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Pernille Rydén

STRATEGIC COGNITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUSINESS-CUSTOMER INTERACTION

The PhD School of Economics and Management

PhD Series 36-2015



COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

Strategic Cognition of Social Media in Business-Customer Interaction

Pernille Rydén



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The PhD School of Economics and Management

Copenhagen Business School

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the strategic cognition research by exploring how managers' cognitive representations of an emerging, but potentially disruptive technology, influence their identification of strategic options. Managers tend to talk of social media as technology that changes customer behavior and disrupts industries, however, this attitude is not reflected in their strategic framing and implementation of social media. As behavioral theory seems inadequate to account for such paradox of social media sensemaking, two qualitative studies purposefully account for the socio-cognitive challenges of understanding and using new, disruptive technology in business-customer interaction and provide theoretical frameworks for overcoming barriers to business transformation in the digital age.

Departing from a thorough review within the marketing and business management disciplines, the studies illustrate how managers' strategic perspective is delimited, at the subconscious level, by experience, knowledge, and assumptions of business-customer interaction, market dynamics, and social media acumen, and how these biases are often confirmed in a social context instead of being challenged, despite of a market-driven, as well as an organizational demand of rethinking. Elicitation of the underlying conceptual structures of social media is based on in-depth interviews with 39 strategic decision-makers on B2C markets in Europe and the US. The first study across companies empirically investigates how strategic decision-makers cognize, formulate, and implement social media differently, and how managers' cognitive understandings of social media are acquired. A detailed study within a media company further demonstrates how managers' identified strategic framings of social media can express different operations of conceptual change of strategies through reflective thinking as higher-order learning. These framing operations can be the basis for discovering possible reorganizations of strategies (strategic reframing) to become aware of new opportunities with social media.

The identification of the conceptual structures underlying managers' strategic cognition of social media through mental models and framing mechanisms contributes to the discussion of how strategic cognition of social media can strengthen the development of business and customer value, as well as individual and organizational capabilities. The findings lead to more nuanced understandings of the micro-foundations of strategy at the intersected levels of management, cognition, market, and media. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt to comprehensively capture the

variety of conceptual representations of social media at managerial level, and to theoretically and empirically account for how these socio-cognitive operations underpin a strategic change process involving social media at organizational level.

The findings suggest how reflective thinking - at individual and collective levels - can help strategists and companies to better meet future challenges of adopting new technologies. The ability to challenge own and others' assumptions through reflective thinking can be initiated through reframing techniques and models developed from this research. Such practices become important to establish when businesses become increasingly dependent on fast-moving technology. Strategic processing becomes a critical precondition for understanding the nature of change and transformation and to be able to relate to customers in an appropriate manner.

Dansk résumé

Denne afhandling bidrager til strategisk kognitionsforskning, idet den afdækker hvordan virksomhedslederes kognitive repræsentationer af en ny, men potentielt set indflydelsesrigt teknologi påvirker deres identifikation af strategiske muligheder. Ledere er tilbøjelige til at omtale sociale medier som en teknologi, der forandrer kundefærden og deres branche og skaber nye muligheder for forretningsudvikling, men denne attitude er ikke altid afspejlet i deres strategiske forståelse og brug af sociale medier. Behavioristiske teorier synes ikke i tilstrækkelig grad at kunne forklare dette paradoks, så formålet med de to studier er at redegøre for lederes kognitive udfordringer med at forstå og anvende ny, banebrydende teknologi til strategisk udvikling af forretnings-kunde interaktionen, og udvikle og præsentere teoretiske modeller til at håndtere disse socio-kognitive barrierer for forretningsudvikling i den digitale tidsalder.

Med afsæt i et omfattende marketing og management litteratur review illustrerer to kvalitative studier hver især hvordan lederenes viden, erfaringer og ofte forældede antagelser omkring forretning-kunde interaktion, markedsdynamik og digitale kompetencer på det ubevidste plan fungerer som referenceramme for deres sociale medieforståelse. Disse begrænsninger bekræftes ofte i den sociale kontekst, i stedet for at blive udfordret, på trods af organisationers og markedets krav om 'nytænkning' og tilpasning til digital forbrugeradfærd. Elicitering af de underliggende konceptuelle strukturer er baseret på dybdeinterview med 39 strategiske beslutningstagere på konsumentmarkeder i Europa og USA. Det første empiriske studium på tværs af virksomheder afdækker hvilke konceptuelle strukturer, der underbygger ledernes strategiske kognition af sociale medier og hvorfra deres kognitive forståelser af sociale medier opstår. En detaljeret undersøgelse i en medievirksomhed demonstrerer yderligere, hvordan identifikation af en leders specifikke grundforståelse (framing) af sociale medier kan danne afsæt for et konceptuelt skift via reflektiv tænkning og højere-ordenslæring. Sådanne operationer kan skabe grundlag for opdagelse af nye strategiske muligheder med sociale medier (reframing).

Identifikationen af de underliggende mentale modeller og socio-kognitive mekanismer bidrager til diskussionen om hvordan strategisk forståelse af sociale medier kan styrke en virksomheds udvikling af forretnings- og kundeværdi og de ledelsesmæssige og organisatoriske kompetencer. Resultaterne bidrager til en mere nuanceret forståelse af strategi i spændingsfeltet mellem ledelse, kognition, marked og digitale medier. Så vidt

vides, er dette det første omfattende forsøg på at indfange varieteten af lederes beskrivelser af social medier og empirisk beskrive hvordan socio-kognitive operationer danner grundlag for strategiske processer, der involverer sociale medier.

Afhandlingen konkluderer at (meta-)refleksion på individ og gruppeniveau kan hjælpe ledere og virksomheder med at forstå den digitale transformations menneskelige forudsætninger og forholde sig til dynamisk til den teknologiske udvikling. De reflektive modeller, som denne afhandling præsenterer, kan understøtte lederne i at udfordre sin egen og andres tænkning. Etablering af en strategisk reflektiv praksis bliver en vigtig konkurrencemæssig forudsætning for virksomheder, der i stigende grad er afhængige af nye teknologier. Strategisk kognition bliver en kritisk forudsætning for at forstå hvad, der driver forandrings-og transformationsprocesser og for at kunne interagere med kunderne på en dynamisk måde.

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*Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but
memory, tradition and myth frame our response
(Arthur M. Schlesinger).*

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Overview of the dissertation

1: Introduction (16 pages) Etymology and conceptualization of new technology Research statements and study propositions
2: Theory (52 pages) Review of literature Discussion of the review findings A socio-cognitive framework Application of mental model theory and the framing approach
3. Case study and domain focus (9 pages) Study across companies Study within a company
4. Method (19 pages) Data collection Analysis
5. Findings (31 pages) 1. Upper left quadrant: Promote & Sell 2. Lower left quadrant: Listen & Learn 3. Upper right quadrant: Connect & Collaborate 4. Lower right quadrant: Empower & Engage
6. Discussion (19 pages) Socio-historical tracings of the four mental models New technology and its limitations in facilitating change
7. Conclusion (4 pages)
8. Managerial implications (21 pages) Recommendations for applying strategic cognition in B2C companies Recommendations for applying strategic cognition in MHA Reflective management Organizational implications Social relations as a management technology
9. Further research (4 pages)

Chapter 1

In this chapter I position the dissertation and discuss the relevance of a qualitative study on strategic cognition of social media. I explain how the dissertation is motivated by the search of understanding of an identified paradox in managerial cognition, which cannot be fully explained by existing research. The explanations are summarized in a description of the research purpose, as well as a presentation of the governing research statements. After the introduction follows a discussion of the conceptualization of new technology, specifically the etymology and definitions of social media. Finally, I present the study proposition to guide the study process.

“Why is it that when we consciously characterize a concept, we try to do so in a cold-blooded, cut-and-dried fashion like lawyers defining a tort, whereas, as Wittgenstein pointed out, if we are prepared to look and see how ideas are used in daily life, we often find nothing so clear-cut, only indefinite and open-ended concepts?” (Johnson-Laird, 1983, prologue xi)

1. Introduction

The dissertation is theoretically positioned as strategic cognition research (e.g., Kaplan 2011; Narayanan, Zane, and Kemmerer 2011; Porac and Thomas 2002; Schwenk 1988; Zahra and Nambisan 2012). With social media as the case study it considers the shift in power balance between customers and businesses as highly relevant for strategic thinking. The dissertation consists of two studies that draw on different, however intersected, strategy paradigms and research streams of management and marketing. Both studies focus on management, cognition, and social media to investigate how managers make sense of social media, i.e., retrospectively develop plausible images that rationalize their decision-making (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005), and how managers from this sensemaking develop the cognitive capabilities required for a business transformation process. This combination provides a setting for the emergence of two alternative frameworks for managers to discover the strategic opportunities that the changes in customer behavior and new social media technology enable. The frameworks that guide managers' cognitive acts can assist in the process of creating competitive advantage.

The dissertation is motivated by an identified paradox of social media sensemaking, as managers and marketers tend to talk of social media as radical technologies that change customer behavior and disrupt industries, but surprisingly this attitude is not always reflected in the managers' understanding and implementation of social media. The paradox underscores that it is not objective antecedent characteristics, such as environmental complexity (Isabella and Waddock 1994), company performance (Lant, Milliken, and Batra 1992), and technology (Itami and Numagami 1992) alone that influence strategists' personal and cognitive context (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006), being either stimulating or hindering. Rather, subjective antecedents subconsciously frame managerial decisions that to a large extent determine how social media are implemented in the organization (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). This explains the need of better understanding why and how managers decide to engage with social media, which will be elaborated in the following.

When social media are referred to as *new and emerging technologies* it is because they are regarded as currently developing and anticipated to undergo successive changes in the next 5 years within the specific historical context (Marshall 1998). The term *disruptive* refers to the effects of this development. At company level, it is reasonable

to talk of social media as *disruptive technology* when they are considered as offering significant improvement that will substantially alter the structure, processes, and culture of the organization. At industry level, social media are regarded as disruptive, when they influence the way the industry operates and the boundaries of its undertakings. For instance, the print media industry is currently in a state of flux due to increased competition deriving from substitute products such as online sources of news content and promotion. The social media sources range from professional content providers, e.g., LinkedIn, to advertising platforms e.g., Facebook to more informal networks for the supply of user-generated content. The disruption from social media stems from a shift from ‘one-to many’ distribution to a ‘many-to-many’ configuration, where customers are both the providers and consumers of content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). This expresses another threat of ‘new entrants’ gaining from the ‘low entry barriers’ provided by social media (with reference to Porter’s Five Forces).

At market level, social media are seen as disruptive technology when they alter the basic conditions for how actors in the (business-to-business) market interact. Historically, many media companies have enjoyed a market structure allowing them to exert influence over the delivery of print news to local consumers, who had relatively few alternative options. Moreover, a favorable market share enabled them to define prices on advertising due to the few substitutes, which gave them an unchallenged market position. Until now, neither external conditions nor substitute products have scathed their position. Today, digital technologies and advertising models challenge the revenues and prices set by the company as customers embrace digital news and advertising sources, such as social media, for generation of news content. Customers utilize social media to their advantage to gain access to substitute products as well as using them for their own content production and editing rather than subscribing for newspapers.

Reframing social media implies that managers convert a dominant perception of social media as a threat to their business into a framing social media as being part of the solution to the identified issues and challenges, which the technology originally was ‘accused’ of causing. Such conversion implies an increased willingness to supply, and eventually/potentially replace, print media with alternative new technologies, including social media, for customers to acquire news, entertainment, advertising and other services in more innovative and profitable ways.

The process of defining the expected benefits of social media to the realizations of these benefits is referred to as *social media implementation*. To implement social media successfully, the company is expected to carry out a number of interrelated tasks followed up by adequate resources, consideration of cultural issues, and communication processes to encourage managers as well as employees to fulfill the desired results.

The degree of severity of these technological developments is measured in form of cognitive adjustment or reframing among managers as well as their reluctance and/or inability to confront these issues at an individual cognitive level as well as social collective level. Although some industries, as the newspaper industry, are undergoing profound transformation, coinciding with disruptive effects of digital technologies like social media, it is also obvious that when managers are capable of reframing to embrace these changes and strategically appropriates the company, the disruption may provide new profitable opportunities.

Social media earn an increasing awareness and acceptance among scholars and practitioners as technology that brings new ways of generating value to businesses and customers (Constantinides and Fountain 2008; Constantinides, Romero, and Boria 2008; Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, and Hughes 2013). Social media literature has developed from being conceptual or anecdotal (Constantinides and Fountain 2008) to become a serious field of research. The academic discourse reflects a set of values and assumptions (van Dijk 2009), which marks a social and cognitive boundary that defines what to be said about social media as a strategic topic. For instance, an increasing stream of academic literature (e.g. Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes 2013; Manyika et al. 2013; Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan 2010; Wind 2009) states that social media technology will lead to a paradigmatic change in business and society, having profound impact on customer behavior, market dynamics, and the competitive situation. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2010, p. xi) describe how profound changes in marketing caused by digital technologies, including social media will require a major rethinking of marketing. In a similar vein Wind (2009) asserts the effects of social media in terms of a shift in the balance of power to empowered consumers, where the boundaries between organizations, customers and suppliers are breaking down.

A ‘burning platform’ discourse can be sensed in the text above. The powerful and compelling metaphor (originally coined by the organizational change ‘guru’ Darryl

Conner) has offered a dominant logic for years to emphasize how dire circumstances should cause actions of immediate and radical change. It is bound to the assumption that identification of a disruptive shift in customer and market behavior will encourage the manager to instigate immediate, and often profound, strategic changes. A similar discourse is reflected among practitioners, which underscores the relevance of taking the both the academic and professional communities into account. In the in-company study of Media House Aarhus (MHA), once a traditional newspaper publishing company, social media, along with other digital technologies such as online products and services, are regarded as disruptive technology. The reasons are that digital technologies, like social media, can be considered as serious substitutes than can replace previously uncontested print media products. Such external condition seriously exerts pressure on the strategic management of MHA.

Researchers conceptualize a future where “social media are changing the business landscape and redefining how businesses communicate across their channels of distribution and with their customers” (Rapp et al. 2013, p. 547). Rapp et al. (2013) refer to a US-EU based survey (InSites Consulting, 2011, September 14) indicating that more than 88% of the companies had initiated social media activities and more than 42% had defined social media strategies. The social media impact is similarly reflected in a recent survey amongst marketers: 92% of marketers indicate that social media are important for their business and 97% state that they use social media. Another major finding is that 89% identify customer engagement, measurement, and other social media actions as the top areas they want to master (Stelzner 2014).

The fact that companies increasingly use social media and define social media strategies is assumed to lead to a change in business behavior to better adapt the company’s interaction with its market. A strategic approach that involves implementation of social media in ways that meet a company’s market and organizational challenges, while strengthening the company’s competitive positioning, is not yet common. Despite the huge interest, there are still fundamental aspects that we need to explain, as the paradox above is an expression of.

At organizational level, a US based survey (The social economy, July 2012) stresses how US companies are being challenged to transform their organization structures, cultures, and processes to become extended networked enterprises. Only 3 per cent of SME’s are fully networked (p. 6). The report calls for a change in managerial mindset. At functional level, though 92% of marketers state that social media are important for

their business, companies allocate relatively few resources and employee hours to social media tasks.

Only a minority of organizations has developed the technology and management skills to realize the full potential of social media (Fitzgerald et al. 2013). Supported by empirical evidence, the pace of adoption at executive level is expressed by the relatively low number of top managers who work strategically with social media (Kiron et al. 2012; 2013) in business. Some managers ignore social media because they either do not understand them, know how to engage with them or how to use them and learn from them (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Reluctance (Katzy and Mason 2012) and lack of conscious reflection present key barriers to technology implementation (e.g., Gondo and Amis 2013; Zahra and Nambisan 2012), managers' interpretations of strategic issues (Plambeck and Weber 2010), and attitude towards the technology (Fulk 1993).

An empirical research-based classification of social media presents a reality where managers are open-minded towards social media, but reluctant to let it 'disrupt' their businesses on the short term (Kiron et al. 2013). Also Fitzgerald et al. (2013, p. 4) 'tested' the digital maturity of companies and found that only 15% of respondents are in the most mature category. 65% of respondents are in organizations that rank as least mature. In their report they conclude that

“Despite growing acknowledgment of the need for digital transformation, most companies struggle to get clear business benefits from new digital technologies. They lack both the management temperament and relevant experience to know how to effectively drive transformation through technology” (Fitzgerald et al 2013, p. 6).

The authors describe how managers face difficulties embracing the new technology due to lack of management vision and qualifications. Facing a high level of uncertainty plays a critical role in the interpretation process (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). In consequence, social media most likely will be applied as yet another tool for marketing communication (Peters et al. 2013). Even specific research on social media adoption (see Christensen and Seebach 2010; Factbook 2013) shows that Danish managers primarily use social media as marketing tools and do not work towards exploring the potential for radical disruption of their businesses. When managers lack strategic vision and knowledge of how to apply a *new* technology in *new* ways, and in some cases for *new* reasons, there is a tendency to make sense of it as “new wine in old bottles”, meaning that managers apply existing understandings and performance

criteria of media for business-consumer interaction. Consequently, the managers are at risk of missing more strategically potent cognitions (S. Kaplan and Tripsas 2008). Also Constantinides, Romero, and Boria (2008, p. 2) refer to social media as online communication tools, while stating “the theoretical underpinning on the Web 2.0 issue is still very limited and there is not even a generally accepted definition.”

As such the paradox is reflected in, and sustained by, different classifications, e.g., social media are conceptualized as technology that will radically transform people’s lives, businesses, markets, and societies at a global scale, while concurrently conceptualizing social media as yet another marketing communication tool. This interpretive and discursive discrepancy indicates that the social media phenomenon involves a broader range of contextual applications and interpretations and that the strategic fit between business and market is not friction-free, which motivates an in-depth study from a socio-cognitive perspective (van Dijk 2009). From a cognition point of view, it seems reasonable to question if the paradox is a symptom of managers, who do *not* regard social media as an apocalyptic threat to their future existence, but rather regard the ‘prophecies’ as remote alarm bells that do not demand immediate action.

Radical or disruptive technology substantially departs from existing alternatives and is shaped by new cognitive frames (Huges 1987). A study by Amburgey, Kelly, and Barnett (1993) shows that environmental change is associated with a significant decrease in the probability of corporate-level change, providing support against the prediction that environmental change leads to an increase in the probability of change in strategic orientation. This finding is inconsistent with the dominant logic of inertia or the approach of strategic fit where the company shapes itself in response to its environment, in the words of Hannan and Freeman (1984; 1989), the probability of change in strategic orientation should increase with environmental change. Though there is a rapid technological change, its influences on the deep structure of the business ecosystem takes a longer time (El Sawy and Pereira 2013).

According to Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) strategic change is about change of current modes of cognition and action that allows the organization to take advantage of new, important opportunities, or to handle severe environmental threats. Back in 1991 the authors stated that the role of the top manager in the critical initial strategy stages was not adequately understood. Today, with the emergence of social media the same statement seems valid, as we do not know well the pre-stages of a strategic change

process involving social media. As strategy instantiation processes often reflect the values of top managers (e.g., Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Hambrick and Mason 1984; Quinn 1980), it makes good sense to focus on the sensemakings, i.e., the value and meaning systems of the individual manager as a platform for understanding the paradoxical tensions at the interface of intra- and inter-subjective (internal) factors and environmental (external) factors. From the outline of the aforementioned paradox, I conclude that

- companies to an increasing extent use or consider to use social media
- managers and other stakeholders make sense of social media function, purpose, and impact in different ways
- the challenge of making sense of social media, in ways that enable companies to fulfill an urgent demand for change in business behavior, is typically approached by formulating social media strategies and measuring digital maturity
- the effects of these initiatives are not necessarily impactful on the business-customer interaction.

Social media strategy research that does not sufficiently take the individual cognitive factors into consideration may not help managers recognize the value of social media in ways that they can act upon, and so, and instead, produce incomplete, even false, conclusions. I therefore assume that cognitive research on how managers can capitalize on a creative expansion of business-customer understandings, and hence social media applications, may advance companies into future markets. As the future of competition lies in new approaches to value creation between customers, companies, professionals and other providers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), the customer-orientation view provides a valuable approach for management to embrace its stakeholders in more innovative and transformative strategy processes.

The purpose of the dissertation is thus to provide academics and practitioners with a better understanding of how individual and collective sensemaking processes and conceptualization of the decision variables, e.g., customer and stakeholder interaction, value creation, visions, values, routines, and capabilities influence how managers socio-cognitively map, and consequently navigate, in the social media landscape. The strategic cognition approach is applied as it

- ✓ involves the overall direction of the company's marketing position, interactions across organizational boundaries, and growth opportunities
- ✓ underscores the influence of managerial cognition in strategy and the relevance of introspecting one's own thinking and behavior, as well as paying attention to others
- ✓ explains how the future of a business is deeply informed by the past
- ✓ provides a framework for managers and other professionals to expand their cognitive models through higher-order learning (Armstrong and Hardgrave 2007).

These four aspects are relevant to the social media strategy issue as they relate to how a company selects its customers and interacts with them, defines and differentiates its offerings, creates value for its customers, defines the tasks it will perform or outsource, configures its resources, and ultimately captures profits (El Sawy and Pereira 2013).

Having fleshed out the motivational contradictions and logics of the research paradox, *the purpose of the dissertation is to theoretically and empirically provide a deeper understanding of managers' strategic cognition of social media for business-customer interaction.* This will be accomplished by two supplementing studies - a study across companies and a study within a company. Two research statements guide this process:

- 1) Positioned as managerial cognition research, study one applies mental model theory to investigate managers' shared mental models of business-customer interaction to understand how they influence on individual social media sensemaking.
- 2) Positioned as metacognition research, i.e., knowledge and regulation of one's thinking processes, study two applies strategic reframing to empirically investigate socio-cognitive learning processes among managers to understand, in greater detail, the challenges and possibilities of converting from print to digital and social media.

Departing from two research statements, the next step is to introduce the overarching case of social media as a new technology, its etymology and conceptualization. The section below outlines relevant linguistic and semantic aspects of social media. By investigating how the social media concept is used, we become aware how commonly used concepts deserve a deeper explanation. Even simple cognitive accounts appear to be based on complicated networks of tacit understandings and assumptions to be critically scrutinized and explained. Following the nature of the dissertation, the purpose is not to provide a ‘correct’ definition of social media, but rather to provide a backdrop for the plurality of individual definitions that will be given in the following chapters by scholars and managers. Thus section 1.1 provides a phenomenological account of the subjective experiences of what new technology is, and the ‘set of rules’ that governs the interaction.

1.1. Etymology and conceptualization of new technology

The term *social media* is a central concept of this dissertation. In Google ‘social media’ appears six times more often than any other synonym, and a literature search confirms the assumption that the concept of social media is most widespread in marketing and management research. As marketing adopts the new web-based technology, the terms ‘media’ and ‘channel’ already describe ways of interacting with consumers. Within this communication frame marketers added the adjective ‘social’ to denote its particular quality (Allen 2012).

Social media research is in its infancy and can be considered a young phenomenon to researchers, managers, and marketers (Rapp et al. 2013). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that there is little understanding of what ‘social media’ actually mean, but instead of investigating different understandings, they define social media in contrast to other media, making sense of social media based on a comparison of other marketing communication channels (ref. to the discussion in section 1.1). It is tempting to define social media as platforms that allow a specifically fast and vast social interaction, but then we fail to question the deeper assumptions of why Facebook or YouTube is more social than e-mails or a telephone. From a strategic management point of view, it is important to a social media case study since language is both descriptive and constitutive of reality (Giddens 1976), i.e., the definitions of social media contain inner logics that propose particular action.

A detailed understanding of the social media phenomenon requires deeper explanations of what constitute social media, their functionality, and how their social dynamics enable business-customer interaction at different levels. Following the thoughts of Husserl, new technology is not considered only an object that managers mentally sense, interpret, or misinterpret; by their wording and etymological connotations the technological phenomenon has already been classified and grasped. The reference to Johnson-Laird (1983) in the beginning of this chapter also expresses a concern with categorical and narrowing characterizations of concepts, instead of understanding a concept as a living, ambiguous, indefinite and open-ended phenomenon.

The reason for treating social media as an abstract term is that the dissertation concerns strategic understandings rather than tactical understandings, for instance the theory of customer co-creation does not discuss the tactics of customer socialization (Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen 2013). However, managers' definitions of social media are presumably rooted in concrete experiences with the social media they know and use. For instance, Facebook appears to be the most widely used social media among Danish companies, followed by other media like Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc., which means that the experienced affordances of those media inform their mental models. The managers are therefore asked about the social media they know and use to gain insight into how the concrete elements of a particular medium form their more general descriptions.

To gain control over a new technology, like social media, managers build internal mental models of the things with which they are interacting. Mental models can be represented as networks of concepts (Carley and Palmquist 1992). The meaning of a concept for an individual is embedded in its relations to other concepts in the individual's mental model. These models provide predictive and explanatory power for understanding the discourses and practices (McNeil 2011).

1.1.1 Ostensive and performative definitions of social media

In a historical context, *social* has been added to *media* to explain its particular characteristics distinct from other media and non-media. *Socius* (lat.) designates a (human) member and ties into status as a unit of society. Again, socius stems from the instructive Proto-Indo-European word *Sek*, which means 'to follow'. Media (lat.) *Middle* refers to tools used to store and deliver information or data.

In Latour's (2005) view, the meaning of social is shrinking, as we tend to limit the social to humans and societies. His ostensive definition of social, i.e., a type of connection between things that are not themselves social, better describes what is going on in the virtual space. Here it is not human beings, but connections of opinions, ideas, interests of statements circulating in social media communities. By the ostensive definition social media essentially become an oxymoron 'community - tool' or 'human - technology'. In fact, social media may be regarded less social as 'tool' accentuates object qualities. The word 'social' alone does not explain what makes media more 'social' or whether a social dimension, social structure or social order actually exists.

This definition of the social as resting on symmetrical relations has a crucial impact on social media understanding and seems to be the far most dominating in marketing and management. The more people act and communicate, the more equal they become, which relates to the empowerment concept (Castells 2009).

A performative definition (Latour 2005) describes how actors connect in their search for what society is. It presents another symmetry that ties into the human society: the more actors are seen as equal, in principle, the more the practical differences between them appear in the means available to them to achieve a social community. A person who sees, for instance, Facebook as performances in action, where members constitute its existence: no members online, no Facebook, would give such description of social media, "the *means of interactions* among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks."

This dissertation departs from the position of social media as *not* being an object of an ostensive (clear) definition, in the words of Korzybski: The map is not the territory. Metaphorically speaking, I thus take an open-ended research approach of landscape construction rather than landscape travelling. The informants define and order the social and as the researcher I trace, rather than settle, the divergent conceptual connections by focusing on their sensemaking and the primary generators and design rationalities for their 'landscape construction'. It has implications, e.g., if a manager regards Facebook as an ostensive object, a dynamic, but stable phenomenon (like a switchboard) that he or she can connect or disconnect to by use of a computer, log-in and password. It reveals a perception of the world as 'something out there'. Ostensive descriptions could be "a collective of online *communications channels* dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration or "a group of Internet-based *applications* that build on the ideological and technological foundations

of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

Instead, the dissertation considers social media as a concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something, not what is being described (Latour 2005). Latour’s distinctions suggest researchers to more carefully consider alternatives to the traditional ‘media as object’ definition, e.g., a ‘social’ definition of subjective quality as the concept of social media can be regarded as socially created and thus add richness to our understanding. It is hardly a context, which underscores what was stated previously: The map is not the territory, which tends to be mistaken by use of the old positivist repertoire to explain new associations, a thought that leads to theorizing about how to reach the ontological level of social media: How a person makes sense of social media must depend on how the person distinguishes it from what social media is not (Spencer-Brown 1994):

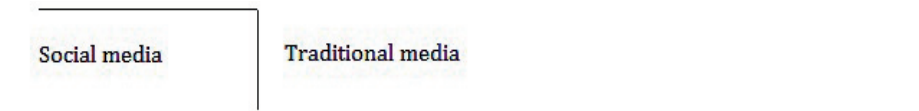


Figure 1.1.1.1: Social media distinguished from traditional media

Figure 1.1.1.1 shows how social media are perceived as ‘something’ different from traditional media, for instance with regards to the purpose of using them, their affordances, and the expected outcome. By placing ‘social media’ on the inner side of the form, i.e., defined social media as a subpart of the ‘traditional media environment’ the interpretation is confined to the traditional marketing framework as social media are still seen as a technology (media tool) for communication. The analyses reveal how managers primarily make sense of social media within a ‘media’ context, but there were also cases of a ‘non-media’ understanding:

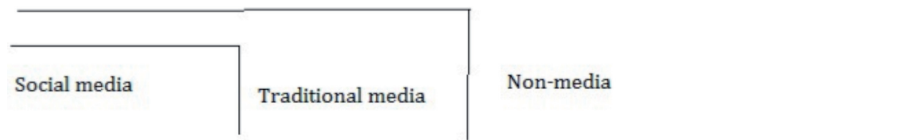


Figure 1.1.1.2: Social media as distinguished from non-media

This is shown in Figure 1.1.1.2 where social media is distinguished by not being a media, for instance carrying human or communicative affordances or idealistic purposes like ‘saving or enlightening the world’. Thus the meaning of social media is taken much farther than a smart technology for conveying messages.

This section has shown that social media are not just tools in the hands of managers or marketers, but a political as well as politicized phenomenon where the meaning of social media is made sense of and negotiated through distinction operations. In consequence, managers are to decide whether companies and consumers are constitutive of social media or if social media constitutes businesses and consumers. The ‘social aspect’ of social media is an ongoing interactive interpretive process impacting the foundations of strategic marketing decisions: If these socio-technical processes are changing the rules of the game without companies realizing it, it might put them out of the game, simply because they don’t know that the rules have changed. Awareness of this, followed by a potential shift in mindset, requires reflective practices where managers think critically upon their assumptions. Social interaction and reflective thinking make room for divergent mental models (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008) and interpretations that can help managers and marketers to better understand the diversity of social media.

1.2 Study propositions

The study propositions align with the two research statements presented in the introduction section. They specify the definitions and assumptions considered for the studies and form the premise for the deduction of inferences.

When customers change their behavior of interaction into more digitized social forms (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Labrecque et al. 2013), and expect companies to adapt, their expectation is not necessarily met, even though business managers acknowledge that it should. Though managers decide to adopt the requested social media, the implementation of them does not automatically impact on the thinking and behavior of the people in the organization. When learning and developing new skills, e.g. social media marketing, the person is “inaugurated” in the traditions of the corporate daily routines. In line with the socio-cognitive approach, corporate identity is seen as socially constructed and maintained discursively through collective sensemaking processes. These socio-cognitive aspects partly explain why managers struggle with

strategic reframing despite an acknowledgement of rapid and disruptive changes in market and customer behavior (Wrona, Ladwig, and Gunnesch 2013).

A shift towards more transparent forms of business-customer interaction may be in conflict with the more traditional view of strategic management and marketing as an adaptive activity of analysis and control between a company and its environment. Extant research on technology adoption (e.g., Tripsas and Gavetti 2000; Kaplan and Tripsas 2008; and Ringberg and Reihlen 2008) shows, from different perspectives and in different situations, how cognitive barriers prevent managers from communicating as well as seeing disruptive effects and strategic potentials.

A “game change” is profound, defined as a disruptive event or crisis that blurs industry boundaries, the rules of competition, or changes the fabric of social order or society. The old and new approaches are regarded as incommensurable, so a radical change forces a company to decide whether or not to change their beliefs, behaviors, e.g. strategic goals, products, and services. This resembles Kuhn’s notion of a paradigm shift where a new way of thinking, and hence acting, in a transformative way replaces the former.

In contrast, evolutionary change is incremental and takes place in gradual steps over time as this is seen as best for the survival of the organization. The change may be prompted by market pressure or competition, like adapting to new technology and meeting stakeholder needs, reflected by a rather reactive change process. New approaches co-exist with the old approaches, eventually to replace them. However, there is no clear-cut line between these two forms of change, as it depends on the perceiving mind and the context in which the change is perceived: Facebook can be seen as a game changer in how people maintain social relationships (El Sawy and Pereira 2013), while still co-existing with the more traditional ways of maintaining relations. Consequently, people may not be aware that they talk of a technology as a game changer, while using it in a “game-preserving” manner.

Departing from the paradox and the first research statement presented in the introduction section the dissertation first investigates managers’ mental models of business customer interactions in order to identify automated/reflective sensemaking processes of social media. This formulate into the first study proposition to scrutinize:

The implementation of social media does not automatically cause a profound change in how the business interacts with its customers due to managers' categorical thinking. For such change to happen managers have to change their mental model of business-customer interaction, which requires meta-cognitive thinking.

The interplay between action and reflection plays a central role to the formulation and implementation of strategy (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel 2009). Strategic representations of phenomena underlie managers' understanding of what business environments are, how they change, and how businesses can interact in such change processes. How such conceptualizations are expressed through language influences operations of conceptual change, for instance by stretching the strategic value ranges, adding new strategic dimensions that enable new combinations of features by merging different domains (like marketing strategy and business strategy), and exploring those domains. Also cultures of consensus, departmental interests, organizational structures, and routines may act as conservatory forces (DiMaggio 1997; Tichy and Bennis 2007). Some researchers (Argyris and Schön 1978; Nelson and Winter 1982; Senge 1990; Weick 1995) explain strategy formation as individual and collective learning processes. To gain insight into the socio-cognitive perspective of a strategic transformation process the dissertation investigates a social media implementation process in a company, departing from automated thinking and default responses at marketing level to reflective thinking i.e., the managers' attention is attracted towards existing routines, leading to a more critical stance giving impetus to strategic operation of social media.

A manager's ability to reframe is considered a starting point for a creative strategy process, an otherwise neglected aspect of creativity (Garbuio, Lovallo, Porac, and Dong 2015). The ability to (re-)frame presents a 'higher-order' skill, as formulation allows professionals to become aware of their individual and collective decision-making (Corner, Kinicki, and Keats 1994) and directly intervene by altering the decision and / or develop alternate frames (Hodgkinson et al. 1999). Such skill is vital as strategy assumptions in a traditional media context cannot automatically, or in a friction-free manner, transfer into a social media context without the need of 'conscious translation'. In fact, what a manager regards as proper behavior in a traditional media context may well, due to the interpreter's knowledge, background, experience, and professional culture, be a cognitive barrier in a social media context. Strategy is both about doing new things as well as doing existing things better (Porter 1996), but it relies on the context what is considered 'new' and 'better', which is why

conscious reflection is considered important. It explains the relevance of exploring how the dynamics of social media sensemaking (in terms of how managers in a company (re-)frame social media) are influenced by the organizational context and routines.

Aligned with the second research statement of investigating socio-cognitive learning processes among managers to understand, in greater detail, the challenges and possibilities of converting from print to digital and social media, the second study proposition for to dissertation to scrutinize is:

Strategic reframing is a reflective approach to assessing and overcoming managers' cognitive barriers to social media implementation. It enables a fast identification of the learning implications of the different frames, which promotes strategic transformation.

Based on Bateson's framework, I classify the different learning levels of the four social media frames (i.e., sensemakings) to unfold the learning implications of each frame. This is based on the assumption that a particular framing releases a unique potential for reflection at different levels, e.g., when social media are framed as online communication tools there is less demand for learning, as opposed to an interpretation of social media as a game changer.

The approaches of the two studies are both rooted in the cognitive sciences. In concert, they constitute a coherent theoretical framework. Mental Model theory (Gentner and Stevens 1983), Strategic frame analysis (Bateson 1972; Lakoff and Johnson 1979; Lakoff 1996; 2010), and Socio-cognitive theory (Bandura 1986; 1988; 2001; Ringberg and Reihlen 2008) have proven useful for examination of the relation between strategy, cognition, and social media at different levels. The theoretical framework will be introduced and elaborated in chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundation of the dissertation. A brief outline of the historical context accounts for the influence of behavioral and cognitive approaches on the field of study. The literature review section first accounts for the search method and the search results within the three core fields of Strategy, Cognition, and Social Media. The search expands to the three intersected fields of Strategic Cognition, Social Media Strategy, and Social Media Cognition illustrating how behavioral and cognitive approaches in different ways address the managerial challenges of implementing social media. After a short review of cognitive learning theory I discuss the review findings.

When uncertainty resolves, people will reevaluate and may want to change their choices. When such change occurs, effective response can be due to serendipitous managerial actions or due to flexibility that was prepared by purpose (Brown and Eisenhardt 1997).

2. Theory

The quote above by Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) underscores the link between cognition and strategic flexibility. The discipline of cognitive psychology is part of the larger field of cognitive science and has diverged into subfields e.g., management, neuroscience, philosophy, and linguistics in line with its increased popularity. From 1920s until the 1950s, behaviorism was the prevalent tradition in psychology (Atkins 1993). It represents a strong tradition rooted in studies of observable behavior, i.e., the stimuli-response relationship between environments, technology (Burton, Moore, and Magliano 1996), and individual behavior, and typically ignores mental events (Carlson and Buskist 1997). The behavioral approach connects managerial decision-making to resource-building and firm performance, i.e., conceptualization of resource configurations that are intended to deliver competitive advantage and development of resources required to implement the strategy (Kunc and Morecroft 2010).

With the cognitive turn in the 1950s, cognitive researchers abandoned the behaviorist tradition by shifting foci to topics such as attention, memory, and problem solving. The cognitive tradition rejects many of the behaviorist assumptions e.g., determinism and managers as logical or rational thinking (or behaving) entities (Jonassen 1991; Barr, Stimpert, and Huff 1992; Hambrick and Mason 1984; Weick 1987). It provides researchers with an alternative approach to rational and analytical strategic management models by seeing individuals as learning and decision-making subjects to account for the complexity of thinking that give rise to strategies (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel 2009). Cognitive approaches accent the presence of different, and often competing, mindsets, and reconcile different assumptions and views (Zahra and Nambisan 2012).

Elaborated separately in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 the concepts of mental models and frames developed very quickly and soon became central notions of cognitive psychology (Held, Knauff, and Vosgerau 2006). The concepts ‘schema’ (Bartlett 1932), ‘mental model’ (Tolman 1948), and ‘frame’ (Minsky 1972) are often used synonymously, and are born within the same tradition. Separate ‘founders’ developed and used the concepts for different purposes, e.g., human-animal cognition and artificial intelligence. Researchers still debate on the conceptual similarities and differences, for instance some argue that mental model theory goes beyond schema theory as it also covers perceptions of task demands and task performance. Applied to

this study, ‘frame’ (or ‘schema’) refers to abstract cognitive structures (social media as a generic concept) that guide the construction of mental models, a concept that also includes specific situation representations (the perception of the business task of interacting with its customers).

Both concepts are central to individual and organizational problem-solving, decision-making, and learning as they express how humans categorically, albeit forcefully, organize ambiguous knowledge and fill in omitted information. The ways in which a manager handles the sensemaking process of a new technology affect the strategic dialogue, agenda, and initiatives concerning social media (Barr 1998; Porac and Thomas 2002) and influence the knowledge and future decisions of the manager (but not necessarily). Though, managers tend to reproduce behaviors, which is why the dissertation investigates individual-based antecedents, assuming that managers do not work as ‘open’ (reflective thinking) systems that automatically allow interaction between their internal frames and the external environment. Rather, they can be regarded as ‘closed’ (categorical thinking) systems in isolation from their environment, which may respond (i.e., open) when triggered (see Maturana and Poerksen 2004; Bateson 1972). Strategic cognition is thus both a cultural and ‘private’ process, which is why reflection becomes essential to acknowledge and understand own and other members’ sources of intentions and performances (Felin and Foss 2013; Maturana and Poerksen 2004).

Thus, cognition plays a prominent role in acquiring and retaining new organizational behavior (Gondo and Amis 2013), which is relevant in situations of influx of new technologies and market transitions. However, “cognition’s role in explaining the dynamics of technical change has not yet been comprehensively explored” (Kaplan and Tripsas 2008, p. 801). Despite an emerging body of social media research, little attention is paid to how managerial cognition influences the adoption and implementation of social media ignoring its potential to explain conceptual discrepancies and cognitive paradoxes. Insights from a strong body of literature on strategic management (e.g., Barr, Stimpert, and Huff 1992, 1998; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel 2009; Plambeck and Weber 2010; Tripsas and Gavetti 2000; Gary and Wood 2011) and organizational behavior (e.g., Gersick and Hackman 1990; Weick 1984, 1987, 1993, 1995; Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron 2001) validate how strategy is the result of previous experiences that shape what managers know and do, which in turn shape their subsequent experiences.

As this dissertation attempts to develop more nuanced views the socio-cognitive approach supplements the behavioral approach, rather than replace it, e.g., Barr (1998) demonstrates from a case study of the pharmaceutical industry how managers' interpretations of environmental events and key dimensions of their strategy affect the way firms strategically respond to new situations.

2.1 Review of literature

The purpose of doing a detailed literature review is first to establish an inventory of the categories and relationships that the empirical studies must investigate, and second, to become alert to the preconceptions already existing in the literature (Prescott 2011). A convincing stream of cognitive research on decision-making, new technology adoption, and implementation stipulates that strategic effects depend on conscious reflection with the manager (Barabba 2011; Tripsas and Gavetti 2000). It can theoretically support and explain the growing empirical evidence that social media adoption and implementation occur with little reflection on its strategic appropriateness. Instead, managers approach social media in ways that rely on cognitive and emotional biases and restrains. Polaroid (Tripsas and Gavetti 2000) and Kodak (Barabba 2011) are popular cases of cognition shaping an organization's strategic path in unfortunate directions. In the two cases, the managers' mental models of the market neglected the prospects of digital technologies and they failed to adapt effectively to market changes. Similar cases are UK real estate managers (Hodgkinson 1997) whose individual and collective cognitions remained highly stable, despite a significant down-turn in the property market, or the US Railroad industry that demonstrated how mental models of top management determine the firm's ability to renew their business (Barr, Stimpert, and Huff 1992).

To support the theoretical and empirical development of the dissertation, cross-fertilization of management and marketing contributes to a broader understanding of how social media implementation is affected by the marketing (outside-in) and management (inside-out) orientations. To explain how the orientations inform the learning processes at different levels, an understanding of the cross-disciplinary flow between marketing and management literature must be created. If succeeded, it offers a progressive theorization of social media strategy research by building stronger customer-focused management research and, likewise, developing more dynamic strategy approaches. An influential aspect is the academic attention and interest in

social media as an emerging strategic concept and field. Kaplan (2011, p. 688) states “There is much more to learn about the process of emergence, and cognition will certainly have a central role in the theories still to be developed.” In order to learn how categories emerge and appear, the review investigates social media strategy theorization in academia.

Marketing and management research communities publishing in different journals make out distinct expert system with unique identity, routines, rules, and practices. They can be regarded as societies of competent practitioners following certain rules for data collection, logical reasoning, and hypothesis testing, by which they account for social media strategy causation and reasoning drawing on cultural mental models of how to do valuable research. An outcome is diverse academic theorizations and discourses, which influence on practitioners’ understandings of professional social media competence. The review scrutinizes academic contributions to 1) gain an overview of existing and relevant research, 2) to develop a socio-cognitive understanding of influential literary flows, and 3) to consolidate the positioning of the dissertation (Arksey and O'Malley 2005).

2.1.1 Literature search method

The review is divided into three subfields ‘strategic cognition’, ‘social media strategy’, and ‘social media cognition’. Together, they consolidate a foundation for the cognitive approach to supply complementary explanation to the behavioral perspectives (Van den Ven and Poole 1995). The review of subfields may decrease the range of subject matter for the analysis, which follows the trend toward specialization in management psychology; however, such foci increase the understanding of the cross-disciplinary contributions.

Figure 2.1.1 provides an overview of how the main fields create intersected subfields around the core field of this dissertation, being strategic cognition of social media. Moreover it visualizes the review structure following sections 2.1.3, 2.1.4, and 2.1.5.

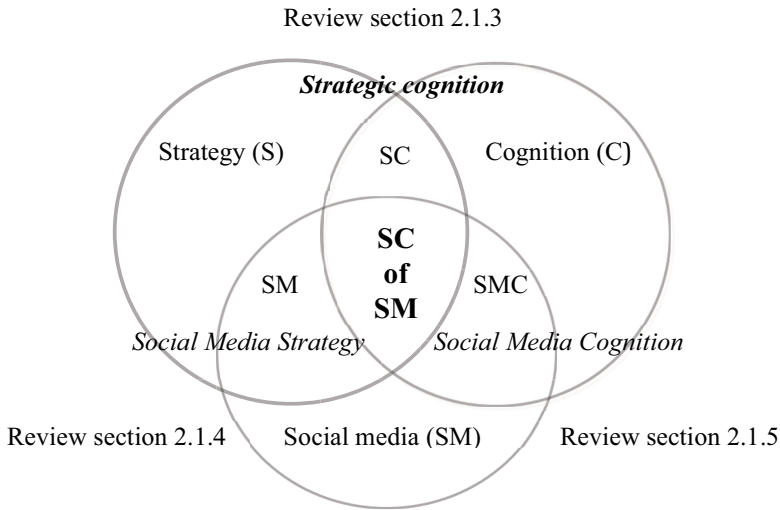


Figure 2.1.1: Intersected fields of strategic cognition of social media (SC of SM)

The first search is conducted in twenty management and marketing journals, hereof 14 listed on FT45, to identify research in the core field ‘strategic cognition of social media’ (SC of SM in figure 2.1.1). The reasons for setting the scope to top-tier journals is that they are regarded as being theoretically and empirically up-to-date, rigorous, and high-quality evidence-based sources. The period represented is 2004 to 2014 as social media appeared in business around ten years ago. A comprehensive (Boolean) search is conducted by scanning for titles and abstracts containing the keywords: (Strateg* AND/OR Management) AND (Cogniti* OR Mindset OR Mental Models) AND (Social Media OR Social Network). In case of a negative result, the search continued by excluding keywords one by one in different combinations one: (Strateg* AND/OR Management) AND (Cogniti* OR Mindset OR Mental Models), (Cogniti* OR Mindset OR Mental Models) AND (Social Media OR Social Network*): (Strateg* AND/OR Management) AND (Social Media OR Social Network*).

Organization

Hits are sorted for irrelevant papers and the remaining titles are grouped and ranked according to relevance (Rel.): A (high relevance), B (some relevance) or C (low

relevance) (see Tables 2.1.2a and b). Relevance is based on an assessment of how the article contributes to fulfilling the research statements. Abstracts are retrieved on all three categories, scanned and the categorization adjusted accordingly. A and B articles are printed for closer reading. To fulfill the search purpose the articles are listed and evaluated according to how well they contribute to an understanding of social media strategy issues from a cognitive perspective.

2.1.2 Search results

Three marketing journals figure among the top twenty. They represent recent research on social media with behavioral and quantitative bias measuring online communicative dissemination, like WOM, and/or sales effects. However, half of the articles are deemed highly relevant to this field as they concern social media specifically.

Marketing	Hits	Year	Author	Search result	Rel.
Journal of Marketing	13	2014	<i>Yadav and Pavlou</i>	Marketing strategy, Social media	A
		2011	<i>Day</i>	Marketing strategy, Social media	A
		2011	<i>Lilien</i>	Strategic planning, Mental models	C
		2010	<i>Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki and Sarah</i>	Marketing strategy, Word-of-mouth	B
		2009	<i>Homburg, Wieseke and Bornemann</i>	Marketing strategy, Social perception	C
Marketing Science	15	2013	<i>Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, and Shah</i>	Marketing strategy Word-of-mouth	A
		2011	<i>Sonnier, McAlister, and Rutz</i>	Management, Social media	B
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	7	2013	<i>Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, and Hughes</i>	Social psychology, Social media	A
		2009	<i>Wind</i>	Marketing strategy, Mental models	A
		2005	<i>Braunsberger, Buckler, and Ortinau</i>	Marketing strategy, Cognition	C

Table 2.1.2 a: Marketing journals

The management literature search reveals a different pattern. Management journals cover strategy and cognition issues in rich numbers. Only few recent publications concern new technology or social media, which confirms that social media is not yet considered a strategic management issue. However, eight articles seem highly relevant to the SC of SM. Surprisingly, a search in more practitioner-based journals as California Management Review and Harvard Business review gave few hits only.

Management	Hits	Year	Authors	Search results	Rel.
Management Science	25	2013	<i>Bayus</i>	Management, Social media	A
		2008	<i>Rahmandad</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B
Academy of Management Journal	6	2013	<i>Bingham and Kahl</i>	Management, Schemas	B
		2007	<i>Maitlis and Lawrence</i>	Management, Sensegiving	B
Academy of Management Review	25	2013	<i>Bundy, Shropshire, and Buchholtz</i>	Management, Cognition	B
		2013	<i>Gondo and Amis</i>	Strategic planning, Schemas	A
		2008	<i>Kaplan</i>	Strategy, Cognition, technology	A
		2006	<i>Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, and Barden</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	B
Organization Science	3	2007	<i>Gavettii and Rivkin</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	C
		2005	<i>Smith and Tushman</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	B
		2004	<i>Kock</i>	Schema, online communication	C
MIS Quarterly	6	2013	<i>Granados and Gupta</i>	Business strategy, Social media	A
		2013	<i>Oh, Agrawal, and Raghav</i>	Management, Social media	B
		2013	<i>Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson</i>	Business strategy, Social media	B
		2007	<i>Armstrong and Hardgrave</i>	Management, Mindset	B
		2007	<i>Kanawattanachai and Yoo</i>	Cognition, Digital media	C
Strategic Management	19	2013	<i>Paroutis and Heracleous</i>	Strategic planning, Schemas	C

Journal		2012	<i>Crilly and Sloan</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	B
		2011	<i>Marcel, Barr, and Duhaime</i>	Management, Cognition	B
		2011	<i>Gary and Wood</i>	Strategy, Mental models	B
		2011	<i>Hodgkinson and Healey</i>	Strategy management, cognition	A
		2010	<i>Plambeck and Weber</i>	Strategy, Attitude	B
		2008	<i>Kabanoff and Brown</i>	Management, Cognition	C
		2008	<i>Nadkarni and Barr</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	B
		2005	<i>Gavetti , Levinthal, and Rivkin</i>	Strategy, Cognition	C
Journal of Business Venturing	20	2012	<i>Fischer and Reuber</i>	Cognition, Social media	A
		2012	<i>Plambeck</i>	Management, Cognition	B
Org. Behavior and Human Decision Processes	1	2004	<i>Selart and Kuvaas</i>	Strategy, Cognition	C
Journal of Management	55	2013	<i>Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, and Thatcher</i>	Decision-making, social media	C
		2013	<i>Trahms, Ndofor, and Sirmon</i>	Strategy, Cognition	C
		2012	<i>Phelps, Heidl, and Wadhwa</i>	Management, Schema	B
		2012	<i>Klaas, Olson-Buchanan, and Ward</i>	Strategy, social media, cognition	B
		2012	<i>Gruber, MacMillan, and Thompson</i>	Strategy, Mindset	B
		2011	<i>Narayanan, Zane, and Kemmerer</i>	Strategy, Cognition	A
		2011	<i>Coff and Kryscynski</i>	Management, Social Media	C
		2011	<i>Molloy, Chadwick, Ployhart, and Golden</i>	Management, Social media	C
		2010	<i>Mohammed, Ferzandi, and Hamilton</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B

		2007	<i>Olson, Parayitam, and Bao</i>	Strategy, Cognition	C
Strategic Organization	58	2013	<i>Baden-Fuller and Mangematin</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B
		2012	<i>Shipilov</i>	Strategic, Social networks	B
		2012	<i>Whittington</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B
		2012	<i>Huy</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B
		2010	<i>Litchfield and Gentry</i>	Strategy, Cognition	B
Business Strategy and the Environment	1	2013	<i>Escrig-Olmedo, Muñoz-Torres, and Fernández-Izquierdo</i>	Strategy, Cognition	C
Journal of Management Studies	23	2012	<i>Barreto</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	B
		2011	<i>Grégoire, Corbett, and McMullen</i>	Management, Executive ability	B
		2011	<i>Kaplan</i>	Strategy, Cognition	A
		2007	<i>Pappas J, and Wooldridge B.</i>	Strategy, Network	B
		2006	<i>Haleblian and Rajagopalan</i>	Strategic planning, Cognition	C

Table 2.1.2 b: Management journals

There were two triple-search hits (highlighted in bold in Table 2.1.2 b), i.e., ‘strategy, cognition, social media’. The hits first hit is *Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, and Thatcher* (2013), who focus on recruitment and social media use in personnel decision-making. The authors suggest that organizational practice has outpaced the scientific study of social media-based assessments in an area that has important consequences for individuals. They urge researchers to help managers understand the implications of social media for personnel decisions. The second hit is *Klaas, Olson-Buchanan, and Ward* (2012), who review the literature on the determinants of workplace voice and explore how the nature and purpose of voice varies with emphasis on formality, focus, and identification. The papers surprisingly concern internal Human Resource Management and Organizational Learning rather than marketing or customer/stakeholder interaction. In consequence, though they both concern strategy and social media from a cognitive perspective, their findings are not directly relevant to the core

field (SC of SM). It is therefore necessary to extend the search to lower ranked journals. I follow the same systematic search procedures in the iterated search.

The next three sections present the remaining papers (authors in italics) and their potential contribution to the field ‘strategic cognition of social media’, supplemented with papers from lower ranked journals identified in the extended (iterated) search. The marketing and management journals are separately reviewed to identify how the disciplines contribute to each subfield and to display biases.

2.1.3 Strategic cognition

Strategic cognition research is a subfield of the cognitive research. It explores the determinants and consequences of cognitive models in the attempt to understand the role of executives in strategic choice, organizational design, and performance (Finkelstein and Hambrick 1997). It also examines the subjective nature of business environments and competitive situations and explains strategists’ cognitive structures and processes to provide basis for better recommendations for improving strategic decision-making (Schwenk 1988). Strategic cognition is becoming a legitimate area for theory building and empirical research in strategic management (Narayanan et al. 2011; Hoffman and Novak 2012), but has not been properly introduced to social media studies despite its obvious relevance.

Central concepts (e.g., cognitive heuristics and bias, cognitive frames, schemata, mental models, mindsets, assumptions, imagery, antecedents, analogies, and metaphors) are used to explain how managers perceive and solve strategic problems (Mintzberg et al. 2009). The concepts help explain how managers are restricted by their view and cognitively reduce complexity, so managers can comprehend and act. This means that a manager’s personal frame of reference (Goffmann 1974) and antecedents, such as experience (Iaquinto and Fredrickson 1997), affiliations, and origin (Dacin, Hitt, and Levitas 1997) shape cognition, which, in turn, influence the manager's interpretations of, and responses to, situations, the strategic route, what drives or prevents the development of a business (Child 1997, Crook and Wind 2006; Porac and Thomas 2002), eventually creating a strong incentive to adopt certain actions, decisions and management approaches (Gosling and Mintzberg 2003; Haynie, Shepherd, Mosakowski, and Earley 2010). Moreover, their different tactics to identify solutions in the strategic decision-making process lead to differing results (Entman

1993; Nutt 1993; Nutt 1998). To summarize, a strategy process is thus considered a person-driven phenomenon that is shaped by, and unfolds in, environmental and organizational contexts (Pettigrew 1997; Watson 2002) and is influenced by a strategic predisposition (Ashmos and McDaniel 1996; Crook & Wind 2006).

Historically, the relationship between strategic management and cognition goes back to *March and Simon* (1958). They stated that all management decisions are influenced by the manager's assumptions and visions, the scope and knowledge of alternative actions, and the manager's ability to foresee the consequences of scenarios. Later, *Simon* (1976) introduced the concept of 'bounded rationality', which implies that strategists produce simplified mental models when facing complex problems (Gosling and Mintzberg 2003). At industry level *Lawrence and Lorch* (1969) defined environment uncertainty as perceived by top executives and generalized about the relationship between strategy, environment, and organizational structure. *Hambrich and Mason* (1984) defined how cognitive frames and top managers' decision-processes influence strategic decision-making. These "represent the agglomeration of different visions and forces that give meaning to an overall set of assumptions and predictions about future states" (Zahra and Nambisan 2012, p. 213). Of current works *Kaplan* (2011) review strategic cognition research based on a classical paper on Scottish knitwear manufacturers by Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) to highlight the challenges associated with establishing cognition as a legitimate factor in strategic management and of showing the causal relationship between cognition and strategic outcomes.

An increasing interest in social cognition (e.g., Ginsberg 1994) fed a number of research articles (see Walsh 1995) and special issues, e.g., in *Journal of Management Studies*, (July 1989, May 1992, and Nov. 1997) and *Organization Science* (Aug. 1994). Social cognition looks, for instance, at the way in which managers and their subordinates think about (each) other and the creation of interactional causal structures in decision-making, as these play a major role in how organizational members strategize and in general interact internally and with their surrounding environment. With the focus on the role that cognitive processes play in social interactions, researchers could better understand team management processes, strategy implementation, and organizational learning (see Wood and Bandura 1989; Sims and Lorenzi 1992). This stream of strategic research flows parallel with other relevant works that tie the socio-cognitive approach to the study domains and foci of this dissertation.

Management journals

This section presents the research scope of different interpretive studies and assesses its relevance to social media strategy research. Inspired by Narayanan, Zane, and Kemmerer (2011), the findings are organized into specific focus areas to guide the reader through the field of strategic cognition.

Interpretation (framing)

This line of research investigates sensemaking of phenomena or situations and its impact on managerial decision-making. As both industry and cognition variables are critical in developing explanations of strategic actions, it supports the argument of this review in supplying behavioral studies with a cognitive dimension, e.g., *Nadkarni and Barr* (2008) suggest that managerial cognition limits the ability to develop holistic explanations of strategic action due to a disconnect between the ‘economic view’ and the ‘cognitive view’. *Barreto* (2012) draws on strategic issue interpretation among managers to show how entrepreneurial interpretation informs both discovery and creation processes. This finding can spur research on how individuals form and decide to exploit business opportunities with social media. *Paroutis and Heracleous* (2013) outline what the concept of strategy means to strategists and how they use it in practice by uncovering four dimensions of first-order strategy discourse (functional, contextual, identity, and metaphorical). They reveal three phases in the interrelation between first-order strategy discourse and institutional work (shaping, settling, and selling). Their approach is applicable to investigate social media strategy conceptualization and adoption, and of the role of discourse in this process.

Research that provides theoretical frameworks and empirical support for studies on how people making the unfamiliar familiar, but conceptually distinct, are highly relevant to an emerging phenomenon like social media. *Bingham and Kahl* (2012) discovered how groups in the life insurance industry developed their schema for the computer from 1945 to 1975 through assimilation, deconstruction, and unitization processes. Same processes may be identified from longitudinal social media conceptualization studies. *Gavetti, Levinthal, and Rivkin* (2005) show how firms, when faced with a new industry, seek a familiar industry matching the new one along that subset of characteristics. *Ivanova and Torkkeli* (2013) show how managerial sensemaking of business relations in Finnish-Russian SME’s is strongly influenced by culture. *Mohammed, Ferzandi, and Hamilton* (2010) review the conceptual

underpinnings, the empirical record related to the outcomes, antecedents, and longitudinal work on team mental models. In a similar vein, *Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, and Barden* (2006) suggest how patterns of institutional persistence and change depend on whether decision makers view environmental change as opportunities or threats to gaining legitimacy. Also *Gruber, MacMillan, and Thompson* (2012) examine main types of characteristics of the founders finding that prior entrepreneurial and management experience endowments enhance, while marketing and technological experience endowments constrain the number of market opportunities identified. Context-informed framing is relevant in studying whether managers conform to or challenge the existing understandings of social media as either an opportunity or threat.

Human emotion has barely been integrated to strategy research, despite its potent influence on cognition and behavior, especially under conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity. Affective aspects may indeed influence social media decision-making as social media still is considered a relatively new phenomenon. *Hodgkinson and Healey* (2011) suggest strategy research to account for emotional/affective (in terms of cold cognition-hot cognition) and automated thinking aspects of strategic adoption, which is highly relevant to explain managerial reluctance or acceptance of social media implementation. *Selart and Kuvaas* (2004) discuss how negative framing stimulates more effortful and thorough information processing than positive framing as decision makers better recall negatively framed information and are less confident than those receiving positively framed information. *Huy* (2012) argues for the relevance of bringing realistic assumptions about human cognition, emotion, and social behavior to the strategic management. Advancing research in social psychology and neuroscience resurges scholarly interest in connecting micro psychological phenomena to strategic outcomes (See also *Hodgkinson and Healey* 2011). *Escrig-Olmedo, Muñoz-Torres, and Fernández-Izquierdo* (2013) identify investor's preferences regarding environmental, social and governance criteria, and find that Spanish investors need exact information in order to invest in socially responsible companies and products.

Some authors include technology and data, e.g., *Kock* (2004) argues how social presence and media richness theories present barriers to the theoretical development of computer-mediated communication. An evolutionary model explains how cognitive adaptation counterbalances the negative link as an individual's level of schema development associates with the use of a particular medium, where speech is more important than facial expressions or body language. Such finding may apply well to some social media platforms and be relevant for researchers or managers who consider

social media for knowledge transfer purposes. *Whittington* (2012) argues for the need of more big data strategy that impacts far beyond firm performance. He encourages authors to 'think bigger' in strategy research, e.g., accounting for the sharing economy phenomenon (Gansky 2010).

Framing research is broadly represented in top management journals and as this brief review shows, there is not yet any research that specifically focuses on social media and few studies only on 'new' technology. However, it provides a rich source for social media strategy researchers to rely on to better understand managerial sensemaking of social media and for investigating the antecedents that inform the sensemaking processes. Moreover, such research can lay the ground for identifying differences and similarities of managerial framing, which can spur reframing processes and organizational transformation (see the subsection on organizational change below). Corroborated by these review findings, especially *Nutt* (1998), who places emphasis on the sources of managerial framing, and underscores the importance of reframing by exploring the underlying aspects and assumptions that demands a strategic change, the two studies can contribute to this stream of research.

Formulation (Conceptualization)

Few papers specifically concern how strategies are formulated and given sense to, i.e., conceptualized and conveyed to explore why some companies are more effective than others at addressing stakeholder concerns (see *Gioia and Chittipeddi* 1991). Though not identified in this review, such research is vital to learn how managers' conceptualizations of customer and stakeholder claims regarding social media interaction influence their sensemakings of social media.

For instance, *Crilly and Sloan* (2012) find that top management's conceptualization of the firm's relationship with society prompts distinct foci of attention, which may constrain how well a company attends to multiple stakeholders. *Maitlis and Lawrence* (2007) investigate the conditions of sensegiving, defined as attempts to affect how others perceive and understand the world (*Weick* 1995). They empirically substantiate that managers with expertise relating to an issue are better able to shape others' interpretations of it. Transferred to the social media context, the finding suggests that managers' expertise in - and cognition of - social media affect employees' and stakeholders' understanding and hence its implementation in the organization. *Baden-*

Fuller and Mangematin (2013) explore business as cognitive configurations that can be manipulated in the minds of managers (and academics). A typology of business models connects traditional value chain descriptors with how customers are identified and satisfied, and how the firm monetizes its value. This line of research seems applicable on research in establishment of social media business models and in the managerial communication of strategy. Sensegiving is central to business transformation processes, and will therefore be covered further in the in-company study in chapter five.

Implementation and Identity

Research within these themes is highly relevant to the second study as it can reflect the reality of managerial behavior and organizational change by social media strategy and its time/space implications. With a strategic cognition view of issue salience, researchers may explain the degree to which a stakeholder issue of social media interaction resonates with, and is prioritized by, management.

Gavetti and Rivkin (2007) develop a perspective for managerial strategy search processes that extends the evolutionary and positioning models of strategic search. It addresses the fundamental tension that over time, the cognitive and physical elements that make up a strategy become less plastic, while mechanisms to search rationally for a strategy become more available. *Bundy, Shropshire, and Buchholtz* (2013) explain how cognitive structures of organizational identity and strategic frames apply different core logics to influence managerial interpretation of an issue as salient and hence respond to their stakeholders. The in-company study will look at similar aspects of a company with a print media identity being forced into a transformation process through the implementation of a digital strategy. *Olson, Parayitam, and Bao* (2007) incorporate group processes within strategic decision-making and found that cognitive diversity has a strong positive relationship with task conflict. Competence-based trust strengthens this relationship. These findings give reasons to assume that companies will respond more substantially to social media when perceived as a salient issue and that this logic even influences a company's interaction with their customers and other stakeholders.

Only few studies look at social media to investigate managers' internal network position and social media activity, but *Fischer and Reuber* (2011) show how high

levels of Twitter interaction can lead to effectual churn, while community orientation and community norm adherence moderate its consequences, and that perceived time affordability predicts the level of social interaction engagement. From a network analysis view *Pappas and Wooldridge* (2007) suggest relationships between alternative forms of network centrality and particular elements of the strategic renewal process. As boundary-spanning managers tend to be more strategically active than their non-boundary-spanning counterparts, a study could look at how social media span the boundaries for managers in a company and what the strategic effects are. *Phelps, Heidl, and Wadhwa* (2012) review empirical research on knowledge networks. Their framework organizes the knowledge networks literature, which can be a useful point of departure for social network analysis researchers.

Routines (strategic operation)

There is a stream of research on the effects of managerial cognition on corporate behavior, e.g., habitual thinking. Research on routines is relevant for this dissertation as it can explain managers' abilities (and reluctance) to explore and exploit new technology for sustained company performance. Routines may partly explain why social media are cognized as either marketing tools or a disruptive technology leading to a paradigm shift that allows organizations to reinvent their businesses.

How to manage strategic contradictions associated with paradoxical cognition is relevant to this study. *Smith and Tushman* (2005) find that the locus of paradox in top management teams resides either with the top manager or with the entire team, and *Marcel, Barr, and Duhaime* (2011) examine the relationship between company-level differences in the cognitive frameworks of executives, and differences in market move challenging. *Kabanoff and Brown* (2008) explore top managers' strategic knowledge structures by measuring differences in the level of attention they give in annual reports to strategic issues. A study of the knowledge and awareness of social media reflected in annual reports can reveal the development of social media influence on top management. *Plambeck's* (2012) investigation of the role of company context and managerial cognition on the development of new products accentuates that managerial cognition and context need further attention in corporate entrepreneurship research. It supports the proposition of the second study that strategy assumptions in a traditional media context cannot automatically, or in a friction-free manner, transfer into a social media context without the need of 'conscious translation'.

Focus on established routines may help managers to differentiate between, as well as integrate, strategy and existing interaction structures. It may also explain how managers transfer norms and behaviors of a traditional media context into a social media context due to the interpreters' knowledge, background, experience, and professional culture. Lastly, it can illustrate how social media interpretation and implementation differs according to marketing and business strategic contexts.

Organizational change (& business transformation)

The strategic cognition approach rejects change and learning as subject to predictive and repetitive cycles or rational responses (Porac and Thomas 2002; Mandler 2002), which allows researchers to account for the biased, distorted, complex, and confusing aspects of organizational change and learning. *Kaplan and Tripsas* (2008) stress how the interaction of the cognition of multiple actors in the market shapes the evolution of technology. Here, the cognitive perspective presents an alternative view to the behavioral models of social business strategy transformation by allowing such process to be seen as a less predictive. This may add to our understanding of social media-based changes as emergent, and often messy process, as opposed to a more predictable and deliberate process.

Barr (1998) demonstrates how managers' interpretations of environmental events and their strategy affect the way companies respond to new situations. The paper emphasizes the context-specific nature of decisions and explains individual and, in turn, organizational behavior. My dissertation can add to this knowledge as it takes similar aspects into account, however with a different case and in a different domain. *Armstrong and Hardgrave* (2007) explain why people with a high degree of existing knowledge face difficulties of mindshift learning. The findings have implications for knowledge companies and their managers if the cognitive load of unlearning is higher in those cases. It opens up for a similar questioning regarding traditional marketing and social media, as marketers tend to find that their knowledge of traditional marketing applies to social media, and thus find it harder to acknowledge when this is not the case. By following this path, researchers may explain how existing knowledge of marketing affects the perceived novelty of social media, which complicates the cognitive transition of managers to apply social media in new domains. An

understanding of mindshift barriers could mean an easier transition and a more effective learning process (see the in-company study, chapter five).

Gary and Wood (2011) propose that organizational learning is an outcome of reciprocal interactions of the processes of knowledge acquisition, dissemination, implementation, sensemaking, memory, thinking, unlearning, intelligence, emotions, improvisation, and organizational culture, which underscores the relevance of including cognitive factors in adoption and implementation of social media. *Shipilov* (2012) sketches a research agenda for a strategic multiplexity perspective. An understanding of how organizations are embedded in different kinds of relationships, the interdependency of the relationships, and how this interdependency influences organizations can also be valuable in studies of social media use for the creation and development business-stakeholder interaction networks. *Grégoire, Corbett, and McMullen* (2011) propose strategies and present research questions to augment the contribution of entrepreneurship cognition research, questions amendable to a social media research context. *Litchfield and Gentry* (2010) show how perspective-taking capability can be a useful concept for strategic management. They examine how to scale perspective-taking to an organizational capability by taking individual-level antecedents to collective levels. This last study ties into the issue of reframing in the second research statement as reframing requires an ability to shift perspective.

Less relevant for this study are *Haleblian and Rajagopalan's* (2006) examination of the influence of sensemaking and interpretation on the role of boards in CEO dismissal processes, and *Trahms, Ndofor, and Sirmon* (2013) summary of what we know about organizational decline and turnaround. They confirm the influence of cognition rather than support social media research. *Kanawattanachai and Yoo* (2007) develop a model of how expertise location, task-knowledge coordination, and cognition-based trust and their impacts on team performance change over time. Their study shows transactive memory systems formed in virtual teams, although they take a relatively long time to develop. Findings show that, once developed, these systems become essential to performing tasks effectively in virtual teams.

Marketing journals

Cognitive research on strategy that takes the customer into account is deemed highly relevant to the study of strategic cognition of social media, but the supply in marketing

journals is scarce. Instead, it offers a row of articles that involve social media, most of them being concerned with the customer side of social media perception and use.

Wind (2009) describes a rapidly changing market spurred by new technologies like social media. He urges that the marketing field rethinks their mental models of traditional marketing (substantiating the relevance of uncovering cognitive link between traditional marketing vs. social media marketing mentioned in the above section). Here, an interdisciplinary approach that involves marketing strategy (outside-in) and business strategy (inside-out) can pave the way for such rethinking. On another shelf we find *Braunsberger, Buckler, and Ortinau* (2005), who empirically investigate cognitive intent congruence aspects underlining the data generated through cognitive response coding. They show gaps in the congruence of cognitive intent between the coding results of respondents and raters. The study questions external raters' ability to produce valid cognitive intent coding patterns, which is relevant to future researchers of strategic cognition of social media. Though the cognitive approach to social media research is in its infancy, *Kardes, Herr, and Nantel's* (2005) work on social cognition applied to consumer-focused strategy touches upon the implications of selective processing for marketing managers.

To summarize, cognitive concepts have diffused throughout different managerial fields, but in the marketing field it is mainly directed towards understanding the consumers. Despite an uneven distribution of strategic cognition research in the management and marketing journals, present works offer several opportunities for informing further research on the social media strategy field.

2.1.4 Social media strategy

This review ties into the discussion in the beginning of this chapter, as its findings confirm how behaviorism has been the legacy of organizational change, strategy, and technology-driven innovation, and still forms the basis with emerging research domains such as social media adoption and implementation.

The social media strategy field develops from precedent conceptions of marketing, sales, and technological adoption, balancing the internal corporate perspective with the external customer and stakeholder perspective. For instance, papers in *Journal of*

Marketing Research focus on how and why consumers use social media. One paper measures the effects of earned, paid, and owned media (Stephen and Galak 2012). Different research foci are identified, however, the behavioral approach is a common denominator as many studies describe and prescribe ‘best marketing strategic practices’.

The review is organized in a way that reflects the four social media sensemakings (first study) and strategic frames (second study). A trait that aligns with the underlying logics of marketing is researching social media strategy for promotion and selling purposes, to gain consumer insight, and to create loyal customers through various relationship-building techniques. First I list marketing papers that provide such research. A conceptual change is evident in the shift from marketing to management journals. Management journals have overlapping issues of customer-stakeholder relationship building, but it is often framed as co-creation and collaborative relations. The more radical framing of social media as causing a disruptive paradigm shift at the global and societal level is scarce, but present in management journals. Here, focus is, for instance, on the leadership roles, transparency, and power issues. The identification of the four sensemakings in academic research further substantiates the inductive development of the two conceptual frameworks (the SMSM and the Reframework).

Marketing journals

Evolutionary models of technological change in organizations tend to draw on life cycle understandings to depict a progress over time that proceeds through a continuous cycle of technology variation, selection, and retention (see Murman and Frenken 2006; Nelson and Winter 1982) with the impact and outcomes typically being defined in incremental stages. The studies of *Ahlqvist, Bäck, Heinonen, and Halonen* (2010), *Kim* (2000); *Li and Solis* (2013), *Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson* (2013), and *Roberts* (2012) describe social media strategy as lifecycles, evolutionary processes (Van den Ven and Poole 1995), and corporate cultural development. *Van den Ven and Poole* (1995) state that this is perhaps the most common explanation of technology-based organizational development in the management literature.

The evolutionary approaches accept the idea that strategy is not the result of planning, but of ‘logical incremental’ processes of strategy formulation and implementation (Quinn 1980). Incrementalism fosters the notion of evolutionary change (Nelson and

Winter 1982), where strategy is seen as the result of organizational cumulative interaction rather than strong leadership or disruptive pivots. Their main argument is that strategy should be viewed as a result of bottom-up directed, incremental (Lindblom 1959) changes that over time lead to major shifts in direction.

For instance, organizations are regarded as adaptive, purposeful and developing toward a goal or a final state - a best practice - a process envisioned and monitored by the manager (and employees). *Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen* (2013) and *Weinberg, de Ruyter, Dellarocas, Buck, and Keeling* (2013) conduct such studies, while *Labrecque, von dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, and Hofacker* (2013) and *Li and Solis* (2013) base their research on evolutionary models of incremental change. The models appear to be of a generic character and transferable to other contexts, which may be considered more useful to practitioners.

A tenet of this line of research is that managers are regarded as learning organisms reacting to external stimuli, such as new technology or market change (Labrecque et al., 2013) in trial and error loops, experience that eventually changes their behavior. To account for such understanding *Weinberg et al.*, (2013) conceptualize and theorize social media strategy as a ‘journey’, *Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen* (2013) talk of a process of escalation of engagement, and (Varadarajan et al., 2010) present process models of social media effect on retailers' strategies. *Yadav et al.* (2013) present a contingency framework i.e., the optimal course of action depends upon the internal and external situation, and *Singh and Sonnenburg* (2012) suggest a behavioral approach to brand management on social media.

Some of the assumptions somehow contrasts other descriptions found in the marketing literature, especially in the papers describing social media for selling, promotion, and broadcasting. They describe strategy processes as the products of deliberate, consistent, and planned actions.

Papers describing social media for selling, promotion, and broadcasting

A general conception is that social media allow companies to ‘mass-communicate’ to the market. Customer expectations further legitimate this application: “Many consumers appear to follow retailer stores for promotional and advertising information” (Rapp et al. 2013, p. 558). It explains why some research reflects an

instrumental understanding of social media as ‘broadcasting tools’ (Zhao and Rosson 2009) or commerce transaction using networks to influence sales (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching 2013).

Yadav and Pavlou (2014) review marketing research in computer-mediated environments and identify topics related to the marketing mix, i.e., product and price decisions, communication, advertising, and multichannel management. Though they talk of ‘decision-making’, they ignore the cognitive influence of decision-making on interactive technologies. An article by *Yadav et al. (2013)* similarly defines social commerce according to pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages. *Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, and Shah (2013)* present a case study of an Indian ice cream retailer to demonstrate how social media can generate growth in sales, and positive word of mouth (WOM). The authors propose a way to measure social media marketing efforts and optimize strategy by linking WOM to the actual sales, and implement a strategy to measure these metrics and identify individual drivers. *Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, and Hughes (2013)* describe social media as channels used for strategic communication to consumers (see also *Also Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes (2013)*). Also *Sonnier, McAlister, and Rutz (2011)* find a significant effect of positive, negative, and neutral online communications on sales performance. It stresses the importance of accounting for communication valence as well as the impact of shocks to positive, negative, and neutral online communications.

Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching (2013) refer to Facebook’s Gifts-option as a way to support a sales strategy, while *Chen and Pisorski (2012)* describe how Harvard Business Review evolved the efforts from social media to social strategy. They moved revenue generation and strategy integration into HBR’s core, thus leveraging social dynamics, while creating revenues or cutting costs. Also *Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, and Sarah (2010)* describe social media for broadcasting and promotion (see also *Brown, Broderick, and Lee 2007; Spurgeon 2008; Zhao and Rosson 2009*). *Malthouse et al. (2013)* report how companies upload advertising to create awareness and change attitudes among prospective customers, and produce and distribute content to attract audience and sell more products or services in the future.

Marketers seem challenged by how to comprehend and use big data. *Day (2011)* focuses on how firms can manage the deluge of data and keep up with the empowered customers. He points towards the need of 1) Vigilant market learning to enhance deep market insights with an advance warning system to anticipate market changes and

unmet needs, 2) adaptive market experimentation to continuously learn from experiments, and 3) open marketing to forge relationships on social media. Obsolete strategies do not keep up with the disruptive effects of social media, so the research of *Day* (2011, p. 183) underscores the importance of strategic cognition of social media among managers “The benefits of these adaptive capabilities will only be realized in organizations that are more resilient and free-flowing, with vigilant leadership and more adaptive business models.”

It may be of value to management that researchers develop social media-based tools and methods that both generate profit and document the profit-generating effects of social media. Moreover, the speed and dissemination effects present new opportunities to marketers. *Rapp et al.* (2013, p 561) warn companies that they must “balance their social media foci between increasing sales and more general relationship-building (through service) to avoid being seen as opportunistic in their social media usage behaviors.” Also *Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson* (2013, p. 597) are skeptical, “When content providers first adopted social computing features, they resorted to advertising as their base revenue model. However advertising is essentially ‘flat’; it does not utilize the insights that come with better understandings of users’ behavioral dynamics in a social context. The different levels of participation call for a business model that better allow for user segmentation.”

Papers describing social media for listening, learning, and gaining intelligence

Another stream of marketing research focuses on monitoring customers’ communication to identify customer needs, trends, and to avoid crises (see Hennig-Thurau et al. 2013). Marketers, who listen, can use social-media mediated intelligence at the short term for marketing strategic purposes and in a longer-term perspective for business strategic purposes.

Peters et al. (2013, p. 283) build on a traditional media vs. social media distinction, suggesting companies to “listen, digest information, and respond.” *Schweidel and Moe* (2012) refer to the use of social media to gain insights into customer behavior to more deeply understand aspirations, desires, motivations, and behaviors. *Simonson and Rosen* (2014) discuss the effect of user-generated online reviews and peer-to-peer information exchange through social media on consumer behavior. They recommend marketing strategies based on how consumers obtain and process product information

and state that managers must understand the influences that affect customers' purchase decisions, including their prior preferences, beliefs, experiences, and input from others. Also *Barwise and Meehan* (2010) warn managers not to forget traditional marketing philosophy: gain customer insights rather than simply try to increase sales, capitalize on social media, while protecting the brand's reputation, and carefully follow the unwritten rules of customer engagement.

Constantinides, Romero, and Boria (2008) suggest social media monitoring as an inexpensive and fast strategy in comparison with more traditional methods. They define social media strategy with the purpose of utilizing the open and interactive sources to expand the experience, knowledge and market power with customers as participants in business processes. *Homburg, Wieseke and Bornemann* (2009) do not focus on social media per se, but underscore the role of customer need knowledge on the employee-customer interface, premises that are relevant to research on social media for business-customer interaction. Advertising is involved as a way to unleash customer participation in brand touch points and social media have become significant research tools and a way to communicate directly with consumers (*Pérez-Latre, Portilla, and Sánchez Blanco* 2011).

Papers describing social media for connecting, collaborating, and creating relationships

A gap between the marketing strategic understandings and the more business strategic understandings reveals by this review, as marketing journals only sparsely cover this area. However, social media are researched for their ability to create informal networks with customers, which allows efficient creation, dissemination, sharing, and editing of company practices (*Bernhardt, Mays, and Hall* 2012). Social media are constituted by “ubiquitous connectivity” that enables global information sharing (*Labrecque et al.* 2013, p. 257). *Dunn* (2010) gives a personal account of how he uses Twitter and Facebook to connect with customers and employees, follow trends, and keep informed. He highlights downsides as account hacking. *Winer* (2009) describes the marketing management challenges of using social media (i.e., measurement and consumer behavior) in alignment with behavioral theory. His proposals rely on a conceptual distinction between traditional media versus social media, e.g., measurement of spending on traditional versus social media. Planning and budgeting are deemed important, as “many senior managers are worried that their communications will be

fractionated among more media” (p. 112). He suggests quantitative and qualitative behaviorist methods, ignoring the cognitive dimension.

Management journals

In the management literature the themes tend to lean towards organizational, rather than individual challenges and opportunities. An exception is *Coff and Kryscynski* (2011), who investigate micro-foundations of strategic capabilities, specifically how individual-level phenomena underpin isolating mechanisms that sustain human capital-based advantages, but also create management dilemmas that must be resolved in order to create value.

The stream of papers describing social media for connecting, collaborating, and creating relationships continues in the management domain. Few authors research the effects of inviting customers in. For instance *Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen* (2013) explain how Finnair co-created service ideas by using a variety of social media technologies. “Socialization tactics” ensured that community members identified with the company’s image and engaged in dialogs that were aligned with both company and customer needs. Thus, this paper is a vital attempt of bridging marketing and management from a co-creation perspective. *Verhoef, Beckers, and Doorn* (2013) look at co-creation in the development of products or marketing strategies (crowdsourcing) and discuss brand reputation based on a case study of McDonald’s Twitter microblog campaign. They discuss the risks of co-creation, emphasizing that customers use them to express complaints or criticisms of the company. Others, e.g., *Wilson et al.* (2011) define four types of social media connection strategies, ‘the predictive practitioner’, ‘the creative experimenter’, ‘the social media champion’, and ‘the social media transformer’ by identifying particular social media practices. They define strategy as a result of the company’s tolerance for uncertain outcomes and the intended level and predictability of results sought. Strategic rationality is assumed and the four strategies are seen as temporal with organizations ideally progressing from one to another.

In the stream of more traditional management research we find *Bayus* (2013), who analyzes the Dell IdeaStorm Community and examines how delays between actions and their payoffs affect the process of organizational adaptation. He shows how previous actions influence current organizational performance through their effects on organizational resources and capabilities. *Rahmandad’s* (2008) work on cognitive costs

may be of methodological relevance to social media strategy research. It concerns crowdsourcing communities that collect ideas for new products and services from consumers. It shows that consumers, who have provided an idea, deemed valuable enough to implement by the organization, unlikely repeat their early success once their ideas are implemented. Of the more unusual cases is *Goodman* (2011), who considers how management techniques of organized crime (terrorists) can be by applied as best practice by legitimate organizations, e.g., planning, outsourcing of specialized services, and international cooperation. Finally, *Molloy, Chadwick, Ployhart, and Golden* (2011) find the dominant approach to measuring intangibles to be mechanical and undisciplinary (i.e., rooted in either economics or psychology). They suggest a multidisciplinary approach to integrate complementary strengths. The strategic communication theme is found in *Oh, Agrawal, and Raghav* (2013), who apply rumor theory to show the determinants of disseminative effects of Twitter through social crises. Such knowledge can be used strategically by companies and may prove valuable to future social media strategy research on ‘shitstorms’.

In literature on digital business strategy, researchers (e.g., Li and Bernoff 2008) refer to a ‘ladder of participation’ paradigm, which is a scheme based on the evolving nature of participatory behavior in online communities. *Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson* (2013) explain how companies can capture value at different participatory levels, evolving from content consumption over content organization and community involvement to community leadership. At organizational level, such ‘ladder of participation’ paradigm shifts are often met by social business strategies (Kim 2000; Li and Bernoff 2008; Preece and Schneiderman 2009). The latter is defined as the ultimate stage for user participation that a company can accomplish due to financial volatility. They suggest businesses to integrate ‘content’ and ‘community’ approaches to make the social experience central to the website’s digital business strategy.

Research based on process conceptualizations provides strategic direction at company level. The collaborative possibilities play on synergetic effects and ‘free and volunteer sources’, which may seem both inspirational and easy to go with. However, if researchers do not account for the individual and cognitive perspective, or the fast-moving developments of the social media field that complicate strategy processes, the value of such models diminishes on the longer run, as a company struggle to apply same phases, models, and ‘best practices’ to its specific context. If they succeed, the models may be obsoleted.

Papers describing social media for empowering and engaging the community

A last stream of strategy research identifies social media as potential for learning and change both on an organizational and a community level (Ellison, Lampe, and Steinfield 2009; Roberts 2012). *Roberts* (2012) states that though social media are in an early phase of business adoption, some companies are transforming through social media in terms of flatter hierarchies, establishment of collaborative networks, and democratization of workplaces. He refers to a hierarchy of social media activity moving from conversational level to upper levels of communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. *Fernando* (2010, p. 508) states, “Social media adoption is less about the tools, but rather the strategies and the attitudes of the people and the community driving it.” He frames social media strategy as a cultural transformation project, and criticizes companies for taking a “build it and they will come” approach to social media’.

Like *Wilson et al.* (2011) prescribe, managers should follow ‘best practice’ and take a “strategic approach”, i.e., to understand the end goal, formulate a strategy, calibrate appropriate social media tools to match strategy, build an open extensible platform, embody strong taxonomy and structure, assemble staff for involvement and knowledge contribution, anticipate and embrace varying use cases, and develop a community maturity model (*Fernando*, 2010, 509-510). *Ahlqvist et al.* (2010) talk of social media transformation as temporal vision-steered roadmaps. In the line with this approach, researchers suggest organic, progressive and evolutionary models of social media adoption maturing towards social business conversion (e.g., *Li and Solis* 2013), stressing the influence of history as well as the corporate identity. They seek to explain organizational success (or failure) by describing (and prescribing) the pace and path of change. *Granados and Gupta* (2013) cover the transparency theme as they address an increasing need for market transparency related to the disclosure of information outside the boundaries of the organization being fostered by social media. They propose an effective transparency strategy and warn of the side effects if managers ignore its importance.

To summarize, the review identifies divergent logics of social media strategy, which confirms the working assumption that social media understanding and use differs according to subjective antecedents, traditions, and contexts. Interpretations span from traditional marketing to more profound changes of the business eco-system, which partly explains the presence of divergent conceptualizations among managers and

academics. Researching social media strategy for promotional and selling purposes aligns with the underlying logics of marketing. In a communication and media context the speed and dissemination effects of social media also relate to the product value of distributing news content. When existing logics are transferred from traditional media to social media, it becomes easier for managers to understand and relate to, which enhances the practical value for management to develop tools and methods that generate profit and document the profit-generating effects of social media. In the same line, social media research on how consumer behavior can be observed and measured at a global scale produces ‘big data’ that can be more easily, cheaply, and quickly retrieved in comparison with traditional methods like surveys and focus group interviews.

Some research describes new collaborative forms of interaction between companies and stakeholders enabled by social media, which may inspire companies to create new venues for innovation through development of products, services. Finally, the last stream of research concerns how social media can create more transparent organizational structures, and in general transform companies to meet the societal demands of a more sustainable and ethical business practice. The next section will take a meta-perspective on social media cognition to identify how research is concerned with categorization of social media themes.

2.1.5 Social media cognition

The scarcely represented field is dominated by consumers’ cognitions of social media and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) research. The former is incorporated in the marketing literature, as researchers investigate teen perceptions, awareness, and conceptualization of digital technologies (*Brito 2012; Hundley and Shyles 2010*) and user schemata of the Internet (*Quiring 2009; Annama et al. 2009; Turner and Sobolewska 2009*). In the latter article, the authors identify how people can relate to technology in both analytical and systematic ways (mental models), but also spontaneously through anthropomorphizing the technology (social cognition), i.e., in systemizing and empathizing ways.

The HCI research falls beyond the marketing and management literature, which is why this review section is organized in a different manner. However, the literature may contribute to strategic cognition of social media, e.g., a method identified is applied to

the two studies, for instance the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Techniques to show how perceptual processes affect picture choices, and how these choices contribute to the narrative imagination.

Socio-cognitive studies of technology and cognition in a business context have been conducted to learn how IT specialists' perceptions and discourse on open source software affect organizational adoption (*Marsan, Paré, and Beaudry* 2012), to identify users' mental models for websites (*Roth et al.* 2010), and to show that individuals behave as if Web sites themselves are primary "actors" in online social networks (*Brown, Broderick, and Lee* 2007). How digital technologies are perceived can be applied to any other subject analysis and may therefore be highly relevant to managerial cognition research.

A few studies combine social media and cognition stating that social media are changing business practices and leader image, and only a few corporate leaders have a social media presence, which is often not utilized strategically (*Dutta* 2010). The author assesses social media to be powerful tools, which have implications on the success, efficiency and the leader's ability to pursue his goals. The paper does not reflect any awareness of a biased view as the author frames social media as tools for employer branding, networking, and information retrieval. It equals operational behaviorist research, which is common in practitioner-targeted journals. *Varajaradan et al.* (2010) review social media and retailing strategy. Inspired by research on adoption of new technologies, they open up for cognitive studies and propose research on what makes a retailer view a specific interactive technology as an enabler or disrupter with reference to previous cognition-based studies of e.g., *Tripsas* (1997).

Except from the two studies mentioned and a rather unorthodox study on Al Jazeera's framing of social media during the Arab spring (*Campbell and Hawk* 2012), most of the research identified is on general technology understandings, rather than social media, which underscores the relevance of new research. Research in technology cognition is applicable to the extent that social media are perceived as technology, but as the review displays various understandings extending beyond a technology frame (also see chapter one), existing research on other technology cannot necessarily work as a proxy for social media. To conclude from the review, research on how managers and other people inside an organization perceive and understand social media is scarce, and over-shadowed by the stream of research on managerial use of social media. Especially the strategic level is deemed important for this research, as understanding

social media allows for companies to enhance and transform their processes in all business functions.

To summarize on the three review sections, how to describe social media use for strategic purposes seems to depend on the academic context. The review in marketing and management journals reveals notably different foci. This finding corroborates with Ali et al.'s (2010, p. 364) statement "Although the literature in the fields of both marketing and strategic management reveals common threads, there has been little attempt to incorporate insights from both these perspectives into an integrative framework." This creates a gap in research that can account for strategic cognition of social media or can provide deeper understanding of the paradox raised above. The applicative value of the review findings to this dissertation is low, as social media strategy research in management journals seems to be restrained by an internal focus (knowledge sharing, organization, and HR) and by the behavioral assumption that social media can be managed like any other technology.

The marketing research discourse tends to take an approach of strategy as an analytical planning process facilitated by a direct causality between formulation, implementation, and subsequent organizational adaptation to the market. Though some research introduces the notion of organizational autonomy and incrementalism, it still rests on the assumption of an integrated organizational culture (e.g., Weinberg et al. 2013; Labrecque et al. 2013; Li and Solis 2013) when applying the evolutionary theory approach. Many traditional instruments and concepts of strategic management may not be sufficiently suited for capturing the dynamics of social media. There may be a plausible risk that the more classical tools will fail due to the dynamic character of social media, in particular in young, innovative companies.

However, at a meta-level the review provides insight of how valuable a cross-disciplinary approach is to cognitive social media strategy research. In management and marketing journals, the research on social media strategy is characterized by approaches, which identify a causality and predictability to increase managerial control, but omit the psychology of unobservable mental states as well as the subjectivity of introspection, which also relate to human behavior. Present research explains what happens by describing and prescribing social media effect on customer-business behavior, but not why it happens by ignoring underlying reasons for the observed patterns of behavior. To conclude, existing research does not sufficiently account for the socio-cognitive dynamics and challenges of social media strategy

processes. The ‘theme cloud’, Figure 2.1.5, elaborates on Figure 2.1.1 (Intersected fields) by summarizing the themes identified and highlighting their dominance on each research field. The purpose is to provide the reader with a visual overview of the variety and distribution of themes identified in the three intersected fields of strategic cognition of social media.



Figure 2.1.5: Thematic word cloud within the three intersected fields

2.1.6 Learning theory

Learning theory has undergone large changes since the 1920s, which somehow is mirroring the changes in behavioral and cognitive theory described in the introduction of this chapter. For instance, the goal of learning has changed from acquiring knowledge and cultivating rationality to securing lifelong learning. In the 1920s-30s learning was defined as behavioral change, but with the cognitive turn in the 1950s-60s cognitive psychology and socio-cognitive theory describe learning as an internal

mental phenomenon potentially reflected in behavior. Instead of seeing learning and behavior as controlled by circumstances in particular situations, the cognitive approach regards control as achieved by individual cognitive processes. The socio-cognitive theory views learning and behavior as controlled both by cognitive processes and the environment (individuals tend to become more self-regulated) (Ormrod 2003, p. 364).

The concept of learning is central to the dissertation as it bridges the theoretical frameworks and the practical managerial implications. However, ‘learning’ was not a keyword in the systematic search as ‘cognition’ and ‘strategy’ selectively capture the learning aspects that particularly concerns cognitive barriers to strategy, such as categorical thinking or the outcome, e.g., first order level learning. By suggesting specific cognitive aspects of learning, the review does not focus particularly on other influential streams of learning literature, such as the resource-based view or the dynamic capabilities view, which also emphasize the strategic value of certain higher order resources (dynamic capabilities) to allow competitive advantage through the generation and regeneration of competences (see Slater and Narver 2000; Teece 2007).

The learning theory elements (Bateson 1972; Argyris and Schön 1978; Nelson and Winter 1982; Senge 1990; Weick 1995) deemed relevant to the dissertation are applied to explain strategy formation as individual and collective socio-cognitive processes. They bond the two studies in the dissertation in a dynamic way, as they incorporate the categorical-reflective thinking dimension of the Social Media Sensemaking Model (Figure 5) developed from the study across companies, being further developed as the Strategic Reframework of Social Media (Table 5.4) in the company study.

The learning theory can explain the extent to which new technology presents a disturbance of the routines, i.e., attract the managers’ attention towards existing routines, leading to a more critical stance. This ability to frame and reframe presents a ‘higher-order’ skill, as formulation allows professionals to become aware of their decision-making and directly intervene by altering the decision and/or develop alternate frames (Hodgkinson, Bown, Maule, Glaister, and Pearman 1999).

Learning theory is also widely represented in the socio-cognitive research (e.g., Garud and Rappa 1994; Ringberg and Reihlen 2006, 2008; Marsan et al. 2011) and particularly useful when complex cognitive and social properties are reciprocally connected and essential for a given problem (Van Dijk 2009). The approach accounts for social cognition, i.e., the beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, values, norms, and

ideologies people share in a group, as well as private mental models that account for specific discourses (Van Dijk 2009). Socially shared knowledge and opinions (cultural models) may be ‘instantiated’ in the private models, leading to learning, which can explain how group beliefs affect personal beliefs. Conversely, if people share the knowledge of influential individuals, like managers, private models may be generalized into certain norms and attitudes. It has previously been applied in few studies only (e.g., Ertl, Fischer, and Mandl 2006; Ringberg and Reihlen 2006; Geels and Deuten 2006). An offline case study shows the creation of generic knowledge and its circulation, conceptualizing knowledge flows as local-global activities of disembedding and reembedding: ”To create generic knowledge that can circulate, dedicated socio-cognitive work is needed to bring about a process of aggregation” (Geels and Deuten 2006, p. 266).

Categorical thinking inhibits learning, in the sense that stimuli and input are integrated automatically and uncritically leading to predictable and consistent outcomes (habitual thinking). The tendency to evoke familiar mental models when facing a new situation is acknowledged in cognitive psychology, sociology (Cicourel 1974; Goffman 1974), and organizational studies (Barr, Stimpert, and Huff 1992; Van Maanen 1984; Weick 1979). For example, Van Maanen (1984) states that if there is a degree of similarity between an old and new activity, the new will be approached in more or less the same way as the old. Categorical thinking is more resistant to change than other types of thinking (Hogg and McCarthy 1990; Peracchio and Tybout 1996). People tend to rely on it when they perform routine tasks, suffer high cognitive loads, make decisions under pressure, have limited cognitive capacity, and are distracted.

Consequently, people force input into existing models with no or low adjustment (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). Social interaction complicates knowledge transfer as environmental feedback may either be processed reflectively or categorically with different interpretations of the same routines (Garud and Rappa 1994 in Ringberg and Reihlen 2008), for instance Das and Teng (1999) demonstrate how a vast number of companies got locked in to certain ways of doing things, which led to their downfall when the external situation changed. Persistent mental models create “blind spots” and limit managers’ abilities to adapt business activities to changes in customers’ needs. The consequences are fatal when managers’ fail to consider important new areas of technology (Barr, Stimpert, and Huff 1992).

Reflective thinking, on the other hand, promotes learning, in the sense that it requires a high level of cognitive capacity and responsiveness. The manager improves his or her sensemaking by combining the private and cultural models in new ways, and even expands or replaces them. This way of thinking can be triggered by new phenomena or situations that cannot be made sense of by existing models. If the manager is able to reflectively apply relevant mental models and decide whether or why they are relevant knowledge transfer takes place (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). When learning and developing new skills concerning social media, the manager is “inaugurated” in the traditions of the corporate daily routines (i.e., the daily operation of a company) as consequences of knowledge-in-action, or automated thinking and default responses.

To Schön (1983), thinking, acting, reflection, and learning are closely intertwined. Likewise, Bateson (1972) regards learning as inherently relational, emergent and recursive, involving different learning levels, (see Argyris and Schön 1978; Dilts and Epstein 1995); Tosey 2006). The dissertation applies four learning levels to address the cognitive challenges of managerial reframing, i.e., cognitive recursions of reframing, moving between first order level (applying social media as add-on broadcast tools) and fourth order level (changing the entire culture), to clarify learning as a recursive contextual affair, where learned patterns may guide a manager’s action in other, but similarly appearing contexts (Tosey 2006). Higher orders of recursion are not regarded as ‘superior’ to lower orders; all levels can be generative in positive and negative respects (Senge 1990). Rather, it is mismatches between levels that have communicative and psychological effects.

Social media involvement at the four levels triggers learning at different levels exemplified by a media company context:

First order level entails stimuli response, but makes no changes based on new experience. There is no need of knowledge reframing as social media are assimilated to the traditional marketing logic, which ensures a common frame of reference of how to apply social media “in the right way”. The manager, who frames social media as online news media for broadcasting, barely learns. Instead the manager produces automated response by applying routines similar to print media production, as the manager is familiar with all there is to know (core expertise).

Second order level changes knowledge, skills, and attitude, as there is a need for modifying prior knowledge to accommodate the understanding of social media as a

‘different phenomenon’. The manager acknowledges, through conscious reflection of the customer interaction, that social media differ from traditional media, which also requires an appropriation of knowledge to new routines. As opposed to the previous learning level, the manager is now concerned with how to apply social media in the right way. As a dialogic expertise is required to interact online 24-7 with customers, competencies are developed accordingly through continuous practice.

At third order level the manager learns how to learn, which often involves radical and unforeseen shifts and learning the pattern of the context in which the shift takes place (Bartunek and Moch 1994; Nadler and Tushman 1989). When reframing, the manager acknowledges a need to establish new structures and routines that allow for more disruptive social media applications. This requires that the manager investigates the principles by which he judges what is valuable knowledge and a desirable business practice. By visioning social media as technology that enables new digital business models, the manager can redefine the competitive positioning, customer interaction, and eventually, the corporate identity. The manager collaborates with other stakeholders to ‘think out of the mental as well as the corporate box’.

Fourth order level involves transformational learning as managers, simultaneously with the previous learning forms, learn how to learn how to learn. Learning exceeds the individual level as it involves fundamental change to society and humanity. This “does, from time to time, occur in psychotherapy, religious conversion, and in other sequences in which there is profound reorganization of character” (Bateson 1972, p. 273). In such case, social media transform the entire conception of company and market interaction at a deeper human and emotional level.

The four learning levels reflect 1) the degree to which the managers’ sensemaking (framing) challenges existing mindsets and basic assumptions of their business, and perceives obstacles and uncertainties (see the Reframework in chapter 5), and 2) cognitive recursions of reframing, moving from e.g., first order level (categorically applying social media as supplementary broadcast tools) to fourth order level (transforming culture). Identification of how different cognitive processing stimulates a distinct learning form, proficiency, and effect, eases managers’ conceptualization and categorization of how their different social media framings can complement each other in dynamic and ongoing interchange of knowledge and experience. It helps managers to intentionally transcend new social media meanings and discuss those meanings at

collective level in order to explore new means of actions. Table 2.1.6 summarizes the learning levels:

Cognition	Learning	Stimuli	Proficiency	Effects
<i>Categorical thinking</i>	1. Order Organization	Automated response	Qualifications	Proportional observance
<i>Reflective thinking</i>	2. Order Analysis	Appropriation	Competencies	Exponential effect
Meta-reflective thinking	3. Order Vision	Production	Creativity	Quantum leaps
Transformative thinking	4. Order Emotion	Social evolution	Culture	Paradigm shift

Table 2.1.6: Reframing as learning levels (Author's own production inspired by Qvortrup 2006)

Balancing individual cognitive processes as well as contextually determined strategic processes is vital for managerial reframing (Koutstaal 2012) that can be done as continuous interchange of knowledge and experience with social media. Managers can challenge frames, perceived barriers, and uncertainties by explicating how alternative social media perceptions uproot the basic assumptions of their business. It relates to the concept of 'realized absorptive capacity' (Zahra and George 2002), described as a company's capability to develop and refine the routines that facilitate the combination of existing knowledge and newly acquired and assimilated knowledge. Absorptive capacity capsules the exploitation capability (i.e., to apply the newly acquired knowledge in product or services that the company can get financial benefit from (see Cohen and Levinthal 1990). However, payoffs cannot be known, but must be learned through experience.

Researchers have just recently sought to understand why individuals have difficulties transitioning to a new technology. The research of Ciganek and Wills (2008) is relevant to this dissertation, stating that when adopting new technology, an understanding of this process rely on whether the technology is perceived as new rather than the actual newness defined on a timescale. They underscore the importance of expanding mindshift learning to further understand why individuals find it difficult

to adopt new technologies. They propose a technology mindshift matrix consisting of a “degree of newness” variable and a “degree of change” variable.

Applied to my research, ‘the degree of newness’ would refer to the way in which the managers view and use social media and ‘the degree of change’ would refer to the impact that social media have on the products and services and development processes.

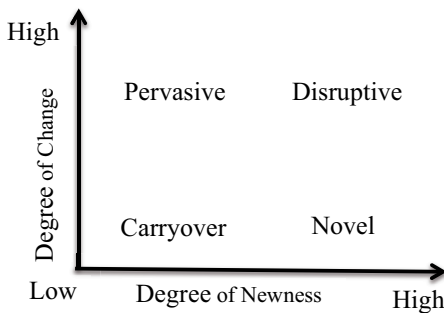


Figure 2.1.7 Technology Mindshift Matrix (Ciganek and Wills 2008)

In the context of the dissertation the four technology mindsets would translate into:

- *Carryover*: There are negligible perceived differences by the manager from the existing media to the social media. Social media are regarded like ‘yet another tool in the toolbox’ as they have the same qualities as traditional media. This mindset would demand little learning (first order learning) and adjustment of existing capabilities, and therefore only release minor changes in the organization.
- *Novel*: The manager perceives social media as being original and unique from other existing technologies but with only minor impact on the existing practices. The social media tool is acknowledged as new, but, metaphorically speaking, there is room for it in the existing toolbox’ as they are operated by the same craftsman, however, refining his skills and work. Understanding the novelty of social media requires more cognitive processing (second order learning) and a competency to distinguish between old and new in its application.

- *Pervasive*: The manager views social media as impacting some services/processes, but they are not perceived entirely as being original. ‘Social media need their own toolbox separate from traditional media’, as they are acknowledged for possessing new functional qualities apart from the traditional tools. They require new skills to operate, or even a new craftsman. Some meta-cognitive processing is involved, and could lead to third order learning from the experimental processes.
- *Disruptive*: The manager views social media as substantially different from previous technologies, which will consequently have a high impact on the organization. This mindset corresponds to the definitions of transformative thinking. Here social media are no longer viewed as tools; *they are the toolbox or even the toolmakers*. Such disruption requires fourth order learning, as all the basic assumptions about what is what must be questioned in order for the organization to regain its operation.

Ciganek and Wills (2008) expand the matrix with a third learning component “pervasiveness” representing a dimension of mindshift learning. They point to an important aspect, namely that adoption of a new technology, when perceived as disruptive or novel, often requires other changes in organizational processes and structures.

Though the matrix in theory can be transferred to a social media case, the third dimension suggests that individuals experience fewer difficulties when they perceive the technology as either identical to existing technology or as completely different from it. Such theory may be sufficient when looking at cognitive difficulties alone. In strategy, the perspective expands beyond the individual manager, even the single organization, in terms of stakeholder demands. Here it will be of no strategic advantage to the manager to only perceive social media in the extreme ends of a range of potential perceptions; instead all the four perceptions may be relevant and potentially represented around in the organization and amongst the stakeholders. Moreover, Ciganek and Wills (2008) argue that a mindshift results from the new technology, but to my knowledge there is no remarkable mindset-shift when a technology is perceived as “old wine in new bottles”.

The learning dimension will be elaborated in the meta-cognition section below and in the reflective practitioner section in chapter 7. The next section discusses the review findings and summarizes the identified foci and gaps.

2.1.7 Discussion of the review findings

The fields of cognition and strategy present extant research, whereas social media research is emerging in marketing literature, which confines social media impact on management thinking, and hence practice. The review shows how a relatively new phenomenon (social media) is biased by tradition concurrently with current trends being added to the existing academic ‘silos’. Thus, researchers are also at risk of comprehending a new phenomenon based on old conceptualizations and approaches (Van Maanen 1984), which is why the comfort of habit in knowing should not be underestimated. To avoid habitual and repetitive research it is vital to understand why and how thinking influence the use of a new technology, i.e., how and why antecedents, heuristics, and biases confine researchers’ and practitioners’ sensemaking of social media (see the study across companies).

Moreover, the fields of marketing and management have divergent foci, i.e., the operational techno-centric and more visionary eco-centric discourses are separated or sequentially subordinate rather than integrated. There are few indications that social media literature disrupts or integrates marketing or management research, which complicates the requested transformation of marketing and business practices. I only identify few papers that expand the marketing sphere to learn how social media can be integrated at deeper levels (e.g. Weinberg et al. 2013). Weinberg et al. (2013, p. 299) explain,

“Social media, by their nature, enable broad communication and collaboration. They can facilitate organizations to tap into the collective intelligence, creativity, and passion of employees, customers, and of partners for practically every important business decision; and they help to improve organizational productivity through the value chain.”

Other streams, like the resource-based view, incorporates both marketing and strategic management in that it recognizes the market factors and need to create value added

products for customers while looking internally for sources of competitive advantage (Ali et al. 2010). It could be argued that social media strategy research, when anchored in different research disciplines, does provide more explanations for managerial thinking and behavior in terms of managers' varied responses despite identically defined market and business challenges. Anyway, this leaves voids to fill, especially with regards to meeting the managerial challenges of adopting and implementing social media at strategic level.

The review shows how the cognitive approach challenges behavioral assumptions in strategic management, for instance that shared values, experience, and acceptance ease an implementation process. Cognitive research shows how fragmented perceptions are present within the same organization. It also shows that managers' shared experience may discourage the implementation of new social media practices: when managers use social media for traditional marketing purposes with little reflection on the implications, they will most likely not realize the consequences of this practice or discover alternative social media framings. If researchers fail to account for the cognitive implications of managing in the midst of fast-moving developments of new technology that complicate the strategic processes, the practical value of the research diminishes at a similar pace: Companies may find it difficult to apply generic phases, models, and 'best practices' to their specific context, and if they succeed, the models may well be obsoleted.

Hence, a disregard of the individual managerial perspective is problematic for both practitioners and researchers. Applying a cognitive approach will not disrupt the field as such, but its inherent methods provide researchers with relevant questions rather than 'correct' answers and operational templates. The distinctive features of social media are not yet well understood (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011) and there is still some way to a solid comprehension of the cognitive and strategic aspects of social media in business-market interaction, which makes social media a serious subject for cognitive and psychological description.

The research gaps are summarized in Table 2.1.7:

	Marketing	Management	Research gaps
Social media strategy	More behavioral research Less cognitive research	More cognitive research Less social media research	We still know little about the socio-cognitive aspects of social media strategy to explain individual and intra-organizational discrepancies
Market focus (outside-in) vs. company focus (inside-out)	Market focus: Consumers' social media behavior and psychology	Business focus: adoption and implementation of new technology in organizations	Research integrating market and business is scarce and fail to explain social media impact at both surface and deeper levels. Cross-disciplinary journals motivate integrative research
Social media use	Social media for external use (sales and promotion bias, and stakeholder collaboration)	Social media for internal use (knowledge sharing, organization, and HR)	Affected by mental and functional silos the fields create blind spots in the organization-market interface for research to disclose
Social media assumptions	Social media are extensions of existing marketing tools	Social media can be managed like any other technology	Empirical research on how social media fundamentally disrupt managerial mindsets and businesses is needed

Table 2.1.7: Overview of identified research gaps in marketing and management journals.

The next section explains the purpose and implications of applying the socio-cognitive approach to a social media case study.

2.2 The socio-cognitive approach

The socio-cognitive approach broadly defines a set of theories and methods that link individual and collective levels to explain how the environmental and organizational contexts influence individual managers and how cognition reflects back on context. Sensemaking is influenced by external inputs (social interaction and media influence)

but, on the whole, it depends on the perceiving mind in terms of the individual's reliance on deeply anchored cognitive patterns to make sense of incoming information. Sensemaking is embodied, but full control is not allocated to the inquiring mind, as interpretive processes are structured partly by private and cultural mental models and partly by the individual's neurological-cognitive dispositions (Bandura 2002; Ringberg and Reihlen 2008).

The approach enables researchers to delineate mental and social structures and specifically describe how cognitive mechanisms of managers impact on strategic processes to fill the void of the manager-organization links in strategic management as identified in the review. The different theories used, i.e., systems of assumptions, principles, and relationships to explain a specified set of phenomena, underscores that decisions origin from the manager's past perceptions and decisions, which is why individual reflection becomes a critical factor to the future situation of the organization. Knowledge of the origins must be essential if they are the drivers of company performance, and here, the socio-cognitive approach provides an understanding of the origin of decision-making, organizational routines and capabilities, how they are generated and evolve (Zollo and Winter 2002).

Though Narayanan, Zane, and Kemmerer (2011) call for managerial team research, the identified research paradox and working assumptions call for research that empirically prioritizes the individual level of individual antecedents, expectations, motivations, knowledge, capabilities, propensities, purposes, heterogeneity, and underlying assumptions. These elements tend to be ignored in the explanations of strategic processes at organizational level (Felin and Foss 2013).

Departing from a social constructivist paradigm, the socio-cognitive approach covers the essence of the mental model theory and meta-cognitive theory applied in the two studies in accordance with the qualitative methods. Meaning lies in cognition, but the approach also captures elements of behaviorism and social constructionism, as it acknowledges that the individual manager is both the source and the target of influence in the organization. This process aligns well with the dissertation, as it concerns how individual managers in and across companies make sense of business-customer interaction and social media. Here, the lines are blurred by acknowledgement of the effects of social interaction and communication (related to the social constructionist paradigm) (Carter 2013).

Cognition is seen as an important component of learning in organizations, however, learning is regarded as accomplished by the individuals *in* an organizational setting, rather than by learning being accomplished by the organization as a whole (Cook and Yanov 1993). Bandura (2002) rejects the idea of organizations as organisms that undergo evolutionary developments (see Levitt and March 1988). The locus of perceived collective efficacy resides in the minds of group members. It is not a disembodied group mind that is doing the cognizing, aspiring, motivating, and regulating. Bandura (2002, p. 269) explains how human behavior is best understood by reciprocal systems of causality of behaviors, individual and cognitive factors, and environmental factors. In a holistic manner, the interaction of these three factors reflects a collective learning process.

Also Felin and Foss (2013) argue that individuals are heterogeneous. They do not imply that the collective level is non-existent or unimportant; rather it becomes important to explicitly link the individual to the collective levels, as depicted in the figure below:

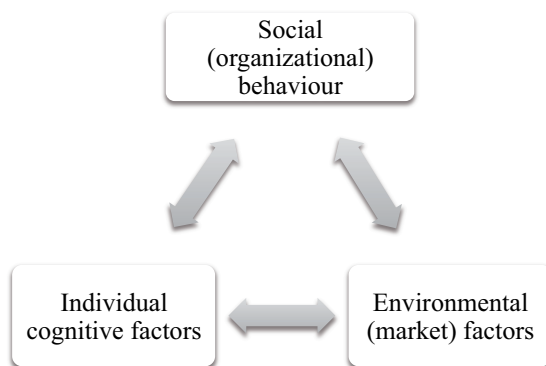


Figure 2.2 a: The elements of socio-cognitive theory

This view adopts an agent perspective to human development, adaptation, and change. It distinguishes among “personal agency” exercised individually; “proxy agency” in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and “collective agency” in which people act in concert to shape their future. The determinants and blends vary across cultures, but the interdependence of all modes to

successfully function is seen as universal. It thus accounts for the social and cultural aspects of learning processes in an organization, as opposed to the individual cognitive theory. Moreover, it gathers the fragmented studies that characterize the field of learning (Akgun, Lynn, and Byrne 2003) and is therefore regarded the right approach to explain the factors, which affect managerial sensemaking and learning, while accounting for the social and cognitive processes.

Ringberg and Reihlen's (2008) socio-cognitive framework is useful for addressing both research statements, as it explains how individual sensemaking is dependent on both private and cultural (shared) mental models, and incorporates higher order learning. According to Higgins (2000), the composition of the socio-cognitive approach is made of 'socio'- being the interpersonal and reflective characteristics of cognition, and '-cognitive', representing the cognitive levels of interaction. In that sense, the framework aligns with the purpose of the first study of investigating managers' shared mental models of business-customer interaction to understand how they influence on individual social media sensemaking.

The socio-cognitive approach similarly accounts for reframing as metacognitive learning as it includes conscious and unconscious human information processing in terms of an explaining whether mental models are applied in either categorical (unreflective) or cognizant (reflective) ways. As described in the learning theory section, the second study adds elements of Bateson's (1972) framework to empirically investigate and operationalize socio-cognitive learning processes among managers to understand and explain, in greater detail, the challenges of converting from a print culture to a digital and social media culture. In line with the socio-cognitive approach, corporate identity is seen as socially constructed and maintained discursively through individual and collective sensemaking processes.

In the context of a social media case, the socio-cognitive frameworks do not in their present forms fully explain the components of virtual interaction, i.e., how the technical components influence individual behavior, which delimits and complicates discussions of social media interaction, learning, and organization. The transitional relations between the individual and collective levels are still not fully resolved as the theory defines human behavior as a triadic, dynamic, and reciprocal interaction of personal factors, behavior, and the social network (Chiu et al. 2006) (see figure 2.2.1a). Kaplan and Tripsas state, "cognition's role in explaining the dynamics of technical change has not yet been comprehensively explored." Considering social media an

extension of tools already in use prevents the managers from seeing, locating, exploring and exploiting the disruptive potential of social media. It will not change the underlying communicative tactics of how to connect with customers. What constitutes this interaction, offline as well as online, is not yet clear between the agency domain and action domain.

However, the approach considers organizations as being networks of shared subjective meanings, where knowledge develops from the complex of human action and interaction (see Gherardi 1999). This allows a conceptual shift from seeing cognitive shifts as the consequence of mere information processing to understanding cognitive shifts as a process of participation and interaction of conceptual structures. The approach thus leaves room for maneuver beyond the existing theory definitions to provide more useful information on socio-cognitive-techno interactions. As the social context, in which managers think, judge, and make sense, is considered influential (Bandura 1986), the understandings of the organizational contexts (virtual as well as physical) can be accounted for.

By applying, hence testing, the theory on a social media case, the dissertation carries socio-cognitive research into a new domain, depicted in figure 2.2 b:

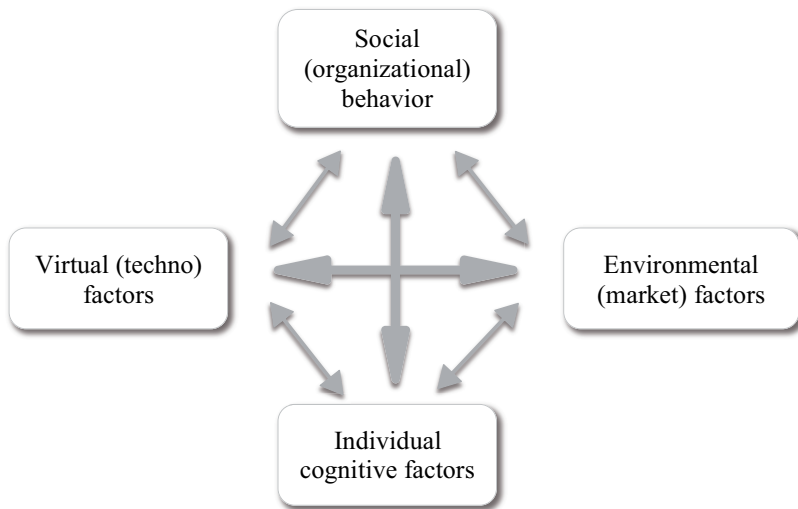


Figure 2.2 b: Adding virtual elements to the socio-cognitive approach

Despite the delimitations mentioned above, the two studies encompass different analytical levels to identify and provide empirical evidence of shared mental models being an underlying central phenomenon of managerial cognition. The dissertation thus corroborates that organizations are *not* essential organisms that undergo evolutionary developments (Bandura 2002), having collective identities, a memory, or a DNA. Instead, I describe an organization as people, who may operate in concert on a shared belief with capabilities or characteristics in individual antecedents. By staying aware of the positioning, and the unavoidable bias of any epistemological position, I attempt to produce rigorous and meaningful results.

The next sections account for relevance of using the mental model theory and meta-cognitive theory and explain their theoretical coherency.

2.2.2 Mental models

Mental models provide a cognitive framework (Daft and Weick 1984; Gentner and Stevens 1983; Goffman 1974; Senge 1990) and are used to construct sense of life in all its complexity. In other words, a mental model works like a “gatekeeper” that decides what is included and excluded from its holder’s view. Research has applied mental model theory to various business issues, including management cognition (Daft and Weick 1984; Goffman 1974; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel 2009; Senge 1990), knowledge transfer (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008), learning (Vosniadou 1992) human-technology interaction (Gentner and Stevens 1983; Payne 1991), and decision making (Carley and Palmquist 1992). Tripsas and Gavetti (2000) illustrate how mental models affect decision making related to technology choice. Mental models can be context specific, yet the ones taking part in individuals’ fundamental identity construction are deep seated (e.g., orientations toward beliefs, gender, politics) and do not readily change according to context, but rather reflects a deeper socialization process (Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen 2007).

It follows that the exposure and internalization of mental models depend on a range of issues, including education and experience (Iaquinto and Fredrickson 1997). Multiple mental models are in “circulation” at any given time, each of which provides a certain perspective or lens that guides individuals’ sensemaking. Thus, depending on the

exposure to such mental models, managers end up framing market inputs, such as the business–customer interaction, or new technology differently. The impact of mental models can be significant. For example, Atuahene-Gima (2005) shows how certain information can be viewed as an opportunity or a threat depending on the manager’s mental model. Managers who frame inputs as threats tend to be risk averse and focus on exploitation rather than exploration strategies (Day 1994). Conversely, managers who perceive the market as filled with opportunities are willing to take greater risks and commit more resources (White, Varadarajan, and Dacin 2003) and are more adept at taking explorative initiatives.

Mental model theory is applied on in-depth interviews to explain *why* managers think social media in particular ways and to show how they come to know that reality (epistemology). Sensemaking, as a pivotal activity in diagnosis (Bogner and Barr 2000; George, Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, and Barden 2006), is characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity, and tensions (Miller, Burke, and Glick 1998). At the individual level, it involves *noticing* (Sutcliffe 1994; Weick 1995), *categorization* (Porac and Thomas 1994; 2002), *simplification*, and the use of *heuristics* (Rajagopalan and Spreitzer 1997). Scanning processes and reasoning processes (intuitive, Nutt 1998) can be based on existing mental models or they can foster new ones (Gavetti and Levinthal 2000). Interpretation and formulation of strategic opportunities, threats, and scenarios (Barreto 2012; Gruber, MacMillian, and Thompson 2012) are also frequented in cognitive research as a method to study endogenous (chosen) effects on strategy outcomes. Recognizing the mental models of business-consumer interaction can help scholars and practitioners understand how managers’ cognition ultimately limits or expands social media actions taken by people in an organization.

Theories of managerial cognition, viewed as a source of heterogeneity in business strategies, argue that more ‘accurate’ and comprehensive mental models (i.e., fit between the realized competitive environment and strategy) lead to better decision rules and higher performance. Some of these studies have been conducted as experiments (Gary and Wood 2011) assuming that we act in the world instead of enacting it (Weick 1993). Instead of taking this route, it is more relevant for the outcome of the dissertation to show how awareness of heterogeneity in mental models, and hence strategic cognition, can be brought to the conscious surface of reflective learning. Comprehension of these structures is essential to meta-strategic processes, which is presented in the section below.

2.2.3 Meta-cognition

Metacognition plays a vital role in strategic management, and hence for this dissertation. Metacognitive knowledge can be actively used to control cognitive processes engaged in strategic management and to oversee learning processes. It may not be different from cognitive knowledge, but the distinction lies in how the information is used (Flavell 1979). Metacognitive strategies ensure that a goal is reached in the most appropriate way based on activities such as planning how to approach a given managerial task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task. Metacognitive thinking often occurs when the manager recognizes that a present understanding or vision is not successful, and attempts to rectify the situation (Roberts and Erdos 1993). Though some individuals by nature are more metacognitive than others, one can learn how to better regulate cognitive activities (Koutstaal 2012).

In concert, the meta-analyses explain practical implications and possibilities of creating individual and social learning. They show how managers can better apply their cognitive resources through metacognitive control. Concepts of *metacognition* (Flavell 1979; Roberts and Erdos 1993; Haynie, Shepherd, Mosakowski, and Earley 2010), *metareflection* (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008) *metastrategic processing* (Koutstaal 2012), *rethinking* (Watson 2002; Wind 2009), and *reframing* (Gilliam and Bales 2001; Kaufman, Elliott, and Shmueli 2003) are used across the studies depending on the focus, but they refer to the same conscious process of thinking about thinking.

Categorical and reflective thinking

The review anchored the dimensions of categorical versus reflective thinking in the cognitive learning literature and the first study applies Ringberg and Reihlen's (2008) framework to measure managerial metacognition along this dimension. *Categorical thinking* describes when inputs are integrated automatically and uncritically leading to predictable and consistent outcomes. People tend to rely on such thinking when (1) performing routine tasks, (2) experiencing high cognitive loads, (3) having limited cognitive capacity, or (4) making decisions under pressure. As a result, inputs are "forced" into the framework of existing internalized mental models leading to little, if any, mental adjustment (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008).

Reluctance to modify routines can be explained as socio-cognitive processes (i.e., habitual thinking and routinized behavior), which tend to preserve function-bound frames of social media. Like mental models, frames are rooted in shared cognitions of a company's *raison d'être*, reflected in a company's routines, which shape how new technology is interpreted and how managers eventually make decisions. Strategic frames often exist prior to conscious processing of information for decision-making to organize knowledge into general categories based on personal and shared mental models. In other words, "a way of seeing is a way of *not* seeing" (Poggie 1965, p. 284). They influence outcomes through managers' interpretation and have long-term implications on business performance (Deal and Bolman 2003). Sensemaking/framing determines how social media are regarded and communicated to employees (discourse) to justify a certain practice, also referred to as sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence 2007). It becomes even more pervasive through the collective acceptance forged by a perception of similarity.

Conversely, *reflective thinking* denotes a high level of cognitive responsiveness and capacity. Here, the individual manager improves her or his sensemaking by relying on both private and shared (i.e., cultural) mental models in new and creative ways, and even expanding on or replacing them. This way of thinking can be triggered by a new phenomenon or situation that cannot be made sense of by internalized mental models, but such cognitive adjustment requires effort. Applied to the context of this dissertation, a shift from categorical to reflective thinking requires that managers are cognitively agile (Koutstaal 2012) and introspective, as well as able to sense the dissonance between external feedback and their own sensemaking (i.e., internalized mental model).

Reflective thinking is often a prerequisite for mental model disruption (categorical thinking can also cause a shift, but it happens outside the individual's awareness) but might not be the final outcome if the manager consciously judges the less disruptive model to be the best choice and therefore decides to keep it. Deeply embedded mental models are disrupted either by a radical shift, referred to as conversion experience, or by a gradual shift through ongoing and extensive learning processes. As a result, managers come to recognize the limitations of their existing mental processing (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008; Van der Veer 1998). The Social Media Sensemaking Model in chapter five and Table 2.1.6 Reframing as learning forms depict the two

modes of thinking (categorical and reflective), circumscribing the internally depicted vertical processing.

Reframing

In the second study, Strategic Frame Analysis is applied to provide new insights into how managers' cognition influence social media strategy processes. It investigates how the frames work as cognitive drivers that enable particular learning forms of transitioning from print media to digital media. The investigation explains *how* frames are contextually 'embedded' in the cultural norms, identity, experience, etc., which structure around particular concepts, logics and assumptions of reality (ontology).

Reframing (e.g., a way of viewing practices, ideas, approaches and attitudes to find better alternatives) is a metacognitive processing being vital for successful future strategists, i.e., when faced with a new decision task, the manager should "first formulate a strategy to frame how he or she will 'think' about this task." However, reframing is by no means an easy task, so managers seeking the potential of social media to create value may not be able to attain such goal. Managers often neglect opportunities, as they are reluctant to change their understanding of the business and its interaction with customers, and ignore the dramatic dimension of change that social media bring about for consumers and firms, misjudging social media as just another communication tool. This partly explains the slow integration of social media in some media companies:

"Even in the media business, the study of how nine US-based media companies use social media strategically, there is no evidence of any new business model emerging regarding social media. At this early stage, monetization of social media is happening primarily through traditional advertising, and that is limited. But it doesn't mean that we won't see new business models emerging. There are several areas, which are ripe for growing revenues related to social media." (Friedrichsen and Mühl-Benninghaus 2013, p. 21)

Reframing expands the visionary horizon, enables the development of dynamic capabilities, and provides the manager with a set of decision options that can be generalized across multiple routines: it guides managers in the process from seeing technology, such as social media, as broadcast tools due to ordinary print media capabilities, to the discovery of more disruptive applications. Wilden et al. (2013) say

that the field of dynamic capabilities has largely ignored bounding assumptions. “Reframing as a systematic learning mechanism could be regarded as a ‘higher order dynamic capability’”, as it provides a basis for ‘mental model innovation’. Anchored in the higher order levels expressed in table 2.1.6 it exceeds contextual boundaries and may produce substantive output effects.

In the process of reframing the manager becomes aware of his or her perception of the phenomenon or issue and how his or her framing may be bound to the functional context in which he or she operates. This is significant because a manager’s judgments could potentially be better informed through other social media frames possessed by colleagues, stakeholders, even competitors, which ultimately lead to better outcomes in terms of value creation (Pirkkalainen and Pawlowski 2014; Weinberg et al. 2013). “Many wise leaders, no matter which field they operate in, seem to rely on reframing to bring about major changes in others’ thinking” (Kaipa, 2012, p. 1).

However, these socio-cognitive processes are often poorly understood as (social media) technologies are habitually interpreted in the process of accommodation to specific functional contexts and needs, but seldom reinterpreted at intra-organizational level. As the review confirms, few researchers recognize how vital this is to strategic management and provide strategic insight from a cognitive perspective (El Sawy and Pauchant 1988; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006) to explain the challenges media companies are facing. At the same time, companies are calling for guidance in developing approaches that will lead them towards business transformation (Weinberg et al. 2013). A marked lack of empirical work on strategic reframing and a need of understanding the specific conditions that influence strategic processes, motivate this work and presents an attractive opportunity for future research.

To summarize, metacognition is proposed as a method for managers to strengthen their cognitive agility. A key issue is to determine when and how concrete/abstract elements are best employed for the manager to gain maximum learning and subsequent transfer (similarity/difference balance) (Koutstaal 2012). Abstract representations of social media can be fast and efficient, as their concise form allows for quick reading, but they are stripped of semantic elaborations and grounded representations. The learning benefit from the mental model approach and framing approach is that they allow managers to move from abstract to concrete (grounded) elements. However, it requires continuous mental training to increase flexibility over cognitive activities. The practices of the reflective manager are elaborated in section 8.3.

Chapter 3

Chapter three explains the reasons for taking the case study approach, and how the case studies can introduce new and interesting research results. I present the case focus and discuss the relevance of studying new technology, specifically social media. The two case studies and their domain foci are presented to explain the intentions, and pros and cons of doing research across companies within Business-to-Customer and within a media company.

““How can you generalize from a single case study?” is a frequently heard question. The short answer is that case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions.” (Yin 2003, p. 10)

3. Case and domain of study

Driven by the research statements in search for deeper insight, the dissertation follows the tradition of cognitive psychology and applies a ‘social media as new technology’ case study as the method of investigating in detail managers’ understandings (Tellis 1997). The case involves three strategic research areas in which sensemaking strongly influence the generation of strategic options, namely framing of industry and market (Porter 1996), sources of innovation (Teece 2007), and customer demands (Dawar 2013).

Case study is an essential method for retrieving data on a narrow field like strategic cognition. It provides detailed, context-based data on subjective and subtle meanings associated with beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Some argue that this makes it less suitable for generalization (as opposed to quantitative random population sampling), however, the quote of Yin (2003) above answers to the critics of qualitative studies regarding particularization versus generalization of findings. Though some scholars state, “the only generalization from qualitative studies is that there is no generalization” (Klenke 2008, p. 71), I rely on Lee’s (1989) establishment of case study as a scientific method to establish analytical generalization to the cognitive theory from the two sets of findings.

To ensure reliability in the two studies it is crucial to examine the trustworthiness of the assumptions of social media strategy processes identified in the introduction:

1. Social media, despite being claimed as a disruptive technology, do not by their mere presence change managers’ strategic orientation and behavior.
2. Social media implementation is not an evolutionary process developing naturally from marketing into the business strategic level; rather it requires shifts in managerial mindsets, which are often experienced as ‘unnatural’ and disruptive.

The continuation of research from one domain into another is the method chosen to provide rich data about meaning and context of the people in study. Walsham’s (1995) four types of case study generalizations support such approach: development of concepts, development of theory, the drawing of specific implications, and the contribution of rich insights, which accounts for the design quality. By doing case

studies across two different domains, the dissertation tolerates both typical and atypical business contexts. This design has enabled detection of general patterns in managerial cognition and provided answers to what, how, and why managers conceptualize the issues related to social media strategy in different ways and in different corporate circumstances.

Based on the theory building from the across-companies study, it has been relevant to test whether the identified conceptual and cognitive patterns of understanding among a variety of informants and company contexts are valid inside a company to document further the presence of shared mental models. The method has proven useful for developing theory as well as testing it. As the domain studies take place in ‘real-life’ companies, they provide more realistic responses than lab experiments or statistical surveys. As the researcher, I talked to the managers in their organizations, which gave me an understanding of the context in which they operate and reason from.

These insights were valuable for interpretation and analysis of the data. As such, I attempt to make sense of their social world by describing the meanings they bring to it. Conveyance of the findings in more narrative forms has been useful for other company managers, as the qualitative data seems easier for them to relate to. Moreover, it has evoked new studies and interesting discussions.

3.1 New technology: Social media

More than twenty years ago, Yin (1994) described case studies as a suitable approach for answering the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, as mentioned above, related to a current phenomenon in a ‘real-life context’. Yin (1994) lists up four applications, which still apply for a new technology case study:

- ✓ To explain complex causal links in real life interventions
- ✓ To describe the intervention
- ✓ To describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred
- ✓ To explore situations in which the intervention under evaluation has no clear set of outcome.

‘Intervention’ denotes well a new technology described as ‘disruptive’. Both research statements aim at describing the four applications, however, in an explorative way and within different domains, as the studies explain managerial sensemaking and causations of the social media phenomenon in relation to the specific contexts.

Around the same time of the release of Yin’s (1993) case study method work, Normann and Ramirez (1993) described how strategy creates value by connecting a company’s competencies and customers. Today, social media presents whole new opportunities for connecting a company and its customers’ competencies to co-create value from user-generated content to community-based transformation. A glance at the customer behavior reveals that their use of social media is rocketing (Berthon et al. 2008). Many customers’ interactive behavior not only changes their daily way of life; it also changes the business, media, and marketing spheres, as consumers insist on taking part in a variety of business activities, e.g., production and dissemination of content, such as promotion, news, company information, developing new products and services, even distribution of products and providing service to other customers. Heionen (2011, p. 364) remarks “instead of focusing on technology applications or push-marketing, social media strategies should adopt a customer-dominant mindset by starting from the consumers’ perspective on activities and practices in social media.”

Hence, organizations struggle to keep up with the effects of technology-empowered customers, and top managers fail to see the value of social media performance (Day 2011). Even to marketers, social media pose new challenges for them to revise their knowledge about marketing, hence the relevance of the case study. As the analysis will reveal, nearly half of the informants in the company study express that they see social media as triggering a paradigm shift in business within the forthcoming 5-10 years. This finding underscores the necessity of placing focus on this new technology, but even more for the reason that there seems to be a gap in the perceptions of social media impact as among managers, which may have important strategic implications.

An understanding of competitor moves and customer desires is crucial to any company’s strategy, however, alone it does not make the company anymore capable of modifying its own understanding and set of operating routines. Managers will have to learn a broader set of learning capabilities, flexible and dynamic coordination of resources, and interactive collaboration with stakeholders in an uncertain market (Wilden et al. 2013). From a socio-cognitive view, I argue that a consumer-dominant

mindset in social media strategy must be preceded by an awareness of the manager's mindset from which the interpretation of other mindsets takes place. The question of 'how managers' minds are set on social media for business-customer interaction' is recurrently covered in the studies from different empirical platforms (domain foci) and theoretical angles to gain an in-depth understanding.

3.2 Domain Focus

The domain of study is business-to-consumer as it is important to engage managers (and customers) more actively in research undertaking by enabling them to present fully their thinking (Zaltman 1997). Retail and services industries are particularly applicable to investigate in terms of how managers make sense of social media, given their heightened focus on the interaction with customers (Deloitte 2011; Gamble and Gilmore 2013). In these industries, any reluctance to use social media is more often a choice than a laissez-faire attitude due to a generally high degree of customer responsiveness. Interestingly, Chui et al. (2012) found that executives at business-to-consumer companies are less optimistic about social technologies than business-to-business peers, likely due to customer expectations, price transparency, and competition.

Also cultures of consensus, departmental interests, organizational structures, and inertia (i.e., when the speed of core feature change is much lower than the rate at which environmental conditions change) act as conservatory forces (Hannan and Freeman 1984; DiMaggio 1997; Tichy and Bennis 2007). Chui et al. (2012) report of misaligned organizational structures as being the biggest challenge that companies face in meeting digital goals, followed by insufficiently reworked business processes to take advantage of the digital opportunities. This is a vital argument for taking the variety in corporate cultures, routines, and structural features of the B2C companies into account.

As mentioned, the domain of study bifurcates into an international study across companies and a national in-company study to rigorously and systematically collect and grasp managers' disparate sensemakings in order to develop an understanding of the phenomena in question (business-customer interaction, social media, and strategy) in ways that make sense to the informants. Where the first study places emphasis on the explanatory links between social media sensemaking and mental models of business-customer interaction, and whether these are applied in a reflective or

categorical manner, the second study progresses these findings by placing emphasis on the how managers can release a learning potential in their company by reframing their current understandings.

A limitation of this study focus is that the analysis does not zoom in on consumer views, employee views, or management team views, though strategy also is a collective process, i.e., when they engage in a shared sensemaking through interpretation and implementation of decisions. The focus is mainly set on the individual B-2-C manager's vision, mindset, attitude, and knowledge about market and technology, as these are deemed vital for a company's ability to incorporate social media at the strategic level (Tyler and Steensma 1995). Managers' perception and experience of customer interaction contribute to the formation of a dominant market view, which will be evoked when making decisions (Eden and Spender 1998). However, it makes room for further research taking multiple perspectives (see chapter nine).

3.2.1 Study across companies

Positioned as managerial cognition research, the first study applies mental model theory to investigate managers' shared mental models of business-customer interaction to understand how they influence on individual social media sensemaking. As the retail and service industries are rather broad in terms of company size, markets, customer targets, etc., the first study represents a broad cross-continent (US and Europe, mainly Denmark) and cross-industry (retail and service) sample. As mental models are entrenched by culture and tradition the aggregation of conceptualizations was expected to be rich and varied. This is the case, but surprisingly, the different definitions cluster around four distinct understandings of business-customer interaction.

Though there is a large variation in the company sample, the companies all operate at markets marked by increasing digitization of products, services, and business models. Examples of European companies participating are Normann Copenhagen, Dancenter, Autohuset. Examples of US companies are Angel Stadium, Taco Bell, and Beyond Gear. Thus, they share the potential of optimizing their interaction with their customers from different levels of social media implementation. Whether the appearance of the four mental models is because the managers are operating under different market, industry, or company conditions could not be determined. The assumptions that

culture, sex, age, and industry, and other demographic variables would influence the findings are not confirmed. Instead, the interpretations seem to be vested in the particular personal and corporate context, rather than sociological segments. Despite the idiosyncratic interpretations, it is possible from the single interviews to account for the influence of environmental factors on the manager's mental models. Subsequent follow-up workshops similarly confirm the presence of the four models.

3.2.2 Study within a company

Positioned as metacognitive learning research, the subsequent study applies strategic reframing to substantiate and develop the theoretical framework or, alternatively, to contradict the findings of the first study (Klenke 2008). It extends the study to managers of a company, who obviously are in a situation, where the whole industry and market is heavily disrupted by new technologies like social media. By doing so, the dissertation can further investigate the practical applicability of the suggestions given in the first study: that reflective thinking 'solves' the paradox (outlined in the introduction section) between seeing social media as disruptive, while not reacting on a market disruption at the expected pace.

Description of Media House Aarhus (MHA)

MHA is located in the second largest city of Denmark. Established in 1794 the company defines itself as the strongest local unifying institution being deeply involved in the commercial and cultural life of the city. Since MHA was founded it has been subject to mergers and acquisitions. At the initiation of the research, MHA consisted of six local free weeklies, all with digital activities. They offer a number of consumer sales activities through which they promote and sell offers to local citizens and subscribers. 75% of their customers are above the age of 40. Defined tasks are to "balance and decode a population who loves and is passionate" about their city, and to produce "local, unique, critical, independent journalism targeted at active, engaged, and culture-interested citizens" (Brand book 2014, p. 4). A claimed focus on digital activities, live blogging and use of social media provide them with an opportunity to tell stories, deliver news, and experiences in new ways. In Nov. 2012 they introduced a pay wall on digital news, which was amended to a 'freemium' model in Jan. 2014.

The 2016 objective is to develop and maintain their position as the no. 1 media brand and “commercially to provide superior and relevant offers for the customers independent of platforms and based on customer needs” (Brand book 2014, p. 4). Financially MHA experiences a decline in revenues, especially circulation sales and ad sales. This was met with heavy cuts and savings in their cost base. The plan is to expand their reach digitally and thus increase sales of content and advertising.

An empirical study in an old media company in Denmark is interesting and relevant to other companies as the traditional print media industry is in the grip of a recession being highly challenged by online technologies and social media. This is the case of MHA. By conducting with the in-depth interview method, it is possible to progress the first study in an exploratory manner.

From the study in the company we learn how the majority of managers are reluctant to admit that revenues have steadily dropped over the past ten years. Print media is still regarded as their biggest asset with online media being a minor and less prioritized activity. The strategic ambition is to convert the business model from print media to digital media within a very short time frame (1-2 yrs.) This creates a ‘burning platform’ for the shareholders and top management to apply different methods of strategic pivoting. On a scale from 1 to 10 the challenge was assessed to be 9-10 in January 2015.

The media behavior of younger customers (15-40) differs from their traditional customer base as information and news are retrieved from social media rather than print media. At present, the company has no grip in the large group of young people in their community; instead, their core business dwells on an ageing customer base (+50). Consequently, the management face tremendous changes in the characteristics and expectations of a customer base transition.

With a management team and journalistic staff, with a strong affection for – and expertise in - the print media, there is an espoused need to rethink and unlearn to develop dynamic capabilities in the forthcoming years. To initiate an intra-organizational development from analogue to digital thinking, the company hires an ambitious and young CDO on the executive board to lead a cultural transformation process. This approach is reported as a general response to the awareness of how important cross-cutting responsibilities for all digital initiatives are (Chui et al. 2012). The CDO at MHA shares the same journalistic background, added with technical and

commercial skills, and has previously been engaged in a successful strategic transformation project in a Norwegian company.

Instead of visioning a long-term evolutionary change, the time scope is around a year, which suggests a hard-steered U-turn rather than an incremental process. The study yields insight into how managers' socio-cognitive learning processes influence on the conversion of managerial thinking from print media to digital media. For instance, if a manager frames social media as broadcast or selling tools, is it then more challenging for him or her to initiate higher-order learning processes required for more substantial strategic change? The study among managers in MHA provides an understanding, in greater detail, of the interplay between categorical thinking (framing) and reflective higher-order thinking (reframing).

From a methodological perspective, the choice of domain is rooted in the criteria of pragmatic usefulness: Good theory is one that will be practically useful in the course of daily events, not only to scientists (Locke 2001). To secure a theoretically credible contribution it is paramount to understand the phenomena from the perspectives of those living it, in their daily practice. In concert, the two studies provides an open and honest account of how managers' different sensemaking, or frames, are contextually 'embedded' in the cultural norms, identity, experience, etc., which structure around particular concepts, logics and assumptions of reality (ontology). They show how 'strategy' in a traditional media or marketing context cannot automatically, or in a friction-free manner, transfer into a digital context without the need of 'conscious translation'.

Chapter 4

Following the introduction of case study and domain focus in chapter three, this chapter outlines the qualitative methods employed in addressing the research statements of the dissertation. It provides insight into the empirical collection of data through in-depth interviews and small-sample surveys. As epistemological and ontological assumptions are translated into particular methods (Krauss 2005), I discuss methodology and assess the pros and cons of the methods chosen. This is followed by a step-by-step description of the interview procedure, the analysis of data and analysis boundaries.

Every discourse, even a poetic or oracular sentence, carries with it a system of rules for producing analogous things and thus an outline of methodology (Jacques Derrida).

4. Method

With reference to Derrida, the likeness created between discourse and methodology is reflected in this dissertation: Strategic cognition of social media is addressed primarily in the employment of qualitative analyses instead of quantitative measures. Whereas the latter would be able to tell us how managers use social media in their everyday operation of the business, a qualitative study can reveal to what extent, and why, social media are perceived as meaningful to the decision-makers or afford particular strategic values to the company. It requires using knowledge about cognitive and other processes to improve how managers are studied (Zaltman 1997).

Interpretive research is conducted based on the belief that a deeper understanding of a phenomenon is only possible through understanding the interpretations of that phenomenon from those experiencing it (Shah and Corley 2006). Shah and Corley (2006) explain how multiple social realities can exist around a phenomenon because those involved interpret the phenomenon differently. In a management context, it means that different managers reach different conclusions about the cause-and effect assumptions of using social media, the implications of them, and their relationships with other phenomena, such as strategy and business-customer interaction.

As mentioned in chapters two and three, different socio-cognitive analytical methods are applied in the two studies to gain a broader as well as deeper understanding of social media as a cognitive and contextual phenomenon. The ambition is to get ‘as close as possible’ to everyday conceptions that weave strategy, business-customer interaction and social media into patterns of meaning. However, such conceptual patterns are not directly observable, but can only be learned if informants communicate them (Seel 1991). It is not an archaeological process where *the* pattern is uncovered; it is rather *a* pattern being weaved from a contingent process. When doing interpretive research, it is not possible to avoid imposing one’s own views indirectly on the informants: the researcher takes active part in the typification process by using predefined concepts during the interviews or when changing the questions underway, when realizing that some questions were more interesting to the informants than others. Such process forces the researcher to collect data in a thoughtful and nuanced way and to adjust the research assumptions and questions in a way that “allows theory to reflect newly observed facets of the phenomenon and its context” (Shah and Corley 2006, p. 1826).

To account for the subjective bias and to utilize my own knowledge and experience of strategy, communication, and social media I carried out a ‘self-interview’ by writing down my thoughts about the phenomena in question and how I approach it professionally. At an early stage it helped me to see additional areas that the interviews should address. It also worked as a mirror of my own assumptions and prejudices in order to maintain sufficient ‘distance’ when preparing and conducting interviews.

The thematic content analysis aligns with the socio-cognitive approach as it identifies and analyzes patterns (themes) within data (the content of the interview transcripts) (Krippendorff 2004) to provide insights into the social, contextual, and semantic aspects of how managers “come to understand, account for, take action, and manage their day-to-day situations” (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 7) regarding strategy and social media. It is often framed as an experiential method (e.g., Roulston 2001) to flexibly provide rich, detailed, and complex account of data of the ways professionals make sense of experiences and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings (Braun and Clarke 2006).

As the work progressed and the four sensemaking categories appeared, it was no longer possible to ignore that in the analysis process of the subsequent data. The emerging theoretical framework became a ‘mental model’ to be constantly aware of, so in the MHA study we used this in a reflective and constructive way to substantiate and develop the theoretical findings from the first study. More nuanced understandings of the influence of organizational context emerged. The relationship between strategic framing of social media and the context was considered more thoroughly as it turned out that the managers’ interpretations of the organizational setting (traditional media production) have an explanatory value in understanding organizational resistance to change and inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1989), i.e., the cognitive backdrop of traditional print promotes a ‘broadcast framing’, which hinders social media implementation at business strategic levels.

This insight corresponds to Tripsas and Gavetti’s (2000) notion of competency traps, where competencies become rigidities. In their very inspirational paper, they examine how managerial cognitive representations constrain organizational behavior, and ultimately, the development of an organization’s capabilities. As the qualitative research progressed from a combination of well-considered decisions and intuitive

processes, being epistemological in nature, perspectives and actions have changed underway, resulting in an individual and collective learning process.

The next section explains how data was collected in the two studies and provides an overview of the informants.

4.1 Data collection

With purposeful sampling the researcher selects information-rich cases for study in depth. Those are cases that teaches us about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling (Patton 1990). The selection criteria are that all the informants are strategic decision makers and can relate to social media from a professional customer engagement perspective. The purposive selection follows accepted qualitative interview criteria as defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008).

In the study across companies, informants vary in age and gender, their educational background vary from degrees in IT and political science to marketing, and their companies vary from small to medium size, thus, the informants possess a range of different types of business–customer interactions and sensemaking of social media. As a supplement, the sample contains informants with atypical experiences, such as social media specialists as well as novices to social media for the entire range of experiences and the breadth of social media sensemaking to be understood. To secure a broad sample of conceptualizations the sample consists of 11 managers situated in the US and 16 European managers situated in Denmark. The assumption is that age, occupation, and cultural contexts influence their conceptualizations. I visited all the companies except from three to be in the context where the managerial sensemaking is taking place (Shah and Corley 2006). My main supervisor and co-author visited one company (MHA).

Following Zaltman and Coulter (1995), the theoretically substantiated point of saturation determined the number of informants. In the study across companies such point of saturation was reached after the 14th interview (as no apparent abnormalities or deviations could be detected), but we performed an additional 13 interviews to generate a sufficient pool of informants for a more in-depth elaboration within each sub-group identified.

Initials	Age	Sex	Business area	Occupation	Mental models			
JN	44	M	Entertainment	Owner	1			
CO	55	M	Furniture and interior design	Owner	1	(2)		
CN	38	M	Car sale	Director	1			
ML	37	M	Storage and furniture removal	Director	1			
IN	51	F	Apparel and fashion	Owner	1			
SO	70	M	Restaurant and boats	Owner	1	(2)		
PE	33	F	Apparel and fashion	Chief marketing officer	1	2		
KN	33	M	Sports entertainment	Marketing manager	1	2		
MN	37	M	Technology	FMC manager	1	2		
KM	56	M	Vacation rental	Product manager	1	2		
PA	48	F	Second hand fashion	Owner	1	2		
SA	33	F	Styling and fashion	Owner	1	2		
GG	38	M	Creative technology	Technical strategist	1	2		
JY	42	M		President and CEO	1	2		
AE	56	F	Customer goods	Owner	1		3	
CR	43	M	Consultancy	Partner		2	3	
JS	38	M	Furniture and interior	Marketing manager	1	2		4
LH	53	F	Grocery store	Owner		2		4
ME	58	F		Marketing manager				4
KS	38	M	Digital consultancy	Creative director/partner			3	
EK	56	M	Counseling	Director and partner			3	
JO	28	M	Microbrewery	Co-owner	1	2		4

LY	57	M	Consultancy	Owner			3	4
LE	33	F	Customer goods	Social media manager				4
MK	29	M	Fast-food chain	Associate manager				4
AA	31	M	Sports apparel	Owner				4
TY	45	M	Brand agency	Owner				4
Total number of representations					17	13	5	9

Table 4.1.1 a: Informant sample across companies

In the MHA study, there is less need of defining selection criteria as the majority of managers participated. The managers' frames are not numbered as in the first study, as the interviews confirmed the presence of different social sensemakings (frames), and the analytical focus is turned towards the shared framing and reframing processes, rather than the individual sensemaking.

All the informants are likewise involved in the strategic process and can relate to social media from a professional customer interaction perspective. Moreover, there is a close resemblance of the average age (43) of the informants in the two studies. Both samples are gender biased with a dominance of male managers, a distribution being more distinct in the media company. As the table below reveals, the managers take on varied managerial tasks and functions in different departments of the company. Responsibilities and functions influence on how social media is codified and how the managers regard social media as enabling or inhibiting the company performance. The managers have relatively comparable levels of expertise, operate under the same industrial conditions, but they represent different managerial responsibilities and carry on different tasks in the company.

From the interviews with all the managers we reached the first saturation point (Zaltman and Coulter 1995) in terms of reflecting the frames in a media company context and assessing the underlying cognitive barriers and learning potential of strategic reframing.

#	Initials	Age	Sex	Occupation	Educational background
1	MJ	35	F	Content Manager (5 yrs.) AOA.dk	Journalist
2	TG	44	M	Executive Editor (1 yr.) In BM 14 yrs.	Journalist
3	MH	58	M	Sales director (6 yrs.)	Master in Economics
4	JX	49	M	Key Account Manager	Not revealed
5	JD	27	M	Online Marketing coordinator (1.5 yrs.)	Master in Business communication
6	JS	44	M	Editor-in-chief (1 yr.)	Journalist
7	LN	50+	F	Sales Manager (6.5 yrs.)	Telecom sales (1982-2008)
8	JM	50+	M	Executive Editor (10 yrs.) In BM 30 yrs.	Journalist
9	DC	56	F	Editor-in-chief	Journalist
10	GF	49	M	COO/CCO	Advertising consultant, marketing manager, Sales- and marketing coordinator
11	CS	37	M	CDO	Journalist, news editor and digital editor

Table 4.1.1b Informant sample within MHA

4.1.1 In-depth semi-structured interview

Both studies are based on in-depth semi-structured interviews. A key research interest of the dissertation is to capture and create internal conceptual representations of managers' mental models and frames. In-depth interviews "provide the necessary depth and richness of data for such an investigation" (Prescott 2011, p. 17). However, time is a crucial factor for such interview types, which can be a challenge when doing management studies. When designing the in-depth interview structure it is deemed vital to ask questions that yield as much information about the strategic cognition of social media as possible. This is not only because managers' time is precious, but also

to be able to address the objectives of the research. The ideal duration was set to 90 minutes per interview, and the realistic time frame was 60 minutes per interview.

The semi-structured interview is positioned between structured and unstructured interviews. It is characterized by a structure of key questions that help to frame the area to be explored. Such interview approach is particularly appropriate when attempting to collect information on emerging themes (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Zaltman and Coulter 1995). It allows the informant or the interviewer to pursue an idea or response in more detail and enables an exploration of what is meaningful and important to each manager, through an iterative and non-directive eliciting process. This is necessary for a mental model study and a framing analysis, as mental models and frames are discursively created, necessitating careful attention to underlying tropes and assumptions (see Corbin and Strauss 2008) to identify these in managers' narratives. Thus, the mental models and frames emerged from a careful and semi-structured eliciting process and a subsequent close analysis and coding of the narratives.

4.1.1.1 Step-by-step interview process

In the first study, my main supervisor conducted one interview. Here I participated as an observer to get insight into the specific ZMET interview techniques. As an otherwise experienced interviewer, I conducted the remaining 26 interviews over a period of 12 months. We both analyzed the full transcriptions to secure more nuanced interpretations and minimize subjective bias. In the MHA study, the first round of in-depth interviews and the interim interview took place over a period of 6 months. Here, the first three interviews were conducted by the interviewer, while being observed by the other researcher. My main supervisor conducted yet another two interviews and I did the remaining six interviews. This was done to secure a common understanding of the organizational setting and interview procedures. The in-depth interviews with managers, ranging from Social media Managers to the Executive Vice Presidents, reflect how different managers in the same company make sense of social media, not only in the context of their business' interaction with customers, but also in the light of the internal business situation and the external market situation.

In order to assess the progression of the strategic reframing process, I had a follow-up meeting with the Director of Business Development in May 2015. I conducted an

interim interview with the CDO seven-eight months after the first interview round and six months into the strategic change process. As part of a longitudinal study, all the informants will sit in for re-interviews 12 month after the first interview round to assess the developments in their mental models and reframing processes.

Management interviews First round	Follow-up meeting Director, Business Development	Interim interview CDO	Management interviews Second round
Oct.-Nov. 2014	May 2015	June 2015	Oct-Nov. 2015

Table 4.1.1 1: Interview Time Table MHA

Photo elicitation technique

Both the across-company study and the MHA study use photo-elicitation techniques by which each informant is invited to expand on, categorize, and prioritize pictures representing their thoughts and feelings about business–customer interactions. The primary argument for applying this technique is that thought arises from images, which are topographically organized neural representations that occur in the early sensory cortices (Zaltman 1997; Koutstaal 2012). Language is not the same as thought because two thirds of all stimuli reach the brain through the visual system (Kosslyn et al. 1993). This suggests that by applying techniques that engage and/or monitor imaginary activity more directly, managers can get closer to the way their thought occurs and thereby provide more complete representations of their thoughts and accounts of their behaviors (Zaltman 1997).

In the MHA study, there was specific focus on media usage as focus was on the cognitive and behavioral transition from print to digital media. The informants gave the interviewer general insights on the strategic situation of the company and its routines and history in the beginning. This was important in order to understand how the contextual aspects influence on their framing and how disruptive they anticipated the transition from print to digital media to be.

All the informants were asked to define and explain their use of associative words and metaphors as the interview progressed. The interviewer asked for elaborations after

In the closing part of the interview, informants were asked to describe their business and the market situation five years ahead, how they used or anticipated using social media as well as describing how social media would influence their industry and the organization.

In the study across companies each interview lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, resulting in 332 single-spaced transcribed pages. In the study within a company each interview lasted 75 minutes resulting in 198 single-spaced transcribed pages. The interviews were supplied by a follow-up survey to validate the qualitative data. All the informants received the transcribed interviews for review. Though initially hidden, informants can often recognize their underlying drivers when these are identified (Zaltman and Coulter 1995). Only one informant corrected a detail related to the company name. Two-thirds of the interviews were followed up by a workshop some weeks later in which informants were invited to discuss the findings in general and in relation to their businesses, which gave additional valuable insights to the research. On this occasion, they filled out a questionnaire centered on the theoretical dimensions of our model to determine whether our data and findings resonated with informants' sensemaking.

4.1.2 Pros and cons of a qualitative approach

Qualitative data analysis is used to organize the different forms of sensemaking. Qualitative data can generate meaning since we act on our assumptions, but seldom inspect them, as we tend to believe that other people share the same assumptions. As a qualitative research process is explorative and emergent rather than strictly planned, there is no guarantee that an interview yields the expected outcome. In the best case, it yields something better than the expected. In consequence, it is not possible to decide beforehand how many interviews are needed or when a maturity point is reached, which leaves the researcher in a rather humble position. The combination of theory, methods, and data is learned along the way.

Moreover, opposed to the positivist paradigm, the study phenomenon (managerial cognition) is not independent of the researcher. Knowledge, defined as appropriate, contextual and actionable information (Desouza and Paquette 2011) cannot be discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements, as mentioned in chapter three. Facts and values blend, but still we attempt to analyze a phenomenon,

examine its component parts, build theory, and thus create a form of generalized knowledge. Knowledge gained from the analyses is established through the individual meanings attached to the phenomenon studied, being context- and time dependent and therefore rather specific, also mentioned in the method section.

In the enquiry process, interaction with the informant to obtain data changes both researcher and informant. Knowledge is in that sense co-created, why the positivist distinction 'researcher' and 'researched' does not make sense. The lack of a clear distinction requires that I stay aware of the epistemological and scientific positioning, and understand the unavoidable bias of the epistemological position. The causality governing this research is that the way managers think business-customer interaction has an effect on their social media sensemaking and behavior. Likewise, I assume that sensemaking (framing) determines to what extent managers can expand their cognitive range of learning. Generation of testable predictions about mental activity through establishment of causal relationships is considered a method to anticipate future acts, which is central to strategy, in other words, change in strategic thinking leads to change in strategic behavior. However, it is easy and tempting to verify and confirm such causalities by searching for confirmations rather than empirical falsifications, especially the more consistent the framework becomes.

During the analyses, the transcripts are further processed from the researcher's interpretation of the informants' contexts as well as interpretations in the attempt to create a new understanding regarding the phenomena, why it is impossible to isolate pre-understandings at any level. Awareness of the experiential dimensions of doing qualitative data collection and analysis is therefore necessary. There is also a risk when working with abstract phenomena that the researcher get carried away and create complex explanations to simple behavior. When reaching a possible explanation I have asked myself two questions: 'Could there be a more simple explanation?' and 'Is the same explanation valid for other similar phenomena?'

Taking a retrospective view, analysis of everyday conversations could further validate the findings, as it would include the discursive construction of social identities instead of seeing to the more individual identities. To test whether the interview frame was suitable for accommodating the research purpose, an explorative pilot study was conducted with three focus groups to utilize the social and discursive dynamics of conversations. I tested this approach in a face-to-face setting by conducting three focus group interviews with 20 managers. Unfortunately, the sample was too scattered and it

did not give as deep insights as the individual interviews, which is why they were excluded from the data set.

Both pros and cons of the qualitative approach can be identified. A cognitive research argument is that the identification strongly depends on the preconceptions of the viewer, e.g., a researcher with a positivist background would have a propensity to criticize the qualitative approach based on quantitative standards. Regardless of scientific background it is vital to the quality and the outcome of the analysis to keep a reflective and critical perspective on both the methods applied and the results produced.

The analysis section presents in detail the coding process and theme identification of the two studies. This is followed by a discussion of analysis limitations.

4.2. Analysis

Rigor is necessary for generating meaning and meaningful results, which is why the analysis shows how conclusions are drawn from the data. Software was not used at any time, as the researcher is far more competent at seeing the complex ideas and perspectives in the transcripts, assuming that a researcher's logical rational reasoning is superior to any software. From the data we identified different, but relevant themes and discourses revolving around business-customer interaction, market situations, and different media types to substantiate the mental models and to assess the cognitive barriers defined in the first study as categorical thinking.

As mentioned above, a focus group interview was conducted in the preparatory phase of the study. Three groups of managers were asked to define social media to reveal deeper assumptions of their nature, function, and business relevance. In the attempt to grasp the social media phenomenon, the managers gave very broad, and in many cases contradictory, definitions of the social media phenomenon, despite their assessment of their impact as highly disruptive for their businesses and markets. This increased the interest of conducting a social media case study in a strategic context of business-customer interaction.

The mapping of the different definitions given by the informants forms a conceptual landscape that widens, rather than narrows the conceptual horizon of social media. It

shows the broad variety of terms in use; however, the informants select identical abstract concepts to describe another abstract concept. There was no evidence found that a specific social media platform encouraged a specific framing or mental model, which argues for the further use of the more abstract term ‘social media’.

The categorization of managers’ sensemaking of social media was supported by an analysis and organization of the aggregated selection of concepts derived from the in-depth interviews. The four conceptual clusters relate to particular mental models discovered through the elaborations. A conceptual mapping of social media was the preliminary step towards the development of the central theoretical proposition of this dissertation, the Social Media Sensemaking Model (SMSM), presented in chapter 5. All the informants described social media along the cognition/action axes displayed in Figure 4.2 below.

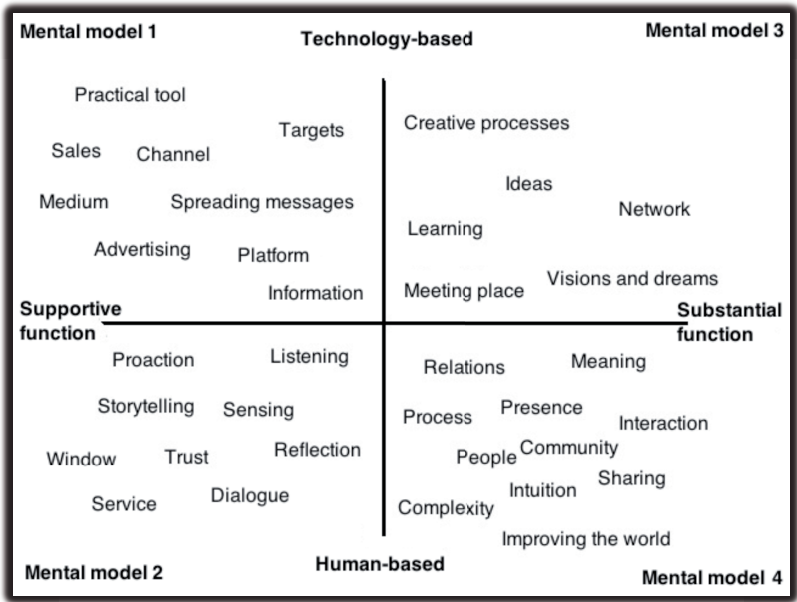


Figure 4.2: Conceptual map of social media

The vertical axis depicts the human-technology dimension of social media, as social media primarily are cognized as involving technology and people. The structural information is supplied by a detailed description of the social media functionality. It can be challenging at strategic level as knowledge of social media functionality is like knowledge of a car brake: it is not necessary for managers to know in detail how social media work, just that they work. This can be used to explain why the social media phenomenon usually is discussed at strategy level without a prior knowledge assessment of how social media are cognized.

A relationship of technical and human factors denotes two essential poles of a dialectic process as discovered through the interviews. Informants moved between the technology-based perceptions of social media as being objects (like a telephone) that can connect people. The human-based perspective, on the other hand, frames social media as human communications that discursively change the world by enabling new technology and future. This subject-object dichotomy not only describes the social reality of managers, it also forms the comparative dynamics of the analysis by displaying the dialectic interplay between the human-technology dimensions.

The horizontal axis refers to the value and role of social media in a professional context as being of central or peripheral value to the company's overall strategic performance, leading to particular social media actions. Social media defined as either having a supportive function or as having a substantial function rests on underlying organizational foundations and assumptions, e.g., the willingness to - and necessity of - change and innovation, taking risks, creation of transparency at the interface of organization and its environment, control slack, and customer influence. The axis aligns with the distinction presented by Varadarajan and Yadav (2009, p.12) in the area of marketing strategy in internet-enabled environments "that represents decisions concerning augmentation of a business' current marketing strategy by leveraging the potential of the Internet. The opposite end represents decisions that entail radical departures from the current marketing strategy (i.e., competing in fundamentally new and different ways by leveraging the potential of the internet)."

In both studies quotes were extracted to illustrate the managerial cognition. In the MHA study barriers were defined in relation to a reframing process study and photos supplement the quotes. The analysis works as a point of departure for discussing whether reframing requires shift between frames or if different frames can co-exist.

The empirical analysis provides further insights into the influence of mental models on strategic cognition within a field whose research is typically conceptually driven. The role of mental models represents an under-developed aspect of the study of market orientation more generally (Atuahene-Gima 2005). Other studies have shown how mental models influence customer decision making and preferences in interactions with businesses and how this insight may affect companies' subsequent strategic initiatives (e.g., Louie and Venkatesh 2013; Ringberg, Odekerken-Schröder, and Christensen 2007). Louie and Venkatesh (2013) provide an account that describes how social media have been conceptualized in different ways (e.g., as communications platforms, as both technologically and culturally constituted strategic tools for companies and political institutions) and how these different conceptualizations have led to different forms of usage (e.g., to achieve a broad communicative reach or to attain a transformational impact on the global society). Ringberg et al. (2007) exemplify how three types of cultural models of the business–customer interaction lead to different sensemaking of the service recovery expectations among slighted customers. This study provides empirical evidence that mental models also influence the underlying values that orient rational decision-making among managers, with direct effects on the level of strategic performance of social media.

In both studies of this dissertation, the first coding cycle focused on review of each transcript from an exploratory perspective asking, “What does this text contain?” (Carley and Palmquist 1992). The purpose was to understand the text's general sense and narrative structure, to further optimize the data analysis procedures and to detect overall conceptual patterns and variations in the data (Saldana 2013). From reading the narratives and sensemaking, we identified managers' perceptions, values, belief systems, and attitudes toward business–customer interactions, and the study in MHA was extended with understandings of the relation between print media and social media.

Categories were identified from each manager's narrative that permeated his or her representation. The approach aligns with grounded theory, particularly the way Corbin and Strauss (2008) developed it, in which an iterative, but careful, execution of these steps secures the identification of recurrent and influential themes. This was a critical task because in the studies across companies some managers' social media sensemaking varied, but still related to identical mental models; for example, three informants conceptualized social media differently as a “network,” “connection tool,” or “innovation tool” but were driven by the same way of making sense of the

interaction with customers (i.e., the mental model of business-*with*-customers). In the MHA study, the strategic frame analysis was equally careful about the managers, especially because some managers used digital media and social media synonymously. Consequently, it was deemed necessary to identify one concept among a range of synonyms to best represent informants' social media sensemaking and that had the strongest discursive support in marketing research. During the final analysis, the findings were organized so that it was possible to visualize (see Figure 5) the connection from social media sensemaking to mental models to historical antecedents.

As mentioned in the method chapter, the strategic frame analysis was conducted while being conscious of the mental models from the first empirical study. However, the case and focus differed between the studies, so the analysis of the transcripts identified how managers anticipated the impact of social media on the organizational routines and a subsequent need for learning. Despite the categorization of social media sensemaking in the study across companies, the MHA study re-conceptualized the sensemaking models (sell and promote, listen and learn, connect and collaborate, and Empower and Engage) to fit the corporate context and to define how identification of the four strategic frames can be used as a point of departure for strategic transformation through reframing.

Following the same procedure, quotes and photos illustrate the underlying logics, values, drivers, capabilities, structure, and learning potential of implementing social media. This is based on the understanding that language reveals the contextual influence in terms of meaning related to beliefs and ideas that predispose certain strategic management values and capabilities. The findings in chapter five illustrate how the different mental models of business-customer interaction and the frames of social media in unique ways present opportunities for reframing.

4.2.1 Analysis limitations

Like in any other research design, this analysis has its limitations. It is based on data retrieved from manager interviews, and managers' interpretation of their customers and their desired outcome of the business-customer interaction. Relevant parameters like age or the recency of the cognized phenomenon impact the cognitive ability to flexibly and appropriately change between categorical-reflective and concrete-abstract

processing (Koutstaal 2012). The analysis does not account for such parameters, though it is relevant for understanding strategic cognition of social media. It may tell us something about the specific obstacles that senior managers experience or how the daily work with social media influence their cognitive processing. In general, it points towards cognitive obstacles to flexibly adapting to new technology and show how mental models and antecedents, such as previous experience, produce these barriers.

The dissertation does not go in-depth with the findings that managers tend to over-rely on incidental and superficial features of the strategic issue or problem (social media). Here, a manager with sales and marketing experience, but being a non-expert in social media, may be too tied into the literal and original context and the particular situations in which social media are used (using social media as a sales and marketing tool). Inappropriate sensitivity to the surface details of information in learning situations may result in an inert knowledge problem, where the manager is able to express the 'correct' knowledge, but is not able to apply it onto the practical situations where it is needed. This can be difficult to overcome and requires direct and deliberate means, but a question then arises: *Who is to instruct the manager but the manager herself?* By not including these aspects into my work I unintentionally risk to assert causality in cognitive processing between upload of mental models and conceptualization of a phenomenon and problem.

Another limitation to pay attention to is that though the analysis accounts for the range of experience among the informants, it does not elaborate on the role of expert-novice influence on abstract-concrete processing, which also plays a role (Koutstaal 2012). This could be important, as novices often show an overdependence on contextual reminding rather than flexibly adapt it to different contexts. Experience level may therefore influence to what extent people in an organization is able to resolve conflicting social media interpretations and practices.

In the first study, the managers came from rather 'local' geographical settings, in this case California and Colorado in the US and Denmark and Italy in Europe. Moreover, the managers came from very different companies operating in different industries with a diversity of history and products/services. Such sampling could be accused of a geographical bias and not taking into account that the companies' use of social media is largely determined by the factors mentioned. However, as this is not a cross-cultural study as such, but a study focusing on the individual manager's cognition of social

media, not the company's use of social media, it does not make sense to take such stringent sampling method.

As stated above, software, e.g., Nvivo, was not used at any time, assuming that the researcher is far more competent at seeing the complex ideas and perspectives in the transcripts. However, when the coding is done manually, the research quality strongly depends on the skills of the researcher. Moreover, it is more easily influenced by personal biases and idiosyncrasies. In this case, in-depth interviewing was not novel to me, and I was guided by my main supervisor, who can be considered an expert in the ZMET interview method. Also the follow-up sessions with some of the managers reduce the risks of a personal bias leading to a low research quality.

Having accounted for the most relevant analysis limitations, the next chapter presents the findings of the analysis.

Chapter 5

Chapter five presents the findings of the study across companies and the MHA study. The findings address the research statements to fulfill the purpose of this dissertation. The Social Media Sensemaking Model conceptualizes managers' shared mental models of business-customer interaction, the underlying historical antecedents that inform each mental model and explain and illustrate how the shared mental models influence on individual social media sensemaking. The study in MHA extends the findings from the first study, as these findings display, through a strategic reframing approach, how awareness of different social media sensemakings (frames) enables the managers to initiate socio-cognitive learning processes in the organization and thus meet the challenges of converting from print to digital media.

Consistency is a virtue of an ass. No thinking human being can be tied down to a view once expressed in the name of consistency. More important than consistency is responsibility. A responsible person must learn to unlearn what he has learned. A responsible person must have the courage to rethink and change his thoughts. Of course there must be good and sufficient reason for unlearning what he has learned and for recasting his thoughts. There can be no finality in rethinking (Emerson).

5. Findings

The words of the American teacher and poet, Emerson, capture the essence of the findings chapter as well as the managerial implications: the managerial responsibility of continuous rethinking and being reflective about the reasons for unlearning. I begin by introducing the framework (see Figure 5), which provides an overview of how managers' social media sensemaking is influenced by mental models, which in turn are rooted in socio-historical antecedents. The mental model theory provides a framework for understanding the cognitive barriers to adopting new technology among managers. It indicates that such resistance may have less to do with technicalities, logistics, and financials and more to do with deeply anchored categorical thinking. Although this chapter argues that social media enable otherwise marginalized mental models to emerge, dominant mental models still assert strong resistance that slows down potential advancement enabled by fast-developing technology.

The Social Media Sensemaking Model presented below can be applied by managers to identify and articulate good and sufficient reasons for unlearning what they have learned, and such reframing process is similarly about changing definitions and verbal presentations. The model provides a stepping-stone for a strategic framing analysis to rigorously investigate the empirical indications in a single company context. This also allows a more context-specific analysis and terminology that reflect the shared understandings among managers in an organization. For instance the “promote-and-sell” sensemaking is reflected by a “broadcast frame”, which denotes a shared understanding of promoting and selling by broadcasting news on social media.

The presentation of the MHA study findings therefore follows the findings of the study across companies. The analysis demonstrates how paying attention to language and context can provide insight into existing frames in a company to spot the frames that dominate the social media discourse(s). The analysis in MHA illustrates how each strategic framing 1) releases a unique knowledge potential, 2) rests on underlying assumptions that propose a certain form of customer interaction, 3) assumes particular capabilities, 4) requires certain proficiencies, 5) leads to specific results, and 6) draws different strategic horizons.

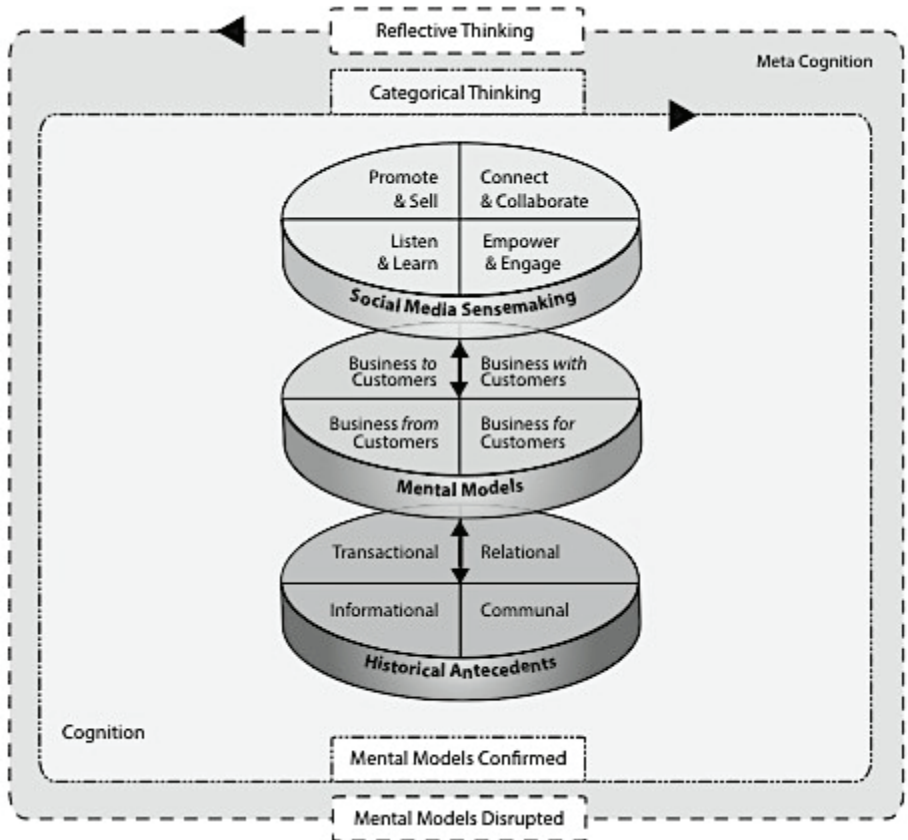


Figure 5: The Social Media Sensemaking Model (SMSM) Rydén, Ringberg, and Wilke (2015).

The Figure serves two purposes. First, it depicts how each mental model of business–customer interactions (middle layer) influences a unique sensemaking of social media (top layer) and is influenced by unique socio-historical antecedents from which sensemaking gains its sustenance (bottom layer). Second, the punctuated lines in the figure illustrate the categorical and reflective processes involved in sensemaking. Conceptually, for managers to overcome categorical (static cognitive) thinking, they need to move into reflective (dynamic meta-cognitive) thinking. When a manager is able to reflect on his or her thought processes, it sets the stage for a potential disruption

of the existing mental model, enabling the potential for adjustment in the fit between a given situation and its sensemaking, for example between a company's strategic orientation and its customers' preferences. This process helps managers do the right things for the right reasons. A manager expresses the importance for managers to overcome categorical thinking, as a prerequisite for adjusting the fit between changing customer behavior and company responsiveness.

“As the customers change, the way you advertise, the way you talk with customers change as well.... The very core of the American culture and the viewpoint of multiculturalism is changing. The customers are much more multi-culturally oriented, and only when you have a similar culture and strategy, then things really change. There are tons of case studies of companies doing the same things for fifty years and then suddenly they realize that the industry changes and they have to change their activities and their assets to be able to follow the consumers along their own stories along their own path, along their own perspectives. We need to change this in order to empathize with them and market to them and understand what values that they care about.” (MK, 29)

The following sections describe the sensemaking of social media (with relevant quotes), after which the related mental models and historical antecedents are depicted. This is done for each of the four domains identified (within each of the three layers). Each quadrant is extended with the findings from the strategic frame analysis at MHA and related to the learning dimensions depicted in the Strategic Reframework of Social Media (see Table 5.4).

5.1 Social Media Sensemaking: Promote and Sell

Upper-left Quadrant

The first quadrant represents sensemaking of social media as tools to enhance one-way communication and to target existing and potential customers through social media advertising and sales. Social media are used to create and/or reach more customers faster. According to Malthouse et al. (2013), many companies begin by uploading advertising spots to create awareness and change attitudes among prospective customers. Transaction-focus measurement is at the core, and social media are

considered an additional channel for communicating to the marketplace (see Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes 2013; Rapp et al. 2013). Both small and large companies use social media in this way (Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes 2013), making the process top-down controlled. However, a top-down approach is preferable for managing strategic integration in a high-commitment, high-turbulence context like MHA (Eisenmann and Bower 2000). A shop owner applies a similar mind-set when describing her use of social media:

*I only use them [social media] to advertise for my business and, **of course**, to create additional sale. [Q: How do you think it (a Facebook site) can do that?] Well, I haven't spent so much time or money to get out there, pop-ups and all that stuff you find in the right column. But still, my page is some form of advertising. I imagine the stuff in the right column would be the same. I don't believe social media can drive the business, but I do believe it impacts my turnover. (IN, 51)*

The wording “of course” reveals a taken-for-granted attitude typical for categorical thinking. An unquestioned mental model of the business–consumer interaction governs her social media use. Thus, the value of social media stays within a transactional realm and is not used to create input, dialogue, and/or engagement with a prospective customer. Another informant reflects a similar sensemaking of social media as add-on sales channels:

*Social media are active or passive advertising. If you just display your product or brand or mention hereof, I see it as passive advertising. I see it as active advertising too, when customers talk positively about my business, my brands, and products. The point is to get some messages out, such as “see this product from the trade fair.” Some will then respond “how interesting” and then they “like” it on Facebook and share it with other friends. **It isn't word-of-mouth, it is “word-of-computer” where you spread messages** to show your presence and increase awareness. It is a way to get out of the shop and into the world. (CO, 55)*

The quote “It isn't word-of-mouth, it is ‘word-of-computer’” exemplifies how a face-to-face (i.e., offline) interaction logic is transferred unreflectively to the online world. Several managers in this quadrant use the term “spreading messages” to describe business communication to consumers. This position is echoed in the interview with AE, who despite a question (posed toward the end of the interview session) asking about potential different usages of social media still maintained a transaction focus:

Social media are targeting [customers], because if you use social media it is with a clear purpose.... The aim of using social media professionally is to spread messages about my business, making it present and tell people what we can. [Q: Could you use it ... for interaction with customers, stakeholders, and all those who influence the direction of the store and your ideas?] I don't see it that way. It is more informing [customers] about our activities and new products. (AE, 56)

The resemblance to a traditional business-to-customer interaction is striking (also see Labrecque et al. 2013), in that both the initial contact and the end purpose are to sell. In a similar vein, Malthouse et al. (2013) state that companies that produce and distribute useful media-like content do so to attract audiences and sell more products or services in the future. Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching (2013, p. 239) describe such use of social media by stating that “recent innovations by Facebook such as the Gifts-option indicate that a potential for success exists if transaction-focused social commerce is done competently.” Similarly, Rapp et al. (2013, p. 553) refer to studies in which “social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook gave businesses a chance to promote their products,” and Yadav et al. (2013, p. 312) refer to “social commerce” as “exchange-related activities that occur in, or are influenced by, an individual’s social network in computer-mediated social environments, where the activities correspond to need recognition, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages of a focal exchange.”

The instrumental approach aligns with Table 1.1 and is exemplified well by Peters et al. (2013), who offer a theoretical framework for managers to ‘take a better top-down approach to social media metrics and dashboards’ by combining divergent theoretical foundations and levels of analysis. The concepts of ‘systems’, ‘tools’, ‘dashboard’, and ‘metrics’ indicate a rather techno-centric (Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson 2013) and instrumental understanding, however, supplemented with psychology, e.g. Stimulus-Organism-Response (Bandura 1971; Belk 1975) and a Motivation-Opportunity-Ability paradigm (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski 1991).

Mental Model: Business-to-Customers

The promote-and-sell social media sensemaking is embedded in the business-to-customers mental model. This mental model is primarily selling oriented and reveals

an instrumentally oriented understanding of the business–customer interaction. The following quote by a shop owner illustrates a focus on product features and explains why she decides to communicate with the customers in a sell and promote manner:

When I am ordering goods I look for the visual, design, quality, and comfort. When I assess that this is a good product, I start to consider “who is this female customer?” Is it her or the young one, or both? [Q: What about the customers’ needs?] They come second, because I sell other products than my competitors. [Q: You attract the customers, who like your products?] Yes, I have done so far and even gained new customers. (IN, 51)

The managers holding the business-to-customers mental model do not recognize a potential interest customers might have in engaging and dialoguing with the company. Research presented in the review shows that even in larger companies, managers rely on social media to enhance one-way communication (see Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes 2013). Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching (2013, p. 238) provide a vivid bowling metaphor to describe the one-directional broadcasting approach to marketing where “the marketing content is the ball, customers are the pins, and media as metaphorically conceived as the ‘bowling alley.’” As the next section reveals, this marketing approach has prevailed for more than 100 years and still dominates the marketplace (Grönroos 1994).

Historical Antecedents: Transactional

In the beginning of the 20th century and until the 1950s, business–customer interactions focused primarily on encouraging customers to transact with the company to buy its products and/or services. The prevailing management discourse was business-centric and characterized by rationalization and administrative and financial control (Gardner and Thomas 1985). Hierarchical structures positioned managers as knowledgeable authorities possessing the power and right to speak to customers (Cohen 1991). In a more recent version of company-controlled interaction (i.e., the resource-based view, Wernerfelt 1984), marketers control the flow of communications through the media to customers (Winer 2009). Here, marketers adopted strategies and tactics to sell more products and services to the passive and uninformed customer.

Such sales philosophy shows little concern with relationship building and involves an outbound (i.e., inside-out) marketing approach that talks to or at customers, but not with them (Lusch and Vargo 2009). Communication is perceived as a linear, management-steered, one-way process in which the company defines direction and message content through different channels to the receiving customers. Shannon and Weaver (1955) echo this view by depicting communication as a process of transmitting messages. Law, Lau, and Wong (2003) note that the business-to-customer term is a good indicator that researchers still concentrate their focus on the traditional interpretation of customers as passive and the company as active.

5.1.1 Interpretation of the upper left quadrant in MHA: Broadcast framing

In alignment with the ‘promote-and sell’ sensemaking, the “broadcast frame” reflects an understanding of social media as technology that can be selectively adopted to supplement traditional news media and marketing channels such as online papers and advertising. There is no immediate reason to develop new understandings or capabilities, as social media activities are applied and organized around existing understandings. Learning consists of reproduction of existing operational skills. A manager reveals his observation of a changed customer behavior, which is accommodated:

“We have to acknowledge that 20 years ago people got their information from newspapers or the news. Today, it often happens through Facebook and other social media, and, of course, traditional media.” (JX, 49)

The primary goal of social media application is thus to support the existing business by meeting marketing objectives and selling news (Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes 2013) through increased customer reach, segmentation, and WOM (Shih 2009). It is not a deliberate strategic choice with the purpose of transforming the organization. A general conception is that social media allow MHA to broadcast to the market without restraint, which explains the instrumental understanding of social media as a broadcasting tool (Zhao and Rosson 2009). This aligns with the reviewed works (e.g., Brown, Broderick, and Lee 2007; Kozinets et al. 2010; Spurgeon 2008; Zhao and Rosson 2009) that have praised social media for having a “broadcast” nature.

Some informants in MHA directly describe social media as a resort to create monetary value through advertising in forms of revenue and customer attention. Other informants considered using networks for influencing sales (see Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching 2013). Social media also present “teasers” that lure customers to buy their print or online products. The social media function is to spread “news about the news”, information, messages, and promotion in a way that the print media did earlier. As the informant explains:

“As a member of a running club, I saw their press release in the newspaper. I would like to share it on a Facebook group, where I can post what the newspaper is writing about us. I would be able to share it with 100 people.” (JX, 49)

A broadcast approach to social media usually stems from Sales, Marketing, and PR, but in a media company it is also supported by Production. The middle managers are the key drivers of social media ad-hoc activities, however traditional management control is preserved through hierarchal structures. MHA was several times described as a bureaucracy of many administrative layers. Informants explain that top management does not allocate sufficient resources to social media activities, which legitimates the constraints of social media activities. So managers, who apply this frame, acknowledge the social media impact on customer behavior, but give it a lower priority.

“There are a billion tasks, so Facebook is just a small thing of what I do. I know it sounds like a cliché, but there is not really time for it. The idea is that we have to be on social media and I feel that we are that. But it would be nice with more resources, so we could prioritize it more.” (MJ, 35)

The knowledge gained from social media activity in this frame is how to organize offline/online activities in its existing form as this is seen as the primary challenge. Some managers describe the online-offline activities as a mess when the routines and criteria of the print media are transferred to the online media. The manager explains:

“The reason why I took this picture (image 5.1.1) is that it makes me think of the lack of a strong horizontal platform internally, so our customer offers are based on a box of Lego bricks or built up over the years by bits and pieces, some old and some new, some modern, some outdated.... Today, we are forced to treat the customers in many different ways. The way we attack our customers is not necessarily an expression of an overall strategic thinking, but rather a product thinking.” (GF, 49)

Since social media are still seen as ‘a supplement to print media and their execution rely on the same qualifications of good journalism, they do not, alone by their use, initiate deeper learning and strategic change. The same tools and analytical frameworks are used for customer segmentation, thus the response is not subject to further correction. The manager explains why he does not find it necessary to measure social media impact in other ways:

“Well, it is simply not necessary. It will not make me sell more, but if there is a situation where I can use it, then I will ask for it.” (JX, 49)

When managers assume that social media can supplement the generation of profits on broadcast and advertising (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Seraj 2012), there is not much learning to gain besides mere tool practice at operational and tactical level, e.g., how to use the different social media platforms is not considered as fulfilling the optimal strategic purpose. The commitment from the business as well as the customer is rational rather than affective, why this strategic framing does not enhance social bonding. Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson (2013) and Rapp et al. (2013, p 561), state that “firms must balance their social media foci between increasing sales and more general relationship-building (through service) to avoid being seen as opportunistic in their social media usage behaviors.”

The analysis of the first quadrant underscores that applying this frame only will hinder MHA in adjusting to their customers and the market changes as it prevents them from settling the traditional print activities. The time spent on making sense of the online activities in an offline context could be better spent if social media and other digital technologies were understood on customer and market premises (outside-in perspective) rather than product premises (inside-out perspective) alone.

5.2 Social Media Sensemaking: Listen and Learn

Lower-left Quadrant

Although customers become central within this orientation, as social media are used to observe and analyze customers, companies still take the initiative to decide when, how,

and what information to collect. Social media become a “listening tool” or “window” into customers’ world, but they do not involve a customer-initiated dialogue. As such, managers still use social media as one-way channels, focusing on collecting rather than disseminating information. As Chui et al. (2012, p. 2) state, “companies are watching what consumers do and say to one another on social media, which provides unfiltered feedback and behavioral data (e.g., do people who ‘like’ this movie also ‘like’ that brand of vodka?).” In the following quote, a marketing manager explains the company’s use of social media primarily as intelligence tools that accesses information, such as demography, psychography, business-specific customer sentiments, and purchase intentions (Beaubien 2008; Casteleyn, Mottart, and Rutten 2009; Hardley 2009):

*I define social media as listening, because it is something, I think, many do. There is a lot about users sharing information, but **I think** most people listen. You receive more than you produce. Of course, there are some who are very productive, but very many get informed by social media. As a company you listen in order to identify the environmental complexity.... A company can mirror its success on social media by listening to what people think of our products, our company, and our brand and how they experience it. By listening we can learn on the way (JS, 38).*

The company receives more than it produces, which underscores the influence of the business-from-customers mental model. Moreover, we identify categorical thinking in this quote because the manager assumes (“I think”) that many others share this mental model. A 38-year-old director emphasizes that a general misunderstanding of social media is to regard it as an inside-out channel when he states, “don’t speak; listen!” which aligns with Berthon et al. (2012, p. 269), who write, “Marketers will have to listen and learn rather than preach.” A retail manager describes social media as primarily informative media due to customer preferences:

***People want to be heard.** We can see how Facebook is used and what gets commented upon. If it can be achieved, then I don’t think it is a problem to engage people. **People want to deliver insight** and all have an opinion on retail business and what a super market should look like and what goods they should sell. (LH, 53)*

Again, we find the listen and learn sensemaking enabled by gathering insights into customers who are willing to share them. Constantinides, Romero, and Boria (2008) note how marketers, by monitoring the social media space, can obtain quality

information about online customers at a fraction of the time and cost required than when using traditional market research for this purpose. This corresponds to review findings where Schweidel and Moe (2012) describe how social media are used as customer intelligence tools by investigating the potential to “listen in” on social media conversations.

From a strategic perspective, monitoring customer communication is a management task done to identify trends and avoid crises (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching 2013). Although customers are likely to be better served by a company that knows their needs, the communication balance is still in favor of the company, which leads to a relational paradox (Mick and Fournier 1998), in which access to massive customer data leads to an uneven power structure favoring the company (Truong and Simmons 2010).

Mental Model: Business-from-Customers

The second mental model reflects a market orientation. Here, the focus is on gathering customer information and listening to customers to explore their sentiments, needs, and preferences, to optimize segmentation, gain positioning, and secure customer loyalty. The marketing manager (JS) quoted previously explains how a company can mirror its success on social media by listening to how people experience the company and its products. The importance of being observant in interactions with the customers also governs in physical settings:

Well, last Friday, I dragged some customers to sit at the computer and take a look at our home page to ask them about their impression and if they could use it. (JS, 38)

As this brief quote reveals, customer insights are deemed very important. The company controls (i.e., “I dragged some customers”) when, how, and, to some degree, what type of information should be collected and especially acted on. The quote displays similar business–customer interactions in the shop and on social media, which confirms our work assumption that managers’ social media sensemaking and use are governed by their mental models of business–customer interactions. The retail manager (LH) quoted previously on how social media can increase insights also depicts an industry-reasoned understanding of the importance of listening to the customers:

The competitive situation of retailing, especially in this area, is to know exactly what the customers expect from us and how they experience us, and the things we do. We have just completed a large customer analysis with a high response rate, which provides us with a “here-and-now” picture of the situation and how we have developed. We need the customers’ input on “what do we need?” to know how we can make ourselves more attractive and relevant to our customers. (LH, 53)

The manager asks customers to express their voice and opinions, which represents a mental model of business-*from-customer*. The underlying assumptions of the reasons to build such a relationship with the customers are, first, that communication with the business is in the customers’ interest (“people want to be heard,” and “people want to deliver insight”) and, second, that the desire to listen and learn from customers is vital for the company’s competitiveness. These assumptions are so self-evident to the manager that they become subject to categorical thinking.

Historical Antecedents: Informational

With the informational focus, companies began looking to the customer for ways to improve their products and services in increasingly competitive environments. In accordance, a new philosophy of business known as “the marketing concept” emerged (Houston 1986). Drucker (2002) defines the purpose of business as creating a satisfied customer, emphasizing that the main factor in successful marketing is to understand customers and their needs, which changed how businesses evaluated their success. Listening to the customer in the form of customer and market analyses thus became a vital marketing approach (Barry 1987; Hennig-Thurau and Klee 1997). In management discourse, the company slowly shifted focus to the external environment. Managers began “listening” to market developments, conducting market analyses, and applying generic strategies with a strong focus on customers, competitors, context, and collaborators. Thus, this focus differs from the transaction focus as companies are more sensitized to fulfilling customer’ needs by listening to their inputs.

5.2.1 Interpretation of the lower left quadrant in MHA: Intelligence Framing

The “listen-and-learn” social media sensemaking was identified in MHA for the same

purpose of listening and understanding customer needs (either stated or hidden) Such market-focused intelligence generation (Dawar 2013; Jaworski and Kohli 1993; Slater and Narver 2000) relates to the second learning form, characterized by analysis of its environment. The shared logic is that analysis of its environment will bring customer insights for adaptation of the company's products and services. Appropriation (see table 2.1.6) is a concept that has been frequently used in socio-cultural learning theory, e.g., Rogoff (1995) talks of appropriation as the process by which individuals transform their understanding of, and responsibility for, activities through their own participation. In this case the interactional routines can be appropriated through language (dialogue) and technology (social media).

Managers, who view social media through this frame, assume that customer intelligence gained from listening yields learning as a business advantage. However, some informants mention how it is a challenge for some journalists and managers with a journalist background to let the customers decide what is interesting content. One manager use a photo of mixed herbs as a metaphor for MHA's heterogeneous customer base and to show how important it is for the customer that they understand it and adapt to it:

*"To me, a modern media company works with a very fragmented culture and a very fragmented customer base, which in many ways do things in similar and different ways.....even though we have different colors and backgrounds, I think of respect for the differences, when I see this photo. Our customers are very different but if you manage to make a difference, to **recognize them for their uniqueness**. I don't know if you know the feeling, but it is so nice when **service is customized**." (GF, 49)*

The diversity of their customers is important for the company to understand and respect, so long as it does not interfere with the existing power balance (it is MHA, who recognize their customers) or intrude customer-defined content into their news platforms (MHA customizes the services, not the customers).

The learning stimuli of understanding a varied customer base is appropriative as "Intelligence is generated when data are collected and given meaning with respect to changing the potential range of organizational behavior" (Slater and Narver 2000, p. 121). Schön (1983) provides the example of the market researcher, who monitors customers' reactions towards a new product and discovers that the customers use the product in other ways than what was originally intended. He then reacts by rethinking

the product as a result of his discovery of the consumers' discoveries. This ties into the learning element described below as the rethinking leads to questioning existing theories, facts, rules, procedures, and assumptions. With the generation and use of big data from customers it subsequently requires knowledge of how the data is created and in what context it is created or gathered, which may take different measurement methods. It takes that the manager can describe the data production process behind the interface in order to avoid a 'black box' issues.

By such, the professional creates a new practice and expertise based on acknowledgements and reflection. Therefore the frame provides a basis for second order learning and development of new competencies, as managers analyze input and share it and collectively form shared interpretation of how to respond to the market. Intelligence becomes a critical source of competitive advantage, so employees on MHA ask for customers' comments to spark a dialog with the purpose of gaining insight, as one manager express it:

"We have to enter a dialog with them, because we can't do this alone" (DC, 56).

Another manager explains how they can relate their efforts to the customer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004a) and discover whether there are unmet customer needs that can be better targeted:

"I think they [customers] feel as part of an entity, but I also think that they feel listened to, that their opinions count, and that the products we make are not just based on what we think or want to make, but based on or what we hear that they want." (MJ, 35)

A similar remark comes from another manager, who deals with selling travel and experience services, when we ask him how much it means for MHA that they listen to their customers.

*"I think it means a lot. It is essential that you listen to what the customers want. If not, you will not end up with the right product assortment. **The rest of the company, which is on publishing and journalism, they could gain from listening to their customers.**" (JD, 27)*

This frame is rooted in such logic implying that marketers develop an understanding of customers' behavior through social media to secure the greatest level of customer

satisfaction, and consequently, increased product- and service adaptation, which, at the end of the day, leads to increased sales. By the last, but critical sentence, the informant implies that marketing and sales possess the competency of listening to their customers, as opposed to the rest of the managers and employees. This confirms the assumption, stated in chapter three, that social media implementation is not an evolutionary process developing naturally from marketing into the business strategic level; rather it requires shifts in managerial mindsets, which are often experienced as ‘unnatural’ and disruptive.

On social media, customer interactions can be examined and interpreted by marketers in a ‘natural setting’, which makes the data more reliable, as one informant explains:

*“Sometimes our customers come up with their opinion if they think something is too bad, annoying or if they think something is good, but they **usually write the negative stuff, but sometimes it is also positive.** This is the sort of interaction we have with our customers.” (JD, 27)*

The quote expresses how ‘interaction’ is made sense of as online reviewing of MHA’s products and services. Identification of trends and crises from social media monitoring (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching 2013) requires that the managers take the customers’ input seriously:

“First of all you have to take what comes in seriously and show them that you take things seriously. On social media it has to do with keeping an eye on what is going on out there on our social media platforms.” (JD, 27)

Some of the managers, who apply this frame, generate statistical data from Google analytics, such as most read, what do people like, share and comment. It is used as an indicator for what the customers find interesting. Others are less systematic and analytical in their ‘listening approach,’ but just take the complaints in as a service recovery function.

Convergence of antecedents of marketing productivity concerns, customer diversity, and development of new technologies lead to more customer-centric marketing that emphasizes the understanding and satisfaction of the needs, wants, and resources of individual consumers (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma 2000). Through conscious reflection the company can learn more about customers and can more deeply understand and

meet aspirations, desires, motivations, and behaviors (Schweidel and Moe 2012), as the informant explains:

“Everytime I make a post on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or other social media I think about what our customers want.... It is perhaps my personal understanding, but I think it is important to be heard; everything else is frustrating. In consequence, we get a medium with more targeted content, which I find very interesting. Knowing that I [as a customer] have an influence on what I want to see or hear about is on the platforms.” (MJ, 35)

As in the broadcast frame, marketing and sales managers are driving social media activities in the company, but with a potential of higher-order learning. Customer appropriation secures consistent competency development in the organization. It is not a question of ‘doing the right thing (using social media tactically correct), but doing things right (learning how consumers want to interact with the brand and the company). However, a criterion for gaining success from this approach is that the customers know what they want, which is not always the case (Zaltman 2003). While being responsive to customers’ stated preferences, competitors may choose to influence how customers perceive the relative importance of various purchase criteria and to introduce new, more favorable criteria (Dawar 2013).

5.3. Social Media Sensemaking: Connect and Collaborate

Upper-right Quadrant

From this perspective, social media are regarded as avenues to develop relationships with current and prospective customers (Hinchliffe and Kim 2012). Researchers who conceptualize social media in this manner argue that social media facilitate interaction *with* customers and other stakeholders and the sharing of skills and knowledge to improve business outcomes (e.g., Korsten, Lesser, and Cortada 2013). Connecting allows companies to tap into user experience, which provides a popular value network due to low entry barriers and versatile revenue models. Similarly, social media reflect a relationship philosophy that adds value for all participants through dynamic information sharing and creation (Hoegg et al. 2006). Although the idea of connecting and collaborating existed before social media, the technological advances gained

momentum to a point at which this interpretation now challenges previously dominant interpretations among traditional managers and marketers (Heiens 2000). This mental model aligns two highly ranked current trends of customer engagement and digitization (Chui et al. 2012). Social media bring people into contact with one another, strengthen relationships, and also form new ties between existing relationship networks. A manager explains the principle in the following quote:

*“You may reach out and say “you said something and I am reviewing something” and we start talking, and I say “I am talking to this company, so we are doing that,” which is maintaining and continuing a relationship. **It is the same way** with social media; it is re-discovering being able to maintain interaction, shape the dialogue.” (LY, 57)*

The manager makes clear how the same interaction principles govern for the physical and virtual spheres and how social media are used to bypass the traditional marketing concept. He unreflectively applies the same mental model he uses to interact with customers in the offline situation to the online social media setting (“It is the same way”).

The following quote by a microbrewery owner reflects the greatness of social media as platforms for involving, bringing in, and sharing customers’ ideas:

“Our choice of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter is a trend to do it that way, because it’s free, it’s super easy. It’s a great way to get personal connections, it’s very fast and it reaches a lot of people. I think that is the great thing about the age we live in is that we can ride in using other people’s great ideas and inventions and just bring them all in.” (JO, 28)

As this quote suggests, social media enable a more innovative interaction with customers. Constantinides, Romero, and Boria (2008, p. 7) reflect this mental model in their definition of the online interaction with customers as “a collection of open-source, interactive, user-controlled online applications expanding the experience, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes.” These authors recognize that social media can be used to create informal and personalized interaction, thereby facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing efficient creation, dissemination, mutual sharing, and editing of company practices. As another manager explains:

“After many years in business it is clear as glass that if a company is to survive in the future, they have to be incredibly strong in the digital arena because that’s where competition will be. If they aren’t strategic about how to be digital, they won’t be here in ten years ahead [...] Starbucks has a fantastic loyalty platform; My Starbucks, which is socially enabled. It is based on Facebook, but is deeply integrated in their internal systems, so you can sit “real-time” and offer a friend on Facebook a cup of coffee. At the same time you gather points via an App, when you buy coffee. It’s an old idea but it is implemented in a very intelligent way and run from the belly of the organization. That stuff is only allowed if you have top management engagement, because it is very expensive.” (KS, 38)

This quote depicts the shift in mind-set toward using social media to engage in meaningful interaction with customers, which is a relationally oriented interactive approach at the core of the company’s strategic orientation (and not merely a communication or information gathering tool). Social media are deeply integrated in internal processes, which require top management involvement and heavy investment. Social media are also an opportunity to enhance (pre-existing) interests in traditional social networks, such as helping customers and companies connect through social media based on shared projects and activities. Thus, this sensemaking rests on a business-with-customers mental model.

Mental Model: Business-with-Customers

The third mental model differs from the two previous mental models in that companies no longer want just the customers’ attention, money, and/or insights and loyalty but now also want customers to become more emotionally and practically involved in the “business.” The microbrewery owner expressed the idea of developing long-lasting relationships with customers to secure sales well into the future:

“Think of it in this way: one person comes in here and loves us, likes talking to us and that person decides that we are their brewery, don’t think of buy a beer here once a week, think of years, think of this person coming back for 10 years, how much money is that person worth? Tens of thousands of dollars, even hundreds of thousands of dollars, long-term relationship.” (JO, 28)

Maintaining a company's relationship with its customers is viewed as bringing the company far-reaching benefits beyond its traditional customer interaction such as a "partnership" (e.g., Fournier and Avery 2011). This mental model also resembles the service-dominant logic proposed by Lusch and Vargo (2009), in which customers are co-creators of value (Michel, Brown, and Gallan 2008). According to Berthon et al. (2012, p. 269), "Marketers used to seek people to consume their products, now they seek people to produce the value they seek to leverage." The manager quoted in the previous section also explains the equality aspect of business-*with*-customers:

"It isn't just monetary, because for me, the value is the relationship ... when we are aligned, then all of the sudden I am a partner and you are a partner. And that is the point that modern business, because of both expectation, and because of the tools we have available, we have this expectation of continual communication, and that is the world we have created over the last 30-40 years." (LY, 57)

Note how the manager describes the relationship as an aligned partnership characterized by continuous communication provided by social media. Among this group of managers, social media connect customers and companies (Bernhard, Mays, and Hall 2012). Here, companies seek competencies for their projects (Ahlqvist et al. 2010) and move toward a collaborative interaction with customers. Thus, managers participate in social learning systems (Wenger 2000). More generally, the business-*with*-customers mental model blurs the traditional business-customer distinction because customers may take over functions previously dedicated to internal units of companies. Managers with this mental model realize the need to encourage customers to become involved in the decision-making processes. The social media technology lends itself well to this mental model.

Williams, Steward, and Slack (2005, p. 29) emphasize the role of customers in innovation and digital experiments by stating that customers are not "passive recipients of supplier offerings, but may play an active role in innovation." Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick (1998) show how customers interact with brands in a relational manner. Managers already having this mental model quickly embrace social media as an opportunity to expand the company's contact base to cultivate mutually meaningful relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Such an embrace is typically still based on categorical thinking rather than reflective thinking.

Historical Antecedents: Relational

The business-*with*-customers mental model dates back at least to 1895 when Durkheim highlighted the influence of the collective and Simmel (1897) described society as a web of (faceless) patterned interactions, which occur and reoccur in different periods and cultural settings. Both these works reveal that people are part of intrinsic social webs in which both personal and professional interests interact. The relationally oriented interaction is reflected in the shift in companies' orientation, from a capability orientation (e.g., marketing, human resources) to one involving customers in the product development phases.

For example, the Danish toy production company, Lego, has developed strong bonds with its customers. Both children and adults are willing to spend time and money developing new products for the company. In return, this collaboration has allowed customers to influence Lego's business decisions. To confirm that the Lego approach aligns with this mental model I interviewed the Global Director of Social Media at Lego, Lars Silberbauer, Oct. 2013 (see the Lego vignette in chapter 6).

5.3.1 Interpretation of the upper right quadrant in MHA: Relationship Framing

In the previous frames, commitment was merely rational. In the relation frame, which aligns with the "connect-and-collaborate" social media sensemaking, customers have to exhibit affective commitment in order to secure 'true' loyalty. Consumers may still be examined and listened to as in the Intelligence frame, but they are considered as partners in a dialogue (Korsten, Lesser, and Cortada 2013). Communication in this frame tends to be designed as more personalized one-to-one interaction (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching 2013) e.g. in forms of 'customized' options and conversations with employees. A form of situational learning is most likely to happen here, as the learning cannot be 'coded' for later use and thus 'absorbed' at organizational level.

Managers in MHA, who apply the relation frame, focus on connecting people and create continuous relationships with the customers and stakeholders. The relation frame helps the company to succeed with, and ultimately profit from, social media (Piskorski 2011). It reflects a "learning relationship", where every interaction progressively develops into smarter and more creative outcomes. As opposed to the

previous frames, the shareholder value is future-oriented, explained by vision as the knowledge form (see Table 2.1.6). Thus, the business-customer involvement ‘digs deeper’ than in the two previous frames. This frame also draws on the human factor. A good relationship provides an experience that meets customer expectations, which ultimately lead to satisfied and trusting customers (Kumar et al. 2013), which one manager illustrates by a heart:

“I know that I have a great, not love, but pleasure by our customers and I know the feeling is reciprocated. They say that they know we do business with our heart, where other media companies do business for the money. It is because we have always been here and can be trusted. This heart thing is difficult, it is both some love, some tenderness and some veneration and some emotions.” (DC, 56)

In consequence, customers engage in the company and its activities at a deeper level. This is also what happens when customers become fans. The informants describe how social media services provided by the organization enables content consumption to be surrounded by relations through which users discuss, share, and react and make out an integrated experience. Moreover, active customer participation will more quickly lead to purchase (Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson 2013).

It also results in customers, who use the relation to strengthen their own identity and build social capital, as a manager puts it:

“People are willing to spend their time with us because they like us and have affections for us and that is a fantastic platform to rest on.... We get a lot of content from our community. We have book reviewers, and many different people, who produce to us, but it enters our context, not theirs, and that is where the young people are different; they want to enter our context of credibility so that they can tell mom and dad that they have been in the media.” (DC, 56)

Seraj (2012) describe how the concepts of intellectual, social, and cultural value converge to create relationships of engagement, loyalty, and sustainability. Social media in this frame are used to establish and maintain such relationship (Fitzgerald et al. 2013; Hanna, Rohm, and Crittenden 2011; Winer 2009), as well as a platform for production. Such approach requires that existing routines be constantly questioned in the light of sustaining a collaborative relationship. A manager explains how it reflects

in the interaction on social media that a relation requires more informal modes of interaction:

“You create a relation with the customers. You make them feel like we are good friends and what we communicate is relaxed, it doesn’t have to be formal, newslake or dull. It is ok to make it friendly, like an invitation, while making them [the customers] feel that they are part of this.” (MJ, 35)

Informal modes of interaction and loose structures lead to greater use of new information, and more effective seizing of opportunities (Deshpande and Zaltman 1982). The idea of inclusion (feel that they are part of this) relates to the belief that commitment creates loyalty (Oestreicher-Singer and Zalmanson 2013). However, such attitude requires a responsiveness and willingness to experiment with the interaction forms. Access to social media platforms can spark a creative process between the members of the organization and customers, or between customers, in the attempt to increase learning or meaning for the customer to interact with the business.

Application of this frame can also help solving disputes as transactions become more transparent, e.g., Baird and Parasnis (2011) suggest that companies need to join social media and customer relationship management (CRM). They define Social CRM as recognition of ‘the role of the business is to facilitate collaborative social experiences and dialogue that customers value’ instead of managing customers (referring to traditional CRM). A change towards transparency does not only come into play by defining technology-based customer-firm interactive services (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer 2009). It requires certain capabilities from the organization to let customers interact with the firm's physical elements, processes and people in both service creation and delivery, which directly influences service quality and behavioral outcomes (e.g., service usage, repeat purchase behavior and word-of-mouth) - as well as firm outcomes (efficiency, revenues and profits). This open approach means adopting new norms and values that facilitate broader knowledge-sharing communities, enabling third order learning (to do the right things right).

Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) state that social media have changed the consumers' role in storytelling from that of a passive listener to a more active participant. On social media brand owners co-create brand performances and product design (Katz and Mason 2012) in collaboration with the consumers. Reframing becomes critically important for the effective creation and delivery of interactive media services and

transformation of the organization towards high levels of customer participation. An informant provides a very illustrative example of an obsolete mindset: A journalist was given the task to produce a tourist guide:

“What he produced was a story about what the taxi driver and the kiosk owner would answer when a tourist ask for advice about an attraction. Well, what do you do when you are in a new city and don’t know what to do? You log on to social media or Google. We are caught in a time pocket of the 60s, where you asked the taxi driver which restaurant to visit. Now you go to Yelp and he (the journalist) had, by the way, not talked to a single tourist, which I think is way off the mark”. (CS, 38)

This active and continuous level of engagement improve the performance in general, (Rapp et al. 201), but the process of improvisation is more important than the output to keep the creative brand performance alive, and to understand consumers and their roles, as expressed by Baird and Parasnis (2011), to make the customer experience seamless across social media and other channels the company should start thinking like a customer.

This may present a managerial challenge as most companies primarily have experience with anonymous consumer segments. The idea of retention may expand from the marketing department to human resource activities in terms of using social media to recruit and keep the loyalty of the employees. Such expansion at the horizontal level requires that top management reflect at meta-level to integrate social media in more substantive ways.

5.4. Social Media Sensemaking: Empower and Engage

Lower-right Quadrant

Ellison, Lampe, and Steinfield (2009) assert that social media potentially change the character of social lives, on both an interpersonal and a community level. Managers in this quadrant use expressions such as “improving the world” by “establishing common meaning,” “sharing,” and “transparency.” A manager states how he opposes business–customer interactions that are based on exploitation and take place at the expense of the rest of the world. He positions himself as someone who has deliberately chosen to

be part of a larger whole, to establish an engagement with other people, in alignment with a wider idealistic perspective that might even go beyond the traditional capitalistic paradigm.

From a company's point of view, the coupling of technology and social dynamics empowers customers; yet it might also threaten traditional businesses, as stated by an associate manager:

"Social media technology empowers people. The traditional business model, that business governs the process is [upended]. Instead, customers control business. They can start online petitions, viral videos, they can post a video of something really bad that happened in the restaurant, and people will hear it and talk about it. Once you have enough social momentum, reports will start picking that up. Now it blows up from a niche thing that happened in Iowa to international news and that is really bad, that will hurt sales." (MK, 29)

The manager expresses how companies must accommodate customers both business-wise and in a broader cultural sense. However, his observations are presented as categorical statements, and the concept of empowerment is unreflectively transferred from a physical to a social media context.

The empowering and engaging sensemaking also suggests a more altruistic approach that is at odds with the dominant capitalist paradigm's business–customer interactions (Yunus and Weber 2007). Yet it was not social media per se that created it; rather, it simply facilitated and enabled managers with already existing ideas to transfer the logics and assumptions of business-for-customers interaction to this media. Again, we observe this sensemaking in the following manager's social media approach:

"[Social media] requires that you have something on your heart. You can't sit and talk about the company. No one is interested in that. But they [customers] are interested in your priorities: climate, environment, our employees, and consumption. First, you have to be fascinated by the [social media] technology and find it interesting. Another thing is to understand that it is not the technology or the corporate issues that are interesting [to customers]; what is interesting is what we can talk about, share, and do together." (LE, 33)

The managers in this quadrant exemplify well how businesses represented by this sensemaking do not exclusively focus on attention, money, insight, and creative skills. It is equally important that customers are regarded with a “heart and conscience.” Welfare, democracy, and social responsibility are included and considered long-term consequences of sensitive business models (Ahlqvist et al. 2010).

Mental Model: Business-for-Customers

The last mental model is defined through key concepts, such as empowerment, societal change, and sustainability, which turn businesses toward broader political and societal issues and values (Truong and Simmons 2010). From a customer perspective, this mental model upends the business–customer interaction by focusing on customer empowerment (Kietzmann et al. 2012; Labrecque et al. 2013). It reflects thinking related to corporate social responsibility (despite its roots in economic sciences), because it argues that the sustainable company must be financially secure, minimize (ideally eliminate) the negative environmental impacts, and act in accordance with societal expectations through dialogue with stakeholders (Juholin 2006). A manager expresses the latter issue as follows:

“Those are my customers and I am in this world to create value for them in the consumption process. We want to be there for our members. Create value for them in their daily lives. We are also here to give something back to our country and its citizens in form of public utility. Here we have some key issues such as health, climate, environment, and ethical responsibility. We operate as a democracy, so anyone can come in and become the chairperson and decide the direction of our retail business.” (LE, 33)

Customers are referred to as members, reflecting a community-based market orientation. The business-for-customer model is clearly expressed in the statement that “I am in this world to create value for them.” This orientation affects the organization’s mantra and procedures, as well as its extended value chain and stakeholders. Whereas the business-with-customers mental model reflects a one-on-one relational orientation, the business-for-customers involves businesses building “social and cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1986) through deeper local market relationships based on joint responsibility (Constantinides, Romero, and Boria 2008).

These managers confirm how business-for-customers is about creating transformation through political and value-based initiatives that focus on the welfare of customers and the surrounding society and community in which a business operates. This orientation is also reflected in the following quote:

“I hug my clients. They are giving me my livelihood, so I can by my house and feed my family. My biggest client he calls me his brother. The values of your company have to be aligned with what people want. You cannot have a business that is based on profit and loan only. This is where the triple bottom line is coming in. Profit, a company has to make profit, but also be there for people, and for the planet. If you don’t satisfy all the three P’s then you have a problem with your business. While it has to be a competitive, strategic type of decision-making you also have to figure out how you are going to change the world. How you are going to change the way you do business.” (TY, 45)

The business-for-customer mental model expresses the perspective in which business and customers are part of an organic whole. Managers convert to a discursive “leadership-in-action” that follows a dynamic strategy approach, emphasizing customer empowerment through open and equal sharing (Zahra and Nambisan 2012). The focus is on meaningful interactions with stakeholders, such that stakeholders are perceived as existing both inside and outside the market. Business is considered part-taker in creating and maintaining the social fabric and building meaningful social connection between stakeholders. From a learning perspective, the quote reveals an attitude that managers and companies should continuously practice a higher-order transformative learning that not only involves the organization, but also has implications for the whole world.

Some of the tenets of “communitarianism” are applicable to this mental model because it requires a deeper sense of inter-connectedness, social cohesion, and identification of core values and beliefs. In describing this line of thinking, Juholin (2006, p. 9) states that “community requires that all citizens (or members of an organization) have a feeling of empowerment, of involvement in making and implementing decisions that bear on their lives.” This alternative interpretation of business–customer interaction provides an extended and more complex theoretical understanding that discards the traditional *raison d’être* of business. The inner logic of “business” reflects a group of like-minded individuals connected by interactions based on mutual interest, respect, and support for the local community as a whole (Ahlqvist et al. 2010; Cova and Cova

2002). It denotes interaction as a community based on face-to-face associations in neighborhoods but that retains individual freedom to act, openly accesses knowledge, creates global interconnections, and foresees these phenomena as transforming to a new or next economy (Robinson 2011). Similarly, Zahra and Nambisan (2012) discuss restructuring the ecosystem rather than simply managing present relationships.

Historical Antecedents: Communal

Although this mental model is also facilitated by the technological breakthrough of social media (Colliander and Dahlén 2011), it existed as a mental model before the advent of this technology; social media simply provided a unique means for its reemergence within a more mainstream setting. It departs significantly from the other three foci because it disrupts the very fabric of the traditional capitalistic structure (Yunus and Weber 2007). Business serves a higher societal purpose. Back in the 18th century the Finnish enlightenment thinker Chydenius (1729-1803) argued for an open economy and governance to profit the people, instead of economies profiting from the people (Virrankoski 1995). The origin of this idea can be traced back to ancient times when pecuniary and social interactions were not viewed as separate entities. The production and consumption of goods are not separated, and consumption is not considered part of an identity construction and an expression of the self as it has become. Society was based on an exchange of services and goods in which both parties were personally concerned with the local community.

Such a view is defined as “Gemeinschaft” (community) as opposed to “Gesellschaft” (company), originally dubbed by Tönnies (1887), who categorized social ties as a sociological dichotomy. Weinberg et al. (2013, p. 300) similarly refer to social business in terms of “Gemeinschaft,” denoting intimate, exclusive communities, as opposed to “Gesellschaft-based relationships,” rooted in larger individualist collectives and rational agreements such as contracts.

A communal focus does not involve businesses as an entity or authority; yet leadership is appreciated through role model behavior, which creates followers. The roles as customer, manager, and citizen amalgamate into a common quest for transformation, identity creation, self-realization, and influence. Boothroyd (1991, p. 130) calls this “the creation of a new community in ‘non-gemeinschaft’ form that aims to fulfill basic

human needs” and, at the same time, promotes sustainable economies that are less dependent on the capitalist economy and the state.

5.4.1 Interpretation of the lower left quadrant in MHA: Community framing

In this frame the customer outlook expands to embrace all kinds of stakeholders to the extent that media usage migrates from broadcasting to community-based interactivity. Content providers and media production are examples of industries, where co-creation fundamentally challenges the traditional roles of industries, businesses and consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004a).

The transformation can unfold on a model of customer empowerment, in which customers use digital media to communicate with one another. Research that defines social media-mediated business clearly indicates a noticeable shift in business practice (Hinchcliffe and Kim 2012; Piskorski 2011), business models (Colliander and Dahlén 2011), and the balance of power from marketer to customer (Deighton and Kornfeld 2009). In consequence, companies can no longer benefit from information asymmetry as information become accessible to everyone.

The informants explain how MHA connects people in the local network to the benefit of the local community, which is different from the intimate connection. This corresponds to the description of Jenkins et al. (2004, p. 10) “we are moving away from a world in which some produce and many consume media, toward one in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced” and underscores a focus on an interacting community (Fournier and Avery 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

The learning implications become clear when contrasting this frame with the neoclassical models of industry competition, where the company acts on a fairly predictable market and with unaltered rules of the game: “Further up the supply chain, new ways of managing alliances and networks have permitted firms to devise new rules of the game” (Baden-Fuller, 1995, p. S8). It involves more than just marketing and expands to the entire company and beyond. Focus is on how digital technologies like social media can support the creation of new markets, products, services, and

technologies through the community of customers, distributors, suppliers, and experts (Pirkkalainen and Pawlowski 2014; Williams, Steward, and Slack 2005).

Social media provide an alternative model for how to do business, which corresponds to the future expectations stated by more than half of the managers at MHA. They already have a strong focus on their local community, which explains why some managers wish to create a community-based business model. A manager considers MHA as the “glue” of the local community by being the messenger between the different actors in the network.

“I have a clear feeling of what we do in our communities and that we establish contact between all the different stakeholders, so we connect. We ensure that the whole retail business is connected. We celebrate them with music, food, and champagne and everything. There is no doubt that we connect. I claim that if we weren’t here a lot of things would not happen, because the messages would not be passed on from stakeholder to stakeholder.” (DC, 49)

With this framing, the community becomes a central strategic influencer. It is based on a learning logic where value is created from network exploration in a dynamic market and involves reframing of the corporate structures and routines. Social media are regarded as enhancing interactions among customers, suppliers, stakeholders, and employees that may enable new business models or operating models, such as peer-to-peer product innovation or customer service, e.g. Tesco have opened up for more collaborative forms of innovation (Hirt and Willmott 2014). However, it requires an engagement among its stakeholders for MHA to tap into their energy.

A manager expresses this need by a photo of an aroused crowd:

“It is the dream of having an audience cheering at us. An engaged audience who really want us and we want them, but that is unfortunately not what we see right now. We must gather people and create enthusiasm. We must nurture the community, I think, at least for the businesses I am responsible for. To create a sense of community and be part of something together.” (GF, 49)

Social evolution can be stimulated through various networked collaborative practices, e.g. wikis, blogs, discussion groups and practitioner/expert groups. To identify and understand the implications of these potential practices, companies must recognize that

consumers' increasing power (Berry et al. 2010) is having implications for creating synergies.

Differences in existing relationships (e.g., new vs. established) and consumers' varying willingness to participate in interactive services must be taken into account to understand the effects of increasing consumer power. A manager explains this aspect by a photo of a runner:

“Customer crowds are also individual people, so the picture of the runner is an icon of a passionate person, who does something extraordinary. To survive as a company, we need to understand what drives the individual, too.” (GF, 49)

The same manager explains how consumer empowerment is a huge cognitive and resource-demanding challenge to MHA:

“I think, in many ways we have not been able to see the differentiated customer potential. A cookie-cutter model of a deadline-ridden newspaper production company forms us. This is our upbringing. 50 years ago we were a very complex production company... Now we are something different. People become 24/7 while we live in our old business model of delivering twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon. Our moment of truth is not in the morning as people want to use us around the clock and push us in all respectable ways so that we are sharp when they need it.” (GF, 49)

Managers with this strategic framing are attentive to the linkages that exist among the company and its stakeholders, like availability as explained above. If management decides to implement social media for stakeholder collaboration with the purpose of formatting the culture, the managers must be aware that such outcome is eased by networked structures rather than traditional hierarchical configuration. Moreover, the management must be able to take a meta-perspective that eliminates previous context-dependent understandings of social media. In consequence, this framing acknowledges social media as a game changer at company, industry, and society levels. The empowered customer is viewed as an asset and social media accommodate customers' material and social needs as well as changing the game of market and organization.

A dynamic “Reframework” summarizes the extended findings of the MHA study. I named it Reframework to denote how the coherent set of concepts and relationships can set the stage for managers to initiate learning processes at individual and collective

levels by conceptualizing, discussing appropriate contexts, and assumed as well as actual outcomes. For each of the four framings identified Table 5.4 1) conceptualizes the cognitive loads/efforts involved in each sensemaking of social media, 2) visualizes the degree of customer involvement, 3) categorizes the type of capability required, 4) indicates the expected result of the learning, and 5) line up the time horizon of the learning process. The punctuated lines correspond to the punctuated lines of the SMSM model (Figure 5) illustrating reflective thinking and disruption of the mental models by shifting between the frames.

Social Media Sensemaking	Promote & Sell	Listen & Learn	Connect & Collaborate	Empower & Engage
Framing	Broadcast	Intelligence	Relation	Community
<i>Knowledge</i>	1. order	2. order	3. order	4. order
<i>Customer Stimulation</i>	Passive	Active	Proactive	Interactive
<i>Capability</i>	Journalistic	Dialogic	Engaging	Empathetic
<i>Proficiency</i>	Factual	Reflective	Meta-reflective	Transformative
<i>Result</i>	Qualifications	Competencies	Creativity	Culture
<i>Time dimension</i>	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Indefinite

Table 5.4: A Strategic Reframework of Social Media

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of chapter five and explains how they relate to existing research. The acquired insights are viewed in a broader perspective of new technology and its limitations in facilitating change to illustrate the relevance and significance of this research. First, I discuss the socio-cognitive consequences of the socio-historical tracings of the four mental models and the social media sensemaking based on the studies across companies and exemplified by the study of MHA. I further theorize on the link between cognition and implementation of new technology to underscore its limitations in facilitating change.

Humanity is acquiring all the right technology for all the wrong reasons (R. Buckminster Fuller).

Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road (Stewart Brand).

6. Discussion

The quote of the American author, inventor, and professor Buckminster Fuller points toward the central finding of the dissertation by describing people's propensity to adopt new technology in an unreflected manner. Consequently, managers are at risk of applying new technology in inappropriate ways. The dissertation contributes to the substantiation of the quote in a business context by identifying four mental models of managers' business–customer interactions and ensuing sensemaking of social media. The four types of sensemaking help explain the various viewpoints and uses of social media in organizations in particular. Moreover, it outlines the potential influence of mental models on the adoption of technology more generally. That is, it helps explain why new technologies, in and of themselves, do not necessarily instill new ways of behaving in the marketplace, at least not among managers trained in more traditional communicative interactions with their customers. The dissertation also provides insights into why it is often newcomers to a business field (i.e., entrepreneurs or people from different industries), who have not been brought up within traditional mental models, who are able to quickly change the existing competition by “going over the top” and exploiting new technologies in radically new ways. A manager expresses this in a vivid fashion:

“Management is responsible for the survival of the business. For some reason many managers are completely deprived of the ability to see what is taking place digitally. They consider social media as tactical tasks that some fool on the lower corporate floors can deal with, which is disastrous. I have faced several directors, who were thinking “That is a job for the IT department, isn’t it?” They do not even feel a responsibility for reading about it. It evokes an image of this dinosaur landscape: The whole landscape changes, temperatures rise or drop, new species appears, small innocent species all of a sudden become dangerous, while these dinosaurs are strolling around thinking “we are too big to fail.” And they have not even opened an edition of ‘Wired’ to see what the world looks like. That is pretty frustrating.” (KS, 38)

Particularly the MHA study shows how an “old” company with “new” technology risks ending up becoming inefficient and expensive without reflection on how the new technology should be implemented to create strategic value. Essential barriers to reframing was found in the cognitive traps related to the print capabilities and, hence, strategic orientation, rather than just a lack of social media capabilities and resources (Zahra and Nambisan 2012). The cognitive bias was further accentuated by a lack of

reflection of the underlying premises for social media decision-making: Should social media play the role of supportive channels to print or should print in the future be converted to an add-on to a digital product portfolio?

Awareness of the framing mechanisms, aided by a facilitator (or facilitating tool, see table 5.4) to guide the process of articulation and identification of existing frames can become necessary, as it is difficult for managers to engage in reframing on their own. The first interview round in MHA showed no record of reframing processes taking place at individual level. Instead, the collection of transcripts of the first interview round revealed a co-existence of all four types of sensemakings among the managers of MHA. At the collective level, the managers were unaware of peer frames. The unarticulated individual frames present a fragmented understanding and knowledge of social media. This finding negates that shared mental models are defined by industry or are company-specific. It corroborates empirically the strategic cognition literature stating that fragmented perceptions can be present within a management team of the same organization, and undermines the ideal in behavioral strategic management of integrated visions and goals.

Though the in-depth interviewing allowed the managers ‘to think about their own thinking’ a reframing effect, being discussed in the section below, interviews must be supplemented with other techniques for continuous reflection. At the interim interview the CDO underscores the importance of reflection and meta-reflection as being part of the daily routines:

“How should we evaluate our products and services? How should it happen? Who should do it? What are the premises? Are there likes or dislikes? Are there any objective criteria? This has been missing and I aspire to develop such a culture.... Where you meet in the morning at look at the digital performance status: “What were our stories? What did the customers say? What did we answer? How was the daily rhythm? Our traffic was high in the morning and low in the evening, how come? (CS, 38)

The quote also reveals the importance of approaching people outside the company as a method of identifying frames apart from those residing internally. From the interviews, we identified a pattern of references, where managers up to the first interview round had been using family members as proxies for customers and stakeholders, customer insight being a product of manager intuition, not analysis.

The research illustrates the commanding influence of socio-cognitive sensemaking on managers' thought processes. As such, mental models serve both as constructs to think with and as mental barriers that potentially prevent a dynamic adjustment and exploitation of new technologies. Managers dominated by the relational and communal antecedents (i.e., business-*with*-customers and business-*for*-customers mental models) were oriented toward customers and other stakeholders and treated social media as a strategic tool. These managers were eager to use social media to engage customers as co-players and bring them into the very heart of the business process.

In MHA, the CDO explained how their new strategy is not considered a 'digital' strategy, but a strategy that is intertwined with the business strategy anchored in these two mental models, and therefore it does not make sense to conceptually explicate the 'digital'.

Conversely, we found that when the transactional and informational antecedents (i.e., business-*to*-customers and business-*from*-customers mental models) were dominant, managers treated social media as tactical communication tools to increase the sales of goods—either through an enhanced broadcasting or from better information about customers (Law, Lau, and Wong 2003). Increased generation and measurement of, and access to, open data (also coined 'big data') further invigorate the business-*from*-customers mental model. Managers embedded within a selling (i.e., tactical) mental model invest time and resources in social media only when they anticipate or experience improving sales; these managers conceive social media as yet another bowling alley, in line with Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, and Bloching's (2013) metaphor. This mental bias has implications for the lack of impact of social media in some companies on strategic business decisions and its conceptual force as a game changer.

In the company study, these were the dominant mental models among managers in MHA. Social media activities were carried out on the premises of the print media, supporting the company's traditional products. MHA has so far been relying on operational excellence, i.e., the corporate strategy rests on the company's internal competencies (Treacy and Wiersema 1997). The capabilities within news publication and journalism have driven the strategic development for many years. A long, and proud history of a strong market position, identity and success with print media explains the managerial propensity to frame social media as a broadcast media. Cicourel (1974), Goffman (1974), Weick (1979), and Van Maanen (1984) describe such phenomenon. The more social media is theorized from a familiar

conceptualization (e.g. as a broadcasting tool) the more it strengthens the perception of similarity, which makes the justification of this frame even more convincing and compelling. When managers attempt to understand a task or an issue by applying a familiar frame, less justification is needed for its use, as it appears more rational and obvious. Instead, the discursive effort is spent on externally confirming and justifying the frame by highlighting similar practices amongst competitors or expert recommendations.

Weick (1983) provides another explanation that when meaning in the surroundings decreases, people pay more attention to existing frameworks in the attempt of recognising, interpreting and negotiating strange situations. With reference to the analogy used by Weick (1983, p. 635): in the Mann Gulch case 13 wildland fire fighters died just in sight of safety areas, as they refused to follow order and drop their heavy tools so they could run faster to escape an exploding fire. The explanation for this 'odd' behaviour as it didn't make any sense to the fire fighters and such decision to let go of their tools deprived them their identity as fire fighters. In a print media context 'drop your tools' refers to letting go of existing logics and stop regarding print media criteria (method and quality) as the governing yardstick for measuring business performance excellence. However, this does not mean that the managers at MHA should not consider using social media for tactical purposes of selling, broadcasting, or gaining customer insight. Instead of categorically discarding them management should reflect on why and how well they supplement the digital business models.

At the overall level, none of the informants realized in their daily work routines how their orientation toward customers was governed by one of the four mental models or reflected on their thought processes from a meta-perspective (i.e., subjecting their mental models to critical reflection). Only after the interview sessions and workshops did the managers become more reflective and speculative about their individual and shared understandings on social media. In paraphrasing Weick (1995), "it is difficult to know what I think, until I see what I say." When managers are not aware of their mental models in the business–customer interaction, they transfer their logics and assumptions of interactions in a physical setting to the virtual interaction of social media. In consequence, they expect the same type of interaction to take place on social media as in other settings.

None of the managers, who were interviewed, expressed any concern with differences between technology-mediated and traditional business–customer interactions or the

impact of human technology on such interactions, more generally. The managers also did not reflect on whether customers’ expectations would change between offline and online settings. This follows socio-cognitive theories, which highlight how mental models function not only as enabling, but also as confining lenses through which managers see the world, almost regardless of the context. Although such thinking might change when the discrepancy between mental model structures and feedback from the environment becomes too large to overlook (see Ringberg and Reihlen 2008), this level of insight had yet to be reached by our informants. As such, managers disregarded the possibilities offered by a new technology, unless they happened to be located within a mental model that resonated with the opportunities offered. This finding underscores the relevance of the second quote by the American writer, Brand: he expresses the strategic consequence of companies who do not react on the technological advancements. Despite the power of mental models, a lot of managers will eventually be faced with the realities of the digital development either in the form of a steamroller or the road.

6.1 Socio-historical tracing of the four mental models

The mental models are passed down through practices and storytelling (e.g., textbooks and popular management books). Which mental model becomes the dominant one depends on the individual’s upbringing, education, training, and experiences (see Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). It may also be influenced by the manager’s self-perception, e.g., self-perceived career mission. Despite originating in different historical periods, the mental models may be co-present and ‘compete’ in contemporary discourses within business contexts. The interviews pointed to such co-presence of mental models within several managers’ mindset (see Table 4.1.1a: Informant sample across companies). That said, almost all of the observed co-presence of mental models was aligned along social media being regarded as either tactical (i.e., mental models 1 and 2: B-to-C and B-from-C) or strategic (i.e., mental models 3 and 4: B-with-C and B-for-C) tools. Only three interviews from the first study revealed the co-presence of mental models across the tactical and strategic divide.

The divide, their different strategic operation, functional domains, management styles, and cultures are collated from the findings chapter and summarized in Table 6.1a below:

<i>Mental models</i>	<i>B-to-C</i>	<i>B-from-C</i>	<i>B-with-C</i>	<i>B-for-C</i>
Level of implementation	Tactical		Strategic	
Strategy	Departmental, ad-hoc or planned		Aligned with business strategy	
Domains	Marketing and PR		Business and R&D	
Management	Administrative and delegated		Visionary and distributed	
Culture	Censored and controlling		Transparent and trusting	

Table 6.1a The tactical versus strategic divide of the four mental models

These findings can be further converted into a cognition-practice matrix (Table 6.1b) to conceptualize and discuss the influence of social media cognition on strategic decision-making. The upper row of the matrix refers to the resource allocation into different functional contexts. By ‘practice’ I mean all forms of sensuously objective human activity. It shows how the managers would distinguish between social media as either adding central or peripheral value to the company’s performance due to the perceived function and intended purpose. This distinction is central for the explanation of the informants’ emphasis on social media as a platform for “*competitive business strategy*” or a platform for “*competitive marketing strategy*” (Varadarajan and Yadav 2009, p. 12).

The left vertical row aligns with the human-technology dimension of Figure 4.2, which proposes particular functions of social media:

Practice Cognition	A marketing (tactical) practice	A business strategic practice
Social media as technology Managerial focus on the instrumental <i>media</i> functions	1. The deployment of resources in social media technology is naturally expended toward marketing activities such as advertising, sales promotion, distribution, and consumer intelligence.	3. The resources are allocated for digitization of the internal business communication, logistics, products, services, and increase of networked interaction with stakeholders.

Social media as people Managerial focus on ‘a cappella’ (polyphonic) <i>social</i> functions	2. The deployment of resources is expended towards ‘capturing’ the polyphony of customer voices and to form voice communities.	4. Deployment of resources naturally becomes a top management decision as social media make out the strategic foundation of a business and is seen as the (perhaps only) way of achieving and maintaining future competitive advantages.
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Table 6.1b: The social media cognition-practice matrix.

The co-presence of mental models might exist for a time being, until such co-presence leads to obvious inconsistencies (especially where social media are represented as both tactical and strategic tools) that are too large to ignore by the manager. A reason that such inconsistencies were not recognized by our informants may stem from the fact that one mental model dominated each manager’s narrative. However, the observation provides an interesting research opportunity that could help clarify both 1) how a manager holding inconsistent mental models negotiates this in everyday professional life as well as 2) at what point such inconsistency becomes too large for the manager to ignore and will require and lead to a mental transformation.

The general change in orientation from the business-*with*-customers mental model to the business-*for*-customers mental model among managers illustrates the relatively recent renaissance of the societal credo of making a better world. Such change reflect a fundamental challenge for the service and profit logic, as the more ‘recent’ mental models are aligned more closely with the sustainability agenda, i.e., that everyone shares the same earth, as well as deep-seated values (Porter and Kramer 2011), such as “doing the right things right” (Carroll 1999; Stiglitz 2006; van Tulder, van Wijk, and Kolk 2009). Part of the management challenge here is to ‘think bigger’ to find out what kinds of ecosystem are needed for sustainable business development.

The findings illustrate not only the influence of sensemaking, qua mental models, but also how more recent foci (e.g., relational, communal) are forging their way into the business discourses and slowly redefining the market-based business–customer interaction. Although the communal mental model is still in its infancy within a business context, its appearance in managers’ narratives illustrates how the right technological factors may enable managers with this mental model to make radical

headway and introduce disruptive practices to otherwise dominant and well-established business–customer interactions. The question remains whether traditional managers (with transactional and informational mental models) are mentally capable, without active intervention (e.g., training, psychotherapy), to consciously reflect on and subsequently reframe their mental model/s and exploit new business–customer interactions opportunities enhanced by technology breakthroughs, such as social media?

The analysis at MHA reveals that though the social media issue was discussed at top management level it did not automatically lead to strategic reframing in the company, as expressed by one of the informants:

It was not anchored at top level. There were isolated initiatives, but they were not anchored in a shared understanding or a common strategy. It was like ‘the course of the day’ or ‘the feeling of the day’, because there was no digital strategy, and there was no digital work. There was nothing.”

From a management perspective, understanding social media is a prerequisite for properly managing them (Peters et al. 2013), but the strategic value is limited if the understanding is unconsciously biased by one frame only. Despite ‘conscious’ framing being an essential part of the marketing and management professions, the managers applied a certain frame without considering the presence and relevance of other potential frames. The fact that marketers and managers risk to get ‘framed’ by their own lack of strategic awareness of social media explains why success with social media is a leadership and management challenge, rather than a technology issue (Bradley and McDonald 2011). In fact, the managers were surprised of the existence of alternative interpretations when revealed to them.

In general, the managers at different levels were not only separated by obvious differences in tasks, routines, interests, values and beliefs; they were also separated at the preconscious level by the ways in which they perceive the world, which leaves them (and their employees) in psychological isolation despite close physical contact. So another barrier is that the managers, having different types of knowledge, are psychologically isolated from each other. Efforts to visualize and share different perspectives often lack legitimacy (Adner, 2006; Dougherty, 1992; Litchfield and Gentry, 2010) and purpose to collaborate (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Besides being exposed to framing managers also use strategic framing to impose on others their version of the enacted environment in which the company operates and to suggest certain strategic actions. In MHA, the new CDO deliberately discussed existing mindsets among the managers, and clarified the impetus of a community orientation (the business-*with*-customers mental model) framing the new strategy as a way to socio-cognitively transform the MHA culture. Sensemaking and sensegiving become important socio-cognitive aspects of the strategic transformation process, as the CDO explains:

"It takes a good explanation of why the strategy is the right one. At the same time you have to acknowledge that the present strategy is not 100% right. It must undergo continuous evaluation, not by me, but by them, but I am with them. I have done this before. It is the most exciting, but also the most painful process to follow, as it demands a lot from you."

These socio-cognitive aspects partly explain why managers struggle with strategic reframing despite an acknowledgement of rapid and disruptive changes in market and customer behavior. Focus on the capability-building potential of reframing shows the importance of actively managing shifts in technological frames in the same way they manage shifts in capabilities (S. Kaplan and Tripsas 2008). The relevance of initiating strategic reframing processes increases as managers wish to explore other opportunities, resources, and business models (Weinberg et al. 2013) through social media, to allow stakeholders to take more active roles, and at the same time wish to understand the organizational and capability-related implications.

To sum up, the intra-organizational identification of the four social media framings substantiates the prevalence of different social media sensemakings. It shows how the frames are shaped by individual cognition and differences in functional contexts within a company, rather than industrial idiosyncrasies alone. Though the management team collectively experiences a market in transition, and shares the need for strategic pivoting infused by social media technology, individual strategic frames are sustained by habitual thinking manifest in the daily routines and operational practices. Awareness of this may release the internal (and, in consequence, the external) potential of alternative frames. This knowledge is expected to appear in the next phase of the MHA study, as the same managers will be re-interviewed to give insight into the effects of the training and learning processes initiated by top management.

6.2 New technology and its limitations in facilitating change

On the basis of the findings discussed above, I find it reasonable to argue that disruption or transformation does not automatically follow from radically new technology. Though the manager overcomes a personal reluctance to implementing social media, and decides to do so, there are still cognitive barriers to stay aware of, for instance the willingness to engage in learning processes. A manager expresses such skepticism:

“I am not sure that my business will change if I acquire more knowledge, so it is not something I have prioritized yet. If you slowly follow, for instance when a new type of mobile phone is released, then you learn how it works when you have the time and energy. That is also how I feel about Facebook. I haven’t spent enough energy on thinking about the consequences. I haven’t studied in detail how to use it, but instead considered how to build up my base.” CO, 55)

The findings reveal how categorical applications of social media are related to strategic imitation, where companies uncritically implement social media because competitors do, in ‘mimetic’ ways. Strategic imitation is a cognitive act, where the manager observes and interprets what other companies do, and deliberately attempt to copy the observed behavior. Though imitation strategy may be perceived as less innovative, given its ostensible origins outside the company (Garbuio et al. 2015), imitation of social media activities can inspire a company to develop new capabilities and eventually new ways of implementing social media.

For many managers, it requires a hard cognitive as well as social effort. This stands in contrast to researchers (e.g., Li and Solis 2013) who use Christensen’s (2003) definition of disruptive technology to define social media. Although radically new technology might be required for radical transformations (i.e., as a necessary tool), it is not a sufficient tool for such processes to occur; rather, it necessitates a change in mindset (i.e., mental model) as this MHA quote reveals:

“Last week I had an discussion with a journalist in plenum, which I think exemplifies that we have progressed, but not enough. A manager says “We must be digital first, not print first!” ... Then one of the journalists says: “Well, I don’t think platform, I think stories.” Fine, he has moved some way, but his understanding of quality, news

criteria, and relevance are based on 30 years of experience of what a good newspaper is. He does not know what a good mobile-based service is.” (CS, 38)

While social media in its popular renditions are typically viewed as shaking up the industry (in opposition to a traditional technology with only incremental improvements), such shake-up is often caused by ‘outsiders’ to an industry who bring along a very different mental model mind-set, rather than by ‘insiders’ within the industry. As such, the level of disruption to an industry by the introduction of new technology hinges as much on the technology itself (and what that facilitates) as on the mental models. The latter may be introduced either by ‘outsiders’ very different mental models, like in the MHA case, or by ‘insiders’, like the executive board in MHA, who decided to hire the CDO to initiate processes of critical reflection and reframing of the existing sensemaking of the business–customer interaction.

In order to escape mindset rigidities managers should try to explicit in what ways social media can challenge the basic assumptions of business. Shafer, Smith, and Linder (2005, p 202) explain the relevance of this approach by describing ‘business model’ as “a representation of a firm’s underlying core logic and strategic choices for creating and capturing value within a value network.” By challenging mindsets, choice can be regarded a matter of invention, not calculation, and thus many perceived obstacles and uncertainties could be converted to opportunities and even fairly controllable ones.

To sum up the discussion of new technology, the use of social media has become indispensable to modern business as well as interaction in general, which influences the belief systems or worldviews that guide managers and marketers (Heiens 2000), but the impact of disruptive technologies may be somewhat exaggerated. It makes sense that when the discrepancy between categorical thinking and the feedback from the marketplace is too large to be ignored, deliberate reflections are prompted, which, presumably in the long run, will resolve such inconsistencies (Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000; Ringberg and Reihlen 2008).

Chapter 7

This chapter concludes on the overall theoretical and empirical findings of the dissertation. I answer how the dissertation addresses the two research statements raised in chapter one: first to investigate managers' shared mental models of business-customer interaction to understand how they influence on individual social media sensemaking, and second to investigate and operationalize socio-cognitive learning processes among managers to understand, in greater detail, the challenges of shifting from one frame to another. I briefly elaborate on the potential learning outcome of the conclusions.

That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way (Doris Lessing).

7. Conclusions

With reference to the quote above, this dissertation contributes with new ways of understanding managerial cognition at a point in time where technology change is a human constant. Strategic cognition is proven a useful approach for understanding processes that involve emergence of disruptive technologies in business, as it provides some socio-cognitive explanation for managerial behavior in terms of managers' varied responses to similarly expressed market change and business challenge.

Placed in the stream of research contributions that have struggled to grasp the interactive relations between stability, change, humanity, and technology, this dissertation is yet an important reminder of how vital it is for managers to understand themselves while trying to make sense of what is going on around them and in the minds of others. This is the reason why the dissertation turns our focus towards the spectacles through which managers view social media for strategic purposes. The two studies demonstrate how investigation and theorization of strategic cognition of social media may produce new, applicable understandings of business-customer interaction for the purpose of evaluating and improving the quality of existing business practices.

Addressing the first research statement, the dissertation illustrates why social media may not automatically challenge the basic assumptions and existing mental models of marketing as a function separated from the overall business. It contributes with a theoretical understanding of why social media may change people's behavior, but not necessarily their cognition, which confirms that *the adoption of social media does not automatically cause a profound change in how the business interacts with its customers*.

The dissertation identifies an espoused paradigm shift, but finds that the old (traditional marketing) and new (social media marketing) mental models exist side-by-side. Such behavior seems to confirm a need to understand social media on the background of traditional marketing rather than vouching for a paradigm shift, "we are better off with a portfolio of models so that we can choose the best one for the task at hand" (Wind 2009, p. 32). Despite strong external environmental and collective forces, the individual is a central strategic factor (Barnard 1968), who enables or constrains organizational action due to antecedents and cognitive models of interaction with its environment. The dissertation empirically demonstrates the influence of managers' categorical thinking, which challenges the rational and behavioral approaches that

dominate social media strategy literature.

Should these findings then discourage the strategic decision-maker to keep an outlook on the world and read the market in which the organization is positioned? Rather, the findings should encourage managers to understand that knowledge of the digital consumers and social technologies is paramount, but complicated by managerial cognitive factors. Even though the manager acknowledges that social media are vital for their customers, and opens up for new ways for their business to interact with the customers, it is not sufficient to spur a change in mindset or culture. In this study we have met managers, who considered social media as a major threat, and managers, who saw it as their only hope. Regardless of the perspective, reflective thinking is required in order to break out of habitual thinking and operation and create new mental and physical structures, competences, and processes.

To conclude on the first research statement, strategic cognition research, corroborated by these empirical findings, confirms that for social media to change how businesses interact with their customers, managers have to change their mental model of business-customer interaction. For this change to happen, managers must take a reflective stance towards how they frame social media, understand how their individual framing is rooted in the historical antecedents and the corporate context. Insight into the way each frame directs a distinct learning level, and determines the transformation potential, can ease the change management process at individual and organizational levels.

Addressing the second research statement, the MHA study confirms how social media implementation in a marketing department of a traditional media context prevents, rather than enables, a more innovative application of social media. However, a decisive and consistent top management effort to strategically reframe the different intra-organizational social media interpretations and applications seems to make a digital and cultural transformation possible. Thus, *strategic framing of social media can create awareness of the cognitive barriers that enable different learning levels*. Based on these findings the dissertation conceptualizes reframing as a method for managers to initiate cognitive and behavioral change in interaction with its stakeholders.

By investigating, manipulating, and evaluating the different frames (Bunge 1983), the managers learn something new. Distinguishing between the cognitive process of inquiry and the result (a state of knowing) is relevant as it indicates an untested assumption. Testing assumptions opens up for learning as a social process of

construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action (Mezirow 1994). It challenges existing conceptions of meaning and enables for acquiring new meaning or confirming currently held views (Krauss 2005), which is in high demand in many traditional media companies today.

To conclude on the second research statement, application of the reflective frameworks can increase managers' awareness of individual frames of social media, while revealing how alternative frames can bring new mindsets and capabilities to the organization. In the best case, the approach can inspire the manager to get involved in strategically choosing and pursuing the right purpose of using social media to expand the strategic vision, bridging marketing and corporate strategy and in general improve capability development, decision quality, commitment, and consensus.

Strategic cognition of social media allows for interpretation of customer orientation in a whole new sense that can redefine combinations of inside-out and outside-in approaches (Baden-Füller 1995). The customer-orientation of marketing (Jaworski and Kohli 1993) provides a useful approach for management to embrace its stakeholders in more transformative strategy processes. Besides providing the platforms for knowledge creation, in terms of collection, dissemination, and use of market and customer intelligence, they may also work as cultural, and practical symbols of redefinition of 1) the power distribution between business and customers (in terms of customer voice, the empowerment and transparency discourse), 2) the traditional market roles and structures (presumption, collaborative forms of service innovation, sharing economies), and 3) the meaning of business (levers of new democratic, environmental, economic, human, and societal values).

Such shift is essential. Studies show that digital consumers' decisions depend less on traditional marketing communication and depend more on sources outside the company. Social media users connect for conversation with other people, not to converse with companies (Baird and Parasnis 2011; Fournier and Avery 2011; Havenstein 2007). Extending the traditional marketing logic into the world of social media does not make sense to digital consumers, which indicate that it is the time for strategists to scrutinize the logics and basic assumptions of their practices.

Finally, the dissertation contributes to the phenomenological debate as it shows that social media technology is a fairly new phenomenon that was brought to the cradle of marketing, and so, "old-time" marketers "brought it up" supported by established

marketing traditions. The conventions, language, assessment systems, and repertoire of ideals, values and knowledge of traditional marketing have rubbed off on social media marketing and strategic management. As top managers slowly begin to adopt social media (Ahlqvist et al. 2010; Ali, Peters, He, and Lettice 2010; Aral et al. 2013), the use of the term 'social media strategy' spreads from marketing to other business domains and confusions are bound to arise in the company due to different (and often tacit) context-based interpretations. It also becomes obvious how researchers and managers uncritically transfer assumptions of the offline interaction to online interaction, regardless of the fact that social media generate complex information dynamics that may take organizations, as 'semantic materializations', in unexpected directions, redrawing boundaries and shifting relationships. Exploration of how everyday human behavior based on (sub)conscious experience allows researchers to provide a greater understanding of the nature of strategic processes through the unique ways managers reflect the society they live in.

Paradoxically, the descriptive properties of the cognitive tradition rely on normative assessments. The dissertation involves normative aspects, prescribing that what is considered wrong social media marketing practice in one context does not necessarily apply in other. Customer norms and preferences may further influence what is considered 'common practice' in the (inter-)actions initiated by the company with the customer on social media. Adding yet a level to the complexity is the researcher's interpretation of the managers' interpretations of the customers' expectations. The development of frameworks by which researchers can comprehend and discuss social media strategic issues is not to be regarded as an isolated contribution, but rather a stepping-stone from which researchers can progress further work.

This underscores the importance of strategic thinking among managers, and researchers too, as a way to develop and test theoretical models and to initiate and support a reflective praxis. Though such form of reflection is under-prioritized due to busy routines and established traditions, it is nevertheless important for developing strategic acumen in a rapidly changing digital society.

Chapter 8

Chapter eight specifies the managerial consequences of the dissertation to further widen the perspective of the conclusions. I consider what managers and companies in general, and more specifically, should do with this knowledge. To pass on this knowledge baton to the managers, individual, collective, and processual considerations are suggested at the end of the first section. This is followed by a more thorough discussion of managerial training in light of the current management discourse, which proclaim a need of reflective management.

“Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible.”

(Dewey 1933, p. 19)

8. Managerial implications

Approaching the end of the dissertation, it may seem easier to grasp the implications by mind than by management. With reference to Dewey (1933) above, when a manager is ready to utilize the potentially disruptive effects of social media on the markets, industries, consumers, competitors, and society in general, it is first of all a symptom of some understanding. The next step is to understand the underlying management assumptions at the interface of the physical organization and the virtual social media space, especially when customer socialization extends the organization beyond traditional management control. Piskorski (2011) highlights the importance for managers to reconsider their approaches to strategy development:

“Creating social strategies will require fundamental changes in the way companies approach strategy development. As social platforms become even more central to consumers’ lives, companies that don’t figure out how to appropriate their value and create true social strategies will find it harder and harder to compete with those that do.” (Piskorski, 2011, p. 122)

At a general level, disruptive technology comes into effect when people allow it to disrupt their mindsets and lives and have a realistic point of departure for taking part in the change, and even, exercise intentional, deliberate control over the socio-cognitive aspects. As simple as it sounds, as complex and demanding is such process. Despite of the cognitive challenges identified, the dissertation shows that managerial cognition, to some degree, can be purposefully influenced (Hodgkinson et al. 2002, 1997).

Research has cemented how many strategic change projects fail (Smith 2002), including social media strategy projects (Piskorski 2011), which is why it becomes important not only to understand how framing issues influence this failure rate, but also how reframing processes can increase the potential rate of success. The transfer of social media to the business strategic level cannot be handled in a simple process-solving manner; in order to fully explore and exploit the values and capabilities of social media, it demands meta-strategic thinking and endurance. The manager’s strategic thinking draws on 1) subjective (knowledge and experience), 2) contextual (organizational position) as well as 3) objective (view on the environment and market situation) antecedents. Rather than expecting coherent intra-organizational understandings, managers should identify and challenge the existing, and often different, context-bound assumptions (Zahra and Nambisan 2012).

The dissertation argues against researchers (e.g., Labrecque et al. 2013; Li and Solis 2013; Yubo, Fay, and Wang 2011) stating that social media implementation follows an evolutionary, organic, progressive process leading to a profound business conversion. They acknowledge the organic nature of strategy processes where top managers can watch how initiatives develop within their organizations. Such perspective views strategy process as dialectic, rational and structured (Farjoun 2002). However, as indicated by Corner, Kinicki, and Keats (1994), decisions are not rationally or consciously constructed. Such a conversion process seems unlikely to unfold and would be too slow for most companies, given the increasingly fierce competition and that younger businesses may be born with social media as part of their core business foundation. As the MHA study revealed, the organic adjustment approach is too slow as the competitive landscape leaves existing companies with little time to analyze, develop, and implement radically new ways to conduct their business. Moreover, changing mental models, frames, or mindsets often meets resistance. The CDO describes a transformation process as ‘painful’, as it creates both a sense of confusion and unease when foundational assumptions are uprooted.

No immediate managerial shortcuts can be identified, for instance it makes little sense to simply replace one mental model with another, as it might not be the right one for a given company and context, and it would not provide the company with a competitive advantage when the new technological scenario is replaced by the next one. Applying a best-case template also seems problematic, as strategy is context dependent and social media use is culturally determined. Likewise, the notion of social media strategy cannot be uncritically transferred from one organizational context to another without complications. With reference to the manager as the strategist, the decision-making process and its characteristics are strongly complicated by individual-related attributes (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006) as managers not only carry different functions in an organization, but also tend to have different ways of framing social media.

Instead, what is required is that managers self-reflect and question their personal values and reasoning as a method to uproot foundational assumptions. The findings suggest how a clarification on different cognitions of social media can aid managers in the strategic process, especially those who tend to rely on intuition (Brouthers, Andriessen, and Nicolaes 1998; Patterson, Quinn, and Baron 2012) and/or experience a cognitive dissonance caused by a perceived pressure to integrate social media disjoined with the manager’s immediate emotions and reactions to social media. Not that

intuition should be avoided, as intuition can be a powerful tool to confirm logic in cases of complex decision-making and high uncertainty (Patterson et al. 2012). As Schön (1983, p. 282) states, “when a practitioner does not reflect on his own inquiry, he keeps his intuitive understandings tacit and is inattentive to the limits of his scope of reflective attention.”

What should managers then do with this knowledge? This question will be addressed in the sections below, first from a general perspective, second from a MHA perspective, to illustrate how the manager can supplement extrospection with introspection.

8.1 Recommendations for applying strategic cognition in B2C companies

A strategic challenge to many companies is how to reconfigure their business from a value chain company to the more fluid and innovative structure of the value network (Allee 2000; Peppard and Rylander 2006). The dissertation explains why social media use alone does not necessarily allow for successful business model innovation. It requires new strategic management approaches to integrate social media solutions on operational efficiency, provide methods of tapping into the opinions, insights, and creativity of customers and other stakeholders, and thus meet those needs better than competition (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

For companies to establish a critically reflective approach to new technology, managers should begin at the conceptual level. The SMSM model presented in chapter five provides managers with a strategic meta-perspective to expand their scope of business–customer interactions. It gives them a more qualified point of departure in the discussion of whether new technology affords new strategic opportunities that, in turn, may lead to a more deliberate use of social media. It provides managers with a conceptual platform from which to discuss and switch between, as well as combine, mental models. By testing alternative mental models managers can anticipate the scope of challenges and possibilities it entails and what actions to take. It allows them to observe the market and technologies from multiple perspectives, so that they can handle potential threats and opportunities in a more meta-cognitive manner. Such approach for managers to develop ‘tools while operating’ or ‘draw map while moving’ is an essential part of modern management (see the discussion in section 8.3.1).

Ringberg and Reihlen (2008) suggest companies to screen new hires for their ability to engage in multiple perspectives related to a given challenge rather than merely selecting those with excellent skills in handling new technology. Managers should also consider the impact of role models, in form of existing managers and employees, who have undergone an individual transformative learning process. They can in a much stronger manner, as opposed to new hires, act as frontrunners and par example encourage a culture change. The CDO at MHA tells about the effect of having senior employees as digital spearheads:

“The really great victories are when you experience senior employees moving at the mental level. [Can they act as role models?] That is what they can, and the effect is tremendous. If you lift a 50-year old out on a social media platform, from not being present at all, or just a little in private, to become fully present, then you will mobilize a network, which nobody can match, and which matches our customer network in an very good way.”

Managers must be willing and able to challenge prior sensemaking (see Baird and Parasnis 2011; Fournier and Avery 2011). For managers in existing positions, sensitizing them to the limiting aspects of their own mental models could be achieved, for example, by holding workshops in which they are “forced” to take other perspectives (see Levinthal and Rerup 2006). This will be elaborated in the section below by examples from MHA. Such actions may not lead to immediate changes in cognition, but increase the creative-reflective processing and encourage managers to respond in new ways to social media (and other technologies).

Companies tend to hire consultants in the process of implementing new technology. With social media, such services tend to be offered by marketing and web communication agencies, rather than management consultants and process consultants. Managers should likewise be aware that consultants are influenced by particular mental models and thus challenge the models being proposed by, or appearing from, consultants and their agencies.

Unfortunately, it is often too late to change business practices when revenues and profits begin to drop. For example, the music, printing, and newspaper industries could have benefited tremendously had their managers approached business–customer interactions (and social media) from different angles at an early stage and prevented more nimble Internet players from quickly gaining huge market shares (e.g.,

Huffington Post, Airbnb, Ubertaxi). Any reluctance to include social media in a strategic vision should be based on reflection, not on categorical thinking, and it is here that the frameworks developed from this dissertation can provide a helping hand.

As already alluded to, some larger businesses have systematically transformed their companies by incorporating social business platforms strategically throughout the entire organizational ecosystem (Roberts 2012). However, not all companies are equally advantageous or ‘born digitally equal’. In the Findings section the Danish Lego Company was provided as an example of a successful company.

Managers are recommended to foster strategic thinking when facing rapid change of markets, consumers, and technologies to similarly adapt their view (Tripsas and Gavetti 2000). Synthesis of the frames, at individual level, can resolve cognitive dissonance and, at organizational level, bridge marketing and business strategy. As a managerial implication, it may lead to well-informed judgment and guide managers in the process from seeing social media as a communication tool to reflecting it deeper in the company value chains. Yet succeeding with such initiatives requires not only retraining, but also a reframing of prevailing sensemaking, which is a method presently being ‘tested’ by the management of MHA.

There is no assurance that MHA, or any other organization, realizes the potential to produce results (Wilden et al. 2013), but there is good reason to be optimistic. A meta-strategic approach, where different orientations are viewed as synchronous rather than sequential, can be the first step towards building an organization that embraces ambidexterity (van Kranenburg and Ziggers 2013). Some of the more specific suggestions provided in the next section may also be valid for other companies.

8.2 Recommendations for applying strategic cognition in MHA

This section shows how successful social media transformation demands integration of knowledge from multiple perspectives. Reframing allows for integration of different functional levels of marketing and business strategy: it dissolves dichotomized views of strategy as operational excellence or a customer intimacy (Treacy and Wiersema 1997), inside-out or outside-in (Baden-Fuller 1995), or as Dawar (2013) suggests: to shift strategy from upstream to downstream.

The reframework implies that the managers turn the reflective perspective in different directions to intentionally transcend new social media meanings and to explore new means of actions. The reflective perspectives are meant as ‘cognitive precursors’ for strategic transformation and learning (Friedrichsen and Mühl-Benninghaus 2013).

Turn the reflective perspective inward

Starting at the individual managerial cognition level, part of the process in MHA is structured as awareness-building sessions where managers improve their understanding through articulation of tacit knowledge. The manager can initiate interviews, arrange questioning and listening sessions, visualization sessions, or study written material of the company. The ability to carry on “learningful conversations balances inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others” (Senge, 1990, p. 9). The quality of this process depends on the manager’s ability to provide the infrastructure for this interaction (Pralhad and Ramaswamy 2004b).

In-depth interviewing to uncover managers’ strategic framing gave insight into the manager’s own understandings and deeper assumptions, which could then be communicated in the management team. This method provides capability development, both in cases when managers at different levels assume a common understanding of the overall strategy and how their work contributes to it, and in cases when they are in doubt. It allows other probable outcomes to appear, which expands the scope of strategic capabilities, and eases implementation by aligning the strategy to other voices inside (and outside) the company. This knowledge informed top management in the strategy process as it gave realistic insight into the thinking, feeling, and doing of the entire management team.

With the SMSM model as a stepping-stone managers can set focus on their own sensemaking to learn the immediate effects of reflective thinking. The model worked as a common point of reference at the interim interview with the CDO to communicate the diversity and to define alternative frames. At a later state it can be applied as a helping tool in the process to develop organizational capability to facilitate further knowledge integration (see also Litchfield and Gentry 2010).

Since customers seem to expand their cognitive frames of social media through extensive use and establishment of communities that share, inspire, and challenge social media users (Labrecque et al. 2013), managers can apply the same approach. For instance, use of social media may change the assumption among managers at MHA that people in their 60s or 70s do not use social media, but only prefer to get their news on print. Thinking *is* action, which is why managers are encouraged to experiment with social media. This suggests that input from other actors through continuous social media experimentation and use can support reframing processes.

The following questions turn the reflective perspective inward:

- What frame/s do I personally identify with?
- What frames do I have most experience with?
- What social media frames have the strongest legitimacy and accept in my organization?
- What personal interests/positions do the frame involve?
- How strong is my personal dedication and involvement in the strategic process?
- How do I cope with divergent views and paradoxes?

Turn the reflective perspective towards the organization

In the next phase, the management team can use reframing as a method of perspective taking (i.e., taking another viewpoint) to jettison ‘misjudging’ frames and establish new sets of ideas. The conscious management of frames can lead to vital shifts in both the individual and collective frames. Strategies to accomplish reframing include frame analysis, deliberate attempts to alter either a dominant frame or conflicting frames and changes in the context, e.g., the construction of forums designed to enhance the communication, understanding, and trust (Kaufman, Elliott, and Shmueli 2003). Social media integration requires a circular perspective, i.e., a continuous strategic learning process, rather than a linear perspective with a “final destination” (see Weinberg et al. 2013), as expressed by the CDO: *“There is no progression from one model to another and then you are done and ready to run for the next 100 years. You enter a continuous development process.”*

First, the management team can use the identified frames as a point of departure for individually and collectively assessing how relevant each frame is to the strategic

vision and situation of the company. The management team can use the Reframework to evaluate how the different frames impact on the existing business structures, practices, and routines in different places of the company. Application of the reframework can be done by questioning statements like, “we have to move from print (first order learning) to digital (second order learning)” and instead reframe the perspectives: “is it relevant at all to talk of print versus digital? What if we instead shift focus from the channels and start to talk about the stories? (3. Order learning).” The exercise draws explicit conclusions about the implications of the experience of different contexts and brings potential benefits for theory building and management of an inquiry into how to generate competence within an organization (Zollo and Winter 2002).

Middle managers and employees can spur strategic social media drive as well, especially if they can bring knowledge and ideas from marketing, IT, and communication that can change the business (Varadarajan et al. 2010). However, it requires that the top manager is able to capture these ideas in a way that unleashes a strategic potential (Kumar et al. 2013). Customer behavior and competitive situations evolve quickly and an effective digital strategy calls for extensive cross-functional coordination involving top management. Appointing new roles like chief digital officer is a common way to introduce outside talent with a digital mindset, as MHA did. However, they may be too focused on marketing or technology and lack the breadth and depth of a CEO forgetting the broader vision. Alternatively the CEO can choose to personally direct the social media agenda, especially if it is of high priority or involve heavy resource investments.

Corporate structures can be more or less conducive to reframing processes. In MHA, the managers viewed the hierarchical and mechanistic structures as restraining the interaction and communication across contexts. However, some centralized decision-making structures are also necessary in radical transformative processes in a turbulent market (Moon 2013), which is why more pragmatic (and agile) structures should be considered. This step is particularly important as it creates awareness of the existing diversity in tasks, logics, and routines and takes into consideration the present organizational boundaries. By reorganizing the different elements of the strategy according to the different functional contexts managers can change the strategic lens through which they process social media.

To ensure that the reframing process involves, and so, impacts other employees and company stakeholders, the managers should focus on how they communicate strategy and initiate learning processes, e.g., Kaipa (2012) describes how Steve Jobs managed to reframe in a way that convinced others to buy into his way of thinking and doing. Instead of superimposing one's own interpretation, the manager must attempt to acknowledge other perspectives and open up the communication in an explorative way. Communication of the overall strategy via presentations, meetings, and dissemination of information are necessary vehicles for creating context. However, they are insufficient for securing that the strategy applied is appropriate.

The questions below turn the reflective perspective towards the organization:

- What frames can be identified among my colleagues?
- How can we exchange and share frames?
- How can we supply the strategy with our social media knowledge?
- What frames should be involved when in the strategy process?
- How integrated do we expect the strategy to be?
- How and when to reframe to secure the necessary capabilities?

Turn the perspective out towards the customers

In the first interview round the managers expressed a critical need of getting hold of the younger customers, while having a close attachment to its older segment and local community. To further spark the strategic process, managers should take an outside-in approach (Baden-Fuller 1995) to identify customer-stakeholder frames. Identification and mapping of interests, need for customer stimulation, competencies, and time horizons can work as a point of departure for a discussion of the strategic relevance of implementing social media for customer interaction at different levels. To listen, engage, and respond to younger customers can be part of the intended strategy of MHA (identified in the lower left quadrant of the SMSM) as it provides an obvious frame for enhanced customer stimulation.

MHA has a strong basis for taking a *customer intimacy focus* where external influences like market developments and input from customers drive strategy. The managers show concern with how they should interact with the customers in terms of promotion, customer acquisition, and retention to guide the strategic orientation. However,

business management has until recently been relying on inside-out approaches in order to increase efficiency, productivity and profit. The downside of this management orientation bias is that MHA loses its ability to connect with their customers and understand the market. Marketing strategic capabilities are market- and customer oriented. They support the business strategy for external changes to evolve with the market, hence referred to as an outside-in approach (Baden-Fuller 1995, p. S3). They help the company to 1) attract new customers, 2) retain existing customers, especially in case of product, service, and market change, 3) compete with other companies and make a profit gained from listening and providing a seamless customer experience, 4) even reconfigure their resource base to differentiate their services and products through social media-based innovation.

When managers acknowledge that strategic thinking is more than long-range planning and cunning competitive moves, they may also incorporate convergent thinking and creativity on how to provide value to customers, collaborators and the surrounding society (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004b). The success of tomorrow's media companies seem to depend on the management's vision of how the organization can collaborate with stakeholders to pull together diverse and complex knowledge sources. Connecting to those knowledge sources requires cognitive, social and structural agility and highly dynamic capabilities.

This lead to the following reflective inside-out questions:

- What frames can be identified amongst our customers?
- What frames can be identified amongst our other stakeholders?
- How can we apply this knowledge of customer-stakeholder framing?
- How involving/engaging do we expect the strategic process to be?
- Should disruptive strategies be launched or should the business forego the digital moves of the customers?

Turn the reflective perspective forward

A starting point for MHA was to understand that the use of 'burning platform' (see also the introduction section) may be a powerful and compelling metaphor, but not useful to drive MHA in the right direction. Rather, the potential of digital technologies

should be made concrete, e.g., by use of numbers like the savings of expenses or time and put in focus.

The role of vision and negotiation of meaning (sensegiving) with other stakeholders is central to the strategic reframing process. The findings suggest that in order to detect new opportunities and directions for the business, a viable vision must be anchored in conscious knowledge about the strategic assumptions and contingencies: what is necessary and what is desirable is not given, but socially negotiated and orients managers towards the past and the future. Rosenstock-Huessy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2012) denoted these conflicting temporal contradictions ‘prejective’ and ‘trajective’. Prejective describes a person being revolutionary, innovative, and progressive oriented towards a yet unrealized future destiny, and the trajective person is of an evolutionary orientation forwarded upon ways known from the past. Whether time orientation preferences are bound to the individual, assessment of individual preferences should be part of the strategic reflection task.

The dissertation sets strategic reflection as a managerial norm, which mirrors a contemporary potentiality-seeking trend. In search of innovative solutions and unexplored possibilities, managers and employees are expected to ‘think out of the box’ and constantly question and exceed their current routines, assumptions, and practices in the quest for the “impossible possibility.” By that concept I refer to strategy as operation in the span between what is presently impossible, but possible in the future. *Potentiality*, rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle, explains, in a modern context, the demand of dynamic capabilities. It requires that the manager looks back to acknowledge the past points of departure, i.e. existing competences and different worldviews and build further from that.

These questions below turn the reflective perspective forward:

- What frames can be identified amongst our competitors?
- How can we prevent that inertia and cognitive bias implicate the strategic process?
- To what extent can proactive leadership, learning and involvement spur the strategic process?
- Do we expect the process to be evolutionary, cyclic, or in quantum leaps?
- How easy or difficult do we assess the process to be?
- What are the possibilities for controlling or influencing the process?

For the dissertation to ‘take its own medicine’ the remaining part of this chapter takes a meta-reflective view by relating the previous part to the contemporarily of management technologies. The dissertation argues that reflection is a crucial strategic skill and management practice, proposing to managers what are ‘optimal’ and ‘right’ ways to think, reason, and form decisions. However, it has so far left little space for discussing it in a broader societal context, which explains the relevance of the next section.

8.3 Reflective Management

Reflective management is a concept denoting both individual cognitive processes and collective social processes, which gives it a socio-cognitive appeal. The notion of the reflective manager dates back to Plato’s ‘The State’ (Reeve 1992) in which management was defined as a reflective relation. The core of management was formed by insights in the form of the good and rational argumentation as opposed to desire, which is uncontrollable. Later, Aristotle (1982 edition) criticizes the thesis that an ultimate form of the good can be identified. Instead he suggests a pragmatic version and the practice of identifying the best management form possible. This ties into the concept of potentiality mentioned above, which has become an important aspect of contemporary governance approaches. The inherent paradox of management expectations is that the manager is able to reduce complexity by creating structures, premises, and goals for decision-making. But at the same time the manager is expected to increase the room of potentiality by questioning and dissolving the premises for goal formulation before they are even defined. In that sense, managerial decision-making becomes difficult to practice without resting upon reflection.

Also the earlier philosophy of Kant (1774) is based on the notions of autonomy and reflection. Kant (1774) stated that rationality defines the rules from which we govern and that reflective thinking is relating to those rules provided by rationality. Even though times have changed, it is largely the same principles that explain strategic management as bound to the cognition of the manager.

Opposed to the classical thinkers mentioned above, who saw reflection as an individual-based practice Habermas (1981) defines reflection as resting in the mutual

linguistic relation between subjects, thus being social. Habermas' theory of communicative action is relevant for understanding reflective management as a social activity. He underscores the increasing importance of communication, which is reflective in character. Our globalized and networked society calls for a whole new communicative and reflective form of management that builds on a radically open form of communication (Larsen 2000). Larsen (200) refers to this as a 'reflective hegemony' where social relations are conveyed through a reflective communication that considers the normative issues and problems of the surrounding society. Likewise, Habermas regards the public space as important for the exchange of different logics and rationalities. In the context of this study, the manager can choose social media as public platforms for this exchange to take place in harmonic accordance with the expectations of transparency from the public.

Another premise for the argument is that our modern society and contemporary management values built on free forms of communication and free access to information parallel with a reflective praxis that accounts for organizations' choice, decisions, and financial and ethical practice. The appearance of alternative and opposition public spheres (Jakubowicz 2007) is enforced by social media as they allow citizens and marginalized people to express themselves and take part directly or indirectly in social changes (Khamis 2011).

Reflective management of new social forms of interaction and technologies becomes a method of transforming society and organizations (Schön 1983), as well as a way for the manager to cope with the strong demand for transparency. The influence of advanced communication technologies and the demand for transparency have brought forward a central strategic issue of how to strike the balance between gaining information and knowledge to be used for competitive purposes and disclosing information for the same reasons. Spin communication and low transparency may harm the image and identity of an organization if stakeholders associate such behavior with historically outdated and conservative practices. The demand for openness may, at first, appear as a threat to traditional management approaches, but due to a communicative pressure from the surrounding society, the influence of the manager may depend on the willingness to obey to this pressure, as there are no longer any legitimate alternatives.

Trust in the organization depends on its ability to communicate openly and display its decision for its stakeholders to see who they are and what they stand for. Reflection is

vital if managers and organizations are to live up to the expectations of the customers and stakeholders. It is no longer sufficient for customers that managers act strategically with the only purpose of fulfilling profit goals. A ‘hard-core’ strategic practice can get the organization in trouble if it is not legitimized by a reflection of the norms and ethical considerations on which the decision-making and actions rest. In democracies, a manager can no longer superimpose financial goals over moral and societal obligations, but is expected to dialogue (and negotiate) with the stakeholders on company norms and values. He or she is confronted with how to manage and on what criteria his or her management rest. So a manager’s ability to observe and critically relate to one’s own communication, while becoming aware of the premises that underlie the conceptualization, has become a success criterion for modern business management. This process takes place in the communication with other subjects, which is why transparent communication and a reflective practice are of a broader societal concern.

Especially the increasing demand for engagement of - and collaboration with – other stakeholders present a cross-pressure of interests, where the manager must decide what premises are acceptable and not acceptable. It can be difficult to account for the route from reflection to decision as it happens in leaps. However, it is possible to reflect upon the ways in which the decisions were made and the subsequent actions to take. The figure summarizes the cross-pressure of substantial management interests, however not consistently, in the four frames:

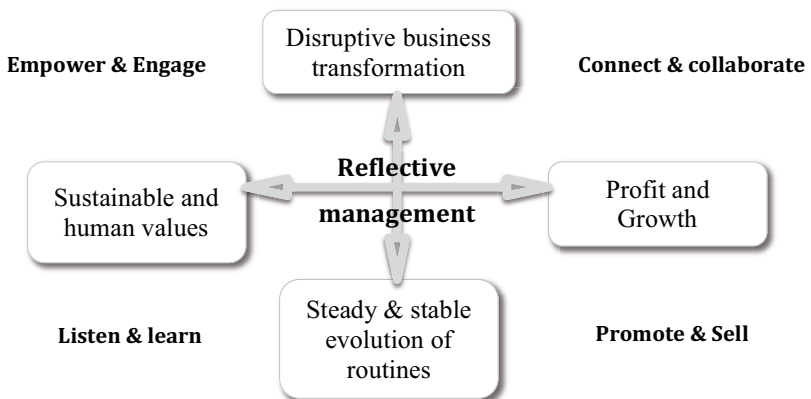


Figure 8.3: Reflective management in a cross-pressure of concerns

Reflective capabilities are crucial for the manager to make decisions and act beyond a cross-pressure. The reflective aspects become visible when values, norms, and ethics clash, as the manager will have to consider carefully what values should be governing. Kirkeby (1998) states that only the manager can make this decision. The values, morality, and ethics of the individual manager form the reflective perspective through which this complexity is perceived.

In general, there is a re-discovery of various methods in the management literature for managers to learn the ‘art and science of reflective management.’ An influx of philosophical methods, e.g., the Socratic dialog, which gives time for reflection or the ‘protreptic dialogue’ (Kirkeby 2008), from which managers come to realize their deepest inherent values that control their lives, a method that requires managers to mentally convert employees and customers to human beings. Kirkeby (2008) states that the protreptic allows for a radically new, deeper, and less instrumental approach to organizational communication.

Of the more ‘spiritual’ socio-cognitive change management theories is Scharmer’s ‘Theory U’ (2009), which opposes against the “decline in integrative awareness and thinking” (p. 103). It draws on the works of e.g., Glasl (1994) and the Goethean techniques described by Steiner (1978) encompassing individual and organizational framing. It turns the strategic focus from ‘what’ (the results), and ‘how’ (the process) to ‘who’ (the mind as the inner (blind) spot from where managers operate). Theory U (also dubbed ‘Ego to Eco’) proposes that managers can change the reality by mind and that the society we live in is a function of the quality of our awareness, attention, and consciousness. The idea of learning from the future while it emerges (Scharmer 2009) is an attempt to answer four questions that are highly relevant for this dissertation:

1. In the face of disruption, what emerging future is already possible to discern?
2. How do managers lead from the emerging future?
3. What evolutionary economic framework can guide managers and companies?
4. How can managers create strategies that enable them to operate from the future they wish to create?

Mindfulness is another example of more meditative practices. Such training dislodges excessive abstraction and reduces habitual thinking to help individuals interrupt highly habitual, but maladaptive modes of thought (Teasdale et al. 2000; Koutstaal 2012). It “increases explicit awareness of the habitual and automatic patterns of the mind to encourage a more non-judgmental perspective” (Koutstaal 2012, p. 89). It implies that managers should view thoughts as thoughts rather than veridical portrayals of reality. It involves a process of focusing on present experiences, paying attention in a particular way that enables them to meta-cognitively process ideas so as to allow greater choice and control.

Mindfulness is a method tested and verified by neuro-cognitive scientists, though the other methods may be possible, I didn’t manage to trace empirical evidence to trace of their effects on strategic management.

To wrap up this section, reflective management has become an institutionalized norm that is difficult for the manager to decline as well as a method to handle increasing demands for authenticity, in the sense that the customers, stakeholders, employees, even the managers, demand that the organization can legitimate its actions by openly communicating how their values affect their profit and reputation. Next section therefore investigates the organizational implications of the findings.

8.3.1 Organizational implications of strategic cognition of social media

When an organization allows for open communication it involves increased communication between the single employees and its customers and other stakeholders, which, again, requires that the single employee can relate to his or her own communicative actions in a reflected manner (Larsen 2000). In fact, it demands an organization that allows for open communication and a higher degree of autonomy in business-stakeholder interaction. A way for a manager to live up to the expectation of an open and transparent organization is by adopting the very same principles internally. However, companies have been slower to adopt digital approaches to engaging their own employees, suppliers, and external partners (Chui et al. 2012). In consequence, social media implementation for the purpose of interacting with its external environment is related to the very same use of social media inside the organization.

As social media allow for open exchange of ideas and opinions with its stakeholders, the same can be the case in a peer context. In that sense, reflective management offers an alternative version of value-based management, which can be demonstrated by the internal use of social media. Application of the four quadrants of the SMSM (Figure 5) for internal use seems evident and could be translated into the following four interpretations:

1: ‘Promote and Sell’: When the manager is using social media for internal information and/or controlling the information to influence opinions of employees and peers to accomplish strategic goals. Informing through social media enjoys the same advantages of fast dissemination in direct and personalized forms or as mass-communication, as stated in the ‘Promote-and-Sell’ understanding. It enables the manager to provide news instantly, which increases the news value while allowing the manager a more efficient and flexible time management (e.g., the news can be given while waiting in the airport, etc.). Employees may also be more willing to listen to such information and digest it if it flows in a more natural order, instead of being served in the form of 20 agenda items at a meeting. It allows the employee, like the manager, to read the posts at an appropriate time, which eventually makes a more efficient time-flow for the employees, too.

2: ‘Listen and Learn’: When the manager is using social media to gain insight into the world of the employees through dialog. It may represent a more ‘fluid’ form of employee evaluation and appraisal interviews, where the employees can express individual career plans and ideas and project aspirations in one-to-one or in virtual groups. Such settings are by managers and employees experienced as being forced, uncomfortable, and formal settings due to the asymmetrical power distribution. In consequence, managers often experience a lack of input from the employee, leading to improper preparation from both parties and improper expectations of what can be accomplished from such dialogs. Social media can be a stronger facilitator of such conversations as the employee can express thoughts, ideas, and feelings immediately, instead of piling them up for the annual talk. Moreover, it may feel more safe and even when the conversation is taking place in a virtual setting, not the manager’s office. Social media analytics can also be another way of listening and learning from data and thus create growth.

3: ‘Connect and Collaborate’: In a manager-employee context this quadrant closely resembles the business-*with*-customers mental model (management-*with*-employees?)

as the manager can establish more wider profession networks and alliances with the employees and their networks, for instance through services like LinkedIn. Social media enable various recruitment possibilities, collaborative product and service designs or knowledge sharing across the supply chain, which are already widely utilized by companies today. It is also quite common to use social media platforms in larger corporations, especially multinational and international companies, as a way to compensate for the lack of geographical and physical proximity. Social media offer expats a direct way to tap into new, local networks in the host country and to keep the relations alive after the expat has returned to his or her home country.

4: ‘Empower and Engage’: This quadrant reflect a leadership paradigm that reflects indirect and discursive management styles where the human, ethical, and emotional aspects are paramount. In a larger perspective, the idea of empowering and engaging employees advocate for a more performative understanding of the future as being socially created, rather than a destination you get to. Due to the democratic aspects that arise by such practice, it may even present the first step towards fulfilling the expectations stated in the fourth mental model of business-*for*-consumer interaction. Future products, services, and experiences driven by authenticity appear as being stronger positioned competition-wise. However, for companies to attract ‘sensitive’ consumers, their business must display certain values, norms, and ethics. Transparency and open communication further strengthen the ability for the company to act according to moral expectations of the modern consumers since the competitive landscape is changing in a direction where all companies are exposed to the same demands. In consequence, employees can monitor the behavior of the managers and their company as a whole and keep them accountable for their actions through open critique. Likewise, the organization can monitor the behavior of their competitors and keep them accountable for their actions through open critique. If a company refuses to play by the rules of the game, they may also lose competitive advantages and thus lose in the game of business.

In the context of the findings, the four mental models represent different ways of relating to the task of strategic decision-making as they in each their way prioritize how the demands of profit, growth, global competition, transformation, transparency, sustainability, etc. can be met by management. However, these demands should ideally be prioritized in a synchronous manner rather than sequentially, meaning that managers are expected produce integrative solutions rather than exercising categorical

‘either-or’ decision-making. The need for reflective management is thus stressed by an increase in paradoxical and conflicting demands that can be difficult to reconcile.

Following the socio-cognitive perspective, the last section links the individual managerial reflection with the social relations as a management technology.

8.3.2 Social relations as a management technology

The identification of the four mental models reflects how the social relations between a business and its customers have become instrumental in four different ways. The transactional logic that underpins the business-*to*-customer model is that management orientation towards profit growth creates profit growth. This was at an earlier point of time criticized by Marx and Weber. Weber (1972) points out how the transactional frame of understanding presents cognitive barriers that captures people in the goal-rationalization of social relations. Luhmann (1985) explains this effect due to ‘money’ as being the strongest medium (i.e., an abstract, concept description of repertoire of language knowledge like vocabulary, grammar rules, and communication skills), even as the role model of other media ‘Money’ can reduce the complexity of a whole world market into one single expression that everybody understands.

However, managers are at risk of being financially ‘punished’ for relations than can the money code cannot account for, such as ethical responsibility as a foundational value. Alternatively, managers can accept the ‘corporate social responsibility’ of interacting with its customers and stakeholders. However it remains an instrumental value, distinct from a foundational value, as the social relationship becomes a way to realize organizational goals of profit. Customer intimacy works a shared, but mutually binding value lens through which the company can find answers and explanations for what they do and who they are. The game of corporate social responsibility, taking place at the interface of business and society, is about convincing each other, and here, social media allows customers to be the questioning part, which requires reflective social, managerial, and communicative skills from the company part. Companies can even compete with how good they are willing to be (see Carrotmob.com).

This may impact some of the indications of this dissertation. Even with the emergence of the ‘business-*for*-customers’ mental model and its idea of ‘empowerment’, it will be

highly relevant to ask whether a reflective practice is enough to escape the understanding of social relations as means that serve utilitarian purposes as long as we live in a capitalist society. It requires a move from an ideology of individualism and self-made success towards an opposite ideological pole of cultural authority and community support. A shift from empowerment of the human agency towards a religious or communitarian authority of 'serving God or the Community' demands trade-offs between two ideological poles, also discussed with the emergence of the sharing economy.

Business examples (Airbnb, Uber, etc.) of the sharing economy can be criticized for the inherent illogical claim of communal benefits, where business networks are developed deliberately to generate and encourage material ambitions, as opposed to offering hope for communities creating equality, welfare and sustainable solutions, cynically called a wolf in a sheep's clothing, assuming that utilitarianism always overrules altruism. However, the process of such trade-offs opens up reconceptualization, e.g. the relevance of moving from corporate social responsibility towards common social responsibility (amalgamation of business-customer activities).

Weber (1972) noted that the rationalization of social relations becomes a meaningless forced form, created by humans themselves in the development of society that displaces human freedom, as it cannot take part in such rationalization. This reveals a paradox relevant to this study that even the business-*for*-customers mental model, which strives for emancipation from the capitalist logic (Yunus and Weber 2007), is still the product of a strategic management decision that rationalize social relations. The development of Google Corporation is an example of a company, which sees socially created data as the new oil. Product iteration is fed by customer feedback being build into the very use of the Google products. Reflective thinking may help managers discover and face that side of it, but despite any normative foundation, there is still a case of a business-customer relation governed by a strategic purpose. It takes more than reflective thinking alone to escape this paradox.

According to Weber (1972) and Bateson (1972) meaning and freedom requires religious and spiritual values, which directs the attention towards the role of spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership theory (relating to Sharmer 2009) describes how organizational transformation is designed by establishing a sense of leader-follower spiritual survival as a way create an intrinsically motivation to foster higher levels of engagement, commitment, productivity, and learning (Fry, Vitucci, and Cedillo 2005).

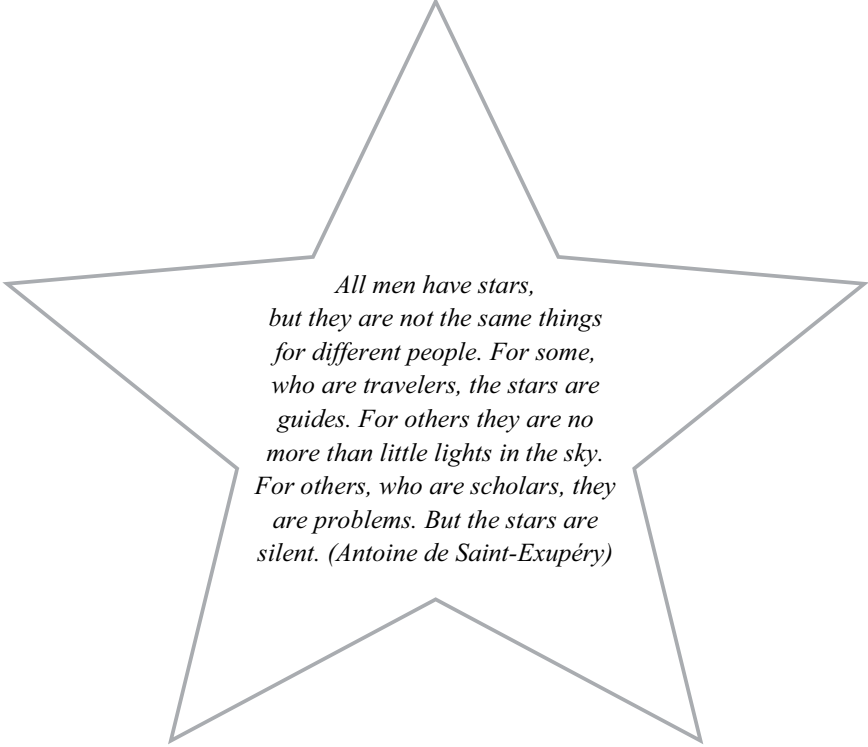
The authors describe how spiritual leadership can create value congruence across strategic and empowered teams and at individual levels. They describe spiritual leadership as a springboard for a new leadership paradigm, which aligns the business-*for*-customers mental model with the internal interpretation of the model as business-*for* employees.

Elements of this thinking could be traced in the interview with the CDO. He characterized his leadership approach as consisting of three different roles of the evangelist (conveying a digital message and telling a story), the consultant (helping the chief editors to take the initiatives and carry out the strategy) , and the psychologist (bring employees back to a courageous state, where they believe in themselves and the mission). The shift of managerial roles only underscores the necessity of taking a reflective stance when managing and leading an organization in a digital transformation process.

To summarize the main points of this chapter, the managerial implications of the findings are visible at individual, organizational, and societal level. Metaphorically speaking, there are strong discursive streams towards transformative social constellations, particularly enabled by new technologies, but the rip currents of traditional management, marketing, and interaction should not be underestimated. This does not excuse managers from swimming in rough waters - on the contrary – they must develop the skills to understand the interplay between mental, physical, and external dynamics and navigate accordingly.

Chapter 9

The last chapter covers potential routes for further development of the field of strategic cognition and new technology. I present examples of research projects and studies that are emerging and can be interesting to realize. The aim is to inspire other researchers to take part in this conversation, as there is plenty of room for theory-building and much empirical work to be conducted at different analytical levels.



*All men have stars,
but they are not the same things
for different people. For some,
who are travelers, the stars are
guides. For others they are no
more than little lights in the sky.
For others, who are scholars, they
are problems. But the stars are
silent. (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)*

9. Future research

Even though the dissertation shows how historical antecedents and mental models guide how people see and use social media, their influence may over time cause a profound change in global business behavior and thinking, which calls for researchers to take a closer examination at how these realities are mentally and socially presented. By investigating further on social media strategy mindsets and personality traits among managers, many perceived obstacles and uncertainties could convert to opportunities, and even fairly controllable ones. As there are no obvious hindrances of applying the cognitive approach, further research that focuses on the manager's stake can help develop a better understanding of how managerial approaches to social media influence business-market growth.

Supported by massive research in familiar areas such as technology, business model innovation, and collaborative business, researchers can pair business innovative ideas with ideas offered by marketing insights. They can use it to reconfigure the strategy field in ways that can bring new theoretical, empirical, and methodological insights and provide answers as well as means to overcome cognitive barriers.

Knowing exactly how mental models of business–customer interactions will affect how businesses approach and adopt social media in the coming years is impossible to predict, but it is an area that deserves further research, especially from socio-psychological aspects of emotion and cognition. Previous research on cognition (e.g., Tripsas and Gavetti 2000) has shown that managers often perceive their business environments differently. This research provides one way to understand such differences. Inspired by the MHA study, it is important to understand how mental models develop over time and how much cognitive effort and retraining is required, not only to change them, but also to enable managers to gain a meta-perspective and switch perspectives.

The study of cognitive mechanisms for shaping social media outcomes could be extended to multiple levels and areas of analysis such as inter-organizational framing, the framing of consumers and other stakeholders, framing at industry level. Daily practices of real-time decision-making and ‘negotiation’ of frames could be investigated in longitudinal studies. In these micro-processes, it is possible to observe

how framing of the business context and technology development affect managerial decision-making.

Reflection and metacognition have been highlighted as important key competences and proposed as methods that strengthen cognitive agility. A key issue, which further research could look into is when and how concrete/abstract elements are best employed for the manager to gain maximum learning creating a balance between similarity and difference (see Koutstaal 2012). Abstract representations of social media can be fast and efficient because their concise form allows for quick reading, but they are stripped of semantic elaborations and grounded representations. Documentation of the learning benefit from e.g., the mental model approach of how it allows managers to move from abstract to concrete (grounded) elements would provide a highly relevant empirical contribution.

Neuroscience is another area that can provide unique explanations to the strategic cognition field. Mental processes are brain processes and since brains are different a variety of neurological processing over the same thought is possible. Research that explains what it is about those neurological patterns and processes that underpin particular thoughts would be insightful to propel this stream of research.

Basic assumptions about the nature of business are essential to understanding the overall perspective from which social media is perceived and used, why this research has its relevancy. Though this dissertation contributes to the field of ‘reciprocal dynamics between cognition, materiality, and interests by discussing how new social technologies interact (and interfere) with management thinking on marketing- and business strategy in general, this is a field that deserves much more attention (see also Kaplan 2011). Further study determining to what extent assumptions and understandings of offline interaction should be transferred to online environments is an area that this dissertation has pointed towards as being highly relevant.

Contrary to common understanding, cognition includes affective aspects, spanning between high cognition and low cognition (Hodgkinson and Healey 2011). The affective mechanisms of cognitive change are central in situations where managers are consciously and subconsciously faced with ‘hyped’ and disruptive technology. As discussed in the previous chapter, preparing for changes that involve a reassessment of the underlying rules, norms, and values of business interaction requires a new kind of management sensitivity and a strategic ability to constantly develop new frameworks

and perspectives to maintain an agile mind. Inclusion of the affective aspects is vital for understanding strategic processes.

Affective and emotional aspects have been highlighted in consumer research, but largely ignored by the field of strategic management in favor of more rational and analytical approaches. Instead of considering thinking as divorced from our sensory motors or perceptual functions, the position of this dissertation is that thinking is based on specific emotions, material objects, and contexts. The affective aspect was not treated explicitly in the dissertation, still it is relevant to incorporate the distinction between emotional and analytical processes, e.g. from the concepts of hot-cold cognition (Hodgkinson and Healey 2011) in the theorizing of mental model influence on conceptualization. It might seem irrational when a manager reacts affectively towards technology, and even base strategic decisions hereon; but why is it more legitimate that consumers more openly make affective decisions? Some informants expressed “hot cognition” in terms of strong aversions against social media and a strong unease of using it, while others expressed “hot affection” towards the medium and a strong emotional motivation to use it.

This finding fostered two further studies not included in this PhD. The first is conducted together with assistant professor Kristen Schiele, California Polytechnic, Pomona, US. It is titled “How managers sense and seize “hyped” technologies: A case study of online reviews” and applies the frameworks of Hodgkinson and Healey (2011) and Teece (2007). The conference paper is accepted at the Direct/Interactive Marketing Research Summit, Oct. 2015 in Boston. The second study is conducted in collaboration with professor Omar El Sawy, University of Southern California. In this present study we look at the strategic cognition of the concept of real-time to understand its real-life value and management.

The finding that existing knowledge of marketing, communication, and media may inhibit the strategic exploration of social media encourages further research on how learning and organizational change is affected by existing knowledge. If knowledge in related areas may have a negative effect on the strategic potential to explore new technology researchers should look into which kind of knowledge is most valuable to further exploration of strategic options. How do managers come up with new valuable ideas for strategic development?

Managerial motivation is a research area that can be elaborated in the context of this dissertation. Success to create thriving social media interaction requires a deeper understanding of what drives the single manager and employee and how and why they chose to participate. A starting point could be Mantovani (1996), who describes actions as goal-driven tasks rather than needs. With the Ecological Cognition Framework Bishop (2007) further explains goals and competencies rather than needs motivate people to participate in online communities. The individual's interpretation of own actions develops into beliefs and goals. Further research based on such framework may explain why some managers are more active than others. Conversely, it may explain the reluctance among some managers to engage with social media.

Another paper also initiates a further study on strategic cognition of online media storms. "Calming the waters or riding the waves? Understanding why and how companies can leverage anger to empower the brand" (Rydén, Kottika, Hossain, and Skare 2015) presented at EMAC 2015 in Leuven, Belgium. It is a scrutiny of the concept of empowerment by emotion and social media technology. This paper conceptualizes and provides a case study of how consumer empowerment and negative emotions can create opportunities for companies to ride the waves of consumer anger in a way that strengthens their brand instead of managers perceive it as a threat that must be managed by strategic communication. Companies can utilize such situations to inform people on their brands' core values, and initiate discussions of larger societal relevance, which improves the brand awareness and value. This calls for a reconsideration of assumptions that empowerment is like a seesaw swinging in favor of either the consumer or the company, and that negative emotions can only be destructive.

Management technologies and constellations are rapidly changing concurrently with the emergence of new technologies, which calls for systematic revision of existing modes of thinking. The sharing economy and academia in the digital age are examples of areas, where research can provide new insights into human and technical interaction at various levels. We know little about how the effects of the leadership role of calling into question an obsolete frame and reframe and ascribe new meaning (sensegiving) to reinvent an organization and discover new business models taking place as an unpredictable, iterative, and experimental process. Cross-fertilization of social and individual cognition and organizational learning can lead to many future studies (Akgün et al. 2003) (e.g., accounting for how political and power processes mediate or moderate learning processes).

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