B2B on Facebook?

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Executive Summary

Have you ever questioned yourself what B2B companies are doing on Facebook? As the world's largest Social Media network in the world, Facebook has quickly obtained the attention of thousands of marketers aiming to engage and communicate with their core targets through Facebook Business Pages. This makes perfectly sense, as Facebook in this context might be perceived as an ideal platform to influence and reach the billions of consumers. However does the same context count for the B2B marketers? When accounting for the higher risk perceptions due to larger complexity and increased need for one-to-one trust building, using Facebook as a communication platform to target B2B buyers might be questionable.

Derived from our interest in Social Media and our fascination of this world's largest Social Media site, we have chosen to concentrate this thesis on this exact questionability. This Master Thesis is therefore focused on getting an understanding of how B2B companies use Facebook Business Pages, and on that basis evaluate whether this platform is recommendable to apply, when considering that each an every company has limited resources and every marketing channel selection should on that basis be evaluated in terms of the benefits it can provide the companies with.

While working with this thesis in hand and on basis of our analysis of 68 Danish B2B companies using Facebook Business Pages, one of the things that quickly came to our attention was that Facebook is not recommendable for each and every B2B company, and the 1 billion users should therefore not be considered as the main point of attraction. Our study has shown that the Facebook Business Pages primarily are recommendable for companies with below 200 followers, 500 employees and companies that only target the national markets with their Facebook Business Pages, which leaves the international aspect out of the picture.

Our findings also showed that Facebook Business Pages are not recommendable to apply for sales- and customer-oriented activities, but rather for internal communication by focusing on engaging the company's employees, as those are the main drivers behind the engagement on the Facebook Business Pages of Danish B2B companies. Hence, based on our analysis of the 68 Danish B2B companies the B2B marketers should not consider the Facebook Business Pages as a lead generation channel, but rather as a channel for employee engagement.

Preface

The Master Thesis in hand has been written on 10th semester as a part of M.Sc. International Marketing program at Aalborg University. The origins of this thesis derive from our general interest in Social Media, as this phenomenon during the recent years has had a huge impact on, how humans and businesses communicate with each other. More specifically, within the marketing landscape it is almost impossible to make conversation about Social Media without taking the world largest Social Networking Site Facebook into the picture. Contrary to its close competitor LinkedIn, Facebook is to higher extent a network for social entertainment, while having the main emphasis on making people connect and socialize with their families and friends. While the fact that many B2B companies have rushed to establish their Facebook Business Pages no longer can be a secret, we have also faced ourselves wondering about the suitability of Facebook Business Pages for those company types, when considering the main mission of this social network. Despite the huge focus on Facebook among marketers, we soon realized that scientific literature concerning the clarification of B2B companies on Facebook surprisingly was lacking, which has made us stand where we are today, basing our Master Thesis on this concrete wonder.

Within our thesis the aim will be on basis of studying 68 Danish B2B companies, to gain an understanding of the presences of B2B companies on Facebook Business Pages, as well as the the suitability of the Facebook Business Pages for those companies. We are confident that this emphasis can contribute with new findings to the lacking scientific literature, as well that the knowledge gained might be worthwhile to consider for every B2B social media marketer working or considering to working with Facebook Business Pages.

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"Facebook was not originally created to be a company. It was built to accomplish a social mission - to make the world more open and connected" (Mark Zuckerberg, CEO Facebook)

Chapter 1

1 The problem discussion and identification

Since the evolution of Web 2.0, the communication patterns of the majority of individuals and companies have forever been changed. The possibility for online interaction through Social Media and the usage possibilities within, has been on the tongue of every marketers ever since. No doubt, the Social Media landscape has found its king among them all - Facebook. Facebook has brought us a completely new understanding of what it is to socialize and interact even though a tablet or a mobile screen sets us apart.

1.1 The Rise of Facebook

What would become the world's most popular social network started in February 2004, when Mark Zuckerberg launched *The Facebook* (Carter & Levy 2012; Treadaway & Smith 2012). Initially, Facebook started as a way for people at Harvard to connect with each other and meet people with similar interest, but soon this simple Harvard vision outgrew. In almost no time, Facebook moved beyond the walls of colleges in United States and became the fastest growing and most popular social network to ever be launched, which reflects the fact that Facebook currently holds more than 1 billion individual user profiles from all around the world (Carter & Levy 2012; Treadaway & Smith 2012).

Today, Facebook appeals to a mass market of individuals searching for social entertainment and a way to stay connected with friends and families by sharing and expressing what matters to them (Facebook n.d.; Lutze 2010). Also businesses have found their way to the platform, due to the unique opportunity for reaching millions of end-consumers with one single click, but also interacting and communicating with them through rich content in almost real time through customized Facebook Business Pages (FBP) (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Hinchcliffe & Kim 2012; Schiffman et.al. 2012).

During the *Second Quarter Earnings Call* in 2013 the Facebook COO reported that the platform currently holds more than 18 million business pages, and 1 million are being added every month

(Ling 2013). This global tendency and interest in Facebook by companies is also confirmed by a Danish study conducted by Danmark Statistik. The study of 3,945 Danish companies (with minimum 10 employees) shows that 36% of the respondents account Social Networking Sites, including Facebook, as the preferable social media channels for supporting their online business activities (Danmarks Statistik 2013).

The interest in Facebook by companies should not be underestimated, as it can have a huge influence on the future competitive advantage and general way of doing business. Despite, we have realized that the scientific literature on Facebook for business is lacking, as the major part of literature available has emphasised social media in general terms.

Before exploring Facebook for business further, it will though be necessary within the next section to distinguish the term "businesses" on basis of the widely divided B2B and B2C characteristics, as the usability may differ on basis of those two different markets.

1.2 The suitability of Facebook among B2C and B2B companies

When taking a simple look across Facebook Business Pages (FBP), it quickly appears that both B2B and B2C companies are present through this platform. It makes sense that B2C companies are present on FBP, as it allow B2C companies to reach millions of end-consumers directly through branded and entertainment-related content, whereas it may be more difficult to identify and reach other businesses, hence the employees within (Treadaway & Smith 2012). This may also be the reason why it appears that the 200 largest Danish FBP account for B2C companies only (Socialbakers 2014).

In general terms, operating in the B2B market often requires a different approach than operating on B2C market, because of the differences in sales cycles. In those terms, the B2B sales cycle is generally considered as more complex contrary to its B2C counterparts. This is due to that the higher deal size, the more B2B actors with potentially different purchase interests, need to agree to it. Also, the sales cycles typically run several months with different stakeholders participating depending on the different points in the process (Hutt & Speh 2012; Ellis 2011). In contradiction to the above mentioned B2C marketplace, where the companies can reach the buyer directly, the

different B2B actors can say "no" during the decision process, hence the "wow factor" when getting familiar with a new product is minimized by the many meetings to discuss the purchase (Hutt & Speh 2012; Ellis 2011).

Contrary, the B2C buying center is often much less complicated and, thereby, easier to reach through FBP, as it often involves fewer actors. Furthermore, private consumers most often purchase goods or services on behalf of themselves or their families, meaning that they might only be influenced by their own opinions and perceptions, or with additions of perceptions of their closest surroundings (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). Hence, through FBP B2C companies can reach and influence the private consumer decision center more easily and directly. In addition, the evaluation criteria in private consumer purchases are to higher extent influenced by emotional feelings, whereas B2B companies evaluate their possible partners with higher extent of rationality in order to decrease their risks. On Facebook, B2C companies have the opportunity to stimulate those emotional feelings towards a buying decision through branded material, engagement through competition, behind-the-scenes exclusive pictures and videos, thereby make use of the functionalities Facebook has to offer (Treadaway & Smith 2012). On basis of the sales cycle complexity, it is questionable whether it makes sense to make use of the same initiatives in B2B context. On basis of the questionability of B2B on Facebook further, we will go more deeply into the B2B characteristics in the section below.

1.2.1 The B2B Characteristics

As mentioned in the section 1.1 above, the purchases in the B2B market tend to be more complex and involve a higher degree of risk, compared to B2C, which causes a higher degree of rational behavior. The common rationality among B2B buyers increases the need for professionalism and relations, where trust and commitment building has proven to decrease the risk companies perceive when buying complex products (Ford 1990; Gummesson 2004; Andersen 2001; Hutt & Speh 2012). In this context Hutt & Speh, 2012 argue:

"Relationship market centers on all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful exchanges with customers. Building one-to-one relationships with customers is the heart of business marketing" (Hutt & Speh 2012, pp. 17).

In connection with the quote above, the B2B market is more often characterized by few but large customers, compared to the B2C marketplace as B2C companies often market their products towards larger audiences. For instance, consumer markets can consist of millions of consumers, whereas far fewer customers make up B2B markets. At the same time, it is common for a small percentage of these B2B customers to account for a large percentage of spending in a particular segment, giving them considerable purchasing power (Ellis 2011). Therefore, customer relationship development and maintaining is also considered more important in B2B context, as those companies normally are more dependent on the small number of actual customers and, thereby, their existing customer relations (Cooke 1986; Hutt & Speh 2012; Ford 1990). However, when being present on Facebook through FBP, the possibility of creating one-to-one relationships suddenly decreases, as the individual Facebook user solely will connect with the business by liking the page on same terms as other individuals have done. Thereby the individual user will also be exposed to the same content as the others who have liked the page. This basically means that FBP lean more towards a one-to-many communication form, which is not optimal when trying to build, maintain and develop one-to-one business relationships.

Additionally, it is important to have in mind that the B2B market can be characterized as less transparent, but also more confidential due to diverse and often adapted contractual agreements and different forms of collaboration, which are meant to give the companies within the relationship competitive advantages (Hutt & Speh 2012). It might therefore be asked, whether public FBP can be perceived as forums where companies are willing to exchange information and freely display who they are exchanging relationships with, even if the competitor might be watching? In this context, it is therefore questionable whether it is possible for B2B companies to use Facebook to build one-to-one business relations, when the platform more consists of a one-to-many communication form?

1.3 The problem identification and problem statement

In the sections above, we have questioned the presence of B2B companies on FBP based on the complexity within the sales cycle, the confidentiality within the B2B marketplace and the importance for relationship marketing, which is maintained through one-to-one communication. Despite our questionability and wondering of the presence of B2B companies on FBP, it has also been stated that many B2B companies have found their way to the platform.

When studying the existing scientific literature, we have not been able to clarify for which purposes the B2B companies use FBP or whether FBP are considered as recommendable for B2B companies. However, when looking at the existing literature about social media, it was found that social media are characterized as a marketing and branding channel. This is due to that several authors argue that social media can be used by companies for sales-related communication (Mangold & Faulds 2009; Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan 2012; Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides 2001).

Therefore, due to the increasing interest in Facebook by companies, the lack of scientific literature within the area and the questionability of B2B companies on Facebook, we see a high need for creating an understanding of the usefulness of FBP among B2B companies within this thesis. Based on the common assumption, that all companies have limited resources, we will also evaluate whether Facebook is a recommendable platform to apply or whether their presences solely can be understood as a *lemming effect* derived from their B2C counterparts (Christensen & Sørensen, 2010).

Due to the lack of literature on B2B using FBP, we will identify the usage possibilities of those companies by making our pre-understanding explicit on basis of the *Generic Value Chain* (Porter 1985), before going further into the investigation. Even though our main assumption is that Facebook primarily can be applied as a marketing, branding and sales related channel, the value chain will ensure that we avoid leaving other relevant value adding activities out of the picture.

Besides identifying usage possibilities through the *Generic Value Chain,* our emphasis will within the first part of the study also be to get an understanding of the characteristics of Facebook as a platform. Therefore, based on the above questionable presence of B2B companies on Facebook, we will identify the usage possibilities, understand the usage patterns and evaluate whether the FBP are recommendable for B2B companies. More specifically we will:

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

1. UNDERSTAND FACEBOOK AS A PLATFORM FOR BUSINESSES, AND INDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE USAGE POSSIBILITIES OF DANISH B2B COMPANIES

2. UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE THE USAGE OF FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGES BY DANISH B2B COMPANIES

3. ON BEHALF OF THE ANALYSIS, EVALUATE WHETHER FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGES ARE RECOMMENDABLE FOR DANISH B2B COMPANIES TO APPLY AND FOR WHICH PURPOSES

Chapter 2

2 Theory of Science

Before placing the emphasis on the identification of the usage possibilities of FBP for B2B companies, as well as clarifying the composition of Facebook as a platform that will make up the basis of this whole study, the aim of this chapter will develop and make sense of the methods we will apply for this research purpose. Firstly, we will clarify the importance methods have for scientific research followed by the underlying assumptions of this thesis, as well as the data collection applied.

2.1 The importance in clarifying the methods

During our individual lifetimes all of us produce knowledge by observing our surroundings, making inferences on the basis of those surroundings and hereafter apply the gained knowledge in other contexts (Andersen 1997). On the basis of our continuous interaction with the environment that surrounds us, but also our individual and personal development, it can be stated that we all produce our own everyday life theories that help us make sense of the reality (Andersen 1997). In many cases, this kind of knowledge production can lead to great results and not least reasonable knowledge. However, this kind of knowledge can also be characterized as random and unsystematic, and result in a bad or misshapen picture of the world around us. Thereby, due to the continuous influence of our surroundings, we can place conclusions and decisions that are wrong. In order to avoid those regular misconceptions it becomes an indispensable necessity within research to define and apply methods that are based on academic theories constructed in a more systematic manner. These allow the researchers to reflect upon the quality of the knowledge gained, clarify the knowledge sustainability and its limitations, but not least categorize the relevance of the information we apply in order to solve a given problem statement (Andersen 1997). Therefore, it is an indispensable necessity when approaching an academic study and searching for avoiding regular misconceptions to articulate the underlying assumptions about ontology, epistemology, views on human nature and methodology. Not only

will this clarification help the researcher to approach the study more systematically, it will in the end also help the readers to make more sense of the work (Andersen 1997; Kuada 2011).

On that basis, the next section of this thesis will, combined with a definition of the term paradigm, provide the reader with a presentation of our underlying assumptions that have been created based on the purpose of this study and therefore will influence the knowledge gained.

2.2 The paradigmatic conception and definition

Within methodology these aforementioned assumptions about how reality is constructed and how knowledge can be obtained and understood, it can basically be reflected in the term paradigm (Morgan & Smircich 1980; Ritzer 2008). In order to specify what we as researchers associate with the term paradigm, we have chosen to apply the definition by Ritzer (2008) presented below:

"A paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter within science. It serves to define what should be studied, what questions should be asked, how they should be asked, and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers obtained. The paradigm is the broadest unit of consensus within a science and serves to differentiate on scientific community (or sub community) from another. It subsumes, defines and interrelates the exemplars, theories, and methods and instruments that exist within it." (Ritzer 2008 p. A-10).

The quote illustrates that paradigms can be applied in order to break down the complexity of the real world, while providing guidelines for how knowledge should be obtained. While there are many diverse conceptualizations of paradigms within the literature, and many diverse ways of approaching methodic, we have chosen to apply the methodological framework of Morgan & Smircich (1980) within this thesis. Doing so, we will be able to define our underlying assumptions and, thereby, also create the methodological approach that will guide this thesis in hand. The framework of Morgan & Smircich is presented below:

Figure 1: Network of basic assumptions and subjective-objective paradigms

	Subjective approaches			Objective approaches		
	Subjectivist approach 1	Subjectivist approach 2	Subjectivist approach 3	Objectivist approach 4	Objectivist approach 5	Objectivist approach 6
Ontology	Reality as a projection of human imagination	Reality as a social construction	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a concrete structure
Human nature	Man as pure spirit, consciousness, being	Man as a social constructor, the symbol creator	Man as an actor, the symbol user	Man as an information processor	Man as an adaptor	Man as a responder
Epistemology	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation	To understand how social reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map context	To study systems, process, change	To construct a positivist science
Research methods	Exploration of pure subjectivity	Hermeneutics	Symbolic analysis	Contextual analysis of Gestalten	Historical analysis	Lab experiments, surveys

Source: Morgan & Smircich, 1980 pp. 492

Figure 1 above visualizes six different paradigms, which all are grouped within either the *subjective* or *objective approach*. Morgan & Smircich (1980) explain the subjective-objective continuum within the framework as:

"The transition from one perspective to another must be seen as a gradual one, and it's often the case that the advocates of any given position may attempt insights from others" (Morgan & Smircich, 1980 pp. 493).

This quote explains that Morgan & Smircich (1980) do not view the paradigms as conflicting. Contrary, the authors believe that in order to solve a given problem statement, paradigms should be considered as valuable additions to one another, rather than replacements to one another.

Regarding figure 1, the aim of the next section within this chapter will be to create the underlying assumptions for this thesis, as those will guide the purpose of the study. The assumptions will be created on the basis of ontology, human nature, epistemology and research methods.

2.2.1 The underlying assumptions of this thesis

In continuation with section 2.2 and figure 1, the aim of this section is to create our ontological, human nature, epistemological assumptions and research methods on the basis of our study purpose. This will help us understand the phenomenon in a more systematic manner, while avoiding bias of misunderstanding and misconception as explained in section 2.1.

2.2.1.1 Ontological Assumptions

Kuada (2011) defines ontology as: *"(...) a term used by philosophy of science scholars to describe the nature of what the researcher seeks to know something about - i.e. the "knowable" or "reality""* (Kuada 2011 pp. 34).

Referring to figure 1 and the above quote, the reality of the right side of the continuum is external to an individual, meaning that the individual cannot influence the reality, as well that the individual is determined by the surroundings. Contrary, the scholars on the left side of the continuum believe that reality is based on social interactions, meaning that individuals create their own social world within a social context. Consequently, the individuals can influence their respective realities (Kuada 2011; Morgan & Smircich 1980). From our point of view FBP is a social construction, which is created and influenced by the interaction between individuals and individuals within companies. The reality created on Facebook is in a continuous process where individuals establish meaningful definitions on basis of their interactions. This happens through the use of language and other symbolic modes that come into the picture when sharing content and interacting with other users or FBP. With this regard, Facebook's existence is depended on the people who use the platform. Without user interaction and sharing of content Facebook would be senseless. On that basis, Facebook cannot be perceived as static or external to the individuals, as those are the ones making up the whole social construction (Morgan & Smircich 1980).

Despite this, it has to be remembered that there also is a certain degree of continuity that defines this exact social construction, which has been created by Facebook itself. So whereas, it makes complete sense that Facebook is depended on its users and their interaction, it should not be

forgotten that the basic structure of the platform, the functions and rules already are given to the users beforehand.

During this study, we are aiming for investigating the usage of FBP of B2B companies based on their share of content and interactions with followers. From our point of view, neither an understanding of the social construction or symbolic interaction can be reached through any objective theories of science that try to distinct the individuals from social contexts, and aim for developing general rules and laws on their behalf. Instead, in order to understand this social phenomenon, it will be necessary to analyze the content which B2B companies share with their followers. This will enable us to understand the usage of FBP by B2B companies, and whether FBP are recommendable to apply and for which purposes, derived from the interaction that takes place.

At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the phenomenon is relatively new, as well as the scientific literature on the topic of B2B companies on Facebook is lacking. The newsworthiness means that this context still is under emergence, and on this basis it cannot be perceived as static but rather as a "moving target". When studying something that not yet has reached its maturity, and where the reality is under emergence, it might be difficult - if not impossible, to reach a conclusion when distancing ourselves from the phenomenon through the more objective paradigms. Instead, in order to reach an understanding of this new phenomenon, it is necessary to come as close to the reality as possible. Through, text-analysis of the content uploaded by the B2B companies on their FBP, as well as interpretations of the level of interactions between B2B companies and their followers, we are convinced to be able to get a better understanding of the usage and favorability, than if we distanced ourselves from the social context.

2.2.1.2 Assumptions about human nature

The ontological assumptions are very close to the way researchers see the relationships between human beings and their environment, with other words; *how researchers view Human Nature* (Kuada 2011). Some scholars see the individuals as being outside the social environment, which means that those are determined by the environment or even seen as adapters of the environment.

Contrary, others believe that the environment and human beings continuously co-determine each other, as humans more are believed as some that posses a free will to interact, and thereby orienting their actions in a way that is meaningful to them (Kuada 2011; Morgan & Smircich 1980). From our point of view, companies cannot be seen as products of external forces to which they are exposed within the environment, as the objectivistic approaches state (Morgan & Smircich 1980). Nor do we believe that the environment of companies "forces" them to respond and behave in predictable and determined ways. Contrary, we believe that companies should be considered on the basis of the people, values and beliefs, and not least on the basis of their social interactions with their environment (Morgan & Smircich 1980). More concretely, the relationships between a company and its customers should not be seen as external or somehow determined on basis of the regulations and laws the objectivistic approach states, as those all depend on the social context and the concrete people within (Morgan & Smircich 1980).

With this regard, it has to be kept in mind that even though we perceive individuals as having a free will, there still exist boundaries of how free humans can be, while having a wish to be a part of a social community. All individuals have to keep themselves to certain restrictions. In Denmark for instance, it is natural for every human being to pay taxes and follow the other laws and rules that have been given by the politicians, in order to avoid placing themselves in an unfavorable position within the society. Believing that people have 100% free will is from our point of view an ideology. Instead the question of free will should be understood through stating that people of course have freedom to choose their way of acting. However, there will always be general social rules that people either should be willing to follow, or be willing to take consequences of if the rules are violated. The same counts on Facebook and within the different companies that have their own code of conduct, behavior and internal policies.

Despite the rules, Facebook is aiming for giving individuals the power to share and express what matters to them, but not least giving them an opportunity to connect with other people. Bringing this to further consideration means that Facebook is all about the individual interactions between people. Those interactions are not determined and to only a small extent regulated beforehand, due to the structure and rules on the platform. Thus, companies on Facebook have the opportunity to interact with their customers through content and communication. As Facebook is highly depended on the individuals and companies that are using the social networking site to

interact with others, the platform will continuously be influenced by the way in which people are using it.

In context with our purpose of study, we will not strive to regulate or determine the presences or actions of companies on FBP. Instead, we will seek to understand their realities and interactions within Facebook as a social construction. This is due to that the objective of this thesis is to understand the presence of B2B companies on Facebook and the recommend ability of FBP for B2B companies.

The understanding gained, can be helpful for the companies considering using FBP to support their business activities. However, the people reading this study should not in any way be seen as some that have to adapt to our understanding and organize themselves in accordance with the gained understanding. Instead, our understanding of the human nature on the basis of the social construction and interaction should enable the companies to expand their own understanding horizon of the social reality.

2.2.1.3 Epistemological Assumptions

When moving across the subjective-objective continuum and their underlying assumptions, it becomes clear that the nature of what constitutes adequate knowledge changes (Morgan & Smircich 1980). Kuada explains epistemology as:

" (...) a term that describes the nature of knowledge and the means of knowing - i.e. "how we know what we know" or what we conceive as truth" (Kuada 2011 pp. 34).

The right hand of the continuum advocates for a positivistic epistemology, where the aim is to analyze concrete relationships in an external social world with emphasis on "objective" knowledge that is based on laws and regularities (Morgan & Smircich 1980). One the other hand, the left side highlights the importance of understanding the world through the frame of reference of the humans or construction that the study seeks to investigate, hence the world has to be studied inter-subjectively (Morgan & Smircich 1980; Kuada 2011).

We believe that the reality can be perceived differently by the diverse B2B companies, depending on the social construction in which they operate, but also depending on the individuals that work within those companies. Furthermore, how the diverse companies perceive

Facebook is also depended on their individual understanding of the usefulness of the medium for different purposes. While some may perceive the reality of Facebook within their individual social constructions as being a lead generation channel, others may perceive Facebook as channel useful for relationship building, HR, marketing or other business related activities. For us as researchers, it will on that basis be necessary to understand the social construction and the symbolic content within, as this can allow us to understand the usage of FBP by B2B companies. Thereby, we will come closer to reveal the real nature of not only the usefulness of Facebook for B2B companies, but also the suitability of FBP for B2B companies based the interaction on the pages.

Our emphasis will, therefore, be on understanding the language, text and other symbols used within the social construction and how humans make sense of their actions (Morgan & Smircich 1980). In order to get this understanding of the human actions, it will not be relevant for us to apply the more positivist paradigms, on the right side of the continuum, as those focus more on facts, laws and regularities, and not on interactions and perceptions. Instead, we will analyze and observe the social interactions in order to understand the usage patterns of B2B companies and clarify how the platform is applied and which usage possibilities that in the end lie within FBP for B2B companies. In this context, companies and individuals on Facebook may act differently depending on the context in which they choose to apply the FBP. Therefore in order for us to achieve adequate knowledge, it will be necessary to uncover their behavior in every possible and available context (Morgan & Smircich 1980).

2.2.1.4 Research Methods

When focusing on defining the research methods, it is important to have in mind that those allow us to explain how to gain the desired knowledge, meaning how it is possible to work towards solving the problem statement in a meaningful way, on the basis of our assumptions about ontology, human nature and epistemology (Morgan & Smircich 1980). Above it has been considered that we work towards understanding a phenomenon that which is under emergence requires to come as close the the moving target as possible, as it might be hard to measure something with ever changing values. At the same time, when aiming for reaching an

understanding of the usage of FBP by B2B companies that unfolds through content, our main emphasis will be to interpret the content shared, as well as the interactions between companies and their followers. This will enable us to realize how B2B companies currently apply FBP, but also whether Facebook is a recommendable platform to apply on basis of the interaction that is going on. We are convinced that hermeneutics is the research methods that will allow us to study this phenomenon as close as possible and enable us to get the understanding required. Therefore, we will go more deeply into these research methods in the subsection below.

2.2.1.4.1 Hermeneutics

In the previous sections concerning our Theory of Science, it has been argued that we perceive reality as socially constructed, which continuously is influenced social interactions that unfold through language, symbols and other forms of content.

When studying a social construction, it is senseless to create explanations, predictions or universal theories that correspond to the scientific ideal based on causal and determined explanations. It has been mentioned before that this study has an explorative character, as it is concerned with relatively unknown knowledge, and on that basis it is not possible to determine or build rules and laws on basis of something that is still new or unknown (Andersen 1972). Therefore, the first step towards reaching knowledge of the "unknown" is to gain an understanding of the social context and construction. When a conclusion is reached, this study will allow other researchers to explore the area further based on our understandings, and maybe apply our conclusion and understanding as a foundation for future explanatory studies (Andersen 1997). Therefore, in order to gain an understanding of the social reality our focus will be both to understand the social context, in which the interaction is placed, and interpret and text-analyse the content and interactions of the actors within (Andersen 1972).

It has been emphasized that the phenomenon that is being studies is under emergence and perceived as a moving target, which increases the need to come as close to it as possible, which cannot be done through statistical studies build on measurement. On that basis, we believe that the best way to reach this exact understanding of this new phenomenon, and thereby gain quality knowledge, is through hermeneutics. This is due to that this method will allow us to come as

close to the phenomenon as possible through text analysis, as well as interpretation of the actions and interactions within the social construction. Hence, it will allow us to understand the development more adequately (Andersen 1972).

The proponents of hermeneutics advocate for an inter-subjectivity of the socio-cultural environment by seeing it as a humanly constructed phenomenon. Through creation of common culture, knowledge, institutions as language and communication and religion, human beings attain an objective character, which is exactly what will be studied in this thesis through hermeneutics (Burrell & Morgan 1979). This is related to our above stated arguments concerning the need to understanding the parts of the social context in order to understand the whole. This understanding of parts needs to be seen as contrasting to the more empirical and analytical studies, as the understanding process within hermeneutics allow us to continuously correct our understanding of the whole through interpretation and text-analysis, and not to develop rules and laws on basis of generalization. That is also why hermeneutics, in contrast to the more deterministic theories of science, often is illustrated through a circle, where we as researchers continuously develop new understanding of the social context on basis of an interpretation of its parts (Andersen 1972; Fuglsang & Olsen 2004).

As argued before, due to the lack of scientific research on B2B companies on FBP, their usage possibilities, patterns as well as an evaluation of whether Facebook is a recommendable platform to apply, our theoretical assumptions will be based on our pre-understanding of the usage possibilities. This will be done on basis of the characteristic of Facebook as a platform and its mechanisms. Afterwards, we will by using Porters' (1985) *Generic Value Chain* make plausible with regard to our pre-understanding, which value adding activities that possibly can be maintained or supported on Facebook, and on that basis making our pre-understanding explicit by developing a framework that contains the usage possibilities identified.

As our emphasis is to understand the phenomenon and, thereby, the parts that make up the whole social construction, we will through text analysis and interpretation observe the content uploaded on the FBP of Danish B2B companies, as well as their interactions and engagement with the followers. This will enable us to understand how Danish B2B companies currently use FBP and for which purposes. This understanding will enable us to revise our pre-understanding of usage

possibilities and make it explicit by the identified usage patterns, which will be gathered in a framework concerning how Danish B2B companies currently apply FBP. This is again reflected in Hermeneutics, as we make our pre-understanding explicit on basis of current literature that enable us make usage possibilities plausible.

Then, following the hermeneutic circle hereafter leads to a new understanding of how the reality really looks like. Through our analysis of the observational results we will be able to expand the new understanding further by understanding the parts that make up the whole, as well as realize whether common characteristics or dissimilarities exist within the usage patterns of B2B companies on basis of our text-analysis and interpretation of their presences. At last, the analysis derived from interpretation and text-analysis will bring us closer to our post-understanding that will result in exploring whether FBP are recommendable to apply for B2B companies and for which purposes. As a result, by applying hermeneutics we will be able to conceptualize a fairly unexplored topic and create an understanding for the phenomenon.

When considering that this study is focused upon an understanding of the usage patterns, it is not relevant to observe all possible B2B companies in Denmark. Instead, our aim will be to include companies that are present through this channel, and use FBP actively for supporting their business activities. That is due to that our aim is not to paint a general picture of which B2B sectors are present on Facebook and which are not, either do we seek to somehow quantify our objectives. When the purpose is to understand a social construction and interaction, hence we will focus on Danish B2B companies that use Facebook actively for interaction with their stakeholders. We are convinced that observation method will enable us coming as close to the phenomenon as possible by allowing us to interpret and analyze the content shared and, thereby, allow us to understand the reality of B2B companies on FBP. Even though online observations do not allow us to study the physical attitude of people behind the B2B pages, nor the people who interact with the pages, this data collection method will allow us to go deeply into the usage patterns on behalf of the content those companies place on their FBP, and how they interact with the stakeholders on behalf of this content (Rask & Nørskov 2011). At the same time, online observation enable us to not only observe what is happening right here and right now, but also gain insights to the development of the usage patterns back in time. Hence, we will be able to see

which tactics companies have used and how those evolved based on the interaction or whether certain evolvement eventually has taken place. This would not be possible if we were focused on observing in physical environment with only an opportunity to get an understanding of how things currently are. Nevertheless, when having in mind that we are focused on interactions unfolding through content on FBP, then it is also most important to observe the content usage and not the physical attitudes towards Facebook. Putting it another way, a B2B FBP will be a representation of a B2B company, and our observation will be complementary to an interaction with a B2B company that currently is present through Facebook. Thereby, when we are observing the FBP this will be complementary to if we were present in the interaction between the company and those it interacts with.

The above states that we are applying the method of hermeneutic, as we believe that this is the best research method to gain the understanding of the phenomenon which we seek to study. This is also due to that we are not seeking to obtain a certain result, but our agenda is only to understand the phenomenon of B2B companies on Facebook. We believe that making our pre-understanding explicit on basis of existing theories must be seen fruitful for avoiding being ruled by prejudices, as our pre-understanding is open minded due to the fact that we do not try to make companies fit into certain boxes. Instead, we present our pre-understanding and hereafter conduct the research in order to understand how the reality currently unfolds.

Also, we are aware of that many studies of companies on Facebook in general are conducted by diverse consultancies and agencies that have a self interest in reaching results that support their business purpose. We perceive ourselves as positioned in another situation than consultancies with business purposes in mind as we do not have an agenda to live up to, instead we have a scientific goal to create an understanding of the phenomenon without a need for reaching certain results to support our business objectives. On that basis, we are confident that we can find a safe foundation for our cognition and distinct fruitful prejudices from the unfruitful (Clark & Fast 2008).

2.3 Data collection

Now our underlying assumptions and research methods have been reached, it will be necessary in the subsections below to come close into what our data collection will consist of in terms of primary data and secondary data. Thereby, how we are going to proceed in order to gain the understanding which we are aiming for.

2.3.1 Primary data collection

Both Arbnor & Bjerke (1997) and Kuada (2011) argue for the importance of that the data collection methods should be guided by the problem statement, but also by the methodological assumptions of the researchers. We have argued already that the scientific literature on the topic is lacking, which also is why the majority of our data will be based on primary data collection. On basis of our methodological assumptions, the primary data will be collected on the basis of qualitative methods, which are defined as: *"any type of research that produces findings not arrived by statistical procedures or other means of quantification".* (Kuada 2011 from Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 10-11).

The primary data collection will consist of online observations of the active B2B companies on Facebook, as this method makes it possible for us to research the interaction and social construction very closely, which is in correspondence with our hermeneutics (Yin 2011; Kuada 2011). The qualitative research is to observe the social behavior, interaction, symbolic discourse, etc. on the FBP, as argued in sections above. Therefore we will now get more deeply into how the online observation will unfold.

2.3.1.1 Online Observation

The primary data collection in this thesis will consist of online observation through text-analysis and interpretation of content shared by Danish B2B companies on their FBP, as we are convinced that using online observation will allow us to come as close to the phenomenon as possible. As a method of data collection and analysis, online observation that is grounded in interactive Internet-based communities will allow us, with reference to the above, gather data across perspectives, time and most importantly in the natural setting of the phenomenon (Babbie

1986, Patton 2002 cited by Nørskov & Rask 2011). Consequently, it will enable us to gain insights to information about the usage patterns of Danish B2B companies on Facebook and their interactions, which otherwise would be difficult to obtain through for example interviews (Nørskov & Rask 2011).

The literature distinguishes between two overall types of observation, namely *unstructured observations* and *structured observation*. Within this study *unstructured observation* will be applied, as it is a qualitative technique contrary to *structured observation*, which will allow us to uncover the subtle nuances of the behavior of the social actors within the social construction, namely the B2B companies and their followers. Contrary, *structured observation* is more concerned with frequency and quantification of actions, which will not be in focus to such a high extent as the former (Nørskov & Rask 2011)

When collecting data through online observation, another aspect that needs to be clarified is the degree of formality and on that basis whether we as researchers have a *formal* or *informal* approach to our observations. *Formal* approach holds a large degree of structure including coding schemes, whereas the *informal* approach involves less structure and allow the researcher more flexibility but also freedom, as no categories are predetermined (Nørskov & Rask 2011). When using online observation as the primary data collection method we will apply both the *informal* and *formal approach*. As stated in section 1.3, our aim is to explore the usage patterns of Danish B2B companies on Facebook, as no previous researches have been identified with this purpose. On the one hand, we will with this regard not be able to somehow predetermine the usage patterns, as we currently do not know how Danish B2B companies actually use the FBP and for which purposes. We will therefore make our usage possibility pre-understanding explicit on basis of the Generic Value Chain and Facebook characteristics, and put those into perspective with the content observed on the FBP. However, we will not be able to predefine content categories before we involve ourselves with the actual observations and, therefore, the content types observed, which is uploaded by the B2B companies will be gathered in groups - if similarities appear between them.

On the other hand, it also has to be brought to attention that our observation is not completely *informal*, as we know the basic characteristics of the platform, meaning that there certainly are some "predetermined categories" to be found on Facebook. For example, one of the things that is predetermined and which we know at the stage where the observation has not begun yet, is that Facebook for example holds a sharing, liking and commenting functions, which also are the ones driving the evaluation of engagement. Hence, whereas our approach is going to be *informal* in terms of the content the Danish B2B companies actually use - the approach is naturally also going the be *formal* towards Facebook as a platform, as we know the main functions before we start our observation (Nørskov & Rask 2011).

When considering online observation as a data collection method, Nørskov & Rask also put emphasis on whether the textual exchanges have *asynchronous* or *synchronous* nature, as the authors state:

"Online observation refers to textual exchanges that can be of both a synchronous (i.e. simultaneous, such as chat) and an asynchronous nature (i.e. non-simultaneous, such as e-mail). It takes place within mailing lists (discussion lists), chat, wikis, blogs with their commenting systems, and other interactive social media platforms." (Nørskov & Rask 2011 pp. 4).

The online observation applied within this study will be based on *asynchronous nature*. Despite the possibility on Facebook to interact *synchronously* through the chat option or private messaging, we will be unable to observe these interactions. Whereas the chat mechanism is not available for companies using FBP, private messaging is not public for other Facebook users than those between whom the conversation takes place. From this can also be derived that we only can base our observation and, thereby, our data collection on the public engagement and content sharing that takes place publicly. Also, we cannot completely ensure that the content and interaction we are being exposed to have not been modified, as companies have the possibility to delete their own posts as well as posts shared by the followers. This can give us a misleading picture of how much interaction is going on, but also whether the content exposure on Facebook leads to further activity offline.

When conducting observations, the acquisition of an understanding about a phenomenon is often accomplished in isolation from the natural context, which prevents the researcher for gaining a complete picture of the particular phenomenon that is being studied. However, this is remedied by using online observation as a data collection method within this context, as we are able to observe the phenomenon in its natural setting. As our method is based on text-analysis and interpretation, derived from our methodological assumptions and hermeneutics as research method, it can be said that observing a FBP might be complementary to observing people and companies in their natural environment. That is due to that the content exposed on their respective FBP is their home ground and the page is applied on their own premises. Hence, despite the distance between us and the companies that are being observed, it can be said that due to the internet, the distance can be minimized and therefore be equivalent to if we were present physically within the companies and observed the FBP from their offices. So despite the fact that we will be unable to observe physical facial expressions, tone of voice and body language, using online observation will enable us to observe in a natural setting. Furthermore, we are certain that only by doing so, we will be able to gather an understanding of the social construction derived from text-analysis and interpretation of the FBP content and interaction (Nørskov & Rask 2011). Hence, using online observation as a data collection method allows us to minimize the typical constraints of time and space that might be an issue when considering offline observation (Nørskov & Rask 2011).

On the other hand, when conducting our online observations of the FBP we will not influence the observed activities, and thereby the content shared by companies and the interaction that takes place between the company and its followers. According to Nørskov & Rask (2011), the internet creates ideal conditions for such an unobtrusive observation, but at the same time the detachment from the observed interaction increases the risk of misunderstanding the context. As well, the authors state that it can be difficult to overcome one's prejudices against others' behavior, customs etc. Despite this possible downside, it must be kept in mind that doing so we will avoid to influence the observed settings, as the companies and the followers do not know that we are observing what is happening on the FBP. This will naturally increase *confirmability* of the study (Shenton 2004). On the other hand, using this form of *direct observation,* and thereby a more

objective approach to the study, only enables us to observe through our senses. Hence, if we only are passive when observing we will not be able to get an understanding of the social construction and the companies and people within. On that basis, it will be necessary for us to combine this with a more participatory approach, where we become participators in the social construction while we collect our data (Nørskov & Rask 2011). The reason for that we also choose to use this method is that it enables us to code our sensory data obtained through the direct observation with the understanding we have obtained through the participatory observation. This means that we will not only observe the actions of the companies using FBP, but also understand the reason behind their actions, which can be done by making our pre-understanding explicit, and afterwards put the pre-understanding in perspective with the sensory data obtained through the more passive data collection form.

We are convinced, that even though we will combine those two observation methods, this will not influence of *confirmability* negatively, as by making our pre-understanding explicit we will enable an external researcher to understand how the diverse sensory data and the understanding have been obtained.

At the same time, by combining the direct and participatory observation with the online method of data collection, we will also avoid that the subjects alter their behavior, as a result of knowing that they are being observed by us, which otherwise would influence the *dependability* negatively (Nørskov & Rask 2011).

Furthermore, we are also convinced that we are able to avoid the common research criteria to fail based on that our observations is *unstructured*, meaning that we do not try to put companies in certain boxes beforehand, but solely note in details the content shared and the interactions that take place in our appendix. Hence, when our pre-understanding has been made explicit, we will move our focus away from it and instead increase our openness towards new possible findings, and that is also where we will explore which content types there are to be found. Doing so, we can ensure to create *dependability* with the data collected (Nørskov & Rask 2011; Shenton 2004). As well, in order to avoid the misunderstandings, both of us will observe all the companies included within this study separately without influencing each other. When that is done, our emphasis will be to review our individual observations of all the 68 companies, and if different understandings of the content appear then review the whole context of the content,

hence the FBP again. Also, we do not only observe the individual posts, but also the whole context of the FBP, which again can help us to avoid misunderstandings of questionable pieces of content. Doing so, we are convinced that the *credibility* of the observation naturally also will be maintained, as we thereby can make each other aware if our individual posture influences the observation (Shenton 2004; Nørskov & Rask 2011; Lincoln 1995). That is also where the online observation contributes as contrary to observing in offline space, where we only can take note of what happens here and now. By applying online observation, we are able to go back in time and consider the whole history of a particular FBP. This could not have been done through interviews that also only take place in real time. Hence, by observation of the FBP, we can become familiar with the wider scope, the content and frequency of interactions, as well as the contributions to the FBP of individuals. This will allow us to gain deeper insights to the communication aspects that other data collection methods, such as interviews, would not have done (Nørskov & Rask 2011).

At last, when working with qualitative research, one research criteria that should not be overseen is *transferability*, which in context with qualitative methods has been discussed heavily by diverse researchers, as this criteria refers to which extent the findings of the study can be applied to other situations. Whereas, the concern within the positivist work lies in demonstrating that the results can be applied to 1 wider population - the findings of qualitative studies are more specific to small number of particular environments and individuals, which makes it impossible to demonstrate that the findings are applicable to other situations and populations. Whereas some researchers believes that many naturalistic inquiries in practice, even conventional generalization is never possible, as all observations are defined by the specific contexts in which they occur. Contrary, contrasting views are offered by other researchers, who suggest that even though each case may be unique, it is also an example within broader group and, as a result, the prospect of *transferability* should not immediately be rejected (Shenton 2004).

Despite the disagreements, a stance that has found favor with many qualitative researchers is that if researchers believe their situations are similar to that described in the study, they may relate the findings to their own positions. As well, researchers suggest that it is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure the sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer (Lincoln 1995; Guba 1981; Firestone 1993). In order

to enable the readers doing so, *thick* descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation will be provided, as this will allow the readers to have a proper understanding of it, and thereby enable them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in a particular research, with those that they have seen emerge in their situations. Hence, within this study, in order to enable this possible *transfer,* our aim is to research the nature of the phenomenon, its essence, central and common characteristics, as well as what separates this phenomenon from other phenomena. Contrary, our aim is on that basis not to develop ideals about the phenomenon before the data collection, as the possible risk of this is that we would generalize beyond the base of data that is reached on basis of our study of the FBP of Danish B2B companies. Doing so, we will convey the boundaries to the reader of the study, so that the reader has a basis for evaluating whether his context has similar characteristics to this study in hand and therefore, whether our study is transferable to his/hers settings (Shenton 2004).

2.3.2 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data have also been applied within this study, but to a lower extent than the primary data described above. The characteristics of secondary data are that those have been gathered and recorded by someone else, prior to and for purposes other than the current study (Zikmund et.al. 2010).

Zikmund et al. (2010) argue that investigators are naturally more prone to accept data from reliable sources, such as governmental institutions and companies that are professionalized in data analysis. This is due to that data deriving from those sources can be mostly counted for accuracy and quality of investigation.

In order to ensure validity when using secondary data, we have been very selective with the data sources, which resulted in primarily using peer-viewed journals that have been reviewed by an experienced board and that are used daily by both governmental institutions, but also leading universities. Especially, *The Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* as well as journal for *Industrial Marketing Management* have both contributed to this study by extending our understanding of the B2B marketplace (Emerald n.d; Elsevier n.d) As well, when gathering understanding of the Danish B2B era, we have applied Danmarks Statistik as a source for our

exploration of social media in Denmark, which is the central authority for statistics in Denmark (Danmarks Statistik 2013).

In general, when applying secondary data sources we have putted weight on splitting a given data sources into raw data, interpretations and opinions in order to avoid using data that somehow have been influenced by the subjective thoughts and opinions of a given researcher. This both concerns our book sources, web-sources and the use of journals.

2.4 The structure of the thesis

In order to provide the reader an overview of the structure of this thesis, we have illustrated the different chapter and sections within in the figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The structure of the thesis
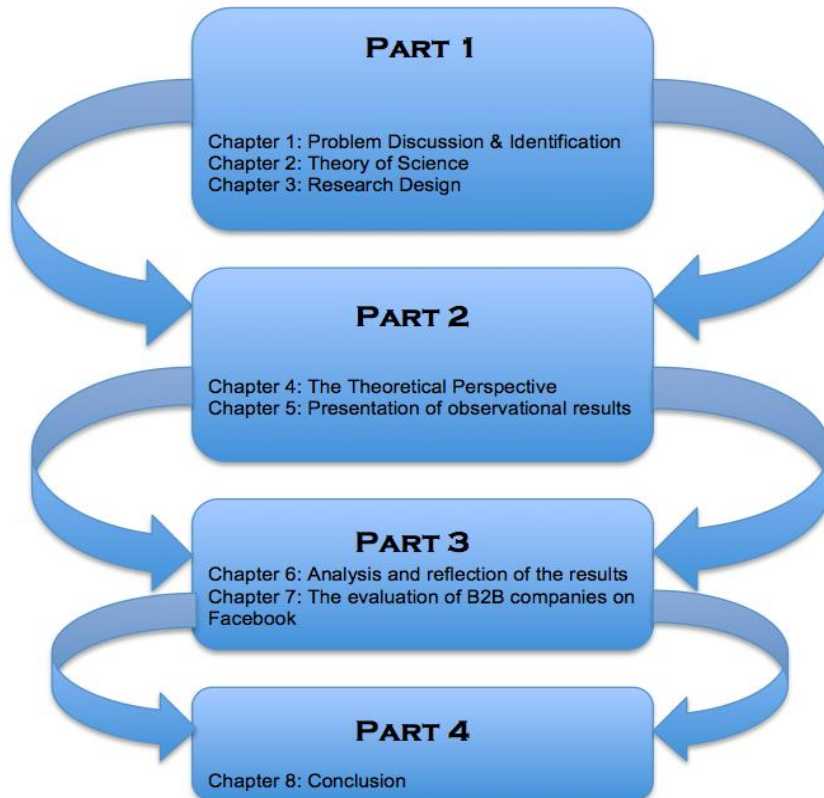
2.4.1 Part 1 - Problem Discussion, Theory of Science & Research Design

In this first chapter of our thesis the focus was on describing and defining the problem identified, hence the questionability of B2B companies on FBP. The second chapter of the thesis is Theory of Science, where we have developed and discussed our methodological assumptions including our research method of hermeneutics as well as our use of online observation as a primary data collection method. In the third chapter of this thesis, we will present our Research Design on which basis we are going to identify the B2B companies that will be a part of our study.

2.4.2 Part 2 - Theoretical Perspective & Presentation of Observational Results

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, as a part of our pre-understanding, we will identify potential usage possibilities on FBP for B2B companies, based on the Generic Value Chain and the Facebook characteristics and compositions. Here we will also define the possible engagement levels that can be achieved on the FBP. In the fifth chapter, and together with the observation results, our new understanding of how Danish B2B companies use FBP, as well as the engagement level that is reached will be presented.

2.4.3 Part 3 - Analysis and Reflection of the Results & Evaluation of FBP

In the sixth chapter of the thesis we will analyze and reflect on the finding of the observational result, in order to come closer to whether FBP are recommendable for B2B companies, and to which extent. Therefore, we will look for similarities and differences among the usage of the FBP in order to reach this understanding. In the seventh chapter, we will evaluate those findings and search for explanations of those findings within the literature, which in the end will enable us to evaluate whether FBP are recommendable for Danish B2B companies and why.

2.4.4 Part 4 - Conclusion

The last part of this study, namely the conclusion should be seen as a summary of all the different thesis parts included that had enabled us to answer our developed research questions in Chapter 1, Part 1. Within this section we will conclude on the final 68 companies included, the

usage possibilities identified on basis of our pre-understanding, but also the understanding we reached at the time we have observed all 68 B2B companies' FBP and gained knowledge about their actual usage. Last but not least, this final section will naturally hold the recommendations of FBP for B2B companies.

Chapter 3

3 Research Design

In this chapter we will present our research design, which consists of the guiding principles that will be the basis of our investigation of B2B companies on Facebook. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to describe the process of identifying B2B companies on Facebook. The filtration criteria will help to identifying the types of B2B companies that most likely are on Facebook, hence those companies that will be a part of the screening process of whether they are on Facebook or not. Hereafter, screening criteria will be applied in order to identify the B2B companies on Facebook and to get more deeply into, which of the filtrated companies provide the best foundation for our future analysis on basis of their use frequency and approach to Facebook.

3.1 The guiding principles of the explorative study

In this thesis, as presented in the chapter 2, Theory of Science, we have expressed that due to the lack of scientific literature concerning the usage possibilities, we will aim for getting an understanding of the B2B - Facebook context as well as the suitability of this medium among B2B companies. Only by doing so, we will be able to draw recommendations on whether FBP are favorable to apply for B2B companies and for which purposes.

Earlier in chapter 2, our assumptions about ontology, human nature and epistemology have been presented together with our Research Methods and Data Collection and as stated, the method created should be seen as guidance for how the filtration below will be put together. It has been argued that in order to solve our problem statement, we need to gain an understanding of the social construction, which has been developed on the basis of Facebook as a platform, but also the individuals and companies using it. In order to reach an understanding of this relatively new phenomenon, our approach is to come as close to the reality of the companies on Facebook as possible by observing their content and engagement with the followers. Regarding our research methods we believe that the best way of reaching this understanding will be to observe the

actions and interactions between the companies and their followers. Hence, on the basis of hermeneutics, which is grounded in text-analysis and interpretation, we will primarily put weight on:

- Observing the content Danish B2B companies currently apply on FBP as a part of their communication with followers
- The extent to which the company and followers engage with each other on basis of the content applied, as well as how those engage

When aiming for understanding the presences of companies on FBP, several criteria for selection of companies are involved. First of all, it is of course necessary to identify the companies that are present through this medium. Secondly, the emphasis will be put on the activity of the companies on FBP. As far as content and engagement are so dominant for our understanding, we need to identify companies that actually use FBP actively. Our purpose of study is not to develop general rules and laws about how companies should act and react on Facebook. Neither do we search for making generalizations as a result of our study, so what actually matters is identifying the right companies that through their usage of Facebook can help us understand the usage patterns.

Before going more deeply into specific companies, it is of high importance firstly to identify the B2B companies that will be a part of our study. Therefore, the filtration criteria will be presented in the section below.

3.2 Selection and filtration of B2B companies

While the aim of this section is to identify the right filtration criteria for our study purpose, we also see a high importance in being aware of one more guiding principle of our study besides our underlying assumptions and approach - namely how we define B2B companies within the research context.

3.2.1 Definition of B2B companies

In this thesis we will only consider companies that exclusively are producing, distributing and selling products and services to other commercial enterprises, institutions or governments. Therefore, companies that are producing products or service directed towards private consumers will not be a part of our study. We are aware of that the reality of all companies is not always black and white, meaning that some companies both operate on the B2B and B2C marketplace. Although, as our aim of the study is exploring B2B companies only, we will naturally exclude companies that are present on both markets, in order to paint as clear picture of the B2B landscape as possible. So our focus will be on companies that approach FBP with a B2B purpose.

3.2.2 The basis of selection: Kompass connecting B2B

The first step towards our identification of the B2B companies is of course finding the right B2B database, which will be a basis for our company selection. Therefore, we have chosen to make use of the B2B database Kompass, which is accessible for us through Aalborg University Library. Kompass is an international database with more than 4.5 million B2B companies from all over the world, with the purpose of "*connect business to business*". The Kompass database identified, on the 22nd of April 2014, 29,832 B2B companies in Denmark of any kind, except of retail companies who directly sell to private-consumers. As mentioned before, we are aware of that some companies are both present on B2B and B2C marketplace, and we have realized that those companies are also a part of the Kompass database, due to their B2B site of business. In accordance with our B2B definition, those companies will be deselected automatically concurrently with our filtration process in order to avoid placing a disturbing picture that is not corresponding with our definitions.

The B2B companies that are present on Kompass can be enrolled in two ways: either the companies enroll themselves in the database, or they are added automatically by Kompass without any action from the company itself. The companies are enrolled on the basis of company facts that include number of employees, address, company website and industry characteristics. The disadvantage of Kompass is that it holds many different types of industries with many

diverse subcategories. This is means that Kompass may has misinterpreted the industry or subcategory to which a company really belongs to, when adding the companies to their database. Therefore, some companies have been added to a wrong industry section. During our filtration we will be aiming for categorizing the companies in accordance with their actual industry and delete the companies that have been placed in wrong industries that do not correspond to our filtration criteria 2. Additionally, some of the company profiles on Kompass have not been updated for a while, which means that some of the companies may not even exist today or the number of employees is not corresponding to the actual number. Therefore, during the filtration process, we will be aiming for only including the companies that actually correspond to our criteria, and leave those that do not correspond to our criteria out, due to misplacement. This we will ensure by double checking the official websites of the companies included in our final study. Concurrently, we have realized during our work with Kompass that the database also holds a lot of duplicates of companies within the diverse industry categories, as the companies are registered within several industries and product categories. For this study, we will of course leave duplicates out as there is no need to analyzing the same company twice.

3.2.3 Filtration Criteria

In order to be able to identifying the companies that correspond our criteria concerning level of engagement, as well the companies that actually are present through Facebook, the study mentioned in chapter 1 conducted by Danmarks Statistik will make up the basis of our filtration criteria. The study concerns the usage of social media by Danish companies, but holds a pitfall in terms of that it both contains B2B and B2C companies, with no diversification between those different markets. (Danmarks Statistik 2013). Despite this, we still believe that the survey conducted by Danmarks Statistik can give an indication of which types of B2B companies that are using Facebook the most, hence enabling us to identify which filtration criteria are necessary to include in order to find the most suitable B2B companies for our study purpose.

The main findings of Danish companies' use of social media in 2013 are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: The usage of Social Media by Danish companies in 2013 in percentage

	All companies	INDUSTRIES					NUMBER EMPLOYEES			
		Produc-tion	Construc-tion	Trade & Transport	Info & Com.	Business service	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
Usage of Social Media in total	40	30	20	43	79	51	37	40	45	55
Social Networking Site	36	22	18	40	73	48	33	36	39	50
Applications	14	14	3	13	39	17	11	14	19	24
Micro blogs	8	3	2	8	34	12	6	9	10	15
Wikis	5	3	2	3	25	7	4	5	6	9
Principles for usage of Social Media	40	34	17	43	44	42	32	41	48	58

Source: Danmarks Statistik 2013

The table 1 above shows the usage of social media by Danish companies. Our study purpose does not include all possible B2B sectors, as the emphasis and purpose is to only consider those sectors that tend to be present through Social Networking Sites (SNS), such as Facebook and LinkedIn. As mentioned before, we are not aiming for developing universal theories, and our focus is not on discovering which industries are on Facebook in general. Rather, we place emphasis on including business sectors that use SNS, as only those can help us to understand, whether FBP and to which extent FBP are recommendable for Danish B2B companies. Therefore our filtration criteria will be based on the knowledge about sectors and company sizes we have gained through the Danmarks Statistik study, as those sectors and company sizes among all are also the ones with the highest degree of online facilitation (Danmarks Statistik 2013).

3.2.3.1 Filter 1: Companies with more than 20 employees

Based on the survey from Danmarks Statistik only companies with +20 employees will be selected. This is due to that the survey shows that the larger the number of employees within a

company, the higher is the tendency towards the usage of SNS, and principles for the use of social media. Additionally, the survey shows that 36% of all the companies use social media, and that 40% of those have principles for the use. The companies with +20 employees match or exceed these averages in both categories, whereas companies with less than 20 employees do not match or exceed the average percentage of use of SNS and principles for use of social media. As the purpose of this thesis understand B2B companies on Facebook, in order to recommend the suitability for Danish B2B companies, it is necessary to only include the type of companies, which most probably are present on Facebook. Therefore, in order to understand the presence of B2B companies on FBP, we are only interested in including companies that use the FBP actively, which is highlighted in the importance for principles for the use of Facebook. Furthermore, it is also important that the B2B companies are aware of the indirect and direct outcomes of the presence on Facebook, and whether the presence on Facebook actually delivers the desired objectives.

Consequently, we select companies with less than 20 employees and thereby only include B2B companies with more than 20 employees, hence 22,648 companies. This reduces the number *from 29,832 companies to 7,184 companies.*

3.2.3.2 Filter 2: Companies within production, service and trade industries

Only companies within production, service and trade industries will be included in this study. The industries of *information & communication*, *business service*, and *trade & transport* are the industries, in which most companies use SNS, and where most companies have principles for the use of social media, as all three industries exceed the average percentages in these categories. Therefore these will be included in our study. The main characteristics of these industries are that the majority of the companies within are service providers. However, we believe that the *information & communication, business service and transport industries* will not give an accurate picture of Danish B2B companies, due to the sole service orientation of these industries. Therefore, it is necessary also to include companies that produce physical goods, and not only services. As a consequence, we will also include the *production industry* in our study. Even though, the *production industry* does not reach the average level of social media usage, it is still

much more close to the general averages than the *construction industry*. The *construction industry* do not only lack behind in the usage of SNS and in principles for the use of social media, but also in the overall online facilitation of their business (Danmarks Statistik 2013).

The above clarifies that we will deselect the *construction industry*, and only select the Kompass classification that can be related to activities of companies within *information & communication*, *business service*, *trade & transport* and *industry industries*.

When considering the Kompass classifications compared to Danmarks Statistik, we realized that the classifications do not correspond each other, as the Kompass database is not divided on basis of "industries" but rather "business activities". In order to "merge" those classifications accordingly, we will solely distinguish the companies on basis of *trade*, *production* and *service* industries. Doing so, we ensure that no companies will be dismissed within the classifications as well those three industries give a simpler overview of the different characteristics of these companies within.

More specifically, we define the *trade* as companies re-selling physical products not manufactured by themselves, whereas the production industry consist of companies selling own manufactured physical products (Kotler & Keller 2009). Finally, the service sector includes companies not selling physical products. Therefore, the service sector contains companies that both are purely providers of intangible services such as consulting, expertise, accounting, etc. As well, we have considered software companies within the service definition. The fact that we have combined purely service providers together with software providers is because of that we have realized that a lof of companies offering both (service and software), which within the Kompass database are defined as "commercial service", as well as we have identified that a lot of software providers within other service related categories. However, we do not believe that it is conflicting that those types of offering companies within one sectors definition, as software often can be categorized as a hybrid between a product and a service company, which often is referred to as Software as a Service (SaaS) because of that applications tend to be delivered through the internet - as a service instead of installing and maintaining complex software and hardware (Cusumano 2004; Benlian, Hess & Buxmann, 2009). Hence, those software solutions are often

connected to higher degree of intangibility than sole physical products. Furthermore, engineering companies are also considered a part of the service sectors, as those also is included in the category of business service of Danmarks Statistik, and not a part of the *construction sector*. The *construction sector* from Danmarks Statistik is defined as building and plant constructors (Danmarks Statistik 2007).

Therefore, based in the above we deselecting the *construction industry,* 698 companies are removed. Furthermore within all the sectors we identified 2,507 duplicates, as well as we were also able to identify 279 B2C companies, which also have been removed from the list. Therefore, this filtration criterion reduces the number *from 7,184 companies to 3,484 companies.*

3.2.3.3 Filter 3: Companies with Official Facebook Business Pages.

The B2B companies included must be present on Facebook through official Facebook business pages, As the purpose is to understand Danish B2B companies usage, as well as evaluate whether FBP are recommendable for B2B companies, only B2B companies with official Facebook business pages will be included, meaning that interest groups (open/closed), Facebook wiki pages and Location pages will not be included. It was found that 3,003 of the companies did not have FBP, whereas those companies left where 67 trade/transport companies, 187 production companies, and 362 service companies (Appendix 1). This filtration criterion of only including B2B companies with official Facebook business pages reduce the number *from 3,484 companies to 481 companies.*

3.2.3.4 Filter 4: Only companies that minimum have updates 20 posts on their FBP will be considered in this study.

During our 3rd filtration, we realized that the fact that companies have official FBP is not complementary to that companies actually use the official FBP. Many of the companies included in filter 3, are very inactive and have not used FBP since their establishment of the profile in 2008, 2009 or 2010. Those inactive business pages are of course not relevant to include in our study as will not help us to understand the usage of Danish B2B companies' FBP. Therefore, we

will deselect companies that have not minimum uploaded 20 content posts on their FBP in 2014, which correspond to between 3-4 posts each month in 2014.

It was found that 413 of the companies did not meet this criterion, hence 63 trade and transport, 161 production, and 324 service companies (Appendix 1). This means that 4 trade companies, 26 production companies and 38 service companies are left (Appendix 3). The sector of trade and transport is reduced to only the trade sector, as no transport companies are found among the four companies. This filtration criterion reduces our number of companies *from 481 to 68 companies.*

3.2.4 Summary of Filtration Criteria

In this section, we have identified the 68 B2B companies that will be included in our study of B2B companies on Facebook. As the purpose of this study is to understand the usage of FBP of B2B companies, as well evaluate the suitability of the pages, we have created several filtration criteria in order to identify the companies that can allow us to gain the understanding of the phenomenon that is desired within this study based on their criteria of using FBP most actively. Thorough Kompass database we identified 29,832 B2B companies in Denmark. In the first filtration criteria we only selected the companies with 20 or more employees, as the survey from Danmarks Statistik has shown that companies with less than 20 employees use social media less than the average, which narrowed the number down to 7,184 companies. The second filtration criteria was based on the industries of the companies, where we have deselected the *construction industries*, as this industry lies below the average concerning Social Media use, as well it is the industry where fewest companies have principles for the usage of social media. As the classifications of Danmarks Statistik and Kompass are diverse, we have identified three main industries; production, service and trade. After deselecting the *construction industry,* as well as removing duplicates and B2C companies, 3,484 companies were left. Based on filtration criteria three we have screened all 3,484 companies in order to identify which of them have a FBP. During this screening, we identified 481 companies with a FBP. In the last filtration criteria we only selected the companies that at least have uploaded 20 posts on their FBP in 2014. This is because of that the inactive FBP are not relevant to include, as those will not help us to understand the usage of B2B companies' FBP. It was found that 68 companies fulfill this criterion, which will be the companies that we will observe on FBP:
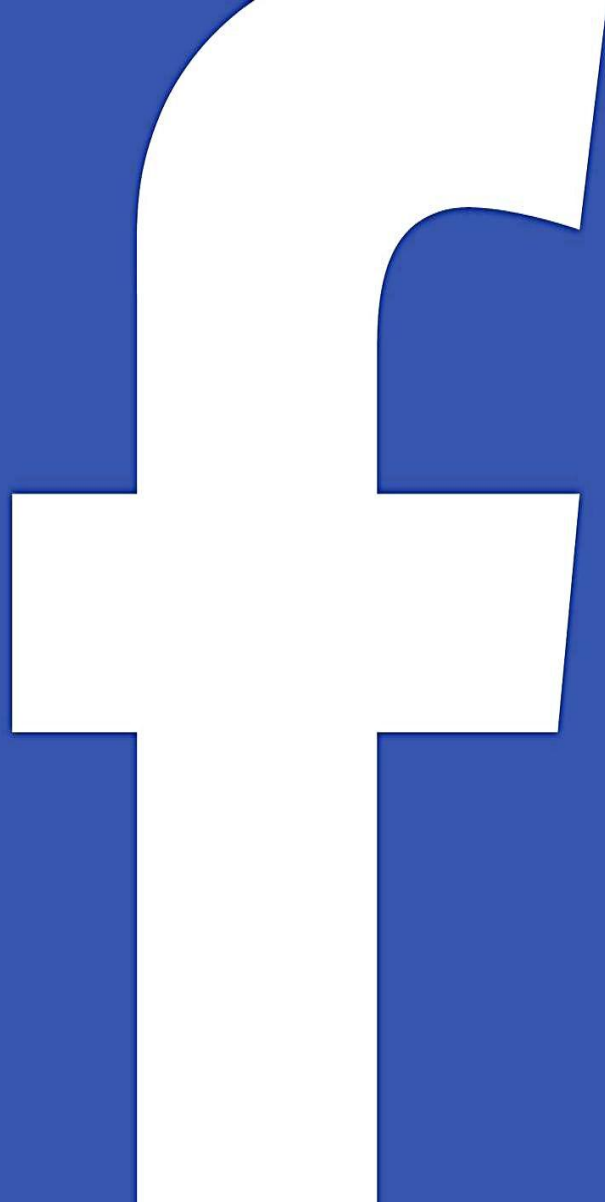
PART 2

CHAPTER 4: THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF OBSERVATIONAL RESULTS

"The question isn't, what do we want to know about people -
it's what do people want to tell about themselves?" (Mark Zuckerberg, CEO Facebook)

Chapter 4

4 The theoretical perspective

Earlier in this study, we have identified that companies increasingly show huge interest for applying FBP for supporting their business activities. Therefore, we have identified a need to get an understanding of the presences of B2B companies on FBP by identifying their usage possibilities, but also to evaluate whether FBP are a recommendable channel for B2B companies to apply. Currently, we have not been able to find any specific researchers on the topic of FBP in B2B context that would enable us to increase our understanding of the presences and the actual usage possibilities. Therefore, the aim of this section will firstly be to present FBP as a business platform and which metrics it constitutes of. Furthermore, we will seek to make our pre-understanding explicit by finding inspiration of FBP usage possibilities in current B2B literature, more specifically *The Generic Value Chain* (Porter 1985)

In relation to the *Generic Value Chain* every company generally constitute of a collection of activities that are performed to design, produce, market, deliver, and support its products/services. Within this context, a value chain is a systematic way for examining those activities a company performs (Porter 1985). Due to the lack of scientific research in the B2B-Facebook context, we believe that the *Generic Value Chain* will allow us to identify which of those above mentioned business activities that possibly can be performed or supported through FBP and which cannot. Doing so, we will ensure to cover all the value adding activities a company and its competitive advantage normally consists of (Porter 1985).

Before going further into the usage possibilities of FBP by B2B companies, we will first present the general characteristics of Facebook and naturally FBP.

4.1 Gaining an understanding of Facebook as a business platform

As stated in the introduction section within this chapter, before moving on with presenting the usage possibilities of Facebook for B2B companies, it is firstly necessary to understand Facebook as a business platform. This is a consequence of that the usage possibilities naturally

partly are based on what Facebook constitutes of and which mechanisms the platform brings to the companies. With this regard, this section characterize which communication functions FBP hold for companies, what Facebook News Feed and its ranking algorithms consist of, as well as state the stages of engagement that are possible to obtain through FBP.

4.1.1 The basic functions of Facebook Business Pages

The entire setup process at www.facebook.com is designed to be as simple and intuitive as possible for the users. The platform holds a clear distinction between *personal profiles* and *business pages*. *Personal profiles* are directed towards individuals for maintaining personal connections with family and friends, as well as keeping updated on other interests. The means of *business pages,* on the other hand, are to establish a commercial presence on the platform, connecting and communicating with prospects, customers and other relevant stakeholders (Treadaway & Smith 2012). On FBP the relevant stakeholders become fans/followers of the FBP by *liking* it, which to some extent will ensure that those will receive the information/content that the company places on their FBP Timeline.

The appearance of the FBP constitutes of a profile and cover picture that lets the company to reflect their brand through designed pictures, as well as an *About* section where the company can describe what their FBP and their overall business is all about. The content shared on a FBP appear within the *Timeline* on the company page, which is visible for all Facebook users. On the FBP *Timeline* companies can upload content consisting of text, photos, links, videos, etc. depending on the choice of each of the companies applying the FBP. Within the FBP, the followers can interact with the content through *likes* and/or *comments*. However, the followers can only ensure to get continuous updates from the FBP within their *News Feed* by *liking* the page (Treadaway & Smith 2012). We will come back to the *News Feed ranking algorithms* later in section 4.1.2 below.

It is also possible to write private messages between the company and their followers on the FBP, however, this will not appear through our observation, as we only have access to the public commenting on the FBP (Treadaway & Smith 2012).

Now the basic FBP functionalities have been described, it is necessary to get more deeply into the *News Feed Ranking Algorithms*, as those among others have a huge influence on the content distribution success or failure from the companies to their Facebook followers, hence also possible relevant stakeholders, prospects and customers.

4.1.2 The Facebook News Feed Ranking Algorithms

As stated already in our problem discussion section 1.1, Facebook has conquered a high and unrivaled market share by appealing to a mass market of consumers as well as business users that all have different sets of needs and desires (Treadaway & Smith 2012). However, this conquer is not completely free of problematic, as Facebook currently has to ensure to appeal to each of those two target groups. From the Facebook point of view this is rather complicated, as the platform needs their social media property to stay interesting for the broader audience while being increasingly important and valuable for businesses. Therefore, the data and *News Feed Ranking Algorithms* have become the kings of Facebook. Statistics based on the user behavior drive the content that is displayed in the individuals *News Feeds*, how ads are served and not least how Facebook as a platform changes and evolves (Treadaway & Smith 2012; Bucher 2012).

As of August 2011, the *News Feed* makes up the center column of a user's home page and thereby represents a constantly updating list of stories formed as text updates, photos, videos, links, etc. from *friends* and *business pages* that a user has a relationship with. Having the ability to breaking into the *News Feed* by companies is critically important when striving to insure that the content is distributed to its target markets. That is a result of the huge amount of private as well as business users of the platform and the relatively limited space in each of the users' *News Feeds* (Treadaway & Smith 2012).

Due to the relatively limited space within *News Feed* and the importance for Facebook to make the individual *News Feeds* relevant for each of the users, the marketers of today live in continuous fight with the Facebook *EdgeRank*. Basically, *EdgeRank* is the algorithm Facebook uses to determine the exact updates that are visible for a given user in the *News Feed* upon login.

More specifically, an *Edge* is a piece of content - a post, a comment, a like, a note, a link, a tag, a photo and so on (Treadaway & Smith 2012: Bucher 2012).

With this regard, *EdgeRank* is personalized for each user based on their real interactions on Facebook and decisions they make every day when they choose to ignore content from some people or companies, while interacting with content from others. In order to keep the platform attracting, Facebook continuously stores all those interactions for purposes of improving the individual *News Feeds* of the users and making the content that appears more relevant (Treadeway & Smith 2012; Bucher 2012).

4.1.2.1 High-Rankings through Engagement

According to Bucher (2012, pp. 1167) at least three different components are key to determining the rank of an *Edge* namely *Affinity*, which pertains to the nature of the relationship between the viewing users and the FBP. Here the amounts of interaction between those parties are measured. This could for example be sending of a private message or other forms of public interaction within the FBP. This increases the affinity score to that particular FBP or friend. Also, each *Edge* is given a specific "weight" depending on how popular or important Facebook considers it to be. Not every *Edge* is weighted the same, as interactions such as comments and shares are considered as more important than a like or a simple click (Bucher 2012). At last, *EdgeRanks* value the freshness of an *Edge*, meaning that older *Edges* are considered that less important than new ones (Bucher 2012).

Thus, in order to achieve ranks within a *News Feed* a company needs to - besides creating engaging content that leads to interaction - make sure to renew their timeline with continuously providing new content. This goes hand in hand with that in order to become visible on the *News Feed* the content distributed has to be considered as relevant and newsworthy, and thereby it is calculated on basis of the number of comments, who posted the content, and what type of content it is (e.g. photo, video or status update) (Treadaway & Smith 2012; Bucher 2012).

Furthermore, the algorithm is geared towards highlighting certain kinds of *Edges*, while downgrading others, and here the level of engagement and type of interaction becomes a critical factor. For example real-time dialogue through private messaging or individual profiles chatting

through the chat counts more than a simple "like" on the counterparts post. As well, comments count more than *likes* due to the fact that those require more individual effort (Bucher 2012).

What can be derived from this section is that the more interactive and engaging content the companies maintain to create through their FBP, the higher *Affinity* and *Time Decay* of the posts, the higher is the probability for visibility within the *News Feed* (Bucher 2012). On basis of the *EdgeRank* composition and the importance of engagement on Facebook to maintain its visibility, we will shortly introduce the different engagement levels on Facebook, as those will have a huge importance for our further study.

4.1.3 The levels of Engagement on Facebook

In the above sections, the importance of engagement as a result of Facebook *EdgeRanks* composition has been described. On that basis, we have realized as a part of our pre-understanding that engagement is one of the factors that need to be analyzed in order to be able to evaluate the recommendation of FBP for B2B companies on basis of their current usage.

Within the existing literature concerning social engagement, we have not been able to identify levels of engagement on Facebook specifically, beside the arguments about the interaction weighting presented in section 4.1.2.1 above. In order to make engagement levels more specific, as a part of our pre-understanding and our analytic framework, we have been inspired to build our pre-understanding on *Structured Engagement Ladder* presented by Evans (2010) in his book on the *Social Media Marketing* illustrated below:

Figure 3: Structured Engagement Ladder
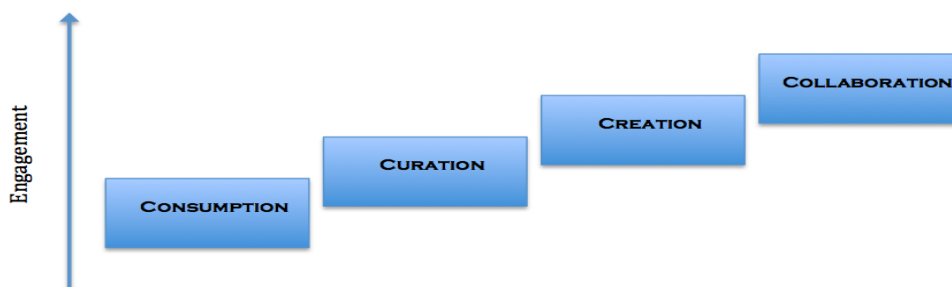
Source: Own Construction, adapted from Evans 2010, pp. 15

As illustrated above, according to Evans (2010) the engagement consist of four levels where the *consumption* represents the lowest degree of engagement, whereas *collaboration* represents the highest degree of engagement. What has to be brought to attention when considering the *Structured Engagement Ladder* is that it does not represent Facebook as a platform specifically, but all social media platforms in general. Within this study, our focus is on FBP only and, therefore, some of the above-presented steps are less relevant and might be excluded. Before doing so, the levels will be described and hereafter it will be presented which levels of engagement that can take place on FBP in correspondence with our pre-understanding.

The first step within the engagement ladder is *content consumption*, which represents the lowest level engagement possible. It represents downloading, reading, watching or listening to the content shared. Thus, *consumption* should be seen as the basic starting point for social activity due to the low degree of actual participation and interaction with a company. At the same time, the *consumption* step within the engagement ladder is crucial because it is impossible to share without consuming first, when assuming that people do not share something they do not know what is. The aim within this engagement process step is, therefore, to move beyond *consumption* by encouraging the customers and stakeholders to create and take actions beyond the basic *content consumption* (Evans 2010).

Based on our pre-understanding, the engagement level of *consumption* on a FBP will happen if the content uploaded only is *liked* by the followers, as *liking* is considered as low engagement in terms of Facebook *EdgeRanks* compared to other interactions, such as commenting and sharing with reference to section 4.1.2.1.

The next step within the ladder is *content curation*, which represents the act of sorting, filtering, commenting on, tagging or otherwise describing content. Hence, this phase makes content more useful to other people active within the community. With other words, *curation* is an important social action as it helps to shape, prune, and generally increase the word-of-mouth within the community about a company. The process of *curation* is the first point of social interaction between a company and a stakeholder or customer, as it represents the first point at which a

participant actually is creating something. *Curation* must be encouraged if companies search for support their business by social media, as it makes people to participate and interact with the brand (Evans 2010).

Within this study, *curation* will be considered as an engagement level on FBP if the followers comment/describe content and/or share content on the company FBP and, it thereby represent a higher level of interaction than *consumption*.

The third step within the ladder is *creation* that generally is recognized as *content creation*. *Creation* requires more from the community than a single response to an event, as it seeks to make the members offer something that they have made themselves. In order to reach this level of engagement on social media, a company needs to provide tools, support, help, samples and more that encourages the members of community to be producers of content. Generally, people like to share what they are doing, and share their own contributions with a larger community, as it can have a great influence on their own reputation. However, the company must be capable of encouraging people to do so and make them feel comfortable in the situation. Therefore, the combination of easy content publishing, *curation* and visible reputation management must be the cornerstones of a strong community (Evans 2010).

Compared to our pre-understanding of FBP as a platform and considering that the *Structured Engagement Ladder* is general for all Social Media available, this step will not be included within our study, as FBP are not structured to provide means for other people to produce and upload their own content. This will more likely be more relevant for content communities such as *Youtube, Vimeo, Vine* or *discussions forums* or *Facebook* and *LinkedIn groups*.

The last step within the engagement ladder - the step that every company engaging in social business strives to reach is *collaboration*. Through collaboration companies open up for dialogue in order to leapfrog knowledge from the community on basis of the company interests (Evans 2010).

Within this study, *collaboration* will be considered as a possible engagement level through FBP. This will most likely appear through a dialogue within the comment fields that both can happen between the company and the follower, but also in between the followers. Hence, contrary to *content curation*, *collaboration* does not appear as single question-response comment, but as continuous conversation where each party interacts several times and discuss matters of interests with each other.

The three level of engagement that are possible to obtain on FBP, based on our pre-understanding, is illustrated in figure 4 below.

Figure 4: The Structured Engagement Ladder for Facebook Business Pages
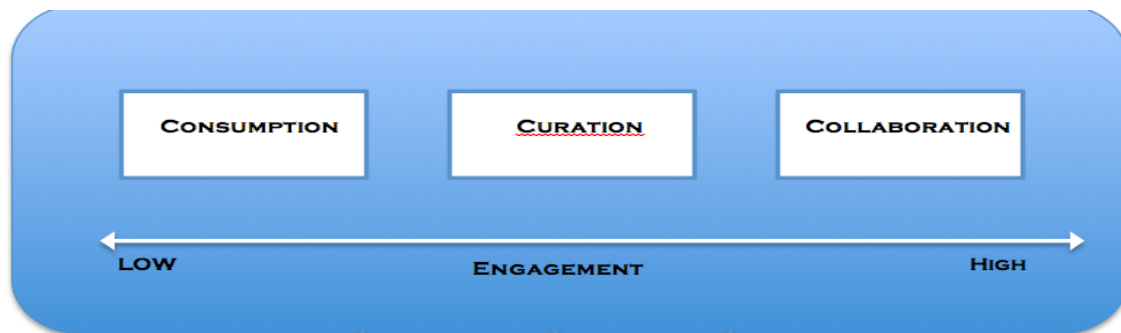
Source: Own construction inspired by Evans 2010

On basis of the above, within this study the Engagement Levels on Facebook consist of *consumption*, *curation* and *collaboration* that all in all enable us to understand the degree of interaction and engagement on each of the 68 FBP included.

4.2 The Generic Value Chain

As referred to in the beginning of this chapter, the *Generic Value Chain* within this study will be applied in order to identify which business activities B2B companies possibly can perform on FBP. We are aware of that all companies are different and so are the ways value chain activities are performed. Naturally, differences among value chains between competing parties are also the

source of key competitive advantages. However, the general collection of value adding activities within companies can be represented through Porter's *Generic Value Chain* illustrated below:

Figure 5: The Generic Value Chain
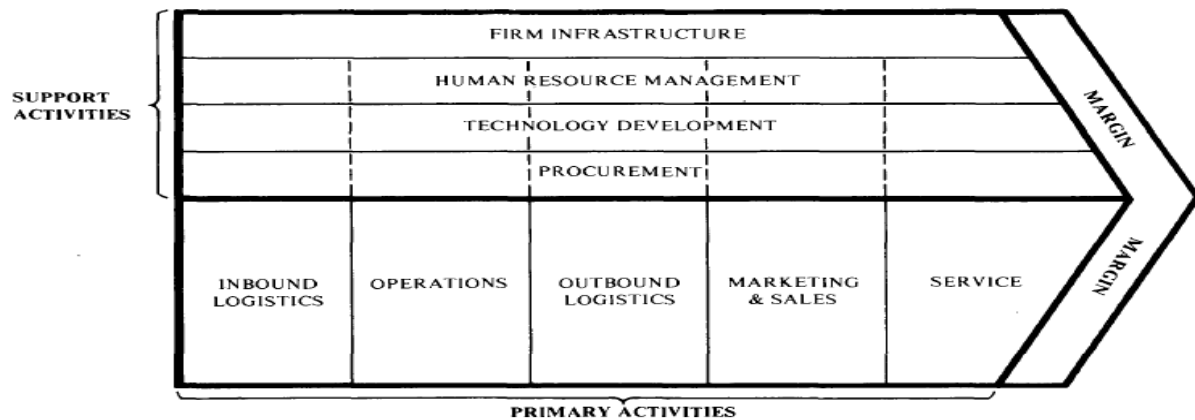
Source: Porter 1985, pp. 37

The activities within the value chain can be divided in two broad categories, namely *primary* and *support activities* as illustrated in the above figure. *Primary activities* are involved in the physical creation of the product/service as well as its sale, transfer and after-sales assistance, whereas *support activities* are supporting the *primary activities* and each other by providing purchased inputs, human resources, technology development and procurement. Porter (1985) also explains the dependency between *primary activities* and *supporting activities* during the following quote:

"The dotted lines reflect the fact that procurement, technology development, and human resources management can be associated with specific primary activities as well as support the entire chain. Firm infrastructure is not associated with particular primary activities but supports the entire chain".

In the following, we will go more deeply into the *primary* and *supporting activities* while identifying the FBP usage possibilities for B2B companies.

4.2.1 Primary activities

As illustrated in figure 5, primary activities consist of *inbound logistics*, *operations*, *outbound logistics*, *marketing & sales* and *service*. We will therefore in this section present possible usage possibilities of B2B companies' FBP in relation to the primary activities of the *Generic Value Chain*.

4.2.1.1 Inbound logistics, operations and outbound logistics

As stated above, *primary activities* partly concern activities involved in the physical creation of companies' products/services, namely *inbound logistics, operations* and *outbound logistics*. Whereas *inbound logistics* account for receiving, storing and disseminating inputs to the product, *operations* reflect activities that transform inputs into the final product form, and *outbound logistics* are characterized as activities associated with collecting, storing and physically distributing the finished goods to buyers. When considering FBP functions and possibilities within this context, it can be assumed that the FBP cannot support those value chain activities of B2B companies. This is because of that Facebook is build on social interactions and communication between the users, which means that FBP does not hold any functions related to internal activities that anyhow can help companies to either receive or store products, neither manufacture products/services or distribute those physically to their end-customers. This means that based on our pre-understanding of FBP, *inbound logistics, operations* and *outbound logistics* are not business activities that can be performed by B2B companies through FBP.

4.2.1.2 Marketing & sales

On the other hand, FBP seem to hold more extensive B2B usage possibilities for performance of *marketing & sales* activities. Within the value chain Porter (1985) define those as:

"Activities associated with providing a means by which buyers can purchase the product and inducing them to do such (...)" (Porter 1985, pp. 40).

These marketing & sales activities can further be divided into *pre-sales* and *sales activitie*s. In the *pre-sales activities* the selling B2B company is trying to promote their product/service towards a potential sale, which happens through different kind of marketing content, whereas

sales activities consist of the actual sales-transaction. In relation to our pre-understanding we believe that FBP can be used to *pre-sales* activities, where companies can use the Facebook platform for advertising, product & sales promotion and branding. In this context, FBP might be seen as a great platform for generating brand awareness due to the high amount of Facebook users gathered in one place and the possibility for uploading different branded and other content that can unfold through photo, video, text etc. By doing so, the companies can over time let their potential buyers to recognize them as feasible exchange partners. Moreover, in order to develop a good credit standing the FBP owner can increase trust stimulation by making their brand names, logos, trademarks and guarantees explicit for the audience (Cooke 1986).

On the other hand, conducting sales transactions on FBP is not seen as an usage possibility in relation to our pre-understanding. This is because of that within FBP there are no possibilities for providing monetary transactions between a buyer and seller, and we believe that it is unlikely that seller and buyer will receive and place orders on the public FBP.

Nevertheless, through Facebook *mobile ads*, *right-side ads* and *sponsored updates*, B2B companies have the possibility to target their customers and stakeholders directly based on their demographics. Whether B2B companies use Facebook for paid advertising will however not be addressed in this study, as our online observation only concerns their FBP and the targeted advertising is obviously only shown on *News Feeds* of the specific targeted Facebook users (Facebook for Business n.d.).

With regard to the *marketing & sales* value chain activities described above, hence our pre-understanding of those, we assume that FBP can be used to *pre-sales activities*, where companies can promote their product/service through different marketing content. On the other hand, we do not believe that FBP can be used to actual *sales activities*, which is due to that the pages cannot be used to monetary transactions, but also that it seems unlikely that buyer and seller would place and receive orders on FBP.

4.2.1.3 Service

The last within *primary activities* is *service*, which Porter (1985) defines as:

"Activities associated with providing service to enhance or maintain the value of the product, such as installation, repair, training, parts supply and product adjustment" (Porter 1985, pp.40).

The value chain *service* activities are all activities that can be characterized as *post-sales activities*. Due to the interaction possibility on FBP, we perceive that the pages offer usage possibilities for selling B2B companies to provide their customers with *post-sales service*. Although this might be in varying degrees according to the service definition quote placed above. *Post-sales service* within this context can be provided on same terms as service provided through telephone, email etc. due to the communication possibilities on the FBP. Through content on FBP companies can provide their followers with FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) and even provide them with guidance for product/service usage through training videos, or content concerning product/service problem-solving. The degree to which FBP can be applied to support *post-sales service* activities may also vary depending on the product/service type. Based on the characteristics of FBP, where the interaction is placed in an online space, it would not be possible for B2B companies to adjust, supply or install physical products.

Therefore, in our pre-understanding we assume that B2B companies can use FBP to *post-sales activities* in forms of providing *service information* to their customers as well as sharing service related knowledge.

4.2.2 Support activities

As shown in figure 5, *support value* activities can be divided into four generic categories that consist of *procurement, technology development (R&D), human resource management* and *firm infrastructure* (Porter 1985). The FBP usage possibilities in relation to those activities will be described within this section.

4.2.2.1 Firm infrastructure and procurement

Within the value chain, *firm infrastructure* refer to number of activities within a company including general management, planning, finance, accounting, legal, government affairs and quality management. Whereas *procurement* refers to the function of purchasing inputs used in the firms value chain such as raw materials, supplies and other consumable items (Porter 1985). In context with a value chain, it is understandable that *procurement* and *firm infrastructure* are value adding activities, which have an influence on the competitive advantage of a company. However, *firm infrastructure* and *procurement* within a B2B context are more seen as indirect and internal activities that cannot be maintained or enhanced through the usage of FBP, which more probably are directed towards customers and other stakeholders. Therefore, based on our pre-understanding and based on the fact that *procurement* and *firm infrastructure* are internal activities of the company, we do not consider FBP as a usage possibility in this context.

4.2.2.2 Human resource management

Moreover, support activities consist of *human resource management* (HRM) that is defined by Porter (1985) as: *" (...) activities involved in the recruiting, hiring, training, development and compensation of all types personnel."* (Porter 1985, p. 42).

As a part of *HRM* activities, we assume that B2B companies can use FBP to upload and promote job openings through uploading of job advertisements. Furthermore, we also believe that FBP can be used for *employer branding*, where B2B companies are promoting their organization as a desirable workplace through communication to existing and prospective employees (Berthon et al. 2005). Both *job advertisements* and *employer branding* can to some extent be similar to *pre-sales* marketing activities described in section 4.2.1.2, where the difference is that companies are making effort to attract employees instead of customers (Berthon et al. 2005).

On the other hand, it is less likely that FBP can be used for training, hiring and development, as those processes often represent internal activities. Hence, for HRM purposes FBP can potentially be used for the basic and first step within HRM, namely *job advertisement* and *employer branding*, whereas employee training, development and hiring are perceived as activities that will happen internally within a company and thereby outside of FBP.

4.2.2.4 Technology development

Last but not least, support activities also consist of *technology development*, which is defined as: *" (...) activities that can be broadly grouped into efforts to improve the product and the process."* (Porter 1985 p. 42).

Due to the possibilities of two-way communication on FBP, the pages enable selling B2B companies to possible gain R&D relevant inputs and information from their customers and other Facebook followers, which could be useful in the technology development of the product/service within the selling B2B companies. In other words, we assume that FBP to some degree can be used to open innovation, where B2B companies make use of outside sources to gain useful information and inputs (Antikaine 2011). Therefore, it is possible that B2B companies can use FBP as an information source to keep themselves updated through dialogues or discussion on the pages, between B2B companies and their customers or other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, B2B companies can also encourage their FBP followers to go into dialogues and discussions about different topics on FBP, which may lead to useful inputs to the selling B2B company.

Technology development can also consist of development of technologies that are not related to the product/service of a company directly, but more improvement of their processes such as distribution, preparing documents, etc. In relation to this, we do not believe that FBP are suitable to use for those indirect technology developments, as B2B companies more probably will have their product/service in focus on the FBP and not their internal processes, which is in compliance with the arguments concerning internal activities described above.

Therefore, we believe that FBP potentially can be used by selling B2B companies to gain useful R&D information and inputs from customers, stakeholder or other Facebook followers, which can be useful in the *technology development* of products/services. In this context, it is although important to have in mind that technology development in a value chain perspective is all about gaining competitive advantage with regard to the competitors. Therefore, it is not likely that selling B2B companies will encourage customers and stakeholders to provide them with very specific confidential and vulnerable information in a public forum as FBP. Rather, those kinds of information could be due through closed groups, which are not included in this study.

In relation to our pre-understanding of the engagement level of possible to achieve on FBP presented in section 4.1.3 we assume that *technology development* both can take place in the engagement level of *curation* and *collaboration*. This is because of that *curation* is defined as when followers are commenting on, sharing, etc. the posts. Therefore, if Facebook followers are providing useful inputs to the companies by commenting on the content, without any continuous conversation between the B2B company and the followers, the will only reach the engagement level of *curation*. On the other hand, if the B2B company and their followers, or solely between followers, engage in continuous conversations, which provides the B2B company with useful input, the will reach the engagement level of *collaboration*. As *collaboration* is the highest possible level of engagement on FBP, it can be assumed that the inputs deriving from this, may be more valuable for the B2B companies, than in the case of *curation*.

Hence, on basis of our pre-understanding of the usage possibilities of FBP, B2B companies have an opportunity of using the pages for *technology development* through gaining product/service related inputs and information. However, we do not believe that FBP can be used as a complete open innovation platform, as this often involve confidential and vulnerable information, which B2B companies most likely are not willing to disclose in a public forum, due to the danger of losing the competitive advantage of the innovation, when a competitor might be watching

4.3 The pre-understanding of usage possibilities made explicit

In the section above, we have made our pre-understanding on the topic of B2B companies on Facebook explicit by identifying usage possibilities on basis of a *Generic Value Chain*, as well as on basis of the *Structured Engagement Ladder*. The figure below represents the pre-understanding made explicit - namely the usage possibilities as well as engagement levels on FBP for B2B companies.

Figure 6: Facebook Business Page usage possibilities for B2B companies
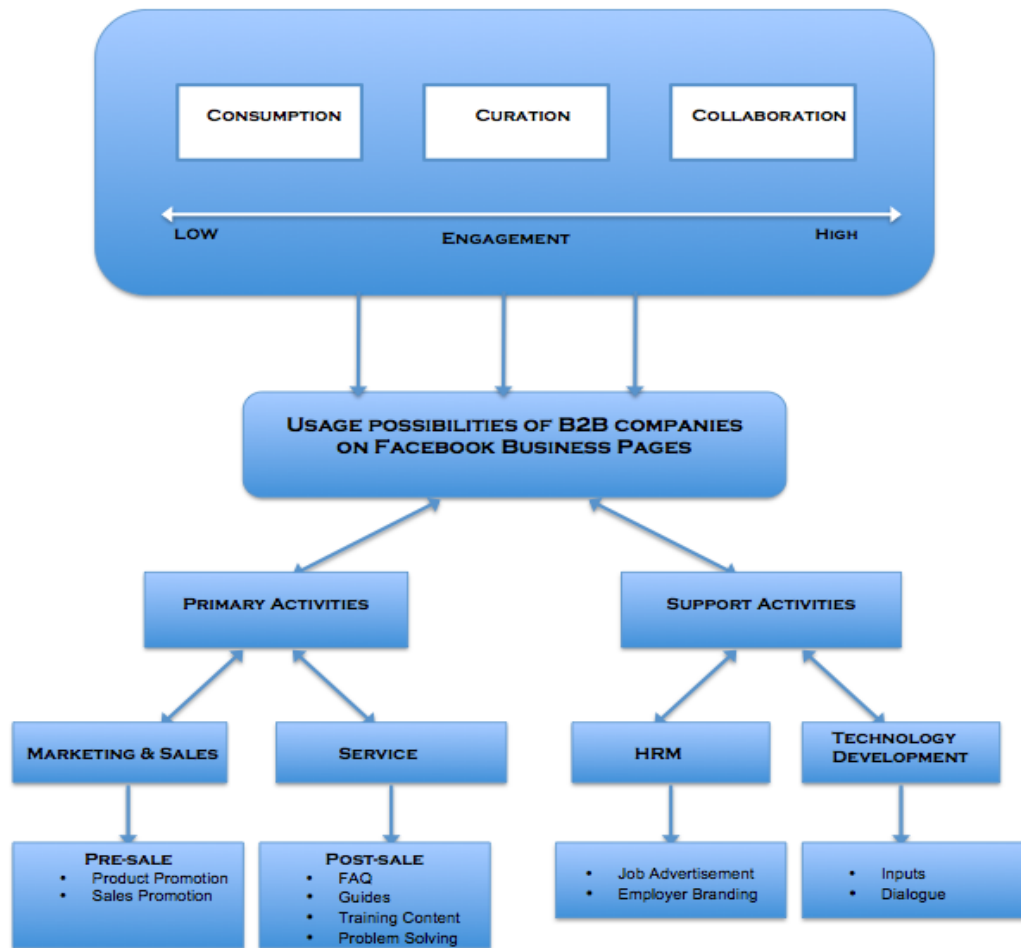
Source: Own construction inspired by Porter (1985) and Evans (2010)

The figure shows that on basis of our pre-understanding have identified that FBP only make sense to apply for *Marketing & Sales* and *Service* within the Primary Activities. This is based on that it was identified that FBP possible can be used for *pre-sale* and *post-sales* within *Marketing & Sales* value chain activities. This is because of that we have stated that FBP cannot be used for the actual sales transactions, based on the lack of this function on the platform. Furthermore, *Inbound Logistics*, *Outbound Logistics* and *Operations* are not a part of our usage possibility pre-understanding, as we have argued that Facebook is build on interaction and communication between users, and does not hold any functions related to internal activities that anyhow can help

companies to either receive or store products, neither manufacture products/services or distribute those physically to their end-customers.

As well, by making our pre-understanding explicit we have also excluded two Support Activities from the context. These are *Firm Infrastructure* and *Procurement* as those are seen as more indirect and internal activities that cannot be maintained or enhanced through the usage of FBP, which more probably are directed towards customers and other stakeholders.

Whereas we have presented the option to use *HRM* for *job advertising* and *employer branding*, we have at the same time stated that FBP cannot be applied for further *HRM* activities such as training, hiring and development, as those processes often represent internal activities. The same was true with *Technology Development* within the support activities, where it has been presented that companies have an opportunity of using the pages for *Technology Development* through gaining product/service related inputs and information. However, we do not believe that FBP can be used as a complete open innovation platform, as this often involve confidential and vulnerable information, which B2B companies most likely are not willing to disclose in a public forum.

All in all our *Generic Value Chain* pre-understanding has identified *Marketing & Sales* and *Service*, hence *pre-sales* and *post-sale* within the Primary Activities to be possible to support through FBP, as well have presented that the same is true for *HRM* and *Technology Development* within Support Activities, as described above.

Concerning the *Engagement Levels,* we have excluded *Creation* from our pre-understanding of usage possibilities, as this engagement level more likely mostly takes place within *Content Communities* such as Youtube, Vimeo etc. and not on FBP where the page is all about the company that is represents. Hence, our engagement ladder consists of *Content Consumption*, *Content Curation* and *Collaboration*.

As mentioned in section 2.3.1.1, now our pre-understanding has been made explicit, we will move our focus away from it, and instead increase our openness towards new possible findings, where we will explore which content types that are to be found on the FBP. This derives from the *explorative* nature, as we cannot predefined the applied usage and content before we involve ourselves with the actual observation, and gain an understanding of the companies, as we do not know how those companies use the FBP before we start observing. This followed by that we will put our pre-understanding in perspective with the new findings in chapter 5 below.

Chapter 5

5 Presentation of the observational results

We will in this section present the results of our observation concerning the usage of FBP by Danish B2B companies. Our observation has included 68 Danish B2B companies' FBP, which are unequally divided within the industries of production, services and trade. Therefore, our survey contains of 38 service companies, 26 production companies and 4 trade companies (Appendix 3). In correspondence with our methodological assumption, these 68 B2B companies do not count for a representative section of all B2B companies, as the purpose is not to generalize the whole Danish B2B sphere, but rather include the companies that can contribute to the understanding we desire within this study.

With regard to our pre-understanding of the usage possibilities, the sections below will present the observational results with regard to the *Generic Value Chain* in section 4.2 as well as the engagement level on FBP derived from section 4.1.2. Also, it came to our awareness that some of the usage of FBP by B2B companies is not possible to relate to our pre-understanding at all. Those new findings will be presented in section 5.3.

At last, within this chapter we will develop a new model picturing our new understanding of how Danish B2B companies apply the FBP in comparison to our pre-understanding.

5.1 The content types identified within the observation

Our Theoretical Perspective (chapter 4) has been developed on basis of our pre-understanding of the topic, which we have made explicit by applying the *Generic Value Chain*, as well as identifying the Facebook composition.

As mentioned in section 2.3.1.1, at the time our pre-understanding has been made explicit, we have moved our focus away from it, and instead increased our openness towards new possible findings. This derives from the *explorative* nature, as we cannot predefined the applied content

types before we involve ourselves with the actual observation, and gain an understanding of the companies, as we do not know how those companies use the FBP before we start observing.

At the time our observational process began we were met with structuring issues of how to note our observations the best way in order to later be able to analyze and make sense of the results. After we observed around 30 companies we realized that similar content types with very similar characteristics appeared among those, which made it possible for us to start developing content categories on basis of the similar characteristics. Hence, gathering the similar content characteristics among the companies within the same terms. This was done in order to be able to later in the process to make sense of the data and see the differences and similarities in a more structured manner.

The common content types we found among all companies will be listed and defined below. Here it has to be brought to attention that the content types have been defined on basis of how the Danish B2B companies used them practically.

Product Promotion

This content type unfold through branded material, where the companies share pictures of their physical products, as well as share information about the product attributes. Furthermore, others promote their products/service by sharing "customer cases" or information about future customer projects, and thereby promote their expertise. This content type also covers whenever companies announce their award nominations and winnings, as well as sharing their expertise through articles, blog posts etc. that are being distributed through the FBP, as those kinds of content are all related to promoting the products/services of the companies.

Sales Promotion:

This content in general appears through discount offers on products/services and time limited offers. This primarily shows through branded pictures, where the price reduction is shown in the center of it. Also, some of the companies have linked to their sales catalogs with price reductions on their FBP. The sales promotion offers are standardized service/product offerings.

Event Promotion:

The *event promotion* content account for content, where companies share information with their followers about the exhibitions they attend, where the companies often invite the followers to join them and meet them at the given place. Furthermore, it also included other events, such as seminars, webinars, open house or other larger conferences, where the company is inviting followers. Those can unfold through either link sharing to a landing page or by creation of Facebook Events.

Customer Service:

The content related to *customer service* has appeared whenever companies have uploaded content specifically directed towards existing customers, such as inviting the customers to customer specific events for example webinars and seminars, providing guidelines to overcome challenges, free service offerings, FAQ, news about service/software updates, as well as usefull customer tip of the days.

Job Advertisement:

The posting of *job advertisements* generally unfolds through posting of links that will direct the follower away from Facebook and instead on their website, where followers will be able to read more specific requirements in addition to the job and the characteristics of the job.

Employer Branding:

Employer branding appears through content such as, posting surveys where the companies are ranked as one of the best workplaces in Denmark/Europe etc., videos or articles with "meet or employees" telling about their career within the company and the various career opportunities the companies can offer, or other video and articles about the benefits of working within the specific company. Furthermore, some companies have also invited student to career events and fairs, where the companies will tell about the career opportunities they are offering.

General Company News & Information:

General company news & information cover content and information that informs the followers about what is happening inside the company. This often appears in terms of that companies sharing news and information about: new employees within the company or old employees leaving the company, new business partners, company expansion and new office openings, internal company events, news about the companies' involvement in new sponsorships or information about their sponsorships, as well as informing about when visiting their customers or business partners around the world. Furthermore, some companies have shared *general company news & information* about CSR policies and strategies, production equipment, but also their financial results or both great achievements and downturns, as well as other news and information about the company.

Competition:

The companies on FBP upload Facebook *Competitions* that require the followers to upload photos or answer a given question, as well as share the competition in order to participate. Then followers can win prizes, such as IPhones, cinema tickets, coffee, clothes and other prizes.

Entertainment:

The *entertainment* content on the FBP unfolds as the companies have posts with; jokes, comic strips, link to quizzes, funny Youtube videos, music videos, funny pictures, and other entertainment related content.

Social Company Activities:

Social company activities content is defined as content showing the employees of in non-business related activities, such as photos from employee parties, photos of employees in the offices, as well as sharing photos of cakes that the employees have baked themselves and brought to work. Furthermore, the B2B companies are also sharing photos and writing status updates about the internal parties the companies are throwing. Some companies also choose to post other after-work activities, such as when the employees go to the cinema together, or photos

of employees enjoying "after-work beers". Additionally, posts are also often uploaded about when employees from the respective companies participate in any sports events.

External Content:

External content appears whenever the company shares content from external news sites relevant to the industry. Hence, this content is not produced by the company itself, but somehow the company chooses to share it, as it might be relevant for the industry in which the company operates.

We are confident that the above definitions cover all content types observed and on that basis, the sections below as well as the future chapters will use those definitions whenever considering content. In the sections below, we put those content types in perspective with our pre-understanding followed by evaluating the level of engagement across the Danish B2B companies on FBP.

5.2 The results compared to Generic Value Chain pre-understanding

In section 4.2, we defined pre-understanding of the B2B companies FBP usage possibilities through *The Generic Value Chain* in order to ensure that all value adding activities within the average company would be considered. With this regard, we have identified several usage possibilities that spread from *primary activities*, such as *marketing & sales* and *service* to *support activities* accounting for *employer branding*, *job advertising* and *technology development*.

Generally, our observation of the 68 B2B companies shows that the majority of the companies do not use FBP to only support one of the above mentioned value adding activities. Contrary, our study has shown that companies use FBP for several activities. This means that the average B2B company on Facebook combine marketing relevant content attributed to *pre-sale* with for example *HRM* relevant content, such as *job advertising*, and *employer branding*. Thus, the presence of B2B companies on Facebook not can be perceived as rigorous, but rather as varying due to the fact that the pages are applied to support several activities at the same time.

The content found on the FBP that is in corresponding with our pre-understanding is illustrated in table 2 below, which shows the percentage of companies that have used the FBP to upload the types of content, as well as the percentages of the companies that mainly uses the FBP for the specific content type.

Table 2: B2B content types identified within the Generic Value Chain

Content types	% of all companies	% mainly use
Pre-sale		
Product Promotion	87.8%	61.7%
Sales Promotion	7.4%	2.9%
Event Promotion	52.9%	8.8%
Post-sale		
Customer Service	11.8%	0
HRM		
Job Advertisement	66.2%	7.4%
Employer Branding	20.6%	4.4%

Source: Own construction (Appendix 6)

In the sections below, we will based on our pre-understanding present the results of our observation on basis of the defined *primary* and *support activities* holding *marketing & sales*, *service*, *HRM* and *technology development*.

5.2.1 Primary Activities

Based on our pre-understanding, we have considered that *primary activities* constituting of *inbound logistics*, *operations* and *outbound logistics* could not be supported through FBP, which is based on that Facebook is build on social interaction and communication. Hence, we have

assumed that FBP does not hold any functions related to internal activities that anyhow can help companies to either receive or store products; neither manufactures products/services nor distributes those physically to their end-customers.

During our observation, this pre-understanding of FBP has been confirmed, as we have not been able to observe any kind of content or activities that could be relatable to either *inbound logistics, operations* and *outbound logistics*.

Contrary, our observation of the 68 B2B companies has shown, and in relation to our pre-understanding confirmed that the FBP hold more extensive B2B usage possibilities for performance of marketing activities counting for *pre-sale*. This is based on that the majority of the companies use the FBP for *pre-sale activities*. This is in correspondence with the definition of Porter (1985) related to *marketing* which states that those activities account for means that induce buyers to purchase a product. With this regard, we will go more deeply into how Danish B2B companies apply FBP for supporting *marketing & sales* activities in the section below.

5.2.1.1 Marketing & Sales on Facebook Business Pages

As mentioned in the section above, it has been confirmed during our observations that the majority of the companies included primarily use FBP for supporting their marketing activities.

Within our pre-understanding we have furthermore stated that *marketing & sale* activities could favorably divided in *pre-sale* and *sale*. In this context, our pre-understanding stated that whereas FBP favorably could be applied within *pre-sale activities*, using FBP for conducting the *sale activities* was much more questionable. In our pre-understanding we have argued that it is unlikely that monetary transactions would take place on the FBP. As well FBP were not considered as suitable for placing and requesting orders. What our observation showed is although that three companies have received buying requests through FBP - those are Grimme Skandinavien, Silvatec Skovmaskiner and Vestas (Appendix 2.33, 2.36, 2.46).

On their *product promotion* posts, Grimme Skandinavien has received two pricing requests on their machines through the FBP. The same is true for Silvatec Skovmaskiner and Vestas. On the FBP of Silvatec Skovmaskiner one follower (in German) expressed his need for a Silvatec machine, and similarly on the Vestas' FBP a follower wrote that he would like to buy a turbine,

and then asked the company how this purchase could be conducted. All three companies answered those requests by directing the followers to call their sales department or sales representatives outside the FBP for further contact (Appendix 2.33, 2.36, 2.46).

Those three cases indicate that the companies somehow have provided means for a buying request through their FBP, but at the same time it also corresponds with our pre-understanding that conducting an actual *sale* through FBP is not a usage pattern of the Danish B2B companies, as the further dialogue always is directed outside Facebook. In comparison to our pre-understanding, we have realized that buying request on Facebook is not unthinkable, but the general tendency among the 68 companies shows that Facebook is not applied for the actual *sale*, as the dialogue seem to continue outside the Facebook walls whenever a potential buying request appears.

During our observation we realized that companies apply different kinds of *product/service promotion*, take place on 87.7% (61 companies) of the FBP, where 61.7% (42 companies) of all companies have *product/service promotion* (as defined in section 5.1) as their main focus/focuses on the FBP.

Within our *pre-understanding* it has also been considered that as a part of their marketing activities, hence *pre-sale*, companies could apply FBP for *sales promotion* (as defined in section 5.1). What came to our awareness during our observation was that only very few companies - more specifically 5 companies out of 68 accounting for about 7.4% have applied their FBP for direct *sales promotion*. Out of the 5 company only two of them use *sales promotion* as the primarily purpose of the FBP, which are Oluf Brønnum & Co. A/S and Atea A/S (Appendix 2.35, 2.68), whereas the other three only have uploaded a few posts relatable to *sales promotion*, which are Bredana, Datacompagniet and Scania (Appendix 2.2, 2.60, 2.64).

During our observation, as shown in table 2, we also realized that 52.9% of the companies use the FBP for promoting *events*, but only 8.8% (6 companies) of all the companies primarily have their main FBP focus on *event promotion* (as defined in section 5.1). Undoubtedly, companies share those events through the FBP in order to make aware of themselves, and have their followers to meet them or join them at the events, so that they can begin to establish a closer

dialogue that in the end might result in a possible sale. Hence, those events are closely relatable to *pre-sale* within *marketing* of *primary activities*. FBP can be seen as a good platform to do so, as this kind of information can possibly reach out to many more followers, than if the company only shared it through their website that most probably does not has more than 1 billion users or visitors.

The above means that the overall tendency in relation to our *pre-understanding* shows that companies primarily use FBP for supporting their marketing activities within *pre-sale*, by creating awareness through *product/service promotion, sales promotion* as well as the new content type identified namely *event promotion* which is in correspondence with our pre-understanding, where it has been stated that FBP primarily are considered as suitable for this exact purposes.

5.3.1.2 Service

As a part of our pre-understanding we have considered *service* as being an activity that could be supported by B2B companies through FBP. The value chain *service* activities have been characterized as those activities that can be related to the *post-sale* activities between a company and its customers.

During our observation we however realized that only 14% (10 companies) of the observed companies have used the FBP to somehow support customer service activities. However, only 8 of those companies, hence 11.8% of all, have used to FBP to upload *customer service* content (as defined in section 5.1) specifically directed towards existing customers. The remaining two companies have also received service related requests from their customers on the FBP, even though those companies have not uploaded any service related content. On the FBP of DanaWeb customers have complained about that the software systems were out of functions. Here DanaWeb gave them an update on the situation and further wrote that the company would contact them all personally outside the platform of Facebook (Appendix 2.23). The company Berendsen also gained a complaint from a customer complaining about often receiving the workwear in the wrong sizes, where the company asked for his contact information, so they

could contact him outside FBP (Appendix 2.27). Therefore, concerning customer service, the observations have shown that whenever companies get a service request from their followers, they usually direct the conversation outside Facebook. This indicates that companies in general not are interested in discussing customer issues in a public platform.

The fact that 85.3% of the companies are not using the FBP to any *post-sale activities*, hence servicing customers, has been surprising for our pre-understanding. This might indicate that *post-sales activities*, hence customer service, most often take place outside FBP, but also that companies in general not are interested in discussing customer related issues in a public space.

5.2.2 Support activities

As a part of our pre-understanding, and, thereby, the identification of usage possibilities of FBP by Danish B2B companies, *support activities* within the Generic Value Chain have also been brought to consideration.

Firm Infrastructure, which account for general management, planning, finance, accounting, legal, government affairs and quality management, and the value chain activity of *procurement*, which refers to function of purchasing inputs used in the firms (Porter 1985), has not been considered as usage possibilities for B2B companies on FBP. During our observation, we have not been able to identify any of those value adding activities to occur on the public FBP, which has confirmed our pre-understanding of the usage possibility within this context.

However, support activities also consist of *HRM* and *Technology Development*. Within Chapter 4 it has been stated that *HRM* activities could be partly supported through FBP, in terms of *employer branding* and *job advertising*. This should be seen on same terms as other *marketing* related activities, which FBP have been considered to support. At the same time, it has been stated that *Technology Development* partly also partly could be maintained through gain of R&D relevant inputs and information from the followers of the page. In order to clarify how this has unfolded during our observations and expanded our understanding, we will go more deeply into those two activities in the two sections below.

5.2.2.1 Human Relationship Management

As mentioned above, we have considered in section 4.2.2.2 that *HRM* could be supported through the FBP in terms of *employer branding* and *job advertising*. This has proven true with regard to our observations. More specifically, based on table 2, the observation has shown that 66.2% of the companies apply FBP for *job advertising* (as defined in section 5.1) together with the rest of the content shared. Additionally, 5 of those companies mainly use the FBP for *job advertisements*, hence 7.4%. This means that companies in general post *job advertisements* on a regular basis whenever they have any free job openings. The most of the companies do not have a clear emphasis on *job advertisements* only on their FBP, but post the opening together with other forms of content mentioned in section 5.3.

The large amount of companies using the FBP for *job advertisements* has, thereby, been in agreement with our pre-understanding, where we have stated that FBP can be used to promote *job advertisements*, as a part of the HRM activities.

In continuation, our pre-understanding was also based on the usage possibility concerning *employer branding*. Based on table 2 above, our observation has shown that 20.6% of all the companies included use the FBP for *employer branding*. As well, three of those companies have chosen to only focus their FBP on this support activity - those are ISS, Coloplast and NNIT (Appendix 2.11, 2.25, 2.57). These findings of that B2B companies uses FBP for *HRM*, hence *job advertising* and *employer branding* have been in compliance with our pre-understanding, where we have accounted FBP to hold those exact usage possibilities for B2B companies.

5.2.2.2 Technology development

In our observations of the 68 B2B companies' FBP we have not found that any of those companies gained useful R&D inputs or information from their followers. This is because of that none of the companies have used their FBP to encourage their followers/customer to engage in *collaboration*, which may have resulted in useful inputs to the B2B companies R&D phase. Some companies have encouraged their followers to engagement by asking them questions, however, none of these questions could be related to the R&D of the companies. We will further elaborate how the companies have encouraged engagement by asking their followers questions in

section 5.4 below. Furthermore, none of the comments written by the followers/customer on the different content types have not been related to the R&D of the B2B companies products/service. Therefore, even though it was found in our pre-understanding that FBP could be used for *Technology Development*, our observation has shown that none of the 68 B2B companies use the FBP for this purpose. Therefore, our new understanding is that Danish B2B companies do not use FBP for *Technology Development*.

5.3 Content with no relation to our pre-understanding

As shortly mentioned in section 5.1, during our observation we also found content types that were not possible to relate to our pre-understanding. Those content types can be related to four categories: *general company news & information*, *external content*, *social company activities*, *competitions* and *entertainment*. The table 3 below shows the percentage of all the 68 companies that have used their FBP for uploading those types of contents, as well as the percentage of the companies that mainly uses the FBP for the specific content type.

Table 3: Content types with no relation to our pre-understanding

Content types	% of all companies	% mainly use
Social Company Activities	44%	2.9%
Entertainment	19.1%	2.9%
Competitions	19.1%	0
General Company News	76.5%	11.8%
External Content	42.6%	0

Source: Own construction (Appendix 6)

Those new findings can expand our understanding of the usage possibilities of FBP for B2B companies and, therefore, we will go more deeply into how those types of content unfold on the FBP in the sections below.

5.3.1 Social company activities, competitions and entertainment

We realized during our observation that companies sometime do not approach the content shared on FBP from a business perspective. We have been able to categorize those non-business related activities in two different content categories namely *social company activities*, *competitions* and *entertainment*.

Our observation has showed that 44% (30 companies) of companies included in the study have shared content related to *social company activities* (as defined in section 5.1), whereas two of those companies primarily use the FBP for uploading of those kind of content, which are Connect Communication and Pentia (Appendix 2.26, 2.64).

Other type of content we have identified that cannot be related to our value chain business perspective on FBP is *entertainment*. We have experienced that 19.1% (13 companies) of the companies included within this study have shared *entertainment* related content (as defined in section 5.1), whereas two companies have their main focus on entertaining their followers, which are LanguageWire and Halbye Kaag JWT (Appendix 2.6, 2.28).

It has also been found that 19.1% (13 companies) have used the FBP to uploading of *competition* (as defined in section 5.1), where the followers could participate in, in order to win prizes.

The above indicates that B2B companies present through FBP also put weight on moving the focus from sharing business relevant content to also basically entertain their audiences and uploading *competitions,* as well as giving the followers insights to non-business related activities of the company and how the employees socialize.

Due to our business focus within this study, and our pre-understanding derived from the *Generic Value Chain*, this content has been challenging for our pre-understanding, and we are unable at this time to understand how those types of content can generate value for the companies, and why companies choose to share this type of content. Hence, those findings do not correspond our pre-understanding, which also means that we have gained a new understanding of how FBP also

are used by B2B companies, namely by switching the focus from business to being social and entertain the followers, as well as giving followers a chance to win prizes.

5.3.2 General Company News and Sharing of External Links

As mentioned above, we have furthermore identified *general company news & information* content, as well as *external content*, which have not been considered within our pre-understanding. Shown in table 3, we have experienced that 76.5% (52 companies) of the companies included within this study have shared *general company news,* and that 11.8% of all companies (8 companies) has their major focus on sharing *general company news* (as defined in section 5.1)

Undoubtedly, sharing of those *general company news* is done in order to support the general awareness of the company and, thereby, the marketing activities. However, in comparison to our pre-understanding, it is not possible to state that this type of content necessarily refer to the marketing activities within *pre-sale*, as this kind of content cannot solely be relatable to *pre-sales activities*. Contrary, due to the general character of this type of news sharing, the information can be useful both for potential customers, that for example like to know about the environmental policies of their possible suppliers, but also for current customers and other stakeholders that solely want to stay updates on how things are evolving within a particular company. This type of content allow those people to stay updated an oriented about the development within the company, their values and general activities. Hence, this type of content and news sharing should more be understood as general marketing activity, where the goal is not to create a solely to create sales, but also to inform the people relevant to the firm, no matter if those are potential and existing customers or other stakeholders.

The same is true when considering *external content* (as defined in section 5.1) applied by 42.6% of the companies uploads content not produced by themselves, and only one company, Bentax, has their main focus on *external content* on the FBP, compared to other types of content (Appendix 2.34). Even though, those content types often are relevant for the respective industries in which the respective companies operate, it cannot be stated that this type of content

is relatable to either the *primary* or *support activities* within the value chain. Whereas it can be said that this type of content can make aware of the industries in which the company operates, it cannot be said that the content anyhow can promote the respective companies, due to the fact that the information is from external sources. Hence, the *external content* can be relevant to people that have interest in the respective industries, but cannot be regarded as a primary or secondary activity within the *Generic Value Chain*. Therefore, sharing *external content* that is not specific for the company, is challenging our pre-understanding, but has at the same time resulted in a new understanding of how companies use FBP.

5.4 The level of Engagement on B2B Facebook Business Pages

Within chapter 4, namely *The Theoretical Perspective*, we have highlighted the importance engagement has for *EdgeRanks* within the News Feed and, thereby, the visibility of the companies through FBP. With this regard, companies need to engage their audiences in order to ensure that their posts are going to be shown within the individual News Feeds.

Due to the importance of engagement on Facebook, we have in section 4.1.3 defined three different engagement levels that can occur on the FBP namely *content consumption*, *content curation* and *collaboration*. Based on our observation, we have only been able to identify *content consumption* and *content curation* on the FBP, which means that not one single dialogue has appeared. Namely, whereas we have observed singular comments, those never evolved to continuous conversations or discussions within the comment field. Hence it has only been a matter of a question - and a single answer, but no continuous conversation between the parties involved.

We have observed that in relation to *Content Consumption* (likes) that all 68 companies in average have managed to engage 3.6 % of their follower bases per post, which naturally is seen as rather unfavorable when this also counts for the lowest engagement level (Appendix 4.2).

Content Curation (comments/shares) also appears on the majority of the FBP, but to a much lower extent compared to *Content Consumption*. This is reflected in that Danish B2B companies on average manage to engage 0.9% of their follower bases in average on each of their posts (Appendix 4.2). This general average pr. post is seen as very unfavorable in terms of the

Facebook *EdgeRanks*. This should especially be seen in context with the high amount competition that is within the News Feed, where B2B companies also compete with B2C companies and all other pages and private profiles (Treadaway & Smith 2012; Bucher 2012).

During our observation, and closely related to the low degree of engagement on the FBP, it also came to our awareness that only few companies directly encourage engagement on the FBP. It was found that only 16.2% of the companies have directly encouraged their followers to interact with them on the page, by asking them different questions, while the rest of the companies do not encourage a dialogue or response from the followers on their content (Appendix 4.1). Hereof only 4 companies gained responses to their questions, which are ISS, Siemens, Coloplast and Grimme Skandinavien. ISS have asked questions such as: *"What does it mean to be a great colleague to you?"* or *"What is your favorite song"* which resulted in responses from their followers (Appendix 2.11). On the other hand, Siemens has asked their followers questions about their favorite color or their childhood dream jobs, which followers also have responded to (Appendix 2.37). Furthermore, Coloplast has also encouraged their followers to ask them career related questions, which few followers made use of (Appendix 2.57), as well as Grimme Skandinavien asked followers a question about how things are going with their machinery, which the followers reacted to by answering the company about their statuses (Appendix 2.46).

The companies that did not get responses to the question asked have asked similar question as those four above. The majority of the questions asked by the companies have a rhetorical character, such as *"Did you know that...?"*. This means, that a lot of questions are asked in order to encourage the followers to read the shared article, where they can get answers to the question asked.

5.4.1 The engagement level on basis of content types

In this section we will present the engagement level gained on the content types identified in our observations of the 68 B2B companies on their FBP. The table 4 below shows the average percentage of the follower bases that have engaged on each posts, in terms of likes

(consumption) and shares and/or comments (curation), divided on basis of the different content types identified.

Table 4: Level of engagement of follower bases in average per post on content types

	Likes (Content Consumption) % of follower bases	Shares/Comments (Content Curation) % of follower bases
Pre-sales activities		
Product promotion	2.8%	0.39%
Sales promotion	0.91%	0.31%
Event promotion	2.62%	0.45%
Post-sales activities		
Customer service	2.06%	0.47%
HRM activities		
Job advertisement	2.05%	4.25%
Employer branding	1.90%	0.12%
Other findings		
Entertainment	1.33%	0.73%
Competitions	3.50%	2.36%
Company news and info	4.25%	0.52%
Social company activities	6.30%	0.99%
External content	1.04%	0.13%

Source: Own construction (Appendix 6)

The table 4 above clearly shows that the content that the most engaging content types in terms of *Content Curation* are *job advertisement, competitions, social company activities,* followed by

entertainment. Especially, our observations have shown that *job advertisement*s in relation to *Content Curation* primarily are shared by the followers, whereas *competition* both reach high numbers of comments and shares due to the fact that companies often require the followers to comment and share in order to participate in the competition (Appendix 2). Furthermore, *social company activities* are mostly commented on by the employees of the companies. Considering *social company activities, competition* and *entertainment* specifically, it can be said that even though those types achieve high levels of *curation* compared to the rest of the content posted, the comments are not business or product/service related, but have a more social character. Concerning commenting within *content curation,* our observation showed that most of the comments left are written by the employees of the respective companies hence the employees are the main *curation* drivers. We have only been able to identify that the employees are engaging when they are commenting on content, where the comments clearly indicates that those are working within the companies. On the other hand, we have not been able to identify when the employees are liking and sharing the content on the FBP. However, it can be assumed that since the employees generally are the ones that comment the most, there is a high probability that those in general also are the ones, who like and share the content on the FBP (Appendix 2).

The table 4 above also shows that the content types that have gained the lowest degree of *content consumption* and *content curation,* in relation to the follower bases, are *external content*, *employer branding* and *sales promotion*, followed by *product promotion, customer service*, and *event promotion*, as those content types have managed to engage less than 0.5% of the follower bases in terms of shares/comment. Finally, *General Company News* content type has created an engagement just above 0.5%. At the same time, this content type but is ranked the second highest in terms of likes, only surpassed by *social company activities* (Appendix 6). It was also found that the employees also to a high extend comment on the *general company news* posts that concern the employees and not the financial results or CSR policies

Therefore, the above clearly shows that that the content with the lowest level of engagement among the follower bases are those relatable to *pre-sale* and *post-sale* within the *Generic Value Chain*.

5.5 Danish B2B Companies Usage of Facebook Business Pages

In the above section, the results of the observation of B2B companies on FBP have been presented and compared to our pre-understanding. Therefore, we have gained an understanding of how B2B companies use FBP and the level of engagement that has been achieved within the follower bases on the FBP. This new understanding is illustrated in figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Danish B2B Companies usage of Facebook Business Pages
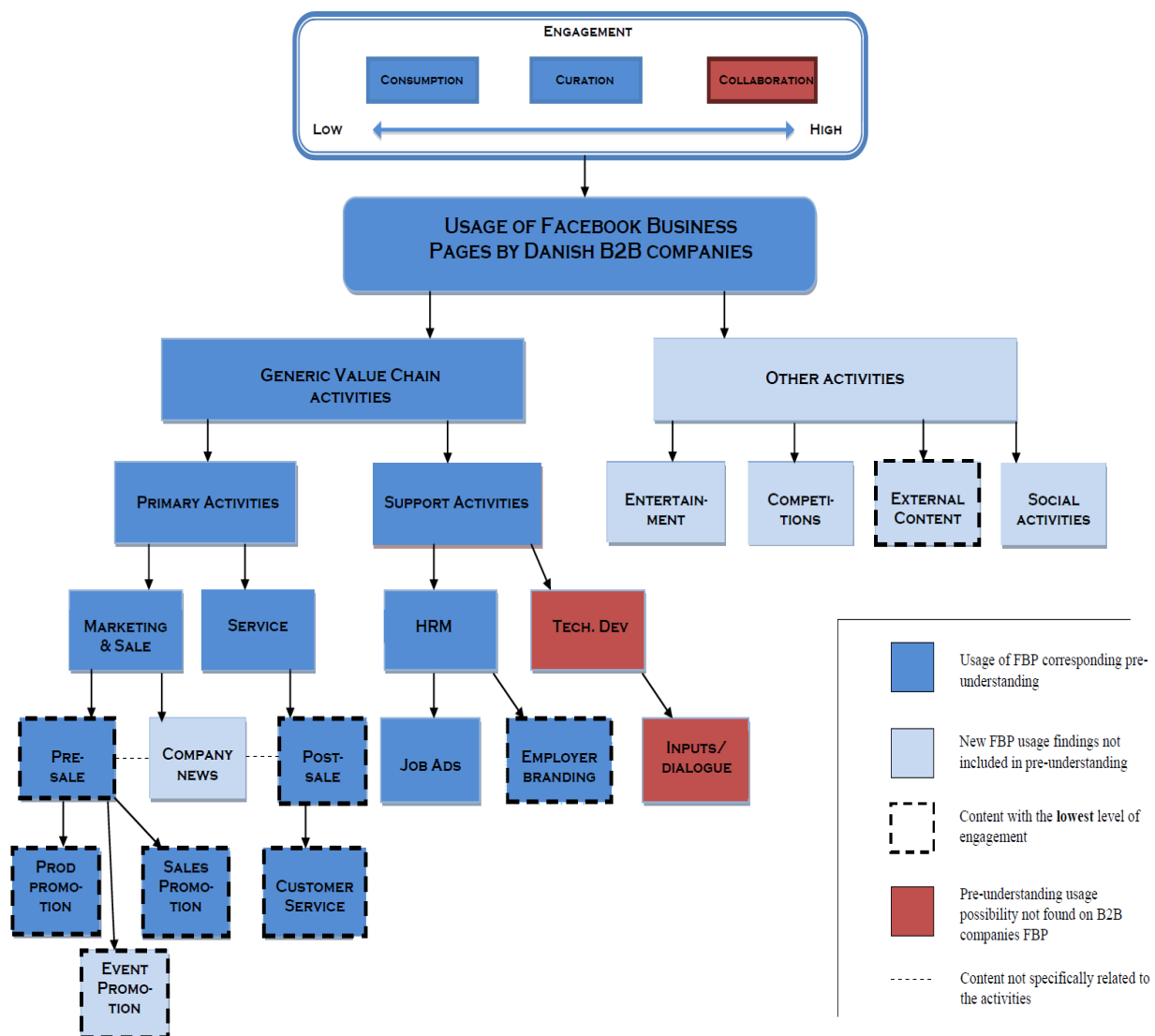
Source: Own construction

The figure 7 above illustrates the usage of FBP by the 68 Danish B2B companies as well as the obtained level of engagement. Hence the figure represents the new understanding gained on basis of our observations. The figure both illustrates the findings that have been in correspondence with our pre- understanding, the pre-understanding usage possibilities that have not been identified as well as the new content types identified. The figure also reflects the least engaging content types observed.

In correspondence with our pre-understanding, we have found that the B2B companies use their FBP for *Marketing & Sales* within the Primary Activities of the *Generic Value Chain*, namely for the *pre-sale* phase that on the FBP unfolds through *product promotion*, *sales promotion* and *event promotion*. Furthermore, few companies also use the FBP for *post-sale*, as they have uploaded content specifically related to customer service. The figure above also shows that the content related to *pre-sale* and *post-sale* are among those content types that engage the lowest percentage of the follower bases in average. Furthermore, as it was argued in our pre-understanding, we did not believe that any sales transactions would take place on FBP, which also was not the case, as none of the companies have received orders directly on the page.

In our observation we also found that the majority of the companies use the FBP to share *general company news & information*, and this content type was not considered in our pre-understanding. This kind of content should not be related directly to either *pre-sale* or *post-sale*, but perceived as a rather general marketing activity that provides followers, customers, prospects and other stakeholders interested with news and information about the companies. Therefore, this content type has been placed within *Marketing & Sales* activities, as we consider this content type as general marketing activity relevant for both potential and existing customers as well as other stakeholders. Therefore, *general company news and information* has been connected with *pre-sale* and *post-sale*, with stipple lines, indicating that this content type cannot be related to either *pre-sale* or *post-sale* specifically.

In relation to the *Support Activities*, it was identified within our pre-understanding that FBP could be used for *HRM* and *Technology Development*. We have found that the companies only

use FBP for *HRM* by uploading *job advertisement*, as well as *employer branding* content. However, *employer branding* is one of the content types that have gained the lowest level of engagement in average, whereas *job advertisement* is the content type with the highest level of engagement on the FBP in average.

In relation to *Technology Development* we have not found that any of those 68 companies gained useful R&D inputs or information from their followers. This is because of that none of the companies have used their FBP to encourage their followers/customer to engage in *collaboration*. Furthermore, none of the comments written by the followers/customer on the FBP could be related to a R&D activity.

The figure also shows, that content types such as *external content*, *social company activities*, *competitions* and *entertainment* could not be related to our pre-understanding. Therefore, these content types have provided us with a new understanding of how Danish B2B use FBP. Besides from *external content*, which has gained a low level of engagement, the other three mentioned content types are among those with the highest level of engagement on the FBP, right behind *job advertisements*.

In our pre-understanding we identified that B2B companies on FBP possibly could achieve all three engagement levels, namely *content consumption*, *content curation* and *collaboration*. During our observation we reached a new understanding, as we realized that *collaboration* was not possible to identify on any of the FBP observed. Namely, whereas we have observed singular comments, those never evolved to continuous conversations or discussions within the comment field. Hence, it has only been a matter of a question - and a single answer, but no continuous conversation between the parties involved. Therefore, it has only been found that Danish B2B companies have achieved the engagement level of *content consumption* and *content curation*, which have provided us with a new understanding since no *collaboration* occurs on the B2B companies' FBP.
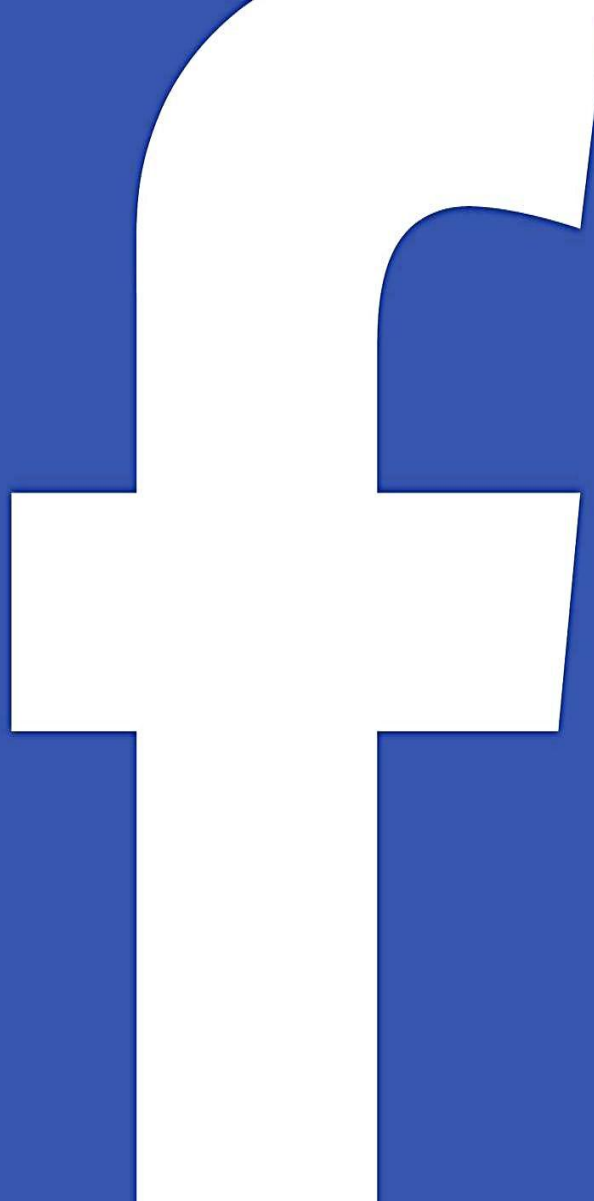
PART 3

Chapter 6: Analysis and Reflection of the Results
Chapter 7: The Evaluation of B2B companies on Facebook

" Building a mission and building a business go hand-in-hand. It is true that the primary thing that makes me excited about what we're doing is the mission, but I also think, from every beginning, we've had this healthy understanding which is that we need to do both "
(Mark Zuckerberg, CEO Facebook)

Chapter 6

6 Analysis and reflection of the observational results

In part two of this thesis we have gained an understanding of how Danish B2B companies use FBP. Therefore, in this chapter we will analysis and reflect on the results in order to make sense of the observations and explore whether any tendencies can be found across the 68 companies observed. To begin with, this analysis will concern the general tendencies among the 68 companies included in this study. Hereafter we will go more deeply whether differences exist among the three industries - namely production, service and trade. Finally, we will analyze the companies that have managed to engage the largest percentage of their follower bases, within this study. This will lead us closer to evaluate whether FBP are recommendable for B2B companies.

6.1 The matter of followers, employees and target market

Within this section we will consider whether the number of followers across all 68 companies influence the level of engagement, as well as whether the company sizes - in terms of number of employees influence the engagement level that is reached among all companies included. Finally, we will consider whether the national or international FBP emphasis have an influence on the engagement levels, and also whether common characteristics can be found among the most and least engaging content types.

6.1.1 The influence of followers on the engagement levels

When taking a simple look across Appendix 5.1, what quickly comes to one's attention is that some of the companies that manage to engage the highest percentage of their Facebook follower bases, in terms of *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation*, tend to have a much lower number of followers than companies with the largest follower bases, namely ISS, Vestas and Siemens. This makes us wonder, whether there might be a general linkage between the high level

of *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* and the number of followers. In order to make sense of this, we have created an overview visible in table 5 below:

Table 5: Does the number of followers influence the level of engagement?

Number of followers	Number of companies	Content Consumption % of follower base	Content Curation % of follower base
51-199	23	5.39%	1.90%
200 - 800	22	2.95%	0.66%
801 +	23	0.923%	0.122%

Source: Own construction, Appendix 5.1

Regarding the table above, the companies have been separated on basis of the number of followers, where our emphasis has been on dividing the companies equally so that each of the intervals included approximately the same amount of companies. By categorizing companies in those equal divided categories, we ensure that the companies with the most similar characteristics are grouped together. As shown in Appendix 5.1 and visible in table 5 above, the average within those intervals has afterwards been calculated on basis of the percentage of followers these companies manage to engage on the FBP.

What appears from table 5 above is that the smaller follower base on the FBP - the higher level of engagement covering both *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* is reached, as the companies with 51-199 followers manage to engage a higher percentage of their follower bases than companies between 200-800 followers and companies with more than 801+ followers. Here it is interesting that the engagement is steadily increasing which means that higher number of followers cannot be perceived as a key factor for success, when using FBP as a Danish B2B company. This is especially, when considering that the three companies with the largest follower bases in this study, namely ISS, Vestas and Scania are ranked as no. 46th, 49th and 64th out of

68 companies, respectively, when considering *Curation* in comparison to the follower base. On the other hand, the company with the lowest number of followers (51), namely Flex Trim, is ranked as the 5th company with highest engagement levels among all 68 companies when considering the *Content Curation* (Appendix 4.2).

This also leads us to consider, whether there are similarities within the content types the best ranked companies (the ones with the smallest follower bases) have uploaded on the FBP, contrary to the ones with the larger follower bases. When considering the content types within Appendix 5.1 it shows that 56.52% of the companies that have between 51-199 followers put larger emphasis on using *Social Company Activities* compared to the companies with larger communities, which is the largest percentage difference among the three intervals, followed by *General Company News & Info*, *Service* and *Sales Promotion*.

With reference to our observations in Appendix 6, we especially noticed that *Social Company Activities* and *General Company News*, were the content types together with *Job Advertisement* among all companies that created the highest level of *Curation* in relation to the follower bases. We also noticed within this context that there also are differences between how smaller and larger companies choose to use *General Company News* (Appendix 6). Whereas, smaller companies generally put much more emphasis on sharing with their communities whenever their employees have jubileums, whenever they gain new employees or some employees leave the company after many years of work or generally highlight the successes of the employees. On the other hand, the companies of larger sizes and, thereby, larger follower bases often put much more weight on sharing their *Financial Results* and *CSR policies*. We found during our observation that the types of *General Company News* that were most engaging were those concerning the employees, whereas the followers generally were less interested in engaging with content concerning *Financial Results* and *CSR policies*. A similarity can be drawn when considering the difference in the use of *Social Company Activities* between the companies with small and large follower bases. During our observation we found, as confirmed within table 5, that companies with smaller communities use *Social Company Activities* more heavily than the companies with higher number of followers. Within section 5.1, we have defined that *Social*

Company Activities is the content showing employees involve themselves in non-business related activities, such as internal employee parties, sharing pictures of the cakes the employees have baked and brought to work, posting about whenever the employees are gathered after-work and go to cinema together or solely enjoy after-work beers. This reflects in companies such as Flex Trim, Bredana Systemudvikling and Centertryk (Appendix 2.2, 2.39, 2.52), which both are among the companies with smallest follower bases and fewest employees, but on the other hand among all companies included that manage to engage the largest part of their followers in percentage. Among those companies, *Social Company Activities* was among the most engaging content type of all content types applied (Appendix 5.1, 6)

Here it has to be brought to attention that this content type has a much more informal aspect, which is similar to the way small companies use their *General Company News & Information* compared to the formal way companies with many followers choose to apply this content type. Considering this means that the companies with smaller follower bases often are much more informal, which reflects in the way they use *General Company News & Information* compared to the companies with larger follower bases, as well compared to the fact that those more heavily apply *Social Company Activities* than companies with large follower bases.

Elaborating on the reason why those smaller and less formal companies maintain to reach higher engagement levels must be seen in context with the people, who choose to respond to those content types. What our observations in Appendix 2 showed is that especially employees of the respective companies are the ones who choose to engage on the FBP. This has been observed on basis of the comments left, where it was both visible and clear that the majority of the individuals were the company employees. For example, the comments left on the *General Company News & Information* that concerned new employees or employees leaving gained many comments from the current employees who expressed how glad they were to welcome a new team member on board, or contrary how unfortunate it was that one of their great colleagues was leaving. Great examples on those companies are AB Metal, Flex Trim and Bornerup Datacenter (Appendix 2.39, 2.42, 2.54), which are among the smallest companies included in terms of follower bases, and also the companies that managed to gain the highest engagement levels among all companies included on this content type, in percentage of the follower bases. Contrary, the

companies with the larger follower bases that focused on the *f*inancial and csr oriented aspect of business, generally gained lower *Curation* levels, which reflects that those content types were less interesting for the followers of the FBP. Examples on those companies are Vestas, NNIT and Berendsen (Appendix 2.25, 2.27, 2.36) that all put emphasis on sharing their financial results and news about their CSR policies. Considering Appendix 6 it stands clear that this content type with the more business oriented emphasis is the least engaging compared to the remaining content types applied among those companies.

The same is true for the ones who choose to engage with the *social company activities* content. Here it also primarily are the employees that express what a great employee party they have had or that they enjoy the after-work beer. Even though, we have observed that companies with larger follower bases use *Social Company Activities* to much lower extent, our results also show that whenever one of those companies chooses to do so, they also manage to engage a higher percentage of their followers, compared to the majority of the other content types applied. Here, companies with larger follower bases - meaning 801+, such as Advice, Danaweb and Atea (Appendix 2.3, 2.23, 2.68), chose to use *Social Company Activities* as a part of their content, and our study showed that this type of content also was the most engaging one among all other content types applied. Similar to the companies with small follower bases, it was also the employees who engaged with those content types and, thereby, increased the overall engagement on the FBP (Appendix 2).

It has also been highlighted that the companies with the smallest follower bases, compared to the companies with the larger follower bases, also are the ones who tend to use *Sales Promotion* as well as *Customer Service* as a part of their content. However, when considering those content types within Appendix 5.1, it becomes clear that those content types, compared to *Social Company Activities*, *General Company News* and *Job Advertisement*, also are among the least engaging for the companies with small follower bases. That is also a general tendency among all companies included as both *Customer service* and *Sales Promotion* generally are among the least engaging content types, which also has been shown in Chapter 5, section 5.4.2.

Compared to the analysis above, this finding makes sense when considering that employees are the ones who create the most engagement on the respective FBP on content such as *Social*

Company Activities and *General Company News & Information*. For those employees, engaging with *Sales Promotion* and *Service* might be less relevant, as those content types are more sales-oriented or customer-oriented. This again highlights the fact that the followers on FBP more are interested in the internal and social aspects of businesses rather than the externally oriented content types.

6.1.2 The influence of employees on the engagement levels

At this point we have realized that there is a general tendency towards that the more focused the FBP is, or in other words, the more specifically the lower numbers of followers - the higher engagement is to be found. At the same time, we have analyzed that the content that is the most engaging often has a more personal touch and so to say "a local emphasis", as it often highlights the employees, as well as the social activities those involve themselves with. Whereas, the larger the follower bases - the harder it seems to share personal content, which has the same relevancy for all companies on the FBP. Due to the fact that we have realized that the employees are the ones engaging the most, it is important to consider whether the number of employees within the respective companies also influence the level of engagement that is gained. In order to make sense of this, we have created an overview of the number of employees and level of engagement of the follower bases in average per post, which is shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Does the number of employees influence the level of engagement?

Number of Employees	Number of Companies	Content Consumption % of follower bases	Content Curation & of follower bases
20-500 employees	54	3.27%	1.06%
501 + employees	14	2.09%	0.2%

Source: Own construction, appendix 5.2

Regarding the table above, the companies have been separated on basis of the number of employees. Similar to table 5, our emphasis when constructing this table has been on dividing the companies equally so that each of the intervals included approximately the same amount of companies. However this was not possible in this case, as we realized that the majority of the companies, hence 49 companies, have below 170 employees. Also, only 5 companies were identified within the category 171-500 employees, while the rest of the companies namely 14 had more than 501 employees. Therefore, we first tried to group the companies with 171-500 employees within the 501+ employees category to see, whether this would change the general *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* level compared to the companies with 20-500 employees. However, no matter in which of those two categories we grouped the companies between 171-500 employees the result was the same - namely that the companies with fewest employees managed to generate a higher percentage of the follower bases (Appendix 5.2). When looking closer into the companies, we realized that the companies with 171-500 employees were much closer to the number of followers within the 20-500 employees category. This is due to that companies such as ISS, Vestas and Siemens have 500.000, 15500 and 7000 employees, and on that basis, the companies with 171-500 employees are much more similar to other companies within the 20-500 employees interval.

When considering table 6, it quickly appears, as mentioned before, that the companies with lowest number of employees also are the ones who manage to create the highest engagement, in relation to the follower bases, in terms of both *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation*. As discussed and analyzed in the section above, the reason for this might be found in the fact that those companies have a more personal and local appearance hence, their content is more relevant for the individuals that choose to follow the page, when considering that the employees are the ones who engage the most with the content uploaded by the respective companies.

Considering companies such as Vestas and Siemens, those are among the companies with the highest number of employees together with ISS, which outstandingly dominates the general employee average with 500.000 employees internationally (Appendix 2.36, 2.37, 2.11). This also means that they have to mass communicate to higher extent in order to be relevant for the mass than the companies with lower number of employees, which opens up for the opportunity

to have a more focused approach, both on basis of their follower base and their company size in terms of employees.

It can be said in this context that the larger the company - the higher number of people with the company interest are surrounding it, which decreases the chance for being more personal and local compared to the companies with smaller follower bases and lower number of employees.

This argument leads us to consider the content applied among those categories in order to clarify whether the smaller companies actually have more local approach, and whether similarities within the content types applied can be drawn to the companies with smaller follower bases.

When considering the Appendix 5.2, what comes to ones attention is that the companies that engage the most, namely those with the lowest number of employees, have a larger emphasis on sharing the content types *Social Company Activities, Event Promotion* and *Service* than the companies with the higher number of employees. On the other hand, it appears that the large companies, compared to the smaller companies in terms of number of employees, dominate when it comes to *Employer Branding, Job Advertisement, Entertainment, General Company News & Information, External Content, Sales Promotion, Product Promotion* and *Competition*.

Similar to the companies with lower number of followers, it appears that companies with the lower number of employees also put much more emphasis on *Social Company Activities* than the companies with larger follower bases and larger number of employees. This confirms that the reason behind the success of the companies with lower number of both employees and followers, can be found on the basis that those maintain to be more relevant for their followers and people surrounding them, due to the fact that they have a more "local" and personal touch on the FBP than the large companies with many followers and employees.

Within Appendix 5.2 we furthermore realized that the more employees the companies have - the larger follower base also is to be found. Contrary, the lower number of employees, the lower number of followers. This follows the fact that the employees are the primarily source of engagement on all FBP included in this study. Furthermore, we have also argued above that the larger company, the higher number of people with company interests are surrounding it, which decrease the chance to be more personal and local compared to the companies with smaller

follower bases and lower number of employees. This might be an explanation for why the large companies with many followers generally focus on many different content types compared to the companies with lower follower bases and lower number of employees. Namely, those companies try to be appealing to the mass they communicate to and catch the interests of the mass or the content types the mass might be interested in. Therefore, they also focus on many different content types compared to the smaller companies with fewer followers that do not have as a large mass of people to appeal to.

Earlier we also found out that the more personal "touch" the *General Company News & Information* had, the more engagement was also gained among the follower bases. When considering that there is a correspondence between the number of employees and the number of followers, this makes perfectly sense. On this basis, the reason why companies with many employees do not manage to have as high *curation* on this content type, is due to that they have the financial and CSR related emphasis, which is less personal compared to the small companies with fewer employees and followers, who instead put weight on communicating about the employees when sharing *General Company News & Information*.

Also, before it was found that whenever content was more sales or consumer-oriented, the engagement generally tended to decrease. When considering that the companies with more followers and more employees generally tend to put more weight on uploading sales-related content, instead of personal and socially appealing content, then it makes sense that those do not manage to engage as large percentage of their follower bases. This is especially when considering that the employees are the ones who create the most engagement, and those sales and customer-oriented content types might be less appealing to them.

6.1.3 The influence of the target market on the engagement level

On basis of the above, there is a tendency towards that the larger company and follower base - the less engagement is to be found on the FBP of Danish B2B companies. We have argued that the local and personal "touch" were the primary source of higher engagement levels among the follower bases, based on the most engaging content types found. The argument concerning the

local "touch" leads forward to consider whether the companies that have chosen to only focus their FBP to the Danish market also tend to gain higher engagement than those Danish companies that have chosen to have a more international approach and therefore focus their FBP towards an international audience. To make sense of this we have created table 7 below:

Table 7: National vs. International Facebook Business Pages for Danish B2B companies?

Type of FBP	Number of Companies	Content Consumption % of follower base	Content Curation % of follower base
National	47	3.25%	1.133%
International	21	1.1%	0.373%

Source: Own construction, Appendix 8

What appears from the table 7 above is that the "local" or so to say "national" FBP, where the emphasis only is on the Danish market, both have higher levels of *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation*. Contrary, whenever the emphasis on the FBP becomes more international both *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* decreases. This corresponds to our findings and arguments presented above, where we have found that the more personal, local and social approach the Danish B2B companies have - the more *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* will be found across the FBP included in this study.

With reference to Appendix 8, it also becomes clear that out of the 14 companies based on the highest number of employees, 78.6% have an international emphasis on their FBP, which again supports the fact that the size of the FBP in terms of followers and employees, as well as the local emphasis matter in terms of engagement levels in percentage of the follower bases. As presented earlier, those large companies in general tend to have lower emphasis on those social, local and personal aspects of communication on the FBP, which has a negative influence on the engagement levels that can be reached on the FBP. This appears when considering that 51.6% of

national companies use *Social Company Activities* as a part of their content, whereas only 28.6% of the international companies choose to apply this type of content. As presented in section 5.4, *Social Company Activities* is the content type that lies in the top 3 of the content with the highest *Content Curation*, then it makes perfectly sense that the national companies also are the ones with the highest engagement levels.

At the same time it appears that 74% of the national companies use the *General Company & News* contrary to 80.9% of the international companies. However, when considering the way in which the national companies use the *General Company News & Information* (Appendix 8), it shows that the companies with the national emphasis generally use the social aspect of this content type by exposing the new employees and the ones that leave the company, whereas the international companies similar to what has been discussed before, put a much more financial and CSR oriented emphasis on this content type. The only clear similarity among the national and international companies that appear in terms of the content percentage is that 66% of the companies, no matter whether they are national or international, put a huge weight on *Job Advertising*, which also is the content type that in average of all companies have have gained the highest *curation* in relation to the follower bases, as shown in section 5.4.

Also, 23.4% of the national companies use *Competition* as a part of their content, whereas the same only counts for 9.52% of the international companies. The larger use of *Competitions* among the national companies also explains why those company types have generated highest *Content Curation* levels, as *Competition* is the second most engaging content type in terms of *Content Curation*, right after *Job Advertisement*. This goes well hand in hand with the fact that larger number of the national companies accounting for 21.3%, compared to 14.3% of the international companies, have chosen to apply *Entertainment* as a part of their content. This content type is the fourth most engaging right after *Social Company Activities* and again, this naturally also has an impact on that the national companies generate higher engagement levels (Appendix 8).

At last, content types such as *Product Promotion*, *Sales Promotion*, *Event Promotion* and *Service* are also among the content types the national companies apply more often than the international companies, whereas the are no differences when accounting for *External Content*. What has to be

mentioned within this context is that *Product Promotion, Sales Promotion, External Content* as well as *Service* and *Event Promotion* are among the content types that generally have among the lowest *Content Curation* averages, based on the engagement of the FBP follower bases. So despite the fact that a higher number of the national companies choose to use those least engaging content types, they still manage to generate higher engagement levels. This means that whereas it undoubtedly is seen as unfavorable for those national companies to use those content types, it also increases the meaning of their success with *Social Company Activities, Competition, Entertainment* and *Job Advertising*, namely that the highest *Content Curation* is generated for content types with less sales and customer orientation, but more internal orientation as the employees are found to be the followers among all companies included that are the main sources for engagement on the respective FBP. The content types and the engagement levels found will be analysed further in the section below.

6.1.4 The influence of content type on the engagement levels

The analysis above has resulted in several key findings. Namely, that the tendency shows that the smaller the company and follower base - the more engagement can be generated on the FBP of Danish B2B companies. In context with this, we also found out that the target market matters, as the Danish B2B companies with emphasis on the Danish market tend to have higher engagement levels than the Danish B2B companies with international FBP emphasis. This means that we have by now considered similarities and dissimilarities among the companies included within this study. Therefore, it is on basis of the above also necessary to analyse what actually characterizes the different content types that have generated the highest and lowest engagement levels, and more concretely, whether similarities and dissimilarities appear when considering the emphasis of these types of content.

When considering the content types that out dominated the engagement levels, our analysis showed that especially content types such as *Social Company Activities, Competition, Job Advertisement* as well as *Entertainment* were the key sources to success among the companies that managed to engage the highest percentage of the follower bases. Also, it has been analysed

that there is a clear difference in the emphasis companies have within *General Company News & Information*, and the level of engagement those can obtain. Namely, companies that tend to focus less on the for example financial and csr oriented aspects hence the business aspect, are the ones that generate the highest engagement levels within this content type. This is similar to content types, such as *Social Company Activities, Competition, Entertainment* and *Job Advertisement* that also were the ones that generally increased the overall engagement levels among the companies with the lowest number of followers, employees and also those with national emphasis on their FBP.

Contrary, when considering the content types that generally tend to obtain the lowest levels of engagement with reference to section 5.4 of this study, but also the analysis above, it appears that those generally are *Service, Event Promotion, Product Promotion, Sales Promotion, External Content* and *Employer Branding*.

Here it has to be brought to attention, that the main difference between these least engaging content types can be found in that the majority of them are either sales - or customer oriented. Those primarily account for *Service, Event Promotion, Product Promotion* as well as *Sales Promotion*. This means that those in comparison to the most engaging content types have a larger emphasis on stimulating a potential sale or keep their current customers satisfied.

However, when considering our observations within Appendix 3, we found out that the general tendency among all 68 companies included was that no matter of content type, the employees were generally the main source of engagement. In this context, it makes sense that the employees are willing to engage with *Social Company Activities* that within the respective companies concern either themselves or their colleagues. As well, it makes sense that those employees are willing to engage with *General Company News & Information*, as long as the aspect is not business/externally oriented, but more internally oriented. On the other hand, it makes less sense that those employees would prefer to engage with content types such as *Product Promotion, Sales Promotion, Event Promotion, Service promotion* when those have an external emphasis. Not to say that we have not experienced employees engaging on those content types especially *Product Promotion* among all the companies observed, rather it should be seen in light of that the companies that are more internally, socially and locally oriented with their content generate

higher engagement levels than those who do not. This is probably because that the employees find those content types more relevant to them.

The fact that employees also are the ones who generate engagement on for example *Product Promotion* posts is visible on for example the FBP of Vestas. Here the employees, respond to the content shared by writing that they are proud to work for Vestas. As well, the employees often comment whenever Vestas have shared that they have received a new order by responding to Vestas that they are looking forward to work on the new order received (Appendix 2.36). So it cannot be said that the employees engage on *Social Company Activities* and *General Company News & Information* exclusively, as our observation shows that they generally are the most active followers among all content types, however, it should not be forgotten that the companies that generate the most engagement are those that are more internally oriented than the others - hence the companies that manage to be more relevant to respond to from the employee point of view.

Considering that the employees naturally are not the ones who are going to purchase the products or services of B2B companies, as those are not business customers, puts the content relevancy into perspective. Also, considering other engaging content types, such as *Job Advertisements, Entertainment* and *Competitions,* it can hardly be said that those have a B2B sales- or customer oriented aspect. For example, it is rather unthinkable that Vestas is going to sell more wind turbines on basis of a FBP *competition*, or that Siemens are going to increase their sales of industrial products on basis of their uploading of *Entertainment* content that for example encourages their followers to solve a puzzle and guess the missing part in the comment field (Appendix 2.37).

Rather, it is worth considering that those content types do not appeal specifically to B2B actors, but instead all Facebook users. Namely, this might be the explanation for that the sales- and customer oriented content types have the lowest engagement levels, whereas the internally oriented and socially oriented content types have the highest level of engagement. This of course includes the observations of the engagement of the employees, as those on their employer's FBP socialize and engage with their colleagues.

6.2 The analysis of B2B companies based on their industries

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, our study has included 38 service companies, 26 production companies and 4 trade companies. At this point, we have already analyzed the general similarities and dissimilarities among all 68 companies, based on their number of followers, employees, target markets as well as the different characteristics among the content types. However, before being able to reach our final recommendation for the Danish B2B companies using FBP, it is also of high importance in context with the analysis above, to put emphasis on analysing whether differences or similarities exist among the respective industries included in this study, which will be analysed in the sections below.

6.2.1 The level of engagement among the three industries

Our observations of Danish B2B companies' FBP have shown that small differences exist in the overall level of engagement dependent on the three industries. The engagement levels counting for *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation* have been calculated on basis of the percentage of followers the companies within the respective industries manage to engage. The differences found are shown in table 8 below.

Table 8: The engagement level of the follower bases of the three industries

	Production	**Service**	**Trade**
Content Consumption % of follower base	4,06%	2,45%	2,72%
Content Curation % of follower base	1,56% /0.89%*	0,47%	0,72%

* Without Alumeco

Source: Own construction, based on Appendix 4.2

With regard to table 8 presented above, within the production industry, we have calculated the percentage of followers engaged both with and without the production company Alumeco. This derives from the fact that this particular company may paint a misleading picture of the overall production industry. Considering Appendix 2.47, it appears that Alumeco on average has managed to engage 18.2% of their follower base, which is the highest *Content Curation* percentage among all companies included, as the second highest curation only is 5.9%. However, the high level of *Content Curation* of Alumeco only derives from one post containing a *Job Advertisement* which has been shared 495 times by the followers (Appendix 2.47). In order to avoiding painting a misleading picture of the overall industry, we have presented the production industry percentages both with and without Alumeco. It appears that when leaving Alumeco out of the picture, it reduces the overall engagement significantly, and thereby also decreases the differences within the engagement levels among the industries. The most significant difference can only be found in terms of *Content Consumption*, where the production companies in average have managed to engage just above 1% more of their followers than the two other industries included. On the other hand, only small and almost insignificant differences are to be found when considering *Content Curation* among the respective industries, where production companies have managed to engage 0.42% more of their followers than service companies and 0.17% more followers than the trade companies.

Despite the fact that only small differences are to be found when considering the overall engagement levels, it is considered as necessary to dive deeper into, whether differences or similarities exist among the industries before eventually stating that those industries do not differ at all.

6.2.2 Content usage pattern among the three industries

In this section we will analyze the content types the three industries have uploaded on the FBP. On that basis, we will consider whether the engagement level respective to the percentage of followers engaged among the industries has something to do with the types of content those companies apply. Consequently, the table 9 below shows, based on each content type, which content the respective industries have uploaded the most. As well, the percentage of followers

the different industries manage to engage on basis of the different content types has been calculated below both in terms of *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation*.

Table 9: Content types usage and Facebook follower base percentage engagement among the three industries

	Production			Service			Trade		
	Usage	Likes	Curation	Usage	Likes	Curation	Usage	Likes	Curation
Product promotion	84.6%	3,27%	0,42%	92.1%	2,51%	0,35%	100%	3,12%	0,597%
Sales promotion	3.6%	0,05%	0,005%	7.9%	1,27%	0,52%	25%	1,95%	2,53%
Event promotion	50%	3,15%	0,56%	52.6%	2,29%	0,39%	100%	3,83%	0,64%
Customer service	3.8%	0,64%	0,19%	18.4%	2,26%	0,51%	0%	0	0
Job advertisement	53.8%	3,18%	5,39%	78.9%	1,50%	1,32%	25%	2,44%	4,88%
Employer branding	11.5%	0,68%	0,07%	23.7%	2,30%	0,14%	0%	0	0
Company news	76.9%	5,23%	0,91%	81.6%	3,77%	0,29%	25%	1,83%	0,24%
External content	19.2%	1,63%	0,09%	57.9%	0,76%	0,12%	50%	2,67%	0,39%
Entertainment	15.4%	0,66%	1,89%	21.1%	1,23%	0,10%	25%	4,76%	1,10%
Social activities	38.5%	7,64%	1,12%	52.6%	5,73%	0,93%	0	0	0
Competition	26.9%	2,36%	0,73%	13.2%	4,17%	4,11%	25%	8,17%	5%

Source: Own construction, based on Appendix 4.2

The *curation* of the *job advertisement* within the production industry is calculated without Alumeco, as the company would double this category, if it was included.

When looking at the content applied by the three industries, it appears that the content of service companies based on the percentages are much more diversified, meaning that those companies tend to upload a higher degree of mixed content than the other two industries. Actually, besides *competition*, where production companies are those who use the content type the most, the rest of the content types are clearly dominated by service companies, but to some extent also the trade companies. Here it has to be considered that the trade companies only count for four companies. Additionally, whereas the production and service companies have uploaded all the content types, it shows that trade companies have not used content types counting for *customer service*, *employer branding* and *social company activities*.

The reason for that the service companies have managed to engage the lowest percentage of their Facebook followers, might found in the fact that they continuously in comparison to production and trade tend to upload many different content types. This should be seen in light of that whereas service companies on average upload 5 different content types on their FBP, the number counts for only 3,8 different content types among both the production and trade industry (Appendix 8). What has to be brought to attention in this context is that doing so the service companies use higher extent of mass communication by trying to appeal to the broader audience instead of focusing on specific targets. When using many different content types, it might be difficult for the individual follower to evaluate, which specific value they either can get when choosing to follow the page, and also the content can automatically become less relevant for the individual that has chosen to follow the page because of a specific interest. Hence, the *what's in it for me* factor from the followers' perspective will be more unclear, which naturally can have a negative influence on whether a certain follower chooses to engage with certain content types or not. On the other hand, the industries that focus on applying fewer content types might not be as appealing to the broader audience, but more engaging for the individual, as those know what to expect when choosing to following the page, as well as engaging with the content - hence, among those companies the *what's in it for me* factor might be more clear for the individual. This can also be seen in context with section 6.1.2 and 6.1.3, where we analyzed that companies with larger number of employees, as well as the companies with an international aspect on the FBP tended to be less focused and, thereby, less engaging than the companies that had a major focus on certain content types that followed them all the way around.

The table also shows that the externally oriented content types, hence the sales- and customer oriented content, have among all three industries gained an engagement level below the overall average (0,9%) among all 68 companies included. This is except for one trade company, which has managed to engage 2.53% of the follower base with *sales promotion* content. However, as this only counts for one case among the four trade companies, we can hardly state that the remaining three companies do not follow the same tendency. With this regard, it can therefore be stated that the respective industries follow the general tendencies, where the sales- or customer-oriented content generates the lowest engagement levels among all other content types.

Additionally, the content types that manage to engage the largest parts of the Facebook follower bases within all three industries are *job advertisements* and *competitions*, where *job advertisements* especially has gained a high level of engagement among the production companies. The *competition* content, however, is not the most engaging among the production companies, which can be because of that about 50% of the companies that have uploaded this content type are large companies with many employees, as well as Facebook followers. This should be seen in relation with that we in section 6.1 found that those were the characteristics of the companies that have managed to create the lowest level of engagement in relation to their follower base. On the other hand, both production and trade companies managed to engage more followers through *entertainment* related content than the overall average found among all 68 companies (0.9%). Also, the table shows that production and service companies have engaged higher percentage of their follower bases through *social company activities* compared to the general average (0.9%). As mentioned in section 6.1 those are also the content types that manage to engage the highest number of employees based on what we have observed and commonly, those content types are neither customer- or sales oriented. This means that the three industries in general follow the general tendencies, hence that the content that is not specifically directed towards B2B actors have gained the highest level of engagement.

Therefore, based on the content uploaded on the FBP we cannot explain the reason why the production companies have managed to engage the most of their followers in percentage, followed by the trade companies, and finally the service companies. We have only put emphasis on that the reason why the service companies are those with the lowest engagement level on the FBP, may be because of that these are less focused on the FBP. Therefore, we will in the next section shortly identify whether the common characteristics found among the most engaging companies also can be found among the production companies.

6.2.2.1 The influence of followers and employees among the three industries

We have found in section 6.1 that there is a correlation between that the lower number of employees and Facebook followers the companies have - the higher the *curation* in relation to the follower bases. Therefore, in order to find out whether these tendencies also can be found

among the three industries, we have calculated the percentage of the production, service and trade companies within the intervals for employees and Facebook followers as earlier applied in sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. The results are shown in table 10 below.

Table 10: Number of followers and employees among the three industries

	Production	**Service**	**Trade**
20-500 employees	80.8%	76.3%	100%
501+ employees	19.2%	23.7%	-
51-200 followers	42.2%	26.6%	50%
201-800 followers	30.8%	31.8%	50%
801+ followers	26.9%	42%	-

Source: Own construction, Appendix 4.2

The table above shows that the a higher percentage of the service companies are to be found within the 500+ employees and 801+ followers, compared to the production and trade industry, as none of the four trade companies can be found within these high intervals. This also means that a higher percentage of the production companies are to be found in the lower intervals of both employees and followers. This is in correspondence with our earlier analysis, meaning that the reason why the production companies have managed to engage a larger part of their Facebook follower base is because of that a larger part of those can be found within the lower intervals. The above also shows that the reason why the trade companies have engaged more followers in percentage than service companies is due to that none of the trade companies can be found in the with more than 801 followers and more than 501 employees.

Furthermore, it was found that in section 6.1.3 that there is a correlation between those companies with a Danish FBP have managed to engage a higher percentage of the followers than

companies with international FBP. However, we cannot say that the production companies have gained a higher *curation* based on that more of those are national compared to the two other industries. This is due to that it has been identified that 38.5% of the production companies have international FBP, whereas this only accounts for 28.9% of the service companies, and none of the trade companies (Appendix 8).

In summary, it can therefore be said that the reason why the production companies have gained a higher *curation* than the other two industries is because of that they are following the general tendencies when accounting for the lower number of followers and employees - the higher the level of engagement on the FBP. Furthermore, a reason why the service companies have gained the lowest levels of *curation* might also be because of the fact that those in general are uploading more content types than the production and trade companies, which might indicate that those have a lack of focus on the FBP.

6.3 Companies with the highest engagement among their follower bases

In this section we will explore those companies that have managed to engage their Facebook followers the most. Therefore, we will consider those companies that have created twice as high *curation* as the overall average, hence companies that have managed to engage at least 1.8% of their respective follower bases. This derives from that section 5.4 clarified that the average level of engagement of the follower base is a *curation* (comments/shares) of 0.9%, which is perceived as the most favorable engagement level in terms of *EdgeRanks*. The companies chosen have on that basis twice as much *Content Curation*, than the remaining companies, which makes them the most engaging FBP included in this study. Therefore, we will further explore whether common characteristics exists among these companies, and whether those are following the general tendencies found earlier in section 6.1.

It was found that 8 companies in this study have managed to engage more than 1.8% of their Facebook Followers. Among those are 75% production companies (6 companies), 12.5% service companies (1 company) and 12.5% trade companies (1 company). These companies are

Bornerup Datacenter (5.9%), VM Tarm (3%), Centertryk (2.9%), Flex Trim (2.55%), Eegholm (2.4%), Bentax (2,2%), Moldow (2.2%), and Reklametryk Herning (2%) (Appendix 2.34, 2.38, 2.39, 2.42, 2.52, 2.55, 2.58, 2.61). We have again excluded Alumeco, as the company has gained the highest *curation* among all the 68 companies, only on the basis of one *job advertisement*. When looking at the characteristics of those companies it appears that that they are among the companies with the lowest number of Facebook followers. With this regard, 6 of the companies have less than 51-199 followers, whereas two of the companies have 211 and 795 Facebook followers, respectively. When considering the number of employees of the companies, it appears that all of them have between 20-500 employees, as well as all of them have Danish FBP. This is corresponding with our earlier finding in section 6.1, where we found that the general characteristics of the companies who manage to engage the highest percentage of their Facebook followers are those with the fewest employees and Facebook followers, as well as they have national and not international emphasis on the FBP (Appendix 7).

The facts that those companies have gained the highest *curation* in relation to their follower bases is to a large extent because of the *job advertisement* type of content, closely followed by *competitions*, *social company activities* and *entertainment* (Appendix 7). With regard to the *social company activities* the employees were again the ones, who commented on the posts posts, which corresponds to the findings within section 6.1. Additionally, it has been a general tendency among these 8 companies that the majority of the comments on the FBP are from employees engaging on the FBP. When looking at the other content types especially those with a larger sales- and customer emphasis on the FBP of these most successful companies, it appears that those content types also are the least engaging, which also follows the general tendencies. Therefore, it can be said that the fact that these 8 companies have gained the highest *curation* in relation to the follower base, can derive from that they are following the general tendencies, hence that those have all have Danish FBP and less than 500 employees, and that the majority have less than 200 Facebook followers. Furthermore, the reason why these companies have gained the highest levels of engagement is because of that their main emphasis has been on uploading content that is not sales- or customer-oriented, but rather directed towards employees and other non B2B actors. This again indicates that FBP might not be the place for B2B specific

content, as this content does not have specific B2B relevancy. Furthermore, the level of engagement on the FBP of these companies is also due to that the employees have created the majority of the engagement, especially in relation to the *Social Company Activity* content, where employees have commented on photos and content of themselves and their colleagues.

The fact that 6 out of the 8 companies with the highest engagement levels are production companies also explains why the production companies have gained a higher engagement level than the service and trade industries, as presented in section 6.2. Thereby, it can be said that FBP seems more favorable for production companies, with less than 500 employees and 200 Facebook followers, as well as a Danish FBP, hence a local emphasis. Additionally, the content that are most favorable for these production companies, as well as all companies in general are those not specifically directed towards B2B actors, hence content without a customer- and sales-orientation, but instead content directed towards the employees or other non B2B buyers.

6.4 Summary on analysis of Danish B2B companies on Facebook

To conclude on the analysis in chapter 6 above, we have found that there is a tendency among the 68 companies observed, towards the fact that the lower number of followers, as well as employees - the higher the engagement levels can be reached when using FBP as a Danish B2B company. As well, we have found that this goes well hand in hand with that the most engaging companies observed are the ones that with their use of FBP only have emphasis on the national market, namely Denmark and not their international markets.

We have analyzed and found that the reason for that might be because of that the companies using FBP for the international purposes tend to communicate to a larger mass people. The major reason for this is naturally that the more people are surrounding the company, following the company or are employed by the company - the higher diversity exist among the people. Consequently, the larger emphasis companies will have on using different content types with the purpose to fulfill the need of as many as possible.

Contrary, and closely hand in hand with that the small and local (national) companies, both in terms of followers and employees, tend to use more of certain types of content and less than

others. This is based on a general tendency, where we have found that those companies have huger emphasis on *Social Company Activities* than the large companies. Derived from this, whereas *Social Company Activities*, which have a more internal character, is obviously also more interesting for people knowing who the news concerns or for the employees themselves. Consequently, the larger scale the companies communicate to, the less personal the content is, and the less people are engaging with it. This is closely related to that we found a general tendency within our observations which shows that employees of the respective companies are the main driver behind engagement, which is the reason why *Social Company Activities*, as well as the more internally oriented *General Company News & Info* tend to engage more than the externally oriented content types, such as *Product Promotion*, *Service* and *Sales Promotion* that have a more sales- and customer-oriented emphasis. Nonetheless, hand in hand with the social aspects of those two content types - our study has also shown that those have common characteristics with *Competitions* and *Entertainment*, which again are content types that are not sales - and customer oriented, but more socially and non-business oriented. Besides, those content types are together with *Job Advertisements* also those that maintain to engage the largest percentages of the follower bases, which again supports the reason for why sales- and customer oriented content types might not be working properly on the FBP of Danish B2B companies.

As well, within our second part of the analysis we found that production companies in average have managed to engage a larger part of their follower bases than both the trade and service companies. The service companies were identified as those with the lowest engagement on the FBP, where one of the main reasons might be that they in average upload more diverse content types on their FBP, compared to the production and trade industries. It was also found that within all three industries the content that was most engaging is corresponding to the general tendencies, whereas content that targets B2B purchasers or customers specifically (buyers/decision makers etc.) were the least engaging among all three industries. Moreover, it was identified that the reason why the production companies have a higher engagement levels is that a higher percentage of those are to be found in the lower intervals of both employees and followers, which corresponds to our earlier analysis in section 6.1. Furthermore, we also identified that the reason why the trade companies have engaged more followers in percentage

than service companies is due to that none of the trade companies can be found among the companies with most employees and followers, which is directly contrary to the service industries.

Additionally, in the last section of this chapter, it was identified that the 8 companies have managed to engage the highest percentage of their follower bases, whereof 6 of those are production companies. Again these followed the general tendencies, as those companies all have national FBP, as well as they have a low number of employees and followers. When looking closer at the content these companies applied on the FBP and thereby on which content types the engagement was achieved, our analysis showed that those were the non sales- or customer-oriented content types which account for *job advertisement*, *competitions*, *social company activities* and *entertainment*. The tendency among these 8 companies was also that the majority of the engagement is created by the employees, especially on the social content, where employees are commenting on photos of themselves and their co-workers. The fact that 6 out of the 8 companies with the highest level of engagement are production companies also explains why the production companies have gained a higher engagement level than the service and trade industries. Thereby, it can be said that FBP seems more favorable for production companies, with less than 500 employees and 200 Facebook followers, as well as a Danish FBP, hence a local emphasis. Additionally, the content that is most favorable for these production companies, as well as all companies in general are the types that not specifically are directed towards B2B actors, hence content with no customer- and sales-orientation.

Chapter 7

7 Discussion and evaluation of Danish B2B companies on Facebook

The aim of this second last chapter, before this study reaches its conclusion, will be to make sense of our analysis results, by putting those in perspective with the traditional components of communication, as this emphasis will enable us to assess our final recommendations to the Danish B2B companies from a broader and more sense giving perspective. The aim of this section will firstly be to gain an understanding of which processes communication consist of. Furthermore, to create meaning of the influence the usage of FBP by Danish B2B companies has on the recommendations for this specific target, when considering their use of content and which responses that are gained on basis of the content. Moreover, we will at last put the analysis findings in perspective with Facebook as a platform, in order to make sense of the recommendations of Facebook for B2B value creation.

7.1 The components of communication

Communication is more than just a global force, it is a unique tool that marketers use to persuade customers to act in a desired way. As observed within this study, communication can also unfold in many forms by being verbal (either written or spoken), visual (an illustration, picture, product demonstration) or a combination of the two. Nonetheless, communication can be symbolic, no matter if this is in terms of a high price, which reflects the product quality or a memorable logo and thereby convey special meaning, which the marketer wants to impart. With other words, communication should be perceived within this context as a bridge between the companies and their customers (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012).

There are various ways to define communication, however, the majority of marketers agree on the phrase that:

"(...) communication is the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver via a medium (or channel) of transmission (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012, pp. 265).

However, it is not enough to solely focus on the message delivery from the *sender* to the *receiver*, but also the component of *feedback*, which naturally alerts the *sender* whether the message was received (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Schramm 1954; Wood 2009).

The basic communication model, or also called the *Interactive Model of Communication* is illustrated in figure 8 below*:*

Figure 8: The Basic Communication Model
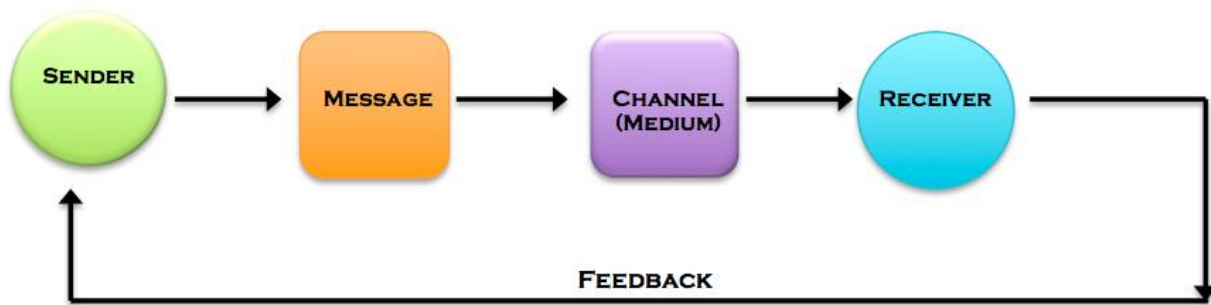
Source: Adapted from Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012 pp. 265

As shown in figure 8 above, the *sender* is the initiator of the communication and can be a *formal* or an *informal* source, where a *formal* communication source normally represents a commercial organisation and, contrary, the *informal* source can for example represent ones families and friends that give product information or advice. Within this study context, the companies' FBP observed naturally represent a *formal source* of information, whereas their employees, as analysed above, are the main driver behind the engagement, which represent the *informal source*. Contrary to the *sender*, the *receiver* of formal marketing communication is most likely to be the targeted prospect or customer, but the *receiver* can also represent an *unintended* audience, which include everyone who is exposed to the message that have not been identified as targets when the *sender* coded the message. Those can for example be represented by diverse stakeholders, employees, the local community etc. (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012).

As pictured in the figure 8 above, the basic communication model also consist of the *medium* that either can be *impersonal* (e.g. mass medium) or *interpersonal* (a formal conversation between a salesperson and a customer, or an informal conversation between two or more people that takes place face to face, by telephone, by post or online). Within this context *mass media* are generally characterised as print, broadcast or electronic (primarily the internet). However, due to the rise of interactive communication, social media, including Facebook seem to blur the lines between *impersonal* and *interpersonal* communication. This is due to that *receivers* through those media types, can give the *senders* (the companies) immediate feedback. However, this should at the same time be seen in context with that the internet provides the companies with more customer data than ever before, which makes it possible for such companies to adapt the marketing messages or the marketing funnel, based on the customers actions on the online platforms (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Chaffey 2011).

Within the communication model, the *message* is represented to be either *verbal* or *non-verbal* or a combination of these two, which has been mentioned before already. Normally, a verbal message can contain more specific product or service information than non-verbal messages, but preferably those two communication methods should be combined, as those together would provide more information to the receiver than either one would do alone (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Wood 2009).

Finally, *feedback* is an essential component no matter if the communication is *interpersonal* or *impersonal,* as prompt feedback especially allows the *sender* to reinforce, change or modify the message so that it is understood in the way it was intended. Obviously, it is often easier to obtain feedback through the *interpersonal* than the *impersonal* communication channel, due to body language, facial expressions etc. (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Wood 2009; Schramm 1954).

7.1.1 Danish B2B companies on Facebook: Who is the target?

When considering the components of communication described above, one of the key components of a communication strategy must undoubtedly be selection of one's target audience. Managing to convert prospects to customers is therefore depended on that marketers are aware of who they will target through different channels and for which purposes, as *responders* obviously consist of different people that have different needs and interests (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Ellis 2011).

With attention to our analysis, we became aware of that the Danish B2B companies on FBP use many diverse content types spreading from *Social Company Activities*, *Entertainment* and *Competitions*, to more sales- and customer oriented content, such as *Service*, *Product Promotion* and *Sales Promotion*, all combined together on one single FBP. This means that no matter if the Facebook user is a B2B customer (buyer/decision maker), an employee, or just a consumer that uses the FBP for entertainment related reasons or to participate in competitions, the Danish B2B companies observed have made sure to create a room for everyone, by using these diverse content types. From the surface this makes sense, as marketers for a long time have argued that there is a high necessity to deliver adapted rather than standardized marketing messages on basis of the characteristics of the targets (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). By applying many different content types on their FBP, the observed Danish B2B companies do not only deliver one standardized message, or in Facebook context, one single content type across the audiences. Rather the B2B companies seem to try to appeal to the broader population of people that have an interest for the company, namely people with different interests, characteristics, and not to forget different needs. This means that whenever one individual chooses to follow a B2B companies' FBP, there is a high chance of that at least a small percentage of the content he/she will get exposed to might catch his or hers interest, as that is the strategy the majority of the Danish B2B have build their FBP around.

However, when considering this much more deeply, it shows that the above mentioned only is the one side of the story, and it brings us to the very beginning of this section, hence that one of the key factors are to have a well defined target group to adapt the marketing messages to, instead of focusing on adapting for no specific reason (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012).

When trying to figure out who the actual targets of the observed Danish B2B companies are, on basis of the communication literature, the whole thing becomes blurred. On the one hand, we sensed that FBP are applied as a channel for promotional purposes related to the *pre-sale*, as defined within our pre-understanding. This firstly made perfect sense because it has been argued that FBP, hand in hand with the majority of other social networking sites and media which is derived from the existing literature, would primarily make sense to apply for marketing and sales related purposes. However, when we moved further within our observation it became clear to us that supporting *pre-sales* related activities through the FBP was not the only focus. As a part of our understanding we therefore realized that B2B companies using FBP also apply those channels for less sales- and customer related activities. This is because of that the companies are uploading *Competitions* and *Entertainment*, as well as the FBP are used for internal communication, which mainly appeared through *Social Company Activities*.

Considering those content types, both the *pre-sales* and non-business content, it becomes clear that those have many different targets, whereas a part of them try to appeal to the B2B prospects and the other half have a more social, entertaining and internal emphasis. The problematic is here that the Danish B2B companies try to stimulate all these different targets from one single FBP, instead of segmenting the targets more specifically, and convey the messages in specific media that are seen, heard or read by the specific target groups, hence applying a multi-channel marketing strategy (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). This problematic is especially visible when considering that the FBP that within our analysis have shown to engage the highest percentage of the respective follower bases when the follower bases only had between 51-199 followers, less than 500 employees, as well when the emphasis was national and not international. Hence, whenever companies maintained to approach more specific and smaller targets.

This should be considered in context with that whenever marketers talk about the thousands of opportunities social media channels hold for companies, one of their arguments are that each of those social media channels allow the companies to target different segments relevant to them. The message is not that companies should appeal to everyone from one single site and be everywhere while still trying to aim for the same targets, instead they should stay focused on

which channels that enable them to target the diverse people relevant to them, no matter of those are prospects, employees or other stakeholders (Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan 2012; Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides 2012; Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012; Ellis 2011).

Considering the B2B purchaser (the responder) that may choose to use Facebook, as a part of his/hers information search during the decision making process, it might be rather difficult to utilize whether the information he/she searches for is available on the FBP, when the content is so diversified and mixed. This means that this purchaser might need to scroll down the FBP across the different pictures from the internal employee parties, which are not relevant at all for B2B actor's context, in order to find a post down the line that might help to solve the problem. At the same time, the credibility of the information that can be obtained on such a FBP might be questionable for this B2B purchaser, as those internal employee parties and communications might degrade the context he/she is searching for (Brashear -Alejandro 2011; Johnston & Lewin 1996; Dubrovsky et.al. 1991; Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). The fact that the credibility of Facebook as a medium for those kinds of professional purchases might be questioned will be discussed further on in section 7.1.1.1. Hence, also for those purchasers the evaluation of whether the particular FBP is relevant for their context might be difficult to evaluate due to the unfocused emphasis of the Danish B2B companies using FBP.

In context with our analysis, this above mentioned problematic might also be the reason why low engagement has been found among all the Danish B2B companies included, which on average only maintained to engage 0.9% of their followers pr.post. While the first point is here, in relation to the communication model, that the responder might have difficulty in evaluating whether the page is relevant for him/her, it also appears that the B2B companies are not aware of who their targets are on the FBP. This has furthermore been confirmed through the fact that we within our analysis found that the service industry, which focused on many different content types, was the least engaging industry among the three industries included within this study.

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However, the value of *feedback* from the *responders* should not only be seen in its favorability of the engagement levels that can be achieved through the FBP, but to high extent also that this would change the whole process from one-to-many to one-to-one communication in the B2B sphere. Nonetheless, the *feedback* is not only important for the *sender* when determining how well the communication has taken place. The feedback is much important for the *receivers*, as it enables them to participate, to be involved, to experience in some way the message itself, which again will reinforce the message (Cooke 1986; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). On basis of our analysis, this participation might be even harder to obtain when it appears that the B2B companies use FBP as a mass communication, by trying to appeal to a broad audience, and not having clarified specific targets for their FBP communication strategy. The low degree of *feedback* is the natural negative disadvantage, when involving in *impersonal* aspect of communication rather than *interpersonal* communication, which the medium selection visible in figure 8 also illustrates. Furthermore, this is also reflect in the fact that only 16% of the B2B companies observed, encouraged to be more *interpersonal* in their approach by trying to establish a dialogue among the audience (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012).

The discussion above has helped us realize that the mass communication, hence the *impersonal* approach to the use of FBP, can be perceived as unfavorable for the B2B companies. This is not only in terms of that it might be hard to evaluate the credibility of the respective FBP from the follower point of view, but also that the less focused the FBP are, the less relevant would those also be for their target groups, which all have different interest, needs and characteristics. Therefore, the aim of the next section will be on which influence this might have when considering the B2B sphere and its complexity isolated.

7.1.1.1 The B2B one - to - one communication and buying complexity

The above discussion has shown that the mass communication, and thereby the *impersonal* communication emphasis, on the FBP of Danish B2B companies is perceived as rather unfavorable. This has to be put in perspective in context with the B2B sphere, its communication form characteristics, as well as the matter of complexity that to higher extent is perceived in the B2B marketplace. Considering the main characteristics of the B2B marketplace, the key factors

among others are: trust and commitment building, confidentiality, higher complexity and higher risk perceptions, purchases compared to the B2C sphere (Ellis 2011; Hutt & Speh 2010; Cooke 1986; Morgan & Hunt 1994).

Considering the *impersonal* communication form that derives from the mass communication emphasis on the Danish B2B companies' FBP, the above mentioned key factors can undoubtedly be hard to obtain. Throughout the B2B literature, it is stated that trust and commitment are the main sources for risk and uncertainty decreases, when involving in complex buying decisions. Not only is it a common fact that building trust requires several social exchanges between parties, as the primarily source for trust building is personal communication and relationship building, it has also been stated within the literature that the more distant parties are from each other during this trust building process, the more psychologically distant the parties will be (Brashear -Alejandro 2011; Johnston & Lewin 1996; Dubrovsky et.al. 1991). However, as it appears the way the Danish B2B FBP marketers tend to apply their FBP does not open up creating the *interpersonal* communication between the parties that is needed in the B2B context. This is not least when considering that the companies do not seem to encourage more personal interactions with their followers, when considering the *pre-sales* or *customer service* oriented content types, which also are among the least engaging content types we have observed. The B2B problematic should therefore be seen in context with the channel selection, hence the public appearance of the FBP, which naturally decreases the *confidentiality* required.

As a consequence, the low engagement levels on the sales- and customer oriented content types, might also be found in the fact that whenever people choose to communicate through technology, they are less constrained by etiquette and social norms, which can have a negative effect on the buying process and relationship building. Those technological media, encourage feelings of anonymity and social distance, which of course has a negative influence on relationship building and the sense of community and network (Dubrovsky et al. 1991).

As shortly mentioned in section 7.1.1 the choices of the content the Danish B2B companies choose to apply might also be conflicting with what a B2B purchaser actually searches for. Here

especially *competition* and *entertainment* content types have to be brought to attention. Although the use of entertainment related content can be relevant in order to catch the attention of consumers involving in low-involvement products, there is no doubt that whenever the complexity of the purchase increases, people will become more receptive and consider those content types as irrelevant for their purchase context. Rather, specific descriptions and other uncertainty reduces will enable to increase the probability for purchase (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). Considering our observations and analysis, we have found that those content types successfully were applied by a high percentage of the companies, and this again raises the question of the target group, as it can hardly be said that those entertaining content types will have an influence on the B2B purchaser. Also, this furthermore questions what the actual emphasis of the Danish B2B companies on FBP actually are, when bringing to attention that those companies apply the same FBP for many diverse content types that has been discussed already in section 7.1.1.

However, on basis of the confidentiality and personal communications that are of high importance within the B2B market sphere, it is also important to highlight that we are not able to observe all interactions happening between the Danish B2B companies applying FBP. Based on the knowledge of that negotiations and dialogues are more proper to be maintained offline, there might be some interactions between the companies derived from the sales- and customer oriented content exposure that we have not been able to capture within our study. Therefore, there might be a slight chance of that some B2B marketers actually have maintained to lead generate through the platform without us knowing it, as we of course do not participate in close offline negotiations. On the other hand, considering the necessity of one-to-one communication within the B2B market in context with the mass communication the companies emphasise on their FBP, the lead generation is still seen as highly questionable. This is not least, when also considering the quite irrelevant and less B2B focused content types the companies generally gain the highest engagement levels on, as well that the sales- and customer related content types are among the least engaging on the FBP of Danish B2B companies.

The knowledge of that the entertaining content types are more engaging than the sales- or customer oriented content types, should also be considered in perspective to Facebook as a platform. This is because of that based on the above discussions found out that those content types have almost non-existent relevancy for a B2B purchaser that is constrained by higher risk perceptions and uncertainty, due the higher complexity and involvement in the purchase process. As well, the fact that public and non-personal communications form might be unfortunate to use when focusing on establishing trust and build commitment. This will therefore be discussed further within the section below.

7.2 Communication towards the unintended receiver

Within the sections above, we have clarified that it might be rather problematic for the B2B companies to reach their targets, namely other businesses, when considering their mass communication approach, but also when emphasizing the fact that B2B sphere is rather complex, which increases the need for trust building, uncertainty reducing, as well as one-to-one communication. Despite the fact that we have realized that the Danish B2B companies using FBP do not manage to overcome any of those above mentioned B2B barriers and, thereby, succeed with their externally oriented communication. The surprising fact within this context is that whereas those companies do not maintain to succeed with their external communication, we have found that they unintended are great at using FBP for internal communication purposes.

When using the term *unintended* it refers to reaching an *unintended audience* with the communication messages, as already has been described in context with our basic communication model presented earlier in section 6.1.

This should be seen in context with both our observational results, as our analysis of all 68 companies, where we found:

- That the common understanding of Facebook as a platform for businesses, which has corresponded to our pre-understanding, is that Facebook together with all other social media channels primarily might be seen as favorable to apply for *marketing & sales*

related purposes. Despite this, we have found that the sales- and customer oriented content types are exactly those that get lost in the clutter.

- Contrary, having the *unintended audience* in mind in this context, we have found that the content types that are the most engaging, among all companies included, primarily are those that do not correspond to the B2B communication requirements discussed above. These account for: *job advertisements, competitions, entertainment* and not least *social company activities*.

Whereas, the success of *job advertisement* is seen favorable among the Danish B2B companies due to the fact that it is defined as a *Support Activity* within the *Generic Value Chain*, the other content types seem rather questionable to apply within the B2B context, when considering the discussion placed in section 7.2 above.

We have analyzed within section 6.1.4 that what all those most engaging content types have in common is that those are not B2B sales- or customer oriented. Rather those content types have an appeal towards all possible Facebook users, or with other words all possible consumers rather than B2B customers. As well, what cannot be left out from this context is that our observations have shown that the followers that are the main drivers behind the engagement created on the FBP of Danish B2B companies are the employees of the respective companies. This count for the general picture of the 68 companies included within this study, as well as we have analyzed that the employees are the main drivers of engagement among the 8 most engaging Danish B2B companies' FBP. Those most engaging companies also generate most engagement on the non - business related content types.

Bringing the *unintended audience* to attention in this context, should be seen in the light of that the employees do not only engage with the non- business related content types, but also with all content types exposed on the FBP observed, which naturally also accounts for the externally oriented content types approaching the B2B buyers and existing B2B customers. This fact again highlights that the companies observed, do not maintain to overcome the complex B2B requirements it takes to influence the B2B purchasers or intended users. This is even though that

the companies try hardly, as about 88% of the companies have used *production promotion* content on the FBP.

7.2.1 The Facebook mission in perspective with the behavior of users

When considering the most engaging content types, as well as the most engaging FBP followers, hence the respective company employees, it is relevant to bring the mission of Facebook in consideration that says:

"(...) people use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them" (Facebook n.d.).

When looking at the perspective of the *receiver*, Facebook is applied to share content with families and friends and receive information about other peoples' lives (Hansson & Wrangmo 2013; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis 2009). In this context, the user emphasis on Facebook is usually not on creating new contacts, but rather to share and keep in touch with friends and family, which is in compliance with the mission statement presented above (Hansson & Wrangmo 2013; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis 2009). Because of the fact that Facebook is not as business-oriented, contrary to LinkedIn, which is a rather business-oriented platform, several studies have also shown that users also perceive Facebook differently in terms of that Facebook to higher extent is applied for entertainment and staying in touch with friends and families. Hence, the users are more present on Facebook for private reasons and less for business related reasons, as that to higher extent is what LinkedIn is applied for (Lutze 2010; Hansson & Wrangmo 2013, Palmer & Koenig - Lewis 2009). Therefore, this might be the reason why the engagement on the FBP is higher on non-business content (entertainment, competitions, job advertisement), as this content is not specifically directed towards B2B buyers and decision makers, but instead all Facebook users, no matter of their professional background and emphasis.

With regard to the entertainment emphasis of FBP, it makes perfectly sense that the most engagement derives from *Competition* and *Entertainment*. As well, considering that the Facebook users apply Facebook for a rather private emphasis should also be put in perspective the popularity of *Social Company Activities* content. This specific content enables the employees

and thereby the Facebook users to do exactly what the mission states - namely to engage and stay in touch with people they know and people they have relation to, which in this context are their colleagues. Our analysis also showed that the companies who managed to create the most engagement with their *General Company News & Information* were not those that shared their financial results or CSR policies that naturally are more business oriented. Rather it was the *General Company News & Information* content that had a larger emphasis on either new employees or existing employees leaving the companies, hence those content types also had a more social rather than business oriented factor. In this context, the diversification can be drawn on basis of the fact that the financial results, CSR, etc. account for a more *Formal* sender. On the other hand, the news about the employees is considered as more *information*, due to the larger social emphasis and internal communication, which corresponds to our basic model of communication presented in section 6.1.

When considering the social emphasis of Facebook, in relation with the earlier targeting difficulty within section 7.1.1, it has been argued that the companies applied both external communication and internal communication within the same FBP. Although, the engagement on internal communication always out dominated the external communication engagement among the majority of the companies. What has to be accounted here is that the social aspect and the private connection is what counts on Facebook. Therefore, it can be argued that in order to make the Facebook strategy of the Danish B2B companies much more effective and focused across their targets, it would be rather preferable to only focus on the internal communication activities instead of delivering messages to their followers that are irrelevant for them in a Facebook context. With this regard, it also makes perfectly sense that the engagement levels decrease whenever the FBP or company was bigger of size, or whenever a particular B2B company had an international emphasis. This is because of that when going to Facebook for socializing with current relations, hence having a social and personal approach to the platform, it becomes less relevant for the individuals to engage on large FBP in terms of follower bases (and in relation to our findings closely connected to the number of employees), as those automatically will lack the characteristics of a small social community where everyone know everyone, and where each individual can engage with his/hers private connection.

One of the key points should therefore be to put larger emphasis on the followers or respondents that actually provide the feedback to the companies on the respective channels, as well consider on which media channels, the targets the companies want to reach actually behave in a way those companies want them to. With this regard it is necessary to have in mind that customers today have plenty of opportunities for communication (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). They can apply Instagram, whenever they would like to capture and share the world's moments (Constine 2013). At the same time, whenever individuals have a need to create and share ideas instantly they can use Twitter, whereas if whenever they feel the need to explore or grow their business network and relations they can easily access LinkedIn, that contrary to Facebook only is focused on the professional connection, and not the private connection (Twitter n.d.; Linkedin n.d.). What has become clear is that individuals undoubtedly use Facebook whenever they want to socialize with their families, friends and other private connections and share what matters to them in those contexts. Hence, they are less interested in giving feedback to the *formal* message senders, but rather socializing with the *informal* senders of messages, which in correspondingly to the basic communication model included in section 6.1 account for the families and friends of the receivers.

This emphasis of Facebook also puts into perspective why the B2B purchasers do not have intentions to engage with the content of B2B companies, as individuals within the communication literature are broadly defined on basis of their selective exposure to messages (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012). This means that on basis of that they have many different media channels to choose from, as well as they daily are exposed to a large amount of advertisements, they tend to ignore the messages that have no special interest or relevance for them at a given time. This is influenced by the mood they are in at a given time, as the mood of individuals affects the way in which a message is perceived and, thereby, whether the receiver of the message chooses to give feedback to the sender, or whether he/she solely choose to ignore the content (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen 2012).

7.3 The Final Recommendations for the Danish B2B companies on FBP

The main emphasis of this section was to put our analysis findings in perspective with the traditional components of communication, as this would allow us to assess our final recommendations to the Danish B2B companies from a broader and more sense giving perspective. Doing so has enabled us to express our final recommendations both on basis of our analysis within Chapter 6 as well as this current Chapter 7.

When putting the recommendations in context, we have found a clear tendency among the 68 companies towards the fact that the lower number of followers and employees within the respective companies, the higher engagement levels can be obtained when using FBP as a Danish B2B company. This goes well hand in hand with that the most engaging companies also are the ones who only target their national market (in this context the Danish market) with their FBP and not the international markets.

We have analysed and found that the reason for that might be because of that the companies using FBP for the international purposes tend to communicate to a larger mass with diversified needs. The major reason for this is that the more people that are surrounding the company, following the company or are employed by the company - the higher diversity exist among the people. Consequently, the larger emphasis companies will have on using different content types with the purpose to fulfill the need of as many as possible, the less focus they also will have on what actually fulfill the needs of their most important targets, which in section 7.1.1 has been highlighted as unfavorable. This derives from that targeting a larger mass of people will result in having an *impersonal approach*, which is unfavorable in the B2B markets. On that basis, it is highly recommendable for the B2B companies using FBP to focus on smaller targets and convey messages to them that corresponds to their interests, instead of focusing on catching the attention of the broader audience by applying many diversified content types. This will naturally result in higher level of feedback and, thereby, engagement than the contrary.

Furthermore, we are confident to state that the FBP are most recommendable to apply for companies for internal communication rather than external, hence B2B sales- and customer oriented communication. This is a consequence of that the more sales - and customer oriented the

content is, the lower level of engagements will be obtained through the FBP of the Danish B2B companies. This naturally reflects in that the followers do not tend to be willing to give *feedback* to the *senders* (FBP) whenever the means are business oriented, and not socially/privately oriented. The reason for this might be found in that business customers require more *interpersonal* communication forms, in order to be able to overcome the high risk perceptions and build trust when involving on complex and high involvement purchases. Also, due to the confidentiality within the B2B sphere those conversations and dialogues would be more proper outside a public platform as Facebook, and rather in person, as one-to-one communication is preferable for further negotiations and extended dialogue between the B2B parties. This also means that there is a chance of that some B2B marketers actually have maintained to lead generate through the platform without us knowing it, as we of course do not participate in close offline negotiations.

Considering the mission statement of Facebook, and the fact that the employees are the main drivers of engagement - using internal communication as the major approach when being a B2B company should be perceived as rather preferable, compared to external communication, and thereby also recommendable based on our analysis and discussion. People use Facebook to socialize with their private connections, families and friends, as well as share what really matters to them. On that basis it makes sense that employees are the ones creating the most engagement as well that *Competitions*, *Entertainment*, *Job Advertisement* and *Social Company Activities* are the most engaging content types found within our analysis. Those content types, all appeal to the private means consumers have when using Facebook as a platform for private rather than business oriented purposes.

In order to conclude, FBP are most recommendable for Danish B2B companies with less than 500 employees and fewer than 200 followers. Furthermore, the B2B companies should also have a national emphasis on the FBP, rather than an international. Moreover, FBP are also recommendable for B2B companies that want to use the platform for internal communication purposes. However, if B2B companies have a desire to use the platform to external sales- and business communication directed towards B2B buyers/decision makers, etc. the platform is not

recommendable for this purpose, based on our finding. Therefore, FBP is not recommendable for B2B companies to invest in, besides from if they have a desire to engage their employees. Here it is important to highlight that we have not been able to observe if some of the companies have managed to lead generate through the platform, or otherwise have engaged with other B2B actors in the private messages of the FBP.

PART 4

Chapter 8: Conclusion

"Simply put: we don't build services to make money, we make money to build better services. And we think this is a good way to build something" (Mark Zuckerberg, CEO Facebook)

Chapter 8

8 Conclusion

The final section of this Master Thesis in hand, naturally consists of a conclusion holding all the different findings that make up answers to our problem statement. In order to make the conclusion more manageable, we will begin this chapter by repeating our Problem Statement derived from section 1.3 below:

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

1. UNDERSTAND FACEBOOK AS A PLATFORM FOR BUSINESSES, AND INDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE USAGE POSSIBILITIES OF DANISH B2B COMPANIES

2. UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE THE USAGE OF FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGES BY DANISH B2B COMPANIES

3. ON BEHALF OF THE ANALYSIS, EVALUATE WHETHER FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGES ARE RECOMMENDABLE FOR DANISH B2B COMPANIES TO APPLY AND FOR WHICH PURPOSES

The conclusion will be structured in a way, so the essence of each chapter is presented in separate sections. This means that we will begin with presenting our pre-understanding of the phenomenon this study has concerned, which will be followed by the understanding gained on basis of the observation of 68 danish B2B companies. Finally, we will present the results of our analysis as well as conclude on the recommendability of FBP for Danish B2B companies.

8.1 Facebook and its usage possibilities for Danish B2B companies

Before moving on to the presentation of the usage possibilities of FBP for Danish B2B companies, it is necessary to bring the 68 included companies to attention. Those companies were identified among 29,832 companies, where we based on the filtration criteria identified 68 companies that followed the criteria. The purpose of the filtration criteria were not only to find a manageable number of B2B companies for this study, but also to identifying the companies that actually uses FBP, in order to help us gain the understanding of the phenomenon that is desired.

In order to identify the FBP usage possibilities for Danish B2B companies, we have chosen to make our pre-understanding of the phenomenon explicit by finding inspiration in the *Generic Value Chain* and *The Structured Engagement Ladder* based on our understanding of Facebook as a platform. Within our pre-understanding we especially perceived Facebook as being optimal for *marketing & sales* related purposes but through the *Generic Value Chain* we also identified other relevant *Primary Activities* that Facebook could be applied for namely *Customer Service*. Similarly, our pre-understanding was based on that *Support Activities* could be maintained in terms of *Job Advertisements* and *Employer Branding*, within *HRM*, as well as through *inputs* and *dialogue* within *Technology Development*.

Considering Facebook as a platform, based on the *Structured Engagement Ladder* we presented, that B2B companies applying Facebook Business Pages possibly could obtain *Content Consumption*, *Content Curation* as well as the *Collaboration* level of engagement.

Making our pre-understanding explicit on that basis, enabled us to clarify the first research problem statement question. As well, it opened up for the opportunity to move forward with this study. Our emphasis was therefore, in correspondence with our Data Collection method, to move our focus away from the pre-understanding, and instead increase our openness towards new content findings based on the *explorative* nature of this study in hand. This leads to presenting the observational results, as well as the new understanding gained in the section below.

8.2 Facebook for B2B: The understanding and analysis

Based on our observational study of the Danish B2B companies using FBP, we have been able to reach a new understanding of the phenomenon.

In correspondence with our pre-understanding we found that Danish B2B companies use FBP for supporting *Primary Activities* in terms of *Pre-sale* within *Marketing & Sales*, which unfolds through *product promotion*, *sales promotion* and *event promotion*. As well, the new understanding gained represented that few Danish B2B companies also apply this platform for supporting *post- sale* through *Service*.

Our new understanding also holds that the B2B companies included apply FBP to share *General Company News & Information*. This content type was not considered within our pre-understanding, as it cannot be directly be related to either *pre-sale* or *post-sale*, but rather as a general marketing activity that provides followers, customers, prospects and other stakeholders of interest with general news and information about the company.

In relation to the *Support Activities*, and in correspondence to our pre-understanding, we observed that Danish B2B companies support their *HRM activities* by sharing *Job Advertisements*, as well content related to *Employer Branding*. Considering *Technology Development*, we have not found that any of the B2B companies used the FBP for this purpose, as no R&D related dialogues took place, as well as the companies did not encourage R&D related inputs from the followers. Hence, our new understanding resulted in that *Technology Development* no longer was considered as a B2B Facebook Business Page activity.

Also, we identified new content types, namely *Social Company Activities*, *External Content*, *Competition* and *Entertainment*. Those could not directly be related to the possible value chain activities performed, which expanded our understanding of the B2B companies' FBP usage further. This is especially on the basis that our pre-understanding was based on that the main usage possibility for B2B companies on Facebook was *marketing & sales* related activities, but none of these content types were identified as having a sales- or customer oriented perspective, when considering the B2B sphere.

Considering *The Structured Engagement Ladder*, the new understanding gained also resulted in realizing that the only engagement levels reached were *Content Consumption* and *Content Curation*, which means that we have not been able to identify *Collaboration* during our observation. Even though we have observed singular comments, those never evolved to continuous conversations or discussions within the comment field. Hence, it has only been a matter of a question - and a single answer, which is conflicting with what the *Collaboration* engagement level represents.

When considering the general engagement levels among the content types identified on the FBP, it came to our attention that the B2B sales - and customer oriented content types, such as *Product Promotion, Event Promotion, Sales Promotion* and *Customer Service*, were among the least engaging content types, considered on the basis of how large percentage of the follower bases the B2B companies managed to engage with those content types. This has been rather surprising compared to our pre-understanding, as we mentioned above have considered Facebook as especially being optimal for those sales and customer oriented content types. This is especially when we also realized that the content types that have proven to be the most engaging among all 68 companies included were, besides *Job Advertisements*, the new findings related to *Social Company Activities, Competition* and *Entertainment*. Those finding have been rather conflicting with our first impression of what Danish B2B companies could apply FBP for in a *Generic Value Chain* perspective.

Within chapter 6, we analyzed the tendencies among the 68 companies included in this study in order to make sense of the data we have collected through our online observations. Our analysis showed that the FBP that managed to create the highest levels of engagements, were those with the smallest follower bases counting less than 200 followers and maximum 500 employees. As well, our analysis showed that the most engaging FBP were those that had a national (Danish page) rather than international emphasis on Facebook.

During our analysis, we also found that the production industry was the most engaging industry among the three included, which also consisted of the service and trade industry. This is also reflected in that 6 out of 8 of the most engaging FBP in our study were production companies. We found also that the service industry was the least engaging industry among those three, and one of the reasons for the lower level of engagement might be found in that this industry continuously was focused on uploading many different content types, compared to the remaining two industries included. Another reason for the lower engagement level within the service industry was that these companies tended to have larger follower bases as well as larger number of employees.

In relation to the 8 companies that have managed to engage the highest percentage of their follower bases, we found that those had a large emphasis on non sales- or customer related content. Hence, those companies were more focused on *Social Company Activities, Job Advertisement*, *Competition* and *Entertainment*. Those content types were also the most engaging ones for those companies, which followed the overall tendency of all companies included. The same has been true, when considering the overall fact that the employees are the main drivers of engagement within the majority of the companies included - and especially the companies that obtained the highest engagement levels. Those companies also generally followed the overall tendencies found within this study concerning the company size, the follower base, and the fact that those all had a national emphasis.

8.3 Are Facebook Business Pages recommendable for B2B?

As derived from the analysis, we are confident that when using FBP in a B2B context, it is recommendable to focus on follower bases with less than 200 followers, as well as having a Danish FBP, hence a national emphasis. At the same time, the analysis has also showed that the FBP are most recommendable for companies with less than 500 employees. By viewing this in a different perspective through our discussion, we realized that this might be due to that the companies using FBP for the international purposes, tend to communicate to a larger mass with diversified needs, and the same is true for the companies with higher number of followers as well as employees. The larger masses, the larger emphasis companies will have on using different content types with the purpose to fulfill the need of as many as possible. This means that they will have less focus on what actually fulfill the needs of their most important targets, which during our discussion, based on a communication perspective has been highlighted as rather unfavorable. This derives from that targeting a larger mass of people will result in having an *impersonal approach*, which is unfavorable in the B2B markets.

Furthermore, we have found that FBP are most recommendable to apply for companies with the intention of using the pages for internal communication rather than external, hence B2B sales- and customer oriented communication. This is a consequence of that the more sales - and

customer oriented the content is, the lower level of engagements will be obtained through the FBP of the Danish B2B companies. This naturally reflects in that the followers do not tend to be willing to give *feedback* to the *senders* (FBP) whenever the means are business oriented, and not socially/privately oriented. Our discussion showed that the reason for this might be found in that business customers require more *interpersonal* communication forms, in order to be able to overcome the high risk perceptions and build trust when involving on complex and high involvement purchases. Also, due to the confidentiality within the B2B sphere those conversations and dialogues would be more proper outside a public platform as Facebook.

Considering the mission statement of Facebook, and the fact that the employees are the main drivers of engagement - using internal communication as the major approach when being a B2B company should be perceived as most recommendable, compared to external communication. People use Facebook to socialize with their private connections, families and friends, as well as share what really matters to them. On that basis it makes sense that employees are the ones creating the most engagement, as well as that *Competitions*, *Entertainment*, *Job Advertisement* and *Social Company Activities* are the most engaging content types found within our analysis. Those content types, all appeal to the private means consumers have when using Facebook as a platform for private rather than business oriented purposes.

Therefore, if B2B companies have a desire to use the platform to external sales- and business communication directed towards B2B buyers/decision makers, etc. the platform is not perceived as recommendable based on our findings.

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