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School of Economics and Management

Social Media and Relationship Management

-a Study in the Business-to-Business Perspective

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Introductory Remark

This master thesis has been written during the spring semester of 2012 at the Business and Economics department at Lunds University. The subject has been concerning social media and business-to-business companies. We feel that social media is an interesting and new subject that needs to be researched throughout different perspectives. This thesis has brought us, and hopefully you, greater understandings about the researcher social media.

We are deeply honored to present our Master's thesis at Lund University. Special gratitude should be given to the staff of the Lund University, directly or indirectly involved in this course. Thank you for providing us with this rare as well as valuable opportunity to research our field of interest.

We are sincerely grateful and would like to thank all of our respondents SEB, Scania, Atea, Ericsson, Sjöman and Abrahamsson for helping us with our thesis. This research would be incomplete without your testimonies and co-operation. You are the seeds and the initial source of knowledge. Also a special thank we would like to dedicate to our supervisor Ulf Johansson, who has help us through his inherited professional academic skills in particular. Thank you for your patience, inspiration and guidance for researching with us. We would also like to thank every single person who has contributed into this study, families and friends who have helped us in every ways to achieve this knowledge and helped us in our research process.

Our hopes are that you will find this thesis interesting and educative, give you an insight into how social media could be used as a device for business-to-business companies in order to manage their customer relationships.

Lund, May 2012.

Marlena Sjöström

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ABSTRACT

- Title:** Social media and Relationship Management –a Study in the Business-to-Business Perspective
- Course:** BUSN29 – Master Thesis in Marketing 15hp, Spring 2012
- Authors:** Marlena Sjöström and Martina Juric
- Advisor:** Ulf Johansson
- Keywords:** Social media, Business-to-Business, Business Customers, Relationship Management, Marketing Communication.
- Research question:** How can business-to-business companies utilize social media in order to manage their established customer relationships?
- Purpose:** The purpose of the thesis is to investigate the theoretical framework and case studies in order to gain an understanding for the advantages and disadvantages of social media in a relationship perspective. To be able to answer how business-to-business companies could employ social media in order to manage their relationships with their business customers.
- Method:** In this thesis, we have used a qualitative research method with an abductive approach. We have used case studies and interviews to conduct data for our research.
- Theoretical framework:** The theoretical section begins with giving the reader an overall insight in business-to-business, customer relationship management, social media and its advantages and disadvantages.
- Empirical framework:** The empirical framework presents the result of the qualitative interviews and case studies.
- Conclusion:** Through communicating in social media channels it has made the customer relationships effective, meaningful and with potential to lead into a long-term relationship with the business customers. As seen throughout our research process where we have investigated social media in a business-to-business perspective, it has lead us to the conclusion that business-to-business companies use social media as a managing relationship device.

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1 Introduction

In this chapter is set up as the foundation for our research area, followed by problem discussion and the purpose of the thesis. The aim is to raise an interest in the subject of the thesis and explain what we try to achieve with this research.

1.1 Background

According to Parsons, Zeisser and Waitman (1998) Internet was about creating deeper relationships and greater personalization of goods already in 1998. Described in Sydsvenskan (2012) the numbers of Internet users have increased explosively in the past ten years all over the world, from 361 million to 2,3 billion Internet users. As the Internet and the technology evolve it leads to new ways for business to communicate and market themselves (Gurařu, 2008). Considering that Internet has been described as ‘*an all purpose communication medium for interacting with a wide variety of stakeholders*’ (Stuart & Jones, 2004:85). Stuart and Jones (2004) argue further that Internet could take on many communication roles including, a means to educate or inform customers, a way to communicate and interact with buyers and a means of managing customer relationships. According to Clow and Baack (2007) Internet has, because of its popularity and utilization, created a new place for communication and socialization online.

Spekman and Dotson (2009) emphasize that Internet and social media has exploded since 2000, social media is now frequently used by individuals to share information and make personal connections. However, it is also used by business-to-business marketers in order to seek alternative ways to reach their priority audiences (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011) argue that market communication¹ no longer is the sole purpose of capturing attention through reach instead marketers must focus on both capturing and continuing attention through engagement. This calls for a blend of traditional marketing² and social media (Hanna et al., 2011). Armelini and Villanueva (2011) believe that social media acts as amplifiers of traditional marketing, which remains indispensable in order to reach the point of sale. In a research made by ComScore in 2011 shows that at least 84 percent of the European Internet users utilize social media sites and that these numbers are growing every month. Armelini and Villanueva (2011) write that in April 2010 social media was used by 24 percent more people than in April 2009 and 79 percent of the world’s biggest companies used social media in order to communicate with their customers (Armelini & Villanueva, 2011).

Spekman and Dotson (2009) describe that there have been two key phenomena that prompted the use of social media by business-to-business companies. The first was a change in

¹ Market communication is when a company customizes offerings to meet the markets needs and preferences (NE, 2012).

² Traditional marketing is mass marketing through Medias as television, radio or newspaper (NE, 2012).

demographics, social networking sites began as havens for teens and college students, however today users over 35 years are the fastest growing demographic group on social media sites (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). Kaplan and Haelein (2009) agree with the statement since they argue that social media today is not only limited to teenagers or members of Generation X, now 35—44 year old people, but other generations are also starting to use social media channels. Spekman and Dotson (2009) describe that as of January 2009 over 50 percent of the users of social media site Facebook and the majority of users on the micro-blog site Twitter are over the age of 35. The second key phenomenon was a shift in usage as it went from strictly personal use to a mixture of personal and professional use (Spekman & Dotson, 2009).

The frequently rising numbers show why social media is an interesting, relevant and developing area to observe and analyze in a deeper research. Researchers are trying to discover how social media can help change the customer relationships (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). As well as the fact that the adaption of social media as a tool in the business-to-business environment is still in early stages, as companies are struggling with issues of productivity, security, privacy and content ownership related to enterprise social media usage (Kho, 2008).

As Palmatier, Gopalakrishna, and Houston (2006) describe, companies invest heavily in different types of business-to-business relationship managing activities. As is also described by Spekman and Dotson (2009), our relationships do influence how we function in the society, furthermore it helps to define who we are professionally and personally. Once we understand the network theory, we can identify and resolve gaps in the network and turn social capital into financial capital for the benefit of the company (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). While we do not recognize the extent to which business-to-business could influence through the web and social media, however we can investigate the social network to better understand how business-to-business firms effectively could use social media to achieve their goals when it comes to managing their established customer relationships.

1.2 Problem discussion

According to a research made by Mainostajien Liitto (Svenska Yle Fi, 2012) social media will increase in meaning for business-to-business companies. However, the research shows that some companies are still not using social media. The research presents that 63 percent of the investigated companies argued that it is the lack of information and knowledge that makes obstacle for a broad use of social media. This shows that business-to-business companies have more to learn and need more information regarding how they could use and manage social media, in order to communicate with their established customer relationships.

Today, social media and Internet has changed relationships between people and companies (Kaplan and Haelein, 2009). However, as argued by Spekman and Dotson (2009) social media is under investigation, the main research focus is concerning business-to-consumers and how companies use social media as a tool to communicate with their private end

consumers. Meaning that it is the business-to-consumer market that social media is commonly utilized in and a component of the marketing mix. However, among the business-to-business companies social media has just began to gain a foothold (Speakman and Dotson, 2009).

The question is if social media is a useful device in a business-to-business perspective. Since according to Ford, Gadde, Håkansson and Snehota (2011) relationships are the foundation of business-to-business marketing. Meaning that it is the main strategy many business-to-business companies use to market themselves, a market where social media could be used for relationships through interaction and socialization (Westerman, Spence & Van der Heide, 2012). This means that social media could be the perfect match for business-to-business companies, to use for communication in order to manage their established customer relationships (Stuart & Jones, 2004).

According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) business must seek to engage through social media to be able to understand how they might manage relationships by communication in the different social media channels. However, as argued, there seems to be a lack of knowledge but a striving to learn more in the business-to-business perspective on how to use social media in order to manage relationships with their customer. We believe that there is a lack of relevant research in what way social media could be used by business-to-business as well as what channels could be used when managing established relationships.

Therefore we feel that there is a lack of research on how to use social media as a communication device to manage relationships in the business-to-business perspective. Since social media is a cost efficient and free channel to use (Scott, 2011), we feel that even business-to-business companies might have great use of social media in a relationship managing point of view.

1.3 Research problem

For this research project we have decided upon a specific research problem that we will focus on in order to answer our problem in the end of our thesis. Our research problem for this thesis is:

How can business-to-business companies utilize social media in order to manage their established customer relationships?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the theoretical framework and case studies in order to gain an understanding for the advantages and disadvantages of social media in a relationship perspective. To be able to answer how business-to-business companies could employ social media in order to manage their established relationships with their business customers.

1.5 Delimitations

We will only research the most frequently and commonly used social media channels and by this not investigate all possible social media channels. Since we only investigate from a business-to-business perspective the customer in this case is other companies and not private ends consumers.

2 Methodology

In this chapter, we argue for our methodological approach and reasoning. First, we provide information about how our departure affected our choice of epistemology, as these factors affect the research strategy, data collection, method and the research design. Furthermore, we describe our choice of sampling method, the selection criteria for our participants and how our interviews and cases have been designed and conducted. Lastly, we explain how the qualitative data was analyzed.

2.1 Research Philosophy

Ontology and epistemology are two philosophical positions that have major impact on how research is conducted and evaluated. Bryman and Bell (2011) describe that an epistemological issue indicates if the inquiry of the specific research subject is relevant and important enough to be investigated. Thereof be able to answer which theoretical frameworks are adequate to sufficiently counter for the inquiry (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research is an attempt to connect epistemology with field practices, as well as with social theory. Our first aim with this research was to use cases and interviews as a starting point to generate data for the theoretical research in the fields of business-to-business, social media and relationship management. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) clarify that there are three different type of approaches to epistemology; positivism, relativism and social constructionism. Due to their research characteristics and the nature of our method we feel that it is most appropriate to utilize the social constructionist approach. Considering that the social constructionism has provided us with the ability to through inventing social constructions understand the social phenomenon without any theoretical presumptions. Then we were able to through studying real-life cases understand how business-to-business companies would be able to manage relationships through social media channels.

2.2 Research Strategy

To fulfill the aim of our research problem and develop theory in the business-to-business relationship department, we implemented a research strategy that is of qualitative approach, considering that it is the details that have been analyzed in order to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that qualitative studies often deliver a detailed and important description of a theme that provide an account of the context within which behavior takes place. Detailed descriptions of social settings, event and individuals are also involved in qualitative studies. The outcome of qualitative methods is supposed to be an investigation rather than something that predicts it, in order to capture complexity and contradictions the researcher has to consider using multiple research methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Considering that our research subject is an uninvestigated area we felt that we needed to invest a lot of effort in order to research the details and nuances of our subject. We believe that it is in the details extracted from our interviews and cases that have helped us conclude to an answer of our research question. We have used a multiple research method considering that we used both data from primary and secondary sources. Hjerm and Lindgren (2010) and Bryman and Bell (2011) mean that qualitative strategies often are words

or texts from interviews, notes from observations, media texts or other similar documents which are of interest for the research problem. Our research derived from words of interviews as well as words from texts. This method requires often a need for concentration on a few aspects and units to be able to reach deeper into the research problem (Jacobsen, 2002). In our thesis these aspects were communication, business-to-business companies, managing relationships and social media. Backman (2008) argues that every research that is made up by interviews often has a qualitative method strategy, hence this research has been partly based on primary data collected from interviews as well as secondary data from case studies. Considering these theoretical claims we believe that a qualitative approach was best suitable for our research.

Jacobsen (2002) and Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that there are two method strategies to consider when collecting data for a research, deductive and inductive approach. However there is an approach which bears the characteristics of both inductive and deductive approach, this is the abductive approach. In our thesis the essence of the theory and empirics was contrived from collected relevant theory surrounding our subject and derived data appropriate to our theoretical framework. This method is in accordance to the essence of the deductive data collection approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, we have returned to the theory after conducting the interviews and researching the cases in order to saturate the theory with unsuspected definitions that were brought up as result from the data collection, which could indicate a notion of abductive approach. In order to understand how business-to-business companies use social media in order to manage and maintain relationships, we have collected data from interviews and case studies to analyze what different strategies and channels business-to-business companies are using today. Then we have been able to comprehend how social media could be used as a tool for relationship managing and answered our research question. The choice of approach is more determined by how much knowledge and theory there is in the area of research (Hjerm & Lindgren, 2010). Considering that we started with a deductive approach where we firstly collected the theoretical framework and then investigated the practical field only to realize that we did not have enough theoretical base in order to answer our research question. Consequently we decided to use an abductive approach to be able to fully research the theoretical framework in order to be able to have a detailed answer. Bacharach (1989) points out that it is important to ensure that the theoretical systems could be empirically tested by providing some source of explanation and prediction. Due to the fact of changed research collection method we believe that we have tested our theoretical and empirical frameworks in order to ensure us that our end result is approved.

2.3 Research Method

In order to be able to collect data needed for our topic we considered the comparative design method to be mostly suitable. Bryman and Bell (2011) explain comparative design as a research method that allows the researchers to compare two or more cases to be able to extract relevant variables that define the subject. Bryman (2008) advocates for the cross-sectional approach when comparing cases because it implies a research strategy of examining more

than one case at the time, he elaborates on the cross-sectional approach and explains that it is preferable utilized in a deductive approach. Silverman (2011) also supports this by explaining comparative as the researcher always researching new cases to test the appointed hypothesis. Through the comparison of cases a researcher can distinguish the theoretical framework, what will be sufficient and what to discard of (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As Bryman and Bell (2011) reflect upon when clarifying the comparison of cases. They mean that the characters extracted from the comparison act as a launching of the theory construction. Denk (2002) points out that it is also important to acknowledge the differences as well as the similarities between the cases in order to provide a thorough picture of the results. Therefore we have examined different company cases in order to become well prepared in our subject in order to be able to distinguish which steps to take, to be able to manage relationships in business-to-business companies through social media.

In a qualitative research strategy, as we have adopted, the proper approach according to Bryman and Bell (2011) for comparative design is through multi-case study. This was an ideal approach to our study since we were conducting our data from primary and secondary sources, for example case studies of companies but also through interviewing key persons at business-to-business companies with proven awareness in the social media sector. We used this data research method since Bryman and Bell (2011) advocate for its use both in case studies as well as the usage of people as cases.

2.4 Data Collection from Primary and Secondary Sources

According to Halvorsen (1989), there are two types of data collection approaches a researcher can choose from, these are primary and secondary data. Jacobsen (2002) argue that primary data is information collected by the researchers themselves, for an example data from conducted interviews. While secondary is information collected by others such as books and articles. It is common for researchers to use both approaches in a thesis, this method with collaborative data strengthens and supports the researchers' conclusions (Jacobsen, 2002). According to Halvorsen (1989) our research problem should guide our choice of data, hence the information we gathered ought to elucidate our research problem.

We have, for this thesis, used both primary data collected from interviews and secondary data collected from relevant cases in the field of social media, business-to-business and relationship managing. This was possible considering, as previously mentioned, that we were employing the comparative research design. To summarize it, the design provided us to draw data from several different cases. In the comparative research design cases do not only consist of academically written papers, but also refers to interviews. Hence the interviews we have conducted will in this thesis be considered as cases as well (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

2.4.1 Primary data

As Bryman and Bell (2011) describe comparative design method could be used when the research uses both case studies and people, in order to collect data. As of this research design,

for our primary data we conducted interviews in order to collect data. Since we have adopted a qualitative strategy for our thesis, considering qualitative studies deliver a detailed and important description of the phenomenon. It was essential for us to get a detailed and informative description through the data collected, in order to answer the research question. Furthermore, qualitative strategy as Backman (2008) argues is often concerning words, made up by interviews which have been the case in our research as well.

2.4.1.1 Interviews

Easterby-Smith et al (2008) argue that people take for granted that interviewing is the best method when trying to collect data and do not contemplate the disadvantages the method brings, for an example its vast complexity and having enough time to conduct the interviews thoroughly. Having that in mind we undertook the process of interviewing with a sense of idea what it entails and how to avoid mistakes.

According to Jacobsen (2002) the selection of respondents has great meaning for our research validity and reliability, further it is important that the respondents are carefully selected. Therefore we set some criteria in order to avoid mistakes and clarify that we chose right people to interview. As is also supported further by Jacobsen (2002) who means that a qualitative strategy it is determined ahead which companies or persons that will be interviewed, in accordance to what goals the research has. Since we chose a qualitative method approach it was natural for us to set some criterions in order to ensure that we chose the right approach for our method.

For our primary sources the criterions were large companies that are able to afford and want to adopt new trends in order to be able to satisfy their customers further. Further the companies needed to have worked with social media for at least a year in order to be able to provide us with their knowledge in the area. We also chose to interview companies that have been mentioned several times from different expert sources that they are leading examples for the use of social media. When contacting the companies we wanted to only talk with the employees directly responsible for the companies social media use. It was important to us that the respondents we talked with had enough knowledge in order to answer our question properly and reliably, to ensure us that we had enough and sufficient data in order to answer our research problem. In order to make our empirical data collection even more reliable we chose to conduct interviews with recognized business-to-business social media experts. This provided us with an ever deeper knowledge as well as conformed the companies' statements. The criteria for the experts were that they needed to have worked with social media for at least a year, in order to ensure that their knowledge was sufficient enough as well as that they have worked with social media for business-to-business companies.

In table 1 our respondents are presented together with their position in the companies as well as what type of interview we were able to conduct.

Company	Respondent	POSITION	Date	Kind of Interview
SEB	Samuel Kammensjö	Manager of Communication	2012-04-26	Personal Meeting
SEB	Johan Bryggare	Community Manager	2012-05-03	Telephone Interview
Atea	Helene Belin	PR Manager and Communication Manager	2012-05-04	Telephone Interview
Atea	Göran Palm	Marketing Manager	2012-05-04	Mail Interview
Scania	Erica Zandelin	Manager Internet Relations	2012-05-03	Telephone Interview
Expert	Malin Sjöman	Social Media Expert	2012-05-04	Telephone Interview
Ericsson	Olle Ahnve	Marketing Communications Manager	2012-05-07	Mail Interview
Social Media Support	Josefine Abrahamsson	Social Media Expert	2012-05-10	Mail Interview

Table 1: Primary sources

We chose to contrive our primary data through interviews because our research question required us to understand the underlying fundamentals of relationship management through social media between business-to-business companies. According to Easterby-Smith et al (2008) interviews are a perfect tool to achieve this understanding. Considering that it has provided us with the prospect of reaching a deeper level of perspective from the minds of interviewees and their own personal perception of the subject and what made them come to this point of view. This ensured us a data collection of the respondents' interpretation of the subject and a realization of their worldview. What they assessed as valuable in order to manage relationships through social media with other business-to-business companies. Fellman (1999) advocates for interviews as a research method because it would provide us as researchers to understand the interviewees in their normal environment like no other research

method could contribute. However, Easterby-Smith et al (2008) warns researchers to provide the interviewees with the possibility to really exploit the subject in their own style and encourage their values in order to evade the risk of generating shallow and superficial data. Fellman (1999) elaborates on the subject by explaining it as a look into the respondents' everyday life, something we feel we had a need to comprehend in order to understand the complexity behind business-to-business relationships and what it takes to create them in a virtual environment. We chose to ask straight forward and relevant questions in order to gain the most information from our interviews seeing as this subject is new and complex.

Our sample size for the interviews was small, since in qualitative research samples and case studies tend to be small (Bryman and Bell, 2011). We followed the principles of the sample size by McCracken (1986) when interview: "less is more". We chose the most important and useful companies when selecting interviewees and found relevant, interesting and well skilled people to interview that were well understood in our subject. Hence, employees and experts who were responsible for the companies' social media activities, which were well educated in the areas of social media and marketing communication, were interviewed. By interviewing them we believe that we received the most informative answers to our questions.

Structure

When trying to contemplate which structure to choose for our interviews we felt that we had to exhaust every alternative in order to be confident enough in that we had maximized the findings from our primary data.

According to Easterby-Smith et al (2008) the aim of the research decides how structured the interview should be. We did not consider the highly structured interview as suitable enough for our research aim even though structured interviews provides the researcher with highly regulated questions and answers, due to that the researcher has to be fully prepared with proved and examined question (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The questions also have to be asked in the same tone of voice for every interview as Easterby-Smith et al (2008) explain. We benefited additional from our method that gave us the freedom to go about the conduction of interviews in an unprompted manner. However, we did not feel that the unstructured approach was appropriate neither because Bryman & Bell (2011) explained the unstructured method as resembling a conversation more than an interview. Due to our heavy and complex subject we recognized that we would have to have a more formal interaction. The respondents would in an unstructured method ramble on too freely and most might probably leave the subject topic, perhaps interpret the question incorrectly, resulting in a waste of our time and collection of wrong data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). McCracken (1986) suggests that interviews should be structured loosely through predetermined prompts and a well-designed questionnaire. As in our case, we designed a well-design questionnaire that we followed in every interview, yet we let the respondents talk freely. Easterby-Smith et al (2008) explain the easy dangers researcher could meet with the unstructured method as making postulations that this method would lead the researcher to a clear picture of what the interviewees are trying to

portray. Seeing as these statements could derive false and inadequate data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

Concluding that a semi-structured approach has assisted our research strategy superlatively since we had the ability to confine the topic of conversation to our interest as well as permit the interviewees to speak freely in the lines of the subject. A semi-structured method would cover these aspects according to Easterby-Smith et al (2008) as it provides the researcher with the ability to base their questions on theoretical framework and inquire the questions in a similar meaning and wording. Nevertheless, Easterby-Smith et al (2008:143) stress the importance of not to be “...*tied up by them*...”, meaning the theoretical framework. It is important for the researchers to gain every single aspect in the matter therefore we did not want to be tied up by our interview guide, but let our respondents talk freely yet stay within our main topics. This is clarified by Bryman and Bell (2011) who mean that a semi-structured approach enables interviewees the possibility to talk openly and free, additionally the researchers are able to add supplementary spontaneous questions and choose which questions to move further with along collecting data. Alvesson (2003) describe qualitative semi-structured interviews as relatively loosely structured and open to what the researcher feel is relevant and important to talk about, given the interest and direction of the research question. This method is often preferred as it bestows a higher level of discretion and the interviewee replies in a personal matter. Easterby-Smith et al (2008) support this discussion due to that it allows the researcher to read the interviewees non-verbal clues, tone of voice, facial expression, what kind of language or their own words they use to describe something. Bryman and Bell (2011) also argue for letting the interviewees elaborate in the subject freely, as it helps the researchers to understand what the interviewees see as significant and essential in the specific topic. Collocating, this method has lead us to a deep and rich data collection which considers vast alternative angles to one perspective and helped us achieve our research goal.

2.4.1.2 Designing and Conducting the Interview

Jacobsen (2002) states that personal meetings, face-to-face, is the most common type of interviews, this is suitable when researchers are interested in how the interviewee put meaning in a special phenomenon. We chose to use personal interviews where we met the interviewee face to face in as many interviews as possible, in order to know how the interviewees put their own sense of the phenomenon. Easterby-Smith et al (2008) support this discussion due to that it allows the researcher to read the interviewees non-verbal clues, tone of voice, facial expression, what kind of language or their own words they use to describe something. Jacobsen (2002) claims that personal interviews are suitable as data collection when there are relatively few units to be examined.

Jacobsen (2002) argues that it is possible to choose between two types of places to do the interview in either a natural or artificial place. The natural site is a place that the interviewee is familiar with. The environment around the interviewee could influence the content of the interview (Jacobsen, 2002). In our personal meeting we met with the respondent in SEB's

own office in Gothenburg where the interview took part in one of their conference rooms. By having the interview in natural site the respondent became more relaxed and confident with the interview, allowing him to answer our questions in a complete and free manner.

Some of our interviews took part over the telephone and through e-mail due to that the specific persons we needed to meet with did not have the time to meet with us personally. Jacobsen (2002) argues that personal meetings are often time and cost consuming, whereas telephone interviews are both effective regarding to cost and time. Further Jacobsen (2002) and Dahmström (2005) believe that there could be an interview effect in personal meetings, meaning that the researchers might affect the respondents in the means of body language or tone of voice. Our data collection has however varied from personal meeting face-to-face to phone interviews as well as mail interviews. Due to that the companies we chose to interview were all big enterprises and the people we needed to come into contact with, in order to get the complete answers, were all high positioned people which lead to that plenty of them did not have the time to sit down and meet with us. However, we feel that these companies and respondents were important for our thesis and chose to retain them considering that their interviews were good even though they occurred over the telephone or through e-mail. In all of our cases we were able to contact them again if there were any ambiguity considering the questions or answers.

Ryen (2004) explains that email communication has both advantages and disadvantages but is useful as an alternative interview solution. The opportunities with the use of e-mail interviews are that the respondents have time to think and reflect upon the questions and their answers. Another advantage is that some people express themselves better in writing than they do orally, thus an e-mail communication becomes a good option. However, the researchers need to be aware that the wordings and language in an e-mail interview needs to be clearer than a personal meeting in order for the message to be easy to understand for the respondents. Considering that researchers in a personal meeting have access to both verbal and non-verbal communication, making misunderstandings easy to submit as well as enables supplementary questions (Ryen, 2004). In order to avoid these problems we made sure that we were able to contact our respondents again if we needed to follow up questions or if there were any misunderstandings. Nevertheless, we believe that the result of our question was detailed and sufficient for us to be able to answer our research question.

2.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is information collected or written by others, meaning that it is based on other researcher's data (Kylén, 2004). According to Bell (2006) secondary sources are divided into two categories; intentional and unintentional. Intentional sources are saved for the future in a conscious and deliberate way, examples of sources could include biographies, memoirs, diaries and letters. Unintentional sources are conducted by researchers for a purpose other than what they were initially meant for originally. Among unintended sources include documents, magazines and websites on the internet. A material which is an accidental source is a typical and common secondary source (Bell, 2006). Our unintended secondary sources

have primarily entailed the companies' websites and social media activities, example of social media would be the companies Facebook page or Twitter account. However, we also took regard for articles, reports and cases published about business-to-business companies' use of social media as a compliment to our primary sources in order to emphasize their validity.

Secondary analysis is described by Bryman and Bell (2011) as data that other researchers have gathered for a different purpose. Thus, information is already collected which researchers have used to meet their own needs and purposes. Data from scientific papers and reference books can be viewed as secondary sources (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For our thesis we chose to use case studies and academic articles as well as books for our secondary data. These we contrived from Lund Universities article data base Summon and Ebscohost, we also found some of the cases in Harvard Business School's database. The books were mainly searched from Lund Universities Library while other came by inter-library loan. By using different tools to search for data we tried to exhaust all possible alternatives in order to saturate the academical framework.

There are more benefits of secondary analysis, for an example that access to secondary data saves time and money (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Given that we were limited by time to put this thesis together secondary analysis becomes very helpful in facilitating data collection. This type of data is often of high quality and approved by researchers. Secondary data may lead to new interpretations because it provides an approach with better perspectives in several fronts. However, Jacobsen (2002) argue that researchers should be critical when using secondary data, to question the quality and range of the information. Bryman and Bell (2011) made us aware of disadvantages that may come with secondary analysis, which is that the alienated researchers who use the data may not have good and deep knowledge of the data available and might interpret it wrong. The amount of data could be complex and extensive. The quality of the data should also not be taken granted of, even if the data is from known sources (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It always requires reflection and review, which we believe we have covered considering that we found our data as credible, relevant to the topic and we have cross referenced our sources in order to ensure true facts. The literature and academic articles we used for our subject are mostly theories established by well-known theoreticians, these theoreticians have formed the basis to social media, relationship managing and business-to-business. We chose to collect some of our empirical data from case studies since we felt that our topic is relatively new and not so well researched. As well as the mere fact that we as researchers are not established interviewers therefore our conducted interviews may not be perfectly performed and essential data might be omitted. Consequently, we are not only relying on our respondents to provide us with all of our in-depth information but are grateful for their contribution.

In table 2 the cases we chose to use for our research are presented as well as what type of characteristics the cases have. Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that it is important that the researches employ criterion on which cases are relevant to the concept in question. In order to ensure that the cases we have chosen are relevant and informative enough for our research we

did carefully select cases that represented our subject of interest and helped us in our research process. We only selected cases that represent companies or experts who work actively with social media as a relationship managing tool in business-to-business companies. It was important for us that the cases were useful enough in order for us to be able to contribute in this research area. Therefore we made sure that all the cases followed a few criterions in order to fulfill these aims. The criterions we set up were that the companies or experts should have worked in this area for at least a year in order to have sufficient knowledge to contribute with for our research. That the cases are from acknowledged companies and experts for their expertise in business-to-business as well as social media for their work.

Case	Date of Download	Characteristics of Case
Hewlett Packard	2012-03-20	Articles
Social Media Marketing Industry Report. Michael Stelzner (2011).	2012-03-23	Report
Social Media in Business-t-Business: Are we trying to force the Stepsisters foot into Cinderella's slipper? Malin Sjöman (2011).	2012-05-04	Article
9 Facebook Success Stories You Should Model Phil Mershon (IdeaPaint)	2012-04-12	Article

Table 2:Secondary Sources

2.5 Sampling Method

Bryman and Bell (2011) explain theoretical sampling as a method where the researchers first collect data in order to move further and research different theoretical frameworks. This procedures repeat itself until all the alternatives are exhausted, meaning that it is a continues procedure and fits in the comparative design basis, since we have compared cases in order to distinguish the theoretical framework that is of use for us. Theoretical saturation goes a bit hand in hand with theoretical sampling. Theoretical saturation means that empirical data has gradually formed the relevance of the research project and which elements need to be taken forward in order to generate a theoretical framework. When theoretical saturation has been met it means that the data collection has been achieved and the researcher should carry on creating a theory proposition, then the researcher might go back and collect data so it fits the proposition perfectly (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This tool also suited our research approach since we needed a method where we felt free to investigate all the cases we experienced as

appropriate, in order to make them fit perfectly and make sure all relevant theories and data was considered.

2.6 Data Analysis

According to Yin (1994) there are two strategies to go about analyzing the data collected for the research. One is to rely on the theoretical proposition of the study, and then analyze the evidence based on these claims. The second technique is to develop a case definition, which will serve as a framework for organizing and analyzing the case studies (Yin, 1994). In our analysis we chose the first strategy, we compared our theoretical framework to the collected primary and secondary data. Further we analyzed the similarities and differences in the results in our own voice through our own thoughts in a critical way, in order to be able to answer our research question. Bryman (2008) supports the cross-sectional approach when comparing cases, as mentioned before, we adopted in order to cross check all of our respondents and cases against each other and against the theory.

Yin (1994) encourages the researchers to do everything possible to gain an analysis of the highest quality. In order to accomplish this there are some principles presented that should attract the attention of the researcher. The study should show that the analysis treats all relevant evidence and include all major rival interpretations in the analysis (Yin, 1994). We believe that we fulfilled these criteria due that we have for our primary sources contacted big companies as well companies that are leading the forefront of social media activities in their marketing communication. This allowed us to speak and research the key people endowed with the social media engagement at the different companies, bringing enclapsed and fully answered results to our questions. Yin (1994) argues that the thesis should address the most significant aspect of the case study. However it is also important to use previous knowledge of researchers for further analysis (Yin, 1994). We have taken advantage of previous courses and literature in our program combined with the knowledge we contrived from in order to have a pre-understanding of the subject and what we need to research, in order to fulfill our research question.

Yin (1994) also points out that the generalization of the results, either from one or more patterns, is made to theory and not to populations. According to Hjerm and Lindgren (2010) a qualitative method strategy is constantly associated with a research that analyzes a problem deeper. In the analysis section we chose to start from one theoretical link between the empirical part and the theoretical framework of this thesis. In our analysis we compared the different cases from the empirical part against one another, as well as the theory against the empirical data. This is made in order to distinguish which differences and similarities there are between cases as well as between the theory and the different cases. Therefore we were able to distinguish new and uninvestigated empirical statements that have not yet been research in a theoretical matter. We believe that might be result of that social media is a fast moving trend where the researchers are having a hard time keeping up with the dynamical changes in the world of Internet. We realized that we have chose to divide our empirical data

into how, why and which positive aspects social media contents, we understand that these categories have some similarities. However, we felt that the answer we gained from the respondents differed and therefore needed the different sub-categories: why, how and positive aspects to be divided into, since we did not want to take any answers for granted. In order to be able to gain a complete picture of the answer to our research question we divided the analysis section into five sub-categories, which we felt has provided us with the tools to analyze the research problem deeper and to answer the question fully.

We have also considered that a deeper analysis of the different stage aspect in relationships management is of interest to investigate for business-to-business companies in order to improve their strategies. That is, how relationships management could be investigated as to how social media might matter and be utilized properly. However we did not have time to analyze that perspective due to our ten weeks restraint.

2.7 Criticism of Sources

We were well aware that our telephone interviews are not the most efficient procedure for collecting data, as Bryman and Bell (2011), Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) as well as Jacobsen (2002) argue that the most prominent way of conducting interviews is through personal meetings. However, considering our subject and the fact that it is a new research area we concluded that we only interviewed people well devoted in the social media process at the different companies we talked with, as well as interviewed three experts in the subject to gain a broader vision. Considering that the people we did talk with in order to get proper answers mostly where in high positions we were not able to conduct personal meetings with most of our respondents. Therefore we adapted our data collecting strategy in order to gain the answers we needed, meaning conducting telephone interview and complementary questions through email. In some cases we were not able to get a telephone interview with our selected respondents due to their tight schedules resulting in only email interviewing. However the results were sufficient enough for the data and the respondents were willing to answer any complementary questions. Bearing in mind the fact that Jacobsen (2002) argues a qualitative method strategy should focuses on the nuance, details and what is unique for each respondent. Something that we felt all our respondents covered since we have different types of experts and companies from different sectors.

Another aspect that hindered our ability to personally meet with our respondents was the fact that all of our interviewees where located at different geographical positions, one was also from America, which was not doable on our ten weeks restriction. In regard to the past statements we were well aware that the telephone as well as email interviews might have affected the type of results we have derived from the interviews. Supported by Dahmström (2005), Jacobsen (2002) and Ryen (2004) they argue that telephone and email interviews are good alternatives when personal meetings are not able to be fulfilled. However we tried to validate our research further through triangulating each interview, meaning that we have tried interviewing at least two people at every company, asking them same question in order to double cross the results. In some cases we were only able to contact one respondent due to

that they did not have other people working with social media and knowledgeable enough in order to be able to answer our question in a sufficient manner. We believe this might be the result of that social media is revolutionary and new in the business-to-business sector, leading to that many companies have not invested or dedicated enough efforts into adapting social media yet. Consequently, we ended up interviewing with only one person within social media in an international enterprise.

Considering our secondary sources there are always the standard concerns regarding how well the research has been performed as well as our interpretations of the result since they were conducted to fit another end goal than ours. However we constricted ourselves to companies well devoted in the social media as well as business-to-business field. The companies we used are all big enterprises in their specific fields, while the experts are experienced within our field since they help business-to-business companies to incorporate social media into their marketing communication plan. One of our experts, Michael Stelzner, conducted a report investigating how business-to-business marketers are using social media in order to grow and promote their companies. Stelzner interviewed 3300 business-to-business marketers with 2278 open-ended questions, making the report valid enough to be incorporated into our study to gain a broader perspective in the research.

Since Stelzner's report has larger resources and time he was able to carry out a complete result compared to ours. We have also contemplated the possibilities of that the cases might have different results due to their cultural heritage, Stelzner's report might be more American appropriate. However since social media is carried out through the Internet environment we do not believe cultural aspect to be an obstacle in social media considering that Internet is a global marketing communication tool. Our second expert respondent was Malin Sjöman, from which we first collected secondary data from one of her articles that was of great interest for our research. As she was Swedish we contacted her for an interview resulting in primary data as well. Lastly, we contacted social media expert Josefine Abrahamsson for an interview in order to triangulate the experts' answers and with that validate our results.

2.8 Reliability and validity

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) the alternatives for reliability and validity in qualitative methods are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is made up by credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility, in the sense that the results are going to be acceptable by others, triangulation is often recommended to strengthen credibility (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Triangulation is explained as, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), to use more than one method or source of data in a study of social phenomenon. Even within one or across different research strategies and the method gives a greater confidence in findings. Triangulation could also strengthen the analysis and the results validity, by using different angles (Darmer & Freytag, 1995). To higher the credibility of this research we have used two research strategies, collect data through interviews and case-studies, thus triangulation has been applied to check for misunderstandings and as a comparative device.

According to Jacobsen (2002) triangulation is a way to examine the data and conclusions to see if the result is valid. One way is to control various interviewees against each other to see if the result is in compliance (Jacobsen, 2002). We chose to use triangulation in our study, in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of our conclusion and findings. This has mainly been conducted through comparing different cases to each other as well as double control the interviews by providing the same questions to their co-workers in the same rank. Through this comparison we distinguished what separates as well as unifies the different statements and how we should interpret them.

We chose to use a qualitative method strategy, this because it fits our purpose and strategy for collecting data to answer our research problem. However, Bryman and Bell (2011) point out that qualitative research could be too generalized in social settings, this might be a problem for the result since the sample and case studies tend to be small. Nevertheless Bryman and Bell (2011:408) argue that qualitative findings “*are to generalize to theory rather than to populations*”, meaning our generalization has been derived from theoretical assumptions from qualitative data that is vital for generalization. In our thesis generalization has not been the primary goal rather to achieve an accurate understanding of how social media could be used when managing relationships in business-to-business companies.

There has not been room for multiple measurements over time, since the interviews have been conducted within a specific and strict timeframe of ten weeks. Therefore, the interviews are considered limited in time since this aspect might change the view of statements, for an example if the same questions were to be asked later the answers might be different. This has to be reflected upon since the validity might be affected (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). As even Bryman and Bell (2011) contemplate, a qualitative study is hard to replicate and same question to even the same person could derive different answer, since we are studying a social science. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) sees this as an opportunity for the researcher since the respondent might reflect on their initial answers, which could lead to them answering differently because of the intervention itself and the process of measurement itself becomes a kind of intervention, however the post reflections are not easy to assess. Thus, we have primarily used initial answers and discussions from respondents, in order to answer how relationship managing could be used through social media in business-to-business companies.

To ensure that we have extract as much as possible during the interviews, Bryman and Bell (2011) strengthen the importance of recording interviews, not only what is said but also how the interviewees express themselves. Since it is impossible for us to remember everything said and taking notes during the interview may interfere with our ability to fully cope with what is said by the interviewee, resulting in missing essential data a recording device becomes crucial and important. Jacobsen (2002) also argues that there might be a problem during personal interviews, meaning when the interviewer may miss something important that the interviewee said. This was solved by using a recording device. However, as Bryman and Bell (2011) explain we had to be cautious when recording our interviews because some interviewees tend

to feel intimidated by the use of a recording device and may unconsciously leave out important data. In some cases the interviewees might also forbid us to record during an interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, in order to avoid this situation, we have made the participants aware of that we have been using a recording device prior to the interview occasion giving them time to become comfortable with the idea. In cases where the interviews occurred as personal meetings and telephone interview we used a mobile recorder in order to not miss data but provided us with the ability to re-listen the interview several times.

Bryman and Bell (2011) endorses to continuously use recording along with transcribing and not to wait until all interviews are conducted to start transcribing, this could then generate new insights and ideas that we could use in upcoming interviews. Even so, transcribing is a difficult and time consuming task and as Bryman and Bell (2011) notes, transcribing may take up to five to six hours to transcribe a one hour interview. Though, this was a tactic we took advantage of in order to save time since we were only offered ten weeks to conduct this thesis. The tactic provided us with the possibility to only transcribe bits and parts of the interview that is actually relevant to our thesis subject. Considering that Bryman and Bell (2011) state that often there are portions of the interview that are not applicable to what is studied, therefore no need to waste time on writing it down. Finally, we believe that recording and transcribing the interviews were a great way of making sure all crucial data was considered as well as making the empirics reliable and valid for the thesis.

Denk (2002) argues that in order to utilize the comparative design there has to be similar features in the cases for them to be compared, if the criteria are fulfilled the cases are valid. A comparative method has to meet the qualifications of both internal and external validity in order to be valid. Internal validity is explained as the possibility for the thesis to study the different features and analyze if they are compatible with each other (Denk, 2002). We have investigated internal validity by researching the cut surface between social media, relationship management and business-to-business companies. While external validity according to Denk (2002) means that the thesis conclusion has to be able to generalize broadly outside of the investigated companies and businesses in order to be valid. We have fulfilled this requirement for external validity by sampling cases by companies from several different business sectors in order to be fairly general in our conclusion. Henceforth, Denk (2002) also advocates for satisfying the thesis reliability, he means that a thesis is reliable if the different methods and samples in a research provides us with the same results every time it is researched. We believe that we ensured this criterion due to that we primarily studied cases and not social events, making them everlasting.

3 Theory

In this section we first explain for our departure in research followed by a description of our field of research and the specific domains. We build a theoretical foundation through a review of the related research streams about social media. Finally, we move on to the theoretical part, which framed our research on social medias impact on business-to-business.

3.1 Business-to-business as the theoretical department

Faucher (2009) as well as Ford et al. (2011) explain business-to-business companies as complex collaboration of two parts that are aiming for different end goals but are dependent on each other's involvement of the relationship to fulfill the goals. The one part is characterized by sales and marketing professionals, also known as suppliers, intending to attract customers by their products and offers, while the other part consists of purchasing and decision making professionals (Faucher, 2009). Rauyrueen and Miller (2007) argue that in a business-to-business setting, suppliers and/or service providers need to understand the nature and circumstances of their customers because of the unique characteristics of the customers acting as organizations. Each business customer uses the service and products in a different fashion within the business-to-business surroundings. Business customers spend often large amounts of money in their purchase of products and services (Rauyrueen & Miller, 2007). Flint, Woodruff & Fisher-Gardial (2002) explain that in today's hard market companies need to stand out in order to sustain stability and have the possibility to survive in a long term perspective. Flint et al. (2002) believe that through registering customer value and desire companies have a chance of attracting customers. The shift in today's market has lead business-to-business companies in needing to establish relationships with their customers in order for the customers to remain loyal. Through providing business customers with greater value the companies have a greater chance to have a competitive advantage as opposed to their rivaling companies (Flint et al., 2002).

According to Ford et al. (2011) companies are in need of establishing relationships with their customers no matter if it concerns a business-to-business or business-to-consumer company. However, since the relationships are more complex and comprehensive and the business deals are often of a greater value in the business-to-business sector, relationships might be emerged as even more important in the business-to-business perspective (Ford et al., 2011).

3.1.1 Nature of relationships in business-to-business

According to Ford et al. (2011) relationships are social entities with possible benefits depending on the involvement of the two parties. Bloise (2009) describe a relationship as a equity, meaning a definition stating that each party in the relationship presume that they will gain some value from the input they generated in their collaboration. However, partners in a business-to-business relationship always consider the outcomes of collaboration, they want to make sure their input is balanced out with the results and therefore compare their options against other companies before entering into a relationship. A company that feels their

relationship is inequity means their expectations from their relational partner has not been met (Bloise , 2009). According to Ford et al. (2011) relationships are assets to the company that could be convert it to an economical value, which needs to be managed over time through a process of interaction investments. Miller and Nigel (2007) describe a business-to-business relationship as, when a business partner feels an obligation to another business partner based on psychological loyalty of the mind, they mean when this feeling develops a relationship is shaped.

Miller and Nigel (2007) explain that relationships are often conceived on the basis of word-of-mouth with origin from engagement and loyalty from customers. This is also supported by Palmatier, Gopalakrishna, & Houston (2006) who argue that relationships affect the customers' perception of value the companies generate by increasing the breadth, depth and length of the relationship. This perception of value then engenders positive word-of-mouth for the company (Palmatier et al., 2006). Miller and Nigel (2007) clarify further that a customer with engagement to a company is more likely to stay loyal and mainly purchase from the company they are in a relationship with. Meaning that a customers' engagement with a company is directly applicable to their loyalty towards the relationship they share. The importance of trust is especially significant in business-to-business relationship management. Trust and loyalty are the two main strategic tools that determine the nature of the relationship and what is necessary in order to manage them. Trust has to be considered as a vital part of the maintenance of high quality service relationships that is managed on the process of making and keeping promises (Miller and Nigel, 2007). Accoring to Rauyruen and Miller (2007) in order to create a loyal business-to-business customer base companies have to realize that it is not only about maintaining numbers of customer overtime, yet about nurturing the relationship with business customers to support their future purchase and level of advocacy. Prepared with the knowledge of their business customers' loyalty levels, a business will be able to figure out their endeavor to be able to manage profitable relationships that could contribute to their profit levels. Considering the nature of the large purchase and transactions in a business-to-business situation, there are gigantic rewards for those companies that succeed in managing loyal customers (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007).

Ford et al. (2011) explain that it is not a surprise that business-to-business relationships are costly and time consuming for companies to manage, however the sheer value a relationship brings to the involved companies is not measurable. All though value may not be objectively determined and is something abstract, the importance of value for the customers often means more than the utter volume of a customer base (Ford et al., 2011). But the fact still remains, as Ford et al. (2011) points out business-to-business relationships are costly, especially the close and intense ones. Palmatier et al. (2006) agree with this statement but they develop the definition by explaining the complexity and cost of a relationship as that every relationship has its own set of bonds and relational rules which are important to take into consideration. Therefore, all relationships are uneven when it comes to level of involvement, engagement and economical turn over. Companies need to be aware of that some customer relationships will need more attention and work and some will need more economical investment

(Palmatier et al, 2006). Elaborating on this subject Ford et al. (2011) also explain that there is no “standard template” for relationships as every single relationship is unique to the collaboration between the two companies and the specific problem they are trying to solve by collaborating. Therefore value has to be created specifically for each customer in order to be able to satisfy those (Ford et al. 2011).

3.2 Customer relationship management

Wahab (2010) explains customer relationship management as a new marketing strategy where the focus lays on creating value, satisfying customers and creating long lasting relationships. In traditional marketing the focus was on the product itself and how well it sold. However, in recent developments in the marketing communication area a more customer oriented focal point has become essential than the mere transaction (Wahab, 2010). Raab, Ajami, Gargeya, & Goddard (2008:6) explain customer relationship management as “*Know your customer and you know what they buy*”. According to Axelsson and Agndal (2005) the new focus towards relationships builds on companies managing to try and individualize customers in their segment.

Wahab (2010) elaborates further on the definition and describes business-to-business relationship management as an ongoing process with regular meetings where both parties are interdependent. Businesses tend to recognize customer relationship management as an expensive tool that requires a lot of resources in order to implement the strategy. It entails for companies to reorganize their entire organizational system in order to be able to invest and establish their customer relationship management strategy. To fulfill the requirements need for customer relationship management the company needs to invest a lot of time and personnel into the implementation, this may be costly in the outset of the process (Wahab, 2010). Bruhn (2003) also emphasizes that in order for companies to have a successful relationship management strategy the companies need to be well aware of their own organization and structure when trying to implement a new strategy that is based on customer satisfaction, commitment, trust and relationship quality (Bruhn, 2003).

Eriksson & Åkerman (1999) acquiesce with previous authors considering the notion of customer relationship management being a costly and long term investment that requires a lot of resources in order to work properly (Eriksson & Åkerman, 1999). However, Wahab (2010) points out that it has been proven that business-to-business companies who have adopted relationship management have been more profitable considering that most profit comes from returning customers. Wahab (2010) explains that the recent shift in marketing is a result of the need and demand for customized offers have increased from the customers’ side. When both parties have reached a common level of a relationship they begin to understand the vast impact the relationship has and focus in continuing to manage the relationship. Much unlike traditional marketing communication where the meeting is a single and isolated event where only a transaction in value occurs and there is no need to follow up the transaction (Wahab, 2010).

Grönroos (2008) argues in order for companies to achieve returning customers they have to find understanding to why the customers return and not only observe their behavior. In order to elaborate and exploit the behavior and not mistake it for a variety of other things the behavior can denote other than a development of a friendship. By that Grönroos (2008) describes a relationship as not only manifested by the customers shopping behavior but the customer needs to feel a mental and emotional connection with the company in order for a relationship to blossom. Gummesson (2008) has also elaborated on returning customers and believes that the mere fact of customers repurchasing products or services from same companies does not mean that the two parties have a relationship. This aspect can instead be result of the company offering special price or that the transfer to another company can involve high costs for the customer. For traditional marketing communication it is hard to distinguish this engagement and behavior from customer since they do not note any history of interactions (Gummesson, 2008).

Grönroos (2008) describe a relationship as an ongoing process the two parties interact through transactions. It is important to remember that customer relationships need to be managed even in between the transactions occasions. Only when companies realize the notion of consistent interaction with their customers is when relationships may take form (Grönroos, 2008). Eriksson & Åkerman (1999) concur with Grönroos (2008) and Gummesson (2008) since they argue that a relationship is a regular process that has to be dealt with daily and not only during the transactions. Egan (2001) also agrees with the prior researchers' assertion of an ongoing process, but believes that companies should focus on creating value for their customers because customers and relationships should be the main priority for business-to-business companies if they would want to succeed in creating long-lasting relationships. Egan (2001) claims that through regular encounters with customers provide the businesses with deeper knowledge and understanding about their customers, this allows companies to serve their customers' better. When the customers feel that their requirements have been met and that they are satisfied they can begin to build trust and confidence with the company (Egan, 2001). Raab et al. (2008) advocates for companies managing trust and loyalty with their business customers because they believe the notion grants companies a competitive advantage towards their opponents.

Eriksson & Åkerman (1999) believe that it is important for business-to-business companies to follow up with complementary questions and help for their customers. This action would ensure the companies about customers' satisfaction with their purchases and managing their relationship with one another (Eriksson & Åkerman, 1999). Therefore Grönroos (2008) believes that customers should be valued by companies at all times and not only when they act or react upon companies' communication. If companies fail to value and manage their relationships with customers between the transaction occasions companies customer relationship management strategies will only be misleading and fictional (Grönroos, 2008).

According to Gummesson (2008) the general idea of why business and customers should undergo into a relationship with each other is that they both have a lot to win from the collaboration. Customers are more satisfied when companies provide them with quality out of the ordinary, if customers are satisfied it might lead to company loyalty and a increase in profitability. This notion provides the both parties with value since the customers gain more quality service while the companies become more profitable (Gummesson, 2008).

3.2.1 Online era of customer relationship management

Bhanu and Magiswary (2010) claim that business-to-business customer relationship management developed into a virtual phenomenon due to the increased use of Internet in today's society. Customer relationship management online permits businesses to manage relationships with their customers through digital techniques (Bhanu & Magiswary, 2010). According to Sharma (2002) it is based on marketing communication needs and the emergence of Internet that business will need to utilize Internet in their communication. By utilizing Internet, companies will be able to better serve the needs of their customers. This movement will impact business-to-business in the areas of markets, cost structures, location, time, and competition. If business-to-business companies do not utilize Internet, there is a high likelihood that value will migrate from the company (Sharma, 2002).

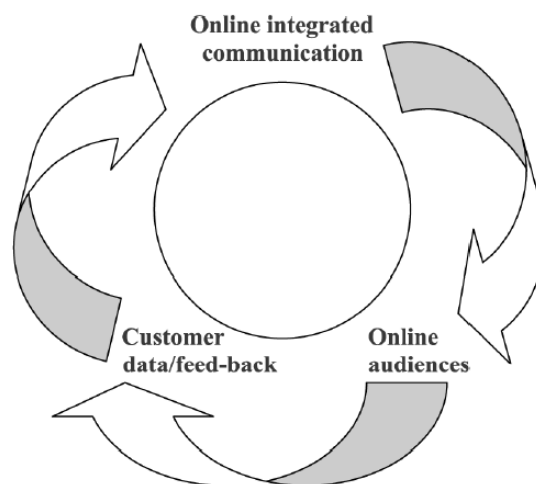
Xin (2009) explains business-to-business customer relationship management online as a mean for companies to create strategies and plans in order to be able to use digital technology and channels to manage relationships. Bergström (2009) states that through using Internet in order to manage relationships businesses could keep their cost down, the aim for this approach is not to sell the product per se but to create trust which will eventually impact sales. Gustavsson (2007) explains that through utilizing Internet to manage relationships companies could create tailored solutions and personal service which is often perceived as better.

3.2.2 Online customer relationship management through communication

Ford et al. (2011) describe that managing customer relationships for business-to-business companies are both interactive and complex, it involves change and development as well as adapting to radical new approaches. Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009) argue that today there are new opportunities in communication since new channels are creating new places for businesses to meet and interact with their customers. These new places are communication channels beyond the old traditional marketing communication channels where marketing took place before. With the help of the new technology of Internet new ways have been developed in order for businesses to create a dialogue with their customers, a two way communication channel has emerged. Today companies are able to communicate with their customers online by delivering messages, get feedback and response straight away. The traditional marketing communication was impersonal and one way directed, where the companies focused on reaching out to a great audience fast. However, communication strategies have developed during the last couple of years, businesses need to adopt the new strategies into their

communication in order for them to interact with the business (Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai, 2009), as seen in the Figure 1 by Gurařu (2008).

Gurařu (2008) describes the customer relationship management online process as the development of Internet technology in the area of marketing communication. The specific characteristics of Internet are making the implementation of integrated online marketing communication both inevitable and efficient for a business online. The transparency, interactivity and memory of Internet force the organization to adopt a proactive-reactive attitude in online communication and to combine consistency and continuity with flexibility and customization. These characteristics can be integrated by designing and implementing a specific model of integrated online marketing communication (Gurařu, 2008).



Figur 1: The online Customer Relationship Management process (Gurařu, 2008)

Gurařus (2008) customer relationship management online model Figure 1 describes the process online communication could take considering that online communication allows a two way communication between customers and businesses. Gurařu (2008) starts off by explaining that a company sends out their message through *online integrated communication*. This could be one of many channels available on Internet, most preferable a communication channel where they have recognized their target segment. This is the *online audience* stage of the cycle, here the customers gain access to businesses messages. According to what they feel towards the companies' messages the customers are able to provide the companies with feed-back or their own views in the matter. This is directly shared on the same communication platform, which is the *customer data/feed-back step in the model* (Gurařu, 2008).

According to Schroeder and Borgerson (2005) the intention of marketing communication is often to manage relationships between a business and its customers. Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009) as well as Kotler and Armstrong (2010) agree that more companies are choosing to create closer and long term relationships with carefully selected customers,

instead of using traditional mass marketing communication to all customers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010) this has to do with the fact that a company cannot and will not have a close relationship with all its customers, but chooses instead to create a close relationship with the most profitable customers. Internet and the computer technology have been developed to a great extent and people are now able to interact with a great amount of groups of people, no matter of the geographical distance on a personal level. This change has affected how customers might relate to a business and companies might now be able to create a close relationship with their customers. Through this method companies are able to make their brand³ a part of customers everyday life (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Oetting (2006) explains that companies today need to be active in order to be able to manage long-term and close relationships with selected and influential customers. Meadows-Klue (2007) describe that this activities requires different thinking and acting from the businesses in order to manage successful relationships in a dynamic world of established customer relationships.

3.3 Social media

Yoffie, Slind, and Achsaf (2009) describe that the beginning of the twenty-first century was an explosion of new online technologies and new business models that analysts gathered under the name of *Web 2.0*. According to Kaplan and Haelein (2009) Social Media is a cluster of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Within this broad definition Social Media is described as a dynamic and fast-moving domain. If a business wants to develop a relationship with someone, it is always advisable to take the lead and to be active within social media (Kaplan & Haelein, 2009). Yoffie et al. (2009) argue that Web 2.0 changed the relationship between content producers and content consumers, enabling users to generate online content and then to distribute it with ease to fellow users. A particularly successful Web 2.0 development involved the emergence of online networking communities (Yoffie et al., 2009). Social Media is all about sharing and interaction, however the content needs to always be fresh and a business needs to engage in discussions with their customers (Kaplan & Haelein, 2009).

3.3.1 Social media as a communication channel

Aula (2010) as well as Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) describe that the social media channels create an open arena where the businesses could communicate and interact with their customers. Hollensen (2011) argue that social media enable customers to speak with businesses and that this is an extension of the traditional communication. Cosio (2011) describe that social media is built on the idea of sharing information openly and fostering a sense of community. Hills and Cairncross (2010) describe that social media is a new shape of word-of-mouth communication. Donovan (2011) argue that the question is no longer if the companies should use social media in their marketing communication, but how companies

³ A Brand should be able to be reflected both graphically as well as it should distinguish a product or service from another company's product or service (Melin, 1997).

should use social media in their communication with their customers. Carlson (2010) believes that social media could help businesses to bring out information and communication in a completely new way, which makes it possible for users to choose when and where they should take part in a business message or information. However, according to Carlsson (2010) as well as Hanna et al. (2011) social media has not come to that stage that it replaces any of the traditional marketing communication channels, nevertheless it should be used as a complement to the company's marketing communication.

Aula (2010) points out that it is important to understand that the content in social media cannot be controlled ahead, as traditional marketing communication can. Carlsson (2010) argue that the two way communication that is present in social media is distinctively different from the traditional base model, where the sender, in this case the company, is in control of the communication. However, in today's marketing communication strategies social media channels are shaped in order to manage relationships, make opportunities for dialogue and to create trust. As opposed to simply sell a product or service. Social media has opened up new ways for business to market themselves, it all depends on creating a message that makes the company stand out and more interesting. Social media has made it easier for companies to communicate with the world directly, without going through any other marketing channel (Carlsson, 2010). According to Weber (2009) marketing communication through social media helps businesses to understand how they should engage with their customers, to build a network and maximize their profits.

3.3.2 Why and how to use social media in business-to-business perspective

Kaplan and Haelein (2009) describe social media as an active and fast-moving domain, which might help businesses to develop a relationship. The web is also used to reach out to millions, as social media is all about interaction and engages discussions (Kaplan & Haelein, 2009). Spekman and Dotson (2009) argue that many business customers perceive social media as a less biased, more objective source of information. This when it comes to search for information, customers tend to place greater credence in social media, because the social network component tends to link people with similar predispositions and beliefs (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). Furthermore according to Kho (2008) social media channels could do something powerful for business-to-business companies, for an example enhance credibility and improve responsiveness.

According to Spekman and Dotson (2009) one of the most promising uses of social media in business-to-business is to improve and manage relationships with existing customers. Scott (2011) describe that today online relationships begin the moment that someone enter a homepage, consequently it needs to have a personality as guests come to rely on the content they find on the site and they will try to develop an relationship connected to the website. Stuart and Jones (2004) argue that plainly having a homepage is no longer a competitive advantage instead companies must seek to dynamically interact with visitors, this would add value to the experience by addressing them individually. Scott (2011) describes that by providing information when guests need it, businesses might be able to manage a long and

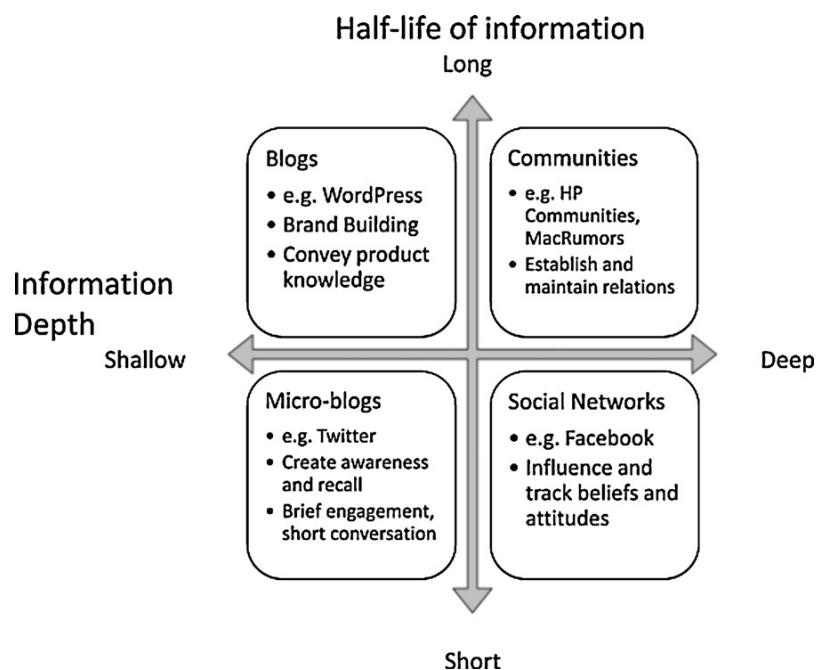
profitable relationship with them. Spekman and Dotson (2009) describe as more companies go global social media will enable business-to-business companies to reconnect with customers in new and more personalized ways. Today companies are using social media to provide customer service, enhance customer value and to get feedback on products and services. When done properly, these types of interactions could create customer loyalty. Seeing as the ability to establish relationships with the company's customer base is critical to creating loyalty and increasing the relationships adhesiveness (Spekman & Dotson, 2009).

According to Stuart and Jones (2004) if businesses want to be able to create communities through the help of social media companies need to embrace it rather than fear it. Spekman and Dotson (2009) suggest for business-to-business marketers to launch social feedback mechanisms to tap into the online crowd's wisdom, anticipate complaints and issues before they hit the blogosphere or go viral on the Internet. Such practical efforts could provide the seller valuable insights in how to address customer needs straight and effectively. Over time, these networks incorporate the voice of the customer better than any other alternative (Spekman & Dotson, 2009). Weber (2009) explains that depending on the size of the business and the companies' customer base, social media could contribute to a stronger brand and brand awareness within a specific customer segment. Moreover, social media is of advantage for a business since it helps to manage closer relationships with the business suppliers, technology developers, manufactures and other business partners. With the help of social media, companies could manage relationships, since the different parties could use social media to consult with each other. It is flexible for business to use social media, since they reach the lattes information, news and histories from the marketplace (Weber, 2009).

Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2010) believe that since social media have a low or no price at all as well as being oblique positioning free, considering that companies who utilize social media cannot have their business messages in the sense that no one could distort their communication. Due to this social media could be the future of marketing communication. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) describe that social media could involve people more effectively and at a lower cost compared with traditional marketing communication. Carlsson (2010) means that theoretically social media does not cost anything for the company, however social media does require engagement, knowledge, continuity and above all, time. Time is the biggest investment for the company, since time is equal to employment costs. Social media requires constant updating and commitment in order to become an advantage for the business. The advantage often leads to an outcome of valuable relationships, networking and new knowledge for the company (Carlsson, 2010). Weber (2009) believes that business could use social media in order to reach more people and specific target markets, both faster and at a reduced cost that is more effective compared to traditional marketing communication. However, when it comes to measuring what social media could do for a business, Hanna et al. (2011) believe that it is only possible to measure some aspects of the use of social media. This because the effect of knowing how many followers companies have does not mean that they know and understand what this could mean for the company. Because of this, the company

must try to track the conversations about them on social media in order to predict what the effects might be (Hanna et al., 2011).

According to Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) in many businesses all types of social media have been combined together and thought of as a unitary phenomenon with respect to impact. When using different types of social media, marketers have noted different purposes or ways in which people respond to or use these media. Social media may vary on a variety of dimensions, however Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) identified two factors that explain well the variation in social media and that could be used to guide marketers in their decisions seen in figure 2. These factors are *the half-life of information* and *the depth of information*. The half-life of information is a function of both the medium and the content, which refers to the longevity of information in terms of availability/appearance on the screen and interest in a topic. Depth of information concerns the richness of the content, and the number and diversity of perspectives. The two factors could be used to show important distinctions among a range of types of social media and, in turn to identify on average, the best types of social media to serve various marketing objectives (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).



Figur 2: Social media by information half-life and depth, and associated marketing objectives and purposes by Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011)

Companies should, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2010), not struggle with what type of social media that is most accepted, yet consider what social media channel that could be of most use for the business. According to Kaplan and Haelein (2009) there are various types of social media that need to be distinguished, although the most popular social media channels are channels like YouTube and Facebook. According to Schmukler (2011) the most popular social media sites used by business-to-business are; LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Communities in that order. In business-to-business the social media strategy is to use

social networks firstly and blogs secondly, followed by video sharing and on fourth place micro blogs (Schmukler, 2011).

Social networks

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Spekman and Dotson (2009) social network means online interaction whereby users create structured personal profiles that allow contacts to be managed on the basis of shared background, interest, or other determinant. According to Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini (2007) social network sites are a kind of communication tool that have risen mainly in the last couple of years. As Yoffie et al. (2009) describe a social network site is an online community that allows users to construct a personal network, invite other users to join their network and to communicate with users. Most social media sites require users to accept an invitation or to confirm a relationship before they become friends with another user (Yoffie et al., 2009).

Brown (2009) explains that social networks are of interest for marketers both because of the large numbers of users but also because of the large commitment engagement from these users to the communities. Dickson and Holly (2010) believe that the new communication within social networks should be considered as a new way of reaching customers in their own environment. Examples of social network sites are Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn (Carter, 2007). According to Dickson and Holley (2010) Facebook is the leading social media site for communication online. In December 2011 Facebook had over 845 million active users (Facebook, 2012). Spekman and Dotson (2009) explain that social networking sites such as LinkedIn are geared towards business professionals and contain self-reported data. Allowing people to update their own work information and history, share it with others, and develop a network of contacts. At LinkedIn, members nurture their professional identity at their own professional profile (Spekman and Dotson, 2009).

Blogs

Spekman and Dotson (2009) describe blogs as a web site created and updated by an individual as a means of expression, often focused on a single topic of interest, also a verb indicating the active maintenance of such a site. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) describe blogs as personal web pages that comes in different variations, from personal diaries to sums of information within specific areas of interests. According to Cox, Martinez and Quinlan (2008) a blog is a homepage which works as a journal and could connect personal, publically, political and commercial messages. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) also argue that blogs often are controlled and handled by a person, however it could be affected by the interactions from others by the comments on the blog page.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) mean that a company could use blogs in order to communicate with employees, customers and other interested parties within the business that could be of interest for them. Cox et al. (2008) believe that the most important thing for a business is to realize the importance of trust from the users. Many individuals trust in what is written on

blogs when making purchasing decisions, this because individuals believe bloggers to be experts in a product or category whilst not being bias (Cox., et al 2008).

Content communities

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) argue that content communities give a variety of opportunities for sharing different types of media between users. There are a variety of different media that could be shared between users like texts, photographs and power point presentations. Users on content community sites do not necessarily create a user account to share and make us of the media available. One example of content communities is YouTube. Through YouTube people upload about 100 million video per day, which shows the sites great popularity (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). Abhari and Soraya (2009) describe YouTube as the most popular video sharing site in the world. It is also the most growing channel on Internet, this because YouTube enable its users to share and contribute to the web page. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) argue that it is not only private users that could use content communities, companies could also use content communities to share and upload media.

Microblog

Jansen, Zhang, Sobel and Chowdury (2009) argue that micro blogs are a kind of electronical tool called Word-of-mouth, used for individuals to communicate and discuss issues and topics online. Spekman and Dotson (2009) describe Twitter as a Micro blog, on which users broadcast short messages to a group of subscribers. According to Kwak, Lee, Park, and Moon (2010) Twitter is the biggest and most popularly micro blog, it has over 41 million users all over the world. Twitter users can send posts concerning everything; however it is usually concerning the latest and hottest news. The posts cannot be more than 140 signs, hence the name micro blog. One problem with Twitter is that it is hard for a user to reach a broad public right away, yet the average user can reach a broad public with the help of Word-of-Mouth. Twitter is not particularly social, since the users normally only follow other users' post, without answering or giving any feedback (Kwak et al., 2010).

3.3.3 Risks and Disadvantages with social media

Armellini and Villanueva (2011) argue that by using social media, companies could get people to talk about them except they cannot control what is said, this phenomenon is called electronical Word-of-Mouth. Electronical Word-of-Mouth might lead to huge success, but bad electronical Word-of-Mouth could create great damage to the relationship with a brand or business. Aula (2010) believes that it is close to impossible for business to control conversations that take place in social media channels. If a business should lose its reputation it might affect the company's trustworthiness (Aula, 2010). Spekman and Dotson (2009) also argue that the most commonly cited and most feared disadvantage of social media is its unpredictable nature. This because many tactics allow both customers and critics to make comments, business-to-business marketers fear that using social media: *"will equate to airing dirty laundry in public, opening up a Pandora's box of negative feedback, much of which*

might be unfair or exaggerated' (Spekman & Dotson, 2009: 10). Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, (2009) as well as Spekman and Dotson (2009) believe that being open to criticism, may give companies some control over the spread of negative feedback and the opportunity to change perceptions. Barwise and Meehan (2010) describes that social media should be used to follow unwritten rules of customer engagement online, it is a new world where relationships are more influential.

Donovan (2011) argues that there are few marketers that understand how social media could be use in a company's marketing communication. Harrington, Khanfar, Kizer and Wright (2010) as well as Hanna et al. (2011) explain that the mistake companies make today are that they are active in social media channels without having any real and clear strategy for it. Donovan (2011) believes that because of this there is a risk that the companies misunderstand or misinterpret the use of social media in the business marketing communication. Therefore this might bring a negative influence on the use of social media which could lead to the effectiveness of the company's marketing communication (Donovan, 2011). According to Stuart and Jones (2004) some companies use Internet and social media as a supplementary marketing communication channel, taking new products to new markets. This has presented some business with an issue as how to present and sell their goods online without affecting the existing corporate brand values. Without a vision and strategy of the Internet, businesses place their existing corporate brand equity in jeopardy. In the lack of such vision, other communication mechanisms such as traditional marketing communication may still be required to communicate the emotional elements of the business (Stuart & Jones, 2004).

Cosoi (2011) argue that organizations want to make the most of social media without leaking sensitive information, must ensure they are carefully weighing up the risks involved and taking the necessary measures to protect themselves from all potential e-threats. Aula (2010), Brown (2009) and Carlsson (2010) all argue that with social media a business could become transparent, which means that it gives the customers an insight into the business. This means that before the company enters social media, it needs to have a clear approach on how open they should be. For an example, what information they should share and why they should share it (Brown, 2009). According to Stuart and Jones (2004) one of the main disadvantages with social media is if a business website is not effective in stimulating emotions. Then successful corporate brands usually have strong emotional appeal and the webpage used as a communications medium may not be an effective way to communicate these brands values (Stuart & Jones, 2004).

4 Empirics

In this chapter we will provide you with the result of our empirical saturation in order to explain the different practical approaches companies and experts have experienced when introducing social media strategies into business-to-business enterprises.

4.1 How Social Media is used and which channels are applicable

Social media expert Sjöman states that the most eligible social media channels a business-to-business company could use are Blogs, LinkedIn and specific Business forums. However, more companies are starting to use Bambuser and YouTube as complements and in some extent Twitter, Flickr and Slideshare. The latter channels are primarily used by companies in order to show relevant material in a demo or for an educational purpose. Social media expert Abrahamsson also believes that the most prominent social media channel for business-to-business companies is LinkedIn. According to business-to-business social media expert Stelzner, who compiled a study based on the use of social media in business-to-business companies, he derive that 90 percent of the business-to-business marketers indicate that social media is important for their business. The marketers were also asked what their top social media tools are, the most popular channels were Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogs in that order. While 70 percent of the marketers want to learn more about how to utilize Facebook and 69 percent want to get acquainted with blogging. Stelzner also mentions that 77 percent of the respondent marketers plan to increase their video marketing strategy, mainly by YouTube. Whereas a significant 86 percent answered that they have no plans to utilize MySpace as a social media channel or will reduce their efforts.

According to Kammensjö and Bryggare Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken, SEB, is primarily using Facebook and Twitter as their social media channels in order to reach out to their business customers. Bryggare argues that these are their primary social media channels due that their customers in majority are using these channels. Therefore SEB needs to be present at these social media channels in order to connect and reach their customers. *“To meet the Business customers where they are active today”* (Bryggare). According to social media expert Abrahamsson business-to-business companies use social media channels in order to create conversations online, it is all about social interaction. Zandelin also contributes to the discussion and adds that Scania is present on primarily Facebook but also Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn and Slideshare. Zandelin explains that they are mainly active on Facebook because they have recognized that the majority of their customers are current on that particular channel. This is also supported by Palm who states that Atea are mainly present on Facebook for the same reasons as Scania and SEB, they know where their main audiences are and wants to be close to them. However, Atea is also present at LinkedIn and Twitter. Kammensjö adds that SEB advertise through social media by for an example buying adverts on the Facebook-homepage and other similar web pages. Zandelin also claims that Scania

utilizes Facebook and Twitter among other social media channels in order to advertise campaigns, even though they use it in a different matter than SEB does. In Scania's advertisement they for an example post different contests for their customers, the customers have to register online in order to compete, in that way Scania could measure and directly see from which social media channels the customers have seen the contest and redirected to the competition homepage. Zandelin says that this helps them recognize which channels most of their customers are utilizing in order to understand which channels Scania needs to invest more effort in or maybe even delete altogether. According to Ahnve Ericsson is using all social media channels that they could identify as relevant for their communications with their customers. Among these they recognize Google+, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. While in the case of IdeaPaint they only use Facebook, YouTube and their own company blog in order to spread information.

Bryggare mentions that SEB is even active within other social media channels, for an example they have a YouTube site but also their own community called The Bench. The Bench is especially created to meet the online needs of SEB's business customers. Hewlett-Packard has also set up an entire custom-built homepage and blog specially arranged for their business customers, the homepage and blog are connected to external channels Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. These channels are directed to specific businesses and enterprises Hewlett-Packard tend to do business with. On these channels clients are able to directly contact the company, ask questions and guidance if necessary. Zandelin also argues for the use of their own community, Scania has one called Scania Newsroom where they publish articles about everything. Sjöman believes that company communities are a great strategy in order for companies to interact and gather information about their customers' feedback and insight.

Scania even use other social media channels, for an example the titles of articles are directly reposted on both Facebook and Twitter, the pictures are also posted on Flickr and if they use any videos in their articles they publish them on their YouTube channel as well. Zandelin explains that when Scania has a new truck release they often have a webcam press conference for journalist that for some reason could not attend or are from a different country. In correlation with the webcam conference Scania makes it possible for the journalists to interact by commenting or ask questions through a chat feature. According to Ahnve LinkedIn is one of the primary social media channels that Ericsson uses to reach out and communicate in the business-to-business sector. This because Ahnve believes that LinkedIn is strong for professional users with its focus on career, however Ahnve emphasize that there are many other social media channels that are relevant for their target segments and have therefore a problem with selecting one as the primary social media channel for Ericsson today.

However, Zandelin believes that it is through a combined force of all these social media channels that they receive the most effect from, meaning that it is important to be active in several channels and not to count one as more powerful than the others. This is also considered by Kammensjö that the combination of several different types of social media channels as important in order for a business-to-business company to be successful within

social media and to be able to use them for their advantage. Only then can companies fully understand the complete extent of social medias' influence and power in order to use it as a marketing communication tool.

Company/ Expert/Case	Social media channels	Primary social media channel	How they use social media	
SEB	Facebook, YouTube and Bench	Twitter, The	Facebook and Twitter	To be present, advertising and communication device
Scania	Facebook but also Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Slideshare and Scania Newsroom		Facebook	To be present, share articles and advertise campaigns
Atea	Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter		Facebook	Communication device
Ericsson	Google+, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flick		-	Communication device
Sjöman	Blogs, LinkedIn and specific Business forums. In some extent Twitter, Flickr and Slideshare. Bambuser and YouTube.		Blogs, LinkedIn and specific Business forums.	Show relevant material in a demo or education purpose.
Stelzner	Facebook, LinkedIn, sharing.	Twitter, video	-	-
Abrahamsson	-		LinkedIn	Create social interaction and communication
HP	Business homepage	specific		Communicate, share information and target specific customers
IdeaPaint	Facebook, YouTube and their blog			Share information

Table 3: How Social Media is used and which channels are applicable

4.2 Why social media strategies are applicable with Business-to-Business companies

According to Sjöman business-to-business companies use social media in order to create closer ties with their customers, companies want to invite customers and partners to create a more direct dialogue with them. Sjöman believes that business-to-business companies are well suitable for social media since they are traditionally more interactive with their marketing communication than business-to-consumer companies. Due to that they tend to work more with the strategy of knowledge transferring considering that they traditionally work a lot with seminars, sales meetings and events with their business customers. According to both Kammensjö and Bryggare SEBs primary goal with using social media is to help their customers in their everyday life, with their problems and possibly recommend them about SEBs' newest ideas and solutions. Kammensjö argues that this is an important aspect for a bank since it builds trust and loyalty with customers. By using social media to fulfill trust and loyalty SEB is able to help the customers faster and it creates a space for SEB to be able to correct errors or misunderstandings in their marketing communication. Sjöman also touches upon this subject because she believes that social media provides companies with the ability to “tap-into” the general discussion that is held between customers, users and influencers. By being able to tap into the general public companies might improve their customer and market insights.

Zandelin argues that the primary reason Scania utilize social media in their marketing communication is to be able to reach out to a larger segment with their brand and services, as well as be available in the channels where their target segments are active. Palm states that Atea primarily use social media in order to reach and create a communication with their customer base. While Ericsson is working actively to be perceived as contemporary by their target segments, as they are still working on becoming even more active in the future. Ericsson primary goal and purpose with social media is mostly considered to the strategic communication aspects social media brings that allows Ericsson to strengthen the relationship with their target audience. Sjöman believes that social media is a great way for business-to-business companies to share and spread the companies' message and acknowledgment about the brand, in order to strengthen the companies' brand. Social media is also used by business-to-business sector in order to make their brand more personal and make space for personal reflections, than in traditional marketing communication.

According to Abrahamsson a company should adapt social media strategies into their marketing plan due to that it provides the company with the ability to directly and personally contact their customers, as well as develop a dialogue between the two parts. Abrahamsson emphasizes the importance of being available for the customer where they are present on a daily basis as well as the positive characteristics of social media for an example that it is a fast moving, simple and cost-effective solution. Sjöman believes that business-to-business

company's brands builds mostly on the human relation between buyer and seller, however today more and more companies are starting to use Internet in order to do their business affairs. Due to the shift from physical to digital contact the companies own webpage's are starting to become more important for marketing and sales purposes. However, Zandelin explains that in the case of Scania it is not obvious for Scania's customers to visit the company's homepage for help and advice, they rather seek attention on communities like Facebook and Twitter. Zandelin argues that Facebook and Twitter are social media tools with a global reach, thereof Scania mainly use them in their online marketing communication. However, many of their marketing communication teams in different territories use a more local approach and may use other channels that are more popular and appropriate in that specific territory. According to Sjöman social media is also great to use for business-to-business purposes when identifying customers as well as potential future partnerships and influencers. Business-to-business could also successfully use social media to gather knowledge and inspiration about their customers. According to Zandelin Scania also use social media as a behavior analysis tool in order to learn more about their customers and the customers' customer in order to understand them better. Scania is able to use this strategy by creating and being accessory in a dialogue with their customers. Zandelin (2012) explains that a dialogue is created when the company angles their communication, because there might be one-way communications even via Facebook, it is not until a company asks questions and engages in a dialogue that they get response.

Sjöman believes that through the use of social media companies gain new customers, considering that she has firsthand experience from helping several companies with their social media strategies which have resulted in new customers. Sjöman explains this phenomenon through exploring the buying process of business-to-business companies, which mainly starts with an Internet research for information about what they are in need of. When companies actively engage in different social media channels it contributes to their rise in search engines results which eases the customers search for the right company. Sjöman is positive towards the use of social media in a business-to-business company and argues that there are more than a few good reasons to why business-to-business companies should adopt an active role in social media as business-to-consumer companies are active. Sjöman has listed five reasons to why business-to-business companies should take part in social media. The first reason is that business-to-business companies are experienced networkers and they tend to organize networking events where they could manage their relationships with customers. Business-to-business companies would thereof be a perfect fit for adopt social media as a marketing communication strategy.

Sjöman explains that the second reason is to always to create new business deals, and social media could create new opportunities to keep the professional network updated. The professional networks helps companies analyze and recognize main decision makers of each industry branch as well as the development a specific industry is taking in order to know what direction business customers are heading and what they might need in the future. The third reason is according to Sjöman that business-to-business deals often take longer time to create

and therefore need to be managed over a longer period to make sure that the relationship could develop to become a long-term relationship. For this to happen, the relationship needs to be cared for and for business-to-business companies the best way of manage the relationship is through creating and engaging in dialogue with their customers instead a one-way communication. Hence social media offers a new platform where business-to-business companies could immerse their relationships and create a dialogue. A fourth reason to why business-to-business companies should use social media is because of the development possibilities it brings for companies to progress together with their customers both in technology and knowledge. The fifth reason has to do with the fact that knowledge attracts others, by this reason Sjöman means that companies should strive to become leaders in their fields of knowledge in order to attract new customers and company partners.

Company/Expert/Case	Purpose for using Social Media
SEB	Help customers, fulfill trust and loyalty, correct errors or misunderstandings in their marketing
Scania	Reach out to a larger segment, be available, global reach, behavior analysis tool, communication
Atea	Reach and create a communication
Ericsson	Communication. Perceived as contemporary. Strengthen relationships.
Sjöman	Create closer ties, create a more direct dialogue and strengthen the company's brand, more personal, identifying future customers, gather knowledge and inspiration. Companies able to tap into the public discussion.
Stelzner	-
Abrahamsson	Be available where the customers are, create a personal dialogue, a cheap, simple and fast solution.
HP	-
IdeaPaint	-

Table 4: Why social media strategies are applicable with Business-to-Business companies

4.3 Positive response from the use of Social Media

From Stelzners report he derived three main positive aspects to social media's benefits in a marketing communication strategy. The number one advantage, as indicated with 88 percent of the respondents, is that social media enables companies to gain more brand and business exposure. The second benefit with 72 percent of the respondents is increased traffic flow of

returning and new customers, which leads to the third benefit as being improved search engine results and rankings with 62 percent of the respondents. While Sjöman has a different approach to the new benefits of social media, she means that they are often highlighted as a new possibility for companies to communicate rather than to inform. Companies are able to promote openness and dialogue over monologue, to better engage their customers in product and service development as well as extending the interface into the company. However these opportunities are already a natural part of everyday life for plenty business-to-business companies and therefore would social media fit perfectly for marketers in business-to-business companies. Even though social media is perfectly eligible for business-to-business companies the progress is moving slow, it may perhaps be because of the very fact that social media is closely related to how the communication process looks in business-to-business. Sjöman means that it feels natural but at the same time not revolutionary as well as difficult and time consuming. Yet the similarities between social media and business-to-business communication tactics should account for that more companies will find their way to social media in the long run. Most presumably the conversion will occur in a new, more structured and effective manner than today.

According to Belin, Atea sees a great advantage in social media since they are able to reach out to, engage a larger audience and create a dialogue with them that is unique compared to traditional media channels. Belin also believes that with the help of social media, Atea could easily and efficiently spread information about their company. In the cases of SEB and Scania, they see mostly positive aspects of using social media as a communication device. Zandelin states that it is the characteristics availability and dispersion effect of social media to be the most positive aspects of using social media in Scania's communication strategy. Zandelin explains that they always get positive response from their customers and fans via social media channels considering that the customers and fans always "Like"⁴ or "Retwit"⁵ text, pictures and videos they post on different social media channels. By responses like these Scania recognizes that their choice of integrating social media in their communication has been a success since it has led to trust. SEB sees another approach of positive aspects with social media, Kammensjö explains that social media allows them to be able to detect causes in their business that might be lacking in an earlier stage than ever before, they are able to contact and help dissatisfied customers faster. Kammensjö even mentions the possibility for companies to learn more about their customers and what they value as important, something that companies have failed to notice but now are able to change and improve for customers' satisfaction and credibility. SEB is satisfied with their social media strategy even though there are always improvements and up-dates to be done, but the overall concept of their strategy works well for the time being. Ahnve argues that some of the most noticed advantages of Ericsson's use of social media are that they create a direct communication with their target audience, a more engaging kind of communication. Social media has also an advantage since it helps create more opportunities to show of the brand; Ericsson.

⁴ Appreciation function on Facebook

⁵ Appreciation function on Twitter

According to Abrahamsson social media is an easy way of creating long term contact with a business customers, it is an engaging way of creating a dialogue between a company and their customers. It is a way to communicate to make a relationship come and stay alive and easier to inform customers about news and specific offers, compared to other traditional channels. Kammensjö states that he does not believe social media have any negative aspects to it, considering the amount of positive aspects it brings especially in the sheer dialogue and communication with customers. Bryggare replenishes the statement by Kammensjö and adds that they have seen a clear satisfaction from business customers where they have been able to contact SEB through social media outlets and gotten responses faster than ever before which the customers have found appealing. Kammensjö expands upon this subject by mentioning that they have been able to clearly see direct results of new customers by the use of social media. Since their customers have written to SEB via social media channels and said *“Thanks to your service treatment and way of handling my problems through social media contributed in my decision of choosing SEB as my bank”*(Kammensjö). Kammensjö believes that the main contributing reason to why their customers are so positive of SEBs use of social media might be that they were one of the first companies to introduce it into their marketing communication strategy.

Company/Expert/Case	Positive Effect	Positive Results
SEB	Detect causes. Contact dissatisfied customers earlier. Learn more about their customers. Create a dialogue.	More customers, customers have directly positively commented about their treatment over Social Media.
Scania	Availability and Dispersion Effect.	Likes on Facebook and ReTwitts on Twitter.
Atea	Reach out to a greater audience, create a dialogue and spread information about Atea.	-
Ericsson	Create a direct and engaging kind of communication.	Create opportunities to show of the brand.
Sjöman	Communicate rather than to inform. Promote openness and dialogue over monologue. Extending the	-

	interface into the company.	
Stelzner	Gain more business exposure. Increase traffic flow of returning and new customers. Improved search engine results and rankings.	-
Abrahamsson:	Easier to create an engaging dialogue and inform customers regarding the business.	-
HP	-	-
IdeaPaint	-	-

Table 5: Positive response from the use of Social Media

4.4 Risks and Disadvantages from the use of Social Media

Sjöman believes that the most common reason to why business-to-business companies do not use social media channels in their marketing communication is due to the lack of knowledge and resources in both time and personal. It is very time consuming for companies to constantly be up to date with everything that is written and posted in social media. Abrahamsson also talks the about importance of investing time and interest into their engagement with social media in order for it to prosper positive results. However, Abrahamsson mentions that not many companies are interested into investing the effort it takes to be successful. Sjöman also believes that social media might bring performance anxiety for companies since they may not fully understand and know what they are supposed and not supposed to write. Considering that many companies do not believe they are doing the “right things”. Sjöman means that many of the product managers and sales personnel that are present in social media are not as comfortable with writing as they are verbally. Further Abrahamsson argues that another reason is that companies are not aware of the possibilities the channels would bring, for an example being able to advertise different messages to different segment groups.

Palm believes that there might be a risk for companies that operate in social media channels but are not active enough in their engagement. Therefore Palm claims that some business may not be eligible enough for the social media environment and with that should not be present in any social media channels. Palm states “*Sometime it is better to pass over, than to only be a little present*”. Kammensjö diminishes this claim because he believes that even though a company chooses not to be present in any social media channel there will be statements written about them anyway. Therefore Kammensjö believes that it is always positive to be

active in any social media, as well as it gives companies the possibility to damage control if there are any misunderstandings about them.

Sjöman talks about another disadvantage companies need to consider, which is the lack of control social media could cause compared to traditional marketing. Through social media the control has shifted from the companies to the customers over the dialogue. Zandelin also believes that companies need to be aware of all the aspects of the dispersion effect, because as much as it can be positive when it is going well for a company it could quickly change into something negative, and negative communication spreads faster than any other type of communication. Zandelin mentions a few examples like a Scania factory burning or there are maybe personnel cut downs because of a recession, that sort of information spread like wild fire over the Internet. Therefore Zandelin argues that companies have to be aware of the consequences social media could bring and be prepared to deal with them. Consequently companies need to build knowledge internally in order for the entire enterprise to be impregnated with the same damage control strategy, only then could companies handle the consequences and successfully utilize social media. Belin does not believe there are any disadvantages with using social media for Atea: *"No disadvantages really, social media is a huge opportunity for us"*. However, Belin mentions that a company will get the engagement they deserve from their customers depending on how active companies are in social media channels.

Company/Expert/Case	Disadvantages	Notice risks
SEB	-	-
Scania	Difficult to control bad news.	-
Atea	Better not to be active at all if the company is not fully engaged.	Companies will receive the devotion they deserve compared to their activity with Social Media.
Ericsson	-	-
Sjöman	Lack of knowledge, resources and control. Performance anxiety.	-
Stelzner	-	-
Abrahamsson	Cannot see the possibilities with social media. Are not prepared to invest the time	-

	that is necessary in order to be successful.	
HP	-	-
IdeaPaint	-	-

Table 6: Risks and Disadvantages from the use of Social Media

4.5 Customers relationship management and Social Media

“I believe that the most companies that take the step to engage themselves in social media professionally use it in order to manage relationships” (Sjöman). Sjöman believes that social media works well for business-to-business companies if they invest time into indentifying their customers or partners they would like to engage in relationship with. Through the help of social media channels a company could create a dialogue that might help them manage relationships with customers, instead of participating in a one-way dialogue through traditional media channels. *“Business-to-business means company-to-company, yet we understand that in the long run it is people we do business with and not companies”* (Sjöman). Further Sjöman explains that the next step in relationship management is to create trust and loyalty for business customers. Sjöman means that a company could create trust and loyalty through the means of Thought Leadership strategies⁶ and Content Marketing⁷. Sjöman clarifies her statement through explaining that it is important for companies to be able to show to their customers that they possess unique knowledge in their area of expertise. For an example through being able to understand the customers purchasing behavior in order to know what sorts of information and guidance they will be in need of before they do. Abrahamsson concurs with Sjöman when it comes to trust and loyalty, however she mentions that the strategy to create trust and loyalty is through working with maintaining customer relationships long-term. Abrahamsson means that companies could utilize social media in order to be able to respond to critic directly to the customers whom she believes to be crucial when creating trust and loyalty. Through being able to directly respond to customers critic companies are able to turn something negative into something positive, hindering it to spread further and affect the relationship to the brand. Sjöman believes that social media are natural elements in the process of managing relationships through trust and loyalty. Sjöman also talks about another approach companies could undertake in order to create trust and loyalty, which is to be active in social media in a serious and honest dialogue where the companies share their knowledge and insights.

⁶ Thought Leadership: Leading knowledge or expertise in a specific area or sector. (LinkedIn. 2012)

⁷ Content Marketing: a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience. (Content Marketing Institute, 2012)

Bryggare argues that social media has helped SEB manage relationships in a more personal level, because it enables the companies to be available to customers constantly. Abrahamsson believes that if a company treats customers in a more personal matter the customer will start treating the companies in the same way. Abrahamsson even mentions that social media provides the customers with the feeling that they know the companies in a different way, provides them with the insight in the companies everyday life. Kammensjö agrees with Byggares statement and adds that social media permits SEB to have dialogues with their customers. Social media even enhances the dialogue because they are able to directly connect the customers with the departments the customers are in need to talk with in order to solve their specific problems. Kammensjö explains that the dialogue they have created through social media with their customers has met the customers' expectations in a greater manner than ever before. Kammensjö is able to guarantee his statement because customers have expressed themselves through comments on how satisfied they are with the service and positively they have been treated by SEB.

Zandelin also states that Scania utilizes social media in order to manage relationships. However, Zandelin mentions that Scania's strategy for managing relationships consists of creating and increasing cognizance of the Scania brand as well as integrating locally appropriate strategies in every territory in the deployment in order to preserve the relationships. Zandelin is very positive with using social media channels in order to create, manage and retain relationships in the long-term perspective. Scania's customers have been very positive with integrating social media in Scania's marketing communication strategy, plenty of them use social media like Facebook themselves and it has eased their everyday life by being able to seek help and guidance through Facebook. Abrahamsson also believes that social media channels are perfect when trying to manage long-term customer relationships. Abrahamsson means that social media is a perfect outlet for in a simple and smooth way for manage their customer relationships because it provides companies with the possibility to reach out and create a two-way dialogue with the right customers, in order to be able to provide them with the specific information and offers they need. That in traditional marketing communication might feel imposed on a mass of customers.

Social media specialist Stelzner also believes that social media is a tool for relationship managing, however he mentions that it often takes time to develop relationships that lead into actual business. Still, a large percentage of business-to-business marketers that have taken their time to interact have had great results from their efforts. Hence, the companies that invest a lot of time in social media marketing communication gain most new business partnerships. Even 45 percent of the marketers that claim they have invested 12 months or less in social media communication could report new partnerships were gained. The remaining majority of the business that only invested six to ten hours per week in social media was also able to build new partnerships. According to Mershon the company IdeaPaint has created a unique three step strategy for managing relationships with their customers, they believe that the key in managing long-term business customer relationships is to provide customers with a good first experience with the companies' brand, product and service.

Mershon means that IdeaPaint has fulfilled this goal by sharing instruction videos through Facebook which illustrate how to install and use their products, they take advantage of the comments posted on the video in order to improve or add missing components of the video. Mershon also mentions that marketers at IdeaPaint make use of their NetworkedBlog which is automatically connected with dedicated tabs like Facebook and Twitter in order to enhance the traffic to their news feed. Finally they direct the company's homepage with other online sites where the company is active, in the case of IdeaPaint social media channels and online purchasing sites.

Nonetheless, Palm argues that for Ateas part the company has not been able to gain profit from the use of social media channels in their communication strategy, thereof it has been a challenge for Atea to start a communication or dialogue with their customer base. However, Palm sees great value in using social media channels in order to recruit employees. Belin agrees with her fellow colleague because Atea cannot see any real effects social media might have had for their relationships with customers considering that they have not measured the results. Yet when it comes to managing relationships Belin believes that social media is not the ultimate tool to use in order to fulfill this purpose. However, Belin is convinced that in situations where Atea already has an established relationship that they have be able to strengthen their relationships with the help of social media. Something that is also mentioned by Ahnve since Ericsson sees communication in social media channels as a possibility to strengthen their relationships with target audience. *"Social media is a relationship channel, more than a marketing channel"* (Belin). Belin means that for companies that engage in social media activities must be aware of their purpose with the engagement, because Belin believes that it is more of a relationship channel than a marketing channel.

Company/Expert/Case	Relationship possibilities
SEB	Social Media enhanced the dialogue by enabling direct answers. Dialogue has helped meet the customers' expectations.
Scania	Increasing cognizance of the Scania brand. Integrating locally appropriate strategies in every territory.
Atea	Social media is primarily a relationship channel rather than a marketing tool. In order to create a two way communication.
Ericsson	Strengthen relationships with target audience with two way communication.
Sjöman	Invest time into indentifying customers, create a two way dialogue, show customers unique knowledge of expertise → understanding customer needs.
Stelzner	Takes time to develop relationships,

	companies that invests a lot of time in social media marketing gain most new business partnerships
Abrahamsson	An easy and smooth way for companies to reach out and communicate with niched customer segments with appropriate information and offers. Companies and customers come closer one another.
HP	-
IdeaPaint	Instruction videos on content communities, NetworkBlog connected with Facebook and Twitter. Homepage directed with purchasing webpage's.

Table 7: Customers relationship management and Social Media

5 Analysis

In the following chapter we will present the result in the interspace between our theoretical framework and the empirical data we have collected in order to analyze our research question in our own voice.

5.1 How Social Media is used and which channels are applicable

The description of business-to-business companies, as given by both Faucher (2009), Rauyruen and Miller (2007) and Ford et al. (2011), explain them as complex collaboration of two organizations that are aiming for different end goals, yet dependent on each other's involvement to fulfill these goals. Then we question how social media could be used to meet the needs of the complex collaboration of business-to-business companies, to fulfill the goals of both parties. As we found that according to Stelzner there is a request from marketers' in business-to-business companies to use social media. Since 90 percent of the business-to-business marketers were indicating that they found social media important for their business. This means that there is a clear striving in the business-to-business sector to use social media in the companies' marketing communication. It could be explained by the fact that, as clarified by Flint et al. (2002), in today's hard market companies need to stand out in order to sustain stability and survive in the long term perspective. There is according to Flint et al. (2002) and Ford et al. (2011) a need to recognize how businesses could create value, manage a relationship and attract customers by standing out. Further Bloise (2009) argues that business customers compare companies with each other before entering a relationship, therefore it is important that they recognize that they could gain a value in the relationship (Bloise, 2009). It is also stated by Sharma (2002) that if companies in business-to-business sector do not utilize social media, there is a great likelihood that value will migrate from the company. Even in the complex collaboration between two business-to-business companies, with different end goals, there is still a need to stand out and to deliver value. In order to accomplish this it is important to use social media, as they would be able to deliver value in a new aspect and be seen as attractive by their business customers.

It is recognized in the statement of how social media is designed, as according to Kaplan and Haelein (2009) and Yoffie et al. (2009), it is a new way that users of the World Wide Web share content and applications in a participatory and collaborative way. Hence, social media creates an open arena where business-to-business companies could communicate and interact with their customers (Aula, 2010 and Kaplan & Haelein, 2009). Business-to-business companies differ from the business-to-consumer companies, since they have different kind of end consumers. Considering, as described by Ford et al. (2011) business-to-business companies have often customers that generate a greater value to the companies in the shape of larger and more complex deals, than a customer in business-to-consumer companies usually do. Carlsson (2010) believes that social media could help all types of businesses to share information and marketing communication in a revolutionary new way, this would then

contribute to the business-to-business companies need to stand out. This theory is supported by IdeaPaint strategy of sharing their instruction videos in social media channels. However, Sharma (2002) and Bhanu and Magiswary (2010) mentions that companies need to utilize Internet in their marketing communication, primarily because of the development of Internet as a business tool, but also due to that it provides companies to better serve their customers needs. Therefore business-to-business companies need to adapt to social media in order to meet the needs of their customers. According to Weber (2009) companies could use social media in order to reach out to specific target audience. This could be found in the statements of our respondents, table 8, that they use social media channels in order to reach out to their target audience. Due to that they have recognized that their main audience is presents in social media and want to be available where the customers are. This approach allows the companies to stand out and appear attractive to their business customers. As we found in the empirical framework it enables them to delivering value in a channel where their customers are present today, as well as meet their needs in these channels. As we understand that this might be an important reason to how business-to-business companies should use social media, which clarifies the results of Stelzners report. The empirical framework shows that plenty of the respondents have clarified that being present where the customer are is important for them, something that the theories have no support for. Therefore to meet the customers' needs, as mentioned in theory, is as important as being present where the customers are today.

Found in theory and in the empirical frame, there are different opinions regarding what social media channels that is most popular to use and what channels business-to-business companies' primary use. We found that our respondents believe Facebook to be the primary channel to use as stated by the companies Scania, Atea and SEB in table 3. According to Kaplan and Haelein (2009) channels like YouTube and Facebook are the most popular once to use. However, according to Schmukler (2011) the most popular channels in business-to-business are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Communities in that order. The different opinions could be connected to the figure 2 of social media channels by Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011). As according to Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) social media channels are divided into categories depending on longevity and depth of information. In this model, figure 2, social network sites as Facebook have the ability to influence, track beliefs and attitudes. Social networks have a rich information depth, yet it has a short life span of information. We believe that tracking information regarding customers' belief and attitudes while having the ability to influence, is of great use for companies as Scania, Atea and SEB. Since the use of Facebook as their primary social media channel has enabled them to constantly follow their customers' activities in order to understand them better. Considering that Scania, SEB and Atea are huge, complex enterprises they could need a helping device in order to keep track of all their customers. The companies are also all suppliers of unordinary services and products, therefore they need to position themselves in the minds of the customers. This might be the answer to why they choose Facebook as their primary social media channel.

However, if we are to believe the allocations from our specialist respondent Sjöman the most eligible social media channels for business-to-business companies are Blogs, LinkedIn as well as specific business forums. These social media channels are also explained in the model of Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011), where blogs are described as containing shallow information depth and have a long half-life of information. In figure 2 communities, as LinkedIn and specific forums, are mentioned as having a long availability and life as well as containing of deep and rich information. Further Sjöman explains that Twitter, Flickr and Slideshare are only used in some extent. However, as we noticed in our data from Stelzner which contradicts the statement by Sjöman, according to his report the number one social media channel for business-to-business marketers was in fact Facebook, followed by Twitter, LinkedIn and blogs. Considering the result from all the respondents and looking at theories concerning how the different social media channels could be used, we believe that the most eligible social media channel depends on the type of business and customer a company has. We argue that since we have different kinds of business types as our respondents' origin from a vast mix of companies, they are likely to have different goals with their use of social media channels. They might choose channels depending on how rich the information depth could be delivered through the channel or how long life span information has in that channel, and even consider both. It may regard to what kind of message the company wants to send and how long that message should live on. This affects their choice of different social media channels to employ. As Kotler and Armstrong (2010) argue companies should not struggle with what type of social media that are most popular, but consider what channel that is of most use for the business. We find that companies might not have to choose only one social media channel as a primary channel to use. As stated by some of our respondents, selecting merely one social media channel as the primary channel to use is difficult, since many channels may be relevant to the companies target segments. The respondents also argue that a combined force of all social media channels might be of best practice in order for a company to become successful, and a combination would bring companies to fully understand the vast extent of social medias influence and power.

Another interesting statement from Sjöman is that specific business forums are stated as one of the most popular social media channels business-to-business companies employs. This is interesting since we found that the big enterprises SEB, HP and Scania all had some kind of communities of their own that they used in order to communicate, meet customer needs and to share information. These communities are often connected to their other social media channels or homepages. This could be related to the theory based on Gura'u (2008) model in figure 1 "Online Customer Relationship Management process". In the online process of communication Gura'u (2008) describes that companies' communication could be efficient since it allows companies to create a two-way communication with their customers, allowing the customers to respond feedback on companies' messages. The ability to create a communication channel might be one of the main reasons to how business-to-business companies use social media in order to open up new arenas to invite customers to communicate, as also mentioned in theory by Kaplan and Haelein (2009). Therefore, social media is used in this extent to create platforms online where business-to-business companies

communicate with their business customers, as stated both in theory and in the empirical framework in table 8.

However, there are other reasons to how companies' uses social media, as seen in table 8, both Scania and SEB utilize social media in order to advertise. Yet, it is only Scania and SEB that have stated that they use social media as a complement to marketing communication. This we believe has to do with the fact that Scania and SEB are two of the interviewed companies that have used social media the longest and therefore been able to try out different applications and use of these channels. Although advertizing might differ between SEB and Scania, considering that Scania only has business customers while SEB also has to work towards their private customers. By these means social media is only considered as a complement to traditional marketing, as none of the companies or cases were able to state that social media had exhausted other means of marketing communication. This verified in the theory as both Carlsson (2010) as well as Hanna et al. (2011) argue that social media has not replaced any of the traditional marketing channels, and should only be seen as a complement to a business marketing communication.

Field of Application									
Theory	SEB	Scania	Atea	Ericsson	Sjöman	Stelzner	Abrahamsson	HP	IdeaPaint
Communicate/ interacting with customers		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sharing information			X		X			X	X
Complement to marketing		X	X						
Serve Customer Needs		X	X	X	X			X	
Target a specific public		X	X	X	X			X	

Table 8: Field of Application

5.2 Why Social Media strategies are applicable with Business-to-Business companies

Internet has made it possible for companies to create a closer and more personal connection with their customers, no matter the size of the target segment or the distance as Kotler and Armstrong (2010) advocate for. According to Axelsson and Agndal (2005) the new focus is to individualize customers through managing their relationships with them. Gustavsson (2007)

also supports the theory of personalizing customer service through Internet channels. Scania, SEB, Abrahamsson and Atea have stated that one of the purposes to why they have adopted social media is to reach customers and offer them service. SEB uses social media by helping their customers in their everyday life by providing guidance and advice with easy access. Scania also claims that their customers have been positive with the integration of social media in their marketing communication strategy, mostly due to that plenty of customers are daily active on social media and Scania's presence on these channels eases their approach to the company for help or questions. Abrahamsson argues that by offering the customers personal service through social media customers come to rely more on the companies. We believe that SEB, Abrahamsson and Scania are on the right path of offering their customers personalized service through social media, considering that social media is an effective way of reaching customers in an easy approach. Therefore, considering that respondents of our thesis, as well as supported in theory, have displayed a purpose of applying social media channels in order to create a more close and personal connection with their customers.

However, Sjöman believes that one primary reason to why business-to-business companies utilize social media is in order to create closer ties and a direct dialogue with their customers. This supports both Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009) as well as Kotler & Armstrong (2010) theory where they state that companies today choose to create closer and long term relationships with their customers instead of only mass marketing their message. Sjöman explains further that she believes social media to be a perfect device for business-to-business companies considering that their entire business strategies evolve around sharing and transferring information and knowledge. Kaplan & Haelein (2009) and Cosio (2011) concur with this statement since they believe that social media is all about sharing, however the content needs to be up to date in order to engage customers in dialogue and fulfill their needs, and as Cosio (2010) explains this fosters a sense of community. We consider that a business needs to create communication to the customer in a more direct matter and the use of social media would therefore be a perfect approach in directing specific messages. Considering that a community, as explained by Cosio (2012), enables companies to create direct and specific messages to designated groups of customers. Due to the fact that communication enables companies to come closer to their customer, making customer feel associated with the companies which could lead to a more easy managed relationship. Considering that all of our interviewed respondents, as seen in table 9, are a part of huge organizations with many customers, therefore we believe that they need an easier approach for communicating with their customer since their main purpose of using social media is to communicate.

Scott (2011) means that social media's most valuable aspect is the ability to provide customers with information and help when they need it. It is a good strategy in order for companies to create long and profitable collaboration with their customers (Scott, 2011). Both SEB and Sjöman agree with this statement, considering that SEB uses social media as platform where they are able to correct errors or misunderstandings from their marketing communication. Sjöman means that social media is a good way for companies to tap into the general discussion between customers and users in order to be able to improve their market and

customer insight. However, the statement from Sjöman regarding that social media is of great use for business-to-business companies when identifying customers, as well as future partnerships and influencers are statements which were not able to match the theoretical data. Social media enables business to get an overview of their customers, which could also lead to the fact that they find future partnerships as well as improve misunderstandings and customer insights. Something that could be satisfied through Scott (2011) theory where the companies have to provide customers with the information they need.

Scania's primary purpose of social media is to reach their customers on a global range, since they are an international company, therefore social media is suitable for them since they have recognized their customers are active on different social media channels. Scania's approach concurs with Guraşu (2008) model "The Online Customer Relationship Management Process", where Guraşu (2008) explains that companies should choose to make their message available in the channel where they recognize their customers are active. Abrahamsson also emphasizes the purpose of being available for the customers in social media, where they are current on a daily basis as considering that it is a fast moving, simple and cost-effective solution. Kaplan & Haenlein (2009), Weber (2009) and Bergström (2009) believe social media to be a more effective approach for companies to communicate with their customers since it is a fast and cost-reductive strategy in order to manage relationships. We agree with these statements considering that social media enables companies to evolve and keep up with their customers in an effective matter. Since social media allows companies to help customers in a direct way as well as resolve confusions in a cost-effective way faster than ever before, these might be enough reasons to why business-to-business companies adapt social media. Even if in table 9 there seems to be a difference in statements from the empirical framework, considering only Abrahamsson concurs with the statement of social media as a cost effective communication tool. We still believe that this aspect is important to emphasize as one reason to why business-to-business companies use social media. However, other respondents might think of social media as a cost effective way of employing communication online, yet they do not recognize that this is the reason to why they use social media.

Both Atea and Ericsson explain that they employ social media in order to create a more effective communication with their customers, as Dickson and Holly (2010) advocate for in their theory. Meaning that social media has enabled new communication strategies where companies could reach customers in their own environment. We consider this to be an effective way of communicating with customers, since they are probably more relaxed in their own environment where they are in control and therefore open for interaction. However, Ahnve also believes that the purpose of Ericsson's use of social media is to create communication. We concur with respondents as well as the theorists, because we believe that why companies use social media is to enable a more live and active dialogue where the customers feel engaged in the discussion and business.

Sjöman and Scania also argue that another aspect to why companies should utilize social media is because companies could spread their brand further in order to acknowledge the

company, this would then lead into strengthening of the brand. This provides the companies with a possibility to make the brand more personal as well as create a platform for customers to apply the companies with their personal reflections. Weber (2009) advocates for the use of social media in order to strengthen the brand, considering that businesses are able to market each specific target segment uniquely to their needs. Kotler & Armstrong (2010) also touch upon this discussion since they believe that social media allows companies to get closer to their customers, enabling them to effect the customers everyday life by always being disposable for them. We consider this tactic as possible considering that companies who are active in social media where their customers are active will get noticed more, depending on how involved they are in various channels. This enables the companies to be present in the customers' social media channels as well as in the minds of the customers, which is a considerable reason to why companies should use social media. Further Sjöman also believes, which is not supported in the theoretical framework, a purpose to why companies use social media is that it helps them identify future customers and partners. Something we concur with since it is a vital part when considering the future purpose for business-to-business companies to utilize social media.

Further, Sjöman believes that due to the shift from physical to digital contact the companies own webpage's are starting to become more important for marketing communication and sales purposes. This agrees with Scott (2009) statement that an online relationship begins as soon as a customer enters a companies' homepage, consequently it needs to have a personality that represents the image the company wants to portray as guests come to rely on the content they find on the site and will try to develop a relationship connected to the website. As Grönroos (2008) argues that a customer needs to feel a mental and emotional connection with the company, in this case the company's homepage, in order for the relationship to blossom. Nevertheless, Stuart and Jones (2004) mean that plainly having a homepage is no longer a competitive advantage instead companies must seek to dynamically interact with visitors, this would add value to the experience by addressing them individually. Which concurs with Zandelins statement, in the case of Scania is not obvious for their customers to visit the company's homepage for help and advice, they rather seek attention on social communities. We believe that by researching the difference between the respondents' statements and the theory we understand that the purpose of social media is important for companies. Considering that a plain homepage is no longer enough to attract and engage customer since it does not invite the customers to interact and create dialogue. As it may lead to that the customers lose interest in staying with that particular company.

According to Scania they use social media for the purpose of analyzing the behavior of their customers to be able to learn more about them and their customers in order to understand them better, something that is not discussed in the theoretical framework. However, Grönroos (2008) discusses the importance of observing customer behavior since it is a vital part in understand the relationship a company and customer share. Scania is able to monitor the behavior by creating and being accessory in a dialogue with their customers. Egan (2001) theory supports this meaning that a company could through regular encounter provide the

companies with deeper knowledge and understanding about their customers, which results in better service treatment for the customers. If Scania keep their dialogue frequent with their customers they will gain a better understanding to their customers' needs and desires. Eriksson & Åkerman (1999) consent with Scania and claim that companies need to ask customers questions in order to be able engage a dialogue and help them properly. This action ensures the companies that the customers are satisfied with their transaction and collaboration with the companies (Eriksson & Åkerman, 1999). Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai (2009) support these claims because they believe that the evolution of Internet has enabled the companies with possibility to emerge into a dialogue with their customers. We agree with the previous statements considering that no one would be interested in engaging in a dialogue, especially online, if the companies are not actively improving their communication and making it more appealing. If companies are not making the effort then there is no reason for customers to stay with the company. Therefore the purpose of utilizing social media for business-to-business companies seems to be, if looking at table 9, in order to create a dialogue for a communication to take shape, due to that dialogue is the business-to-business companies main purpose of using social media.

Purpose of use									
Theory	SEB	Scania	Atea	Ericsson	Sjöman	Stelzner	Abrahamsson	HP	IdeaPaint
Personalized service	X	X			X		X		
Dialogue	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Cost effective							X		
Reach customers	X	X	X		X		X		
Strengthen relationships and Brand	X	X		X	X				
Available		X			X		X		

Table 9: Purpose of use

5.3 Positive Response from the use of Social Media

One of the main positive advantages that we distinguish in table 10 is that many of our respondents' mentions that social media has brought them a new channel where they could communicate with their customers online. It seems that this is one main advantage that social media has over traditional marketing communication. As also found in theory by Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009) who point out the very fact that traditional marketing

communication is impersonal and one way directed, where the focus is to reach out to as many as possible fast. New technology of Internet and social media has created an opportunity to form a communication with the company's customers. This is also announced by Speakman and Dotson (2009) who believe that social media enables business to communicate and reconnect with customers in an engaging way. Contributing to this theory Kaplan and Haelien (200) as well as Weber (2009) describe social media as a perfect tool since it could be used to reach out and interact with millions of people. Hence, we argue that the traditional marketing communication strategy where reaching out fast to as many as possible using mass marketing, has been complemented through social media. This is also supported by Carlsson (2010) and Hanna et al. (2011) with a new way of making connection with a company's customers, still reaching out to millions fast but doing this in way where companies invite customers to communicate. Looking at what our respondents as well as theoreticians Cosio (2011), Hills and Carncross (2010), Hollensen (2011), Weber (2009) and Donovan (2011), the communication in social media has made it possible for companies to create openness, information and engage customers in the company's business. Where Donovan (2011) describe the very fact that business-to-business companies no longer should question if but how they could use social media in order to communicate with their customers. Contributing to this Stuart and Jones (2004) believe that companies should embrace social media rather than to fare it. It has been mentioned by the respondents that they feel social media to be a more easy way to reach out to and communicate with customers. Learning both from customers as well as describing and instructing them more about their company and business.

However, Sjöman points out in the empirical framework that the new conversations in social media are more structured and effective way of communicating then before. These statements are not met in the theoretical framework, yet we feel that they are important to enlighten. As social media enables companies to be able to keep track of conversation history through channels that have longevity of life as seen in figure 2 by Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011). Meaning, the statement by Sjöman could be connected to the figure 2, since companies in a more effective and structured matter could return in conversation history of the channels that Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) point out as having a longer life span. This is a more effective and structure way than in traditional marketing communication where there are no conversations, since the traditional marketing communication is often one way directed, as stated in theory by Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanali (2009).

Social media has helped some of our respondents to better promote their companies brand and inform their customers about their company, as stated by Stelzner, Ericsson and Atea in table 10. This is also found in the theoretical framework as Weber (2009) believes that social media could contribute to a stronger brand and brand awareness. We argue that social media brings with it a new and unique way, as our respondents agree, for reaching out and invite customers to share a dialogue with the company. This dialogue is valuable for the companies to use in order for the companies to inform customers about their business, but it seems also important for the companies to learn from their customers. As it is a communication, it is an ongoing

process where we believe the companies have a lot to learn from their customers as well as the customers could learn more about their business. The theory of Gura~u (2008), tells us that communication is an ongoing process that goes in circles. Where information that companies sends out as online integrating communications brings back feedback and customer data to the company. However, Stuart and Jones (2004) argue that it takes more than merely using the Internet and only having a homepage that the customers could visit. Instead to become an advantage, companies must interact with their customers to add value to the experience and address them personally. Gummesson (2008) points out that merely recognizing returning customers does not necessarily mean that a company has created value for their customers. Still it could be a result from other aspects the company generates, where traditional marketing communication fails to contribute with value through interactions with customers (Gummesson, 2008). Hence, we believe that this theory and empirical framework makes it clear that a new way of open communication has been created that helps business-to-business companies promote their brand and inform customers about their business. That is, social media having an advantage and adds value on a more personal level for both customers and companies in business-to-business sector. Social media is introduced and used as a complement to the traditional marketing communication.

Stelzner mentions in his report that the main benefits of social media is that it enables companies to gain more business exposure, increase traffic flow of returning and new customers and that it also improves search engine results. These statements have not been identified in the theoretical framework, meaning that there are no theoreticians that have recognized these advantages of social media yet. However, we consider that gaining more business exposure, increasing traffic flows and improvement of the search engines result, may derive from companies being able through social media to reach out to more customers than before, as supported by Kaplan and Haelien (200) as well as Weber (2009). As pointed out by Gummesson (2008) above, recognizing returning customers does not mean that business have relationships with these customers, however as Stelzner mentions social media could help companies gaining more returning customer. As we feel that could help companies realize why the customers are returning through tracking their activities in social media.

As mentioned by Kammensjö he believes that social media creates an advantage for SEB, allowing them to contact and help dissatisfied customers and allow SEB to detect causes in their business that might be lacking in an earlier stage. As supported by the theory of Spekman and Dotson (2009) who argue that the feedback business-to-business gets from using social media helps them to anticipate complaints and issues. Yet, seeing in table 10, no other of our respondents and cases have commentated on this advantage. However, it might be related to the fact that SEB was one of the first companies to introduce social media into their marketing communication strategy. Considering that SEB alone uses social media in order to detect issues we believe this to be an advantage since they might have a lead in how to use social media. However, we feel that by only using social media will not delete the essence of unsatisfied customers. Yet, that social media helps to create a process, like mentioned in figure 1 by Gura~u (2008), this process helps companies communicate with their

customers and might help them to reach out to unsatisfied customers, before the issues gets larger and brings damage to the business.

According to theory by Weber (2009) social media helps business to understand how they should engage with their customers, to build a network and maximize their profits. As some of our respondents and cases argue that building a network and engaging with their customers through using social media is an advantages. However in table 10 none of our respondents or cases have commented regarding if social media has enables them to maximize their profits. Yet, respondents from Scania and SEB announce that they see positive results from using social media. Scania measure their online customers through the Like and Retwitt button on social media channels. Hanna et al. (2011) supports that it is possible to measure some aspects of the use of social media, yet the effect of knowing how many clicks or followers a company has does not mean that they fully understand what effect it has for the company. Kammensjö argue that there is a direct result of SEB using social media, since it has resulted in SEB gaining new customers. However, none of our respondents or cases comments on the very fact that they have seen a clear result of maximizing their profits by using social media. Even if respondents have commented on that they noticed positive results of their use of social media none of them have seen that it has had a clear effect in the results of profitability. Although we believe that gaining new customers could be considered a profitable result from using social media. This might have something to do with the fact that social media is a new area of marketing communication, hence business do not understand or know yet how or what to measure, in order to be able to answer if their profits have changed or even better maximized. There is still an uncertainty to what results social media has brought to companies, or if the use of social media has changed profits for business-to-business companies. We feel that companies do not yet know what they should measure to be certain regarding what results social media has brought them, or what these results mean for the company.

Another great difference, when looking at the empirical framework and theory in table 10, is theory by Spekman and Dotson (2009). They argue that social media has a positive advantage since customers perceive social media as a less biased, more objective source of information. Even if this is a theory which could not connect to any of the respondents or cases statements, we feel that this might be connected to statements regarding credibility and trust. Since some respondents state that using social media has helped them create trust and credibility towards their customers. Which is also found in theories by Cox et al. (2008), Kho (2008) and Carlsson (2010) who argue that social media create something powerful for business-to-business companies, as it enhance credibility and trust. This might have something to do with each other, since trust and unbiasedness are closely related. As we argue that if customers trust companies who use social media this should also be related to their sense of unbiasedness towards the companies as well.

In theories by Kotler et al. (2010) and Kaplan and Haelein (2009) it is mentioned that an advantage with social media is that it has a low or no price at all. Kotler et al. (2010) also

argue that social media has the advantage that a business message could not be distorted. However, none of our cases or respondents have made any statement that these advantages have been recognized. Still, we believe that this does not have anything to do with the fact that in theory it is more or less cost free and that it might be hard to distort a printed message from a business. However as mentioned in theory by Carlsson (2010) even if social media usually is cost free to use it brings other costs with it like for example costs for the employees working with social media. Since we have interviewed people that have a social media related title or position in companies, working more or less only with social media strategies. It has contributed to our understanding that there are personal costs. Regarding that no one stated that social media is a distortion free channel, we believe may have something to do the fact that the companies have not experienced any problems with it and therefore have not thought about it.

Positive Response									
Theory	SEB	Scania	Atea	Ericsson	Sjöman	Stelzner	Abrahamsson	HP	IdeaPaint
Communicating and interacting	X	X	X	X	X				X
Brand awareness			X	X		X			
Create trust and credibility	X	X							
Engage with customers	X	X	X	X	X				
Maximize profits									
Unbiased									
Anticipate complaints and issues	X								
Low or no price									
Distortion free									

Table 10: Positive Response

5.4 Risks and Disadvantages from the use of Social Media

Sjöman as well as Abrahamsson state that one of the main disadvantages to social media is the time commitment a company needs to undergo in order to be successful and gain positive results from their efforts. Sjöman believes that it is due to the lack of knowledge and

resources because companies do not invest the proper amount of time to fulfill the requirements. While Abrahamsson means that plenty of companies are not interested into investing resources in order to have time for social media strategies. Carlsson (2010) explains the phenomenon by meaning that the actual act of participating in social media is cost free, however social media requires engagement, knowledge, continuity and above all, time. Wahabs (2010) theory has a different approach to this aspect, claiming that companies need to invest time and personnel in the first implementation of social media in a company's communication strategy. This would be costly in the outset of the strategy but would pan out in the long-term perspective considering that it would lead companies to customer relationships. However, according to Ford et al. (2011) it is not a surprise that business-to-business companies are costly and time consuming considering their complex nature. Palmatier et al. (2006) concurs with Ford et al. (2011) meaning that some relationships will need more attention and economical investments, considering that every relationship is unique. We concur with Wahabs (2010), Ford et al. (2011) and Palmatier et al. (2006) theories, believing that the first encounter with social media might be disconcerting because of the lack of information and knowledge concerning the subject, as well the time investment creating unique solutions for every relationship. Nonetheless, we believe that it is worth the effort after seeing the success and progress some of our respondents had with their adoption of social media after devoting whole heartedly to the implementation.

One in particular interesting announcement from the social media expert Sjöman is the risk of performance anxiety in business-to-business companies when it comes to how they are supposed to use social media, in the means of writing and communication. This statement is not sustained in the theoretical discussion and could not be found in these words by any other theoreticians. We believe it to be an important consideration, however it is something that could derive from the fact that there is sometimes a lacking of knowledge and understanding in business-to-business companies regarding how to use social media, which might lead to the fact of performance anxiety as well.

Another main concern regarding social media companies have is according to Sjöman the lack of control social media is able to cause compared to traditional marketing communication, by that meaning that the control now lays in the hands of the customers instead of the company. This is also described as risks by the means of customers have more control and are influential according Barwise and Meehan (2010). Even Scania mentions the lack of control by comparing it through negative dispersion. Aula (2010), Brown (2009) and Carlsson (2010) argue that the lack of control in social media could mean that businesses become transparent, therefore companies need to have a clear strategy and control regarding what they share through social media channels. However, Zandelin does not see this as a reason to why Scania should not engage in social media, but argues that companies have to be aware of the consequences social media could bring and be prepared to deal with them. Consequently companies need to build knowledge internally in order for the entire enterprise to be impregnated with the same damage control strategy, only then could companies handle the consequences and successfully utilize social media.

Cosois (2011) theory regarding organizations that want to make the most of social media without leaking sensitive information must ensure they are carefully weighing up the risks involved and taking the necessary measures, in order to protect themselves from all potential e-threats. Aula (2010), Armelini & Villanueva (2011) and Spekman and Dotson (2009) have also observed the fear of losing control in social media, when claiming that companies need to understand that it is impossible controlling content on social media, as was possible through traditional marketing communication. They mean that a result from negative dispersion might lead to companies losing their reputation which could affect the companies' trustworthiness.

We understand the dilemma control has posed for companies, however we have to consent with Kammensjös belief that even though a company chooses not be present in any social media channel there will always be statements written about them. Atea has another approach, claiming that some companies might not be eligible enough for the social media environment, meaning that they should not be present in any social media channels if they do not have a clear strategy or motivation for social media. Concurring with Harrington et al. (2010) as well as Hanna et al. (2011) statements that many companies today make the mistake of being active in social media without having any clear or planned strategy for their approach. As argued by Abrahamsson, plenty companies are not aware of the possibilities the channels would bring and therefore have no plan for their strategy. We recognize the possible risks social media could bring business-to-business companies, if companies do not have a clear strategy the shift of control will change from companies to customers. This shift does not need to be negative in the initially sense, although we believe that customers are not always satisfied with the companies which could enable the spread of negative dispersion leading to lose of reputation as well as trustworthiness. Another risk with lack of control and strategy could lead to companies' transparency, with that a possibility of leaking sensitive information not suitable for social media communication. We consider that this especially important for our respondents to be aware of these risks and try to minimize them in any way possible since they are huge enterprises, some even leading in their fields of expertise. Due to that all of the respondents we interviewed had at least one person working with social media at their companies, we believe that they should be able to tackle this risk, although we understand that they will never be able to control it fully considering that nothing is ever completely controllable.

One interesting observation in table 11 is that even if some respondents have noticed negative response of social media, neither SEB nor Ericsson have not recognized any negative consequences. SEB even claims that there are no negative aspects or risks to social media use. Even though our theoretical framework supporting the fact that there are negative aspects to the use of social media. However, one reason to why SEB might have not encountered these aspects could be that they were one of the first once to implement social media as a strategy. This could have led to that their customers were more excited and interested with the transaction than they would have been otherwise. Contributing to that the customers have only seen their social media involvement as positive, since they recognized a totally new way

of service which was cost free and time efficient. Another aspect to why SEB might not recognize any negative aspects with social media could be a sense of denial from their part, considering that they are the only one of our respondents who have mentioned that they have a clear strategy when dealing with social media. Therefore they might not want to consider any negative aspect against this communication strategy since they believe very strongly in it. The reason to why Ericsson have not recognized any negative aspect might have to do with the fact that they only focus on the positive features of social media involvement and therefore have not contemplated any negative aspect regarding social media, yet it could also be a result of denial from their part as well.

Finally we believe that there are negative aspects with social media when looking at the theoretical framework as well as some of our respondents' statements. We argue that it is important to recognize that there always are negative aspects and companies need to devote time and knowledge if they should have a chance of controlling their use of social media.

Risk and Disadvantages									
Theory	SEB	Scania	Atea	Ericsson	Sjöman	Stelzner	Abrahamsson	HP	IdeaPaint
Time consuming					X		X		
Lack of Knowledge			X		X				
Lack of Control/ E-treats		X			X				
No clear strategy			X				X		

Table 11: Risk and Disadvantages

5.5 Customer Relationship Management and Social Media

Carlsson (2010), Gurařu (2008), Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai (2009), Schroeder & Borgerson (2005) as well as Speakman and Dotson (2009) claim that technique of social media has shaped communication strategies in order to provide companies with the possibility to create contract through personal relationships and dialogue with their customers, allowing a two way communication. Something that Sjöman, SEB, Scania, Atea, Ericsson, Abrahamsson and Stelzner also mention in table 12 as an important aspect for relationship managing, as social media channels have supplied them with the opportunity to engage in dialogue with their established customer relationships. Grönroos (2008) believes that it is important for companies to create a communication with their customers otherwise companies will fail to deliver value and manage their customer relationships. Kammensjö even adds that the

dialogue has enhanced the commitment level of their relationships because they are able to directly tackle any problem or question that customers might have. Supporting this Carlsson (2010) claims that social media has enabled companies to communicate with their customers directly and wherever they might be geographically. We concur with the empirical framework and theoreticians' perspective of social media as a communication device. Considering that the possibility of a two-way dialogue allows the companies to become more personal and lively, which helps business-to-business companies manage their established relationships. Something customers would appreciate bearing in mind that it helps set a tone and warmer image of the companies, especially in the business-to-business sector where the formal and sterile environment is a standard. However as seen in table 12 there are only statements from SEB and Abrahamsson regarding that social media provides the possibility of personal relationships. This could be a result from that both SEB and Abrahamsson are considered as experts in this area of expertise, since SEB are leading in the social media communication due to that they have worked with social media for several years and even developed a strategy concerning social media, something that is not found in any of the other companies strategies. Consequently we believe that SEB and Abrahamsson have unique knowledge when it comes to dealing with social media possibilities in personal relationships with their customers.

Another aspect we found both in the theoretical as well as the empirical framework is that loyalty and trust are two vital characteristics if companies want to manage their customer relationships. The theory by Miller and Nigel (2007), Bruhn (2003), Gummesson (2008) and Flint et al. (2002) tells us that trust and loyalty are the two main strategic device that determine the nature of the relationships and what is necessary in order to manage them. They are the main tools due to that it is especially important with trust and loyalty in the business-to-business sector. Spekman and Dotson (2009) mean that creating trust and loyalty are two of the important characteristics if companies want contain into relationships with customers. Rauyruen and Miller (2007) advocate for companies invest time and effort in creating trust with their business customers. They argue that trust has to be nurtured through relationships where the companies are able to effect the customers' future transaction and collaboration with the companies.

Miller and Nigel (2007) also believe that trust is specifically important in the business-to-business segment because the maintenance of high quality service relationships is built on the process of making and keeping promises. Sjöman supports the allegations concerning trust and loyalty, she believes that social media is natural element in the process of managing relationships through trust and loyalty. Trust and loyalty is created through being active in social media in a serious and honest dialogue where the companies share their knowledge and insights. Sjöman clarifies in her statement that trust could also be created though businesses showing their customers that they posses unique knowledge in their specific area of expertise in content marketing strategies. This is not encountered in the theoretical department of this thesis, yet we consider that it is also an important aspect that helps business-to-business companies manage their relationships through trust. Abrahamsson concurs with the statement of Sjöman, however Abrahamsson mentions that the strategy to create trust and loyalty is

through working with managing customer relationships long-term. Abrahamsson means that companies could utilize social media channels in order to directly respond to critic, which she believes to be crucial when creating trust and loyalty in customer relationships. We agree with the theory and practical approaches considering that trust ensures companies that the customers will return to purchase again. This is especially important in business-to-business perspective since the business deals and partnerships are often of greater character and importance than private transactions, as even discussed by Ford et al. (2011) and Rauyreun and Miller (2007).

Further we believe that a combination of Sjöman and Abrahamsson statements would be in order if managing relationships, meaning that companies need to be honest and plan for the long-term. Considering that we believe trust and loyalty are not built up overnight and need to be constantly nurtured. It is an interesting observation, in table 12, that only the two experts Sjöman and Abrahamsson have noticed the importance of loyalty and trust. Which we feel could be results of the fact that they as experts have more clear strategies of how to utilize social media as a relationship possibility, where loyalty and trust are big parts of it. While the companies use social media without really contemplating the different aspects that could occur when dealing with customer relationships.

Scania states that they utilize social media in order to manage their relationships, however Scania has a different approach to the strategy. Scania's strategy for managing relationships consists of creating and increasing cognizance of the brand relationship. As well as integrating locally appropriate strategies in every territory in the deployment in order to preserve the relationships. Abrahamsson mentions that social media could be used in order to effectively hinder negative information to be spread that could affect the brand relationship. Mershon contributes to this by adding that a brand relationship could be strengthened by providing customers with a good first experience. Even if a good first experience is not mentioned as a relationship possibility in theoretical framework, Weber (2009) argues that social media could contribute to a stronger brand and brand awareness, within a specific customer segment or geographical location. We believe that it is as important for brands to have a good reputation as the companies they originate from, considering that customers have a strong relationship to brand as they have with the company. Meaning that we believe customers do separate brands from their companies. As well as the fact that the brand is the first thing customers' notice about a company, being their initial relationship with companies through their brands. Due to this we recognize that social media is a good way of enabling the possibility to strengthen the brand relationships and we feel that this could be done with the help of a good first experience as well.

Even though, as seen in table 12, it is only Scania, Abrahamsson and IdeaPaint that recognized brand relationship possibilities through social media, we still believe this to be an important possibility. Considering that Scania and IdeaPaint have larger market to reach out to since they are international companies but restricted to their areas of product expertise, therefore they might have experienced difficulties with creating a brand relationship.

Consequently since they have observed that they need to strengthen their brand relationships. While Abrahamsson have observed the need of brand relationships due to that she is a consultant who might have worked with companies that have experienced similar difficulties as Scania and IdeaPaint.

Further Scania, Abrahamsson and Atea argue that social media is an effective way of managing relationships in a long-term perspective found in table 12. Several of the theoreticians, Wahab (2010), Grönroos (2008), Eriksson and Åkerman (1999), Gummesson (2008), Egan (2001), Scott (2011), Oetting (2006) and Meadows-Klue (2007) agree with the statement posted by Scania, Abrahamsson and Atea, however the theoreticians' have different approaches when it comes to attaining long term relationships. Wahab (2010) means that companies could achieve long term relationships through relationship marketing, by creating value and satisfying their customers' needs. Grönroos (2008) and Eriksson and Åkerman (1999) on the other hand believe that a long term relationship is reached when companies and customers interact with each other on an ongoing basis, meaning even in between the transaction occasions. We believe that social media could in this situation provide valuable help considering that it allows companies to communicate with their customers in a consistent process.

While Egan (2001) states that a long term relationship is accomplished when the companies realize that their focus should lie on creating value for their customers. Since customers and the relationships with them should be the main priority when trying to manage long lasting relationships. Whereas Scott (2011) describe a long relationship as when the companies are able to provide the customers with the information, guidance and recommendations when needed. Abrahamsson also believes companies need to be able to assist customers with the help and direction they need no matter when they need it. Abrahamsson means that social media is a perfect outlet and smooth way of manage their relationships, as is even discussed by Xin (2009). Because it provides companies the possibility to reach out to the right customers with the specific information and offers they need, that in traditional marketing communication might feel imposed on a mass of customers. As is also discussed by Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai (2009) and Wahab (2010) when they state that traditional marketing communication is impersonal and one way directed, where the focus lies on a single value transaction. Still Mershon presents us with another approach to how IdeaPaint achieves long term relationships through sharing information with their customers. Mershon explains that one of IdeaPaints steps is to illustrate how to install and use their products on video social media channels, a strategy also considered by Kaplan and Haenlein (2009). Contributing to this discussion Palmatier et al. (2006) argue that it is important for customers' perception of value that positive information is spread regarding the company. Further, we believe that sharing information through social media channels with company customers enables them to feel as part of the organization where they have an important role in the communication and decision making. Which we understand helps companies manage their relationships with established customers in the long term perspective.

However, an interesting difference is recognized in table 12, as only IdeaPaint and Abrahamsson consider sharing information as a relationship possibility. This could have something to do with the fact that IdeaPaint is an organization that is primarily available online. This could mean that they consider social media as an extension of themselves where they could share information about their products and services and help their customers in a new way they were not able to recognize before, hence manage their relationships. Regarding Abrahamsson's statement, we believe that she has noticed the importance of sharing information due to the fact that she works as a social media consultant. Therefore she might have experienced a wide range of situations in relationship managing, where sharing information could have been the solution that has worked for several business-to-business companies when dealing with relationship management through social media channels.

Lastly, Oetting (2006) and Meadows-Klue (2007) believe that companies need to be active and first to reach out to the customer if they would want to manage their long term relationships. Reaching out and interacting with customers is easily managed through social media whereas time and geographical distances are no longer of instant concern. We concur with the theoreticians' several statements because we consider these aspects to be vital in long term relationships and all strategies are applicable to the reaches and restraints of social media channels. However, we could not deny Stelzner's report where he has investigated the amount of time marketers spend dealing with customer relationships. The results show that the companies that invest the largest amount of time consequently have the best response from their efforts. Nonetheless, the report even showed that many companies that invested 12 months or less in social media channels also got good results. From this we derive that even though companies do not invest their primary efforts in social media channels they could still succeed in managing their relationships. We believe that this is possible considering as several of our respondents as well as theoreticians have mentioned that social media is an effective communication tool where companies could reach out to their customers, disregarding time as well as distance, in order to manage their existing customer relationships.

Relationship possibilities									
Theory	SEB	Scania	Atea	Ericsson	Sjöman	Stelzner	Abrahamsson	HP	IdeaPaint
Personal Relation	X							X	
Two-way dialogue	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Loyalty/ Trust					X			X	
Brand Relationship		X						X	X
Long-term Perspective		X	X					X	X
Share Information								X	X
Create Contact	X	X			X	X		X	

Table 12: Relationship possibilities

6 Conclusion

In this chapter we will present the conclusions we have drawn from the results we derived in our theoretical and empirical framework as well as the analytical chapter, in order to present our answer to our research question. We will also give forth our thought and beliefs about future research endowers we consider would be of interest to investigate.

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the theoretical framework and case studies in order to gain an understanding for the advantages and disadvantages of social media in a relationship perspective. To be able to answer:

How can business-to-business companies utilize social media in order to manage their established customer relationships?

It has been proven in our thesis that business-to-business companies are starting to use social media channels, in order to manage their relationships. Considering that the word relationship is mentioned as to why business-to-business companies use social media today. We believe that this thesis shows that the department of business-to-business consists of complex relationships and collaborations between a business and their business customers. Business-to-business companies of this thesis have shown a particular interest in the use of social media channels in order to communicate with their customers and create a dialogue that goes two ways. This use of social media, in order to communicate with the business customers, has been proven through both theoretical and empirical framework to be the main reason how business-to-business companies use social media. It has also been concluded that to be able to be close to the business customers is a reason to how social media is used by business-to-business companies. We have been able, through the empirical framework, to distinguish that an important part to how business-to-business companies use social media is because it provides the possibility for companies to be present where their business customers are. We have not been able to find this specific reason to how business-to-business use social media in the theoretical framework. Due to this we conclude that to be present where the business customers are is a vital contribution to how business-to-business could apply social media in order to manage their established customer relationships.

In the analysis we have derived to the conclusion that there is no superior social media channel that could be used in a general sense in business-to-business companies' strategies. However, we conclude that the most eligible channel depends on the situation, meaning what type of company and sector it is as well as what they want to accomplish with the use of social media.

From our theoretical as well as empirical framework we conclude that the main purpose to why business-to-business companies use social media is to create a personalized dialogue in order to better reach their business customers. However in the empirical framework we found that there are several aspects to why business-to-business companies should use social media,

which is not supported by theory. The first purpose is to be able to identify and gather insights about future customers and partners. The second purpose is to be able to analyze customers' behavior in order to understand business customers. We are therefore able to conclude that these two purposes are important contributions in this research.

As found in our empirical framework there is a positive aspect of social media in business-to-business companies that is superior to the rest. Communication has been the main theme that theoreticians and respondents seem to believe to be the major advantage of using social media, in order to reach out to their business customers. Communication is a characteristic that is used in several ways throughout the different fields. It is how and why business-to-business companies use social media in a relationship perspective. According to our view it is the way that business-to-business companies use social media in order to manage relationships. Therefore we conclude that communication is the main advantage that social media brings to business-to-business companies when managing their established relationships. New contributions that we have found in our empirical framework are that there are two main features to positive response not covered by theory. The first one being that social media enables companies to increase their traffic flow of returning and new customers to their homepage and social media channels, which improves their search engine results. Secondly social media develops the conversation, making it more structured and effective. From this we can conclude that these two advantages of social media are vital for business-to-business companies in the relationship management and therefore should contribute to the theoretical discussion.

The theoretical department has shown that there still are insecurities in the business-to-business sector regarding the use of social media. From both the theoretical and empirical framework we derive that there are insecurities regarding social media. The first one is concerning that social media is time consuming to manage since there are many different social media outlets to keep track of, as well as the fact that new posts are written every second. The second disadvantage is the lack of control that is experienced in social media, since business-to-business companies no longer are in control but the control has shifted to their customers. The third risk is the lack of knowledge business-to-business companies feel they have regarding social media use, they are not sure what the right strategies are in order to implement it, as well as what it takes to be active. One new disadvantage has been distinguished in our empirical framework which is the fact that social media could create performance anxiety in business-to-business companies. Due to this, we derive to the conclusions that the lack of knowledge, time and control as well as performance anxiety are the main risks and disadvantages social media brings to a business-to-business perspective.

As written above, communication and creating contact through a two way dialogue is how business-to-business companies mainly use social media, in order to manage their established relationships with their customers, in a long term perspective. This is supported in both the theoretical as well as empirical framework. Therefore we conclude that these are important considerations to this research. We have also managed to distinguish new aspects, found in

the empirical data, to managing established business-to-business customer relationships. Through using social media business-to-business companies could manage their established customer relationships by providing them with unique knowledge in their area of expertise. Another considered aspect that social media brings is the relationship managing possibility for business-to-business companies to implement various locally appropriate strategies, considering that social media has a global reach. Further, by business-to-business companies offering their customers a good first experience with the company, in the means of products and services, companies could manage their customer relationships. Lastly, we have seen that companies who devote most time and effort into integrating and maintaining their social media presence gain the most positive results. From this we conclude that social media helps business-to-business companies in their efforts to manage their established customer relationships, by offering their customers out of the ordinary efforts in order to please them and strengthen the business relationships.

Social media will help the business-to-business companies to show customers that they are present and active, by reaching out to the customers and communicating with them. We believe that social media will grow even further and become an ordinary strategy in business-to-business companies' relationship management in the future. We argue that in the future there will be room for improvements and ways to measure how through the use of social media business-to-business companies could manage their relationships, as well as compare this to their profits and results. We conclude that in the future there will be a need to understand how social media could be measured and what these results mean to business-to-business relationships.

Finally we answer our research question, where we conclude that business-to-business companies utilize social media in order to manage their established relationships with their business customers. Through communicating in social media channels it has made the customer relationships effective, meaningful and with potential to lead into a long-term relationship with the business customers, if managed properly. As seen throughout our research process where we have investigated social media in a business-to-business perspective, it has lead us to the conclusion that business-to-business companies use social media as a managing relationship device.

6.1 Future Research

For future research it would be interesting to compare business-to-business to business-to-consumers companies' use of social media. In order to see how, what and if the approaches vary due to the different types of companies it is regarding, in their use of social media as a communication channel. Further the research could focus on why it differs as well as how many communication activities these companies are doing. Which type of companies creates most relationships and are able to maintain them in a long term perspective, as well as which business sector is mostly preferred when communicating through social media. For a deeper understanding a research could also be conducted concerning what the similarities are

between the different types of companies. We also consider that a deeper analysis of the different stage aspects of relationship marketing might be of interest to investigate for business-to-business companies, in order to improve their strategies. That is, how different stages of relationships could be investigated as to how social media might matter and be utilized properly considering what stage the customer relationship is in.

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Content Marketing Institute: <http://www.junta42.com/resources/what-is-content-marketing.aspx> *Contrived: 2012-05-05*

Facebook: <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22> *Contrived: 2012-04-11*

Hewlett-Packard: <http://h41112.www4.hp.com/promo/obc/uk/en/> *Contrived: 2012-03-28*

LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/answers/business-operations/quality-management-standards/OPS_QMA/10145-9406980 *Contrived: 2012-05-20*

NE: <http://www.ne.se/sok?q=marknadskommunikation> *Contrived: 2012-05-21*

NE: <http://www.ne.se/massmedier> *Contrived: 2012-05-21*

NE: <http://www.ne.se/sok?q=underh%C3%A5lla> *Contrived: 2012-05-21*

Svenska Yle Fi:

<http://svenska.yle.fi/nyheter/sok.php?id=188404&lookfor=&sokvariant=arkivet&advanced=yes&antal=10> *Contrived: 2012-03-28*

Sydsvenskan: <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/varlden/Internets-fiender-rustar-for-krig>
Contrived: 11-04-2012

Appendix:

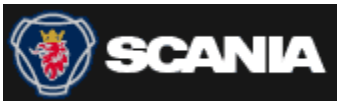
Companies and Cases:



Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken “SEB” is a market leading Nordic bank, with a focus on private customers as well as insurance business. www.SEB.se



Atea is Swedish company with business focus on IT solutions for business customers. www.Atea.se



Scania-Bilar Sverige AB is a market leading Swedish international truck company. www.Scania.se



Ericsson is a Swedish mobile and network supplier for both private as well as business customers. www.ericsson.se



HP is a computer company, operating in both customer and business sector. www.hp.com



IdeaPaint is a company that produces single-coat, roller-applied whiteboard paint that transforms almost anything into a high-performance dry-erase surface available online. Only efficacious in the business-to-business sector. www.ideapaint.com

Malin Sjöman: Works as a consultant with small and middle sized business-to-business companies to help them with their marketing and communication in social media channels. Has work with social media for more than two years, as she has looked worked close with Swedish and international business-to-business companies, on how they uses social media as a communication tool.

Michael Stelzner: is the founder of www.SocialMediaExaminer.com, a top online business magazine dedicated to social media. Technologists rank SocialMediaExaminer.com as on of the 100 business blogs in the world. Stelzner is also the man behind large online professional development conferences, such as Social Media Success Summit.

Josefine Abrahamsson: Has worked with social media for about a year. She is one of the founders behind the company Social Media Support. Working with Swedish companies in helping them implementing a social media communication strategy.

Interview guide

Personal Data

1. Titel?
2. How long have you worked for the company?
3. What is your education? Education in social media?
4. Would it be okay to use your name in our thesis?

Company Data

5. Short information, definition and information regarding your company?

B2B today

6. How do you market your company towards the B2B industry?
7. How huge part of your work is used for B2B?
8. What are you trying to accomplish with your marketing towards B2B?

Social media

9. How do you define social media?
10. Which social media channels are you using towards B2B? Why? How active are you in them?
11. Which one is your primary social media channel towards company customers?
12. Has social media replaced any other marketing?
13. What do you believe is the biggest difference between social media and traditional media? Positive or negative?
14. What is your purpose of using social media in the B2B?
15. What are your goals with the use of social media in the B2B?
16. Which positive advantages have social media brought?
17. Which disadvantages or risk have you noticed with the use of social media?
18. Have you noticed any effects or results from your use of social media?
19. Can you measure any results from the use of social media?
20. Have you discovered any changed relationship within the B2B sector as a result of your use of social media? How? Why?
21. Which response have you had from your existing customers by using social media?
22. How do you experience social media as a relationship building tool?
23. Do you believe that you have received new customers by use of social media?
24. How do you believe that you create trust and loyalty through the use of social media with your customers? Is it possible? How?

25. Do you feel that you have gotten to know your customers better with the help of social media? How?

Future of social media

26. What are your beliefs regarding social media in the B2B perspective?

27. What do you believe about social media in the future for your company?