

Managing Social Media Platforms: Understanding the Interplay Between Technology, Socio-Cultural Contexts and Organizational Strategy

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List of Abbreviations

ACIS	Australasian Conference on Information Systems ¹
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
BISE	Business and Information Systems Engineering
BPM	Business Process Management
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
ECIS	European Conference on Information Systems
EVAP	Editability, Visibility, Association, Persistence
FB	Facebook
HCI	Human-Computer Interaction
ICIS	International Conference on Information Systems
IG	Instagram
IS	Information Systems
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MISQE	MIS Quarterly Executive
P	Research Paper
RO	Research Objective
SMP	Social Media Platform
TW	Twitter
U&G	Uses and Gratifications
VHB	Verband der Hochschullehrerinnen und Hochschullehrer für Betriebswirtschaft (German Academic Association for Business Research)
WI	International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik

¹ This list includes only abbreviations used in the synopsis of the dissertation (Part A). Abbreviations used exclusively in the research papers (Part B) are defined within the respective articles.

Part A

Research Overview

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

Social media encompasses a range of online communications technologies that enable users to connect, interact, consume and share content via smartphones and other digital devices (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Montalvo, 2011; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Social media platforms (SMPs) such as Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG) and Twitter (TW)² function as ubiquitous technological systems and have become integral to daily life, facilitating dynamic, real-time interactions for billions of users worldwide and across different social media environments and contexts (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Statista, 2024).

Beyond personal use, SMPs have significantly transformed how organizations engage with their target audiences, including (potential) customers. In both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts, SMPs function as strategic digital interfaces, enabling brand-building campaigns, customer engagement and long-term relationship management (Appel et al., 2020; Haenlein et al., 2020; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kotler et al., 2017; Montalvo, 2011; Vaast and Pinsonneault, 2022).

In addition to direct communication in SMPs, the growing collaboration between companies and platform-specific influencers underscores the critical role of selecting appropriate SMPs for effective outreach (Goodman et al., 2011). This shift in corporate communication strategies toward engaging networked consumers requires organizations to carefully manage their social media approaches and make informed decisions about selecting and using different SMPs effectively (Ngai et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2013).

Consequently, social media management has become a key organizational capability, involving the coordinated use of Web 2.0 tools to support strategic goals (Montalvo, 2011). It requires aligning platform activities with broader goals (Boudreaux, 2011; Newberry and Wood, 2022). Central to this function are social media managers³, who act as brand ambassadors, public-facing storytellers, representing the organization’s brand and image (Arslan and Trier, 2024;

² Although Twitter was rebranded as ‘X’ in 2023, this dissertation refers to the platform by its original name, Twitter, to reflect the context during the period of data collection.

³ The term ‘social media manager’ is used throughout this dissertation for consistency, also referring to related roles such as online marketing managers.

Jacobson, 2020; Neill and Moody, 2015). Their role is embedded in the customer journey⁴ – a series of multiple touchpoints a customer has with a brand over time (Kotler et al., 2017) – where user interaction drives value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

As social media has matured as a research topic within the Information Systems (IS) research, studies have examined its organizational implications, user behavior and technological features (Culnan et al., 2010; Gallagher and Ransbotham, 2010; Miller and Tucker, 2013; Montalvo, 2011; Smith and Wollan, 2011; Trier and Jensen, 2018). However, much of this literature has focused on broader system-level dynamics or end-user interactions, often overlooking the specific practices and strategic contributions of social media managers within organizations.

1.2 Research Problem and Research Objectives

Since SMPs play a central role in the customer journey across diverse product and service sectors – such as retail, banking or taxation – organizations must navigate an increasingly fragmented social media landscape (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Hanna et al., 2011; Kotler et al., 2017). However, operating across multiple SMPs, each with distinct features as well as platform-specific *use expectations and practices*, many organizations often struggle to effectively leverage these differences to achieve strategic goals (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014). In this context, *use expectations* refer to what users anticipate from a platform – for example, expecting specific types of content like entertainment on Instagram – while *use practices* describe the actual ways users engage with design features. These practices can vary significantly across SMPs, even when the platforms offer similar *affordances* (Arslan and Trier, 2023).

Affordances refer to action possibilities that a technology's features offer to users (Hutchby 2001; Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2012; Majchrzak et al., 2013; McGrenere and Ho, 2000; Norman, 1988; Treem and Leonardi, 2012) emphasizing how different users interpret and engage with technology in diverse ways. Unlike mere functionality, affordances arise from the interaction between the user and the object – they are not fixed properties but emerge through users' perceptions, interpretations and actions upon the design (Volkoff and Strong, 2017). This

⁴ While the 'customer journey' concept as discussed by Kotler et al. (2017) often emphasizes service contexts, this dissertation does not primarily focus on service delivery. Instead, it concentrates specifically on SMP strategies and how social media management activities influence customer interactions within these platforms. Thus, the term 'customer journey' highlights the sequence of touchpoints relevant to social media engagement rather than a broader service framework.

underscores that user interpretation is central to how affordances are actualized in practice, making them inherently relational and context dependent (Ciriello et al., 2024; Richter et al., 2011; Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Volkoff and Strong, 2017).

From an organizational perspective, two challenges stand out among various complexities: Selecting the most appropriate SMPs for specific business objectives and accurately understanding the behaviors and expectations of distinct target audiences (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025; Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Richter et al., 2011). Although SMPs are widely adopted and strategically important (Alhabash and Ma, 2017), the IS literature provides limited practical guidance on how organizations can effectively manage and utilize these platforms to achieve business outcomes (Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014). Social media managers often pursue goals such as increasing brand awareness, fostering customer engagement, managing brand reputation and driving conversions – goals that require tailored strategies across different SMPs (Arslan and Trier, 2024).

While the IS literature on SMP use and media choice increasingly incorporates interdisciplinary insights from psychology and marketing (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; De Vries et al., 2012; Karahanna et al., 2018; Kietzmann et al., 2011), it remains fragmented in offering guidance on navigating platform-specific *affordances*, *socio-cultural contexts* and *organizational strategies* – particularly from a strategic *differentiation perspective* (Arslan and Trier, 2021; Arslan and Trier, 2023). In this context, this perspective emphasizes the need for organizations to tailor content to each platform’s unique characteristics rather than applying ineffective ‘copy-paste’ strategies across various SMPs. For example, Arslan and Trier (2023) show that although FB, IG and TW offer *similar affordances*, users expect *different content types*: Playful, visual storytelling on IG, community-oriented updates on FB and concise, news-style posts on TW. These differences call for platform-specific strategies that align with use expectations and socio-cultural contexts.

Moreover, the literature often preselects platforms without justifying these choices. While studies like Karahanna et al. (2018) and Alhabash and Ma (2017) examine user engagement on individual platforms, they provide limited insight into why these platforms differ or how these differences impact organizational use. Many treat SMPs as a compound variable without theorizing their structural, socio-cultural or strategic differences. This limits practical understanding of how to effectively select SMPs and adapt content and engagement strategies across various SMPs to enhance visibility, foster meaningful user engagement and maintain a

consistent brand image across platform-specific socio-cultural contexts (Arslan and Trier, 2024).

Drawing on these gaps, this dissertation addresses the following overarching research problem:

Research Problem: *The IS literature on SMP use and media choice offers limited guidance on how to effectively manage and utilize these platforms to achieve organizational goals. More specifically, it lacks comprehensive insights into how social media managers can navigate similar affordances across platforms and adapt to diverse socio-cultural contexts to optimize engagement, achieve strategic goals and address communication challenges.*

In response to the growing demand from organizations for clearer guidance on how to effectively select SMPs and engage with current and potential customers, this dissertation addresses the research problem through three interrelated research objectives (ROs). Each research objective focuses on a critical aspect of social media strategy and management and is investigated through specific research questions in the individual research papers. The first research objective is defined as follows:

Research Objective 1 (RO1): *To develop a comprehensive framework that identifies and conceptually structures key categories and factors influencing organizational decision-making in selecting SMPs for effectively engaging with current and potential customers.*

Since the general academic conceptualization of social media ‘per se’ is too broad to effectively guide managerial strategies, this objective aims to conceptually structure and define key categories and influence factors in organizational decision-making – serving as a first step toward a more systematic consideration of platform-specific differences.

Although SMPs initially followed distinct design logics, they have increasingly aligned and copied each other over time (O’Riordan et al., 2012). Nevertheless, they are designed and tailored to different target groups and purposes (Ngai et al., 2015). This results in similar affordances, that are visible – such as stories, hashtags or photo uploads – but differences in less visible use expectations. For example, FB users tend to have lower expectations to interact with organizations or check status updates, whereas IG users, typically expect more frequent engagement and communication with organizations (Arslan and Trier, 2023). These often hard-to-discern differences complicate platform selection and content strategy for organizations,

especially as the social media landscape evolves rapidly with diverse users and ongoing market dynamics (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Eghtesadi and Florea, 2020).

From an IS perspective, understanding the interplay between platform design, user behavior and organizational strategy requires a strong theoretical foundation. To explore how SMPs are used in both personal and organizational contexts, a theoretical lens is needed that captures the interplay between technological design and user behavior.

The *concept of affordance*, widely adopted in IS and social media research, offers such a lens. Affordances highlight the action possibilities enabled by technological features and how different users interpret and engage with them in diverse ways (Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Despite its value, prior research has often focused narrowly on technological features, overlooking platform-specific affordances (O’Riordan et al., 2012). Later, different individual additions have been made to the core concept that address general patterns of user behavior (Treem and Leonardi, 2012), uses and gratifications (U&G) (Alhabash and Ma, 2017), psychological needs (Karahanna et al., 2018) or cultural affordances (Sun and Suthers, 2021), however they are still fragmented. Moreover, many of these studies lack an integrated organizational perspective and tend to neglect the differences and socio-cultural contexts that shape user behavior and platform use (Arslan and Trier, 2023; Ciriello et al., 2024; Vaast and Kaganer, 2013). To address these gaps and support more effective social media strategies, the second research objective is formulated as follows:

Research Objective 2 (RO2): To analyze differences between popular SMPs (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) in terms of affordances and socio-cultural contexts, to guide managers in selecting and leveraging these SMPs more effectively.

While many studies focus on platform features or user behavior, the managerial perspective, particularly that of social media managers, has received limited attention. This gap has led to both conceptual ambiguity and a lack of practical guidance. Positioned at the intersection of internal organizational strategy and external communication, social media managers must coordinate cross-platform communication in real time (Arslan and Trier, 2024; Neill and Moody, 2015).

Yet, they often operate without clear strategic frameworks (Bell, 2016; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Richter et al., 2011). As Burton-Jones et al. (2015) emphasize, the sequence and order of activities in process theory are critical – incorrect ordering or skipping steps can undermine

desired outcomes.⁵ This underscores the importance of providing clear, structured guidance for social media management activities to achieve effective results.

To address this gap, the third research objective is formulated as follows:

Research Objective 3 (RO3): *To develop an integrated conceptual process model⁶ of social media management and marketing that systematically captures the sequential activities of social media managers to identify specific affordances and sub-affordances leveraged to support strategic organizational goals and effective management practices.*

This objective is critical because social media managers shape brand communication, foster engagement and translate digital interactions into strategic value. Understanding how they navigate platform design, use expectations and practices and strategic goals – while operating in the same environment as their target audiences – offers valuable insights into effective social media management in today’s complex digital ecosystem. The process model is essential for gaining a high-level understanding of social media management activities. It provides a structured foundation for examining how SMPs are used to support these activities across different sequences of social media management.

To address these challenges, this dissertation adopts a theoretically grounded and empirically informed approach to develop a structured and integrative understanding of SMP management. Anchored in three interrelated research objectives, it aims to inform both academic research and organizational practice by examining how organizations – particularly social media managers – strategically navigate diverse SMP environments.

By combining affordance theory with socio-cultural and managerial perspectives, the dissertation contributes a nuanced understanding of SMP use that moves beyond feature comparisons or basic user metrics and advances the field of IS research. Given that social media managers often operate in marketing and sales roles, this dissertation also contributes to the field of (online) marketing by mapping their digital practices and strategic use of SMPs.

⁵ This dissertation adopts Burton-Jones et al.’s (2015) process theory, emphasizing the logic, sequence and interdependence of activities in achieving goals, rather than business process management (BPM) approaches that focus on visual process diagrams.

⁶ In this dissertation, the term ‘process model’ refers specifically to a process-theory perspective (Burton-Jones et al., 2015), which emphasizes that the sequence of events is crucial for achieving particular outcomes and that these events cannot simply be reordered without affecting the result. This usage differs from the concept of a business process model in the process management sense.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

To clarify the connection between the research papers and their integration into IS research – as well as their relevance to the field of (online) marketing – this dissertation is structured into two Parts: Part A and Part B. The overall contributions of the papers are summarized in Part A. Figure 1.1 illustrates the structure of this dissertation, highlighting the interplay between these two parts.

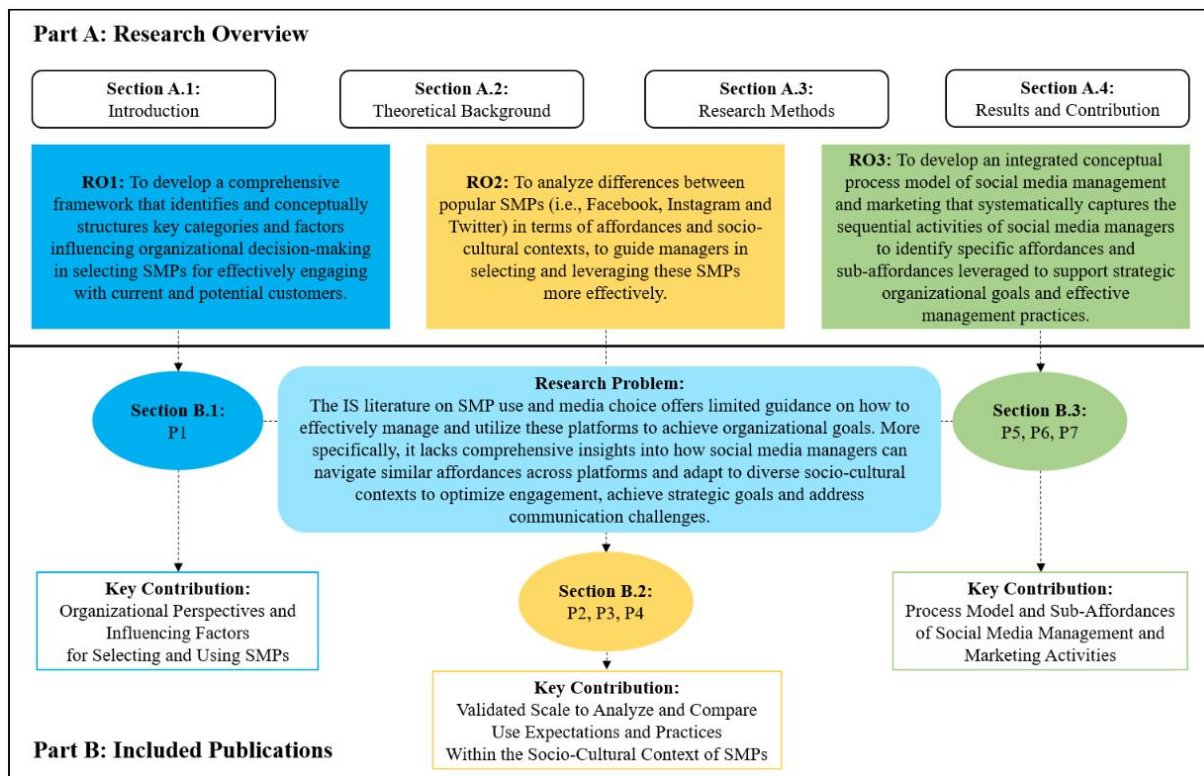


Figure 1.1: Structure of the Dissertation

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to develop a comprehensive, theory-informed understanding of how organizations – particularly social media managers – strategically navigate and manage diverse SMPs to optimize engagement and achieve organizational objectives.

The identified research problem and three research objectives outlined above are examined in-depth through seven research papers included in Part B. Each paper contributes uniquely to IS research and (online) marketing literature by responding to calls for more nuanced, context-sensitive and role-specific analyses of social media use – balancing technological design elements (Treem and Leonardi, 2012; O’Riordan et al., 2012), user behavior (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Bucher and Helmond, 2018; Karahanna et al., 2018; Sun and Suthers, 2021) and socio-cultural contexts (Arslan and Trier, 2023; Ciriello et al., 2024).

The remainder of Part A is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical background underpinning the dissertation. Drawing on research related to affordances, affordance actualization theory, socio-cultural contexts and use expectations and practices as well as social media management processes and practices, the main assumptions shaping the *differentiation perspective* on SMPs are outlined in separate subsections.⁷ Section 3 summarizes the methodological approach of the dissertation. It describes the mixed methods research design applied across the included papers. Each paper employs a distinct methodological approach, including various forms of literature reviews, online surveys with social media users and qualitative interviews with industry experts. The section also outlines the analytical techniques used, such as the Wilcoxon test and iterative coding for qualitative data analysis. Section 4 concludes Part A by providing a synopsis of the major research findings from the seven papers. It offers an integrated discussion of how these findings address the research objectives and highlights both theoretical contributions to IS research and practical implications for social media strategy and management. The section concludes by outlining limitations and proposing directions for future research.

Part B consist of six double-blind and one single-blind peer-reviewed research papers (P)⁸. Five of the papers have been published, while two are currently under review for publication in IS outlets ranked A–C in the VHB Publication Media Rating 2024 for Wirtschaftsinformatik/Information Systems (VHB, 2025). The IS outlets targeted in this dissertation include the journals *Business and Information Systems Engineering (BISE)*, *MIS Quarterly Executive (MISQE)* as well as the conference proceedings of the *International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS)*, *European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS)*, *International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik (WI)* and the *Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS)*.

⁷ This dissertation does not focus on service outcomes, such as those examined in service marketing, but rather emphasizes how social media managers engage with platform design and effectively use SMPs in their daily activities to support organizational outcomes.

⁸ The papers and appendices in Part B have not been modified content-wise, except for minor corrections regarding typos, grammar and references. Furthermore, to ensure consistency within this dissertation, the formatting of papers and appendices – including labels, table and figure titles, footnotes, abbreviations and colors – was adapted to the dissertation’s layout. Hence, the position and presentation of figures and tables might slightly differ from their original versions. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, abbreviations used in figure and table titles have been omitted from the list of figures and tables. Colors in figures and tables may have been adjusted (e.g., converted to black and white) to ensure consistency with the dissertation’s formatting style without altering the content.

Notably, the first paper (P1) was nominated for the Best Research-in-Progress Paper Award by the 29th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS 2021), highlighting its significant contribution and relevance to the field. This strong record of research papers (see Table 1.1) underscores both the academic rigor and the practical relevance of the research presented in this dissertation.

Table 1.1: List of Research Papers Included in Part B

No.	Author(s)	Title	Outlet	VHB Rating (2024)	Points
Research Objective (RO1): To develop a comprehensive framework that identifies and conceptually structures key categories and factors influencing organizational decision-making in selecting SMPs for effectively engaging with current and potential customers.					
P1	Arslan, K.	A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations ⁹	ECIS 2021	A	1
Research Objective (RO2): To analyze differences between popular SMPs (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) in terms of affordances and socio-cultural contexts, to guide managers in selecting and leveraging these SMPs more effectively.					
P2	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review	ACIS 2021	C	0.9
P3	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of the Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter	ICIS 2023	A	0.9
P4	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective	Working Paper	–	0.9
Research Objective 3 (RO3): To develop an integrated conceptual process model of social media management and marketing that systematically captures the sequential activities of social media managers to identify specific affordances and sub-affordances leveraged to support strategic organizational goals and effective management practices.					
P5	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing	ACIS 2022	C	0.9
P6	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities	WI 2024	B	0.9
P7	Arslan, K. Trier, M.	Management Practices of Successful Social Media Platform Use – An Affordance Approach	Working Paper	–	0.9
Σ					6.4

⁹ This paper was nominated for the Best Research-in-Progress Paper Award by the 29th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS 2021).

The following section provides a brief overview of each paper included in Part B, outlining their respective motivations, research methods and contributions to the IS and (online) marketing literature. It also explains how their integration at a more abstract level in Part A yields an additional contribution aligned with the three research objectives. The papers in Part B are arranged thematically to align with the dissertation's three overarching research objectives, thereby facilitating a clearer narrative and stronger integration across the papers (see Table 1.1).

P1. *A Review on Social Media Channel¹⁰ Choice Determinants in Organizations*. Organizations increasingly rely on social media as a core element of their communication and brand-building strategies, aiming to foster trust and long-term relationships with their audiences (Laroche et al., 2013; Porter and Donthu, 2008; Steinberg and Schultz, 2011). However, despite the widespread adoption, many organizations continue to face challenges in effectively managing different SMPs (Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Sharma, 2019; Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014). While prior research has explored organizational use of social media (Gallaughier and Ransbotham, 2010; Miller and Tucker, 2013; Trier and Jensen, 2018), it often overlooks the nuanced differences between SMPs and how these differences influence strategic choices. This gap in practical guidance complicates managerial decision-making, especially considering the growing variety of SMPs available, each with its own technical features and user behaviors. This first paper of the dissertation addresses this gap by proposing a systematic approach to assess and select SMPs based on specific communication goals. Rather than viewing social media as a uniform medium, this study adopts a *differentiation perspective* of platforms, grounded in the concept of affordance – which represents, in this context, the perceived possibilities for action that platforms offer to users (Majchrzak et al., 2013; O’Riordan et al., 2012; Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Using a structured descriptive literature review, guided by established IS methodologies (Paré et al., 2015; Schryen et al., 2020; vom Brocke et al., 2015), this paper develops a *comprehensive framework* that structures key categories, related concepts and factors influencing organizational decision-making in selecting SMPs (see Table 1.2). The resulting taxonomy categorizes these elements into three interrelated perspectives: *platform-centric*, *user-centric* and *strategy-centric*. This synthesis not only clarifies the fragmented

¹⁰ While the original paper uses the term ‘social media channel’, to emphasize a bundled view of platform alternatives, subsequent research showed that ‘social media platforms’ is the more current and widely accepted term. Accordingly, this term is used in the following papers and the dissertation’s synopsis.

nature of existing IS research but also contributes to RO1 and forms the conceptual foundation for the dissertation's subsequent research objectives RO2 and RO3.

Table 1.2: Influences on Social Media Channel Selection Choice for an Organization
(Adapted from Arslan, 2021)

Influences on Social Media Channel Selection Choice for an Organization	Categories	Concepts	Influence Factors	Author(s)	Year
	Understanding of social media channel differences	Channel functionalities	Identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, groups	Namisango et al.; Sæbø et al.; Leidner et al.;	2020 2020 2018
		Channel attributes	Choice of tools, tool integrity	Bucher and Helmond; Chouikh et al.;	2018 2016
		General affordances, social affordances and content affordances	Visibility, editability, persistence, association, connectivity, interactivity, profile management, communication guidelines	Ngai et al.; Stenmark and Zaffar; Majchrzak et al.;	2015 2014 2013
	Understanding of social media use culture	Creation of personas	Type of user (e.g., connected user, consumer, business partner, influencer), user personality, user behavior, user properties, user attributes, affordance perception, social factors (e.g., social influence, social capital), user experience, purpose of engagement	Treem and Leonardi; O'Riordan et al.;	2012 2012
		Genre analysis		Kietzmann et al.;	2011
		Consumer motivation and input	Entertainment, social connection, information	Kaplan and Haenlein	2010
				Leidner et al.;	2018
	Key managerial implications: Developing suitable social media strategies and goals	Media richness theory	Choosing more than one channel to communicate	Huang and Su; Kotler et al.;	2018 2018
		Social media richness	Choosing more than one social media channel to communicate	Ngai et al.;	2017
		Organizational attributes	Level of customer and marketing orientation	Ngai et al.;	2015
		Determinants of brand post popularity	Vividness, interactivity, informational content, entertaining content, position, valence of comments	Kane et al.;	2014
		Social media metrics	Key metrics to measure success	Stenmark and Zaffar;	2014
		Social media monitoring	Frequency of data analysis, reaction, gaining insights, improvement (lessons learned)	Peters et al.;	2013
				Laroche et al.;	2013
				De Vries et al.;	2012
				Montalvo;	2011
				Kietzmann et al.;	2011
				Smith and Wollan;	2011
				Gallaughar and Ransbotham;	2010
				Daft and Lengel	1986

P2. *Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review*¹¹. With the growing importance of SMPs such as FB, IG and TW in corporate communication and marketing, organizations increasingly face challenges in navigating the nuanced differences among these platforms (Gallaughar and

¹¹ While the original paper uses the term 'use culture', subsequent research showed that 'socio-cultural context' better captures the broader social and cultural influences on platform-specific user behavior. Accordingly, this term is used in the following papers and dissertation's synopsis.

Ransbotham, 2010; Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). Additionally, adapting to the target groups' platform-specific use cultures represents a further challenge for organizations. Prior research tends to treat social media as a homogeneous medium, insufficiently addressing how platform-specific affordances and use cultures jointly shape user behavior and managerial outcomes (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Addressing this gap, this paper responds to the calls for extending the affordance perspective into social contexts (Nagy and Neff, 2015; Vaast et al., 2017; Volkoff and Strong, 2017) by arguing that research must go beyond a limited comparison of SMP functionalities (O'Riordan et al., 2012) and instead identify differences from the perspective of interdependent users and their user behavior. Guided by established IS review methodologies (Schryen et al., 2020; vom Brocke et al., 2015), the paper conducts a systematic organizing literature review, synthesizing 102 key studies that examine affordances, use culture and/or the SMPs FB, IG and TW. It reveals that most commonly discussed affordances on FB, IG and TW are profile management, connectivity and interactivity (Chouikh et al., 2016; O'Riordan et al., 2012) and that the interdependence of affordances and use culture are not yet theorized in an integrated approach. Thus, this paper serves as a starting point for a more nuanced practical understanding of the differences between affordances and use cultures across these SMPs. The findings contribute partially to RO2 by providing an initial step toward organizing the literature and assessing its fit to a conceptual framework.

P3. Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of the Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. To better understand platform differences beyond their technical features, this paper explores how *similar affordances* are shaped by *varying socio-cultural contexts*. It argues that the affordance perspective alone does not sufficiently capture nuanced differences between SMPs that emerge from these contexts. As Volkoff and Strong (2017) emphasize, affordances are not universally actualized and whether and how they are actualized depends on users, their goals and social environments. Building on this perspective, the paper draws on insights from P2 and integrates a *framework for structuring the socio-cultural context*. This includes *use practices* identified in P2 and extended through additional empirical studies on SMPs in P3. This paper contributes to IS research by conceptualizing *use practices* not solely as outcomes of technical design but as *behaviors that shape and are shaped by socio-cultural contexts* of SMPs. Addressing the limitations of fragmented concepts such as U&G, which often list motivations or behaviors without linking them to affordances or a coherent conceptual structure, this paper operationalizes a *socio-cultural context perspective* through four abstract key constructs: *Individual online identity*,

social (group) identity, expectations regarding roles and types of others and social behaviors, along with their 15 *sub-constructs*. To empirically capture these socio-cultural context factors, this study employs a validated scale to measure, analyze and compare these influencing factors, enabling robust cross-platform comparisons. An online survey (n=197) was conducted to empirically analyze differences across FB, IG and TW. Using pairwise comparisons via Wilcoxon tests, the paper shows how similar affordances such as interactivity are actualized differently, for example for organizational versus entertaining purposes. Thus, this paper contributes to RO2 by offering a *framework that links affordances to socio-cultural contexts*, enabling a systematic comparison of ‘how’ affordances are actualized differently across SMPs.

P4. Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective. Building on the foundations laid in P3, this *journal* paper offers an extended and more theoretically grounded analysis of SMP use by integrating the affordance perspective with the socio-cultural context perspectives. While P3 demonstrated that similar affordances are actualized differently across SMPs due to socio-cultural context factors, this paper advances the discussion by refining the core *dimensions* and *sub-dimensions of the socio-cultural context* and deepening the theoretical lens, particularly around the concept of affordance actualization (Strong et al., 2014; Volkoff and Strong, 2017). This paper contributes to RO2 by a sharper distinction between *use expectations and practices*. It argues that use expectations – shaped by norms, values and intentions – precede observable practices and are a vital part of the socio-cultural context. Recognizing that some intentions may remain unacted or invisible in SMPs and thus the affordances are not actualized, this paper justifies the inclusion of *use expectations* as a critical analytical dimension and links them back to cultural theory to strengthen conceptual coherence. This paper further extends the empirical scope through an online survey (n=357). It contributes to RO2 by revealing clearer patterns in how use expectations and practices are actualized across the SMPs FB, IG and TW through pairwise comparisons.

P5. Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing. Social media marketing has become a central component of contemporary communication strategies, where content creation represents the new form of advertisement and hashtags equal the role of traditional taglines (Kotler et al., 2017). Despite a broad body of valuable contributions to the social media marketing literature, an overarching and integrated framework for managing SMPs effectively is rarely addressed and insufficiently linked to the diverse topics discussed in the literature (Diba et al., 2019; Felix et al., 2017; Hu and Olivieri, 2021). To address this gap, this paper

adopts a *process theory perspective* as conceptualized by Burton-Jones et al. (2015) which emphasizes the order and interdependence of activities in achieving a desired outcome.¹² In this view, the effectiveness of a process depends not only on the activities themselves but also on their sequence, with deviations (e.g., reordering or omitting steps) potentially undermining the outcome. Following this theoretical foundation, an integrated *process model of social media management and marketing activities* is developed based on a systematic theoretical literature review grounded in established IS methodologies (Rowe, 2014; Schryen et al., 2020; Webster and Watson, 2002). This paper contributes to RO3 by providing an abstract and foundational framework that systematically captures social media management and marketing activities. The proposed process model reflects the strategic logic of these activities arranged in a coherent sequence, emphasizing key interdependencies and sequential constraints.

P6. Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities. While P5 introduced a conceptual process model outlining the key sequences of how organizations plan and realize social media strategies and activities – serving as a high-level framework – this paper takes the next step by zooming into the *operational level of the social media management and activities*. Although social media management is widely discussed (e.g., Jacobson, 2020; Kietzmann et al., 2011), the concrete practices of social media managers – their daily ‘doings’ – have rarely been systematically examined. This paper addresses this gap by applying the EVAP affordance categories, which encompass editability, visibility, association and persistence (Treem and Leonardi, 2012), to analyze how social media managers interact with SMPs to achieve specific goals throughout the strategic process. Notably, while the affordance perspective has been used across various roles and contexts (Bucher and Helmond, 2018; Ellison and Vitak, 2015; Volkoff and Strong, 2017), it has not been systematically applied to the stakeholder group of social media managers. This paper addresses this gap by drawing on in-depth interviews with social media managers from 14 different organizations. It contributes to RO3 by offering a deeper understanding of their SMP activities and supporting competency development in practice.

P7. Management Practices of Successful Social Media Platform Use – An Affordance Approach. Building on the conceptual process model developed in P5 and the analysis of managerial platform use through the EVAP affordances in P6, this *journal* paper advances the

¹² Rather than modeling a process in the BPM sense, this process model conceptualizes the optimal sequence of social media management and marketing activities as a strategic logic that progresses in a defined sequence.

research by transforming empirical insights into a *practitioner-oriented guiding framework*. To strengthen the analysis, the interview sample from P6 was extended to 19 organizations, providing a broader empirical base and more robust insights. The findings show that social media management is often driven by intuition and trial-and-error, reinforcing the key research problem identified in P1: the lack of structured guidance for managing different SMPs effectively. By synthesizing these insights into a practical framework, this paper contributes to RO3 by not only identifying how affordances and sub-affordances are actualized but also by translating abstract categories into *practical recommendations* and *lessons learned*. Thus, it offers a foundation for improving social media management practices.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 A Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms

2.1.1 The Concept of Affordance

The *concept of affordances* provides a valuable theoretical lens to understand SMPs beyond their design-oriented functionalities, focusing instead on how users perceive and act upon the possibilities enabled by technology. Originally introduced by Gibson (1979), *affordances* describe the action possibilities that an environment offers to an individual based on their capabilities and context. This idea has been widely adopted in human-computer interaction (HCI) and IS research to explain how design aspects of artifacts suggest potential user actions (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2012; Norman, 1988).

The affordance lens has been applied extensively to study technology use in social and organizational settings. These concepts articulate the potential actions enabled by technological design – as well as the interpretational and contextual factors that influence how users engage with these affordances. However, classic conceptualizations have been criticized for insufficiently addressing the complexities arising from interconnected users and social contexts (Leonardi, 2013; Vaast et al., 2017). Emerging research recognizes the importance of *social* and *cultural factors* in shaping how affordances are perceived and actualized (Khan et al., 2019; Nagy and Neff, 2015; Sun and Suthers, 2021).

In social media contexts, affordances are understood as the action possibilities offered by SMP functionalities such as creating content, liking or connecting, based on user perceptions (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Markus and Silver, 2008). Treem and Leonardi (2012) identified four key affordances – editability, visibility, association and persistence (EVAP) – related to social media content, which serve as foundational categories for examining how SMPs shape user behavior and organizational communication. Thus, the affordance concept enables a nuanced understanding of how similar technological features can yield different meanings and uses across individuals and social contexts (e.g., interactivity with an organizational purpose versus interactivity with an entertaining purpose), making it an appropriate theoretical foundation for analyzing SMP differences and user behaviors.

2.1.2 Affordance Actualization

While affordances highlight the potential actions that technology enables, recent research emphasizes the need to examine *affordance actualization*. Volkoff and Strong (2017) point out that individuals within a group influence “*how, how well, or even whether any affordance will be actualized*” (p.7). In this regard, affordance actualization refers the use (or non-use) of an affordance. This implies that users act within a specific social context, from which they decide whether or not to actualize an affordance in a certain way. Thus, understanding affordances requires not only examining the design features but also the socio-cultural contexts of SMPs.

Affordance actualization draws attention to the dynamic and situated nature of technology use. It recognizes that affordances are not ‘static properties’ inherent in an artifact but rather emerge through interactions between users and technology within specific contexts. This process is influenced by users’ individual capabilities, social norms, cultural values and collective practices, which shape ‘how’ affordances are perceived and actualized (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2012; Sun and Suthers, 2021). For example, a ‘like button’ on a SMP may afford simple feedback but whether and how users employ this function depends on the cultural norms around communication and social interaction within their user community.

Despite these advances, a key gap remains: Research tends to emphasize similarities in affordances across platforms rather than exploring how affordance actualization varies across diverse socio-cultural contexts (e.g., O’Riordan et al., 2012). Approaches such as needs–affordances–features (Karahanna et al., 2018) and U&G (Alhabash and Ma, 2017) lack systematic integration of design elements with socio-cultural context factors. This limits the understanding of how social groups, for example demographics, interests and cultural values, mediate technology use in SMPs – which is particularly relevant when organizations engage with their (potential) customers.

2.1.3 Socio-Cultural Contexts and Use Expectations and Practices

SMPs facilitate complex social interactions where affordances are actualized within patterns of shared expectations and behaviors emerging within social groups (Volkoff and Strong, 2017). However, the above-mentioned limitations in affordance theory highlight that user contexts – particularly socio-cultural context factors (Arslan and Trier, 2023) – are critical but often insufficiently accounted for (Costa, 2018; Osmundsen et al., 2022; Sun and Suthers, 2021). These limitations were recognized early on by Norman (1988), who emphasized that

“affordances result from the mental interpretation of things, based on our past knowledge and experience applied to our perception of the things about us” (p. 219), underscoring that user interpretations of affordances are shaped by prior knowledge and experience.

Expanding on this, Nagy and Neff (2015) introduced the concept of *imagined affordances*, emphasizing the interplay between users’ perceptions, attitudes, expectations, technology functionality and designers’ intentions. Sun and Suthers (2021) further bridged affordances and culture through the notion of *cultural affordances*, examining how social media could shape established and emerging cultural values (see Table 2.1). However, they do not refer to concrete use practices in SMPs.

Table 2.1: Fundamental Concepts in Affordance Research

Concepts in Affordance Research	Explanation	Author(s) and Year
Affordance	Action possibilities offered by the design of an object or technology to a user, suggesting how it can be used	Kaptelinin and Nardi (2012); Majchrzak et al. (2013); Norman (1988)
Editability	The ability to create, edit or remove content before and after posting	Treem and Leonardi (2012)
Visibility	The potential to make information visible to others that was previously hidden	Treem and Leonardi (2012)
Association	Connections formed between users, content or content items such as tagging, following or recommendations	Treem and Leonardi (2012)
Persistence	The extent to which content persists and can be revisited after publication	Treem and Leonardi (2012)
Affordance Actualization	The process by which users enact or fail to enact affordances depending on social context and individual choices	Volkoff and Strong (2017)
Imagined Affordances	Affordances perceived by users based on their attitudes, expectations and cultural background in relation to their interaction with technology	Nagy and Neff (2015)
Cultural Affordances	Possibilities that a particular environment offers for users to act, communicate or create meaning within their culture	Sun and Suthers (2021)
Socio-Cultural Context	The broader social and cultural environment that shapes users’ beliefs, values, norms, use expectations and practices. Socio-cultural context factors shape and are shaped by how users engage with SMPs and how affordances are perceived and actualized	Arslan and Trier (2023)

Despite growing insights, comprehensive empirical frameworks that link affordances and socio-cultural context dimensions to analyze differences between SMPs remain limited. Shane-Simpson et al. (2018) highlight that affordances shape diverse cultural practices across platforms, yet they acknowledge the vagueness of culture as a construct (Archer, 1996). Fragmented research streams, e.g., U&G (Alhabash and Ma, 2017), user engagement (Voorveld et al., 2018) and motivation (Oh and Syn, 2015) tend to focus on specific aspects of SMP use but do not integrate affordances with socio-cultural contexts to explain platform differences.

To consolidate the core concepts discussed across Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.3 and to support the analytical framework of this dissertation, Table 2.1 summarizes the key theoretical constructs. It outlines how the concept of affordance evolves through actualization and how it is linked to socio-cultural contexts – an essential foundation for examining differences across SMPs from the perspective of customer-oriented social media managers.

2.2 Social Media Management Processes and Practices

Social media management, which includes social media marketing, offers organizations new opportunities to promote their brand and engage with (potential) customers who increasingly influence brand reputation through their online interactions (Montalvo, 2011). Effective social media management and marketing requires a deep understanding of the social media landscape – including platform design, user behavior and a clear, strategic plan aligned with organizational goals (Arslan and Trier, 2022; Newberry and Wood, 2022).

Despite a growing volume of research on social media, social media management as a field remains notably underconceptualized and lacks an integrated theory. Corporate cases often highlight the challenges organizations face in navigating the complexity of SMPs (Arslan and Trier, 2023; Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014). Much existing research tends to focus either on technical platform features (O’Riordan et al., 2012), user behaviors (Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Ashley and Tuten, 2015) or isolated marketing tactics (De Vries et al., 2012; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), without adequately addressing the complex interplay between SMP design features and their socio-cultural contexts.

Prior literature on social media management lacks an integrated conceptual framework that explicitly connects the tasks and responsibilities of social media managers with the affordances of SMPs. This gap is especially significant because social media management operates within a broader organizational landscape – spanning (online) marketing, sales, service and customer relationship management (CRM) – and social media managers play a key role in bridging these organizational functions with platform capabilities (Arslan and Trier, 2024; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Montalvo, 2011). Thus, understanding the role of the social media manager, who represents the organization’s brand and image, is essential to grasp how SMPs are leveraged strategically in organizations (Arslan and Trier, 2022).

Although attention to social media marketing processes has increased, research remains fragmented and lacks an integrated framework that fully captures the complexity of strategic

social media management and marketing. Existing contributions tend to focus on specific stages or categorize social media practices without articulating a clear, overarching overall model (e.g., Aral et al., 2013; Du Plessis, 2017; Hu and Olivieri, 2021; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Tuten, 2021; Vinerean, 2017). This fragmented state highlights how social media management remains underconceptualized, with no comprehensive theory but rather separate calls for theorizing the field.

Moreover, while content marketing is recognized as involving the creating, curating, distributing and amplifying of targeted content (Kotler et al., 2017), there is limited insight into how SMP-specific features like interactivity or vividness (De Vries et al., 2012) dynamically shape content quality and influence subsequent stages. Consequently, strategic management of social media marketing often remains underexplored, with insufficient understanding of how process stages interconnect to influence overall performance (Burton-Jones et al., 2015).

In organizational contexts, social media management encompasses the strategic and operational tasks required to achieve business objectives via SMPs (Montalvo, 2011). This includes setting goals, defining tactics, measuring performance and managing user engagement (Wilcox, 2020). However, studies show that social media strategies are often applied more intuitively than through formalized planning, highlighting the need for integrated management frameworks (Ananda et al., 2016; Arslan and Trier, 2024).

Social media managers play a crucial role in this process. As organizational actors and storytellers responsible for managing the brand's online presence, they mediate between internal organizational goals and external user engagement (Jacobson, 2020). Their activities range from developing brand-building campaigns and engaging with customers to collecting feedback and enhancing customer experience (Appel et al., 2020; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Wang et al., 2021). Thus, they must navigate the distinct affordances of various SMPs to align their strategies with both platform-specific dynamics and organizational objectives (Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014).

SMPs are designed and tailored for different target groups and purposes (Ngai et al., 2015). For example, FB supports broad social networking, IG emphasizes visual content and TW focuses on fast-paced messages (Arslan and Trier, 2023; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). These differences in affordances and socio-cultural contexts require social media managers to possess nuanced knowledge beyond analytics tools to optimize strategies and respond to user behavior dynamically (Kannan and Li, 2017; Wedel and Kannan, 2016).

Given these complexities, social media management poses both strategic and socio-technical challenges. However, the role of social media managers and how they actualize affordances remains insufficiently explored. This gap highlights the need to integrate affordance theory with management practices more effectively. Accordingly, this dissertation frames social media management within an affordance-based analytical perspective, using the EVAP affordance categories to link affordance and strategic management research with the practical realities social media managers face in navigating social media marketing across SMPs.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 Literature Review

In IS research, literature reviews are typically conducted following established methodological guidelines to ensure transparency and rigor (Rowe, 2014; Schryen et al., 2020; vom Brocke et al., 2015; Webster and Watson, 2002). This dissertation adopts a comprehensive, concept-centric and structured literature review approach, guided by these frameworks. This methodology is applied across three papers (P1, P2 and P5), to explore the strategic and contextual dynamics of social media management and SMP use.

P1 employed a descriptive literature review to explore the affordance-based dynamics that influence SMP selection in organizations. Following guidelines by Levy and Ellis (2006), Paré et al. (2015) and Schryen et al. (2020), the search process utilized Google Scholar and leading IS publication outlets, combining targeted keywords with backward and forward citation chaining to identify relevant literature.

P2 extended the scope by focusing on affordances across SMPs and the role of cultural influences. The literature search, again based on guidelines by Rowe (2014) and vom Brocke et al. (2015), incorporated interdisciplinary sources from Google Scholar and Google. The keyword set expanded to include terms related to culture, motivation and use practices. Citation chaining and the principle of saturation were employed and inclusion criteria emphasized methodological rigor. The literature was categorized thematically and by SMPs, specifically focusing on FB, IG and TW – and distinguished between design-centric and user-centric perspectives.

P5 investigated strategic process models, social media activities and frameworks for social media management and marketing. It began with a conceptual framing derived from widely cited professional textbooks (e.g., Kotler et al., 2017; Wollan et al., 2011), which provided initial categorization of social media management and marketing stages. A targeted keyword search on Google Scholar identified relevant academic literature, which was evaluated through full-text screening and citation chaining. In addition, non-academic sources such as agency websites and blogs were reviewed to compare academic findings and practitioner perspectives.

Across all three studies, the literature review process was iterative and adhered to the principle of theoretical saturation. This methodological approach enabled the identification of *design-centric*, *user-centric* and *strategy-centric* insights, which collectively form the theoretical and empirical foundation of this dissertation.

The literature reviews also helped to identify complementary gaps and research needs that later guided the choice of quantitative (P3 and P4) and qualitative (P6 and P7) methods for the empirical studies.

3.1.2 Online Survey

An online survey is a widely used method for collecting data remotely via the internet, enabling researchers to reach diverse participants efficiently and systematically (Saunders et al., 2009).

In this dissertation, online surveys were conducted based on the framework developed in P3 and P4, which connect affordances with the socio-cultural context. The survey aimed to empirically investigate how users perceive and evaluate use expectations and practices shaping the socio-cultural context across the SMPs FB, IG and TW. This approach enabled for collecting data directly from users with varying engagement levels to understand platform-specific behaviors and attitudes underlying the actualization of affordances and to explore, how similar affordances are actualized differently (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3).

Data collection was conducted anonymously and voluntarily using LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey, 2025), a reliable and widely used online survey tool that offers flexible questionnaire design and secure data management. The dataset comprised $n=197$ participants in P3 and $n=357$ participants in P4.

Participants were categorized into three user groups based on their engagement with the SMPs and their rating results: those actively using all three platforms, those familiar with the platforms but not actively using all anymore and those with limited or past experience. Participants who did not meet these criteria were excluded to maintain data integrity. Importance ratings for the socio-cultural context factors were collected using a ten-point Likert-type scale anchored at ‘1=not at all important’ to ‘10=very important’. Data was analyzed by employing Wilcoxon tests (see Section 3.2.1). The use of surveys in P3 and P4 reflects the need for standardized, empirical data to compare user behavior across SMPs and to explore platform-specific patterns in how affordances are perceived and actualized.

3.1.3 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews are an effective method to explore social media managers' interpretations of technology and their intentions in using SMPs to achieve organizational goals (Flick, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). Both P6 and P7 conducted semi-structured interviews based on a developed protocol that adhered to established interview guidelines. Key questions addressed social media strategy, activities and target groups.

Data was collected in multiple waves and included social media managers from 14 organizations in P6 and 19 organizations in P7. To ensure a broad representation, participants were recruited from diverse industries and organizational contexts (e.g., retail, banking or taxation), focusing on individuals with relevant roles such as social media managers, online marketing managers and similar positions. Recruitment was conducted via two online platforms, targeting managers primarily based in Germany.

In total, the social media managers worked across companies of various sizes and managed accounts on multiple SMPs, such as FB, IG, TW, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Xing, with varying engagement levels and both B2B and B2C focuses. Data was analyzed by an iterative coding process (see Section 3.2.2).

The interviews were especially suited to address exploratory research questions that required deep contextual understanding of social media practices, complementing the survey-based studies and enabling a richer theoretical development across the dissertation.

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 Wilcoxon Test

The Wilcoxon (signed-rank) test was employed to analyze differences in the importance ratings of use expectations and practices across the three SMPs FB, IG and TW. Effect sizes were calculated following Cohen (1988) to assess the magnitude of significant differences. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (IBM, 2025), with descriptive statistics generated for all items. The analyses were based on a validated and tested scale of SMP affordances linked to use expectations and practices that shape and are shaped by socio-cultural contexts of SMPs (Arslan and Trier, 2023). This scale provided a standardized instrument to measure use expectations and practices influencing socio-cultural contexts of SMPs, ensuring

the reliability and validity of the survey data used in P3 and P4. To ensure the robustness of results, additional tests were conducted using stratified samples based on user groups.

Findings revealed significant differences in how users actualize affordances and perceive use expectations and practices across FB, IG and TW, emphasizing the unique socio-cultural contexts of each platform. The Wilcoxon test confirmed these differences as statistically significant, with varying effect sizes. Robustness checks across different user groups further validated the consistency of these results. Overall, the findings highlight the critical need to consider platform-specific dynamics when studying social media management and marketing activities and user behavior from an organizational perspective.

3.2.2 Iterative Coding Process

To analyze the qualitative data collected in P6 and P7, an iterative coding process was carried out using qualitative content analysis supported by the software MAXQDA (MAXQDA, 2020). Following the methodological approach of Trier and Richter (2015), the analysis applied the EVAP affordance categories as abstract ‘sensitizing’ theoretical concepts, enabling the inductive development of sub-categories (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). Coding was conducted collaboratively, beginning with open coding and followed by discussions to refine and cluster categories as needed.

The analysis assessed whether interview responses directly reflected the EVAP affordance categories or whether it was useful to regroup certain sub-affordances. For example, when social media managers emphasized achieving a high reach of content, this was more closely associated with the affordance of visibility than with editability, persistence or association.

Overall, the use of MAXQDA in combination with an iterative, theory-informed approach supported a nuanced understanding of how social media managers actualize affordances and sub-affordances, highlighting the applicability of the affordance framework as a robust lens for structuring and interpreting social media management activities.

4 Results and Contribution

4.1 Synopsis and Discussion of Findings

Emphasizing a differentiation perspective, this dissertation investigates three interrelated perspectives: *platform-centric*, *user-centric* and *strategy-centric* (see Table 1.2). Five of the papers (P1, P2, P3, P5 and P6) have been published, while two (P4 and P7) are currently under review in peer-reviewed IS outlets, reflecting their valid contribution to the IS knowledge base. Notably, the first paper (P1) was nominated for the Best Research-in-Progress Paper Award by the *29th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS 2021)*, highlighting its significant impact and relevance (see Table 1.1).

The research begins with comprehensive literature reviews (P1, P2 and P5), followed by empirical studies including online surveys with social media users (P3 and P4) and in-depth interviews with social media managers (P6 and P7). These approaches collectively explore how social media activities are conducted and how affordances are actualized across different SMPs (see Figure 1.1). Together, they provide social media managers with clearer insights into *platform-centric* and *user-centric perspectives*, integrating new knowledge that advances IS and (online) marketing research and offering practical guidelines for effective strategy-centric decision-making and capability development in contemporary social media management and marketing.

The foundation of this dissertation is grounded in Research Objective 1 (RO1):

Research Objective 1 (RO1): *To develop a comprehensive framework that identifies and conceptually structures key categories and factors influencing organizational decision-making in selecting SMPs for effectively engaging with current and potential customers.*

Paper P1. *A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations* reveals that existing academic conceptualizations of ‘social media’ are often too broad to provide practical guidance for social media managers. Through a descriptive literature review on social media management from an organizational perspective, P1 develops a framework (see Table 1.2) by introducing a taxonomy of key categories, concepts and factors influencing the selection of SMPs in practice and thus makes a direct contribution to RO1. For example, when targeting social media users, it addresses the need to be aware that different types of users exist in SMPs, such as connected users, business partners or influencers, each with different motivations like

entertainment or informational purposes. The paper highlights three central issues: (1) the need to place the concept of affordance more centrally in managerial social media strategies, (2) the importance of understanding user behavior across platforms and (3) the need to align strategies and goals with the specific characteristics and socio-cultural contexts of individual platforms. By emphasizing these perspectives, P1 not only advances theoretical understanding but also initiates a shift towards integrating managerial concerns more explicitly into social media research, thereby laying a solid conceptual foundation that supports the achievement of RO1. The introduced framework establishes the conceptual foundation for this dissertation and guides the theoretical lens and empirical investigations pursued in the subsequent papers (P2–P7).

Research Objective 2 (RO2): *To analyze differences between popular SMPs (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) in terms of affordances and socio-cultural contexts, to guide managers in selecting and leveraging these SMPs more effectively.*

Building on the conceptual foundation established in P1, the subsequent papers P2–P4 contribute to RO2 by systematically comparing platform-specific affordances and exploring how they are actualized within diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Paper P2. *Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review* builds on the first and second key categories of the framework introduced in P1. While P1 explored all possible influences on SMP selection and resulted in identifying three broad perspectives – *design-centric*, *user-centric* and *strategy-centric* – P2 focuses specifically on extending the first two perspectives – *design-centric* and *user-centric* – in greater detail. P2 investigates how existing research addresses the relationship between platform-specific affordances and user behavior. While some studies consider both perspectives, they typically treat them separately, lacking a coherent theoretical integration (e.g., Alhabash and Ma, 2017; Kim and Kim, 2019). Drawing on an organizing literature review (Leidner, 2018), P2 reveals that although affordances are widely discussed, detailed cross-platform comparisons of user behavior on FB, IG and TW are rare. Socio-cultural context factors are often addressed inconsistently and largely disconnected from affordances. P2 contributes to RO2 by developing a comparative lens that links design-oriented affordances with user-oriented behaviors, illustrating how SMP-specific affordances are interpreted and actualized with distinctions in user behavior. This addresses the need for a more differentiated, management-relevant understanding of SMP differences. The paper represents an initial conceptual approach that is explored in greater depth and detail in P3 and P4.

Paper *P3. Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of the Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter* contributes to RO2 by offering a *framework that links affordances to socio-cultural contexts*. It operationalizes a socio-cultural perspective through four abstract key constructs: *Individual online identity*, *social (group) identity*, *expectations regarding roles and types of others* and *social behaviors* as well as their 15 sub-constructs. This framework enables a systematic comparison of how affordances are actualized differently across the SMPs FB, IG and TW. Moving beyond P2's focus on *use cultures* by adopting the broader term *socio-cultural contexts*, this shift captures the complex, multi-layered *social and cultural context factors* influencing platform-specific use practices, thus providing a richer and more nuanced understanding.

Building on Volkoff and Strong's (2017) perspective on affordance actualization, P3 extends this view by grounding it in quantitative empirical research through an online survey (n=197). The analyses relied on a validated scale of SMP affordances linked to use expectations and practices (Arslan and Trier, 2023). To empirically capture the socio-cultural context, the paper employs this scale to measure and compare use practices across FB, IG and TW, enabling robust cross-platform comparisons. For example, the study shows that users on FB tend to build relationships primarily with friends and family, highlighting the platform's connectivity affordance actualized in a family-oriented social context. Additionally, on IG, users exhibit connectivity with influencers and organizations, illustrating how similar affordances are actualized differently across platforms due to different *expectations regarding roles and types of others* – one key dimension of the socio-cultural context outlined in P3. While Karahanna et al. (2018) highlight social and contextual factors, their focus remains largely on psychological needs, with social aspects receiving less attention, whereas P3 applies the concept of affordance actualization systematically to socio-cultural contexts in diverse SMPs. By integrating affordance actualization as a dual construct – combining affordances and socio-cultural contexts – P3 shows how certain affordances are actualized in specific socio-cultural contexts and how similar affordances are actualized in different ways (e.g., interactivity with an organizational purpose versus interactivity with an entertaining purpose).

Paper *P4. Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective* builds directly on the foundations laid in P3 by offering a more advanced and theoretically grounded analysis of SMP use. This paper

combines the affordance perspective with socio-cultural context approaches (see Table 4.1)¹³ to deepen the understanding of how similar affordances are actualized differently across SMPs.

Table 4.1: Framework for Structuring the Socio-Cultural Context in SMPs
(Adapted from Arslan and Trier, 2023)

Dimensions of the Socio-Cultural Context in SMPs	Sub-Dimensions of the Socio-Cultural Context
1. Individual Online Identity (What determines social media users' identity?)	a. Online Identity Expression
	b. Online Identity Expression by Impression Management
2. Social (Group) Identity (How is the social (group) identity and impressing other users determined?)	a. Social (Group) Identity Expression on a Low-Level
	b. Social (Group) Identity Expression on a High-Level
3. Expectations Regarding Roles and Types of Others (Who is in a social (group) environment?)	a. Connectivity with Friends
	b. Connectivity with Family
	c. Connectivity with Celebrities
	d. Connectivity with Organizations
4. Social Behaviors (What is the content of interest, expectation of other users' behaviors and how is the interactivity carried out?)	a. Interactivity with an Organizational Focus
	b. Interactivity with a Political Focus
	c. Interactivity with an Entertaining Focus
	d. Interactivity with a Focus on Other Special Interests
	e. Interactivity by Checking Status Updates
	f. Interactivity by Using Hashtags
	g. Interactivity by Using Links

Empirically, P4 retains the validated measurement scale developed in P3 but extends the scope by using a larger online survey sample (n=357), enabling for more fine-grained pairwise comparisons across FB, IG and TW. For example, the dimension *individual online identity* is divided into the sub-dimension *online identity expression* and *online identity expression by impression management*. Each sub-dimension is operationalized through measurable *use expectations and practices* – for example, ‘*I use FB/IG/TW to maintain my online identity*’ or ‘*I use FB/IG/TW to maintain a positive attitude*’ both of which belong to the sub-dimension *online identity expression*.

This larger dataset uncovers clearer and more nuanced patterns in how use expectations and practices manifest across these platforms, contributing to RO2. Moreover, tables and results are presented with greater emphasis on practical implications for organizational contexts, particularly for social media managers. Thus, this paper represents a further evolution of the framework – underscoring its growing theoretical sophistication and practical significance – and is currently under review for journal publication.

¹³ This dissertation presents the dimensions and sub-dimensions, adapted from P4, to highlight the key contributions. To maintain focus and brevity, the detailed use expectations and practice items from the survey, as well as the corresponding items from the literature presented in P4, have been excluded.

Research Objective 3 (RO3): *To develop an integrated conceptual process model of social media management and marketing that systematically captures the sequential activities of social media managers to identify specific affordances and sub-affordances leveraged to support strategic organizational goals and effective management practices.*

Building on the theoretical and empirical groundwork laid in P1–P4, the subsequent papers P5–P7 contribute to RO3 by advancing an *integrated process model* that connects the concept of affordance with practical insights on social media management and marketing activities, illustrating how social media managers strategically utilize platform-specific affordances to achieve organizational goals.

Paper P5, *Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing* contributes to RO3 by conceptualizing the order and interdependence of social media management and marketing activities through the lens of process theory (Burton-Jones et al., 2015)¹⁴. The paper conducts a literature review and develops a *process model* that organizes the field into eight sequential social media management and marketing activities (see Figure 4.1).

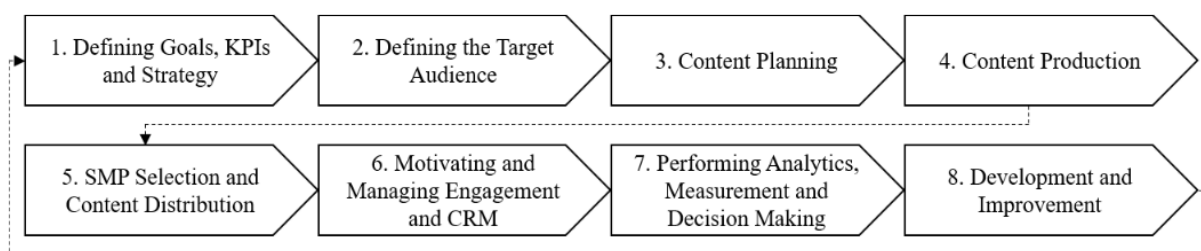


Figure 4.1: Process Model for Social Media Management and Marketing Activities
(Adapted from Arslan and Trier, 2022)

This model highlights how predecessor-successor relationships among activities are essential for achieving strategic outcomes. Reordering or skipping steps can undermine key objectives such as enhanced CRM. Unlike prior studies that suggest a fragmented or loosely defined progression (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Diba et al., 2019; Hu and Olivieri, 2021; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Keegan and Rowley, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Tuten, 2021), P5 organizes social media management and marketing activities into a clear, sequential process comprising interdependent stages. Drawing on a process theory perspective, focusing on how sequences of activities affect final outcomes (Burton-Jones et al., 2015), the paper fills a conceptual gap by

¹⁴ In this dissertation, the term ‘process model’ does not follow traditional BPM frameworks based on visual workflows or procedural modeling. Instead, it refers to the strategic logic and interdependencies that structure the sequence of social media management and marketing activities.

synthesizing scattered insights into a unified framework that supports strategic organizational goals and strengthens CRM. P5 lays the conceptual foundation for understanding social media management and marketing activities as a structured, outcome-oriented process. P6 and P7 build on this by examining specific stages of the model in greater depth, analyzing what occurs within these stages from the perspective of social media managers.

Paper P6, *Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities* contributes to RO3 by advancing the understanding of how social media managers actualize platform-specific affordances in a structured, goal-oriented manner. Building on the foundational EVAP affordance categories – editability, visibility, association and persistence – developed by Treem and Leonardi (2012), P6 explores how these affordances are strategically actualized by social media managers. While the affordance lens has been widely applied in IS research to study roles such as knowledge workers or general users (e.g., Bucher and Helmond, 2018; Leonardi, 2013; Majchrzak and Markus, 2012; Treem and Leonardi, 2012), the specific practices of social media managers – who operate at the intersection of organizational strategy and public engagement – have remained largely unexplored. P6 shifts analytical focus to this stakeholder group, identifying nine distinct sub-affordances that concretize the broad EVAP affordance categories (see Figure 4.2).

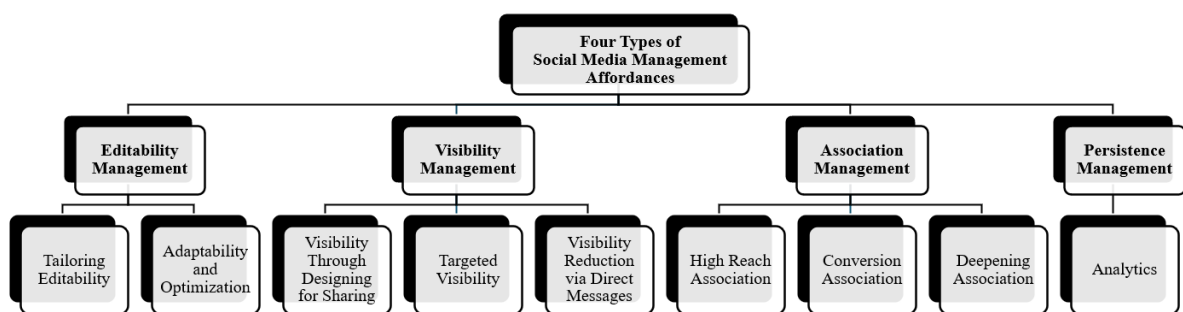


Figure 4.2: Affordances and Sub-Affordances Utilized by Social Media Managers
(Adapted from Arslan and Trier, 2024)

For example, *tailoring editability* reveals that social media managers who carefully manage content before its publication – by strategically timing posts and customizing content for each platform – achieve more effective user engagement, while others adopt a ‘copy-paste’ approach. Further, *adaptability and optimization* refer to the practice of some social media managers continuously refining their posts over time, suggesting a more effective management process compared to posting intuitively across various SMPs. Thus, the sub-affordances in P6 reveal concrete social media activities rather than abstract, high-level EVAP affordances – such as editability. They offer a fine-grained view of the operational tasks carried out by social media

managers and illustrate a clear emphasis on forward-looking planning and proactive campaign design, rather than an archival use of SMPs. The qualitative findings, based on interviews with social media managers from 14 organizations in Germany, show that visibility and association are the most frequently actualized affordances, while editability and persistence play a less central role. This strategy underscores a strong managerial focus on maximizing campaign reach, shaping brand perception and enhancing customer interaction, rather than revisiting prior content.

Importantly, these affordance-based activities align with the process model for social media marketing developed in P5, thus linking strategic-level planning with operational-level affordance actualization. For example, while P5 outlines *content production* as one sequence in the social media marketing process model, P6 deepens this by exploring how the *editability* affordance – and its sub-affordance *tailoring editability* – is actualized in SMP use. In this context, P6 uncovers that some social media managers employ a ‘copy-paste’ approach across SMPs such as FB, IG and TW, while others report more effective engagement when tailoring content to fit the unique socio-cultural and technical contexts of each platform. This insight reinforces the processual interdependence of social media activities (Burton-Jones et al., 2015) and supports a view of affordances as mechanisms through which broader social media activities are carried out in practice.

Paper P7. *Management Practices of Successful Social Media Platform Use – An Affordance Approach* builds on the foundation of P6 and extends the analysis of how social media managers actualize EVAP affordances and sub-affordances across SMPs, based on an expanded dataset (n=19). In addition to deepening the understanding of affordance actualization, another key finding is that success in social media management depends less on company size and more on strategic adaptability – especially the ability to interpret performance data and flexibly adjust campaigns. While P6 is more theory-driven, P7 is written for a practitioner-oriented journal and therefore places greater emphasis on practical case examples and actionable insights derived from the survey results.

4.2 Contribution to Research and Management

This dissertation contributes to both research and practice not only through its individual papers included in Part B but also through its overarching conceptual integration. As a whole, it advances the IS and (online) marketing literature by offering a *comprehensive understanding of affordances, affordance actualization and socio-cultural contexts within SMPs* – from both

the perspective of social media users and social media managers, with a particular focus on social media marketing activities.

Beyond its contribution as a literature review, P1 offers a valuable starting point for future research that addresses the lack of strategic guidance in social media management (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Parsons and Lepkowska-White, 2018; Stenmark and Zaffar, 2014). It responds to calls for a more differentiated view on SMPs by identifying affordances and socio-cultural contexts as central concepts for understanding how organizations can align their communication strategies with platform-specific dynamics. Previous studies often treat social media platforms as a homogeneous medium, overlooking the importance of platform-specific affordances and socio-cultural factors (O’Riordan et al., 2012; Treem and Leonardi, 2012).

The paper addresses the need for structured support in selecting and using suitable SMPs to meet specific organizational goals and lays the foundation for a more systematic, management-oriented analysis of SMPs. In doing so, P1 contributes to RO1 by providing a *taxonomy* that structures the strategic considerations relevant for social media managers and offers concrete starting points to improve decision-making processes. The resulting *taxonomy* distills these elements into three interrelated perspectives – *platform-centric*, *user-centric* and *strategy-centric* – allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing SMP selection and use. Consequently, it also aims to provide practical insights, particularly by supporting social media managers in aligning their strategies with platform-specific affordances and user behavior.

P2 contributes to research by *linking affordances with use culture*, addressing a key gap in IS literature on SMPs (Volkoff and Strong, 2017). It shows how users shape the actualization of affordances and argues that social contexts must be considered alongside design to fully understand SMP dynamics (Nagy and Neff, 2015; Vaast et al., 2017; Volkoff and Strong, 2017). This integrated perspective addresses a significant limitation in prior studies, which often treat affordances and user behavior as separate and lack cross-platform theoretical integration (e.g., Alhabash and Ma, 2017; O’Riordan et al., 2012). This strengthens the theoretical basis for comparing FB, IG and TW.

For management, P2 lays the groundwork for a more detailed, practical understanding of differences between affordances and use culture across these platforms. By highlighting how platform features are influenced by community norms and behaviors, it provides managers with a structured approach to evaluate SMPs beyond design aspects. This supports more informed,

platform-specific decision-making and promotes a strategic shift away from generic social media approaches toward tailored, audience-focused communication, responding to calls for nuanced social media management and marketing activities. These insights are further developed in papers P3 and P4.

P3 advances theory and research on SMP use by extending the traditional affordance lens to systematically integrate *socio-cultural context factors* through a rigorously developed and *validated scale*. The *framework* developed in P3 *links affordances to socio-cultural contexts*, thus avoiding ineffective ‘copy-paste’ strategies – as revealed by interviews with social media managers in P6 and P7 – by promoting deliberate, context-specific engagement.

A key contribution of P3 lies in the theoretical refinement from the term *use culture* – originally introduced in P1 and further developed in P2 as a user-centric perspective on SMPs – to the broader and more comprehensive *concept of socio-cultural context*, which was conceptualized with *four constructs* and *15 sub-constructs capturing use practices of SMPs*. This shift enhances the explanatory power of the framework by capturing the wider social and cultural influences (Nagy and Neff, 2015; Sun and Suthers, 2021) shaping platform-specific user behavior. By adopting this concept and operationalizing it through a validated scale, the dissertation advances conceptual clarity and supports more nuanced empirical analysis, laying the groundwork for subsequent papers such as P4.

The scale was empirically tested in a quantitative study (n=197), demonstrating that it reliably differentiates *use expectations* and *practices* across FB, IG and TW confirming its practical and theoretical relevance. Three pairwise comparisons were conducted by measuring, analyzing and comparing the socio-cultural context factors across platforms – FB and IG, IG and TW as well as TW and FB – illustrating how these contexts differ. The validation and empirical application of the scale represent a core academic contribution, advancing beyond the scattered and fragmented research streams, such as U&G (Alhabash and Ma, 2017), engagement (Voorveld et al., 2018) and motivation (Oh and Syn, 2015). Thus, this paper provides social media managers with the insights necessary to align content and communication strategies with platform-specific use expectations and practices. P3 extends P1 by demonstrating that understanding *socio-cultural context differences in affordance actualization* can lead to better decisions about which SMP to use and how to use them more efficiently. For example, interactivity on FB centers more on personal relationships, while IG users have higher expectations to connect with organizations. Additionally, visual content is emphasized on IG, whereas TW users focus on real-time, fast-paced information – insights organizations can

leverage to tailor their content strategies to resonate with each platform's socio-cultural context. This directly contributes to RO2 by providing both a theoretical advancement through the operationalization of socio-cultural context influences and practical guidance for strategy development in social media management.

Building on P3, P4 sharpens the analytical lens by expanding the concept of *socio-cultural context* to explicitly encompass both *use expectations and practices*, thus, making a notable theoretical contribution by refining this concept. While P3 conceptualized socio-cultural context, P4 argues that *use expectations* – shaped by underlying norms, cultural values and user intentions – precede and influence observable use practices, representing a critical yet sometimes hidden facet of socio-cultural contexts. Importantly, P4 highlights that not all user intentions result in visible actions on SMPs, meaning that affordances may be only partially actualized (Strong et al., 2014; Volkoff and Strong, 2017).

Another conceptual refinement lies in the renaming of the original socio-cultural constructs and sub-constructs (developed in P3) to *socio-cultural dimensions* and *sub-dimensions*, reflecting the paper's more advanced and structured analytical framework. By connecting this refined conceptualization to broader social and cultural theories, P4 enhances the coherence and explanatory power of the framework, offering a richer lens for interpreting platform-specific social media behaviors.

Empirically, P4 validates the measurement scale developed in P3 using a second, extended dataset (n=357), thereby strengthening the scale's reliability and confirming its utility for capturing socio-cultural influence factors. This validation with a second dataset adds a significant methodological contribution to the research. The study further strengthens the robustness of its findings through detailed pairwise comparisons of FB, IG and TW, generating nuanced insights into how affordances are differentially actualized across these platforms. This empirical depth extends and deepens the findings of P3, resulting in a more *operational and actionable framework for analyzing SMP use* within organizations. Through this, P4 makes a significant theoretical and empirical contribution to the discourse on affordances and affordance actualization and the role of socio-cultural context in shaping SMP use.

Practically, P4 provides valuable, empirically grounded guidance for social media managers, helping them interpret platform-specific user dynamics and differences more accurately. By highlighting distinct use expectations and practices tied to FB, IG and TW, the validated

framework moves beyond uniform or superficial ‘copy-paste’ approaches, promoting content and interactivity that align with the unique socio-cultural dynamics of each platform.

Paper P5 makes a theoretical contribution by laying the foundation for a *process-oriented understanding of social media marketing*. Rather than treating social media marketing and management as isolated practices or factors, it conceptualizes these activities as a structured sequence of interdependent sequences, thereby aligning with the principles of the process theory as outlined by Burton-Jones et al. (2015). The paper argues that the order of the sequences matters, that sequences cannot be skipped and that they mutually influence one another – highlighting core characteristics of process theory.

This perspective is reinforced through a systematic literature review revealing how many fragmented contributions can be integrated into a coherent predecessor-successor structure, resembling ‘puzzle pieces’ forming a complete picture (e.g., Aral et al., 2013; Hu and Olivieri, 2021; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Pour et al. 2021; Vinerean, 2017). Although many of these academic works imply such a logic without explicitly formulating a process, P5 identifies gaps in existing frameworks, such as those by Kotler et al. (2017), which come close to a full sequence but tend to be normative or textbook-driven and lack empirical grounding. P5 addresses this gap by proposing an academically rigorous and practically relevant process model that connects strategic and operational considerations of social media marketing.

From an organizational perspective, P5 offers a valuable *roadmap for practitioners* navigating the complexities of social media management and marketing more systematically. It helps organizations to better understand how earlier sequences – such as defining goals and target audiences – inform and shape subsequent activities like content production or performance evaluation and decision making. While P5 provides the *overarching framework*, P6 and P7 build on it by focusing in-depth on specific sequences, shedding light on what occurs within these sequences from the perspective of social media managers.

P6 makes a theoretical contribution by extending the affordance-based view of IS specifically to social media management. While existing affordance research has focused on platform use by knowledge managers or employees using enterprise social networks (e.g., Khan et al., 2023; Leidner et al., 2020) or youths (e.g., Shane-Simpson et al., 2018), P6 demonstrates that social media managers actualize social media affordances in distinctive ways – compared to social media users, as explored in P3 and P4 – shaped by their organizational role and strategic communication goals.

Building on the well-established EVAP affordance categories – encompassing editability, visibility, association and persistence – P6 develops a *category system of sub-affordances tailored specifically for the social media manager role*. This paper shows that while the EVAP affordances remain valid at a high level, their enactment is contextually specific and reveals more nuanced sub-affordances – such as *targeted visibility* which directly relate to organizational objectives like brand visibility, user engagement or customer satisfaction.

Conceptually, the introduction of role-specific sub-affordances represents a key contribution, showing that affordances are not static but contextually interpreted and operationalized based on role-specific intentions and goals. This aligns with calls in IS research for more situated accounts of technology use (e.g., Volkoff and Strong, 2017). Moreover, P6 shows that context and intentions – two key determinants of affordance actualization – are shaped by the unique position of social media managers, who act both as a storyteller and as an organizational agent (Neill and Moody, 2015; Vaast and Kaganer, 2013). These sub-affordances make the affordance lens more actionable for empirical studies of digital communication and provide richer insight into the daily work of social media managers. For example, *editability management* involves the sub-affordance *adaptability and optimization*. This means tailoring content specifically for each platform and audience before posting. Social media managers often use editorial plans and adapt their posts based on feedback and performance data from earlier content. This adaptive, learning-driven approach extends the original conceptualization of editability by Treem and Leonardi (2012), enabling managers to address diverse use expectations and practices that are shaped by platform-specific socio-cultural context factors, as explored in P3 and P4.

From a managerial perspective, P6 provides practical guidance by illustrating how platform features can be strategically leveraged to enhance campaign effectiveness. Strategies like *targeted visibility* and *high reach association* facilitate better audience segmentation and content distribution. P6 also highlights the importance of continuous adaptation, as evidenced by social media managers' embrace of emerging platforms such as TikTok. By articulating these affordance-based activities, P6 supports capability development, role design and digital strategy.

Together with P5, which presents the broader social media management and marketing process, P6 enriches both academic and managerial perspectives by unpacking how these processes and

practices are enacted in the daily digital work of social media managers through a detailed affordance lens.

While P6 focused on theory development and addressing academic gaps, P7 advances this work by providing *concrete, actionable guidance* grounded in the affordance perspective and tailored to real-world challenges faced by social media managers across industries such as retail, banking or taxation. Drawing on an extended interview sample, P7 reveals how social media managers actualize the EVAP affordances and sub-affordances in their daily work, providing numerous examples of managing editability, visibility, association and persistence within SMPs. Moving beyond the abstract categorizations common in existing literature, a key contribution of P7 is its systematic derivation of *lessons learned and practical recommendations for EVAP affordances*, translating the conceptual insights from P6 into actionable guidance for social media management. For example, under the affordance of association, the paper shows how social media managers deliberately combine *high-reach associations* with strategies to *deepen associations* with loyal customers, effectively building and sustaining relationships.

By addressing the initial gap identified in RO1 – namely the lack of strategic guidance for SMP use – P7 effectively closes the loop initiated in P1. Like P6, P7 links strategic-level planning with operational-level enactment, delivering empirically grounded, practitioner-focused insights – a need expressed by the interviewees across both studies. However, while P6 primarily advances theoretical understanding of affordance actualization, P7 translates these insights into *practical recommendations and actionable guidance for social media managers*. In doing so, it makes a significant contribution to RO3 by supporting social media managers in enhancing their social media management and marketing activities across SMPs – dynamic digital environments shaped by diverse socio-cultural contexts.

4.3 Conclusion and Outlook

This dissertation follows calls in IS research for a more integrated and theory-driven understanding of social media management. Addressing the need for conceptual clarity and practical relevance, it develops an affordance-based and process-oriented perspective that addresses how organizations manage their presence across SMPs. Building on the EVAP affordance framework – comprising editability, visibility, association and persistence – (Treem and Leonardi, 2012) and strategic perspectives on social management (Kietzmann et al., 2011;

Montalvo, 2011), the study introduces a process model that connects strategic objectives with platform-specific activities shaped by affordances, sub-affordances and socio-cultural contexts.

A central contribution lies in conceptualizing social media management and marketing as a dynamic and multifaceted process. Despite the increasing strategic relevance of SMPs in organizations, existing research remains fragmented and tends to overlook how individual process steps interrelate or how they are shaped by design-centric affordances as well as user-centric socio-cultural contexts. This dissertation addresses this gap by identifying eight key social media management and marketing activities and linking them to both social media affordances and socio-cultural influences, thereby enabling a more coherent and strategically grounded approach.

Another contribution addresses the role of social media managers in IS research. Positioned between internal strategic planning and external user environments, these actors engage with SMPs in role-specific ways. Yet, their role remains underexplored in IS literature, especially in terms of how they interpret and actualize affordances across SMPs (Volkoff and Strong, 2017). This dissertation addresses this gap by examining how social media managers actualize the EVAP affordances and by conceptualizing the specific sub-affordances relevant to their roles, platforms and objectives – providing insights into how their practices differ from those of other user groups typically studied in IS research.

Moreover, this dissertation advances the conceptualization of socio-cultural context as a key determinant of affordance actualization, marking a significant contribution to IS literature. While design-oriented perspectives on affordances emphasize functionalities (e.g., O’Riordan et al., 2012), this research highlights the role of socio-cultural context dimensions in shaping how affordances are perceived and actualized in SMPs such as FB, IG and TW. It operationalizes these *socio-cultural context dimensions* into *individual online identity*, *social (group) identity*, *expectations regarding roles and types of others* and *social behaviors*, comprising 15 sub-dimensions (Arslan and Trier, 2023). Thus, the study demonstrates how these dimensions frame both user and managerial practices – providing a nuanced understanding of SMP-specific engagement contexts. For example, interactivity by checking status updates differs from interactivity by using hashtags.

From a practical perspective, this dissertation offers a *platform-sensitive framework* to guide organizations and social media managers in making more informed decisions when selecting SMPs, adapting content strategies and engaging through diverse social media affordances. Instead of treating SMPs as interchangeable, the framework encourages a differentiated,

affordance-based approach that integrates socio-cultural contexts that considers both user behavior and organizational goals.

Future research can extend the validated process model and the identified sub-affordances of the EVAP affordance categories by applying them across various organizational roles and settings. This can yield deeper insights into how different stakeholders – such as campaign managers, customer service teams or influencers – actualize affordances differently, shaped by their specific goals and the socio-cultural contexts of SMPs. Moreover, the socio-cultural context framework could be broadened to incorporate additional variables like socioeconomic status and age, which may further influence use expectations and practices.

In sum, this dissertation lays a foundation for understanding social media management and marketing as a process-driven, context-sensitive and strategic practice. By linking affordance research with strategic management and emphasizing the socio-cultural contexts of SMPs, it advances both IS research and the development of more adaptive, user-centered management practices in digital environments. Recognizing that social media managers frequently work within marketing and sales functions, this dissertation also contributes to the field of (online) marketing by uncovering how these professionals leverage digital tools and platforms strategically in their daily activities. This is especially relevant considering the continuous emergence of new SMPs (e.g., TikTok), which requires organizations to develop flexible and context-specific digital strategies that can effectively respond to platform-specific affordances and to evolving use expectations and practices that shape and are shaped by socio-cultural contexts.

Part B

Included Publications

5 A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations

5 A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations

Title	A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations	
Publication Type	Conference Proceedings	
Publication Outlet	29th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS 2021)	
VHB Rating (2024)	A	
Status	Published	
Award	Nominated for the Best Research-in-Progress Paper Award	
Author	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	100%
Presentation	Kader Arslan	100%
Location and Date	Marrakesh, Morocco (held virtually), June 2021	
Full Citation	Arslan, K. 2021. “A Review on Social Media Channel Choice Determinants in Organizations,” in <i>Proceedings of the 29th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS 2021)</i> , Marrakesh, Morocco, Paper 37.	

Table 5.1: Fact Sheet of Paper P1

6 Comparative Analysis of Social Media Platforms: Affordances and Socio-Cultural Contexts

6.1 Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review

Title	Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review	
Publication Type	Conference Proceedings	
Publication Outlet	32nd Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS 2021)	
VHB Rating (2024)	C	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
Presentation	Kader Arslan	100%
Location and Date	Sydney, Australia (held virtually), December 2021	
Full Citation	Arslan, K., and Trier, M. 2021. "Towards a Differentiation Perspective on Social Media Platforms' Affordances and Use Cultures – An organizing Literature Review," in <i>Proceedings of the 32nd Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS 2021)</i> , Sydney, Australia, Paper 80.	

Table 6.1: Fact Sheet of Paper P2

6.2 Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of the Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Title	Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of the Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter	
Publication Type	Conference Proceedings	
Publication Outlet	44th International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS 2023)	
VHB Rating (2024)	A	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
Presentation	Kader Arslan	100%
Location and Date	Hyderabad, India, December 2023	
Full Citation	Arslan, K., and Trier, M. 2023. "Similar Affordances, Different Use Practices? An Investigation of Socio-Cultural Contexts in Facebook, Instagram and Twitter," in <i>Proceedings of the 44th International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS 2023)</i> , Hyderabad, India, Paper 14.	

Table 6.2: Fact Sheet of Paper P3

6.3 Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective

Title	Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective	
Publication Type	Working Paper	
Publication Outlet	Paderborn University, Faculty of Business Administration and Economics	
VHB Rating (2024)	–	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
Full Citation	Arslan, K., and Trier, M. 2025b. “Similar Affordances but Different Use Practices? Contrasting Social Media Platforms from a Socio-Cultural Context Perspective,” <i>Working Paper Series, Paderborn University, Faculty of Business Administration and Economics, No. 157</i> .	

Table 6.3: Fact Sheet of Paper P4

7 Conceptual Process Model for Social Media Management and Marketing: Affordance-Based Strategies for Organizations

7.1 Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing

Title	Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing	
Publication Type	Conference Proceedings	
Publication Outlet	33rd Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS 2022)	
VHB Rating (2024)	C	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
Presentation	Kader Arslan	100%
Location and Date	Melbourne, Australia, December 2022	
Full Citation	Arslan, K., and Trier, M. 2022. "Towards a Process Model for Social Media Marketing," in <i>Proceedings of the 33rd Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS 2022)</i> , Melbourne, Australia, Paper 81.	

Table 7.1: Fact Sheet of Paper P5

7.2 Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities

Title	Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities	
Publication Type	Conference Proceedings	
Publication Outlet	19th International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik (WI 2024)	
VHB Rating (2024)	B	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
Presentation	Matthias Trier	100%
Location and Date	Würzburg, Germany, September 2024	
Full Citation	Arslan, K., and Trier, M. 2024. "Do Organizations Utilize Social Media Affordances? A Qualitative Investigation of Social Media Management Activities," in <i>Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Wirtschaftsinformatik (WI 2024)</i> , Würzburg, Germany, Paper 52.	

Table 7.2: Fact Sheet of Paper P6

7.3 Management Practices of Successful Social Media Platform Use – An Affordance Approach

Title	Management Practices of Successful Social Media Platform Use – An Affordance Approach	
Publication Type	Working Paper	
Publication Outlet	Paderborn University, Faculty of Business Administration and Economics	
VHB Rating (2024)	–	
Status	Published	
Authors	Name	Contribution
	Kader Arslan	90%
	Matthias Trier	10%
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Table 7.3: Fact Sheet of Paper P7

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