How does social media affect entrepreneurial leadership
A qualitative study on entrepreneur’s perceptions regarding social media as a tool for entrepreneurial leadership

Master’s Thesis 15 credits
Department of Business Studies
Uppsala University
Spring Semester of 2018
Date of Submission: 2018-05-29

Carl Johan Dahlin
Philip Gratell
Supervisor: Gundula Lücke
Acknowledgements

We would like to give a huge thanks to the people that helped us during the progress of our thesis. Firstly, we would like to give big thanks to our respondents, without you we would not have been able to conduct our thesis. Thank you for giving us your time!

We are also grateful for the help from our supervisor, Gundula Lücke, thank you for the support and helpful guidance during the spring semester and this master’s thesis.

Klaudia Leks and Valquiria Jablinski thank you for your comments on our thesis during the opposition.

Lastly, we would like to give our thanks to Espresso House and Stockholm city library for their generous open hours and strong coffee.
Abstract

This thesis is about entrepreneurial leadership and how entrepreneurs are affected by social media.

Our aim with this study is to investigate how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership. One of the main questions we are trying to figure out is, can social media be used as a tool for entrepreneurial leadership and if that is the case, how?

To be able to answer the aim, the thesis takes a qualitative researched approach, we conducted individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs.

The data from the interviews will be analysed using grounded theory coding with the approach of finding 1st order concepts to look for patterns in the data. The 1st order concepts led us to the 2nd ordered themes, which became three aggregated dimensions; cast expander, leadership enhancer and new social context.

The result gave us a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial leadership and how the entrepreneurial leader perceives social media as a leadership tool. By combining our three aggregate dimensions, cast expander, leadership enhancer and new social context we were able to build a model of how these three dimensions intersect. What makes this model useful is that it gives us some insight into how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial leadership, Entrepreneurial Vision, Leadership, Social media, Social networks, Start-ups.
Table of contents

Introduction 4

Theoretical Framework 6
  Leadership 6
  Entrepreneurial leadership 7
    The entrepreneurial leadership model 9
  Social media 10
  Entrepreneurial leadership on social media 12

Methodology 14
  Research approach 14
    Qualitative research – Semi-structured interviews 14
    Sample 14
    Research design 16
    Reliability and Validity 17
    Conducting the interviews 18
    Transcription and data analysis 19

Result and Analysis 21
  Analysis 21
    The 1st order concepts 22
    The 2nd ordered themes 26
    The aggregated dimensions 27
    Can you be a leader on social media? 32
    General thoughts about social media 32

Discussion and conclusions 33
  Conclusions 37
    Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research 39

References 40

Appendix 1 – Interview guide 43
Introduction

This thesis is about entrepreneurial leadership and how social media affect the entrepreneurial leader. It is an interesting and important topic because according to Fischer & Reuber (2014) there has not been a lot of previous research on the subject, how entrepreneurs use and potential benefits from social media. Entrepreneurial leadership and social media are two subject areas that are well-researched, and both have been suggested to be of great significance for the success of a company, especially in the early part of a company's existence. By conducting semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurial leaders, we aim to examine where these two topics intersect.

The leadership has been studied intensively since ancient China but entrepreneurial leadership is a relatively new field (Cogliser & Brigham, 2004). Leadership abilities are very important for entrepreneurs although the advantages of the leadership capacity of the founder are often overlooked (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). Jensen & Luthans, (2006) showed that employees who perceived their founder to be more of a leader showed a correlation with higher levels of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and work happiness. This also led to productivity, customer satisfaction, profit, employee safety. Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban, and Geho, (2016) showed that if the entrepreneur as a leader has a competitive approach, they can turn their limited resources into improved innovation.

In this study, we will as mentioned investigating entrepreneurial leadership. Gupta, MacMillan, and Surie (2004, p. 243) define, entrepreneurial leadership as “leadership that creates visionary scenarios that are used to assemble and mobilize a ‘supporting cast’ of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation.” The vision is a very central aspect of entrepreneurial leadership and the formulation and communicating of the vision is crucial as a means to inspire and rally the team. The communication part is very interesting because the communication landscape has changed since the beginning of the World Wide Web. The birth of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram have undoubtedly changed how we communicate, (Gruber, Smerek, Thomas-Hunt & James, 2015: Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010).

Social media are important for the entrepreneur and can have high value if the entrepreneur understands the ecosystem. Fischer & Reuber (2011) state that “entrepreneur” is the most mentioned word in the biography with the most active members on Twitter. Overall there is a
significant gap in the existing literature regarding how social media affect entrepreneurial leadership, both the benefits and disadvantages with it.

To fill this gap, in this thesis we draw upon data from semi-structured qualitative research interviews. Interviews have been conducted with 7 respondents. Qualitative research interview was chosen because it is a strong tool for studying and gaining in-depth knowledge of the interviewee opinions and attitudes within the chosen research area, (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

Our aim with this study is to investigate how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership. One of the main questions we are trying to figure out is, can social media be used as a tool for entrepreneurial leadership and if that is the case, how?

Our thesis contributes to the existing literature by examining the intersection and role of entrepreneurial leadership and social media. We believe that the sample is somewhat limited the findings can be used to further our understanding of the entrepreneurial process. The study might be useful in shaping the way entrepreneurs in the future use social media as platforms to lead and with it increase their possible success rate.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. In the next section, we will examine what is known of leadership theory, entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial vision and social media and provide definitions of these themes and how they intersect. We then continue to describe and critique our choice of method and how we operationalise theory into a useful interview guide based on the Gupta and colleagues (2004) model with relevant themes and questions (see Appendix 1). We will then present our findings and discuss their validity and implications. Finally, we will present our conclusions and give suggestions for further research and the thesis limitation.
Theoretical Framework

Leadership

Leadership research can be traced back a century, and a lot within the field have been investigated, even though not a lot of strong conclusions have been made regarding the leader. What type of traits, intelligence, personality distinguish leaders from people have been the focus of previous scholars (Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002). There is a link between leaders and the “Big Five” or the five-factor model where five different personality traits are considered to play a role of leadership. The five traits are conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness. (Judge et al, 2002) Within leadership research, there is also a controversy regarding if it is possible to learn leadership or if you are born a leader (Brungardt, 1996). Some research implies that leadership is learnt by experiences in life and that education, the practice can help the leader grow his/her leadership abilities (Brungardt, 1996).

The founder within the entrepreneurial venture is often only seen as entrepreneurs, but when the venture later become more developed, and human capital enter the firm, then the entrepreneur also can be seen as a leader. It is here that the future of the start-up will be determined on the leading abilities of the founder, the entrepreneur needs to sustain the organisation as it grows (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). It is also crucial that the founder as a leader, attract other workers so that the vision of the founder can be transformed into reality. The advantage of the leadership capacity of the founder is often overlooked, even if it has been stated that leadership abilities are very important for entrepreneurs (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). A study was done by Zhao, Seibert & Lumpkin, (2010) showed that conscientiousness is linked with traits like motivation and goal setting, aims, organisation, and planning. The study also showed that entrepreneurs with a higher score in conscientiousness tended to have the ventures with higher growth.

The entrepreneurial journey is known to be a bumpy road with a lot of challenges, especially in the beginning. Entrepreneurs who are equipped with the abilities of a leader are more likely to overcome future obstacles. When the stress on the workforce is increasing, it is important to keep the workforce motivated, this is key for success and growth. (Jensen & Luthans, 2006) Leaders also need good communication tools, in order to make the workgroup more effective. Using motivational language as a leader has also shown to related with higher innovations from employees within new ventures. (Dunne et al, 2016)
The leadership abilities of the founder will result in the workforce and among their peers, higher trust among them will make them more positive, broaden their thinking, and improve the overall performance of the organisation over time. (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). The study done by Jensen & Luthans, (2006) showed that employees who perceived their founder to be more of a leader showed a correlation with higher levels of organisational commitment, job satisfaction and work happiness. This also led to productivity, customer satisfaction, profit, employee safety. The study done by Dunne and colleagues (2016) showed that if the entrepreneur as a leader has a competitive approach, they can turn their limited resources into improved innovation.

Leadership is important for entrepreneurs and one concept within leadership research that is more focused on the ecosystem of entrepreneurs is entrepreneurial leadership.

**Entrepreneurial leadership**

Entrepreneurial leadership is as mentioned, a relatively new concept in leadership research. Leadership research has been a vast researched field, but in the recent decades’ entrepreneurial leadership has opened-up a new paradigm within the field (Leitch, McMullan, & Harrison, 2013). Some argue that leadership and entrepreneurship are two fields that are so close together that they should be combined (Veccio, 2003). The concepts of leadership and entrepreneurship still exist as separate fields and other scholars have since developed a new concept of entrepreneurial leadership and today it is a thriving research field. Entrepreneurial leadership shares a lot of common traits with transformational and team-oriented leadership in that the leader pulls out extraordinaire performance from the group members and is highly involved in the group (Reid, Anglin, Baur, Short & Buckley, 2018). The more volatile nature of the entrepreneurial firm separates entrepreneurial leadership from other leadership styles (Gupta, MacMillan & Surie, 2004).

Early entrepreneurial leadership scholars like Ireland, Hitt, and Sirmon (2003) define the entrepreneurial leader as a person who strategically manages resources, influences others and puts great importance on advantage and opportunity seeking behaviour. Gupta, MacMillan, and Surie (2004, p. 243) define the entrepreneurial leadership as “leadership that creates visionary scenarios that are used to assemble and mobilize a ‘supporting cast’ of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation.”. Thornberry (2006) continues to build on the leadership literature by defining vision, focus passion and inspiration of others as key entrepreneurial leadership aspects as well as the ability to capture and develop new business opportunities. Like Gupta with colleagues (2004), Surie and Ashley (2008) emphasize the
circumstantial aspects of entrepreneurship in their leadership definition that focus on adaptation and innovation in uncertain environments. One of the newer additions in trying to define the entrepreneurial leader is Renko, El Tarabishy, Carsrud and Brännback (2015) who lifts the influential and directing role of the leader, that the leader should push the group members to achieve the organisational goals, the leader also needs to spot and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities.

The common traits found in most of the entrepreneurial leader definition is vision, opportunity recognition and the ability to lead and keep a group together (Ireland et al, 2003; Gupta et al., 2004; Cogliser & Brigham, 2004; Darling & Beebe, 2007; Ruvio, Rosenblatt & Hertz-Lazarowitz 2010; Renko et al., 2015; Reid et al; 2018). Early studies of entrepreneurial vision focus on growth and creation (Baum & Locke, 2004; Dees, 1998; Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Ensley, Garland & Carland, 2000; Greenberger & Sexton, 1988; Naffziger, Hornsby, & Kuratko, 1994). Baum, Locke, and Kirkpatrick’s (1998) found the entrepreneurial vision attributes to be more abstract and future-oriented compared to other leadership visions. They also found it to be crucial as a means to inspire and rally the team. Ensley et al. (2000) point out the entrepreneurs’ ability to formulate a vision that suits their specific venture and sees the entrepreneurial vision as a holistic and intuitive mindset that bridges the current situation and the future state. Renko with colleagues (2015) defines vision as being used to inspire and to highlight opportunity. The vision can also act as an important tool to defines what is possible and also be used as a way to attract new people to realise the vision (Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009). The vision can also be used to remove uncertainty and instil confidence in the venture (Gupta et al, 2004).

Many entrepreneurial leadership traits are found in other leadership theories and many scholars have a hard time identifying exactly what separates entrepreneurial leadership from other leadership theories (Renko et al, 2015; Ried et al, 2018). In transformational leadership, leaders and followers coordinate their vision to reach goals and achieve changes (Ensley Pearce & Hmieleski, 2006; Ardichvili, 2001). Charismatic leadership vision focuses on effective vision communication to achieve a deeper adoption of goals by the followers. Transactional leadership vision is based on the exchange between the leader and the followers, the leader monitors the subordinates and rewards or punishes to make sure goals are met (Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009). Visionary leadership focuses entirely on vision (Westley & Mintzberg, 1998). A few researchers separate entrepreneurial leadership from other theories by pointing at the specific entrepreneurial organisational context. For instance, the volatile environment surrounding the entrepreneurial leader separates entrepreneurial leadership from transformational and team-oriented leadership (Gupta et al, 2004). Kempster and
Cope (2010) discussed that it might be hard to even call it entrepreneurial leadership since it’s so hard to define what is inside and what is outside the organisation in the entrepreneurial context. Papalexandris and Galanaki (2009) point out several different variables that separate professional CEO from the entrepreneurial founder/leader.

We will use Gupta with colleagues (2004) definition of entrepreneurial leadership since that was based on cross-cultural GLOBE phase I data from over 17,000 midlevel managers. Their leadership definition describes leading the group as assembling a “cast of competent and committed supporters” rather than only seeing the manager/employee leader relation. We also assume that entrepreneurial leadership is still leadership but that it is more relevant in certain organisational contexts and situations. We will use the Gupta model that define entrepreneurial leadership, we will describe the model in more detail in the next section.

The entrepreneurial leadership model

According to Gupta, MacMillan and Surie’s (2004) model for entrepreneurial leadership, the entrepreneur faces two main challenges or dimensions; scenario enactment and cast enactment. These two variables are interdependent and an entrepreneur needs to understand and master both dimensions in order to succeed as an entrepreneurial leader.

Scenario enactment

Scenario enactment is the envisioning and creation of a possible scenario of opportunities that can be seized and realized. Scenario enactment has three leadership roles; framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty and path clearing (Gupta et al, 2004).

By framing the challenge the leader sets a framing on what can be achieved to push the team to its performance edge without exhausting them. It’s a balancing act of improving results but at the same time understand the limits of the cast. To frame the challenge the entrepreneurial leader need to be pragmatic and attentive to what can be accomplished resulting in a vision worth perusing.

The second role of scenario enactment is absorbing uncertainty when the leader states a vision of the future to be enacted by the cast. The leader is supposed to take on the burden of responsibility for the outcome of the vision, success or failure. By taking on that burden the leader lifts that responsibility of the back of the cast, enabling them to pursue and realize the vision without having to fear failure (Gupta et al, 2004).
Path clearing is the last role and entails negotiating the internal and external settings. The leader is supposed to dissolve and anticipate potential resistance, gain support from stakeholders inside and outside of the firm. Path clearing is what it sounds like, it entails removing hinders on the path to the potential goal. It entails making important information and resources available.

*Cast Enactment*

Cast enactment the act of convincing the entrepreneur’s network that the idea has merit and potential and to assemble all possible resources including the recruitment of the cast to realize the idea (Gupta et al, 2004). Cast enactment is divided into two roles, building commitment and specifying limits.

Building commitment refers to the act of discovery-driven, active and creative commitment to the entrepreneurial possibilities and opportunities. The commitment role targets the entrepreneurial leaders focus on products, customers, results and value creation. In order to do this, the entrepreneurial leader tries allocating as much attention, resources, and talent as possible in order to overcome the barriers of the entrepreneurial firm (Gupta et al, 2004). In Gupta and colleagues (2004) entrepreneurial leadership model the role of commitment building is divided into four attributes; Inspirational, enthusiastic, team builder and improvement-oriented.

The other role of cast enactment is specifying limits, building an agreement and understanding in the group of what can and can’t be done. In doing this, leaders re-shape the individuals’ knowledge of their own capabilities by removing ideas of limitation. The entrepreneurial leader is also supposed to set up clear constraints in order to increase creativity, improve results and product innovation (Gupta et al, 2004). The role of specifying limits is divided into four leadership attributes; integrator, intellectually stimulating, positive and decisive.

*Social media*

In the previous sections, we have focused on the leadership theories and the Gupta model. In this section, we will focus on the research regarding social media. We will enlighten the importance of social media and try to define social media so that our aim to examine where entrepreneurial leadership and social media may intersect becomes more visible.

In this thesis, we investigate the role of social media, like Twitter and Facebook. First of all, social media and social networks sites often get lumped together, even though the different
platforms stand apart and differ (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). The definition constructed by Kuss & Griffiths (2017) regarding the subject is “virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends, and meet other people based on shared interests”. Kuss & Griffiths (2017) technically write and define “Social network sites” but due to the implications with the word “social networks” and the different meaning it commonly has, we made the choice of sticking with social media. Social media as a definition is also more commonly used in Sweden.

The communication landscape has changed since the beginning of the World Wide Web and even more since the rise of web 2.0 and the birth of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Slack, Snapchat. The different platforms connect people and have changed how individuals interact with each other. The power of the platforms has interrupted the status quo within politics, news, marketing, networking and many other fields. (Gruber et al, 2015, Kwak et al, 2010) The new landscape has during the decade also challenged the traditional management and business methods used by firms and how they communicate with the world, and foremost the stakeholders. (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Social media is also a platform where people can engage and spread their opinions and visions. (Haro-de-Rosario, Sáez-Martín & del Carmen Caba-Pérez, 2018)

Gruber et al (2015) state that crises are more common in today’s business ecosystem, one reason for this is that social media has made it more difficult for businesses to manage and lead. Fischer & Reuber, (2011), states though that there has never existed an equally big opportunity tool like social media for the individual and primarily the entrepreneur.

There are different social media on the web and they all have their own purposes. Facebook is the largest social media with its 2.2 billion monthly active users. Facebook is the most personal platform where friends and family can connect with each other, while other platforms like LinkedIn is more for professional use with the purpose of adding the individual professional value on the job market (van Dijck, 2013). The social platform that according to Fischer & Reuber, (2011) is the most important for entrepreneurs is Twitter.

Twitter is a social platform where people interact with each other through following or sharing content, or Tweets. Tweets can be seen as a new medium of communication called microblogging, because of the restricted 200 characters (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Kwak et al, 2010). Twitter is a platform where the individual decides what to follow. The one who follows will receive the followed person or organisations future tweets, and information. One of the strengths of Twitter
is the speed of the communication, the 200 characters forces fast Tweets and most members post several Tweets a day. (Java, Song, Finin & Tseng, 2007) The content on social media is decided by the individual publisher and many use it to share their personal values regarding environment, politics or some other humanitarian causes. A firm can use social media as a platform to communicate with their customers, and gain trust. (Kietzmann et al 2011) According to Fischer & Reuber (2011), the company Zappos use Twitter for recruitment purposes this because it allows them to get the right people that they think match the company culture.

Social media are important for the entrepreneur and can have high value if the entrepreneur understands the ecosystem. Fischer & Reuber (2011) states that “entrepreneur” is the most mentioned word in the biography with the most active members on Twitter. Uncertainty is something that is high within the new firm, according to Fischer & Reuber (2014) communication tactics on social media can be used by the entrepreneur to persuade their early members.

According to Fischer & Reuber (2014), there is a gap in the literature regarding entrepreneurial communication and social media. It is not a well-researched subject, and most scholars focus on the marketing aspects. They mean that it is important to study the subject “how the entrepreneur uses social media” even more to see how it can affect the developing of new firms.

Previous research suggests that it have both changed how we interact with news, democracy and each other. Because of this strong tool of communication, we suggest that social media also have changed the landscape of entrepreneurial leaders as previous research also hints (Fischer & Reuber, 2014; Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

**Entrepreneurial leadership on social media**

Fischer and Reuber (2011) have established that social media are important for leaders navigating the entrepreneurial ecosystem. We will also draw from Jensen and Luthans, (2006) conclusions that the leadership abilities from the entrepreneurial founder are crucial for the success of the new organisation. The leader also needs to be a good communicator (Dune et al, 2016; Jensen & Luthans, 2006).

In this thesis, we are looking at entrepreneurial leadership on social media. The assumption is that entrepreneurial leadership is defined by the entrepreneurial leader's ability to spot opportunity, communicate a clear vision and form a tight group (Ireland et al, 2003; Gupta et al., 2004; Cogliser & Brigham, 2004; Darling & Beebe, 2007; Ruvio et al, 2010; Renko et al., 2015; Reid
et al; 2018). Entrepreneurial leadership stand out against other leadership styles in that it is bound to its entrepreneurial context, volatile environment and that the group members are not set in stone (Gupta et al, 2004; Surie & Ashley 2008; Kempster & Cope, 2010; Papalexandris and Galanaki, 2009; Ruvio et al, 2009).

Although definitions vary between different authors the common characteristics is that entrepreneurial vision is future-oriented with a focus on growth and creation (Renko et al, 2015; Baum & Locke, 2004; Locke & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Ensley et al., 2000; Gupta, et al, 2004). The entrepreneurial vision is an important tool for the entrepreneurial leader since it is used to guide, instil confidence, motivate and attract a cast; employees, investors or future employees (Gupta et al,2004; Ruvio et al, 2009; Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009).

Researchers have established that the entrepreneurial leader has a communicative role in which he guides his followers or ”cast”. This cast is not set in stone and consists of both intra-organisational members’ employees and external members like investors and future employees due to the often relatively small size of the organisation and volatile nature of the entrepreneurial environment. In this role of vision communicator with loosely defined organisational boundaries, the leader is expected to share his vision. The social media has changed how we communicate. The entrepreneurial leader has been handed a new set of tools and opportunities to lead and share his/her vision (Fischer & Reuber 2014; Fischer & Reuber. 2011). We believe that in order to be an entrepreneurial leader you need to share the company vision not just inside the organisation. Entrepreneurial leaders might benefit immensely from having a social media presence in order to reach out to the cast.

In the following section, we will discuss or method and further describe our application of the entrepreneurial leadership model.
Methodology

In this section, we will motivate our choice of method, sampling, interview, and analysis techniques.

Research approach

Qualitative research – Semi-structured interviews

The main goal of this qualitative research was to get a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial leader’s perception and how social media affect entrepreneurial leadership. There are a great number of different methods within the qualitative research domain that potentially would have provided us with interesting data. We decided that qualitative semi-structured interview would suit our needs best because the semi-structured interview can be seen as a tool to discover other people’s views of the world with the purpose of gaining deep subject knowledge. (Brinkmann, 2013; Qu & Dumay, 2011) Also, the exploratory nature of the study motivates to use of interviews (Saunders et al, 2009).

The conducted interviews transcription was used as raw data that was then coded into 1st order concepts, 2nd ordered themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia, Corlay & Hamilton 2013). These dimensions and themes became the basis to construct the model see (figure 2) later used to answer the research question.

The selection of our respondents and the complexity of the questions we wanted answered also motivated the use of semi-structured interviews. (Qu & Dumay, 2011) The semi-structured interviews were conducted through a pre-constructed interview guide and the purpose was to get more detailed answers from the respondent. (Saunders et al, 2009) The interview guide helped us as interviewers to keep track of the interview and helped us make sure that we went through all aspects of entrepreneurial leadership thoroughly. We were most aware of how the questions were asked during the interview since it also can affect the answers. Leading questions, failing to listen to the respondent’s answers or other errors were not be tolerated. (Qu & Dumay, 2011)

Sample

Since the study’s aim is to research the interplay of social media and the entrepreneurial leader, who better to interview than the entrepreneur. Some may argue that the entrepreneur aren’t experts on social media but we take the stance of Gioia, Corlay, and Hamilton (2013) that the practitioners of
an occupation are to be considered as “knowledgeable agent” of their own organisational realities. We believe this to be the case with entrepreneurs as well and that they are in fact a “knowledgeable agent” that know what they are doing and can explain their own thoughts and actions. In this study, 7 entrepreneurs were interviewed. The respondents all have a strong connection with the studies aim since they are leaders within the entrepreneurial firm. The companies that we choose where mostly young companies that had a lot of common entrepreneurial characteristics like innovativeness, high risk, and a strong vision. All of them used social media platforms regularly and have insights on how the different platforms work. Even though the diversity of the group wasn’t overwhelming with most of the companies being tech start-ups in the Stockholm and Uppsala region they all had very different perceptions regarding social media practices. The interviews still gave us a lot of varied raw data that we were able to construct into themes and dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership on social media. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)

We used our connection in the Uppsala start-up community to find our first respondents and after we found the first respondent we used the snowball-technique. We asked the interviewee if he/she knew some other entrepreneur that he/she thought would want to be interviewed. This technique opens-up for a more unplanned selection of respondents.

The sample size should according to Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill (2009) be as close to the population as possible to get a more certain result. Though, this is more related to probability sampling. Entrepreneurial leaders as a population are too big to sample as a whole and therefore this study will proceed from a non-probability sampling point of view, where the aim is to reach theoretical saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) state that theoretical saturation often could be hard to reach and argues that 12 interviews are enough if it is a homogeneous population. The sample size of this thesis is 7, our goal was to conduct more interviews but unfortunately, our data collection period coincided with a holiday heavy season leading many of our intended respondents to cancel or reschedule. This is something that we are aware of and is a limitation that we have written more about it in our limitation section. We still believe that the data that was collected is big and varied enough for us to analyse and draw conclusions from.

The sample group within this thesis is as mentioned entrepreneurial leaders within small entrepreneurial start-ups. They are new and innovative and operate within a high-risk ecosystem. All of the respondents had other human capital within the start-up firm and can, therefore, be seen as leaders. Even though this does not matter for the purpose of this thesis, since we are looking at perceptions, it is something that makes our sample group more relevant as interview subjects. The
geographical aspect should also be taken into account. We have only interviewed Stockholm and Uppsala based start-ups so conclusions are most applicable to this group. The size of the start-ups has varied, and the revenue of the start-ups ranged from 0 to 87 000 000 SEK. The different start-ups also operate within different markets, four of the start-ups were technological, and three were not tech-based.

**Research design**

In this qualitative research paper, we have used an inductive research strategy. Inductive research means that the themes and dimensions emerge from the data (Bryman & Bell 2011). This paper has an interpretivistic epistemology since our aim is to understand the social world of entrepreneurial leaders. We will do so by applying a cross-sectional research design. In cross-sectional, the researcher collects data from more than one respondent, at a single point in time and with two or more variables (Bryman & Bell 2011). In this thesis, we have interviewed 7 entrepreneurial leaders with one interview per respondent. Since the data is collected during a very short period of the time it is only possible to look at the relationship between variables (Bryman & Bell 2011). In our case, we will investigate the relationship between social media and entrepreneurial leadership and see if and how social media could be used as a tool for affecting leadership. Even though we can’t draw any direct causal relationship between our variables we can still draw causal inferences from the data.

The method used for collecting data has been semi-structured interviews. Since we have general but well-specified research question and we found semi-structured interviews to be the most suitable method. Semi-structured interviews are great for capturing real-time accounts of people's perceptions of a theoretically interesting phenomenon’s (Gioia et al, 2013).

We have coded our large set of unstructured transcribed data using qualitative data analysis. In qualitative data analysis, grounded theory is the most prominent strategy (Bryman & Bell 2011). In grounded theory, the data is broken down into 1st order concepts and given names, see (table 1) and (figure 1) preferably names used by the interviewees. The data is collected until all aspects of the concept have been unearthed reaching theoretical saturation (Bryman & Bell 2011). The most important step in grounded theory is the coding of the collected data. In this paper, we first used open coding meaning that we structured the interview transcription and searched for concepts that fit the data (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The next step after open coding is axial coding that consists of the intense analysis of the categories looking for “core categories” that might eventually form the basis of emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990).
In the next sections, we will describe the more practical aspects of how we implemented the entrepreneurial leadership model, selected our population and how we conducted the interview.

**Reliability and Validity**

In this section, the thesis reliability and validity will be discussed.

**Reliability**

Reliability is about the possibility of replicating the research with the intention of finding the same result (Bryman & Bell 2011). This could be achieved by describing all steps of the thesis. We have aimed for full transparency by describing each step of the thesis regarding each section. (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015)

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), replication is not that common in business research and especially not within qualitative research, because qualitative research is by nature hard to replicate. With this in mind, and regarding that this thesis research focuses on a new approach within entrepreneurial leadership and social media which mean that there are no similar studies in the field, therefore, it is difficult to compare the results and the conclusions presented in this study with other results. Therefore, extrapolation and drawing conclusions have been taken with caution in order not to generalize or draw conclusions that cannot be supported by the data-set.

**Validity**

Validity is important due to the fact that we as the researchers are trying to understand if we as researchers measure what is intended to be measured (Bryman & Bell 2011).

The aim of the study was to investigate how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership. according to Bryman & Bell (2011), the researcher needs to consider the face validity, which is when you ask people with expertise in the field if the concept that is being measured reflects the aim of the study. This was established with help of our supervisor and follow master students within entrepreneurial research, people who indicate expertise within the field.

Construct validity is also something that we aimed for. Construct validity is when the hypotheses are constructed in the relevance of the concept (Bryman & Bell 2011). We derived from the theoretical research, especially regarding entrepreneurial leadership research to assemble the right research questions.
Conducting the interviews

As described in the theory section Gupta and colleagues (2004) have constructed a model that defines entrepreneurial leadership. The model breaks down entrepreneurial leadership into two leadership dimensions. The first dimension is “Scenario enactment” and the second is “Cast enactment”. The interview guide (see Appendix 1) and the interview questions were formulated using this model. We divided the interview guide into two parts, the first part focusing on scenario enactment and the other on cast enactment. Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that you start the interview with an introducing question preferably one that is not too hard to answer. This question will get to the focus of the interview and in the meantime, lower the nervousness, if existed, of the respondent (Qu & Dumay, 2011). We began by letting the respondent talk a little bit about his or her company, followed up with an open question about their social network use.

We are aware that using a model as a base for our interview guide will shape that answers from the respondents and that this potentially limits the richness of the collected data (Gioia et al, 2013). However, we are interested in how social media influences entrepreneurial leadership. In our research of the existing literature on entrepreneurial leadership Gupta with colleagues (2004) model stood out as very inclusive and it covers a wide variety of leadership attributes. By using their model our intention was to “push” the interviewees towards leadership instead of marketing which is often the focus of social media discussion. It was also used to make sure we covered a wide range of leadership related topics.

The questions about scenario enactment were divided into six open-ended questions based on the attributes that explain the entrepreneurial leadership roles. The questions do not exactly follow Gupta and colleagues (2004) model but were changed into open-ended questions based on the attribute explanation provided in their model. The six questions were meant to get the respondent thinking about a wide set of leadership attributes. Each question where followed up with questions about social media applications and practices connected to these leadership attributes. The answers to these follow-up questions are what we are mainly interested in as they give us an insight into how leaders see and use social platforms. Our intentions were to get answers to give us rich data to answer our research aim. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), one of the great qualities of the semi-structured interview is that you can depart from the interview guide if we stumble upon interesting topics during the interview. That was also done during our interviews since a lot of the questions came in the forms of personal anecdotes of which certain details were of extra interest for us. Probing questions don’t need to be a follow-up question per se, it could just be that the
interviewers are quiet and use body language instead, like nodding, to stimulate a more detailed elaboration (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Cast enactment was divided into seven questions based on Gupta and colleagues (2004) leadership attributes. Similar follow-up questions were asked as in the scenario enactment questions with the same agenda of extracting information about their social media practices. The interview ended with two questions that were not directly linked to the model but that gave us even more insight into how leaders think about social media. The first about whether you could be a leader on social media. The second question was whether the respondent had any personal thoughts about social media.

The interviews were conducted in Uppsala and Stockholm. During the interviews, a microphone was used to record the interviews. This helped during the transcription and analysis of the material (Saunders et al, 2009).

**Transcription and data analysis**

The data analysis is very important part of the research; the purpose is to get a deeper understanding of the data that have been collected (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015: DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). First, we transcribed our material by listening to our recorded interviews. We transcribed every word to make the analysis easier. It is important to also include other data, like the notes that were taken during the interviews, so that this data not is lost (Saunders et al, 2009). During the interviews, we also looked for other non-verbal communication that the respondent communicated. These anomalies were noted.

We built our analysis of our transcribed material using grounded theory coding. We have coded the material into 1st order concepts using open coding. The concepts were based on quotes from the interviewees mostly using their own words (Strauss & Corbin 1990) see (table 1) and (figure 1). It was also important when the interviews become written words to note how the word was said, so that any misinterpretations were avoided, for example, if the respondent is ironic this is noted (Saunders et al, 2009).

After the transcription, we made a structured summary of the total collected data. The summarization made it easier to find concepts and themes within the data collection (Saunders et al, 2009). The summarization also made the categorization of the 1st order concepts and 2nd ordered themes easier, this also made it possible to find relationships between the answers of the respondents, which opened-up for aggregate dimensions relating to the aim of the study and the
research questions (Gioia et al, 2013).

To help make conclusions we will use our data structure with our 1st order concepts, 2nd ordered themes and aggregate dimensions to build a model of the interplay between social media and the entrepreneurial leader. This model will help us explain how social media shapes entrepreneurial leadership.
Result and Analysis

In this section, we will go through the analysis, coding, and structuring of our data collected during the interviews described in the method section.

Analysis

Our interviews were conducted over a time-span of four weeks. The number of years that the companies had been in operation differed quite a bit. the companies were founded between one year and seven years ago. All the company’s works in an entrepreneurial spirit and all interviewees were the founder or co-founder of the company’s.

The interview was roughly one hour in general but differed from case to case due to conversation speed and setting. These were transcribed in Swedish since the interviews were conducted in Swedish. The question headings where then removed from the transcribed interviews to not influence our search of 1st order concepts. Bryman and Bell (2011) even suggest that it might be useful to scramble the transcription to get away from the old narrative and look at the transcriptions just as raw data. Gioia and colleagues (2013) suggest the use of an external coder to bring a fresh pair of eyes to spot new patterns and concepts in the material. We tried to the best of our ability to have a neutral mindset free from theoretical preconceptions.

In our search for 1st order concepts, we mainly looked at the follow-up questions that focused on social media. Our research aim was to investigate how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership. In our first open coding analysis, we looked for cases of practical uses of social media, social media perceptions and descriptions of their organisational use of social media platforms. When coding we used Bryman & Bells (2011) coding instructions for grounded theory coding and Gioia and colleagues (2013) input into how grounded theory open coding and axial coding should be conducted.

We tried to steer clear of our preconceived notions in our search for 1st order concepts. When possible we used the respondent’s own terms, otherwise, we tried to stay as close as possible to what we believed to be their intent in naming the concepts. At the end of the first round of open coding, we had 74 1st order concepts. These fist concepts where examined for similarities and
differences and after long discussions and deliberation we managed to work it down to a more manageable number of 27 concepts. These 27 1st order concepts can be examined in table 1.

After this first decimation of categories, we started to look for patterns in the concepts, whether the concepts referred to internal or external activities if they were network or group related and so on. This led us to a set of 11, 2nd ordered themes. We tried grouping these concepts by different themes and finally after lots of discussions we came up with three dimensions; cast expander, leadership enhancer and new social context.

The 1st order concepts

Table 1 – The data derived from the transcription and the main quotes that support the 1st order concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Supporting</strong></td>
<td><strong>The entrepreneurial leadership on social media model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme – Social media as a revenue generator</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media as CRM-tool</td>
<td>“It’s quicker, then if you would have had the customer relation more traditional. Professionally, you don’t talk about private things at meetings...If I meet someone in a meeting and then adds that person on Facebook, then I would know that this person is going on a weekend trip to Milan. Of course, this is building the relation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business through social media</td>
<td>“Maybe that’s the next thing, I would like to close businesses through Snapchat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media and partnership and synergies</td>
<td>“If you have just made a new partnership, you could post it on social media which would show the new partnership. This would be of the value of both partners. Then it becomes synergies” “It happens that you receive posts on Facebook, from people that want to collaborate and plan for future partnership”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme – Social media as company amplifying tool</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External communication</td>
<td>“Your homepage is your business card and regularly happenings in the company is communicated through social media”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating vision and change</td>
<td>”The big vision should be on social media, as a trigger for the followers, so that they would like to follow the project” “You should communicate your vision through social media” “You don’t have to talk about your vision in every post, but the things you retweet, comments, this should be in line with your vision” “You have to work with social media to communicate your message, to show what you stand for and what you want. It's unavoidable otherwise you'll never move on. You cannot scale as you like regardless of industry.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Social media as external educational-platform** | “Everything moves towards this way of communication.”
“If you want to tell people about what you are aiming for, then social media is an excellent channel”

| **Theme – Social media as leader assistant** | “…Especially in our industry where it happens a lot right now…Demonstrate through social media that this technology is also for you (future costumers), it could be applied in your industry”

| **Interpersonal communication on SM** | “I chat on social media with everybody within the office, things you don’t want to take in front of everybody”
“We work with a non-public Facebook group where we talk about inspiration connected to work”
“I believe that we progressively will give up the idea that social media are not suitable within the company, or in the communication between colleagues…It is within the company we communicate”
“It believe that part of the communication can you always do digitally”
“We send snaps to each other (colleagues) in our shared Snapchat group, we motivate each other, or being silly sending squirrel filtered videos.”
“We use Slack as a company tool…we don't want to be public, it is an office communication platform, and we send private and personal things even there because we already have a conversation going. If you are joking about that someone did something funny, we post it here or on Facebook”

| **Interpersonal management** | “We don’t force any (employees) to comment on all the posts on social media, but, we do encourage it”

| **Communicating internal goals** | “Slacks own communicating channels are good, because there you can communicate, now we are going to reach this goal and this is what we need to do”

| **Theme – Human capital database** | “The advantage with social media is that if you don’t reach the right person that knows about the thing you need help with, there is probably someone in your network that knows that person.”
“LinkedIn will be of value because it more national, then we can show for investors and people that are here in Sweden that we are now up and running.”

| **Networking on social media** | “We have one successful case where we recruited through Snapchat…The person is still working with us”
“Internship through social media, yes”
“One challenge can be recruiting, of course, you use social media there”
“Leads, I need a UX designer for this type of job if we need to build a new webpage, then we often go through social media”

| **Theme – Communication aid** | “E-mail is the slowest, there is a culture around it that it is OK to wait one hour or two before responding, which does not exist on messenger for...”

| **Social media and speed** | “...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme – Social media as a team builder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Convenience of social media | “It is a convenient way for the entrepreneurs, to really get the employees because it is tiresome for a leader to stand and talk about the vision and inspire all the time, one has to do his shit job as well. Satisfy a board or submit a VAT declaration, the boring stuff. Social media could be a good way to inspire, not only prospect but internally as well.”
| Public problem-solving | “We have a guy in Bangkok... Our primary communication channel is Slack. It does not matter where you are... constant communication wherever you are.” |
| Being personal on social media | “As a networking tool, as an individual that you create a network where you can ask for help” “To ask my Facebook flow to solve impossible tasks...it works pretty well” |
| Communicating positive emotion | “This thing, about using emoji’s and it being unprofessional is a disaster. I do not know how often we have problems with the communication that you perceive something like there would be undertones of disappointment, anger, upset, or being happy or whatever it may be. It's so hard to express it in a text, then it's easier when you can use several different platforms where you can talk in different ways” |
| Internal motivation on social media | “...you follow what is within your genre and designers that do good things. You follow them, you see what they do and then you develop yourself, you learn things.” |
| Social media as company culture | “That you have the same tone when you brief and when you talk to each other in the other social media, and I think that could be a good extension. Sending a GIF, you extend the company culture when you're not at the office, and I think that's something good.”
| | “Up-lifting employees on social media is something you do to show the culture of the company. This to show the culture for recruiting purposes so that people can see “Yeah, it seems like a cool place to work”
| | “When you are expanding the company, you must develop your company culture, you need to do it in recruiting purposes. You want to show people how it is to work here. If you want the best, they need to feel that this feels like a good workplace. Here you could definitely use social media, to show, the vibe of the office” |
| Theme – Social media technophobia |
| Trust issues on social media | ”You don’t know how many people are behind the screen...I would never do business with someone that I only met on the web” “People want a handshake, people still want that security” |
| Risk of privacy | “There is a risk that it feels intrusive that someone has looked you up on
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>issues</th>
<th>Facebook or Twitter”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm loyalty</td>
<td>“To write about feelings generally and Facebook-specific, you are technically allowed to write what you want as long as you don’t break the Facebook agreement. But it is about loyalty, and how it is used connected to the workplace”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Misinterpretation on social media          | “There is a risk that someone takes it pretty hard if you all of the sudden communicating something serious in a Snapchat group that is usually silly. It can open up for interpretation in a bad way.”  
”You should be careful with self-confidence on social media, it easily comes off as bragging.”  
”I don't think I would feel comfortable to put pressure on an employee through social media, it feels like it is a big risk for Misinterpretation”  
“I don’t know how many times I have sent something ironic that have been misinterpreted”  
“Humans use a lot of body language and there are things that don't get revealed in a text” |
| Lack of physical context                   | “On social media, you can write that you are feeling really great, but in reality, you are crying, that is not good...when it comes to the personal and the emotional then I don’t think that social media works that good” |
| What is social media?                      | “It becomes more personal, if you look at it right now when we stand right in it, we don’t know what social media is, is it still a place where you share funny pictures with your buddy’s after a trip, or is it a networking tool in your work?” |
| Social media as inspiration               | “When it comes to Inspiration, then social media has helped me. I follow other entrepreneurs and company leaders, people I know are good at the things I am bad at.” “Follow entrepreneurs that have come a long way, I get inspired by them to make myself better” “We work with a non-public Facebook group for the inspiration part”  
“For inspiration and motivation, it is good if you keep track of the people within your genre, you follow them and learn new things” |
| Social media as entrepreneurial input      | “For example, get tips, here are the ten best business models. You want inputs and ideas.” “To get input from the best in the world, I try to follow them with knowledge, like Sundar at Google, which focus on Deepmind and have a cutting edge within the field and research” |
| Social media as an educational platform    | That is really great with social media to get every follower to feel, “maybe I don’t like shoes, but I think it is really great that they have an environmental approach” or “I think it is cool that they are creating a UN goal” |
The 2\textsuperscript{nd} ordered themes

This (figure 1) is the analyse progress from; 1st Order Concepts to 2nd Ordered Themes to Aggregated Dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Order Concepts</th>
<th>2nd Order Themes</th>
<th>Aggregate Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social media and speed</td>
<td>Communication aid</td>
<td>New social context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Convenience of social media</td>
<td>Social media technophobia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Public problem-solving</td>
<td>Desocialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trust issues on social media</td>
<td>Social media as leader assistant</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial enhancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Risk of privacy issues</td>
<td>Social media as team builder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Firm loyalty</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial fuel</td>
<td>Cast expander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Misinterpretation on social media</td>
<td>Social media as company amplifying tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lack of physical context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What is social media?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Interpersonal communication on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Interpersonal management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Communicating internal goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Being personal on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Communicating positive emotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Internal motivation on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Social media as company culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Social media as inspiration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Social media as entrepreneurial input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Social media as educational platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. External communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Communicating vision and change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Social media as external educational-platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Networking on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Recruiting on social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Figure 1} – The analyse progress from; 1st Order Concepts to 2nd Ordered Themes to Aggregated Dimensions.
The aggregated dimensions

*The empirical model of entrepreneurial leadership on social media.*

To make the result more visual we constructed a model (figure 2), showing how social media affect the different aspects of entrepreneurial leadership.

"New social context" is the dimension that the other dimensions exist in. The dimension’s Entrepreneurial enhancer and "cast expander" work within the "new social context". As can be seen in (figure 2), the "new social context" has both positive and negative side-effects according to the respondents. This will be discussed in greater detail in coming sections. The dimension "entrepreneurial enhancer" contains three themes, "leader assistant", "team builder" and "entrepreneurial fuel". These themes relate to internal entrepreneurial leadership activities. The dimension cast expander contains two themes, "company amplifying tool" and "human capital database". This dimension relates to the external activates of entrepreneurial leadership. The dimensions also influence each other, for example. If the entrepreneurial leader can benefit from the positive aspects of the dimension’s entrepreneurial enhancer then the entrepreneurial leader will also benefit from the positive aspects of the cast expander dimension.

![Figure 2 - Empirical model of entrepreneurial leadership on social media.](image-url)
New social context

During the analysis, the data indicated that there is a dimension that makes up a new social context in entrepreneurial leadership that new context is social media. This new social context has both positive and negative implication on the users, and as we found out on the entrepreneur as well. The new social media context forms the base of the model and effects anything that within this context. The dimension “New social context” is built of three themes that we found within the data-set, these three themes are "communication aid", "social media technophobia" and "desocialization". (figure 1)

The theme that concerns the more beneficial aspects within the new social context is that the respondents perceive social media as a communication aid. It is built of three concepts, "social media and speed", "convenience of social media" and "public problem-solving”. It is focusing on social media as a strong tool for communication according to our respondents. One respondent told us about the convenience of social media in its functions for communicating inspiration and vision “It is a convenient way for the entrepreneur…” another respondent expresses the convenience regarding the help of reaching employees with social media “It does not matter where you are… constant communication wherever you are”. Social media and public problem-solving was also something that was mentioned “To ask my Facebook flow to solve impossible tasks…it works pretty well”. All respondents saw some positive effect that the new social context brings for the entrepreneurial leader as a communication aid.

The perceptions of social media weren't only positive with our respondents. The theme that we named social media and technophobia handles some of the more negative aspects of the new social context. The theme is built of three concepts, "trust issues on social media", "risk of privacy issues" and "firm loyalty". According to the respondent's, there are security risks on social media. ”You don’t know how many people are behind the screen… I would never do business with someone that I only met on the web”. The new social context is new, it is scary, it breeds a new type of phobia, technophobia. The new social context also makes the private less private, “There is a risk that it feels intrusive that someone has looked you up on Facebook or Twitter”.

The theme desocialization is the second theme that focuses on the negative social side effect that the new social context has. According to the respondent's the new social context erases some of the beneficial characteristic attributed to regular human interaction. “Humans use a lot of body language and there are things that get lost text”, said one of the respondents regarding text-
based communication on social media. The theme is constructed from three concepts, "misinterpretation on social media", "lack of physical context" and "what is social media?"

Misinterpretation on social media is one of the problems that the respondents perceive, “I don’t know how many times I have sent something ironic that have been misinterpreted”. Because of the novelty of the new social context, there is also a confusion regarding what social media is and how it should be used. This is also something that feeds the desocialization on social media.

**Entrepreneurial enhancer**

The dimension entrepreneurial enhancer is a dimension focusing on the findings of the respondent's perceptions regarding how social media is enhancing their internal entrepreneurial endeavour. The dimension is constructed of three themes that are found within the data-set, these three themes are social media as leader assistant, social media as a team builder and entrepreneurial fuel. (figure 1)

The theme social media as leader assistant is built of three concepts that we found within the data-set, these are "interpersonal communication on social media", "interpersonal management" and "communicating internal goals".

Interpersonal communication on social media is a concept about how the entrepreneurial leader uses social media for interpersonal communication. The discretion that social media enables was mentioned by a respondent “I chat on social media with everybody within the office, things you don’t want to take in front of everybody” another mentions that the stigma of using social media within the company as an interpersonal communication is soon dead “I believe that we progressively will give up the idea that social media are not suitable within the company, or in the communication between colleagues…It is within the company we communicate”.

Interpersonal management and communicating internal goals is also something that was mentioned, and some interviewees perceived social media as somewhat of a leader assistant. One respondent mention how Slack could be used to communicate goals “Slacks own communicating channels are good because there you can communicate, “now we are going to reach this goal and this is what we need to do”

The theme social media as a team builder is constructed of four concepts, "being personal on social media", "communicating positive emotion", "internal motivation on social media" and "social media as company culture."
The social media function that most respondents perceived as being of value are social media potential as an entrepreneurial enhancer is how it can help build company culture. One respondent talked about how social media is an extension of the company culture and that this is beneficial “…you extend the company culture when you’re not at the office, and I think that's something good.” Another said that social media could help during the expansion of the company and in recruiting “When you are expanding the company, you must develop your company culture, you need to do it for recruiting purposes” another respondent made a comparable statement “This to show the culture in recruiting purposes, so that people can see “Yeah, it seems like a cool place to work”, the last quote derived from the notion that entrepreneurial leader can boost employees on social media, to show the culture of the company.

The concept of social media as a team building tool is that social media often is used as a platform where employees can interact with each other, being personal “…upload pictures with friends, and in the same time a networking tool”. Another respondent talked about how emoji’s on social media could be used to communicate emotions with the function of making the text-based communication more “human”.

Another theme within the dimension entrepreneurial enhancer is entrepreneurial fuel. The respondent talked about how the entrepreneurial leader could use social media as fuel in different ways. The theme entrepreneurial fuel is constructed by three concepts "social media as inspiration", "social media as entrepreneurial input" and "social media as an educational platform".

Social media as an inspiration source is a concept that several respondents perceived as important in an entrepreneurial context, “When it comes to inspiration, then social media have helped me. I follow other entrepreneurs and company leaders, people I know of that are good at the things I am bad at.” Another mention a comparable statement “…follow entrepreneurs that have come a long way, I get inspired by them to make myself better”.

Another concept is social media as entrepreneurial input, this concept focus on how social media as can be used as an entrepreneurial input channel. One quote from of the respondents mentions how he gained valuable input from his social media network “For example, get tips, here are the ten best business models. You want inputs and ideas.”. The entrepreneurial input work as an entrepreneurial enhancer in the entrepreneurial leader’s workday.
The last dimension that we found within the data-set is the Cast expander. This dimension is also constructed from the respondent's comments regarding how social media could be implemented in the entrepreneurial leader’s workday concerning expanding the cast. The dimension has two themes, social media as a company amplifying tool and social media as a human capital database.

The theme Social media as a company amplifying tool is composed of three concepts, "external communication", "communicating vision and change" and "social media as external educational-platform". All respondents mentioned social media as a channel where vision could be external communicated. ”The big vision should be on social media, as a trigger for the followers, so that they would like to follow the project”. The vision needs to be communicated on social media to expand the cast. A respondent state that social media is mandatory if the company wants to scale, “You cannot scale as you like regardless of industry. Everything moves towards this way of communication.”. Another respondent said that social media can be used as an external educational-platform, as a channel were the entrepreneurial leader can educate and teach the followers about the subject that concerns the company, “…demonstrate trough social media that this technology is also for you (future costumers), it could be applied in your industry”. “That is really great with social media to get every follower to feel, “maybe I don't like shoes, but I think it is really great that they have an environmental approach”.

The second theme that we found within the data was how there were thoughts regarding how social media could be used as a human capital database, and therefore continues building on the dimension cast expander. There is two concept of the human capital database theme "networking on social media" and "recruiting on social media".

The two concept focuses mostly on the external cast expander dimension in finding new competence. Recruiting through social media is something that several respondents mention as something that social media could be used for. ”We have one successful case where we recruited through Snapchat…The person is still working with us” “Internship through social media, yes” and another respondent states that “One challenge can be recruiting, of course, you use social media there”.

In the next section, we will discuss our finding and look at some potential practical implications that social media can have for the entrepreneurial leader.
Can you be a leader on social media?

We also asked our respondents if they believed that you could be a leader on social media. One respondent said that “social media could be used as a great tool for external communication” and “in decision-making” said another respondent, but it depends on what purpose or platform. Some platforms are better for internal communication that other and the tonality changes depending on what platform is being used. Almost all respondents agree that you can’t be a leader only on social media. It is a complimentary or tool for the entrepreneurial leader, but it is a great channel for reaching out to others.

General thoughts about social media

Most of the respondents have a complex relation to social media. All of them think that it is very important to be there but how to handle and use it is very individual. The social media logic makes a few stand out over the other, there is a risk that you miss the new innovations if you only focus on the big social media players said, one respondent. Another respondent pointed out that the border between our regular life and our digital life is becoming more and more blurred, that is also true in our work life. The respondent believed that this could be a good thing since more platforms opens-up for more communication “Why not translate how we are communicating in private, with friends and family, why can’t you get that it into the workplace?”. A few just see it as a necessity to be on social media platforms, if you are active on the Internet, you have to be on social media just to show presence and to communicate with the world.
Discussion and conclusions

In this section, we will draw from previous research and discuss the connection to our own result, and what it implies. The section will end with conclusions, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

The aim of this thesis was to investigate how social media enhance Entrepreneurial Leadership and their perception towards the use of social media as a tool for their entrepreneurial leadership.

Leadership is important for entrepreneurs this is something that previous research states, Jensen & Luthans, (2006) showed that employees who perceived their founder to be more of a leader showed a correlation with higher levels of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and work happiness. While Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban and Geho (2016) showed that if the entrepreneur as a leader has a competitive approach, they can turn their limited resources into improved innovation. According to Fischer & Reuber (2014), social media is important for the entrepreneur and they also state that “entrepreneur” is the most mentioned word in the biography with the most active members on Twitter. There is a gap in the literature regarding entrepreneurs and their social media use.

Our thesis has resulted in a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial leadership and how the entrepreneurial leader uses social media as a leadership tool, and how it can enhance the entrepreneurial endeavour. All respondents are using social media somehow in their work, this is an early indication of how important social media have become for the entrepreneur. Social media are second nature to all of us in the modern world. Something that also the remarkable 2.2 billion Facebook daily active users indicates.

According to Gruber and colleagues (2015) and Kwak and colleagues (2010), social media have altered different business areas and our result also indicates that the importance of social media connected to the entrepreneurial leader have changed how the entrepreneur operates.

In the next coming sections, we will discuss our findings and what it implies for the entrepreneurial leader.
**New social context**

Many of us can agree that social media has had a great impact on our everyday life. How we communicate, handle relations and according to our findings, even how entrepreneurs lead their businesses. Our model show how social media both impact the internal aspects of entrepreneurial leadership (Entrepreneurial enhancer) and the external (cast expander). We have named this dimension “new social context” and it is potentially a new reality for entrepreneurial leaders using social media. This new dimension to ads convenience to the leadership but also gives us a set of problems and risks. This dimension is not necessarily bounded to the entrepreneurial context, rather it is a set of themes that social media as a new communicative paradigm bring to all its users. We will concentrate our discussion on what it might do to the entrepreneurial leader.

**Communication aid.** The main reason for social medias big impact on our society is its convenience and practicality. We named this theme “communication aid” since it increases the reach and speed of communication, it is convenient for sending messages and documents and it’s a great tool for solving problems. These concepts are mostly positive and can be used by the entrepreneurial leader both for internal communication and team building. It can also be used to great effect in spreading the company vision and expanding the cast. It is also a source of inspiration for the entrepreneur since you can ask for input in difficult situations or reach out to peer for guidance.

**Social media technophobia.** This new social context might have many positives but it also comes with its own set of problems and risks. The social media platforms are as mentioned before used for communication and information sharing. This information is often of a sensitive nature to the company. We regularly hear of hackers that steal information from big databases or that the platform owners themselves sell information to the unknown third party. Another potential reason for scepticism among entrepreneurial social media users is the privacy issues. The sender of a message can never really know who is on the receiving end. Social media also opens-up for loyalty issues. What is prudent to say on social media, all company employers are ambassadors of the company and what they say on social media might reflect badly on the company. Since the media is relatively new many entrepreneurs feel an uncertainty how much this should be regulated in the employer/employee agreements, written or unwritten. All this has made some entrepreneurs a bit hesitant about the new technology.
**Desocialization.** Social media might have social in the name, but it has some major drawbacks compared to face-to-face interaction. Most social media platforms are text-based and emotions and nuances tend to get lost in text. This can lead to misinterpretations and unnecessary confusion. However, we got some examples of how this can be counteracted. Emoji’s, videos and even music can be used do better set the tonality of messages. The lack of physical contact and ability to see the receiver also limits the use of social media. It’s hard to gauge emotions and it’s hard to measure the importance of a handshake to seal the deal. Overall it is not really clear what social media is, is it mostly for private communication, is it ok to add a new business contact on Facebook? These uncertainties will probably resolve them self with time, but right now they cause confusion of what the platforms can and should be used for.

*Entrepreneurial enhancer*

Our model has two leadership dimensions, one internal and one external. Our data gave us three themes that were mostly concerned with the internal leadership activities of the entrepreneurial firm. We named the internal dimension “entrepreneurial enhancer”. Entrepreneurial firms have advantages when it comes to flexibility and utilization of resources (Surie & Ashley, 2008). Social media can be used as the tool to extend and expand the leader role in the company. Removing both geographical constraints and providing more platforms for team building and feedback helps the leader to do his job more effectively.

**Social media as leader assistant.** Social media can be used as a platform for internal communication and different platforms are suited for different types of communication. Some platforms are great for informal and motivating messages and the tonality of certain platforms even allows for the messages to be outright silly at times. Other platforms are better suited for delegating tasks, planning activities and setting organisational goals, all important factors for entrepreneurial success (Ruvio et al, 2009). The different levels of platforms make them versatile as leadership tools since some platforms allow for discrete individual communication while other platforms are great for group conversations. It is important to be able to see team members as individuals and build one-to-one relationships with them (Renko et al, 2015). It is up to the leader to learn how the platforms work and set a tone that allows both professional and social activities. Social media can also be used to communicate goals with the team goals, both internally and externally to create some
positive pressure. It is an important aspect of entrepreneurial leadership to be able to set up a goal for the team to pursue (Renko et al, 2015)

**Social media as a team builder.** Like we touched upon in the last paragraph social media can be used to great effect by the leader to be personal with the team, both individuals and the whole group. In order for the entrepreneurial firm to succeed the leader need to form a “winning team” (Darling & Beebe, 2007). The informal nature of some platforms and the fact that many use them privately makes them great complementary tools for informal conversation where the leader can get personal with the team members. The platforms also have some function that allows for communication of feelings. This should be done with some care though since there are always risks for misunderstandings. Since social media can be seen as an extension of the company into the digital realm, company culture plays a big role on social media as well. The entrepreneur can lift individuals intently end externally on the platforms to encourage great work performance and inject the team with some team spirit (Kempster & Cope, 2010).

**Entrepreneurial fuel.** Many parts of social media are used for communication. But they can also be used to get inspiration and to share experiences. It is a common understanding that the entrepreneurial leader needs to be visionary and inspirational (Papalexandris & Galanaki, 2009). But the entrepreneur needs got to get inspired in order to be inspiring. Most companies have active social media accounts on the big platforms, by following these account the entrepreneurial leader gets a manageable overview of what is going on at the competitors or clients. Many famous entrepreneurs and leaders like Elon Musk, Richard Branson or Mark Zuckerberg are active on social media and share inspiring quotes and entrepreneurial tips on a daily basis. Most of our respondents followed at least a couple of other leaders for inspiration. There are also a lot of online courses and educational material that is being published on social media.

**Cast expander**

One of the most important objectives in any entrepreneurial venture is growth, both financial but also competence growth (Gupta et al, 2004; Baum et al, 1998). This is true regardless of whether the leader is active on social media or not. But social media if used correctly can be a great way of gaining new followers or expanding the cast. In many peoples mind, social media are platforms for external communication of opinions and vision (Haro-de-Rosario et al, 2018). It is also a useful tool for networking and getting in contact with new people.
Social media as company amplifying tool. Fischer & Reuber (2011) states that social media opens-up for many entrepreneurial opportunities. The new media is a great tool for external communication. It lowers the barriers for getting in contact with others and with well-managed social media accounts you can quickly reach out to many people and stakeholders at once or get in touch with individuals (Kietzmann et al, 2011). The ability to gain followers and motivate them by communicating company vision and live that vision also considered entrepreneurial leadership (Renko et al, 2015). Many famous entrepreneurs and leader are active on social media, this is also a possibility for the entrepreneurial leader. You can spread your vision, mission, and news regarding the company to all your followers in order to gain their attention and potentially expand your cast with new stakeholder. Social media can also be used as an educational platform where you can explain your idée or product to potential customers and investors (Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

Human capital database. Social media and social network sites are synonyms and there is a big debate over the terminology of these new platforms (Kuss & Griffiths 2017). Whether you call it social media or social network is up for debate but that social media can be used as a great networking tool well established (Kietzmann et al, 2011). Assembling a cast of followers with the right set of competencies to best utilize resources is key for succeeding as an entrepreneur (Gupta et al, 2004). Networks such as LinkedIn with 500+ members are a great tool to established first contact with potential employees, investors, and clients. It is not uncommon to add business contacts on multiple platforms to build a more personal relationship. Recruitment can also be done on social media, either by asking around in the leaders own social network or by posting open position adds on platforms like LinkedIn. If the leader does a good job of building a strong public image of the company on social media is to get spontaneous applications from people who like what you do.

Conclusions

Our aim with this study is to investigate how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership.

By combining our three aggregate dimensions we were able to build a model of how these three dimensions intersect. The key dimension is the “new social context” it is within this dimension that social media impact entrepreneurial leadership. The other two dimension handles leadership tasks and aspects that are affected by social media. Most of these tasks and aspects are important regardless of social media.

What makes this model useful is that it gives us some insight into how social media affects entrepreneurial leadership. Social media has the potential of affecting entrepreneurial leadership in a
positive direction. It gives the entrepreneurial leader a set of tools to reach out and communicate with billions of people all over the world. Internally it can be used to manage inter-organisational tasks and communication, building the team and be a great source of inspiration. Externally it can be used to build and maintain the entrepreneurial leader’s network. Social media can also be seen as a database of human capital, a potential source of new cast members.

The model also indicates that this new social context is a double-edged sword. Social media is a relatively new phenomenon under constant development and how we are supposed to behave within this new context is not yet set in stone. There are no universal rules of proper etiquette on social media and the interfaces make misunderstandings and misinterpretations a common occurrence. There is also some scepticism against social media among many users. It is unclear what happens to the information that is shared on social media.

We don’t have enough data to rank if aspects are more important than other aspects. What this model indicates is that there are many potential advantages of using social media, but it also raises some big concerns and risks of using social media unwisely.

It might be wise to think twice before posting.
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In this section, we will enlighten the limitations of our study, and give suggestions on what future research will behold.

First our study has some limitations regarding the sample group, first, there are limitations regarding the geographical aspects. Our sample has only derived from the Uppsala area and most of our sample group is within the incubator Base10. This could have limited the result of our thesis due to the homogeneous aspects of only interviewing Swedes. The second limitations are regarding the sample size, according to Guest, Bunce, Johnson (2006) 12 interviews are enough when conducting a quantitative study. This was also our ambition to have 12 interviews, but due to limited time and Swedish holidays, some planned interviews ran through our hands.

There are also limitations regarding classify the concepts of social media or social networks. There is clearly a confusion regarding what is social media and social networks. We think that here in Sweden people talk about “social media” and concludes the platforms that actually are social networks. Talking to a Swede, he or she will talk about Facebook and define it as social media when it according to Kuss & Griffiths, (2017) is a social network site.

Regarding future research, as of now, we can only see relations between the themes and dimensions. We can say very little about the correlation between the dimensions and themes. It would be interesting to do quantitative studies researching what aspects of social media that has the greatest impact on venture growth in entrepreneurial firms. We would also like to see more studies to be done on how social media affects group interaction within an organisation.
References


Brinkmann, S. 2013, Qualitative interviewing, Oxford University Press, Oxford.


van Dijck, J. 2013, "You have one identity": Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn", Media, Culture and Society, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 199-215.


Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Before the interview, we talked and asked some more formal questions, these questions were recommended by Saunders (2009). We started by thanking the respondent for their time and that they wanted to contribute to the study. We then explained the purpose of the research, the respondents right to confidentiality and anonymity, we offered to provide a summary of the interview, and finally, we asked for permission to record the interview. These questions also worked as “ease in” questions, to minimize nervousness and tension.

Warm-up questions

1. Can you tell me more about your company?
2. Do you follow any companies, employees, customers, suppliers, investors on networks?
   a. Why?

Interview Questions - Entrepreneurial leadership + Social media

These questions are based on the definition by Gupta, MacMillan, & Surie, 2004 and their model on how to measure entrepreneurial leadership. We have divided into the questions after the roles and attributes specified in Gupta et al, (2004)

Scenario enactment

1. Challenges are common within the entrepreneurial journey, what is your attitude regarding inviting other people to help overcome these?
   a. Probing - Could this be done on social media, how?
2. In situations of uncertainty and crisis, how would you communicate responsibility?
   a. Probing: Could this be done on social media. How/why not?
3. What are your thoughts about establishing the vision for the future?
   a. Probing: What are your perception regarding the vision and social media? How? why not?
4. What are your thoughts on managing personal relations (first-name basis) tied to the company?
   a. Probing: Could those be managed on social media? How/why not?
5. How would you conduct negotiation and transactions?
   a. Probing: Could that be done on social media? How/why not?
   b. Probing: What is your perception regarding this?

Cast Enactment

1. What is your thoughts on inspiration, and motivation to enhance work performance?
   a. Probing: Could that be done on social media? How/why not?
2. What are your thoughts on emotions in the workplace?
   a. Probing: Could the emotions be enhanced by social media? How?
3. Teamwork is important, but what is your perception regarding social media and teamwork?
4. Could social media improve group performance?
   a. IF YES - What is your perception regarding using social media to improve performance?
   b. IF NO - Why not?
5. What do you think when you hear “company culture”?
   a. Probing: Could this be integrated on social media? How?
6. What is your thought about influencing others to change their minds?
   a. Probing: Could social media be a tool for this?
7. What is your perception regarding showing optimism and confidence in social media?
8. What is your attitude toward decisiveness?
   a. Is this important on social media?