Master Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

Working with Social Media in Japan

In the case of H&M, Ikea and Volvo Corporation

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Abstract
Social media is an evermore important tool for companies to utilize in marketing, as it no longer is a question of if, but how social media can be employed for communicating to current and potential customers. However, it is also a tool that holds its complexities, and one in which companies are resistant to use. Therefore it is of interest to investigate how in particular MNCs work with social media in a foreign market, as the marketing medium thus holds both opportunities and challenges, as well as cultural mechanisms and behavior affecting usage on local markets. The purpose of this study is to investigate social media usage of Swedish companies H&M, IKEA, and VCC in Japan, in order to develop a framework of how MNCs work with social media, as well as identify factors that affect how foreign companies work with social media on a local market. This was done through semi-structured interviews conducted in Japan with the three case companies, as well as interviews in Sweden. Further, we have introduced the PIE model as a framework for social media usage and concluded distinctive factors that influence presence of Swedish MNCs on the Japanese market including: reachability, applicability, popularity, and professionalism. Moreover, to create interest among users, the distinctive factors of commercial information, inspiration, tutorial, and competition effect utilization. Lastly, to enable conversation and engagement the distinctive factors of adaptability, sociability, and caution influence social media usage on the local market of Japan.

Introduction

Social Media has become a growing and ever-more influential part of 21st century's (Berthon et al., 2012) marketing activities and strategy (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014). Unlike traditional marketing communications where a high degree of managerial control and value production is present however, social media allows a shift from corporate to consumer interaction, content creation as well as control (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011). In many ways the advent of social media has changed the way businesses interact with key stakeholders (Arora & Predmore, 2013); making adaptation and implementation of alternative marketing methods in social media and marketing strategy overall essential, as both transcend into a new, dynamic and interconnecting international marketplace (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

With introduction of the Internet and Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2007) communication has become immediate, caused time- and national boundaries to blur as well as business transparency hard to omit. Thus this virtual "many-to-many" communication medium (Fuchs, 2014) has

caused high global accessibility and scalability through populous penetration; creating aftermath of consumption and interactivity upon both global, national and local level. Thus, multinational corporations (MNCs) may realize that a once global marketing strategy can be reinterpreted, altered and adopted to fit cultural needs and values of local markets. Further, what commences in one market will spread instantaneously, resulting in need to drive global brand value coherence with local methods of adaptation for enhanced level-of-fit (Berthon et al., 2012). Thus, social media though being a global phenomenon (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014) indeed mirrors a country's cultural values, technology level as well as historical- and governmental structure during interpretation, usage and interaction (Berthon et al., 2012).

Unlike initial internet adoption centered in North America and Western Europe, social media has shown to have highest penetration and awareness in present-day Asia (Gong et al., 2014). 2013 revealed consecutive growth within the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region for both Internet, mobile, technologies and social media usage (Kemp, 2014); suggesting the "digital divide", acknowledged as inequality of information and media technology between nations (Ali, 2011) is decreasing (Bertot et al., 2010) on a global scale (Kemp, 2014). Factors behind amplified growth of social media, in Asia (Gong et al., 2014), particularly in emerging markets, may derive from motivation of increased social, political and governmental transparency through open platforms (Bertot et al., 2010; Abbott, 2012), as well as wish to take part in economic and educational aspects of Web 2.0 (Ali, 2011). E-commerce, global marketing facilitation as well as many-to-many benefit of reach (Fuchs, 2014) through social media has enabled MNCs to compete past traditional barriers of trade (Ali, 2011). Thus, national and international MNCs influence and

foreign direct investment in Asia is steadily growing (International Monetary Fund, 2015), and through utilizing of social media, traditional marketing practices need to be modified for best practice, continued economic prosperity within APAC (Kemp, 2014) as well as consideration to cultural implementation (Sheth, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012).

A nation within APAC, being referred to as a "top technology affluent" market (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; International Monetary Fund, 2015) with an Internet penetration of near 80 percent (Kemp, 2014), as well as having similar economic circumstances, literacy rates and overall technological infrastructure to that of the West (Gong et al., 2014) is Japan. The nation has enjoyed economic growth since post-war society (Hughes, 2013), and through having met contemporary financial struggle, Japan is the third-largest economy globally (BBC News, 2015) after the US and China (CNN Money, 2015). The nation possess high level of foreign direct investment through MNCs' presence (Kemp, 2014) and through being recognized as a "regional and global economic superpower" (Hughes, 2013) Japan acts as predominant example of "imitation-based growth" for other emerging APAC nations (Kim & Nelson, 2000).

Considerable trend differing from other APAC nations, as well as Western Europe and North America, however is usage and penetration of social media that has not been established to the same extent. Social media usage in Japan represents mere 17 percent compared to APAC average of 25 percent, Western Europe of 44 percent and North America of 56 percent (Kemp, 2014; Kende, 2014); deriving from aspects of online anonymity among Japanese consumers (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Japan is thus described through past research to largely differ in terms of norms and values as well as view of society versus self

(Suzuki & Takemura, 2013). Cultural differences have also manifested themselves in communication methods and tone-of-voice, which can vary during online interaction between nations; thus impacting the transversal of marketing methods from the global to the local (Acar, 2013) for MNCs acting in Japan. Online and social media behavior in Japan may then be a prominent example of influence of culture and other factors (Berthon et al., 2012) differing across global communities (Gong et al., 2014), in which MNCs act and coexist (Ray, 2014).

Background

With globalization and through use of social media, brands are emerging in new contexts and communities (Tuten, 2008), thus raising interest in the development in international marketing (Baack et al., 2013) and how this area is managed (Berthon et al., 2012). Through 21st century's technological development, innovation is moving at a fast pace and consumers are quick to adapt new means of online brand interaction (Hanna et al., 2011). Social media implementation is growing among top Fortune Global 100 firms and others especially since 2011 (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014), and marketing managers subsequently no longer face questions of *if*, but *how* social media marketing can be applied and enhanced, in order to boost business and sales in a particular market, as well as overall brand perception and importance within the global marketplace (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Through social media as a "free-to-use" communication platform (Woerdl et al., 2008) companies can interact within a global community in which the digital medium encourages consumers to create and co-create value and activity amongst brand platforms (Berthon et al., 2012), thus increasing the power of marketing influence, engagement and reach than ever before (Hanna et al., 2011).

Social media is admitting an ever-increasing role, however, it is still a tool that companies are averse to fully employ (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Taprial & Kanwar, 2012) in conjunction with traditional media and marketing activities (Hanna et al., 2011). Some reasons include loss of managerial control, possible damage of reputation through misperceptions, unabridged transparency (Van Dijck, 2013) as well as faulty communication spreading fast to a globalized and instantly reactive market (Woerdl et al., 2008). Thus company participation on social media is not free of challenges (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), as merely being present is not sufficient enough for interaction and increased awareness within the digital sphere. Consumer engagement requires interesting and creative content, in order to catch but also maintain attention and engagement (Hanna et al., 2011), coupled with discretion through sensitivity during interaction with consumers (Thackeray et al., 2008); conjointly placing emphasis on resources of labor, technology, and capital during utilization (Venkatesh, 2015).

Social media thereby encompasses both opportunities and challenges (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) upon all national markets, and are influenced by infrastructural enablement, governmental regulations as well as cultural belief systems (Berthon et al., 2012). Japan is as introduced above, an intriguing nation of academic study, as social media usage despite high level of technology-based growth in both social, governmental and business based structures still shows penetration close to mere 17 percent (Kemp, 2014). Lack of governmental hindrance, present within other nations of APAC showing greater share of social media usage (Kemp, 2014), has further enabled not only fast expansion of usage for portable devices, but also has created a platform for further development within digital field and social media networks (Ito, 2005). Lessened social

media activity in Japan compared to other regions may thus have other explanatory factors, such as the nation's deeply embedded culture (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Rosenberger, 1994; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002); thus being of academic interest to gain greater insight within the field for international marketing and social media strategy. Share of foreign MNCs within Japan has been elevated since mid 1990s, allowing new norms, managerial education and practices to have been introduced (Kushida et al., 2013), that may have effect upon Japanese cognition and social media utilization. As social media has been a growing and influential part of 21st century's (Berthon et al., 2012) global marketing activities (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014), foreign MNCs aspire social media usage for success in Japan as in other markets of operation. Through identifying factors utilized within a low social media penetration market by MNCs, such as Japan, current and aspiring MNCs may enhance utilization of social media tools going forward.

One nation with high MNC presence is Sweden, which in relation has both national and economic similarities to Japan through having both high geographical and socio-cultural distance, defined as differences between home and host national cultures (Holmstrom et al., 2006). Thus, Sweden and Japan portray similar aspects of technological, economical as well as educational aspects, all having impact upon enablement of social media implementation, usage and spread (Berthon et al., 2012). Therefore, three Swedish MNC, namely H&M, IKEA and VCC are chosen as an example of MNCs in foreign countries, as the common basis of choice includes size and economic influence; each included within the Fortune 500 companies (Fortune 500, 2014), common country of origin, targeting of end-consumers, as well as all having presence within the Japanese national market and on social media platforms.

Thus the research question is as follows:

What are the distinctive factors of how Swedish MNCs work with social media in Japan?

The purpose is thereby to investigate social media usage of Swedish companies H&M, IKEA, and VCC in Japan, in order to develop a framework of how MNCs work with social media, as well as identify factors that influence how foreign companies work with social media on a local market, in order to add to research within the social media field. Social media marketing, even though attracting greater levels of attention (Kietzmann et al., 2011) has yet to become a highly researched topic (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014), making cross-national analysis for MNCs (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013) evermore significant. Thus, identifying academically distinctive factors influencing social media usage in foreign markets may be of high value for Swedish based MNCs when comprehending how cultural norms and behavior mechanisms affect social media usage in Japan. Localization of usage upon foreign markets is thus of particular interest and contribution to academia, since what commences in one market will spread speedily, resulting in need for MNCs to drive global brand coherence with local methods of adaptation for social media (Berthon et al., 2012). The chosen companies enable connections to be drawn as well as further discussion regarding identified factors to be made for social media usage upon chosen marketplace of Japan.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand how social media is used within the national market of Japan by Swedish MNCs, the theoretical discussion will include a brief literature review, followed by discussion of social media as an interactive and engaging tool using the so-called PIE model. Lastly, a

section regarding Japanese culture is added for enhancement of discussion and findings later on.

Social Media Literature

Social media is among the most rapidly expanding research areas of interest within marketing journals (Schultz & Peltier, 2013; Gong et al., 2014), and described as a shift from the commercially traditional and one-way promotional marketing method, to a more 'virtual' and 'social' means of communicating business practices (Dann & Dann, 2011; Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). With introduction of the term Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2007), control has altered from the producer to the consumer through cooperation and transparency with other users; individuals are not only retrieving or 'consuming' information, but also 'contributing', 'reviewing', and 'refining content' (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Berthon, et al., 2012). Further co-value creation is possible upon what is conceptualized as "hypermedia computer-mediated environments" (CME's) when referring to the dependence upon technological platforms, as these can consist of among others social network sites (SNS), virtual communities/worlds, creativity work-sharing sites, instant message chats, File Transfer Protocol (FTP) or e-mail when communicating during such interactive forms of marketing (Fuchs, 2014; Dann & Dann, 2011, Chu & Kim, 2011; Brodie et al., 2007). Thus, the Internet may be both a "market and a medium" (Ngai, 2003), entangling relationships through exchange of ideas, products and services, often referred to as "democratization of media" (Tuten, 2008). Therefore, content distribution is converging towards less distribution through corporation editors, and to a greater extent through online users, underlining both participation, interaction and power as defining key concepts (Fuchs, 2014; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008); when combining "personalized mass marketing" with increased individualization of message within and for the many interest groups (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). Social media then blurs distinction between personal and public media (Meikle & Young, 2012), through aspects of accessibility, speed-of-spread through exponentiation, voluntary targeting by peer-to-peer transmission (Woerdl et al., 2008), as well as measurable response-rates and credibility through transparency (Tuten, 2008).

Marketing communication on social media thus entails a vast area in which many factors need to be considered when communicating brand message and informational activities (Berthon et al., 2012), as communication rests upon awareness, information, generating attitudes, and affecting behavior (Delozier, 1976 in Wijaya, 2012). Social media is defined in this study as a two-way-medium, in which communication not only occurs between companies and consumers but also directly between consumers-to-consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), proposing a vast, ever-altering and strategically challenging area (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014). Accordingly, social media is an important tool for generating growth in sales, return on investment, positive word-of-mouth, or mouse (Sun et al., 2006) as well as brand knowledge (Kumar et al., 2013). Further, customer involvement is positively related to an increase in purchasing expenditure (Goh et al., 2013) and participation by customers within social media content increases frequency of visits (Rishika et al., 2013). Therefore, interaction on social media exceeds traditional conversations through more powerful communication that spreads to a large amount of users (Wu et al., 2013; Tuten, 2008; Evans, 2010).

Even though social media has been increasingly researched (Schultz & Peltier, 2013; Gong et al., 2014), there are still perspectives and angles yet to be addressed

(Macnamara, 2010) within the topic of national markets and social media (Gong et al., 2014; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Thus, in this article social media usage of Swedish companies within national market Japan is of interest. In order to map out the specific area chosen for this paper, we have derived the PIE model, in which the abbreviations 'presence', 'interest' and 'engagement' build upon each other. This, through working abductively with existing literature within the field as well as findings, with basis in the hierarchy-of-effects model AIDA (Kotler, 2002), since business-to-consumer products constitute of marketing/advertising communication that need to incorporate Internet technologies within the promotion mix (Venkatesh, 2015). As follows, the AIDA model is not used from the traditional perspective (Strong, 1925) or through alterations made by later researchers (Robertson, 1971; Preston, 1982 in Barry & Howard, 1990) or applied to how the area of advertising entails today (Wijaya, 2012), but with the thought of a sequence from the perspective of engaging social media users with a company's content as a form of advertising and ultimately increase brand awareness and in turn sales of Swedish companies in the Japanese market.

The PIE model
The PIE model was developed by the abductive research approach to existing literature and our findings thus constituting a framework of how to work with social media - and in extension - what successful social media activities should include. In order to enhance our model we have added relevant literature to the model that further help define distinctive areas.

'Presence'
'Presence' concerns to be present on the different social media in order to enable communication with potential fans and users, in order to draw advantage of the effectiveness of social media for business

opportunities (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2014). Further, in order to maintain a good presence in social media five aspects can be added from the literature in this application (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), firstly to choose which social media to use with care and secondly if there is no suitable option there is the possibility of developing an own social media platform. Thirdly activity alignment as well as fourthly media plan integration is central. Lastly it is important to let all employees' have access to social media profiles, in which some have administrative responsibility and others are time-to-time participants (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

'Interest'
'Interest' refers to having content on social media that sparks interest among users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) as well as content that encourages participation and can rouse conversation (Haydon, 2013; Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Content is a way to interact through information about the brand or product through visuals that can reach many people, but also it is an opportunity to listen and understand more about customer interests and preferences (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014; Coles, 2015). Ultimately, we argue that content drives 'interest' in social media and in order to spread marketing communication as well as to boost sales and brand image it needs to speak to the audience. In order to take advantage of the possibility to engage people on social media, Haydon (2013) has several suggestions for how this can be done; a company should look past content that is simply informative and instead take advantage of the viral effect that can occur on social media through for example posting stories, tips, or insights of for instance products as opposed to promotional posts, since more content richness can generate enhanced attention. Further, extending discounts, special offers or giveaways on social media should be utilized (Haydon, 2013) since offering a high perceived value that requires little

effort from the customers' part on social media can have positive widespread effects. The essential part is thus to spread interesting creative content while truly understanding what customers are interested in (Haydon, 2013).

'Engagement'
The term 'engagement' is central in order to reach out to users and spread brand awareness that increases preference for a brand and in turn sales. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) propose a five point framework concerning how a company should be social when interacting with its consumers and it includes being active (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Stavros et al., 2013), as in building a relationship through an open conversation and being interesting (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014), through posting content that consumers find enjoyable and valuable. Further, being humble through understanding how to participate in a conversation is of importance as well as being 'unprofessional'. In social media, being 'over-professional' can thus give the wrong connotations, and it important to set the right tone similar to how users communicate in order to give an as natural impression as possible. Moreover also expressed by Sherman & Smith (2013), being honest is the most central part, since users today are most sophisticated when it comes to Internet technology and misleading information will come forth. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) Therefore, we argue that thinking in terms of the five point framework is of great importance in 'engagement', since companies need to establish conversations with consumers, in order to give a good impression on social media (Sashi, 2012), which in turn can either benefit or harm a brand (Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

Thinking in terms of the PIE model is of importance, as in order to have 'engagement' by users; a company has to ensure 'interest' through creative content, while proper communication can only be provided through having 'presence'. Overall, the model we take forth to the coming section involves 'presence' 'interest' as well as 'engagement; the PIE model. However, in order to convey correct understanding of the distinctive factors found, social media upon local markets is highly influenced by mechanisms and behaviors deriving from culture (Berthon et al., 2012), which is mentioned in the following section.

Japanese Culture
In order to add to the discussion of the findings, culture and particularly Japanese national culture will be put forth, as it is an essential influence to social media usage in Japan; thus comprising a dimension that is discussed in relation to the findings.

National culture, norms and values, has direct influence upon corresponding behavior, perception of meaning, personal disposition, beliefs and character (Samuel Craig & Douglas, 2006; Luna & Forquer Gupta, 2001; Steenkamp, 2001; Carter, 2001; Yaprak, 2008; Ricks, 1993), thus acting as a framework for construction of the self, and well as the self in relation to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1991; Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz, 1997). Consideration of impact in regards to national culture for MNCs' acting in foreign markets will thus influence positive or negative outcome of investment (Ricks, 1993), perception of risk (Doney et al., 1998) as well as work-related values applicable within organizations (Hofstede, 1980; 1991). National language is found to act as tool for social interpretation, tone-of-voice as well as belonging (Cleveland et al., 2015), suggesting culturally embedded values to be addressed through consideration upon foreign markets (Yaprak, 2008).

Social theory and application of Japanese culture in society (Clammer, 1995), suggest difficulty when theorizing Japanese way of living without including

cultural, as well as historical aspects (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), but the society is instead stated to be bundled by these contrasts (Carter, 2001; Rosenberger, 1994). In the following paragraph culturally defining 'way of thinking and being' within Japanese society (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Edman, 2007; Carter, 2001; Rosenberger, 1994; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002; Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013) will be presented, that may impact and influence social media application and usage.

The Japanese experience of self-construct is based upon interdependence with others; through finding meaning in behavioral patterns, fitting in through interpersonal relationships, as well as being of relevance to society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The mere word 'self' in Japanese bears definition of "one's share of the shared life space" (Hamaguchi, 1985 through Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and for fear of turning against a group, whether in a company, family or society at large, Japanese individuals will conform with preference of anonymity. This results in inability to denounce or reprimand openly, and typical 'yes or no' answers are avoided in order to maintain harmony, with diversion of answer or sentences including more than just one intended meaning; so-called 'ambiguous' answers as result. Thereby ambiguity in speech, and limited choice of words may protect both speaker as well as remaining group from insult, as oversimplifying or explaining can induce feeling of un-knowledgeability, disrespect, or impoliteness, as well as lack of capability to sense the thoughts or feeling of others (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Elimination of risk is an important aspect to interdependence with others, as a Japanese will prioritize outer control (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and loyalty (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002) with silence, ambiguity (Davies & Ikeno, 2002) rather than attempting directly at business opportunities and earnings (Edman, 2007).

Vertical hierarchy is present, and during interaction members of a group, most important aspect is to determine status and level of formality for further action, politeness and traits of conversation. (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Edman, 2007) within both an online and offline setting.

What is denoted as beauty, fashion or perception of common-term 'cute' ('kawaii' in Japanese) has shifted over the years derived from historic and religious influence (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Carter, 2001), denoting the nation having post WWII gone from Chinese and Korean influence to increased influence of a Western style of living (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002; Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Though Western styles are popular in contemporary Japan, especially amongst younger generations, there is national beauty and pride for Japanese traditions and historical meaning that is growing in importance (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013). Beauty is according to Japanese tradition a subjective view in the eye of the beholder (Carter, 2001) to be found everywhere (Davies & Ikeno, 2002), in which globalization and increased outer influence has played a prominent role. During the 21st century however studies have shown increasing influence of the Japanese subculture 'kawaii' upon global fashion, animation and entertainment on a larger scale (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013). Japanese 'cuteness' within interactive systems and social media have thus displayed results of greater interaction and co-creation output in Japanese and foreign markets, suggesting the nation to be on the forefront for increase of design, user-friendliness and interactivity within social media systems (Cheok & Fernando, 2012) through utilization of cultural influence.

In conclusion, the model that is taken henceforth through the discussion of findings, in context of social media usage

in Japan by Swedish companies involves; 'presence', 'interest', and 'engagement', namely the PIE model. Further, Japanese culture as an area affecting usage is taken into consideration when analyzing social media in Japan.

Method

Qualitative Research Method

Since this study has the purpose to identify distinctive factors of how Swedish MNCs work with social media in Japan, a qualitative research method was chosen to fulfill the aim. A qualitative approach (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) was found appropriate, as this study bears an exploratory manner, with focus on interpretation and understanding rather than statistical analysis of quantitative research approaches. In order to gain deeper understanding interviews were conducted, since the topic of interest is rather new, and thus helps to enhance understanding of the area (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the research approach in this study is based on the abductive model that allows to reassess the theoretical framework after empirical findings are gathered, which goes in line with the exploratory nature of this study as it provides an iterative process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This was utilized through basing an initial framework on theories and articles within marketing and social media in general for formulating the interview guide. Thereafter research was conducted, and later the framework was reassessed and relevant academic literature found to enable more interesting and deep analysis.

For this study, H&M, IKEA and VCC were chosen as case companies, since these MNCs each operate on foreign markets, and specifically also Japan. H&M, being a Swedish multinational retail-clothing company, offers fast fashion for men, women, teenagers as well as children (H&M Sweden, 2015). IKEA is a Swedish

multinational company that designs and sells ready for assembling furniture, appliances and home accessories (IKEA Sweden, 2015). Volvo Car Corporation (VCC) is a Swedish premium automobile manufacturer operating globally (VCC Sweden, 2015). Therefore, choosing these three cases can enable comparisons and conclusions to be drawn, thus comprising of corporate brands that share similarities of corporate culture and common 'Swedishness' (Azar et al., 2011) for the research.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011) are utilized, as relatively specific themes within the area of social media are studied and this method allows a greater degree of freedom in respondent's ability to answer. However, in order to attain answers that still connect to the area of interest, an interview guide was developed in regards to literature within the social media. The process of developing a relevant interview guide was thus followed through the step-by-step points (Bryman & Bell, 2011) below:

1. General Research Area
2. Specific Research Questions
3. Interview Topics
4. Formulate Interview Questions
5. Review/Revise Interview Questions
6. Pilot Guide
7. Identify Novel Issues
8. Revise Interview Questions
9. Finalize Guide

The chosen interview-technique enabled questions to be asked by the researchers not previously stated in the interview guide, but related to the answers as 'follow-up questions' for the respondents. This thus provided enhancement to the richness of findings, as the aim is to encourage dialogue in which conversation flows and the interviewees perceive themselves as experts within the specific area (Thompson et al., 1989).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of staff from both marketing and social media departments within H&M, IKEA and VCC; three in Sweden, and three in Japan during the first half of the research process. Interviews were firstly conducted in Sweden to broaden researchers' understanding of social media strategy in general. A Designer from H&M Sweden was interviewed for about 40 minutes prior to the visit and interview in Japan; a Social Media Manager and a Project Leader from Inter IKEA Systems were interviewed through Skype about 55 minutes after the data collection in Japan; and Vice President Global Marketing from VCC was interviewed approximately 60 minutes prior to the conducted interview in Japan at VCC headquarters in Torslanda. The interviews in Japan were held with a Social Media Specialist from the Marketing Department at H&M by visiting their headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo and took about 60 minutes; the Senior Web Specialist Marketing from IKEA was interviewed by visiting their headquarters in Funabashi, Tokyo and took approximately 80 minutes; and the Marketing Director from VCC was interviewed by visiting their headquarters in Shibakoen, Tokyo and took about 60 minutes.

After opening questions were asked during the initial phase of the interview, the researchers thereafter let the conversation flow with help of the interview guide to reconnect to certain aspects of interest for the study. Thus during the interview, the researchers advanced as well as upheld the dialogue of topic through 'what' and 'how' questions to gain deeper meaning, by which 'why' questions were avoided. This since 'why' questions could make the interviewees rationalize and interpret their own answers, which is the researcher's responsibility at a later stage of the research process. In order to minimize risk of 'missing' answers, or obtaining to high

degree of focus upon the next coming question, one of the researchers main task was to take notes, while the other was in charge of the interview and follow-up questions. This enabled the interviewee to focus more upon one person, and possibly relax to a greater extent, noticing after a while an order of routine. Further, to eliminate risk of speaking at the same time, the interviewers discreetly signaled each other that a follow-up question was required. The flexibility of structure and the order of questions differed in the six conducted interviews, and permitted to explore the area of social media in general, while keeping focus upon themes particularly chosen within the market of Japan; thus enhancing the richness of information for interpretation and further analysis.

Data Analysis
The collection of empirical data as well as its analysis is central within qualitative research, since it aims to provide an understanding of a specific topic and is thereby sensitive (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). After the interviews, the recordings from an iPhone were listened to as well as transcribed in English, followed by first attempts to interpret and code the given answers, enabling possibility for reducing data, as well as extracting relevant statements that may go in line with aspects of theoretical framework. In this manner the analysis of data was divided into different factors within the theoretical framework and discussion; namely 'presence', 'interest' and 'engagement', and results are presented in accordance to commonly shared meaning and interpretations made through statements by the respondents. This process, as well as combining findings and discussion, was decided upon by the researchers due to enablement of coding according to highlighted components, as well as providing an interesting flow of discussion and in turn analysis for the readers throughout the thesis.

Research Quality

When conducting qualitative research it is of importance to ensure quality or 'goodness' of the research, which naturally should be ensured while performing the study as well. One aspect to ensure quality is the aspect of transparency, which can demonstrate strengths and weaknesses of the research thus enabling 'goodness' throughout the study. Further, trustworthiness of a qualitative method, including dependability, transferability, credibility, and conformability, are measures that particularly assess quality (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Dependability concerns responsibility of presenting the information to the reader in a logically documented way (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In this study, the different choices for the presentation are argued for in the beginning of each chapter, in order to clarify an understanding for the reader and show upon the process that was chosen from the researcher's perspective. Therefore, dependability has been assured, since this was made with appropriate documentation as well as knowledge of prior research that was correctly referred to.

Transferability concerns the researcher's responsibility to provide a degree of similarity towards prior research of the area, in order to connect new research with previous results (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This is fulfilled as this study is conducted to enhance understanding regarding social media usage and through this add to the general research area as such. The theoretical framework is based on previous research within the area in order to put the findings of this study into the context of social media usage and thereby this aspect also is assured.

Credibility (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) concerns to assure that the researchers are familiar with the topic of the research area as well as are able to provide findings in

order to verify analysis in the study. Six interviews were made to collect empirical data, which may seem un-efficient, however, it provides sufficient amount of data as social media experts in the respective companies were interviewed, which enabled the researchers to answer the research question through interviewees firsthand experience within the area.

Conformability (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) concerns the notion of logically extruding interpretations from data and writing out these in a simplified manner, which implies imagination not to be present when establishing interpretation; in order to fulfill this aspect. Also, direct quotes from the interviews are followed by direct analysis that ensures understanding for the readers.

Findings and Discussion

In this section our findings are presented and discussed through the PIE model. Social media usage of H&M, IKEA and VCC Japan are thus described and analyzed on the basis of 'presence', 'interest' and 'engagement' in order to identify distinctive factors that were found during the coding of the findings from the interviews conducted in Japan, and thus presented when applicable in the different cases.

'Presence'

'Presence' concerns being present on the different social media in order to enable communication with users and potential users (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2014). Thus the distinctive factors found were reachability, applicability, popularity, and professionalism.

Reachability

Reachability concerns having 'presence' on social media, as ultimately, the aim is to reach fans and potential followers. Further, this factor is also influenced by the work of employees to be active on social media in

order to reach out to the audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

H&M started using social media five years ago, in 2010 when "Twitter and Facebook was really huge in Japan" (H&M Japan, 2015) by reaching its customers and potential customers through these two media platforms; "as it is the first voice to the consumer", therefore "we have to do it" (H&M Japan) in order to reach social media users. Further, the LINE application is utilized by H&M since one year, being a media with high potential consumer reach through provision of popular sticker packs that create a "huge response because now we have 5 million friends on LINE … we increased about 3 million friends" (H&M Japan). Thereby we identify a vast importance of especially LINE for H&M in this case, as securing presence upon LINE elevates the number of followers. Further, one full-time social media specialist is responsible for the social media utilization for H&M, Japan, contradicting to the suggestion of having time-to-time participants, as proposed by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010); thus potentially resulting in limiting human and monetary resources during H&M's current 'presence' on social media platforms.

IKEA began utilizing social media three to four years ago, as "people started using social media in Japan, it got bigger and people started checking in (to the stores) by utilizing Facebook" (IKEA Japan, 2015) thus IKEA found that social media can "reach people easier … and the stores can utilize this to connect to consumers" (IKEA Japan). Further, IKEA uses Twitter through a 'Ask Anna' function, as part of their customer center to be reachable for questions from consumers on this media. Thus IKEA Japan points to the importance of Facebook in this case to reach consumers with a social media team in which one specialist has the overall responsibility, thus having a efficient 'presence' as stated in the PIE model.

VCC started using social media about three to four years ago, since "we can't ignore social media as a marketing tool … as Facebook is very popular in Japan" (VCC Japan, 2015) in order to reach current Volvo owners for retention and loyalty. Further, VCC "is not strong enough to conquer the users" (VCC Japan), thereby we can identify that reaching consumers through being present on social media is considered important even if the extent might be limited. Further, social media is handled by a marketing bureau in connection to VCC marketing department in Japan, thus also comprising of a solid responsibility division (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) in order to utilize social media to reach consumers.

Thus we identify that reachability is a factor that is important when having 'presence' for all three companies, since social media is acknowledged as a tool to reach many users, as well as elevate MNCs' presence within the online field.

Applicability
The above concerns choosing social media with care and with regards to suitability to a company's business and if there is no applicable one there is the possibility of developing an own platform. Further, this connects to activity alignment and media plan integration possibilities, as the type of media can ensure aligned and integrated presence on social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

We identified that H&M utilizes the fast-changing social media landscape to have presence where the consumers are at the moment, as "meeting consumers where they are" (H&M Japan) is the applicable use of social media for the brand, however limiting the choice of social media with care (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). H&M uses primarily Twitter, as it is "kind of free" (H&M Japan) and thereby fashion content is widely shared due to the anonymity of this social media, as "Japanese people tend to be shy … on

Facebook where names are mentioned" (H&M Japan); thus directly relating to elimination of risk (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) through silence and ambiguity (Davies & Ikeno, 2002) during exposure of identity (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). We observe that Twitter is the applicable choice of social media for H&M Japan, considering also the culturally related aspects, as being 'present' enables alignment and integration with social media users.

IKEA has carefully chosen the social media best applicable for their business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) within the Japanese market; thus as H&M acting with consideration to national culture (Ricks, 1993); as well as contemplation of being a Swedish based brand in a foreign market; thus "foreign brands need to make an effort and give an aspirational image" (IKEA Japan). Facebook has been chosen, as "it is seriously talking about topics" (IKEA Japan) thus comprising of a social media where the company can to be 'present' and assure media plan alignment and integration that is important for, precisely, applicability of presence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

VCC uses Facebook, as the most applicable media for "owner retention and loyalty" (VCC Japan), and further Twitter is refrained from active utilization, as it is perceived not to entail their target customers. Further, VCC Japan states that LINE is a social media that their competition is using, however, this tool is not applied in their marketing strategy due to the expenses of use "being astronomic in relation to size of (VCC's) market share in Japan" (VCC Japan). VCC Japan however has developed their own platform named "My Volvo", which is seen more valuable and applicable for the owners by providing "direct services and warranty", which we identify manifests aspects of solid presence. By use of a own and highly-developed platform, as proposed by

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) this may entail most possible value for end-users and social media consumers thus ensuring alignment and integration to a great extent.

Hence we identify that applicability is dependent on where a company can apply a large amount of social media communication, in which consideration is made towards applicability to the local market and brand values; thereby affecting the choice of media in order to align and integrate their presence.

Popularity
This factor can be said to derive from the ever-changing and vast social media landscape in which many different social media emerge thus affecting presence of both MNCs and users (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014).

This can be found for one of the cases, as for H&M Japan the choice of social media usage is done with consideration to consumer trends and "always trying something new, because everyone (the consumers) love that" (H&M Japan); making choice of Twitter relevant as it may fulfill the need for being "hot and trendy" (H&M Japan). Further, LINE has proven a significant social media that is "very new and hot right now … because everyone loves it" (H&M Japan), as for H&M "always keeping an eye on competition, on what they are doing" (H&M Japan) is central in order to stay ahead. Thus media plan integration (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) can be observed when having presence in order to maximize the potential within social media channels. Japan as nation has been sensitive to outer- and national influence, consumer and technological trends (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002; Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Cheok & Fernando, 2012), making choice of media with consideration to popularity evermore essential in order to create positive word-of-mouth, or mouse (Sun et al., 2006) and brand knowledge

(Kumar et al., 2013) in order to stay ahead of competition (Goodrich & Mooij, 2014).

Therefore we identify that popularity is a factor that comes as a result of the ever-changing social media landscape in which pursuing latest trends upon a national market for consumer recognition is of importance for having 'presence'.

Professionalism

The need for professional 'presence' can be said to derive from the national culture of Japan, as it is of importance to convey a certain set of Japanese "thinking and being" within society (Davies & Ikeno, 2002) and thus this transcends into social media utilization (Berthon et al., 2012).

This can be found for one of the cases, as IKEA Japan utilizes presence on Facebook, as "we still have to be aware that people can react to whatever we communicate … that we can be destroying our brand" (IKEA Japan) and Facebook is seen as a "professional and serious" (IKEA Japan) social media "where there is the chance to communicate well" (IKEA Japan), since potential and/or current customers are posting and commenting under genuine profile details. Thus, in accordance to Japanese culture, consumers through personal accounts, will refrain from open complaint, explanation or potential insult in order to maintain harmony within the greater society (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Edman, 2007). Thus, IKEA Japan states that Twitter is seen as "very different" (IKEA Japan) using anonymous accounts, as opposed to Facebook, since "it is an everyday media and people say whatever" (IKEA Japan). We thereby observe that, for IKEA Japan, choosing social media with care (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) is of great importance, as opposed to the other two companies, as level of formality and status are central (Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Edman, 2007).

Thereby we identify that professionalism as a factor derives from cultural aspects that are deeply embedded also in social media usage, hence affecting presence through the need of MNCs to convey a certain set of connotations with regards to formality and status.

'Interest'

'Interest' concerns having creative content that speaks to the interest and preferences of the users thus sparking interest through understanding consumer interests and preferences (Coles, 2015). Thus the distinctive factors found in regards to content were commercial information, inspiration, tutorial, and competition.

Commercial Information

Social media communication with the aim to boost sales and brand image thus comprising of content that is simply informative (Haydon, 2013), composes of this factor. For all three case companies in Japan social media is used for commercial purposes that can raise interest among consumers and underlying commercial intentions (Ngai, 2003; Sun et al., 2006; Goh et al., 2013) is naturally common feature of consecutive factors presented below.

Firstly, H&M Japan addresses that commerce "is a central topic where we state sales and discounts, pricing as well as seasonal campaigns". IKEA Japan posts seasonal information in line with the calendar year such as around April 1st, when a new fiscal year in Japan commences, and consumers may reallocate both housing and/or business options. Also, sustainability and charity topics are communicated in order to inform and raise interest for the brand. Further, department messages are also communicated on social media, thus communicating enhanced information of a particular line of home appliances or choice of interior design, where beauty and fashion is seen as important (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Carter, 2001) in close conjunction with "high functionality of use" (IKEA Japan).

VCC Japan encourages consumer loyalty by providing current owners with global brand-related information as well as localized content for nationally distributed models through Facebook at least once a week. VCC Japan uses 'My Volvo' as an additional platform communicating with their owners for personalized service, dealer information and after-sales, further having information on other media of their choice. Thus, the companies post content that is not seen to raise the 'interest' overall, as Haydon (2013) states, however, such information may be targeting a certain group of consumers, as well as being a natural part of firms commercial communication.

Therefore we identify that commercial information is a central part when working with content on social media, as it is part of marketing communication overall, and thereby much needed for the companies.

Inspiration
Inspiration connects to the viral effect that can be taken advantage of when working with social media and thereby posts content that can generate attention (Haydon, 2013) and entice conversation (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Further, brand and product visuals comprise of content that can be used for speaking to the audience (Coles, 2015).

H&M Japan incorporates inspiration in online content through sneak-peaks as well as clothing collage imagery "that get more likes and favorites since it shows many kind of visuals" (H&M Japan). Further content includes designer collaborations, store openings and special events "that enhances the brand through being exclusive and high fashion" (H&M Japan). Visual content is localized to Japanese models in reaction to Japanese women "having trouble identifying with only western models" (H&M Japan), as well as mixing Japanese and English words or expressions to enhance rate of attention and "trendiness" (H&M Japan) of the posts

through touching upon the subculture of 'kawaii', 'cute' (Cheok & Fernando, 2012). Further, H&M Japan shares seasonal topics such as White Day, a local answer to Valentine's Day, when men return gifts to women, thereby H&M Japan incorporates seasonal balance of inspiration in their content for shoppers to buy gifts at their stores.

IKEA Japan inspires through content such as 'Behind IKEA' stories with employees, events held at IKEA stores in Japan such as family sleep-overs covered on TV and social media, language and cooking courses. Thus IKEA Japan promotes the brand more as an experience and as an inspiring brand that can spark further interest among Japanese consumers beyond being a 'furniture selling company'. Japanese and Swedish holidays as well as Scandinavian food is furthermore posted with strong emphasis, as "Japanese people share a strong interest and love for food" (IKEA Japan), which they openly share through 'Foodies' a form of food images. Inspiring content goes in line with Japanese affection for fashion and beauty, using 'cute' imagery related to the so-called subculture of 'kawaii' (Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013) in order to further enhance consumer interest (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

VCC Japan posts marketing campaigns on social media in accordance to print advertising in fashion magazines featuring a popular blogger used for brand promotion, as inspiring story content rather than using direct commercial messages. Further there is possibility for owners/social media users to post content upon the official VCC Japan Facebook page, however, this is not utilized by consumers, and further not encouraged by the Japanese social media admins. Also, "we (VCC) would like to be very Swedish as far as we can, because we are Swedish brand" (VCC Japan), thereby raising interest through utilizing such imagery. We

observe that inspiring content on social media in Japan is much in coherence with consumer's interests (Coles, 2015), being relevant in relation to local holidays, preferences as well as utilizing images and communication in regards to cultural acceptance, preference of anonymity (VCC, 2015; Davies & Ikeno, 2002) and tone-of-voice (Yaprak, 2008; Cleveland et al., 2015).

Hence we identify that localized content comprises of inspiration for users in Japan through visuals as well as topics of interest that can communicate their respective brand and/or origin. Further localized tone of voice and cultural traits found to be inspiring of the users are essential to include as content.

Tutorial
The above concerns taking advantage of viral effects that can occur when using social media through posting attention generating content, such as stories and advice (Haydon, 2013). Further aspects of culture, through wanting to 'fit in' through interpersonal relationships with others and society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) may influence enhanced attention for tutorial-based content.

This factor could be found in two of the cases, as a specific topic that raises interest upon social media are tutorials in the form of visuals and short videos, by H&M Japan and IKEA Japan. H&M Japan utilizes 'how to' tutorials for makeup, style coordination, and "selfie advice" (H&M Japan), whereas IKEA Japan uses videos for interior decoration, consultation, as well as images for assembly support. Comprising of a specific interests that touches upon this 'how to', and conformance to society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Davies & Ikeno, 2002; Edman, 2007; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002) beauty ideals (Carter, 2001), and wanting to look 'cute' (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013), tutorials are important aspects aiding individuals

not to 'lose' face in public. This goes in line with the PIE model through raising interest upon local preferences (Coles, 2015) within chosen national market.

Thus we identify that tutorial is content rich in information, but also touches upon the cultural aspect of wanting to act in accordance to the "'way of thinking and being' within Japanese society.

Competition
Having high perceived value, through competition requires little effort from the user's part and thus being able to spark interest (Haydon, 2013), as it is central to understand what consumers may be interested in (Coles, 2015).

This could be found for the case of H&M Japan; as competitions of various forms were well received. Described competitions could include posting on Twitter through a 'tweet' with a hashtag in order to receive an exclusive product, and also posting "selfie competitions" (H&M Japan) in order to win tickets for designer collaboration releases, since this is a "really fun and great" (H&M Japan) way to raise interest. Thereby offering high-perceived value, as proposed by Haydon (2013), comprises of content in order to raise interest on social media in Japan.

Therefore we identify that competition is a factor that can spark interest among users and thus comprise of a important tool for social media usage.

'Engagement'
'Engagement' concerns engaging with social media users (Stavros et al., 2013). The following distinctive factors found thus include adaptability, sociability, and caution.

Adaptability
Adaptability refers to engagement through being interesting, being "unprofessional" as well as being humble, as it is of importance to set the "right tone"

(Cleveland et al., 2015) during conversation and adapting communication to the users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) in foreign markets (Yaprak, 2008).

H&M Japan states that adapting the conversation creates positive reaction when engaging with users, as "H&M (global) does not use 'emoji' due to guidelines, but we are in Japan so we have to localize and sometimes use 'emoji'" (H&M Japan). Thereby H&M Japan has identified tendencies that consumers enjoy when the company adapts to their way of communicating (Cheok & Fernando, 2012; Ohkura & Komatsu, 2013), since "Japanese people love these kind of things, cute things, so I am trying to use" (H&M Japan), thereby targeting specific customers by being 'interesting' and maintaining a somewhat 'unprofessional' stance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Also, H&M Japan has launched a sticker pack on LINE exclusively for Japan that has proven popular among consumers; as "it is a Japanese trend, LINE is for everyone, … every company has LINE" (H&M Japan), thus comprising of a too important social media to ignore. Further, the time of posting content includes mornings and/or late night posts, with regards to commute hours, in order to speak to customers, thus H&M Japan appears to be active, as proposed by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) when engaging with customers.

IKEA Japan has succeeded in adapting to local customs such as national holidays as well as utilizing "correct expressions" (IKEA Japan) regarding for example how to say 'Happy New Years' in the appropriate manner. IKEA Japan states that expressing themselves correctly upon national holidays derives positive response and comments, as Japanese people tend to further respect a foreign company aspiring adaption to local customs. This in turn thus elevates brand image as "Japanese company tries to understand us (the consumers)" (IKEA Japan), when adapting

the conversation with consumers through being humble (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), as appropriate tone when communicating elevates engagement (Cleveland et al., 2015).

VCC Japan explains that engagement topics, which are posted, are related to market demand of for instance smaller cars and "around 40% of Volvo market share sales include the V40 (car model), making almost all assets posted related to the V40" (VCC Japan). Therefore, we observe that adaption to relevance for Japanese consumers is made, when displaying consideration to what is interesting for further engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

As follows we identify that adaptability when engaging is important in order to communicate using the right tone of voice within conversations. In order to be perceived as a member of the social media platform, localized adaptations and correct expressions with regards to local culture is thus considered by the MNCs.

Sociability
The indicated concerns being active when engaging with users, but also touches upon the being humble and honest; as sociability with regards to Japanese ideals of maintaining harmony and societal acceptance (Davies & Ikeno, 2002) is of importance when communicating as a MNC (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) in local markets (Samuel Craig & Douglas, 2006; Luna & Forquer Gupta, 2001; Steenkamp, 2001).

In order to engage with customers, H&M Japan utilizes Twitter primarily by commenting on posts, as well as searching for posts by utilizing the "hashtag-search", in order to reply customers that have tagged the company; "I may write 'thank you' or similar" (H&M Japan). Further, concerning honesty (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), H&M Japan answers to complaints as well as reaches out to internal

'Customer Service' in order to solve problems that are openly posted within the social media platform, thereby also touching upon the 'being humble' aspect (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) through transparency of interaction. Thus, we can identify that H&M Japan engages in conversation, making the brand perceived as one of the users through socialization openly upon social media.

VCC Japan engages with all posts made upon the mentioned social media platform Facebook, as "if no one replies you will feel lonely" (VCC Japan), thereby engagement occurs in accordance with the proposed PIE model in the instances posts are made. Further, other aspects of importance for 'engagement' within the PIE model are less applicable for VCC Japan, apart from Facebook, since their own social media platform is used for owner retention and loyalty. Thus, as 'engagement' rather applies to catching new 'fans' or 'followers' on social media, we cannot specify how this factor is utilized within the other platforms in accordance to the PIE framework.

Accordingly we identify that sociability, when actively engaging with consumers through being humble and honest in accordance to local culture, is central in order to be perceived as an equal among social media users, fans and followers.

Caution

Caution is a factor that indirectly affects the way MNCs engage with their consumers on social media, as cultural mechanisms influence communication (Ricks, 1993; Yaprak, 2008; Cleveland et al., 2015) as well as transparency being hard to omit (Tuten, 2008). Thereby, being honest (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) can be said to have an essential role in a conversation, as interaction can lead to rapid exponential reach among consumers (Woerdl et al., 2008; Sherman & Smith, 2013).

H&M Japan, however, takes a distant standpoint when engaging with consumers within certain topics such as apparel regulations as "sometimes they are talking about for example fake fur, you know about animals" (H&M Japan), proving the only instance we could observe where the company refrains from the proposed framework of the PIE model. This may derive from cultural aspects of inability to denounce or reprimand openly, as well as potentially wanting to protect both speaker as well as remaining group (of social media users) from insult (Davies & Ikeno, 2002) and elimination of risk (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Edman, 2007).

IKEA Japan does not engage with its consumers through replying or commenting to 'fan' posts, for fear of users being "left out and not receiving attention" (IKEA Japan), thus displaying caution on social media. IKEA finds engagement difficult, "because a lot of people are very cynical, just going against anything … because on Twitter is is easy to say anything, close an account and open a new one" (IKEA Japan). Another aspect touched upon by IKEA Japan is that among the older generation social media users, the medium is mostly viewed as a "showing off tool" (IKEA Japan), which contradicts with norms and values on the local market and how one should behave (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Rosenberger, 1994; Clammer, 1995; Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Thus, unspoken cultural aspects may further complicate application (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Ricks, 1993) of engagement on the Japanese market for MNCs. In this case the framework (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) merely applies to the extent of written and posted content, but not for interaction, since IKEA Japan does not engage with posts, positive or negative, as "it is their (the user's) space to write what they want about our company" (IKEA Japan). In addition, the 'like' button on Facebook does not encompass the same conceptual meaning for Japanese users,

compared to other parts of the world. In Japan the "like" button only includes positive meaning, in the sense of 'Congratulations. Well done.', but may in the West or North America include both liking a post per se as well as an acknowledgement that someone's post has been seen, IKEA Japan states. Therefore IKEA Japan's presence on Facebook, where user profiles are genuine and negative comments or complaints are uncommon, is likely to be associated with the factor of caution. If enquiries were to arise, IKEA's Customer Center is informed and takes over the errand using direct-communication with consumers IKEA Japan states. Thus, we can assume that engagement is a component that is not fully utilized and thereby not applicable to a great extent, causing IKEA Japan to not reach the full potential of engagement when utilizing social media.

In the case of complaints, VCC Japan states these to be occurring on Twitter. Depending on the gravity, the conversation may be moved to direct-message correspondence within the same media; thus decreasing the level of honesty (Sherman & Smith, 2013) and increasing use of caution through diversion of risk (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Consequently we identify that caution is a central factor of consideration for MNCs during consumer and user engagement on social media platforms in Japan. Cultural norms and values have great influence, and tone-of-voice within communication as well as correct interpretation of cultural mechanisms is essential when portraying and representing the corporate brand on social media.

Presence	Interest	Engagement
Reachability	Commercial Information	Adaptability
Applicability	Inspiration	Sociability
Popularity	Tutorial	Caution
Professionalism	Competition	

Figure 1. Distinctive factors of social media usage

Conclusion

The purpose was to investigate social media usage of Swedish companies H&M, IKEA, and VCC in Japan, in order to develop a framework of how MNCs work with social media, as well as identify factors that affect how foreign companies work with social media on a local market. We have introduced the PIE model and identified distinctive factors that influence presence of Swedish MNCs on the Japanese market including: reachability, applicability, popularity, and professionalism. Further to create interest when having presence, the distinctive factors of commercial information, inspiration, tutorial, and competition are of influence. Lastly, to converse and engage with social media users the distinctive factors of adaptability, sociability, and caution are effecting social media usage on the local market of Japan. This thesis contributes to the literature through proposing the PIE model for social media usage of Swedish MNCs on the local market of Japan. Further, the distinctive factors contribute to practice as they can influence how MNCs work with social media on the Japanese market, in order to employ activities for successful usage and equally be aware of aspects concerning local culture for greater consideration going forward.

Limitations and Future Research

Investigating social media usage by Swedish companies H&M, IKEA and VCC in Japan includes limitations, as it is a first attempt to map out the area of research; thus addressing lack of similar study found during the literature review. Also, this study focuses on social media including Facebook, Twitter and LINE that encompass the most utilized media in Japan for greatest relevance of findings. Thus, further research within this area is necessary, for comparability of results, as well as reasons of the ever-changing nature and vast amount of social media. Additionally, as this study touches aspects of culture within both Sweden and Japan, the researchers are aware that the discussion of the findings are conducted from a Swedish perspective, even if cultural comparisons are not explicitly intended or drawn. Naturally, products the companies sell differ and thus social media usage can vary, however, research of the companies in relation of each other is possible due to the shared 'Swedishness' as well as operating on the same foreign market with similar economic circumstances, literacy rates and technological infrastructure to that of Sweden. This study is limited to three Swedish MNCs and for more depth further respondents, as well as academic social media experts and Japanese cultural experts may be of importance, which should be addressed in future research. However, due to limited time it was seen as sufficient to lay a basis and theoretical understanding within the area of social media in Japan for the three companies.

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