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Social Media Use in Organizations: Exploring the Emergence of a New Practice

A case study on institutionalization

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Abstract

Almost a third of the world's population use social media, and organizations show growing interest in how they can harness the potential of social media. Scholars have investigated various implications of social media use at the individual level. However, there is a substantial lack of research at the organizational level.

This thesis explores how organizations institutionalize social media in a comparative study on two Norwegian organizations, Alpha and Omega, which are leading in the use of social media. Empirical findings are presented as narratives on the development of social media use, based on data collected from fourteen semi-structured interviews with employees in these two organizations. By applying qualitative research methods, we explored the development of social media use in these organizations, and identified characteristics of actions that contributed to its institutionalization. The thesis makes use of theory from Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) concept of institutional work in order to understand the relationship between actions and institutionalization.

We identified three central factors which organizations with ambition to successfully make use of social media ought to consider. First, we found that a strong advocate for social media is required for institutionalizing the new practice. This is related to persuading others to support and accept use of social media as a normal practice in the organization. Second, we found that an environment for trial and error is essential for successful use of social media in organizations. Allowing subordinates to experiment with their work in combination with systematic evaluation, contribute to incremental progress toward appropriate use of social media. Third, collaboration across departments will ensure that use of social media as a new practice attracts a wider audience. Organizations that engage in collaboration across departments can take advantage of synergies such as more unified interaction between the organization and its users. This will facilitate acknowledgement of social media as a new practice throughout the organization.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and relevance

Almost a third of the world's population, 2.48 billion people, were using social media in 2017 (eMarketer Inc., 2018). Fifteen years ago, organizations like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube did not even exist. The emergence of social media has affected a large part of people's lives in areas such as work, politics, communication patterns and people's level of stress (Perrin, 2015). How organizational actors can harness the potential from social media remains an enigma for many business leaders (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Researchers like Peters K. et al. (2013) have attempted to establish guidelines for metrics that might contribute to uncover the potential from social media. In addition, they suggest further research on adequate organizational structures and processes that guide organizations in their change process toward successful implementation of social media.

Our thesis will examine use of social media in organizations, more specifically actions performed by individual and collective actors aimed to develop use of social media in organizations. The way in which new practices are accepted, adopted and eventually become established as taken-for-granted practices is essential for understanding changes in institutions (Reay et al., 2013). Scholars mainly address implications of social media at the individual level, and the limited literature at the organizational level is mostly oriented toward marketing (Ngai et al., 2015). Academics from the discipline of management accounting have just begun to explore how social media might impact their practice. (Scott & Orlikowski, 2012; Jeacle & Carter, 2014; Agostino & Sidorova, 2017; Arnaboldi et al., 2017a; Brivot et al., 2017)

From an organizational perspective, social media can be separated into two areas of application. The first area addresses the establishment of a virtual community and relates to communication and marketing (Gopinath et al., 2014; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015). It can be understood as managing the social media activity an organization spreads out to its users. The second area is that social media can be used as a source of information, where it is possible to analyze peoples' opinions and individual characteristics (Haeffliger et al., 2011; Jeacle & Carter, 2014; Medhat et al., 2014). This is often described as social media monitoring (Constantinides, 2014), and can be understood as managing the social media data an organization collects from users of social media.

Empirical findings of how social media impacts businesses seems to be opaque, and the CMO Survey (2017) of top marketers in the US found that only 16.3 percent of businesses can quantitatively prove the impact of social media. Still, practitioners seem to devote more resources in this field as the CMO Survey also reports that marketers expect to increase the social media expenditure the next five years. Paniagua and Sapena (2014) examined how social media impacts business activities, and their empirical findings suggested that financial performance indeed was affected by content from social media.

A survey of practitioners by Accenture (2014) revealed that social media brings disruption that can revolutionize business. Having a data-driven approach, by applying tools that combine sophisticated algorithms and state-of-the-art technology, can improve organizations' performance, and the understanding of customers' needs. Findings from McAfee and Brynjolfsson (2012) show that organizations with emphasis on data-driven decision-making are performing better in terms of profitability and productivity. This form of decision-making relies on the analysis of data rather than purely on intuition (Provost & Fawcett, 2013).

Peter Drucker, described as the founder of modern management (Denning, 2014), is quoted for saying: "If you want something new, you have to stop doing something old". The transformation from analogue processes to digital processes is a journey many organizations will have to make at some point. This might leave a range of existing practices obsolete as new practices emerge. Scholars have thoroughly examined the spread of practices from one organization to another (Reay et al., 2013). However, they have given relatively little attention to what happens to such practices within an organization, during and after adoption (Ansari et al., 2010). Kostova and Roth (2002) describe institutionalization as the way in which new practices are implemented and internalized. The background for our thesis is the need to shed more light on how organizations institutionalize the use of social media and to study mechanisms at play during and after adoption of this new practice. In our thesis we will use Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) concept of institutional work, and draw parallels to institutionalization of social media in organizations. This entails examining how actions from individual and collective actors affect different parts of the organization as the practice of social media develops in the organization.

1.2 Research question

The objective of our thesis is to explore how organizations implement use of social media as a new practice. We seek to explore whether the emergence of social media creates new or alter existing institutions in organizations through continuous interaction between actors and institutions. Thus, our main research question is:

How is social media institutionalized in organizations?

To give a comprehensive answer, we will divide our main research questions into two sub-questions:

- 1. How does the use of social media in organizations develop over time?*
- 2. What are characteristics of actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations?*

Our first sub-question seeks to explore the way use of social media progresses as organizations gain more experience with it. This entails identifying the development of how organizations use social media to interact with customers or users, as well as the benefits organizations claim they gain by engaging in social media. Our second sub-question seeks to explore characteristics of actions that incrementally create or change an institution by identifying explicit actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations.

1.3 Methodology

We seek to answer our research questions by use of a qualitative research method. The data was collected by conducting a case study on two Norwegian organizations, which we have anonymized as Alpha and Omega.

To our knowledge, there are a limited number of studies on the topic of social media within a Norwegian context. A report on digitalization and the effect it has on work by McKinsey & Company (2017) categorizes Norway among the world's most advanced digital economies. Some of the characteristics are a high level of digital integration and public initiatives to

facilitate the digital economy. Further research within a Norwegian context could be of particular interest as it might help envision the digital evolution.

The reason we found it interesting to compare the two selected organizations is because both are leading in use of social media. Alpha operates in the public sector, which allows us to explore how a public institution keeps up with its social media use in an advanced digital economy. The basis for action differs from Omega, as the objective of a public institution is not profit driven but has its essence in serving the society. Omega operates in the private sector and is a well-established organization exposed to the pressure of competition. Thus, analyzing how these contrasting organizations institutionalize social media is likely to provide new insight.

By conducting semi-structured interviews, we aimed to gain deeper insight in various actions performed by individual and collective actors regarding social media in organizations. Knowledge from existing literature on social media and institutionalization was applied to understand the dynamics of actions that lead to institutional change. A comparative analysis of similarities and differences in the use of social media in Alpha and Omega sheds light on how actions related to this phenomenon influences organizations.

1.4 Outline

In chapter 1, we introduced the background for conducting this research and how the concept of social media is relevant for organizations. In chapter 2, we present essential theory that is foundational for our thesis. In chapter 3, we discuss our choice of research method. Chapter 4 presents empirical findings of our collected data from Alpha and Omega. In chapter 5, we will discuss the findings from chapter 4 along with expectations deduced from theory on social media and institutionalization. Additionally, we will compare the findings from the two organizations studied. In chapter 6, we conclude on our findings and present suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical foundation

In this chapter, we present existing literature related to social media in organizations in order to establish a foundation for our analysis. In chapter 2.1, we elaborate on how the concept of social media is understood in the existing literature and how we choose to define it. Additionally, we elaborate on which dimensions social media has been studied, in an organizational context. In chapter 2.2, we draw attention to institutional work theory, which acts as our theoretical lens for analysis. We bring into focus how institutional work is defined and describe various actions that lead to changes or creation of institutions. A conceptual framework will be presented to illustrate institutional work theory in the context of social media in organizations.

2.1 Social media in the management literature

The use of social media has increased extensively in recent years, and it is reasonable to consider that social media represent a revolutionary trend that organizations ought to engage in (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the following, we aim to define the concept of social media as it is to be understood in our thesis. In addition, we will present existing management literature on social media in organizations. The literature review is intended to reflect the existing knowledge to date on social media in an organizational context. Consequently, the review will make gaps in the current literature visible, i.e. uncharted territory which our study aims to explore. The findings from the literature review are intended to give an idea of expectations related to our first research question, *how does the use of social media in organizations develop over time?*

2.1.1 Definition of social media

There is an ambiguous understanding of the term social media among decision makers, managers, scholars and the like (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Xiang and Gretzel describe social media rather vaguely as a “variety of new and emerging sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers with the intent of educating each other about products, brands, services and issues” (2010, p. 180). Obar and Wildman (2015) mention two distinct challenges with defining social media. First, the high rate of technology expansion

and development makes it difficult to define clear boundaries around the concept. Technology associated with social media include a wide range of computer and mobile-based platforms that continuously evolve. Over time, new platforms emerge while others are abandoned. Second, social media facilitate diverse forms of communication that are analogous to those enabled by other technologies.

The most cited definition of social media found in existing literature belongs to Kaplan and Haenlein, who define social media as “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” (2010, p. 60). Practitioners and scholars seem to be inconsistent in the use of social media, user generated content (UGC), and Web 2.0 as terms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In order to understand the concept of social media, it is necessary to explain the terms ‘Web 2.0’ and ‘user generated content’. Web 2.0 describes the new generation of social networking services. The term describes how the Internet is utilized as a platform that is continuously shaped by all of its users in collaboration, as opposed to individual content creation and publishing. Web 2.0 can be considered as the platform for the evolution of social media.

There are three basic requirements UGC needs to fulfill according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007). Content such as music, video or texts, needs to be published on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible for a community. This excludes content exchanged in e-mails or instant messages. The next requirement is that it needs to include a certain amount of creative effort, meaning that users must add their own value to the content. Either by creating new content or adapting existing works. Finally, the content creation has to be outside of professional routines and practices. UGC is not intended for commercial market purposes.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) considers Web 2.0 to represent the ideological and technological foundation for social media, while UGC can be understood as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. To shed light on the vast and various nuances of the term social media, academics have attempted to classify social media into several subgroups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and building blocks (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) highlight two other important features of social media. First, user data is produced on a continuous basis and is readily available almost instantaneously. Second, it is a soft innovation in the sense that it is not the result of revolutionary technological advances.

Nevertheless, it has contributed to a massive change in the way people communicate at a global level.

Despite Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) definition of social media being quite renowned, it creates boundaries that conflict with our view of social media from an organizational perspective. The conflict relates to our understanding of the term 'user generated content' and the notion that it is not intended for commercial market purposes. The above-mentioned extracts from literature on social media serve as a useful guideline for understanding the concept, while at the same time demonstrating the extensive use of the term in today's society. For the purpose of our thesis, we defined social media in the following way:

Social media consists of a variety of online information that is created, exchanged and consumed by users through dynamic internet platforms that support interactivity and real-time communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Obar & Wildman, 2015; Arnaboldi et al., 2017a).

2.1.2 Social media use in organizations

With its massive increase in popularity in recent years, social media has moved from being of interest only at the individual level to attracting attention also at the organizational level (Ngai et al., 2015). The influence of social media in society has made it possible for new business models to emerge, and has challenged organizations to rethink their business processes and the way they operate. Social media is no longer a simple tool for communication among friends and acquaintances. It has, among other things, developed into a resource with respect to reputation management and revenue generation. Technological developments have contributed to social media evolving into analytical tools where real time data and trends can be explored in detail (Arnaboldi et al., 2017a). Organizations can collect and analyze massive amounts of data at an affordable price. This has in turn made social media a potential focus area for organizations searching for new ways to improve their performance (Arnaboldi et al., 2017b). It has been emphasized that a prominent feature of social media is that it allows for many-to-many communication (Peters L., 1998; Ngai et al., 2015). As described by Ngai et al. many-to-many communication is a feature that has "become the business transaction norm, replacing the one-to-many marketing promotion model" (2015, p. 38). An important factor for organizations to keep in mind when making use of social media, is the notion that it is crucial to understand the variations between different social media platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

All characteristics of social media are not present on every platform and they are not mutually exclusive. Hence, an organization should only be present on social media when functionality matches the organization's overall goals and strategies.

It has been stated that the rise of social media may cause substantial changes to organizational work (Haefliger et al., 2011). It is expected to have a significant impact along three dimensions. First, through consumer communication with users inside and outside the organization, it is proposed that social media facilitates value creation and appropriation. Second, from a technological point of view, organizational structures and competitive advantages are challenged as the field of consumer interaction is altered. This implies social media can be used as a strategic tool and mediator between organizations and both internal and external users. Third, management is given the opportunity to play a role in leading and influencing online communities. Over time, social media has become less costly for organizations to engage in, and it has also developed toward personalization and the targeting of individual needs (von Krogh, 2012).

Social media is different from traditional media. Traditional media is unidirectional and brand managers advertise to consumers indirectly through them, giving managers authority and control of brand communication (Peters K. et al., 2013). In contrast, social media is a multi-way, open network where an organization's brand is just one piece of the network in line with every other user. This has implications for marketing, since the reach of published content becomes dependent on the actions and reactions of other network users. If the content is of low interest, adverts will have a low reach. As a consequence, when advertising in social media, brand managers lose control over reach. At the same time, linking the organization with 'the outside' allows an organization to be part of the conversation and engage with external users (Arnaboldi et al., 2017a).

An implication for practitioners is that advertising in social media requires inspiring and engaging content to catch the attention of users. Compared to traditional media, social media can be quite challenging in the sense that it requires constant nurturing of the user base otherwise their attention will turn elsewhere (Peters K. et al., 2013). In addition, social media opens up for dialogue between a brand and its consumers, and dialogue between consumers about a given brand. The dialogue feature requires organizational competence in listening, in assessing relevance of information, and in responding to inquiries. Peters K. et al. indicate that the tempo of social media and the excessive amounts of data being generated across platforms

will make organizations “feel the need for a central content hub that serves all channels on all relevant topics in almost real-time” (2013, p. 295).

Within the field of marketing, it is emphasized that social media have become a crucial element of strategic marketing (Hanna et al., 2011). Technological advances and massive growth in user numbers have contributed to changing social media into platforms where organizations can reach the masses and influence consumers. Hanna et al. (2011) point out that in order to be successful in social media, different platforms should be treated as components of an integrated system rather than stand-alone elements. In this system, social media and traditional media coexist and strengthen each other. Based on a best practice case study, Hanna et al. (2011) identify implications for practice. Among them is the need for tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success. Another implication is that social media efforts can prove to be effective at much lower cost than traditional media. Peters K. et al. (2013) state that organizations often have bottom-up, data-driven processes of collecting and employing social media metrics. They also point out that using metrics readily provided by social media platforms is not necessarily the best choice for organizations. The most important point is to have a clear connection between choice of social media metrics and organization specific objectives.

In a multiple case study on two Italian organizations, Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) find that performance figures have been established for social media in marketing and communications departments. In the above-mentioned cases, implementation of social media monitoring was guided by a wish for speeding up decision-making processes and increasing knowledge on consumers. In the process of building up systems for monitoring, standardized tools were found to be either too simple or too complex, leading to the development of organization specific monitoring tools. Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) also find that as actors involved with social media develop their skills, competencies and techniques, their significance within the organization increases. As a result, efforts are made within the organization to link together social media variables and traditional business variables.

For the government sector, social media proposes a new way to reach out to and engage with the public. At the same time, it has contributed to raise expectations to how government work is executed (Lee & Kwak, 2012). Bonsón et al. (2012) state that social media is a way for government to become more visible due to the possibility of mass redistribution of content. Active use of social media is also described as a way to facilitate corporate dialogue, i.e.

interaction between an entity and its stakeholders. Arguably, social media has the potential to act as a catalyst for governments to become more informed, responsive and citizen-oriented. By studying the practices of 75 European local governments in their use of Web 2.0 tools and social media, Bonsón et al. (2012) find that social media efforts were intended for enhancement of local governments transparency. Additionally, they observed practices to still be in their infancy, with low levels of adoption and active presence. Local governments were found to lag behind their citizens in the use of social media. This gap between citizens' and local governments' partaking in online communities, restricts local governments' ability to engage in ongoing debates.

In their study of U.S. federal agencies, Lee and Kwak (2012) find that many social media initiatives intended for public engagement end up failing due to political, organizational, technological or financial challenges. One challenge relates to resource allocation. Social media initiatives require dedicated employees and a substantial time commitment. Another challenge is the organizational culture in government agencies, which in many cases can be described as somewhat “hierarchical, top-down, command-and-control, and siloed” (Lee & Kwak, 2012, p. 499). Lastly, opening up for public engagement does not mean that the public will automatically show interest. Gaining people’s attention is a competition and when the public engages, open discussions on governmental policies might get out of hand. Lee and Kwak (2012) also highlight examples of best practices. To be successful, social media initiatives should be aligned with the main objectives of the agency. Involvement and support from top management will further help to align strategy and objectives. Active communication, employee education and knowledge sharing are pinpointed as key elements for organizations to become more transparent and open. The researchers call attention to the showcasing of success stories as a powerful way to change organizational culture.

In a study of how social media experts make intraorganizational claims to certain tasks, Suddaby et al. (2015) focus on the process of institutionalization. They find that over time, change occurs uncontested and unintended through everyday interactions between accountants and social media experts. Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) state that several professions are making efforts developing their skills and competencies within the field of social media. The researchers argue that those involved in marketing and communications are most affected by the emergence of social media. In contrast to the substantial interest in social media from marketing and communications, Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) find that the accounting profession is notably reluctant to the use of social media. Accountants seem to consider social media as

a field belonging to marketing and communications and do not value it as particularly useful for accounting purposes.

2.1.3 Summary of literature review on social media

The literature review highlights existing knowledge on social media in an organizational context found in management literature. Social media is defined rather broadly in the management literature. Scholars propose that organizations use social media for commercial market purposes and that they treat platforms differently dependent on their functionality. For the purpose of our thesis, we have defined social media as a variety of online information that is created, exchanged and consumed by users through dynamic internet platforms that support interactivity and real-time communication.

Social media is a soft innovation that has strongly contributed to altering the way people communicate. Over time, social media has evolved from being of interest for individual use only, to being embraced as a strategic tool for organizations. In our thesis, social media is discussed within an organizational context. Therefore, the literature review focuses on private and public organizations' use of social media. This includes literature on the development of social media use in organizations, and identifying which organizational actors are affected by increased attention to social media.

Existing management literature on social media in organizations is limited (Bonsón et al., 2012; Ngai et al., 2015; Arnaboldi et al., 2017b). Consequently, parts of our literature review present predictions in need of empirical support. Existing literature points out implications of social media use in organizations. Findings from the literature review result in certain expectations. The expectations in our thesis are the following:

Organizational actors working with marketing and communications are those who find social media most useful. As social media allows for engaging with external users, an organization will need specific competence to handle multi-way communication. Furthermore, commitment to social media requires a central content hub. To measure success, performance is measured via organization specific KPIs. At the governmental level, social media is linked to arguments of increased transparency. However, using social media in public agencies is particularly challenging due to political, organizational and financial constraints.

2.2 Theoretical framework on institutionalization

The second research question we seek to answer is *what are characteristics of actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations?* To analyze institutionalization of social media in organizations we intend to use the theoretical framework known as institutional work theory. The relationship between institutions and actions can be regarded as recursive, i.e. institutions affect actions and actions affect institutions (Lawrence et al., 2011). Barley and Tolbert highlight that “institutionalization is best understood as a dynamic, ongoing process” (1997, p. 93). A structure or practice becomes institutionalized when it is “taken for granted by members of a social group as efficacious and necessary” (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996, p. 179). The theory of institutional work is a branch of institutional studies which focuses on understanding how actors and actions affect institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In our thesis, an actor is defined as an individual, group, association or organization.

Lawrence and Suddaby describe institutional work as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (2006, p. 215). Institutional work provides a useful theoretical lens for answering our second research question as it directs focus toward the countless number of day-to-day forms of agency, i.e. coordinated and uncoordinated efforts, that are performed by individual and collective actors (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In other words, institutional work theory studies how actors, intentionally and unintentionally, deal with and influence the institutional structures surrounding them. In the subsequent sections, we present the concept of institutional work and the three distinct types of work relating to the creation of institutions: political, technical and cultural work.

Institutions and work

To understand the theory of institutional work, it is first necessary to understand its core components, ‘institutions’ and ‘work.’ Perkmann and Spicer (2008) refer to institutions as self-policing conventions between actors who provide meaning and stability to social life. Lawrence et al. (2011) highlight that institutions affect both the behavior and belief of actors by establishing guidelines for action, cognition and emotion. As explained by Hodgson, “language, money, law, systems of weights and measures, table manners, and firms (and other organizations) are thus all institutions” (2006, p. 2).

Organizations are special institutions with additional features: They have boundaries distinguishing members from nonmembers, they have rules and principles for who is in charge, and an internal hierarchy defining the chains of command (Hodgson, 2006). Work as a concept has not been given particular attention in the institutional literature (Lawrence et al., 2011). Consequently, Lawrence et al. rely on the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of work as "activity involving mental or physical effort done to achieve a result" (2011, p. 53).

Institutional change

Institutional work theory allows to study the relationship between actors and institutions by examining how different actors engage in small-scale social transformation as opposed to large-scale shifts. It involves efforts of a physical or mental character directed toward influencing an institution. Thus, the focus area of institutional work is on the processes and practices of the individual and collective actors populating institutions (Lawrence et al., 2011). The process of institutional change is associated with effortful work on a continuous basis by actors at all organizational levels (Bjerregaard, 2011). Suddaby et al. underline that "processes of endogenous change, driven by alterations in micro-practices at the sub-firm level and which are largely unintended, describe key elements of institutional work" (2015, p. 66). The concept of institutional work is viewed as a counterpoint to existing theories on institutional change. Existing explanations tend to emphasize highly influential and powerful 'institutional entrepreneurs' who generate social change by shaking up organizational fields, often associated with conflict and resistance (Suddaby et al., 2015).

2.2.1 Three types of institutional work

Perkmann and Spicer (2008) build on the literature on institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), emphasizing three types of institutional work linked to the creation of institutions: political, technical and cultural work. Political work relates to building social support for a process or a practice by recruiting relevant actors (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008), and is associated with actions of persuasion, defining boundaries and establishing rules (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Technical work aims to affect the cognitive side of an institution. This involves developing meaningful templates and guidelines, making it possible to understand how an institution is meant to function (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). Finally, cultural work can be seen as the activities directed at linking new

practices with the norms and values of broader audiences. In the following, we will describe the different types of institutional work in more detail.

Political work

Political work involves the development of rules and regulations to secure the place of an institution within the broader social system (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Activities that fall under political work are known as advocacy, defining and vesting. Advocacy is the act of persuading others through social interaction to gain support for a certain practice. Advocacy can be observed at different levels in society ranging from lobbying activities toward government legislation or trade unions trying to affect companies, to friends arguing over who deserves the right to sit in the front seat of the car on a road trip.

Defining is a mean to distinguish between insiders and outsiders in a social system. It involves defining boundaries that indicate who can partake in certain practices and who cannot. It builds the foundation for creating status hierarchies (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). An illustrative example of defining is the concept of citizenship. As a citizen, you are awarded status and membership in a given country, while at the same time you have to abide by the rules and regulations of that country (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Lawrence and Suddaby define vesting as “the creation of rule structures that confer property rights” (2006, p. 221). This can be interpreted as actions aimed at creating new field dynamics, paving the way for new practices and new actors. Vesting is most notably observed when government authority is exercised. An example of vesting can be found in the U.S. government’s division of power in the power-production industry in the late 1970s (Russo, 2001). Production and pricing was divided between different actors, which led to a change in market relations. Thus, opening up the power-production industry to new actors.

According to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) the various types of political work are mutually reinforcing, and often involve dramatic reshaping of institutional structures and practices. It is worth mentioning that although many of the examples put forth involves the actions of government, political work is not limited to government activity. Political work facilitates the creation of institutions, but it does not provide details on the functionality of institutions (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). This is where technical work becomes relevant. In our case, political work relates to actions aimed at convincing various actors about social media’s

relevance in Alpha and Omega, and actions aimed at establishing the use of social media in the two organizations.

Technical work

Technical work can be described as actions aimed at creating ‘mental models’ to serve as a basis for understanding an institution’s functionality (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). With the help of such models, people are provided with information on how to interact within the context of a new institution. Technical work takes the form of theorization, mimicry, and education (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). Theorization activities relate to the development of theoretical models of practice, which in turn can be formalized into manuals, procedures, and tools (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). Through this type of activity, one can create legitimacy around new practices.

Mimicry is a type of technical work where new practices are aligned with taken-for-granted practices. Mimicry makes it easier to implement new practices since people already are familiar with old structures and templates (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Thomas Edison mimicked the design and infrastructure of gas lighting when trying to institutionalize electric lighting. Even though electric light was technologically superior to gas light, Edison “deliberately designed his electric lighting to be all but indistinguishable from the existing system, lessening rather than emphasizing the gaps between the old institutions and his new innovation” (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001, p. 489).

The last form of technical work is education, which involves formal and informal activities aimed at developing skills and knowledge of relevant actors (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). Lawrence and Suddaby point out that educating “provides actors with the knowledge necessary to engage in new practices or interact with new structures” (2006, p. 228). The different types of technical work support the creation of new institutions by providing explanations on how the institution is to be understood. Technical work also has its limitations. It does not necessarily ensure that actors feel connected with an institution. To accomplish this, cultural work is required (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). In our case, technical work involves actions aimed at systematizing the way social media is used in Alpha and Omega, and actions aimed at clarifying how the use of social media should function in the two organizations.

Cultural work

Cultural work relates to actions aimed at ensuring that an institution attracts a wider audience. It concentrates on affecting attitudes and developing common identities such that actors without a specific interest or stake in an institution will find it appealing (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). In addition to the construction of identities, cultural work involves actions toward changing norms, and constructing networks (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The different forms of cultural work are of more symbolic nature, and focus on reshaping actors' values and belief systems (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017).

Construction of identities involves actions intended to alter the way actors relate to the institutional field in which they operate. This involves making actors picture themselves as a distinct functional group inside an institution. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argue that the construction of identities depends highly on cooperation among actors, since identity construction often is dependent on being formally and informally sanctioned by others. Lounsbury provides an example on identity construction in the study of college and university recyclers in the early 1990s. In a fieldwork study, it was observed that "status-creation recyclers began to forge a new and distinct occupational identity that was connected to the ideals of the broader environmental movement." These types of recyclers could identify one another via their "joint participation in the National Recycling Coalition (NCR), the main recycling trade association" (2001, p. 33).

The construction of networks is described as actions of creating interorganizational connections that provide the basis for new institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). An important element of network building is to make a somewhat diverse group of actors think along the same lines. Creating a network "depends heavily on the ability of actors to establish and maintain cooperative ties" (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 229). The action of constructing networks can be illustrated by the way the European auto industry contributed to institutionalizing recycling in the early 1990s (Orsato et al., 2002, p. 648). In this case, "significant industry groups, such as Renault, the PSA Group and CFF" participated in a working group where they argued that "industry-wide cooperation, collective liability, and commercial relations between the various partners involved" were the best principles to follow to solve waste problems. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) emphasize that institutions exist in nested systems across many levels, i.e. micro-, field- and societal-level. Our thesis coincides with a micro-level of analysis, which relates to institutions in groups and organizations. Thus,

it should be remarked that the understanding of interorganizational connections, is analogous to intraorganizational connections in our thesis.

The type of cultural work known as changing norms, involves re-constructing or expanding the links between current practices and the underlying moral and culture of those practices. This type of work involves actions such as delivering lectures and strategic use of communication (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017). An example of changing norms is actions toward implementing for-profit norms like efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In sum, cultural work is actions aimed at “making actors ‘attached’ to an institution” (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008, p. 818). In our case, cultural work relates to actions aimed at making the use of social media attractive to actors without an immediate interest in social media.

Multiple types, multiple workers, cumulative efforts

Perkmann and Spicer (2008) argue that for successful institutionalization, it is necessary to have multiple types of institutional work, multiple institutional workers, and institutional work has to be carried out over time. Thus, the combination of all three works, political, technical and cultural, is more likely to be effective than efforts only focused toward a single type of work. The effect of multiple institutional workers builds on the notion that there is strength in numbers, i.e. many hands make light work. With multiple actors involved, there is an increased likeliness of all types of work being involved in the process of institutionalization. Finally, institutional change is a product of cumulative efforts, meaning that institution building is a process where future actions build on the results of past actions.

2.2.2 Summary of institutional work and conceptual framework

To summarize, in our thesis we will use institutional work theory (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Perkmann & Spicer, 2008) as a theoretical framework for analysis. Institutional work related to the creation of institutions can be classified into three types: political work, technical work and cultural work. It is argued that institutionalization is more likely to be successful when applying multiple types of institutional work carried out by multiple actors over time.

The strength of institutional work is that the analytical focus lies in exploring and understanding how actors influence the institutional structures surrounding them. At the same time, institutions and actions have a recursive relationship, and the effect institutions have on

actions might be just as crucial for understanding the mechanisms in play. The theoretical framework will form the basis for identification of *characteristics of actions that have contributed to institutionalization of social media* in the two studied organizations, Alpha and Omega. Based on the above-mentioned literature of institutional work, we present a conceptual framework in Figure 1. The conceptual framework illustrate the linkage between the theoretical framework and the focus of our research.

The theoretical framework provides us with certain expectations to findings. We expect to find various elements of political, technical, and cultural work in the study of Alpha and Omega's institutionalization of social media. In addition, it is expected that multiple actors have contributed to the institutionalization process. Finally, it is expected that the various types of institutional work have been carried out over a long time period.

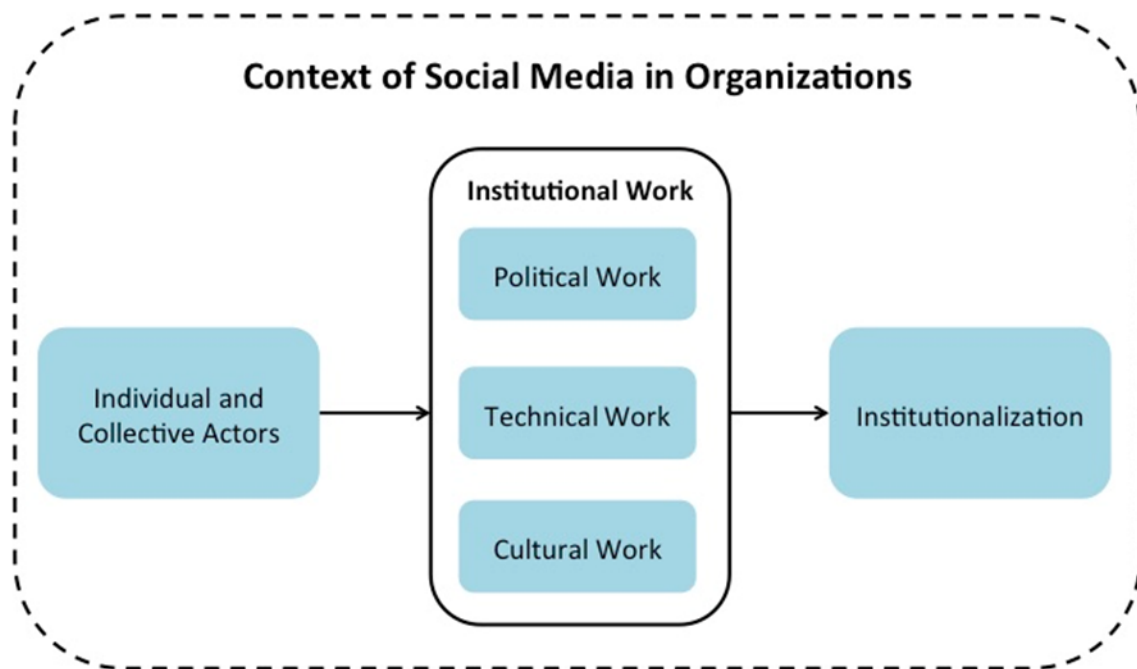


Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating actions from individual and collective actors aimed at institutionalizing social media in organizations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research philosophy

According to Saunders et al., a research philosophy is “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (2016, p. 124). They argue that sensible and consistent assumptions will constitute a credible research philosophy, and that it underpins the logic for belief throughout a research project. It can be understood as our assumptions about the way in which we interpret the world. The assumptions characterizing research philosophy can be divided into three types: ontology, epistemology and axiology. Additionally, Niglas (2010) mentions that the three types of assumptions concurrently exist along a multidimensional set of continua between two opposing extremes. Objectivism is one side of the extreme and it claims that the reality in social interactions we research, is external to us and other people (Saunders et al., 2016). The opposite side is subjectivism, which claims that reality in the social interactions are made from the perceptions and consequent actions of people.

Ontology addresses the nature of reality, raising questions of the assumptions researchers have regarding how the world operates and the commitment to particular views (Saunders et al., 2016). These assumptions shape the way in which we see and understand what is assumed to be a “real” reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Saunders et al. (2016) describe an example where scholars made an ontological assumption that resistance to change was highly damaging to organizations. Consequently, research in this field focused on finding ways to eliminate resistance. However, other researchers have started to view the nature of resistance as a natural reaction that highlights problematic aspects of change programs. This new ontological assumption resulted in a shift from focus on eliminating resistance to how it can be harnessed to benefit organizations.

Epistemology questions the grounds of knowledge that appears when investigating a subject (Burrell & Morgan, 1985). More specifically, how we might acquire acceptable knowledge in order to understand something and communicate this as knowledge to others. It entails ideas of how knowledge can be expressed through various forms, and how legitimate it is. The business and management discipline has a variety of legitimate epistemologies ranging from numerical data to visual data, and from facts to interpretations (Saunders et al., 2016). The importance lies in grasping the implications of different epistemological assumptions. An

emphasis on objective facts through quantitative research would more likely lead to narrow, but generalizable findings. On the other hand, qualitative research has an emphasis on interpretation of the local and particular may offer richer and more complex views of organizational realities - perhaps an entirely new understanding of the subject, but at the cost of being less generalizable.

Lastly, axiology addresses the influence of how values by our own and research participants' affect the research process (Saunders et al., 2016). The axiological assumptions of research philosophy refer to how we express a set of shared values as a guiding reason of making judgments of what is relevant (Heron, 1996). In other words, our values shape what we perceive as important. In some research cases, it might be helpful to reflect on personal and participants' values in order to establish guidance on what is important to focus on (Saunders et al., 2016). In other cases, it might be more fitting to detach from values in order to stay objective.

Our primary approach is to use Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) institutional work theory, which emphasizes the small-scale, day-to-day activities of actors over time. Social media is yet to be clearly defined in the academic literature, and there are multiple meanings and interpretations of it. In other words, the ontology in our research project is complex and rich. Thus, it will make sense epistemologically, to draw knowledge from interpretations of narratives and stories, which could contribute to a new understanding of the subject. Our thesis will therefore align with subjectivism and the research philosophy known as interpretivism, where the purpose is to "... create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 140). Interpretivism recognizes that researchers' interpretations of data are crucial for the contribution, and thus it has an axiological implication since our values shape our interpretations (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.2 Research approach

Saunders et al. (2016) describe three research approaches, deductive, inductive and abductive, that generally portray the way of reasoning in research. The approach relates to how researcher's cope with the theory development. A deductive approach often takes place when the conclusion is derived logically from a set of premises, meaning that when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). This entails that the

research begins with theory, developed through reading of the academic literature, followed by a research strategy designed to falsify or verify the theory (Saunders et al., 2016).

An inductive approach draws general conclusions based on facts or observed evidence (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The research begins with collecting data to explore a phenomenon and infer theoretical concepts and patterns, often in the form of a conceptual framework, and contribute to theory generation (Saunders et al., 2016). By having an inductive approach, theory is the outcome of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Finally, a combination of the two above mentioned approaches is referred to as an abductive approach, where the approach is to move back and forth between induction and deduction (Suddaby, 2006). Observations lay the foundation for premises that partially or wholly explain and determine the conclusion (Saunders et al., 2016). It is typically characterized by the collection of data to explore a phenomenon, identifying themes and explaining patterns, and to create a new theory or modify an existing theory that is subsequently tested through additional data collection.

Our thesis will be applying an abductive approach. We approached our research by reviewing existing literature on institutionalization and social media in organizations. Themes that we identified as interesting to investigate were based on Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) institutional work theory, such as actors' actions and the incremental development of institutions. While the existing literature on institutionalization is extensive, there is limited research in the context of social media. Thus, we seek to explore patterns of how social media is institutionalized in organizations, with the intention to modify or add new dimensions to existing theories.

3.3 Research design

Research design is an extensive plan for data collection in an empirical research project (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It can be seen as a blueprint for empirical research with the intention to answer specific research questions or testing specific hypotheses. A clear design with valid reasons for each of our research design decisions, should be derived from the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). Each component should align with the research philosophy and demonstrate coherence across the research design. In chapter 3.3.1 – 3.3.4, we will elaborate

on four components of our research design: research purpose, research method, research strategy, and the time horizon for our study.

3.3.1 Research purpose

A research purpose can be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, or some combination of these (Saunders et al., 2016). The way in which we have formulated our research question coincide with an exploratory research purpose. Exploratory research seeks to examine a topic of interest, where the researcher usually begins with questions such as “what” or “how”, and gains insights by asking open questions (Saunders et al., 2016). This kind of research is particularly useful when it is a need to clarify the understanding of an issue, problem or phenomenon.

Exploratory research is usually conducted in new areas of inquiry (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It seeks to scope out the extent, generate some initial ideas, or to test the feasibility of conducting a more extensive study regarding a particular phenomenon. The goal of our research is to explore how use of social media has evolved over time in organizations and to gain insight in how organizations institutionalize it. Although social media is frequently used by many organizations, its concept is rarely reflected in the management literature.

3.3.2 Research Method

Research methods relate to data collection techniques and can be classified as either quantitative, qualitative or mixed (Saunders et al., 2016). Researchers can determine the method by assessing whether the data needed to respond to the research question is numerical, textual, or both. Quantitative research uses a range of statistical techniques and seeks to examine the relationship between different variables that are measured numerically. Qualitative research design focuses on textual data, the observation of interviewees’ responses and the relationship between them. This is done by using various data collection techniques and analytical processes in order to create a conceptual framework and theoretical contribution. The mixed methods research is an extension of the quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and can be combined in a variety of ways that range from simple concurrent forms, to more complex and sequential forms (Saunders et al., 2016).

We find it appropriate to apply qualitative research methods in our exploration of social media use in organizations. Qualitative research is often associated with an interpretive philosophy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), which is in line with our research philosophy. The main argument for using a qualitative method is that it enables us to analyze the personal reflections of our interviewees. We seek to understand how an organization experiences and implements social media in their daily routines, and how it evolves as the organization gains more experience with social media. Our thesis intends to extract individual perceptions of this process, in order to understand the observed phenomena.

3.3.3 Research Strategy

The term research strategy refers to the researchers' plan of action on how to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2016). It should be guided by the research questions, the purpose, the philosophy, and the approach, as well as pragmatic matters such as the amount of time and resources available of the research. Choosing a fitting research strategy is important in order to achieve coherence throughout the research design, and to meet the goals of the research. In qualitative research, strategies such as case studies, ethnography or action research is typically used. A combination of different research strategies is also possible.

Our thesis explores how social media use has evolved in organizations, and how it has been institutionalized. In order for us to answer these questions, we find it appropriate to conduct a multiple case study of two Norwegian organizations that are outstanding in the field of social media use.

According to Yin, a case study is “a study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world context” (2014, p. 237). A study of a case within its real-life setting is often used when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context in which it is studied is not clear. This justifies our logic for conducting a case study by using institutional work theory. Social media is rather uncharted phenomenon in the management literature. Thus, we find it relevant to conduct an in-depth analysis to increase the understanding in this field.

Yin (2014) argues that single and multiple case designs are two variants within the same methodological framework. Single case study seeks to examine a critical or extreme case, and may be selected because it is a typical case or because it provides an opportunity to analyze a

phenomenon that few have considered before (Saunders et al., 2016). When the rationale is to explore whether findings can be replicated, more than one case are to be included. The findings from multiple cases are often regarded as more robust (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). However, multiple case studies might require extensive resources and time (Yin, 2014). By studying two cases, we expected to find more variation on how social media is used in organizations, and thereby gain a broader understanding of the institutionalization of social media.

During the preliminary phase of our thesis, we conducted a careful evaluation of large Norwegian organizations with a presence in social media. We examined their presence in three social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Potential organizations were ranked based on reach, activity and engagement from users. Reach was measured by the total number of followers of the organization. Activity was measured by the frequency of posts. Finally, engagement from users was measured by likes and comments related to the posts. Ranking organizations allowed us to identify organizations that seemed to excel in their use of social media. The reason for limiting our multiple case study to two cases, was because of the extensive effort required, which goes beyond the means available for our thesis in terms of time and resources.

Our justification for selecting Alpha and Omega as units of analysis was that we aspired to examine leading organizations in use of social media. Based on information from our preliminary screening of organizations, and discussions with professors at NHH, we concluded that both Alpha and Omega appeared to be leading in use of social media, but with different intentions. Our expectations to finding similar results from each of the two organizations were vague. Yin (2014) describes literal replication as a simple multiple case where units of analysis are expected to produce similar results. A more complicated multiple case, theoretical replication, is where the contextual factor of the units of analysis is deliberately different.

Alpha and Omega operate in different contextual factors. Alpha operates in the public sector where the value lies in serving the society, with less competition and more bureaucracy. Omega operates in the private sector where activity is intended to increase profits, with more competition and pressure to perform.

Although public sector and private sector can be considered as two opposing environments to operate in, it has from our perspective, similarities as well. Alpha and Omega are similar as

both excel in social media use, and their success has been acknowledged through winning awards in this field. Our thesis emphasizes institutionalization of social media by examining it through the lens of institutional work theory. Thus, we consider our case study to align more with literal than theoretical replication. A comparative analysis of the social media use in these organizations could contribute with valuable insight as these organizations operate in contrasting sectors, broadening the scope for the various ways in which social media are institutionalized.

Furthermore, a case study can either be holistic or embedded (Yin, 2014). A holistic approach considers an organization as a whole. Conversely, an embedded approach places an emphasis on several units of analysis within one organization. Our approach is mainly related to analyze each of the two organizations as a whole. A holistic approach will therefore be taken in order to gain insights of the situation at hand. Despite this, we occasionally address the differences we find between interviewees representing various departments in the same organization. The main focus is to analyze how an organization as a whole use social media to interact with the external environment, and then seek to obtain transferable findings by comparing Alpha and Omega to each other.

3.3.4 Time horizon

The time horizon of a study can either be cross-sectional or longitudinal (Saunders et al., 2016). Cross-sectional studies represent a “snapshot” taken at a particular time. Longitudinal studies involve repeated observations of the same variables and show a series of snapshots over short or long periods of time (Shadish et al., 2002). Although we seek to gain insights of the development over time, we practically have a cross-sectional study, as we do not conduct repeated observations. Our research is based on interviews conducted in April 2018 and will include a snapshot of how the interviewees perceive the development of social media use in organizations. A longitudinal study could potentially be interesting for our research, since repeated observations over time would provide more insightful data when studying the development of a phenomenon.

3.4 Sample selection

Collecting and analyzing all the existing data is often unfeasible for many researchers due to restrictions in time, finance or access (Saunders et al., 2016). Sample selection allows for a convenient approach for researchers to reduce the amount of data collected. In chapter 3.4.1 – 3.4.3, we will describe the population of our study as well as the way in which we sampled and collected data from our respondents.

3.4.1 Defining the population

The researcher has to define a population prior to the data collection process for making it possible to answer the overall research question (Saunders et al., 2016). Limitations of time, access and resources might make it reasonable to target a subset of the population, referred to as a target population. Narrowing down the whole process to a subset makes the execution more manageable. Consequently, researchers attain the opportunity to select a sample that can be used to draw inferences about the target population. It is important that the target population and sample is chosen in a well-reflected way, to answer the research question in a reliable way.

Considering our overall research question, our population can be defined as any organization that has an official presence in social media. Thus, we found it necessary to narrow the process down by selecting a specific part of this population. We chose leading organizations in the use of social media to be our target population, as we expected the institutionalization of social media to be more distinct. Additionally, individuals working with content from social media were of particular interest. Findings from such organizations would also act as a suitable proxy to envision the potential of social media.

3.4.2 Probability vs. Non-probability sampling

Selecting respondents from the target population can either act in accordance with probability or non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2016). The probability technique contributes with information on the likelihood of someone in the sample being chosen from the target group, meaning that one can statistically determine to what degree the interviewee can infer something about the population. This is not the case for non-probability sampling, although one may still be able to generalize findings about the target population.

We base our thesis on a non-probability sampling and seek to develop an in-depth understanding of our research topic rather than statistical generalizations. Our emphasis was directed toward collecting many different insights on the subject and not to maximize statistical inference to acquire a holistic view.

3.4.3 Data collection

The data collected can be categorized as either primary data or secondary data (Saunders et al., 2016). New data collected specifically for the purpose of a particular research is referred to as primary data. Secondary data is existing data that initially has been collected for some other purpose. We have collected primary data to our research by conducting semi-structured interviews. Yin argues that “one of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (2014, p. 110). This method relates to developing an interview guide and asking question based on it. The researcher may also deviate the pre-set questions and delve deeper into the subject as the interview proceeds.

Primary data: semi-structured interviews

Collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews seemed appropriate to our research as the phenomenon of social media is rather new, especially in the management literature. Based on the theoretical foundation in chapter 2, we identified a set of topics which we wanted to discuss in our interviews. For instance, we were curious to obtain the interviewees’ reflections around their hands-on experience related to social media use in organizations. Particularly, how social media, as a new practice, has been institutionalized in their organizations. Therefore, we interviewed employees in each of the two organizations and collected primary data through personal interviews. The semi-structured interview method provided a suitable structure to our research, as we wanted to examine specific topics as well as to capture relevant, but unforeseen subjects.

Secondary data

In addition to the primary data we collected, we made use of secondary data such as annual reports, strategy documents, public presentations and presence on social media platforms. Insights from these data were used as guidance for formulating the questions in our interview guide. Furthermore, the insight we gained from reviewing the data proved valuable in our interviews, as we gained information on important contextual factors such as company culture

and patterns in the social media content. These insights enabled us to follow up on answers from the interviewees' in ways that enlightened the subject of interest even further. Lastly, we used the secondary data in our comparative analysis to supplement and verify our collected primary data.

Sample size

According to Saunders et al. (2016), there are no standard principles regarding the size of the sample when using a non-probability sampling. The key is to strive for a sufficient logical connection between the research question and the sample. A general study can expect to have between 5 to 30 interviews (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the sample size depends on an evaluation of what is thought to be useful, credible and possible to be done within the available resources, as well as on the research question (Patton, 2002). When conducting structured or semi-structured interviews, researchers ought to take these factors into account. This is discussed more in chapter 3.6.

Sampling technique

The sampling technique relates to how one goes about selecting the specific sample of respondents (Saunders et al., 2016). Different techniques can be used within non-probability sampling. Our thesis applies a purposive sampling technique, which requires the researcher to purposefully choose the sample in order to answer the research question in the most suitable way (Saunders et al., 2016). The technique is considered to be useful when working with smaller samples such as in case studies (Neuman, 2005).

In chapter 3.3.3, we described our logic for selecting Alpha and Omega as cases to study. During our screening process, we learned which employees in the organization that had substantial knowledge and experience with social media. Our contact persons in Alpha and Omega helped with selecting specific employees to participate in the interviews. As our thesis is intended to contribute to the management literature, we also requested to interview at least one person in each organization from the finance department. This was to examine whether their perspective on social media coincided with those working directly with social media. The interviews were conducted as face-to-face meetings at the organizations' premises. Table 1 on the next page provides an overview of our interviewees.

Organization	Interviewees	No. Interviews
Alpha	Social media manager	1
	Social media subordinate 1	1
	Social media subordinate 2	1
	Social media subordinate 3	1
	Section manager of road operations	1
	Section manager of park operations	1
	Section manager of forest operations	1
	Department manager of recreational activities	1
	Business controller	1
	Total	9
Omega	Social media manager	1
	Social media subordinate 1	1
	Social media subordinate 2	1
	Market analyst	1
	Business controller	1
	Total	5

Table 1. Overview of interviewees in Alpha and Omega.

In order to preserve anonymity and make it easier to compare positions across organizations, we have altered the names of the positions in both organizations. We define Social media manager as employees with management responsibilities related to social media. It does not imply that their jurisdiction is limited to social media. Social media subordinate is defined as employees with no management responsibility, dedicated to work with social media. Section manager and department manager are defined as employees with management responsibilities apart from social media. Market analyst is defined as employees working with all aspects of marketing research. Business controller is defined as employees working with overseeing the business and financial operations.

3.5 Data analysis

Analyzing qualitative data usually entails a process of grouping data into themes by categorizing, coding and summarizing collected data (Saunders et al., 2016). We used a thematic narrative approach to identify themes within narratives. Chronological sequences and contextual background of the themes identified are crucial in order to gain a rich and insightful data interpretation. A thematic narrative analysis allows us to construct a narrative from parts

of data collected from various sources, such as documents or research interviews. It emphasizes what the narrative is about and can be used to analyze an individual narrative or multiple, related narratives.

For our purpose, we found the use of thematic narrative analysis appropriate to understand retrospectively, how the practice of social media has developed over time. We analyzed multiple, related narratives by examining data from all our interviews in the organization. Alpha and Omega were analyzed separately to construct narratives for each organization. The interviewees agreed for each interview to be recorded electronically and the recordings were later transcribed to text. In order to keep the narratives intact and minimize our subjective interpretations, we used color-coding for identification of categories based on our theoretical framework. Next, we transferred the color-coded data to Microsoft Excel, where we had a systematic approach to structure themes into Perkmann and Spicer's (2008) three types of institutional work. Additionally, we used secondary data to validate and complement the narratives to construct a chronological development of social media use in the organizations. Lastly, we conducted a comparative study of similarities and differences in Alpha and Omega, which was primarily based on the constructed narrative.

We would like to emphasize that our intention was originally to explore whether we could replicate similar findings as Arnaboldi et al. (2017a). They found that marketing and communications managers could enter the field of performance management by collecting information from social media. However, participants in our interviews had a perception that social media was mainly related to building a virtual community. It became clear during our data analysis that the phenomenon Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) described was not evident in our case. Thus, we decided to alter our study to explore how use of social media is institutionalized in organizations.

3.6 Evaluating the research quality

The quality of research designs can be tested in terms of four categories: internal validity, external validity, construct validity, and reliability (Yin, 2014). It is argued by Yin that internal validity is not relevant in exploratory research. Thus, the discussion of internal validity is excluded in our thesis.

3.6.1 Validity

External validity deals with the issue of knowing whether findings from a study are generalizable, regardless of the research method used (Yin, 2014). Generalization can be separated into statistical generalization or analytical generalization. Statistical generalization is common in quantitative research and involves making inference about a population based on empirical data collected from a sample of that population. Analytical generalization involves identifying general themes from a particular case study in order to shed empirical light on theoretical concepts or principles. It makes sense to discuss analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization as our study is qualitative.

Thus, Alpha and Omega are not to be considered as ‘sampling units’ for statistical generalization to a broader population of organizations, but treated as two ‘extreme’ cases of social media use in an organizational setting. As noted in chapter 3.3.3, we recognize that there are distinct differences between the two organizations. In spite of this, identifying recurring themes and principles in our empirical findings may contribute to the management literature of social media and institutionalization. We argue that potential findings by analyzing Alpha and Omega could prove to strengthen external validity due to the contextual differences.

A potential threat to external validity in our research is the selection of units of analysis. The deciding factor for selecting Alpha and Omega was that they both won awards in an annual social media conference in Norway. As social media is a relatively new phenomenon, it follows that the conference is new as well. The potential threat in generalizing our findings is that we misjudge these organizations as ‘extreme,’ and that a reclassification to a typical well-performing organization would be more appropriate. However, we do not consider this to have any significant consequence for our research. The reason is that a substantial number of Norwegian organizations, which focus on use of social media, are represented at the conference.

Yin (2014) notes that construct validity is challenging in case study research as it seeks to identify how well the operational measurement represent the theoretical construct that it is expected to measure. When conducting interviews, it is important to assure that the questions asked are clear and understandable for the participants (Saunders et al., 2016). Vague questions might cause a threat in our study when evaluating the construct validity. The risk of

participants' misinterpretation due to ambiguous questions and formulations could result in that the collected data does not measure what it is intended to do.

To reduce this potential threat to construct validity, we would rephrase and give a short summary of the comment from the interviewee, before asking the next question. This would improve a correct interpretation when questions or comments were vague. We commenced each interview by asking open questions about their understanding of professional use of social media to clarify each interviewee's understanding. Subsequently, we probed the interviewee to reflect on how it could be related to different departments in the organization. We followed up by asking questions related to guidelines in their daily work, persuasion to advocate social media and how it was valued in the organization over time.

3.6.2 Reliability

The goal of reliability is to have errors and biases in a study as low as possible (Yin, 2014). It entails that one should be able to achieve the same findings and conclusions, if another researcher conducts the exact same study at a later time. To repeat an earlier case study generally involves documenting the procedures followed. Saunders et al. (2016) highlights four concerns to reliability: participant error, participant bias, researcher error, and researcher bias.

Participant error may be any factor that change how the interviewee perform, such as conducting the interview at an inconvenient time (Saunders et al., 2016). All of the interviews were voluntary and conducted on the interviewee's terms in regards to both time and location. We expressed that we wanted to make it as uncomplicated as possible to our participants. Thus, we were flexible when scheduling times and dates, and conducted the interviews at their office buildings. Participant error due to inconvenient time should therefore be low. We acknowledge that the comments, tone or non-verbal behavior of the interviewer could result in biased response from the interviewees. Neutral attitude was emphasized, and our personal opinions were held back regarding the topics discussed during the interviews.

Participant bias concerns any factors that might induce a false response from the interviewee (Saunders et al., 2016). Participant bias can occur if an interviewee provides answers that appears to promote their supervisor or organization, instead of their honest opinions. Our interviews were audio-recorded, and there is a risk that the interviewees moderated their

responses knowing that they were being recorded. To mitigate such answers in our research, we assured the anonymity of the organizations and the participants at the beginning of each interview.

Another potential cause of participant bias could derive from the fact that both organizations assisted us in the selection of interviewees. Our sample of interviewees may be skewed, as each organization could potentially select employees that are experienced with answering questions in ways that is beneficial to the organizations they represent. On the other hand, we managed to identify candidates who worked directly with social media during our screening process. Those were mainly the individuals that we in fact interviewed. Therefore, this type of bias may relate more to participants who did not work directly with social media. The fact that the organizations assisted us in selecting interviewees, means that they had the possibility to attain a general idea of the interviewees' identities. A potential risk here is that our findings might be biased as a result of the interviewees' fear that their responses can be traced back to them. To reduce this threat to reliability, a formal consent form was signed between the interviewee and us. This included the option to not answer questions or terminate the interview, along with the participant's right to anonymity and to treat the collected data confidentially.

We had one interview where the risk of participation bias appeared more evident to us. The interviewee had deliberately brought along a summer intern to observe the interview. This might have increased the risk of providing falsely positive answers (Saunders et al., 2016). However, the interviewee did not work directly with social media and we did not notice any unusual response compared with participants of similar positions.

Researcher error relates to any factors that may have altered the researcher's interpretation of interviewees' responses (Saunders et al., 2016). To mitigate this threat, both researchers were present at all the interviews. Still, the risk of group thinking might cause some researcher error. Each interview was recorded electronically and transcribed in order to guarantee that we were analyzing the correct data at all time. This allowed us to be more present during the interview and pay more attention to non-verbal signs. Our interview guide also ensured a certain standardization in regards to the information we collected. In sum, we consider the threat of researcher error to be modest.

3.7 Research ethics

Research ethics refers to the standards of behavior that guides the researcher's conduct when considering those who become a part of the study or are affected by it (Saunders et al., 2016). The ethical principles presented by Saunders et al. (2016) were used as a guideline in our study. Every participant was presented with a consent form prior to conducting the interview (see appendix 8.2). Information about our research, the interviewee's voluntary participation, right to confidentiality, and consent to audio-recordings was clearly stated. By presenting this consent form and conveying the purpose of our study, we aimed to satisfy the ethical principles of voluntary participation, as well as ensuring confidentiality of data and maintenance of anonymity of those taking part in the study. We also acknowledge other ethical principles such as respect for others, avoidance of harm, responsibility in the analysis of data and reporting of findings by acting with integrity and objectivity. Further ethical considerations in our study include correct referral to all sources of information used in our research, as well as being open about potential errors in our research.

3.8 Summary of methodological choices

A summary of our methodological choices is presented in Table 2 below. The summary highlights characteristics of our research methodology described in chapter 3.

Dimension	Methodological choice
Research philosophy	Interpretivism
Research approach	Abductive
Research purpose	Explorative
Research method	Qualitative
Research strategy	Multiple case study
Time horizon	Cross-sectional
Sampling	Non-probability
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews
Sampling technique	Purposive
Data analysis	Thematic narrative

Table 2. Summary of methodological choices.

4. Empirical findings

This chapter will present our findings as a narrative, which has been constructed based on the empirical data collected. The narratives describe how the phenomenon of social media has developed in Alpha and Omega during the time span 2009 – 2018. In both Alpha and Omega, the circumstances allowed us to separate the development of social media use in two phases. Chapter 4.1 will present a narrative on Alpha's use of social media in phases prior to and after a merger. Omega's narrative will be presented in chapter 4.2 and begins with the first phase when use of social media was an outsourced operation. Omega's second phase involved the transition to establish social media as an in-house operation.

4.1 Alpha's narrative on development of social media use

Alpha is an agency in a large Norwegian municipality with 500 – 1,000 employees. In 2011, the municipality decided to merge five agencies into one large agency, Alpha, and gave them a common goal. Alpha was given the responsibility for the operation, maintenance and development of municipal public areas such as streets, parks, recreation areas, sports facilities and forests. Alpha's goal is to make the municipal active, green, safe and beautiful for residents and visitors.

In the organizational hierarchy, the social media unit is subject to the Communication department. In the beginning of 2018, it was decided that the communication department were to be placed at the administrative level, below the Director of Alpha. This gave the field of communication a formal position in Alpha's upper management. Moving the department higher up in the organizational hierarchy has been an ongoing process for many years. Figure 2 on the next page illustrates the change where communication was moved from department level to administrative level.

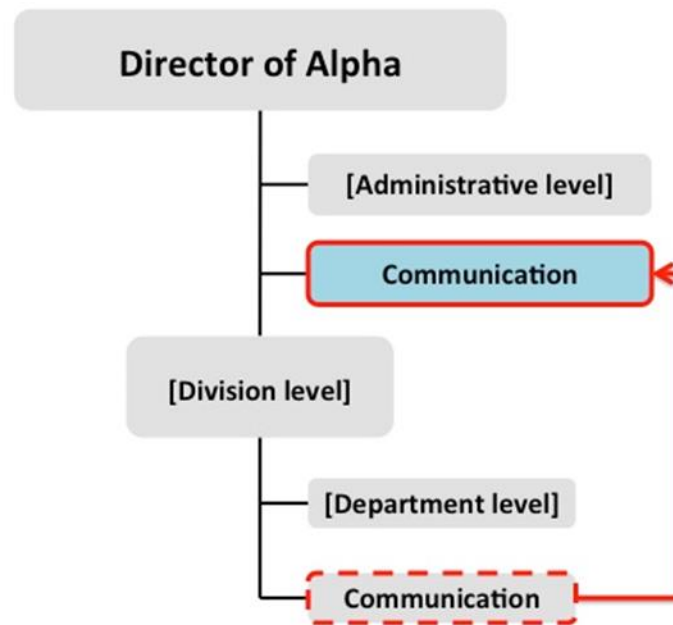


Figure 2. Illustration of the Communication department's change in the organizational hierarchy.

Whether this organizational change makes communication more important in Alpha, or if it is merely a symbolic effect, is still too early to decide:

It is a recent change, so we don't quite know. [...] This is something that we have hoped for a long time. I think that it is probably as a consequence of them [upper management] seeing the value [in communication].

(Social media manager)

The team working with social media today consists of four people including the Social media manager. They all have a degree in the field of communication, and daily tasks are mainly related to content production such as creating video, text and pictures to publish on social media platforms. Alpha launches a large-scale campaign twice a year, which includes paid promotion on social media. Other than these campaigns, Alpha mainly publishes content in social media which is not paid promotion. The underlying goal is to update residents about changes in public areas and facilitate the activity in these areas.

Use of social media has contributed to improving the sense of pride among employees, as well as the reputation of Alpha. The current Social media manager is the person who initiated professional use of social media in the organization and is the driving force behind its development in Alpha. Prior to the merger, there were some ad-hoc use by the different agencies, but it was far from institutionalized.

Various social media platforms have been introduced over the years in Alpha, both prior to and after the merger. These platforms bring with a new way of communicating, and has made Alpha more transparent in terms of allowing residents easy access to interact with them:

I think that it [social media] is a new way of communicating. [...] It's like a big open door in comparison to how it used to be, and this makes us more transparent. People know more of what is going on. It's harder to keep things hidden, or not to keep things hidden. In the past, people didn't know that much about what public institutions really did. [...] We have become way more visible because people ask and demand [more]. Taking pictures and documenting. Yeah, it makes you more accountable than before, but in return, we get much more insight in what people's needs are, and it's really an amazing opportunity if you make use of it [social media].

(Social media subordinate 1)

Figure 3 below illustrates a timeline for when Alpha started to make use of various social media platforms. It is based on the 'joined date' that the social media platforms display or the date when Alpha published content for the first time. The time span goes from 2009 to 2018 and can be separated into two phases: pre-merger operation and post-merger operation. Note that Figure 3 also illustrates when the social media platform Twitter was abandoned, which is marked with a circle-backslash symbol. The pre-merger phase shows when at least one of the five prior agencies joined the various social media platforms.

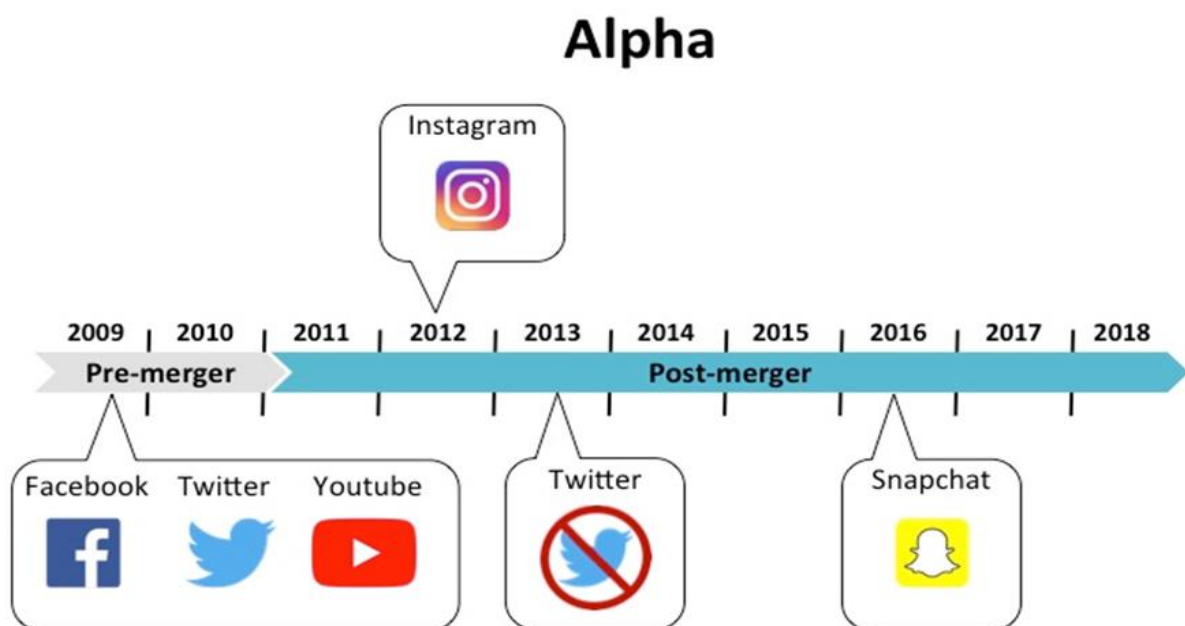


Figure 3. Illustrates the timeline of when Alpha started to use or abandoned various social media platforms.

4.1.1 Phase 1: Pre-merger operation of social media

There were two agencies that had explored the use of social media prior to the merger in 2011. During that time, social media started to gain a lot of popularity in Norway, but few organizations seemed to know how to take advantage of it. Social media was associated with something bad and not to be used during work-hours:

[Agency] considered to block access to Facebook because people were afraid that it would distract the employees during work-hours. [...] It was a skepticism to it. You did not quite know what it was, and what it really could be used to in a work context. It was really just that people didn't know enough. We have something called "communication forum" where all of the employees working with communication in the municipality gathers a couple of times a year for a seminar. I remember all the talk about social media, in almost every seminar - everyone talked about it in a way that it was something dangerous. (Social media subordinate 1)

Although participants in the communication forum seemed to be sceptic to social media, there was some curiosity to explore the potential of social media in an organizational context. Some employees in the prior agencies that merged into Alpha felt that it was necessary to explore social media as a communication channel because of the large attention it was getting:

We thought that we could not just work with communication without knowing what this [social media] is. Everyone talked about it. What was it really? We were neither on Facebook or Twitter personally, but everyone talked about it. (Social media subordinate 3)

In the pre-merger phase, social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were used just to gain experience with how the platforms worked. User-profiles were created without significant supervision from superiors, and social media was primarily used as a push-channel, meaning that the purpose of publishing content was to direct users to other websites:

We didn't quite know how to use this, really. [...] It was mostly used as a push-channel to promote news that we published on other places. In other words, a gateway or content enhancer. [...] In a way, it was free advertisement... At least we hoped it was.

(Social media subordinate 1)

At that time, employees working with communication in these agencies had very different tasks before social media became important. They mainly had administrative ad-hoc and publicity related tasks to opening ceremonies of new public facilities:

It was totally different. At that time, we had a lot of these opening ceremonies. When a bridge was newly-constructed, or a site, or a fountain or something, we had opening ceremonies. It was those things we managed, and we dealt with ordering food, speaker systems and wrote speeches.

(Social media subordinate 3)

4.1.2 Phase 2: Post-merger

The initiator of social media is an ambitious person that worked with public relation consulting in the private sector prior to joining one of the agencies and had a particular experience in consulting the public sector. Prior to the merger, the initiator was the Head of communications in one of the prior agencies. Alpha went through a major reorganization when the five agencies merged. The public sector traditionally promotes employees based on seniority. As a result, a person from one of the prior agencies with longer seniority was appointed as Communications director of Alpha. It was at this point the initiator persuaded the new Communications director to support use of social media and established a dedicated unit to work with it:

I thought: "Okay, now you have the choice - either move on, or look for a new opportunity. It was still quite early with social media, even though this was in 2011. Still, I thought [to myself] that there were no public actors that had initiated this properly. [...] Social media is just another channel. As a professional communicator, it is about knowing who you talk to and with. [...] Put it like this, to work with social media today, those who succeed there - it is those who are good with communication. (Social media manager)

Most of the work related to the social media unit has been rather autonomous, and the upper management let the initiator operate freely within a given budget. It was not required to ask for permission for actions as long as it could be related to Alpha's communication goals. This led to the establishment of a unit of four, dedicated to work with social media. Visual representations were early identified as an important factor in social media. Social media subordinate 1 had an interest in developing skills in video production, and the initiator decided to invest in that person. Being present in social media lowered the threshold for residents to get in touch with Alpha, and often led to inquiries that were complaints about faults in the public areas. Social media subordinate 3 soon became the person in charge of answering inquiries from the residents in social media:

I don't know why it became me who answered. [...] I think that most of my experience and education that are useful on Facebook, is my social worker education and experience. Because... yeah, it is not given that everyone can easily communicate with such aggressive people. I'm thinking that it [social worker background] is way more important for me than those three years with communication at college. (Social media subordinate 3)

Convincing Alpha to acknowledge the importance of social media has been a cumbersome process. The initiator has been a strong advocate since the merger, and a number of meetings with the management has taken place in order to explain why current actions in communications had to be different from how it used to be. Although the process might have been seen as more cumbersome from the outside, the initiator viewed it differently. It was just a matter of having the right argument and being persistent:

It is just about explaining, but it is also about having a dialogue and to be persistent. [...] And then you also need competence in your field of expertise, in order to explain or argue. Usually, people welcome change as long as they understand it. [...] If someone disagrees, we just need to continue to argue in favor of it. That is what it often is about. (Social media manager)

Shortly after the merger, the initiator launched a series of presentations in a range of departments in Alpha. The intention was to build a common understanding of what communication is, how the organization would benefit from using social media, and what was required from the employees. Use of social media was portrayed as beneficial for building

Alpha's reputation and thus something the whole organization should contribute to. The initiator wanted to build up the comprehension of communication in the organization:

But it was also my goal when I came to the agency - that I needed to build up the comprehension of communication internally. [...] It was challenging when we merged, since it was a large difference in how people understood communication. As a result, [Social media subordinate 3] and I created an own concept which involved explaining reputation. That reputation is not just something the communication department does, but something that the whole organization needs to take part in. (Social media manager)

At that time, social media seemed to be associated with a phenomenon only the younger generation engaged in, and there was some subliminal reluctance to embrace it during the presentations:

You felt a certain unwillingness - that it was a bit nonsense what we worked with. But... it's hard to say. [...] I haven't heard any direct rejection from the upper management regarding what we have done either, but we might have felt that we, in periods, have not been taken seriously either. That people thought: "This Facebook thing is something that teenagers engage in." (Social media subordinate 3)

In 2012, an external consultant was introduced to keep up with the changes in social media. The consultant contributes with updates on different aspects in social media such as technology, algorithms and trends. Keeping up with all of the rapid changes in how different social media platforms prioritize certain types of content, or how a new social media platform works, takes a lot of resources. It also provides a way to tap into the external environment and gain input from a different perspective. The same year the external consultant was introduced, the social media unit decided to use Instagram. However, content was mainly published to engage the residents during campaign periods that occurred twice a year.

The following year, the initiator reflected on which social media platforms to be present in and what they should communicate. Then the initiator made the first social media strategy. At that time, Alpha did not have any official communication strategy for the whole organization. The social media unit also decided to abandon the use of Twitter. Limitations in character length when posting, in combination with complicated topics to answer took a lot of resources.

Inquiries were often related to politics or a specific topic only relevant to a small group of people. It was also a disadvantage that the communication was more one-to-one based:

It is difficult to explain complex issues with 140 characters, but the main reason was that you only talked with one at a time. While on Facebook, things [dialogue] stays more visible for everyone that is interested in the case. To answer, you spend a lot of time gathering [information for] an answer to someone on Twitter, and then two and a half minutes later someone else ask about the same. It was inefficient use of the time.

(Social media subordinate 3)

Social media has, on a yearly basis, received increased attention in Alpha's annual reports. According to Alpha's annual report in 2014, using videos in social media is an important factor in the social media work. The majority of the videos were produced externally at that time, but the social media unit strived to keep most of the work internally as they gained more experience. The advantage with in-house production is to save the taxpayers money. It also gives more flexibility, for example when filming, in terms of weather conditions and participating in trends. One of Alpha's Business controllers confirmed the efficiency of the social media unit:

I think that our communication budget is way too small compared to large firms and organizations. Alpha has been really good in solving this in a cheap [way] - this is a bit of advertising, but it is actually true.

(Business controller)

Prior to social media, residents used to call and could risk being put on hold, or send a mail where it could take weeks to get a reply. Casual inquiries were not worth such efforts. With social media, residents could easily post their inquiries on Alpha's official Facebook-page and Alpha experienced that there was a significant increase in these casual inquiries. The social media unit relies on insights from various departments in Alpha in order to give a proper reply to these inquiries. Especially from those working with tasks such as road maintenance, parks, and recreational areas. In order to gain more knowledge about the work of the various departments, the social media unit needed a tight collaboration with departments in Alpha. It was the initiator that secured support throughout the organization, and did this by persuading

and creating a strong relationship with employees that had a positive attitude toward social media:

I remember [Social media manager] came to a department meeting and challenged us: “How can we promote [public swimming pool]? We want to think in a new way”. [...] I noticed that one of the managers and me, we were straight on. We are on Facebook and had been a part of that wave. While the others in the management team, which were a bit older, were not on Facebook and it was like... Yeah, [they] didn’t quite know what it was. It was at that point I think the good collaboration with [Social media manager] started. [Social media manager] saw that: “These two, they are in on this ride”. [...] But the issue was to convince the rest of the group to think differently. We received good help from [Social media manager].

(Department manager of recreational activities)

The two managers with a positive attitude toward social media offered their resources to the social media unit. They temporarily joined the social media unit and created content in order to promote one of Alpha’s facilities, and presented the round of results in order to gain support from the reluctant group:

We presented both pictures and adverts, they got to see the [campaign] posters. [...] And I think, when they [management team] got to see the results of the first round - it wasn’t that intimidating anymore. [...] There are no one who thinks it’s intimidating anymore. Now, it’s a totally different mindset around it. (Department manager of recreational activities)

The social media unit started to participate in department meetings, which allowed them to establish a relationship where they had easy access to information. Participating in these meetings made it easy to listen in and pick content that seemed relevant for publishing in social media, as well as gaining basic knowledge so they could answer inquiries on behalf of the departments. It was an attempt to establish regular interaction between the social media unit and the various departments. After a while, participating in these regular meetings went over to be more ad-hoc based as the social media unit gained more insight. One department has established meetings with the social media unit as a part of the annual plan:

As for my own part, I've put this in my annual plan, which I report higher up. I have put it as a separate goal that I want to have a good collaboration with the communication department, and therefore want a permanent series of meetings. Meaning that, should I be gone, or I'm on a long sick leave - the person who substitutes or replaces me, has to keep doing it. It is a concrete goal for the department.

(Department manager of recreational activities)

One significant change with social media in Alpha, is how it changed the interaction between the organization and the residents. Alpha is a large organization and those departments who frequently were involved with inquiries from residents highlighted two practical advantages. Firstly, social media could be used to publish informal casual updates that could reduce the amount of inquiries. These were updates that did not qualify as important enough to inform through the official municipal website or in traditional media, but still generated inquiries. Secondly, by answering inquiries without assistance from various departments, the social media unit made it possible for the departments to focus more on their primary task:

[The social media unit helped] to reduce a great deal of those unnecessary inquiries, unnecessary noise. Replying, explaining why it is like it is, saves us for a lot of phone calls, mails and letters. This might be the largest way we notice it - we don't get those inquiries [anymore].

(Section manager of road operations)

The initiator stated that: "We are the eyes both outside and inside the organization." Being a mediator between Alpha and its residents allowed them to function as a filtering organ. Residents could potentially influence management in Alpha through dialogue on social media. An interesting example is that a resident had noticed that a different municipality had launched an initiative in response to drowning incidents, and posted this on Alpha's Facebook-page:

[...] And then I took this to the Recreational activities department and they responded spontaneously. So in the course of four days, we organized, I think it was 86 spots with free swimming courses for teenagers. It was followed up instantly. (Social media subordinate 3)

Due to the increasing workload, Alpha moved a part of the social media work to customer service department. In 2015, it was decided that the customer service was responsible for one-

to-one communication, while the social media unit was responsible for the one-to-many communication. Although it made sense, the separation felt like a breaking point for the initiator:

What I see more of now, is an organization [Alpha] that increasingly wants to communicate things that we don't have the capacity to do. Both in communicating it outwards, and to produce the various things. [...] But when we split the dialogue with the customer service, so to speak, I felt that it was a breaking point. (Social media manager)

Performance figures were introduced by the initiator the same year. The intention was to use figures to indicate performance instead of speculating. It was used as a basis for discussing the progress and evaluate how the social media unit could improve themselves. Figures are measured against historical performance since there are no industry standards that are suitable for Alpha. The goal was to learn more about how they could stay relevant for all the residents in the municipality. Performance figures were used to examine what type of content that were interesting for their broad audience. These figures seemed to be more relevant for the initiator, and the rest of the social media unit were more focused on having a high quality in their content regardless of performance. One of Alpha's business controllers stated that they were more concerned with the underlying role Alpha had in the society:

We are here to solve tasks. It's doing tasks for the sake of the [municipality] that is the point here, and not the individuals. [...] In the end, we have to carry out tasks for the society which is given from a political leadership. (Business controller)

Performance figures were also frequently used in relation to celebrating milestones or as a way to update relevant departments:

It was a period when we started to celebrate with cakes, where the supervisor above us - one of the divisional directors, celebrated every 10,000 followers [on Facebook]. [...] Then the director of Alpha celebrated [the last milestone], I think. (Social media subordinate 1)

And then [Social media manager] sends an [email]: "Look how many hits and likes we got [on Facebook]". I also experience that I get proud, and the

employees also get proud. You read the comment section and get in a better mood because people appreciate what we do in the municipality.

(Section manager of park operations)

In order to engage the younger audience, the social media unit introduced Snapchat in 2016. Like Instagram, it was mainly used in relation to the campaigns that were launched twice a year. Producing relevant content on Snapchat was seen as difficult due to the nature of publishing, and the social media unit acknowledge that they do not prioritize this type of social media. Snapchat requires real-time production. Lack of capacity seemed to be an issue, and the fact that content was only displayed temporarily was a significant drawback. Despite the lack of capacity, the social media unit strives to gain firsthand experience in new social media platforms:

Whenever new [social media] platforms arrive, we've seen the possibility for communication. Then, we simply grabbed it [the opportunity], and developed it as we went on. What stopped us sometimes was the capacity.

(Social media manager)

Table 3 summarizes insights on the rationale behind Alpha's presence on various social media platforms. The platforms are presented in descending order relative to level of priority. During campaign periods, the social media unit strives to increase presence on all social media platforms.

Social media	Rationale	Priority
Facebook	Has their largest user base on this platform. Suitable for informing and engaging in dialogue with residents on various topics.	High
Instagram	More focus toward inspiration. Content that motivate residents to use public facilities or recreational areas.	Medium
Snapchat	Intended for reaching younger audiences. Use of informal and humoristic content. Limited use since content is displayed temporarily.	Low
YouTube	Mainly used to upload videos related to campaigns.	Low
Twitter	Abandoned due to character limitations and resource intensive one-to-one communication. Complex and politically oriented inquiries.	N/A

Table 3. Summary of the rationale behind Alpha's presence on social media platforms.

According to the initiator, being open to change and embrace that one has to continue improving are the reasons for their success. Having a safe environment where the unit can be critical to each other, while still allowing for trial and error, such as trying new social media platforms, are crucial in their work. The initiator carefully facilitates a sense of safety in the social media unit. Every week, the social media team has a meeting where they evaluate lessons learned and make plans for the next week. Content on social media is planned on an aggregated level based on certain intents such as inspiring residents to engage in activities or provide insights for Alpha's actions. Decisions are mostly based on their discretion:

We don't have a checklist. We base it a bit more on intuition and experience, but then again, we have this strategy in the back of our head. Ideally, we want to put ourselves in the user's head - what does a user get out of this, and what do we wish to get in return? (Social media subordinate 2)

The social media unit also argue that the success is a result of their strong passion in their field of work. It has become a center of expertise, which actively works to gain control over Alpha's social media policy. There is no restriction for other departments in Alpha to create their own presence on social media platforms, but the social media unit strives for Alpha's use of social media outside of their own unit to be aligned with their general guidelines. Departments in Alpha value their ability to convey complex messages in a simple and captivating way.

Agencies in the municipality started to request the social media unit to come and hold presentations and share their knowledge. The initiator saw this as an opportunity to build their reputation as a leading actor in social media. External interest in the social media unit increased significantly after they won a social media award. Alpha's presence in social media has also been recognized outside of Norway. At a large public conference in Denmark, Alpha was mentioned as a success story and even those in the field of auditing were interested:

Not long ago, we were at Riksrevisjonen [state auditor of the Government of Norway], which didn't work with social media. They wanted information, the whole management team - arguments for why they should start with this [social media], and what the challenges and opportunities were. (Social media manager)

Operating in the public sector can be challenging in terms of keeping or recruiting talented people. The social media unit does not have a systematic approach to retain knowledge within

the unit. Knowledge and expertise are retained within the individuals, which makes it difficult to replace employees in the social media team. Being highlighted as one of the leading organizations in social media has increased the risk of employees being approached by other organizations. Due to budget restrictions, the social media unit recently lost a key employee and the Social media manager admits that financial limitations are a burden:

No, [Social media subordinate] will disappear with all the expertise on videos. [...] It is clearly more difficult for me to [recruit people] when you don't have a good salary base, and I find those situations to be a bit tiresome... I think that's very much on me. My leadership, my expertise, my passion - that I won't be able to have this financial type of support. [...] Put it like this, none of us are here because of the salary. [...] But it's clearly an important tool. (Social media manager)

The majority of Alpha's employees have developed a positive impression of the social media unit. Departments that work with the social media unit sees them as a professional and humble unit:

I think that people see them as incredibly professional. That we are very proud [of them]. They are not good at bragging, really. I think they could do more of that, because they do receive a lot of awards.
(Department manager of recreational activities)

Since Alpha is a large organization, those who do not work close to the residents might not fully understand the value of social media:

They are probably an undescribed unit for many, a unit you do not know how to deal with. That could be the case for people who don't have any use of them, in a way. Accounting - what use do they have of the social media unit? They don't have an outward-looking business. We do. We probably have a difficult outward-looking business. [...] It's clear that we're noticing that it [social media unit] is creating something positive.
(Section manager of road operations)

One of Alpha's Business controllers confirmed that the finance department does not work closely with the social media unit:

I don't work a lot with them, so to speak. [...] I follow up on them, help them with the budget. [...] I contribute with reporting and when there are changes - cases that can't really be solved within their field with their current funds. [...] (Business controller)

Information from social media is important, but the business controller found it hard to relate how it could be useful in financial circumstances:

In finances, you have to make a connection that it actually has a substantial effect on finances. We don't notice all these small things that impacts [finance]. It has to be a substantial effect in order for it [social media] to reach such things as finance. I want to say yes, but I can't say how. However, information [from social media] is important. (Business controller)

The initiators impression is that the majority is proud of the way the social media unit presents the various departments in social media. Still, there is a lack of support in the upper management. While the upper management acknowledges their success, the social media unit's budget has remained unchanged. The social media unit has consisted of four people since the beginning of the merger. Despite being recognized as successful, the social media unit are reaching their limit, as their audience in social media grow larger:

I actually feel that it contributes positively in the organization. [...] But sometimes, I wish that there was more understanding in relation to the parts which could lead to acquiring more capacity. [...] I also get feedback that that they [social media unit], in periods, find it to be a bit too much. (Social media manager)

4.1.3 Summary of findings in Alpha

Social media started as a phenomenon Alpha was reluctant to invest in. There was a skepticism because of the unknown benefit it could have in a work context. We found that the initiator was evidently a strong driving force for developing the use of social media in Alpha. The initiator saw an opportunity to be in the forefront of social media in the public sector and managed to set up a social media unit shortly after the merger. In order to gain support throughout the organization, the initiator commenced in meetings with superiors and held presentations in various departments. The rationale was to build up the comprehension of communication by explaining why current actions in communications had to be different from how it used to be. The argument was that social media was advantageous for building Alpha's reputation, and that it is "something that the whole organization needs to take part in."

We also found that employees in the social media unit seemed to be more specialized toward certain areas of social media work such as creating videos or handling the interaction with residents. Practices are somewhat based on intuition and experience, which could make it more difficult to replace employees. Especially since it seemed to be a low emphasis on how to retain social media knowledge within the organization. The initiator argued that openness to change and continuous improvement were the reasons for their success. Focusing on building a safe environment for a trial and error approach allowed the social media unit to explore and learn from their mistakes.

Lastly, we found that as Alpha's presence in social media grew larger, the amount of inquiries from residents increased. Social media had lowered the barrier for interaction between a public institution and its residents. Thus, Alpha has become more visible and transparent to the residents regarding their work. Tight collaboration with various departments were formed in order to gain insight and knowledge to answer inquiries on behalf of these departments. As a result, inquiries from residents to departments were relieved, which allowed the departments to focus more on their primary tasks. Facebook is Alpha's main social media platform. Due to the lack of resources, the social media unit finds it challenging to keep up with the workload as the use of social media grows. Although the upper management seemed to acknowledge the social media unit's success, their budget has remained unchanged.

4.2 Omega's narrative on development of social media use

Omega is a commercial actor in the fast-moving consumer goods industry with more than 1,000 employees. The organization has a solid marketing budget and has a proud history as a leading brand in Norway. Omega is viewed as one of Norway's most digitally mature in marketing and has in the last couple of years directed substantial focus toward digital platforms and social media. Until 2016, social media was outsourced in entirety to various media agencies for Omega's portfolio of different brands.

In 2016, the organization initiated a pilot project where the presence in social media of some of its brands were taken in-house. As part of the project, a multidisciplinary collaboration with expertise from three departments: 'marketing', 'communication' and 'customer service' was established, from now on referred to as 'Troika'. Within a year, the pilot project was deemed a success and Troika has become an integrated part of the organization's digital venture, a kind of in-house agency. Troika's objective is to ensure strategic use of social media, retainment of knowledge from marketing campaigns, better utilization of resources, and creation of synergies through collaboration and communication of common messages. Omega's overall focus with respect to branding was emphasized by one of its market analysts:

For Omega as a brand actor, coverage and frequency are the most important [factors]. We need to spread our message to as many as possible as often as possible, with a sequential frequency. (Market analyst)

Omega make use of five social media platforms. Facebook is the main priority followed by Instagram and Twitter. The other two are Snapchat and YouTube. Omega's social media efforts are mainly related to the social media platforms' services for paid promotion. The platforms are viewed as part of the organization's marketing mix, and used strategically in a multi-channel perspective:

We reach various people, and we reach them with different means. It's like meeting the users where they are. Everyone is not present on every platform. So you need to be aware of the totality, such that the coverage is good in total. Ok, some watch TV, that's one hub. Then some are on Facebook, and some are on Twitter. In all, you reach a great many. One doesn't necessarily use all platforms every time. We don't use them all together. Some things

don't work on every platform either. Then it's not desirable to use all platforms. It's like, from a business perspective, how to spend money in the best way possible or most effectively. (Social media subordinate 2)

Figure 4 below illustrates a timeline for when Omega started to make use of various social media platforms. It is based on the 'joined date' that the social media platforms display or the date when Omega published content for the first time. The time span goes from 2009 to 2018, and can be separated into two phases: outsourced operation and in-house operation. No social media platforms were abandoned during the time period.

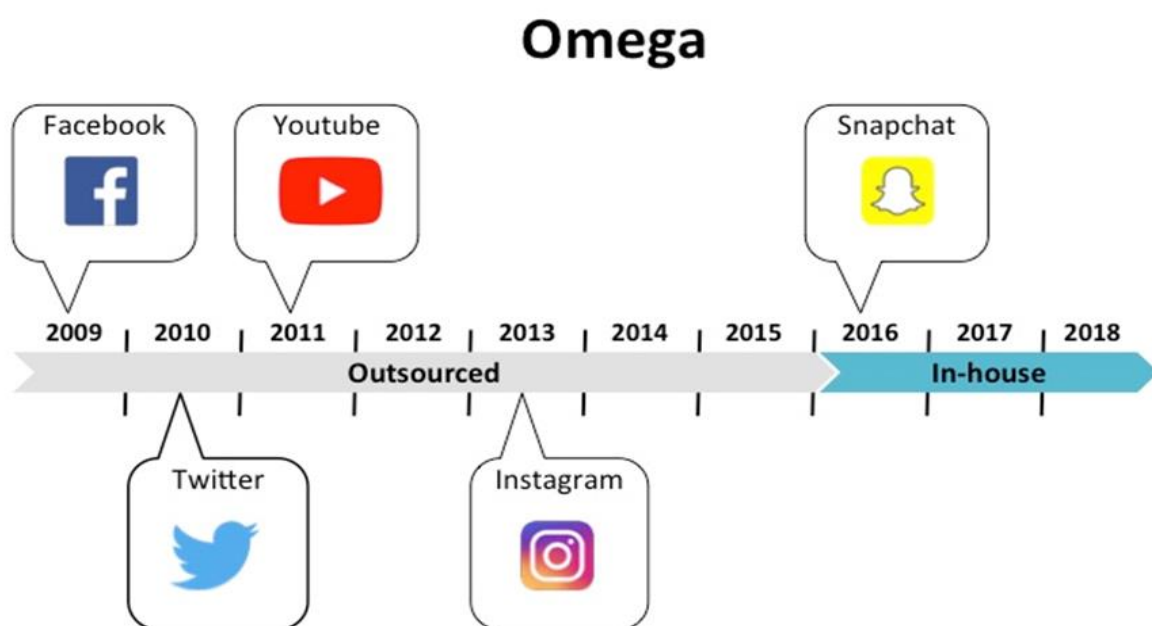


Figure 4. Illustrates the timeline for when Omega started to use various social media platforms.

4.2.1 Phase 1: Outsourced operation

Prior to the establishment of Troika, virtually all Omega's social media efforts were outsourced to various agencies. None of Omega's employees worked specifically with social media. The organization had little information about its level of success in social media:

It's almost like a black hole, since the agencies hold all information about the consumers. My experience is that you don't have as much information - you're not that close [to consumers]. You don't make the most of the

synergies of collaborating with colleagues, as we [Troika] do across brands. We learn new things and share the knowledge among ourselves. And you lose this feature when various agencies hold various brands. Then it comes to a stop. And the agencies are not as involved, some are, but not all are equally involved in the production phase. So, you don't really know whether the content you receive works in social media. (Social media subordinate 1)

The small amount of in-house social media effort in this phase was unsystematic and given low priority. In a previous position in Alpha, one of the social media subordinates carried out some organic (unpaid) posting. Most of the work was related to administering that social media content from agencies were in line with Omega's policy:

I didn't do much more than making sure that the agencies in charge of advertising stuck to the plan, that it was in line with Omega. In reality I was mainly a supervisory body, making sure nothing differed substantially from the plan or that the rules of Facebook were followed. I had the responsibility but didn't do much operationally.

(Social media subordinate 1)

The media agencies that Omega worked seemed to not prioritize social media. For them, focus on such platforms did not provide the right incentives. At the same time, competence on the field internally was scarce. The market analyst pointed out three reasons to the organization's position in phase 1:

Traditionally, we've worked a lot with TV adverts. The agencies we worked with delivered the creative content and they were experts on making TV adverts. We're talking about people, so they probably found it fun and exciting to make adverts. It's way more boring making Facebook ads than making a 30 second TV advert. So, I think that's one of the reasons for the slow development, there was no drive from the advertising industry to switch to social media. [...] Then there's the incentive models. The media agencies have good deals with the TV channels and radio channels. They receive kickbacks or percentages. Facebook and Google, they pay nothing. The only earnings for agencies from Facebook and Google ads are the hours spent on set up, a standard hourly income. [...] And then there's also the maturation

process and level of competence in-house. Many of those working with marketing haven't worked with social media over the last 20 years. So, there's a competence and information gap. (Market analyst)

Omega has acted on the need to become more digital, and there has been a steady increase in digital competence within the organization:

There have been a lot of various employments of people with digital backgrounds. The company has seen a need for change and adapted recruitment accordingly. So there has been influx of digital people, but still change hasn't happened overnight. There has been a maturation process over many years, where a number of people have sort of worked toward a common goal [to become more digital]. (Market analyst)

4.2.2 Phase 2: In-house operation

In 2016, Omega hired a competent digital advisor with expertise in digital media, digital marketing and social media among other. Omega was rather monotonous and formal in its dialogue, which was not in line with modern times. The organization found it necessary to have a closer relationship with its consumers. Within the year, the advisor took initiative to run the pilot project that would later become Troika:

Initially, I was hired as an advisor on how the various brands should act digitally. We identified some needs. Among other things, Omega's presence in social media was close to nothing. Hence, we started working on a project. [...] We experimented a bit, ran a pilot, tested some hypotheses, and produced more content than the agencies - twice as much. We had twice as good effect internally than externally. People who work internally are dedicated to the brand and know what it stands for. They know the brand's value, take the work seriously, and care about people. Externals don't act in the same way, that's natural. Since the pilot proved to work, we figured that we should run it for real. (Social media manager)

Initiating the pilot project required some convincing and brought with it frictions that had to be addressed. The level of friction was viewed somewhat differently between the social media subordinates and the manager:

We thought it was very exciting, but it was also a quite heavy process because there was so much to learn. There were a number of discussions. [Social media manager] was persistent, and today we're all very glad [for that]. But there and then, there was a lot of friction because it was so much enhancement of competence simultaneously. [...] [Social media manager] fought quite hard to get the pilot project accepted. (Social media subordinate 1)

We're talking changes. It comes with a cost, but I feel that most of Omega's actors have been positive when it comes down to it. Making it work went very fast. It was more of a change that was somewhat difficult initially, but as the project went forth, people's experiences were positive. We just had to overcome the early obstacles. (Social media manager)

According to the initiator, it was not difficult to gain support from the upper management. Omega seemed to value results from piloting to evaluate whether they should invest in an initiative. It was just a matter of convincing the upper management to launch a pilot. New initiatives were supported as long as the results from the pilot went well:

Then it [the initiative] has to be presented to the upper management where they say "yes" or "no". If they say "yes", then we go for it. Then you evaluate the pilot: "Okay, it definitely gave us what we thought it would give." Then we launch it for real. Yeah, there is a lot of piloting. (Social media manager)

The media agencies on the other hand, were not particularly enthusiastic. It required some convincing in order to maintain good relationships:

Of course, they weren't happy, they lose business. It wasn't challenging, it was just a fact. But it was also important for us to communicate that we wouldn't become an in-house advertising agency. Because that's not our objective. [...] We had to talk with all the suppliers and inform them that they were still in charge of the creative elements, but that we would take it from there and produce content based on their work. In addition, we do editorial stuff, real time topicality and things like that. Things the agencies never have done for us. So it was a process of assuring the advertising and media agencies. "This is how we'll do it." It went well. (Social media manager)

Along with the influx of employees with a digital background, Omega had also launched a different initiative with intent to become more data-driven and move away from relying on intuition. The technological development made it easier to facilitate a digital environment and manage data. Social media also grew more important in Omega, which was reflected in the marketing budget:

It's no surprise that we didn't have this [access to data] earlier, because the technology has really developed during the past years. We didn't have the same technological platforms out in the society when I started here. [...] It's clear that the social media part has become more and more important, but this is connected to media spending on social media becoming larger and larger. It has taken a bigger slice of the cake from the spending budget, marketing budget. (Market analyst)

The pilot project required allocation of resources. A team was put together comprising of three to four employees from marketing, one employee from customer service, and one employee from communications. At the beginning, the team members had limited knowledge on the topic of social media, and external resources from all major social media platforms were brought in to provide crash courses:

Getting all on board was a process, since it was an investment with respect to costs and resources. Our work tasks changed and someone else had to attend to our old tasks. It was like putting together all the pieces of a puzzle. So, it took some time to get it up and running actually, but we were all determined to make it work. [...] These things usually require some extra effort and extra resources. In the beginning, we spent so much time before posting one single post. We spent hours. Now it only takes minutes. Start-up costs. (Social media subordinate 2)

Troika was established as a multidisciplinary collaboration in order to create synergies and avoid silo mentality:

A silo-based approach to communication is rubbish. The more people work crosswise, the better the effect. First, you avoid having too many messages being distributed via too many sources. We merge budgets and reach more people with a unison message. That's kind of obvious. Second, knowledge sharing makes people better themselves and improves their focus. There's simply more to gain by merging. (Social media manager)

For every social media platform, Omega assigned one in-house champion - a super user. Every champion is responsible for being the most knowledgeable on a given platform, and function as an educator for colleagues. Every member of Troika is a champion:

To exemplify, I'm the champion on Instagram, while another Social media subordinate is champion on Facebook. You have a responsibility to stay updated. It has been alright since there are many platforms and a lot of things happening all the time. Now you know who's updated on the latest news for a given platform, and you are responsible for updating the rest of the group on your platform. That's also the case when it comes to teaching others in the organization. (Social media subordinate 2)

The choice of which platforms to take on first when establishing the pilot project was mainly based on the size of their user base. Being present on multiple platforms was also an objective in itself:

Facebook was where we started, where we began professionalizing. It had the greatest potential. Quickly thereafter came Instagram, naturally. And then Twitter. Those were the most important in the beginning.
(Social media manager)

In total, we wish to be present everywhere. That's the ultimate goal, penetration. To achieve this, we need to use all the platforms. We want the platforms to enhance TV, display and so forth. In such a way that when we're running a commercial it will be everywhere. You're supposed to be exposed to the message wherever you look. (Social media subordinate 1)

Table 4 summarizes insights on the rationale behind Omega's presence on various social media platforms. The platforms are presented in descending order relative to level of priority.

Social media	Rationale	Priority
Facebook	Most suitable platform for branding. Can launch diverse types of messages and customize advertisement.	High
Instagram	More focus toward inspiration. Short movies that engage quickly. Subsidiary of Facebook, it has the same reporting system as the parent company.	High
Twitter	Suitable for discussions, e.g. serious communication topics. Possibility to reach opinion leaders. Present news, e.g. new products or commercial initiatives.	Medium
Snapchat	Only used for advertising, the format has limitations. Relatively wide reaching, not just the youth.	Medium
YouTube	Users are in the mood for video consumption, not just fast scrolling. Allows for wide reach with TV adverts.	Low

Table 4. Summary of the rationale behind Omega's presence on social media platforms.

A key aspect when establishing the multidisciplinary collaboration was to create a learning environment with knowledge sharing as a cornerstone, and where trial and error was encouraged. The initiator was pointed out to be the driving force behind this idea. On this topic, the initiator stressed the importance of employees having an unprejudiced attitude:

We worked toward creating harmony, getting rid of any 'us and them' mentality. Creating a safe space with no ulterior motives, where people are focused on helping each other. You have to clarify it continuously. Talk about challenges that have been overcome. Talk about something that didn't go well. Continuously focusing on learning. It's important to tell those stories. It's smart to systematize it in order to make people feel safe and to change their mindsets. (Social media manager)

For a while, we celebrated our mistakes to sort of honor them and render them harmless. We celebrated our mistakes instead of our accomplishments. [...] If you as a person are a perfectionist, you might suffer a setback. [...] But [Social media manager] has strongly promoted that we should have such an

environment. Where you should - yeah, dare to fail a bit.

(Social media subordinate 2)

In addition to focusing on creating a learning environment, Troika created KPIs and a benchmark index in collaboration with the market analysis section. The objective was to become more data-driven and less based on intuition, by measuring performance and campaign quality. The process of collecting data is fast, and within a day there is enough data available to assess success:

Our obsession toward learning is an important feature, that's one thing. But we're also obsessed with tracking our performance. It didn't take long before we had targets and KPIs in place for everything we do. We pay attention to the way we work. We have an index where 100 percent is the average. In the beginning we compared ourselves with externals, but we performed so much better that we switched to comparing with ourselves. (Social media manager)

The in-house learning process has been systematized via 'projects' and 'experiments'. This structure allows for trial and error. It facilitates for incremental changes and continuous improvements:

A project lasts maybe one, two or three months, and includes three objectives. [...] People then have some projects to work on alone or in pairs. The goal is to reach a certain level where a project is no longer a project, but instead has become routine. [...] With experiments, you can fill out a document anytime with different hypotheses. Then we have a joint discussion on key elements and how to carry it out. If there's a positive result, you write a guide on how it's done. So, it's sort of all the time, continuously trying to learn how to improve and put it into practice. (Social media manager)

Taking social media in-house has given Omega the ability to act faster, participate in trends and be a part of the conversation with consumers. They have begun monitoring the amount of brand talk in social media and linking it to market segments, trying to forecast the development in market shares:

There's great value in feeling the pulse. Because when you work so closely with things you're sort of living in a bubble. And maybe nobody is interested

in what you're doing even though you feel they should be. Then you have to figure out why. For that you can run tests. You can try out five different types of content on a specific target group and see how they respond. You find out what type of content is found to be relevant, and then you can alter your strategy. It's easy to run tests, and it's low cost. So, staying up to date on what people are saying about your brand is definitely a smart thing to do. (Social media manager)

Monitoring brand talk could potentially influence management in Omega. An interesting example is that some customers created a Facebook-group in order to get back a phased-out product. This gained large attention on Facebook and eventually Omega's interest:

This wasn't a recent case, but when [product] was taken off the market, people got upset. Then they created a Facebook-group in order to get the [product] back. Just because of this, the [product] came back. Such things [brand talk] always get detected. We keep a very good track on what's going on. Some things we can't launch due to limitations in manufacturing, but we regularly discuss cases when it becomes a bit larger. (Social media subordinate 1)

Troika is organized somewhat similar to the editorial office of a newspaper. Figure 5 illustrates how Troika is organized. Troika acts as a forum across departments where actors from marketing, communications and customer service team up to align their work and discuss content production:

We have daily meetings where we go through our editorial plan for the year. We take a look at our weekly schedule, what we're planning to publish, what's going on in the world in general, and what people are talking about. We discuss if it's possible to make content related to different topics, and we plan the day so that customer service knows what is going to happen. The way we're organized right now, communications and marketing take care of the publishing while answering is covered by customer service.
(Social media subordinate 1)

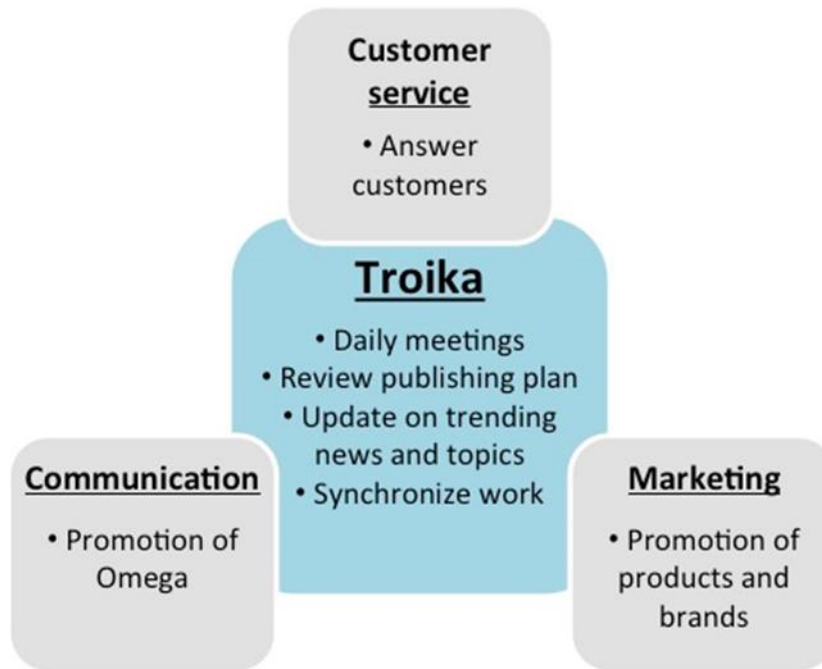


Figure 5. Illustration of the multidisciplinary collaboration, Troika.

In Omega's marketing department they have weekly open meetings for knowledge sharing. It is an informal setting, where actors from different sections within the department are given the opportunity to present cases and insights believed to be of interest to their colleagues:

At weekly open meetings we can present projects or campaigns we have completed. It's a way of learning across departments. We try to present different cases to showcase what works and what doesn't. We have also seen an increase in people contacting us asking for our opinion before they launch their campaigns. So, we have reached a fairly good level of competence in Troika. (Social media subordinate 2)

Troika has become an in-house competence hub within their field of responsibility, i.e. social media, and is frequently used as an advisory function when dealing with advertising and media agencies:

When running large campaigns, we usually involve agencies. They create the content, and then we collaborate closely with them to ensure that the format is right, and that the content is compatible with social media. [...] We are often included in meetings with agencies to ensure that we get everything we need. So, there has been a huge improvement. The brand managers, they have a lot

of responsibilities. They're not at the same level as us, and they're not supposed to be either. However, we're noticing that they slowly but surely are increasing their competence. The fact that we act as advisors and standard-bearers is perhaps the decisive factor in receiving the content we want from the agencies. That's in huge contrast to when we first started.

(Social media subordinate 1)

In the wake of establishing Troika, Omega's social media efforts have received increased attention:

We were lucky enough to be awarded a prize for our accomplishments with Troika. Afterwards, the upper management sent us a gift basket. That's pretty far from our prior situation when social media wasn't visible at all. The fact that it has reached the level of upper management is pretty cool for us. These days everybody has a profile on Facebook, also those who work here. People often come by and tell us that they've seen what we've been posting. So, it's very visible for the employees.

(Social media subordinate 1)

In order to gain a financial perspective, one of the organization's business controllers contributed with some insights. The business controller was surprised as to why it was of any interest to discuss Omega's social media efforts since the interaction between the controller and Troika was limited:

We don't collect any information from them. And we're not supposed to either in my opinion. We're such a large organization. If there in any way exists a KPI of interest or something worth following up on, then we have a highly skilled digital department within marketing that should be aware of such. In my opinion, the only right thing is that it is linked to those who hold in-depth knowledge. [...] When I think of social media, I think of Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, but it's possible that you're thinking of something completely different. Am I right? (Business controller)

4.2.3 Summary of findings in Omega

Omega started with social media by outsourcing it to various media agencies as part of a larger marketing agreement. These agencies retained all the information about Omega's consumers and it was hard to evaluate the success of social media. The organization saw a need to become more modernized and began deliberate recruitment of employees with a digital background. The initiator of taking social media in-house was one of these deliberate recruitments. We found that Omega seemed to rely more on results from testing such as piloting. The upper management would support an initiative as long as the pilot went well. After a successful social media pilot, the initiator took lead in launching a multidisciplinary in-house collaboration, Troika, for social media across three departments in 2016.

We also found that Troika has developed a clear structure for continuous testing and how to retain knowledge within the organization. The initiator has facilitated a safe environment for a trial and error approach. Troika has taken it a step further by distinguishing certain categories of testing such as individual ad-hoc experiments and projects in teams with clear goals. Employees write guidelines for best practice after successful testing and share knowledge both within Troika and openly in the organization. Facebook is the main social media platform in Omega, and content is mainly published by use of paid promotion in social media.

Lastly, we found that there was some resistance from the employees involved, as the transition to become specialized in a field they had no competence in felt overwhelming. Collaboration between departments allowed Troika to merge budgets and gain more funding. Since Omega was a large organization investing in social media, the social media platforms themselves participated with guidance and helped to raise the competence of Troika. In sum, the process of implementing in-house operation of social media went rapidly for Omega, and they have become one of the leading organizations in use of social media within the course of just two years.

5. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the empirical findings presented in chapter 4, which form the foundation for answering our two sub-questions:

1. *How does the use of social media in organizations develop over time?*
2. *What are characteristics of actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations?*

In order to answer the first sub-question, we presented our findings as narratives that elaborated on the development of social media use over time. In addition, we will compare our expectations derived from the literature review of social media use with the findings from Alpha and Omega. The narratives from chapter 4, along with the discussion of our expectations, will provide an answer to our first sub-question. Next, we will conduct a comparative analysis of individual and collective actions through the lens of institutional work theory from Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). Perkmann and Spicer's (2008) extension of Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) institutional work will be applied, which links the creation of institutions to three types of work: political, technical and cultural. The comparative analysis will provide an answer to our second sub-question.

Based on answers to our sub-questions, we will draw a conclusion to our main research question, *how is social media institutionalized in organizations?*

5.1 Development of social media use in Alpha and Omega

The literature review in chapter 2 led us to form some expectations to the development of social media use such as which actors were likely to engage in social media, specific competences required to engage with external users, and use of systematized measures in order to track performance. In relation to the public sector, we also expected Alpha to experience increased transparency as well as challenges related to political, organizational and financial constraints. In the following, we will discuss the expectations from our literature review along with our findings.

Arnaboldi et al. (2017a) highlights that professionals within the field of marketing and communications are most affected by the emergence of social media. They also mention management accountants as a professional group with growing interest in the social media sphere, which is separated into two areas of application - establishment of a virtual community and acquiring insight on users by monitoring social media. We found that Alpha's social media unit consisted of employees from the field of communication. The multidisciplinary collaboration, Troika, indicate which professions are taking lead of social media in Omega - marketing, communications and customer service. Our findings support that professionals within the field of marketing and communications are most affected by the emergence of social media. However, we did not find substantial interest in social media from other fields such as management accounting. Although accountants acknowledge that information from social media is important, they find it difficult to relate how it can be useful in a financial context. We presume that the main intention with use of social media in organizations might be to establish a virtual community. Thus, professionals from marketing and communications are taking lead in social media as these skills are more suitable in terms of influencing and interacting with users.

The dedicated units to social media in Alpha and Omega resembles the notion of a 'central content hub' described by Peters K. et. al. (2013). Alpha's social media unit is valued for their competence to convey messages on behalf of various departments. It requires more effort as communication in social media increasingly needs to be adapted to users' preferences. By use of social media, they control a significant part of the information flow between Alpha and its residents. We found similar tendencies between Troika and Omega's brand managers. In order to be relevant for users, Troika has a systematic approach for sharing knowledge on latest news and trends through daily meetings. Since social media allows for many-to-many communication (Peters L., 1998; Ngai et al., 2015), we also found that both Alpha and Omega made a distinct separation in their interaction with external users. Both organizations resolved the complex many-to-many communication by giving marketing and communications responsibility for the one-to-many interaction, while customer service were responsible for one-to-one interaction on social media. In Alpha, the social media unit lost control over a part of social media when customer service was given responsibility for the one-to-one interaction. In contrast, Troika remained in control since customer service was a part of Omega's multidisciplinary collaboration.

Hanna et al. (2011) highlights that social media and traditional media coexist and strengthens one another in order to become successful in social media. We found that Omega seemed to be more focused on making a combined effort of social media and traditional media. Troika emphasized the importance of strategic use of social media and creation of synergies through collaboration and communication of unified messages, while Alpha predominantly made use of social media without combining it with traditional media. This finding could be related to the fact that the two organizations operate with different budget restrictions. It makes sense to have a combined effort of social media and traditional media when there is access to sufficient resources. When an organization has budget restrictions, it is sensible to put more emphasis on social media efforts since it can prove to be more cost-efficient than traditional media (Hanna et al., 2011).

Both organizations established KPIs in order to measure success, a finding that aligns with what Hanna et al. (2011) identified as an important part of best practice. KPIs in Alpha seemed to be of more interest to their Social media manager than the rest of the social media unit. It was occasionally used in relation to celebrating milestones or forwarded to relevant departments to signal success, i.e. positive feedback from residents on department-relevant content. A possible explanation could be that the public sector is more concerned with carrying out tasks for the society as opposed to measure individual performance, as mentioned by Alpha's Business controller. Omega, on the other hand, were more invested in measuring KPIs, and took it a step further by constructing their own performance indicators based on input from their social media platforms. Measuring success of their work was perceived as essential in Omega.

Despite these differences, Alpha and Omega had some similarities with respect to KPIs. Both organizations measured performance against themselves over time as they argued that it was difficult to compare against competitors, due to different practices in social media. Another similarity is that they used KPIs in order to learn about which content that piqued the interest of the users. As Peters K. et al. (2013) points out, actors that promote in social media lose control over reach because social media is a multi-way, open network where the reach of content is defined by the amount of interest it has for users. Measuring KPIs in order to learn about users' interests seemed to be crucial in both organizations because users' interest has a direct impact on reach in social media, regardless of content being published as paid or non-paid promotion.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) argues that an organization should only be present on social media where functionality matches the organization's overall goals and strategies. We found that this might not be true. The fact that Alpha abandoned Twitter in 2013 was not just because it did not align with Alpha's overall goals and strategies. It was also because Twitter required a lot of resources to answer a small group of people which was insufficient use of their already limited capacity. In the case of Omega, the ultimate goal was to be 'present everywhere'. We did not find any indication that the two organizations deliberately restricted use of certain social media platforms because of conflicting strategies and goals. Both organizations were more concerned with how they could adapt their communication to users' preferences in order to succeed in social media. We presume that the selection of social media platforms in Alpha and Omega might be related to how 'mainstream' a social media platform is. Thus, a large enough user base to qualify as mainstream in any given social media platform might in itself be of interest for organizations. Kietzmann et al. (2011) also emphasize that it is important to understand the variations between different social media platforms. As adapting to users' preferences seems to be important in social media, we suggest that organizations ought to strive for understanding how goals and strategies can be adjusted to match the variations between different social media platforms.

Regarding use of social media in the public sector, Lee and Kwak (2012) mentions some challenges related to resource allocation and organizational culture. In the beginning, Alpha was reluctant to take part in social media. The initiator of social media in Alpha made extensive efforts through meetings and presentations in order to persuade the upper management and various departments to invest resources in social media. Consequently, departments that collaborated with the social media unit gradually acknowledged that social media has a positive impact in terms of less inquiries from residents and improved reputation. This has resulted in Alpha being more transparent, a result in line with the study of Bonsón et al. (2012). However, the social media unit found the development challenging due to limited resources as their budget has remained rather unchanged since the initiative was launched. These findings suggest that even if use of social media in the public sector succeeds, the initiative will evidently have to cope with resource limitations.

Finally, we found it interesting how social media could potentially influence the management in Alpha and Omega. By using social media, a resident notified Alpha about an initiative a different municipality had launched related to drowning incidents. This information was forwarded to a relevant department and resulted in a rapid organization of free swimming courses. In Omega, some customers created a Facebook-group with intention to get back a product that had gone off-market. It gained increasing attention by users and Omega decided to re-launch the product. These examples illustrate that information from social media can alter management decisions in organizations. However, we presume that single pieces of information from social media that lead to large changes in organizations, such as the above-mentioned examples, appear sporadically. Thus, it is unpredictable, and organizations might only take advantage of such opportunities by being present in social media.

5.2 Institutional work in Alpha and Omega

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) emphasize how individual and collective actors' actions can influence the institutional structures surrounding them. Perkmann and Spicer's (2008) extension of Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) institutional work will aid us in order to answer our second research question, *what are characteristics of actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations?*

In the following, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the actions from actors contributing to institutionalization of social media use in Alpha and Omega. The discussion will take its starting point in the narratives presented in chapter 4 and align findings from the narratives with the characteristics of Perkmann and Spicer's (2008) three types of institutional work. For every type of institutional work, we will begin by highlighting our key findings, before elaborating on characteristics of actions in Alpha and Omega respectively. A finding might entail several day-to-day forms of agency, i.e. coordinated and uncoordinated efforts, that support the process of institutionalization (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Thus, it should be noted that, in line with our understanding of institutional work theory, various findings in our study of Alpha and Omega may be related to more than one type of institutional work.

5.2.1 Political work

With respect to political work, we found that both Alpha and Omega had one significant person that was involved with this type of institutional work, which Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) describe as actions of ‘advocacy’, ‘defining’ and ‘vesting’. It was the initiators of social media in the organizations, who later became Social media managers, that performed political work. Alpha seemed to have more acts of political work compared to Omega in their process of institutionalizing social media. A possible explanation could be related to the point in time when the organizations started in-house operation of social media. Both organizations introduced social media around the same time. Alpha started directly with in-house operation of social media in 2011, while Omega initially outsourced social media, and started their in-house operation in 2016.

Alpha’s initiator engaged in numerous actions with intent to gain support for establishing social media as a professional practice in the organization. In contrast, there were less distinct actions with intention to gain support for social media in Omega. An interesting finding is the initiators’ attitudes toward persuasion. The approach of the initiator in Alpha was to simply find the right arguments and be persistent in order to gain support. The initiator in Omega had, to some extent, a similar attitude toward persuasion as it was described as a rather straightforward process to gain support. The attitudes of the initiators were in contrast to other employees, who perceived that the initiator went through a cumbersome process in order to gain support.

Political work in Alpha

When Alpha merged from five agencies into one large agency in 2011, it created new field dynamics. In other words, the merger can be seen as an act of vesting (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In the aftermath of the merger, the initiator in Alpha saw an opportunity to take jurisdiction over social media as a new practice. After the initiator managed to gain support from the new Communications director of Alpha, one of the initial actions was to promote social media internally. Another action was to distinguish between who could partake in social media and who could not, by establishing a dedicated unit to work with social media. Distinguishing between insiders and outsiders in social media coincide with Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) description of defining. In our study, we also found that the initiator recruited a subordinate that specialized in making videos, and established a collaboration with

an external consultant to keep up with the developments in social media. These are examples of deliberate actions by the initiator to build social support for a practice by recruiting relevant actors (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008).

We found that Alpha's initiator early on held presentations regarding social media in Alpha's various departments in order to build up comprehension of communication within the organization. By ensuring that the organization understood the mechanisms of communication, the initiator increased the likelihood of gaining support for use of social media in Alpha. The initiator also commenced in a number of meetings with the upper management in order to gain support for social media. However, there were some subliminal reluctance to embrace social media in the beginning as the benefits from participating in social media were unknown in a work context. This led the initiator to make actions to form alliances with early supporters of social media in various departments. An effective action to gain support was to work with early supporters and persuade the reluctant part of the organization by demonstrating results from social media efforts, as emphasized by the Department manager of recreational activities. Forming alliances at management level allowed the initiator to establish tight collaborations with various departments. One department manager also included regular interaction with the social media unit as a part of the department's annual plan. This can be interpreted as a sign of formal rules being established, and the act secured regular collaboration between the respective department and the social media unit. The above-mentioned findings indicate that Alpha's initiator was responsible for the majority of actions related to advocacy, which Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) described as persuading others through social interaction to gain support for a certain practice.

Political work in Omega

We found fewer actions of political work in Omega than in Alpha. The difference in amount of political work can be related to three factors. First, the initiator of social media as an in-house operation was initially recruited as an advisor intended to contribute with digital improvements in Omega. The upper management might have expected an initiative for change and thus they were less reluctant to it. Second, the use of social media in organizations had become a more accepted practice in 2016, when the initiative to have an in-house operation of social media was proposed. Third, Omega seemed to make decisions based on results from piloting. It was just a matter of convincing the upper management to launch a pilot with

acceptable results in order to gain support. The political work found in Omega seemed to be mostly directed toward persuading the employees that were to be involved.

After the successful pilot regarding in-house operation of social media, the initiator took lead in defining boundaries by establishing Troika. Relevant actors from the fields of marketing, communications and customer service were recruited. However, there was some resistance as use of social media in the organizations was a practice that subordinates in Troika had no former experience with. The initiator deliberately acted to persuade subordinates in Troika to change their mindsets about working with social media. When Troika was established, the initiator continuously emphasized the importance of the learning process and mitigated the fright of making mistakes. Actions such as storytelling, open talk about challenges and celebrating mistakes were initiated in order to persuade a shift in the mindsets of Troika's subordinates - from fright of making mistakes to being comfortable with mistakes. The initiator also appointed each of Troika's subordinates to become champions of the social media platforms Omega engaged in. As champion, each subordinate in Troika is responsible for being an expert in a given social media platform. Given that every champion take their roles as experts seriously, the initiator might have influenced the social media subordinates to become advocates for every social media platform Omega engages in.

5.2.2 Technical work

Technical work relates to the functionality of an institution. It is described as actions aimed at developing 'theorization', 'education' and 'mimicry' (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In our study of Alpha and Omega, we found that both organizations have had a deliberate focus toward creating mental models of continuous learning by trial and error when working with social media. Further similarities involve procedures of internal meetings and frequent meetings across departments. In choice of which platforms to prioritize it was found that both organizations have a similar understanding of the functionality of the various platforms.

As part of the process of institutionalizing social media, both Alpha and Omega introduced performance figures which they use to measure against themselves over time. Measurement can be seen as a means to assure quality in their content production, i.e. creating content that pique interest of users. In addition, we found formal and informal educational activities involving both external and internal resources. Finally, we found that social media as a new

practice was aligned with existing practices from traditional media in Omega, which was not the case in Alpha.

Although the two organizations had several similarities in regard to technical work, we also found some distinct differences. While Alpha was more intuition-based in their content creation, Omega had a strong focus on data-driven decision-making. A possible explanation for this contrast might be that Alpha operates in the public sector and places less emphasis on performance while Omega is a more result-oriented organization due to its commercial nature. Furthermore, Omega had a more systematic approach than Alpha to the process of institutionalizing social media and to retain knowledge in the organization. Arguably, the contrast between the two organizations can be linked to differing timelines of taking social media in-house, variations in resources, capacity restrictions, and dissimilar overall objectives.

Technical work in Alpha

Our empirical findings indicate that theorization might be the most dominant type of technical work found in Alpha. Theorization contributes to the creation of an institution in the form of procedures, manuals and tools (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). In Alpha, the social media unit holds weekly meetings to evaluate the quality of their work. In these internal meetings, constructive criticism is welcomed and trial and error is encouraged. The focus on having a safe environment for collaboration within the social media unit can be interpreted as the unit's mental model, i.e. the content and form of these meetings affect the mental processes of learning within the unit.

In addition to internal meetings, the various team members participate in various department meetings at regular intervals. The meeting activity can be seen as procedures that are established to help substantiate the presence of social media in the organization. A fitting illustration of the formalization of social media, is the finding that the social media unit strives to act in accordance with the general guidelines they have created. As described by one of the Social media subordinates: "We don't have a checklist. We base it a bit more on intuition and experience, but then again we have this strategy in the back of our head."

Theorization of social media in Alpha is not only subject to mental models, procedures and manuals. An important part of social media's functionality is the use of tools. The various social media platforms where Alpha is present, are described as tools for communication. Facebook is highlighted as the platform which takes up most of the social media units capacity

and can thus be characterized as their primary tool. At the same time, the social media unit has a conscious attitude toward exploring new platforms and being open to change. The decision to abandon Twitter in 2013 is an interesting finding in relation to functionality. It was stated that Twitter resulted in inefficient use of already limited resources due to character restrictions. The abandonment of Twitter can be interpreted as the social media unit acknowledging that the platform did not function along the lines of their objectives. For Alpha in general, the willingness to use various social media platforms seem to be limited by capacity constraints rather than differing functionality among platforms.

Taking a more figurative approach, Alpha's introduction of performance figures in 2015 can also be interpreted as a tool. A tool intended for quality assurance of content. Alpha were found to measure against historical performance, and the idea behind measurement was to improve the quality of their work. Focusing on high quality content seems reasonable for Alpha as piquing the interest of its users might increase the reach of informative messages and thus reduce unnecessary inquiries.

Theorization is not the only type of technical work identified in Alpha, there are clear signs of education as well. Education as understood in institutional work theory is the informal and formal actions providing actors with necessary knowledge and skills to engage in new practices (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Perkmann & Spicer, 2008). First, regular use of an external consultant since 2012 can be interpreted as a formal action aimed at ensuring that the social media unit will not fall behind as social media develops. Second, the weekly internal meetings as mentioned above reflects a more informal way of learning. By discussing the quality of produced content and sharing insights from trial and error in these meetings, the social media unit educates one another. Third, the social media unit's focus on being curious and explorative seems to support an informal 'learn as you go' attitude that might contribute to the development of new skills and knowledge.

Technical work in Omega

A similar pattern to Alpha's is evident in Omega in the sense that theorization is the most dominant form of technical work identified. Troika holds daily meetings where ideas are shared, plans are discussed, and communication messages are unified across marketing, communications and customer service. Omega's initiator has systematized the process of creating a learning environment by continuously communicating both efforts that go well and

challenges to overcome. The initiator's actions indicate a deliberate focus on constructing a mental model within Troika where focus lies on learning in the form of trial and error.

Troika has established a work structure of projects and experiments. This structure can be interpreted as theorization in the form of procedures to be followed. The outcomes of said projects and experiments might in turn lead to the development of guidelines and manuals. As explained by Omega's Social media manager: "If there's a positive result, you write a guide on how it's done. So, it's sort of all the time, continuously trying to learn how to improve and put it into practice." Troika's procedures of carrying out projects and experiments seem to facilitate retainment of knowledge within the organization and thereby contribute to the institutionalization of the most effective procedures. The concept of projects and experiments can be seen as a systematic approach to ensuring incremental improvements for the organization.

Omega's presence on social media platforms appear to be based on the platforms' size of user base, i.e. where they can reach as many as possible with marketing and communication messages. Accordingly, Facebook and Instagram are the platforms given highest priority, but Omega also finds considerable benefit in using Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube. One of Troika's subordinates mentioned that "In total, we wish to be present everywhere. That's the ultimate goal, penetration. To achieve this, we need to use all the platforms." It appears that differing functionality between various platforms is of lesser importance to Omega, and that the value of a social media platform as a tool depends on its potential for reaching users. Omega will make efforts to use any platform as long as it ensures substantial reach. Thus, we interpret Omega's focus on making extensive use of several platforms, as an act of aligning the organization's social media efforts, with Omega's overall objective of reaching as many as possible as often as possible.

Similar to Alpha, Omega have developed its own performance figures, tools for quality assurance in the form of KPIs. In addition, they have developed their own index for benchmarking. Omega use performance figures to benchmark against themselves over time in order to continuously improve and to ensure that they develop their skills and knowledge with every campaign. Since content that pique users' interest also affects the reach of paid promotion (Peters K. et al., 2013), we presume that improving performance is crucial as it will result in lower cost per impression. Actions related to development and follow-up of

performance figures support the notion that Omega's process of institutionalizing social media is based on the creation of a quality-conscious learning environment.

Technical work in the form of actions related to education is present in Omega as well. Early on when establishing Troika, external resources from all major social media platforms were brought in to provide crash courses on functionality to the social media subordinates. This approach serves as a pronounced example of a formal activity aimed at educating relevant actors. Furthermore, every subordinate was appointed champion of a given platform. It was found that a champion in Troika is the most knowledgeable employee in Omega in their given social media platform. In addition, the champion should make efforts at educating others in the organization. Troika's champion structure can be understood as a formal way of ensuring informal educational activities. We presume that the champions work toward self-education since they are expected to fill the role as internal experts. We also found that the champions contributed to increasing the competence of brand managers on social media by acting as in-house advisors. In other words, the champions carried out activities providing the brand managers with knowledge necessary to interact with new structures, which is in line with the way Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) describe educational actions.

Finally, in our study of Omega we found technical work based on mimicry. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) explains mimicry to be actions of aligning new practices with taken-for-granted practices in order to ease implementation. In Omega's case, it was emphasized that Troika is constructed similar to the editorial office of a newspaper with daily meetings and an editorial plan for the year. It can be argued that the act of making Troika similar to a news desk has helped bridge the practices of traditional media and social media, which in turn can be seen as a contribution to the process of institutionalizing social media in Omega.

5.2.3 Cultural work

Cultural work as highlighted by Perkmann and Spicer (2008) involves actions that make actors 'attached' to an institution. Cultural work is of a more symbolic nature than political- and technical work (Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017). In our study we found noteworthy actions in both Alpha and Omega aimed at 'constructing identities', 'changing norms', and 'constructing networks' (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

We identified some actions related to identity construction in the organizations. Having units devoted to working with social media can be interpreted as actions altering the way actors in the organization relate to social media. Additionally, third party recognition of Alpha's social media unit and Omega's Troika appeared to alter the perception of social media experts as a distinct functional group within the organizations. In other words, receiving awards helped formally sanction the identities of those working with social media in Alpha and Omega (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Both organizations made actions aimed at changing the norms of internal and external actors in relation to social media, i.e. the reshaping and developing of the underlying culture and moral associated with the use of social media in organizations (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In Alpha, we found that the social media unit could influence other departments by forwarding positive feedback from social media and participate in department meetings. Additionally, they gave presentations about social media for external actors, i.e. other organizations. In Omega, we found that subordinates in Troika occasionally held open presentations about their practice within the organization. Actions of communicating Omega's new practice to external collaborators such as media agencies, were also made in order to change the norms of relevant industry actors. The five-year time difference between Alpha and Omega's decisions to establish in-house operation of social media may be a possible explanation for the apparent dissimilarity in actions aimed at changing norms found in the two organizations.

Lastly, we found interesting similarities in the way the two organizations emphasized collaboration across departments and the creation of intraorganizational connections. Both Alpha and Omega's initiators pointed out that a key factor for successful social media efforts, was cooperation and a common understanding in the organization. The social media unit in Alpha constructed networks by participating in various department meetings, while the establishment of Troika as a multidisciplinary collaboration in Omega, was an act of network construction in itself. Furthermore, subordinates in Troika also created cooperative ties with various brand managers and assisted them with insights on social media in meetings with media agencies. Each interaction through these networks can also be interpreted as an opportunity to make actions toward constructing identity and changing norms. Thus, collaboration across departments might be crucial as it facilitates various dimensions of cultural work.

Cultural work in Alpha

From our empirical findings on Alpha we identified actions of cultural work along all three dimensions described by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). The construction of identities involves actions aimed at altering the way actors relate to their institutional field and how they picture themselves inside an institution. We interpret the existence of a unit devoted to social media within the communication department as an illustration of identity construction. This finding was supported by the fact that the work tasks of the employees who were part of the social media unit changed immensely after the merger in 2011. Furthermore, being recognized by third parties and receiving awards for the quality of their work, had a positive effect on the way the social media unit was perceived in the organization. It can be interpreted as an eye-opener for the organization that raised awareness of the quality of their work, which again helped reshape actors' values and belief systems in relation to social media (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

Noticeable actions of cultural work in Alpha were found in connection with changing norms. This type of work involves reshaping and expanding the links between current practices and their underlying culture via actions involving strategic communication and lecturing (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017). In meetings with other departments, actors from the social media unit challenged the participants to think in a new way about communication and the possibilities of social media. Another type of activity that can be seen within the scope of changing norms is the forwarding of positive feedback from residents on department-relevant content to the respective managers. This practice is in line with the arguments of Lee and Kwak (2012) who point out that the showcasing of success stories can contribute strongly to changing organizational culture. Examples such as upper management participating in the celebration of every 10,000th follower on Facebook, and Alpha's social media efforts being recognized at a large public conference in Denmark, supports the notion that the use of social media in the organization has attracted a wider audience.

In our study, we found that the social media unit in recent years has held several presentations to third parties where they have shared their knowledge with both public and private organizations. Furthermore, by reviewing Alpha's annual reports since the merger in 2011, we found that social media has received increased attention year after year. These findings represent further actions that have been carried out intentionally or unintentionally to affect the attitudes of actors who do not have an immediate interest in the field. Such actions can be

seen as attempts at reshaping and expanding actors' understanding of social media, i.e. actions contributing to the process of institutionalization (Perkmann & Spicer, 2008).

Lastly, we identified actions in Alpha that are in line with Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) description of network construction. The building of networks involves creating intraorganizational connections. In other words, it relates to actions of establishing and maintaining collaborative ties. The act of gaining admittance to department meetings can be interpreted as a first step in creating collaborative networks. In these meetings, the social media unit were given the opportunity to pick up content of interest. At the same time, knowledge about the various apartments have made it possible for the social media unit to relieve work by mitigating inquiries from residents to departments in Alpha. Collaboration made it possible for the social media unit to display their practice to a larger audience in the organization, as well as acquiring some influence in various departments. Thus, we argue that the social media unit and departmental actors have created cooperative ties, a feature that is described as critical when networks are to be created and maintained (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Over time, such establishments contribute to making diverse actors think along the same lines.

Cultural work in Omega

In our study of Omega, we found a resembling pattern to Alpha's in the sense of action characteristics which can be aligned with all three types of cultural work. To begin with, we found Troika's mandate to educate others in the organization on social media as a way of attracting a wider audience, actions which represents the overall aim of cultural work. The establishment of Troika as a specialized unit devoted to social media resulted in the social media subordinates perceiving themselves as internal advisors and experts on the field. This is in line with the reasoning of Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) on construction of identities. They outline that identity construction involves altering the way actors picture themselves as a distinct functional group. An example that highlights how new identities relate to Troika, is the receiving of an award from a third party for the quality of their work with social media. Following the award Troika received positive attention from upper management, an act that made the social media subordinates feel particularly valued.

When Troika was established, Omega had to explain the scope of their new practice to various media agencies to maintain good relationships with their suppliers. Within the scope of

cultural work, such actions can be seen as the use of strategic communication to re-construct the links between current practices, thereby changing the norms associated with social media in organizations (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017). Furthermore, it was found that Troika occasionally contributed with presentations and knowledge sharing at the marketing department's weekly open meetings, which arguably contributed to altering the perceptions of social media internally in Omega.

The organization of Troika as a multidisciplinary collaboration across three departments is a construction that facilitates intraorganizational cooperation. Its intention is to break down silo thinking and create crosswise synergies. Based on said logic, Troika illustrates a distinct example of a network, constructed to make diverse actors think along the same lines (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In addition to the above-mentioned illustration of the construction of networks in Omega, we found that the subordinates in Troika supported brand managers in meetings with external media agencies due to their specialized expertise. As in Alpha, collaboration across departments also made it possible for Troika to display their practice to a larger audience in the organization, as well as acquiring some influence on brand managers' decisions about social media use. Thus, we argue that subordinates in Troika and the brand managers have created cooperative ties.

5.3 Summary of development and institutionalization of social media

To summarize, social media started as a practice Alpha was reluctant to invest in and there was skepticism to it because potential benefits in an organizational context were unknown. In Omega, use of social media started as an outsourced operation as part of a larger marketing agreement with external media agencies. In-house operations of social media were eventually implemented as Omega increased its digital competence among employees. Both organizations emphasized Facebook as their main social media platform, and pointed out that having a trial and error approach was essential in order to learn more about use of social media. In line with our literature review, we found that actors with marketing and communications backgrounds are those who pioneer the use of social media in organizations. Further developments in social media include the establishment of dedicated social media units and implementation of performance indicators. The overall focus was mainly on building a virtual

community between the organization and its users. Alpha and Omega strived to be present on any social media platform that had a large user base. In contrast to existing literature, the organizations did not select social media platforms based on whether functionality in social media matched their overall goals and strategies.

Based on our findings, we conclude that variations of all three types of institutional work have been performed in both Alpha and Omega in order for the use of social media to become institutionalized in the organizations. Furthermore, it is evident that institutional work was carried out at different points in time. Initially, acts of political work were performed. Later on, efforts of technical work and cultural work occurred as part of the institutionalization process of social media. The above-mentioned remarks supports the arguments of Perkmann and Spicer (2008) who state that multiple types of institutional work and cumulative efforts are necessary for institutional work to successfully contribute to institutionalization.

In addition, we found that one single actor, the initiator of social media, accounted for a considerable amount of institutional work. Although numerous actors were involved in performing institutional work, the initiator stood out as a driving force. This finding stands in contrast to the reasoning of Perkmann and Spicer (2008) who emphasize that multiple institutional workers should perform institutional work in order for institutionalization to occur. A possible explanation for a single actor being able to strongly influence the process of institutionalizing social media, might be that launching a social media initiative does not require an extraordinary investment by the organization in advance. This might not be the case with other initiatives aimed at establishing new practices.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides the conclusion of our thesis, as well as limitations and ideas for further lines of inquiry. Chapter 6.1 presents the answers to our two sub-questions, which form the basis for providing an answer to our main research question. Chapter 6.2 highlights limitations of our thesis and provides suggestions for further research.

6.1 Answering our research question

The objective of our thesis was to explore how organizations implement use of social media as a new practice. Our thesis has examined how two Norwegian organizations institutionalized the use of social media, and the mechanisms at play during and after adoption of this new practice. We conducted a case study on two leading organizations in use of social media, Alpha and Omega. Fourteen employees were interviewed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of social media use, and to identify characteristics of actions from both individual and collective actors in these organizations.

The main research question in our thesis was *how is social media institutionalized in organizations?* We intended to answer this question by examining two sub-questions. Our answers aim to contribute with additional insights to the literature on social media in organizations and institutionalization of social media as a new practice.

First, we questioned *how does the use of social media in organizations develop over time?* We found that organizations can address social media as a new practice by directly engaging in it or by outsourcing it. Organizations that directly engage in a new practice during its infancy, might experience slow development as the organization is reluctant to invest resources due to the unknown benefits of a new phenomenon, particularly in the public sector. Use of social media in the public sector might also encounter resource limitations as it can be difficult to justify the use of additional resources on social media at the expense of traditional tasks. By outsourcing a new practice during its infancy and switch to in-house operation when there is sufficient competence, organizations might accelerate their development of social media use. We found that both organizations first engaged in Facebook, which developed to become the organizations' main social media platform. We also found that organizations that excel in social media seem to value an environment for trial and error, allowing incremental progress

and continuous evaluation of social media use. Thus, we presume that further selection of social media platforms to engage in, might relate to a trial and error approach based on various social media platforms' popularity.

Second, we raised the question *what are characteristics of actions that contribute to institutionalization of social media in organizations?* We applied institutional work theory as a theoretical framework to identify characteristics of actions that can lead to the institutionalization of social media in organizations. We found that the initiator accounted for most of the actions related to persuading and gaining support for social media in the organization. A data-driven approach, where organizations make decisions based on results instead of intuition, required less actions aimed to convince the organization to support social media. Initiators with management responsibilities deliberately performed actions to facilitate a safe environment for trial and error. In the case of a reluctant organization, we found that the initiator formed alliances with early supporters from other departments. Over time, the advocates for social media managed to convince the rest of the organization by demonstrating results from social media efforts. We also found substantial collaboration across departments related to social media, either as a result of actions that formed early alliances or by authorization from the upper management.

To provide an answer to our main research question of how social media is institutionalized in organizations, we identified the following three central factors:

First, a strong advocate for social media is required for the new practice to become institutionalized. The initiator has a substantial role in persuading others to support social media and accept it as a new practice in the organization. In the case of a reluctant organization, the initiator will first need to increase the comprehension of social media in the organization. As the initiator is likely to have authority in terms of management responsibilities, the task of gaining support on a larger scale, i.e. throughout the organization, is taken by the initiator. Subordinates are likely to contribute with actions that support their own work in a micro-dynamic setting within their unit, for instance in the setting of internal meetings.

Second, we find that an environment for trial and error is essential for successful use of social media in organizations. The underlying criteria for an environment for trial and error is that subordinates feel safe and that mistakes are accepted. A trial and error approach appears to be most sensible for learning about a new practice. Organizations will allow for incremental development of social media use by evaluating their successes and failures through frequent and systematic reviews. This ensures that an organization makes collective corrections to refine the use of social media. Over time, the organization will gain sufficient experience such that new corrections eventually become taken-for-granted practices.

Third, collaboration across departments ensures that use of social media as a new practice attracts a wider audience. Organizations that have a unit dedicated to social media can relieve work from departments that frequently interact with customers or users. Actors in the field of marketing and communications are those who initiate use of social media in organizations. By establishing a unit that acts as a central content hub that collaborates with other departments, organizations can take advantage of synergies and a more unified interaction with users. As collaboration attracts wider audiences, it might also lead to increased attention to and acknowledgement of social media throughout the organization. Thus, collaboration across departments can facilitate the institutionalization of social media use in organizations.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

We acknowledge that there are limitations to our research. In chapter 3.6 we discussed research quality and our efforts to mitigate threats to quality in our research. However, there are some limitations concerning data quality, time horizon and generalizability. Institutional work theory points out that both intentional and unintentional actions contribute to institutionalization. We recognize that there are limitations to data quality as our interviewees might have found it difficult to recall unintentional actions. The time constraints of our thesis also caused limitations to our approach. A longitudinal study, instead of cross-sectional study, would provide more insightful data while studying the development and institutionalization of social media over time. Multiple observations over time might mitigate differences in the accuracy between actual events and the interviewees' memory of said events. Generalizability to other organizations is problematic since our research is limited to a case study of two organizations. Findings might not be representative to other organizations, and thus more research is required to validate our findings.

Further qualitative research, examining organizations that are leading in use of social media might contribute to envision the potential of social media in organizations. More research on institutionalization of social media in organizations is needed in order to uncover the mechanisms at play. We propose scholars to pursue research on how efforts from one strong advocate can facilitate the development of social media use in organizations. Perhaps a different branch of institutional theory would be more fitting, such as ‘institutional entrepreneurship’, which features the role of powerful actors that are able to reshape the social organization of fields or contribute to establish a new dominant practice (DiMaggio, 1988; Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007).

Additionally, we propose to study professional service firms that have developed expertise on social media, i.e. consulting firms or media agencies. The topic of social media in organizations could be broadened by examining practices in these firms, such as how organizations make use of information from social media. Our findings suggest that organizations that are leading in social media prefer an in-house operation that focus on building a virtual community, and thereby possibly neglect how social media can act as a source of information. However, misuse of information acquired from social media has appeared to be a threat for users. This has led to new laws and regulations in privacy policy such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation, which might constrain parts of social media’s potential. Still, it should be interesting to examine whether organizations navigate around such constraints.

In existing literature, scholars have focused on implications of social media at the individual level. There is a substantial lack of research on social media at the organizational level, particularly related to institutionalization. The understanding of this phenomenon in the existing literature may not stay valid as social media is evolving continuously. Thus, future research is needed to update existing literature and refine current findings.

7. References

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8. Appendix

8.1 Interview Guide

Part I: Introduction

1.1 About the project and us

- a. Short presentation of Georg and Tony
- b. Short introduction to our research
 - i. Thesis on use of social media in organizations
 - ii. The broad concept of social media and its effects on organizations
 - iii. Thesis part of PhD research project

1.2 General information

- a. Participant's anonymity
- b. We would like the individual's honest reflections and opinions about the topics discussed, not textbook answers
- c. Request to record the interview electronically
- d. Presentation of participant information sheet and consent form (to be read and signed)

Part II: Individual and organizational context

2.1 About the interviewee

- a. Could you describe your educational background?
- b. Could you describe your prior work experience?
- c. What are your responsibilities in the organization?
- d. What is social media to you?
- e. Social media information can be seen as knowledge collected from social media data.
 - i. What type of information from different social media platforms do you view as useful?

2.2 About the department

- a. Could you briefly tell us about the department you work in?
- b. How does your department cooperate with other departments in the organization?

Part III: Chronologic development of social media use in the organization

3.1 Institutional work

- a. When did the organization start working with social media?
- b. What kind of social media did the organization use at that time?
 - a. Reason for introducing the specific social media?
 - b. Who initiated the introduction?
- c. How did the organization view social media at that time?
 - a. What was your opinion?
- d. How did you make use of social media at that time?
 - i. Who worked with it?
 - ii. Advantages and disadvantages?
- e. Did you experience any challenges when introducing a new social media?
 - a. How did one create support for this initiative?
- f. How was the work by the social media team valued by the organization?
- g. What is the procedure for implementing a new social media?

3.2 Use of social media

- a. How did you evaluate the insights from social media?
 - i. In what way were these insights seen as relevant for management purposes?
 - ii. How were these insights used in terms of governance?
- b. How did you measure the level of success in your content creation?
- c. When was the next prominent change the organization made in use of social media?
 - i. Repeat the from 3.1 – 3.2 c. to capture the storyline up until today
- d. In your opinion, have there been any changes over time regarding how social media is perceived in the organization?
- e. How do you think social media utilization will evolve within the organization the next five years?

Part IV: Closing remarks

- 4.1 Do you want to add anything?
- 4.2 Do you have any questions for us?

8.2 Consent form

NHH



About the research

The following document is a consent form for a master thesis at NHH Norwegian School of Economics. The master thesis is a part of FOCUS, a research program at the Center for Applied Research at NHH. The objective of this thesis is to contribute with insight into the use of social media in organizations.

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Tony Hu and Georg Weidle Windstad from NHH. I understand that this research project is designed to gather information on the use of social media in organizations.

1. My participation in this research project is voluntary. I may at any time during the interview withdraw or end participation without consequences.
2. If I feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, I have the right to abstain from answering any questions or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by researchers from NHH Norwegian School of Economics. The interview will last approximately 45-90 minutes. Notes might be taken during the interview.
4. I agree to being audio-recorded during this interview. If I am uncomfortable during the interview, I may enquire that parts or the entire interview is to not be audio-recorded.
5. I understand that the researchers will not identify me by name in any reports that make use of information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this research project will be preserved. Subsequent use of data and information will be subject to standard guidelines for data usage which ensure protection of the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
6. I have read and understood the content of this consent form. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research project
7. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Interviewee's name and position (in capital letters):

Signature of interviewee:

Date:

Signature of the researchers:

Date:

8.3 List of formal interviews

	#	Position	Date	Length
Alpha	1	Social media subordinate 1	04.04.2018	80 min
	2	Social media subordinate 2	04.04.2018	68 min
	3	Social media subordinate 3	04.04.2018	82 min
	4	Social media manager	04.04.2018	168 min
	5	Section manager of forest operations	05.04.2018	38 min
	6	Section manager of road operations	05.04.2018	71 min
	7	Section manager of park operations	05.04.2018	34 min
	8	Department manager of recreational activities	06.04.2018	47 min
	9	Business controller	06.04.2018	50 min
Omega	10	Market analyst	10.04.2018	71 min
	11	Social media subordinate 1	11.04.2018	79 min
	12	Business controller	11.04.2018	45 min
	13	Social media manager	12.04.2018	70 min
	14	Social media subordinate 2	12.04.2018	72 min