-way communication (e.g. employer broadcasting messages and employees not able or willing to reply), or where the exchange did not happen at all, the “dialogue as outcome” was coded as 0.

#### Step one: Identification of Conditions

The conditions were derived from the empirical data. Each interview was coded in NVivo, and each sentence was assigned a (new or existing) code. Within-case coding was then performed: codes from different interviews from the same case were combined, and the interviews were re-coded to reduce the number of codes (Silverman, 2013). From these codes, a concept map – visualisation of relationships between the codes- was developed iteratively (Figure 42). The concept maps were re-created whenever changes to the codes/themes occurred.

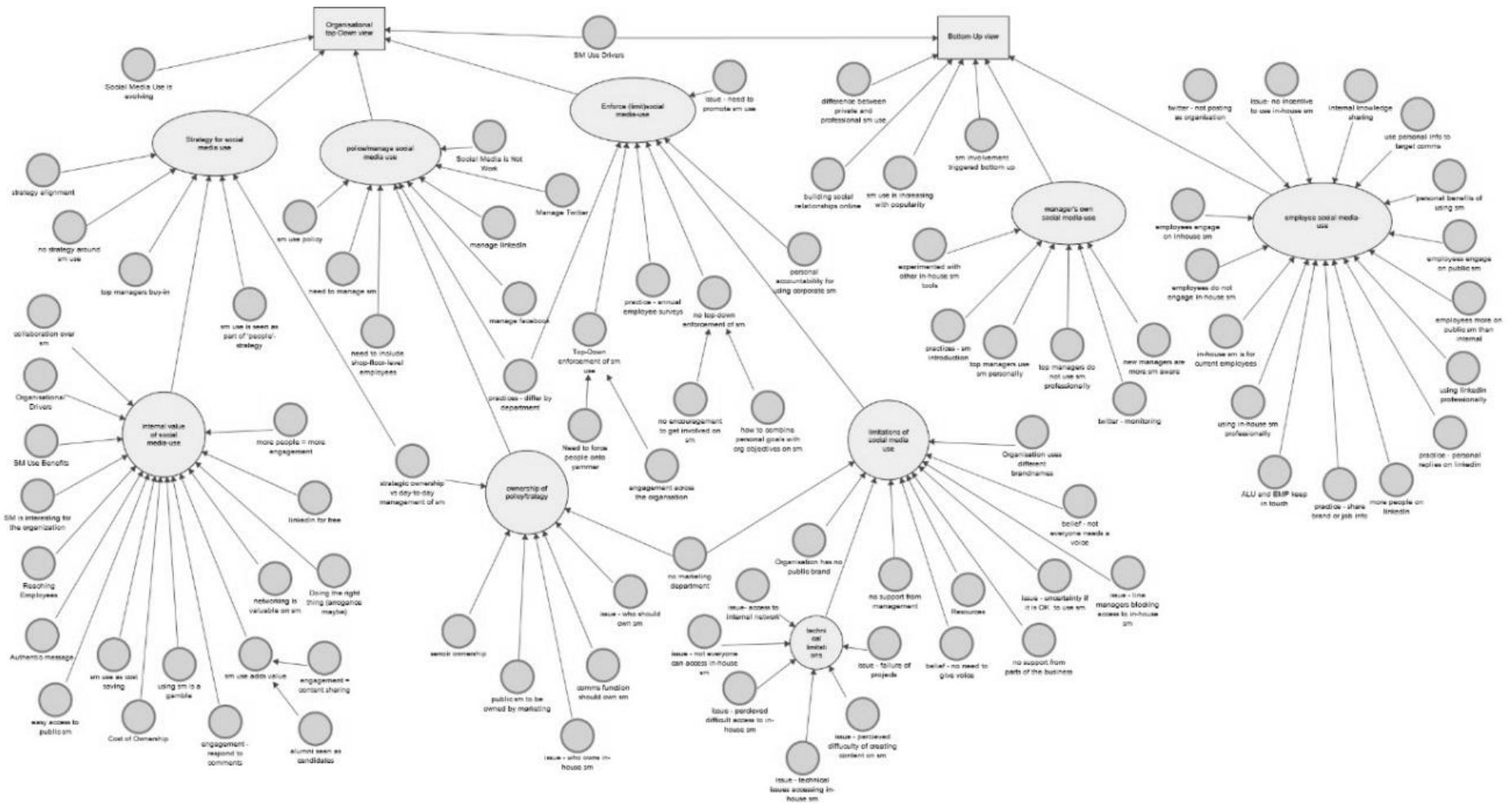


Figure 42 - Initial Data Analysis Concept Map

Codes were then grouped within each case to form initial themes. The cross-case analysis was performed with the reduced number of codes, and reviewed themes and codes from different cases (one-by-one comparison) were combined followed by another round of re-coding (Eisenhardt, 1989). Finally, the themes were grouped to “conditions”, whereby diagonally opposing themes were attributed as positive and negative outcomes of the same “condition” (e.g. “no senior ownership”, “long-term strategic view” were attributed as negative and positive instances of “Strategy”-Condition). Figure 43 demonstrates how similar codes were identified and how new codes, themes and concepts were introduced.

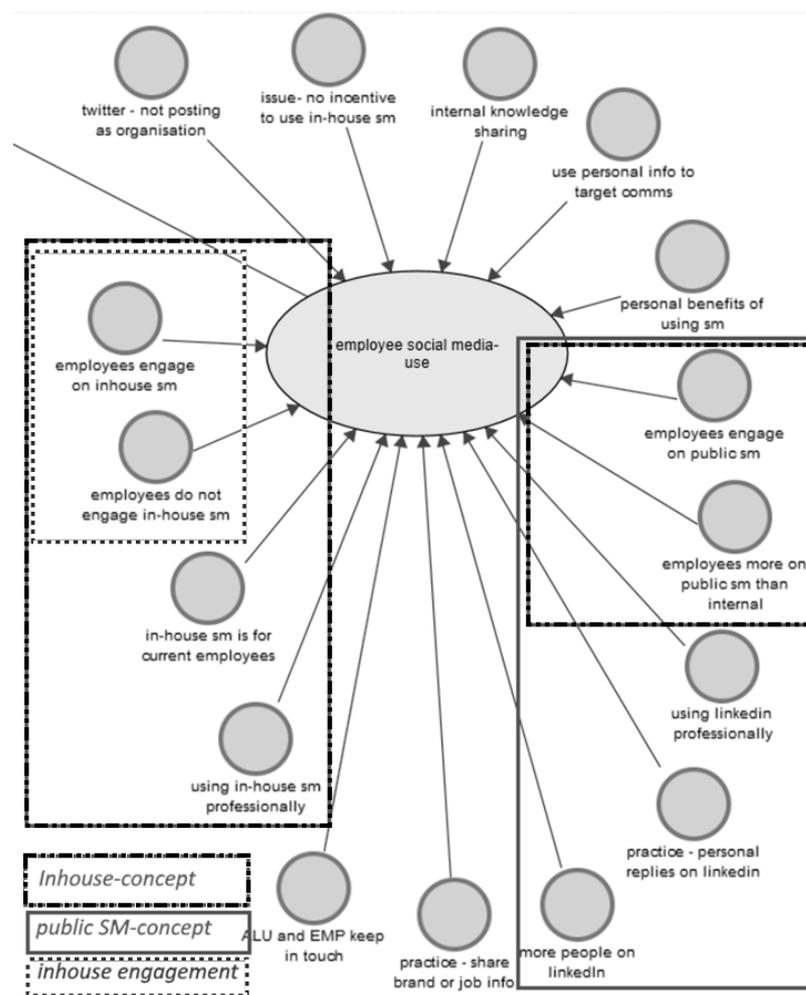


Figure 43 - Coding and Concept Discovery example

Following initial analysis of the case-interviews, four main themes/conditions for social media use have been identified: (1) engagement strategy, (2) usage policy, (3) top-down or bottom-up use, and (4) management beliefs about the importance of control/enforcement. The number of conditions has a significant impact on the analysis, as the number of possible configurations grows exponentially.

*Strategy:* in all cases, the expression “strategy” in combination with “engagement” or “social media” has been used. None of the UKBank interviewees could confirm the existence of a social media strategy. To the contrary, UKConsulting interviewees confirmed that the firm “definitely has a strategy”. In UKOutsourcing the bluntest statement was “we don’t have a strategy around social media”. Finally, UKSoftware has a “clear strategy regarding employee engagement”.

*Policy:* UKBank has no clear policy regarding engagement on social media, or the employees are not aware of it. UKConsulting employees are not sure what the policy is either. UKOutsourcing “have some governance guidelines for employees in terms of how you operate on social media personally and professionally”. UKSoftware has “training on using chatter and wiki [which] is mandatory for all employees”.

*Top-down vs bottom-up use:* UKBank enforces and regulates social media use top down: “[my job was...] making sure that recruiters who have licenses use these to the full level”; UKConsulting encourages but does not enforce social media use. However, the employees are free to use (internal) social media how and when they see fit. UKOutsourcing had a bottom-up initiative to start using social media for internal communications and LinkedIn for employee and candidate engagement. UKSoftware employees are encouraging each other to use an internal wiki: “This is good, post it on Wiki, someone else might like it”.

*Management beliefs:* UKBank believes in strict managerial control of social media use: “in order to be able to effectively use social media you also have to have a decent administrative function there to control it and to feed through it”. UKConsulting’s management does not enforce use: “Management think that people are interested, but if it is not followed through it makes you sceptical”. UKOutsourcing is guided by the assumptions that employees must be “driven” to social media channels: “we need to drive traffic to things like “Yammer” because the only way to get that information is if you go there”. UKSoftware’s management puts out active messaging to drive social media use and is very active in doing so: “Our goal is to enable the community, so the preference is to share it”.

#### Step two: Constructing a Truth Table

To construct a “truth table”, each case is written as a row listing all conditions as “present/absent (1/0)” and the outcome as “observed/not observed (1/0)” (Table 34).

Case	Strategy exists (S)	Usage policy public (U)	Bottom-Up Use (B)	Management enforcement (M)	Dialogue (D)
UKB	0	0	0	1	0
UKC	1	0	1	0	1
UKO	0	1	0	1	0
UKS	1	1	1	1	1

Table 34 - Case Truth Table

Each unique set of conditions is referred to as a “configuration”. Each of the conditions identified in the previous step has been coded for each case based on the qualitative empirical data. The resulting table provides a structured representation of configurations/outcomes based on the available data. The first four columns list the *conditions* identified in the data during the first step of the analysis, the last column (Dialogue) is the reported or observed *outcome*.

Based on the four case studies, four out of 16 possible configurations have been covered. If two or more cases have the same configuration and outcome, the rows are joined and the “Case” column is updated to contain all the affected case names. If the cases with the same configuration show different outcomes, the contradictory configurations need to be addressed and resolved.

#### Step three: Contradictory Configurations

Contradictory configurations are cases with same conditions but different outcomes. There are different approaches to resolving those cases (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). One possible approach is to “drop” one of the cases. Another approach is to revise the list of conditions and add new conditions, adjust the definition of conditions or the 0/1 coding. Finally, the assessment of the outcome as can be reviewed. The elimination process can be repeated recursively until no contradictions remain.

In the four cases in this study, there were no contradicting configurations, as each case was characterised by a different configuration. Additionally, the conditions were derived from the cases so that the matching process was “reverted” – not the cases were matched to conditions, but conditions to the (data within the) cases.

#### Step Four: Boolean minimization

The process of Boolean minimisation is following the rules of Boolean logic to identify the most parsimonious truth formula based on the data, also called “minimal formula”.

The data coded in the truth table can be expressed verbally or as a Boolean formula. Each of the case's conditions can be described as present or absent. For example, the UKS' row can be described as "When conditions Strategy and Usage Policy and Bottom-Up Use and Management Enforcement were observed, Dialogue was observed". For a shorter term, the conditions were abbreviated using the first letter of each condition. The formula for the UKS' row in Boolean notation is thus  $S*U*B*M \rightarrow D$ .

Analysing rows with positive outcomes, it becomes clear, that there are two possible configurations which both lead to "dialogue": UKC:  $S*\neg U*B*\neg M \rightarrow D$  and UKS:  $S*U*B*M \rightarrow D$ . These expressions can now be joined with an "OR" expression (as we can say "dialogue was observed under conditions of case UKS or UKC):  $S*U*B*M+S*\neg U*B*\neg M \rightarrow D$ , this can be expressed as  $S*B * ( U*M + \neg U * \neg M ) \rightarrow D$ . Which reads "Dialogue is observed when there is Strategy and Bottom-Up use and there is either both Management Enforcement and Public Usage Policy, or neither Management Enforcement nor Public Usage Policy".

A similar process is carried out for cases where the outcome was not observed. In case of UKB, the formula is  $M*\neg S*\neg U*\neg B \rightarrow \neg D$ . In case of UKO, the formula is  $M*\neg S*U*\neg B \rightarrow \neg D$ . The combined formula is  $M*\neg S*\neg U*\neg B + M*\neg S*U*\neg B$ , or shorter:  $M*\neg S*\neg B * (\neg U + U)$ . It is obvious, that the condition "U+¬U" is tautological and can be removed, leading to  $M*\neg S*\neg B \rightarrow \neg D$  as the minimal formula for the absence of dialogue, reading "No dialogue is observed when there is Management Enforcement, but no Strategy and no Bottom-Up Use".

#### Step Five: Logical remainders

The Number of possible configurations is greater than that of observed cases. With four conditions, we expect  $2^4=16$  configurations. It is possible to construct a list of all possible combinations (however unrealistic they are to occur in real life) and extend the truth table to cover all possible configurations. The outcome in such "theoretical cases" is not (yet) observed, therefore, can only be coded as 0 based on the data available. The theoretically possible (if improbable) cases are referred to as "logical remainders", and are coded as "Logical Reminder X (LR1 – LR12)" (Table 35).

Case	Strategy exists (S)	Usage policy public (U)	Bottom-Up Use (B)	Management enforcement (M)	Dialogue (D)
UKB	0	0	0	1	0
UKC	1	0	1	0	1
UKO	0	1	0	1	0
UKS	1	1	1	1	1
LR1	0	0	0	0	0
LR2	0	0	1	0	0
LR3	0	0	1	1	0
LR4	0	1	0	0	0
LR5	0	1	1	0	0
LR6	0	1	1	1	0
LR7	1	0	0	0	0
LR8	1	0	0	1	0
LR9	1	0	1	1	0
LR10	1	1	0	0	0
LR11	1	1	0	1	0
LR12	1	1	1	0	0

Table 35 - Truth Table with Logical Remainders

The formulae for observed and unobserved conditions can now be re-written using the logical remainders. As we have not added any new cases with a “positive” outcome, the formula from step four cannot change. However the formula for “no dialogue” can now be extended, for example employing a Karnaugh Map (Karnaugh, 1953), to:  $\neg S + \neg B + S*B*(U*\neg M + M*\neg U)$  (Figure 44).

	S		¬S		
B	1	0	0	0	U
	0	1	0	0	¬U
¬B	0	0	0	0	U
	0	0	0	0	¬U
	M	¬M	M	¬M	

Figure 44 - Karnaugh Map of all configurations

Three alternative configurations describe a “no dialogue” outcome:

1. No Strategy
2. No Bottom-Up use
3. Strategy and Bottom-Up use and either Usage Policy and No Enforcement or No Policy and Enforcement

The configurations for “dialogue” and “no dialogue” can now be analysed and interpreted.

### Step six: Interpretation

How do organisations use social media to create dialogue? Under what conditions can dialogue happen on social media? The initial findings suggest that a top-down strategic approach is an enabler of dialogue (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). *Social media strategy is a necessary condition* for dialogue. However, just having a strategy, enabling employees' participation is not enough to create two-way communication. Surely, top-down encouragement and *access* to social media platforms are important and necessary conditions, however not sufficient.

Another *necessary condition is the bottom-up use of social media* platforms. Bottom-Up use cannot be enforced or imposed, and relies heavily on the creation of *benefits* for individual participants or, as one of the interviewees in UKC put it: "it has to be relevant". While Bottom-Up use is a necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for creating dialogue.

The role of Policy and Management Enforcement is not clear from the data available. Neither is a sufficient condition, and both only appear to be mutually exclusive. The effects of alignment of policy and strategy of IT use would deserve an individual in-depth study which would go beyond the scope of this project (Wu et al., 2015). Arguably, "policy" or "management enforcement" create a framework within which engagement on social media takes place. While policy is spelling out the rules, the management enforcement is the act of implementing the policy and pushing it through. Does too much or too little regulation (either condition present or both conditions absent respectively) create a setting in which there is no dialogue (DesAutels, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)? Further research into these settings would be required to provide more insight into the possible mediating role of both: a clear social media use policy and the managerial enforcement of social media use. The data from four available studies do not deliver explanations but introduce more questions. It is also possible that the policy and management enforcement are not necessary conditions in either case: existing research suggests that communication on social media can happen without regulation and oversight so that neither enforcement nor regulation would be necessary (Huang et al., 2013), but also, that certain combinations of individually successful practices and policies result in failure (Andreeva & Sergeeva, 2016). The cases LR9 and LR12 (Table 35) are representing the mutually exclusive "policy" and "enforcement"-conditions and are the two cases which would empirically help

understanding the role of Policy and Management Enforcement. If these cases lead to positive outcomes, Dialogue can happen independently of Policy or Enforcement. On the other hand, if either case leads to a negative outcome, the role of Policy and Management Enforcement becomes more complex and would warrant more attention, suggesting that Policy can influence participation and dialogue (Stein, 2013).

The findings assessed within the DART-framework of value co-creation suggest that *access* and a balance of *risk/benefits* are necessary conditions for the creation of dialogue (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). The absence of access or lack of (perceived) benefits for either employee or the management appears to inhibit dialogue, despite possible managerial encouragement and enforcement. Further, the findings complement the “top-down” strategic HRM view presented by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and suggest that dialogue and employee involvement cannot be enforced from the top.

The results of the preliminary analysis were not yet satisfactory for many reasons. First, the themes identified were uncertain and could change as more interviews are analysed and other themes emerge. Second, csQCA has limited power of explanation (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). While the method can highlight necessary and sufficient conditions, it does not explain *why* these conditions are present when a particular outcome is observed, neither does the method claim any causality. Third, the findings appear to suggest something rather “intuitive” – an interaction between employees and management took place when there was a bottom-up drive to interact and a top-down initiative to engage with employees.

Despite the shortcoming, the early application of csQCA proved valuable. It provided early insights into (incomplete) data. It helped critical assessment of the selected approach and triggered further and deeper investigation. Finally, it contributed to the professional development of the researcher in an application of different analysis tools.

## C.2. Second round of analysis – analysing complete studies

The second stage was completed once all interviews have been concluded and transcribed. As the study at UKSoftware could not be completed, it was dropped from this analysis stage. The analysis process itself took place in several stages. In preparation, the interviews transcribed during the initial analysis step have been complemented by the additional interview transcripts. New projects for each of the

case studies were created in NVivo so that there was no direct access to the codes from the first round of coding. This was done deliberately so that the second round of analysis could be performed as an independent analytical exercise rather than the continuation of the first round.

The analysis started with immersion into data. Initial coding aims at building a catalogue of codes to later define core conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2006). The categories emergent from the data and the codes are used for “Pattern naming” (Glaser, 2002) – the discovery of words that describe the emergent social phenomenon.

Before coding, word clouds were created for each of the cases (Figure 45).



Figure 45 - Word Clouds from UKBank, UKConsulting and UKOutsourcing

Word clouds is a visualisation technique whereby words from a text are printed in larger and bolder characters if they occur in the text more often. The idea behind the word clouds was to get a general “feel” of what the case study participants talked about most. This image is less “biased” than the researcher’s interpretations, as it is based simply on a word count and bears no connection to content, feelings or context. During the selection process UKBank and UKOutsourcing were identified as organisations where either the employees or the management are not actively interacting on public social media; While UKConsulting was identified as an organisation where some form of management-employee interaction takes place. Interestingly, the word clouds for the former organisations feature references to “LinkedIn” and “Recruitment/Candidates” most prominently, while the latter organisation refer to internal social media platforms “Networking” and “Communities” as well as to “personal” and “Change”.

Each interview was coded individually, however, within each case, the codes used for one interview were re-used for another when possible. Similar to the coding process

in the first round, each interview was broken down into sentences, and each sentence or significant statement was given a code. Whenever the context of a sentence was relevant for the coding, several sentences were coded together. Case studies were coded one by one. All interviews from case one were coded, then all interviews from case two, then three. The number of codes increased as new case studies were analysed and from initial 45 codes in the first case study. Additional 43 codes were created while coding subsequent cases.

During the coding process, the transcriptions have been further corrected – spelling mistakes, obviously omitted words or autocorrected expressions. Revisiting the interviews for a fourth or fifth time (interview, transcription, round one coding, re-coding, round two coding), listening into the recordings once more to verify the transcripts, and re-reading the answers had a positive effect on researcher’s understanding for each of the participants. A silent dialogue between the researcher and the participant would take place, with researcher re-phrasing the original question or raising new questions in reply to the participant’s answers: The researcher listening into the recordings would “interrupt” the participant’s answer and note a new question which was not asked in the interview. Of course, the recorded and transcribed answers did not change, but the researcher’s interpretations and sense-making did evolve with the repeated review and analysis of the data. In some cases, the researcher would go back to the participant and ask the new questions; these would be added to the interview transcripts with a corresponding date. In other cases, the questions would be used by the researcher to adjust coding of certain sentences. The audio recordings and the interview notes did provide a valuable memory aid to assist with recalling the mood, the gestures and the tone of the conversation – otherwise, it is difficult to spot irony, sarcasm, disappointment or light-heartedness in transcripts. These “hidden” emotions, invisible in pure text transcripts do, however, give the words additional, sometimes opposite meaning to what can be interpreted from the simple transcript.

The nearly ninety codes from the initial round of coding were exported to Excel and combined to new codes wherever possible. Duplicate codes were combined, codes were generalised (e.g. “restrictions on Twitter use” and “restrictions of LinkedIn use” to “restrictions on social media use”). The interviews were then re-coded, with each replaced code verified that the coding remained meaningful.

Remaining 54 codes were grouped into eight “Themes”, unlike the first round of coding the “themes” did not appear to be on the same theoretical level (Table 36).

Code (first-order concept)	# of sources	# of codes	Theme (second-order concept)	Abstract Concept (third-order concept)
no branding expertise	1	3	Continuous Changing	Evolving Social Media-Use
social media use is evolving process	8	14		
advertising jobs on social media	1	1	Using Social Media in Organisations - Practices	
communications via conventional media	4	4		
difference between internal and external tools	5	8		
employee feedback collected through questionnaires	2	2		
employer brand creation on linkedIn	3	5		
linkedIn as search tool	2	3		
social media as business tool	2	3		
social media as marketing tool	1	1		
social media as search tool	1	1		
social media is a communications tool	9	16		
Employees as brand ambassadors	4	5	Realising Social Media Value for Organisations	Motivating Social Media-Use
internal mobility	1	1		
limited use of public social media for promotion	1	1		
limited value of direct communications on linkedin	2	5		
limited value of external social media	2	2		
limited value of internal social media	3	5		
limited value for recruiting	4	7		
not prepared to pay for social media	1	2		
referral system	4	8		
value in attracting or recruiting candidates	9	21		
value in networking tools	1	1		
value in using internal social media	2	2		
value is quantifiable	3	4		
value of using external social media	2	2		
belief that social media needs to be managed	4	12		
Broadcast in place of dialogue	12	27		
enforcing social media use top-down	2	5		
no big bang launch of internal social media	1	1		
policy restrictions	5	7		
top down enabler	10	16	Preventing Use	Controlling Social Media Use
employees not accepting internal social media	5	7		
internal resistance to social media at work	2	3		
internal tools not used by managers	1	1		
issue with transparency	2	3		
no propagation of available comms tools	2	2		
no social media engagement experience	1	1		
no top-down attempt to encourage feedback	1	1		
no top-down encouragement to use social media	8	20		
no use of twitter by top management internally	1	1		
resistance from middle management	1	1		
technical limitation of access	4	5		
time as restricting factor	5	7		
too much information is decremental	3	4		
uncertainty about what can or not be said on social media	6	6		
alumni-employee access	7	9		
breaking down of hierarchies	7	13		
direct candidate-HR contact on social media	1	1		
direct HR -Candidate engagement on linkedIn	2	2		
social media enables engagement	11	23	Personal Motivations	Using Social Media
employees accepting internal social media	1	1		
motivating ongoing use	9	22		
personal motivation for continuous use	13	45		
using social media (employees)	7	11	Emergent Using by employees	

Table 36 - First-, Second- and Third- Order Concepts

In the first-round coding, the identified themes described conditions present or absent in an organisation. In this round of coding, the themes seemed to be “all over the place” – covering individual practices, organisational practices, strategies and policies, personal motivations and perceived value generated through social media use.

The motivation for letting the themes emerge from the data, rather than retrofitting the data into themes derived from literature is based on the grounded-theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While the richness of data and the flexibility of this approach might provide new insights into the phenomenon, the danger of being overwhelmed by the data and losing the focus is not to be underestimated (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). An absolute “abstraction” from preconceptions, after compiling Literature Reviews, developing concepts for case selection and performance measures, and conducting initial analysis rounds is virtually impossible. It needs to be acknowledged that, despite the best efforts, the researcher cannot free themselves from any a-priory knowledge and pre-conception. Acknowledging this makes the researcher aware of the potential bias and allows them to address it during the analysis. For instance, the codes and themes from the first round of analysis were consciously disregarded in the second round to allow new and fresh themes to emerge. The initial coding resulted in a number and diversity of themes which appeared unmanageable. Potential explanation theories included personal motivation, software adoption, and social exchange theories, power-relationships and actor-network theory. It was realised that a tighter relationship between the themes needs to be made explicit. Otherwise, the emergent theory would be too broad and too thinly spread among an unmanageable number of points of views. The right balance between the number of dimensions of analysis and the focus and sharpness of the argument is a necessary attribute of theory (DiMaggio, 1995).

The analysis of the themes and their interrelations and to link the themes to the interaction patterns between employees and managers within the HR communication process, consisted of three steps: first identifying general relationships between the themes, then linking the themes and their relationships to changes within the interaction patterns, finally understanding how the themes can be used to describe and explain these changes.

### *C.2.1 Discovering relationships between the concepts*

Developing second-order concepts – moving from themes to concepts, included a transformation of codes into “actions”. Whereas codes were defined by nouns, verbs and whole sentences, second level coding focused on the performative view. For example, first level codes would include definitions such as “policy restrictions”, “belief that social media needs to be managed” or “broadcast instead of dialogue”.

These codes describe observations of artefacts (e.g. policy), outcomes (e.g. broadcast), conditions (e.g. beliefs) and so on. Second level Themes focused on the actions, activities and processes which encapsulated or described the corresponding themes. For example, the previous codes were grouped together as a Theme of “Managing Social Media use top-down”, thus emphasising the continuous changes in the observed settings. These changes would include the development as well as sustaining of the environmental conditions under which social media are being used.

The second-round coding yielded eight second-order concepts (Table 37).

Continuous Changing
Using Social Media in Organisations - Practices
Realising Social Media use Value for Organisations
Top-Down Managing of Social Media use
Preventing Use
Enabling Interpersonal Access
Personal Motivations
Emergent Using by employees (bottom-up)

Table 37 - Themes from Qualitative Data Analysis

The concepts were named using gerunds when possible to focus on process rather than “things” (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2002). The concepts were written on cards, and the cards were re-arranged on the table to order/group the themes in a pattern that would highlight the relationships between them (Figure 46).

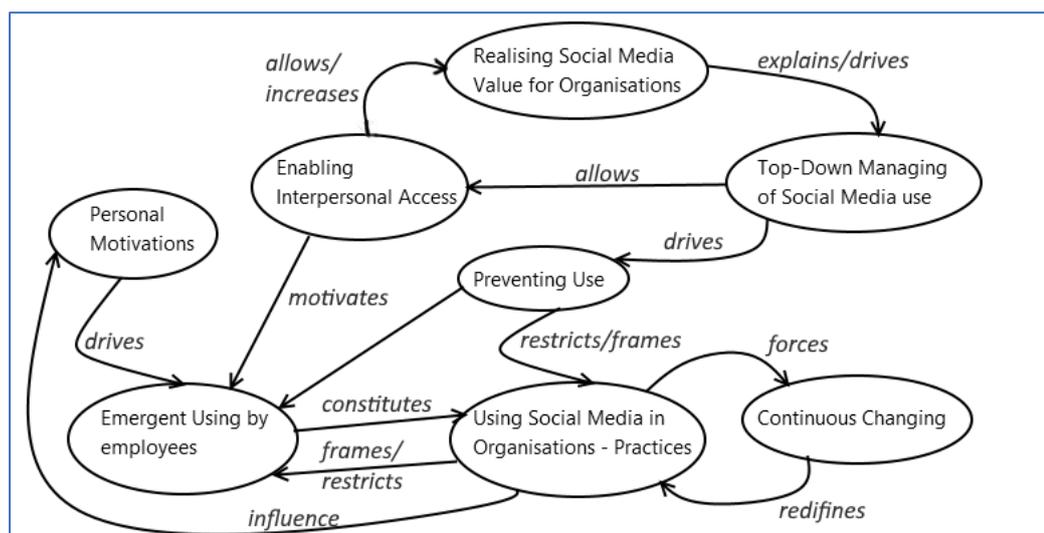


Figure 46 - Clustering: relationships between Concepts

To analyse these higher-level concepts (or “Themes”) “Clustering”-method was used (Charmaz, 2006). This technique allows the researcher to draw and highlight

relationships between concepts in a freehand manner. It starts with a basic concept/code/theme, and others are then placed in relation to that concept. Several cluster concepts are tried out and discarded before a more detailed write-up commences. The cluster-method allowed to focus on relationships between concepts and group loosely related concepts to new, more abstract concepts (Table 38).

Evolving social media use
Motivating social media use
Controlling social media use
Using social media

*Table 38 - third-order concepts*

“Evolving social media use”-concept considers the interactive relationship between the concepts of “continuous changing” and “using social media”, whereby continues change “affects” the way organisations are “using social media” and on the other hand is happening because of the social media use. This new concept encapsulates the interplay of structure and practice of social media use.

“Motivating Social Media use”-concept captures the perceived, reported and expected “value” (benefits, advantages) for the organisations resulting from social media use, and the beliefs that social media use needs to be controlled, guided and managed. This concept provides a placeholder for organisational motivations to use social media, not only as a “consumer” (utilising its features for expected benefits) but also as a controller/manager, seeking to frame social media use by employees.

“Controlling Social Media Use” is related to the previous two concepts. includes the themes of “Preventing Access” (creating or removing physical, organisational or legal/contractual barriers for accessing social media *technologies*) and “Enabling Interpersonal Access” (creating or removing physical, organisational or legal/contractual barriers for accessing *people* on social media).

Finally, the concept “Using Social Media” covers the themes “Emergent Using (of social media) by Employees” and “Personal Motivations”. This concept relates to individual motivations and practices which may (not) be aligned with prescribed organisational procedures and policies.

The relationships between the newly defined concepts are crisper than those in the initial concept map. Specifically, the reciprocal interplay between structure (control and motivation) and action (evolvment and practice) becomes visible (Figure 47).

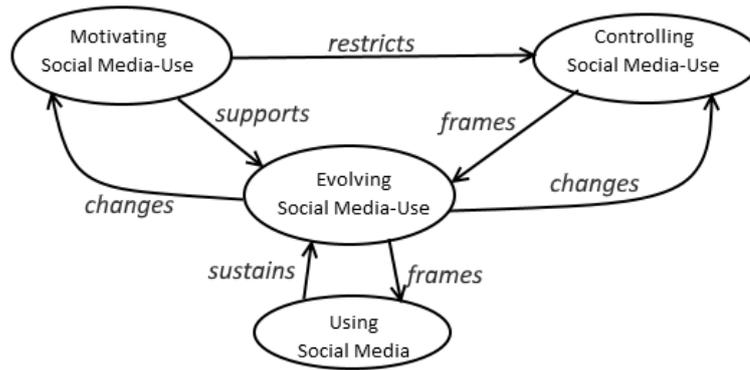


Figure 47 - Third-Order Concept Map

The next step was to link the second-order concepts (“themes”) back to actual observable and reported changes within the management-employee interaction pattern (Huang et al., 2013), and to validate these concepts (Charmaz, 2006). These abstract third-level concepts are then used in the following Analysis-Chapter to further explain the relationships between those concepts (Glaser, 2002).

### C.2.2 Linking the themes and their relationships to value creation

The next necessary step is to understand *how* each of the themes is related to value creation properties of a communication system. Establishing a relationship between a concept/theme and value creation would support an explanation of *how* social media use contributes to value creation. Each of the themes can influence and explain one or more value creation properties of a communication system.

This section describes how the value-creating properties of Dialogue, Access, Risk/Benefit balance, and Transparency are related to the themes of Evolving Social Media use, Motivating Social Media use, Controlling Social Media Use, and Using Social Media which emerged from the empirical data (Table 39). These relationships are used to describe how value is generated through social media use in each of the case organisations.

Concept	Theme	Dialogue	Access	Risk / Benefits	Transparency
Evolving social media use	Using social media in Organisations - Practices	Exemplify dialogue	Exemplify access	Exemplify mitigation of Risk/ access to benefits	Exemplify Transparency in interaction patterns
	Continuous Changing	Describe new interaction patterns	Describe new access paths to/between employees and managers	Describe benefits and emergent risks through new interaction patterns	Describe organisational and personal changes in information sharing
Controlling social media use	Enabling Interpersonal Access				
	Preventing Use	Discourage engagement	Explain access restrictions	Define personal risks	Explain reluctance to transparency
Motivating social media use	Realising social media use Value for Organisations	Define desired outcomes of dialogue	Evaluate cost/benefits of gaining or providing access	Justify risks, List and quantify benefits	Explain contribution of openness to perceived benefits
	Top-Down Managing of social media use	Support/encourage two way communication	Provide permission & physical access	Legitimise/prohibit access, remove ambiguity	Encourage openness
Using social media	Personal Motivations	Support continuous engagement	Explain readiness to seek access	Define personal benefits	Explain readiness to be transparent
	Emergent Using by employees	Encourage employee involvement	Find alternative access routes	Describe personal benefits, highlight participative behaviour	Demonstrate openness towards employer and colleagues

Table 39 - Relationship between Themes and DART framework

*Changes to Dialogue:* Dialogue – a two-way-communication, requires that a power balance between the parties be maintained (Kent & Taylor, 1998). “Top-Down” rules, regulation and enforcement can encourage or discourage dialogue. “Emergent Use by Employees” theme covers employees’ participation in dialogue. “Personal Motivations” and “Preventing Use” describe what (de-)motivates dialogue at the individual level. “Social Media use value” links to dialogue as an explanation of expected positive outcomes. “Social media use Practices” provide examples for continuous dialogue (or the lack thereof). Finally, the “Continuous changing”-theme provides descriptions of how dialogic communication is (not) evolving.

*Changes to Access:* On the one hand, the access to public social media is equal for organisations and employees (Boyd & Ellison, 2008), on the other hand, organisations have significantly more control over internal social media platforms (Leonardi et al., 2013 2013). “Top-down”- strategies and regulations explain the provision and legitimisation of access to (certain) social media platforms. The “Bottom-up”- initiatives highlight how employees seek and introduce alternative access routes. “Motivators” and “Inhibitors”-themes would explain a person’s readiness to seek access or unwillingness to do so. “Social Media use value” justifies the provision of access (or non-provision, or even active removal thereof) by the management. “Continuous Changing” describes new pathways for employees to communicate with each other, and channels which are used by employees to establish and maintain

relationships. “Social Media Practices” provide concrete examples of new interaction channels used or provided by either management or employees themselves.

*Changes to Risks/Benefit:* The “Top-Down” regulations directly introduce new Risks (e.g. by creating punitive regulations), reduce Risks (e.g. by providing clear guidelines) and communicate expected benefits resulting from social media use. “Bottom-up” initiatives, while possibly introducing new Risks for the organisation, also demonstrate perceived personal Benefits. “Motivators” and “Inhibitors” can be linked almost one-to-one to corresponding Benefits and Risks respectively and so help to describe the Risks/Benefits-balance for an individual. The theme “Social Media use value” justifies possible Risk-taking and describes expected (or actual) benefits for the organisation. “Continuous Changing” and “Social Media Practices” themes show how the Risk/Benefits balance is shifting and provide examples of practices aimed at maximisation of Benefits and reduction of Risks.

*Changes to Transparency:* Organisational openness is driven by “Top-Down” approach to information sharing. At the same time, “Bottom-Up” initiatives highlight employees’ readiness to share (personal) information and opinions. “Motivators” and “Inhibitors” would provide insight into why employees are (not) ready to share information. “Continuous Changing” shows whether there is a shift in what and how openly information is being shared between employees and organisations, while “Social Media Practices” provide examples of altered information sharing levels.

### *C.2.3 Using the themes to describe and explain interaction pattern changes*

Aiming at addressing all of the theory-relevant questions of What, How, Who, Where and When and Why (Freese, 1980), the findings from each case are reported to answer the What, How and Who/Where/When questions to provide a setting for the discussion. The “why”-question is then addressed in the analysis and discussion chapter (Table 40).

Concept	Theme	Questions covered
Evolving social media use	Using social media in Organisations - Practices	What is happening
	Continuous Changing	How the process/practice change
Controlling social media use	Enabling Interpersonal Access	How practices are sustained
	Preventing Use	How practices are sustained
Motivating social media use	Realising value for Organisations	How practices are sustained
	Top-Down Managing of social media use	What practices are enforced Who uses social media
Using social media	Personal Motivations	How practices are sustained
	Emergent Using by employees	What practices emerge Who uses social media

*Table 40 - Themes relationships to research questions*

Each case will report the details of “Social Media Practices” theme – the “what” can be observed. The theme “Continuous Changing” describes the changes and “how” the processes and communication patterns changed. Data coded as “Top-Down” and “Bottom-Up” (emergent use by employees) will be reported from the point of view of explaining “what” approaches to using and changing the use of social media for employee/management interactions are taking place. Simultaneously, these two themes are used to answer “who” and “how” questions: who and how is participating in the shaping of Social Media-in-use changes. The themes “Realising Social Media value”, “Personal Motivations” and “Preventing Use” provide answers to the “how” specific practices are justified and are sustained.