

# Organizational Social Media: A Literature Review and Research Agenda

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## Abstract

*Social media refers to online tools that make it possible for users to create content, publish, share and communicate online. Social media use by and in organizations is a developing research field still in its infancy. The present paper presents a literature review on the subject of Organizational Social Media (OSM), starting and proceeding from van Osch and Coursaris's literature review extending to 2011. The review contributes to the IS research field by describing how the IS research field defines and categorizes social media, identifying what topics are currently interesting and suggesting future research topics. The findings suggest that to a great extent the IS research field focuses on internal activities e.g. communication and knowledge sharing made possible by social media and that a common definition of social media is lacking.*

## 1. Introduction

Social media refers to online tools that make it possible for users to create content, publish, share and communicate online [1]. In recent years, the usage of social media by individuals has flourished and as a result, organizations have started to use the new technology as well for strategic purposes [2, 3]. However, researchers [2] argue that when it comes to the use of social media by and in organizations, we have “barely scratched the surface of what is coming and what is possible” (p. 3), and there is growing importance of social media as a strategic tool [2, 3]. Aral et al. [2] emphasize that social media have made fundamental changes in the way we communicate, consume and collaborate, hence social media “represent one of the most transformative impacts of information technology on business, both within and outside firm boundaries” (p. 3). Furthermore, researchers argue that social media have revolutionized the way organizations relate to stakeholders and society, which creates both challenges and possibilities [1, 2, 3]. A large amount of research within the field of Information Systems (IS) has been conducted with

individuals as level of analysis focusing on individual use and acceptance of social media. However, despite increased organizational use and several calls for more research on organizational use of social media the topic is a developing research field, still in its infancy [2, 4]. Furthermore, there is a plethora of definitions of social media creating a lack of thorough, theoretically grounded description of the meaning of social media, which is a challenge for research on organizational use of social media [4]. Van Osch and Coursaris [4] emphasize that a lot of research has been conducted on the use of social media for marketing and advertising purposes. The authors also argue that it is likely that organizations will use social media beyond the context of marketing and advertising to support other organizational activities such as knowledge sharing, learning and innovation.

Social media are often categorized depending on how they are used and for what purpose, e.g. social media used for internal organizational communication is often referred to Enterprise Social Media (ESM) [4, 5] while social media used for external communication has been termed Social Media Marketing (SMM), or Public Social Media [3]. As use of social media by organizations is a relatively new and evolving area of research, many different definitions and terms have been used, often interchangeably, to describe the phenomena of social media. The many definitions of social media and categorizations of social media use in organizations overlap [3]. For example, Wehner et al. [5] define ESM as social media used in an organizational context, while other researchers define ESM as social media used by organizations for internal communication [6]. The use of overlapping definitions is described by Vam Brocke et al. [7] as an IS discipline characteristic and they also emphasize the fragmented and cross-disciplinary characteristics of the IS research field, and the tendency for topics to come and go with waves of technology or for similar concepts to be published under different headings. Of existing social media reviews, very few have focused on the overall use of social media in organizational contexts [4]. Instead, many reviews focus on specific uses of social media, e.g. advertising,

public relations, marketing and communication [3] or specific industries such as the hospitality industry [8] or healthcare system [9]. Also, many reviews have focused on Enterprise Social Media, referring to internal use of social media [5, 10, 11]. In 2013, Van Osch and Coursaris [4] conducted a literature review on organizational use of social media with articles published between 2003 and 2011, resulting in 19 articles covering a more general use of social media by and within organizations. The review resulted in a research framework and a definition of Organizational Social Media (OSM):

*“Organizational Social Media are technology artefacts, both material and virtual, that support various intra- and extra-organizational actors—including management, employees and external stakeholders—in a multiplicity of organizational communication activities for producing user-generated content, developing and maintaining social relationships, or enabling other computer-mediated interactions and collaborations in the context of a specific organization and its environment”*(p. 703).

Van Osch and Coursaris’s [4] review of the social media literature was not restricted to MIS journals. Instead, a broad search for articles containing a social media technology was conducted, regardless of the journals’ primary domain of research. However, the review showed that only three articles from the “Basket of Eight” (*European Journal of Information Systems* (EJIS), *Information Systems Journal* (ISJ), *Information Systems Research* (ISR), *Journal of AIS* (JAIS), *Journal of MIS* (JMIS), *MIS Quarterly* (MISQ), *Journal of Strategic Information Systems* (JSIS), and *Journal of Information Technology* (JIT)) were published during this period of time.

Due to the rapid development of Social Media use by both individuals and by organizations, there is a need to investigate the current status of IS research on social media in organizational contexts. Hence, the present paper proceeds from van Osch and Coursaris’s [4] review of OSM with the purpose to contribute to the IS research field by reviewing studies published in ten prominent IS journals including the “*Basket of Eight*”, *Information and Organizations* (I&O) and *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (JCMC) from 2012 to 2017 in order to investigate how research on social media use in organizational contexts has been conducted within the IS research field. The study supplements previous review studies with more recent work on IS studies of social media in organizations and contributes an analysis of how the IS research field defines and studies social media in organizations.

The present paper aims to identify current IS research on social media in organizational contexts and to propose a research agenda. The following three research questions are asked: RQ1: Which definitions, terms and categorizations referring to social media does the IS research field apply? RQ2: What topics are currently addressed in the IS research field concerning organizational use of social media? RQ3: What topics can be identified for future research on organizational use of social media? The paper is structured as follows: First, the methodology and scope of the literature, including the process of identifying relevant literature, is described. Thereafter, the findings of the review are described. Finally the results are discussed and a conclusion and limitations of the study is presented with suggestions for future research.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research method and reflection

In order to appreciate the current state of social media research within the IS research field, a literature review has been conducted. Many approaches can be found on how to conduct a literature review. Unlike the literature review by van Osch and Coursaris [4], which includes conference papers, the present study was restricted to prominent IS journals included in the “Basket of Eight” plus the journals *Information and Organizations* and *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. The journals were chosen due to the aim to provide an insight into social media research in the IS research field. Although the IS research field is interdisciplinary [12], many reviews are conducted using a wide scope of literature, spanning several research fields [13]. However, in order to discover the fundamentals of IS research it can be argued that it is relevant for future research to explore the research that has been published in highly ranked and influential IS journals. Also, many literature reviews in the IS research field have conducted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) [13, 14]. In the case of SLR, it offers a wider scope of research, since it aims to achieve a rigorous review and identify as many publications as possible relevant to the research questions [8, 14]. However, SLRs have also been criticized in the IS research field (see [13]) for not having the aim to provide an assessment of a state of knowledge in a problem domain and identification of weaknesses and needs for further research [15], which is the purpose of a traditional or narrative literature review [16]. Also, the IS research field has called for more literature reviews [17] with “good or reasonable coverage rather than a comprehensive one that would make a review process at best ephemeral if not unachievable” (p.

246). The present literature review is not exhaustive in nature [18], as it does not seek to review all existing literature in the subject. Instead, it seeks to focus on finding key texts and thereby identify exemplars or path-defining studies, or “a few authoritative summaries of the literature or a handful of recent, influential and well-respected articles” [19, p. 18]. The present literature review was conducted during the summer of 2017. The selected articles were categorized and analyzed using Van Osch and Coursaris’s [4] research framework. The framework offers two layers of analysis. First, identification of three general elements of OSM: *artefacts, actors* and *activities*. Second, focus on three central actors engaging with OSM: *management, employees* and *external stakeholders*. Furthermore, the articles were categorized according to *author(s)* and *year of publication, name of journal, research design and methods* (quantitative method, qualitative method, and mixed methods), and *definitions and terms of social media* used. Additionally, after the first screening of articles, which revealed that many articles studied organizational implementation and adoption processes, the category of *adoption/implementation phases* was added in order to describe what part of the process the article studied.

## 2.2 Identification of relevant literature

The following keywords were used in the literature search: social media, social network site(s), social networking sites(s) and online social networks. Just like in van Osch and Coursaris’s [4] review, the main criterion for inclusion of an article in the review was the use of the term “social media” or any of the above terms as the primary technology analyzed. After defining the search keywords, the literature search was conducted in each journal’s database, resulting in 2111 articles. After removing duplicate articles, commentary articles and editorials, the dataset contained 743 scholarly articles. Thereafter, the articles were evaluated in relation to the criterion of using social media as core technology. To decide whether the selected articles met the inclusion criteria the titles and abstracts of the articles were manually and systematically screened by the author. This step resulted in 67 articles. The second step of the literature dealt with evaluating and categorizing articles that focused on social media in the context of an organization by full-text reading, which resulted in 46 articles (see table 1). Out of the 46 articles, 89.1% were empirical and 10.9% conceptual. In terms of method, 28.3% of the articles used a qualitative research method, 45.7% used a quantitative method and 25.7% used a mixed method. Of the 15 articles that discussed

adoption or implementation processes, 46.6% studied early stages of post-adoption and 26.7% described that they used a longitudinal method.

**Table 1.**  
**Summary of articles found in the review**

Journal	Reference, author(s) and year
EJIS	[31] Koch et al. (2012)
I&O	[22] Martini et al. (2013)
I&O	[35] Kane (2017)
I&O	[47] Leonardi (2017)
ISJ	[55] Koch et al. (2013)
ISJ	[24] Subramaniam and Nandhakumar (2013)
ISJ	[33] Trier and Richter (2015)
ISR	[40] Aggarwal et al. (2012)
ISR	[62] Dou et al. (2013)
ISR	[51] Wu (2013)
ISR	[28] Leonardi (2014)
ISR	[39] Singh et al. (2014)
JAIS	[29] Dennis et al. (2016)
JAIS	[52] Salehan et al. (2017)
JCMC	[59] Lovejoy and Saxton (2012)
JCMC	[48] Fulk and Yuan (2013)
JCMC	[43] Gibbs et al. (2013)
JCMC	[6] Leonardi et al. (2013)
JCMC	[41] Majchrzak et al. (2013)
JCMC	[44] Vaast and Kaganer (2013)
JCMC	[53] Fieseler et al. (2015)
JCMC	[42] Oostervink et al. (2016)
JIT	[27] Argyris and Ransbotham (2016)
JIT	[25] Choudrie and Zamani (2016)
JIT	[32] Mettler and Winter (2016)
JIT	[26] Recker and Lekse (2016)
JIT	[37] Rode (2016)
JIT	[58] Schlagwein and Hu (2016)
JIT	[56] Van Osch and Steinfield (2016)
JMIS	[30] Lu et al. (2015)
JMIS	[21] Khansa (2017)
JSIS	[36] Von Krogh (2012)
JSIS	[50] Ali-Hassan et al. (2015)
JSIS	[63] Dong and Wu (2015)
JSIS	[46] Huang et al. (2015)
JSIS	[38] Karoui et al. (2015)
JSIS	[49] Kuegler et al. (2015)
JSIS	[61] Benthaus et al. (2016)
JSIS	[60] Hauser et al. (2017)
MISQ	[20] Beck et al. (2014)
MISQ	[34] Kane et al. (2014)
MISQ	[45] Leonardi (2015)
MISQ	[54] Miranda et al. (2015)
MISQ	[57] Huang and Zhang (2016)
MISQ	[23] Zhang et al. (2016)
MISQ	[64] Lu et al. (2017)

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Artefacts - terms, definitions and categorizations

The literature review revealed that a broad range of definitions, terms and categorizations of social media were used. When describing the overall phenomenon of social media, 37.8% used the term “social media,” while 19.6% used the term “social network” or “social network site(s).” Other definitions were used as well, such as Social Media Platforms (SMP) [20], Social Media Sites (SMS) [21], Social Technologies (ST) [22]. Important keywords that described the nature of social media like “relationships,” “User Generated Content” and “interaction” were common throughout all of the articles in the review. However, it was noticeable that a large variety of theories was used to explain and define the phenomena of social media. Zhang et al. [23] do not define social media but describe the phenomena by saying “social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Amazon allow users to generate, share and communicate with others” (p. 584). When discussing the actual social media artefact studied, 26% defined the artefact, e.g. Facebook [24], Twitter [20], or Yammer [25, 26], while the remaining articles used a more overall definition, e.g. Enterprise Social Media or Social Media when discussing the technology used. For example, Argyris and Ramsbothan [27] study Wikipedia’s use in an organizational context, and Leonardi [28] focused on the usage of Jive for internal communication and knowledge sharing while Dennis et al. [29] and Lu et al. [30] study internal and external corporate blogging. Remaining articles use broader categorizations when describing the artefacts.

The use of the term Enterprise Social Media is common and describes social media used for *internal* communication in organizations. However, there are also “sub-categories” describing ESM, e.g. [31] use the term “Digitally Enabled Social Networks” and [32] Enterprise Social Systems (ESS), when discussing social media used for internal communications. By comparison, [33] uses the term “Corporate Social Network Services” when discussing social media used for internal communications in organizations while [20] use the term “Enterprise Microblogging” when studying blogging used for internal communication.

**Table 2.**  
**Summary of existing articles and topics**

Research Topics	Subtopics	References
Artefacts	e.g. Jive, Microblogging, Wikipedia, Facebook, ESM Corporate blogs	[20][24][25][26][27][28][29][30][40][59][61]
Actors	e.g. performance, private vs. professional use	[6][37][38][40][50][51][52]
Activities	e.g. knowledge sharing, internal communication, innovation, policies, internal communication	[20][21][26][30][31][34][35][36][37][39][41][42][48][49][57][54][60][64]

#### 3.2 Actors and activities

Overall, 47.8% of the articles had the organizations as level of analysis. The articles were also classified according to the main organizational activity studied in the article (see table 2). The review reveals that 67.5% focused on internal activities, while 17.4 % of the articles emphasized social media used for external communication. Furthermore, 15.1% pointed out the use of social media for both internal and external activities. The 46 articles were also classified on the basis of the main actor using them. Similar to [4], three categories were found: employees, stakeholders and managers. Of these, 41.3% of the articles specifically studied employees, while 8.7% studied management and 6.5% studied stakeholders.

**Table 3.**  
**Summary of categories of main social media users in organizations**

Research Topics	Subtopics	References
Employees	e.g. internal networking, communication, technology resistance	[24] [25][31][32][33][37][41][42][43][45] [47][49][50][51] [52] [53][54][55][57]
Management	e.g policies, organizational hierarchy	[25][26][27][56]
Stakeholders	e.g. marketing, knowledge sharing, innovation	[22][61][63]

### 3.2.1 Internal use and knowledge sharing

Emphasis on how social media are used as an enabler of internal communication and knowledge sharing was found in 67.5% of the 29 articles that studied social media for internal communication and use (see table 2). Kane et al [34] and Kane's [35] article discusses how social media have effected knowledge sharing in organizations and overcome many limitations found in earlier Knowledge Management technologies. Also Von Krogh [36] studied how social software change knowledge management activities. Rode's [37] quantitative study points out how employees at a high-tech firm are driven to share knowledge in ESM by extrinsic motivation, which includes expected gains and mutual gains. Furthermore, the study shows that the employees are driven by social rewards such as improved reputation, rather than the satisfaction of helping colleagues. Karoui et al [38] studied employee's use of social media and how the use can create social capital. From the managers' point of view, Recker and Lekse [26] investigated how managers in an organization placed in different geographical settings use Yammer to communicate. The study shows how internal communication that used to be spatial and private becomes visible and persistent, and unbound to space and time with the use of ESN. Singh et al. [39] explored how employees use Enterprise Blogging, what subjects they write about and how readers are attracted and retained. The authors emphasized that it is assumed that by allowing and encouraging employees to blog the organization can create knowledge sharing. However, the result of the study shows that the employees had a tendency to blog about non-work-related subjects, hence management needed to find regulations and policies to encourage employees to focus on work-related blog content.

How EMS can be used to create digital bridges was studied by Beck et al. [20], who emphasized that Enterprise Social Media (ESM)-enabled Electronic Networks of Practice (ENoP) can be regarded as a symbolic social interaction system that can close the gap between knowledge demand and supply across geographic and organizational boundaries. By studying the use of Enterprise Microblogging they study how ENoP can establish knowledge exchange in organizations. The study focuses on the relationship between knowledge contributors and knowledge seekers and how they interact. Aggarwal et al [40] studied the management of social media and how employees negative blog posts can make corporate

blogs more interesting and attract more readers and present theoretical grounding for the idea that negative blog posts does not always damage a corporation and could create more positive effects, hence they argue that corporations should be careful when prohibiting negative blog posts by employees.

Majchrzak et al. [41] theoretically discussed how social media may change how individuals in organizations are engaged in how knowledge is shared within organizations. By applying an affordance lens the authors identify and examine four affordances (metavoicing, triggered attending, network-informed associating, and generative role-taking) related with social media that are generative for engaging individuals in organizations. Oostervink et al. [42] also studied knowledge sharing with an affordance lens, more specifically how institutional complexity influences the use of ESM for the purpose of sharing knowledge in organizations. Their qualitative case study revealed that professionals find ways to manage the uncertainties they experience by engaging the affordances of ESM in such a way as to develop managing practices. Gibbs et al. [43], who identified tensions associated with social media use by employees, also studied affordances. The study reveals that the employees encountered tensions in their social media use due to the relationship between affordances that empowered both overt and covert behavior. Similarly, Leonardi [28] investigated reasons for why employees don't want to share knowledge through social media. Furthermore, Vaast and Kaganer [44] when investigating organizational social media policies and how organizations respond to their employee use of social media also used affordances. Their findings show that organizations tend to perceive employee social media use as a risk rather than a value.

How Enterprise Social Networking Sites (ESNS) can be used for both internal communication and as a tool for employees to get information about "who knows what and who knows whom" in the organization was studied by Leonardi [45]. The result shows that the message transparency enabled by ESNS is an important factor in effective knowledge transfer and collaboration within the organization. Similarly Huang et al [46] studied social media adoption for internal communication purposes. In another study, Leonardi [47] followed the implementation of an Enterprise Social Network Technology, Jive, and the study reveals how communication visibility has consequences for work and knowledge sharing in organizations. In their conceptual article, Fulk and

Yuan [48] discussed how knowledge moves around organizations and that conventional Knowledge Management systems focus on static knowledge while Enterprise Social Networking Systems may have better potential for affording knowledge creation processes. Leonardi et al. [6] discussed how Enterprise Social Media can be defined and also made suggestions for further research, pointing out the need for more and different metaphors for understanding Enterprise Social Media use.

### 3.2.2 Performance and motivation

Topics related to employees' job performance were studied by Kuegler et al [49] and Ali-Hassan et al. [50] investigated if and to what extent the impact of social media on routine and innovative job performance differs depending on how social media are used. The result shows that if and how job performance is affected is linked to the context in which social media are used by employees. For routine types of work social media can have a negative effect, while for more innovative and creative tasks social media use can have a positive effect. Wu [51] studied how the use of social media can drive both work performance and job security. The relationship between employees' private use and enterprise use of social media was also explored by Mettler and Winter [32] who by using a design experiment measured enterprise users' attitudes towards sharing information and using Enterprise Social Systems. Their result showed that users in an organizational setting are less social and that how social media are used is highly dependent on the setting, as suggested by Ali-Hassan et al. [50]. Furthermore, Salehan et al. [52] analyzed how employee motivation, participation and performance are related to each other and how private participation in and use of social media are linked to job performance and professional use. For example, managers tend to reply to other, geographically relatively close managers more rapidly than to more distant managers. Fieseler et al. [53] also studied how professional and private roles are affected by social media use. By quantitatively exploring the self-presentation of marketing and communication managers they demonstrate how organizational identification affects how managers combine professional and private domains and create an online persona. Similarly, Miranda et al [54] studied social media use related to Diffusion of Innovation and Koch et al [31] investigated an implementation of an internal Social Networking Site (SNS) in an organizations and found that the SNS blurred the boundary between the employees' work life and social life and the blurred boundaries created positive emotions for the

employees that used the SNS. In another study, Koch et al [55] studied the relationship between IT conflicts and the use of social media in an organization.

The literature review also revealed topics related to hierarchical organizational issues related to the use of social media in an organizational context. Choudrie and Zamani [25] studied hierarchical challenges by investigating how the social media platforms Yammer and Chatter were used in large service organizations, and the results showed what motivation the employees had to use ESN and identified resistance-related behaviors. The result shows that there are bottom-up and top-down pressures that hinder an effective and successful use of ESN. Furthermore, the study by van Osch and Steinberg [56] reveals how boundary-spanning activities and how internal group members in an organizational context interact with extra-team stakeholders using ESM. Their findings reveal that there is a relationship between organizational hierarchy and blogposts. Individuals in a leadership position are more likely to create representational posts while team members are more likely to use ESM for activities related to information search. Huang and Zhang [57] investigated how employees participation in a social network related to their career development.

### 3.2.3 External communication and knowledge sharing

8 of the 46 articles studied social media used for external activities i.e., social media used by the organization to communicate publicly e.g. with stakeholders and customers. Schlagwein and Hu [58] identified five different social media use types that support different organizational purposes, both internally and externally. As in social media used for internal activities the interest in how to gain and share knowledge is also evident in this category of research. Zhang et al.'s [23] study provides an insight into how organizational Facebook pages can be used in order to create social engagement for a brand. Similarly, Lovejoy and Saxton [59] studied how non-profit organizations use Twitter in order to engage with stakeholders and the public. They found three main functions for the Twitter use: "information," "community" and "action.". The need for social media management was also revealed in the literature review. The topic was also studied by Hauser et al. [60], who discuss how conflict and crisis management can be used by organizations in social media environments. They argue that online communities, both driven by customers and by organizations, can create value for organizations by providing product ideas, innovations and creating relationships with stakeholders. However, online communities can also create negative word of

mouth and social conflict, which is an interaction relationship that can occur when community members perceive incompatibilities. They conclude that conflict and crisis management are necessary. Benthous et al. [61] argue that digitalized word of mouth and User Generated Content (UGC) have resulted in extensive sharing of information among consumers about firms' products and services. However, the authors argue that it is necessary for organizations to consider the UGC in order to benefit from social media and to engage with the community. By comparing how eight companies answered and managed Twitter posts by consumers, they developed a tool for social media management in order to organize social media presence by organizations. Similarly, Dou et al [62] investigated the value-generative potential of word-of-mouth. Dong and Wu's [63] study is on how firms can use social media technologies or Online User Innovation Communities (OUIC) for open innovation by crowdsourcing ideas about new products, services and processes. For example in OUICs, users can post, comment and vote for new ideas on innovation. Similarly [64] studied how knowledge sharing structures can emerge when organizations use social media for relationship management. Martini et al.'s [22] article focused on the implementation of a social media platform by an organization with the aim to explore how the organization kept in contact with its customers, while gathering innovative ideas from them.

## **4. Discussion, future research agenda and limitations**

### **4.1 Discussion**

In the present review, 46 articles were found, compared to 19 articles in the van Osch and Coursaris [4] review, despite the smaller scope of the present review, which indicates an increase in publications in recent years. This result also goes hand in hand with the development and increased use of social media in and by organizations [1, 2]. In the present paper, three research questions dealing with Organizational Social Media in the IS research field were defined. The first research question focused on what definitions, terms and categorizations the IS research field uses when studying social media. Just like earlier reviews and research [3, 4, 5, 10], the present review reveals a varied yet myopic use of definitions, terms and categorizations concerning both social media and social media use in organizations, despite several attempts to define the research field [6, 34]. This was especially noted in articles that studied ESM, where

different terms were used to describe the same phenomena. For example, the terms "Digitally Enabled Social Networks" [55] and "Corporate Social Network Services" [33] were both used to describe internal communication enabled by social media. I argue that van Osch and Coursaris's [4] definition of organizational use of social media is highly relevant since it points out that social media can be used by organizations both for external and internal communication and activities, and also offers a more holistic view than for example Social Media Marketing or Enterprise Social Media. However, it could also be relevant to use definitions concerning "Organizational Social Media Presence" or "Organizational Social Media Activities," that is, definitions that emphasize and embrace the purposes, activities and outcomes of social media use rather than organizational boundaries, as also suggested by [3].

The second research question dealt with the topics that are currently studied in the IS research field concerning social media use in an organizational context. The 46 articles in the subject area studied this at both the employee and organizational level of analysis. Interestingly, the result suggests that there is an increased interest in organizations as level of analysis, 47.8% compared to 5.45% in [4]. Furthermore, the result of the present literature review shows that social media used for internal organizational communication still has major interest within the IS research field, as also suggested by [4, 5, 24]. Out of the 46 articles, 29 focused on social media used for internal activities such as communication [e.g. 26, 28]. Also, as discussed by van Osch and Coursaris [4], there is a dominance of internal actors such as employees and managers in the present literature review and little focus on external stakeholders (6.5%) (see Table 3). This is compared to 16% that were found in [4]. Also, the relationship to Knowledge Management was largely represented in the review. Subjects such as internal communication related to Knowledge Management [26] knowledge sharing [see 26, 39, 41, 42,43, 47, 48] information sharing [32] and knowledge exchange [20] were widely studied. This is similar to findings in earlier reviews such as [5] who point out that ESM impact on Knowledge Management was the main topic in their literature review. However, only a few studies also emphasize that social media can be used to collect knowledge from outside the organizational boundaries [22, 61, 63].

### **4.2 Future research agenda**

The third research question dealt with suggesting future research topics based on the literature review.



Methodologically speaking there is a need for both qualitative, longitudinal studies as well as quantitative studies that focus more on studying overall social media use in organizations in order to be able to develop new theoretical frameworks. This is arguably needed in order to understand the functions and consequences of OSM. Little focus has been given to organizations overall use of social media which also future research may focus on in order to identify how social media may support organizational activities as suggested by [2, 48]. Thematically speaking, the present literature review reveals that the IS research field has a tendency to categorize organizational use of social media in rather traditional communication categories, not taking the “newness” of social media into consideration. For example, social media used for internal communication are often referred to as Enterprise Social Media [48]. Hence it can be argued that categorizing social media into traditional communication categories fails to point out and analyze what is novel about social media and how the new platforms affect the organizations that use them. One example of this is that research within the IS field has given little attention to how social media blurs the boundaries between the organization and its surroundings, challenging existing and traditional categorizations of internal and external communication [52]. Future research questions could involve areas like “social media presence” and thereby emphasize the boundaries that may be blurred by organizational social media use, as suggested by [55].

Also, as suggested by earlier literature reviews [4, 5] and also found in the present literature review, there has been a large interest in individual use and adoption of social media, also within organizational contexts. However, as noted in relation to RQ2, there are areas that can be further explored such as how the use of social media use affects professional and private roles, as pointed out by [31, 53]. It can be argued that since social media were designed for leisure there is a need to understand how employees interpret and use social media in different contexts such as workplace and private contexts, as suggested by [50]. For example, questions concerning social media policies [21] and its use and consequences over time are relevant topics. Exemplary research questions are: *What is the relationship between private and professional use of social media by employees?* Or, *How does private use of social media affect organizational social media use?* Future research could also contribute by studying the effects of social media use on hierarchical and organization structures and strategies related to social media use. The present review reveals little research on that specific area [25, 56] similar to the review made

by [11]. Furthermore, the large interest in Knowledge Management and internal communication could be developed by further investigating how organizations can collect knowledge from User Generated Content as suggested by [22, 61] and thereby both collect and share knowledge, but also support innovation [63]. The present review shows that little focus has been given to this subject. Here I propose research questions concerning how the use of social media could benefit knowledge sharing and organizational learning across organizational borders. Exemplary questions are: *How can UGC be used in workplace learning activities?* Or, *How could UGC be used in organizations’ innovation processes?*

### 4.3 Limitations

The present literature study has several limitations. First, the selected keywords were chosen in order to identify articles that focus on social media use in organizations. However, due to the scope of different definitions and terms concerning social media, some relevant literature might have been overlooked. Therefore, future reviews can gain from adding more keywords, e.g. Corporate Social Software of Enterprise 2.0. Second, the study focuses on ten prominent IS journals including the “Basket of Eight” in order to review current definitions and topics in the IS research field. The small sample is a limitation to the study. Hence, future literature reviews can gain from widening the scope, since literature from other research fields can be valuable in order to understand how social media use in organizations is being defined and analyzed. For example, since the IS research field is interdisciplinary and social media have been widely studied, e.g. in Marketing and Communication research, journals from these areas could be added. Furthermore, the lack of conference papers is a limitation to the present study and hence conference papers may be added in future reviews, as many trending topics are introduced in conferences and many IS conferences offer specific research tracks on social media use in and by organizations.

### 5. References

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