WHAT DRIVES EMPLOYEES TO ENGAGE IN WORK-RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA USE?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FLEMISH EMPLOYEES

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Preface

During an intensive period of several months, I have been writing this dissertation. This was a long process for which I received very useful help. I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. An-Sofie Claeys, for her help during this process. I also received very helpful recommendations from Phd Researcher Ellen Soens. I would like to thank both of these supervisors for their patience and guidance. Then, I want to thank all respondents, who offered their time for this dissertation and shared their insights. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother for her moral support and involvement, and my brother and my friends for supporting me through this process.

Lien Eelbode

Ghent, August 1, 2023

List of Abbreviations

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

IM: instant messaging

OER: organisation-employee relationship

PEP: perceived external prestige

R: respondent

sECB: employees' communicative behaviours on social media

WOM: word of mouth

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1. Introduction

Employees are increasingly using their personal social media channels to share messages about their jobs, their organisation, or their organisation's products and/or services (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). Such messages are shared in the public sphere through public social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which are used for many-to-many communication, or in the private sphere through instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, which employees use for one-to-few and one-on-one communication (Tsai & Men).

Previous research has focused on work-related social media use on public platforms and the benefits and risks this entails. We will discuss work-related social media use on these public platforms, as well as instant messaging channels, which forms an interesting yet not widely explored research topic. On the one hand, employees can act as brand ambassadors on public social media platforms. In this case, employees share and promote information regarding their organisational brand, promote their organisation's online advertisements, make positive comments on brand posts, recommend the companies' products, and uphold brand values (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). They can enhance their company's reputation among external publics, win over consumers and attract new employees (Dreher, 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). In addition, employees can use instant messaging channels to build and maintain communities and connections with co-workers (Men et al., 2020). On the other hand, employees can act as brand saboteurs on public social media, by sharing criticisms or harmful information about their organisation, disclosing confidential data, etc. (Dreher, 2014; Wallace et al., 2007). As such, they can harm the organisation's reputation. It can lead to humiliation and crushed credibility, as well as legal implications, such as a lawsuit or termination of contract for the employee (Dreher, 2014).

Several researchers have conducted studies on why employees engage in work-related social media use on public platforms. For example, motivations for positive work-related social media use are enjoyment, self-enhancement (Y. Lee, 2020), relationship management, etc. (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Motivations for negative social media use are the venting of negative feelings or frustrations to friends or colleagues, for instance if an issue wasn't tackled in the workplace (Y. Lee, 2020; Y. Lee, 2022).

To maximize positive social media use among employees and minimize negative social media use, organisations increasingly implement social media policies and guidelines (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, organisations' social media policies often focus on the negative side of work-related social

media use, on limiting employees' communicative behaviours online (sECB), to reduce possible risks (Soens & Claeys, 2021). In this sense, the potential opportunities of employees who behave as brand ambassadors is acknowledged and stimulated too little (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017).

With regard to messages posted in the private sphere through instant messaging channels, these are perceived to be more private. However, when informal, and at times controversial conversations do leak, this can pose a risk for the company's reputation, and the employee can experience negative consequences, such as termination of the contract, as is seen in recent news articles (Bergmans, 2017).

Organisations need insight in how they should draw up their social media policy. First and foremost, employers should know what employees post on social media channels. They seem to think these are mostly negative posts, because of which they implement restrictive policies (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). This paper wants to investigate if that is justified. Only few studies looked into this (e.g., Van Zoonen et al., 2016). That study showed that only very few negative messages appear, but was limited since its focus was only on Twitter and Facebook. Therefore, this study will investigate (RQ1) how employees engage in work-related social media use.

Apart from this, employers need to know why employees engage in positive or negative online communicative behaviour. Their social media policy needs to cater to these motivations. Studies have explored these motivations, but these were mainly quantitative research (e.g., Van Zoonen et al., 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2016). In-depth interviews should offer deeper insights. For this focus point, the paper will discuss (RQ2) why employees engage in work-related social media use.

Third, organisations should specifically know more about how employees react to social media policies, and how far they can go in steering this social media use. The limited research to the impact of social media policy on employees shows that restrictive guidelines can be counterproductive (Soens & Claeys, 2021). Deeper insights are needed to know how employees react to social media policies, to detect what works and what does not. In that respect, this paper will look into (RQ3) what role social media governance can play when it comes to employees' work-related social media use.

Lastly, organisations should know more about employees' habits on instant messaging channels to draw up specific guidelines for this use. Research on instant messaging is very limited. Consequently, this paper will investigate (RQ4) how and why employees engage in work-related use of instant messaging channels.

2. What is Work-related Social Media Use?

Social media are ubiquitous and have filtered their way into our private as well as our professional lives (Dreher, 2014; Soens & Claeys, 2021). The line between both uses is increasingly blurry, as users upload private and work-related content for both private and work-related audiences simultaneously (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Work-related social media use means using personal social media accounts to participate in discussions related to work, namely employees' job, organisation, products and services of the organisation, to create or share content and develop contact with stakeholders, such as colleagues and consumers, for work-related issues (Van Zoonen et al., 2014b).

Several ways can be distinguished in engaging in social media. Yue (2023) defines some levels of engagement, which range from merely consumption of social media, to contribution, creation of content and conversation with other users. Consumption is limited to regarding or reading work-related information, whereas contribution consists of sharing and liking such content. Creation encompasses publishing self-made work-related posts and lastly, conversation includes taking part in online discussions about topics related to the job or organisation (Yue, 2023).

Employees can use different types of social media platforms to engage in work-related social media use. First of all, they can use enterprise social media channels. These are social media platforms that are exclusively accessible to organisational members and are designed to foster social interactions within the enterprise (Leonardi et al., 2013). Typical examples of enterprise social media platforms are Yammer, Jive, FacebookforWork and Social Chorus (Men et al., 2020). Enterprise social media platforms allow employees to (1) communicate messages to specific colleagues or to the entire staff, (2) point out certain co-workers as communication partners, (3) share, edit and sort text and files and (4) consider the messages, connections, text and files shared, edited and sorted by others at any given time (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Secondly, employees can share work-related content through public social platforms, that are open to public registration, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, which are more commonly used, due to their low cost and employees' familiarity with the platforms' specific features (Ewing et al., 2019).

Apart from this general social media use, employees can turn to instant messaging platforms to talk about their job and organisations (Men et al., 2020). They enable horizontal and vertical communication (Leonardi et al., 2013). Social messengers are mobile-based instant messaging platforms with multimedia features such as text/audio chat, group chat, video calls, message

notifications, status updates, and media sharing (Tsai & Men, 2018). This use will be discussed in a separate chapter. The following chapter of this literature review, namely chapter three, discusses employees' work-related social media use on public platforms. Chapter four then delves into the different motivations employees have for these uses. Next, chapter five discusses different forms of social media governance and lastly chapter six covers sECB on instant messaging channels.

3. Work-related Social Media Use on Public Platforms: a Double-edged Sword

This chapter will offer an insight in employees' work-related social media use on public platforms. First, it discusses the impact sECB can have on the organisation and its reputation. Then, it covers various benefits and risks this use entails. Lastly, it shows employees' most common online work-related behaviours.

3.1 Impact

"People trust people more than organisations." (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019)

With over two billion users on social media, every employee can reach a large amount of stakeholders in their social network: business partners, suppliers, vendors, existing or potential customers, job candidates (Dreher, 2014; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Employees carry a lot of power as communicators. Their voice is so powerful, since they are perceived as authentic, knowledgeable, credible and trustworthy (Helm, 2011; Y. Lee, 2020; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Stakeholders trust them due to their cognisance of the company's business and spirit, products and services, and their involvement in daily practices, as well as due to their autonomous and more neutral messages, instead of sophisticated public relations publications (Helm, 2011; Y. Lee, 2020; Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019). Madsen & Verhoeven (2019) posit that employees may even have a greater influence on the image of the organisation than the organisation itself, since people trust people more than organisations. Even today with changing communication technologies, word-of-mouth (WOM) is still of great importance. Choosing a product, or services, advice from friends or families resulted to be the most influential factor (Kim and Rhee, 2011).

Because of this trusted position of employees, they are online representatives of the company (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). Through employees' online activities, a company's values, behaviours, beliefs, and overall character are more transparent for stakeholders. In this way, they can shape their organisation's reputation. This can either benefit or harm the organisation (Dreher, 2014; Helm, 2011; Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019; Sakka & Ahammad, 2020), depending on whether employees share information about organisational weaknesses (negative megaphoning) and strengths (positive megaphoning) (Kim & Rhee, 2011). It is a double-edged sword (Y. Lee, 2020). Research from Helm (2011) and Van Zoonen et al. (2014) suggests that employees are aware of their potential impact on

the corporate reputation, whereas Sakka & Ahammad (2020) state that not every employee realises their influence.

3.2 Benefits

New communication technologies offer some business benefits. Generally, employees may act as brand ambassadors, also referred to as brand or corporate advocates and external communicators (Dreher, 2014; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). This entails positive external communication from employees, in which they display pro-brand attitudes and behaviours (Xiong et al., 2013), share positive information or defend their employers from criticism or cyber attacks (Y. Lee, 2020). Employee advocacy involves sharing and promoting information regarding their organisational brand, promoting their organisation's online advertisements, making positive comments on brand posts, recommending the companies' products, and upholding brand values (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Employee advocacy reaches external publics, but can also be aimed towards co-workers (Thelen, 2020). Another important concept is employee branding, where employees first internalise the organisational brand image, to then recommend the brand externally to both customers and potential employees (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Schweitzer and Lyons (2008) display it as the willingness of employees to act as part-time marketers, as a part of internal marketing. Cervellon & Lirio (2017) divided employee branding behaviours in social media into four dimensions. First is positive WOM, followed by "employee endorsement", i.e. recommending the organisational products or services through social media. Third is "employee sharing", where employees like or share links of their organisation's brand, and lastly "employee culture" where employees conduct appropriate behaviours online, in accordance with the organisational brand values and culture.

When employees engage in such positive work-related social media use, they can improve the perception of the organisation among target audiences, as well as increase the organisation's visibility and reach (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). As such, they can help their organisation build and foster valuable relationships with target audiences, such as customers, investors, community members or future talent (Dreher, 2014; Kim & Rhee, 2011). Through engagement with these audiences, organisations can leverage social media to effectively attract and recruit highly qualified human capital (Thelen, 2020). These interactions also show transparency, as they offer an insight into the company culture (Dreher, 2014). Further on, social media communication promotes collaboration, solution finding for work problems and importantly, knowledge sharing (Leonardi et al., 2013). The information

flow allows employees to be informed about the latest developments in their area of expertise. Altogether this leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness in work performance (Dreher, 2014; Leonardi et al., 2013). These media further promote organisation learning and innovation (Dreher, 2014; Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). These interactive social media features of commenting, group or individual discussing, create connectedness, stimulating employee commitment and satisfaction. This results once again in better teamwork (Men et al., 2020; Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). This connectedness is present between employees among themselves, and between employees and the organisation. Swift communication helps create trust and engagement (Men et al., 2020). An increased feeling of work group support, commitment and satisfaction can also positively influence employee well-being. When social needs are satisfied through social media use, productivity may rise. General happiness incites the same rise in productivity (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017, Van Zoonen et al., 2016).

3.3 Risks

On the other side of the double-edged sword lie certain risks. As opposed to a marketing and communication department, employees don't get the same training in communication strategies, brand voices or other guidelines (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019). This may lead to some undesired behaviours, such as brand voice inconsistency and negative megaphoning (Dreher, 2014; Kim & Rhee, 2011), including inappropriate statements, criticisms or inaccurate information (Men et al., 2020; Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). Social media's immediate nature requires quick decision-making. However, an instantaneous post may be forever accessible to everyone. Some normative expectations are held over employees' social media use. On the one hand in direct relation to the employer or organisation's products, on the other hand in indirect contact, such as liking anti-Semitic posts or promoting vicious government decisions (Schaarschmidt & Walsch, 2020).

Negative consequences of work-related social media use may be severe for both employers and employees. For the organisation, there may be a loss of confidential data, exposure of company secrets, or security breaches. Risks also include humiliation, crushed credibility, productivity losses and public relations and social media crises (Dreher, 2014; Kim & Rhee, 2011). For employees, undesired behaviours may have legal implications, such as a workplace lawsuit or can lead to the termination of employment (Dreher, 2014). This happened for example in the company Addition-Elle, that sells plus-size clothing. An employee posted "Conquering the world, one well-dressed fat lady at a time," and was laid off. In this way, Addition-Elle intended to reduce the negative reputational damage to the

company (McKee, 2017). Lastly, the distance between professional and private life has been blurred with the Internet in general and social media in particular (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). In light of employee well-being, posting about work and interacting with colleagues on social media, makes it difficult to disengage after working hours, increasing work-to-life conflicts (Van Zoonen et al., 2016).

3.4 Most common use

As mentioned before, employees can engage in positive and negative megaphoning (Kim & Rhee, 2011). This paper will investigate which communicative behaviour is most common among employees. Organisations generally focus on possible negative behaviour of their employees, which is shown in their adoption of restrictive social media policies (Soens & Claeys, 2021). Some research has shown that negative megaphoning is rather exceptional on LinkedIn (Hesse et al., 2022), as well as Twitter (Van Zoonen et al., 2016). More research also showed that generally, people prefer to engage in positive communicative behaviours on social media (O'Connor et al., 2016; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). Partially, this is because sharing negative information about their company is not a "norm" or expected behaviour for employees from a company they represent (Y. Lee, 2020). More research is needed to check if there is a general trend beyond different platforms. Therefore, the first research question is:

(RQ1) How do employees engage in work-related social media behaviour?

4. Motivations

As employees partake in positive and negative megaphoning about their company, this study will look into the motivations for these behaviours. First, there are personal motivational factors, such as knowledge creating and sharing, brand ambassadorship, etc. Then follow interpersonal motivations, such as relationship management. Lastly there are organisational factors, such as the organisation-employee relationship, perceived external prestige and brand identity and engagement.

4.1 Personal motivational factors

On an individual level, employees use social media for knowledge creating and sharing, information seeking and dissemination. The flow of shared information helps employees to stay updated and make sense of work-related topics (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). Second, as mentioned before, employees engage in organisational ambassadorship via social media and promote their organisation while reaching a larger audience (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). Further on, social media are pleasure-oriented platforms, that individuals enjoy using (Kang & Schuett, 2013). A third motivation therefore consists of enjoyment. Amusement, fun, and positive emotions are the main reasons the internet is generally accepted. General traits or habits on social media influence a person's active work-related communication. Individuals might be drawn to social media in their everyday lives, which also makes them lean towards social media to report about their professional lives (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Y. Lee, 2020). Specifically, digital natives might be more inclined to be active, as they were born into the era of the internet. However, age is not a conclusive determinant (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). Additionally, social media are perceived as convenient, which presents another cause of sECB (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020).

Next, interestingly, researchers are in dissonance about self-enhancement as a motive. Several researchers presented self-enhancement as a motivation (Lee, 2020; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Van Zoonen et al., 2018). People would desire positive recognition and impression and use social media to those ends (Van Zoonen et al., 2018). Self-enhancement is the desire of individuals to enhance their positive self-image, and to promote self-relevant information that offers a favourable view on themselves (Kowalski & Leary, 1990). Employees strategically craft the impression that they are experts (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019). For employees, social media are important online networks, where people can maintain this positive reputation (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). When they value

their position in the company, this may be an incentive to post about it and in that way boost their reputation once again. Thus, social media can be used to self-promote and form a chosen favourable self-image, also by posting about the company (Y. Lee, 2020). Adversely, some research opposed that employees act out of personal self-seeking motives, such as personal branding (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). The explanation that they propose is that employees experience a large number of work-based friendships, that they nourish through personal social media technologies (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Van Zoonen et al., 2016). These friendships provide accountability, as colleagues may question the validity of shared information, or share subtle feedback in case an employee posts a euphemistic message about themselves. Therefore, employees would present an actual version rather than an ideal version of themselves (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

For negative online communicative behaviours, venting negative feelings can be a reason to be active on social media, to lessen frustration and anxiety about a specific event. Organisational issues or problems sometimes are discussed, to vent negative emotions, such as frustration or disappointment (Y. Lee, 2020; Y. Lee, 2022). Another ground for negative sECB can be of a constructive and prosocial motive, to bring about change in the organisation or the society, or of a destructive and revenge-based motive, to try to hurt the organisation (Ravazzani & Mazzei, 2018).

4.2 Interpersonal level

On an interpersonal level, employees take to social media for relationship management, socialisation (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017; Van Zoonen et al., 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2016). Perceived online communities (e.g. online social capital) play a role in employees' communicative behaviours on social media. The social environment of a person (family, friends, peers) is the main influence on one's behaviour (Robinson, 2008). A person's social network or social support is the main form of social capital. Social media is highly useful for creating, maintaining and strengthening ties with colleagues and customers (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Y. Lee, 2020).

4.3 Organisational motivational factors

On an organisation-level, the following factors influence the willingness to share information on social media: the endorsement of collective efforts, the organisation-employee relationship (OER), perceived external prestige (PEP) and brand identification and engagement.

4.3.1 Endorsement of Collective Efforts

Another motive is to endorse collective efforts, to provide benefits and support their company (Helm, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). A next factor could be an employee's awareness of their impact. Some research suggests that employees are aware of their potential impact on the corporate reputation (Helm, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2014), whereas other research states that not every employee realises their influence (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). The last-mentioned researchers pose that if employees would understand their role in the branding process, and perceive they can play a role in the success of the company, they are willing and able to perform brand advocacy roles. Subsequently, job satisfaction is a considerable factor for positive sECB. When employees feel proud to work, they are more likely to reward their company by spreading positive WOM to outside audiences (Yuan et al., 2022).

4.3.2 Organisation-employee Relationship

A good organisation-employee relationship (OER) enhances employees' likelihood of sharing positive information about their organisation in their personal networks, (Kang and Sung, 2017; Kim and Rhee, 2011; Schweitzer & Lyons, 2008), and prevent negative information from being circulated (Y. Lee, 2020). Moreover, the favourable relation even renders the sharing of favourable company contents an enjoyable experience (Lee & Kim, 2021). A quality OER is based on trust, respect for the power to influence, satisfaction with each other, and commitment to another. The quality of the OER is increased by symmetrical communication firstly (Men & Stacks, 2014). This consists of different opportunities for employees to use their voices, e.g. seminar, workshops, events, informal gatherings. In addition, when employees have this opportunity, do not feel afraid to speak up and believe that their organisation is responsive to their issues, they are more inclined to express their support for their company or share enjoyable experiences online (Lee & Kim, 2021). Equally, the quality of the OER is positively influenced by transparent communication. This is characterised by information substantiality, accountability, and employee participation (Men & Stacks, 2014). Next, communication is the base to reduce problems and prevent potential issues in the online environment (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017; Y. Lee, 2020). As it helps with brand advocacy, it is vital to establish and maintain a long-term favourable relationship with employees. This long-term favourable bond potentially makes employees consider organisational problems as their own (Men & Stacks, 2014, Walden & Westerman, 2018).

4.3.3 Perceived External Prestige

Perceived external prestige (PEP) is the degree to which employees perceive how outsiders view their organisation, i.e. the construed external image. This image is construed through opinions of reference groups, word-of-mouth, publicity, external company-controlled information, and internal communication about how a company is perceived by external stakeholders (Y. Lee, 2020). Pride plays a significant role in employee satisfaction, commitment and awareness of their impact on corporate reputation, and is strongly related to the firm's reputation. Depending on this reputation, employees likely perceive their role as corporate ambassadors different. Job satisfaction and commitment are not strong drivers of the awareness of the potential impact. Pride is decisive (Helm, 2011). This is significant as the AICR can boost brand advocacy (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). Moreover, research by Schaarschmidt & Walsch (2020) notably shows that the effect of PEP is a stronger predictor than employees' own impressions of the firm's online reputation. This means that in an online world, impressions of how outsiders' views on the work organisation are more important to employees' identity than their own reputation perceptions.

4.3.4 Brand identification and brand engagement

Related to OER and PEP, one of the reasons to advocate for the organisation is the level of brand identification, an employees' sense of belonging to the brand (Piehler et al., 2016, Walden & Westerman, 2018). In social identity theory, organisational membership is an important part of an individual's identity (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019). When the organisation is viewed as a positive part of their lives, people act as organisational representatives with externals stakeholders (Y. Lee, 2020). Due to the identification, the employees promote the brand or organisation to external publics. Employee engagement is linked with internal symmetrical communication management (Kang & Sung, 2016).

Brand engagement is pushed by engaged leadership, quality OER and internal communication (Imam et al., 2022). Brand understanding represents a link between internal brand management and desired outcomes (Piehler et al., 2016). Brand knowledge contributes to pro-brand behaviours directly, on condition that employees see the brand as meaningful and relevant (Xiong et al., 2013). Employees that are genuinely enthusiastic about organisation's products and services, are more likely to be talking

about them avidly with their networks (Thelen, 2020). A technique for an organisation to obtain brand engagement is constant exposure to brand values through the organisation's culture (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Xiong et al., 2013) If employees realise the brand is important and necessary for organisational success and see their role's central relevance to the brand's success, they are more likely to develop a psychological attachment to the brand directly (Xiong et al., 2013).

As a company, brand advocacy can be rewarded, which can also be a motivation for employees. Intrinsic factors such as recognition and appreciation are well accompanied by extrinsic factors such as financial rewards and additional vacation days. Intrinsic psychological rewards are more appreciated and entail better effects than extrinsic rewards (Miles & Muuka, 2011). The best rewards are listening to employee feedback, paying attention to employee suggestions, and congratulating employees on their achievements. Systems where employees receive points for comments or likes, risk being seen as manipulating employee voice and intruding in employees' private lives (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

This chapter gave an overview of different motivations to use public social media platforms for work-related purposes. Since previous studies mainly conducted quantitative research (e.g., Van Zoonen et al., 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2016), in-depth interviews can offer deeper insights. The second research question is:

(RQ2) Why do employees engage in work-related social media use?

5. Social Media Governance

To regulate these different social media usages on public and instant messaging channels, many organisations opt for social media governance. Social media governance are defined as "the formal or informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an organization within the social web" (Linke & Zerfass, 2013, p.274). They encompass both strict social media guidelines, and broader frameworks (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). Generally, organisations seem more concerned with the risks of employees' social media and less with the opportunities (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). Even though a poorly judged post may cause damage, it is impossible for an organisation to stop or fully control social media use (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019).

Organisations can take different approaches when it comes to social media governance. Some organisations give their employees free reign, not implementing any specific regulatory frameworks (Linke & Zerfass, 2014; Rokka et al., 2014), whereas others do implement social media guidelines (Van Zoonen et al., 2014; Soens & Claeys, 2021). Social media guidelines offer guidance on how social media communications should be enacted by all organisation members (Linke & Zerfass, 2014). They can be incentive or restrictive (Van Zoonen et al., 2014; Soens & Claeys, 2021). Other companies ban the use of social media entirely (Johnston, 2015).

Some companies do adopt guidelines. Incentive guidelines usually emphasise potential benefits of sECB and create strategies to maximize this organisational asset. For example, Coca-Cola "encourages all of its associates to explore and engage in social media communities at a level at which they feel comfortable. Have fun, but be smart. Be a 'scout' for compliments and criticism." (Johnston, 2015). Such guideline communication is associated with trust, openness, reciprocity and negotiation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Incentive guidelines can be viewed as symmetrical internal communication. They stimulate employee voice and branding behaviour, while upholding control mutuality, which is the sense of shared control between employees and the employer (Men & Stacks, 2014). These positive guidelines increase positive megaphoning and reduce negative social media use simultaneously. They often offer a broad advice (Soens & Claeys, 2021), such as "be nice, have fun and connect" (Johnston, 2015, p.182). This can have a positive effect, since spontaneous and unrehearsed communication can lead to strong relationships with the public (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). Some companies encourage retweeting or sharing company information, as that requires practically no risk. Using the official platforms, the corporate character will be maintained (Dreher, 2014; Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017; Van Zoonen et al., 2016). Organisations

that typically benefit from incentive guidelines are in the area of sales and marketing, as these employees directly interact with customers every day, employee advocacy is essentially a part of their job (Thelen, 2020). This forms a powerful competitive advantage (Thelen, 2020). Some managers that let their employees choose freely, emphasised how their employees thoroughly understood the corporate values and were able to deliver them (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). These organisations limited official policies, to ensure the upheld freedom and creativity of employees when representing corporate values (Christensen et al., 2008).

On the other side of the spectrum, some organisations choose restrictive guidelines. This can be interesting for the legal, healthcare and public industry, for the protection of confidential information. Therefore, these industries require more restraint, due to a justifiable need for confidentiality, to prevent information leaks (Johnston, 2015; Thelen, 2020). Interestingly, restrictive guidelines provoke a better recall, because of fear appeal theory. Fear stimulates people to cognitively process the message (Soens & Claeys, 2021).

Even more restrictive are organisations that ban social media use entirely at the workplace. They act out of fear of employee distraction (cyberloafing) or harmful consequences of sECB (Ng et al., 2016). This displays a certain level of distrust. A ban is motivated by fear that employees may disseminate negative or confidential information (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Furthermore, some companies fear that through social media, employees will express criticism of the management or the organisation (Men et al., 2020). Nevertheless, a ban on social media is simply unrealistic. Employees' participation in social media is inevitable and impossible to eliminate (Dreher, 2014). Companies are required to give up control (Madsen & Verhoeven, 2019).

During the process of making a policy, employees should be consulted (Dreher, 2014; Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017), as this has a positive effect on skill levels, strategies and the level of activity (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). Both parties, employee and employer, should express their concerns in an atmosphere of support and trust, while showing commitment to the dialogue. (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017).

A common concern with social media governance is that it contradicts the freedom of expression and respect for the employee (Soens & Claeys, 2020). Nevertheless, companies try to consider this, by formulating the guideline positively, i. e. incentive guidelines, and not regulating the use too heavily. In that manner, a relationship of mutual trust between company and employee is able to grow (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). Employees should feel free to express themselves, within the boundaries outlined by the organisation, that is the desired balance (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

Noteworthy is that social media guidelines will not make up for a bad reputation among employees (Soens & Claeys, 2021), therefore the OER should first and foremost be attended to (Johnston, 2015, Soens & Claeys, 2021).

In addition to social media guidelines, the social media team should establish and execute best practice examples (Dreher, 2014), as well as offer social media training, which should prepare employees to share appropriate content and to restrain from sharing confidential or offensive content (Ewing et al., 2019). Aside from technological and management skills, the social media team should grasp the company's corporate culture and character, its products and services, and departments, structures and hierarchies. Therefore, they should include or collaborate with representatives of different department (Dreher, 2014; Linke & Zerfass, 2014). Insight in social media governance and employees' attitudes toward these is needed to offer companies advice on their adoption of social media governance. This brings us to the third research question:

(RQ3) What role can social media governance play when it comes to employees' work-related social media use?

6. Work-related Instant Messaging

In social media governance, companies generally focus on public platforms, because the public character of these platforms forms a clear risk (Soens & Claeys, 2021). Instant messaging policies are less adopted, probably because these are intended to be part of employees' private sphere (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). However, recent news has shown that these private conversations can leak to executives and the outside world (Bergmans, 2017; Blg, 2023). In April 2023, eight teachers from a sports school in Hasselt were suspended after a closed WhatsApp group chat of theirs had leaked, in which they uttered discriminating, racist and homophobe statements (Blg, 2023). Similarly, six years earlier, an investigation was started into officers of the Antwerp police force, who engaged in racist and sexist conversations through private messages, that also came to light. For example, they ridiculed detainees, glorified violence and referred to Hitler (Bergmans, 2017). These examples of current topics demonstrate the use of instant messaging for work-related communication, and its possible detrimental effects when messages sent through this perceived private medium, reach the outside world.

For this chapter on work-related instant messaging, I will discuss the factors influencing the adoption of IM in the workplace, then I will continue to provide the most common uses of IM in the workplace. Subsequently, I will go into the motivations of this use, offer some benefits and risks. However first, I will start by discussing a topical issue.

6.1 Use of Instant Messaging

Instant messaging channels are widely adopted in society (Nardi et al., 2000). They are used for personal and work purposes, to engage with both friends and colleagues (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Cho et al., 2019; Isaacs et al., 2002; C. Lee et al., 2020; Nardi et al., 2000). The adoption of new communication technologies depends on a "critical mass". In social science, this refers to the idea that a certain threshold of participants has to be crossed so that the rate of adoption of an innovation takes off (Oliver et al., 1985). Perceived critical mass is the degree to which a person believes this point has been reached (Lou et al., 2000). Employees would use IM instead of another communication medium if this critical mass point is reached (Cameron & Webster, 2005).

Employees use instant messaging channels for quick or work-related short questions and clarifications between colleagues (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2002; Nardi et al., 2000). Further on,

they use it for coordination and scheduling (Isaacs et al., 2002; Nardi et al., 2000). These uses are made possible through the immediacy of the medium. Furthermore, former research has shown that IM was used for media switching, to a telephone or face-to-face interaction when the conversation got too complex (Nardi et al., 2000). Other research however has shown that employees use IM for complex work discussions (Isaacs et al., 2002). Additionally, IM is used for strengthening social connection between colleagues through frequent, qualitative communication. (Nardi et al. 2002, Ou & Davidson, 2011). Next, employees use IM for work-related information dissemination towards the non-corporate world or colleagues that do not form a part of a group chat (C. Lee et al., 2020). This use can be intended or unintended, as is seen in the example of the Antwerp officers' and Hasselt teachers' leaked group chats at the beginning of this chapter, which were leaked to executives of their organisations (Bergmans, 2017; Blg, 2023).

The pairing of users also influences the use of IM. Different communication pairs can be distinguished. Frequent partners discuss more complex and diverse matters through IM on several instances during the day, whereas more infrequent pairs generally coordinate and schedule, with less interactions during the day (Isaacs et al., 2002).

6.2 Advantages and disadvantages

Instant messaging use offers several advantages. IM characteristics are the immediacy of the interaction, enhancing efficient communication (Isaacs et al., 2002; Nardi et al., 2000). Moreover, instant messaging is perceived to be effective, as well as convenient, accurate, adequate and interactive (C. Lee et al., 2020). All of these qualities also enhance a more fluent collaboration (Ou & Davidson, 2011). Furthermore, this medium is preferred due to its informality. IM is perceived to be fit for informal conversations, that are casual and friendly, and less fit for formal conversations and official communication (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2002; Nardi et al., 2000). In addition, the established social connection and qualitative communication lays a foundation of trust between employees, which leads to higher levels of productivity (Ou & Davidson, 2011). Lastly, instant messaging is used for its greater privacy, as it offers the opportunity to quietly communicate with others, without bystanders or eavesdroppers, in some cases comparable to "passing notes" in school (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2002; Lien & Cao, 2014; Nardi et al., 2000; Ou & Davidson, 2011).

However, its use entails some disadvantages as well. A first disadvantage is that IM is interruptive to the workflow and breaks employees' concentration (Cameron & Webster, 2005), although it is no more interruptive than other forms of communication, according to Ou & Davidson (2011). Other research even show it is less interruptive than telephone or face-to-face communication, as IM negotiates the availability of the recipient (Nardi et al., 2000). Further on, it helps to rapidly obtain task-relevant information, turning it into a medium to manage the interruption (Garret & Danziger, 2007). The interruptive nature is thus disputed, and moreover, IM benefits, such as qualitative communication, far surpass its interruptive effects (Ou & Davidson, 2011).

A second disadvantage is that employees potentially experience a disturbance in their work-life balance due to the constant availability and potential intrusion of IM messages into their personal time (Cho et al., 2019; Diaz et al., 2012). The excessive use of IM, entailing information and system feature overload, led to increases in burnout (appearing as emotional exhaustion and reduced personal achievement), which negatively impacts job performance (Cho et al., 2019). A last and considerable possible disadvantage is when the expected private conversations do reach the daylight. This can entail negative consequences, as is seen in recent Belgian news (Bergmans, 2017; Blg, 2023).

In conclusion, instant messaging channels are widely adopted by employees for quick responses, coordination and scheduling, handling complex issues, and social connection. Its usage is influenced by critical mass and its informality. Benefits of IM are its efficiency and effectiveness, its immediate nature, its enhancement of trust between employees and its privacy. However, IM usage entails interruptions and can disrupt a healthy work-life balance. Lastly, private messages can leak, entailing serious consequences.

Research on instant messaging is still rather limited, therefore this paper will add to this research. Understanding work-related instant messaging habits is important to include in social media governance. Concerning instant messaging, this paper will try to provide an answer to the last research question:

(RQ4): What are the general work-related uses of instant messaging?

7. Method

To investigate how (RQ1) and why (RQ2) employees engage in work-related social media use, as well as what role social media governance can play when it comes to employees' work-related social media use (RQ3) and how employees engaged in work-related instant messaging use (RQ4), I conducted in-depth interviews with Dutch-speaking Flemish employees. In what follows, I will discuss the procedure I followed to recruit participants and which documents I provided them with and let them sign. Then, I will go on to explain how the interviews were conducted and later analysed using a thematic analysis, which will also be elaborated on. Lastly, I will describe the profile of the recruited participants.

7.1. Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited through random sampling. The desired profile was as follows. Participants had at least one account on a social media channel, so that their work-related social media use could be discussed. They were employed in an organisation with at least 20 employees, since this increased the possibility that a form of social media governance was present in the companies. In larger organisations social media policies are more common, since in this case it is more difficult to discuss social media use with each employee individually (Carim & Warwick, 2013). Participants worked as white-collar workers, some as executives, or blue-collar workers. Only working students were not allowed. They were from different age groups and industries. They had to have posted, shared or liked work-related posts on social media more than once in the month before the moment when they were contacted. Work-related means related to their job, their organisation or their organisation's products or services.

I conducted the selection through my social network. First, I posted a Facebook post on my timeline, where I listed the requirements for participants, followed by a call-to-action to participate or contact other friends that suit the description. This post was shared 11 times by friends. I also posted two messages in separate Facebook groups that serve as communities for residents of two Belgian cities. Then, I consulted my friends and family through private messages. This provided 12 participants. For the last five, I posted another message on my Facebook page, and asked around again to friends and family in real life as well as through private messages.

When someone was interested and fulfilled the requirements, I provided them with an information letter with additional information through e-mail or WhatsApp before the interview. This letter included descriptions of the goal of the project, which is to investigate what and why employees post,

share or like work-related content on social media. It then restated the requirements for participants, and how they would participate, namely by being interviewed about work-related social media use during approximately an hour. The document stated that participants could break off the interview at any time, and all information is confidential and anonymised. Then, the letter clarified that the research team had access to the recordings and transcripts, and that participants could receive the results of the study. Lastly, it gave contact details of the research team. An English version of the information letter is included in Appendix A.

All interviews were conducted in Dutch and took place in real life, either in participants' homes, a neutral place or in the interviewer's home. On average, the duration of the interviews was 51 minutes. The shortest interview was 31 minutes long, and the longest one was one hour and 29 minutes. The space was usually very private, in a closed room, only in two interviews did someone pass by briefly. This was necessary to protect the confidentiality and to prevent distraction. At the start of each interview, the respondents signed a document of informed consent. This document stated that the interview would be recorded, that the collected data would be processed as stated in the information letter, and that the respondents consented to their participation. All participants agreed with the terms. An English version of the informed consent is included in Appendix B.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that "a set of predetermined topics must be covered, but it is up to the interviewer to decide how to ask the questions, which usually are tailored to each interviewee" (Crano et al., 2014, p. 287). Based on a topic list, questions were asked and left room for personal additions. The topics were based on the concepts discussed in the literature review. The questions were both closed- and open-ended. First, the list started with introductory questions about the organisation where participants worked and their relation to it. Then, it inquired about their general social media use, followed by their work-related use, and asked for examples of work-related posts. Next, participants were asked about the presence of social media policies in their organisation and their opinions on those. Lastly, it inquired about work-related instant messaging and some examples of messages posted in chats with colleagues. An English version of the topic list is included in Appendix C. The interviews were recorded on two phones to have a backup, and the recordings were processed through a verbatim transcription in Dutch. This means they were written out exactly as said, "word for word, including any non-verbal or background sounds, e.g., laughter, sighs, coughs, claps, snaps fingers and pen clicking and car horn." (McLellan et al., 2003, p. 77).

This step brought us to the next step, the thematic analysis of the interviews. The purpose of the thematic analysis was to look for recurring themes and subthemes and to compare similarities and differences from different groups. The first phase in this analysis was familiarizing yourself with the data, rereading the transcripts or listening to the interviews and taking notes to thoroughly process the information. The second phase was generating initial codes. These were relevant specific data that could be collected from the interviews and started very small (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This analysis encompassed both inductive and deductive coding. An example of inductive coding is R13 stating that she is "proud of her job". The start for the code "pride in the job" was the data. Deductive coding on the other hand, starts from the theory. Self-enhancement is a recurring concept in the literature, so this became the name of a new code. These separate codes could then be fused together in larger themes, which was the third phase (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The code "pride in the job", for instance, could be included in a theme: "motivations for positive sECB". In phase four, potential themes were reviewed. Some themes might just be a code, or are not supported enough to count as a theme. They might have to be restructured. Some themes could be merged together or split. Phase five was defining and naming themes. For this step, one had to look for what is unique and specific about each theme. Phase six, the final phase, was producing the report. The process of report writing already started during earlier phases of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Lastly, in accordance with the data protection policy from Ghent University, all data were anonymised. The analyses and results are anonymous. The results from this thematic analysis are presented in the chapter "Results". I demonstrate these themes by means of quotes that I selected from the interviews and that are translated to English.

7.2. Participants

The interviewees were 17 employees, from various medium-sized to large companies from 10 different industries, the most common were the healthcare and nutrition industry, which provided three participants each. The next most common were passenger transport and higher education, of which two participants formed a part of for each industry. Participants represented different age groups. The average age was 40 years old. The age ranged from a minimum of 23 to a maximum of 65. Respondents also execute different functions: 5 were blue-collar workers, for example a train conductor and a postman, 12 white-collar workers, with either general functions, for example a care provider and a business analyst and 5 of the white-collar workers were executives, for example a head nurse/head of department and a district manager of a food chain. Nine are male and eight female.

Table 1

Information participants and organisations

Respondents	Age	Sex	General function	Specific function	Company industry	Company size	Date interview	Duration interview (hh:mm:ss)
R1	51	Male	BCW	Train conductor	Passenger transport	10.000-20.000	25/11/2022	58:20
R2	43	Female	WCW	Anchor person Marketing and Communication and secretarial	Higher education	1000-5000	27/11/2022	1:10:57
R3	23	Female	WCW	Care provider	Healthcare	200-500	27/11/2022	55:40
R4	25	Female	WCW	Sales employee	IT	0-200	29/11/2022	1:29:28
R5	24	Male	WCW	Lecturer	Higher education	500-1000	30/11/2022	58:33
R6	31	Male	WCW	Project engineer	Dredging	5000	01/12/2022	46:24
R7	26	Male	WCW	Business analyst	IT-consulting	1000-5000	02/12/2022	52:41

R8	65	Male	Executive	First councillor	City council	200-500	03/12/2022	1:08:43
R9	31	Female	WCW	Educator and quality coach	Healthcare	0-200	05/12/2022	32:37
R10	41	Male	Executive	Cluster manager, research program manager	Energy	200-500	06/12/2022	37:09
R11	30	Female	Executive	Trainer consultant	Consulting	0-200	07/12/2022	43:24
R12	29	Female	Executive	District manager	Nutrition	5000-10.000	12/12/2022	59:51
R13	57	Female	BCW	Packer	Nutrition	200-500	13/12/2022	31:19
R14	53	Male	BCW	Foreman new installation	Nutrition	10.000-20.000	13/12/2022	37:04
R15	65	Male	BCW	Driver	Passenger transport	0-200	14/12/2022	38:02
R16	25	Female	BCW	Postman	Parcel delivery	>20.000	15/12/2022	49:36
R17	55	Male	Executive	Head of department, head nurse	Healthcare	500-1000	16/12/2022	36:48

Note. BCW = blue-collar worker, WCW = white-collar worker

8. Results

In this section, I will present the results from the thematic analysis and its most important themes that came to surface. I will start with stating the general social media habits of the participants, their preferred platforms and the content they post. Then, I will provide an overview of the work-related social media habits of the employees. Specifically, I will discuss the platforms they used, the types of work-related content they liked, shared and created as well as their motivations for doing so. Thereafter, I will give three profiles of the participants in regard to their sECB, and some general motivational trends that could be observed. Subsequently, I will talk about the social media governance companies adopted, what these entailed, if they were adopted, and give some examples. Lastly, the results section will show employees' instant messaging habits, the content they post and motivations to do so. It will end by listing some advantages and disadvantages of these platforms.

8.1 General Social Media Habits on Public Platforms

8.1.1 General Social Media Presence

First, participants were asked about their general social media habits, as this could be an indicator of the frequency of their work-related social media use. Individuals that make more use of social media in their everyday lives, tend to use it more for work-related purposes as well (Lee, 2020).

When asked about their general social media use, most participants talked about how they liked other social media users' content on a daily basis. One large group was also very active in posting content themselves, on a daily or weekly basis. A few respondents posted on a monthly or bimonthly basis, and some only rarely ever posted content.

8.1.2 Most Frequently Used Platforms and Content

With regard to their social media channels, the most popular platform was Facebook, which was used by almost every respondent, except for one. This was followed by Instagram, then LinkedIn and a minority also used BeReal, Snapchat and Twitter. When asked about their reasons for using Facebook, several indicated that it is a platform to communicate with friends. It is also used for practical purposes, namely familiarity with the platform. Respondents experienced that this platform was the easiest to use because of this reason, and because of the longer period of time they had been using it. For

Instagram, the same familiarity was reported as a reason, as well as the visual nature of the platform. For LinkedIn, the professional nature was given as a reason, and the professional network that could be reached. Even though the majority of respondents had accounts on several platforms, most individuals were more active on certain channels. Notably, LinkedIn was not used by any of the blue-collar workers. Facebook was more actively used in the age groups above 40 years old, and Instagram was more popular for especially female participants between the ages of 20 and 40. For instance, when asked about which platforms she uses, R4 replied: "Facebook, but I really uh rarely use that. Only for like Facebook events. Instagram I really use on a daily basis. LinkedIn mostly work-related of course. Well, only work-related actually. I don't have Twitter." (R4, 25, sales employee)

The content respondents posted on their social media ranged from holidays, activities, such as a dancing video, and events, such as a birthday or parties, to advertisements for events of an organisation they are affiliated to, such as a youth movement or youth centre, to sharing information that they deemed interesting, for example in news articles.

8.2 Work-related Social Media Behaviour

After these general social media habits were explored, participants were asked about their work-related social media use. A relation did exist between participants' everyday use and work-related use of social media. Conclusively, participants who were more actively posting content on their social media in general, did post more work-related content as well. R15, for instance, regularly posted parties or events he went to, and continued this active posting behaviour for his excursions as a bus driver. "I usually post on a daily basis. I mean, if I have to drive, I always upload it. With whom, where we're going. Then I make a photo report and everything" (R15, 65, driver). For participants that did not engage in regular general social media use, the results were divided. A part of them also did not engage much in work-related social media use, whereas another part did engage more in work-related use.

8.2.1 Most Frequently Used Platforms

With regard to the channels used by participants to engage in work-related social media use, the majority still leaned towards Facebook. Next in line was the professional network LinkedIn. This was followed by Instagram, Twitter, BeReal and Snapchat. Grounds to use these platforms were various. First, Facebook was used out of habit and due to participants' familiarity with the channel. For many

participants, it was the first social medium they ever used. In this respect, some participants added they could reach an older audience using these platforms. Further on, it was used because of its wide reach. When asked why he used Facebook the most, R15 said the following:

> *Well, because that's what we started with. Apparently you would have a broader reach through Twitter or Instagram, but that is not that important. Because there are also many older groups and people from associations that don't use those platforms. So they mostly only use Facebook.* (R15, 65, driver)

Second, LinkedIn was used because it also offers a broad network. This network is also professional, so messages reach their target audience. Next, it is used to expand this professional network. One participant stated, for instance, that he preferred LinkedIn to engage in work-related social media use "because that's a professional network, whereas Facebook… On Facebook, users are friends, while LinkedIn is for the professionals. For [him], that's the Facebook of the professionals*"* (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse).

Third, Instagram was also used out of habit, because of its visual character and for some, because it feels more personal as they have less contacts or so-called followers on there. For example, R16 was more inclined to post work-related content on Instagram because "it is an app I use a lot. It's also just easier in comparison with Facebook. And also probably because I have less friends on Instagram, on purpose" (R16, 25, postman). Fourth, Twitter was used because of its wide reach. Fifth, BeReal was used when the moment for a daily picture fell during working hours. Lastly, Snapchat was used sporadically to send a photo or video during working hours.

8.2.2 Friending or Following Colleagues on Social Media

All of the participants did have colleagues as contacts on social media. Some did indicate they limited these contacts. Specifically, some executives stated that they did not add blue-collar workers in their industry. In the following quote, for instance, a participant talks about him posting pictures on a boat when he is working on a project at sea:

> *[On Facebook], I do sometimes add colleagues, or they add me. But then those are also white-collar workers. As for the blue-collar workers, I don't add them, nor do I accept their friend requests. […] I think it's less their business, while my real close colleagues.... I don't mind them seeing [my posts].* (R6, 31, project engineer)

8.2.3 Liking and Sharing Work-related Content

In terms of work-related content that is posted, a distinction should be made between liking and sharing work posts, or posting self-made work-related content. Most interviewees did like a lot about their jobs, and shared company posts. In this respect, several interviews showed that employees are more comfortable sharing existing company posts rather than creating their own. Some respondents simply found the readymade posts to be convenient, whereas others showed a fear of making mistakes, so that sharing an existing post feels like a safer option, as is the case for R7. "I'm also just afraid of saying something wrong or using language that is too unprofessional, so it reflects badly on myself and the company as well." (R7, 26, business analyst)

The posts they shared or reposted were first and foremost call-to-actions that benefit the company. For example, most interviewees reposted vacancies from official company accounts for the recruitment of new employees. Several also reposted company events, such as information days for higher education, as well as company campaigns. The following quote is a description of a post a respondent shared for a fundraising.

> *[Name client] is actually a client who wants to learn a trade, woodworking. A while back, [name organisation] posted a message for a fundraising to support [name client] in his search for employment and woodworking training. They added an explanation that we are working on this, but that we still need money, as well as what the money will be used for and that more people also need money for a training.* (R9, 31, educator and quality coach)

Second, many respondents shared positive information about their companies. This encompasses company accomplishments, such as a finished project or an impressive partnership. Many interviewees also mentioned they would advertise for new projects or products. R17, for instance, shared the following message from his organisation. "Have you met our new colleague, the border collie [name dog]? At [name organisation], since September we have been offering dog-assisted therapy!" (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse). R5 shared a post about a company accomplishment: "[Field] studies at [name organisation] in [location organisation] again one of the best [field] schools in the world." To which he added a caption: "And I am a part of that." (R5, 24, lecturer)

Third, many interviewees shared posts about the company culture. Generally, when these were prefabricated posts, they were general company events, such as a starter's day or a company party. R7 explains which events he shares from his company.

[I share posts] for example on a starter's event, where all team members and the boss will be presented, or if we organise a team day, or a work event, like we do each trimester. Next week we'll have two work events, then some posts will pop up online, that will be shared. (R7, 26, business analyst)

Fourth, several participants shared personal accomplishments, these include a realised project, or an obtained certificate. On LinkedIn, people were often automatically tagged in these company posts. As an example, R12 said: "On Wednesday, we are opening a new store. That's a store that I open. And then something does get posted on [LinkedIn on the national company account] and I would definitely share that." (R12, 29, district manager)

So, generally, they shared call-to-actions that support the company, and positive company information, that was already shared by the company.

8.2.4 Posting Self-created Work-related Content

A distinction could be found between the liked and shared posts and posts that were self-fabricated. Call-to-actions and positive information about the company were generally already shared by the company, which allowed interviewees to share the existing message, possibly with a personal addition.

The self-created posts were more about first, the company culture, during work events as well as after working hours. For example, many reported having shared pictures of a lunch or dinner with colleagues, from business trips or work events:

Yes, we have had an uh, how do you say that, a beer tasting. At work, at our office, on a Friday afternoon. I'm just going to share that too, I'm just going to tag that too, because that's our workplace culture. (R4, 25, sales employee)

Connected to the previous, they also posted anecdotes or experiences during working hours: a drawing from a kid for a train conductor, or the following example:

Usually it's because I have a nice view and I'm like, I actually really have a nice job. Those are moments when I actually really enjoy my job. […] When you have to do stretches by bike or by car, you see a lot of beautiful landscapes. And sometimes, if you're there very early, it's

beautiful. Sometimes there are sunrises that you see. So then that's kind of nice to post, because then you're like, I actually do have a nice job. (R16, 25, postman)

Subsequently, they shared information that was useful for both close colleagues and people working in the same field:

I also use LinkedIn to show something to colleagues. See, that's what's new on the market. And then... I also saw today that other colleagues then respond to that. "Look, that might be cool. You can do that with your students as well then." That kind of interaction on certain topics. (R5, 24, lecturer)

Lastly, some participants also posted negative experiences concerning their jobs. As most employees operated as brand ambassadors, the negative work-related social media use stayed limited. In the interviews, the only negative online behaviour came from frustrations. For example, R16 (25, postman) posted when all of her letters had fallen on the ground, out of order. "Or people who order the strangest things, so you think to yourself: 'I have to show this to people, how funny that is.' Yeah. So things like that. I'll post that." (R16, 25, postman) This may be posted with no intended harm, however supervisors at her workplace might not be satisfied with this behaviour, since it makes fun of customers. R1, who is a train conductor, also used his platform to vent negative feelings about subway surfers, and aggression on the train.

8.2.4.1 Function

For this research, employees from three different functions were interviewed: blue-collar workers, white-collar workers and executives. The level of employee ambassadorship was not influenced by respondents' functions. Nevertheless, the content of their posts differed slightly. First, most blue-collar workers posted about the working culture or anecdotes during their job. Next, white-collar workers generally posted more diverse content, forming a middle ground. Lastly, executives were on the other side of this spectrum. They were inclined to post more call-to-actions and positive information about the company, and less about the working culture and barely any personal experiences.

8.2.5 Motivations for Work-related Social Media Behaviour

This chapter describes motivations that employees recognise influence them when engaging in online work-related behaviour. These various grounds can be divided into three levels. One level offers personal motivations: enjoyment, self-enhancement and pride in personal or team achievements. A

second level consists of interpersonal motivations: social capital and information exchange. A third level is the organisational level: organisational goals are viewed as own goals, pride in the organisation and brand identification. Most of the motivations were for positive sECB, as the participants engaged more in this behaviour. However, on the personal level, one motivation for negative sECB is also mentioned.

8.2.5.1 On a Personal Level

First, enjoyment in sharing the posts was often stated as a motivation. This reflects the earlier statement that general social media habits influenced work-related habits. When R4 was asked why she posted work-related content, she said: "Um, but I post a lot anyway. When I baked cookies, I will post that too. [laughs]" (R4, 25, sales employee) The interviewees simply enjoyed sharing posts abut their life and their joyful moments.

> It's more because I like it, rather than really important. It's not that I want to prove something with that or… No, I just rather like it. And it's purely as an interest. It's also not because it makes me feel better about myself. It's just fun to share it. (R6, 31, project engineer)

Several respondents also mentioned that they want to share a positive story, to counter existing negativity on the Internet.

Second, most participants introduced self-enhancement as a motivation. Self-enhancement is the desire of individuals to enhance their positive self-image, and to promote self-relevant information that offers a favourable view on themselves (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013). R11 said she used LinkedIn "to market [herself] a bit as a brand" (R11, 30, trainer consultant). R7 saw LinkedIn "a bit as a resume as well," (R7, 26, business analyst) on which he also posted personal achievements.

Third, pride in such personal or team achievements is offered more often as a motivation. This is closely connected to pride in the organisation and its achievements, but the difference is that this pride is less general and more personal. For example, R14 posted about a difficult job his team and him had completed in a couple of hours.

> We finished the job in a limited period of time, in a couple of hours. […] Yes, because I liked it that those colleagues had worked so hard in a short period of time. Yes. I was proud of that honestly. (R14, 53, foreman new installation)

So we make products, now around Christmas it is a very busy period, then beautiful products appear and then you always like that, because yes, you are involved in it, you have wrapped everything yourself, so you are proud of that, and then you like that. […] So I share that. And I also like it. (R13, 57, packer)

For employees' negative communicative behaviours on social media, only one personal ground was mentioned by participants, namely to vent negative feelings, and to look for support. This is seen in the first respondent's interview. He fell victim to an act of aggression during his shift and filed a complaint. He also indicated that he later posted about this incident:

And I have now, after a year, gotten a letter from the public prosecutor's office that due to fortuitous circumstances, it is not accepted as a complaint and it is dismissed. He happened to be drugged and drunk and then you get to hit people. [sigh] And I did post that frustration then, like look, this is unacceptable. (R1, 51, train conductor)

8.2.5.2 On an Interpersonal Level

Fourth, many participants saw social capital as an incentive, namely to build and maintain a network. R12 confirmed this with a brief statement. "So my main reason is to maintain a network, if I have to put it briefly." (R12, 29, district manager)

Fifth, some participants mentioned information exchange as a motivation. They found it useful to stay up-to-date on developments in their area of expertise and happily informed others of their projects.

Yes, of course. To show what we are working on. Or what I'm working on. Not so much what I'm working on. But what we as [name of organisation] are working on. To keep each other up to date. Because you have to help each other. And in this world you can't do it all by yourself. That's why it's good to be able to build that cooperation in that way with others, sometimes people respond. (R10, 41, cluster manager and research program manager)

8.2.5.3 On an Organisational Level

As a first motivation, many interviewed employees saw organisational goals as personal goals. They showed interest to uphold or improve the company's reputation, and to promote the brand to a larger audience. This was a goal when they shared call-to-actions, positive information about the company, or the workplace culture. When asked why she posted a call for new employees, R11 said: "To support my organisation in that. To then tap into my network to help with that." (R11, 30, trainer consultant) R17 also shared the ambition to help his organisation.

And a team building activity, specifically with the department. And a picture of the colleagues in the department, I'm going to post that too. Why? Also partially to indicate, hey guys, if you're looking for work, this is also a nice one, right. There's a good team, there's good cooperation. So come on in, we are warm people. So what's stopping you from not coming by? (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse)

Second, pride in the organisation, its products, services or achievements was mentioned numerous times as a motivation as well. When asked if she liked to advertise for her company, R13 replied: "Yes. You're proud of that, right? Your job. I mean, that's what I think?*"* (R13, 57, packer) R6 also exhibited his pride for a project he was working on.

Because I'm proud of it and it's something that people don't see very often. Those ships, there aren't that many of them in the world. And that is quite impressive. […] But I am proud to take something like that outside and show it to people, what I do. Yes. (R6, 31, project engineer)

Third, perceived external prestige was a motivation. R4 posted many positive messages, and gave her interesting job as a reason:

I find my job very fun and interesting. Well, this could sound very mean, but I would probably not share posts if I'd work at Kruidvat[1], because I would find that less interesting. However, I am involved in very cool, interesting things. I talk to very interesting people. […] You don't experience that working at Kruidvat, so I am so thrilled to be working with interesting people, so I like to show that. (R4, 25, sales employee)

Fourth, brand identification can predict online work-related behaviours. Participants that stated they identified with the brand, and saw their work really as a part of themselves, tended to post more. This connection can be implicit, for instance R7 says that he "really feels like a part of the organisation" (R7, 26, business analyst), and he does act as a brand ambassador. The connection is also explicitly mentioned by some participants. When asked why he reposted many company messages, R17 named his involvement in the company as a reason.

Because I am proud of my employer. And because I know that I have an extended network, especially within LinkedIn. And just because my department doesn't encounter any problems for a certain vacancy, does not mean that there can't be problems within [organisation]. And

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[1] Belgian pharmacy

since we are all one 'institution, family,' so to say, we have to support each other in [recruitment]. (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse)

When asked why she shared company-related posts, R3 shared the following message: "It is a part of my identity as well, I think. … Like okay, this is my job, this is what I do. So I want to incorporate that into my private life as well." (R3, 23, care provider)

8.2.6. The Organisation-employee Relationship

In the last chapter, most motivations that were mentioned were stated by employees. Apart from these motivations they are aware of, in this chapter the OER is discussed and how this forms an unconscious motivation for sECB.

For a better look into the role played by this OER, it is appropriate to first divide the respondents into different profiles. Three could be distinguished. First, group A acted as vigorous brand ambassadors. Brand advocacy involves sharing and promoting information regarding the organisational brand, promoting the organisation's online advertisements, making positive comments on brand posts, recommending the companies' programs, upholding brand values, as well as defending their employers from criticism or cyber attacks (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). This group fulfilled all of these behaviours on a regular basis and behaved as true representatives. Some respondents even acted as brand ambassadors towards their colleagues. Second, group B also acted as brand ambassadors. However, they only posted very sporadically, they weren't as present online as group A. Third, group C even took it a step further, and posted some forms of criticism or negative messages about their work or a certain work situation at times.

Among these profiles, some trends were observed in their motivations for sECB. First, the OER can have a notable effect on the sECB. In this research, the large majority of employees experienced a positive relationship with their organisation. A general trend was that the more positive this relationship was, the more positive workers' online work-related content was. Group A respondents generally had a very good OER. In group B, most participants still enjoyed a good OER, whereas some rated their OER as mediocre. In group C, the respondents had a bad OER. When asked about her opinion about the organisation, one respondent of this group replied: "It's a beautiful job, but the way they treat you, that sucks a little. […] You're also constantly working overtime and getting nothing for it. […] They ask way too much from you." (R16, 25, postman)

8.2.7. Awareness of the Impact of sECB on the Organisation

Additionally, a motivation that was not mentioned by participants yet could be distinguished as an underlying factor, was employees' awareness of the impact of their sECB on the organisation. On the one hand, a convincing majority realised that sECB was impactful on their company. This goes both ways, they realised the positive as well as negative impact a post could incite. Several underline the large public social media offers. A few respondents mentioned the algorithm, and how liking or sharing posts can boost its visibility. One of these was made aware of this during an information session organised by his work. On the other hand, some respondents were hesitant about the potential impact of work-related posts or even declared that the impact of their posts was low to none.

The trend could be observed where a higher level of awareness of the impact of sECB encompassed more positive sECB. This motivation overruled the OER. Some participants of group B did indicate that they had a very good relationship with their organisation, but did not necessarily understand their potential role in helping the organisation through content sharing. This group was an ambassador at times, but not as consistently as group A. Members of group A generally had a better understanding of the potential impact of sECB, as the following example of a member of group A demonstrates:

> *I'm not saying that that's massively influential and that that's going to make the difference, but whatever helps, helps. Every little bit helps, right, so yeah, I do believe in that, that there's always going to be, somebody's going to see or pick up or uh take something from it.* (R2, 43, anchor person Marketing and Communication and secretarial)

By contrast, a lower level of awareness generally entailed lower work-related online activity. The following respondent forms a part of group B, only posting very sporadically. When asked about the importance of sECB, he said the following.

> *It's a very large organisation. Now when I post that on social media... It will be only my friends who see that. It won't really be the companies that are clients of ours. Those are very large companies. It is about millions of euros. That's not really important for my company, no. It is nice if you are well exhibited there. As a company then. But whether that is really important, I don't think so.* (R6, 31, project engineer)

Notably, for several participants, both of these underlying factors combined, namely OER and the awareness of the impact of sECB, lead to more frequent interaction with work-related content. By way

of illustration, the last-mentioned respondents of group B do indicate a good OER, but do not post as much due to their lower level of awareness.

8.2.8 Social Media Governance

To somewhat control employees' online work-related presence, in many companies a form of social media governance was present. I will discuss the different forms of social media governance, the familiarity of employees with them, the degree to which respondents followed them or were willing to follow them, and some examples of reward systems, training and information sessions.

8.2.8.1 Types of Social Media Governance

There were three types of social governance to be distinguished. Companies that adopted an incentive social media governance, companies with restrictive guidelines and companies with no guidelines or governance at all.

First, most organisations applied incentive social media governance. These focus on the opportunities social media offers and intend to stimulate employees. Incentive guidelines were the most common in organisations of the participants. R2 showed an example of social media guidelines of her organisation: "Become an online [organisation] ambassador. 1. Like or follow the official [organisation] accounts on social media. 2. Tag official accounts and use official hashtags if you post something yourself. 3. Mention that you work for [organisation] proudly." (R2, 43, anchor person Marketing and Communication and secretarial)

Some companies offered their respondents a form of social media training. Some that received a training, did use their acquired skills.

> As a coincidence, now through the marketing and communication department, there are ten mails being sent out in certain periods about how you can promote LinkedIn and how you can optimise your projects to reach the broadest possible public within LinkedIn. (R10, 41, cluster manager and research program manager)

> But recently in a training I learned that Facebook lives off liking and that you receive information or advertisement in accordance with what you're liking. So through the city team, it is asked to like a variety of things that the city posts, even though it seems evident that I am informed about them. (R8, 65, first councillor)

One company employed a reward system as a motivation to boost a specific post or product. It extended an extrinsic and intrinsic reward. Through a link, the company could track how many people had used your link to swipe up on a post, for example a recruitment call. This formed an intrinsic reward.

> *Generally they just keep track, how many people [went to the call] through your link. But you know they'll see. You feel me? So then you feel like you don't want to be at zero. You don't want zero people to have gotten to the e-book or Webinar through your link. So that's a little nudge in the right direction.* (R4, 25, sales employee)

As an extrinsic reward, the company offered a prize, namely festival tickets for the person that had the most people download [name e-book] through them, the most important giant e-book that is published every year from the community of 500,000 [company-specific employees]. "And if we share that, there's a prize to be won for that. But for the rest there isn't. And last year, those were [name festival] tickets." (R4, 25, sales employee)

Second, some organisations adopted restrictive guidelines. These focus on the potential risks of work-related social media use. Restrictive guidelines were adopted in industries with confidential information: IT, the city council and the care sector. This was to respect the GDPR. Some guidelines were also forwarded by mail:

> *There are some standard regulations. For example, we aren't allowed to share client data. So if I do an assignment somewhere, I can't necessarily make a post about that. Because many of our clients want to stay anonymous. GDPR is something you have to keep in mind in any case of course.* (R11, 30, trainer consultant)

When BeReal became a more popular medium, one company sent around an e-mail with recommendations for the correct use of this app, so that confidential information could not leak:

> *We received a company e-mail that if we received our BeReals during working hours, to please open a blank Word document or a blank Google page. Because actually really nothing at all of work information should be released. Not who our clients are, not everybody that works for us should be known, in terms of legal.* (R4, 25, sales employee)

Lastly, several organisations used no guidelines or governance at all, they adopted a laissez-faire attitude. When asked if there were any formal or informal guidelines for work-related social media use, R15 replied: "No. No. The more we advertise, the better and the more they like it."

8.2.8.2 Compliance

The familiarity with the guidelines was divided. Some respondents knew the social media guidelines of their organisation somewhat. Some did not know if there were guidelines, and most did not know what the guidelines entailed exactly. In many interviews, employees therefore indicated they used their "common sense" when using social media for work-related purposes. When asked which guidelines his organisation had, R1 replied that there were none, and added: "You sense what you should do, like okay, I shouldn't tear my company down. Then why do you work for them? Just quit. If you're not satisfied with your boss, you leave." (R1, 51, train conductor) R17 shared a similar viewpoint. When asked if there were any informal guidelines, he replied with the following.

> *I think it's the societal policy. You don't post anything on Facebook or social media that can harm your employer. For me that is so self-evident, that I wouldn't even think about it if that were to become a guideline. … If I am against my employer, then why am I still working there? Well, then go somewhere else.* (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse)

When asked if he followed the guidelines, R6 shared the following statement.

> *I do not take it into account in the sense that I do not reread it every time I post something. But I do use my common sense. And for example, I won't post other colleagues without permission. And… Just not share any confidential information. I think that is the gist of it.* (R6, 31, project engineer)

For the compliance with the guidelines, "common sense" was mentioned by many as a requisite. If the guidelines felt logical, respondents had no resistance against them.

When they did know their work's set of guidelines, most employees agreed and complied with them. Especially towards incentive guidelines, no negative attitude was expressed. As a reason, several people explained that if there are rules, they would simply comply with them. This is illustrated by the following example. "Leading up to those events like info days, then it's going to be more important to post more as well. Then they will also ask colleagues to promote some more. So I'm going to do that as well." (R5, 24, lecturer)

For restrictive guidelines, up until a certain point participants agree with them, as long as they are logical to the participants. However, multiple respondents did indicate that if guidelines were to become too restrictive, this would cause resistance. "They can't force you to post something, in my opinion, so then I would just say, "My Facebook has nothing to do with it." (R5, 24, lecturer)

> *Yeah, if that's imposed from the top down, I think figuratively a big middle finger would go up. Or, you're not going to tell me what to do, because I'm pertinently sure that the way I'm currently doing it, that that's only with the intention of making the company better.* (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse)

When drawing up the guidelines, only a few employees said that they had a say in the process. The others thought their views weren't asked during this process.

8.2.9 Instant Messaging

After this use of public platforms, employees' use of instant messaging channels will be discussed. These channels are perceived to be more private, which entails other types of engagement, as will be discussed in this chapter.

8.2.9.1 Content

For instant messaging, the most commonly used platforms were WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger and Signal. Generally, employees have conversations with colleagues and only rarely with clients, to arrange for a meeting for example. The instant messaging conversations between colleagues exclusively formed a mixture between formal and informal communication. Instant messaging groups were often created for one specific event, such as an external meeting or a work trip, or for quicker communication between (close) colleagues.

Instant messaging is used to enjoy an efficient collaboration. This was facilitated by quick questions, information sharing and searching between colleagues and information from the organisation itself. When asked for an example of something that is shared in instant messaging groups, R5 gave the following example: "Do you have a minute to think about good internship projects? Since the student is from different college, he will only work with us four days a week, he has to write his bachelor's thesis about his internship topic." (R5, 24, lecturer) Another example of instant messages is offered by R9: "Some videos are posted in there, for example if we have to provide some care for a client, so that everyone knows how to do it right" (R9, 31, educator and quality coach).

Second, it is used for practical arrangements such as which room they will meet in or to arrange vacation days. R1 provides an example of this use: "Last week our annual plan was announced. So we know, I know that next year the third of August I'll be home. Someone else knows they won't be, so they will ask now if it is possible to switch." (R1, 51, train conductor)

Another reason to use instant messaging channels is that it is impossible to meet in real life, for example for international colleagues, or when someone is working from home. Further on, when a group is created specifically for a certain event, it often dies out when the event is over.

Apart from these practical uses, these channels are also used for informal conversations, for example to meet up to eat a sandwich or go for drinks. The use of these group chats often becomes blurry. Sometimes there is a specific leisure and formal group chat, but more often, the functions merge. When asked if the conversations were more often work-related in the group, R7 said the following.

> *Gosh, I think that's really fifty-fifty. It depends on, if there's really a question, we can spend some time on that. But every morning, like coffee breaks are also always sent in like, it's ten o'clock, somebody goes for a coffee or somebody goes for a chocolate milk.* (R7, 26, business analyst)

When comparing the use of instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp to that of public social media platforms such as Facebook, instant messaging is preferred for internal affairs, confidential information, venting negative emotions, and sometimes for reactions that are deemed inappropriate for a larger audience. R4 had a group chat with colleagues for a company trip, in which they sent drunken photos of the trip. When asked what they sent, she replied: "We share some pictures of the trip. Here [name colleague] asks for example: 'Who are these people?' They went for a night swim with us. Those kind of things. So that is very informal." (R4, 25, sales employee) R1, for instance, stated that his colleagues and himself were more inclined to talk about controversial topics through instant messaging channels.

> *We also know what type of people often [are involved in] aggression and fines. But [who they are], we're not allowed to identify. We can't [make] racist remarks, religious… But well, that's not only on social media, it's just like that. And off the record, between us, that's possible [that we say] it's that black one again from last week as well. Then you might think maybe [I'd better not post that] publicly, that could end badly.* (R1, 51, train conductor)

8.2.9.2 (Dis)advantages

Instant messaging channels offer some benefits. Almost every employee confirmed that they experienced instant messaging apps as nice or convenient to use. The advantages they named were that it is fast, efficient, easy to use and more approachable than e-mail. You can take quick action, which helps R6 for example when he is on a boat. "It definitely saves time not having to search everyone." (R6, 31, project engineer) "If you simply have a question, it's just easy. You just post in the group and you get a response*." (R12, 29, district manager)

However, some disadvantages were also named. First, a few employees underline the temporary aspect of the apps, and propose mail as an easier tool to arrange meetings or to enclose files. Then, some participants also note that large group conversations can be tiring when the notifications keep rolling in. "You always get ding, ding, ding, when they keep on reacting to it. When the event has passed, I delete the group." (R13, 57, packer)

> *I left the department's WhatsApp group, I think two weeks ago, because I was beginning to find it a bit annoying that 60 messages a day were coming in. If everyone sends one message a day.... Sends two messages a day, we're at uh 72 messages. That's a little too much for me.* (R17, 55, head of department, head nurse)

Further on, some participants judged the number of different instant messaging channels negatively.

> *What I do find annoying is... So there's Teams, then there's WhatsApp, there's mail. You have to keep track of all that. And one person responds to that. And then that one says, well, you didn't respond. Yes. You can't respond to everything. [laughs] It's a bit of a proliferation of information channels. Yeah.* (R10, 41, cluster manager and research program manager)

8.2.9.3 Work-life Balance

The majority of employees also mentioned that they use instant messaging apps after hours. On the one hand, some interviewees did not have an issue with this, or even like it.

> *I have the late shift, for example. I write something. But the one who did the early one can also comment on it and so on. I have to say that we are all kind of workaholics [laughs], that we are constantly engaged with [our work].* (R1, 51, train conductor)

> *Because the other, the research team also feels a little bit more like friends. Then I certainly don't mind that that can happen via WhatsApp after hours either. Then sometimes there will*

be a message at night from someone uh who is still awake and wanted to send a message. That certainly doesn't bother me because that's really a limited group. And also all people that I think are really cool, so. (R5, 24, lecturer)

On the other hand, others found this to cause an imbalance in the work-life ratio. "I feel like, you don't need to always be available. Now people expect you to be available 24/7. Yes, that forms the disadvantage to me." (R13, 57, packer) R3 offers a solution: "If I receive a message during the weekend, I'll answer on Monday." This does however show that instant messaging allows for the possibility to send a message during the weekends. As a last example, when asked if she thought instant messaging channels were convenient, R2 replied with the following statement.

Yes, it is convenient. Sometimes it is… Recently, I was already in bed, but [name daughter] was going out, so I didn't want to turn off my notification sounds, and at once I receive chachacha, a bunch of pictures, but they were so many, I thought it was a phone call. They were 90 photos of a lecturer who wanted them on Facebook, the [notifications] all came in. And then I though, yes, sometimes it really is a lot, so you think: "help". (R2, 43, anchor person Marketing and Communication and secretarial)

9. Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the results and link them with previous literature. Further on, I will try to provide an answer to the following research questions:

> *(1) How do employees engage in positive or negative work-related use of public social media platforms?*

> *(2) Why do employees engage in positive or negative work-related use of public social media platforms?*

> *(3) What role can social media governance play when it comes to employees' work-related social media use*

> *(4) How do employees engage in work-related instant messaging use?*

As for the first research question (RQ1) concerning public social media platforms, some employees felt more comfortable sharing company messages, to minimise the risk of them making a mistake. Previous research encouraged their employees to share company posts (Dreher, 2014). This study adds to that, that employees themselves feel insecure about posting self-created content. Another result that surfaced from this research concerning the used platforms, is that none of the blue-collar workers used the professional platform LinkedIn. This had not previously been discussed in research. Blue-collar workers potentially do not see the use of this platform or do not adopt it, since their environment does not adopt this either, as it is seen that perceived critical mass is an indication for the adoption of a new platform (Cameron & Webster, 2005).

Further on, the study demonstrates that the large majority of employees engage in positive online communicative behaviours. They act as brand ambassadors for their companies. These results build on existing evidence of Van Zoonen et al. (2016). However, that prior study only examined behaviour on Twitter. The results of this current study were seen in every used platform: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. These online behaviours are very important to guide companies in their adoption of social media governance. The most common messages for work-related use were (1) call-to-actions for recruitment, campaigns, or events, (2) positive information about the company, such as achievements, products and projects, (3) the working culture: work events, dinner with colleagues, work trips and (4) positive information about oneself, such as achievements or finished projects. Previous research has also named these mentioned uses (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Van Zoonen et al., 2018).

Additionally, the data suggests that blue-collar workers were less inclined to post call-to-actions and positive information about the company. White-collar workers formed a middle ground, followed by executives that did post many call-to-actions and positive information about the company, but uploaded less content on the working culture or anecdotes during working hours. This division on the basis of functions was not yet discussed in previous literature. This could imply that blue-collar workers generally post more out of enjoyment, or for social capital, and less to support organisational goals, possibly because they are not sufficiently aware of the value of their contribution. White-collar workers on the other hand, might not be aware of the value of personal contributions, such as a work anecdote.

The next research question (RQ2) looked into the motivations of employees for their work-related use of public social media platforms. Employees posted work-related content for (1) promotion of the organisation and its products or services, for (2) enjoyment, (3) convenience and (4) self-enhancement. This last point was something previous literature did not agree upon. This research confirms quantitative research that names self-enhancement as a motive (Lee, 2020; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Van Zoonen et al., 2018). It contradicts research that stated employees act out of selfless motives, not self-seeking (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). For negative content, the only mentioned motive was to (5) vent negative feelings, which is in line with some research (Lee, 2020), but does not include other factors, such as revenge (Ravazzani & Mazzei, 2018).

Further on, they posted for more (6) social capital, and (7) to exchange information. This confirms previous findings (Kim & Rhee, 2011; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). Next, their use was influenced by (8) a will to endorse collective efforts, as was stated in previous studies (Helm, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2014), (9) pride in the organisation and (10) perceived external prestige, as was found by previous research (Helm, 2011; Y. Lee, 2020). They posted due to (11) brand identification and lastly, (12) the organisation-employee relationship. This is in line with previous findings (Kang and Sung, 2017; Kim and Rhee, 2011; Piehler et al., 2016; Schweitzer & Lyons, 2008; Walden & Westerman, 2018). Notably, previous research named perceived external prestige as a motive (Schaarschmidt & Walsch, 2020), which this study confirms.

The organisation-employee relationship was noted by employees as a motive, but the trend was sometimes also noticeable when not explicitly mentioned. A strong OER translated into more positive and generally more online communicative behaviour. A weaker OER translated into less or negative sECB. These results reinforce former research that stated the OER is a very important precursor for

positive sECB (Kang and Sung, 2017; Kim and Rhee, 2011; Schweitzer & Lyons, 2008) and a negative OER can result in negative posting (Y. Lee, 2020).

Another notable and underlying factor for sECB is employees' awareness of the impact of their sECB on the company. The more employees were aware of their impact, the more they posted about their jobs. The opposite is also true, the less they were aware of their impact, the less they posted about their jobs. Previous research was not unanimous about impact as an indicator. Some research stated that the level of awareness did motivate employees to post (Helm, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2014). However, some research showed the opposite (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). This research therefore specifically asked about the awareness in in-depth interviews, and the results clearly support former research stating that the awareness was a strong motivator.

The third research question (RQ3) centred around the influence of social media governance on sECB. The most remarkable result that came in this context, is how many employees said they followed their common sense. Many respondents were uncertain if there were any guidelines, so they noted that they appealed to their common sense. This is a new found result that was not yet discussed in previous literature. This logical thinking was not only mentioned here, but also as a ground to comply with guidelines. If the guidelines made sense to participants, they indicated they followed or would follow them. This finding adds to prior research that focused on the effectiveness of incentive and restrictive social media guidelines, but did not see this motive of common sense come to surface (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017; Soens & Claeys, 2021). The current study shows that compliance with governance would be jeopardised if a set of guidelines were too restrictive, as this would evoke resistance in employees, which is in accordance with previous findings (Soens & Claeys, 2021). Restrictive guidelines were however accepted when they are installed to protect confidentiality, which is a justifiable reason for the interviewees. This adds to previous research that states governance is adopted to protect confidentiality (Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017)

When companies offered a training, the acquired knowledge was incorporated by employees in their online operations. A training about algorithms for example, caused an employee to like more company posts. Some research already stated that training could positively influence employees' online work-related behaviour (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017), and this is secured by this in-depth research, rendering training an even stronger precursor for sECB.

The fourth and last research question (RQ4) was about employees' work-related instant messaging use. Generally, this topic has been covered less in research than public platforms. The most important

findings concerning instant messaging use were that the medium is used because of its informality, in line with previous findings (Cameron & Webster, 2005; Isaacs et al., 2002; Nardi et al., 2000). Social messengers are preferred over social networking sites for greater privacy, as is also seen in Lien & Cao (2014). This informal and private character drives it to be used for more private conversations, that can contain confidential or controversial messages. Several participants used it to vent to each other about a negative day or event during work, share drunken pictures or even racist remarks. This seems safe, but could pose a risk if conversations leak.

In continuation of this topic, instant messaging offers an immediate form of contact, that can entail some advantages and disadvantages. Many employees found the medium very efficient, although it did also disturb employees' work-life balance. This was already stated in previous research (Cho et al., 2019; Diaz et al., 2012, but elaborated on in this study. Respondents found the need to be available constantly tiring. This can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Cho et al., 2019).

10. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This research consisted of a qualitative analysis through interviews. This filled a gap in research, where most research was mostly based on quantitative analyses. However, this research only explored a fairly small sample. Only 17 employees were interviewed, all of which were Belgian. Future research could interview more employees, or broaden the research area to other countries, for international results.

One participant in this study mentioned how her organization offered intrinsic and extrinsic rewards related to employees' work-related social media use. This field of intrinsic (e.g., employee recognition) and extrinsic (e.g., festival tickets) reward systems could be further explored. The participant mentioned that it did positively influence her social media related behaviours. It is, therefore, worth exploring if intrinsic or extrinsic reward systems both have similar effects, or if one is welcomed more by employees than the other. This could be explored using interviews. More interviews could also be conducted to inquire about these motivational factors.

Research about instant messaging is still very limited. In this research, the part about instant messaging was exploratory. Future research could further elaborate on this. It could focus on information that is shared through these channels, that could possibly harm organisations. It could ask how often this type of information is shared. Further on, it could focus on the work-life imbalance caused by instant messaging channels. Research could investigate general views on this work-life ratio, and offer possible solutions.

11. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to examine employees' work-related social media use. The research examined first, the content of employees' work-related use of public social media platforms (RQ1), second, their motivations for this use (RQ2), third, how social media governance played a role in their online work-related behaviour (RQ3), and fourth, how employees used instant messaging channels (RQ4). With a better insight in these aspects, the research wanted to provide companies with recommendations for social media governance that will positively reinforce employees to execute employee advocacy.

11.1 Theoretical Implications

This qualitative research showed that employees generally engage in positive work-related online behaviour. Further research on social media governance, and employees' work-related social media use can use this as a focal point, as it is most common. Then, the research poses that the organisation-employee relationship is crucial for sECB, as well as the level of awareness of employees about the impact of their sECB on the organisation. This can also be adopted in research into social media governance. Adding to former research, this study offers common sense as a determinant for sECB and the compliance with social media guidelines. This can entail that at times, for instance when employees are less familiar with the guidelines, they will disregard them and trust their own instincts. For instant messaging, this research confirmed a disturbed work-life balance, which can be further looked into in other research.

11.2 Practical Implications

Aside from adding to existing research, this study offers some practical implications for companies. As an ultimate starting point, the organisation-employee relationship should be nurtured. The OER was a definitive predictor for sECB. A positive OER will lead to positive sECB. Then, when drawing up guidelines, they should be incentive as much as possible. Restrictive guidelines are not generally welcomed. Employees accept guidelines they view as logical, or in accordance with common sense. This rule offers an exception. Restrictive guidelines are sometimes accepted and necessary, in certain industries that engage with confidential information: IT, the city council and the care sector. Then, employees saw the use of the guidelines and had no problem in accepting them. Next, the company should offer company posts which are ready to like or share. As most respondents took part in this behaviour, and some preferred this to creating posts themselves, this is something a company should tap into. A good message in the brand voice that is ready to be easily shared, provides employees with

the possibility to forward this message. Both self-created posts and liked or shared posts are helpful to the company.

Further on, the company should offer some form of training or information session to employees.

First, the results clearly stated that the more employees realised the impact of their sECB on the company, the more they were inclined to post about work-related topics. This should be encouraged. Through training, employees can learn about their impact, guiding them towards more online brand-positive behaviours.

Second, some employees mentioned they preferred liking or sharing company posts to creating them themselves, out of fear of making mistakes. A way to turn these hesitant employees into self-assured brand ambassadors, is again through training in the brand voice and expectations of the company. As they are more familiar with the brand and brand voice, they could feel more confident in sharing their own posts.

Third and similar to the last point, employees should be taught how to use platforms. As a reason to use a platform, many mentioned the familiarity with the platform. If they are familiarised with a platform, they might use it more. For example, as blue-collar workers in this research did not use LinkedIn, they could receive a training to introduce them to this medium and its functions.

Fourth, the training should encompass the content of possible posts and can be directed to specific groups of employees. Blue-collar workers did not post as many call-to-actions and positive information. In a training they could be reminded of the impact of these posts. Simultaneously, executives did not share many posts about the working culture. These posts also contribute to organisational goals, so this impact could also be emphasised to this group.

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12. Appendix
12.1 Appendix A: Information Letter
Research at Ghent University on work-related social media use

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Lien Eelbode. I am a master's student at Ghent University, in the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication. I am currently conducting research on employees' work-related social media use. By this we mean everything employees post, share or like on social media related to their jobs, their organisations or their organisation's products/services.

I would like to thank you in advance for your interest in this study. With this letter, I would like to invite you to participate. Before you decide on your participation, I ask you to read the text below. In this I will go over the study.

Purpose of the project
This study examines what employees post, share or like on social media related to their jobs, their organisation or its products/services. In addition, this study looks at employee motivations behind these work-related social media activities.

Why was I chosen?
For this study, I am looking for participants who work in an organisation with at least 20 employees. Employees with any position (e.g., clerk, worker, executive) are eligible to participate, with the exception of student job employees. Furthermore, each participant must have at least one account on a social media channel such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. On these, the participant must have posted, shared and/or liked work-related posts more than once in the past month. By work-related, we mean related to your job, your organisation or your organisation's products/services.

What does participating in the study entail?
Participating in this study involves one of the researchers conducting an interview of you. This is a conversation between you and the researcher where you will be asked questions about your work-related social media use. You may choose which interviewer you feel most comfortable with: myself (Lien Eelbode) or doctoral student Ellen Soens. The interview will last approximately one hour. The place and time of the interview will be determined by mutual agreement. Only you and the researcher will be present during the interview. An audio recording of the interview will be made so that the interviewer can transcribe it afterwards. Your anonymity will be assured during the processing of the interviews.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of participating?
It will be necessary to allow sufficient time, i.e. about an hour, for the interview. I do not expect the interview to cause any inconvenience, but if there are topics that you do not wish to discuss, you can simply communicate this to the researcher. If you wish, the interview can also be stopped or briefly interrupted. Any audio recordings can be erased at that time at your request. The researcher will always take into account what you wish. All information will be processed anonymously, and used only for this study.

Can I postpone or stop my participation?

If you wish to suspend the interview or discontinue your participation, you may do so without having to give a reason. You will have the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher after the interview. You may also contact the researcher Lien Eelbode or doctoral student Ellen Soens (see contact information at the end of this document) for further information, if desired.

What are the possible benefits of participating?
There are no direct benefits to you as an individual. I cannot pay you for your time or participation. The purpose of this study is to better understand employees' work-related social media use. Based on my findings, I want to make recommendations for social media policies in organisations that are beneficial to both employer and employee. Through your participation, you can support my research.

Is there any cost to participation?
Your participation in the study involves no additional cost to you.

Do I have to participate?
You are completely free to participate or not. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can refuse to participate without having to give a reason and without it affecting your relationship with the researcher or with UGent. You may revise your opinion up to 7 days after the interview. In that case, you can contact researcher Lien Eelbode or doctoral student Ellen Soens (see contact details below).

Confidentiality
In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Belgian law of July 30, 2018 (protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data), we respect your privacy. If the results of the study are published, the data we collect from you will be pseudonymised. That is, all data that could directly identify you (e.g., your name, organisation, position, etc.) are deleted from the database. All participants are given a unique number in its place. In addition, measures are also taken to avoid indirect identification (e.g. by very concrete unique elements you mentioned in the interview). If you wish, the Data Protection Officer of Ghent University can provide you with more information on the protection of your personal data. Contact details: Ms. Hanne Elsen, tel: +32 9 264 95 17 or privacy@ugent.be, Campus Ufo, Rectoraat 2, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Gent.

What happens tot he data?
The recordings of the interviews will be transcribed word for word and analysed by the interviewer. The electronic versions (transcripts) and the recordings will be stored at Ghent University on a researchers' shared network drive, protected by a password. This network disk is a highly safe storage place as it is only accessible by the researchers. Moreover, the disk is managed and maintained by the ICT department of Ghent University. At the end of the study, the audio recordings will be destroyed and the pseudonymised transcripts will be kept for a period of at least five years. In order to share the findings of this study with other researchers and policy makers, they will be

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written down in academic publications. All information about participants will be anonymised in the process.

Who has access to my data?
The research team will have access to the recordings and transcripts. In any case, all personal data and any information that could possibly lead to you will be omitted from the interview transcripts.

Can I view the results of the study?
You can receive a copy of the summary of the results if you wish. The data controller is Lien Eelbode (see contact details below).

Who organises and funds this study?
This research is not funded. However, it will be part of the doctoral research of Ellen Soens, and that is funded by the FWO (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek van Vlaanderen). The research team consists of: Lien Eelbode (master's student at UGent), Ellen Soens (doctoral student at UGent) and An-Sofie Claeys (professor at UGent).

Contact for further information:
I want to cordially thank you for reading this information and for your interest in this research. If you would like to participate or if you would like some additional information, you can always reach me at lien.eelbode@ugent.be.

Kind regards,

Lien Eelbode, master's student at UGhent, lien.eelbode@ugent.be

Ellen Soens, PhD student at UGhent, ellen.soens@ugent.be

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12.2 Appendix B: Informed Consent
Research at Ghent University on work-related social media use

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of a project within the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication at Ghent University, research is currently being conducted into employees' work-related social media use. By this we mean everything employees post, share or like on social media related to their jobs, their organisations or their organisation's products/services.

Through interviews with employees from different organisations and with different jobs, this study examines exactly what kinds of work-related posts employees post, share or like on social media. In addition, this study looks at employee motivations behind these social media activities. Based on my findings, I aim to make recommendations for social media policies in organisations that are beneficial to both employer and employee.

The survey itself consists of a one-time interview. Through open-ended questions, we gauge your work-related social media use and your motivations behind it. You will be given the opportunity to answer in your own words. The interview itself will take up a maximum of one hour of your time. In order to process the data properly and correctly, the interview will be recorded.

All data collected as part of the study will be treated as completely confidential. In other words, your data will not be passed on to third parties. If the collected material is processed in an (academic) publication, your anonymity will be assured (your name will not be mentioned, any excerpts from the interview will be presented anonymously).

Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You have the option to discontinue your participation at any time during the interview, without having to provide a reason.

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that I

1.	have read and understood the information about the study. I had the opportunity to consider the information and my participation and ask questions that were answered to my satisfaction.	☐
2.	understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may discontinue my participation at any time during the interview without having to provide a reason.	☐
3.	understand that if I discontinue my participation in this study, I may withdraw my already collected data up to 7 days after the interview. A simple e-mail or phone call to the researcher will suffice for this purpose. I do not need to provide a reason for the withdrawal of my data.	☐

4.	understand that discontinuing my participation will not affect my relationship with Ghent University in any way.	☐
5.	understand that I will not receive financial compensation for my participation in this study.	☐
6.	give permission to the researchers to record the interview (audio recording).	☐
7.	understand that the data collected during this study will be processed in accordance with legal provisions and the information provided to me.	☐
8.	am informed that I can get a summary of the survey results.	☐
9	hereby grant permission to the researchers to publish research results based on the information I provide in scientific journals and to discuss them at scientific meetings provided that my identity cannot be discovered in the process.	☐
10	agree to participate in the research.	☐

As the participant, you will receive a copy of this consent form.

The participant:

Naam	Datum	Handtekening

If you would like a summary of the results, please provide below an (e-mail) address where you would like to receive this summary:

The person asking for permission:

Naam	Datum	Handtekening

Name and contact information of the researchers:

If you would like more information about the research, or if you have any comments about the research, please contact doctoral student Ellen Soens at ellen.soens@ugent.be or the master's student conducting the research at lien.eelbode@ugent.be.

Name and contact details of the Data Protection Officer of Ghent University:

Ms. Hanne Elsen, tel: +32 9 264 95 17 or privacy@ugent.be

Ufo Campus, Rectorate 2, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Ghent

12.3 Appendix C: Topic List Interview
Topic list interview

*The researcher first goes over the requirements for participation with the participant and deletes what does not fit:

- ☐ The participant works in an organisation with at least 20 employees
- ☐ The participant is a clerk / worker / other: ....
- ☐ The participant is 18-30 / 30-40 / 40-50 / 50-60 / 60+ years old.
- ☐ The participant is male / female / X.
- ☐ The participant has at least one account on a social media channel (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok).
- ☐ The participant has posted/shared/liked a work-related post on his/her/their social media account(s) more than once in the past month. By work-related we mean related to his/her/their job, organisation or the products/services of the organisation.

The researcher goes through the informed consent form together with the participant. Only after the participant has signed this form, the actual interview can start.

Introductory questions:

- In which sector is your organisation active?
- Is it a public or private organisation?
    - o In the case of a private organisation: Is it a multinational?
- How many employees does your organisation have?
- What is your role within the organisation?
- How long have you been working for this organisation?
- What do you think of the organisation you work for?

General social media use

- What social media do you have an account on?
- How often do you view those accounts?
- How often do you post things on those accounts?
- How often do you like or share things on those accounts?

Work-related social media use:

- Do you sometimes share or post about your organisation or job on your social media accounts?
    - How often do you do that?
    - Which channel do you use most often for that? Why?
    - What do you share/post?
    - What are your main reasons for sharing or posting such messages?
    - Do you think it is important to post about your job, organisation, ... or not?
    - If you don't often share messages about your organisation or job on your social media, why is that?

- Can you check your most used social media account to see if you have recently made a work-related post? *If you can't find it, ask if they've recently posted something work-related on another channel and want to check it out*

    - Can you tell me what you posted/shared? This can be abstract or in detail, you can choose whether you want to show it or rather describe it.
    - Did you write/create this post yourself, or did you share it from another account? Which account?
    - Why did you post/share this post?
    - What were the privacy settings? Do you take that into account? Why?
    - Do you often post these types of messages?

    After one example has been discussed, ask for other examples, also on other social media channels. Stop after discussing three concrete examples.

- Are there periods when you post more or less work-related messages on social media? E.g. following an event, an event, new product, ...

- Has your organisation ever experienced a crisis in recent years? If so, did you then share or post messages related to that crisis on social media?

- Does your organisation have a particular social media policy or guidelines?
    - If so, can you tell us a bit more about that?
        - How is this policy drafted?
        - How are the guidelines formulated? Can you give an example?
        - Were employees consulted when drafting this policy?
    - If so, do you consider this policy when posting work-related posts? Why or why not?
    - If so, what is your opinion on this policy?
        - How do you estimate the impact of employee social media behaviour on the organisation?
    - If not, would you consider it a problem if there were a social media policy or social media guidelines? Would you follow that policy/guidelines? Why or why not?
    - If not, are there informal instructions?

Work-related instant messaging:

- Do you have group conversations/chats on instant messaging channels such as Whatsapp, Messenger, ... that have something to do with your job or organisation? For example, a group conversation with a group of colleagues, with customers, ...
    - If so, with whom? For what purpose? What things are posted in it?
    - Do you like it or find it useful to be able to communicate about the work or the job in this way? Why or why not?

- Can you take a look at the most recent work-related group conversation and tell me what the last conversation was about? This can be abstract or in detail, you can choose whether you want to show it or rather describe it.
    - What was the conversation about?
    - What prompted this conversation?
    - In which group was this conversation held?
    - On which channel was this conversation held?
    - Do you often have these kinds of conversations?

    After one example has been discussed, continue to ask questions about other group conversations. If the respondent has only one work-related group on an instant messaging channel, ask to look at the penultimate conversation next and discuss what that was about. Stop after discussing three concrete examples.

- Are there periods when you have more or fewer conversations on instant messaging channels? E.g. following an event, an event, new product, ...

- Has your organisation already been through a crisis? If so, have you had conversations about that on instant messaging channels?

Do you have any questions, comments or additions?

Thank you for participating in this interview.