**Aalto University
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The New Era of Corporate Marketing: Building and Managing Corporate Identity in Social Media

Marketing

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to broaden the understanding of corporate identity management by exploring it in a new context – social media. The idea is to study how companies can successfully build and manage their corporate identity in this context. The objective is to determine the strategic and tactical approaches business managers can and should use in this process by unraveling the rationales behind the identity-related decisions made by successful social media managers.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among managers of eight Finnish b-to-c companies that have proven to be successful in utilizing social media in their business operations. In order to dig deep into the mind-sets and decision-making processes of the managers, the research followed a qualitative approach. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews. The data was examined and interpreted utilizing the theoretical framework on corporate identity management by Cornelissen & Elving (2003). The goal was to investigate how well this framework could be applied to the context of social media and how should the new context reshape the framework.

FINDINGS

Social media influences the corporate identity management process in a multitude of ways and changes the underlying logic of the process. Successful identity-related social media management processes resemble the characteristics of the organization and environment. Successful companies incorporate useful practices into these processes, such as having a personal tone of voice, consistent and authentic style of communication, communicating various dimensions of the identity, using various channels, engaging the audience, and utilizing design elements/tags. When presenting corporate identity in social media, successful companies also note and utilize the special characteristics of the media. The meaning of the company's identity is constituted in co-operation with the social media stakeholders. This interaction produces a feedback element to the process, which has both direct and indirect influences to the identity-related social media management processes and organizational characteristics. Thus, social media changes the entire operational logic of corporate identity management by making it receptive and co-operational in nature.

Keywords Corporate identity, business identity, corporate profile, corporate identity management, social media, brand community

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. MOTIVATION

Corporate identity – the core characteristics of a company – has been a pressing issue for business managers and scholars over the past decades. The question of identity cuts across various organizational goals and concerns. As a result, using corporate identity for strategic purposes has attracted attention of various academic disciplines such as strategic management, public relations, psychology, marketing and organizational behavior. The field of marketing generally regards it as a strategic resource for building credibility and support amongst stakeholders and gaining competitive advantage in the business environment. It's also widely accepted that audiences rely on the reputations of firms in making investment decisions, career decisions and product choices. (Melewar, 2003.) Scholars have argued that in order to be able to deliver its' full value, corporate identity needs to be acknowledged and managed, just like other strategic resources of a company (Bick et al. 2003; Cornelissen & Elving, 2003; Melewar, 2003). However, due to the major recent developments of media and the way people consume it, companies are faced with a new era in terms of the way they can and should manage their corporate communication, marketing and consequently their corporate identity.

As an outcome of the digitalization and transformation of the media environment, social networking sites have achieved great amount of cultural recognition. Social media platforms have altered the ways in which people interact with one another (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). These sites are designed to enable users to express themselves, establish social network ties, and develop and maintain social relationships. In addition to consumers, many companies have actively developed their social media identities. In 2008, companies invested more than 1,5 billion dollars for the implementation and support of social media communications, and the investments are expected to increase by more than three billion dollars per year by the end of 2013. (Bruhn et al. 2012.)

The emergence of social media brand communities has dramatically changed the nature and dynamics of communication between companies and their stakeholders by introducing new interactive and dialogical elements to corporate communications and marketing. There is a growing need for companies to adapt their corporate identity, profile and image management to the new media environment. This new frame of communication provides companies with

huge amount of opportunities. Using social media effectively in identity management can for example help a company brand become more real in the eyes of the consumers by giving it a social voice (Volmar, 2010). Social media sites can function as channels for interaction between companies and customers by helping to transmit company brand value, to enhance brand attractiveness and attract consumer attention (Lin & Lu, 2011). Yet, the scale, speed and unpredictability of the new media can make falling short instantly painful for companies. As a matter of fact, among the Fortune 1000 companies that sponsor virtual communities, more than half might actually destroy value for themselves and their customers. (Porter et al. 2011.)

The above notions reflect why it's important for company managers to understand how the context of social media should be taken into consideration in their corporate identity management. By understanding the how this context influences the process, managers will be able to build and manage their company's identity in social media in a successful way. This thesis research pursues to tackle this issue by determining the strategic and tactical approaches business managers can and should use to successfully build and manage their corporate identity in social media contexts.

1.2. RESEARCH GAP

The first academic research articles related to the concept of corporate identity were published already in the 1950's (Otubanjo, 2011). Mostly due to the multidisciplinary nature of the corporate identity field, there is neither a universally accepted definition of the concept, nor the specific elements constituting the corporate identity construct (Melewar, 2003; Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007).

Some academic research has been published on the neighboring concepts of corporate identity such as corporate image and reputation in the context of social media marketing (Ryan, 2011; Byrd, 2012). The academic research articles on corporate identity, however, haven't addressed media-specific contexts such as social media in building and managing corporate identity. Although corporate image and reputation are closely related to the concept of corporate identity, they reflect separate areas of interest in corporate marketing. The existing research on identity building and management in social media relates mostly to

the consumers' personal identities, not corporate identity (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Bargh et al., 2002; Bargh & McKenna, 1998; Stern, 2004).

The majority of the academic research in the field of social media marketing is related to the effectiveness of social media in producing outcomes such as purchase intentions, brand commitment, brand involvement, brand evaluations and brand loyalty (Naylor et al., 2012; Bruhn et al., 2012; Naveed, 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012; Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). However, the research on social media marketing does not directly address the concept of corporate identity.

Although academic research on corporate identity has not addressed media-specific contexts such as social media, a small amount of managerial articles have been published based on experts' advice on the best practices of building and managing corporate identity through social media (Volmar, 2010; Wilson, 2013). These articles are written based on subjective suggestions from social media experts or presentation of successful cases, but do not include academic research on the subject. Postman (2008) has addressed the issue of corporate identity management is social media in his book "SocialCorp: Social media goes corporate". The suggestions of the book are of same nature as the managerial articles, and thus based on the author's personal point of view.

In addition to the managerial articles, Gilpin (2010) has investigated the key themes in Whole Foods' self-constructed image online and to what extent and in what ways does each of the online channels investigated (press room, blog, Twitter) contribute to image construction. The article terminology focuses on corporate image, but in this case it can be used interchangeably with the term corporate identity. The limitations of this research are that it combines other corporate online channels with social media channels, so that the mere effect of social media channels is not addressed. Also, the most prominent corporate social media channel, Facebook, is not included in the research. Gilpin uses quantitative research methods and investigates causalities, which only answer to the questions of "Which channel?" and "How much?". The goal of this thesis, however, is to study the phenomenon more deeply with qualitative methods in order to contribute to the understanding and tackle the questions of "How?" and "Why?".

The above review indicates that the academic research on the fields of corporate identity and social media are lacking understanding on the building and management of corporate identity

in social media. Although a few experts have addressed this issue, the subjective nature of these recommendations indicates that the phenomenon needs further attention based on actual research data. The goal is to address the gap in literature in this thesis.

1.3. RESEARCH IDEA, OBJECTIVE AND PROBLEM

The idea of this research is to study how companies can successfully build and manage their corporate identity in social media. In order to do this, the research will study how companies that are considered to be successful in their social media actions build and manage their corporate identity in this setting. The objective is to determine the strategic and tactical approaches business managers can and should use to successfully build and manage their corporate identity in social media contexts.

The research is conducted among the social media managers and decision makers of major Finnish companies that have successfully utilized social media in their business activities. The selection of companies is based on a previous index ranking research conducted by a Finnish communication and media news website Mediaviikko.fi. The companies studied in this thesis will be selected from the top 20 performers of the research. The goal is to unravel the rationales behind the identity-related decisions that the successful social media managers have made.

The underlying research question is set as follows:

> *How can companies successfully build and manage their corporate identity in social media?*

The underlying research question can be further divided into three specific sub-questions, each addressing one point of view of the main research question. The sub-questions are:

1. *How does the social media context influence the way successful companies manage their corporate identity?*
2. *What are the essential elements and practices in building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media?*
3. *How can the special characteristics of social media be utilized in successful corporate identity presentation?*

1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis consists of six chapters. The introduction focuses on the motivation as well as the positioning of the research, including the research gap, research idea and context, research objective and research problem. The next section introduces on the theoretical background and the selected interpretive framework for the research as well as the proposed coherent explanation. The research is based on a comprehensive review of the theoretical background on the concepts of corporate identity and social media. A theoretic framework will be used as a foundation for the data analysis and interpretation, and the conclusions will be drawn in relation to this framework.

The third section presents the methodology of the research, including the research tradition and paradigm, research design, description of companies and data collection and analysis. Next section will introduce the analysis of the data and the resulting findings. The discussion and conclusions part will present further interpretation of the findings and the revised theoretical framework. It will also reflect on the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings, and present the limitations of the study as well as the potential future research avenues.

1.5. KEY CONCEPTS

Corporate identity refers to the personality of the company or "what the company indubitably is". Corporate identity relates to the organizations intrinsic, core characteristics. It is the reality of what the company actually is.

Corporate profile signifies the "picture" the company wants to send to the stakeholders about its' corporate identity. Corporate profile is created solely by the organization and does not address the image of the company perceived by the stakeholders.

Corporate image is synonymous to the perception of the company in the minds of the stakeholders. Corporate image results from the corporate identity via corporate profile.

Social media refers to the online communication environments, where all users or groups of users have the opportunity to be an active communicator and producer of content, in addition to being the recipient of information. Some authors describe social media as "a group of

Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Web 2.0 describes the new ways in which to utilize the Internet and a platform where content is no longer created and published by individuals, but instead continuously modified by all users in a collaborative fashion.

Brand community is an application of social media, which brings together a group of ardent consumers organized around the lifestyle, activities, and ethos of the brand. They provide a platform through which consumers can share information and experiences regarding a certain product or service. These communities can exist in social networking sites such as Facebook, for example.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter introduces a comprehensive, organized and critical review of existing theory related to the research. The purpose of the theoretical background is to provide extensive academic research background for the study on the concepts of corporate identity and social media, which will function as the basis for interpretation of the data.

The literature review first introduces the academic research on the concepts of corporate identity. The section will start with the introduction to the corporate identity history and definition, and how it relates to neighboring concepts. It will also present the literature on the importance of having a strong corporate identity. Next, the focus is on the components that construct the concept, as well as the means through which corporate identity can be presented. Finally, the literature on corporate identity management will be reviewed.

The literature review on social media starts with an introduction to the field of study and definition of the concept. Next, the focus is on the special characteristics of social media compared to other corporate communication channels used for consumer communication purposes. After this, the review will detail the motivation for social media presence, as seen from the perspective of consumers and companies. Finally, literature review on corporate social media management is presented.

The third section of the theoretical background will present the literature review on building and managing corporate identity in social media as well as the selected interpretive framework used for understanding the phenomenon. Lastly, an explanation for this framework in the context of social media will be presented.

2.1. CORPORATE IDENTITY

2.1.1. History and definition of corporate identity

The interest towards the concept of corporate identity started already in the 1950's, but it didn't emerge as a critical corporate level construct until 1970's and the 1980's. Starting from the period of the early 1960's, many academic articles were published, addressing the concept of corporate identity by the name (Otubanjo, 2011). During the 1970's and 1980's, corporate identity emerged as a key organizational concern and a critical corporate level construct

(Balmer, 2009). Corporate identity was seen as a useful way of differentiating a firm from its' competitors (Otubanjo, 2011). From the early 1990s onwards, marketing and communications researchers have explored the concept of corporate identity further (Balmer, 2009). The benefits of the concept of corporate identity, corporate identity change and the corporate identity mix were studied. To date, studies on corporate and organizational marketing have extended beyond corporate identity into corporate branding. (Otubanjo, 2011.)

The academic research on corporate identity reveals a great amount of perspectives with regard to various identity concepts, which also illustrates the huge disparity between the nature and role of the identity studies. This is mostly due to the fact that corporate identity is a multidimensional concept, which addresses various aspects of a company such as business strategy, philosophy and culture (Balmer, 2006; Melewar, 2003). The muddled use of the terminology has contributed more to the fog surrounding the corporate identity domain than any other factor. The concepts that are often confused with corporate identity are corporate image, corporate profile, corporate culture, corporate reputation and corporate values. (Balmer, 2001.)

The foundation of corporate identity relies in the corporate brand. It includes elements not directly associated with a product or service the company sells, such as social responsibility, employee relations and corporate trust. Corporate brands integrate a company's common product attributes and benefits, relationships with people, social values and programs and corporate credibility (Keller, 1998). Thus, corporate brand is the overall perception about an organization, reflected by its overall corporate identity (Balmer, 2001).

The review on the different definitions of the concept of corporate identity reveals two major avenues: The inward-looking and the outward-looking perspective. According to the inward-looking perspective corporate identity can be defined as the inner personality of the company. It answers the questions of what the company indubitably is, what it stands for, what it does, how it does it and where it's going. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al., 2008, 10; Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Melewar, 2003.) The concept relates to the organizations intrinsic characteristics in terms of personality, character, individuality, distinctiveness, meaning, essence and behavior (Melewar, 2008, 9). In contrast, according to the outward-looking perspective corporate identity is the "set of meanings by which a company allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it"

(Topalian, 1984; Cornelissen & Harris, 2001). It is the planned presentation of a firm's personality through various channels (Otubanjo & Amujo, 2012).

The difference between the two perspectives becomes apparent when they are compared with each other in a causal model. According to Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10) the concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image are linked to each other and follow a causal relationship. Since Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008) support the inward-looking perspective, corporate identity is the true intrinsic identity of a company, which is followed by corporate profile; the "picture" the company wants to send to the stakeholders. Corporate profile is then followed by the corporate image or the view of the company in the minds of the stakeholders. Based on the definition presented above by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10), the outward-looking definition is actually describing what is called the corporate profile in the inward-looking perspective - the "picture" the company wants to send to its' stakeholders.

The single clear definition of corporate identity has not yet been established in the academic field. The concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image are still used interchangeably. The researchers do however agree to a great extent on the mechanism leading to corporate image as described by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008), but the use of terms differs between the outward-looking and inward-looking perspectives. Both perspectives are relevant in this thesis, because the research will, amongst other things, study how the intrinsic identity characteristics are expressed to potential and existing customers in the setting of social media. The concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image will, however, be discussed separately according to the inward-looking perspective as defined by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10). This perspective better distinguishes the terms of corporate identity, profile and image from each other, so it's easier for the reader to understand the differences between them. Corporate profile as a term can be seen more valid in describing the picture that the company wants to send to its' stakeholders.

2.1.2. Importance of strong corporate identity

As discussed shortly in the introduction of this thesis, a strong corporate identity can result to several tangible and intangible benefits that concern various audiences. It's widely acknowledged that audiences rely on the identities of firms in making investment decisions,

career decisions and product choices. (Melewar, 2003). For example, due to strong corporate identity the financial community can better understand a company, which in turn attracts investors (Sternberg, 1991). Corporate identity also works as a motivator for the company's employees and enables them to adapt to existing cultures with greater sensitivity and integrate new cultures with less disruption. Also, as the current staff can better understand the purpose and direction of the organization, they are likely to show greater pride and support for it. (Downey, 1987; Sternberg, 1991.) A strong corporate identity also provides benefits for consumers. The extent to which people identify with a company is dependent on the attractiveness of the organization's identity, which helps individuals satisfy important self-definitional needs (Longinos & Salvador, 2007). Of course, this is also beneficial for the company itself. For example, the consumer's perception of a company's identity can generate a state of closeness and connection for the consumer towards the company. Thus, the purchase of products by the consumer is an act of self-expression, and is necessary for his/her personal identification (Pérez, 2009).

The field of marketing generally regards corporate identity from the perspective of the company management. It is considered a strategic resource for building credibility and support amongst stakeholders and gaining competitive advantage in the business environment (Melewar, 2003). A strong corporate identity enables the formation of a strong corporate brand that creates stakeholder loyalty (Balmer, 1995). Stakeholders are likely to become aware of the organization's core capabilities, strengths, competitive distinction, and offering diversity by the reflection of its identity (Lippincott and Margulies, 1988). Effective expression of corporate idenity allows firms to take better advantage of market opportunities (Smith, 1990). In addition, Sternberg (1991) observed that corporate identity helps in the redefinition of long-term goals, enhances market positioning, aids diversification into new product areas, assists in product differentiation as well as boosts corporate image.

2.1.3. Components and presentation of corporate identity

In order to understand and study the concept of corporate identity, it's necessary to determine the various elements that construct it and the means through which these are presented to stakeholders. As a result of the multidimensional nature and evolution of the corporate identity concept, the term has become associated with a wide range of functions

including business strategy, philosophy, corporate culture, behavior and corporate design. These are all both interdependent and unique to each organization. (Van Riel, 1997.) Corporate identity is built up from the physical, operational and human characteristics of an organization, which are closely interrelated (Topalian, 1984; Melewar, 2003). These notions further emphasize the previously mentioned outlook, that the construct of corporate identity is both multidimensional in nature and addresses various dimensions of an organization.

Figure 1: Corporate identity taxonomy (Melewar, 2003)
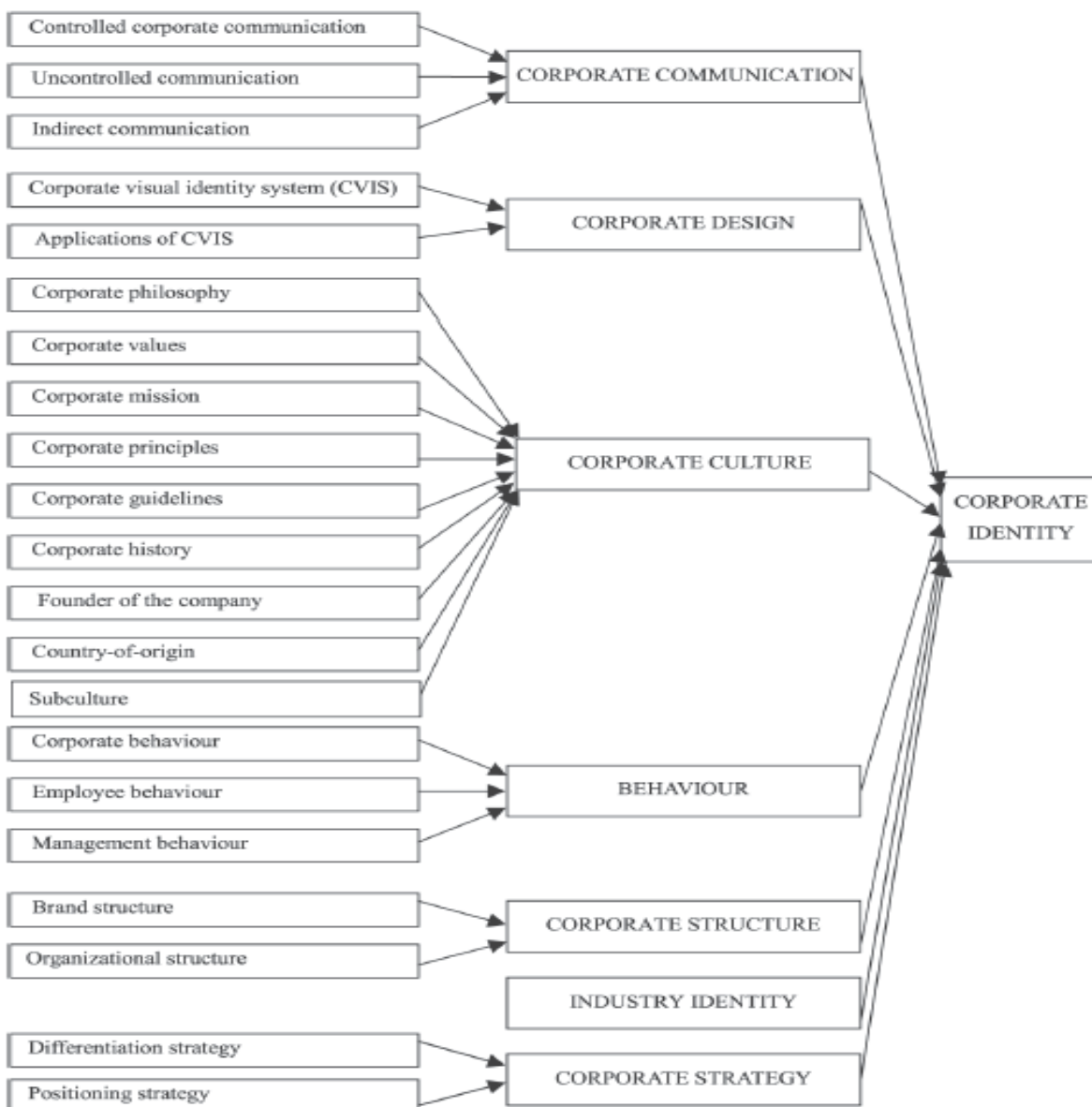
Melewar (2003) has developed a holistic taxonomy, including the constituting components of corporate identity. The taxonomy is based on a review of literature on the corporate identity construct and its components as presented by various scholars of the field. Thus, the

framework summarizes the diverse perspectives and definitions of the concept by breaking it into its constituting parts. *Figure 1* presents Melewar's (2003) taxonomy framework.

The first aspect of the taxonomy, corporate communication, includes the ways through which the organization communicates with its' stakeholders. It can be both controlled and uncontrolled in nature. Controlled corporate communication refers to the communication intentionally instigated by management with the aim of improving stakeholder relationships. There are three main types of corporate communication: management, marketing and organizational communication. Marketing communication is aimed to support the sales of an organization's products or services, such as advertising and PR. Organizational communication refers to communication with stakeholders that have an interdependent relationship with the firm, for example investors and labor unions. Management communication refers to communication of the vision and mission of the company to establish a favorable image and reputation among stakeholders. These include for example annual and environmental reports for external (and internal) audiences. On the other hand, uncontrolled communication takes place when organizations influence stakeholders' perceptions unintentionally. Finally, indirect communication refers to communication about the organization initiated by external parties. These can be for example articles in the press, news about the organization or comments by competitors. (Melewar, 2003; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006.)

Corporate design or visual identity describes the vast number of visual cues associated with an organization. It has two fundamental purposes: presentation of the organization's values and philosophy, and supporting corporate communication. Corporate visual identity system (CVIS) composes of five elements: the organization's name, slogan, logo or symbol, color and typography (Melewar & Saunders, 1999). Visual identity can be conveyed in other ways too, such as through the company's products and architecture of its buildings. In addition, applications of CVIS including advertising, clothing, packaging and promotion and giveaways are included. (Melewar, 2003; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006.)

The element most largely acknowledged as being an integral part of the corporate identity construct is an organization's core value: corporate culture (Bernstein, 1984). In fact, Melewar (2003) concluded that the identity of a company is driven by its organizational culture, values and principles. The constituting dimensions of corporate culture are corporate philosophy, values, mission, principles, guidelines, history, founder of the company, country-of-origin and

different subcultures. Culture summarizes the consensus of a company on how activities should be done. It's a result of a group's shared experience and learning with respect to external adaptation and internal integration processes. Behavior is a fairly intangible aspect of corporate identity, because it refers to the corporate actions in their entirety, both planned and those that occur spontaneously. Behavior can be further divided into elements that make up behavior including corporate, employee and management behavior. (Melewar, 2003; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006.)

Corporate structure consists of organizational structure and branding structure. The brand structure refers to the fact that organizations engage in branding strategies in order to differentiate themselves from competitors. Strong brands are fundamental in establishing an identity in the marketplace, strengthening customer loyalty and counteracting the growing power of retailers. Organizations can for example use a consistent name and visual style, so that the corporate identity of the company is also the brand to the consumer. Other options are associating corporate identity of the parent company with the name of the subsidiaries or having products that are differentiated through different brand names, like companies such as Unilever and Procter & Gamble have done. Organizational structure is related to the organizational hierarchy, lines of communication and reporting responsibilities. Industry identity, on the other hand, pertains to company characteristics such as competitiveness, size and rates of change compared to other players of the industry. (Melewar, 2003; Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006.) Companies operating in an industry with a strong identity are likely to adopt similar strategies in corporate identity management, which consequently results to similar identities (Balmer, 1995).

Finally, corporate strategy is the blueprint of a company's objectives and strategies for competing. It determines what the company produces, the level of profit and stakeholder perceptions about the company. As noted earlier, many authors suggest that a strong link exists between corporate strategy and corporate identity (Balmer, 1995; Melewar, 2003). Differentiation strategy pertains to the specific strengths of a company and how it chooses to compete with these strengths. Positioning strategy on the other hands is associated with the identity that a company strives for. Companies position themselves so that they can distinguish from competitors through their strengths and weaknesses. (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006.)

Several authors have introduced different perspectives to corporate identity presentation, which are often referred to as the "corporate identity mix". It's a corporate marketing phenomenon composed of various approaches in which an organization's corporate identity is presented to stakeholders through symbolism, behavior and corporate communications. (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997.)

Symbolism communicates a firm's corporate personality through visual means to stakeholders, for example the company logo, colors and uniforms. Companies use visuals as a vehicle for conveying messages about their corporate mission, vision, etc. to stakeholders. The behavior dimension presents the collective organizational identity, organizational activities, actions, mannerisms and culture among the internal members of an organization. (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007.) It relates to the core features that characterize an organization in relation to the ways that its members behave, act or conduct themselves (Balmer, 1995). Finally, the corporate communications aspect refers to the expression of organizational mission, vision, philosophy and essence through controlled and uncontrolled corporate communications. It relates to what the company says they are through various means, such as text and speech. (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Otubanjo & Melewar, 2007.)

Several authors have contributed to the corporate identity mix by introducing additional and differing ways through which companies can present their identities, but there is a common agreement that at least the components of symbolism, communications and behavior are integral parts of this categorization. Some research has for example suggested that strategy should be added to the corporate identity mix as a way for presenting or expressing corporate identity (for example Balmer, 2002). Authors have also had mixed responses regarding the inclusions of corporate culture and structure as separate parts of the corporate identity mix. (Melewar, 2008, 10-11.)

Cornelissen & Elving (2003) have developed a framework, which takes all of the above discussed dimensions into account, but notes that strategy, structure and culture can be seen more as the constituting components of corporate identity, while symbolism, behavior and communication are the means through which these are presented. This framework will be presented in more detail in further sections. Looking from the standpoint of Cornelissen & Elving (2003), the corporate identity taxonomy by Melewar (2003) should be divided into two categories: 1) dimensions that construct corporate identity (strategy, culture and structure) and 2) dimensions through which corporate identity can be presented (symbolism

(design), behavior and communication. The reason why Melewar (2003) hasn't made a difference between the two is the adoption of the outward-looking perspective on corporate identity. As discussed earlier, this point of view does not clearly distinct the difference between corporate identity and profile, like done by the supporters of the inward-looking perspective. Cornliessen & Elving (2003) have made a distinction between the two categories.

Despite of the limitations of the corporate identity taxonomy by Melewar (2003), it's very useful in identifying the various dimensions and sub-dimensions that have to do with the concept. Since this research exercises the inward-looking perspective to corporate identity, the framework by Cornelissen & Elving is more suitable for this research. Nevertheless, Melewar's (2003) taxonomy will be used as a guideline for studying the sub-components corporate identity, since these are not included in Cornelissen & Elving's (2003) framework.

2.1.4. Corporate identity management

The research tradition of this thesis is strategic marketing, so the focus is on the role of marketing as practiced by the management function in their decision-making. The theoretical background on corporate identity management (CIM) is particularly important, because this can be useful in the context of social media, too. The academic field of marketing has acknowledged that the CIM process is valuable to companies and it should be a central concern in the process of formulating a company's marketing strategy (Bick et al. 2003). Corporate identity forms an integrative function within the corporate and competitive strategy, because it has an important role in influencing the content of the strategy as well as providing a corporate communication system to stakeholders (Marwick & Fill, 1997, 401). Not managing a company's corporate identity may result to a confusing corporate image among various stakeholders, underperforming in operations as well as inadvertently contributing to the formation of negative reputations (Fill, 1995).

Corporate identity management is concerned with the conception, development and communication of what the company is and what it stands for (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). CIM focuses on the important role of employees and senior management and is mostly concerned with the controllable aspects of corporate identity. The central assumption is that companies are able to manage how they present their corporate identity through the corporate identity mix. (Melewar, 2008, 69.)

As the concept under scrutiny here is the management of corporate identity and profile, managers naturally have a significant role in the process. Amongst others, Van Riel and Balmer (1997) have concluded that because a favorable corporate identity is an asset for a company, the implication requires the attention of the management function. It's also widely recognized that the way in which managers connect with the organization influences how stakeholders, such as employees and customers, see and feel about the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). According to Van Riel and Balmer (1997), "senior managers can narrow the gap between the actual and desired corporate identity through marshaling the corporate identity mix". Thus, the role of corporate management is pivotal in a sense that they have a role in constructing and developing the corporate identity as well as communicating it to stakeholders and their identification with the organization. According to Melewar (2008, 69), managers can establish these roles in a successful manner by addressing the three aspects of the corporate identity management "triangle". The aspects are 1) the dissemination of mission and values, 2) consistent image implementation and 3) visual identity implementation. These elements should be specified and managed consistently. By doing so, the company is able to establish the desired corporate image in the minds of their stakeholders. (Melewar, 2008, 69.)

The dissemination of mission and values stresses that successful corporate identity management requires the definition of relevant values and mission and sharing these with organizational members. McDonald, de Chernatony and Harris (2001) have emphasized that employees are an essential intermediary between the company and the customer in conveying business messages. The corporate culture should ideally reflect the organization's philosophy, and the mission is the "vocalization" of the corporate philosophy to audiences. In other words, corporate identity is driven by the organization's unique philosophy, which is reflected in the mission, values and goals. This creates a need for developing consistent behavior among employees emphasizing their role in transmitting the right business messages. (Melewar, 2008, 70-71.)

The second element, consistent image implementation, captures communications through various degrees of tangibility. The view is concerned with the consistency with which all aspects of corporate identity are presented, resulting to a coherent corporate image. In order to achieve a coherent image, scrutiny is needed of marketing, promotional activities, employees and the visual presentation through logos and symbols used. Communications should be coordinated so that all parties within the organization ideally start from a common

point and share the same values (Van Riel, 1995). Each member of the organization has a role in this process, because every employee is a potential "salesman" for the company. (Melewar, 2008, 72-73.)

The third aspect, visual identity implementation, deals with the physical elements of a company (such as logos, company name, colors and typography). These elements form the physical symbols and create the tangible recognition for the organization. When managed in a coordinated way, the physical symbols may enhance the appeal of the company. The goal is to seek consistency across the visual or tangible aspects and establish specific guidelines for visual presentations. Visual identity implementation can be seen as the most practical constituent of the corporate identity management. (Melewar, 2008, 74-75.)

The management of corporate identity and profile is by no means without challenges. Clutterback (1979) has presented several reasons why corporate identity programs can fail. The most prominent pitfalls are underestimating the effort needed to implement a corporate identity program, failing to monitor the process to ensure the full implementation of the program, introducing visual symbols that conflict with the culture of the company, creating a rigid or stiff corporate image, imitating or copying other successful companies, and giving up too early. Although the research by Clutterback dates back to the 70's, the challenges presented are universal in a sense that they can be applied to the 21st century as well.

2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND BRAND COMMUNITIES

2.2.1. History and definition of social media

The concept of social media has been at top of the agenda for many business executives for the past five to ten years. Although at first many social media platforms were designed solely for consumer-end users, decision makers and consultants have tried to identify ways through which companies, too, can make use of social media applications such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.) As companies begin to realize the value of the Internet and social media as an essential components of corporate communication, they are beginning to leverage alternative marketing practices that are more cost-effective and more efficient at engaging with consumers compared to traditional advertising channels (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). As a consequence, social media is increasingly replacing

traditional media in terms of monetary corporate media investments as well as efforts (Bruhn et al., 2012).

The time when social media hit the mainstream with the emergence of new popular sites of LinkedIn and MySpace was around 2000 to 2003, followed by the introduction of Youtube and Facebook in 2004 to 2007. The major increase in academic articles on social media coincided at the same time with the rising of the most popular social networking sites. The research disciplines that have dealt with social media are communications, marketing and public relations. The studies have most frequently addressed the social media as a phenomenon, different uses and users of it and the resulting effects. (Khang et al., 2012.) The recent academic focus has been on normative suggestions promoting social media presence for companies (Campbell et al., 2013).

In general, social media can be defined as the online communication environments, where all users have the opportunity to be active communicators and producers of content, in addition to being the recipients of information (Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Web 2.0 is a term that was first used in 2004 to describe the new ways in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the Internet. It refers to a platform where content is no longer created and published by few individuals, but instead continuously modified by all users in a collaborative fashion. (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010.) Social media is often described based on its' different types of channels, services and applications. The most typical categorizations include social networking sites, content communities, blogs, discussion forums, chat rooms, consumer product rating sites, wikis and interactive virtual reality platforms (Hintikka, 2007; Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008; Parsons, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social networking sites are applications enabling users to connect by creating personal profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending messages between each other. The personal profiles can include several types of information, such as photos, video, audio files, and blogs. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.) The most popular social networking sites worldwide are (in this order) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and MySpace (eBizMBA Rank). In contrast, content communities' main objective is the sharing of media content between users. Content communities exist for a wide range of different media

types, including text, photos, videos, and presentations. Some of the most prominent content community sites include Youtube, Flicr and Slideshare. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Blogs are the social media equivalent of personal web pages and can come in a multitude of variations, from personal diaries to summaries of relevant information in an area of content. They are often managed by one person only, but provide the possibility of interaction with others through the addition of comments. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.) Discussion forums are communities where visitors may read and post topics of common interest and exchange open messages (OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms; Marketing Terms). Chat rooms, on the other hand, allow users to communicate with each other through instant messaging. Text is instantly displayed in the conversation log when the user hits the send button. Other users included in the chat session are able to see what other users type. (Businessdictionary.)

Product rating sites give customers an opportunity to rate and comment on products they have purchased. Other consumers can read these reviews and base their purchase decisions on the available information on these sites. (Webobedia.) Wikis are types of collaboration websites that allow users to upload, edit, and remove content present on a webpage. The goal of these sites is to form a comprehensive meaning, definition, or answer on a specific subject matter. The most popular wiki websites are Wikipedia and WikiAnswers. (Businessdistionary.) Finally, interactive virtual reality platforms allow users to choose their behavior freely and live a virtual life or game that simulates real life. Users can appear in the form of personalized avatars and interact with each other. Examples of the most prominent interactive virtual reality platforms include World of Warcraft and Second Life applications. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

As an application of social media, brand communities are of particular interest in the context of this thesis, because they present one of the most relevant platforms of building and managing corporate identity in social media. A brand community is a group of ardent consumers organized around the lifestyle, activities, and ethos of the brand (Fournier & Lee, 2009). Brand communities provide a platform through which consumers can share information and experiences regarding a certain product or service (Casalo et al., 2008). These communities can exist in social networking sites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter, for example.

2.2.2. Special characteristics of social media

Social media differs from other corporate communication platforms in many ways. The way in which content is produced in this setting is one of the most important areas of difference when compared to the traditional media. The term "user-generated content" (USG) is often used in describing social media. It means that anyone can be the producer of the content, whether it is the company, consumers or some other group of stakeholders (Hintikka, 2007; Bruhn et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2011). Social media provides an arena where people are free to exchange ideas on companies, brands and products. This also implies that, from the company's perspective, the content produced by consumers can vary significantly in its' range from positive to negative (Morgan et al., 2011).

Since social media offers an opportunity for consumers to talk to hundreds or even thousands of other consumers around the world, companies are no longer the sole source of brand communication (Bruhn et al., 2012). The content on social media and online brand community pages are often produced collectively by the company, it´s' consumers and other stakeholder groups. Typically, the content is produced voluntarily and without monetary or other compensations. (Hintikka, 2007.) Thus, the value of social media presence is co-created by the company and its' stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2011; O'Reilly, 2005).

The age of social networking has changed past methods of developing relationships (Lin & Lu, 2011). Interaction is one of the factors that differentiate social media from the traditional mass media communication. Dialogue and communality are terms that have been especially emphasized in the discussion. (Hintikka, 2007; Morgan et al., 2012; Lin & Lu, 2011.) The communication in social media is often transmitted from many to many, so the dynamics between the communicator and the recipient typical for mass media communication doesn't exist (Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008). Social media is an environment where consumers and companies can interact and where company professionals can promote their brand and influence their company's image by listening and responding to what the public is saying (Morgan et al., 2011; O'Reilly, 2005).

2.2.3. Motivation for social media presence

In order to better understand the motivation for companies' social media presence, it is important to first gain knowledge on the motivating factors that consumers have in their engagement in social media activities. The most important and recognized motivating factor for consumers is the desire to express oneself (Lee, 2010; Porter et al., 2011; Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008). Social media is a useful outlet for their desire to express their personality and identity. According to Lee (2010), information shared in social media has more meaning to consumers, because it comes from someone they know and is thus more relevant compared to for example random news from the general media. One motivator is also that users can see how the people they are interested in are doing, satisfying their desire to stay "on top of things" (Lee, 2010). Social media also provides escape from daily routines and prevents boredom (Lee, 2010; Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008). The interactive nature of social media allows consumers to build relationships with other people, which is also a motivational factor. Other factors presented by scholars include the desire to help others, the desire to belong and the desire to gain status. (Porter et al., 2011.)

The above review indicates that the main motivators for consumers' social media presence are not directly linked to engaging with companies, but with other consumers. However, many of the desires can be attained by interacting in brand communities, too. According to Lin and Lu (2011), social interactions, shared values, and trust are three major factors facilitating intention to use Facebook company fan pages. The authors concluded that social interaction increases shared value and trust of fan pages and that shared values are an important factor influencing trust.

Also companies have several reasons why they want to engage in activities in social media. Most companies establish social media presence to enhance brand engagement and to build their brand amongst stakeholders (Andzulis et al., 2012; Bruhn et al., 2012; Casalo et al., 2008; Lee, 2010). Through social media, companies have access to a significant amount of consumers from diverse backgrounds, are able to gain feedback in a timely manner and create word-of-mouth (Campbell et al., 2013; Lee, 2010). Companies pursue to bring like-minded consumers together and provide them with the opportunity to talk about topics related to the brand at hand (Bruhn et al., 2012). Social media is seen as a speedy medium that can have a long-lasting impact and where sincere communication and trust-building is possible (Lee,

2010). Also the cost-effectiveness of the medium is widely recognized (Lee, 2010; Casalo et al., 2008).

Companies and scholars have also realized the more concrete positive implications of social media presence. Kumar et al. (2013) have studied that the revenue produced by consumers who have participated in social media actions with brands is 5,6 % higher than for those who have not. These consumers also visit company stores approximately 5 % more often than those who do not participate in social the companies' social media actions. The authors found that when building online brand communities, transmitting personalized messages and encouraging the consumers to express their opinions can broaden the customer experience, increase the frequency of page visits as well as increase the company's sales. Stephen and Galak (2012) found out that audiences engaging in a company's social media activities are more interested, involved with the company and more likely to act than the audiences who are only exposed to mass media communications. These findings are supported by the research conducted by Naylor et al. (2012), who discovered that connections with consumers created through social networking can indeed yield positive effects on brand evaluations and purchase intentions. Additional support was provided by the findings by Corstjens and Umblijs (2012), who noticed that positive social-media sentiments and threads - if boosted and reinvigorated - can have a significant positive impact on company sales and profits.

2.2.4. Social media management

Consumers today almost expect companies to be present online and in social media (Nair, 2011). The challenge for companies is the questions of *how* to get involved and establish this presence. As noted in the previous section, social media offer numerous opportunities for companies to listen to their consumers, engage with them, and to establish conversations. However, there are also several negative impacts that may follow from badly managed social media presence. Companies invest millions of dollars in social media, with little understanding of how to actually manage their activities in these settings (Divol et al., 2012). This seems to be a real issue for company managers. According to Porter et al. (2011), among the Fortune 1000 companies that sponsor virtual communities, more than half might actually destroy value for themselves and their customers. In order to overcome the challenges and pitfalls, scholars and experts have defined specific guidelines for companies to successfully

establish their presence in social media. These guidelines also form the basis for understanding how to build and manage corporate identity in social media.

The vast majority of social media experts and scholars stress the importance of incorporating the company's social media presence into their overall business strategy (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Bottles & Sherlock, 2011; Nair, 2011; Andzulis et al., 2012; Bruhn et al., 2012; Drillinger et al., 2011). In many cases the corporate communication in social media consists of short-sighted and disconnected efforts that lack strategic vision. Companies lacking the strategy basis for their presence have also been proven to perform the worst in social media. (Wilson et al., 2011.) It's important to realize that social media is not just a channel for distributing corporate information or an add-on to a firm's media offerings (Nair, 2011). It's important to determine strategically why social media is effective for that particular organization and what it wants to achieve in this context (Bottles & Sherlock, 2011). Drillinger et al. (2011) recommend that companies establish a detailed plan on how to reach their social media goals, what content is published and what is the schedule of publications, for example. Social media experts also recommend integrating social media into the company's existing media mix in a relevant way, instead of substituting other relevant means of communication with it (Wilson, 2010; Bruhn et al., 2012).

In addition, managers should realize that they don't have very much control over the content on their social media platforms (Cafasso, 2009). However, still majority of companies in Facebook (for example) try to control the content on their social media sites rather than for example allow users to post directly on their community pages (Parsons, 2011). Fournier & Lee (2009) recommend that companies should let community members to manage and control themselves, while companies only define the terms of participation. By doing this, companies can enhance the characteristics of social media, such as the existence of user-generated content, instead of trying to fight them.

When it comes to the types of postings and style of communication, experts advice to keep them fresh and current. More specifically, Han & Cho (2012) studied that the most successful companies mainly post about current issues and news related to the company. Other recommendations relate to the communication initiated by the company in social media include that companies should pursue to activate consumers in their postings, always respond to questions and feedback presented by users, and keep from bombarding consumers' timelines with too many postings (Drillinger et al., 2013; Divol et al., 2012; Parsons, 2011).

Finally, the importance of measuring the performance of the social media activities is also stressed by several authors (Divol et al., 2012; Parsons, 2011; Casalo et al., 2008; Drillinger et al. 2008). The effectiveness of a brand community can be measured for example in terms of engagement indices, the size of the community, the loyalty garnered from members, user evaluations of postings and ideas generated by members (Casalo et al., 2008; Drillinger et al. 2011). Parsons (2011) notes that managers should keep in mind that several companies have large numbers of fans and followers, which may falsely suggests that the brand is popular. However, the sheer number of "likes" does not measure sales figures or purchase intentions of the consumers.

2.3. MANAGING CORPORATE IDENTITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA

2.3.1. Best practices

The management of corporate identity in the social media context requires understanding of both the management of corporate identity as well as the management of social media. Thus, the review of literature on social media and corporate identity concepts serve as the basis for the best practices of building and managing corporate identity in social media context.

Today's online media environment allows organizations to use social media to contribute to the presentation of their corporate identity. Different online and social media channels can and are being used to construct an organization's profile online. (Gilpin, 2010.) As discussed earlier, social media has changed the consumers' role from a passive listener to a more active participant, which is why brand owners do not just tell brand stories, but co-create the brand in collaboration with the consumers in social media (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Brands have an important role facilitating conversations between consumers and themselves as well as openly sharing their values, which will help consumers connect with them and with one another, too (Powers et al. 2012). These notions emphasize the social, interactive and dialogical nature of the corporate identity management process in social media. Effectively using social media can help a company become more real by giving it a "social voice" (Pranlikoff as cited by Volmar, 2010).

As noted earlier, a small amount of managerial articles have been published on experts' advice on the best practices of building and managing corporate identity in social media. The

following review presents the recommendations that relate directly to the management of corporate identity in social media, and not just for example to good social media management in general. According to social media and branding experts, the following actions and elements are seen as crucial in building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media:

1. *Establishing a personal tone of voice*

Users of social media are accustomed to and expect transparency and unscripted, honest communication from brands in social media. This is why companies should try to avoid pre-planned corporate sales speeches, and instead let consumers know there is a personality behind the communication. (Wilson, 2013.) However, establishing a personal voice does not mean being inappropriate or too aggressive in social media communication (Pranlikoff as cited by Volmar, 2010).

2. *Communicating in a consistent manner*

Consistency and coherence applies to many aspects of the social media communication. Wilson (2013) argues that companies should plan the voice of the content at the beginning of the social media journey, and stick with it throughout. Consumers should feel like they are communicating with a single persona friend who can tell them interesting things, let them know about deals, and resolve their customer service issues. On the other hand, Pranlikoff (as cited by Volmar, 2010) states that even though the voice should be consistent, it should be kept fresh by updating the strategy every once in a while. The social media platforms will also most likely be managed by a group of people working in the organization. The customers usually know this, but they should feel like they are speaking with the same company identity every time. This is why companies need a succession plan that articulates how a social media account can be transferred from one employee to another. (Pranlikoff as cited by Volmar, 2010.) This is especially important if companies are using a third-party member to take care of their social media communication, because these members may not fully understand the company values, philosophy, culture and business strategy (Wilson, 2013).

3. *Emphasizing different dimensions of the organization's identity*

Gilpin (2010) has studied successful cases of corporate identity management in social media. Based on this study, the author found out that these companies used social media to

emphasize the different dimensions of their organization's identity. Thus, it can be stated that in order for companies to successfully build and manage their corporate identity and profile in social media, they should emphasize varied dimensions of their corporate identity, as presented in the corporate identity taxonomy by Melewar (2003).

4. *Utilizing various social media channels*

Gilpin's (2010) study also revealed that successful companies utilize several and varied social media channels to relate directly with consumers and other stakeholders online. Companies should not rely only on one social media channel to build and manage their social media identity, but select and incorporate a set of relevant channels in order to expand the range of their organizational image and broaden its' appeal to consumers who use a variety of digital communication platforms.

5. *Engaging the audience*

Wilson (2013) recommends companies to follow back relevant followers, share commentary on others posts, and start or jump into conversations that apply to the industry at hand. Engaging the audience and being active in commenting and sharing gets companies in front of consumers in a powerful and personal way.

6. *Utilizing the platforms' design elements*

In order to build corporate identity and profile through the social media design elements, companies can use the corporate logo in the profile and in the supporting graphics (Postman, 2008). Companies have the possibility to add cover photos, profile images and backgrounds to make their accounts look consistent with the business brand. For example, Facebook has the option of adding a large cover photo and customizing the "buttons" on the brand community page timeline. Twitter also offers similar options and a background image possibility. (Wilson, 2013.)

7. *Using tags*

Companies can unify their social media followers by using tags; most often hash tags. These are best used when they are linked to an event and not just a topic. (Pranlikoff as cited by Volmar, 2010.) This way they can build their corporate identity in an integrated way through varied audiences.
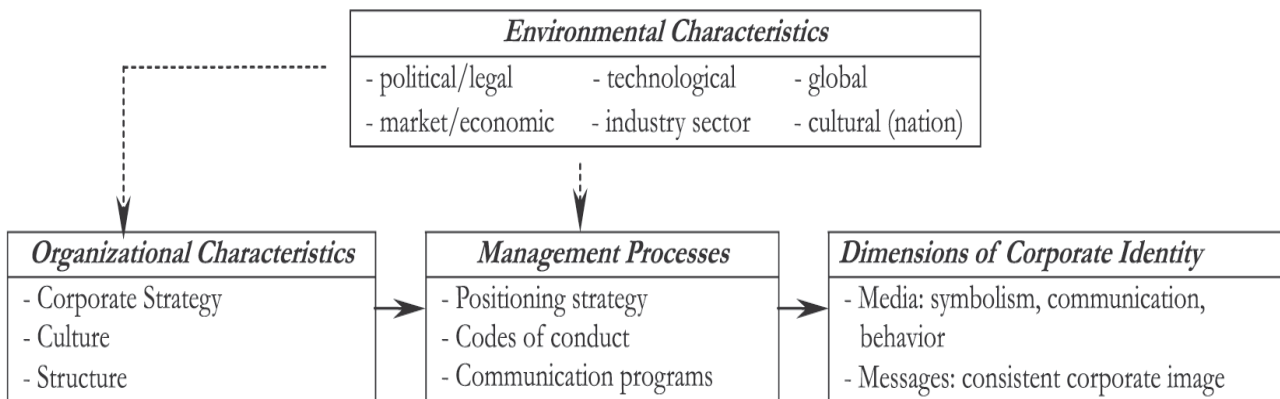
2.3.2. Interpretive framework

The interpretive framework is the "frame" through which the researched phenomenon and collected data are investigated and interpreted. Because the academic research on the concept of managing corporate identity in social media is still in its' infancy, no prior research was able to provide me with a relevant interpretive framework that would combine the fields of corporate identity and social media management. The framework was thus selected from the academic field of corporate identity, because this field can be seen as the underlying theme of this thesis. Social media, on the other hand, can be considered as the context the phenomenon is being studied in.

The selected framework is developed by Cornelissen and Elving (2003) for the purpose of studying corporate identity management (*Figure 2*). The integrative conceptual framework introduces dimensions and determinants of corporate identity management and links these to situational and conceptual factors. It combines knowledge on the dimensions of corporate identity (Melewar, 2003), the presentation of corporate identity (corporate identity mix) and corporate identity management. The authors consider corporate identity management as "the strategic development of a distinct and coherent image of an organization that is consistently communicated to stakeholders through symbolism, planned communications and behavior". This emphasizes the outward-looking perspective. Since the perspective in this thesis is the inward-looking one, the terms corporate identity and corporate identity presentation will be distinguished. According to the inward-looking perspective, the symbolism, planned communications and behavior refer to the presentation of corporate identity, while the organizational characteristics are considered as the true components of corporate identity. The framework includes the dimensions of Melewar's corporate identity taxonomy (2003), but incorporates these into a process, emphasizing that not all of the elements are direct components of corporate identity.

The organizational characteristics in the framework (Cornelissen & Elving, 2003) are defined as corporate strategy, culture and structure. Rather than considering strategy, culture and structure as a direct antecedents of corporate identity presentation, the authors present a moderator phase, where these are translated into a positioning strategy, communication programs and codes of conduct. From the perspective of corporate culture for example, values and beliefs held by members of the organization influence the content of representations to stakeholders and publics, but these representations are not directly determined by it.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the study of corporate identity management (Cornelissen & Elving, 2003)

Environmental Characteristics		
- political/legal	- technological	- global
- market/economic	- industry sector	- cultural (nation)

Organizational Characteristics	Management Processes	Dimensions of Corporate Identity
- Corporate Strategy	- Positioning strategy	- Media: symbolism, communication, behavior
- Culture	- Codes of conduct	
- Structure	- Communication programs	- Messages: consistent corporate image

The managerial interpretation and decision making on the corporate identity presentation involves a choice of the positioning strategy and specification of codes of conduct for employees, and communication plans and programs which in turn influence and guide the media and messages employed. The managerial processes and organizational characteristics are influenced by the different conditions in the environment of an organization, such as the technological, economic or cultural characteristics.

As noted, the dimensions of corporate identity refer to the ways through which corporate identity is presented to stakeholders. This is why the section in the framework called "dimensions of corporate identity" could be considered more as the "presentation of corporate identity". In addition to the three elements of the traditional corporate identity mix (symbolism, communication and behavior), another dimension considered instrumental to corporate identity management is the consistency across the messages carried by these media.

The framework should be regarded as delineating the most important constructs of successful corporate identity management process. The authors suggest that contributions to the theory would be made by empirically examining and testing the relationships between the constructs of the framework. This research will investigate whether the framework by Cornelissen and Elving (2003) is applicable also to the company's social media context. The question is, whether the model can explain the successful management of corporate identity also in social media.

The underlying objective is to study how the context of social media influences successful corporate identity management. The goal is firstly to investigate, how the characteristics of

the environment influence the process of managing corporate identity in social media and in which ways do different organizational characteristics affect the management processes in this context. With regards to the organizational characteristics, the objective is to find out how and which of the different components of are communicated and emphasized in social media. The study will also address what kinds of management processes are included in corporate identity management in social media and whether the processes suggested by Cornelissen and Elving (2003) are relevant also in this context. In addition, the objective is to find out how and whether the employed media and messages are guided by the management processes and in which ways are symbolism, communication, behavior aspects and consistent corporate image/profile executed.

2.3.3. Proposed explanation

The proposed explanation for the framework relies on the notion that the corporate identity management framework will be applied to the context of social media, and thus the explanation combines the knowledge form both corporate identity management as well as social media management literature. The assumption is that the context of social media will influence some aspects of the framework. However, the prominent logic will maintain as proposed by Cornelissen and Elving (2003).

The assumption is that social media context will not affect on the process in its entirety. The dimensions directly influenced by social media are the management processes and the presentation of corporate identity. This means that the management processes would in this context be called "identity-related social media management processes" and the dimensions of corporate identity "social media presentation of corporate identity". The environmental and organizational characteristics influence the social media management processes and consequently the presentation of corporate identity in social media, but not directly. For example, the corporate strategy, culture and structure influence the social media management processes, but these characteristics are formed outside the social media context, because they are connected to the company's overall business operations, and not to a specific context.

The first proposition is that the environmental characteristics influence the organizational characteristics and social media management processes as described by Cornelissen & Elving (2003). Since the companies included in this thesis research are very different in terms of

their industries and type of businesses, the results are likely to indicate that environmental characteristics are emphasized differently from company to company. The projection is that the company managers will address the overall importance of the environmental characteristics as a whole, but the importance of the specific elements will differ between them.

The organizational characteristics of corporate strategy, culture and structure are likely influence the social media management processes as described by Cornelissen and Elving (2003). However, the different components, namely strategy, culture and structure, are likely to vary in importance. Based on the notion that culture is seen as the driving component of corporate identity (Bernstein, 1984; Melewar, 2003), the presumption is that culture is seen as the most important organizational characteristic influencing the social media management. Since strategy is founded in the corporate culture, managers are likely to also emphasize this dimension. On the other hand, structure is likely to be seen as the necessary construct that assists and guides the social media management processes, but it's not seen to have as big of a guiding purpose compared to the other two dimensions.

The social media management processes include the social media positioning strategy, codes of conduct and communication programs. The assumption is that the successful companies have a social media management process that includes all these elements. The assumption is that the companies emphasize the best practices in managing corporate identity in social media, and have incorporated these practices into their management processes.

The social media presentation of corporate identity is likely to incorporate the special characteristics of social media in symbolism, communication and behavior. Through these means the companies are assumed to speak with a unified but personal voice, in a sense that the consumers can identify the voice to be characteristic to the organization in question. The type and content of communication may vary from channel to channel, but it still represents a style that is recognizable and true to the company in question. This results to a consistent corporate image, as proposed by Cornelissen & Elving (2003).

The final assumption is that the special characteristics of social media have a significant impact on the very mechanism of the framework. Since successful companies are likely to interact and co-create value with their current and potential consumers in social media, the process does not simply end to the presentation of corporate identity in social media. The co-

creation of value indicates that there is a feedback element to this process. Thus, the assumption is that companies can gain feedback from the process of presenting their corporate identity to consumers in social media, and can incorporate this feedback into their social media management processes and organizational characteristics. This means that the process is actually dynamic. As a result of the feedback process, the organizational characteristics and social media management processes are reformed, which will in turn impact the presentation of corporate identity in social media. This results to a new round of feedback, and the cycle continues.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following section will present the methodological aspects of this thesis research. The chapter will start by introducing the selected research tradition and paradigm, which serve as a foundation for selecting the rest of the methodological elements. Next, it will introduce the research design by presenting the rationale of the design of the research based on past research in similar studies. As a part of the research design, a thorough explanation on the research context will be presented, which will function as a description and justification of the physical and theoretical context of the study. Next, the section will introduce the companies selected as objects of the study. After this the focus is on the data collection and analysis by providing a description and justification of all aspects regarding the collection of empirical material, techniques and tools used, places and times of observation as well as sample details. The data analysis process will also be explained and justified, including the practical and theoretical issues. Finally, the reliability and validity of research will be addressed.

3.1. RESEARCH TRADITION AND PARADIGM

According to Möller (2007), the field of marketing constitutes of the following research traditions: marketing management, services marketing, marketing channels, the interaction and network approach in business marketing, and relationship marketing. Consumer behavior forms a distinct discipline in its own. The perspective of this thesis lies on the theory of marketing management. The marketing management school is a normative theory of the optimal marketing management solutions. In solving the key questions, it relies on the monopolistic theory of competition and marginal utility theory, and on being informed about customer preferences and responses. (Möller, 2007.) This thesis will focus on the role of marketing as a part of corporate strategy and as practiced by the management functions in their decision-making. The goal is to develop knowledge that will help the management to develop successful business models and strategies for the future.

A core issue for academic research is related to choice of a research paradigm. A paradigm can be regarded as the worldview that guides the investigator. There are four different paradigms of science – positivism, realism, constructivism and critical theory. They differ from each other based on their ontological, epistemological and methodological elements. The first of the four paradigms is called positivism, which indicates that the knowledge is generalizable to

a population by statistical analysis of observations about an accessible reality. In this view the researcher is objective and can access the "true reality". Positivism mostly concerns with a testing of theory and is thus used often in quantitative studies. In the second paradigm, realism, the aim is to generalize only to theoretical propositions, not to populations. Reality is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible. The researcher is value-aware and needs to triangulate any perceptions he or she is collecting. In the other two paradigms of constructivism and critical theory, reality is based on perception and thus generalization of the findings about someone's perceptions to another person's theory about reality cannot be done. These findings are related to individual views of the world and create a world of multiple constructed realities. (Sobh & Perry, 2005.)

This thesis research is guided by the realist paradigm. It was selected because it best suits the phenomenon under study in terms of the ontology, epistemology and methodology. The philosophical position in realism is that reality exists independently of the researcher's mind, which means that there is an external reality. Realism acknowledges differences between the real world and particular views of it and tries to construct views of this reality. The desire is to develop a "family of answers" that covers several reflective participants. This process is called triangulation. Interviewees are asked the same questions to test whether they answer with the same perceptions, as recommended by the relist approach guidelines. Different sources may provide different perceptions, but these should not be considered to be in contrast with each other, rather they are considered to foster understanding of the complexities of that reality. (Sobh & Perry, 2005.)

Realism usually involves several cases (or subjects) to be studied. The cases should be selected so that they either produce similar results for predictable reasons or contrary results for predictable reasons. Realist researchers also enter the field with prior theories. According to this view, there is an external reality which others have usually researched before, so their perceptions are views to that reality deserving consideration before the data collection starts (Perry et al., 1999, p. 18). This is also a reason why the review of previous academic research is relevant. The ways used to reduce data are found in the conceptual framework, as recommended by the realist approach guidelines. Thus, the conceptual framework and the data determine how the displays are constructed. (Sobh & Perry, 2005.)

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research will be conducted among the managers and decision makers of Finnish companies that have successfully utilized social media in communicating with their current and potential customers. In order to dig deep into the mind-sets of these managers and decision makers, the research follows a qualitative approach. This approach helps to gain more in-depth information and understanding, when compared to the quantitative approach. The qualitative process is also less strict, because the researcher has a chance to influence the research process as it proceeds by posing spontaneous sub-questions or listening to the respondents' narratives. It can be said that the qualitative approach provides a richer understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. (McCraken, 1988.)

The vast majority of research on corporate identity have been conducted based on the review of other researchers' theoretical approaches, and by developing guidelines and frameworks based on these reviews. The research articles that investigate causalities have commonly used quantitative research methods, but there is only a handful of research on corporate identity using these kinds of methods. The qualitative methods used range from discourse analysis to ethnography, but the research has especially endorsed single case studies to investigate a certain industry or other context. The use of multiple research companies will provide more comprehensive, reliable and generalizable findings than single case studies. The research on social media, on the other hand, has a more balanced set of conducted research in terms of quantitative versus qualitative approaches. Most of the research investigating the concrete outcomes of social media relies on quantitative methods. However, when the focus turns to the more strategic or managerial sides of social media, the researchers have mostly used qualitative methods. Using the qualitative approach in this thesis research seems to be supported by the past academic research on corporate identity and social media.

The selected research method is interviews. In circumstances where it's possible to identify people who are in key positions to understand a situation, interviews are a preferable method because they provide a significant amount of details and insights (Rowley, 2012). The realist approach recommends using multiple sources of data in order to get to good approximation of the "truth"(Sobh & Perry, 2005). Interviews have also been used as a method especially in studies, which investigate the logic in the formation of corporate identity. These interviews are mostly conducted among business executives and experts, which supports the method selected for this thesis.

The research context refers to the setting where the research problem can be studied in most favorable terms. The research will be conducted among the social media managers and decision makers of major Finnish companies that have successfully utilized social media in their business activities. Managers have long been considered an important instrument of corporate identity. It is widely recognized that the way in which managers and decision makers connect with the organization affects how stakeholders feel about the organization (Melewar, 2008). This notion supports the decision on selecting company managers and decision makers as the object of study. The goal is to unravel rationales behind the corporate social media identity management decisions made by the company decision-makers. This way the research can provide more knowledge on how also other managers can harness their social media efforts for building and managing their corporate identity in a successful way.

The selection of companies included in the research is based on a previous research conducted by a Finnish communication and media news website Mediaviikko.fi. The research studied the social media performance of the 500 biggest Finnish companies. It is the first social media index research conducted in Finland, published in January 2012. The assumption is that the companies that have performed well in this research have also been successful in harnessing their social media platforms for building and managing their corporate identity. The companies studied in the thesis are selected among the top 20 performers of the index research. These companies are likely to be relevant in studying the successful communication of corporate identity in company social media settings, because they are among the top 4 percent of performers of the index study. The index score was based on each company's activity and engagement in social media. The platforms included in the study were Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google (which is only evaluated as the basic component of online communication). (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012.)

The companies were selected on the basis that they provide consumer goods and/or services. Companies that operate mainly in business-to-business contexts are not included in the research, due to the different nature of communication compared to business-to-consumer communication. The total number of companies under study in this research is eight. The interviews will be conducted among the social media or communication managers (or equivalent) of each company. Since the companies operate in the area of consumer goods and/or services, the social media sites under scrutiny in this thesis research are those that especially enable interaction with the potential or current consumers of the company. These

sites are the social media sites of the corporate brand, such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. Sites such as LinkedIn, which is more of a professional networking site and not especially designed for consumer interaction, will not be included in the research.

3.3. DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED COMPANIES

This section provides a short overview of the companies that were selected under study for the purpose of this thesis research. The descriptions include the general information on the company and its operations as well as the social media ranking based on the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research.

1. *Yleisradio*

Yleisradio Oy, more commonly known as Yle, is Finland's national public service broadcasting company. It operates four national television channels and six radio channels and services, complemented by 25 regional radio programs. The company is state-owned and supervised by an Administrative Council appointed by the Finnish Parliament. The company plays a major role in producing and presenting programs dealing with news, current affairs, national arts, and educational and children's programs. (Yle home page: Yle yhtiönä.) Yle was ranked as the number one company in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

2. Fazer Group

Oy Karl Fazer Ab, established first in 1891, operates in two business areas. Fazer Food Services offer food and services through contract catering. Fazer Brand's famous delicacies are baked goods, chocolate products, biscuits, sugar confectionery and chewing gum. Consumers are also served in Fazer cafés and shops. The company has operations in eight countries (Finland, Sweden, Russia, Estonia, Norway, Denmark, Latvia and Lithuania), and exports to more than 40 countries worldwide. (Fazer home page: Fazer Group.) Fazer was ranked in second place in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

3. *Nokia*

Nokia Oyj, established first in 1871, is a Finnish multinational communications and information technology corporation, which originally started off as a paper production plant. Nokia has become known for producing mobile devices, principally mobile phones and IT devices. It has also offered internet services including applications, games, music, media and messaging, and navigation services. In September 2013, Nokia announced that it will sell its' mobile device operations to Microsoft. (Nokia home page: Tietoa Nokiasta.) Nokia was ranked third in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

4. *Valio*

Valio Oy is one of Finland's biggest companies, producing mainly dairy products such as milk, cheese, powdered ingredients, butter, yoghurt, curds and such. It's Finland's biggest milk processor, producing 86 % of the country's milk. The company is also a pioneer of functional dairy products in Finland. Valio is owned by 18 dairy cooperatives with about 9 000 milk farmers as members. In addition to Finland, Valio operates in Russia, Sweden, Belgium, the Baltic, USA and China. (Valio home page: About Valio.) Valio was ranked fifth in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

5. *Finnair*

Finnair Oyj, established in 1923 as Aero Oy, is the flag carrier and largest airline in Finland and its subsidiaries dominate both the domestic and international air travel markets of the country. The subsidiaries provide support services to the airline or operate in closely related areas. Finnair Group's business areas are airline business, aviation services and travel services. Finnish government is a major shareholder with a 55,8 % holding. (Finnair home page: Konserni.) Finnair was ranked seventh in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

6. *Nordea*

Nordea Bank AB, commonly referred to as Nordea, is a financial services group operating in Northern Europe. The bank is the result of the mergers and acquisitions of the Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish banks of Merita, Unibank, Kreditkassen and Nordbanken. The largest

shareholder of the company is Sampo, a Finnish insurance company with 20 % share. Nordea has leading positions within corporate merchant banking, retail banking and private banking in the Nordic countries. It is also the leading provider of life and pensions products. (Nordea home page: About Nordea.) Nordea Finland was ranked 13th in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

7. *OP-Pohjola Group*

OP-Pohjola Group is a Finnish financial services group, which provides its' customers with extensive range of banking, investment and insurance services. The group has three business segments: banking, life insurance, and wealth management; banking being the largest of these segments. In addition to Finland, the company also operates in the Baltics. (OP-Pohjola Group home page: OP-Pohjola Group in Brief.) The group was ranked 15th in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

8. *Veikkaus*

Veikkaus, founded in 1940, is a Finnish lottery for Finnish players. It is entirely owned by the Finnish government and has a legal betting license on lotteries and sports betting in Finland. Veikkaus organises 20 different games, the most popular being the national lottery, which generates more than a third of the company's total sales. Veikkaus contributes its total proceeds to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, which distributes them further to Finnish arts, sports, science, and youth work. (Veikkaus home page: Tietoa Veikkauksesta.) Veikkaus was ranked 19th in the Mediaviikko.fi social media index research (Sosiaalisen median yritysindeksi 2012).

3.4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data was collected via semi-structured interviews among the social media decision-makers or managers of the selected companies. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a form of interviews in order to receive answers to specific and multiple questions to gain a coherent understanding of the phenomenon and its' implication to the selected theoretic framework. All relevant aspects of the phenomenon most likely would not have been addressed with other interview methods, such as open-ended interviews. Semi-structured

interviews also allowed some room for addressing issues and themes that arose in the interview situation, which structured interviews do not allow for.

The questions in the interviews were defined from the basis of the interpretive framework in order to address all relevant themes and investigate linkages among them. The majority of the interview questions were formed so that they encourage the participants to describe their experiences with a wide vocabulary. The interviews started with more general questions and then continued by deeper into each dimension of the framework. Whenever clarifications or further descriptions were appropriate, additional questions were asked from the interviewees. If requested, the interview frame was sent to the interviewees prior to the meetings in order for them to prepare for the questions and details.

The total number of interviews conducted was eight; one per each company. All of the interviews were carried out with one decision maker or manager of the selected company, except for one. The interview with Nokia included two managers, because they manage the company's social media as a team. Due to this the total number of interviewees was nine. The interviews were conducted over a two-month period from July to August 2013. They took place in the offices of the selected companies. The data was collected in face-to-face sessions. When compared to telephone interviews for example, face-to-face interviews allow richer interaction between the participants (Rowley, 2012). In addition to the managers and myself, there were no other parties present in the interview sessions. The interviews were carried out in Finnish to allow the interviewees to express themselves in their native language and to gain richer descriptive data. The length of the interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded with a smart phone dictation device and the files were uploaded to a laptop afterwards to be transcribed.

According to Rowley (2012), there are widely recognized key components of data analysis. These components are: organizing the data set; getting acquainted with the data; classifying, coding, and interpreting the data; and, presenting and writing up the data. The analysis process in this thesis was designed so that each of these key components was addressed. The analysis process followed the practices used in thematic analysis. It emphasizes the participants' perceptions, feelings and experiences as the paramount object of study, which is in line with the realist paradigm. Thematic analysis emphasizes pinpointing and examining patterns or themes in the data.

In reference to the first two components of the data analysis, the interview data was listened to and transcribed verbatim into text format once it had been recorded. Since computer programs were not used to assist the data analysis process, the step of organizing the data set was not of particular relevance. The transcribed interviews were then read through multiple times with a structured reading methodology, by annotating the text for key themes and pivotal observations. The interview questions functioned as the basis for pinpointing the key themes.

The classifying, coding and interpreting the data component focuses on imposing structure on the data set. The initial themes were set based on the interpretive framework. The themes were then crystallized and finalized. These categories functioned as the main areas in which insights were generated. The themes were identified by attaching them to codes. The coding was done by color-coding the transcribed data according to the different themes. The coding technique was used so that text covering similar themes in different interviews or in different parts of the same interview were drawn together and compared.

The interpretation phase pursues to make sense of the data and was based on the thematic patterns found in the interview data. These patterns were compared with the classifications in the interpretive framework and assumptions, which served as a basis for the findings, discussion and conclusions. The key sub-themes under each main theme were identified and reported as well as illustrated through the use of quotes from individual interviewees. The presentation of findings was conducted by utilizing graphs in addition to text, summarizing the data.

3.5. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

Academic research is usually evaluated in terms of validity and reliability (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Even though these concepts are usually connected to quantitative research, it's necessary to evaluate these aspects also in qualitative research. Validity refers to the capability of the research data to accurately describe the examined phenomenon. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2010.) It also embodies the truth of the claims and the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation. Validity often revolves around objectivity. (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006.) The validity of the data in this research can be considered at least satisfactory, because it follows the carefully planned methodology described earlier. The validity of the interpretations can

also be claimed satisfactory through the in-depth familiarization with the topic and previous research in the field, as demonstrated in the theory review. According to the nature and characteristics of realistic qualitative research, it's evident that the interpretations are not completely free of subjectivity, but somewhat bound to the introspection of the researcher. The realist approach notes that the researcher is value-aware and needs to triangulate any perceptions he or she is collecting. Again, because the research follows the carefully planned methodology, and triangulation as a part of it, the validity of the can be considered satisfactory.

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which the research findings are independent of accidental circumstances of their production (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Reliability of data is thus considered achieved, if the findings can be repeated in a different time or by different methodology (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, 186). Reliability is established in that the findings of the study were to a great extent supported by previous studies and the issues that differentiated from existing research can be logically explained. However, it is clear that the phenomenon would greatly benefit from further research and various methods in order to gain even more reliability.

4. FINDINGS

The following section will present the findings of the research. The presentation of the findings will be based on the framework by Cornelissen and Elving (2003). It will start by introducing the background of the companies in terms of operations, development, perceptions of corporate identity and social media history. These serve as the basis for understanding the findings related to each dimension of the framework. They may also help in understanding some of the uniformities and differences between the managers' responses in the sections that follow. Next, the findings related to each dimension of the framework will be presented, starting with the environmental characteristics and moving on to organizational characteristics, social media management processes and social media presentation of corporate identity. Finally, the findings related to the process and mechanism of the framework as a whole will be introduced.

4.1. COMPANY BACKGROUND IN CORPORATE IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

4.1.1. Operations and challenges

The companies selected as objects of this study operate in varied industries. These industries include food items (dairy products, sweets, baked goods and lunch services), air travel, finance and banking, mobile devices, electronic media and gambling. All of the companies have roots in the Finnish market, but most of them also operate outside the Finnish borders. They are all well-recognized operators on their fields in Finland, some of them also internationally. The companies have somewhat divergent bases for their businesses due to the fact that some of them are state-owned and/or have a special position in the market. For example, Veikkaus is a state-owned business and has the exclusive legal betting license on lotteries and sports betting in Finland. In addition to Veikkaus, Yle is also a state-owned company. Finnish government is also a major shareholder of Finnair. The state-ownership implies that these companies have special rights and responsibilities related to the common welfare of the Finnish public. This influences the process of managing and presenting corporate identity in social media to some extent, too.

The most prominent current developments and challenges in the companies' business include the reorganization of the business activities and company structures, and the renewals in the

companies' digital media operations. The changes in the industry market position, new competitors and diversification of the product offering were also mentioned by some of the managers. This indicates that the companies are facing somewhat similar challenges in their businesses throughout the industries. The reorganization of business activities and company structures were seen as a way to answer to increasing operational costs and demands of growing operations outside Finland. The changes in consumer behavior especially in terms of media usage have resulted in the renewal of the companies' digital and online media operations. The challenges of the operational environment are further analyzed in the section related to environmental characteristics.

4.1.2. Perceptions of corporate identity and its management

The managers' perceptions of their company's corporate identity varied in terms of descriptions, but emphasized very similar dimensions. Cultural aspects were heavily emphasized by all of the interviewees. They especially highlighted the corporate values, philosophy, principles and mission, as reflected in the following quoations:

> *"A certain kind of Finnishness is built in us, which translates to reliability and preciseness. It shows outside as operational quality: we are punctual and fly in all weather. What is typical for us is also certain kind of goofiness and having fun. It's also emblematic that we truly care about our customers and pursue to do good. I see us as a relaxed company, but I also believe that some may think that Finnair is somewhat old-fashioned and conservative, which may also be true."*
> *(Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"Our identity largely derives from why we exist as a company. Our mission is to produce additional value for Finnish milk and we pursue to do that by producing desirable products for our consumers. Our roots are deep in the Finnish countryside."*
> *(Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

The fact that cultural aspects were seen so important indicates that culture is the driving force of corporate identity, as indicated in the theory review. This does not mean that other dimensions of corporate identity such as corporate communication, design, behavior, structure, industry identity and strategy (Melewar, 2003) are not essential. Culture, however, is in the heart of the concept and thus seen as the origin where the other aspects stem from.

Very few of the participants noted to have had addressed corporate identity management in their daily work per se. However, all of them expressed that the corporate identity

management or at least expression of it is a part of what they do in social media, whether they had thought about it as a concept or not. Many of the managers also assimilated corporate identity management with the neighboring and somewhat overlapping concept of corporate image management. The further findings indicate that the companies *do* manage their corporate identity in social media in varied ways, even though for some of them these actions may be more or less unconscious.

4.1.3. Social media background

The companies have a rather long history in operating in social media; all of them have been present in social media at least four years. The motivation to enter social media varied, but there are two major avenues to be noted. The first avenue can be described as the "organic" route, which is based on the consumers' initiative. The other avenue is based on the initiative of the company itself. The motivation then lies in the potential business opportunities and possibility to engage and interact with the consumers. The following quotations depict the two major routes:

> "Since we have the Fazer Blue chocolate, which is a well-known brand in Finland, we had a fan group that already had set up a fan page in Facebook for it. At that point it was not about whether we should establish a social media presence or not, because we already were there. We made a decision that we want to be there with the consumers." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)

> "The motivation for our social media presence in the beginning probably was a combination of the fact that one "should" be there and also because we saw a lot of potential in the media. Throughout the years our presence has become more goal-oriented and we have learned a lot about what works and how to act there." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)

For some, the decision to enter social media was not an easy one and required a lot of thought due to the nature of the company's operations:

> "We had to think quite hard that should a bank even be in social media. We had to think about the risks related, for example in terms of banking secrecies. We thought about it long and hard and finally started experimenting social media in Norway, then Sweden and after that in Finland." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)

The companies have developed their presence in social media by experimenting and learning about their past and by entering new relevant platforms when they have become available. Whether entering the social media environment was a strategic and well-thought decision or

not, over the years the presence has developed to be more strategic and goal-oriented, and it has become an integral part of the company's overall business operations.

4.2. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The assumption related to the environmental characteristics was that the majority of the companies will address their overall importance in general, but the importance of each element will differ from company to company. Another assumption was that the environmental characteristics affect the organizations characteristics, such as the corporate strategy, structure and culture, as well as the identity-related social media management processes.

4.2.1. Importance of environmental characteristics

The characteristics of the company's environment are seen as crucial factors that influence the way the company operates. The managers agreed that all aspects of the environment are at least somewhat significant for the company, either directly or indirectly. The emphasis put on each characteristic varied from company to company in relation to the type of business, industry and time. The above findings are reflected in the following quotes:

> *"The legal characteristics are important for us and the economic situation also, directly and indirectly. The technological development has to do with the huge change in the media industry, and the competition environment is also linked to that. Global characteristics are perhaps a bit less important, because we only operate in Finland, but the national cultural phenomena are crucial for us in many ways. I see that in one way or another all of the environmental characteristics are linked to our business, and are more or less important." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

> *"Our competition environment and competitors in general, those are the ones we pay attention to the most." (Tomi Pyrhönen, Nokia)*

> *"The legal conditions of the market affect us a lot, because the banking and insurance industry is so heavily regulated. Those are probably the most important environmental aspects for us." (Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)*

Out of the environmental characteristics that were mentioned, the technological and cultural aspects related to the industry sector were the most emphasized. The reason why these two categories were emphasized over others has most likely to do with the massive global developments in communication technology and the ways of communication. The

technological aspects mainly emphasized the huge change in the media scene, which has resulted to the emergence of varied online services, social media and mobile devices. The cultural aspects are related to the technological aspects in a sense that the managers emphasized the changing consumer behavior in terms of media consumption as a result of the technological development. These developments influence the vast majority of economies and cultures of the world, which makes them a common factor among the companies under this study, too. The cultural considerations also focused on the increased importance of the corporate citizenship and how companies operate in terms of responsibility. The importance of the technological and cultural characteristics is reflected in the following:

> *"The banking industry is going through the biggest structural change of its history and it shows especially in the number of branch offices, because the move towards mobile and electric services is massive." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"One of the biggest changes recently is the fact that due to the increase in smartphones, the amount of mobile game playing has become more common." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

> *"What we have noted and what has changed radically is that how the company acts as a corporate citizen has grown in importance significantly over the past two years." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The fact that the managers addressed the overall importance of environmental characteristics in general, but the importance of each element differed from company to company, supports the projections. Moreover, the massive global developments in communication technology and the ways of communication were considered the most important environmental factors affecting the companies at the time the research took place.

4.2.2. The environment's influence on organizational characteristics and identity-related social media management processes

The environmental characteristics influence organizations' characteristics—strategy, structure and culture – in several ways. It was argued that a good strategy process should always take the environmental characteristics into consideration. The environmental conditions have influenced the strategy processes for example by creating a need to intensify operations, direct strategic focus and even by changing the very way the companies do business. The environments influence on corporate strategy is demonstrated in the following:

> *"Our competitive environment and geographic location influence our focus on Asia. The European routes are super competed; we have to search for growth where we have the competitive advantage." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"The financial crisis has influences our strategic alignments, for example we were the first ones out there executing the efficiency programs." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"The biggest change has been that due to the technological development, we now have a direct contact with the consumer. Before there always was a mediator in between us, for example a retailer." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

In addition to strategy, the corporate structure is also affected by the environmental factors. The companies have had to reorganize their organization and brand architecture as a result of the increasing costs, which on have to do with the global and national economic conditions, as demonstrated below:

> *"The environment influences our corporate structure, that's why we are for example going through the current structural changes in our organization." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"We have been having a structural change in the company since the beginning of the year, and the environment has contributed to that." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The managers also agreed that the corporate culture is molded by the environment, because the environment influences all aspects of the organization:

> *"I consider the changes in the operational environment as an integral part of our corporate culture, because the culture embodies these changes. In the 50's it was one change and in the 80's it was another, and now it's another one." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

> *"Yle has always been under pressure from various directions and the Finnish public has great expectations for us. This all has an impact to the corporate culture, too." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

Additionally, the findings reveal that the environmental characteristics influence the identity-related social media management processes. The importance of each characteristic varies somewhat from company to company, but the most commonly addressed ones in this context were the cultural aspects of the environment. The cultural characteristics are especially important when designing and guiding the communication in the social media channels. For example for companies that have followers from multiple nationalities, it's important to adapt the communication to fit this context. Several managers also stressed the importance of recent cultural trends such as the consumer interest towards corporate responsibility and transparency, which should be addressed in the social media management and

communication. The importance of the environmental characteristics and especially the influence of the cultural aspects on the companies' social media management processes are reflected in the following:

> *"I see that the environment has a big role in our social media management. The challenge is that these factors change constantly and their importance vary. The online discussions for example tend to focus on certain topics, and it's very difficult to predict which is more important than the other." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

> *"Different nationalities communicate in different ways in social media; this can be seen for example in the mere amount of discussion in the pages. We need to take into account that there are cultural and national differences and different things have different emphasis." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

These findings support the framework and the projections by Cornelissen & Elving (2003) in a sense that the environmental characteristics are seen as factors influencing the characteristics of the organization as well as the company's identity-related social media management processes. Moreover, the cultural aspects were seen to have an especially important effect on the management processes.

4.3. ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The underlying assumption related to organizational characteristics was that they influence the company's identity-related social media management processes. These characteristics are presumed to form outside the context of social media, so they are connected to the company's overall business operations. It was also projected that corporate strategy and culture would be seen as the most important organizational characteristics influencing the processes. On the other hand, structure is likely to be seen as the necessary construct that assists and guides the processes, but it is not seen to have as big of an influence on the actual corporate identity management in social media.

4.3.1. Corporate strategy

The interviewees were very unanimous in their arguments on what is the role of corporate strategy in directing the social media management processes. First of all, the corporate strategy was seen as an important aspect that guides the company's identity-related actions in

social media. It was seen as the basis for all actions in social media, and these actions should also be traceable back to the strategy. This way all actions that take place in social media execute the corporate strategy, too. The following quotation describes the importance of strategy in guiding the social media management processes at Yle:

> *"We have certain strategic alignments on how we operate and what are our objectives. Since they align all other aspects of our operations, they also align our actions in social media. Everything that we do in social media must be one way or another connected to our strategic goals, to the goals of the public service, and to our foundation." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

The ways through which the corporate strategy influences the processes are varied. The managers argued that the corporate strategy brings long-term orientation and orderliness into the identity-related social media management process. In its' most visible form, the strategy dictates the emphasis certain products, services or themes are given. Certain power brands under are usually more visible in social media. Corporate strategy also guides the channel strategy by focusing the presence to the channels that are relevant in the markets that are included in the growth strategy. All these strategic choices also communicate the company's identity to outside stakeholders:

> *"The corporate strategy naturally affects the way we build our corporate identity. It's the foundation of it, just like our corporate values, which our social media presence is founded on." (Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)*

4.3.2. Corporate culture

Just as corporate strategy, the corporate culture is seen to influence the actions made in the social media context. Many of the interviewees argued that culture is "everything the company is" and it is also the foundation of the corporate strategy. The managers argued that social media is an especially relevant avenue for communicating the corporate culture. The sub-dimensions of culture that were most emphasized were the corporate values, philosophy, principles and mission. This further verifies the notion, that these aspects of culture are the driving force of corporate identity, and this also the case in the context of social media. Culture also has an impact on the themes emphasized and communicated on the social media pages. Additionally, it influences the ways of communication, which indicates that culture is manifested in how the company behaves in social media. The managers stressed that the company's social media actions should express the company values and philosophy, such as

openness, freedom and authenticity. The following demonstrates how corporate culture is seen to influence the identity-related social media processes:

> *"The leading thought of our corporate philosophy is "great customer experiences", which is also reflected in everything we do in social media." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"The values of Nokia, like wanting to be open, helping each other, having a good atmosphere, and daring to speak up and challenge when needed are our principles also in social media." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)*

> *"Corporate culture is all that we are and that's how it affects our actions in social media. Fazer is strongly defined by the legacy that we have in our 120 years of operations. The story of Karl Fazer is still valid today; we still speak about how he as a brave entrepreneur wanted to introduce flavor experiences to Finns and later to other nations too. Our values also define our corporate identity to a great extent. We have a passion for our client. On the other hand we highlight our team spirit: this is a company that respects all employees and we do things together. That's in our DNA and is an integral part of what we do, also in social media." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

4.3.3. Corporate structure

All managers agreed that the corporate structure affects the ways the company's social media presence is managed, but the style and scope of the impact differs greatly from those of the corporate strategy and culture. The organizational structure influences the social media management processes by delegating responsibilities among the social media team members. The companies have social media teams that consist of experts from several areas of business, such as marketing, communications and customer service. In some companies the teams exist around brand groups. All and all, different functions of the organization co-operate, so that the social media presence is not the responsibility of only one function of the organization. The managers also stressed that the organizational structure does not bring any value to their customers, so there is no reason why it should be visible to outside audiences. Thus, the organizational structure is seen as the necessary part that helps the company to manage their operations in social media internally. Elisa Hautaniemi from Nokia summarizes the role of organizational structure as follows:

> *"The social media channels we have are not only managed by our marketing function, we also have the corporate communications and customer support, so we all do this together and help out each other. But our fans or customers or potential customers*

are not interested in our organizational structure, and they don't need to be. For them Nokia should be one Nokia." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)

In addition to organizational structure, a company's brand architecture helps the company manage their operations in social media by providing ways to prioritize their actions. Some brands have a priority over others due to their power brand status. Some of them may even have their own fan or follower groups in social media. Some managers also noted that some brands are more relevant online, because the target audience for that specific brand tends to be very active in these media and consequently these brands tend to attract more discussions and other consumer activities. The role of brand architecture is further clarified in the following:

"We have certain brands that have been seen to be more appropriate for online presence. Some brands have bigger emphasis anyway and we want to inform consumers about them, but we consider what brands the customers want to talk about online. For example, if you go to Instagram and look at how many pictures have been tagged #profeel, there are thousands of them. It's a good example that we wouldn't be doing the right thing if we didn't let Profeel have a strong role online. We always think whether the brand has such an angle that can be lifted into conversations, whether it's interesting and whether it can inspire stories that people want to share." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)

As a conclusion, some managers emphasized culture over strategy and vice versa, but all agreed that these two are more important in guiding the social media management practices than structure. Structure was seen as a necessary part, that helps the company by organizing its' social media presence in a coherent way. The importance of culture and strategy over structure is emphasized below:

"I believe culture is the core of everything we do, so if our social media actions don't stem from the culture, it's not credible and authentic. Everything that we do also carries out our strategy. I think that the social media presence needs to be managed and someone needs to say the direction where we are going, but the culture gives us the content and authenticity and that is the core of corporate identity." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)

"I would say that strategy is the leading element. Culture is also important; we do our best to show our good spirit. The strategy is founded in the corporate culture, it stems from there to some extent. And the corporate structure doesn't need to show outwards." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)

The assumption that the organizational characteristics influence the company's identity-related social media management processes was supported. The findings also indicate that organizational characteristics are formed outside the context of social media, and they are

connected to the company's overall business operations. Moreover, corporate strategy and culture were seen as the most important organizational characteristics influencing the identity-related social media management processes, while structure was seen as the necessary construct that assists and guides them. Thus, all presumptions were confirmed.

4.4. IDENTITY-RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

The social media management processes include the social media positioning strategy, codes of conduct and communication programs. The assumption was that successful companies have a social media management process that includes these elements. It was also proposed that companies incorporate the best practices in building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media into their identity-related social media management processes.

4.4.1. Positioning strategy

The goal of a positioning strategy is to establish a unique and distinctive brand image relative to the competition. Only two companies out of eight had defined how they want to position themselves in social media. This positioning strategy was a part of the companies' social media strategy, which was seen as an extension of the corporate strategy and aimed to specifically guide the companies' social media operations. For the others, the corporate positioning strategy of the company influenced the social media management processes, but they hadn't defined a separate positioning strategy for this context. This, however, doesn't mean that their presence in social media is not strategically based. All managers emphasized that their social media operations are tightly grounded in the corporate strategy, which directs the actions that take place in their various social media platforms. The corporate strategy is established for example through social media guidelines or "codes of conduct" as well as a social media content strategy in some cases. Another reason why a social media positioning strategy was not seen very relevant was that the managers stressed the importance of relying on one's own competencies and strengths instead of looking too much at what others do. The motives for establishing (or not establishing) a separate social media (positioning) strategy are demonstrated below:

"The first thing we did was that we crystallized how we want to position OP-Pohjola in social media. The description is very short, simple and includes adjectives; it's based on our values." (Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)

"We do have a social media strategy, which is founded on our corporate strategy and we have the same core messages that we have in our communication anyway. But we don't really analyze what our competitors are doing, because everything should stem from our own identity and objectives." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)

"Our social media presence must execute the strategy that we have chosen. For example, we don't have a separate social media or digital strategy. We have principles and guidelines that carry out our business strategy, and that's that. It's important for us to be what our customers want us to be and what we truly are, warts and all." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)

The findings indicate that a social media (positioning) strategy does not have to be a pivotal part of the corporate identity management processes in social media, as long as the management is strongly grounded in the corporate strategy. However, a social media strategy may be a useful aid in carrying out the corporate strategy into social media. The social media presence should stem from the company's own core competencies and not solely from responding to the actions of other companies. Thus, a positioning strategy does not have to be a crucial part of a company's social media management processes. The above findings are partly in conflict with the initial predictions.

4.4.2. Codes of conduct

The data revealed that all studied companies have established guidelines or codes of conduct for their social media presence. Most of these guidelines had two levels: one for the entire staff of the company and one for the social media professionals. The codes of conduct for the entire staff dealt with social media guidelines on a more general level, such as how to present themselves as a member of the company and what details of the company's operations are ok to be shared in social media. The codes of conduct for the social media professionals included more specific guidelines related to their work, such as what kind of tone of voice to use in posts, instructions on effective copywriting, how to use social media analytic tools and how to optimize the content to different platforms. The common characteristic across all companies was that the codes of conduct were very permissible and encouraged the members of the organizations to being active in social media.

"We have social media guidelines for those that don't have it as their profession, but we also have guidelines for those who write to our blogs, work in the customer service in social media or make updates for our pages." (Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)

"Our social media guidelines are very allowing. Their purpose is to encourage and evoke thoughts. They don't include many policy definitions per se. They mainly encourage people to be active in social media." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)

Another unifying factor across the companies was that experimenting was seen as an integral part of managing the social media presence. This notion was usually included in the guidelines. The studied companies tend to experiment new social media channels, services and ways of communication, and operate without the fear of failing. Experimenting, and even failing every once in a while, were seen as necessary in learning new things about the ever-moving social media scene, as demonstrated below:

"In social media, there is still not one right way of doing things. We do some basic stuff and then we experiment." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)

"I believe that it's very important that if we have messed up somewhere in social media, it doesn't matter as longs as the issue is corrected soon. I have told the team to feel free to experiment and not to be afraid if something happens. We just try not to do things that way again and tell the customers that we are sorry about our mistake." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)

The findings reveal that "codes of conduct" is a relevant corporate identity management process also in the context of social media, as predicted. Moreover, it's important that these guidelines are allowing and encourage organizational members in being experimental and active in social media, and not being afraid of making mistakes.

4.4.3. Communication programs

Whether it's a marketing campaign or a communication program with a longer scope, social media was generally considered as a part of a bigger entity. This means that social media is seen as an important part of marketing or communications plan just as any other media would be. Some participants indicated that they have also established communication plans solely for social media. These plans included for example major themes of discussion and/or a content plan for different platforms. When it comes to marketing campaigns, the managers stressed the importance of integrating social media into the campaign design already in the

beginning of the planning process (if appropriate), and not just having it as a disconnected add-on afterwards, as demonstrated below by Elisa Hautaniemi from Nokia:

> *"The role of social media is increasing all the time. It's no longer that we design a campaign and then afterwards we figure out a "social media portion" of the campaign, which could indicate a Facebook post or a video related to the campaign theme. Social marketing is part of the design from early on and it should be sensibly integrated into the entity, not an afterthought." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)*

It seems that social media has changed the marketers' mindset from the traditional push-style marketing campaigns towards a more interactive and continuous communication. Even though campaigns are still a part of what the companies do in terms of their marketing, the managers emphasized the importance of continuity and sustainability instead of shortsighted campaigns aimed to "charm" the current and potential customers. The following quotation reflects the emerging change in the thinking:

> *"We are more and more moving away from the traditional kind of marketing campaigning, where campaigns start and end. We are shifting towards being constantly present in our chosen social media channels. Of course we may have campaigns also, but the basic presence is everything but that. It's an ongoing dialogue with the consumer." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

Another finding was that the context of social media has changed how the companies construct their communication programs or plans. Due to the interactive nature of social media, the companies can no longer plan the communication entirely beforehand and then just execute the plan. They need to take into account that the customers take part in the conversation and may be interested in something totally different than what the company had planned. Thus, the companies need to have room to adapt and react to these consumer requests:

> *"We don't have any straightforward, preplanned or cast iron communication plans for social media, because it's constant interaction with our different interest groups. We can proactively do something in our own agenda, but we also react to outside impulses. That's what social media is for. We may have a plan but only 50 % is planned by us, and the other 50 % by someone else. That's the new thing." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The findings indicate that communication programs are still an important part of the companies' social media management processes. These programs should be more interactive compared to traditional marketing campaigns and the companies should be able to react to impulses generated by the social media audience. Thus, not having a strict plan is now part of the plan.

4.4.4. Cross-functional team structure

One finding supported by all of the managers was the existence of cross-functional teams. The studied companies have social media or digital teams including members with expertise from different areas of business. Since social media is in touch with so many parts of the organization, the presence needs to be a joint effort between several functions. The most common team combinations included experts from marketing, communications and customer service. Some companies had also incorporated (at least momentarily) professionals from the company's production, R&D and other functions. Some companies mentioned that they often have visiting members in the team meetings, for example if another team of the organization has an agenda that they see relevant in social media. The need for cross-functional team structure was manifested as follows:

> *"Our Facebook page is a joint effort between communications, marketing and customer service. It's not a pure marketing channel, a communications channel or customer service channel. We all do it together." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"We have a team that includes representatives from different parts of the organization. We constantly discuss our social media presence with people from marketing and communication. Every time we have a need, let's say for example that we want to communicate the good things we have done with the lottery revenues, we incorporate people from different functions." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

The strong emphasis on cross-functional teams indicates that the formation of these teams is an important and integral factor in building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media. Consequently, the interpretive framework needs to be adapted by adding this dimension into the identity-related social media management processes.

4.4.5. Best practices of corporate identity management in social media

The best practices in managing corporate identity in social media include establishing a personal tone of voice, communicating in a consistent manner, emphasizing various dimensions of the organization's identity, utilizing various social media channels, engaging the audience, utilizing the platforms' design elements and using tags. The projection was that the studied companies incorporate all of the above practices into their identity-related social media management processes.

Having a personal tone of voice was not emphasized per se, but the uniting factor among all companies was that being true to one's identity was considered important in social media. The companies rely on their own strengths and don't try to be something that they are not. Since identities are unique, being true to one's own identity should also result to a personal tone of voice. Incorporating this practice into the identity-related social media management is demonstrated below:

> *"We don't try to be something we're not. We are what we are and that's also what we communicate." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

> *"Authenticity is one of the most important things." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)*

Additionally, in order to make the communication in social media more personal, many of the companies let the individual employees' personality shine through. This is established for example by signing comments and replies with the employees' own name.

> *"One of the guiding principles in the cabin is the "licence to act", which means that you can let your own personality show. This is also the case for social media." (Anna-Kaisa varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"We always make the messages personal, so we put for example Tiina from Fazer so that one can see the person behind the post." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The perceptions about the importance and nature of consistent identity communication in social media differed slightly between the studied companies. Some companies stressed that it's very important that the communication across social media channels and organization's members is consistent in tone and style. The majority, on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of consistency to some extent, but emphasized that authenticity and identifiable feel in the communication overrides the need for consistency. This indicates that the identity communication should communicate the same story, even though the story may vary in terms of style and tone and between the organization's employees. If the communication is characteristic for the company, it results to a consistent "vibe". In order for this kind of identity communication to be possible, it requires resources in employee training and familiarization. The need for consistency and authenticity was reflected in the interviews as follows:

> *"If people were asked how they see Veikkaus through our social media communication, they would probably have various answers, but the basics are there, the things that come from our values. We communicate that entity. All communication should support that big picture." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

> *"The posts and tweets need to have approximately the same tone; they need to be recognizable somehow. We need to have some guidelines, but we also have to be flexible with them. This requires resources and we have authorized people who know our tone and vibe to be responsible for the content production."* *(Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

The findings point out that the companies emphasize various dimensions of their corporate identity in their social media presence, but some of the dimensions were more popular than others. As discussed earlier, culture and strategy were seen as the most important identity dimensions influencing the identity-related social media management processes. This notion is supported by the findings in this context, too. Although other dimensions of corporate identity such as structure or design were emphasized occasionally, the dimensions communicated more than other were culture and strategy, as highlighted below:

> *"Since we are a public service company, we have certain values, objectives, mission and ways of working. I believe it's very important to communicate these to the Finnish people, because it also helps them to understand why we do certain decisions and why we do things this way and not that way. We may talk about our structure for example if there's a change in the structure or the ways of working change, because it's important information to our partners."* *(Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

The companies are present in all social media services that are relevant for them and their customers. At the moment Facebook is the most prominent of the service due to its popularity and reach among consumers. Twitter has also gained ground during the past few years and has become a big social media avenue for the companies as well as their consumers. Other important channels that were mentioned are Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest, Vimeo and corporate blogs. Companies that operate outside Finland also favor channels that have a strong presence locally in some of their markets, such as Sina Weibo microblog site in China. The companies select and incorporate a set of relevant channels in order to expand the communication range of their corporate identity and broaden its appeal to consumers who use a variety of digital communication platforms, demonstrated in the following:

> *"At the moment we are in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube. Facebook is the priority number one for us because it represents the Finnish people and they can be reached there. Twitter has also lots of active social media users, and we have emphasized it even more starting from this spring."* *(Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)*

> *"Our emphasis is on quantity over quality. Even though we are present in Pinterest and Instagram, they are not platforms for the masses. But consumers have indicated that these are the places that they want to produce content in with us, so the decision to go there was very easy."* *(Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The managers argued that social media provides a good platform for consumer engagement. They pursue to engage their current and potential customers by encouraging them to take part in the content production in social media. This includes for example asking them to share their opinion on certain issues and increasing the social interaction possibilities by adding social elements in the company's products or services. In order for the engaging elements to have the desired effect, they need to be meaningful to the consumer by being either useful or entertaining. This is the foundation for authentic, organic interaction and discussion. The following quotations reflect the avenues for consumer engagement through social media:

> *"We try to figure out ways to get people talking about us and share their experiences with their friends. We try to make their traveling experience more social and introduce various social elements along the journey, which are either fun or useful for the customers. We have launched a social seating chart. When you're doing the social check-in service you can see if your friends are on the same flight and who else is flying with you. You can also tell your friends that hey, I'm going on this flight. That's something that we try to do, getting people to participate."* (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)

> *"For example, we borrow phones and one can apply for one to make a personal project or something. We try to get people talking about us to their friends in a natural way through their own channels."* (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)

However, in contrast to the presumptions, the managers didn't mention to have used the most proactive methods such as starting or jumping into conversations in social media that apply to the industry. This indicates that the companies may still have avenues of engagement that they are yet to explore. Being active in commenting may be helpful in getting companies in front of consumers in a very powerful and personal way.

The companies utilize social media design elements to build their corporate identity and profile. This is done by using company logos and colors in the supporting graphics of the pages. They also produce the content based on the social media channels' design so that the look and feel of the material is adapted to match each of the platforms. By doing this the companies pursue to maximize the attention and engagement value of their posts. The following quotes demonstrate the utilization of design elements to communicate the company's identity in social media:

> *"We use Yle logo and colors when applicable. We use as much of our own corporate or program-related images as possible."* (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)

> *"When we produce video or image material, we do it in terms of the media at hand and try to bring forth all the graphic elements."* (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)

> *"In Facebook about 70 % of the content is consumed in the news feed and only about 30 % occasionally visit the actual page. That's why it's important to optimize the images and make them look good, so that the brand is visible, the copy is short and concise, and the tone of voice is right." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)*

Many of the companies also mentioned using tags or tag-like elements. This is mostly done via hash tags but also for example through tiny urls in Twitter. Tiny urls can for example link to additional information or video material on the tweeted issue. By using hash tags companies can link content from one social media platform to another and have more interaction between their various platforms. This way they build their corporate identity in an integrated way through varied audiences. The main purpose of hash tags, however, is that consumers can participate in the content production and interaction in a convenient way by posting their personal photos or comments. Hash tags make the interaction easier and lower the threshold for the consumers to interact. The following examples demonstrate how tags can be used in building corporate identity in social media:

> *"The most recent example in our program production is the youth series #lovemilla. We included a virtual toilet wall in the series, so that by posting #lovemilla the consumers can have their photos and messages visible on the wall, and it worked very well also in Facebook, Twitter and Youtube." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

> *"This summer we had a Valio summer photo contest in Instagram, which started by us asking the consumers how Valio products are visible in their summer. They were asked to take pictures of the "vibe" and post them with #valiokesä." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

The findings support the initial prediction that the best practices in managing corporate identity in social media are incorporated into the social media management processes. The way these elements were incorporated differed to some extent from the ways presented by the theory. The difference was most evident in the element of consistent communication. The theory indicated that companies should always communicate consistently in a way that customers feel like they are speaking with the same identity every time. This notion was supported by the managers, but they also emphasized that authenticity and identifiable feel of the communication is even more important than consistency. Additionally, the most proactive methods such as starting or jumping into conversations in social media had not yet been addressed by the managers. This indicates that the companies may still have avenues of engagement to explore.

4.5. SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENTATION OF CORPORATE IDENTITY

The companies' presentation of corporate identity in social media was expected to utilize the different aspects of symbolism, communication and behavior to speak with a unified but personal voice. This would result to the expression of consistent corporate image. It was also presumed that the managers would consider and utilize the special characteristics of social media in the process of presenting their corporate identity to outside audiences through symbolism, communication and behavior. The special characteristics were described earlier as the existence of user-generated content, collective content production process, possibility for interaction and dialogue, importance of listening, and co-creation of value.

4.5.1. Presentation of corporate identity through symbols in social media

In this context symbols are considered as visible objects, such as shapes, forms, logos, colors and images that represent and communicate the corporate identity of a company in social media. The managers highlighted various symbolic ways to present their corporate identity. They agreed that their social media sites are designed so that they express the company's visual identity in terms of colors, logos and background pictures, for example. Additionally, the pictures and videos that the employees post on the sites are selected so that they support the visual identity of the company, if appropriate. The following quotations present some examples on how the symbolic cues are used to communicate the company's identity:

> *"We have an official look on our websites that embodies Nordea. It's in line with everything else we do. All the colors and logos etc. should be in place. Also the visual material is in line with what we have defined as Nordea's style." (Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"We think a lot about why we put a certain color somewhere or why we highlight a certain aspect of the image content. Currently I'm renewing the look of our Youtube channel and we put certain graphic elements visible, if we consider that it looks good and fits our brand." (Tomi Pyrhönen, Nokia)*

Again, the managers emphasized that even though consistency over the visual identity is important, it's even more important to be authentic and sincere. This means that the visual material doesn't all need to be of the same homogenous "corporate photo bank" quality. Sometimes it can be a bit rough around the edges and even amateurish-looking, because the overly ad-like material may communicate to the consumers that the company is only engaging

with them in social media to generate sales. This notion is further demonstrated by Simo Salmela from Veikkaus:

> *"At times the visual material should be more real and rough. It doesn't always have to be done by a professional graphic designer. It kind of has the same impact as if you see photos in Facebook from your friends; it sometimes works better if it doesn't look like an ad." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

4.5.2. Presentation of corporate identity through textual and verbal communication in social media

The communicational presentation of corporate identity refers to the written (and verbal) communication that expresses the corporate identity in social media. In relation to this, the managers emphasized the importance of diction and tone-of-voice. Corporate identity is generally not communicated literally, but embedded in between the lines of the textual communication that takes place in social media, as described by Laura Hinkkanen from OP-Pohjola:

> *"We try to do it in between the lines, for example one of our values is humanity, so we try to be on the same level with the customers. We try not to use banking and insurance jargon with them, we use language that they know." (Laura Hinkkanen, OP-Pohjola Group)*

A more literal way of communicating corporate identity is to express the aspects of the company's identity per se, for example through a slogan. The slogan often communicates the corporate values and mission, so it can be categorized as corporate identity communication. Most companies have their core messages visible in their social media sites.

> *"We have our core messages visible in our social media profiles, whether it's Facebook, Youtube or Twitter." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

The findings related to the communicational presentation of corporate identity in social media further highlight the importance of to being authentic and sincere. Almost all managers emphasized the importance of a more intimate, relaxed and chatty tone-of-voice in contrast to a traditional, formal and serious style of communication. It's important to be able to communicate in a manner that is suitable to the interactive and informal context of social media, and this usually differs greatly from other styles of corporate communications. Even though the tone should be relaxed and relatable, it shouldn't be *too* intimate. The need for an appropriate tone-of-voice is presented as follows:

"One can't talk with the same tone-of-voice in Facebook as in a press release or in a marketing campaign. One must find a more relaxed and personal way of discussion." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)

"If you think about Facebook, the discussion there is very close to the style you have if you are for example hanging out with your friends. Veikkaus can't be as intimate, because we are a company, but we do have an intimate tone in the communication. I believe corporate communication and marketing should be relatable and humane anyways, but it should be even more so in social media." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)

4.5.3. Presentation of corporate identity through employee behavior in social media

The dimension of behavior relates to the company's social media presence in its entirety and is strongly linked to the symbolic and communicational ways of expression. Behavior is established through the company's employees and is manifested through symbolism and communication. The company's behavior is visible for example in the ways to take part in the conversation and all other procedures that take place in social media, as emphasized below:

"Behavior – that's the whole presence: whether the company is reachable, whether they react within one hour or one week time span and whether they listen or not. The entire social media presence is about behavior." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)

"We also communicate in terms of behavior, for example we behave appropriately and take part in the conversation appropriately." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)

An important finding relating to the company's behavior in social media in terms of corporate identity is that the behavior should embody transparency, openness and frankness. For example, the social media behavior cannot only revolve around the positive aspects of the company's operations, because this doesn't embody the reality and is generally not perceived genuine by the consumers. By being open and frank about all aspects of the business, the companies can arouse conversation around problematic topics, which can consequently result to trust and possibly even a deeper joint understanding of the issue. The need for transparent and open behavior is demonstrated below:

"One can't be afraid to communicate about the difficult stuff, either. For example, we recently had a product withdrawal, and we immediately published a release on our website and created a tweet about it. Of course we were apologetic about it, but we also communicated the issue the way it was. If one wants to be genuinely present in social media, I think it's very important to be real and to be able to handle the tough things. It's not just a marketing channel." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)

"I think it's essential in the current situation, where we have tough organizational changes going on, that we can build a conversational and trusting atmosphere by being open, honest and willing to discuss the issues." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)

4.5.4. Special characteristics of social media in corporate identity presentation

The findings indicate that successful companies utilize the special characteristics of social media in their identity presentation in many ways. Firstly, the managers argued that companies today need to be prepared for the user-generated content in their social media channels. The actions taken by (or not taken by) the company may cause discussion in a more or less vibrant manner. The discussions may also take off to unpredictable directions. Consequently, companies need to be able to join the conversation in a timely manner in order to manage the presentation of their corporate identity, as noted by Kaisa-Maaria Hildén from Yle:

> *"It shouldn't be a surprise in 2013 that if one shares a link in Facebook, it may take off to any direction. One needs to be prepared and able to take part in the conversation. It should be at least monitored and not left to swirl about on its own." (Kaisa-Maaria Hildén, Yle)*

The content in social media is produced in co-operation with the consumers. They contribute to the social media presentation of the corporate identity almost as much as the company itself. Thus, motivating the consumers to be active is important, but the user-generated content should not be valued per se. The content should always bring added value to customer or other customers, as well as to the company. These findings related to the collective content production are highlighted below:

> *"The proactive actions that we take in social media is only 50 % of what we do, the rest 50 % is all about what the consumers want to talk about with us." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

> *"In the future we pursue to activate consumers, but from the point of view that the content they produce would also be useful or joyful to other consumers." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

The possibility for interaction and dialogue was also emphasized by the managers to a great extent. The companies encourage their followers and fans to interact with them in various ways. The very name of social media indicates that companies can't simply just rely on one-way communication. In order to be a credible social media player and considered genuine, companies need to found their presence on interaction and dialogue. The interaction should

also be valuable to all participants. The following presents the ways through which the possibility for interaction and dialogue has been enhanced by the managers:

> *"Dialogue is very important for us. We have tried several ways to attract conversation in our social media pages, for example by conducting a contest in Facebook. If we offer a prize, the consumers tend to offer us lots of ideas."* *(Kati Tommiska, Nordea)*

> *"We try to encourage dialogue. We have organized Facebook chats, where we have invited our experts and customers to discuss a certain topic. They have been very popular. We have also asked for comments on issues in Twitter. We have a Wifi in one of our planes, so we chatted over a flight from Helsinki to New York. We talked about Wifi and travelling with Finnair."* *(Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

The importance of listening was also emphasized. The managers argued that dialogue is listening to a great extent. Listening is important, because companies should adapt their behavior and communication style based on the opponent. By listening to consumers in social media the companies can also gain valuable ideas for developing their operations, products and services. Some companies also mentioned using special listening tools to do this.

> *"I sometimes compare social media presence to a giant dinner table setting, where people can discuss and interact with each other. If one member tries to get all the attention and only talks about himself and is not interested in what the others would like to talk about, the others can choose to sit next to someone else."* *(Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

> *"If you're answering to a question in Facebook, you must listen to what kind of person is proposing the question and what is his/her style and tone. One needs a lot of intuition, as in all kind of interaction between people."* *(Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

> *"We have invited the most active fans and followers to Helsinki to meet us and our experts and to develop our services."* *(Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"Of course we listen to how people talk about us. We have all kinds of listening tools that we can use. Also, our community manager may spot some potential ideas when he goes through the Twitter feed."* *(Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)*

The importance of the co-creation of value is apparent in the findings. The company's social media presence should bring added value to the social media stakeholders the company has, and of course for the company itself. The managers emphasized that consumers should be rewarded for being active and contributing to the company's social media presence. The added value for the company is realized in the product/service development, trusting and engaged customers and increased word-of-mouth, for example. This way both parties benefit from the presence. The managers demonstrated the ways of creating value for their customers in social media as follows:

"We want the consumers to perceive that it's valuable for them to follow us in social media. We have conducted surveys about how our Facebook fans perceive our presence in social media. The results indicated for example that they really like to have useful tips for cooking, how to cook with our novelty products and what kind of meals they can produce." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)

"We use a lot of the photos or blog postings that were created by members of our communities. We may for example do a blog posting where we highlight the best comments and give credit to those who have participated. By doing this these guys can receive more followers in Twitter and we can contribute to their social media "growth"." (Elisa Hautaniemi, Nokia)

The findings support the presumption that the companies' presentation of corporate identity in social media utilizes the different aspects of symbolism, communication and behavior to speak with a unified but personal voice. These actions aim to result to the expression of consistent corporate image. However, the findings strongly suggest that even though consistency is important, it is even more important to be able to be authentic. The findings also confirm the presumption that the managers note and utilize the special characteristics of social media in the process of presenting their corporate identity.

4.6. THE MECHANISM OF CORPORATE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The final presumption was that the special characteristics of social media will have a significant impact on the underlying mechanism of the framework. As noted earlier, successful companies are likely to interact, listen and co-create value and content with their current and potential consumers in social media. This notion indicates that the process doesn't end to the mere presentation of corporate identity as proposed by Cornelissen & Elving (2003). Social media stakeholders influence the way companies present their corporate identity in social media by interacting and producing content that adds to the company-based identity presentation. Thus, the presentation of corporate identity in social media is a joint effort between the company and its current and potential customers in social media. The companies also react and adapt to the impulses generated by the current and potential customers, which indicates that the corporate identity management process in social media has dynamic elements to it.

As an example of the reaction and adaption, the companies can utilize the user-generated content in their R&D. They can identify product-, service-, or process-related issues based on the communication that takes place in their social media channels. As a result, companies can

improve and correct their offerings. They can also ask for consumer input to various things, such as how the consumers feel about their social media content. This way they can also improve their identity-related social media management processes and produce content that is desired. The following examples demonstrate how successful companies react and adapt to the user-generated impulses in social media:

> *"We follow very carefully how people react to things that we do in social media. We utilize this info when we ponder on the direction where want to take our business. I believe we will utilize it even more in the future." (Simo Salmela, Veikkaus)*

> *"When it comes to consumer research, we can divide the information process into two. On the other hand we can ask the consumers what they think about our products or what they would like to have, or we can just listen, gather material and analyze it." (Pekka Rantamoijanen, Valio)*

> *"We have recruited brand ambassadors, who are eager to develop our services. The online community has become a part of our service development process and we utilize social media a lot in that area." (Anna-Kaisa Varamäki, Finnair)*

> *"Not everything needs to be perfect when it goes out. One can put a draft in social media and ask for comments and based on these comments the result may be even better than we could have done by ourselves." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

The above examples clearly indicate that successful companies gain feedback from the process of presenting their corporate identity in social media and incorporate this feedback into their identity-related social media management processes and organizational characteristics. In other words, the social media interaction along with other special characteristics of social media has a profound influence on the organization's characteristics such as strategy (through product or service development), as well as the identity-related social media management processes.

Based on the above findings, it's evident that building and managing corporate identity in social media is not a one-way process as presented in the framework by Cornelissen & Elving (2003), but based on interaction and co-operation, as also noted by Kati Sulin from Fazer:

> *"It can't be so that we are just running with our own agenda and close our eyes and ears and try to somehow "execute" our corporate identity. The biggest change is that we have to be a sort of constantly pulsating ameba, which spreads its tentacles to different places and reacts to situations that emerge." (Kati Sulin, Fazer Group)*

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This section will summarize the main findings presented in the previous section. It also presents the empirically reviewed framework based on these findings and provides insight on how the new framework explains the underlying research questions and phenomenon. Finally, the theoretical and managerial implications of the research will be presented along with the limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Firstly, the findings of the study indicate that the studied companies manage their corporate identity in social media in varied ways, even though for some of them these actions may be more or less unconscious. This management process is influenced by the political, economic, technological, competitive, global and cultural aspects of the environment. Even though the companies are facing somewhat similar challenges in their industries due to the global economic situation and changing media environment, the environmental characteristics have different emphases for different companies. All companies addressed the overall importance of the environmental characteristics in general, but the importance of each element varies from company to company. The environmental characteristics are seen as background factors influence the organization's operations, namely the corporate strategy, structure and culture. They also influence how the company manages its corporate identity in social media and the processes related.

The company's organizational characteristics, on the other hand, influence the company's identity-related social media management processes. Organizational characteristics are formed outside the social media context and they are connected to the company's overall business operations. Corporate strategy and culture are the most important organizational characteristics influencing the identity-related social media management process, while corporate structure is the necessary construct that assists and guides this process.

The identity-related social media management process includes various sub-dimensions. The findings indicate that the social media (positioning) strategy does not have to be a pivotal part of the management processes in social media, as long as the management is strongly grounded in the corporate strategy and supported by social media guidelines. A social media

(positioning) strategy can however be a useful aid in carrying out the corporate strategy into actions in social media. Codes of conduct are a relevant corporate identity management process also in the context of social media. It's important, however, that these guidelines are allowing and encourage organizational members being active and explorative in social media. Communication programs are also an important part of the companies' identity-related social media management processes. The programs should be interactive in nature and sensitive to outside impulses. In addition, the managers highlighted the need for cross-functional teams in managing identity in this context, which indicates that this dimension needs to be added to the framework.

The best practices in managing corporate identity in social media presented by experts were seen relevant also by the company managers. The way these elements were incorporated into the management processes differed to some extent from the ways presented by the theory. The difference was most evident in the element of consistent communication. The findings indicate that even though consistent identity communication is important in social media, authenticity and identifiable feel of the communication overrides the need for consistency.

The companies' presentation of corporate identity in social media utilizes the different aspects of symbolism, communication and behavior in order to speak with a unified but personal voice. These actions aim to result to the expression of consistent corporate image. However, the managers once again emphasized that even though consistency is important, it's even more important to be able to be authentic and true to one's real identity, whether the expression of it was consistent or not. Managers should also consider and utilize the special characteristics of social media in presenting their corporate identity to outside audiences. Successful companies do this by interacting, listening and co-creating value and content with their current and potential consumers in social media. As a result, the consumers, too, influence the way companies present their corporate identity in social media. Successful companies also react and adapt to these consumer impulses.

To sum it up, the special characteristics of social media enable the corporate identity to be developed in cooperation with the consumers and other social media stakeholders. Building and managing corporate identity in social media is thus not a one-way process as presented by Cornelissen and Elving (2003), but based on interaction and co-operation. The process has a feedback element to it, which makes it dynamic. The feedback process has both direct and
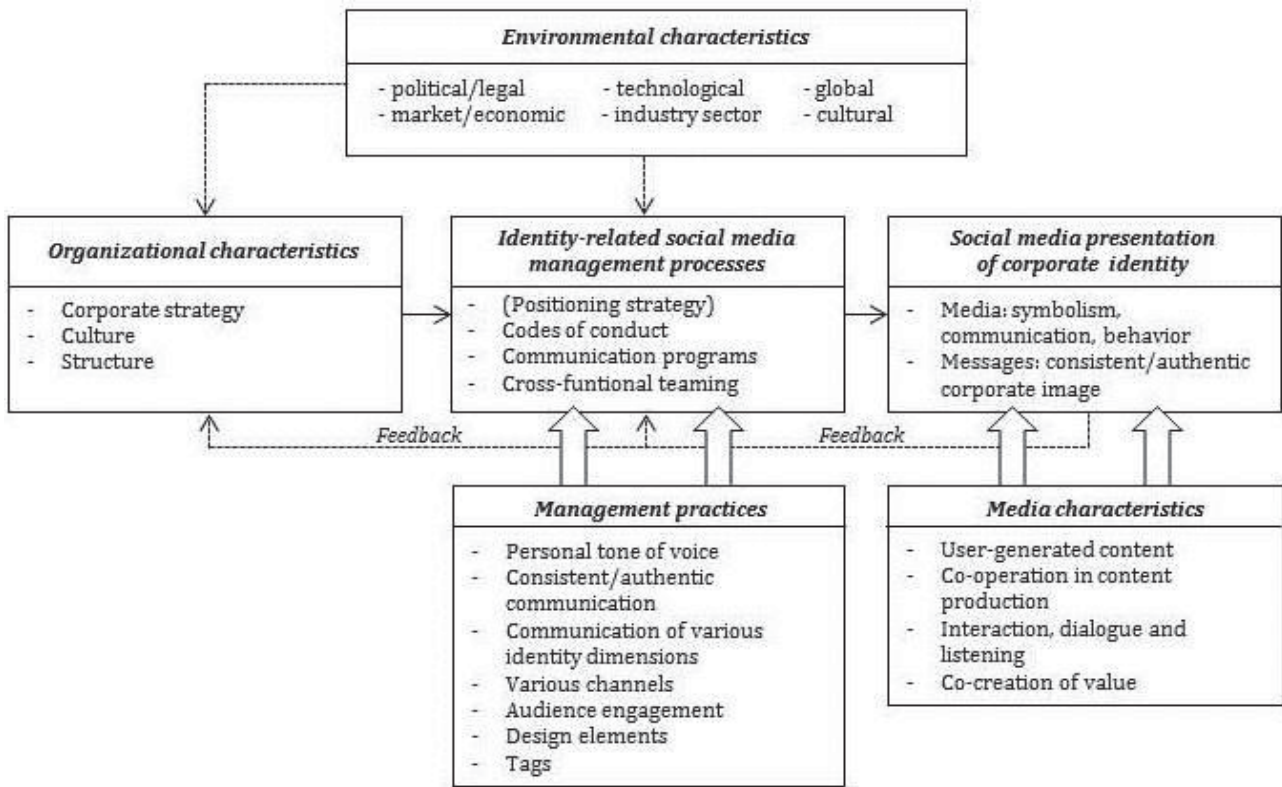
indirect influences on the social media management processes and on the organizational characteristics.

5.2. EMPIRICALLY REVIEWED FRAMEWORK

The reviewed framework is grounded in the conceptual framework on corporate identity management developed by Cornelissen & Elving (2003) and adapted to fit the context of social media. In order to fit the framework to this context, the reviewed version incorporates knowledge from the theory of corporate identity management, social media and the best practices on managing corporate identity in social media. The mechanism and applicability of the framework were tested and modified further based on the research conducted for the purpose of this thesis. *Figure 3* presents the reviewed framework for managing corporate identity in social media. With the help of this framework managers can note the succession factors in the process of managing corporate identity in social media. It presents how social media changes the management mechanism compared to general corporate identity management and summarizes the essential steps of the process. The framework also explains how the environmental and organizational characteristics influence corporate identity management in social media. Additionally, it highlights the essential identity-related management processes and practices as well as the special characteristics of social media, and how they can be utilized in successful corporate identity management and presentation.

The framework presents the management process in its entirety, starting from the characteristics of the environment, which influence the characteristics of the company as well as the identity-related social media processes. Thus, the successful management of corporate identity in social media is dependent on the political/legal, market/economic, technological, industry sector, global and cultural conditions of the environment. These conditions make up the frame for the organization's operations and management practices. Consequently, the company's organizational characteristics and identity-related social media management practices are constituted according to the environment's conditions and should reflect these.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework for the study of corporate identity management in social media

The organizational characteristics, especially corporate strategy and culture, influence the way companies conduct their identity-related social media management processes. The management processes, on the other hand, are the foundation for the corporate identity presentation in social media. In order for the company to establish successful identity-related social media management processes, the managers should pursue to incorporate the well-tried "best practices" into these processes. The practices include using a personal tone of voice, consistent and authentic style of communication, communicating various dimensions of the company's identity, using various communication channels, engaging the audience, and utilizing design elements and tags. When managers are considering the presentation of their corporate identity in social media through symbolism, communication and behavior in order to establish a consistent but authentic corporate image, they should take advantage of and note the special characteristics of the media. These special characteristics include the existence of user-generated content, co-operation in content production, possibility for interaction, dialogue and listening and the co-creation of value.

Due to the unique characteristics of social media, the process of managing corporate identity in social media doesn't end to the mere presentation of it. Consumers and other social media stakeholders have such a significant role in this media environment in terms of co-creation,

interaction and content generation that they contribute to building the company's identity. The meaning of the company's identity is thus constituted in co-operation with the consumers and other stakeholders in social media. This indicates that the process has a feedback element to it, which has both direct and indirect influences on the identity-related social media management processes and on the organizational characteristics. As a result of this process, the identity keeps renewing and shaping itself over and over again.

The reviewed framework stresses that the mere nature of social media changes the entire operational logic of corporate identity management. The general corporate identity management models and tools are cannot be to applied, because they don't pay attention to the unique context. The findings of the research confirm that social media is a noteworthy phenomenon, which contrasts the traditional logics of communication between the company and its stakeholders. It contributes to the major transition that corporate communication and marketing are facing. Companies can no longer rely only on the traditional one-way style of communication, because social media has introduced an interactive element to the process. This interactivity also applies to building and managing corporate identity. The company and its employees are no longer the sole creators, because consumers contribute to the creation through social media.

5.3. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study combines knowledge from various fields of study and thus contributes to the theory in more ways than one. It contributes to the theory of corporate identity and corporate identity management by scrutinizing the phenomenon in a nontraditional context – social media. It also adds a new dimension to the theory of social media management by scrutinizing it from a new perspective, namely the perspective of corporate identity. By adding a new context and perspective to existing research, the study broadens and deepens the knowledge base of both fields. In addition, the study deepens the understanding of corporate identity management in social media by providing academic research on the subject to support and adjust the subjective recommendations made by experts.

Although the results are to a great extent in line with previous academic research on the above mentioned disciplines, the findings of the study indicated a need for some adjustments (as presented in previous sections) when combining the theories of corporate identity

management and social media management. This study extends our views by introducing a thought that corporate identity management can and should be context-specific and that the general corporate identity management frameworks cannot be applied to all contexts. Corporate identity management is thus a more multifaceted and complex construct than suggested by existing research.

5.4. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The focus of this research was the role of marketing as a part of corporate strategy and as practiced by the management function in their decision-making. This research gives answers to how managers can successfully build and manage their company's corporate identity in social media. With the help of this research they can identify the crucial factors and steps in the process and avoid major pitfalls. Consequently, the research has multiple implications for managers and decision-makers. The following review lists the key take-outs and guidelines for building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media:

- ❖ Corporate identity can and should be managed.
- ❖ Social media is a relevant and useful channel for building and managing corporate identity and has a unique role as a part of corporate communication.
- ❖ The identity management in social media should reflect the major characteristics of the operational environment, such as the cultural mindset, industry setting and technological sophistication.
- ❖ The management should be grounded in the cultural and strategic characteristics of the organization, and carried out by cross-functional teams through strong strategic orientation, permissive codes of conduct and flexible communication programs.
- ❖ Establishing a personal tone of voice, creating a consistent and authentic style of communication, communicating various dimensions of the company's identity, using various communication channels, engaging the audience, and utilizing social media design elements and tags are useful practices in managing corporate identity in social media.
- ❖ The presentation and communication of corporate identity should be designed to utilize the special characteristics of social media.

- ❖ Gaining feedback from presenting corporate identity and incorporating this feedback into the social media management processes and organizational characteristics enhances continuous renewal.
- ❖ The new frame of corporate communication should embrace the interactive ways of communication. Being receptive, flexible and able to react to changing needs of consumers in a timely manner is essential.

By following the above guidelines for building and managing corporate identity successfully in social media, company managers can grasp various tangible and intangible benefits for the company. These benefits include for example establishing credibility, loyalty and support amongst stakeholders, gaining competitive advantage and boosting corporate image. A strong corporate identity helps to present the company to its stakeholders in a unique and compelling way.

5.5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the reliability and validity of the study can be considered at least satisfactory, the research has some limitations. According to the realist approach, reality is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible and the researcher is value-aware. Although the triangulation process was successful, it doesn't remove the fact that the findings are only probabilistically apprehensible and cannot be considered as absolute truths.

The assumption was that the companies that have performed well in the Mediaviikko social media index research are also successful in harnessing their social media platforms for building and managing their corporate identity. However, since the index research didn't address corporate identity management is social media per se, it's possible that the selected companies have not performed exceptionally well in this dimension. Additionally, since the nature of corporate identity is very abstract and the management is sometimes done unconsciously, the managers may have a large amount of subconscious knowledge related to the phenomenon. Interviews as the method of research are suitable for addressing knowledge that is conscious and can be articulated, but don't regard subconscious knowledge. Thus, there is a possibility that some portion of the manager knowledge was left unrevealed. Finally, the study was conducted only among Finnish companies, so there is a chance that the results may not be applicable to companies in other markets.

This research opens several avenues for further studies. Due to fact that the phenomenon hasn't been addressed in previous academic research, it would benefit greatly from additional academic attention. In order to fully understand the phenomenon, it needs to be studied from the perspective of the consumers and other social media stakeholders, too. They are, after all, the ones who finally decide whether the process of building and managing corporate identity in social media has been successful or not. The generalizability of the results would also benefit from additional research conducted among companies from markets other than Finland. Additional methodological approaches, such as netnography, would potentially reveal some of the subconscious knowledge related to the phenomenon. It's also important to be able to link the successful management of corporate identity in social media to tangible business results. This indicates that there is a need to study the phenomenon also from a more quantitative perspective.

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APPENDICES

Interview frame (translated in English)

Background
1. Name, company, title and description of duty?
2. How would you describe the company and the major industry trends that have occurred over the past years?
3. How would you describe the identity or personality of the company?
4. What kind of historical background does the company have in social media? What is your social media presence like today?

Environmental characteristics
5. How do the environmental factors influence the ways you manage your corporate identity, especially in social media? Are some factors more important than others?

Organizational characteristics
6. How does the corporate strategy influence the ways you manage the company's corporate identity in social media?
7. How does the corporate culture influence the ways you manage the company's corporate identity in social media?
8. How does the corporate structure influence the ways you manage the company's corporate identity in social media?

Corporate identity management processes in social media
9. How do you manage your corporate identity in social media? What kinds of management processes are included?

- Have you defined a positioning strategy for social media?
- Have you defined any principles for your corporate social media presence and communication?
- What kinds of communication programs do you have for your social media presence?

Communicating corporate identity in social media
10. What means of communication do you utilize in communicating the corporate identity in social media? How?

- How do you express the corporate identity in a consistent manner?
- How do you utilize the special characteristics of social media in the daily communication?
- How do you utilize the content produced in cooperation with the consumers through your social media sites?

Summary of interviews

Company	Interviewee	Title	Length of interview
Fazer Group	Kati Sulin	Vice President, Online, PR and Dialogue	43 min 54 sec
Finnair Oyj	Anna-Kaisa Varamäki	Social Media Manager	58 min 19 sec
Nokia Oyj	Elisa Hautaniemi	Social Marketing Manager	44 min 13 sec
Nokia Oyj	Tomi Pyrhönen	Social Media Production Manager	45 min 13 sec
Nordea Bank AB	Kati Tommiska	Head of Communications	29 min 29 sec
OP-Pohjola Group	Laura Hinkkanen	Development Manager, Identity and Communications	38 min 15 sec
Valio Oy	Pekka Rantamoijanen	Community Specialist	44 min 24 sec
Veikkaus	Simo Salmela	Media Manager	59 min 10 sec
Yle (Yleisradio Oy)	Kaisa-Maaria Hildén	Communications Coordinator	1 h 3 min 38 sec