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**EXPLORING WHETHER AND HOW ORGANIZATIONAL AND CORPORATE IDENTITY  
CAN BE OBSERVED ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Coordinatore:

Chiar.ma Prof.ssa

**Cristina Mele**

Relatori/Tutor:

Chiar.mi Proff.

**Gilda Antonelli**

**Marcello Martinez**

Candidato

**Stefano Di Lauro**

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## Executive Summary

My PhD building on existing identity and social media research aimed to understand how organizational and corporate identity can be measured or observed on social media. It consists of the following phases:

**Phase 1:** Scoping literature review on measuring organizational and corporate<sup>1</sup> identity on social media. Building on the work of Foreman and Whetten (2016), this review aimed to analyze, classify and synthesize existing evidence on how identities can be measured or observed on social media (RQ1). By identifying and analyzing all published, relevant research, this study provided an overview of the state-of-the-art of organizational identity, corporate identity and social media research including an in-depth overview of publication characteristics and associated literature gaps. The results of this review thus helped to inform the research phases described below. They are also offered as a helpful reference guide for scholars from diverse disciplines, and for organizations.

**Phase 2:** Analysis of 12 international Human Resource (HR) consulting company social media pages to understand how they use them to project their corporate identity (RQ2). The analysis draws on previous corporate identity and social media research and was informed by an existing conceptual framework explaining the relationship between social media and corporate identity (Devereux, Melewar, & Foroudi, 2017). This framework helped to explore and classify social media platforms these HR consulting companies use, type of content they publish, as well

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<sup>1</sup> This concept is often used as a synonym to the organizational image that organizations project externally (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007), as such the concepts organizational image and corporate image are used interchangeably in this thesis.

as their approaches for stakeholder engagement and interaction for building a stronger corporate identity. Diverse off-the-shelf applications were used for collecting and analyzing social media data posted by the HR consulting companies analyzed between January and December 2017.

**Phase 3:** Analysis of employees' public social media profiles to understand how they project their organizational identity (RQ3). The analysis was conducted in one of the HR consulting companies selected from the aforementioned research phase (Phase 2-RQ2). Specifically, in this phase, the aim was to explore how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age play in this.

The results of this research phase differ from the findings of previous generic organizational identity research that stated that employees' type of contract, seniority of service and age can affect organizational identity that employees' project. The fact that I aimed to specifically explore these factors in relation to social media might have caused this outcome.

**Phase 4:** Field study aiming to cross-check and triangulate the findings from the previous research phase (Phase 3-RQ3). In particular, drawing on traditional organizational identity research the aim here was to measure how employees manifest their organizational identities and to understand the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer

(RQ4). This phase included analysis of 22 semi-structured interviews (selected from a total number of 34 interviews conducted).

The findings of this study suggested that organizational identity is not directly reliant on employees' use of social media. They also revealed a number of organizational identity characteristics both at the organizational and individual levels that are associated with varying extent of social media use. Thus, both strategic and cultural aspects of employees' organizational identity emerged from the analysis though the former prevailed. The majority of adjectives from the strategic organizational identity category belonged to the organizational level of analysis regardless of the extent of employees' social media use, while most of the adjectives referring to the cultural aspect of organizational identity belonged to the individual level of analysis.

Overall, the research outcomes from the Phase 1 (RQ1) provided a description of the state-of-the-art on organizational identity, corporate identity and social media research; the outcomes from the Phase 2 (RQ2) and Phase 3 (RQ3) include suggestions on how organizations can use social media to strengthen their corporate identity and the framework developed for measuring organizational identity employees project on their social media (respectively); while the outcomes from the Phase 4 (RQ4) revealed the nature of the organizational identity employees can hold about their employers.

The PhD research reported in this thesis included six month research period abroad at the Business School of the University of Edinburgh (between July-December 2019) used primarily to analyze qualitative data from Phase 4 (RQ4).

Results of my research were presented at diverse international conferences, including Italian Chapter of Association for Information Systems 2017 and 2018 (University of Milano Bicocca and University of Pavia, respectively), British Academy of Management 2018 (Bristol Business School, University of the West of England), WOA 2019 (University of Palermo), European Group for Organizational Studies colloquium 2019 (University of Edinburgh) and the upcoming European Conference of Information Systems 2020 (the paper is currently under review) and were published as original articles and book chapters in international peer-review journals (see Appendix 1 for all scientific outputs arising from this PhD).

# Table of Contents

1	Chapter 1: Research aims and thesis structure.....	13
1.1	Introduction and research aims .....	13
1.2	Structure of the thesis .....	15
2	Chapter 2: Overview of organizational identity, corporate identity, and social media.....	18
2.1	Introduction .....	18
2.2	Organizational identity: Concept and definitions.....	18
2.3	Corporate identity: Concept and definitions .....	21
2.4	Social media: Concept and definitions .....	22
2.5	Social media and organizational and corporate identity .....	23
2.5.1	LinkedIn and organizational identity .....	25
2.6	Conclusion.....	26
3	Chapter 3: A literature review on organizational and corporate identity, and social media .....	28
3.1	Introduction .....	28
3.2	Need for literature review on organizational and corporate identity, and social media .....	29
3.3	Review objectives.....	30
3.4	Scoping literature review methodology .....	30
3.4.1	Search strategy .....	30
3.4.1.1	Keywords identification .....	31
3.4.2	Article screening, selection, and inclusion and exclusion criteria .....	31
3.4.3	Data extraction and analysis .....	32
3.5	Literature synthesis .....	34

3.5.1	Review results .....	34
3.5.2	Publication characteristics .....	35
3.5.2.1	Year of publication .....	35
3.5.2.2	Type of publications, disciplines and journal ranking .....	36
3.5.2.3	Country of origin .....	36
3.5.2.4	Sector and unit of analysis .....	37
3.5.2.5	Type of social media studied .....	38
3.5.2.6	Kind of data analyzed .....	39
3.5.3	Perspective of stakeholders .....	40
3.5.4	Corporate identity and social media .....	41
3.5.5	Organizational identity and social media .....	43
3.6	Discussion .....	44
3.7	Conclusion .....	46
4	Chapter 4: Conceptual framework .....	47
4.1	Introduction .....	47
4.2	Frameworks adopted to observe corporate identity on social media (Phase 2-RQ2) .....	48
4.3	Frameworks adopted to observe organizational identity on social media (LinkedIn) and to develop hypotheses (Phase 3-RQ3) .....	50
4.4	Relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4) .....	51
4.5	Conclusion .....	54
5	Chapter 5: Methodology .....	56
5.1	Introduction .....	56
5.2	Research questions .....	56
5.3	Research methodology .....	57

5.4	Selection of cases and sector .....	59
5.5	Data collection.....	60
5.5.1	Data collected from the corporate social media pages of HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2).....	61
5.5.2	Data collected from employees' public LinkedIn profiles and internal data on employees' seniority of service, type of contract and age (Phase 3-RQ3) .....	62
5.5.3	Semi-structured interviews with employees (Phase 3-RQ3) .....	63
5.6	Data analysis .....	64
5.6.1	Analysis of the data collected from the corporate social media pages of HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2) .....	64
5.6.2	Analysis of the data collected from publicly available employees' LinkedIn profiles and internal data on employees' seniority of service, type of contract and age (Phase 3-RQ3) .....	67
5.6.3	Analysis of semi-structured interviews with employees and categorization of their organizational identity scores (Phase 4-RQ4) .....	69
5.6.3.1	Extend of social media use .....	70
5.6.3.2	Organizational identity score .....	70
5.6.3.3	Nature of organizational identity.....	71
5.7	Ethical considerations: Confidentiality and sensitivity .....	72
5.8	Critical reflections on my role as a researcher .....	73
5.9	Research quality .....	73
5.9.1	Credibility .....	74
5.9.2	Transferability.....	75
5.9.3	Dependability and confirmability .....	75
5.10	Conclusions .....	76
6	Chapter 6: Measuring/observing corporate identity on social media (Phase 2-RQ2).....	77



6.1	Introduction .....	77
6.2	Choice of platform .....	78
6.3	Choice of content .....	79
6.4	Engagement .....	81
6.5	Interaction.....	83
6.6	Discussion .....	84
6.7	Conclusion.....	87
7	Chapter 7: Measuring organizational identity on LinkedIn (Phase 3-RQ3) .....	89
7.1	Introduction .....	89
7.2	Findings.....	90
7.3	Discussion .....	93
7.4	Conclusion.....	96
8	Chapter 8: Social media use for professional purposes and the nature of the organizational identity (Phase 4-RQ4).....	97
8.1	Introduction .....	97
8.2	Social media use and organizational identity .....	98
8.3	Nature of organizational identity.....	100
8.3.1	Strategic aspect of organizational identity .....	101
8.3.2	Cultural aspect of organizational identity .....	103
8.4	Discussion .....	104
8.5	Conclusion.....	108
9	Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	109
9.1	Introduction .....	109
9.2	Synthesis of research objectives and research findings.....	109
9.3	Research limitations and implications for future research .....	113

9.4	Theoretical and practical contributions of the research.....	115
9.4.1	Contribution to the theory .....	115
9.4.2	Contribution to practice .....	117
9.5	Conclusions .....	119
	References.....	121
	Appendices.....	144
	Appendix 1. Scientific outputs arising from the PhD .....	144
	Appendix 2. Characteristics of the included studies .....	148
	Appendix 3. Interview guide.....	156
	Appendix 4. Facebook analysis .....	158
	Appendix 5. LinkedIn analysis .....	159
	Appendix 6. Twitter analysis .....	160
	Appendix 7. YouTube analysis.....	161

## List of Figures

Figure 1.	Thesis structure.....	16
Figure 2.	PRISMA flow diagram.....	35
Figure 3.	Type of social media studied .....	38
Figure 4.	Study design .....	40
Figure 5.	Types of social media the companies analyzed use .....	78
Figure 6:	Overview of employees LinkedIn accounts .....	91
Figure 7.	Employees' level of organizational identity and social media use.....	98

## List of Tables

Table 1. Framework on the relationship between corporate identity and social media (adapted from Devereux et al., 2017) .....	49
Table 2. Approach to data collection .....	64
Table 3. Data collection and analysis methodology .....	65
Table 4. Model summary .....	92
Table 5. Regression analysis results .....	93
Table 6. Classification of the adjectives used by employees.....	100
Table 7. Adjectives related to the strategic aspect of organizational identity.....	101
Table 8. Adjectives related to the cultural aspect of organizational identity.....	103

## Abbreviations

<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CTA</b>	Call to Action
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>PRISMA</b>	Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis
<b>RQ</b>	Research Question
<b>SJR</b>	Scimago Journal Ranking Portal
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

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## **1 Chapter 1:**

### **RESEARCH AIMS AND THESIS STRUCTURE**

#### ***1.1 Introduction and research aims***

Identity is one of the core concepts in organization study (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013) and it can be both organizational and corporate. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), organizational identity is the way in which members of an organization define themselves as such (who we are as an organization). Corporate identity is what organizations do, how they do it, and where they are going (Balmer, 2008).

There is a close relationship between organizational identity and corporate identity concepts (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016; Kitchen, Tourky, Dean, & Shaalan, 2013). Thus, beliefs about organizational identity can influence the corporate identity of organizations. In this broad meaning, corporate identity, sometimes also referred to as organizational image that an organization wants to communicate to constituents (Cornelissen et al., 2007), can be considered the external perception (image) of internal organizational identity. Thus, while organizational identity has an internal employee focus, corporate identity has an external focus.

Organizational and corporate identity are dynamic concepts, as they change over time. Moreover, recent research (Gioia et al., 2013) highlighted that globalization and the expansion of social media in the past decade have re-invigorated the discussion on organizational and corporate identity, changing the way the “identity” is conceptualized, operationalized and measured. Indeed, social media started

playing a substantial role in identity development (Waters & Jones, 2011), and organizations need urgency to manage this identity (Huang-Horowitz & Freberg, 2016). However, the management of identities today is challenging, because it is hard to manage something that you cannot measure (Broadbent, 2007).

There are a number of studies on organizational and corporate identity (e.g. Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011; Gioia et al., 2013; Ravasi & Canato, 2013). However, Foreman and Whetten (2016), who conducted a systematic literature review analyzing over 80 studies measuring organizational identity, observed that most of these studies focused more on a conceptual perspective, discussing issues and terminology, and less have addressed methodological issues in organizational identity research. Moreover, although this review is relatively recent, none of the qualifying studies it analyzed concentrated on measuring organizational identity via social media. Similarly, Melewar (2003) concluded that, despite the significant attention from both academics and practitioners to corporate identity, a definitive construct of measurement of the concept does not exist yet.

In my PhD research, I aimed to address these important literature gaps. However, as two initial phases (Phase 1 and Phase 2) of my research revealed that measuring organizational and corporate identity concepts can vary between diverse social media, in the last two phases of my research (Phase 3 and Phase 4) I decided to focus on LinkedIn, the world's largest professional social network on the Internet (Tifferet & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2018). Specific research aims set for my PhD research are described below:

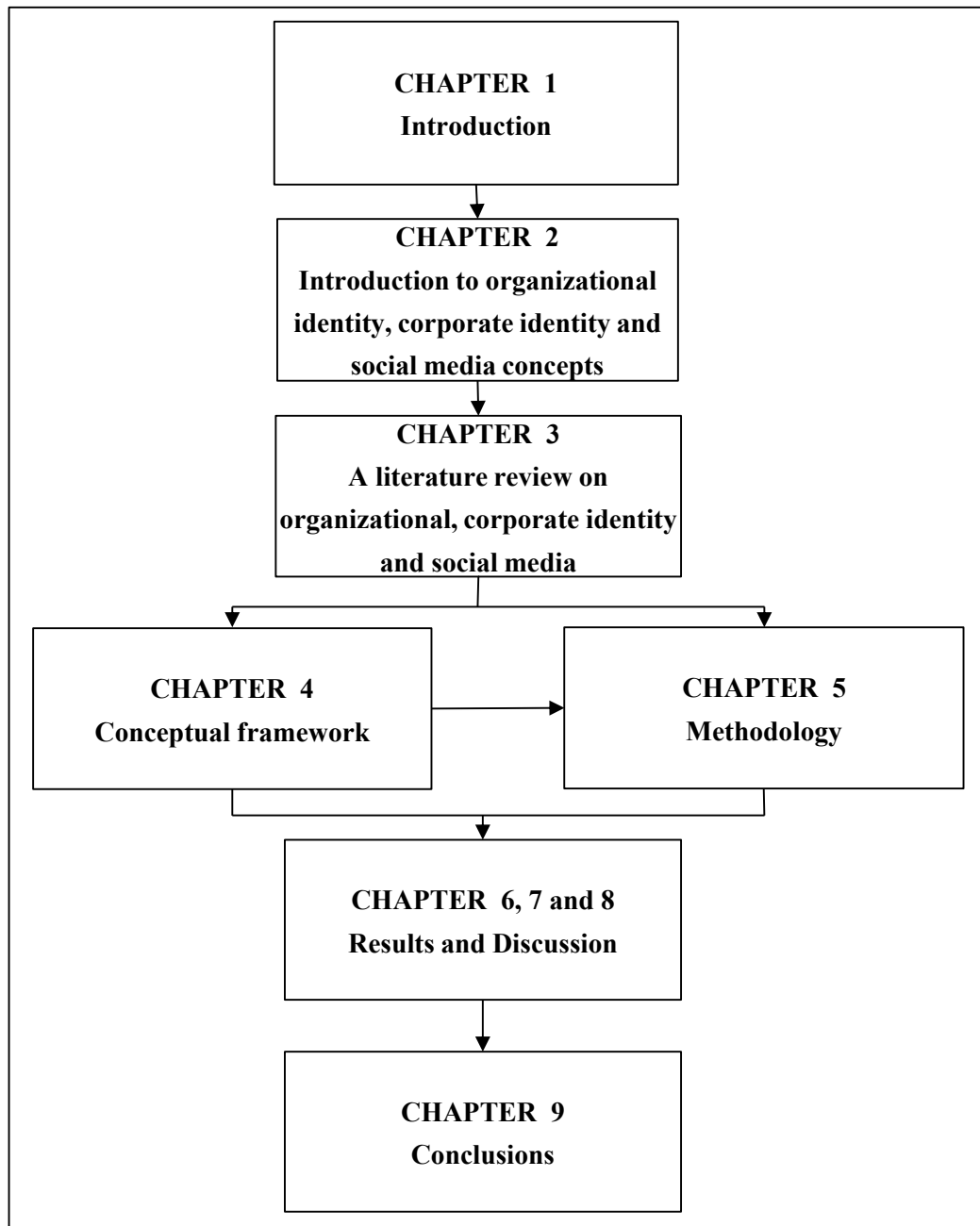
- Establishing the state-of-the-art on how organizational and corporate identity can be measured or observed via social media (Phase 1-RQ1) by conducting a scoping literature review that was also supposed to inform the following empirical studies;
- Understanding how international companies - specifically 12 international HR consulting companies - use their social media pages to project their corporate identity (Phase2-RQ2);
- Understanding how employees of one of the aforementioned HR consulting companies use their public social media profiles to project organizational identity (Phase 3-RQ3). Specifically, in this phase, the aim was to explore how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity, and the roles played by their seniority of service, type of contract and age;
- Understanding the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4). The aim of this particular study was also to cross-check and to triangulate the findings from the previous research phase (Phase 3-RQ3).

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters. The visual representation of the thesis structure is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Thesis structure**



Chapter 1 is an introduction focusing on the relevance and the aims of the research and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 offers an overview of the organizational and corporate identity concepts, as well as their relationship with social media.

Chapter 3 focuses on an original scoping literature review investigating how organizational and corporate identity can be measured or observed via social media (RQ1).

Chapter 4 introduces the conceptual (theoretical) frameworks adopted in my research. It first describes the framework used for exploring corporate identity via social media (Phase 2-RQ2). Then, it describes the theoretical approaches and the hypothesis developed from the organizational identity literature in order to test how employees use their social media profiles to project organizational identity (Phase 3-RQ3). Finally, it describes the theoretical background of the final qualitative study aimed at understanding the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4).

Both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 reveal gaps in the current literature and consequently justify the research questions identified.

Chapter 5 describes the research methodology used in the quantitative and qualitative studies. It starts from specifying how the research design and cases to study were chosen, as well as justifying the approaches to the data collection and analysis that have been adopted. It then describes the data sources used in this study.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the study findings for each research phase (Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4, respectively) and discuss their significance.

Chapter 9 discusses the contribution this research makes to the academic literature and to potential future practice. Finally, it identifies the limitations of the research undertaken, and on this basis suggests areas for further research.

## **2 Chapter 2:**

### **OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY, CORPORATE IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### ***2.1 Introduction***

Awareness of the prominence of organizational and corporate identity has increased noticeably in recent years. This has been primarily associated with the growth of theoretical and empirical work focusing on defining these concepts and the processes associated with them, as well as the outcomes they can lead to (Cornelissen et al., 2007). Relevant to these topics, studies were published in communications, marketing, management, psychology and strategy literature. As such, a wide variety of terminologies and definitions have been used in the literature to describe these concepts. Similarly, social media that have created a multitude of ways for organizations to develop and disseminate their identity also have a number of definitions. Overview of these concepts, as well as their definitions, is presented in this chapter.

#### ***2.2 Organizational identity: Concept and definitions***

The original definition of the organizational identity of Albert and Whetten (1985) refers to it as the way in which members of an organization define themselves as

such (“Who we are as an organization”). They also described organizational identity to be a “collectively taken by organization members to be central, distinctive, and enduring” (as cited in Rho, Yun, & Lee, 2015, p. 422). The central character of an organization refers to the characteristics which make an organization different. The distinctiveness focuses on how organizations differ from others and how the members classify organizations based on various contexts. The enduring aspect underlines the degree of continuity of time. However, collective identity is not always the same beliefs of any individual members of the organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harwail, 1994). Indeed, when individual members discover misalignments between collective organizational identity and organizational decisions, their perceived organizational identity can separate from the collective one, thus affecting the degree of their identification with the organization.

The aforementioned original definition of organizational identity by Albert and Whetten (1985) was also tried to be enriched by different scholars. Thus Hatch and Schultz (2000) described the organizational identity concept as “a narrower set of meaning structures focused on how members develop, express, and project their organizational sense of self” (p.23). Similarly, Cornelissen and colleagues (2007) referred to it as “the shared meaning that an organizational entity is understood to have that arises from its members’ (and others’) awareness that they belong to it” (p.3).

Diverse scholars also tried to revisit the original question of Albert and Whetten (1985) - “Who we are as an organization?” - by adding to it also such supplementary questions as “What business are we in?” and “What do we want to be?” (Lin, 2004). Nonetheless, most scholars agree that organizational identity has an internal

organizational focus and that it can be a basis for employee identification with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Witting, 2006) thus influencing the way employees feel about organizations and enhancing their commitment (Zollo, Laudano, Boccardi, & Ciappei, 2019).

Employees are the main group of stakeholders in an organization. The more employees identify with an organization, the more likely they are to show a supportive attitude toward it (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Stuart, 2002), the more likely their actions and decisions will be consistent with organizational objectives (Pezzillo Iacono, De Nito, Martinez, & Mercurio, 2017; Stuart, 2002), and the more enthusiastic the employees will be about promoting their organization to audiences that have control over the resources that organizations need to grow and survive (e.g. Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014; Fini, Jourdan, & Perkmann, 2018). The extent to which members identify with an organization is influenced by the attractiveness of the organizational identity and by the visibility of membership (Scott & Lane, 2000). Thus, members who identify more closely with their organizations are more engaged and willing to make a difference to the organization (He & Brown, 2013).

Beliefs about organizational identity influence the images of organizations. Thus employees have a crucial role to play in organizational processes, considering that they can also project organizational image (Rho et al., 2015) that can potentially affect external stakeholders' perceptions. Moreover, individual members perceive and interpret the organizational images presented and, from these data, construct a cognitive image of the organization (Scott & Lane, 2000).

### **2.3 Corporate identity: Concept and definitions**

The concept of corporate identity has also been widely discussed and defined in the literature (Kitchen et al., 2013). It is often referred to as “the mix of attributes which makes any entity distinct” (Balmer & Greyser, 2002, p.76), or in other words what organization does, how it does it, and where it is going (Balmer, 2008). Other relevant definitions of corporate identity include “A firm’s unique capabilities” (Ackerman, 1988), “The ways an organization reveals its philosophy and strategy through communication, behavior and symbolism” (Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997, p.59) and «The set of meaning by which an object allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and related to it» (Van Rekom, 1997, p.411).

Westcott Alessandri (2001) analyzed about 20 definitions of corporate identity published between 1977 and 2000. He concluded that corporate identity is the “Outward presentation of the firm”, and that a steady and good-looking corporate identity will yield a positive organizational image to the public. Overall though, corporate identity forms on the basis of organizational identity composed by strategy, philosophy, culture and organizational design (Gray & Balmer, 1998). As such, the concept of corporate identity strictly relates to organizational identity (Kitchen et al., 2013), but, while the latter refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organizations (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) and has an internal employee focus, corporate identity is a socially constructed view on organization of external stakeholders (Kitchen et al., 2013). Therefore, corporate identity is often used as a synonym to the organizational image that organizations project externally and, in particular, to the organizational image that an organization wants to communicate to

constituents (Cornelissen et al., 2007). This image is formed through the company's organizational identity.

## **2.4 Social media: Concept and definitions**

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), "Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p.61). They developed one of the most cited academic social media classifications, defining social media as collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. However, as demonstrated by the updated classification published recently by Hootsuite (2017) in its influential practitioners' blog, considering the rapid latest developments in the social media field, this definition is no longer fully inclusive. Hootsuite reclassified social media into 10 categories according to what users hope to accomplish by using them. These include: Social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn); Media sharing networks (e.g. YouTube, Instagram); Discussion forums (e.g. Reddit, Quora); Bookmarking and content curation networks (e.g. Pinterest); Consumer review networks (e.g. Yelp, TripAdvisor); Blogging and publishing networks (e.g. WordPress, Tumblr); Social shopping networks (e.g. Etsy, Fancy); Interest-based networks (e.g. Goodreads, Last.fm); 'Sharing economy' networks (e.g. Airbnb, Uber); and Anonymous social networks (e.g. Whisper, Ask.fm).

It is worthwhile to mention that these days, however, the lines between social networks and media sharing networks are blurring. For example, Facebook and

Twitter have both recently added live videos and other multimedia services on their platforms.

Overall, social media are an emerging topic in many disciplines (e.g. health, information technology (IT), etc.) and academic scholars, industry practitioners and citizens continue to discover new applications for them. Thus, the rapid advancement of social media has affected numerous organizations around the world, changing their work practices (Brumana, Decastri, Scarozza, & Za, 2014; Dreher, 2014). For example, externally, organizations started using social media to crowdsource innovative ideas on how to improve their service delivery, quality or to increase transparency regarding their operations (Tursunbayeva, Franco, & Pagliari, 2017), while internally, organizations started using social media to quickly integrate employees into organizational culture or to increase their engagement by creating a sense of community (Goldwasser & Edwards, 2014).

## ***2.5 Social media and organizational and corporate identity***

Recent research has highlighted that globalization and the expansion of social media in the past decade have re-invigorated discussions around organizational change and organizational identity change (Gioia et al., 2013).

Indeed, social media have created a multitude of ways for organizations, as well as for their employees, independently, to develop and disseminate their identity (Devereux et al., 2017). They play an increasingly important role in communication and interaction between organizations and their employees, customers, investors, and other internal and external stakeholders (Nguyen & Sidorova, 2018).



Some previous research started exploring the link between social media and organizational and corporate identity. Thus some of the existing studies already focused on the ways organizations can exist on social media. These can include official means, employee accounts, parody accounts, and online discussions (Devereux et al., 2017). Other studies focused on examining the ways different online media channels can contribute to organizations' projected image following the claim that every social media has specific objectives and can deliver specific benefits to business (Foreman, 2017). Other studies also focused on the ways organizations can best present their identities on social media for different audiences. Thus Postman (2008) stressed the importance of the graphic elements, such as for example logo, in order to build the corporate identity. Morgan and colleagues (2011) noted that social media have also changed the consumers' role from passive to active participants, transforming corporate identity into a process of brand co-creation - in collaboration with the consumers on social media (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Kuvykaite & Piligrimiene (2013) suggested that overall the way organizations present their identity on social media depends on the organizational social media management strategy that can include aims of social media interaction, message theme/s, content form, and social media channel of choice. Indeed, every social media have different goals and can benefit organizations in different ways, as such scholars also proposed that it is more efficient and productive for companies to migrate toward a larger-scale, integrated management strategy covering all social media they use (Wilson, Guinan, Parise, & Weinber, 2011).

At the individual level, the increasing use of social media at work has brought questions related to the effects of social media use on how professionals represent

themselves online (Fieseler, Meckel, & Ranzini, 2015). This comes from the pervasiveness of social media within our lives and daily practices which have contributed to a progressively thinner and blurrier distinction between personal and professional spaces (Fieseler et al., 2015). In fact, contemporary employees, do not draw anymore a line between corporate and personal social media (Song, Wang, Chen, Benitez, & Hu, 2019). Moreover, in the social media era, every single member of an organization has an equal opportunity to project his/her own perception of the organization via his/her personal social media account and all organizational members can be active communicators. From how employees project the image of their organizations on social media, it is possible to comprehend organizational culture, as well as, potentially to gather evidence regarding their organizational identity (Price & Gioia, 2008).

### **2.5.1 LinkedIn and organizational identity**

LinkedIn, with more than 530 million users (LinkedIn Newsroom, 2018), is the world's largest professional social network on the Internet. The difference between LinkedIn and other social networks, such as for example Facebook, is that through LinkedIn people channel their professional identity and interact with others, mostly for professional purposes (Alroy, 2017). This includes expanding and cultivating their professional network, which is not a network of friends or family.

With a stronger focus on personal information, LinkedIn can be seen also as a digital curriculum vitae, where people can present themselves in a professional way, emphasizing their skills and showing their employment history and education while

creating a network of connections. People represent their identity on LinkedIn in the way they connect with others and especially in the way they share information, knowledge, opinions, and ideas. Through a variety of interface strategies, LinkedIn promotes the ideology of having one transparent online self or identity (Van Dijck, 2013). Thus, according to LinkedIn's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the key distinction of this social network is that "*As a professional you want people to want to know who you are*" (Lapin, 2011) and who you work for as well (Van Dijck, 2013). LinkedIn users can create, directly or indirectly, different images of the company they work/worked for. Thus LinkedIn is considered to be a powerful tool for companies to use employees as their ambassadors, as they directly or indirectly use company information (copying it from official company pages or rewriting them, in the course of building their personal profile). For this reason, many companies encourage the use of LinkedIn among their employees and even encourage communication between their employees and those outside their direct contacts, sometimes rendering the platform a mandatory in-company communication tool (Van Dijck, 2013).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the concepts used in my PhD research including organizational identity, corporate identity, and social media (including LinkedIn). It also discussed that awareness about the prominence of organizational and corporate identity has noticeably increased in recent years. Moreover, it highlighted that the expansion of social media in the past decade have re-invigorated the discussion on

organizational and corporate identity, and created the need for more knowledge on how these two can be managed on social media. However, although there are already some studies on organizational and corporate identity and social media their focus is somehow limited, and little is still known about how these two concepts can be measured or observed on social media. My interdisciplinary and multi-phased PhD research aimed to close this important evidence gap.

### 3 Chapter 3:

## A LITERATURE REVIEW ON ORGANIZATIONAL AND CORPORATE IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a literature review<sup>2</sup> that collected, analyzed and synthesized the corpus of published research on the approaches for exploring organizational and corporate identity on social media that aimed to inform the research strategies for my empirical case studies (see chapters 6, 7 and 8). In addition to qualifying publications characteristics, this study reports also on the open coded

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<sup>2</sup> The scoping review presented in this chapter was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Gilda Antonelli (University of Sannio), Prof. Marcello Martinez (University of Campania) and Dr. Aizhan Tursunbayeva (University of Edinburgh), and its findings have been disseminated in the following ways:

- Di Lauro, S., Tursunbayeva A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2020) Organizational and corporate identity on social media: A literature review. *International Journal of Business and Management*.
- Di Lauro S., Tursunbayeva A., Antonelli G., & Martinez M. (2019). Understanding organization's digital identities on social media: A review of literature. 35th European Group for Organization Studies Colloquium: Enlightening the Future: The Challenge for Organizations, University of Edinburgh, 4-6/07/2019.
- Di Lauro S., Tursunbayeva A., Antonelli G., & Martinez M. (2018). Exploring organizational and corporate identity on social media: A literature review, WOA 2019: Identity and Pluralism across Organizational Studies and Practices. University of Palermo, 7-8/02/2019.

findings, as well as on those classified according to the three main categories for measuring organizational identity proposed by Foreman and Whetten (2016).

### ***3.2 Need for literature review on organizational and corporate identity, and social media***

Most of the published reviews of organizational identity (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2011; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; Corley et al., 2006; Cornelissen et al., 2007; Gioia et al., 2013; Ravasi & Canato, 2013; Ravasi & van Rekom, 2003; van Rekom & van Riel, 2000) focused more on a conceptual perspective, discussing issues and terminology (Foreman & Whetten, 2016). Considering the lack of methodological issues in this field, Foreman and Whetten (2016) analyzed over 80 studies measuring organizational identity in their influential systematic literature review, which revealed a wide diversity of approaches (e.g. qualitative or quantitative) to understand or evaluate organizational identity. Though this review is relatively recent none of the studies it analyzed focused on measuring organizational identity via social media, as such there is a clear gap in the literature.

Similarly, Melewar (2003) reviewing the corporate identity literature, stated that despite this concept has received significant attention in the last 25 years, a definitive construct of its measurement does not exist yet.

As such although there are studies on organizational and corporate identity and social media their focus is somehow limited, and little is still known about how these two concepts can be measured on social media. What cannot be measured, cannot be

managed (Broadbent, 2007). Therefore, a literature review on this topic is very timely and would be helpful to inform my empirical case studies and overall advance existing relevant theories and practice.

### **3.3 *Review objectives***

I set out to conduct an interdisciplinary literature review utilizing sources of evidence from social science and business/management literature.

While the main aim of this review was to inform the research strategies for empirical case studies of my PhD research, the following specific objectives were also set for guiding it:

- Collect, analyze, classify, and synthesize the corpus of existing published research on the approaches for exploring organizational and corporate identity via social media;
- Understand the methodological approaches and types of data used to measure organizational and corporate identity on social media.

### **3.4 *Scoping literature review methodology***

#### **3.4.1 *Search strategy***

Following the approach first proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), a scoping review was undertaken, in order to profile this relatively emerging topic where research is an early stage (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro, & Pagliari, 2018).

A comprehensive search strategy was developed to identify relevant literature. Three international interdisciplinary online databases were interrogated: Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science. Qualifying studies references were also “snowballed” to ensure that no relevant study was missed (Yeager et al., 2014). An email request was sent to authors of publications not available online or in the libraries that I had access to (i.e. University of Edinburgh and University of Naples Federico II).

### **3.4.1.1 Keywords identification**

In order to create a specific and sensitive search query, I undertook several cycles of piloting interrogations (in October 2018) of three aforementioned databases to create a specific and sensitive search query.

The search query comprised keywords related to Organizational identity, Corporate identity, and Social media:

"Organizational identity" OR "Organisational identity" OR  
"Organizational image" OR "Organisational image" OR "Corporate  
identity" AND "Social Media".

### **3.4.2 Article screening, selection, and inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Following the approach adopted by Foreman and Whetten (2016), the principal criterion for inclusion in this review was that the publication in question attempted to, or proposed a means by which one could, “measure” organizational and corporate



identity. Although the term “measure” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “to ascertain the size, amount, or degree of [something] by using an instrument or device marked in standard units”, in this review, I approached measurement as “any attempt to operationalize and empirically observe [the organizational and corporate identity], including approaches that were more qualitative or abstract” (Foreman & Whetten, 2016, p.3).

After excluding from the analysis duplicates, conference proceeding descriptions and books, the full text of potentially relevant articles was examined in order to identify qualifying studies. Details of the filters applied at each screening stage are presented in the Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) flow diagram (see Figure 2).

### **3.4.3 Data extraction and analysis**

The data from the qualifying studies were extracted into a pre-developed Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet contained fields related to publication characteristics including author(s), year, title, journal name, and journal discipline.

Scimago Journal Ranking Portal (SJR) (2017) was used to assess the disciplinary affiliation of journals and study quality following the strategy proposed by Tursunbayeva and colleagues (2018). The results of this analysis were also cross-checked with the analysis of the number of Google Scholar citations, which is often used in formal or informal research evaluations and has been shown to be reliable, especially in Humanities and Social Science disciplines (Martín-Martín, Orduna-Malea, Thelwall, & Delgado López-Cózar, 2018). Not all of the qualifying studies

were available in Google Scholar, as such citations for these studies were not taken into account for the analysis.

Social media platforms adopted in the qualifying studies were also analyzed. Moreover, three among six data extraction categories from the descriptive classification framework of organizational identity measurement approaches developed by Foreman and Whetten (2016) were also included in the coding scheme:

- Analytical approaches (quantitative and qualitative) and the types of data involved in measuring organizational and corporate identity (i.e. What kind of data and how is it analyzed?);
- Identifying whether organizational identity (and corporate identity) can be operationalized in terms of the views of insiders, outsiders or both (i.e. organizational and corporate identity as seen from whom/which stakeholders?); and
- Unit of analysis (what is the referent?).

The remaining three categories were not included as one of these relates to the conceptualization of organizational identity and the other two (i.e. use of organizational identity and time frame) were found to be rarely included in studies on organizational identity (Foreman & Whetten, 2016).

Finally, in order to summarize the relationship between social media and corporate and organizational identity, the extracted findings were also open coded (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) and grouped according to the categories that emerged from the data analysis. These categories were also cross-checked with the ones already mentioned in the scientific literature.

## **3.5 Literature synthesis**

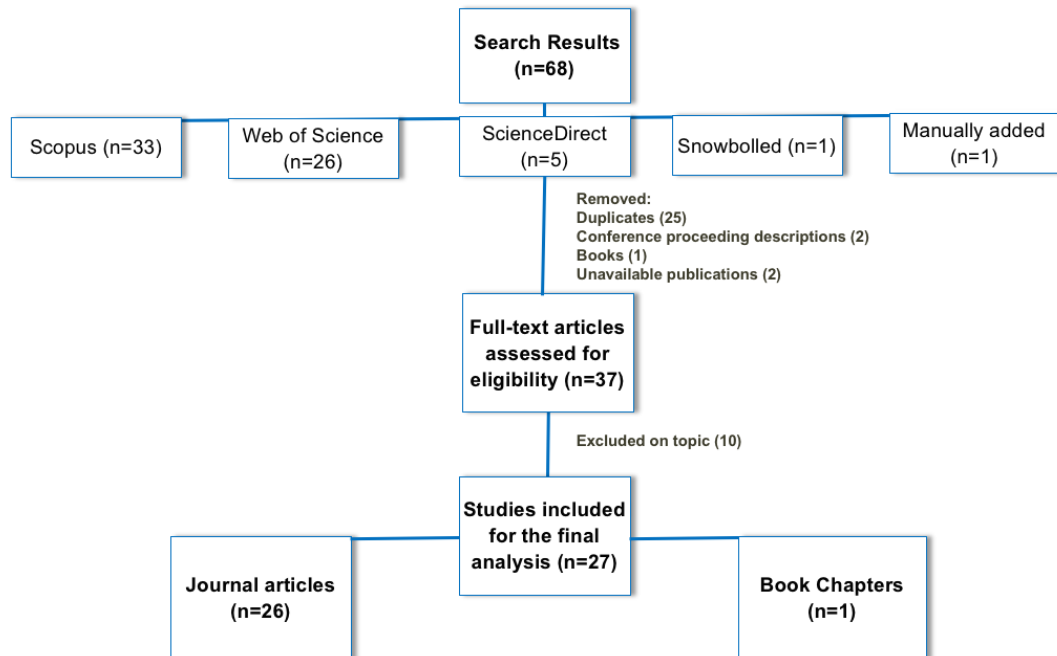
### **3.5.1 Review results**

68 returns were generated by the search strategy:

- Scopus database=35;
- ScienceDirect database=5;
- Web of Science database=26;
- Snowballed=1;
- Manually added=1.

After removing 25 duplicates, two conference proceeding descriptions, one book and two unavailable publications, 37 articles qualified for the full-text review. After excluding papers not in English or highly descriptive papers (10 publications), 27 studies were included for the final analysis (see Figure 2 and Appendix 2).

**Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram**



### **3.5.2 Publication characteristics**

Among 27 studies, 12 studies focused on organizational identity, and 15 studies centered on corporate identity or organizational image. One of these, although explicitly referring to organizational identity, discussed the corporate identity perspective.

#### **3.5.2.1 Year of publication**

Included articles were mostly published between 2015 and 2018 (n=22). The earliest of the qualifying studies was published in 2010.

### **3.5.2.2 Type of publications, disciplines and journal ranking**

Out of 27 included publications, almost all (n=26) were journal articles. Only one was a book chapter.

Classification of the journal articles according to the SJR revealed that 24 studies were published in unidisciplinary journals. Among these 22 studies were published in social science journals, while one in information and communication technology (ICT) and one in a health journal. Only two studies were published in multidisciplinary journals: both social science and ICT.

Assessment of the study quality with SJR and Google Scholar revealed that the available evidence on this topic is low-medium (SJR average=0.836). The lowest journal is “Problems and Perspectives in Management” (SJR=0.143) and the highest is “Journal of Public Relations” (SJR=2.313). Overall, the qualifying studies available in Google Scholar have a relatively low number of citations (average 26.7). The two most cited studies are quantitative and qualitative with 165 and 124 citations, respectively. This finding could be explained either by the fact that overall the search did not reveal a high number of studies on this topic or that new relevant studies do not build on the theoretical and methodological foundation of the pre-existing studies.

### **3.5.2.3 Country of origin**

The majority of studies were conducted in high-income countries.

12 studies focusing on organizational identity come from the USA, Italy, Denmark, and Norway.

15 studies focusing on corporate identity or organizational image concepts come from the USA, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, Denmark, South Africa, Portugal, and Turkey, showing a more international presence compare to organizational identity studies (see Appendix 2 for details).

#### **3.5.2.4 Sector and unit of analysis**

19 studies mentioned sector/industry of organizations analyzed. Three of these focused on several sectors together. The remaining studies focused on diverse sectors and aimed to measure different types of identity:

- Banking (3 corporate and 1 organizational identity studies);
- Government and Military (2 corporate and 1 organizational identity studies);
- Health (2 corporate identity studies);
- Education (1 corporate and 1 organizational identity study);
- ICT (1 corporate identity study);
- Food (1 corporate identity study);
- Sport (1 corporate identity study);
- Art (1 organizational identity study).

The majority of these 19 studies (n=10) examined a single organization (corporate identity=6; organizational identity=4); Six studies examined a group of organizations

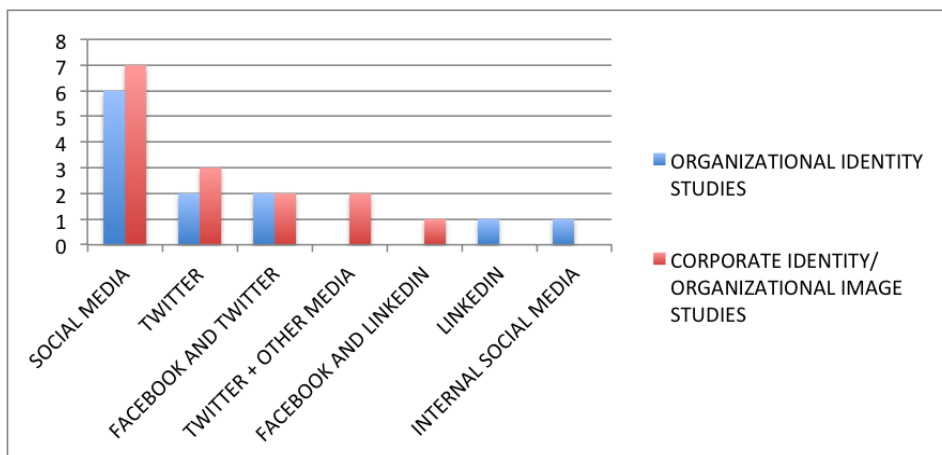
defined as sector/cluster community (organizational identity=2; corporate identity=4); and three studies examined multiple organizations, each as a separate entity.

The fact that the majority of studies on organizational identity examined a single organization is in line with the findings of Foreman and Whetten (2016) related to generic research on measuring organizational identity.

### 3.5.2.5 Type of social media studied

Most of the studies (n=13) addressed social media as a single general phenomenon, or grouped several social media platforms together. Five studies used Twitter, four both Twitter and Facebook and one study used LinkedIn (see Figure 3). Only one study focused on internal social media channel. However, the findings and discussion sections of almost all studies related to generic social media, as such not allowing to draw findings specific to each social media.

**Figure 3. Type of social media studied**



### **3.5.2.6 Kind of data analyzed**

According to the first data extraction category described by Foreman and Whetten (2016), the research designs used in the qualifying studies included:

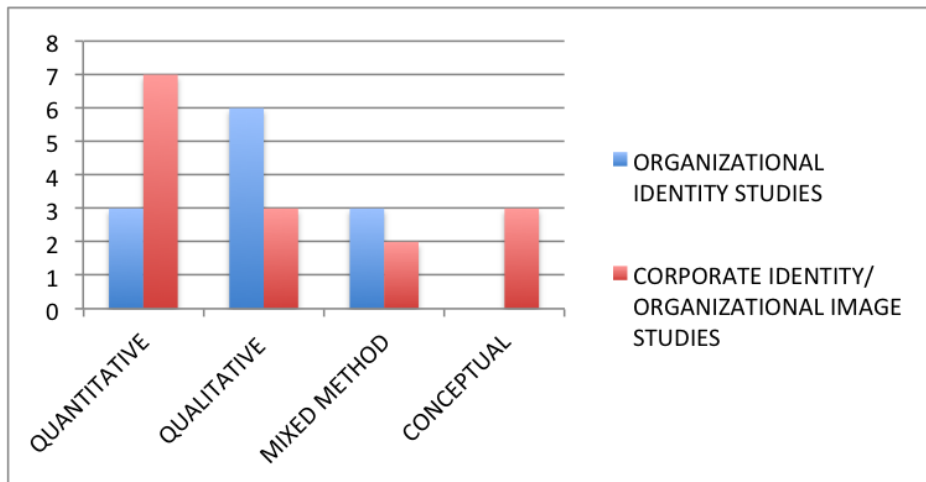
- Quantitative (n=10);
- Qualitative (n=9);
- Mixed-method (n=5); and
- Conceptual (n=3).

Interestingly, the majority of studies (n=7) that referred to corporate identity/organizational image were quantitative, while the majority of organizational identity studies (n=6) were qualitative. These results are in line with the findings of previous research, where many organizational identity studies were found to be of qualitative nature (e.g. Corley & Gioia, 2004; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2006). Thus appropriate for the emerging research topics due to the opportunity such an approach offers for building theory that can subsequently be tested empirically (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Detailed information on the type of data analyzed is presented in Figure 4.

Most of the qualitative studies analyzed social media content, interviews or researchers' observations, while most of the quantitative studies analyzed (offline or online) surveys.



**Figure 4. Study design**



### **3.5.3 Perspective of stakeholders**

The review findings illustrate that the majority of corporate identity studies focused on the official organizational social media pages (e.g. Joachim, Martin, Lange, Schneiker, & Dau, 2018; Ozdora-Aksak & Atakan-Duma, 2015/2016). Joackim and colleagues (2018), for example, aimed to understand how the companies brand themselves when using Twitter, while Ozdora-Aksak and colleagues (2015) analyzed official company pages' posts and photos to identify themes utilized by the companies they studied. Meanwhile, the study of Devereux and colleagues (2017) underlined how social media can reveal corporate identity of organizations which choose to adopt them, summarizing the relationship between corporate identity and social media according to five stages of social media including social media adoption, choice of platform(s), choice of content, stakeholder engagement and organization interaction.

Meanwhile, organizational identity has been studied from multiple perspectives (e.g. Dawson, 2018). Nonetheless, almost all studies highlighted the role of organizational members in the social co-construction of organizational identity, while some specifically recognized the role of employees in this process (e.g. Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). This is indeed in line with previous research reporting on how social media has promoted an ambassadorial role of employees regarding organizational identity and culture. However, some studies also acknowledged the standing of external members (e.g. customers and followers) in the management of organizational identity. Dawson (2018), for example, stated that organizational identity should not be limited to internal organizational members, as in some ways it is always defined by its relationship with external stakeholders. For this reason, organizations are recommended to invest in endorsing social media interaction among diverse stakeholders (Nguyen & Sidorova, 2018).

#### **3.5.4 Corporate identity and social media**

Two major themes emerged from the analysis of how corporate identity can be observed on social media. These included a positive corporate image (e.g. Hussain, 2015), and corporate values (Ozdora-Aksak & Atakan-Duma, 2014).

The positivity of corporate image was mentioned in the studies in relation to the rapidity of information sharing (Holmgreen, 2015; Joachim et al., 2018), as well as the ability of social media to help organizations to maintain and protect a strong reputation (Oliveira & Figueira, 2015). Thus, for example, the research conducted on the whole population of Higher Polytechnic Portuguese Education Institutions

revealed that it is important to invest heavily in communicating corporate identity via social media to create and manage a positive internal and external corporate image (Oliveira & Figueira, 2015). Creating a dialogue with stakeholders on social media was identified as another crucial element in developing, co-constructing or enhancing the corporate image (e.g. Pang, Shin, Lew, & Walther, 2018). Moreover, some of the qualifying studies revealed that a positive impact of social media on corporate identity can be achieved by using some simple strategies. These included instilling trust and confidence in customers, creating a memorable and lasting impression on their mind in every encounter (Boateng & Okoe, 2015), and, overall, ensuring that corporate identity is in sync with the image desired by diverse stakeholders (Bruce & Solomon, 2013).

“Corporate values” are the dominant system of beliefs and moral principles that are intrinsic to an organization and its purpose (Campbell & Yeung, 1991). Ozdora-Aksak and Atakan-Duma (2014), in line with generic corporate identity research, underlined that corporate values can motivate stakeholders to support organizations and suggested some themes that can be used to construct and communicate corporate identities on social media such as being ethical or being the highest, strongest and/or the first. Correspondingly, Brandhorst and Jennings (2016) reported the case of Planned Parenthood, a nonprofit organization that provides sexual health care in the US and globally, that uses Twitter hashtags as a call for unity among supporters, reminding them what the organization stands for and promotes – “Important American values”.

### **3.5.5 Organizational identity and social media**

As aforementioned organizational identity has been studied from multiple perspectives. However, most of the studies focused primarily on the role of organizational members in the social co-construction of organizational identity on internal or external social media channels. Thus Madsen's (2016) study reported specifically that coworkers can contribute to the construction of organizational identity when they discuss and negotiate organizational identity on internal social media. In consequence, it is highlighted that the management should treat all employees as essential partners in managing organizational identity (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). Moreover, organizations are also advised to create a strong internal brand on internal social media which can increase employee identification (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014).

Meanwhile, Albu and Etter's work (2016) stressed the importance of interaction and engagement on external social media such as Twitter for building organizational identity and co-constituting the desired representation of the organization. Moreover, the findings of this study also suggested that the use of hashtags on this external social media could help to co-produce organizational identity insofar as it also renders possible its destabilization by people external to the organization if used incorrectly. For example, during a corporate sustainability campaign of a multinational fast-food chain, an activist non-governmental organization "took over" the hashtag used by the company account for raising awareness of its socially responsible supply chain activities, by retweeting it to illustrate the unsustainable ingredients used in the company's food products.

Ozdora Aksak and Aktakan Duman's case study (2016), which explores how a Turkish bank uses corporate social responsibility to construct its identity revealed that all organizational communication channels, including internal and external social media, have a role to play in constructing a competitive, legitimate and moral organizational identity, and communicating it to all stakeholders.

### **3.6 Discussion**

Interest in social media has increased in the last few years considering their high adoption rates, as well as the power they have given to organizations and individuals to interact with each other. Scholars and practitioners published numerous recommendations for effective social media communication or management strategies including how social media can be used to communicate or manage organizational or corporate identity. The former has been illustrated for example by recent generic reviews on social media metrics and analytics in marketing (e.g. Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018) or generic reviews on advances in social media research (e.g. Kapoor et al., 2017). Regardless of this interest, little attention has been dedicated so far to addressing methodological issues in organizational and corporate identity research, in particular on how these concepts can be measured or observed as in general as specifically on social media. However, what cannot be measured cannot be managed (Broadbent, 2007).

Thus this study set out to collect, analyze and synthesize the corpus of published research on approaches to observing/measuring organizational and corporate identity on social media. This work makes several important contributions to the existing

organizational and corporate identity research. Thus, the findings provide an overview of the state-of-the-art of organizational identity, corporate identity and social media research including an in-depth overview of publication characteristics and associated literature gaps. They show that this research is in a nascent state; that most of the studies on exploring organizational and corporate identity on social media come from high-income countries, that latest studies draw little on the previous organizational/corporate identity and social media research, and that qualifying studies mostly refer to the generic term social media, making it difficult to draw specific conclusions for each specific platform. Those few studies that specified which social media platforms they considered focused mostly on Facebook and Twitter, with the result that LinkedIn- one of the most popular professional social media – is under-researched, despite the fact that users are largely structured around professional relationships based on who users work for, work with and where they work (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2018), and neglecting the latest social media such as Instagram or Snapchat. Moreover, it can be observed that there is some confusion between definitions used by some authors to refer to organizational and corporate identity, as some studies used these terms interchangeably. As such the authors might be shaping the two concepts to fit their ontological and epistemological assumptions about the organizations they studied (Dowling, 2016; Foreman & Whetten, 2016).

Overall, even though the review touches on and analyzes diverse studies focusing on several points of measurement of corporate and organizational identity via social media or the relationship between these concepts, it does not reveal many studies with a reliable and universal method for measuring them. Probably because of the

ambiguity of these concepts or because developing a reliable and valid means of measuring them is a tough task (Melewar, Karaosmanoglu, & Paterson, 2005). The findings of this analysis still should be of interest to interdisciplinary scholars to, for example, to understand methodological approaches, as well as types of data used to explore organizational and corporate identity. This study also has important practical managerial implications. Organizations investing in social media and in promoting both their products and themselves as an employer would be interested in exploring what kind of results these efforts have achieved. Drawing on these findings organizations can design more tailored interventions for strengthening the management of their organizational and corporate identity on social media, as these are directly connected to successful organizational performance (Voss et al., 2006).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The primary aim of this review was to inform the research strategies for conducting empirical case studies for my PhD research. The analysis provides the state-of-the-art on this topic that can help future scholars to understand methodological approaches, and types of data used to explore organizational and corporate identity on social media, though overall it revealed few studies with a reliable and universal method for measuring these concepts guaranteeing future research. Practitioners can also draw on these findings to design more tailored interventions for strengthening their organizational and corporate identity.

## 4 Chapter 4

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The findings of the review of published literature on organizational and corporate identity on social media presented in the previous chapter revealed that this research is still in its nascent state and echoing Foreman and Whetten (2016), and Melewar (2003) confirm that most of the studies have addressed little methodological issues in organizational identity and corporate identity research (respectively).

This chapter highlights the theoretical underpinnings of the approach adopted in my PhD research to study the organizational and corporate identity on social media. In particular, this chapter:

- Introduces the framework used for exploring corporate identity on social media (Phase 2-RQ2);
- Describes the theoretical approaches and the hypothesis developed from the organizational identity literature in order to test how employees use their social media profiles to project organizational identity (Phase 3-RQ3).
- Describes the theoretical background of the final qualitative study aimed at understanding the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4).



## **4.2 Frameworks adopted to observe corporate identity on social media (Phase 2-RQ2)**

Two main frameworks were adopted to understand how international companies - specifically 12 international HR consulting companies – use social media to project their corporate identity.

The first one is the classification of all social media proposed by Hootsuite (2017), an influential practitioners' blog, categorizing social media into ten main categories according to the reason why users use social media:

- Social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn);
- Media sharing networks (e.g. YouTube, Instagram);
- Discussion forums (e.g. Reddit, Quora);
- Bookmarking and content curation networks (e.g. Pinterest);
- Consumer review networks (e.g. Yelp, TripAdvisor);
- Blogging and publishing networks (e.g. WordPress, Tumblr);
- Social shopping networks (e.g. Etsy, Fancy);
- Interest-based networks (e.g. Goodreads, Last.fm);
- ‘Sharing economy’ networks (e.g. Airbnb, Uber); and
- Anonymous social networks (e.g. Whisper, Ask.fm).

This particular framework was selected as it considers the nature and the purpose of the adoption of each particular social media platform.

The second framework was adopted from the study of Devereux and colleagues (2017). It links social media and corporate identity concepts summarizing their relationship into the specific stages of social media. These stages together with some specific aspects (questions) that were considered relevant to answer the RQ2 are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Framework on the relationship between corporate identity and social media (adapted from Devereux et al., 2017)**

<b>Social media adoption</b>	<b>Choice of platform/s</b>	<b>Choice of content</b>	<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	<b>Organization interaction</b>
To use or not to use social media? How to use it (e.g. for internal or external use)? Who needs to look after them?	How many platforms should be adopted? Why are they chosen? When are they adopted?	Why is it created? Who will create it? What form will it take? What does it contain? When is it published?	What is the Level/Nature of Engagement?	How does the organization react to engagement? How does the organization interact with other users?

### **4.3 Frameworks adopted to observe organizational identity on social media (LinkedIn) and to develop hypotheses (Phase 3-RQ3)**

Previous identity research has explored when and why identities are adopted and enacted both at the organizational (Jensen & Kim, 2014) and individual (e.g. Dačiulytė & Aranauskaitė, 2012) levels. As the focus of this study is on exploring individual internal members' organizational identity as evidenced on their personal social media profiles (RQ3), the hypotheses were built on previous individual-level organizational identity research described below.

Dačiulytė and Aranauskaitė (2012) observed that there is a difference in the strength of loyalty that organizational members with different types of employment contracts show to organizations. Thus, they found that full-time employees with permanent contracts contribute more strongly to organizational identity by comparison with employees with temporary contracts. The aim of this particular research phase was to investigate whether this finding also holds true for how employees who have different types of contracts project their organizational identity via their personal social media accounts, the hypothesis being:

*H1: Employees with permanent employment contracts project organizational identity more strongly than employees with temporary contracts.*

In 1994 Dutton and colleagues found that the attractiveness of the organizational identity projected varies with an employee's length of tenure (years in the organization). Indeed, back in 1958, March and Simon also noticed that the longer an individual remains in an organization, the more his/her interactions occur within the

organization, the more his/her needs are satisfied, and, therefore, the more he/she identifies with the organization. Drawing on these findings, in this study I also aim to investigate whether employees with longer years of service demonstrate stronger organizational identity via their personal social media accounts, the hypothesis being:

*H2: Employees with more years of service manifest stronger organizational identity.*

Previous studies on organizational identity also concluded that people from diverse age groups express it differently. Thus, Cakinberk and colleagues (2011) in their study comprising 135 teachers and school managers concluded that organizational identity is higher among employees who are over 30 compared to employees under 30 (as cited in Oktug, 2013). Building on this finding, and taking into consideration that social media usage varies across different age groups the aim here was to investigate whether employees from younger age groups, using LinkedIn more often (see Censis, 2015 or Greenwood et al., 2016 for discussion), project stronger organizational identity via their personal LinkedIn profiles, where the hypothesis is:

*H3: Younger employees manifest stronger organizational identity.*

#### **4.4 Relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4)**

Organizational identity has been studied in relation to its influence on the implementation of new IT (Tyworth, 2014). In social media research, identity has

been examined in the context in which users' profile reflects, at least partially, their identity (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy, & Pitt, 2012, as cited by Zoonen, Verhoeven, & Elving, 2014). Through work-related social media use, employees can emphasize their role as organizational members (Zoonen et al., 2014) and engage with their colleagues rapidly (Dutta, 2010). However, the use of social media in the workplace has been mostly studied along specific, isolated organizational dimensions (Fisher, Boland, & Lyytinen, 2016) including the effect of social media use on social capital (Chang, 2015), on careers (DiMicco et al., 2008), and on the rate of innovation (Leonardi, 2015) among others, rather than through the lens of organizational identity. Though Forsgren and Bystrom (2018) already expressed the need for research beyond the occurrences of social media.

Gioia and colleagues (2013) stated that the rapid expansion of social media has re-invigorated the discussion about organizational identity, changing the way the "identity" is conceptualized, operationalized and measured. However, now as before, the majority of the empirical research is not explicit on how organizational identity is to be operationalized and assessed (Corley et al., 2006; Foreman & Whetten, 2016). Indeed, as mentioned by Margolis and Hansen (2002) and then confirmed by Hsu and Elsbach (2013) there is limited research on the shared aspects (or categorization) of organizational identity because organizational identity is the discovery of an organization's distinctiveness and a methodology measure based on predetermined categories established by the researchers will not solve the question of organizational identity (Sato, 2014). The challenges in operationalizing organizational identity are also often attributed to the "fluidity" of the organizational identity concept caused by

its constant interrelationships with an organizational image (Gioia, Shoultz, & Corley, 2000), which makes it a constantly changing phenomenon. In a comprehensive work seeking to clarify the different components of organizational identity. Corley (2004) identifies four aggregate dimensions of organizational identity including:

- Nature of organizational identity;
- Identity discrepancies;
- Basis of identity change; and
- Identity change implementation.

His approach examines organizational identity in the context of change. As I am interested primarily in the nature of organizational identity (regardless of whether the context changes or not), I focus here only on the first dimension proposed by Corley (2004).

The nature of organizational identity covers the cultural and structural (strategic) aspects of the organizational identity. The cultural aspect of organizational identity includes the values and beliefs exposed by the organization, while the strategic aspect comprises organizational purpose, mission, and philosophy.

According to Corley's (2004) study, identity differentiation can occur at different levels of an organization's hierarchy. For example, employees at the top of the hierarchy (i.e. managers) are more likely to see organizational identity in relation to the organization's strategy and purpose, while the perception of organizational identity of employees on the lower levels focuses on the cultural dimensions. This

multilevel notion of organizational identity was also recognized by Puusa (2006), who studied organizational identity at the individual, group, organization or industry levels (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2010; Puusa, 2006).

At the individual level identity has been argued to address the psychological motives of employees (self-knowledge, self-expression, self-coherence, self-continuity, self-distinctiveness; and self-enhancement). At the organizational level, identity has been argued to differentiate the organization within an industry context. Acknowledging the multilevel nature of organizational identity, these categories were kept in mind to answer the research question set for this particular research phase.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Existing literature on organizational and corporate identity, especially empirical cases, is not so explicit on how these concepts can be operationalized and assessed. Therefore, drawing on the existing organizational identity, corporate identity and social media studies in my research I aimed to address this important research gap from diverse angles.

Thus, I conducted a multiphase study including 1. Analysis of official social media pages of 12 HR consulting companies; 2. Analysis of public social media profiles of selected from the previous stage HR consulting company's employees; 22 qualitative interviews and observations aimed at triangulating the findings from the previous research stages.

This chapter summarized and described the conceptual (theoretical) frameworks adopted in my research. The next chapter (chapter 5) describes in detail the

methodology of my PhD research as well as how each of the aforementioned frameworks was applied to answer the research questions set.



## **5 Chapter 5:**

# **METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in this study and describes how it was applied to the conceptual (theoretical) frameworks outlined in the previous chapter (chapter 4). It also specifies how the research design and cases for the study were selected, as well as gives reasons for the approaches adopted to data collection and analysis.

### **5.2 Research questions**

The main objective of this research is to understand how organizational and corporate identity can be measured/observed on social media.

The following specific research questions were set out in order to achieve the aforementioned research objectives:

- Phase 2-RQ2: Understanding how international companies (specifically 12 international HR consulting companies) use their social media pages to project their corporate identity:
  - RQ2(A): Which social media HR consulting companies use?

- RQ2(B): Which are the main content themes of the posts made by HR consulting companies on different social media?
- RQ2(C): How organizations (specifically HR consulting companies) use social media for stakeholder engagement and to project and strengthen their corporate identity?
- Phase 3-RQ3: Exploring how employees (of one of the aforementioned HR consulting companies) use their public social media profiles to project organizational identity and how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age play in this.
- Phase 4-RQ4: Analyzing the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that an employee holds about their employer.

### **5.3 Research methodology**

There are two main research paradigms that diverge in their philosophical worldview, and understanding of the social (e.g. focus on facts or on their meaning) and technical methods (e.g. whether samples are large or small). The former research paradigm is often dubbed positivist and the latter research paradigm non-positivist, roughly corresponding to the division between quantitative and qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1997; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). Thus, any empirical research often starts from choosing which of these research paradigms to follow.

This choice primarily depends on the nature of the study and its research questions. A positivist research approach is often followed when the emphasis is on the facts, the causal relationships between phenomena, and testing hypotheses, while a non-positivist research approach is suitable predominantly when the attention is on meanings, and on analyzing the roles played by actors' interpretations of, and motivations regarding, the processes in which they are involved (Stake, 1995).

Many studies today follow the positivist research paradigm. They are often criticized for neglecting the context in which they are situated (Cucciniello, 2011). Especially because it has been already acknowledged that the uses and consequences of technological innovations such as, for example, social media emerge unpredictably through complex social interactions amongst the actors involved, their responses to and interactions with the innovation, and the organizational context in which they are situated (Robert, Greenhalgh, MacFarlane, & Peacock, 2009; Tursunbayeva, 2018).

Diverse studies highlighted the prominence of selecting the research paradigm to follow at the study outset, as any study has to reflect the identified research strategy and questions. As the aim of my research was to understand how organizational and corporate identity can be measured/observed on social media as well as nature of organizational identity, I drew on both research paradigms, adapting a mixed-method research study that included both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Among the wide variety of qualitative research types (e.g. phenomenology or ethnography), I decided to follow a qualitative case study research approach because it is "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context

are not clearly evident...[and it]...relies on multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 2003, p.13). It also permits to benefit from rich and detailed contextualized data (Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000).

#### **5.4 Selection of cases and sector**

Overall, we already know how social media affected the brand image of organizations in diverse industries, for example, the hospitality industry (Perera & Perera, 2016), or specific functions or practices within organizations such as HR functions or HR management practices (e.g. McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). However, little is still known on how HR consulting companies use social media, especially how they do it to project their organizational or corporate identity. As the disciplinary sector of my PhD is Organization and Management, in my research I decided to address this research gap and to focus on HR consulting companies. This is also because previous research on organizational identity underlined the growing attention of contemporary research on organizational identity to consulting firms (Alvesson, 2012; Stanske, 2017),

In order to answer the RQ2 (Phase 2) - understanding how HR consulting companies use their social media pages to project their corporate identity – I selected 12 different HR consulting companies located in Europe and the USA. Although these companies differed by size they provide similar services and products to their customers. In order to identify suitable consulting companies, I conducted an expert interview with the CEO of one of these companies located in Italy. The main

objective of this interview was to identify the companies that he considered as direct competitors.

In order to answer the RQ3 (Phase 3) – understanding how data from employees’ personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity, and the roles played by their seniority of service, type of contract and age – from the analyzed at the previous research phase HR consulting companies I selected one medium-sized HR consulting company with circa 10 international branches (from hereinafter referred to as the Case Company). This specific company was selected because it is located in Italy and because it has recently changed its name and was going through a rebranding process to re-position itself in an international competitive context and to reemphasize to their customers, suppliers, and employees who they are and what they do. Thus, the self-reflective question “Who are we as an organization” considered relevant in situations of organizational change (Stanske, 2017) is pertinent to this organization.

## **5.5 Data collection**

A “multiple method” strategy was adapted for data collection as this allows an understanding of all angles of research questions and helps to render the research more generally valid (Read & Marsh, 2002). It also offers “a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena and produces much more accounts of social reality” (Bryman, 1988, p. 126).

Four main methods of data collections were employed in this research:

- RQ2 (Phase 2): Data collected from the corporate social media pages of HR consulting companies;
- RQ3 (Phase 3): Data collected from publicly available information on employees' LinkedIn profiles;
- RQ3 (Phase 3): Internal data such as data on employees seniority of service, type of contract or age;
- RQ4 (Phase 4): Semi-structured interviews with employees.

### **5.5.1 Data collected from the corporate social media pages of HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2)**

The findings of the scoping literature review suggested that there are four most popular social media including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube, as such these platforms were selected for data collection for this research phase. The data collected from these social media included:

- The number of fans, followers or subscribers;
- The data on the type of content posted;
- Type of social media pages or functionality used; and
- Information on the frequency of engagement and interaction, among others.

The whole analysis took into consideration a twelve months period (from January to December 2017). Data were collected manually, although diverse off-the-shelf applications were also used where possible (e.g. FanPage Karma and Twittonomy

tools were used for measure the engagement and the interaction rates). Detailed information on the data collected for each specific social media is presented in Table 3.

### **5.5.2 Data collected from employees' public LinkedIn profiles and internal data on employees' seniority of service, type of contract and age (Phase 3-RQ3)**

At the time of the data collection, the Case Company had two official LinkedIn company pages, each relating to a separate business activity/line. The first page (Page A) had over 500 followers, while the second page (Page B) had over 7,000 followers. Both company pages were active (e.g. posting company updates or industry news) and were managed by the internal Marketing team.

There are several approaches to measuring organizational identity. Van Rekom and van Rie (2000) mentioned that existing studies on measuring organizational identity are mainly based on primary input from organizational members. However, in my study, I used data collected not directly from organizational members, but from their publicly available LinkedIn profiles.

I included in this study only employees that are based in the Italian Case Company office (n=62). Thus employees working in the company's international branches or parent company were not considered.

The list of employees was provided by the Case Company's HR manager and included data on employees' years of service, date of birth and type of contracts.

The first phase of LinkedIn data collection involved manual searching for individual employee profiles in order to identify those who had a LinkedIn account. Employees with closed accounts or those whose profiles were not found via manual search were not included in this research, as the organizational identity they might potentially project is, in fact, invisible to external users.

The following information from employees' personal profiles was considered to be relevant for this research and thus was collected:

- **Headline:** the text that appears under the user's name. Together with the name and the photo, the headline is possibly the most valuable real estate in the personal profile. The default headline consists of the current job title and the related employer (LinkedIn Help, 2017).
- **Summary:** an important section of the LinkedIn profile, where users can give information about their mission, accomplishments, and goals, and showcase their career and experience (LinkedIn Newsroom, 2018) as it relates to the company.
- The work experience section related to the current job in the Case Company.

### **5.5.3 Semi-structured interviews with employees (Phase 3-RQ3)**

34 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 Company employees chosen to represent employees with different employment tenure, hierarchical roles, and contract types to ensure the variety of the sample. Among these 34 interviews, 22 interviews conducted with employees who had a LinkedIn account were selected for analysis.



The questions were guided by the questionnaire (see Appendix 3) built on the basis of Margolis and Hansen’s interview protocol (2002). The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The text of interviews conducted in Italian was translated into English. It’s important to underline that at that time the Company did not have any guidelines for social media use. The description of the approaches to data collection is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Approach to data collection**

<b>Type of data</b>	<b>Approach to data collection</b>
The extent of social media use	Interviews
Organizational identity score	Social media data from LinkedIn accounts
Nature of organizational identity	Interviews

## **5.6 Data analysis**

### **5.6.1 Analysis of the data collected from the corporate social media pages of HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2)**

In order to reveal the corporate identity of the analyzed companies, following Devereux and colleagues’ (2017) framework presented in Chapter 4, firstly platform/s companies used and the number of these platforms were identified. Then I focused on understanding the content these platforms contain and tried to explore why it was created, and on analyzing the stakeholder engagement, and the nature of

this engagement. Finally, I considered organizations' interaction with their social media audience.

A detailed description of this approach to data collection and data analysis with regards to each social media the companies used is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Data collection and analysis methodology**

	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>YouTube</b>
<b>Audience</b>	- Number of fans (number of users who like the page) <sup>1</sup>	- Number of followers (number of users who follow the page) <sup>1</sup>	- Number of followers (number of users who follow the page) <sup>2</sup>	- Number of subscribers (total number of channel subscribers) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Aspects considered</b>	- Call to Action Button (CTA) (There are a wide variety of CTA buttons available on Facebook to add to the company pages: book now, contact us, send message, send email, call now, use app, play game, shop now, see offers, sign up, watch video (Facebook Business, 2014) <sup>1</sup>	- Type of page: (LinkedIn offers three types of pages: Company page, showcase page (an extension of the company page) and career page (to attract talents and to quickly and easily provide candidates with a personalized look into a company, culture, and jobs) <sup>1</sup>	- N/A	- Featured video <sup>1</sup>
<b>Content analysis</b>	- Presence of the defined publishing calendar (the posts are planned and published regularly) <sup>1</sup>	- Presence of the publishing calendar (the posts are planned and published regularly) <sup>1</sup> - Internal or external content <sup>1</sup>	- The most used hashtags <sup>3</sup> - Type of tweets (categories: original, reshare and reply (Fanpage	- Type of videos (categories were created manually based on the types of videos available on the company's

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Type of posts (categories: status, picture, link, video, questions, offer, music, slideshow, others (Fanpage Karma, 2018)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Internal or external content<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Typology of internal content<sup>1,2</sup></li> <li>- Top posts (total reactions, comments, and shares)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Typology of internal content<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Karma, 2018)<sup>2</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main typologies of original tweets<sup>1,2</sup></li> <li>- Most retweeted tweets<sup>3</sup></li> <li>- Top mentioned content topics<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p>YouTube channel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interviews with professionals;</li> <li>informative/promotional videos;</li> <li>company videos-stories;</li> <li>CEO and employees' interviews;</li> <li>tutorial videos;</li> <li>conference recordings;</li> <li>workshops)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Main created playlists<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Most popular videos (the most-viewed video on the channel)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Understanding frequency, engagement, and interaction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General Level of engagement (It is the average amount of likes, comments and shares per day, divided by the number of fans (Fanpage Karma, 2018)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Posts per day (average number of posts per day)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Posts per month (approximate average number of post per month)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Likes per post (approximate average number of post likes per month)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Twitter engagement (It is the total number of users' interactions on one day divided by the number of followers. This includes retweets and favorites (Fanpage Karma, 2018)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Tweet interaction (It is the number of reactions divided by the tweets and divided by the fans (Fanpage Karma, 2018)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Tweets per day (average number of tweets per day)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Video views (total number of all the video views)<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Related pages (pages related to the main page:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Related groups (LinkedIn groups provide a place for professionals in</li> </ul>		

	e.g. branches or associated partner pages) <sup>1</sup>	the same industry or with similar interests to share content, find answers, post, and view jobs, make contacts, and establish themselves as industry experts) (LinkedIn Help, 2018) <sup>1</sup> - Number of employees on LinkedIn <sup>1</sup>		
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<sup>1</sup>Manual data collection; <sup>2</sup>Data collection with the help of Fanpage Karma; <sup>3</sup>Data collection with the help of Twittonomy

### **5.6.2 Analysis of the data collected from publicly available employees' LinkedIn profiles and internal data on employees' seniority of service, type of contract and age (Phase 3-RQ3)**

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and linear regression, as the latter can visualize the relationship between two or more independent and dependent variables. The analysis was conducted with the help of SPSS Statistics.

Among 62 employees, 45 have LinkedIn accounts. Thus, the dataset comprises 45 employees. For each employee the following variables are present:

*Independent:*

- Seniority of service (defined on a scale 0-3):
  - 0 = 0-2;
  - 1 = 3-5;
  - 2 = 6-10; and
  - 3 = 11+ years of service.

- Type of contract, differentiated between:
  - Permanent employees: contract = 0, and
  - Contract agents with temporary contracts and freelancers: contract=1.
  
- Employee age, using the categories proposed by the 49th report on social media use in Italy (2015):
  - Group 1 = 18-29;
  - Group 2 = 30-49;
  - Group 3 = 50-64; and
  - Group 4 = 65+ years.

*Dependent:*

A created bespoke measure, on a scale of 0-10, of organizational identity intended to register how strongly employees felt a sense of belonging to the Case Company and projected their organizational identity through their personal LinkedIn accounts. This produced a figure aggregating five variables that capture the extent to which employees project their organizational image on their personal LinkedIn profiles, based on whether:

- The employee has a LinkedIn profile;
- The employee’s LinkedIn profile is linked to their employer profile;
- The employee specifies the name of the Case Company in the job title/headline;

- The employee states the name of the Case Company in their LinkedIn profile summary;
- The employee describes their main work responsibilities and whether they provide a brief introduction to the Case Company.

Each of these five variables was weighted 0 where this information was not present and two where it was available.

### **5.6.3 Analysis of semi-structured interviews with employees and categorization of their organizational identity scores (Phase 4-RQ4)**

Diverse approaches were applied to the analysis of the qualitative data. This included analyzing the data following Kroezen and Heugen's (2012) protocol in order to identify and define the concepts and constructs, as well as with the help of the principal component analysis to identify main groups of words. The nature of the organizational identity also tried to be categorized according to the Lux's (1995) categories of organizational dimensions that organizations can convey to its stakeholders created based on the Guilford's (1959) analysis of 4,000 adjectives that people used to describe each other. I decided not to proceed with these pilot data analysis approaches due to their inability to fully interpret and represent the study findings. Nevertheless, they still helped me to understand the data better, to practice the coding of the qualitative data, as well as to inform the final data coding.

### **5.6.3.1 Extend of social media use**

Following Heinrichs and colleagues (2011) the data on employees' social media use were manually classified into three categories including employees with low, moderate and high social media use.

To classify the data to these categories I considered employees' relationship with social media, and the frequency of their social media use for both professional and personal purposes. To cross-check and triangulate the results of this analysis additional data obtained from employees on the type of social media content the company publishes was analyzed to verify their effective use and knowledge of social media platforms.

### **5.6.3.2 Organizational identity score**

The data on employees organizational identity collected and analyzed in the previous phase (Phase 3-RQ3) were also grouped into three relevant categories including employees with a:

- Low organizational identity (i.e. 2-3);
- Moderate organizational identity (i.e. 4-6); and
- High organizational identity (i.e. 7-8) score.

The aim here was to register how strongly employees felt a sense of belonging to the Case Company and projected their organizational identity through their personal LinkedIn accounts.

The organizational identity score was assigned based on the aforementioned bespoke measure created on a scale of 0-10 (see section 5.7.2 of this chapter).

### **5.6.3.3 Nature of organizational identity**

Instead of analyzing phrases as was done by Corley (2004) in his original study, similarly to Lux (1995), I analyzed adjectives used by the interviewees to describe the Case Company together with the adjectives they used when responding to broader questions about the Case Company to understand the nature of their organizational identity (whether strategic or cultural) (Corley, 2004). The goal was to identify the types of attributes that may constitute participants' perceived organizational identity which can be considered possible indicators of the content of the participant's perceived organizational identity (Bartel, 2001).

Crosscheck of the adjectives each interviewee mentioned and the ones they used in their responses to broader questions about the Company revealed that interviewees utilize similar adjectives for the former and the latter. These adjectives were then classified. It is worthwhile to specify that most of the employees used the same adjectives; few synonyms were identified and classified under the same relevant adjective (e.g. fluid, and in movement).

Then, the adjectives were clustered according to the two levels - individual, organizational - that emerged from this analysis. With the individual level, I associated the human's behavior and the organizational climate (i.e. needs of employees) as well as their individual aspects/characteristics (e.g. young age). To the organizational level, I linked all the issues and characteristics related to the Company



itself (i.e. the distinctive competencies of the Case Company, its attitude, and goal orientation).

### **5.7 Ethical considerations: Confidentiality and sensitivity**

Relationships of trust were established with the respondents. In order to maintain their confidentiality, the names of interviewees and the Case Company were anonymized and any identifying information was removed from this thesis and the relevant articles. It was also agreed with interviewees that only aggregated results of this research would be disseminated. Thus participants felt comfortable to share sensitive and confidential information.

Both soft and hard copies of the recorded interviews and information received from the Case Company were stored in a secure place.

Finally, only publicly available information posted on the organizational and personal employees' social media pages was collected. However, some scholars still raised ethical concerns regarding publicly available social media data – "...it is problematic for researchers to justify their actions as ethical simply because the data are accessible... The process of evaluating the research ethics cannot be ignored simply because the data are seemingly public" (Boyd & Crawford, 2012, p.672). One of the approaches to address these concerns was to seek informed consent from social media users (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). I followed this advice and informed all employees with the help of the Case Company CEO that the data will be collected both from the organizational and personal social media pages. Finally, I also presented the findings of my research to all employees at the company meeting.

## **5.8 Critical reflections on my role as a researcher**

I have an educational and professional background in social media and social media marketing. I often mentioned these to study participants. This increased my credibility as a scholar, and the interviewees felt free to use social media related terminology during the interviews.

While collecting and scrutinizing the data for my PhD research, I tried to keep my mind open of any assumptions, stereotypes or biases. Though I acknowledge that my educational and professional background, as well as those of my PhD supervisors, might have potentially affected my research strategy (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Overall, PhD taught me an important lesson – not to make any assumptions while scrutinizing the data, which I had a habit of doing prior to my PhD, but to look at it always with a very critical eye. This prevented me from premature conclusions and helped to ensure higher reliability of my research findings discussed in the following section.

## **5.9 Research quality**

Scholarly research is required to respond to several important criteria to assure future readers that its findings are reliable. There are diverse tactics for evaluating the quality of scholarly research. Following the strategy adopted in previous PhD research (e.g. Stringer, 1999, as cited in Waring, 2000) I followed the criteria discussed below:

- “Credibility – established by prolonged engagement with participants; multiple sources of data for triangulation purposes; participants check and verify the accuracy of data and information recorded; peer debriefing which allows the researcher to reflect on research processes with a colleague.
- Transferability - established by describing the means for applying the research findings to other contexts. This is done by giving detailed descriptions that enable the readers to identify similarities between the research settings and other contexts.
- Dependability and confirmability - readers should be able to see an audit trail that clearly describes the processes of data collection and analysis.”

### **5.9.1 Credibility**

Multiple data sources were analyzed in my research to increase its reliability. However, more detailed observations on the respondents’ behavior could have potentially increased the credibility of my research and ensured full triangulation of its findings.

I nurtured and preserved a good relationship with the respondents and with the Case Company CEO. I also presented some of the findings of my research to the Case Company employees, who confirmed that my preliminary findings and conclusions were accurate. Moreover, the research strategy, as well as study analysis were constantly discussed with my PhD supervisors, one of which helped me with the data collection, to identify any emergent issues and to timely resolve them. Finally, the preliminary study findings were discussed at diverse international conferences (e.g.

European Group for Organization Studies Colloquium 2019) and workshops (British Academy of Management Doctoral Symposium 2018). The complete list of the conferences attended and events, where the research results were disseminated, is included in Appendix 1.

### **5.9.2 Transferability**

Qualitative research, as well as single-case studies, are often criticized for not allowing full generalizability of findings (Mason, 2002). One of the recommendations to address this limitation is to sample “typical organization”. This was adopted in this study.

### **5.9.3 Dependability and confirmability**

Back in 1995, Walsham stated that “convincing the reader of the validity of case study research is as much a matter of rhetorical style and flair as it is of accuracy and care in matters of theory and method” (as cited in Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998, p.288). Thus I have done my best in my PhD research to support my findings with evidence and to present them in a tabular format (Darke et al., 1998). Finally, I also tried to present my PhD findings as an engaging and convincing story (Yin, 2009).

## **5.10 Conclusions**

This chapter has outlined the research questions set out for empirical study and has justified the research design adopted. It has also described and aimed to validate methodological choices made throughout this study (e.g. selection of cases to study or approaches to data collection/analysis). Finally, it also provides reflections on my role as a scholar and the research ethics and quality.

In summary, after analyzing diverse HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2), one company was selected as a Case Company where I first conducted a quantitative (Phase 3-RQ3) and later qualitatively (Phase4-RQ4) studies. Both secondary (e.g. social media data) and primary (semi-structured interviews) data collection methods were employed in my research. The results of this data analysis will be presented and discussed in the following chapter.

## 6 Chapter 6:

# MEASURING/OBSERVING CORPORATE IDENTITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (Phase 2-RQ2)

### 6.1 Introduction

The background scoping work (Chapter 3 – RQ1) revealed that social media have created a multitude of ways for organizations, as well as for their employees to develop and disseminate their corporate identity, though little is still known about how organizations use their social media profiles for these purposes. The empirical research<sup>3</sup> presented in this chapter aimed to address this knowledge gap. Building on the previous corporate identity and social media research, and adopting an existing framework explaining the relationship between social media and corporate identity, it reports on an analysis of social media profiles of 12 international HR consulting companies. In particular, it explores the platforms they use, type of content they

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<sup>3</sup> The empirical research presented in this chapter was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Gilda Antonelli (University of Sannio), Prof. Marcello Martinez (University of Campania) and Dr. Aizhan Tursunbayeva (University of Edinburgh), and its findings have been disseminated in the following ways:

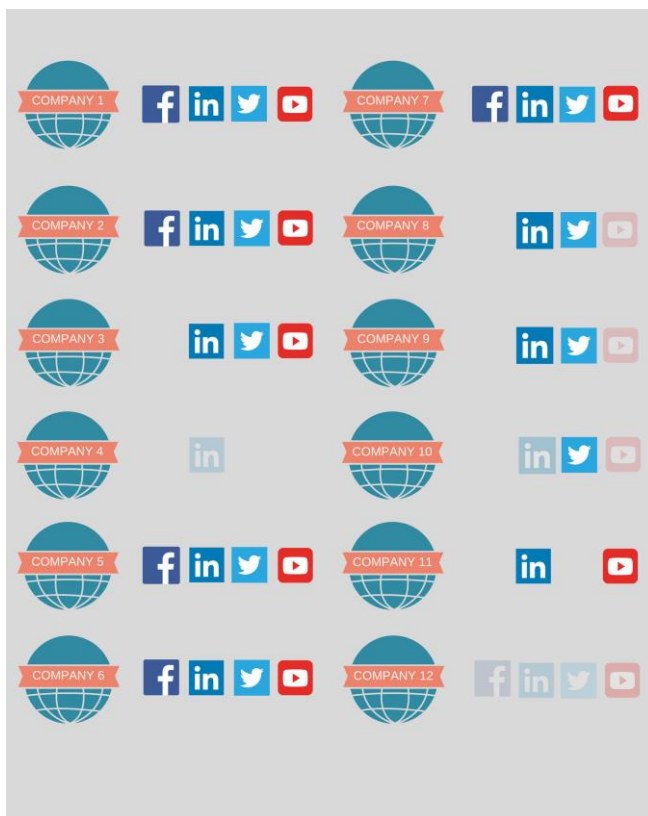
1. Di Lauro, S., Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2020). Grasping corporate identity from social media: Analysis of HR consulting companies. In A. Lazazzara, F. Ricciardi, S. Za. Exploring digital ecosystems: Organizational and human challenges. Springer series: Lecture Notes in Information Systems and Organisation. ISBN: 978-3-030-23664-9.
2. Di Lauro, S., Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Grasping corporate identity from social media: Analysis of HR consulting companies. Conference of the Italian Chapter of Association for Information Systems. University of Pavia. 12-13/10/2018.

publish, their approaches for stakeholder engagement and interaction for building a stronger organizational image/corporate identity.

## 6.2 Choice of platform

The findings revealed that the twelve HR consulting companies analyzed are present only on social networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and media sharing networks (YouTube). Figure 5 shows the social media platforms each HR consulting company is present on.

**Figure 5. Types of social media the companies analyzed use**



As illustrated in Figure 5, LinkedIn is the most frequently used social media. Indeed, all analyzed companies have an official LinkedIn page. However, only nine out of twelve companies are active on LinkedIn, thus regularly share their updates.

Twitter is the second most used social network platform: ten out of twelve companies use it. However, it is the first, together with LinkedIn, in terms of companies' level of activity (nine out of twelve companies are active on Twitter).

Facebook is the least used social network. It is actively used only by five companies, and another company, which only has an official page without any recently published content.

Finally, the most common media-sharing network (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2018), YouTube, is actively used by seven companies. Four companies have an official channel on YouTube, but they are not using it and one company does not have a YouTube channel.

As “social media are all about sharing and interaction” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.66) Company4 and Company12 were not included in the analysis presented below as they did not share any content on their official pages in the past twelve months. The remaining companies are all active on the social media channels they use.

### **6.3 Choice of content**

The analysis demonstrated that none of the companies has a fully integrated social media strategy, as none of them is a frequent and regular simultaneous publisher of the content on all of the platforms adopted. For example, none of the companies



shared the same update on all of its social media simultaneously. The analysis also demonstrated that none of the analyzed companies published content on Facebook regularly implying that they do not have a pre-defined social media publishing calendar, while some companies (Company7 and Company8) have a structured publishing plan on LinkedIn.

Typology of content companies posted differed by the social media platform. Almost all companies present on Facebook (Company2, Company5, Company7) published internal content related to their employees' company life, especially pictures. These, together with employees' video interviews were the most popular in terms of total reactions, comments, and shares (see Appendix 4 for details).

The publishing calendars on LinkedIn were richer, although not always well defined, and looked to be more dynamic and professional. These included case studies, reports, whitepapers, insights on trends, informative and promotional tests, announcements about workshops, trainings and/or webinars, as well as content related to companies' values, culture, and identity. The latter comprised awards and recognitions, internal testimonial interviews and blog posts from the LinkedIn publishing platform - Pulse. One company (Company8) even had a dedicated career page containing employees' and top managers' interviews and photos taken during or outside working hours (e.g. during outdoor team buildings) and demonstrating a friendly working environment (see Appendix 5 for details). It can be deduced from the content analyzed that the primary aim of this career page was to attract talents.

Twitter was used by all of the active companies. Team life pictures were again the main typology of original content posted by the companies analyzed (posted by

seven out of nine companies with Twitter). Live-tweeting during events and pictures of these events were also a very common practice and content. Moreover, all of the companies used hashtags related to their business activity (e.g. #HR is the most used hashtag among all companies). However while most of the companies use trending and content hashtags (e.g. #assessment #leadership), three companies (Company1, Company5, and Company8) frequently used a personalized hashtag (i.e. brand hashtag) with their company name (see Appendix 6 for details).

Finally, YouTube channel was mostly used by companies to show company videos including stories about the company, to share informative/promotional videos, and to help clients with tutorial videos. The most preferred content posted by users included informative videos by company employees and managers on company values and culture (see Appendix 7 for details). Only one company (Company6) had a featured default video with a generic presentation about the company, which automatically plays when any user opens their YouTube channel.

#### **6.4 Engagement**

The level of engagement was generally low on all the social media pages analyzed. Even though there were companies with a slightly higher level of engagement on some specific platforms, none had the same (high) level of engagement on all the social media platforms adopted.

On Facebook, almost all companies shared less than a post per day. The level of engagement on Facebook was mostly inversely proportional to the number of fans.

For example, Company2 had a low number of fans (526) and the highest level of engagement (0.34%) and Company7 had the highest number of fans (25K) and the lowest level of engagement (0.0047%). Company7 also had the highest number of posts per day (7.5) (see Appendix 4 for details).

Company7 and Company8 had the highest number of followers on LinkedIn (209K and 148K respectively). However, here, the number of followers did not affect much the total number of likes per post. Company8 had a Career page and it had the highest number of employees linked to the page (4.3K) (see Appendix 5 for details), which potentially can also represent the total number of the company employees. However, considering the aforementioned company's page goals and focus, which as emerged from this analysis was to attract talents, it is worthwhile to assume that the company paid great attention to its employees' network. Company8 also had the highest number of followers on Twitter (20K) and the highest number of tweets per day (9.0). The level of engagement (0.29%) of Company8 was the highest among other companies (see Appendix 6 for details), while Company6 had the lowest level of engagement (0.0028%).

Company6 had a YouTube channel with the highest number of subscribers (2.7K) and video views (410K). Overall, the number of subscribers on this social media channel was directly proportional to the total number of views (see Appendix 7 for details).

## **6.5 Interaction**

The concept of interaction is related to the concept of engagement. However, the interaction involves also how the companies respond to users' engagement. Similarly to the engagement, the level of interaction was overall pretty low, especially on Facebook. The analysis revealed that the companies used social media only for information push purposes, as such as a one-way interaction tool. Only one company (Company9) responded to their LinkedIn and Twitter users timely providing them requested information, and trying to establish a dialogue. Moreover, this company created interaction not only through its official social media channels but also through the public (personal) social media accounts of its employees (in particular on Twitter). Here the employees retweeted the company posts, replied to comments, and mentioned the company in their posts. Moreover, analyzing the top retweets, I noticed that the content related to employees' life and live corporate events generated more interaction also from the external users' side. Detailed information on the user interaction findings can be found in Appendix 6.

Similar high-level interaction between companies and personal (public) employee accounts on LinkedIn was notable also by Company7, Company8, and Company9, which shared LinkedIn Pulse articles written by their employees or consultants.

Finally, on Facebook, most of the companies used "call now" or "send message" CTA buttons, instead of "shop now" or "see offers" buttons (see Appendix 4 for details).

## **6.6 Discussion**

Previous research has already identified social media as a relevant and useful tool for building and managing corporate identity. In this research, the aim was to explore whether and how companies from the specific HR consulting industry actually use social media to develop and strengthen their corporate identity/organizational image.

The companies analyzed used several social media types. This is in line with the findings of previous generic social media research (Gilpin, 2010) mentioning the adoption of diverse several social media as a successful strategy for expanding the range of their organizational image. The companies, however, were present only on two typologies of social media such as social networks and media sharing networks out of 10 categories proposed by Hootsuite (2017). This finding is similar to the findings of research on social media use by other organizations, for example, by public health organizations (Tursunbayeva et al., 2017), most of the non-profit organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2013) and by Fortune 500 Companies (Nanji, 2017) which named Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn as the most commonly used social media.

Overall, most of the selected companies seemed to recognize the importance of using social media for sharing and demonstrating externally a positive organizational image (corporate identity). The companies did it with the help of company life pictures and video interviews of CEO and employees. This once more confirms the effectiveness of posting visual materials on social media (Devereux et al., 2017). However, companies can do more by taking advantage also of the latest types of visual materials such as infographics and GIFs. Another approach to demonstrating

corporate identity was observed from the use of personalized hashtag with the company's name. Indeed, marketing professionals have already referred to this as an effective strategy for promoting the brand online and achieving an extended reach for the company with the help of users (Wishpond, 2013).

These findings demonstrate, however, that none of the companies had a fully integrated social media strategy focused on aspects that could be helpful to grasp their corporate identity. Some companies were found to be better structured on some specific social media platforms. For example, it was notable that they published posts according to a pre-defined publishing calendar. Publishing calendars, overall, are recommended to be used (Killian & McManus, 2015) to maintain the audience's expectations and to select the best time/date to publish content. This is usually done after carefully studying social media insights and/or other analytics (Killian & McManus, 2015).

Moreover, the type of content companies posted differed by social media platforms. This finding is in line with Gilpin's (2010) study reporting a high level of message differentiation among the different communication channels and suggesting that each social media plays a distinct role in constructing an organizational image. However, I observed that the companies analyzed did not link the content posted on different social media. Furthermore, the content, for which it was possible to track this connection, was not well adapted to each individual platform. For example, some tweets were shared also on Facebook, without taking into consideration the word limits available on each platform (e.g. Twitter has a limit of 280 characters, while Facebook post character limit is 63,206). The hashtags were also used both on

Twitter and Facebook. However, if they are essential on Twitter, their use is mostly pointless on Facebook.

This analysis demonstrated that having a high number of fans/followers does not always mean having a higher number of likes. This counter-intuitive result can be possibly explained by the fact that the followers of these companies are not well targeted (e.g. many followers are not related to the business of the companies) or that the followers do not consider the content of particular interest to them. An exception to this was observed on YouTube, where the number of subscribers was always more or less directly proportional to the total number of video views. Sharing too many posts per day on Facebook can also be considered a cause of having a low level of engagement on the platform (e.g. Company7), as sharing more than 1 or 2 posts per day can push the boundaries of civil participation (Hutchinson, 2018).

While I observed some evidence that companies were paying attention to the content they publish and the organizational image this content can project to their followers/fans (i.e its visual representation), less attention was paid by the companies on interaction with followers. This is evident not only from the company's low interaction or low response rates to their followers but also from the written content posted by the companies. Very rarely companies' asked questions or tried to involve users with the content they posted by, for example, sharing followers' comments or commenting on followers' posts (Wilson et al., 2011). Overall, the concept of interaction closely relates to the concept of co-creation - "it is through the interaction with the stakeholders that the identity would develop" (Devereux et al., 2017, p.124). However, the idea of co-creation with external stakeholders (e.g. clients or possible clients) seemed to be neglected in most of the companies' social media strategies

observable from their social media with the exception of LinkedIn where some companies liked or shared positive content written (and published) by their employees. This type of content is generally considered more credible (Dreher, 2014), as employees are often nominated as ambassadors for promoting company culture and values - components of organizational identity. Employees' important role in projecting externally organizational identity on social media has been empirically confirmed also in the following stage of my PhD research (Phase 3-RQ3).

Finally, also the "call now" or "send message" CTA buttons chosen frequently by the companies demonstrate that rather than only selling their product/services, companies started to be eager to understand their customers' needs and to create opportunities for dialogue.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter reported on the results of the analysis of how HR consulting companies use their social media to project their corporate identity (RQ2). Building on previous corporate identity and social media research, and adopting an existing framework explaining the relationship between social media and corporate identity, it explored social media platforms HR consulting they use, type of content they publish, and their approaches for stakeholder engagement and interaction for building a stronger organizational image/corporate identity. Diverse off-the-shelf applications were used for collecting social media data for the period between January and December 2017. The results of this analysis can help to understand how organizations (specifically



HR consulting companies) use social media to project and strengthen their corporate identity, and what organizations from other sectors can learn from them. This research also helped to identify a suitable Case Company used in the following phases of my empirical research aimed at answering RQ3 (Phase 3) and RQ4 (Phase 4). The results of these analyses are presented in the following chapters, while the research strategy and methodology used in these case studies are presented in Chapter 5.

## **7 Chapter 7: Measuring organizational identity on LinkedIn (Phase 3-RQ3)**

### **MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY ON LINKEDIN (Phase 3-RQ3)**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The findings presented in the previous chapter illustrated how corporate identity can be potentially observed from organizational social media pages (Phase 2-RQ2). However, in the era of social media, every single member of an organization has an equal opportunity to project their own perception of the organization externally via their personal social media accounts. Nevertheless, the role of employees in organizational identity projection has been mostly overlooked in academic research. The empirical case study presented in this chapter<sup>4</sup> aimed to address this gap by exploring how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to observe how they manifest organizational identity, and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age play in this. The selected Case Company is one

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<sup>4</sup> The empirical research presented in this chapter was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Gilda Antonelli (University of Sannio), Prof. Marcello Martinez (University of Campania) and Dr. Aizhan Tursunbayeva (University of Edinburgh), and its findings have been disseminated in the following ways:

- Di Lauro, S., Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Measuring organizational identity via LinkedIn: The role of employees' tenure, contract type and age. *Studi Organizzativi*, 2.
- Di Lauro, S., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Understanding employees' perspectives on organizational identity change from their LinkedIn accounts. In F. Cabitza, A. Lazazzara, M. Magni, S. Za. *Organizing for Digital Economy: societies, communities and individuals*.

of the HR consulting companies analyzed during the previous research phase (see Chapter 6). Descriptive statistics and linear regression were used to analyze the data that was manually collected from employees' public LinkedIn profiles, as well as internal data provided by the Case Company HR department (i.e. data on seniority of service, contract type and employee age).

## **7.2 Findings**

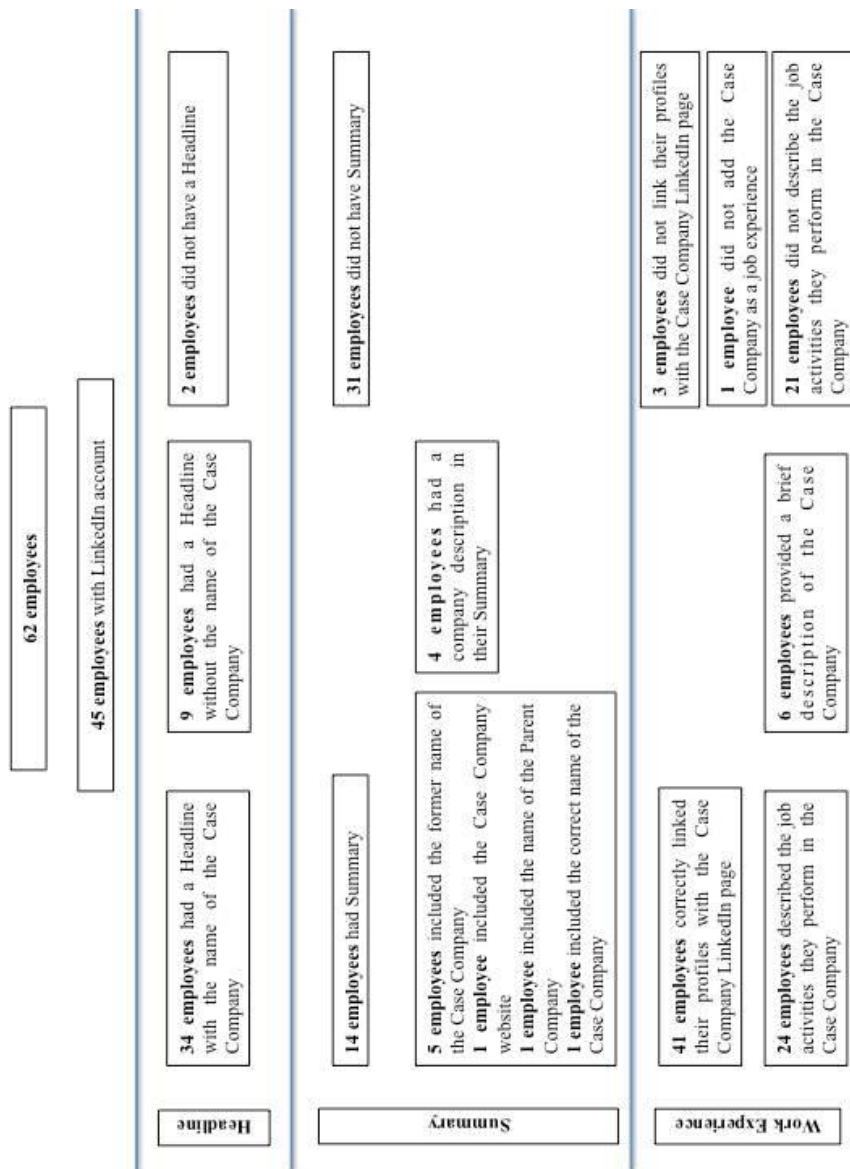
Among 45 employees who have a LinkedIn account, 34 have a headline or a job title with the name of the Case Company. Two employees do not have a headline and nine employees have a headline without the name of the Case Company. The latter must be intentional since according to LinkedIn's protocol only the current job position will be shown in the employee profile unless the user adds the headline manually.

31 employees have left their Summary sections empty while 14 employees use them only to describe themselves. Only five employees state the name of the Case Company in their Summaries, using different definitions. Of these, five employees continue to use the former name of the Case Company, one employee mentions the website of the Case Company, while another gives the name of the parent company. It is worthwhile to mention that only one employee updated the summary with the new name of the Case Company.

Moreover, among these eight employees, only four added a Case Company description into their Summaries (three of them with permanent contracts). However, all of these descriptions were different from each other.

41 employees correctly linked their profile with the Case Company LinkedIn page. In the experience section, dedicated to professional positions and experience (e.g. jobs), 21 employees did not describe the job activities they perform for the Case Company. See Figure 6 for details.

**Figure 6: Overview of employees LinkedIn accounts**



The average seniority of service among the employees who has a LinkedIn account is 1.18 (out of 0-3). The percentage of contractors and freelancers who work with a temporary contract/VAT tax number is 42.2%. The average employee age was 2.02 (out of 4). The average organizational identity ratio, where the minimum was 0 and the maximum 8 (out of 10) among all employees was 4.71. The average organizational identity ratio for regular employees was 5, while for temporary contractees/freelance employees 4.32. The average organizational identity by employee's seniority of service was found to be as follows: 0=4.39; 1=4.43; 2=5.21; 3=4.83. The average organizational identity for employees from different age groups was as follows: 1=3.83; 2=4.85; 3=5; 4=4.

The Model summary box demonstrates that the multiple R-square equaled to 0.039. As such only 3.9% of the variance in organizational identity in the studied case is accounted for its shared relationship with the seniority of service, contract type and employee age (Table 4).

**Table 4. Model summary**

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. error of the estimate</b>
1	.198	.039	-.031	1.920

Regression analysis (Table 5) demonstrated that P values are respectively: 0.680, 0.435, and 0.929. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at any reasonable level of statistical significance for independent coefficients.

**Table 5. Regression analysis results**

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Std. error</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>Pr(&gt; t )</b>
(Constant)	4.659	1.221		.000
Seniority of service	.138	.333	.082	.680
Contract type	-.519	.659	-.137	.435
Employee age	.054	.600	.017	.929

This means that seniority of service, contract type, and employee age do not significantly influence organizational identity. However, there is a faint hint of a possible negative effect on the organizational identity of having a temporary contract or being a freelancer, as opposed to being a regular full-time employee ( $b_2 = -0.519$ ). This effect could become significant given a big enough sample size. But even then, the magnitude of the effect is projected to be relatively small.

### **7.3 Discussion**

This study, contrary to most of the existing studies that are not explicit about the criteria they employ to measure organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013), proposes a unique framework developed for measuring/observing the organizational identity individual employees project via their LinkedIn profiles. Moreover, contrary to the previous studies that focused on internal social media (Madsen, 2016) this study

focused on an external social media channel – LinkedIn, which is also the world’s largest professional social network on the Internet (LinkedIn Newsroom, 2018).

As I could not reject the null hypothesis at any reasonable level of statistical significance, the findings indicate that employees’ type of contract, seniority of service and age do not have a significant influence on the organizational identity that employees project on social media. This finding does not fully support the results of previous generic organizational identity research, which concluded that:

- The greater the employees’ seniority of service, the greater their organizational identity (March & Simons, 1958);
- Full-time employees with permanent contracts contribute more strongly to organizational identity compared to those with temporary contracts (Dačiulytė & Aranauskaitė, 2012); and
- Organizational identity varies between employees from different age groups (Çakinberk et al., 2011).

However, it is noticeable that overall the Case Company has relatively low organizational identity attractiveness to employees, even among employees with longer service. Employees dedicated very little attention to the Case Company on their personal LinkedIn profiles, thus contributing little or nothing to its organizational image. However, I believe that this is more a matter of employees’ carelessness towards their personal LinkedIn accounts (as manifested by their failure to update their LinkedIn profiles) and/or the organizational identity they project, rather than, for example, due to the lack of acceptance of the new Case Company name (Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007). It could also be a lack of a clear branding/re-

branding strategy communicated to and shared by employees that caused these results. Employees might also perceive LinkedIn as an instrument for individual networking and not for identifying or representing the organizational identity of their employer. Thus employees may potentially aim to use LinkedIn for exploring new job opportunities and not for demonstrating to others their belonging to some particular organization. Finally, the non-standardized description of the Case Company in the Summary section of the employees' profiles, which emerged from the analysis, might be caused by the diversity of the two business activities/lines that the Case Company has and that different employees are involved in.

Several practical contributions were implemented in the Case Company based on the findings of this research. These aimed at addressing the emerging need for explaining social media use management practices to employees and included creating LinkedIn usage guidelines that were distributed among all Case Company employees, as well as conducting two open group seminars and some individual LinkedIn training sessions for any interested employees. All of these activities helped to explain to employees how to use LinkedIn for professional and personal purposes, as well as the importance for the organization of the organizational image that they project externally via their personal profiles.

As a result, seven months after the first data collection (and only two months after the aforementioned seminars), screening of employees' public LinkedIn profiles demonstrated that:

- 87% of employees with LinkedIn profiles updated their LinkedIn headline with the new Case Company name;



- 43% of employees brought their summary to a standardized format; and
- All employees correctly linked their profiles to one of the two Case Company LinkedIn pages.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

The empirical case study presented in this chapter aimed at exploring how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how employees manifest organizational identity, and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age can play in this. The findings demonstrate that none of the selected variables significantly affected the organizational identity that employees projected on their LinkedIn accounts, as such I aimed to also understand the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and the nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees can hold about their employer (Phase 4-RQ4). The findings of this study are presented in the following chapter, while a detailed description of the research strategy and methodology for this study are provided in Chapter 5.

## **8 Chapter 8:**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND THE NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY (Phase 4- RQ4)**

### **8.1 Introduction**








This particular study of my PhD research focused on the relationship between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and the nature of organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (RQ4). This was examined in the Case Company selected in one of the previous research phases (Phase 2-RQ2). Data were collected by interviewing 22 employees selected to represent employees with different employment tenure, hierarchical roles, and contract types to ensure the variety of the sample. The data collected from employees' LinkedIn accounts during research phase 3 (RQ3) was also used in this analysis. The study draws on the categories of the nature of the organizational identity of Corley (2004), as well as the categories of the extent of social media use proposed by Heinrichs and colleagues (2011).

The findings of this specific part of the research are presented in this chapter, while a detailed description of the research strategy and methodology for this study are provided in Chapter 5.

## 8.2 Social media use and organizational identity

The findings revealed that among the 22 employees interviewed, there was a homogenous distribution among the three categories of employees' use of social media - low, moderate and high -, and that the majority of employees had a moderate organizational identity score (see Figure 7). These results suggest that organizational identity might not depend on employee's use of social media (in particular LinkedIn).

**Figure 7. Employees' level of organizational identity and social media use**

	LOW OI (2 employees)	MODERATE OI (18 employees)	HIGH OI (2 employees)
LOW SM USE (6 employees)			
MODERATE SM USE (7 employees)			
HIGH SM USE (9 employees)			

OI-organizational identity; SM-social media

To understand what other factors could explain the variance in employees' perceived organizational identity, I also looked at the four extreme cases of employees' low and high organizational identity. Both employees who demonstrated high organizational identity, despite describing the Case Company as fluid or in constant

movement, had a clear idea of their role in the Case Company. Moreover, both employees believed that the Case Company had a stronger market position compared to its competitors. One of these employees also had a perception that the Case Company has strong values (e.g.: *“it is a company with many values... and our mission is wellness”* [Respondent 5]), though this employee also noted that these values might not coincide with the values perceived by other employees in the Case Company (e.g. *“these are the company values for me. I'm not sure that they necessarily coincide with the rest of the company, because we can have different values with [CEO]”* [Respondent 5]). The other employee with a strong organizational identity also had a perception that he was important for the company only because he had *“historic memories of organizational changes that “younger” employees in the company did not have”* [Respondent 9]. Also, he mentioned that he now feels more identified with the Case Company, as in the past he risked to lose his job because of the economic crisis.

The other two employees with low organizational identity both described the Case Company as unstructured (in a negative sense), demonstrating their unhappiness about the vagueness of their role in the Case Company (e.g.: *“(Laughs) you tell me what my role is!?”* [Respondent 16] or *“so even my role and my duties were not clear right away, not even with whom I should interface”* [Respondent 10]), and about where and how to find information useful for their work, which they felt they had to find by themselves (e.g.: *“onboarding process was absent at my entrance, thus I had to find all information myself”* [Respondent 10]).

### 8.3 Nature of organizational identity

Both strategic and cultural aspects of the employees' organizational identity emerged from the analysis, although the former prevailed (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Classification of the adjectives used by employees**

Strategic aspect	Number of times mentioned	Cultural aspect	Number of times mentioned
Fluid/in movement	11	Good organizational climate	5
Unstructured	8	Young	5
Scientific	8	Historical	5
Innovative	7	Collaborative	4
International	6	Sympathetic	2
High quality products and services	6	Ethical	2
Leader	6	Trustworthy	2
Belongs to a family business	3	Motivated	1
Structured	3		

### 8.3.1 Strategic aspect of organizational identity

Most of the adjectives used by employees related to the strategic nature of organizational identity (see Table 7). Moreover, the majority of adjectives from this category belonged to the organizational level of analysis regardless of the extent of employees' social media use. The exception to this was “scientific” adjective, which refers to the scientific approach continuously adopted by employees/individuals to develop products or to deliver customer services.

*“This company stands out for making, proposing, selling products and services that are based exclusively on scientific methods and approaches. I give you an example [...] When we build a psychodiagnostic instrument we try it as if it were a new molecule, like a drug. We try it, we experience it on very large samples. Then we do all the statistical work to make sure that it works...or that its evaluation is reliable” [Respondent 1].*

**Table 7. Adjectives related to the strategic aspect of organizational identity**

<b>Level of analysis</b>	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Low social media use</b>	<b>Medium social media use</b>	<b>High social media use</b>
Organizational	Fluid	27,3%	45,4%	27,3%
	Unstructured	25%	37,5%	37,5%
	International	0%	16,7%	83,3%

	High quality products and services	16,7%	33,3%	50%
	Leader	16,7%	50%	33,3%
	Innovative	14,3%	28,6%	57,1%
	Belongs to a family business	66,7%	0%	33,3%
	Structured	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%
Individual	Scientific	25%	0%	75%

The nature of the organizational identity of employees with high social media use was mostly associated with the international presence of the Case Company, and the scientific, and innovative approaches it adopted to develop products and to deliver services. Employees with high social media use overall were neutral to the Case Company organizational structure referring to it as neither fluid, unstructured nor structured.

Employees with medium social media use mostly perceived their Company as having a fluid organizational structure and being a leader on their market. Meanwhile, employees with low social media use mostly perceived the Company as being part of a larger family traditional business, and less of being innovative.

“[...]a company that still has a strong family root, in the sense that belonging to [name of the company group] in my opinion is felt and is important” [Respondent3].

### 8.3.2 Cultural aspect of organizational identity

Most of the adjectives referring to the cultural aspect of organizational identity belonged to the individual level of analysis (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Adjectives related to the cultural aspect of organizational identity**

Level of analysis	Adjective	Low social media use	Medium social media use	High social media use
Organizational	Good organizational climate	0%	60%	40%
	Historical	20%	60%	20%
Individual	Sympathetic	50%	0%	50%
	Young	40%	60%	0%
	Collaborative	25%	25%	50%
	Ethical	50%	0%	50%
	Trustworthy	0%	0%	100%



	Motivated	0%	0%	100%
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Organizational level of analysis emerged from the adjectives used primarily by employees with medium social media use who underlined a good organizational climate and a rich historical background of their Company. Employees who describe the Case Company as formed by young employees were middle-of-the-road users of social media. The nature of the organizational identity of employees with equally low and high social media use was both sympathetic and ethical.

*“It is a correct company [...] as such everything is done very correctly here”* [Respondent 12].

Meanwhile, employees with high social media use stressed the collaborative nature of the Case Company, which they linked also to its trustworthiness, and their motivation at work.

*“We are positioned as a trusted, reliable company”* [Respondent 17].

## **8.4 Discussion**

Building on the previous research on social media and organizational identity, I aimed to explore the relationship between the extent of employees’ social media use for professional purposes and the nature of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer. I identified here a number of patterns: Organizational identity perceptions related to innovativeness, large scale and internationalization; collaboratives and trustworthiness was associated with higher social media use;

while perceptions of smaller scale, family business and localization, as well as a differential in age, was associated with lower social media use.

Overall, the analysis revealed that the majority of employees regardless of their social media use or organizational identity levels viewed their organization as unstructured and in constant movement (fluid). This might be associated with the current goal of the Case Company – a leader in the local market in its specific sector and part of the traditional family business - to innovate and to increase its international presence as was highlighted by some interviewees.

At the organizational level, indeed, employees who have a high use of social media saw their organization mostly as international and innovative. This can be explained by the fact that this type of employees uses social media, especially LinkedIn, to be constantly updated about relevant worldwide work-related news, to be inspired with new ideas

*“LinkedIn I think is also very useful for professional development because you can see what is new” [Respondent 2].*

and to keep in touch with colleagues from international branches, and with other people they need to interact with for work. These employees saw social media as a cost-effective tool to achieve this aim

*“LinkedIn serves me to maintain contacts with the people with whom I have professional relationships” [Respondent 18].*

Vice versa, employees with low social media use see their organization mostly as belonging to a larger company group (which is an Italian family business and does not have a Company LinkedIn page) not recognizing the international aspect of the

Case Company. Though some of these employees with low/moderate organizational identity describe the Case Company as international they refer to it also as unstructured. The latter has a mostly negative meaning for them:

*“And there are also people who have many roles and this clearly makes the workload bigger [...] it is not that [the Company] is very hierarchical [...] it is more difficult to organize and therefore also internal communication is often left to a goodwill rather than to a structured process. So you always risk losing information, you risk introducing errors” [Respondent 11].*

These employees with low social media use, who see their employer as a leading local company make less use of social media and utilize different means to portray their organizational identity, when choose to do so, such as face-to-face communication or communication via personal networks rather than social media.

The employees with moderate organizational identity describe the Case Company as fluid, similarly also to some employees with high organizational identity. Here compared to the unstructured aspect of the Case Company, which employees viewed negatively, employees acknowledged the fluidity as a positive temperament of the Company.

*“[...] a company is always in turmoil. Uneasy if we want. I find it a great strength - as an imprint to change. Yes, absolutely yes. [...] because I also believe that it is a salt that gives innovation, ideas and avoids sitting down” [Respondent 25].*

At the individual level, employees with high use of social media recognize the collaborativeness and the trustworthiness as the main aspects of their colleagues, while employees with low use of social media stress the young age of their peers. A good organizational climate is a component recognized by employees with both moderate and high use of social media. The trustworthiness, in particular, is an aspect of the Case Company which emerged only from employees with high social media use. Previous research on organizational identity already recognized that the interactive qualities of social media (e.g. to facilitate the quality of organization–public conversations and to generate positive outcomes) affect key relational values of trust (Bruce & Solomon, 2013), fostering brand loyalty and communities (Laroche et al., 2012).

The fact that employees with high intensity of social media use mention frequently the adjective innovative might suggest that they see also social media as an innovative technology, as such aligned with the organizational identity of the organization they need to identify with. As such the intensity of their social media use might also change when social media becomes taken for granted. Longitudinal follow up study could help to confirm or reject this hypothesis. Moreover, these findings also do not fully support the findings of Hall and colleagues (2015) who found a relationship between employee perceptions regarding the quality of a firm's offerings and perceived organizational identification, as in this study I did not observe the relationship between the quality of the products and services the employees developed or delivered and their organizational identity.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter reported on the results of the analysis that aimed to understand the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees hold about their employer (RQ4). The aim of this particular study was also to cross-check and triangulate the findings from the previous research question (Phase 3-RQ3).

The findings of this research step illustrate that organizational identity might not depend on employees' social media use. Both strategic and cultural aspects of employees' organizational identity emerged from our analysis, although the former prevailed. The findings for the former category belonged mostly to the organizational level, while the findings for the latter category to the individual level of analysis regardless of the extent of employees' social media use.

In the following (final) chapter of my thesis, I will elaborate upon the main findings of my research, highlight its main contributions, identify its limitations, and based on these indicate areas for future scholarly research and practice.

## **9 Chapter 9:**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This final chapter begins by drawing together the analysis carried out in the previous chapters and linking them to the initial aims of this research (research questions). It then discusses theoretical contributions and practical implications concerning the corporate and organizational identity on social media, both from companies' and employees' perspectives. Finally, this chapter analyzes the research limitations, and based on these limitations makes a proposal for future research areas.

#### **9.2 Synthesis of research objectives and research findings**

The main objective of this research, informed by a scoping literature review (presented in Chapter 3), was to understand how organizational and corporate identity can be observed/measured on social media.

The specific research questions guiding the realization of these research objectives and associated findings are presented below:

- *Phase 2-RQ2(A): Which social media platforms HR consulting companies use?*

This research is one of the first studies aimed at understanding specifically the type of social media platforms used by HR consulting companies. The findings revealed that each of the HR consulting companies analyzed used diverse social media. However, the attempt to classify these social media into the 10 categories proposed by Hootsuite (2017) revealed that the companies used primarily social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and media sharing network YouTube. LinkedIn was the most popular, while Facebook was the least popular social network. The findings also revealed that although the companies analyzed had social media, not all companies were actively using them.

- *Phase 2-RQ2(B): Which are the main content themes of the posts made by HR consulting companies on different social media?*

This study is also one of the first attempts to explore the type of content posted by HR consulting companies. The findings revealed that the type of content posted by the companies analyzed differed by social media platforms. Moreover, the content posted was not adapted to each individual platform. For example, some tweets and hashtags were used also on Facebook. The former did not consider the extended word limit of Facebook allowing to post longer messages, while the latter did not consider that the use of hashtags on Facebook does not add any benefit.

None of the companies analyzed seemed to have a fully integrated social media strategy. Only some companies were found to be slightly better structured on some specific social media. These posted content in accordance with a pre-defined publishing calendar, which is often suggested by the social media management experts to be used to maintain the audience's expectations and to publish content at the best time/date to reach larger audiences.

- *Phase 2-RQ2(C): How organizations (specifically HR consulting companies) use social media for stakeholder engagement and to project and strengthen their corporate identity?*

To the best of my knowledge, none of the previous research aimed to explore how HR consulting companies use social media for stakeholder engagement and to project or strengthen their corporate identity. The analysis indicates that the companies analyzed seemed to understand the importance of using social media for sharing and demonstrating a positive corporate identity. These companies tried to achieve this by posting company life pictures and video interviews of the company's top management and ordinary employees. Though the analysis also indicated that the companies do not fully benefit from the emergent types of visual materials such as infographics. An additional strategy used by the companies to establish and demonstrate corporate identity was using personalized hashtags containing the company name. Interestingly the findings revealed that having a high number of fans/followers did not guarantee a high number of likes on Facebook and Twitter. Though the result was opposite on YouTube.

The companies also paid very little attention to real interaction on their social media. Very rarely companies tried to involve users in some conversation or tried to co-create some new content or new product or services with them. Some exceptions to this can be the content created by the employees that the companies shared mostly on LinkedIn in order to promote their culture and values, often making their employees ambassadors for their brand.

- *Phase 3-RQ3: How employees use their public social media profiles to project organizational identity and how data from employees' personal*



*LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity, and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age play in this?*

The findings of this research, compared to the previous studies that do not specify the criteria they employ to measure organizational identity, aimed to provide a unique framework for measuring employees' perception of organizational identity via LinkedIn. Moreover, it is one of the few studies that focus both on the organizational identity and social media (i.e. LinkedIn).

The results of my research do not support the findings of previous organizational identity research suggesting that employees' type of contract, seniority of service affect organizational identity that employees' project. Most likely that compared to that research I aimed to specifically explore these factors in relation to social media.

- *Phase 4-RQ4: Which kind of relationship there is between the extent of employees' social media use for professional purposes and nature (dimensions) of the organizational identity that employees can hold about their employer?*

The findings of this particular research suggest that organizational identity is not directly dependent on employees' use of social media. They also revealed a number of organizational identity characteristics, both at the organizational and individual levels that are associated with varying extent of social media use. Thus both strategic and cultural aspects of the employees' organizational identity emerged from the analysis though the former prevailed. The majority of adjectives from the strategic organizational identity category belonged to the organizational level of analysis

regardless of the extent of employees' social media use, while most of the adjectives referring to the cultural aspect of organizational identity belonged to the individual level of analysis.

### ***9.3 Research limitations and implications for future research***

As with any research, my PhD study has a number of limitations (Cucciniello, 2011).

The scoping literature review (RQ1-Phase 1) does not draw on grey literature such as descriptive case studies developed by practitioners, from which valuable insights could also be obtained. The review also includes studies published prior to 2019, as such it does not integrate more recent studies on this topic. Future research might be interested in addressing these limitations and conducting a more inclusive literature review capturing also experiential knowledge.

In terms of the RQ2 (Phase 2), where 12 HR consulting company social media pages were analyzed to understand how they use them to project their corporate identity, it is important to underline that the analysis did not take into consideration all of the questions proposed by Devereux and colleagues (2017) to understand the connection between social media and corporate identity. Not included questions include: When are the platform/s adopted?; Who creates the content?; When is the content published? It was not possible to address these questions with the data collection method set in my PhD research. Thus, they would require an additional analysis, which could be addressed by future scholars. Their findings can then be combined with the findings of this research.

The main limitations of the Phase 3 of my research (RQ3) are that the framework proposed for measuring the organizational identity employees' project via their LinkedIn profiles comes from my practical work experience as a social media marketing consultant and that the proxy used as a measure of organizational identity is also just one of many possibilities. Defining organizational identity in different ways might lead to finding significant relationships between it and variables such as seniority of service, type of contract, or employee age, especially given bigger sample size. Future academicians might be interested in validating this framework and its applicability, potentially also to other social media and organizations from other sectors.

The research at this phase has also taken into account only the perspective of internal members, without considering the organizational image formed by external members. To address this limitation, a qualitative case study on organizational identity was conducted in the Case Company (Phase 4-RQ4), even though it also does not take into consideration the perspectives of all possible stakeholders (e.g. customers, partners, and competitors). Nevertheless, the results from the qualitative study (RQ4) can help to triangulate the findings of this study.

Overall, in my studies, I focus on external social media. Internal social media also plays an important role in creating and strengthening the organizational identity of organizations (Madsen, 2016). Therefore, studying how organizational identity can be observed/measured on internal social media can be another avenue for future research. In addition, when considering the findings of this study it is important to bear in mind that not all employees with LinkedIn profiles have the same

computer/internet/social media literacy skills, and that our results might have been affected by this diversity.

Finally, although a relatively small sample size used in this research allowed me to address the research questions, and to test the research hypothesis in a fairly short time (Hackshaw, 2008), it did not allow me to formulate broad general conclusions. Thus future scholars are also encouraged to test the generalizability of the research findings by replicating this analysis in other companies, and in different industries. Future scholars might also like to test empirically in organizations from diverse sectors the validity of the categories that emerged from my analysis on how the organizational identity and corporate identity can be observed on social media.

Thus, overall, despite its limitations, my research offers a new set of insights and theoretical innovations that call for future studies to explore their applicability within and outside the HR consulting sector.

#### ***9.4 Theoretical and practical contributions of the research***

The findings of this research offer the following useful insights for theory and practice.

##### **9.4.1 Contribution to the theory**

By identifying and analyzing all existing published research on organizational, corporate identity and social media, this study provided an overview of the state of the art of organizational identity, corporate identity and social media research that

included an in-depth overview of publication characteristics and associated literature gaps. The findings of this analysis should be of interest to interdisciplinary scholars to understand methodological approaches, as well as types of data used to explore, observe organizational and corporate identity on social media.

Research phase 2 aimed at answering RQ2 (i.e. how HR consulting companies use social media to project their corporate identity) is one of the few theoretically informed attempts of applying an existing conceptual framework to empirically illustrate the approaches for social media use by HR consulting companies for projecting their corporate image and/or for strengthening it. The findings of this research can be valuable for future organizational and management scholars with an interest in this topic.

The quantitative analysis aimed at exploring how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure/observe how they manifest their organizational identity (Phase 3-RQ3) makes an important contribution to organizational identity measurement, and to organizational identity and social media literature. In particular, compared to most of the existing studies that are not explicit about the criteria they employ to measure organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013), this study proposes a bespoke approach for doing this. Moreover, this is one of the few attempts that focused on how organizational identity can be observed on external social media channels such as LinkedIn. This approach can be used by future scholars with a research interest in this topic to check its applicability for organizations from other sectors, organizations of different dimensions and internal social media.

The findings of this particular research phase do not fully support the results of previous scholarly investigations that concluded that: the greater the employees' seniority of service, the greater their organizational identity (March & Simons, 1958); full-time employees with permanent contracts contribute more strongly to organizational identity compared to those with temporary contracts (Daciulyte & Aranauskaite, 2012); and that organizational identity varies between employees from different age groups (Cakinberk et al., 2011). These results thus call for further investigations that can help to enrich the research on this topic.

Finally, the qualitative analysis (Phase 4-RQ4) makes an important contribution to research on social media use by exploring the nature of the organizational identity employees can hold and their potential relationship with social media, especially their use of social media for professional purposes, which is the concept mostly overlooked in current research. Even though some research has begun to consider the motivations of employees in using social media (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011), this analysis takes a step further and shows that certain aspects of how employees perceive their organizational identity can be important in explaining their engagement with social media for professional purposes.

#### **9.4.2 Contribution to practice**

My study also has several important practical managerial implications because organizations investing in social media and in promoting both their products and themselves would be interested in exploring what kind of results these efforts can achieve.

Drawing on the findings of the literature review (Phase 1-RQ1) and on the findings of the analysis of the social media pages of HR consulting companies (Phase 2-RQ2), organizations can design more tailored interventions for strengthening the management of their organizational and corporate identity on social media, as these are directly connected to successful organizational performance (Voss et al., 2006).

Several practical contributions have already been implemented in the Case Company based on the findings of Phase 3 and Phase 4 (RQ3 and RQ4) of my research. Thus in order to address the emerging need for explaining social media use practices to employees, I created LinkedIn user guidelines that were distributed among all Case Company employees, as well as conducted two open group seminars and some individual LinkedIn training sessions for the interested employees. All of these activities helped to explain to employees how to use LinkedIn for professional and personal purposes, as well as the importance for the organization of the organizational image that employees can project externally via their personal profiles. As a result, seven months after the first data collection (and only two months after the aforementioned seminars), screening of employees' public LinkedIn profiles demonstrated that: 87% of employees with LinkedIn profiles updated their LinkedIn headline with the new Case Company name; 43% of employees brought their summary to a standardized format; and All employees correctly linked their profiles to one of the two Case Company LinkedIn pages.

Based on this positive outcome, appreciated also by the Case Company management and employees, I would strongly recommend that other organizations (of varying sizes and from different sectors) pilot social media use management practices that take into consideration an analysis of the organizational and corporate identity that

employees and organizations can project externally via their personal social media channels, and that they also evaluate whether and how these can affect organizations.

## **9.5 Conclusions**

This mixed-method PhD research, aimed to explore how organizational and corporate identity can be measured or observed on social media, adds to the interdisciplinary academic literature by addressing existing gaps in:

- Scoping literature review on organizational and corporate identity, and social media;
- Understanding the approaches to social media use by HR consulting companies for projecting their corporate image and/or for strengthening it using an existing theoretical/methodological framework;
- A bespoke framework for measuring employee’s perception of organizational identity via LinkedIn; and
- Exploring the nature of organizational identity employees can hold and their potential relationship with social media use for professional purposes.

The results of my research and the unanswered questions remaining indicate the importance of observing organizational and corporate identity on social media, and reveal the need for more multi-disciplinary studies, encompassing also longitudinal research, economic evaluations, and systematic assessments of the impact of organizational and corporate identity projected by organizations and employees on



social media on organizational performance, as well as new exploratory research to understand the value of these concepts in support of effective organizations.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Scientific outputs arising from the PhD

#### Published in international peer-reviewed journals:

1. **Di Lauro, S.**, Tursunbayeva A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2020). Organizational and corporate identity on social media: A literature review. *International Journal of Business and Management*.
2. **Di Lauro, S.**, Tursunbayeva, A., & Antonelli, G. (2019). How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media for Fundraising: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 14(7). doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v14n7p1.
3. Tursunbayeva, A., **Di Lauro, S.**, & Pagliari, C. (2018). People analytics—A scoping review of conceptual boundaries and value propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 43, pp. 224-247. doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.08.002. (Fascia A ANVUR)
4. **Di Lauro, S.**, Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Measuring organizational identity via LinkedIn: The role of employees' tenure, contract type and age. *Studi Organizzativi*, 2. doi: 10.3280/SO2018-002005

#### Under review in international peer-reviewed journals:

1. Tursunbayeva A., **Di Lauro, S.**, Pagliari P., & Antonelli, G. The Ethics of People Analytics: Risks, Opportunities and Recommendations. *Personnel review* (since December 2019).

2. Tursunbayeva, A., **Di Lauro, S.**, & Antonelli, G. Exploring shared work values and work collaboration with a network approach: An explorative case study from Italy. *International Journal of Management and Decision making* (since November 2019).
3. **Di Lauro, S.**, Tursunbayeva, A., Bunduchi, R., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. Organizational identity in an Italian HR Consulting Company: A qualitative case study. ECIS Conference 2020 (since November 2019).

#### **Book chapters:**

1. **Di Lauro, S.**, Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2020). Grasping corporate identity from Social Media: Analysis of HR consulting companies. In A. Lazazzara, F. Ricciardi, S. Za. Exploring digital ecosystems: Organizational and human challenges. Springer series: Lecture Notes in Information Systems and Organisation. ISBN: 978-3-030-23664-9.

#### **Conference proceedings:**

1. Tursunbayeva, A., Pagliari, C., **Di Lauro, S.**, & Antonelli, G. (2019). Opportunities and benefits of People Analytics for HR managers and Employees: Signals in the grey literature. The XVI Conference of the Italian Chapter of Association for Information Systems (ItAIS) and the Mediterranean Conference on Information Systems (MCIS). MCIS 2019 Proceedings. Naples, Italy.
2. Tursunbayeva, A., Pagliari, C., **Di Lauro, S.**, & Antonelli, G. (2019). People analytics: ethical considerations for organizations. XXXIX Convegno nazionale

AIDEA “Identità, Innovazione e Impatto dell’Aziendalismo Italiano Dentro l’Economia Digitale”. Turin, Italy. ISBN: 9788875901387

3. **Di Lauro, S.,** Tursunbayeva, A., & Antonelli, G. (2019). Fundraising on social media; A review of strategies and benefits. XXXIX Convegno nazionale AIDEA “Identità, Innovazione e Impatto dell’Aziendalismo Italiano Dentro l’Economia Digitale”. Turin, Italy. ISBN: 9788875901387
4. Tursunbayeva A., **Di Lauro S.,** & Antonelli A. (2018). The use of Organizational Network Analysis in change management processes: an Italian case study. British Academy of Management Conference, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-9956413-1-0.
5. **Di Lauro, S.,** Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Understanding employees’ perspectives on organizational identity change from their LinkedIn accounts. In F. Cabitza, A. Lazazzara, M. Magni, S. Za. Organizing for Digital Economy: societies, communities and individuals. Proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Italian chapter of AIS. Luiss University Press – Pola Srl. ISBN: 978-88-6856-129-1.

**Presentations at referred conferences/workshops:**

1. **Di Lauro, S.,** Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2019). Understanding organizations’ digital identities on social media: A review of literature. 35th EGOS Colloquium 2019 in Edinburgh, UK.
2. **Di Lauro, S.,** Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2019). Exploring organizational and corporate identity on social media: A literature

review. WOA 2019 organized by the Italian Association for Organization and Human Resource Management. Palermo, Italy.

3. **Di Lauro, S.,** Tursunbayeva, A., Antonelli, G., & Martinez, M. (2018). Grasping corporate identity from social media: Analysis of HR consulting companies. Italian Chapter of Association for Information Systems. University of Pavia. 12-13/10/2018.

## Appendix 2. Characteristics of the included studies

Author(s), year	Title	Number of citations	Main focus	Country	Sector	Study aim	Analytical approaches	Research design/ measurement methods	Organization	Unite of Analysis
Albu and Etter, 2016	Hypertextuality and Social Media: A Study of the Constitutive and Paradoxical Implications of Organizational Twitter Use	31	Organizational identity	NA	Advocacy, banking, tourism, food	How two organizations used Twitter to interact with their constituents	Mixed (Multiple case study)	Interviews, participation and observation in meetings, twitter data collection	2 organizations (an international cooperative and a multinational fast-food chain)	Multiple
Boateng and Okoe, 2015	Consumers' attitude towards social media advertising and their behavioral response	49	Corporate identity/ organizational image	Ghana	NA	To examine the relationship between consumers' attitude toward social media advertising and their behavioral response and the moderating effect of corporate reputation in this relationship	Quantitative	Survey research design (questionnaires, hierarchical regression)	Consumers	NA
Brandhorst and Jennings, 2016	Fighting for funding: Values advocacy and Planned Parenthood's	6	Organizational image	USA	Health	To examine how Planned Parenthood appeals to core American values through	Qualitative	Rhetorical analysis	Planned Parenthood (1 organization)	Organization

	right-to-life					social media to enhance its image and reinforce its legitimacy				
Bruce and Solomon, 2013	Managing for Media Anarchy: A Corporate Marketing Perspective	35	Corporate identity	NA	NA	To propose a taxonomy of “digital real estate” that acknowledges an expansion in the media options available to managers	Conceptual		NA	NA
Carpentier et al., 2017	Recruiting nurses through social media: Effects on employer brand and attractiveness	8	Organizational image	Belgium	Health	To investigate whether and how nurses’ exposure to a hospital’s profile on social media affects their perceptions of the hospital’s brand and attractiveness as an employer	Quantitative	Survey (online questionnaire)	1 hospital	Organization
Dawson, 2018	Fans, Friends, Advocates, Ambassadors, and Haters: Social Media Communities and the Communicative Constitution of Organizational Identity	NA	Organizational identity	USA	Several (for-profit and non-profit sector)	To demonstrate ways that organizational identities are co-authored from external interaction (conversation) to internal practice (text)	Qualitative	Interviews, marketing meetings observations, and social media interaction observations	20 diverse organizations	Multiple
Devereux et	Corporate Identity and	7	Corporate	NA	NA	To explore the relationship	Conceptual		NA	NA

al., 2017	Social Media: Existence and Extension of the Organization		identity			between social media and corporate identity by breaking social media use into five stages and discussing what each stage can reveal and add to our knowledge of corporate identity				
Di Lauro et al., 2019	Measuring organizational identity via LinkedIn: The role played by employees' tenure, type of employment contract and age	NA	Organizational identity	Italy	NA	To explore how data from employees' personal LinkedIn accounts can be used to measure how they manifest organizational identity, and the roles that their seniority of service, type of contract and age play in this	Quantitative	Linear regression (data collected from LinkedIn)	1 organization	Organization
Foreman- Wernet, 2017	Reflections on Elitism: What Arts Organizations Communicate About Themselves	1	Organizational identity	USA	Art	How arts organizations are communicating their unique identities and how they are working to position themselves on the democratic side of the elitism continuum	Mixed	Content analysis of annual reports, season brochures, news releases, and social media + case study approach	Group of arts organizations	Sector/ Cluster/ Community
Giplin, 2010	Organizational Image Construction in a Fragmented Online Media Environment	165	Organizational image	USA	Food	To examine the role of different online and social media channels in constructing organizational	Quantitative	Case study (Social Network analysis)	1 organization (supermarket chain Whole	Organization

						image			Foods)	
Hanusch, 2017	Political journalists' corporate and personal identities on Twitter profile pages: A comparative analysis in four Westminster democracies	14	Corporate (and personal) identity	Australia, Canada, New Zealand and UK	Government	To address the lack of empirical understanding through an analysis of the identities which political journalists present on their Twitter profile pages	Quantitative	ANOVA	679 accounts of parliamentary press gallery journalists	NA
Holmegreen, 2015	"Why am I to blame when the law is on my side?" A study of crises, public opinion and frames	NA	Organizational image	Denmark	Food	To discuss why social media frames may exert substantial influence on the image of organizations and even trigger organizational crises	Qualitative	The data for the analysis consists of entries from different social-media sites and articles from Danish online and print media	1 Organization (restaurant chain)	Organization
Huang-Horowitz and Freberg, 2016	Bridging organizational identity and reputation messages online: a conceptual model	10	Organizational identity	NA	NA	To propose a conceptual model that can be used to bridge organizational identity and reputation messages	Qualitative	Reviews	NA	NA
Hussain, 2015	The impact of social media within the sporting industry	1	Organizational image	South Africa	Sport	Set out to assess the impact of social media communication tools within the sporting industry	Quantitative	Survey (questionnaire)	1 organization (local rugby sport organization)	Organization



Joachim et al., 2018	Twittering for talent: Private military and security companies between business and military branding	6	Corporate identity	USA	Military and security	To examine how private military and security companies deploy these identities when they recruit new personnel through social media	Qualitative	Computer content analysis	2 organizations (Private military and security companies)	Sector/ Cluster/ Community
Madsen, 2016	Constructing Organizational Identity on Internal Social Media: A Case Study of Coworker Communication in Jyske Bank	21	Organizational identity	Denmark	Bank	How coworkers use internal social media to contribute to the construction of organizational identity	Qualitative	Case study (ethnographic observations + interviews)	1 organization (coworkers at a large Danish bank)	Organization
Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016	Worker word of mouth on the Internet. Influence on human resource image, job seekers and employees	6	Organizational image	NA	NA	To test if a new and unexplored worker conduct such as weWOM constitutes a relevant behavior for human resource management	Quantitative	Web-based experiment (quantitative)	NA (238 individuals)	NA
Montanari et al., 2013	Identity and Social Media in an Art Festival	3	Organizational identity	Italy	Arts	To investigate how festivals can communicate their central and stable characteristics to audiences by adopting Web 2.0-based communication strategies	Mixed	Survey (questionnaires), in-depth interviews, archive analysis, and direct observation	1 organization (Italian festival)	Organization
Nguyen and Sidorova,	Organizational Identification and User	NA	Organizational identity	USA	Education	To examine the role of organizational	Quantitative	Regression (online survey)	1 organization	Organization

2018	Responses to Online Organization Criticism					identification and organizational identity orientation in motivating stakeholder responses to organization-directed criticism on social media			(Large public university - students)	
Oliveria, 2015	Benchmarking analysis of social media strategies in the Higher Education Sector	19	Organizational image	Portugal	Education	To present a sector benchmarking process, and the respective analysis, to provide insights on the sector's tendency, as well as a threefold classification of the sector's social media strategies being pursued	Quantitative	Automatic text-mining and categorization information system	Several organizations (Higher Polytechnic Portuguese Education Institutions)	Sector/ Cluster/ Community
Omilion-Hodges and Baker, 2014	Everyday talk and convincing conversations: Utilizing strategic internal communication	22	Organizational identity	NA	NA	To describe the process through which everyday talk within the organization shapes its identity while wielding powerful effects on external perceptions	Qualitative	Descriptive	NA	NA
Ozdora-Aksak, 2014	The online presence of Turkish banks: Communicating the softer side of corporate identity	22	Corporate identity	Turkey	Banking	To understand how organizational identities are constructed and supported by corporate social responsibility activities in addition to how they are communicated to	Mixed	Collected data from social media accounts and websites	Several organizations (eight largest banks in Turkey)	Sector/ Cluster/ Community

						stakeholders				
Ozdora-Aksak and Atakan-Duman, 2015	An analysis of Turkey's telecommunications sector's social responsibility practices online	12	Corporate identity	Turkey	Telecommunication	To determine how public relations and corporate social responsibility practices help construct organizational identity	Mixed	Content analysis	Several organizations (Turkey's four largest telecommunications companies)	Sector/ Cluster/ Community
Ozdora-Aksak and Atakan-Duman, 2016	How a Turkish bank uses corporate social responsibility to construct its identity? A case study	NA	Organizational identity	Turkey	Banking	To understand the corporate social responsibility agenda, organizational identity construction, and how both are communicated	Qualitative	Case Study (document analysis, observations, and interviews)	1 organization (Garanti Bank)	Organization
Pang et al., 2018	Building relationships through dialogic communication: organizations, stakeholders, and computer-mediated communication	12	Organizational image	NA	NA	To propose dialogic strategies that organizations can use to improve their online communication with their stakeholders	Conceptual		NA	NA
Rasmussen, 2017	'Welcome to Twitter, @CIA. Better late than never': Communication professionals' views of social media humour	15	Organizational identity	Norway	Security and emergency	To discuss challenges that use of humor poses for the identity of public organizations	Qualitative	Interviews	Several organizations (six Norwegian security and emergency)	Sector/ Cluster/ Community

	and implications for organizational identity								authorities)	
Waters and Jones, 2011	Using Video to Build an Organization's Identity and Brand: A Content Analysis of Nonprofit Organizations' YouTube Videos	124	Organizational identity	NA	Education, Human Service, Health, Arts, Public services-societal benefit, Religion	To examine how content and style are used by nonprofit organizations in their YouTube videos to shape their organizational identity	Quantitative	Content analysis	100 most viewed official NPO YouTube channels	Multiple

NA=Not available

### **Appendix 3. Interview guide**

Semi structured interview questionnaire used to guide discussions with respondents:

- Qual è il Suo ruolo nell'azienda?
- Da quanto tempo lavora nell'azienda?
- Quali sono le Sue mansioni all'interno dell'azienda?
- Descriva brevemente l'azienda.
- Quali aggettivi userebbe per descrivere l'azienda?
- Quali sono, a suo avviso, i punti di forza e le criticità dell'azienda?
- Quanto pensa di contribuire lei al vantaggio competitivo con il suo lavoro?
- Pensa che i Suoi colleghi condividano la sua percezione dell'azienda?
- In cosa l'azienda è unica e diversa dalle altre?
- In che modo l'azienda comunica/esprime la propria identità?
- È un'immagine giusta quella che viene comunicata/espressa?
- Crede che l'immagine comunicata dall'azienda sia coerente con quella da Lei percepita?
- Pensa che il sito internet aziendale rispecchi l'identità, la mission e i valori dell'azienda?
- Recentemente l'azienda ha modificato il proprio nome. Cosa è cambiato, secondo Lei, dopo questa modifica al nome dell'azienda in termini generali sull'organizzazione interna e sull'immagine esterna dell'azienda?
- Come pensa che l'azienda sia percepita dai clienti e dai partner dell'azienda?
- Crede che l'immagine dell'azienda sia sempre stata la stessa nel corso degli anni o è cambiata? In che modo?
- Qual è il suo rapporto con i social media? Che uso fa di LinkedIn? Con che frequenza aggiorna il suo profilo e legge gli aggiornamenti presenti nella home?
- Sa se esistono pagine aziendali e/o gruppi LinkedIn dell'azienda e se sono attualmente attivi?
- Sa che tipologia di contenuti vengono condivisi dall'azienda su Facebook e LinkedIn e se c'è una differenziazione tra i contenuti condivisi nei due social?

- Ritiene che i contenuti condivisi sulle pagine social (LinkedIn e Facebook) dell'azienda siano interessanti e rispecchino le tematiche affrontate nel suo lavoro quotidiano?
- Ritiene che i contenuti condivisi sulle pagine social (LinkedIn e Facebook) dell'azienda restituiscano un'immagine appropriata delle attività svolte dall'azienda?

## Appendix 4. Facebook analysis

Main company page	Company1	Company2	Company5	Company6	Company7
Number of fans	19 K	526	15K	6.9K	25K
CTA button	Buy now	Call now	Call now	Send message	Call now
General level of engagement	0.19%	0.34 %	0.11%	0.010%	0.035%
Post interaction	0.24%	1.3%	0.15%	0.15%	0.0047%
Editorial calendar	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Posts per day	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.07	7.5
Type of posts in ascending order	Pictures Video Links Status	Pictures Links Videos	Links Pictures Status Videos	Links	Pictures Links Videos
Internal or external content	Internal content	Both internal and external	Both internal and external	External content	Internal content
Main typologies of internal content	Company news Tests Promotion Industry news & research Events	Team life Job opportunities Company news Industry news & research Industry article Tests promotion Whiteneborc	Team life Video interviews Events Re-posts Company news Tests promotion	-	Links from the blog Team life
Top 10 posts (total reactions, comments and shares)	Events Company news Industry news & research	Team life (pictures) Tests Promotion Company news	Video-interviews Events Tests Promotion Team life (pictures)	-	Links from the blog Employees' video-interviews Team life (video-interview) Team life (pictures)
Related pages	1	4	1	5	1

## Appendix 5. LinkedIn analysis

Main LinkedIn page	Company1	Company2	Company3	Company5	Company5	Company6	Company7	Company8	Company9	Company11
Type of Page	Company page	Company page	Company page	Company page	Company page	Showcase page	Company page	Career page	Company page	Company page
Followers	7.4K	3.3K	11.3K	7.2K	7.2K	20.4K	209.K	148K	4.2K	3.9K
Posts per month	2	6	11	5	5	11	13	5	18	7
Likes per post	12	15	18	4	4	12	15	20	4	9
Editorial calendar	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Internal or external contents	Internal content	Internal and external contents	Internal contents	Internal contents	Internal contents	Internal and external contents	Internal and external content	Internal contents	Internal and external contents	Internal and external contents
Typologies of internal posts	Interviews Promotion and offers	Interviews Company's awards and recognitions Trends Reports Informative and promotional tests	Testimonial Case studies Company's awards and recognitions Webinars Informative and promotional tests Conferences Training and	Case studies Free ebook Informative and promotional tests Workshops and trainings	Case studies Free ebook Informative and promotional tests Workshops and trainings	Webinars Posts from the blog/website	Link to Pulse posts written by managers or consultants of Company7	Whitepapers Webinars Workshops and trainings Informative and promotional tests Link to Pulse post written by managers or consultant	Links to Pulse post written by managers or consultants of Company9 Team testimonials Trainings and workshops Informative and	Informative and promotional tests Training and workshops Case studies
Related groups	N.A.	1 (2.3K members)	N.A.	1 (5.3K)	1 (5.3K)	N.A.	N.A.	12.5K	N.A.	N.A.
Employees on LinkedIn	46	156	429	126	126	N.A.	4.2K	4.3K	444	101



## Appendix 6. Twitter analysis

Main company	Company1	Company2	Company3	Company5	Company6	Company7	Company8	Company9	Company10
Followers	1.4K	992	154	18K	6.3K	13K	20K	850	320
Engagement	0.013%	0.11%	0.096%	0.029%	0.0028%	0.012%	0.29%	0.059%	0.056%
Tweet interaction	0.061%	0.18%	0.34%	0.034%	0.020%	0.0092%	0.032%	N.A.	0.22%
Tweets per day	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.9	0.1	1.3	9.0	N.A.	0.3
Most used hashtags	#hr #c503company1 #psychometrics	#hr #management #talent	#assessment #humanresources #webinar #hr	#leadership #personality #company5	#hr #leadership #talent #recruitment	#digitalstability #career #jobs #talent	#digitalstability #leadership #career #job	#hr #risorseuman #management #companytale #nt	#hr #assessmen #updates #test #jobs
Type of tweets in ascending	Original Reshare Reply	Original Reshare	Original	Original Reshare Reply	Original	Original Reshare Reply	Original Reshare Reply	Original Reshare Reply	Original Reshare Reply
Main typologies of original tweets	Promotions and offers Conversations with users	Team Life (pictures) Live tweeting events Links to other SM/website Promotion and offers	Industry news & research Informative/promotional tweets	Team life (pictures) Live tweeting events Links to interviews	Team life (pictures) Other pictures Live tweeting event Links to other SM/website	Webinars Team life (pictures) Infographics Promotions and offers	Conversations with users Links to other SM/website Webinars Team life (pictures)	Live tweeting events Team life (picture) Pictures from live events Promotions and offers Quotes Mentions of	Quotes Live tweeting events Team life (pictures) Team life (pictures) Promotions and offers
10 most retweeted Tweets	Conversations with users Promotion and offers	Links to Interviews (YouTube) Promotions and offers	Industry news & research	Links to Interviews Links to other SM	Pictures of the new logo Info about the company Events	Webinars Team life (pictures)	Team life (pictures) Webinars	Live events (pictures) Team life (pictures)	Team life (pictures) Pictures of live events Quotes

## Appendix 7. YouTube analysis

Main company channel	Company1	Company2	Company3	Company3	Company3	Company5	Company6	Company7	Company11
Subscribers	503	320	230	230	230	1.1K	2.7K	1.2K	70
Views	111K	134K	29K	29K	29K	385K	410K	160K	N.A.
Main types of videos	Interviews with authors Conferences	Informative/promotional videos Company videos (stories) Tutorial videos	Informative/promotional videos Company videos (stories)	Informative/promotional videos Company videos (stories)	Informative/promotional videos Company videos (stories)	CEO and employees' interviews Workshops Informative/promotional videos Tutorial videos	Company videos (stories) Informative/promotional videos	Company videos (stories) Informative/promotional videos Video interviews	Workshops Tutorial videos Employees presentations Conference Recordings
Main Created playlists	Interviews with authors Tests and tools	Client case studies Careers at Company2 Products	Webinars Podcasts Client testimonials Company3 education Company3 culture	Webinars Podcasts Client testimonials Company3 education Company3 culture	Webinars Podcasts Client testimonials Company3 education Company3 culture	None	Success stories Company6 careers	Company7 careers Company7 solutions News	Trainings Employees presentations Conference Recordings
Most popular videos (total views)	Interviews to authors	Tutorial videos Company videos (stories)	Company videos (stories)	Company videos (stories)	Company videos (stories)	CEO interviews Company videos (stories)	Company videos (stories)	Company videos (stories)	Tutorial videos