How to compete with the funny cat video?

- A qualitative study to describe how micro-sized firms can create customer engagement on social medias

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Term: Spring 2018
Subject: Relationship Marketing
Level: Undergraduate
Course Code: 2FE21E
Abstract

Background: Social medias have contributed to big changes in the way firms and customers interact with each other. Due to the great amount of people using social medias, firms have understood the importance of incorporating social medias in their marketing strategy. However, due to increasing competition, customer engagement on social medias has become important. To generate customer engagement, firms must create engaging social media content that is worth the customer’s time and effort. The micro-sized firms are under researched and therefore the authors have chosen micro-sized firms as a study subject and hence the sender of the content.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to describe the key components of creating customer engagement on social medias for micro-sized firms.

Methodology: This research took a qualitative approach in a deductive nature with a descriptive purpose and a cross-sectional research design. The need of primary data was collected by conducting seven semi-structured interviews with social media managers- and consultants. Participants were purposely sampled and the empirical findings were coded, concepts were identified and further categorised while trustworthiness was set to be a criterion for the quality of the research.

Conclusion: The research provided seven key components of engaging social media content for micro-sized firms and further recommendations on how to implement them in the micro-sized firms social media management. The components are described together with an illustration.

Keywords: Micro-sized firms, social media managers, social media, customer engagement, content appeals, social media targeting, social media timing and frequency, qualitative research, semi-structured interviews.
Acknowledgements

This bachelor thesis was conducted during the sixth and last semester of The Marketing Program at Linnaeus University in Växjö.

To begin with, we would like to thank our tutor Michaela Sandell for being generous with her time and conducting insights of worth. We would also like to thank the examiner Åsa Devine and the opponent groups for providing great input and guidelines during the seminars.

Last but certainly not least, a big thank you to all our interview respondents. The respondents have, during office hours, given us time that is completely crucial for the completion of this thesis.

Linnaeus University, Växjö, 24th of May 2018

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1. Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the background to the area of research that is customer engagement and social media content in relation to micro-sized firms. This presentation leads to discussion and argumentation concerning why the study is needed and problems within the phenomena which result in the purpose and research question.

1.1 Background

Social medias have over the last years taken a significant step forward in development and has changed how people interact with each other (Van Asperen, De Rooij & Dijkmans, 2018). Today there are numerous of social medias available out there, e.g. Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Everyday people create and share content on these sites in terms of posting messages, sharing pictures and videos, liking brand pages and attending social events (Vinerean, 2017). Along with this development the marketing landscape has also changed into a more complex field (Vinerean, 2017). Because of that, social medias have become an essential part of firms marketing strategies. When it comes to communicating with customers and promoting the firm on social medias, creating attractive content which will make the customer engage with the firm is something that all social media marketers strive for (Van Asperen et al., 2018). Having a strong customer engagement on social medias will have positive effects on firms in terms of getting positive attention on platforms where lots of potential customers spend their time. This will in turn lead to a bunch of positive outcomes such as increased sales and extended exposures on social medias (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). As mentioned, the marketing landscape has changed and therefore marketers need to be aware of how to create as much customer engagement as possible in this new field. Therefore, this research will provide a description of how to be successful within this new and complex landscape. Key factors which will have an impact in this context consists of what content that is being posted, which target group that has been chosen, through which social media platform and also when and how often it should be posted (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018).
Most firms that are in present time operating are to be considered as of smaller size and according to Ekonomifakta (2017) the micro-sized firms constitute 23.1% of the market. In order to be classified as a micro-sized firm there are a couple of factors such as number of employees and turnover which determines the correct term for it. If the firm has between 1-9 employees and a turnover of 2 million euros or less, it is considered as a micro-sized firm (European Commision, 2018). The competition among the micro-sized firms is tough in the social media landscape and marketers need to be well informed of how to stick out from the rest with tailored and engaging content (Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015). Jones et al. (2015) also state that being active on social medias is especially important for a firm of smaller size since there are in general a lack of resources for them to market themselves in traditional ways compared to larger firms.

1.2 Problem Discussion

In the existing research in the field of social media marketing, the micro-sized firms are not as represented as a study object as large firms since prior research has mostly focused on larger firms and research with emphasis on micro-sized firms are rare (Gaither & Austin, 2016; Krake, 2005; Pride, 2009; Brink, 2017). Krake (2005) is stating that when valuable marketing strategy theories were created, researchers were not having any emphasis on micro-sized firms. Krake (2005) says “Open practically any management book at random and it is a good bet that you will find Coca Cola, Nike, Philips, Unilever, Shell or Procter & Gamble used as the practical examples.” (Krake, 2005, p. 228). Still, customers expect the same quality of social media content from micro-sized firms as from large firms (Cole, DeNardin & Clow, 2017). The results from earlier research are not fully transferable to micro-sized firms since methods and findings suggested by researchers that study large firms are too expensive, resource demanding and time consuming for a micro sized firm to use (Read, Sarasvathy, Dew, Wiltbank, & Ohlsson, 2011). This is supported by Vanyushyn (2011) and Pride (2009) when they describe that the social media research is biased towards larger firms and that the results can be difficult for micro-sized firms to adapt in their social media strategies. They describe that the reason for that is not just a matter of
financial perspectives but also organizational. Still, micro-sized firms are expected by customers to perform social media marketing as larger firms (Cole et al., 2017). Brink (2017) supports the statement that the research having emphasis on micro-sized firms is underdeveloped when she argues for that more in-depth research on how micro-sized firms with limited resources can handle social media content that engage customers.

The social media content needs to be worth the customers’ time and effort, which is done with engaging social media content (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Li & Bernoff, 2011). This is the aim for a micro-sized firm which posts social media content to create engagement among its customers. According to Gambetti & Graffigna (2010) the engagement is described as an essential driving force behind behaviour and decision making. It can be concluded as an expanded domain of relationship marketing, where the customer is triggered to engage with the firm (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). Micro-sized firms want their customers to engage by e.g. viewing, liking, commenting and sharing the content in their network (Jiang, Lou & Kulemeka, 2016; Brodie et al., 2013; Vinerean, 2017). The social media content can be interpreted as disturbing if the content is not adjusted to the specific target group it is aimed for (Kaplan & Haenline, 2010). To achieve engagement, several pieces need to fall in place. Barregren & Tegborg (2013) states that social media customers are smart and that marketers might even get a backlash from performing non-adjusted social media content towards the wrong social media target group. What exactly to post, when to post it and to whom is the question for all social media marketers (Barregren & Tegborg, 2013). Ashley & Tuten (2015) claim that content that has different appeals evoke interest among the social media customers and thus it can be more engaging. Barregren & Tegborg (2013) argues for that having the right timing of content posted is more important than to post often. Further, who to post to is a question of social media targeting and hence a crucial question for micro-sized firms. The social media targeting process consists of matching the social media platforms users with the desired customer for the micro-sized firm (Canhoto, Clark & Fennemore, 2013; Kaplan & Henline, 2010). Researchers state that this opens up for opportunities for firms that are adaptable, but also opens up for challenges for the ones not being adaptable enough. The ones who
take advantage of this opportunity and manage to engage customers are the ones who will attract the attention from the social media users. If micro-sized firms are passive by not creating engaging social media content, they allow competitors to steal the attention from social media customers (Tripathi, 2009; Heinonen, 2011).

Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2012) argue that using a sender perspective by interviewing social media managers instead of customers enable researchers of getting deeper information regarding what content that creates customer engagement. Thus, the depth in the data collection will not be possible to reach in any other way. Moreover, Cawsey & Rowley (2016) undertook a qualitative approach and interviewed social media managers which generated findings that differ from prior research studying customers. Cawsey & Rowley (2016), identified components for successful social media marketing and suggest further research could focus on developing a framework for the key components in engaging social media content. Earlier studies in the field of social media are researching the receiver and rarely the sender (Baretto, 2013; Heinonen, 2011; Labrecque, 2014). Since earlier studies are portraying larger firms, neither financial or organizational assets are similar, which can be interpreted as a research gap (Brink, 2017; Krake, 2005).

Social media managers are in need of knowledge regarding what components of content that create customer engagement since customer engagement is a goal for a firm attending social medias (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). This research is aiming to conduct insights regarding the key components of such engaging content and further provide tools for social media managers in order to reach customer engagement. Creating customer engagement will further be a tool for social media managers to help their firm increase sales which in most cases is the final goal of attending social medias (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018).
1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the key components of creating customer engagement on social medias for micro-sized firms.

1.4 Research Question

What are the factors of creating customer engagement on social medias for micro sized firms?
2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents existing theories which work as this study’s theoretical framework. The chapters begins by detailing customer engagement on social media followed by strategies for engaging social media content. The chapter is further summarized and ends up in an illustrated conceptual framework.

2.1 Customer Engagement on Social Media

Customer engagement in the context of social media is according to Syrdal & Briggs (2018) “A psychological state of mind experienced when consuming social media content in which an individual is highly absorbed in the content and experiences a sense of excitement.” (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018, p.18). Put simply, customer engagement on social media is when individuals actively decide to get engaged with the content being presented in their medium (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Brodie et al. (2013) mean that customer engagement is initiated largely by customers’ need and search for information on social medias. However, to succeed to get a high level of customer engagement on social medias, Ashley & Tuten (2015) claim that frequent updates and having a social media strategy are vital aspects for a firm to employ. Further, customer engagement is highly affected by emotional factors, for instance if individuals feel personal connection to the content (Brodie et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2016).

The sought customer engagement and what marketers consider the primary goal in the context of engaging social media marketing is what refers to likes, followers, comments and shares (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The customer engagement process begins simply by that an individual view, watch or read content. This is a decisive stage, either the individuals move on, thus do not further engage with the content or do the opposite by e.g. like, share or comment. Given this, social media engagement can be categorized as passive or active where reading and viewing content falls under passive and liking, commenting and sharing falls under active (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). According to Syrdal & Briggs (2018) a passive engagement should not be considered a fail to engage since only viewing or reading content is still a form of
engagement. This is supported by Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege & Zhang (2013) who distinguish between two levels of customer engagement, lower and higher. The lower level of customer engagement constitutes users who passively engage, whereas the higher engagement recognizes by users who are triggered to actively engage, for instance commenting and sharing content (Malthouse et al., 2013; Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2017).

2.2 Engaging Social Media Content
According to Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) the content connected to customer engagement that is being posted on the social medias are pictures and videos. Du Plessis (2017) argues that the content must be valuable in order to engage customers. Further, Alagöz & Ekici (2016) claim like Kaplan & Haenline (2010) do regarding valuable content, that the content must be focused on the customers interest which will create customer engagement. They also argue that the customer prefer to reach the main message of the content rather than details. Therefore, the content should to be narrowed and concise (Alagöz & Ekizi, 2016). Syrdal & Briggs (2018) concludes that customers find content more engaging when they perceive it to be more authentic that does not have the main goal to only sell. Syrdal & Briggs (2018) further states that visually appealing content is more engaging. In other words, pictures or videos are superior compared to only using texts (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018).

2.2.1 Social Media Targeting
Social media managers need to adjust the social media content to specific platforms and target groups. Social media content that is aimed to a specific target group can help to create customer engagement (Gagnon, 2014). This is also argued for by Alagöz & Ekici (2016) when they describe the importance of putting quality before quantity; meaning to perform target group adjusted social media content to engage the customers. Different social media platforms make it possible to reach different target groups and social media managers need to select the specific platform of their content carefully. The targeting
process consists of matching the firm’s customers different characteristics with the social media platforms different users (Kaplan & Haenline, 2010). Canhoto et al. (2013) further argue for that the social media landscape offers many options for a target based social media marketer and according to Du Plessis (2017) there is no one-size-fits-all approach. The content has to be tailored for each social media platform due to the differences of user profiles between the platforms. Canhoto et al. (2013) supports this with a three stages of social media targeting. First off is to identify the characteristics of the desired customer. Here, social media managers need to observe the chosen variables among its’ customers on social medias. This is done by first identifying the characteristics of customers and later apply it on the social medias of choice. Second stage is to decide which target to focus on and the third stage is to develop an offer that is both adjusted to the specified target group but also differentiated from the competitors (Canhoto et al., 2013).

In terms of identifying different target groups, Campbell, Ferraro & Sands (2014) present examples of different target groups on social medias based upon how they react to the content. They conclude that there are two groups marketers should aim for; actives, which refers to customers with high levels of information motivation, shopping enjoyment and convenience. The other group is the talkers, which also refers to customers with high information motivation, though they do not have any particular purchase intention of the products but they instead tend to spread information about it (Campbell et al., 2014). The information supply on social medias is very big, meaning that social media managers are able to use social medias to get access to users’ profiles and find out about their daily activities on the platforms. Moreover, they can take advantage of the platforms’ advertising algorithms to make sure that the content is exposed towards the right target group (Canhoto et al. 2013).

2.2.2 Content Appeals
To enhance the engagement among customers on social medias, marketers should consider different appeals to employ in the content. Ashley & Tuten (2015) suggest using functional appeals to display the functionality, quality and performance of a product of service which
has shown to be a drive for customer engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Further, emotional appeals are suitable to apply when marketers aim to engage the psychological senses in customers. For instance, showing the social need for something or including people that customers can relate to (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Emotional posts employ emotion oriented language, inspiring stories or humor that generate strong feelings for customers which in turn result in greater engagement (Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf & Donthu (2017) confirm that customers viewing environment in social medias are characterized by emotional attachments. Swani et al. (2017) confirm that texts, pictures or videos with an emotional or functional appeal result in enhanced engagement. Furthermore, marketers can also include their employees in their content. For example, the content can be about an employee's own stories, interests or opinions about their situation, which enhance customers willingness to engage with the firm (Tafesse & Wien, 2017).

2.2.3 Timing and Frequency of Content

Firms should have a detailed plan of what exactly they should post, on which platform and when the content shall be posted (Killian & McManus, 2015). According to Killian & McManus (2015), the timing and consistency is one of the four primary themes of social media philosophy which is also supported by Ashley & Tuten (2015) who highlight the importance of frequency to engage customers. Barregren & Tegborg (2013) further argues for that the frequency is dependent on the logic and the consistency. It is more important to keep a high quality in the content and posting at the right moment rather than posting often. This is further argued for when Arhammar & Staunstrup (2016) writes that the quality is of higher worth than the actual frequency and that the detailed plan of when and what to post is crucial. Killian & McManus (2015) state that the optimal timing for engagement is depending on what platform and what time of the day. Further, Dolan et al. (2017) argue that most activities are taking place during weekdays and that engagement are significantly decreasing during weekends. Their findings also show that posting content in the mornings and early afternoons create less engagement among customers due to the lower activity
compared to posting during evenings, when customers do statistically have a greater activity on their social medias (Dolan et al., 2017).

2.3 Theoretical Framework Summary

Below, the authors present a summary of the theoretical framework. The summary is intended to form a better understanding and guide for the conceptual framework that further will be presented.

Table 2.1: Theoretical Framework Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Summarized Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Engagement on Social Media</td>
<td><em>Customer engagement</em> refers to “A psychological state of mind experienced when consuming content in which an individual is highly absorbed in it and experiences a sense of excitement.” (Syrdal &amp; Briggs, 2018, p.18). The sought customer engagement and what marketers consider the primary goal in the context of engaging social media marketing is what refers to likes, followers, comments and shares (Syrdal &amp; Briggs, 2018; Ashley &amp; Tuten, 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Social Media Content</td>
<td><em>Engaging social media content</em> refers to content considered valuable, narrowed, concise, authentic and original towards customers which will make them engage (Alagöz &amp; Ekizi, 2016). Syrdal &amp; Briggs (2018) state that visually appealing content is more engaging. In other words, pictures or videos are superior compared to only using texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Targeting</td>
<td><em>Social media targeting</em> refers to choosing the right target group for the content. The choice of platform does play a major role here (Kaplan &amp; Haenline, 2010). There are two groups marketers should put focus on; actives and talkers, due to their tendency to engage and spread information about the content (Campbell, Ferraro &amp; Sands, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Appeals</td>
<td><em>Content appeals</em> refers to different appeals marketers can use within the created content to evoke and enhance engagement among customers (Ashley &amp; Tuten, 2015). Functional appeals which is used to describe the function and quality of a product and emotional appeals which are used to evoke psychological senses may help enhancing the customer engagement (Swani et al., 2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing and Frequency of Content</td>
<td><em>Timing and frequency</em> refers to when and how often the content should be posted to gain as much engagement as possible (Killian &amp; McManus, 2015). Barregren &amp; Tegborg (2013) state that posting content with good quality and the right point of time is more important than posting with a</td>
</tr>
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high frequency. Studies have shown that most user activities on social medias connected to engagement takes place on weekdays during the evening, thus that is the ideal time for creating customer engagement (Dolan et al., 2017).

2.4 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool used to clarify for both the researchers and the readers to better understand and follow the study; i.e. how to answer the research questions and reach the purpose. A conceptual framework is a visual product that explains the main things from the theoretical framework to be studied and how the tools are connected to each other (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For this conceptual framework, a model is drawn up below to illustrate how the authors reason concerning the tools relationship.

**Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model**

Figure 2.1 shows how customer engagement in social medias can be affected by these four different parts, in accordance to the theoretical framework. Thus, by creating attractive social media content with the right content appeals towards the right target group and posting it the right time will lead to customer engagement.
3. Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive presentation and justification of how the authors went by conducting the research. The chapter guides through the different choices made, such as research approach, purpose, data collection method, sampling, ethical and social considerations, data analysis method and quality criteria. At last, the chapter is summarized to obtain a structured overview of the chosen methods.

3.1 Research Approach

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), a study's research approach refers to the track the researchers have used to approach the specific subject or problem of interest by which the research is about. The research approach is concerned about the researchers selection of either deductive or inductive reasoning as well as the choice of going for a quantitative or qualitative approach when collecting the data for analysis. These two choices affect the research and the researchers need to carefully evaluate the two alternatives since they both have advantages and disadvantages. Given this, the researchers should select the alternatives that are most advantageous in relation to the study’s purpose (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.1.1 Deductive Approach

In business research, there are two major reasonings towards the relationship between theory and research, deductive theory testing and inductive theory building (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When adopting an inductive approach the researcher aim for generating theory. That is, the theory is not the factor which leads the study, instead it is the target of outcome. An inductive approach is an open-ended and exploratory approach as it refers to observations and findings from where the researcher can draw generalizable results (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). However, by adopting a deductive approach the researchers goal with the study is to test theory and hence relying on existing theory rather than developing new theories (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Saunders et al. (2009) argue that a deductive approach involves a structured process and is referred as a theory-based
approach, where the theory guides the researcher. It begins with what is known about a particular domain and out of the existing theory, the researchers tend to deduces a so-called hypothesis, several hypotheses or research questions that are to be subjected into empirical examination (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009; Hyde, 2000). However, formulation of hypotheses are not that crucial as it indicates in deductive studies; one can have a deductive approach without formulating hypotheses (Hyde, 2000). Further, in order for the hypothesis or research question to be confirmed or rejected, gathering of data for analysis needs to be collected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Here, Saunders et al. (2009) explain that a deductive approach is commonly used when one wants to explain something, eg. the relationship between two variables. Given this, a deductive approach is useful in quantitative studies, although it should not be excluded as an approach in qualitative studies since one can have a deductive approach there as good as in quantitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Hyde, 2000).

In this study, the authors took a deductive approach although the subject area of how the senders perspective in micro-sized firms regarding customer engagement on social media was under researched where an inductive approach could be argued for. The deductive approach was suitable because the theoretical tools have been the the starting point and worked as guidance. The chosen theories was existing and also widely used in other researches in the area of subject. Also, since this research did not have an aim of generating new theory, but rather using existing theories to draw connections to the empirical findings, it was considered by the authors to be the right choice. Nevertheless, the researchers did not have any intentions of testing hypotheses, but as Hyde (2000) states, a deductive approach does not need to formulate hypotheses.

3.1.2 Qualitative Strategy

When collecting the data for the research, researchers can choose to either go with a quantitative or a qualitative strategy. It all depends on what the researchers wants to find out about, which perspective that is considered most suitable. The two strategies differ in several ways in terms of the framework that the data collection it provides (Bryman &
Bell, 2011). With a quantitative strategy, the aim is usually to test a hypothesis with help of the collected data to investigate the relationship between different variables and it is concerned with numbers rather than words (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). In a qualitative research strategy, the researcher strives to understand and discover new phenomena. In other words, the focus is on interpretation (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). The empirical data is preferably collected by close interactions with respondents in form of interviews, focus groups or participant observations. This in order for the researcher to gain as deep understanding as possible about the subject from the respondents’ perspective (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Given the information about quantitative versus qualitative strategies, the suitable strategy for this paper was determined to conduct a qualitative study. This because a qualitative research strives to understand people’s reality, experiences and perception which the authors believe are crucial when having the sender perspective from micro-sized firms. A qualitative approach do also provide deeper information when the data is being collected, which was of importance for this research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009).

3.2 Research Purpose

The authors’ decision around either qualitative or quantitative, deductive or inductive lead to the question of the study's purpose. There are three purposes typically used in business research which are explanatory, exploratory and descriptive (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Studies with an explanatory purpose emphasizes on explaining the relationships between variables. An exploratory purpose refers to finding out what is happening and to seek new insights in a particular field that is unexplored. A descriptive purpose is recognized by having an aim of accurately portraying a phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). It is important to have a clear picture of the phenomena prior to the collection of data. As the name reveals, the focus is to describe which enables both qualitative and quantitative methods (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). The field of studying customer engagement in the context of social media content is not unexplored and theories are to be found in the subject. A qualitative study of
the sender perspective in micro-sized firms was not that representable to our knowledge which would call for an explorative study. However, since an explorative purpose aims for generating new theories which this study not intended to do, a descriptive purpose implied as the most suitable approach. This because of the aim of portraying and describing the key components of how to create engaging social media content for micro-sized firms. With regards to that research purpose, the choice of using that particular approach was considered most suitable by the authors.

3.2.1 Research Design

Once the research purpose is determined, researchers must decide a suitable research design to perform the study in the most optimal way in relation to the purpose and research questions. A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data, and helps the researcher to create a good structure and foundation for the study (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Bryman & Bell (2011) are there five types of designs that are typical in business research. There is ‘experimental design’, which applies manipulation of a dependent variable on one of at least two control groups. A design called ‘cross-sectional design’ refers to a snapshot of a particular population at a single point of time. Another design is called ‘longitudinal design’, referring to a research that look to change over time. There is also ‘comparative design’, which compares at least two groups that are believed to generate different results. The fifth and last design mentioned is ‘case study design’ which refers to detailing a single case which is complex, typically an whole organization where departments are very different from each other (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A characteristic of a cross-sectional research design is that it include more than one case as the researcher is interested in variation. The ‘cases’ can for example be people, organizations/firms, nations or states. Cross-sectional research design often refers to quantitative strategies due to that surveys are often used to collect data and hence, to be quantifiable. However, Bryman & Bell (2011) argue that qualitative research in business and management often entails a form of cross-sectional design by employing unstructured
3.3 Data Sources
Collecting data can be completed in two different ways, either the researcher collects primary data which is new empirical data or secondary data, which is data gathered earlier by someone else with another purpose. Gathering primary data is time consuming but it is advantageous since the gathered data is tailored to the research while secondary data is not. Bryman & Bell (2011) claim that when collecting primary data, the researcher must ensure that the data lives up to certain criterias such as being relevant, authentic and objective.

This study based the empirical and analysis parts only upon primary data. The reason why primary data is collected was because of the lack of existing data in relation to this study’s problematization and purpose.

3.4 Data Collection Method
When it comes to the collection of the data, there are according to Bryman & Bell (2011) several ways of doing it. The choice of it depends on what method the research is based upon; qualitative or quantitative. In quantitative studies, surveys are a typical method to use while in a qualitative approach content analysis, observations, in-depth interviews and focus groups are being used (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since this study employed a qualitative method, the chosen collection approach considered most suitable by the authors were in-depth interviews. This because of the deep and rich information it will be able to obtain from the interviewees.

When doing these interviews there are according to Bryman & Bell (2011) a couple of ways to go about. One can choose between semi-structured or unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have certain questions as starting points, but as the interview takes shape the interviewer can ask supplementary questions to receive an even deeper
discussion of the subject. When it comes to unstructured interviews, the approach is very informal and usually used for inductive studies (Saunders et al., 2009). In regards with this research, the researchers took a deductive approach and thus, semi-structured interviews were considered to be the most appropriate way to go. This because the theories used were operationalized and the fundamental platform for formulating the interview questions.

3.4.1 Execution of Interviews
When executing the interviews, they were all taking place face to face with the social media managers or consultants at their office. Thus, each interview took place at different places. The interviews started with a short presentation of the project, its purpose and the reason why the authors had chosen to contact the particular person. Ethical and societal questions regarding if the interviewee wanted be anonymous or not were also presented. In this case there were none of the managers who found it necessary be anonymous in this research, as they did not consider it to be a sensitive subject. The interviewees were also asked if they agreed upon letting the authors record the interview, which they had no problem with. By recording the interviews, the researchers made sure that no data was missed out after the interview. Since there are three authors on this research who participated in the interviews, two of them took notes while the one asked the questions to the respondent. Since the interviews had a semi-structured approach, the theories converted to what the authors searched for in the operationalization had several probing questions which will further be described in the interview guide. The consequences by doing so led to greater depth in the answers which gave rich and deep information for the empirical data and it also made the interview last for a longer time than planned. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes.

3.4.2 Operationalization
According to Saunders et al. (2009), the operationalization is the process of converting intangible theory into measurable concepts, in this situation; interview questions. Presenting a table makes the reader understand how the theoretical tools are interpreted and
further used to collect empirical data. Bryman & Bell (2011) states that in a qualitative study there are risks relating to the interview getting subjective or non-structured. An operationalization structure with a clear table helps the researcher to maintain structure and collect the data that the researcher is aiming for. Summarized, the operationalization connects the theory chapter and the empirical chapter and makes the platform for further analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). The table shows the central terms of the theoretical tools chosen of this research and how they are used in collecting data from the interview subjects.

**Table 3.1: Operationalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical area</th>
<th>Sub-concept</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Engagement on Social Media</td>
<td>Social media strategy</td>
<td>To obtain an overall view of the different aspects of customer engagement.</td>
<td>How does a social media marketing strategy look in general when aiming for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional factors</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the vital aspects of a social media marketing strategy when aiming for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active engagers, passive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is it any difference in different type of engagers, such as likes/comments, passive/active?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engagers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is some type of engagement more important than the other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Social Media Content</td>
<td>Valuable content</td>
<td>To obtain deep and rich information about what the respondent classify as engaging social media content.</td>
<td>What type of content is suitable when aiming for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually appealing content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What type of content would you classify as valuable? Is valuable content a key component for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrowed and concise content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is visual content a key component for customer engagement or can you go with only text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What type of content would you classify as narrowed and concise? Is narrowed and concise a key component for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What type of content would you classify as authentic? Is authentic a key component for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How do you create content that engage customers in a way that they discuss and share content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pictures, videos - what type of content is suitable for what type of situation when aiming for customer engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Targeting</td>
<td>Putting quality before quantity</td>
<td>To obtain deep and rich information in how to target suitable customers on social medias.</td>
<td>What target groups exist on which platform?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying the target group</td>
<td>Actives, talkers</td>
<td></td>
<td>What platforms is most suitable for what target group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching customer characteristics with platform</td>
<td>Algorithms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Should different content be posted on different platforms? If so, what content shall be posted on what platform?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are there differences in customer engagement between the platforms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you adjust your social media content for specific target groups?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What characteristics describes a good social media targeting process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How do you identify the desired customer to further use as a persona in the targeting process?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Appeal</th>
<th>Functional appeals</th>
<th>To obtain deep and rich information in how to make use of different content appeals for the social media content.</th>
<th>How do you work with different appeals of your content, emotional/rational?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional appeals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are both of the appeals a factor to reach customer engagement or is one more important than the other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What characteristics do you apply on the different appeals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When are the different appeals suitable?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing and Frequency of Content</th>
<th>Detailed plan of timing and frequency</th>
<th>To obtain deep and rich information regarding the optimal timing and frequency of posted content on.</th>
<th>What is the optimal timing of the social media content?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal timing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is your view about consistency - is there a need to be consistent with the posted content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you reason regarding specific hours during the day - are there specific hours during a day that results in more customer engagement than other?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any difference in how often you post content regarding on what type of content?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it exist any optimal frequency and in that case, what is it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.3 Pre-test

To make sure that the questions in the semi-structured interviews were understandable and were in a suitable order to keep a certain structure of the interview, a pre-test was conducted. According to Bryman & Bell (2011) the pre-test should be conducted both on a potential respondent and on experts who possess knowledge within research. Thus, by using this pre-test, errors and misunderstandings can be avoided and corrected before the actual interview takes place (Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, Kim & Willson (2010) also emphasize the importance of following up and evaluating the results after conducting the pre-test, otherwise it might end up in misinterpreted results.

In this case, the questions for the semi-structured interviews were reviewed and approved by the tutor of this thesis, because of the research knowledge that she possesses. The questions were also pre-tested on a potential object of study. Though, the material from the interview with that person has not been included in the study. As the pre-test took place, it started off by shortly presenting the project followed by an explanation of this interview just being a test. During the pre-test interview, there was a discussion with the respondent whether the questions were considered relevant and clear enough for a social media manager.
3.4.4 Interview Guide

When doing semi-structured interviews the interviewer has a certain structure for questions to be asked. However, the interviewee might not answer the question in a way that it provides the information the researchers are searching for. This explains how semi-structured interviews are characterized by probing questions which enable the researchers to obtain the wanted information. This is where an interview guide is helpful which Bryman & Bell (2011) describes as a memory list which help the interviewer to lead the interview session in the right direction. For the interviews executed for this research, the authors need for deep and rich information from the interviewees was of high importance. Due to the characteristics of semi-structured interviews of having main questions followed by deep discussions of the subject, the questions stated in the operationalization were complemented with probing questions throughout the interviews. The probing questions asked during the discussion of the main question were first “how” and “why” and “please elaborate”. If the interviewees answer did not reach the authors satisfaction of deep and rich information regarding the concepts, the interviewer asked further probing questions connected to the sub-concepts in the operationalization.

In addition, it was of high importance that the interviewees answered the questions with the perspective of a micro-sized firm in mind. As a purposive sample selection resulted in seven social media managers from micro-sized firms, it could be implicit that they would answer the questions with a micro-sized firm perspective in mind. However, as seen in table 3.2 in the sampling topic, three social media consultants are included, which represent other firms than their own. For those interviews, it was especially important to ensure that they answered the questions from a micro-sized firm perspective since they might possess information not in relation this research purpose. Given this, the authors ensured that all the interviews executed in this research had a micro-sized firm perspective in asking questions as well as the answers and notes taken. Thus, the questions that were asked, had several probing questions. When the authors felt that an answer lacked of micro-sized firm perspective, the interviewer probed the interviewee with questions to elaborate. Examples of those questions were: “what is the optimal way of managing this
when also having to think about the financial resources?” or “in a micro sized firm, the social media manager is also often the entrepreneur with other tasks. What are your thoughts of managing both of these tasks?”.

3.5 Sampling
Collecting empirical data for analysis takes a lot of time and effort for researchers. In the best of worlds, researchers would study the whole population in the subject. However, collecting empirical data from all social media managers in all the micro-sized firms are not possible and this is where sampling is necessary. A sample refers to a selected representation of a whole population that holds empirical data that the researcher is looking for (Bryman & Bell, 2011). There are two main types of sampling, probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is most related to quantitative methods whilst non-probability sampling is suitable for qualitative methods and thus used in this research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). There are different techniques a researcher can choose from in non-probability sampling. Saunders et al. (2009) describes purposive as a technique useful in studies with very small sample sizes and where the focus is in-depth with the aim for deep and rich data. The purposive sampling enables the researcher to use its judgement to select cases that best will be able to provide empirical data to answer the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Since this study gathered the empirical data from conducting a few semi-structured interviews with social media managers in micro-sized firms or social media consultants representing different micro-sized firms, purposive sampling was a suitable sampling technique. The authors used their judgement regarding what type of firm, size and what social media activities that were already known for the researchers that the manager is operating within. When doing these judgements, as the purpose is to investigate micro-sized firms, firms considered to be within this size and being active daily on social medias were the essential criterias. Micro-sized firms not being active on these medias would not be relevant. In addition to that, all of the managers and consultants that were interviewed work within a modern and highly competitive industry which means that they have to stay up-to-date in their work.
Therefore, they possess great knowledge within this field of study. The final criteria was that the chosen respondents must work with micro-sized firms, since some of them work as consultants for different firms. In total there were seven social media managers and consultants who were asked to participate in this study and all of them agreed to participate. Below they are presented.

Table 3.2: Interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Managers</th>
<th>Managerial Perspective</th>
<th>Firm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika Åberg</td>
<td>Social Media Manager</td>
<td>Växjö Citysamverkan AB, Växjö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornelia Munge</td>
<td>Social Media Manager &amp; Owner</td>
<td>Lyx Vxo AB, Växjö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna Göthberg</td>
<td>Social Media Consultant &amp; Owner</td>
<td>Social By Hanna AB, Växjö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannes Fridolfsson</td>
<td>Social Media Manager</td>
<td>Pitchler AB, Växjö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina Möller</td>
<td>Social Media Consultant &amp; Owner</td>
<td>Odd Kommunikation AB, Växjö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Sterling</td>
<td>Social Media Consultant</td>
<td>Connect Media AB, Kalmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathias Eriksson</td>
<td>Social Media Consultant</td>
<td>Viva Media AB, Kalmar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Ethical and Social Considerations

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), there are four areas of ethical issues for a researcher to manage: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and involvement of deception. For preventing these issues, Bryman & Bell (2011) claim that the researchers must follow certain guidelines which here will be described.

Harm to participants can include both physical and psychological harm. A common problem addressed is the harm to future career or the employment at the moment. It is important to keep data anonymous in order for the participant to feel secure when the topic or subject of study is of sensitive character (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Regarding this research, the social media managers- and consultants were being recorded and their names were published in the research. Though, the subject of study is not of sensitive character and this is transparently discussed with the participants and they are agreed on the terms. Lack of informed consent highlights the importance of giving the right amount of information in order for the participant to make a well informed decision about to participate or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this research, the interviewees was informed, before accepting participation, with which questions that would be asked and what would happen with their personal information as well as the empirical data. Further, a transparent discussion with the interviewees about the area was conducted. Invasion of privacy refers to the anonymity and the confidentiality that a participant should have (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As mentioned, in this study a transparent discussion and well informed details about the personal information was given to the participants. Involvement of deception refers to the researcher lying about what the agenda for the project is, conducting wrong information or leaving out crucial information for the participant. If the researcher is desperate for respondents, there might be a risk of representing the research in a not truthful way (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). For this research, every part that was relevant for the participant was communicated in a transparent way. The participant also got a draft of the paper in order to not make any mistakes regarding their participation information.
In some cases, social issues that might come along with the research could also be important to take into account. This could be referred to harm towards non-participants as a study might concern a subject where findings might make the society change their perception and behavior about something in a negative way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this case the research contains information regarding how social media managers from micro-sized firms are using their social medias and what strategies they are using. This might be a social issue since they reveal some part of their marketing strategies towards the public. Though, these strategies secrets are most likely differ from case to case and in this research none of the social media managers and consultants had any problems of revealing any information.

3.7 Data Analysis Method
Qualitative research contributes with a large and rich amount of data; especially when conducting in-depth interviews as in this study. Thus it needs to be analyzed in a systematic manner in order to make sense of it (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The major distinction from quantitative analysis methods is that for qualitative, the focus is on meanings expressed in words and analysis conducted through the use of conceptualisation (Saunders et al., 2009). Below the authors describes how they systematically analysed the data.

3.7.1 Transcription of Raw Data
The interviews held with the social media managers in the selected micro-sized firms were recorded which Bryman & Bell (2011) and Saunders et al. (2009) supports as strategy for semi-structured interviews. Bryman & Bell (2011) claim that transcription, the process of writing down everything said from the recorded material must be done as soon as possible while the interviewers memory from the interview is recent. Transcribing recorded interviews are time consuming which researchers need to consider. However, recording the interviews will enable researchers not only to remember what the interviewees said but how they said it (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). In this case, the authors
took as many notes they managed during the interview sessions. Secondly, they listened to
the recorded material and wrote down the raw data from each recorded interview. The
interviews were held in Swedish due to convenience for the interviewees to be able to fully
express themselves and as the authors wrote down the data they translated it into English.

3.7.2 Open Coding
The process of open coding is according to Bryman & Bell (2011) described as “the
process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data”
(Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 578). Put simply, identifying and labeling pieces of fundamental
empirical data. The authors followed guidelines when coding suggested by Bryman & Bell
(2011) who argue that researchers should read the transcript one time without making any
interpretations of the answers to obtain a clear view of the data. However, the second time
reading, being the first stage in the coding process, the authors wrote down notes which
results as concepts from what was significant. The raw data that was not considered to
contribute to answer the purpose and research questions was left out during the coding
process. The concepts identified was then used to form categories of the data which the
authors connected with the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the second step of the
coding process, the collected data was divided into categories to get a clear view of the
findings.

Nine categories were identified during the coding process. The first category
identified was types of engagers, based on codes from interview respondents such as
“passive engagers” “some users act in different ways when engaging”. The second
category of social media strategy was based on discussions regarding if social media
managers need to have a plan in writing or just freestyling, codes like “to know what to
do”, “detailed plan”, “scheduling posts” was the basis. The third category of inspirational
content was based on the discussion with respondents of regarding what type of content
that is linked with customer engagement and since every respondent had an opinion
regarding inspirational content, that became the third category. The fourth category short
and concise content was based on the discussions with respondents regarding social media
senders often being too long in their texts and that it is in all situations more effective to be short and concise, all respondents had some sayings about this. Codes like “senders are too long in their texts” and “get to the point quickly” were common. The fifth category personal content was the most saturated and clear category since every respondent in exact words were mentioning personal content. All respondents were agreed that a common mistake is to sell too much and that “social medias is not a sales tool, it is a relationship tool” and “sell less on social medias; sell more” was codes that gave basis for this category since respondents state that personal content should be used instead of selling. The sixth category visual content was identified when discussing codes like “pictures” and “videos” with the respondents. The seventh category choice of social media platforms and target groups was found when coding the discussions of how to find the suitable target group. Codes of the different social media platforms and different demographic variables in the interviews were the basis for this category. The eighth category was found during discussions of how important it is to stay updated in the frequent updates in the algorithms, codes like “algorithms prioritize peer to peer connection” were basis for the category. The ninth and last category was timing strategy and were based on codes from what the respondents thought was the optimal timing and how to “schedule posts to manage time”. Further in the analysis, the categories were connected with the theoretical tools and from that point the authors could analyze what categories that were connected to what theoretical tools. On the next page, a table with the final coding results of connections between categories and theoretical tools are presented. The categories are marked with numbers and the theoretical tools connected with the same number.
Table 3.3: Coding process - Categories connected to theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Theoretical Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of engagers (1)</td>
<td>Customer Engagement - Active engagers, passive engagers (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media strategy (2)</td>
<td>Customer Engagement - Social media strategy (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational content (3)</td>
<td>Content - Valuable content (3, 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short and concise content (4)</td>
<td>Content - Narrowed and concise content (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal content (5)</td>
<td>Content Appeal - Emotional appeal (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appeal - Functional appeal (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer Engagement - Emotional factors (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content - Authentic content (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual content (6)</td>
<td>Content - Visually appealing content (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of social media platforms and target groups (7)</td>
<td>Targeting - Putting quality before quantity (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeting - Identifying the target group (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeting - Matching customer characteristics with platform (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeting - Actives, talkers (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algorithms (8)</td>
<td>Targeting - Algorithms (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing strategy (9)</td>
<td>Timing - Detailed plan (8, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timing - Optimal timing (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7.3 Saturation

The idea behind saturation is that the researcher should continue sampling interview participants and continue the coding and analysis of empirical data until saturation is reached (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is widely used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis (Saunders et al., 2017). Saturation means that no new relevant data is emerging when doing further interviews and that no new concepts occur in the empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2017). In this research, the authors began to identify saturation after coding the empirical data from the first five
interviews. Additionally two interviews were executed and when the data from the last two interviews were coded, saturation was reached.

3.8 Quality Criteria
The quality of a research depends on the measurements applied both in collecting and analysing data. Depending on the nature of the research, whether it is quantitative or qualitative, different quality criteria for evaluation is more or less suitable. For quantitative methods, reliability and validity are the two salient ones. For qualitative studies, Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that there are alternative criterias to be employed and suggest trustworthiness as appropriate criteria for the evaluation of data. Trustworthiness are broken down into four areas; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Krefting, 1991).

Credibility refers to how well the application of the study is performed. In other words that is how well it connects to the purpose. Furthermore, Bryman & Bell (2011) argue that credibility can guarantee that empirical findings are conducted in relation to principles and good practise. What the researcher must accomplish is to identify repeating patterns respondents say in the interviews. Thus, it increases the credibility of the data (Krefting, 1991). Since a qualitative research usually entails the study of a small group with focus on depth rather than breadths, the area of transferability is concerned about how well a study can be transferred to other populations, situations or contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Krefting, 1991). However, it is argued that it is rare that qualitative findings can be transferred as described above due to that the social world is constantly changing. Therefore, researchers should aim for producing what Bryman & Bell (2011) refer to as thick description, which can be provided and used by others who make judgements about possibilities whether findings can be transferable. The concept of dependability refers to the consistency of the findings. Because many qualitative studies differ in how the method was executed to answer the research question, researchers are encouraged to carefully describe how the collection and analysis of data was performed (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Krefting, 1991). The fourth category in trustworthiness, confirmability refers to objectivity.
This is important in qualitative research due to the researchers tendency in some situations to include their own values in the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.8.1 Application and Reflection of Quality Criteria

To make sure that this research lived up to these quality standards, making it trustworthy was an essential part of the whole process. If looking at the credibility in relation the purpose of the study, the researchers were in contact with social media managers and consultants representing micro-sized firms, considered experts in the field. When it came to transferability, with regards to the qualitative approach the authors focused on thick description in order for others to use their own judgement of the findings whether they are useful or not. The dependability part the authors clearly described everything concerning the collection of data, how it was executed as well as how it was analyzed. The authors also kept an objective view throughout the whole research to ensure confirmability.

During the first interview that was executed, the flow in terms of asking questions, leading the interview with probing questions and taking notes, was not on the same level as the six following interviews, which went very well. Why the first interview went this way are by the authors explained by inexpert in conducting interviews in this research area since it was the first time for them. However, the first interview went overall well and resulted in deep and rich empirical material useful for the analysis. Moreover, the authors had a good reflection and evaluation after the first interview. Nevertheless, the rest of the interviews went according to the authors very well in terms of a better flow and probing questions and no other complications occurred. In regards to the trustworthiness of the research, the authors want to point out the advantage of the purposive sampling. Only micro-sized firms, managers and consultants the authors had no prior relation to were contacted for interviews, which the authors believe established an unbiased environment as the collection of the data took place.
3.10 Methodology Summary

Below, a summary of the chosen methodology for this research is presented in order to give an overview of the comprehensive chapter.

**Table 3.2: Methodology Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Application of Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Approach</td>
<td>Deductive approach: the study relied on existing theory which can be described as a theory-based approach (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011). Qualitative strategy: was the strategy used to achieve rich and deep data from respondents (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Purpose</td>
<td>Descriptive purpose: the purpose was set to be descriptive due to the aim of portraying the phenomena of engaging social media content (Saunders et al., 2009). Cross-sectional research design: was the research design employed due to the several cases the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources</td>
<td>Primary data: was collected to obtain new deep and rich information from micro-sized firms to answer the research question and reach the purpose (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Method</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews: follows a certain structure and open up the ability for follow-up questions (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011). Execution of interviews: the semi-structured interviews were performed at the participants office. They were recorded and lasted for 30-45 minutes. Operationalization: was used to convert intangible theory into questions for the interviews and to follow a structure for the empirical data (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011). Pre-test: was performed to avoid errors and misunderstandings with the questions before the actual interviews were held (Saunders et al., 2009). Interview guide: was the tool used for leading the semi-structured interviews in the right direction. By ensuring that the participants were had a micro-sized firm perspective in mind and asking probing questions, deep and rich information was obtained (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Purposive sampling: was employed so the authors could use own judgements of whom was a suitable interview object due to the small sample size in the study (Saunders et al., 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and Social Considerations</td>
<td>Guidelines: were followed to collect in an ethical way. The authors considered: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, involvement of deception and invasion of privacy as well as social considerations (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
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</table>
Data Analysis Method

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcription of raw data</strong></td>
<td>The process of writing down what has been said in the interviews was conducted as soon as possible with help of the recorded material (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open coding</strong></td>
<td>Was the tool used in the process of identifying and labeling concepts and create categories of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturation</strong></td>
<td>Was the criterion employed for discontinuing the collection of data from the semi-structured interviews as well as the coding process where the authors did not identify any new relevant data for the study (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011; Saunders et al. 2017).</td>
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Quality Criteria

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trustworthiness</strong></td>
<td>Were determined to be the optimal quality criteria for the research. It is broken down into four concepts; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
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4. Empirical data

This chapter presents the empirical material from the semi-structured interviews with the participating social media managers and consultants from the micro-sized firms. The empirical material is divided into three sub-chapters. In the cases where no information from specific interview subjects are to be found except from a few, it means that the others did not have any information or opinions that were contrary with the opinions mentioned.

4.2 Customer Engagement and Engaging Social Media Content

Hanna Göthberg states that one of the cornerstones for creating customer engagement is to not go for hard-selling. Hanna says that “Social media users are sitting on the couch, looking at TV shows with commercials. When they are tired of the commercials, they go for their cell phone and start looking in their Facebook flow. They do not want any further hard-selling marketing in that case”. Ulrika Åberg is agreed with Hanna, stating that she has a rule of 80 / 20; 80% of inspiration, 20% of selling. She states that 80% of the time she is pushing on the emotional buttons of the social media user to increase long term engagement and 20% of the time she is trying to sell something on a short term basis.

Ulrika is mentioning that emotional buttons can be pushed via human elements. Ulrika tells a story about when she worked with car events. They did a formation in their social media marketing strategy from “press pictures” with professional photographers of the cars to sending videos of the people working with the cars as for example the mechanic employees. The engagement went triple sized and the Facebook page total spread got huge.

Moreover, Mathias Eriksson contributes to this discussion by stating “Stop selling - sell more”. By this he means that 85% of the times social media content with an intention to sell, do not result in sales. Customers find ways to do purchases from other ways, mostly through firms homepages.

Hannes Fridolfsson states further in the subject that a key to interrupt a customers flow and get their engagement and attention is to stick out from the blurr. Hannes describes the concurrence in the blurr and tells about funny cat videos. He says that it might sound funny, but that is the actual concurrence for an micro-sized firm on social medias in
regards to customer engagement. For a customer to engage, it does not matter if it is a humoristic video or a message from a firm; both are in a fight about the customers attention. Hannes further tells about how he is sticking out from the blurr with short videos with short and concise messages. All of the seven respondents are agreed upon this. For example, both Mathias and Hanna stated that in order for content to be engaging, it has to be concise, niched and original. Hannes further states that if a video is too general or not very clear with the message they want to bring - it will be a failure. Hannes gives an example about how he performed content when searching for people who wanted to search job via video. The first trial was formed “Seek job with video” and a picture of a girl talking to a camera. It went very bad and many people even pushed the “I do not want to see this”-button on the social media platform. He tried again with “Seek summer job with video” and a video of a girl working at a restaurant - and suddenly he got a lot of engagement. Hannes states that “this is a clear case of why video together with concise messages and personal content is the way to go when aiming for customer engagement”.

Cornelia Munge lists four keys to content that triggers customer engagement. *Stick out, Be personal, Differentiate, Show the quality of your product & service but not in a stiff way.* Cornelia is further asked how to perform those key factors of social media content. She then shows us the statistics for their Instagram account and tells about the top pictures. All of those pictures do have a face on it, often from staff. None of them includes any offers or marketing/selling methods. Cornelia further shows the bottom of the statistics and there the hardcore selling pops up. “Buy two and get three!” for example. She tells about that the human elements in the content must be considered to perform customer engagement.

Anna Sterlings contributions in the subject are similar to the others, among one other factor she highlights the personal touch of the content as the number one key factor of customer engagement. When Anna is asked how to perform this key factor “personal content”, she is concise. Anna Sterlings four components of creating personal content: 1. *Give something back to the social media user!* Could be in form of knowledge, inspiration or an actual offer. 2. *Let the user in.* Presenting the employees of the firm is a key factor
for creating a relationship between the users and the firm. As a customer, you engage and get a platform for future trust. 

3. The language shall also be personal. Personal but not private. 

4. Local touch. Use pictures and videos from the local city that you are trying to promote yourself in. In that way, you are building a bridge between the customer and the sender that is creating engagement.

The other factor that Anna tells about is the component of keeping the content niched and concise. The target group needs to feel “hit” to create customer engagement. Content that is general in its approach risks getting ignored and miss out on customer engagement because the content is only scratching the surface of several target groups instead of really penetrating one or two. The key component of niched content is to perform a precise targeting work so the knowledge of what buttons to push in the content that is being sent is obvious. This is totally agreeing with Hannes, who explicitly talked about the story of when he performed too general content. Users even clicked on the button “I do not want to see this”. All respondents are agreed in that the too general content can be interpreted as PR instead of relationship oriented. All respondents are agreed upon that PR oriented content is not a path to take if aiming for customer engagement.

4.3 Social Media Targeting

Nina Möller divides the users of social media into three different categories for her micro-sized firm customers. Primary target group, secondary target group and ambassadeurs. Primary group are the ones who the micro-sized firm perceives as the desired customer, the secondary is the ones buying but not necessarily are the most desired. Ambassadeurs do not buy but they engage because they like what the firm does. Nina states that, in general people are generous with their time and engagement as long as they like what you do. They do not need to be customers. When Nina is asked about how the micro-sized firm shall perform the targeting process, she recommends hiring a consultancy firm for setting up a persona but in the same breath she states that very few can afford that. She therefore put emphasis on the classical trial and error way and says that the social media landscape is a perfect way to test things due to the flexible and in many ways
without any costs. If the micro-sized firm follows the engagement with some trial posts, useful information can be found. Nina also describes the next step in the process, to match the desired customers characteristics with the different social media platforms of choice. Nina tells a bit about the different platforms “It is harder to create engagement on Facebook because of an algorithm that prioritize peer to peer since that is the core focus of Facebook - communication between people. If you can manage to get comments on your posts, that is perfect. Instagram has no algorithm that is similar to FB but they still prioritize peer to peer”. All respondents are agreed regarding that trial and error is the process that are most suitable for micro-sized firms that probably do not want to hire consultants to set up a persona. Mathias also puts emphasis in the developments of the tools inside the platforms. The tools are nowadays highly developed with emphasis on helping the sender finding the proper target group, Mathias recommends micro-sized firms to study those and take hold of those. Mathias also recommends micro-sized firms to follow the algorithm updates that can gain understanding of what content that Facebook for now premiers in the Facebook flow for the users. This is something that is updated a lot and the ones having deep understandings in the subject can win customer engagement.

4.4 Timing and Frequency

Anna means that a micro-sized firm should avoid the larger holidays or events where it is a massive achievement to stick out from the blurr. Since sticking out is key, the micro-sized firm should avoid those situations. She also means that for managing high frequency posts as everyday content, selling is a no-go, the micro-sized firm needs to conduct content that is received as worth. Inspiration and knowledge is perceived as worth. The other respondents further state that a key to succeed with the timing is to use both the integrated software in the platforms of choice, but also external software as scheduling posts and analyzing statistics of your actual followers and potential followers. Hanna talks about how she sits in the sunday evening and performing posts for the whole week - and if something changes, she can just adjust it. Hanna is further describing the importance of not being one sided in the frequent content. She states “the content can have the same attributes but the
social media user will easily get tired of you if it is obvious that you are copy pasting. If the social media manager do not have the ability to create a content with enough variation, it is better to turn down the volume of frequency and create stimulating and engaging content”. The respondents are agreed regarding the hours during the day when working B2C, since the time when the customers are not on the work is the time for having time to engage on social medias. Cornelia agrees and says “the most important is to differentiate the content, not the number of posts. You can post 5 times a day if you differentiate the content”. Cornelia also states that the hairdressing industry, that is her industry, is a typical B2C industry with a lot of competition on the social media landscape between the salons. She states that they post three times per day and that the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram are their only marketing channels.

All the respondents are agreed in the points of having an external software to schedule posts and to follow the users that are matching with the desired customer. All the respondents are agreed in that the micro-sized firm should use the statistics of the platforms and match the online hours of their desired customer and that the evenings is the proper timing for a B2C micro-sized firm. For a B2B, respondents say that it is more complex and more industry oriented.
5. Analysis

The following chapter presents the analysis of the empirical material collected from the semi-structured interviews. The coding process that resulted into categories are presented and linked with the theoretical tools. The categories are analyzed and presented with italic text.

**Category one: Types of engagers**

Syrdal & Briggs (2018) means that active and passive engagers have differences but that the passive engager is not a failure. The interview respondents have contrary opinions in this subject since Nina Möller is the only one who to some extent lifts up the passive engagers as important. As Nina divides the social media user engagement into the “primary target group, secondary target group and ambassadeurs”, she is developing her thoughts about different target groups and pointing out the importance of the ambassadeurs. The ambassadeurs can be interpreted being the passive engagers according to Syrdal & Briggs (2018) and Malthouse et al., (2013). The theoretical findings are in line with the accordance of Nina Möller but it is interpreted that a passive engager is not a positive result if aiming for customer engagement. Though, that is only the situation if the passive engager would have been active if performing the social media content in another way. A passive engager or as Nina calls them, ambassadeurs, is interpreted to be better than nothing as the theoretical findings also state (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018; Malthouse et al., 2013).

**Category two: Social media strategy**

Ashley & Tuten (2015) states that it is vital to have a strategy. Some interview respondents have opinions that are in line with the statement but do not lift this factor as a key component. When discussing the strategy subject with the interview respondents, they all say that it is good to know what you want to reach with the social media presence of the firm and further the customer engagement, but the strategy factor in further detail is left out as a factor in the discussions with the interview respondents. It is interpreted that the
strategy factor is important for the senders structure and time management but it is not a vital factor for creating customer engagement.

**Category three: Inspirational content**

It is theoretically argued that social media content must be valuable for customers (Du Plessis, 2017), which is in line with respondents opinions. Anna Sterling was very explicit, listing components of what is “value”. All respondents have suggestions for what “value” is. All respondents do not have the exact same components but some components are returning in every interview; inspiration and knowledge. It can be interpreted that a factor to reach customer engagement is to offer the social media user inspiration for use of the product or service and knowledge about the profession of the sender. As Nina Möller stated, some of her clients are in the construction industry. When they post content that is offering professional expertise via video in order for the social media user to learn; customer engagement is strong. Inspirational content is hence a factor for customer engagement.

**Category four: Short and concise content**

Alagöz & Ekici (2016) claim like Kaplan & Haenline (2010) that the social media content must be narrowed and concise. The social media user is engaging with posts that has a narrowed message and cares less of details. This is backed up by the empirical findings since the factors “narrowed, clear, niched and concise” is returning in every interview. Empirical findings state that shorter texts and videos with concise messages are factors of customer engagement. Hannes stated that the longer he worked with social medias, the shorter the videos got. He puts emphasis on that the videos should never be longer than 30 seconds. It can be understood that a short and concise content is a factor of creating customer engagement.
Category five: Personal content

What can be interpreted as a main factor is to make the content personal. Every respondent asked is highlighting the personal and human elements as a key factor to reach customer engagement. Personal content is linked with the emotional appeal and selling is linked with the functional appeal (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Syrdal & Briggs (2018) made a conclusion regarding this subject when they stated that social media users engage more when they perceive the content as authentic and further not created only to sell. This is in line with the empirical findings since all respondents are agreed on that personal content is a key; and hard selling is a big no-go. Some respondents as Hanna and Ulrika claims that a micro-sized firm can create engagement with using the emotional appeals and when the micro-sized firm needs to sell something, they can approach with a functional appeal and go for a more selling attitude. Ulrika is in this case using the 80/20 rule of emotional and functional appeal to not sell too much. Further, every other respondents claim that a way to get interpreted as annoying by the social media users is to sell too much hence using too much functional appeal. It can be interpreted that the statements from Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf & Donthu (2017) regarding customers viewing environment in social medias are highly characterized by emotional attachments, is clearly in line with what the respondents are stating. Anna Sterling is stating that a micro-sized firm should never never use functional appeal on social medias hence never pushing an offer. Syrdal & Briggs (2018) claim that authentic content that not go for not only selling can be connected to customer engagement. It can be interpreted that there are some contrary opinions in the subject but no respondent or the theoretical findings are claiming that a micro sized firm should go for hard selling on social medias. The theoretical findings though say that functional appeal and emotional appeal are as worthy as each other (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tafesse & Wien, 2017). This is not the case in the empirical findings since emotional appeal is the one that the respondents say is the key to customer engagement. It exists situations where functional appeal can be of worth; but not situations related to customer engagement. Cornelia Munge was the only one stating that it was important to show the quality of the products; but in the same sentence she stated that
it should not be “stiff”. Hence it can be interpreted that the emotional appeal is a factor for customer engagement and functional appeal is not. Functional appeal can be used for other types of situations but should according to empirical findings be used with restrictions.

Category six: Visual content
It can be interpreted that videos are both according to theory (Syrdal & Briggs, 2018) and the empirical findings the best visual content when aiming for engagement. Though, empirical findings state that video are both time consuming and financially expensive. Interview respondents state, as Hannes and Anna, that videos are the way to go but from a resource management perspective, the situation can be different. Since a micro-sized firm needs to look for both what content that creates engagement but also how resource consuming it is. An interpretation is though that content without visual elements is not a component for engagement since all the respondents are agreed in the opinion of never posting anything that do not have visual attributes. This is in line with Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) & Syrdal & Briggs (2018), stating that the content linked to customer engagement is pictures and videos. Visually appealing content can therefore be interpreted as a factor for customer engagement.

Category seven: Choice of platforms and target groups
According to both Gagnon (2014) and Alagöz & Ekici (2016) it is important to have a chosen target group as a priority when posting the content. As Nina said in the interview, when choosing target group it can be efficient to divide the customers into three categories; firstly a primary group which should be the main target just as Gagnon (2014) and Alagöz & Ekici (2016) state. After that a secondary target group should be developed who also tends to purchase the products but is not considered to be the desired target group and finally a third category that according to the respondent refers to ambassadeurs should be targeted. Campbell, Ferraro & Sands (2014) refers to the two target groups called actives and talkers. Here one can interpret the primary group to which Nina talked about as the actives since they are considered to be the ones who actually purchase the the products.
Hence, it becomes evident that the talkers can be interpreted as the secondary and ambassadeur target group in regards to the tendency of spreading the word about the content rather than purchasing the actual products from the firm. All of the respondents are also agreed upon that one should carefully choose which social media platform to use in order to reach the desired target group. Canhoto et al. (2013) suggests the stages of matching customer characteristics with the users of social media platforms and further tailoring the content for the specific target group. As Du Plessis (2017) argues, there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to choosing platform confirms this. It is interpreted that the targeting process is a factor of worth for the customer engagement.

*Category eight: Algorithms*

Though, in terms of using Facebook as platform Canhoto et al. (2013) argue for the advantage of the algorithms which can be used to allocate and make sure that the content is being exposed to the right target group. Nina on the other hand stated that Facebook’s algorithms might also at the same time make it more difficult to create engagement because they prioritize peer-to-peer conversations in the feed rather than just ordinary content posted by firms. In contrast to this, Mathias made it clear that as long as one stays updated within the algorithms’ development and understands how to take advantage of it, customer engagement can be created. Something that was noticeable among all of the respondents was that their best advice after choosing what platform and target group to focus on, is simply to go by trial and error. Hence, to stay updated in the algorithm changes is a factor for creating customer engagement.
Category nine: Timing Strategy

The empirical findings is stating that a micro-sized firm should have a plan of how often to post to increase customer engagement. The customer shall be able to trust that if a social media page during a longer time post every day, they will continue doing that and hence this can be a factor for customer engagement. This according to Barregren & Tegborg (2013), meaning that consistency can be a factor for customer engagement. Further, all respondents are agreed with the theoretical findings regarding the specific hours during the day. When aiming for customer engagement, the evening hours with emphasis on 9 o'clock is mentioned during all interviews. The customer engagement exists in the hours when social media users are not asleep or during the office hours which is in line with the arguments from Dolan et al. (2017) and Killian & McManus (2015) regarding when to post. Respondents are agreed regarding that the micro-sized firm should use software to schedule posts in order to manage time effectively. Ulrika tells how she during sundays makes schedules for the week which can be interpreted to have a detailed plan for the posts. The theoretical findings and the empirical findings are in line regarding the importance to have a detailed plan of when to post (Killian & McManus, 2015; Dolan et al., 2018). Anna continues in the subject of timing and tells about that the micro-sized firm should avoid bigger holidays where the blurr gets nearly extreme. The risk of putting large money to stick out from the blurr is a risk Anna do not recommend. This is argued by Arhammar & Staunstrup (2016) when they argue for that the quality of content and to stick out from the blurr is more important than to post often.
6. Conclusion

Based on the factors analyzed and argues for in the analysis, seven key components of how micro-sized firms can create customer engagement on social medias are presented. The components selected are the ones argued for in the analysis hence showed the greatest connection to customer engagement.

Key component one - Finding the proper target group and choosing platform
This is done with matching the desired target groups characteristics with the platforms target group. Firstly, deciding for the desired customer; a persona. It is stated that for a micro-sized firm, with less of resources, trial and error is a proper way to go to find the proper target group of social media users. Another statement regarding the social media platform is that the social media manager should be updated in the changes of the algorithms of the social media platform since the algorithms change and that might occur changes in how to reach the target group.

Key component two - Personal content
It is concluded that social media content with a personal touch is a key factor to reach customer engagement. The human elements and the local connections to the social media user are attributes that makes a personal content. Both theoretical findings and empirical findings state that letting the user in behind the walls and showing and presenting the employees of the micro-sized firm is directly linked with customer engagement. Further, personal content can also be reached by creating content that the user is feeling locally connected to, for example the home town.

Key component three - Short and concise content
It is concluded that a too general content will not result in customer engagement. The pattern seen is that social media users are not attracted of too general or PR oriented content. According to the empirical findings, the social media users get enough from that watching TV and similar activities. The content must therefore be short and concise. To
reach this, the sender needs to adjust the content to the specific target group first; then perform short and concise content. This is done with having emphasis on short texts, early cliffhangers, easy formulations and less of information. Regarding the visual content, the pictures must be concise and the videos must be short and have a concise message early in the video.

**Key component four - Emotional appeal shall be the emphasis**

According to theory, emotional appeal and functional appeal is as worthy. New patterns can though be seen in the empirical findings. Most respondents state that a clear emphasis shall be on the emotional appeal and Anna Sterling states that functional appeal is not suitable at all on social medias. The conclusion here is that a clear emphasis in the social media content shall be on the emotional appeal, connecting back to Ulrika’s 80/20 rule of emotional/functional. To create emotional appeal, the sender must use earlier components as personal and niched content. Pushing the emotional buttons of the social media user is about human elements and local connections.

**Key component five - Offer value based content; do not sell too much**

It is concluded that the social media field between sender and receiver is a give and take relationship. A pattern can be seen in the empirical findings regarding that customers are sensitive and overselling is a common mistake. As Mathias stated - sell less on social medias; sell more! The conclusion here is the key component of offering value in the content. The examples coming from the empirical data is things as offering knowledge and inspiration. The micro-sized firm shall put emphasis on sharing valuable information and expertise about their profession. A classical example that comes up among the interviewees is the plumber that puts videos on YouTube on how to fix the stop in the toilet and gets valuable customer engagement.
Key component six - Use visual content

It is concluded that video is the content that creates most customer engagement but it is also stated that it is resource consuming. Since a micro-sized firm needs to have a resource management perspective, it is not stated that videos alone is a key component. It is though stated that visual content in general, both pictures and videos, should be used in all situations and hence is a key component of customer engagement.

Key component seven - Detailed plan of when to post and use a software to schedule posts

As the micro-sized firm often needs to have a time management perspective on social media tasks, it is concluded that a software should be used to schedule posts. This can for example be done as Ulrika stated sunday evening for the whole week. It is also stated that a detailed plan should exist in order to manage time effectively and maximize customer engagement.
7. Research Implications

This chapter presents the contributions of this research in terms of theoretical contributions, managerial contributions and recommendations. At last, limitations and future research is presented.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research has conducted insights of worth regarding micro-sized firms and how they shall behave on social medias to reach customer engagement. The goal throughout the thesis has been to conduct new and insightful knowledge in the research gap argued for in the problem discussion. The research gap of micro-sized firms being under researched and that the social media research landscape lacks of sender perspective have throughout this research been the main target. The authors certainly believe that the sender perspective, interviewing experts in the field, has given insights of worth. A theoretical contribution is the statement regarding functional and emotional appeal of content. Functional appeal was stated being a factor for customer engagement in the theoretical framework but later showed to not be approved as a factor for customer engagement in the analysis. The emotional appeal was though treated as a substantial factor for customer engagement and the new contribution generated is the emphasis on emotional appeal and the functional appeal being dismissed as a factor for engagement. Moreover, theoretical findings stated that having a strategy for the social media marketing is vital for creating customer engagement. Our findings are contrary to this and instead state other factors for customer engagement. It can be stated that a contribution is the updates and rejections of earlier theory. Further, the conclusion is a theoretical contribution that also can be understood as upgrades of earlier theory. If applying the key components from the conclusion in further research, further theory can be generated with our conclusion. The authors also believe that the social media research landscape will continue to thrive and that this research have conducted theoretical contribution along the road. The descriptive purpose made it possible to increase the understanding of customer engagement in the context of micro-sized firms as senders as well as portraying the conclusions drawn from the analysis. The authors
decision of a qualitative strategy with semi-structured interviews gave deep and rich insight in the micro-sized firms perspective which the authors think would have not been possible to reach with any other approach.

7.2 Managerial Contribution and Recommendations

This research has throughout the process aimed to conduct managerial tools for social media managers. The authors certainly believe that social media managers in micro-sized firms will see our seven key components of customer engagement on social medias as trustworthy and useful. The seven key components are below listed with managerial recommendations.

*Key component one - Finding the proper target group and choosing platform*

The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to first decide for a desired customer with explicit demographic characteristics and match it with the social media platform. Finding the target group is in some cases difficult, then trial and error is cheap but still effective. Secondly, be updated in the changes of algorithms since it can change your social media targeting process.

*Key component two - Personal content*

The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to first, put focus on the human elements. Secondly, do not be afraid of inviting yourself. Third, use content of showing faces of employees, customers and other people connected to the firm.

*Key component three - Short and concise content*

The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to use short texts. It is a common mistake to write too much. Secondly, get to the point quickly to create instant interest. This because of users in general has a massive flow with other content; they do not stop to read something that is even a tiny bit of boring. Third, the visual content should be linked to the target group you are aiming for. Think about what is their interests and
demographic variables to link their characteristics with your content. See component one for targeting.

Key component four - Emotional appeal shall be the emphasis
The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to use inspiration instead of functionality. Secondly, use content that “push the emotional buttons” instead of a functional approach showing the quality and/or functions of your product.

Key component five - Offer value based content; do not sell too much
The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to not use social medias as a sales tool. It is not meant that you will not sell with help of social medias, but you will not do the actual sales on the social medias. 85% of the trials to sell on social medias is failure. Secondly, use content that is approaching the customer in a way that they feel that they get the value; not you. If posting “buy 3 for 2”, the customer is feeling that you are the one that gets value. This do not create customer engagement. Thirdly, use value based content such as offering the customer knowledge that is valuable. This could for example be a plumper that is guiding customer on YouTube on how to fix a stop in the toilet.

Key component six - Use visual content
The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to use visual content in all posts, do not post only text. Secondly, short and concise videos is a key factor to maximize customer engagement. Thirdly, use videos if you can afford to maintain quality - it is in many cases expensive if you yourself are not an expert with equipment of quality. Fourthly, if videos are not an alternative due to financial resources, you can reach a decent level of customer engagement with pictures. See other components to reach customer engagement with pictures.
Key component seven - Detailed plan of when to post and use a software to schedule posts

The authors recommend social media managers of micro-sized firms to use a detailed plan for when and how to post in order to not lose the motivation when the customer engagement is not showing - all posts will probably not be successful due to unexpected circumstances. Secondly, use a software to schedule posts in order to increase time effectiveness. You can schedule posts for the whole week and focus on other tasks the rest of the time; as the situation often is in a micro-sized firm.

Figure 7.1: The key component process of creating customer engagement on social medias for micro-sized firms.
7.3 Limitations and Future Research

To begin with, a reflection is that the knowledge of customer engagement on social medias is narrowed, as well as the choice of focusing on micro-sized firms. The saturation was reached early in the process by talking to experts in the research field of social media and customer engagement. Though, due to the rapid growth of social medias, research in this field is continuously needed. Further, not all firms attend social medias to reach customer engagement. It does exist other reasons even if the customer engagement can be interpreted to be the most common one. Our choice of study, customer engagement, leaves those firms outside. It can be, for example, firms that attend social medias to maintain connected to their customers in order to deliver customer service and answer questions. This type of firms is left out and we suggest further research with those firms as subjects. Also small, medium and large firms were left out in this study which the authors recommend for future research to investigate in to obtain an even greater understanding of engaging social media content. There are differences between B2B and B2C but we chose to study both due to time effectiveness. The time of a bachelor thesis, 10 weeks, is a limitation. We suggest future research in the area of either B2C or B2B context to gain a deeper understanding of either B2C or B2B. Further, we suggest looking at the same area but with quantitative nature from a secondary data approach. In this way, massive data can be reached and it might be manageable to get different results that can be of worth for academic field as well as for managers.
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