

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA



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# USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Beata Jungselius

Department of Applied Information Technology  
University of Gothenburg  
SE-412 96 Gothenburg Sweden



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## Abstract

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The rise of social media platforms has changed how people interact. Mobile technologies with built-in, high-quality cameras offer new possibilities for people to document and share their everyday activities. Many consider these interaction-mediating devices to be important tools for facilitating people's social life through use of social media. The aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use in a world of smartphones with cameras, why and how social media use is meaningful as a category of activity, and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. Drawing upon data collected in 2012 and 2017, this thesis provides empirical findings from four papers. By returning to the same informants, conducting stimulated recall interviews five years apart, the data provides insights on how social media use has developed over time. In this thesis, social media use is understood as the social practices that people engage in when they plan, produce, post, and take part in social media activities. As levels of engagement in social media vary from active involvement, such as producing and interacting with content, to more passive ways of planning and monitoring social media, a revised conceptualization of

social media use is argued. The focus of this thesis is on a specific and central part of social media; social photography (i.e. how people produce, share and interact around pictures) in social media, especially through the use of the social photo sharing application Instagram. When engaging in social photography activities, users rely upon modal, technical and social affordances and develop particular idioms of practices. Each social media platform engenders its own expressions and idioms, and its own platform vernacular, which users learn in order to interact on it fluently. Users develop new skills through social participation within their community of practice on one or more platforms. As they learn how to engage in social practices, developing skills for particular idioms of practice and platform vernaculars, they become competent members of these social media communities. Based on data collected five years apart, this thesis highlights that despite many relatively stable aspects to the ways that users approach social media, four prominent categories of factors have had an impact on changes to social media use over time: changes in life and time management, changes in technical capabilities, changes in privacy preferences, and changes in modes of engagement.

## Sammanfattning

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Sociala medier har förändrat hur människor interagerar. Smarta mobiltelefoner med inbyggda högkvalitativa kameror har erbjudit nya möjligheter för människor att dokumentera och dela med sig av sina vardagliga aktiviteter. För många är dessa enheter viktiga verktyg vad gäller att ta del av nyheter, bli underhållna och själva underhålla sina sociala liv. Syftet med denna avhandling är att beskriva vad användning av sociala medier innefattar, varför det är meningsfullt att studera och att bidra med nya insikter om hur färdigheter och perceptioner utvecklats i takt med att sociala medieplattformar vuxit. Med utgångspunkt i data som samlats in 2012 och 2017 presenteras i denna avhandling empiriska resultat från fyra artiklar. Genom att återvända till samma informanter fem år efter första datainsamlingstillfället har data som bidrar till förståelse för hur användningen av sociala medier förändras över tid kunnat samlas in och analyseras. I den här avhandlingen beskrivs de sociala praktiker som människor engagerar sig i när de planerar, postar, producerar och interagerar med innehåll i sociala medier. Människors engagemang i sociala medier varierar. Användning av sociala medier kan innefatta ett aktivt engagemang, som att producera eller interagera med innehåll, såväl

som ett mer passivt engagemang, som att planera sin produktion eller bevaka andras interaktion. Eftersom användning av sociala medier inkluderar en rad olika praktiker, argumenterar jag i den här avhandlingen för en reviderad konceptualisering av sociala medier-användningsbegreppet. Fokus i denna avhandling ligger på en specifik och central del av interaktionen i sociala medier: social fotografering, dvs. hur människor producerar, delar och interagerar kring bilder i sociala medier. När människor lär sig att interagera i sociala medier, utvecklar de olika färdigheter. När användare deltar i sociala fotograferingsaktiviteter förhåller de sig till, och använder sig av, olika modala, tekniska och sociala affordancer och utvecklar genom interaktion med varandra s.k. praktikidiom. På varje plattform utvecklas ett eget, särskilt plattformsspråk som användare lär sig att behärska. Trots att flera aspekter av användning av sociala medier varit stabila över tid, har andra förändrats. Baserat på analysen av den på djupintervjudata som samlats in med fem års mellanrum presenteras i den här avhandlingen de mest framträdande faktorerna som har haft inverkan på användningen av sociala medier över tid: livsstilsförändringar, teknologins förändring, förändrade integritetspreferenser och förändringar i engagemangsformer.



## List of published papers

*Creating live experiences with real and stuffed animals: The use of mobile technologies in museums*, Hillman, T., Weilenmann, A. & Jungselius, B., (2012). Proceedings of The Transformative Museum, May 23-25, 2012, Roskilde University, Denmark.

*Instagram at the Museum: Communicating the Museum Experience through Social Photo Sharing*. Weilenmann, A., Hillman, T., & Jungselius, B. (2013). In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1843-1852. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2466243>

*"In Just Three Hours I Got Like 22 Likes on a Pancake Picture": Dealing with Temporality in Social Media Use and Research*. Hillman, T., Weilenmann, A. & Jungselius, B. (2013). Workshop paper at the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13). ACM, New York, NY, USA.

*Fishing for followers: Using hashtags as like bait in social media*, Jungselius, B., Hillman, T. & Weilenmann, A. (2014). AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research, IR '15. Association of Internet Researchers.

*Traces of engagement: Narrative-making practices with smartphones on a museum field trip*. Hillman, T., Weilenmann, A., Jungselius, B & Leino Lindell, T. Learning, Media and Technology 41, 2: 351–370.

*Pokémon GO And Mobile Wellbeing: Initial Observations On Experiences And Reported Connection*, Jungselius, B., Weilenmann, A. Rost, M. (2016). Proceedings of NordiCHI 2016. Gothenburg, Sweden: ACM Press. Workshop paper for the workshop “*Mobile Wellbeing*”.

*“She liked the picture so I think she liked it: Unpacking the social practice of liking*, Jungselius, B. (2018). Proceedings of International Conference Social Networks, Digital Traces and Electronic Communication, Le Havre, France, 2018.

*“Conceptualizing 'Use' in Social Media Studies”*, Jungselius, B., Weilenmann, A. (2018). Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Social Media and Society (SMSociety '18) Copenhagen, Denmark: ACM Press.

*Same Same But Different. Changes in Social Media Practices Over Time*. Jungselius, B., Weilenmann, A. (2019). Proceedings of 10th International Conference on Social Media and Society (SMSociety '18) Toronto, Canada: ACM Press.

*“She liked the picture so I think she liked it”. Unpacking the social practice of liking*, Jungselius, B. (2019) Netcom [En ligne], 33-1/2 | 2019, mis en ligne le 09 septembre 2019, consulté le 09 septembre 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/netcom/3849>

## List of included papers

### **Paper 1. Talking About Social Media Use**

Jungselius, B., Weilenmann, A. Manuscript. Extended version of Jungselius, B. and Weilenmann, A. (2018) “Conceptualizing ‘Use’ in Social Media Studies”, In Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Social Media and Society – SMSociety ’18. Copenhagen, Denmark. ACM Press.

### **Paper 2. Instagram at the museum: Communicating the Museum Experience through Social Photo Sharing**

Weilenmann, A., Hillman, T., & Jungselius, B. (2013). In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1843-1852.

### **Paper 3. “She liked the picture so I think she liked it”: Unpacking the social practice of liking**

Jungselius, B. (2019) Netcom [En ligne], 33-1/2 | 2019, mis en ligne le 09 septembre 2019, consulté le 09 septembre 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/netcom/3849>

### **Paper 4. Same Same but Different: Changes in Social Media Practices Over Time**

Jungselius, B. and Weilenmann, A. (2019). In Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Social Media and Society – SMSociety ’19. Toronto, Canada. ACM Press.



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Beata Jungselius

Gothenburg, October 2019





Fire



○ Lisa Lastname lisa.lastname@gmail.com  
○ Beata Jungelius beata.jungelius@ait.gu.se

Wednesday, 29 August 13:24

Dear Beata,

I read your article on Likes.

We have been through the largest fire in Europe in Portugal. People posted horrible pictures on Instagram and Facebook. To my dismay I saw lots of hearts and Likes.

Became upset and have received comments saying that this is how social media works today and that we are supposed to understand that it means that you have seen the picture. We are retired and put Likes on what we like and find beautiful otherwise you can use a sad smiley face, we think.

Has it really come to this, that it is okay to put red hearts on other people's unhappiness and misery?

Greatful if you have the time for a short comment if it is us that are wrong and needs to accept this.

Best,  
Lisa

Sent from my iPad



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# Part 1

## Using social media





# 1. Introducing social media use

During the last decade, social media has become an integrated part of many people's everyday life. The period between 2012 and today has been an explosive one in terms of growth in social media use. An increasingly large number of users are spending more and more time on a variety of social media platforms (Davidsson, Palm, & Melin Mandre, 2018; A. Smith, Anderson, & Caiazza, 2018). During the years of writing this thesis, the number of social media users worldwide increased from 1.4 billion (EMarketer, 2018) to almost 3.2 billion (Kemp, 2018) and the array of social media platforms, as well as the definition of what social media use is, has changed drastically. Interaction in social media today is massive. Every single minute, one million people are accessing their Facebook account, 347,222 people are scrolling Instagram and 87,000 people are tweeting (Walker-Ford, 2019). New platforms have emerged and

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additional mobile social applications are continually put on the market, offering new ways for users to document and share their daily activities. Against this shifting backdrop, the aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity, and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop.

Today, the most common way to access social media is through a smartphone (Davidsson et al., 2018) and many recent social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat, have been specifically developed as mobile applications. The increased ownership and use of smartphones with built-in, high-quality cameras has been a contributing reason for the everydayization of social photography. Much of the visual aspect of social media now consists of the activities of taking, sharing and interacting around photographs, activities made possible by the widespread adoption of smartphones with cameras. As use of social media, including social photography, has become more integrated in everyday life, online and offline interaction has become increasingly intertwined and more difficult to separate with the scope of interactions widening beyond physical spaces (Baym, Zhang, & Lin, 2004; Vorderer, Krömer, & Schneider, 2016). The increasing presence of social media has had consequences on how people communicate. As society digitalizes, so do many aspects of our lives. We use social media in different ways for different purposes such as staying in touch with friends and family, keeping up with events, or sharing and reading news. The development of social media has changed us as media consumers, relationship facilitators, students, and citizens as we access and share information in new and different ways. We use social media to consume news and to be

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entertained, we create and facilitate relationships and we share snapshots from our everyday lives. In order to keep up with these developments, an understanding of emerging communication technologies is needed. Social media users develop both general technical as well as platform specific skills and learn to understand the underlying social norms on which their interactions rely. Apart from technical skills such as downloading a specific application, creating a profile, or pressing the correct button, there are also a number of social skills that users must master in order to be able to make use of social media. Developing these skills and learning which social codes to comply with sometimes leads to confusion, as exemplified in the e-mail that prefaces this chapter. As we become more competent and used to different forms of mediated interaction, we develop repertoires where we express what we have learned, the logics we understand on which our platform use builds, and our recognition of nuanced shifts and deviances from established norms.

Although use of social media is becoming increasingly widespread, no longer being just a leisure activity, but also having implications for other domains, such as work (Thomas & Akdere, 2013) and education (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016), the multifaceted notion of social media use is yet to be further conceptualized. To date, a large number of studies have been conducted, contributing to the growing body of work on social media use. Previous studies of social media use have examined interaction on specific platforms, for instance Facebook (Buehler, 2017), Instagram (Gibbs, Meese, Arnold, & Nansen, 2015), and Twitter (Brownlie & Shaw, 2018; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). Studies have also investigated specific social media practices such as liking (Hayes, Carr, & Wohn, 2016b; Scissors, Burke, & Wengrovitz, 2016), retweeting and favoriting

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(Paßmann, Boeschoten, & Schäfer, 2014), taking selfies (Svelander & Wiberg, 2015), and even how social media users handle Facebook breakups (Gershon, 2010). Although many new insights have been gained, there are several common limitations with previous work. A common approach has been to study the final products of social media such as tweets and instagrams, i.e. the content posted and shared, rather than to follow the process leading up to this. It has also been common to study practices of a homogenous group, often students and mainly undergraduates. In addition, the meaning of central terms and concepts, such as “social media use” and “Like” is often generalized without being unpacked. Also, little research has taken a longitudinal approach where the same individuals are followed over time leading to a lack of knowledge about how social media practices develop over time.

Due to the development in terms of increased ownership and use of smartphones with built-in advanced cameras, visual aspects have become an even more central part of social media during recent years. This shift has included additional modes for interaction, such as the possibility to communicate through photography and video in a simpler, more accessible way, and has contributed to changes in how social media interaction is understood. Much earlier work on online mediated social interaction has focused on interaction through text, as this was the most common mode through which people interacted online. However, when social media interaction was substantially text-based, social media interaction was, in fact, substantially different than it is today. Shifts in social media technologies and practices often happen gradually and can be difficult to grasp, not just for users themselves but also for researchers interested in understanding social media (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010).

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For instance, when social media use is mentioned in the literature, researchers tend to neglect the fact that what social media is, is not static; it is an evolving process, where platform capabilities are continually updated and changed in ways that also affect user practices. In addition to adjustments on existing platforms, new platforms appear, changing the social media landscape. Extending the existing literature, this thesis seeks to address several limitations of previous work and provide new insights by presenting findings on social processes implicated in multimodal social media activities, through work conducted on social media users varying in age and occupation, and with data collected following the same users over time. As part of this work, concepts and terms that are often taken for granted in the social media literature are unpacked and scrutinized. Specifically, I unpack the multidimensional phenomenon of social media use through four papers on how people plan, produce, post and take part in social media interaction. Focusing on the level of granularity of these activities, this thesis presents detailed descriptions of social media activities. A combination of different methods for collecting data, such as observations, online scraping and in-depth stimulated recall interviews has made it possible to identify different components of social media use. By collecting the data for this thesis during the most explosive phase of social media adaption, letting social media users reflect upon their social media use in both 2012 and 2017, this thesis presents findings on the evolution of social media use over time.

In *Paper 1*, social media use is introduced and the notion of what constitutes social media use is conceptualized. Commonly, when studying traditional media, including television and the Internet, time spent has been the prominent way to measure use (see for instance (Bondad-Brown,

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Rice, & Pearce, 2012; Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017)). When applying this way of measuring use to studying social media, however, new concerns arise in terms of which activities would be included. Social media is different from traditional media, especially in terms of the interplay between consuming and producing of content. Does social media use only refer to time spent on actively writing and sharing a tweet, instagramming a photo or posting a status update on Facebook? Or should the concept of social media use also include the time spent on planning and composing the tweet, taking and editing the picture and formulating the status update? Does social media use only refer to producing and posting one's own content or would sharing content produced by others be included as well? Are scrolling, liking and commenting all counted as use of social media? Should the concept of social media use include all the times a user has an Internet connection and is available for comments and mentions through notifications despite not actively looking at the screen and engaging with a social media application? By providing examples of how people talk about and conceptualize their own social media use, this paper contributes to the discussion about what constitutes social media use. This paper provides examples of activities on different levels of involvement in social media practices, ranging from more passive use, such as monitoring and planning, to more active kinds of use that together form the scope for a revised definition of social media.

*Paper 2* examines the compositional resources and concerns shaping the creation of the multi-layered presentations of images and texts referred to as “instagrams”. The analysis in this paper focuses on the process of creating and sharing instagrams, including photographic choices of various kinds, the formulation of captions and hashtags, and the role of

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the audience. Combining different sets of data, collected through several complimentary methods, this paper contributes with a holistic view on how content is produced and shared in social media. It also shows how interaction around produced content steers further production and how interaction initiated on one platform often evolves and continues on others.

In *Paper 3*, the social practice of liking on Instagram is examined and the difference between liking a photograph and “liking” on Instagram is unpacked. Likes were originally introduced in social media with the intent to make social media easier and more rewarding to use (Pearlman, 2009). However, descriptions from social media users show that the meaning ascribed to these seemingly simple expressions cannot always be simply interpreted. In addition to the meaning intended by the developers of social media platforms, users add their own meanings to technical expressions. As social media users interact, they develop a great sensitivity for the different meanings of available expressions and for the norms that regulate the social practices that include them. Looking closer at the social practice of liking, this paper offers insight on a specific social media practice.

*Paper 4* examines changes in the use of social media and explores differences and similarities in social media use over time. It includes analysis of data collected with the same social media users in 2012 and 2017. By allowing informants to comment on their five-year-old statements on their own social media use, the participants’ own analysis and reflections upon their own developments as social media users was fostered. The analysis shows a change in how users spend their time in

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social media, where some users admit to higher frequency but less engagement in terms of how they interact with peers and produce and share content. A distinguishable shift from engaging in public interaction towards keeping conversations more private is also observed. The factors that influence evolutions in social media practices are discussed and it is concluded that although having undergone life changes and sometimes switched platforms and changed some behaviors, users' approaches towards social media have to a great extent remained stable.

Despite the fact that social media platforms and use have grown massively over the last decade, we are still far from understanding the possible consequences of this phenomenon. Although affecting almost all of us, we still know little about the impact and meaning of social media. For my thesis, I aspire to contribute to the growing body of work on social media interaction by unpacking and describing practices that are known to many, but not observable and understood by all. Or to use the language of ethnography more deliberately; by making the invisible visible.



## 2. Research questions and aim

In earlier iterations, interaction in social media relied heavily on text. However, increased ownership and use of smartphones with built-in advanced cameras has contributed to change in what we understand social media interaction to be. With an increased emphasis on producing, sharing and interacting around photographs, the visual aspects of social media have become more central, not only for specific social photo sharing platforms such as Instagram, but for social media in general. As often used today in research literature, the term “social media” is insufficiently detailed to be meaningful and there is a need to further unpack social media practices as platform and context specific activities. Social photography is a central part of social media today and users engaged in this practice rely on a multitude of modes and affordances as they develop both textual and visual social media skills. Focusing on the

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adoption of social photography and taking a critical stand on common conceptualizations of social media use in the literature, the aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. In order to provide these insights, the research questions for this thesis are:

RQ1) What is social media use and how is it meaningful as a category of activity?

RQ2) What kind of skills are necessary to engage in social media activity and how do these change as practices and platforms develop?

RQ3) How do perceptions of social media as a type of activity change as practices and platforms develop?

### 3. Related work

The aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. The research questions seek to unpack social media use and contribute with an understanding of the social practices that people engage in when producing, sharing and interacting in social media. In this chapter on related work, I will first address the key idea for this thesis that explores the complex multi-dimensional ecology in which social media interaction takes part, that users are “permanently online, permanently connected” (Vorderer, Hefner, Reinecke, & Klimmt, 2017). I will next turn to established perspectives on social media use and discuss different ways of looking at social media use and users. In particular, much of the earlier work taking the kind of micro-sociological interactional approach to understanding social media use taken in this thesis, has adopted Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective (Goffman,

1959). In this section, I describe Goffman's conceptualization of social interaction and provide examples of how this concept has been used to describe social media interaction in previous work. In order to be able to understand the social practices that people engage in when using social media, I will introduce a definition of social media practices and discuss earlier work taking a similar perspective. Further, asking: "what skills are necessary to be able to engage in social practices?", I will introduce the concepts of media convergence, modal affordances and social affordances and describe how they can be used to understand the ways that social media use is shaped. The data for this thesis has been collected with one main social practice in focus, social photography, where social interaction around photographs on Instagram has been of particular interest. The first phase of the study was situated within a museum context, both in terms of the physical space (as in within the walls of the Natural History Museum in Gothenburg) as well as in online spaces (such as on Instagram, Twitter and Spots.io). At the end of this chapter, I will present related work on social photography in general as well as work on social photography in museum settings to provide the reader with an understanding of both social photography in general as well as within the specific setting in which the first phase of the study took place.

### 3.1 The messiness of bridging contexts

During the last decade, social media has become an integrated part of many aspects of people's everyday lives (Davidsson et al., 2018; Kemp, 2017; A. Smith et al., 2018). Although people use social media for different purposes, the focus of this thesis is mainly on the micro-interactions that people engage in when using social media. When talking about social media, I rely upon the well-established, early definition of boyd and

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Ellison (2007), who defined social networking sites (SNS) as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system ”(boyd and Ellison, 2007). When talking about social media, both users and researchers often use the term vaguely, referring to the largest social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Interaction on social media platforms is usually part of a larger interactional pattern and use of a particular social media application is often situated within broader social media use (C. Smith, 2011). Interactions in social media may also shift among different platforms, where conversations initiated on one platform continue on another one (Weilenmann, Hillman, & Jungselius, 2013b). As detailed by McMillan, McGregor and Brown, social media use is also situated within an offline, face-to-face context where smartphone use may take place alongside involvements with co-present activities and other people (McMillan, McGregor, & Brown, 2015). Similar to the shifts occurring with social media, scholars have described the adoption of earlier technologies such as mobile phones themselves, as major social transformations that while in progress are as yet too massive to be fully described as they find their way into our everyday lives, affecting how we socialize and communicate in ways greater than we are able to scope in the moment (Ling, 2012). Engendering such scale and complexity, the online practices involved in social media use are always situated within an offline context as well, with the co-presence of other activities and other people influencing the scene. Thus, a consequence of the increased use of smartphones to access and interact in social media is that people are often involved and engaged in

different social contexts in parallel, where they are no longer really “logging off” social media. To describe this always-online way of using social media, I use Vorderer et al.’s concept of a permanently online, permanently connected (POPC) world which refers to “a) the close and intense relationship with the smartphone and its communication ecology to which it grants permanent access and b) the communication-related expectations that are brought forth with one’s own and other’s permanent connectedness” (Vorderer et al., 2017, p. 3). In this thesis, a key idea is that social media interaction takes part in a complex multi-dimensioned ecology where users are “permanently online, permanently connected”.

### 3.2 Social media interaction

A common approach in early work on social media use was to describe people’s social interaction as “performances” where users were considered to be actors performing on a stage in front of their audience of followers. The performance metaphor is a central component of the dramaturgical perspective on social interaction originally developed by sociology and anthropology professor Erving Goffman (1959). Although Goffman accentuated face-to-face interaction and immediate physical presence, the concepts he developed remain useful and are often applied in studies of technology-mediated social interaction in non-physical spaces (Hogan, 2010; Robards & Lincoln, 2016; Sveningsson Elm, 2007). In “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” (1959) social interaction is described as a performance similar to those acted out by professional actors on a stage (Goffman, 1959). Goffman uses theatre and dramaturgy to explain how people present themselves in the drama of everyday life. In Goffman’s view, what happens when we meet and interact with others, is that we choose to enhance information we believe to be beneficial, while

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concurrently toning down information that might affect the impression we try to make in a negative way. In order to live up to the ideal norms prevailing during the performance, the individual must refrain from, or try to conceal, any actions incompatible with these norms. Thus, an individual must not only possess the right attributes but must also keep up with current norms and demonstrate that they are in control of the rules governing behavior within a particular social group. Goffman defines performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). When an individual performs in front of others, they will have a number of motives to try and control the impression that they make in the situation. When a performance is formed and transformed to fit into the society in which it is performed, the process is understood to be the “socialization of a performance”. Generally, interaction is described as “the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence” (Goffman, 1959, p. 15). While *an* interaction is defined as “all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another’s continuous presence” (Goffman, 1959, p. 15), the term “encounter” could also be used in a corresponding manner. When performing for an audience, people sometimes make mistakes. Unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions, and missteps are examples of what Goffman describes as “performance disruptions” or “incidents” that may be in conflict with the impression people are trying to make.

During the last two decades, Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor has been used as a framework in a number of studies on social media interaction.

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How people present themselves as well as how they interact with others have garnered particular interest in social media interaction studies. As people engage in social media interaction, they are not only interacting with the immediate other part, but also with what Goffman termed the “performance team” surrounding them, such as mutual followers or friends of friends. Using Goffman’s concept of audience for example, Bernstein et al. state that that audience estimates are central to media behavior, “as perceptions of our audience deeply impact what we say and how we say it” (Bernstein, Bakshy, Burke, Karrer, & Park, 2013, p. 21). Studying emotional attachment to mobile phones, Vincent (2003) uses Goffman’s concepts to reason on the turn from mobile phones being a novelty into becoming a more integrated item in everyday life, mentioning how this shift requires “a new set of normative behaviors common to all users” (Vincent, 2003, p. 96). In a more recent study, Wei links Goffman’s work to today’s use of mobile social media noting that, “What Goffman (1963) imagined sociologically a half century ago, that “co-presence renders persons uniquely accessible, available and subject to one another” (p. 22) has come true thanks to advanced mobile media” (Wei, 2013, p. 52). Exemplifying this, Goffman’s argument concerning how individuals play different roles in different contexts was applied in a study on young people’s presentations of relationships in a Swedish Internet community (Sveningsson Elm, 2007). Goffman’s ideas on presentation of self, in particular, have been reinterpreted in the context of romantic relationships on Facebook (Robards & Lincoln, 2016) and developed further by extending the concept of presentation of self into an exhibition metaphor, describing social media as a place of displaying and curating content (Hogan, 2010).



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Within the dramaturgical perspective, aspects of self-presentation and impression management are fundamental. How imagined online audiences affect the use of social media has been central in previous work on social media interaction. Marwick & boyd (2010), Weilenmann et al. (2013) and Cramer et al. (2011), among others, describe how both actual and imagined online audiences are central concerns for social media users and affect the ways they engage. In relation to social photography and sharing photographs with others, a range of studies have shown that when taking photos, photographers orient to the fact that their photos might be viewed by others and social photographers often relate to a perceived audience when producing and sharing photos online (Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Miller & Edwards, 2007; Weilenmann, Hillman, & Jungselius, 2013). The imagined audience may consist of friends and family in the tradition of snapshot amateur photography (Chalfen, 1987) as well as the broader online community in general (Miller & Edwards, 2007). When trying to understand use of social media, the presence and possible impact of online audiences are central and needs to be taken in consideration. People are aware of their online audiences and their social media practices are affected by this awareness. The very essence of social media is people being social, producing, sharing and interacting around text, tweets, instagrams and a multitude of other media that has been produced and shared with others.

### 3.3 Social media use and users

In more recent work, some researchers have suggested that not all social media use is social interaction. For instance, in an attempt to define mediated social interaction, Hall asks “When is social media use social interaction?” (Hall, 2018). Through his work, Hall shows that “only a

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minority of time spent on social media can be characterized as social interaction, and that a minority of daily social interactions take place on social media” (Hall, 2018, p. 167). Interestingly, Hall notes that no matter the definition (either provided by researchers or by allowing users to provide their own definition), social media users believed that a majority of their social interactions occurred in some other way than through social media (Hall, 2018, p. 175). So not all social media use constitutes social interaction, but what constitutes social media use? Leading the reader towards a definition of mediated social interaction, Hall presents different views on social media interaction. While mentioning Goffman’s use of “focused social interaction” (Hall, 2018, p. 164), of particular interest for this thesis is Hall’s discussion of the distinction between browsing and broadcasting of social media. Aiming to conceptualize mediated social interaction, Hall suggests that interaction requires “(1) mutual acknowledgment by both partners of a shared relationship, (2) conversational exchange” (Hall, 2018, p. 165). Therefore, neither browsing nor broadcasting can be classified as social interaction as neither of these requirements are met.

Talking about social media users, it is important to recognize that they may not primarily see themselves as users. Aiming to conceptualize technology users as social actors, Lamb and Kling highlight the fact that users tend to see themselves in a different way than the researchers who study them. They note that, “In fact, users don’t think of themselves as having anything to do with the computer at all. They see themselves as professionals, working with others, and using computers in support of those interactions”(Lamb & Kling, 2003, p. 200). Within my work, this has been noticed as being a potential problem when interviewing users,

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encouraging them to talk about and describe their own use by asking “how much do you use social media?” and having them sometimes respond, “what do you mean by use?” (Jungselius & Weilenmann, 2018). Despite the complexity of defining social media users, some scholars have attempted to categorize different types. For instance, Brandtzaeg identified five user types: Sporadics, Lurkers, Socializers, Debaters, and Advanced (Brandtzaeg, 2012). Including the dimension of tension among motives for use, Ploderer et al. introduce the notion of the “Ambivalent Socializer”, “a person who is simultaneously keen but also reluctant to engage with others via social media” (Ploderer, Smith, & Howard, 2012, p. 1511). Thus, capturing sometimes contradictory feelings about one’s own social media use. Touching upon these ambivalent feelings towards social media use, Tiidenberg et al studied how young people make sense of their social media experiences and talk about their use. They suggest that when encouraged to reflect upon their experiences with social media, users’ “rhetoric about social media use and its implications becomes more nuanced yet remains inherently contradictory” (Tiidenberg et al., 2017, p. 1). They describe how users’ struggle as they negotiate the paradoxes among established “grand narratives” of social media use, such as juggling feelings about social media being either bad, because it is addictive, or good, because it is their lifeworld (Tiidenberg et al., 2017). In Paper 4 of this thesis, I build upon earlier categorizations of user types with my co-author and identify an additional type, “Consuming Socializer”, “the social media user who checks, monitors and consumes publicly displayed content, not as passively as the “Lurker”, but yet not as interactive as the Socializer” (Jungselius & Weilenmann, 2019).

### 3.4 Social media practices

For this thesis, I use the term “social media practices” when describing how social media users engage with social media. The term was introduced by Hogan and Quan-Haase in 2010 in the *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* through a number of papers in a special issue on Persistence and Change in Social Media. The aim of this special issue was to “identify elements of social media practice that are persistent across platforms, users, and cultures” (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010, p. 309). The concept allows for an emphasis on the on-going social processes that people engage in when using social media. In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted to explore platform-specific social media practices. Seeking to understand the practice of retweeting on Twitter, Paßmann and colleagues conclude that a lot of effort is put in to this practice and that users make a number of pragmatic choices when retweeting and favoriting tweets, such as aiming to return a favor or seeking to write tweets that receive a maximum of retweets, favorites and followers in order to increase their status (Paßmann, Boeschoten & Schäfer, 2014). Another example of a study aiming to describe a specific social media activity is to be found in work by Svelander and Wiberg who argue for the need to understand selfies as a social practice. In a way similar to Paßmann and colleagues, Svelander and Wiberg show how selfies are the result of a long and thoughtful process (Svelander & Wiberg, 2015).

Managing their social media interaction, users often rely upon a structured set of social norms. They negotiate between different needs, suggesting a tension between what is possible to do and what is done. For instance, a recent study showed that when using Facebook, users negotiate between seeking emotional support and not violating the social norms that regulate

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the use of the platform noting that, “Users must balance competing needs for emotional comfort with needs to behave appropriately within the Facebook context” (Buehler, 2017, p. 9). Another example of social rules regulating use is that during the peak of its popularity adding someone unknown on Foursquare was not considered to be okay, while following a similarly unknown somebody on Twitter was (Cramer et al., 2011).

Another example of a social media practice where users negotiate between what is technically possible and what is socially acceptable is using hashtags, or hashtagging. Hashtags (#) are used on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, del.icio.us and similar platforms to annotate different kinds of content such as micro blog posts, status updates, videos, images and photographs. When adding a hashtag to a photograph in social media, like Instagram, the audience for a photographer is extended beyond their immediate followers. By searching for photographs with a specific hashtag, people who usually don't follow a photo stream from a certain user are able to see those photographs without needing to follow the rest of that user's photo stream. By using many different hashtags, the possibilities for reaching audiences larger than one's own followers are increased. In this way, hashtags are used to provide information about a photograph and to help others find one's photographs (Ames & Naaman, 2007; Miller & Edwards, 2007). Apart from serving as a bookmark for content and as a symbol of community membership (Yang, 2012), hashtags also allow users to track ongoing conversations and to communicate non-verbal cues like irony (Lin, Margolin, & Keegan, 2013). In a published paper, not included in this thesis, my co-authors and I presented findings from users' descriptions of using hashtags to provide information about such features as where a photo had been taken, the

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camera used, and any photographic filters added. Interestingly however, in addition to using hashtags to provide basic information about the content and composition of photographs, users also described how hashtags were sometimes used strategically as tools to attract more views in order to gain more likes and followers (Jungselius, Hillman, & Weilenmann, 2014). A conclusion that could be made from this finding is that apart from the hashtag uses intended by platform developers, users create their own meanings, practices and ways of use through participation and interaction with other users. In relation to differences in how developers of a social media platform intend a feature to be used and how people go about using it, there are also differences in the ways people use common concepts and terms in everyday talk versus how they use them when referring to social media. Words such as “friend” and “like” are frequently used in online interaction, but they are not always used in the same ways they are used away from social media contexts. For instance, Turkle (2011) noticed that users make an important distinction between a friend and a Facebook friend, and others go as far as to claim that a virtual friend is not the same as a real friend (Smith, 2011). Ouwerkerk and Johnson (2016) suggest a number of alternative motives for friending someone, showing that befriending someone online is not necessarily equivalent to becoming, or even wanting to become, friends in a more traditional sense. In a similar way, there is a significant difference between liking a photograph and liking an Instagram (Jungselius, 2018) and there are a number of reasons for a user to like another user’s picture apart from actual appreciation of the photograph. Given this complexity, in the following section, I will describe the social and technical skills that users of social media develop in order to be able to use social media fluently.

### 3.5 Social media skills

A central concept when unpacking the skills needed for engaging in social media interaction is convergence. Henry Jenkins defines convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 2). Jenkins argues against the idea that convergence is to be “understood primarily as a technological process bringing together multiple media functions within the same device” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). Instead, he claims that “convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). Epitomizing Jenkins’ ideas, social media use may be described as differing from previous media as the lines between different kinds of interaction are blurred with audiences required to acquire skills for engaging in social media beyond those associated with the consumption of traditional media.

Taking the view that emerging technologies change how we communicate and that people use language differently as a result, a broadened conceptualization of the skills required for fluency with social media is needed that includes not only language in text, but also a number of other modes. However, offering such a broadened conceptualization in a discussion of the multimodality of texts, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) claim that the notion of language as not only being text is not something new. Language, they say, whether spoken or written, has always existed as “just one mode in the ensemble of modes involved in the production of texts, spoken or written” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 41). They note

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that a verbal text is never just verbal, but instead combines a number of visual expressions such as gestures, posture and facial expressions. Similarly, a written text involves a lot more than language, as it is both written *on* something and *with* something. Drawing on this, Kress and van Leeuwen claim that the multimodality of texts is being revealed in today's age of multimedia (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Building on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen, Jewitt explains the concept of “modal affordances” as “what is possible to express and represent, [...] how a mode has been used, what it has been repeatedly used to mean and do, and the social conventions that inform its use in context shape its affordance” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 247). When learning to use social media, it is not only about learning how to use a new kind of technology, but rather about learning both the social mechanisms that social media interaction relies upon as well as learning how to make use of the different communication modes that social media use offers. When engaging in social photography for instance, the user has a number of modes available. They express themselves both through the choice of photo subject as well as the ways they choose to manipulate and present their photographs. They also formulate captions to go with a photograph to add another level of meaning and after sharing their photos. They learn how to interact around them, using letters, emojis, GIFs and Likes.

Apart from acquiring modal and technical skills, a user of social media also acquires social skills. Wellman et al. (2006) suggest that a set of societal changes such as increased communicational bandwidth, people staying more or less always connected, the development of computer mediated communications towards personalization, wireless portability, and globalized connectivity has created possibilities or “social



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affordances” that have influenced the social use of the internet in everyday life (Wellman et al., 2003). Also using the term “social affordances”, but in a slightly different way, Hogan and Quan-Haase describe them as allowing “individuals to perceive aspects of their social environment, such as who else is in a chat room, who was co-sent a message, or who are the friends of my friends on a social network site” (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010). In this way, the social affordances of social media may be viewed as enablers of social practices.

A specific social media practice where social affordances are key and that has been of particular interest for me during my work is the practice of liking, i.e. interaction through the use of Likes. In Paper 3, I argue for the interactional richness of these seemingly simple expressions. Although the Like button, when launched on Facebook in 2009, was introduced as a way for users to “be able to say that they ‘Like’ something” (Kincaid, 2009), it has been shown that Likes may have various meanings and can embody large amounts of information (Hayes, Carr, & Wohn, 2016a; Jungselius, 2018). The possibility to like a status update, comment, photo, or organization is central when using social media today. On Instagram alone, users perform over 4.2 billion Likes per day (Aslam, 2017). Although beginning to acknowledge liking as an increasingly popular social function (Jin, Wang, Luo, Yu, & Han, 2011) some studies refer to Likes as “non-text feedback” (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2009) and “lightweight interaction” (Backstrom, Kleinberg, Lee, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, & Max, 2013; Burke, Kraut, & Marlow, 2011). Jang and colleagues refer to Likes, Favorites (on Twitter) and Re-pinning (on Pinterest) as “micro expressions” (Jang, Han, Shih, & Lee, 2015) and Meixner and Marlow describe Likes as “endorsement of content”

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(Meixner & Marlow, 2017). Taking a slightly different approach and exploring the social value of Likes, some studies have concluded that Likes can serve as tokens of emotional gratification and support. Simply put, users report feeling happy when receiving Likes and sad when they do not (Hayes et al., 2016a). Focusing on Facebook, Gerlitz and Helmond (2013) explored the technical infrastructure of Likes and similar “social buttons” as part of a so-called “Like economy”. Drawing on Thrift (2008), they suggest that “a Like is always more than a number on the Like counter” (Gerlitz & Helmond, 2013, p. 1359). More specifically seeking to understand the social value of Likes on Facebook, Scissors et al. (2016) found that users tend to care more about *who* likes their post rather than the number of Likes they receive (Scissors et al., 2016). Likes are used in a number of ways and are interpreted differently depending on the social context. Technically, the act of clicking a Like button might be considered to be lightweight, low-cost or as a micro endorsement of content, but socially, this non-text feedback to social media content encompasses a range of complex social practices (Jungselius, 2018).

In this section, I have presented related work on social media interaction, use and practices and the skills needed for being able to interact properly in social media. For the next section, I will go into more detail on what has become a central part of social media use during the past decade, social photography. I will present relevant related work on how people engage in this practice generally and in the specific setting for the fieldwork undertaken for this thesis, museums.

### 3.6 Social photography

Social media use is no longer just a leisure activity that only has impact on everyday, peer-to-peer social interaction. Instead, social media has also rearranged the way we look at other domains, such as the workplace (Thomas & Akdere, 2013) and education (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). As built-in cameras in mobile phones have become more advanced, social photography has become an increasingly popular activity embedded in many practices. Early work highlighted the fact that camera phones make it possible for people to take and share pictures of the places, people, pets and objects that they get in touch with in their everyday lives in new ways (Okabe, 2004). It was also noticed early on in their adoption that there are differences between how people use camera phones and how they use classical cameras to document and share their experiences (Okabe, 2004). For a conceptualization of social photography, I turn to the work of Richard Chalfen and his studies of how people take, organize and share photographs (Chalfen, 1987). For decades, anthropology scholar Chalfen studied how people use cameras and video cameras to capture and present particular versions of life to others. Within his work, the focus was on understanding the knowledge that one must have in order to be able to take “good” photographs and how this knowledge is used in everyday life. For instance, he discusses the “normality of taking pictures” (Chalfen, 1987, p. 9), i.e. what is considered to be “normal” pictures, how these pictures are taken and what enables photographers to take these pictures. Studying how people act both behind and in front of the camera, he presented the idea of “Kodak culture” (Chalfen, 1987). Within Kodak culture, the knowledge that users develop in order to engage, is key. This knowledge consists of “whatever it is that one has to learn, know, or do in order to participate appropriately” (Chalfen, 1987, p. 10). Over the

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years, Chalfen's work has been cited by a number of researchers studying social photography (Belk, 1988; Frohlich, Kuchinsky, Pering, Don, & Ariss, 2002; Grinter, 2005; Hillman & Weilenmann, 2015; Miller & Edwards, 2007). In early work on personal photographic practices mediated by mobile phones, some researchers concluded that Chalfen's work had become dated due to changes in technology, claiming that "camera phones change the definition of what's photo-worthy from what's special and enduring to what's often transitory and ordinary" (House et al., 2005). In recent years, however, as mobile phones with high-quality cameras have become accessible to a larger population, scholars have returned to Chalfen's work to inform studies of different aspects of smartphone mediated social photography. For instance, Weilenmann and Hillman build upon Chalfen's work to describe the act of taking selfies as a situated practice (Weilenmann & Hillman, 2019) and MacDowall and de Souza refer to Kodak culture in a study of the relationship between street art, graffiti, and mobile digital technologies, discussing the role Instagram plays in reshaping production and consuming practices (MacDowall & de Souza, 2018). Of particular interest for this thesis is Chalfen's discussion of what is possible to do with the technology at hand in relation to what people actually do with it. Technology in itself has different features that shape use in one way, as in what can be done, while norms and social codes shape what is actually done. Chalfen makes a distinction between "a culturally structured set of norms that helps us separate and differentiate what can be done – in a technical sense – from what can be done – in a social sense" (Chalfen, 1987, p. 44). Social photography is shaped by both technical features and social norms. In the next section, social photography within a specific domain will be further described.

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### 3.6.1 Social photography in a museum setting

The presence of smartphones has impacted a number of everyday life activities such as shopping, how we talk to friends and family, how we consume media and how we experience and share cultural activities such as going to a concert or visiting a museum. Institutions such as museums are impacted as people experience and interact with exhibitions in new ways. Social media being the media channel, smartphones with built-in cameras are often the technology that people use when documenting and sharing their museum visits. Previous work on the use of mobile technologies within cultural institutions has examined how museum visitors use technology while visiting a museum and how they interact with technology that is already there or provided by the museum for the visitors to use with their own devices (Grinter et al., 2002; Pierroux, Krangle, & Sem, 2010; Woods & Scanlon, 2012). Within the project that provided the opportunity for the fieldwork undertaken in this thesis, however, the interest was on both documentation practices that take place during museum visits (i.e. the process of taking photos and recording videos), as well as sharing practices (i.e. how photos and videos are shared during and after visits), and how people engage in these practices with the mobile devices and applications that they have brought with them to the museum themselves. In relation to this interest, a number of studies have been conducted that deepen understanding of the relationship between mobile technology, social media and learning in cultural institutions (Pierroux et al., 2010; Russo, Watkins, Kelly, & Chan, 2006). Russo et al. for instance, studied the potential role for social media when it comes to learning in informal environments such as museums, libraries and galleries. In their work, museums emerging use of social media as a way to engage online participants with new interactive experiences is discussed. Although some

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put great faith in museums use of social media and believe that social media have potential to gain a central role as a learning tool in museums and science centers, other studies have shown that young people rarely initiate museum visits (Pierroux et al., 2010), that they often find museums to be boring and unapproachable and that they often believe that museums hold nothing of interest to them (Jansson & Thyrsson, 2012; Stuedahl & Smørdal, 2011). Despite this, there has been a prevalent belief that social media can be a way for museums and science centers to communicate and attract younger visitors and engage them in the co-design of exhibits. For example, Pierroux, Krangle & Sem studied upper secondary students in an art museum field trip interpreting contemporary art within and across school and museum settings using social and mobile technologies, specifically blogs and mobile phones. The aim of their study was to examine the ways in which mobile phones and social media may contribute in facilitating meaning making in both formal and informal learning environments. Through interaction analysis, they examined ways that the students interacted on a specifically designed platform called Gidder, by studying how students discussed and created content related to the art museum field trip (Pierroux et al., 2010). More recently, however, it is often visitors themselves, even in younger age groups that bring mobile technologies into museums. Before the development of these devices, museums and science center exhibitions often focused on providing different technologies for visitors to interact with, but during recent years, it has become increasingly common for museums and science centers to avoid providing their own devices in favor of using visitors' own and social media in order to introduce new types of interaction with museum exhibits. However, beyond more pragmatic concerns such as the cost of providing devices, some claim that the reason

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that social media has been adopted by an increasing number of museums and science centers is the potential to help visitors to co-create and interact socially with museum exhibits (Stuedahl & Smørdal, 2011). This aligns with the call for museums to be responsive, democratic, and reflective and to subsequently take the “museum conversation” beyond the museum (Black, 2010 in Stuedahl & Smørdal, 2011, p. 216). Choosing to focus my work on social media activities within cultural institutions was a way to approach the activity of documenting and sharing of everyday life online in a delimited physical space. A museum visit is a focused, demarcated activity that plays out in a public, and thereby accessible, place. Although being a public place, delimiting to a physical setting within four walls, made the practice of documenting and sharing through mobile social media more accessible to study.

### 3.7 Summary of related work

The aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. By focusing on a specific and central part of social media use (social photography) in a specific domain (museums), combining studies of this delimited physical space with the accompanying delimited non-physical space, was a way to locate and bound a relevant study object in the complex landscape of social media use. Working from this study object, my ambition in this thesis is to conceptualize the findings from my studies in these spaces and show how they may be transferred to other settings as well. The conclusions in this thesis draw upon fieldwork in these settings, but build upon the related work presented here on social media use more generally, contributing to our understanding of social

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media use and social media practices in general. To summarize this related work and set the stage for the studies reported in this thesis, both modal, technical and social affordances shape the use of social media. Apart from social and technical affordances, use of social media is also shaped by social norms that regulate its use. As with all communication, interaction in social media is regulated by social rules that rely upon sets of norms. Some terms are taken for granted within this interaction, such as social media use, social media user, Likes, and friends. My contribution with this thesis is to provide new insights on the concepts and social practices that shape social media use. In the next section, I will introduce the theoretical perspectives chosen for interpreting social media activities in this thesis.



## 4. Theoretical perspectives

In this thesis, I suggest that social media use consists of social practices that people engage in when they produce, share and interact around social media content. The focus of my work has been on *social photography*, i.e. how people produce, share and interact around pictures in social media, especially when using the social photo sharing application Instagram. When doing so, users rely upon *affordances*, both modal, technical and social, and they develop *idioms of practices*. Each social media platform has their own language, their own *platform vernacular* that users learn in order to interact fluently. According to legitimate peripheral participation theory, people develop new skills through social participation within their *community of practice*. As people learn how to engage in social practices, as they develop skills on idioms of practice and platform vernaculars, they become competent members of these communities. In this chapter, I will unpack these central concepts and detail how they can be used for understanding social media use.

## 4.1 Affordances

In the previous chapter on related work, the notion of social affordances was raised (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010; Wellman et al., 2003). Social affordances in social media may be viewed as enablers of social practices. Hogan and Quan-Haase describe social affordances as allowing “individuals to perceive aspects of their social environment, such as who else is in a chat room, who was co-sent a message, or who are the friends of my friends on a social network site” (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010, p. 310). Their conceptualization builds upon on the notion of “affordances” the way it was originally coined by Gibson (1979). James J. Gibson, an American psychologist who made a great contribution to the visual perception field, situated the concept of affordances within an ecological approach. Placing affordances within an ecological context, Gibson suggested that: “The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. The verb to *afford* is found in the dictionary, but the noun *affordance* is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does” (Gibson, 1979, p. 119). Affordances are flexible, and “different layouts afford different behaviors for different animals, and different mechanical encounters” (Gibson, 1979, p. 120). In this sense, affordances are not static, and some objects afford manipulation. For instance, “a handheld tool of enormous importance is one that, when applied to a surface, leaves traces and thus affords trace-making. The tool may be a stylus, brush, crayon, pen, or pencil, but if it marks the surface it can be used to depict and to write, to represent scenes and to specify words” (Gibson, 1979, p. 125). Affordances should not be equated with properties or qualities, as the concept of affordances is wider than that. Objects all have properties or qualities such as “color, texture,

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composition, size, shape and features of shape, mass, elasticity, rigidity, and mobility” (Gibson, 1979, p. 125), but these are not yet affordances until they are in relation with a user. In this way, not all features of an object are important to distinguish for all uses and not all potential affordances are visible at any given time. Depending on who uses an object, and for what purpose, an object may afford different capacities. As Gibson exemplifies:

*The fact that a stone is a missile does not imply that it cannot be other things as well. It can be a paper weight, a bookend, a hammer, or a pendulum bob. It can be piled on another rock to make a cairn or a stone wall. These affordances are all consistent with one another. The differences between them are not clear cut, and the arbitrary names by which they are called do not count for perception. If you know what can be done with a grasp able detached object, what it can be used for, you can call it whatever you please.*

(Gibson, 1979, p. 126)

An affordance “points two ways, to the environment and to the observer” (Gibson, 1979, p. 132). The relationship between the object and its environment is reciprocal. The observer, or user of an object, can be described as:

*the other person, the generalized other, the alter as opposed to the ego, is an ecological object with a skin, even if clothed. It is an object, although it is not merely an object, and we do right to speak of he or she instead of it. But the other person has a surface that reflects light, and the information to specify what he or she is, invites, promises, threatens, or does can be found in the light.*

(Gibson, 1979, p. 127)

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Although describing how an affordance of an object may shift depending on the actor and environment, Gibson also states that the affordances of an object do not necessarily change as the needs of the observer change. An object is what it is, regardless of the needs of an actor, “the object offers what it does because it is what it is” (Gibson, 1979, p. 130). Further, Gibson describes how “the observer may or may not perceive or attend to the affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived. An affordance is not bestowed upon an object by a need of an observer and his act of perceiving it” (Gibson, 1979, p. 130). Gibson also points out that affordances are often perceived directly, “without an excessive amount of learning” (Gibson, 1979, p. 134). Although affordances are perceived, they should not be mixed up with values or meanings. As Gibson describes them, affordances can be seen to be objective and real. He notes that, “an important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental” (Gibson, 1979, p. 121).

Referring to Gibson, but developing the concept further by making a distinction between real and perceived affordances and stressing the relevance of cultural restraints, Donald A. Norman (1999) discusses how the concept of affordances is often misused due to a common misunderstanding about what the concept entails. Norman suggests that when people use the concept and talk about affordances and limitations within, for instance, a technology or an interface, they are often actually referring to and talking about cultural restraints. Situating the concept in a contemporary, technological context, Norman claims that affordances,

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“both real and perceived, play very different roles in physical products than they do in the world of screen-based products” (Norman, 1999, p. 39). He stresses the fact that affordances are always present, no matter what is visible on the screen. What is visible on the screen is not the technological affordances, it is only visual feedback, “those displays are not affordances; they are visual feedback that advertise the affordances: they are the perceived affordances” (Norman, 1999, p. 40). The perceived affordances are not equivalent to the real affordances and a distinction is made between the two as follows:

*In graphical, screen-based interfaces, the designer primarily can control only perceived affordances. The computer system already comes with built-in physical affordances. The computer, with its keyboard, display screen, pointing device, and selection buttons (e.g., mouse buttons) affords pointing, touching, looking, and clicking on every pixel of the screen.*

(Norman, 1999, p. 39)

According to Norman then, the affordances of a technology are what they are, but the perceived affordances may shift. Norman suggests that three kinds of behavioral constraints that may be used as powerful design tools when designing a technology; physical, logical, and cultural constraints. Physical constraints make some actions impossible as there is no way to ignore them. Logical and cultural constraints however “are weaker in the sense that they can be violated or ignored, but they act as valuable aids to navigating the unknowns and complexities of everyday life” (Norman, 1999, p. 41). Cultural constraints are conventions shared by a cultural group. They are not arbitrary, they evolve and they require a community of practice (Norman, 1999). Norman also emphasizes the difference between affordances and symbolic communication. Symbols and

constraints are not affordances, he argues, instead “they are examples of the use of a shared and visible conceptual model, appropriate feedback, and shared, cultural conventions”(Norman, 1999, p. 41). Summing up his argument, Norman writes:

*Please don't confuse affordances with perceived affordances. Don't confuse affordances with conventions. Affordances reflect the possible relationships among actors and objects: they are properties of the world. Conventions, conversely, are arbitrary, artificial, and learned.*

(Norman, 1999, p. 42)

For this thesis, Norman's conceptualization of affordances adds the aspect of cultural restraint as an additional explanation for how technology use is shaped.

### 4.2 Idioms of practices

Social media use is shaped by a number of technical, social and cultural aspects. Chalfen (1987) distinguished between technical and social skills that regulate use of a technology, Gibson (1979) provided us with the concept of affordances which may be used to describe the relationship between the technology and the user, and Norman (1999) added the aspect of cultural restraint as an additional explanation for how technology use is shaped. Apart from technical skills such as being able to download the right application, creating a profile and producing multimedia content in social media, there are also a number of social skills that social media users gain when learning how to use the technology in a fulfilling way. Examples of social skills that users of social media develop are, for instance, the ability to argue over text (Gershon, 2010), to know when and what to like on Instagram (Jungselius, 2018), and to seek social

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support without violating social norms (Buehler, 2017). Studying a specific platform-related social skill that some users of social media develop, knowing how to handle a break-up on Facebook, anthropologist Ilana Gershon introduced the concept of “idioms of practice” (Gershon, 2010). In her work, she found that there was no widespread consensus on social etiquette for the use of emerging technologies such as Facebook and other social media. Not all users of a technology use the technology the same way. In Gershon’s work, she noticed that all Facebook users used Facebook to accomplish different tasks. Each user in her study reported at least one way to use a communication technology that she had never heard of before. The reason for these disagreements on appropriate use is that people were still in the process of figuring out how to use the technology. Other than learning how to navigate among technical features, there are also social rules to be learned that regulate the use of these technologies. When beginning to use a new communication technology, the social rules that regulate use of them are not always explicit and expressed. Within Gershon’s work, there were disagreements between users about who should change their relationship status first on Facebook after a breakup and what rules apply when friending and de-friending people on the platform. Based on this work, Gershon proposed the concept of idioms of practice for describing the agreed upon appropriate social uses of technology that people create, learn and negotiate through asking for advice and sharing stories with each other (Gershon, 2010). The notion points to “how people have implicit and explicit intuitions about using different technologies that they have developed with their friends, family members and co-workers” (Gershon, 2010, p. 6).

Idioms of practice emerge out of collective discussions and shared practices, and “the structure of the technology is profoundly social, and socially embedded in everyone’s experience” (Gershon, 2010, p. 50). Part of the reason why communicative technologies necessitate people to form idioms of practice is that they manifest a range of problems, both social and technical, requiring solutions to be agreed upon through conversation (Gershon, 2010, pp. 6–7). As idioms of practices often emerge out of collective discussions and the shared practices of social participation in informal communities, users learn about them from other practitioners. When the agreed upon ways to use emerging communication technologies are lacking, users are forced to negotiate the meaning of concepts and terms they may already be used to from other contexts in everyday life.

### 4.3 Social media platform vernacular

Digital platforms are becoming increasingly present elements to consider for researchers, as well as for participants in many everyday contexts from business (D. S. Evans & Schmalensee, 2016) to organizations (Rolland, Mathiassen, & Rai, 2018), public health care (Aanestad & Jensen, 2011) and interaction with friends and family (Weilenmann et al., 2013b). There are a number of definitions available for what a platform is. One perspective on platforms is the one taken by Tiwana that characterizes software-based platforms as “a software-based product or service that serves as a foundation on which outside parties can build complementary products or services” (Tiwana, 2014, p. 5). However, acknowledging that the term “platform” may be used in a number of ways and taking a less developer-oriented focus, instead taking a more management-oriented view, Evans and Gawer (2016) focus their work on platforms in terms of “platform business models” and “the design choices that allow these



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business models to be successful” (P. C. Evans & Gawer, 2016, p. 5). From this perspective, network effects, the possibility to create value along with distinctions between different kinds of platforms, such as transaction platforms, innovation platforms, investment platforms and integrated platforms, are central concerns. Evans and Schmalensee unpack this business perspective on the concept of platforms further introducing the concept of “multisided platforms” as “a business that operates a physical or virtual place (a platform) to help two or more different groups find each other and interact” (D. S. Evans & Schmalensee, 2016, p. 210). As an example, they suggest Facebook, as it “operates a virtual place where friends can send and receive messages, where advertisers can reach users, and where people can use apps and app developers can provide those apps” (D. S. Evans & Schmalensee, 2016, p. 210). They describe multisided platforms as being “a platform for platforms” (D. S. Evans & Schmalensee, 2016, p. 208), a feature highlighted in their example and description of the multisided purposes of Facebook. However, taking a different approach and developing an organizational-focused perspective to compliment the two dominate perspectives on digital platforms, Gawer calls for a more user-inclusive view, questioning “economics, which sees platforms as double-sided markets, and engineering design, which sees platforms as technological infrastructures” (Gawer, 2014, p. 1239). As noticeable here, conceptualization of digital platforms from an end-user-perspective has been lacking.

In early work on social media use, what is now often referred to as social media platforms (Carah & Shaul, 2015; Alhabash & Ma, 2017) was usually described as social networking sites (SNS) (Brandtzæg, 2012; Ross et al.,

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2009). Some SNS, such as Instagram, were originally developed as mobile social applications and was then limited to mobile phone use only. Today however, Instagram is accessible from any device, such as a computer or tablet. In more recent work, as the years have passed and these services have grown and evolved, they are usually rather considered social media platforms. It is important to notice that definitions of what constitutes a platform minted taking an economic, owner-centered or a developer/engineering perspective and may be different then the definitions understood by users. For example, the Instagram platform would, using some criteria, classify as being part of the Facebook platform, as it is owned by and partly integrated with Facebook. However, to most users of these platforms, it is fair to assume that they are understood to be completely separate and different. For users, these platforms are not only being different applications, but also rely upon different social norms, different technical capabilities, affordances and networks that shape the use of them. In this sense, Facebook and Instagram can be considered to be completely different platforms, with totally different sets of norms and social codes regulating their order. These differences are exemplified in the work of Buehler (2017) on norms on Facebook, Jungselius (2018) on social rules that regulate the practice of liking on Instagram, and by Alhabash and Ma (2017) who report on similarities and differences in motivations and uses of the four largest social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Not only are social media platforms different today than they were a decade ago, they are also socially different when compared to each other and there is great variety in the ways each of them is used. This notion that cultures vary between different social media platforms was already

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acknowledged in the late 2000s (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Although seemingly connected and used in parallel, there are individual similarities and differences between social media platforms. In an attempt to grasp the notion of cultures emerging on social media platforms, Gibbs et al. (2015) introduce the concept of platform vernacular arguing that “each social media platform comes to have its own unique combination of styles, grammars, and logics, which can be considered as constituting a “platform vernacular, or a popular (as in ‘of the people’) genre of communication” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 3). Gibbs et al. further highlight that “platform vernaculars are shaped not only by the platform architecture but also by the habits and practices of users” and that these platform vernaculars are “shared (but not static) conventions and grammars of communication, which emerge from the ongoing interactions between platforms and users (2015, p. 3). Every platform has a specific vernacular which has “developed over time, through design, appropriation, and use” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 3). Although platform vernaculars are particular to each social media platform, it is acknowledged that they can “share many elements, and the vocabulary and grammars of vernaculars migrated between social media platforms as new practices and features from one platform are appropriated for use on others” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 3). Both social practices and technical capabilities shape use of a platform, contributing to defining what that platform is. Crossing of platform boundaries and shifting platform vernaculars, even within platforms, highlights the importance of questioning platform boundaries as what users understand as a platform stretches beyond technical restrictions. Building on the previously described perspectives on platforms in this thesis, I argue that we need to include and understand the particulars of micro-social

practices as they relate the development of platform vocabularies in research on social media platforms.

### 4.4 Communities of practice

Using social media requires the learning of how to do so. In order to become competent members of social media communities, users develop knowledge about how to produce and share content and how to interact with others. When learning this, users develop both technical and social skills. For this thesis, it is argued that the complex and emerging set of skills related to social media use is learned through participation in communities of practice formed through social media interaction. Since many of the skills required to participate in social media interaction are not generally learned through formal education, understanding their development requires a learning theory that also accounts for informal community-based learning. A particularly relevant approach is Lave and Wenger's concept of communities of practice, which is a social learning theory based on the assumptions that learning is a situated activity and that learning is a process of social participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are informal, self-organized groups that people form as they engage in a similar practice. These groups are everywhere and, generally, people are involved in a number of them (Wenger, 1998). The idea of communities of practice is based on the assumption that "engagement in social practice is a fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are" (Wenger, 1998). 'Legitimate peripheral participation', which is a central component of communities of practice theory, concerns the process by which newcomers learn to become full practitioners. This may include learning who other members are, what those who are already considered to be full practitioners do, what other

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newcomers do, and what newcomers need to learn to become full practitioners. This social process also involves learning to appreciate what full practitioners “enjoy, dislike, respect and admire” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95). Becoming a full practitioner of a community of practice is an ongoing, continually changing process. What is required to be able to participate is not static. In the case of social media, technical features become more complex and social rules and conventions evolve over time. As argued by Norman and highlighted in the previous section, “conventions are not arbitrary: they evolve, they require a community of practice” (Norman, 1999, p. 41).

### 4.5 Affinity spaces

Although being an acknowledged and well-referenced theory, some scholars have critiqued Lave and Wenger’s work on communities of practice. James Paul Gee, in particular, critiques the concept as having limited relevance for explaining many forms of collective effort, leading him to propose an alternative perspective, “affinity spaces”, that has significance for understanding social media use by focusing on, “the idea of a space in which people interact, rather than on membership in a community” (Gee, 2005, p. 1). Affinity spaces are informal learning spaces where groups of people are drawn together as a result of a shared interest in a common activity. Within affinity spaces, “people ‘bond’ first and foremost to an endeavor or interest and secondarily, if at all, to each other” (Gee, 2005, p. 20). What is important within affinity spaces as compared to communities of practice is that people in affinity spaces are gathered around a common and shared interest, rather than with an interest in bonding. In this sense, activity is key, bonding is secondary. While highlighting activities as the primary reason for people to engage

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within affinity spaces, interactional aspects are not neglected. As Gee explains in relation to the multiplayer video game, Age of Mythology (AoM):

*Let us say, then, that every space has a “content organization” (that is, how its content is designed or organized) and an “interactional organization” (namely, how people organize their thoughts, beliefs, values, actions, and social interactions in regard to those signs and their relationships). The content organization of a game emerges from the work of designers. The interactional organization emerges from people’s actions and interactions with and over the space (in this case, AoM) as these begin to take on some (however loose) regularity or patterning.*

(Gee, 2005, p. 12)

Although making a distinction between content organization and interactional organization, Gee acknowledges that there is a reciprocal interplay between these practices and it is assumed that they contribute in shaping each other. He explains: “We can also ask questions about how the content and interactional organizations reflexively shape each other, if indeed they do, i.e., how does the content (and its design) shape thought, deed, and practice and how do thought, deed, and practice shape and re-shape (re-design) content (Gee, 2005, pp. 14–15).

The aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. From the perspective chosen for this thesis, I have described how social media use is shaped by a number of technical, social and cultural aspects. Chalfen (1987) distinguished between technical and social skills that regulate the use of a technology,

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Gibson (1979) provided the concept of affordances which may be used to describe the relationship between the technology and the user, and Norman (1999) added the aspect of cultural restraint as an additional explanation for how technology use is shaped. Apart from technical skills users also develop a number of social skills and learn idioms of practice (Gershon, 2010) and platform vernacular (Gibbs, 2015). Users acquire these skills through social interaction and participation within their communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in affinity spaces (Gee, 2005) found on various social media platforms. The synthesis of these theoretical concepts offers a useful frame for understanding the ways that social media use, skills and perceptions changes as practices and platforms develop, that has informed the work in this thesis.





## 5. Method

The aim of this thesis is to describe what constitutes social media use, why and how this is meaningful as a category of activity and to contribute with new insights on how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. Aiming to answer the research questions, I have collected different sets of data, using a combination of methods. Although social media studies had been conducted for some time when I started my work, there was no standardized, given method to turn to for planning a data collection on social media use. In order to collect relevant data for answering the research questions for my thesis, I have explored a number of methods, all providing different insights contributing to a fuller understanding of the many dimensions of social media use.

Being a practiced social media user myself, my interest in social media was already sparked when I began my Ph.D. As is well known, all qualitative research is contextual as it occurs within a specific time and place between

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two or more people (Dodgson, 2019). What is important as a qualitative researcher studying a practice is to be aware of the possible impact of the context and previous experience and to be transparent about the relationship between the researcher and the practices and practitioners they study. In this sense, reflexivity is key for credible qualitative work. In my work for this thesis, I started out with previous extensive personal experience of several social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. This provided me with a legitimacy among other users and allowed me access to the field I wanted to study. The users who participated in my interviews were recruited through an openly posted tweet that was also posted to Facebook and Instagram where I called for social media users who wanted to take part in a research project. Through this process, relying on the legitimacy provided by my visible track-record on these platforms, I was able to recruit users who I did not have an existing personal relationship with.

In previous related work, researchers have taken different approaches when aiming to study different aspects of social media use. A common approach has been to conduct social network analysis (Eghdam, Hamidi, Bartfai, & Koch, 2018; Leskovec, Huttenlocher, & Kleinberg, 2010) where large amounts of platform data is collected and analyzed aiming to find out how users are related to one another within a social network. An example of other types of similar quantitative analysis can be found in the work of Lindgren (2011) who combined sentiment analysis and discursive network analysis in order to find patterns within YouTube comments on six different kinds of how-to videos. Yet another example of a quantitative approach, focusing more on finding patterns within the content, rather than within users' interaction with it, is the work by Hochman and

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Schwartz (2012) who visualized and analyzed a sample of 550,000 Instagrams from New York City and Tokyo to trace cultural visual rhythms. When wanting to quantify social media use, a common approach has been to turn to Twitter for gathering of large datasets (e.g. Brownlie & Shaw, 2018; Gurajala & Matthews, 2018; Lin et al., 2013). Tweets are publicly available and, in comparison to content posted on Instagram and Facebook, relatively easy to access and collect. From Twitter, it is also possible to collect very large datasets making the platform particular suitable for quantitative analyses.

Among scholars taking a qualitative approach when seeking to understand social media use, a lot of previous work has been based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews (e.g. Brewer & Piper, 2016; O'Hara, Massimi, Harper, Rubens, & Morris, 2014; Whiting & Williams, 2013). This data has often been analyzed in combination with data collected through other methods such as surveys (Cramer et al. 2011) and focus groups (Hayes et al., 2016b). Although these common ways of collecting data have provided insights on social media use, they have limitations. While analysis of large datasets of platform data may be difficult to understand and interpret without context and explanations provided by users, self-reports such as interviews and surveys risk not getting access to actual use, but rather getting a user's constructed descriptions of their experiences of social media use. Social media use is multidimensional, including a broad set of different activities and modes, making a wide range of research methods necessary for understanding the social practices it consists of. Some activities are not visible in the physical world making it necessary to turn to non-physical settings to understand them. Equally, some social media activities visible only in physical settings would

be impossible to understand solely through studies of non-physical spaces. In addition, some activities are difficult, or even impossible, to observe at all making it necessary to turn to users themselves and let them provide context through descriptions of their own activities.

When beginning my work, I started out with an interest in the use of mobile phones and social media interaction. Over time, as mobile phones became more advanced and as the visual aspect of social media became even more central, my interest in the visual aspects of social media grew. I also became as interested in what people do *with* the phone as what they do *on* the phone. In order to get a holistic view of social media practices, where social media use in both physical and non-physical spaces are involved and acknowledged, I have experimented with different ways of collecting data. I have observed social media users as they engage in social photography practices such as producing, sharing and interacting in a physical space, I have collected and analyzed instagrams produced and posted in social media and I have interviewed users to get access to their own reflections on their social media use. In the following sections, I will unpack my course of action in more detail, beginning with a description for the permanently online, permanently connected (Vorderer et al., 2017) setting in which I have conducted my work and account for concerns raised as the lines between online and offline are blurred and users become mobile and move between different contexts.

### 5.1 Studying mobile phone use

For this thesis, I have studied the use of social media in a permanently online, permanently connected world (Vorderer et al., 2017). Today, most social media is accessed and used through mobile phones (Davidsson et

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al., 2018; A. Smith et al., 2018) making these mobile technologies especially interesting to study. However, studying mobile technologies comes with challenges. As Brown and Laurier note, “despite the widespread use of mobile devices, details of mobile technology use have been proven difficult to collect” (Brown & Laurier, 2013b, p. 1). In previous work on the use of mobile technologies, a number of concerns and difficulties have been discussed. Examples of these concerns are users’ ubiquitous systems often being mobile, the small screens of handheld computers and mobile phones, and the sometimes invisible sensing systems (such as Global Positioning Systems) that users interact with (Crabtree et al., 2006). Others mention limited battery life and a lack of flexibility with digital wearable cameras, as well as restricted possibilities for capturing what is happening on a mobile phone screen due to bad angles, sunlight reflections etc. (Brown & Laurier, 2013a). There is also the problem of capturing peoples’ interaction on small touch screen devices like many smartphones as such devices are more difficult to record with video than larger devices such as computer screens, and their mobile nature makes recording even more challenging (Brown & Laurier, 2013b; Brown, Reeves, & Sherwood, 2011). However, in the field of mobile technology research, there is an established tradition of meeting the methodological challenges that come with studying mobility. Weilenmann (2003) for instance, distinguished four approaches suitable for studying mobile interaction. The first approach is to *follow actors* around to see how they use their mobile technology in different situations. In the fieldwork conducted at the Natural History Museum, museum visitors were followed and how they used their own mobile devices to document and share their experiences was observed. The second approach is to *follow the technology*, i.e. to follow the mobile technology in and of itself wherever it

takes the researcher. In a pilot study for the broader project that this thesis was conducted in, we used a screen capturing application, which can be seen as an example of taking this approach. The third approach is to find and *study a place where mobile people are to be found*. For my work, this has meant both identifying a particular museum as a place that attracts people who use mobile phones, as well as finding “hot spots” within that institution. The fourth approach is to *study the virtual communication space*. As part of the work included in this thesis, platform data from Instagram was collected through the portals spots.io and Webstagr.am that make geo-location data accessible. This dataset includes instagrams taken at the museum and its analysis may be seen as an example of taking this approach.

## 5.2 Studying social practices in non-physical spaces

Over the years, a wide range of researchers have conducted studies aiming to capture online practices and activities using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the tradition of Internet studies, the prevalent approaches may be divided into two categories, those focusing on life *in front of* the screen, and those focusing on life *on* the screen (Takahashi, 2010). In my work, I have combined methods for data collection with the aim of capturing a larger context, incorporating both what happens on the screen as well as in front of it, or as suggested by Dirksen, Huizing & Smit, “combining online and offline methods for capturing the dynamics of online social practices” (2010, p. 1045). In their paper on online work practices, the authors discuss how using what they describe as connective ethnography may be used as a way to “pile on layers of understanding”

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(Dirksen et al., 2010). They argue for this way of conducting research describing it in terms of making practices visible both online and offline by, “Adding the idea of connectivity to the notion of geographically defined locales” (Dirksen et al., 2010, p. 1046).

Although there is acknowledgement that new analytical approaches and methods are needed for studying social media use (Brandtzæg, 2012; Hall, 2018), there are still a number of practical, technical and ethical obstacles to overcome. Social media is often accessed through mobile phones and several social media applications are often used in parallel. Mediated social interaction often evolves over different platforms and consists of parallel and intertwined use of applications (C. Smith, 2011). With the development of the term “polymedia”, Madianou and Miller (2012) seek to highlight the importance of taking a more holistic approach when studying social media use. Multimedia for instance, they mention, refers to the simultaneous use of different media, and not alternating uses of media. Madianou and Miller argue that since users switch between technologies to achieve different purposes, one technology will always be preferred over another for a given purpose and therefore each medium needs to be understood as integrated parts of a larger media structure. In order to fully understand this, they argue, a revised analytical concept that explains this parallel use of media technologies is needed. When studying how people use social media on their mobile devices, the complexity of the interaction that is distributed across different applications and devices is central. There is a difficulty that comes with “reconciling the fragments” (Crabtree et al., 2006, p. 3) of interaction that are distributed on an increasingly larger number of platforms. Besides the difficulty that comes with studying how people use their mobile devices, in terms of how people

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physically move around, when studying social media interaction, there is also the difficulty of capturing the ways that people move around online, engaging in cross media platform interactions.

In my work, three particular areas of concern when studying mobile social media use have been identified; the challenge of defining a *temporal unit of analysis*, examining *cross media platform interaction*, and the difficulty of capturing *situated online activities*. When studying social media use, a key issue is to decide upon an appropriate *temporal unit of analysis*. Beyond deciding on the amount of time for which one should study a phenomenon, an issue for researchers examining social media use is that the time scale of an event which occurs in both physical and non-physical spaces may shift. For example, while a museum visit may last for an hour or two, comments on photographs shared by visitors may continue to be posted for weeks after the physical event. Discussions in the comment thread of a photograph may form an integral part of a visitor's experience of a museum exhibition, but research that only considers synchronous activity at the time of the initial visit would miss this important asynchronous interaction. Another issue involves understanding *cross media platform interaction* and, in particular, the need to consider data collected on different platforms and devices as part of a single event. In a paper where instant messaging (IM) in a workplace context and its implications for media theory are studied, Nardi & Whittaker (2000) challenge traditional assumptions by describing how apart from supporting work through its interactional ways, the so called outeractional aspects of IM are important as well. The unexpected, non-scheduled uses of IM, outeraction, are described as "a set of communicative processes outside of information exchange, in which people reach out to others in



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patently social ways to enable information exchange” (Nardi et al., 2000, p. 79). Among other ideas, Nardi and Whittaker argue that instead of studying one interaction at a time, we need to shift focus as it is impossible to truly understand interaction if we fail to understand how interaction develops cross-media over time (Nardi et al., 2000). When writing a letter, reading a book or talking on the phone, one usually uses a limited set of communicative recourses. What is noticeable when communicating in social media however, is that the array of accessible tools and platforms for communicating is greater and increasing. Although some social media platforms such as Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube provide enormous volumes of publicly available data that consists of text, images, photos and video, data from other platforms, such as Facebook, are much more difficult to access and collect and the interaction is not always limited to visible content provided on one platform alone. These ideas are further developed in the paper, *”In Just Three Hours I Got Like 22 Likes On A Pancake Picture’: Dealing With Temporality In Social Media Use And Research”* (Hillman, Jungselius, & Weilenmann, 2013).

### 5.3 Blurring the line between online and offline

In the field of social media research, virtual ethnography was one of the earliest methods developed for studying what people produce and share online (Hine, 2000). However, this approach does not address the situated nature of people’s online activity and is thus insufficient for completely understanding mobile social media use. Instead, this phenomenon requires a combination of approaches to understand both the process by which people interact through social media on their mobile devices and

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the products of that interaction. In a permanently online, permanently connected world (Vorderer et al., 2017) where mobile social media use is becoming an increasingly common activity and part of peoples' everyday lives, it seems no longer possible to separate online and offline activities. Already in the 90s, some claimed that shared online worlds were growing increasingly common and that researchers aiming to understand this evolution would face many new challenges in the progress of understanding them (Schiano & White, 1998). Schiano and White describe their combined method study of a social MUD (a text based real time online role-playing game) called LambdaMOO as a case of "incorporating a synergy of qualitative and quantitative, subjective and objective methodologies in the attempt to understand "what life was like" for most people in a given online community at that time" (Schiano & White, 1998, p. 357). Following this, a range of others have more recently described offline and online worlds as increasingly connected spheres of social activity (Dirksen et al., 2010, p. 1059). For example, Orgad (2009) discussed the blurring line between online and offline interaction and highlighted the importance to consider both online and offline data when planning a research project noting that, "It has become clear that the separation between the online and offline cannot be sustained" (Orgad, 2009, p. 37). She argues for the need to be critical towards researchers making claims about peoples' everyday lives while solely relying on data that only to a very limited extent provides understanding of the relationship between the participants' online and offline worlds (Orgad, 2009, p. 51).

Connected to criticism of studies that make claims about peoples' everyday lives while missing significant aspects of their experiences,

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researcher reflexivity and awareness of limitations is central and often brought into the discussion of qualitative Internet studies. Markham emphasizes the importance of a researcher's reflexivity throughout the research process and provides questions that may be useful to ask oneself when conducting the study as well as strategies to "situate reflexivity". These include situating a research question into larger frameworks, a local context into larger contexts, and situating a study, both in its whole and in its component parts, among larger conversations (Markham, 2009, p. 142). However, the importance of being aware of the kinds of data being collected and for what purposes, is not unique to this kind of research. As with all research, it is important to question when and how different types of data, such as online and offline data, are needed and how they enhance the interpretation of each other. Even if aiming to study an online phenomenon, there is no need to leave out offline, local activities, as these may help by providing a more holistic view of social media use in a permanently online, permanently connected world. As pointed out by Hjort and Pink, "Mobile social media are a global phenomenon, but they are also local at every point" (2013, p. 43). Adding data on locally situated practices enriches online data and places activity within a physical context, providing additional insights into what might otherwise be mistakenly considered to be an exclusively online practice.

In a permanently online, permanently connected world, offline and online interaction are not separated in the same way as they have been considered to be in the past. Therefore, a combination of methods is needed in order to capture both the local, situated activities as well as the online aspects of mobile social media practices when aiming to study and understand social media use. In my work, I have experimented with different possible ways

to study social media use through a combination of methods, collecting data from both physical and non-physical spaces and enriching this data by letting users themselves provide descriptions and reflections for a wider context on their social media use. I have studied both the locally situated social practices that take place as content is being produced and shared in social media and I have studied interaction around produced content after it has been shared, both in terms of the actual content as well as descriptions made by the users producing and interacting with it. From my methodological explorations, the data in focus for this thesis is primarily collected through stimulated recall in-depth interviews. In the next section I will describe my way of working with this data in more detail.

### 5.4 Study design

The study that this thesis builds upon consist of two phases. Phase 1 included ethnographically inspired fieldwork where data was collected through observations, taking fieldnotes and photographs, and informally interviewing museum visitors and staff. This was done in order to get a sense of the phenomenon and what aspects of it were especially central to study. In addition, I collected and analyzed instagrams from non-physical spaces and conducted semi-structured in-depth stimulated recall interviews with 16 social media users. The data from the first phase was collected in 2012. At this time, social media was still relatively new and under-examined. People were still in the process of figuring out how to use it and little research had begun to explore Instagram use. Therefore, this phase served as an introduction to social media use where the aim was to gain an understanding of different aspects of activities in both physical and non-physical spaces. Phase 2 consisted of a follow-up study on the

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data collected in Phase 1, where the aim was to return to the same participants as in Phase 1 in order to gain an understanding of how perceptions of social media change as practices and platforms develop. Being mainly interested in users' own reflections on this development and having access to the same individuals as in Phase 1, the focus of Phase 2 was on data collected through semi-structured in-depth stimulated recall interviews with eleven of the participants who participated in Phase 1. In the following section, the two phases of the study will be described in more detail.

### 5.4.1 Phase 1: Understanding social media use

Deciding to focus my work on social media activities at a museum was a way to approach the activity of documenting and sharing everyday life on social media in a delimited physical space. A museum visit is a focused, demarcated activity that plays out in a public, and thereby accessible, place. Although being a public place, the delimiting to a physical setting within four walls, makes the practice of documenting and sharing through mobile social media more accessible to study. At the start of my PhD program, I was involved with the LETStudio project "Mobile technologies and social media in cultural institutions (MobSoMe)". The focus of this project was to examine how visitors at cultural institution used mobile technology they had brought with them themselves to document and share experiences within these venues. At this time, a number of studies had been conducted to examine how museum visitors interact with technology provided to them by a museum, such as audio guides, touchscreens and similar (e.g. Grinter et al., 2002). There had also been studies conducted on the use of mobile applications developed specifically for research to examine how visitors engage with exhibits (e.g. Pierroux, Krangle, & Sem, 2010; Woods

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& Scanlon, 2012). However, few researchers had looked at the visitor-driven, local mobile social media practices that we were interested in within our project and there was a lack in studies on how museum visitors use their own mobile technologies to document and share their experiences in museums.

During the spring of 2012, I spent many hours at the Gothenburg Museum of Natural History where I engaged in ethnographically inspired fieldwork (cf. Berg, 2001) doing observations and collecting field notes and taking photographs. In addition, I conducted informal interviews with both museum visitors and museum staff. Through this work, it was noticed that museum visitors used their mobile devices to document and share their museum experiences in various ways, to a greater extent than what had been described in the literature at that time. Some of the visitors took pictures and showed them to the people they were visiting with, some sent pictures to friends and family as private messages, while other visitors explained how they were going to edit and share their pictures in social media later on. As I approached and talked to museum visitors, it became clear that the social photo sharing application Instagram was used to a great extent for both editing and sharing pictures of museum visits. As a way to narrow the study, it was therefore decided to look into social practices of producing, sharing and interacting on Instagram more closely.

When discussing content produced for Instagram, I refer to the multi-layered presentations of both images and text (such as captions written to explain or support the picture posted) as “instagrams”. Following observations and informal interviews at the museum, I turned to non-physical settings for instagrams that had been taken at the museum. The

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empirical material for Phase 1 encompasses two datasets that were collected in two different ways. Dataset one consists of 123 publicly available instagrams. These were screenshotted as presented on the platform and downloaded on July 9th and 10th 2012. These instagrams represent all those available at that time that had been geotagged with one of two commonly used tags for the location of the museum. The instagrams were accessed through spots.io, a web-based service that allows searching for commonly used geotags and listing of the resulting instagrams. Dataset two consists of 99 instagrams taken by 16 Instagram users who were recruited to participate in the study. In contrast to dataset one (that consists of publicly available instagrams), for dataset two, the participants, all of whom are regular instagrammers were asked to visit the museum and to create instagrams as they normally would. When meeting them at the museum before their visit, participants were given a brief introduction to the research project and were given minimum instructions to minimize steering their social media activity during the visit. They were, however, informed that they were not required to take any photographs at all if they did not want to. This was done to help the participants feel comfortable and to minimize the pressure to produce the “right” content for the study. Immediately following their visits, semi-structured in-depth stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each participant in a room at the museum. This resulted in 14 videotaped interviews with the 16 participants (four were interviewed in pairs). Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and included discussion of the instagrams created during their visit. Thus, for the instagrams in dataset two, participants were asked to visit the museum and to instagram their experiences and this may have influenced their instagramming practices. On the other hand, more information is available about the context in which these

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instagrams were created than those in dataset one where no contact was made with the creators. By interviewing the creators of the instagrams in dataset two, reasoning on the choices made during the creation processes were made accessible. In this way, the two data sets are complementary.

A majority of the 16 participants recruited were frequent users of social media which is why I refer to them as “heavy users” of social media, a term used in a similar way by Jones (2002) and Horrigan (2007) (Horrigan, 2007; Jones, 2002). This may have partly been an effect of the recruitment process where participants were contacted through Twitter using a post that was also shared as a screenshot on Instagram and Facebook. Although there are limitations associated with studying heavy users in particular, these users provided great insights on their instagramming practices as many of them had already reflected on their own behavior and were willing to talk about them, providing rich descriptions of both Instagram use as well as social media use in general. Eleven of the sixteen participants were women and five were men. The youngest participant was 19 at the time of the first interviews in 2012, and the oldest was 38 years old. Three of the participants were students, and thirteen worked in a variety of industries. Each of the participants visited the museum for approximately one hour.



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Table 1: Overview of participants in interviews, 2012

Username	Age	Gender	Occupation	Posts	Username	Age	Gender	Occupation	Posts
wieslander	19	F	Shop assistant	5	stinablom	31	F	Copywriter	5
johanssonsanna	28	F	Consultancy support	5	ccsteen	28	M	Group home worker	8
ruggighund	30	M	Art director	2	eandrie	23	F	Student	16
mariaskoeld	24	F	Insurance agent	0	pal031	29	M	Student/sales	10
rickybobby	27	M	Information officer	5	ramonacarlsson	27	F	Marketer	2
lillastuga	27	F	Home care worker	4	schmia	29	F	Marketer	2
marycherryz	26	F	Student	6	isruf	26	F	Student	9
sammets	29	F	Journalist	4	nomethod	38	M	Digital producer	16

Following collection, analysis of the two complementary data sets was structured as follows. The two first authors of Paper 2 began working with dataset one without having looked at dataset two. This had the implication that they were not influenced by discussions in the interviews (that I conducted) and they did not know how the instagrams in dataset two might differ from those of dataset one. By constraining ourselves to the material available from the general instagramming public during this initial analysis phase, our intention was to begin with the data produced without any researcher intervention. Based on dataset one, my co-authors categorized the content and features of the 123 instagrams. This analysis included taking into account what the photo in an instagram represented as well as how it was manipulated and the captions and hashtags added by the user. In addition, the sequences of instagrams posted by users from the museum were analyzed. Using this initial categorization as a guide, all three of us analyzed the instagrams produced by the recruited participants in dataset two. These instagrams differed from those in dataset one as a result of our methodological approach. It is likely that some of the participants created more instagrams from the visit than they would have done without our intervention. In addition, the 99 instagrams in dataset two do not represent all the categories identified in our preliminary taxonomy of dataset one. Most significantly, since 14 of the 16

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participants visited the museum alone, none of the instagrams they created contained pictures of co-visitors or people interacting with exhibits.

It has been noted that a common approach to studying visual objects is to base the analysis on “finished products, rather than the processes through which these products were assembled. Consequently, the design rationales of the original composers of the objects are not directly available to researchers, but have to be inferred” (Greiffenhagen, 2013, p. 129). Through analysis of dataset two, as much as possible of the creation process leading up to the published instagrams was incorporated. While the analysis of dataset one was conducted with relatively limited knowledge of the context in which the instagrams were created, it was then complemented by the interviews during which participants discussed their considerations when creating the instagrams in dataset two. For the analysis in this thesis, an inductive and data-driven, qualitative, user-centered perspective, taking an ethnographically inspired path was suitable. For a definition of ethnography, David Silverman (Silverman, 2006) turns to the words of Brewer (2000) stating that:

*Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘field’ by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher directly in the setting, if not also in the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner*

(Brewer, 2000, p. 6 in Silverman, 2006, p. 114).

Choosing to complement my ethnographically inspired field work and collection of instagrams with in-depth interviews came out of an interest in gaining social media users’ own descriptions of their social media use. An interest in people’s stories is often the reason motivating in-depth

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interviews as a research method and the purpose is rarely to get specific answers to questions, to test hypotheses or to evaluate. Instead,

*“At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience”*

(Seidman, 2006, p. 9).

Interviews are often relevant as a research method as a way to “gain further understanding of the motivations and strategies underlying interactions and practices” (Dempsey, 2010). The interviews conducted for this thesis were semi-structured and followed an interview guide covering questions regarding participants’ museum visits (such as frequency, preferences etc.), photography practices (smartphone camera use versus use of traditional cameras) and social media use (frequency, time spent, network, apps, etc.). The interviews were conducted with the aim of letting participants “offer their own definitions of particular activities” (Silverman, 2006, p. 15). At the end of each interview, for approximately 20 of the 60 minutes, participants were shown the instagrams they had just produced during their museum visit. This was done as a way to get access to how they reasoned about producing the instagrams and link their descriptions of social media practices to actual content. This way of showing the participants their own instagrams as a way to stimulate discussion during interviews was inspired by the stimulated recall technique (Dempsey, 2010). Stimulated recall as a technique has been used in ethnographic studies (Dempsey, 2010) within a range of different fields, such as in studies of teaching (Calderhead, 1981) and psychology (Kagan, Krathwohl, & Miller, 1963) where individuals are introduced to audio or audiovisual recordings of their own behavior in social situations during interviews to discuss different aspects

of the recordings. Traditional in-depth interviews can help us gain understanding of motivations and strategies that underlie interactions and practices (Dempsey, 2010). However, if relying solely on the descriptions of informants out of memory, descriptions of remembered actions rather than descriptions of what actually happened are common, as “Motivations and rationales that informants describe retrospectively may not conform to those that they actually held in the moment of the experience” (Dempsey, 2010, p. 349). Stimulating memory through photographs or video through the stimulated recall technique “brings informants a step closer to the moments in which they actually produce action” (Dempsey, 2010, p. 349). Showing the users their own instagrams and encouraging them to reflect upon these, was a way to link their reflections to actual productions, not only to their memory of them.

### 5.4.2 Phase 2: Revisiting social media use

With the aim of exploring user perceptions of social media as skills, practices and platforms develop, I did a follow-up study in 2017 where I returned to the same informants as in Phase 1 and conducted video-recorded semi-structured, stimulated recall interviews with them again. All of the 16 informants from the first interviews were invited and eleven chose to take part. In a similar way to Phase 1, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews. During these interviews, questions similar to those asked in the first study were asked building upon the same interview guide as Phase 1 as a starting point. Participants were also encouraged to talk freely about their social media use. In addition to asking questions from the interview guide, I showed the participants short snippets from the videotaped interviews they took part in five years earlier, asking them to reflect and comment on their social media use then and to

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reason about their earlier statements to get access to their own analyses of their social media use. This was done in order to connect their reflections to specific previous comments and avoid general, vague reflections on earlier social media use. When the interviews were conducted in 2017, the majority of the participants had undergone life changes. Apart from being five years older, some had changed their occupation, had children or moved and the impact of such life changes on their social media use was also discussed.

Table 2: Overview of participants in interviews, 2017

Informant	M/F	Age 2012	Age 2017	Occupation 2012	Occupation 2017
1	F	19	24	Shop assistant	Student
2	M	27	32	Information officer	Project manager
3	F	27	32	Home care worker	Medical secretary
4	F	26	31	Student	Teacher
5	F	29	34	Journalist	Journalist
6	F	31	36	Copywriter	Copywriter
7	M	28	33	Group home worker	Marketing manager
8	F	23	28	Student	Purchaser
9	F	29	34	Marketer	Marketer
10	F	26	31	Student	On parental leave
11	M	38	43	Digital producer	Strategic digital producer

In the first study, the participants had visited a museum and instagrammed their visit prior to the interview. In Phase 2, eight of the interviews were conducted onsite at the University of Gothenburg and three were conducted through Facebook video call. In Phase 2, the interview guide had been slightly revised, mainly due to technical evolvments. Questions concerning their museum visiting habits had also been excluded for the benefit of additional questions related to more general use of social media. The interviews were video-taped, fully transcribed and analyzed in NVivo. The data was coded for examples of how the participants talked about their own as well as others' use of social media. Second, thematic analysis

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was used to identify and analyze themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method where Braun and Clarke respond to criticisms of qualitative research from those outside the field who have the perception “that anything goes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 95). They detail a step-by-step guide to analysis with guidelines for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). For Braun and Clarke, a theme “captures something important in the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (2006, p. 82). Thematic analysis is flexible and “the ‘keyness’ of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In this sense, thematic analysis is not a linear process, but rather recursive and involves moving between and searching across a data set to find repeated patterns and meaning, and to search for and review themes.

Through an exploration and combination of different methods, where stimulated recall interviews conducted with the same informants five years apart have been in focus, in this thesis I have developed a way of studying different aspects of social media use. In Phase 1, ethnographically inspired fieldwork, online collection of instagrams and stimulated recall interviews provided an initial basis for understanding social media practices such as producing, sharing and interacting with content. In Phase 2, the stimulated recall interviews, where informants reflected on their own five-year-old statements, provided valuable insights on the evolvement of social media use over time. Paper 2 and 3 are based on data from Phase 1. Paper 1 and 4 are based on data collected in both phases. Combined, the data from

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these two phases has contributed to findings supporting an argument for how social media use can be meaningful as a category of activity and how social media skills and perceptions change as practices and platforms develop.





## 6. Summary of findings and contribution of thesis

In this chapter, the main findings from each of the four papers in this thesis will be summarized. Following this, I will suggest how each of these contributes to knowledge of what social media use is and how it can be understood. These contributions are reflections of the aim of the thesis, to describe how people use social media and to provide new insights on social media practices. In order to provide these insights, the research questions have been:

RQ1) What is social media use and how is it meaningful as a category of activity?

RQ2) What kind of skills are necessary to engage in social media activity and how do these change as practices and platforms develop?

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RQ3) How do perceptions of social media as a type of activity change as practices and platforms develop?

RQ1 aims to conceptualize the notion of social media use and answer the question of what constitutes social media use and unpack why and how it is meaningful to understand it as a category of activity. With RQ2, the aim is to identify and describe the kind of skills people acquire when engaging in social media; to characterize and illustrate the skills needed and developed when engaging in social media practices. RQ3 refers to the evolution of social media use over time and aims to locate how perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. In the following, I will summarize how the findings from each of the four papers included in this thesis contributes to answering these research questions.

*Paper 1* is an extended version of the published work-in-progress-paper “*Conceptualizing ‘Use’ in Social Media Studies*” (Jungselius & Weilenmann, 2018). Written in 2018, this paper serves as an introduction to social media use for this thesis. While other papers (such as Paper 2) were written earlier, reading about the conceptualization of social media use first provides a helpful introduction and frames the very subject of the thesis: social media use. Arranging this paper first also helps the reader to understand the papers that follow. In Paper 1, my co-author and I argue for a revised and wider definition of the concept of social media use based on how social media use is talked about and conceptualized by users themselves. Building upon data from both phases of this study, that paper presents examples of a variety of social media uses and show how social media users orient towards social media even when they are not actively engaged with their phones and computers. Users reported engaging in

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activities ranging from active involvement with producing content as well as managing relationships and time, to more passive ways of planning and monitoring social media activities. In a permanently online, permanently connected world (Vorderer et al., 2017), online and offline interaction is difficult to separate. Therefore, we argue that it is problematic to measure social media use in terms of time spent online, as there is no consensus on what constitutes use. Because of this, we need to move beyond the traditional ways of conceptualizing how people live with technology and incorporate additional, sometimes seemingly passive, involvement as well. In this paper we show examples of different aspects shaping social media use and how depending on their level of engagement, users tend to experience different feelings ranging from concerns about spending too much time on social media, to not spending enough time on, for instance, taking and sharing their own pictures. Social media users both passively consume content in social media, but they engage in production and management of their content as well. We also found it interesting that our informants oriented towards what can be described as a kind of moral for social media use, describing a pressure felt for having to attend to certain social duties, but at the same time not wanting to be the kind of person who is always on their phone. This sort of negotiating between multiple kinds of use sheds light on the complexity and interplay between the many elements and socially regulated practices involved in social media use. Although arguing for a widening of the definition of social media use, we suggest that care be taken not to widen the definition too much, as in equating social media use with “being online”. Social media use still relies upon specific practices, and we argue that both those practices that are more active and those that are more passive, need more attention within the social media studies field.

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*Paper 2* presents work conducted on social media use during the first phase of this thesis through descriptions of the documenting and sharing practices of visitors in a museum context. The paper shows how museum visitors use mobile technologies and social media to document and share their experiences, before, during and after their visit. Based on data collected in Phase 1, this paper was one of the first contributions to the field to focus on Instagram use. It examines the resources used and the aspects considered which shape the creation of social, multi-layered, aesthetic documents of museum experiences. The main findings from this paper concern insights on how users balance compositional concerns, create collections of instagrams and engage with online audiences. What was clear from the data used for this paper, was that instagrammers (users of Instagram) expend a lot of effort on creating their final products; the instagrams. Participants expressed balancing different compositional concerns when instagramming, such as subject choice (as in the photographic sense of the term), aesthetic qualities and captioning. Some users created narratives to “tell a story” by presenting collections, introducing a sequence with a cover photo and using hashtags to present curations of their own that re-categorize the museum exhibition. Most participants engaged with online audiences, extending their dialogue beyond the museum. Sometimes they included these others in their Instagram narratives by mentioning them, using their @ handles, and in some cases, their interactions even resulted in them changing their story as online audiences commented or reacted on their postings. In one especially interesting case, a picture posted on Instagram resulted in a conversation continuing on to Twitter, affecting further postings on Instagram. In this case, feedback from this instagrammer’s online audience was taken into account in the creation of her subsequent

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instagrams. Based on this, my co-authors and I argue that instagramming as a practice goes beyond Instagram as a platform, both in terms of production and interaction. For instance, users sometimes uploaded instagrams containing photos that were edited using other applications. Also, we saw how communication around instagrams can simultaneously take place on other social media platforms in ways that affect subsequent instagramming. Connecting Instagram to other social media like Twitter and Facebook makes it possible for the conversation around instagrams to continue and spread beyond the Instagram platform. It is therefore important to avoid considering the practice of instagramming as an activity that solely occurs within Instagram as an isolated platform. Had we only studied final products, finished instagrams, we would not have gained these valuable insights on the process leading up to and following their publication.

Also based on data collected in Phase 1, *Paper 3* examines a specific social media practice; liking, i.e. the use of “Like buttons”. The research questions answered in this paper concern micro-interaction through Likes, the meaning users add to Likes, how they use Likes themselves, and how they interpret the meaning of the Likes they receive and do not receive. In addition to the meaning intended by developers, i.e. being able to express fondness of content with a simple click, the descriptions made by the users and reported in this paper show that to many, Likes are anything *but* simple expressions of fondness. Supporting previous work suggesting that Likes can have multiple meanings (Hayes et al., 2016b), I conclude that in addition to interpreting multiple possible meanings of Likes received, users also tend to interpret a meaning for Likes they do not receive. Likes can have multiple meanings and in order to understand

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them, users find social reference points to interpret them. Examples of social reference points created and described in the paper are the use of existing or non-existing relationships or basing interpretations on previous liking behavior. Of particular interest, and somewhat surprising, was the important part Likes play in general social media interaction. Not only are the Likes received of great importance to social media users, but absent Likes are to a great extent interpreted as interactional gestures as well. Absent Likes are sometimes interpreted as a “telling silence”, almost as being an act of withholding expected social support (Cobb, 1976). Paper 3 highlights that there is a difference between liking a photograph and “Liking” on Instagram. A Like is not always a symbol of endorsement of content, but rather a representation of a range of information which is interpreted within a social context. Pressing the Like button is not only a technical action, but rather part of a social expression adapted to a set of social rules that regulates this practice. Apart from technical possibilities, platform norms regulate the use of the platform, shaping the platform vernacular. Technically, the act of clicking a Like button might be considered lightweight and a simple endorsement of content, but socially, this non-text feedback to social media content encompasses a range of complex social practices.

In *Paper 4*, data from both phases of the study were analyzed and compared. In this paper, my co-author and I examined how social media users reflect upon their own development as social media users over time and outline four prominent influencing factors that have had an impact on that development: changes in life and time management, changes in technical capabilities, changes in privacy preferences and changes in modes of engagement. Although previous work has contributed with

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important insights on social media use, there are limitations to these studies. For instance, little work has been conducted on how technology mediated social practices develop over time, with informants often consisting of a representative population of a homogenous group (e.g. young graduate students). In previous longitudinal work on social media use, it has been very rare to follow the same informants over time. In Paper 4, we contribute to previous work by presenting findings from qualitative data from both Phase 1 and 2, collected five years apart where the informants were varied in terms of age and occupation. They were interviewed in semi-structured interviews where we asked them questions and showed them snippets of film from their interviews in 2012 to stimulate reasoning and reflection on their own use of social media. Based on this work, we were able to show an evolution in how users spend their time in social media, where some users admit to having moved towards a higher frequency of activity but less engagement in terms of how they interact with peers and produce and share content. In this paper, we also show that there has been a clear move from engaging in public interaction towards keeping conversations more private. We discuss the factors that influence changes in social media practices, and conclude that although having undergone life changes and sometimes switched platforms and changed some behaviors, users' approaches towards social media has in many ways stayed stable.

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Table 3. Summary of paper contributions

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Main contribution</b>	<b>Phase</b>
<b>Paper 1. Talking about Social Media Use</b>	Insights on variety of levels of engagement in different social media practices that constitute social media use.	1 & 2
<b>Paper 2. Instagram at the museum: Communicating the Museum Experience through Social Photo Sharing</b>	Insights on specific part of social media use; social photography, heavy on the role of the technology; production process, sharing and interacting.	1
<b>Paper 3. “She liked the picture so I think she liked it”: Unpacking the social practice of liking</b>	Insights on additional specific social practice; liking, not linked to a platform or technology.	1
<b>Paper 4. Same Same But Different: Changes in Social Media Practices Over Time</b>	Insights on engagement in social practices and changes in social media use over time. Methodological contribution.	1 & 2

For the final chapter of this thesis, I will return to the research questions and provide answers to them based of the findings presented in the four papers. The contributions of each paper will be discussed with the goal of presenting an overall perspective on the new insights on social media use gained through this study.



## 7. Discussion

In the beginning of my PhD, I was especially interested in *the needs and reasons* for using social media. I wondered *why* do people use social media? *Why* do people share pictures online? Over the course of my studies, however, I have become more interested in *expectations* of social media and the granularity of social media use itself. I have also experienced a shift in my interests in terms of a movement from an interest in use of tools and applications to a wider interest in mediated micro-interaction on, and across, platforms. This has of course partly to do with the fact that what was introduced as a mobile application (Instagram) has today turned into a multi-million-dollar platform. My studies have also supported my initial hunch that social media is not a teen phenomenon that only a limited group of early adopters engage in, but rather a social transformation that had, and still has, societal consequences. The shift to social media playing an important role in our everyday lives has happened gradually and been difficult to grasp, both for researchers and users.

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In this thesis, I have studied descriptions and perceptions of social media use at two different points in time, 2012 and 2017. During this time, many applications have become platforms and the acts of logging on and logging off have become being permanently online and permanently connected. Despite the significant impact of this massive change in how people interact, our understanding of it as a social transformation is still limited. What are the consequences on both an individual level as well as on a societal level? What happens with the concept of “use” when the user is always online? Is non-use even possible when the mediating tool is always on and connected? And if so, how does one study an activity that never ends? In this thesis, some of these questions are problematized through analysis of social media users talking about and describing their own use. This thesis also shows that a lot of work goes into using social media. There are a number of examples of how people balance, plan and monitor social media interaction before, after and in-between their postings. There are also examples of expressions of a social media morality where users explain relation to social duties such as liking the right pictures, spending enough time on commenting friends’ posts and reaching out through the right channel. However, this work and the processes leading up to posting and interaction through visible interaction are not always visible. For this thesis, I have aimed to unpack and describe these often-invisible practices to make this work visible.

Large variation in uses show that it is no longer accurate to talk about “social media use” as one thing, and one thing only. Social media use consists of a number of practices that sometimes span cross-platforms, and sometimes play out within only a very local sub-community within only one platform. The activities also range between being actively

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engaged in activities that leave digital traces like pressing buttons and posting pictures to more passive and often less visible involvement such as monitoring and planning future interaction. This range makes it difficult to measure social media use in terms of “time spent”. In the remainder of this chapter, I will unpack this argument, discuss the findings from my studies in relation to previous work and use the theoretical framework chosen for this thesis to synthesize them further.

### 7.1 What social media use is

My first research question asks for a conceptualization of the notion of social media use and insight into what constitutes social media use and why and how it is meaningful as a category of activity. Based on my studies, and with the framework chosen for this thesis, I argue that social media use consists of social practices that people engage in on different levels of involvement. Social media use is to engage in social practices such as planning, monitoring, producing, consuming, sharing and interacting around content. It is to make use of affordances to produce, share and interact in social media, to engage in a community of practice, to be familiar with idioms of practice, and to act according to the social rules that regulate those practices. Social media consists of users, shaping the platform vernacular and the idioms of practice within their communities of practice. These evolve over time; they are not static. Social media use is shaped both by design and technical capabilities as well as by the social practices that users engage in. Habits, aesthetic preferences and social concerns are as involved in shaping the use of a social technology as technical capabilities are. As is illustrated in the findings of this study, even when provided with the same technical features on different platforms, users tend to use different social media platforms in different ways. Also,

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as highlighted by Gershon (2010) mentioning that each and every one of the participants in her studies suggested different kinds of use of Facebook, people make use of the same social media platforms differently.

To synthesize the different activities and practices involved based on the findings of this study, I suggest describing social media in the way visualized in Figure 1 below. Social media use plays out in a permanently online, permanently connected world where the local social surroundings and physical settings influence social media interaction in non-physical spaces, and vice versa. The activities that people engage in include passive involvements such as planning and monitoring and more active involvements such as producing and posting content. However, in addition to these content production activities, I propose that there is a need to recognize the social media specific activity of “partaking” where involvement might be more active (as in commenting) or more passive (as in “lurking”). The activities affect each other and users often engage in them simultaneously (see Figure 1).

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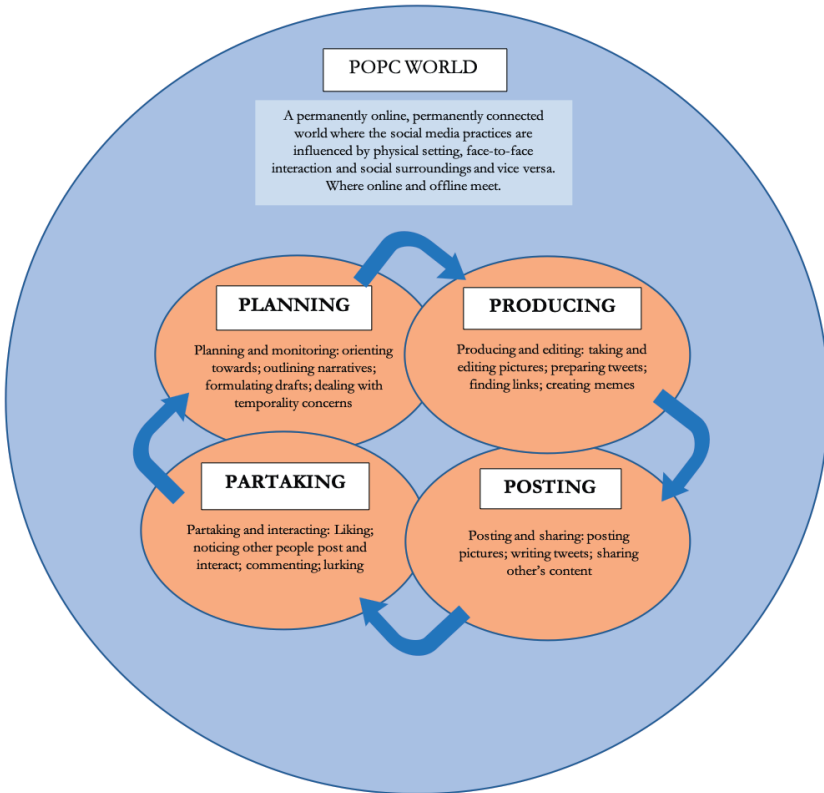


Figure 1. Using social media

In Paper 2, instagramming is described as a social practice that moves beyond Instagram. Social interaction on a specific social media platform is often situated within a broader social media use (Smith, 2011) and a feature enabled by one application is rarely used as an isolated function, but rather as “an activity that is strategically integrated with a larger suite of social media applications in concert with each other, for defined purposes” (Smith, 2011, p. 3). Not only being practiced within a broader online context, social media use is also situated within a face-to-face context. As noticed by McMillan, McGregor and Brown, smartphone use

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takes place alongside involvements with co-present activities and other people (McMillan, McGregor, & Brown, 2015). In a similar way, so does social media use. The social practices involved in social media use are always situated in a non-physical context, with co-present activities and the presence of other people possibly influencing the scene. In a permanently online, permanently connected world (Vorderer et al., 2017), the act of logging in and logging off when using social media is often made irrelevant. Rather, social media use in such a world has more to do with being more or less actively involved, than being online or offline.

When analyzing the data for Paper 1, it was noticeable that users describe their social media use in a variety of ways. By examining how users talk about their social media activities and engagement, it was possible to let the users themselves steer the direction towards a revised concept of social media use. When they talk about their social media activities, they sometimes describe their practices simply in terms of use. For example, they talk about time they spent *using* a certain app, they describe themselves *using* different platforms and applications in different ways and they talk about themselves as being passive or active *users* of certain social media services. On other occasions, they use other terms when they describe their social media practices. They mention *scrolling, looking, peeking, opening an app, checking, posting* and similar to describe their use in a way that is more about the actual details of the activity. Sometimes, they focus instead on the particular platform in their descriptions by saying that they are *instagramming, facebookking, tweeting, snapping* etc. rather than saying that they *use* each specific platform. These different ways of formulating their social media engagement problematizes the seemingly simple term “use”. In addition to these active kinds of use, participants also described a type

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of behavior where social media is being continuously monitored. They reported an ongoing form of awareness of what was happening online, even when not using their phones or actively checking it. This included activities such as keeping a Facebook tab open on their computer even when not looking at it, or even being an active Facebook member at all mainly as a way to get invites to events and avoid missing out on social activities. It was noticeable that people orient towards social media even when not actively using a specific application or visiting a certain web page. They plan their activities and monitor their accounts in ways that are not always visible to us if only studying the results of the produced content that is being posted and shared online. Instead of focusing mainly on content analysis of Instagram pictures, studying the spread of tweets or number of Likes received on certain Facebook posts, we also need to consider the more difficult to capture processes leading up to posting of these products online. Social media users' reasoning on the process and the ways in which social media use is conceptualized by the users themselves has to be taken into consideration in studies of social media use. By including these perspectives in addition to analysis of the process and results, we can gain a greater understanding of what constitutes social media use.

In this thesis, it is argued that it is problematic to use time spent as a measurement when understanding social media use. A common approach within both large-scale national studies aiming to map out citizens' media use (Findahl, 2016; Nordicom Sverige Göteborgs Universitet, 2016), among researchers (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Bondad-Brown et al., 2012) as well as in the marketing industry (Asano, 2017), is to consider social media use in terms of time spent daily on a platform. Not only is this limiting in

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terms of understanding of how social media is being used, it is also the case, that social media is usually used alongside other media, such as watching television, which makes it difficult to measure actual spent time and focus on which media (Doughty, Rowland, & Lawson, 2012). If users and researchers define time spent on social media differently, this raises potential methodological concerns. If the definition of use is too narrow, researchers who study social media use may risk losing insights into interesting social practices that would not be included in a traditional definition. For instance, having a Twitter account and using push notifications when someone mentions, likes or retweets their content would allow a user to be available in a sense, even when not using the Twitter application. With a revised, richer definition of social media use, this would constitute a monitoring sort of social media use.

Social media users describe how they orient to social media as part of their everyday activities in a fluid way, where active engagement is no longer the only form of use. In a permanently online, permanently connected world (Vorderer et al., 2017), the act of logging in and logging off when using social media is no longer relevant. Social media use in such a world has more to do with being more or less actively involved than with being online or offline. Social media use consists of different social practices requiring different levels of involvement that range between a more passive, monitoring kind of use to a more active kind of use, where users manage their time, their relationships and their production of content. Therefore, I argue that in a permanently online, permanently connected world, we need to move beyond activity-oriented ways of conceptualizing how people live with technology and incorporate additional, sometimes seemingly passive, involvement as well.



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Another feature of the findings of this study is that social media users orient towards a kind of morality of social media use. Some described feeling pressured to attend to certain social duties, but at the same time not wanting to be the kind of person who is always on their phone. This sort of negotiating between multiple kinds of use sheds light on the complexity and interplay between the many elements and socially regulated practices involved in social media use. In terms of morality then, the massive impact that social media use has had on social interaction is neither all good nor all bad, but there is rather a tension between different aspects of it. In 2004, Ling described a similar tension while looking into the social consequences of mobile technology. Ling emphasized that although people complained about mobile phones becoming intrusive and sometimes interrupting sociality, people also tended to rely on and personalize their phones. He noted that, “It helps us coordinate our lives while on the run: it provides us with a sense of safety and gives us accessibility to others. We personalize the device, and in doing so we make a statement as to who we are and how we want to be seen” (Ling, 2004, p. 7). A similar kind of ongoing negotiation between needs and reasons for using social media has been described in previous work, such as Buehler’s (2017) study of how Facebook users negotiate between emotional needs and social restrictions. Based on my work for this thesis, I see such negotiations as glimpses into the process shaping idioms of practice, where users verify and negotiate their “implicit and explicit intuitions about using different technologies that they have developed with their friends, family members and co-workers” (Gershon, 2010, p. 6).

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Summarizing the discussion following this first research question, I argue for a widening of the definition of social media use where more passive involvement in social media use, as it is traditionally defined, is included. However, we need not widen the definition too much, and need to take care to avoid equating social media use with “being online”. Social media use still relies upon specific activities and practices, and these practices, both the active and the more passive ones, need more attention within the social media studies field. Figure 1 above summarizes different dimensions of social media use. Although these play out in a non-physical context, social media users are always situated within a physical context as well, with other people and surroundings influencing the scene. The four dimensions indicated in the figure are affected by each other and the activities contained in each category often take place in parallel. The contexts overlap and so to do the activities that the practices consist of. Planning of content is not necessarily separated from the production of it and posting is sometimes an interactional activity. What is important, is to consider how these dimensions can be at play at the same time and how they influence each other. For example, when partaking, social media users notice what others’ do which affects their further use. If they notice a specific kind of content receiving a certain kind of feedback, they might take this into account when planning, producing and posting their own content.

Use of social media is complex even though it relies on what might be characterized as a simple need to communicate. Equally, it is neither good nor bad, yet there can be more or less appropriate uses of it. What may be considered to be appropriate shifts within one community and social context and may not be appropriate in another. Social media is not only

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taking place online nor is it only situated within a physical space. Social media interaction is both local and distant at the same time. Likes are not worth a lot nor are they worthless and people are not online or offline. With all this complexity and tensions at play, it is important to remember that values, meanings and idioms of practices are negotiated and determined by the actors involved and the social context surrounding them.

### 7.2 Social media skills

With the second research question, the aim has been to identify and describe the skills people acquire when engaging in social media; to characterize and illustrate the skills needed and developed when engaging in social media practices. To be able to engage in social media practices, such as planning, producing, posting and partaking, people develop social media skills. These skills are part technical, part social and are acquired through social participation. Being able to use social media is also related to making use of affordances, i.e. what is offered within the technology both in terms of technical capabilities as well as more socially equipped affordances. Technical skills make it possible to edit pictures, download the right mobile application, or press the right buttons, but users also develop social skills such as being familiar with the rules for Liking, knowing who should end a relationship first on Facebook, or being able to argue in comment threads. Users learn to understand social rules that regulate the practices that social media use consists of. They learn specific platform vernaculars (Gibbs et al., 2015) and they learn the idioms relevant within their particular communities of practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Gershon, 2010). Social media users acquire both more general social media skills as well as skills related to specific social platform

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practices, such as social photography on Instagram or retweeting on Twitter. As many technical features and affordances are relatively similar on the large social media platforms in use today, what sets the social platforms apart from each other are the different cultures and social norms that shape their platform vernacular.

It is by using social media that users learn how to do it. They learn how to make use of technical features and they learn how to interact with other users. In order to be able to engage in the social media practices that constitute social media use, they need to learn a set of skills. Being able to engage in social media interaction requires modal, technical and social skills. The findings from this study show that social photography, for instance, requires all three. A social photographer needs to be able to handle different modes of expression, such as visual and textual. In addition, they need technical skills, such as knowing how to take and possibly edit a photo before sharing it. Apart from these, they need to gain knowledge about the social codes and norms that interaction on a platform builds upon. Both technical features and social rules regulate use of social media. To be able to use social media, skills are needed and acquired, both in terms of technically oriented skills as well as more socially emphasized skills. Increasing access to new communication technology means that the requirements in terms of what one must master to be considered competent, are constantly evolving. When writing a letter, reading a book or talking on the phone, one usually uses a limited set of communicative recourses. What is noticeable when interacting in social media on the other hand, is that the array of accessible tools for interacting, is larger and constantly increasing. As compared to traditional media, where production and consumption phases are clearly separated,

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with social media, these processes are not separated as distinctly. When using a social photography application for instance, the production process and the consumption process might occur at the very same time with a sharing process usually added somewhere along the way.

In all four papers within this thesis, it is shown that a lot of effort, work and engagement goes into planning, producing, posting and partaking in social media, often more than what might be accounted for at first glance. Paper 2 identifies how, when instagramming, people balance compositional concerns such as subject choice (in the photographic sense of the term), aesthetic qualities and captioning, and how users create stories and present collections, introduce a sequence with a cover photo and use hashtags to present curations of their own. How users engage with online audiences, extending their dialogues beyond their immediate physical context is also shown. Paper 3 unpacks liking and shows the underlying mechanisms that regulate how this seemingly simple expression is used for interacting. The findings show how for many users, liking has evolved into a social media language of its own. Liking and more generally, the activities of planning, producing, posting and partaking in social media are examples of activities that involve social media skills. These skills are learned through participation, and are regulated by underlying social norms. Social media use is shaped by a number of technical, social and cultural aspects. Chalfen (1987) distinguished between technical and social skills that regulate use of a technology, Gibson provided us with the concept of affordances which may be used to describe the relationship between a technology and a user (Gibson, 1979), and Norman added the aspect of cultural restraint as an additional explanation for how technology use is shaped (Norman, 1999). Agreed

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upon uses for affordances in social media can be considered in terms of idioms of practice (Gershon, 2010). Part of the reason why communicative technologies encourage people to form idioms of practice is that new technologies present people with a range of problems, both social and technical, for which solutions must be sought through conversations with each other in communities of practice. The studies of this thesis illustrate how when becoming competent members of social media communities, users gain knowledge about the idioms of practice for how to plan, produce, post and partake in social media interaction.

In Paper 3, the poverty and the richness of one particular social media affordance, the seemingly simple action of liking on Instagram is unpacked. Although Likes are often referred to as lightweight interaction (Burke, Marlow and Lento, 2009), I argue that the practice of liking is not simple nor lightweight, but rather involves a complex form of social interaction that users learn to understand and engage in to be able to interact in a fulfilling way on Instagram. In Paper 3, it is shown that liking a photo on Instagram is not necessarily equivalent to actually liking the photo and that a simple Like may be expressed for a number of reasons and interpreted in a variety of ways. Other researchers have approached and struggled with similar issues related to the multiple possible meanings of computer-mediated expressions. For instance, Turkle (2011) noticed that for Facebook users there is an important distinction to be made between a friend and someone who has been friended on Facebook. As highlighted in the initial example in Paper 3, regarding the heart symbol replacing the star symbol on Twitter, users tend to make a clear distinction between favoriting something on Twitter and actually liking something in the sense that, “favoriting something on Twitter is not the same thing as

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liking it” (Whitten, 2015). In a similar way, there is a significant difference between liking a photograph and liking an Instagram, or as highlighted in the preface example; between liking a Facebook post and appreciating the meaning of it. From the findings presented in Paper 3 it is clear that a seemingly simple element of communication such as a single Like can mean a multitude of things and be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the social context. Due to this complexity, the value and meaning of Likes cannot be measured purely in terms of numbers. When liking an Instagram, it is not always the photograph in itself that is being liked but rather a Like can suggest a complex expression of appreciation of both explicit and implicit content. Examining a Like received from a friend, one informant stated that: “She liked the picture so I think she liked it”, highlighting this particular dilemma. The process of interpreting Likes is closely linked to the social context in which they are performed and not performed and is often perceived more as a form of social support (Cobb, 1976) than as an actual appreciation of the aesthetics of a photograph. The perceived meaning of a Like is regulated by the relationship between the person performing the Like and the person receiving it. A Like is not always a symbol of endorsement of content, but rather a representation of a range of information. Pressing the Like button is not only a technical action, but rather part of a social expression adapted to a set of social rules that regulates this practice. Interestingly, not only received Likes are interpreted and on some occasions, absent Likes are analyzed and valued as well. To Instagram users then, even absent Likes are sometimes viewed as information. Sometimes, absent Likes are even interpreted as the non-liker actively expressing dislike. Many Instagram users show a great awareness of who will like which of their photographs. Users perceive Likes as socially supportive even without implicit meaning

being associated with them (Wohn, Carr and Hayes, 2016). When Likes from particular followers are expected but missing, these non-Likes are sometimes interpreted as a lack of expected social support.

Apart from technical possibilities, platform norms regulate the use of a platform, shaping a platform vernacular (Gibbs et al., 2015). A central part of the platform vernacular of Instagram is knowing what and how to like. Although having a specific and, for the platform unique vernacular, it is problematic to consider any social media platform to be one unified space with a homogeneous set of communication rules that regulate all use on it. Use of a certain platform may rely on the same technical features, yet each user on each specific platform has their own network consisting of their own unique set of followers and users they follow which shape their social experiences in very different ways. Also, the social practices found on social media platforms are constantly changing as they are being engaged in and negotiated by the people interacting on them.

### 7.3 How social media practices develop and change

The third research question refers to the evolution of social media use over time, and aims to locate how perceptions change as practices and platforms develop. Changes in technology and user practices and the consequences those changes have had on social media use are specifically addressed in Paper 4. By returning to informants interviewed in Phase 1 and asking them to comment on five-year-old statements about their own social media use through stimulated recall interviews, the participants' own analyses and reflections on their development as social media users are made visible. Within the research field of social media use, there is a



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lack of work conducted on how technology mediated social practices change over time. As pointed out by Hogan and Quan-Haase, social media is a “moving target” (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010, p. 309), making it sometimes difficult to study the evolvments as social media platforms and social practices change over time. In the data collected in Phase 2 for this thesis this issue is addressed with findings reported in Paper1 and 4. From this work, I have been able to conclude that different factors have influenced evolvments in social media practices. The most prominent influencing factors that has had an impact on social media use over time were changes in life and time management, changes in technical capabilities, changes in privacy preferences, and changes in modes of engagement. However, despite having undergone life changes, changing behaviors and switching platforms, participants’ approaches to, and perceptions of, social media remained relatively stable.

The first prominent change that impacted how the informants use social media was *changes in life and time management*. Apart from all of the informants being five years older, the changes they had met during the time that had passed between the interviews included professional shifts such as graduating and starting a new job, becoming a full-time university student or moving to another town for work. They also included family related shifts such as having two children and deciding to stay at home with them, and relationship shifts such as getting engaged and moving in with a partner. These life changes impacted on participants’ social media practices, especially in terms of how they described spending their time on social media differently in relation to their everyday activities. Shifts in how they manage and spend their time on social media were described as

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having to do with both limited time at hand (due to having children or jobs requiring their attention) as well with shifted social priorities.

The second prominent change that impacted social media use was *changes in technical capabilities*. During the time of writing this thesis, communication technologies and social media platforms have evolved greatly. The possibilities for social media users to interact are greater today than in 2012 and a large variety of features, such as being able to interact through photo and video, text, GIFs and stickers, are to be found on most of the well-known and most heavily used social media platforms. Apart from becoming more technically advanced during these years, enabling users to consume, produce and share content in a number of ways, social platforms are more technically similar today than they were in 2012. The largest social media platforms; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, provide similar technical possibilities and different modes for expression are not linked as closely to particular platforms as they were in 2012 when, for example, Instagram was a photo sharing specific application and Twitter was a place for posting short 140-character text messages. As an example, the possibility to edit a photo within the Instagram application was limited in 2012, causing some users to turn to other photography applications when editing their photos before returning and sharing them with their online community on Instagram. Since then, however, Instagram has developed an extended array of photo editing possibilities, though even when provided with extended possibilities, there is no guarantee that users will make use of them the way that developers intended (see for instance Paper 3 and the discussion on difference between liking a photograph and Liking on Instagram). Also, despite now often being presented with the same or similar technical

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features on different platforms, the findings of this thesis show that users still tend to use similar features on different platforms differently. As Chalfen (1987) suggests, the use of a technology is shaped both by design and technical capabilities as well as the social practices that users engage in. Habits, aesthetic preferences and social concerns are as involved in shaping the use of a technology as technical capabilities are. Although social media platforms rely upon similar affordances today, not all users will engage with them in similar ways.

There has also been a clear development from engaging in public interaction towards keeping conversations more private, highlighting *changes in privacy preferences*. The informants in this study reported a change in how they treat and share information, where they initially were more inclined to share content with all their friends or followers, but now show more awareness about how much and with whom they share information. What might previously have taken place as open and public conversations has moved onto private and closed accounts, to chat groups, and messaging platforms.

In terms of *changes in modes of engagement*, the informants painted a picture of a multidimensional evolution of their own use of social media, where some described a higher frequency of use (as in how often they check an application) but also admitted to spending less time engaging with producing content themselves. There has been a clear shift in frequency and engagement in social media use where some informants claim that they use social media as much, or even more often than before. At the same time, they also describe being less engaged in posting statuses and editing pictures. The examples provided by the informants highlight the

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complex development of social media use over the last years. Some informants described a decrease in use, in terms of posting, writing of statuses and “fiddling” with pictures. However, there were also examples of increased use. One informant described using social media as often as before, “but not as thoroughly”, and another admitted to using social media even more now, but not being “as active herself”. By this, she made a distinction between types of engagement and implied that there is a difference between *checking* social media and *being active* on social media. This shift towards checking and consuming social media rather than primarily producing and publishing content oneself may be linked to Hall’s discussion on what constitutes social media interaction (Hall, 2018) and the argument that not all social media use is social interaction. These findings support Hall’s argument and also suggest that even though users engage more often, they do not always classify checking as being “active”. Checking may be frequent but the engagement it may be producing, in terms of sharing or interacting, may not be considered to be active use by users.

This way of using social media in a more consumption-oriented way, described in more detail in Paper 4, has similarities to watching TV or listening to a podcast. However, in addition to consuming entertainment, there is a social interactional factor to social media that is being consumed as well. Users of social media are “consuming” the lives of others. As argued by Hall, not all social media use clearly constitutes interaction, but in the interviews conducted in Phase 2, the informants described a complex behavior of consuming social media almost as a way of taking part in social life without actively being involved themselves. Building upon these findings and the work of Brandtzæg (Brandtzæg, 2012) an

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acknowledgement of the Consuming Socializer as a role in social media is suggested, e.g. the social media user who checks, monitors and consumes publicly displayed content, not as passively as the Lurker, but yet not as interactively as the Socializer.

Beside examples of how social media practices have changed over the years, the findings of this thesis also point towards some things staying relatively stable. At first glance, it might seem that the participants in this study have dramatically changed the way that they use social media. However, when looking more closely, it is clear that they describe similar practices taking place to the ones they described five years earlier just on other platforms and through other channels. Some social media users may have switched to other platforms, but many of their social practices have stayed the same. Although technologies and platforms are changing and evolving, many of the social practices that people engage in using them stay the same. The platform vernaculars may be different from platform to platform, idioms of practice may have evolved, affordances are continuously refined, but the behaviors and feelings towards social media that users describe and display are to a great extent the same.

Despite the apparent stability, however, there is an ongoing, continually changing evolution. What is required to be able to participate in social media practices is not static. Technical features become more complex and social rules and conventions change over time. As argued by Norman, “conventions are not arbitrary: they evolve, they require a community of practice” (Norman, 1999, p. 41). The communities of practices found in social media are not always defined as intuitively as one might think. Lamb and Kling argue that users of a technology do not see primarily themselves

as users (Lamb & Kling, 2003), “In fact, users don't think of themselves as having anything to do with the computer at all. They see themselves as professionals, working with others, and using computers in support of those interactions” (Lamb & Kling, 2003, p. 200). Considering this argument in relation to my work, I suggest that social media users today do not see themselves as users of social media, but rather as social individuals talking to friends, keeping up with family and interacting within their community of practice. Due to this, I argue for an acknowledgment of the participants’ perspective on social media use when defining social media platforms. Social media platforms are part of modern digital infrastructure yet, traditional platform literature seldom accounts for the individuals view on platforms. From the perspective taken in this thesis, a social media platform can be defined by the use of it, and by the practices users engage in as they interact on it. In 1996, Star and Ruhleder asked “when is an Infrastructure?” aiming to incorporate the end-user perspective into the conceptualization of infrastructure, emphasizing that “a tool is not just a thing with pre-given attributes frozen in time – but a thing becomes a tool in practice, for someone, when connected to some particular activity” (p. 112). Taking that question a step further in relation to social media, I ask: when is a platform? With my answer to that question, I suggest that a platform becomes a social platform as it is being used by the people interacting on it.

### 7.4 Limitations of this study and ideas for future work

During my time working on this thesis, some of my initial questions about social media use have been answered, but new questions have also arisen.

## DISCUSSION

For my thesis, I have mainly studied heavy users. These expert users have contributed with valuable insights that less frequent users would probably have had difficulties articulating. Their descriptions have been rich and have enabled me to understand specific aspects of social media use. However, the findings of my work are informed by a limited group of individuals. How transferable these findings are to other, more varied user groups, would be interesting to investigate in future work. For future studies, I would suggest including other user groups and following their developments in use. In order to fully understand the wide concept of users, one might need to turn to limited users and non-users.

The social practices found on social media platforms are constantly changing as they are being engaged in and negotiated by the people interacting through them. Because of this, social media today is not what it was in 2012 and will probably not be what it is in 2025. Research will need to continue to follow and widen our understanding of this shifting phenomenon. Although having reached a greater understanding of the consequences of social media use in everyday life, we are still far from fully understanding the possible magnitude of this social transformation. Apart from being a research field that has garnered great interest, some stubborn “social media myths”, such as social media causing depression anxiety and social isolation, also seem to live on. In future work, we need to continue to separate research from personal experiences and encourage further studies of the actual use of social media. Through the development of a methodological approach, i.e. following the same users over time and revisiting their previous statements in stimulated recall interviews, this thesis has contributed with a way of understanding shifts in social media use over time, a way of following and studying development in mediated

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interaction over time that may also be applicable to other areas. Future research would benefit from attending to how particular users develop practices on specific platforms or engage in specific mediated practices over time. For instance, one might examine possible similarities and differences between the social practices of liking on Instagram and liking on other social media platforms to contribute further to understanding the complexity of social media platform vernaculars. In this way we may gain insight into how, as Gibson put it, “we were created by the world we live in” (Gibson, 1979, p. 122).



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## 9. Svensk sammanfattning

### Inledning

Den här avhandlingen är skriven inom tillämpad IT, ett ämne som syftar till att beskriva hur människor använder sig av informationsteknologi. Majoriteten av befolkningen använder sig idag av olika former av informationsteknologier och många av oss lever mer eller mindre ständigt uppkopplade. Vi arbetar, shoppar och umgås över nätet och vi delar och tar del av nyheter och annan information i större utsträckning än någonsin tidigare. Sätten på vilka vi gör det omformas ständigt. Kommunikationsteknologier utvecklas, plattformar växer och våra kommunikationsmönster förändras. Under det senaste decenniet har den teknologimedierade interaktionen fullkomligt exploderat. Vi likear, swipear och checkar in. Vi följer och avföljer. Vi retweetar och vi blockar. Vi livesänder och vi taggar. Vi delar länkar och vi tar bilder, på andra och

på oss själva. Just att ta bilder på sig själv ansågs som ett så tidstypiskt fenomen med ett så kraftigt genomslag att Oxford Dictionaries 2013 utsåg "selfie" till årets nyord efter att ökningen av ordet beräknades ha ökat med 17,000 procent sedan föregående års nyord utsetts <sup>1</sup>.

I takt med att kommunikationsteknologier utvecklats och internetuppkoppling blivit snabbare och billigare har den uppkopplade interaktionen blivit mer avancerad, mer mobil och mer tillgänglig. Den ökade användningen av uppkopplade mobila teknologier, som smarta mobiltelefoner med inbyggda högkvalitetskameror, har bidragit till att interaktion, ofta med och kring bilder, i sociala medier för många har blivit en självklar del av vardagen. De förändrade kommunikationsmönstren har påverkat samhällets alla skikt, på såväl makro- som mikronivå. Nya krav ställs på företag i möten med kunder, på lärare i möten med elever, på nyhetskonsumenters källkritiska förmåga i möten med alternativa medier och på politiker i möten med medborgare och väljare. Det efterfrågas ett ansvarstagande från de större aktörerna, som Google, Amazon och Facebook och det har uttryckts önskemål om att tillsätta en sociala medier-minister med uppgift att hantera frågor som berör demokrati, rättigheter och integritet.

Utöver de samhälleliga aspekterna har den ökade teknologimedierade interaktionen även inneburit ett förändrat förhållningssätt till vår privata kommunikation. Vår sociala interaktion har i och med de senaste årtiondenas förändringar förflyttats till nya digitala platser, vilket har fått konsekvenser för var och hur vi shoppar och arbetar, hur vi interagerar med vänner och familj och hur vi tar del av nyhets- och

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/selfie-ar-arets-ord-i-england>



underhållningsmedia. Vi producerar och konsumerar sociala medier. Vi bevakar, postar och interagerar. Vi bidrar och vi tar del av. Det tidigare inramade fotot på skrivbordet finner vi nu i ett Instagramflöde, telefonsamtalet har kanske blivit ett videosamtal på Facebook och den som tidigare tog del av America's Funniest Home Videos ser nu kanske på TikTok-filmer eller Vines, tittar på memes på Twitter eller läser trådar på Reddit. Sociala medier har förändrat hur vi interagerar, både med varandra och med medier i sig. Trots den här pågående enorma förändringen vet vi fortfarande mycket lite om hur människor använder och förstår sig på sociala medier. Syftet med att skriva en avhandling om användning av sociala medier är därför att bidra med en förståelse för hur de här framväxande sociala mötesplatserna ser ut och fungerar och att beskriva den teknologimedierade mellanmänskliga interaktionen som sker på dessa platser.

### Bakgrund

Under det senaste decenniet har användningen av sociala medier ökat enormt och blivit en integrerad del av många människors vardag. Mobilapplikationerna på vilka den här sortens interaktion tog fart har vuxit och blivit stora, kommersiella medieplattformar. Det som i slutet av 2000-talet av många sågs som ett främmande och obeständigt fenomen som främst yngre ägnade sig åt, ses idag som en etablerad och självklar komponent i dagliga medievanor, oavsett ålder, utbildningsnivå och sysselsättning. En majoritet av oss använder idag sociala medier för att konsumera nyheter och bli underhållna, vi gör affärer och möter företag, organisationer, myndigheter och politiker och vi skapar och underhåller våra privata relationer.

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I takt med att användningen av sociala medier har ökat, har användarna av dessa utvecklat färdigheter som gör det möjligt att dokumentera och dela med sig av sina liv. Genom att interagera med andra användare, så lär de sig att förstå de underliggande sociala normerna som interaktionen bygger på. Förutom tekniska färdigheter som att ladda ner en specifik applikation, skapa en profil och trycka på rätt knapp finns det också ett antal sociala färdigheter som användare förvärvar när de lär sig använda sociala medier.

När vi började använda sociala medier var interaktionen primärt textbaserad. En tydlig konsekvens av den ökade användningen av välutvecklade, uppkopplade smarttelefoner med inbyggda avancerade kameror är att den visuella aspekten av sociala medier har blivit allt mer central. Användare har idag tillgång till fler uttryckssätt, som foto, video och möjlighet att skapa egna animationer, vilket har lett till att interaktionen idag är mer mångfacetterad än tidigare. Det här har i sin tur påverkat hur vi ser på, och definierar social media-interaktion. Att interaktion i sociala medier idag inkluderar fler sätt för oss att uttrycka oss på än med enbart text har bidragit till att det vi idag beskriver som interaktion i sociala medier är något annat än vad det var för tio år sedan. Förskjutningen har skett gradvis och har tyckts vara svår att fånga och beskriva, inte bara för användare själva utan även för forskare som ämnat förklara sociala mediernas utveckling. När användning av sociala medier omnämns i litteraturen tenderar forskare att åsidosätta faktumet att de sociala medierna som nämns inte är statiska. Sociala medier förändras konstant. De tekniska förutsättningarna har förändrats och plattformarna har genom åren tillhandahållit olika uttrycksmöjligheter, vilket påverkat hur användarna av dessa plattformar interagerat på dem. I takt med den

tekniska utvecklingen, så har även sociala medie-landskapet i stort förändrats. Nya appar utvecklas parallellt med att andra faller bort och befintliga användare följer med dit deras vänner, följare och kunder förflyttar sig.

Forskningsfältet växer, men trots det så vet vi fortfarande ganska lite om hur och varför människor använder sociala medier. Tidigare arbete har bidragit med många viktiga insikter, men trots detta har vi ännu en bit kvar om vi verkligen vill förstå hur människor hanterar och värderar sociala medier. I tidigare studier av mikro-interaktion i sociala medier har man till exempel studerat interaktion på specifika sociala plattformar och specifika sociala praktiker som att till exempel retweeta och favorita på Twitter, ta och dela selfies och att hantera separationer på Facebook. Det har i tidigare arbete varit vanligt att studera färdiga produktioner, som redan publicerade tweets och instagrabilder. Man har alltså primärt tittat på slutprodukten efter att den har delats och därmed åsidosatt den process som lett fram till att tweeten eller instagrabilden delats. Det har även varit vanligt att man studerat en förhållandevis homogen grupp, ofta bestående av yngre användare, särskilt vanligt är det att studenter förekommer som deltagare, vilket har gjort att generaliseringsmöjligheterna varit små. Utöver det faktum att det är representanter ur en relativt homogen grupp som studerats, har man vid ytterst få tillfällen följt samma deltagare över tid. I de longitudinella studier som gjorts har man istället återvänt till en liknande population, men i stort sett aldrig till samma individer. Vi har därför saknat kunskap om hur användningen av sociala medier förändras och utvecklas över tid. Dessutom tas centrala begrepp, som ”sociala medier”, ”vän” och ”gilla” många gånger för givna, vilket ger potentiella validitetsproblem om vi som

forskare definierar dessa begrepp på andra sätt än vad våra studieobjekt gör.

### Teoretiska utgångspunkter och begrepp

Den här avhandlingen tar avstamp i ett par antaganden. Dels beskrivs sammanhanget i vilket sociala medier används som en ständigt uppkopplad, ständigt sammankopplad värld. Eftersom vi inte längre loggar på eller av när vi använder internet, behöver vår definition av vad det är att göra så revideras. För att försöka förklara vad det innebär att använda sociala medier i en värld där tekniken vi använder för att göra det är ständigt uppkopplad och påslagen, används ett par centrala begrepp. Dessa är bland andra social media-interaktion, sociala medier-praktiker och -färdigheter, affordancer, praktikidiom och dialektala plattformsuttryck.

”Social interaktion” används i den här avhandlingen influerat av Erving Goffmans (1959) dramaturgiska metaforer, där människor antas förhålla sig till och påverkas av andra när de agerar och presenterar sig själva för andra. Även om Goffmans arbete kretsade kring ansikte-mot-ansikte-interaktion och fysisk närvaro, är koncepten fortfarande användbara och används ofta i studier om användning av teknologimedierad social interaktion i icke-fysiska utrymmen. Med teknologimedierad social interaktion i icke-fysiska utrymmen avses i den här avhandlingen till exempel interaktion i chattrum, kring en hashtag på Twitter, en bild på Instagram eller i ett kommentarfält efter en statusuppdatering på Facebook.

I den här avhandlingen ses att gilla bilder, ta selfies eller att engagera sig i Facebookgrupper som exempel på olika sociala medier-praktiker. Uttrycket hänvisar till de sociala aktiviteter som användare engagerar sig i när de använder sociala medier. Dessa är ibland plattformsknutna, men flyter lika ofta över olika plattformar och teknologier. De är ibland lokala och mycket specifikt avgränsade till en liten grupp användare, och de är ibland generella och allmänna och gäller för en majoritet av användare av sociala medier.

För att kunna använda sociala medier utvecklar användare ett antal färdigheter. Dessa kan vara av teknisk karaktär, som att lära sig ladda ner rätt app eller trycka på rätt knappar, och de kan vara av mer social karaktär, som att veta vilka bilder man ”ska” gilla eller att använda hashtags på ”rätt” sätt för att undvika att stöta sig med någon. Genom att förhålla sig till och använda sig av olika modala, tekniska och sociala affordancer (eller förutsättningar) som tillhandahålls i en teknologi utvecklar användarna dessa olika färdigheter. Genom social interaktion inom sitt nätverk utvecklas normer, praktikidiom och dialektala plattformsuttryck.

### Metod och tillvägagångssätt

Datan som ligger till grund för den här avhandlingen är insamlad i två faser, under 2012 och 2017. Centralt i arbetet har varit att utforska de olika möjligheter som funnits för att studera användning av sociala medier för att få en holistisk bild av de olika komponenterna som ingår. Som ett resultat har en unik metod utvecklats, där samma användares användning studerats med fem års mellanrum.

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För att fullständigt förstå användning av sociala medier, behöver man studera olika aspekter av användningen. Sociala medier används i en ständigt uppkopplad värld, där våra mobiltelefoner, som idag är den vanligaste teknologin som används för att engagera sig i sociala medier, i stort sett aldrig stängs av. Vi behöver förstå att trots att de plattformar där sociala medier-interaktionen blir synlig är förlagd till en uppkopplad och ej fysisk plats, utspelar sig användningen alltid i en fysisk social kontext där omgivningen på olika sätt påverkar. För att förstå hur sociala medier används behöver vi därför studera vad människor gör *på* sina telefoner, så väl som *med* sina telefoner och andra internetuppkopplade, interaktionsmedierande verktyg. Arbetet som ligger till grund för den här avhandlingen har varit etnografiskt inspirerat, induktivt och datadrivet. Centralt har varit att följa fenomenet, över fysiska och icke-fysiska gränser, över tid och rum och över teknologier och plattformar. I arbetet med att utforska möjligheter att beforska ett fenomen som är så centralt i mångas liv idag, men som trots det ännu saknar en given och självklar metod för att undersöka, utvecklades ett unikt metodologiskt tillvägagångssätt. Genom att följa samma användare över tid och jämföra deras uttalanden om sin egen användning av sociala medier med fem års mellanrum, skapades en möjlighet att få ett helhetsperspektiv på de olika faktorer som påverkar människors användning av sociala medier.

Studien är uppdelad i två faser. Första fasen innefattade dels etnografiskt inspirerat fältarbete, där data samlades in genom observationer, fältanteckningar, foton och informella intervjuer med besökare och personal på Naturhistoriska museet i Göteborg. Detta gjordes för att få en uppfattning om förekomsten och användningen av mobiltelefoner och sociala medier samt för att förstå fenomenet och kunna identifiera särskilt

centrala praktiker på en avgränsad fysisk plats. Därtill utfördes insamling och analys av samtliga bilder som vid tidpunkten tagits, delats och taggats på eller kring museet. Dessutom utfördes i samband med sexton användares museibesök semistrukturerade, ca en timma långa, videofilmade djupintervjuer där deltagarna intervjuades om sin användning av sociala medier i allmänhet och Instagram i synnerhet. I slutet av varje intervju tittade vi gemensamt på bilder som diskuterats under intervjun och på de bilder som tagits under föreliggande museibesök. Deltagarna uppmuntrades till att berätta om sina tillvägagångssätt, de val och reflektioner de gjort när de tagit och delat bilder samt om liknande aspekter av sitt instagrammande. Den här tekniken, att stimulera samtal med hjälp av foto eller video, kallas ”stimulated recall” och syftet är att undvika allt för allmänna reflektioner och istället ge forskare tillgång till resonemang knutna till faktiska aktiviteter.

Datan i den första fasen samlades in 2012, vid vilken tid sociala medier ännu var nytt för många användare och förhållandevis outforskad inom HCI-forskningen. Datan insamlad i den här fasen syftade därför till att skapa en initial förståelse för hur det går till när användare dokumenterar och delar med sig av sina upplevelser och hur de själva förhåller sig till, och pratar om, sin användning av sociala medier. Intervjuerna transkriberades i Transana och datan analyserades genom tematisk analys. Datan från fas 1 låg till grund för artikel 2 och 3.

Fas 2 bestod av en uppföljande studie, där samtliga sexton deltagare från fas 1 bjöds in att delta i uppföljande videofilmade djupintervjuer, elva hade möjlighet att vara med. Syftet med att återbesöka samma deltagare var att

försöka förstå hur användning av, och uppfattningar om, sociala medier förändrats i takt med att praktiker och plattformar utvecklats. Under intervjuerna användes samma, men något reviderade, intervjuguide som i första fasen, men frågor relaterade till museibesök hade strukits och fler frågor kring generell användning av sociala medier hade adderats. I slutet av respektive intervju återknöt vi dessutom till vissa särskilda uttalanden gjorda 2012, genom att användarna fick se delar av intervjuerna de deltagit i då. Genom att återvända till samma användare och knyta samtalet till särskilda bilder de tidigare postat och frågor de tidigare resonerat kring istället för att enbart be dem reflektera allmänt över sin eventuellt förändrade användning blev förutsättningarna för att kunna jämföra uttalanden gjorde över tid bättre. Intervjuerna i fas 2 transkriberades i NVivo och analyserades genom tematisk analys. Datan från fas 2 användes tillsammans med datan från fas 1 i artikel 1 och 4.

## Resultat

Resultaten av studiens två faser presenteras i avhandlingen i fyra artiklar. I artikel 1 problematiseras användningsbegreppet och tjänar som en introduktion till vad det innebär att använda sociala medier. Den här artikeln bidrar med förståelse för olika former av användning av sociala medier, på olika engagemangsnivåer. I artikel 2 beskrivs social fotografering i detalj. Vilka bilder delas på Instagram? Hur går det till när man instagrammar? Vilka avvägningar görs? Hur förhåller man sig till sina följare? Och hur flyter interaktionen kring bilder över olika plattformar? I den tredje artikeln redogörs för en särskilt central social interaktionspraktik i sociala medier: att gilla och inte gilla bilder. Gillar- och avgillar- markeringar beskrivs som ett slags socialt stöd, varför användare även reagerar när de uteblir. I den fjärde artikeln sammanfattas arbetet som



gjorts och data insamlad 2012 jämförs med data insamlad 2017. Vilka förändringar har skett i människors användning av sociala medier? Och vad är likadant?

Tabell 4. Avhandlingens artiklar och bidrag

Artikel	Huvudsakligt innehåll och bidrag
<b>Artikel 1. Talking about Social Media Use</b>	Introduktion till sociala medier-användning. Problematisering av användningsbegreppet. Öppnar upp för en förståelse för olika former av användning av sociala medier, på olika engagemangsnivåer.
<b>Artikel 2. Instagram at the museum: Communicating the Museum Experience through Social Photo Sharing</b>	Detaljerad redogörelse av vad sociala fotografering var 2012. Plattformsöverskridande interaktion. Betoning på faktisk användning, knuten till en avgränsad fysisk plats.
<b>Artikel 3. “She liked the picture so I think she liked it”: Unpacking the social practice of liking</b>	Gilla-markeringar är en central social praktik i social media-interaktion och fungerar ofta som ett slags socialt stöd. Även uteblivna gilla-markeringar spelar stor roll.
<b>Paper 4. Same Same But Different: Changes in Social Media Practices Over Time</b>	Sammanfattning av arbetet baserad på data insamlad 2012 och 2017. Förändringar och likheter i människors användning av sociala medier 2017 och fem år tidigare.

## Diskussion

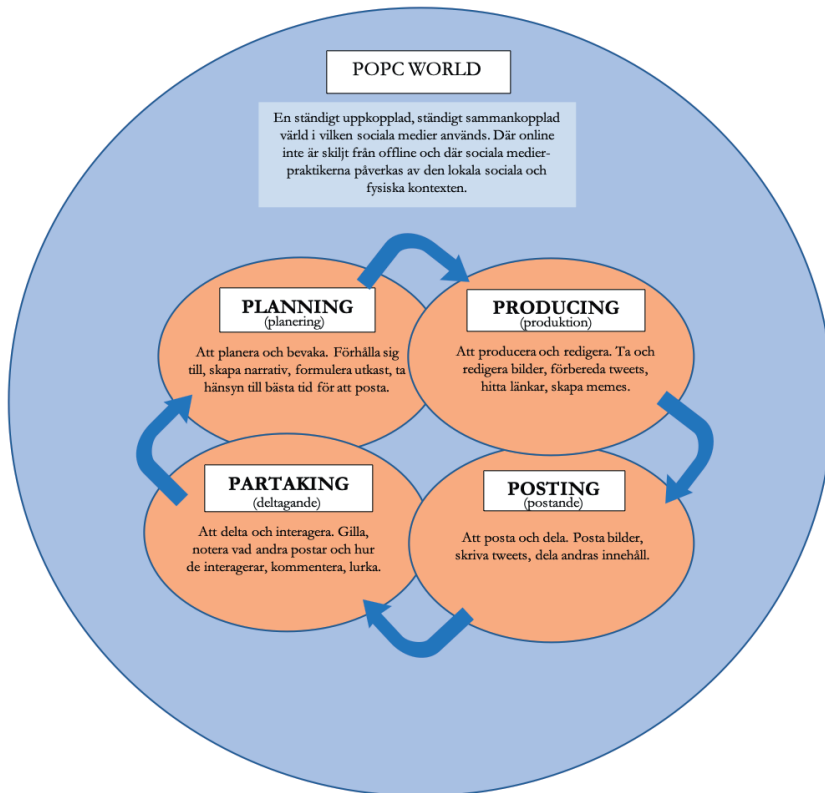
Resultaten diskuteras under tre rubriker, relaterade till forskningsfrågorna.

### Vad det innebär att använda sociala medier

Användning av sociala medier innefattar att planera, producera, posta och delta och aktiviteterna kan vara mer eller mindre aktiva. De olika nivåerna

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av engagemang som användarna växlar mellan tyder på att det finns en stor variation när det kommer till uppfattningen om vad det innebär att använda sociala medier. Användare planerar och bevakar ofta sin egen och andras användning för att sedan producera och posta innehåll, samtidigt som de interagerar med andra och deras innehåll. I modellen nedan har jag försökt visualisera den här processen.



Modell 2. Att använda sociala medier

Varje del i den här kedjan av aktiviteter påverkar resterande. Den återkoppling som tas emot efter att ha postat ett inlägg påverkar sedan planeringen av nästa inlägg. Ofta pågår även de här aktiviteterna parallellt,

och ju mer vana och kompetenta användarna blir, desto skickligare blir de på att växla mellan dem. Interaktionen är central eftersom dessa sociala plattformar blir sociala genom att människor interagerar med varandra på dem. Mycket av den bakomliggande betydelsen av den för användare centrala mikrointeraktion som sker i sociala medier är dock inte alltid synlig. En gilla-markering på en bild kan till exempel många gånger avse och uppfattas som ett uttryck för något mer än att man ”gillar” bilden. Dessutom kan en utebliven gilla-markering ibland uppfattas som ett slags uteblivet förväntat socialt stöd och tolkas många gånger som en minst lika betydelsefull kommunikativ gest som en gilla-markering som faktiskt delas ut. Detta tyder på att användare tillskriver dessa till synes små uttryck mycket mening, varför det är viktigt för oss som studerar användning av sociala medier att framhäva dessa uttrycks centrala betydelse i sociala medier-interaktion. Eftersom stora delar av sociala medier-användningen består av ett mer passivt engagemang, som att planera och bevaka, krävs det att vi ser över och omformulerar vad vi egentligen menar när vi pratar om att använda sociala medier. Eftersom vi dessutom i allt större utsträckning engagerar oss i sociala medier-interaktion med hjälp av ständigt påslagna och uppkopplade mobiltelefoner blir det svårt att göra en distinktion mellan att använda och inte använda sociala medier, vilket får påföljden att det är mycket begränsande att mäta användning endast i termer av tid. Istället behöver vi öppna upp för en vidgad syn på vad sociala medie-användning är, där fler typer av aktiviteter inkluderas i definitionen.

### Sociala medier-färdigheter

Att använda sociala medier kräver såväl tekniska som sociala färdigheter. Tekniska färdigheter kan vara att redigera bilder eller ladda ner rätt

mobilapplikation. De mer socialt orienterade färdigheterna handlar om att utveckla en kännedom om de sociala regler som styr vems bilder man bör gilla och när man bör gilla dem, hur man löser en konflikt över DM eller vem som bör avsluta ett förhållande först på Facebook efter en separation. Att använda sociala medier handlar i stor utsträckning om att lära sig göra det mesta möjliga med tillgängliga och tillhandahållna affordancer, det vill säga de tekniska förutsättningarna såväl som de sociala möjligheterna. Sociala medier-användare utvecklar en mycket god känsla för normer, moral och sociala koder som reglerar de sociala praktikerna som social media-användning består av. Dessa färdigheter förvärfvas genom att studera och interagera med andra användare. Man kan alltså säga att man lär sig använda sociala medier genom att använda sociala medier.

### Sociala medier-användning – 2012 och 2017

Användningen av sociala medier har förändrats de senaste åren. Genom att följa användare av sociala medier över tid och låta dem beskriva sin användning med fem år emellan, har det gått att identifiera ett antal särskilt centrala faktorer som påverkat denna förändring.

En särskilt avgörande faktor vad gäller hur människor använder sociala medier handlar om hur man lever och på vilket sätt man tillbringar sin tid. När det kommer till förändringar i användning av sociala medier visade det sig att förändrade livsförhållanden (som att exempelvis få barn, flytta, bli sambo eller byta jobb) och därtill hörande mer eller mindre god möjlighet att själv kontrollera sin tid var särskilt centrala. Intressant var även hur synen på engagemang i flera fall förändrats. Någon användare beskrev till exempel i intervjuer 2017 att hen nu visserligen använde

Instagram ”mer”, men medgav samtidigt att hen var ”mindre aktiv” i termer av hur hen interagerar eller publicerar foton.

En annan av de faktorer som påverkat användningen är den tekniska utvecklingen av de sociala plattformarna på vilka interaktionen sker. Dels har flera av de sociala medier som startade i form av en social mobilapplikation vuxit till att idag ha blivit stora kommersiella plattformar som omsätter miljardbelopp. Dessutom är möjligheterna att kommunicera och interagera betydligt fler idag än de var 2012, då användarna idag kan använda sig av text, foto, video, GIF-filer och stickers i sin interaktion på samtliga av de största sociala medieplattformarna. Tidigare var plattformarna mer diversifierade och hade sina specialiteter, idag liknar de varandra till stor del. Även synen på sekretess och integritet har förändrats, och det har skett en tydlig förskjutning där interaktion som tidigare skedde i mer publika flödena där interaktionen var synlig för alla numera i större utsträckning sker i mer slutna forum, som via privata direktmeddelanden, chattar eller särskilda grupper. Trots att stora förändringar skett vad gäller hur människor använder sociala medier, visade det sig även att vissa beteenden och föreställningar tycks bestå. Trots att livet och tekniken förändras så tycks många användares sociala praktiker och inställning till sociala medier vara desamma över tid. Vissa användare ägnade sig fortfarande åt liknande aktiviteter och uppvisade samma beteenden, men det som tidigare utspelade sig på Instagram kunde fem år senare äga rum på Snapchat. Hur utvecklingen av sociala medier ser ut fortsättningsvis är svår att sja om, men tydligt är att vi ännu bara sett början av den enorma sociala transformation som sociala medier medfört.

