Metropolia

Marjo Brander

# Processing Social Media Posts in Contact Centers

## Preface

Processing social media posts in companies is a new phenomenon, especially in contact center environments. A challenge for this study was to suggest a combination of contact center services and social media posts handling. All the interviewed companies handle social media posts manually and mainly outside contact centers. Software proposals for social media posts handling in contact centers were at the time of this study, so rear that it was not realistic to find case companies using them. Therefore a data collection on social media post processing in contact center was challenging and useful.

My biggest thanks goes to my family; they gave to me a chance to conduct this study. I would like to thank my tutor Minna Takala for guiding me into the world of Social Media with her own example, and also Marjatta Huhta for her contribution by instructing and encouraging me to finish this project on time. My special thanks go to Zinaida for patience and for giving her contribution to this study.

Especially I would like to thank those nine companies, which made this study possible by giving their interviews. Valuable information given by them is an important part of The Thesis. Thank you.

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This Master's Thesis explores different aspects of social media use in companies and proposes a model for processing social media posts in contact centers.

A social media can be used as a tool for customer service and a new channel for customer to contact a company. When the number of social media posts increases, the company must address this challenge. For this purpose, the company needs guidelines and developed processes for handling social media posts.

This study was launched due to the new social media engagement products in contact center solutions. These products are new and their practical implementations are still largely absent. The aim of this Thesis is to make a proposal how social media posts can be processed in contact centers.

This study was carried out by collecting data through semi-structured interviews from companies operating in different industries. The data were analyzed, and based on the analyses, a model was suggested. The developed model was then discussed with contact center experts.

The result of this Thesis is a model for processing social media posts in contact centers. This model is formed taking into account the customer, the process and the economic aspects. The suggested model can be further modified to serve those companies use, which intend to process social media post in their contact centers.

| Key words | Contact center, social media, posts, model for processing posts |
|---|---|

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| B2C | Business-to Consumer |
| B2B | Business-to-Business |
| BSC | Balance Scorecard |
| CRM | Customer Relationship Management |
| GEIS | General Electronic Subsidiary |
| IRC | Internet Relay Chat |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| SLA | Service Level Agreement |
| SNS | Social Network Site |
| UC | Unified Communication |
| WFM | Work Force Management |
| WFO | Work Force Optimizer |

# 1   Introduction

This Thesis examines how social media tools can be utilized and processed in a company's contact center for the purpose of effective customer care. The Thesis is particularly scoped around the processing of social media post through contact centers and contact center professionals.

According to Merriam-Webster, the word *social* is defined as "relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group" and the word *media* as "a medium of cultivation, conveyance, or expression" (Merriam-Webster).

Social media has a variety of definitions. One such definition is suggested by Bradley: "Social media is a communications channel opened for the purpose of mass collaboration" (Bradley 2011). Bradley opens up this definition by underlying that social media is a channel, not a technology, and a specific social media channel has a purpose. A real value of social media comes from the massive communication, in which large numbers of people can effectively collaborate (Bradley 2011).

Along with various definitions, several attempts have been done to classify social media. One of the classifications, called social media landscape, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Social Media Landscape 2011 (Cavazza 2011).

Figure 1 illustrates Cavazza's classification of social media. This classification suggests a set of 7 families: *publishing, sharing, discussion, commerce, locating, networking and games.* Cavazza's classification has placed Facebook and Google into the central place, and it divides social media tools into seven families based on their usage. Facebook and Google have grown into giants of social media field, which manifests as an opportunity to log into several social media tools by using Facebook or Google authentication.

The first category (*publishing*) contains social media tools such as blog platforms, microblogs, social stream services and wikis. In these tools, users are enabled to be writers of document. For example, users of WetPaint can write gossips about celebrities, or

Wikipedia users can write an encyclopedia together. A popular tool for microbloging is Twitter, in which a user can share short information pieces or news. (Cavazza 2011)

The second category (*sharing*) contains services for users to share videos, photos, links, music or documents. One example here is YouTube, a popular video sharing tool, where users can also comment videos or send links to Facebook or Twitter. (Ibid.)

The third category (*discussion*) consists of bulletin boards, comments management systems and social search tools. Discussion tools allow a user to post short text, photos, questions and comment them, at least partly, centralized. Bulletin boards are also used as tools for anonymous postings, such as photo sharing tool 4Chan. Comments management systems gives a possibility to comment different blogs with a profile, which allows tracking back these comments and receiving alerts from other comments. A social search tool provides a means to post questions and wait for the answers from other users. (Ibid.)

The fourth category (*commerce*) contains customer reviews solutions, collaborative feedbacks tools, recommendation and inspiration communities, localized coupons, purchase sharing tools, co-shopping tools and Facebook-shopping tools. Modern commerce allows for shopping reviews and commenting. For example, in Blippy a user can write comments and reviews on their credit card shopping. (Ibid.)

The fifth category (*location*) has social location platforms, local social networks, mobile social networks and events sharing. Location platforms allow users to share local events and other happenings online. The user can share their current location or try to find a new friend close to his or hers current location through for, example Facebook, places. (Ibid.)

The sixth category, *networking*, holds personal social networks, professional social networks, "traditional" social networks and social networks creation tools. Different kind of social networks allow users to connect to their friends and colleagues. "Original" Facebook and LinkedIn, where users can share their competence and build their professional network of people, belong to this category. (Ibid.)

The seventh, and the newest, category in Cavazza's landscape is *games*, where user can find traditional plays from casual gaming, but also social gaming, as well as mobile gaming and virtual worlds for tweens. (Cavazza, 2010)

Appendix 1 holds a table where a more detailed listing of different social media tools per each category is provided. Cavazza's categorization gives a holistic coverage of social media and different social media tools.

## 1.1 Introduction to Contact Centers

A contact center is "a system that handles and manages customer contacts regardless of the form of contacts "(Genesys 2001: 8). Contact center provides a centralized and unified contact point for customer, regardless of the contact channel. If effectively used, a contact center brings value to the customer and, at the same time, unifies the company's contact points towards better serving its customers. This Thesis concentrates on Genesys (Genesys Telecommunication Laboratories), which provided contact center software and Genesys Social Engagement solutions. Figure 2 illustrates a contact center overview and Genesys role in it.
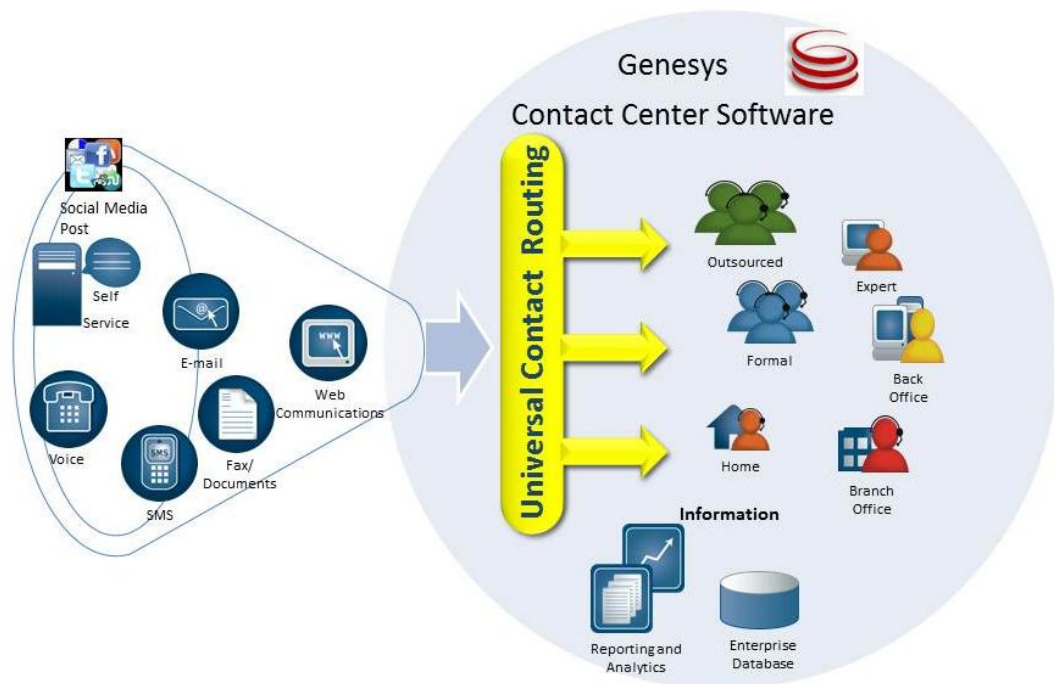


Figure 2. Overview of the Contact Center and Genesys Contact Center software in it (Genesys 2009: 16).

Figure 2 shows an overview of contact center functions in general. Figure 2 illustrates how customer contacts received, from various channels, are directed to the contact center, where all the customer representatives are gathered. Customer representatives can be physically located in various locations, and routing (universal contact routing) divides customer contacts, according to established categorization, to various customer representatives. Centralization of contact handling allows for reporting, customer representative workforce management and integration with other systems (Genesys 2009: 16).

A Genesys software role in contact centers is to route contacts to right customer representatives. Another major role of Genesys software is to enable an interface, where a customer representative can handle all kind of contacts through one single tool. For management, the system provides interfaces for monitoring both services and customer representatives and a tool for workforce management.

## 1.2    Research Problem and Research Question

In general, this research deals with the problem of how social media can be utilized in a company and, more precisely, how social media posts can be processed by the company contact center. These research problems are shaped into the following research question:

What model could be used for processing social media posts through contact centers?

Research design, illustrating the development from the research problem to the final result, is shown in Figure 3.
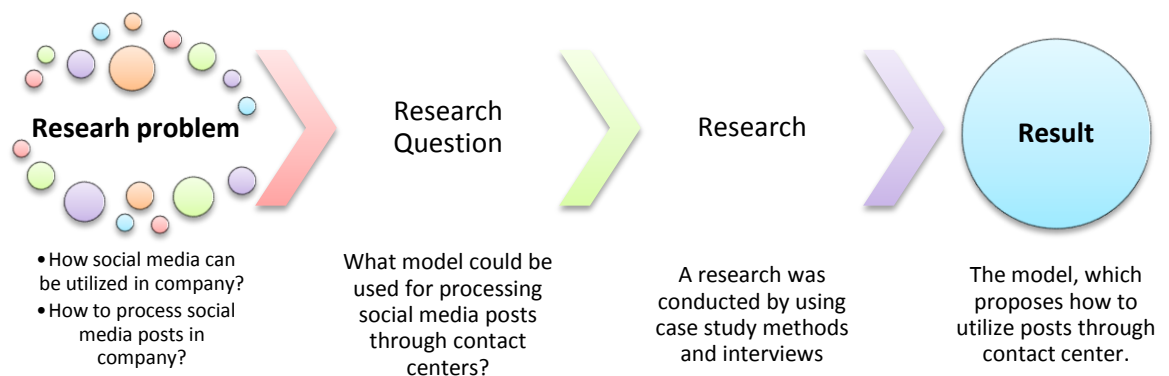


Figure 3. Research design of the Thesis.

As Figure 3 shows, the research problem is derived from the initial need to the actual process of effectively handling great amounts of social media posts. The research concentrates on studying a social media post processing in a contact center environment. This Thesis searches for an answer to the research question by applying the case study research method and two types of interviews. The result and outcome of the Thesis is a proposed model, which is formed by using the balance scorecard method.

## 1.3  Research Method and Outcome

Several interviews with the case companies and experts are used to examine possible solutions to the research question. A model as the outcome of this study is formulated based on the interviews by using a balance scorecard strategy model.

The research method is thus a qualitative case study method. Seven different case companies are examined in this study. To gain multiple perspectives to the subject, a triangulation is implemented as a data collection method. Used data sources are literature review, case studies and expert interviews.

First, the initial model is formed based on the literature review and the case company interviews. The initial model is then reviewed and validated by the expert interviews. The final outcome of this research is, therefore, a validated model for processing social media posts through contact centers.

## 1.4  Structure of the Thesis

The Thesis consists of background sections (Sections from 2, 3 and 4), results and analysis sections (Sections 6, 7 and 8), method and material description (Section 5) and discussion and conclusion sections (Sections 9).

This introductory section (Section 1) is followed by an overview of social media (Section 2), to establish its role for individuals and businesses. Section 3 focuses on contact center operations and their different functions. Section 4 describes the strategies for creating model that have been used to form the outcome of this Thesis. Section 5, describing the method and material, elaborates on the method used for this study and the data collection methods applied.

The result and analysis consists of three sections. In Section 6 the case company interviews are analyzed. The following Section 7 describes an initial model formed, which is based on the case company interviews. The last section of the results and analysis presents the revised model, which is based on the expert interviews.

The Thesis ends with of discussion and conclusion section (Section 3), which presents the main points of the Thesis results.

## 2 Social Media as A Phenomenon

This section gives an overview of the existing social media, focusing on developments of the social media and its three major players: Facebook, Twitter and Google in social media industry. This section also explores social media usage among Finns, in terms of the Internet writing, registration to social media tools and intensity of social media usage.

### 2.1 Development of Social Media

The history of social media is still to be written, since even the term social media is fairly new. But building relationships and meeting people in the Internet is not such new phenomena. Depending on the point of view, social network may be considered to have started from usernets, such as newsgroups (O'Dell, 2011). Figure 4 lists a number of popular and other interesting social media tool launches, starting from 1970s until 2010.

Figure 4. Launch Dates of Major Social Media Tools (Boyd and Ellison 2008: 212) supplemented with (Chapman 2009).

In the late 70's, usernets were followed by bulletin board systems, which were hosted on one computer, so that the users could dial-up, one at a time, to post news on the bulletin board. Bulletin board systems were used for illegal matters such as viruses or adult material. Nevertheless, bulletin boards were one of the first social networks, where users were able to interact with each other (Chapman 2009).

Nearly a decade passed before General Electric Subsidiary (GEIS) created an early online service, offering games, shopping, mail and forums in 1985. At the same time, CompuServe was the first company to bring in chat program as a service. In 1988, a father of instant messaging IRC (Internet Relay Chat) was created, which is used for both file and link sharing and keeping in touch (Chapman 2009).

The first major milestone after IRC was Social Network Site (SNS) SixDegrees.com, which was launch in 1997. Its predecessors, early social networks, were dating sites and forums. Forums played a big role in social media evolution, since forums function as bulletin board systems with a more user-friendly interface. They gave a chance for non-technical users to participate. Forums are still in use and they already allow users to create profiles, but a difference with social networking sites comes from the friend lists, which are not used in forums (Chapman, 2009).

SixDegrees.com was a father of a new phenomenon, which is called Social media or social networking today. SixDegrees.com allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and then browse their Friends lists. Six Degrees.com profiles existed on major dating sites, and it was promoted as a tool to help people connect with and send messages to each other. Despite the widespread prevalence of SixDegrees.com, it failed to prosper and was closed at 2000. Six Degree was a few years ahead its time. Nevertheless, SixDegrees.com created a first social network site, which is defined as follows:

> "Social network site is a web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and transverse their lists of connections and those made by other within system (Boyd and Ellison 2008: 211)."

Several other social network sites came into being between 1997 and 2001 (which are listed in timeline in Figure 4 above). Before social media hit the mainstream, an interesting social media site Friendster was created. A Friendster was originally formed to be a dating site, which assumed that friend of friends will more likely make romantic couples than strangers. In 2002, Friendster created a portal, where user could create a profile and maintain a list of friends. This invention was successful and since then Friendster has started a rapid growth in the number of its users and therefor started to have problems with capacity. Another problem in Friendster came to surprise when users started to have their colleagues and bosses as friends, which caused problems for sharing. Eventually, Friendster faced the same problem as SixDegrees.com, because users were not ready to share their lives with a broad audience. At the same time, Friendster made a series of wrong decisions, for example, by prohibiting the visi-

bility of fourth-degree friends. This caused problems for those users who were using Friendster still as a dating service. These contradicting problems caused a shutdown of Friendster some time later (Boyd and Ellison, 2008: 215 - 216).

A social gaming site, Habbo, owned by Sulake, was launched during the year 2000. Habbo aimed to a attract teenagers to a virtual game, which happens in a hotel environment. Players could chat and interact with each other while playing. Habbo hotel is one of the largest social games, which reached a milestone of 200 million registered users milestone in January 2011. In 2010, Habbo revenue grew 25% compared to the year 2009 (Sulake press release 2011).

The year 2003 was a turning point for social media, since several social network sites were launched, including MySpace, LinkedIn, Delicious and Hi5. Most of these social network sites used a Friendster's idea on profile centric interface, where users can keep and maintain a user list. For example MySpace held a title for most popular social network for several years, before Facebook became even more popular. In 2010, MySpace and Facebook announced that their user accounts could be joint together (MySpace, Press release 2010). Another social media site, LinkedIn, provides a social network for professionals and attracts increasingly more professionals in various fields. Presently, LinkedIn has over 90 million users around the world (LinkedIn 2011). Hi5 was also launched in 2003. In this social media site privacy is less strict, since friends-of-friends can see each other profiles. Hi5 became popular in Asian, Latin American and Central African countries (Chapman 2009).

Social media continued its triumph in 2004 when more and more new tools were launched. Examples of social media tools from 2004 are Flickr, and Digg, which are still fairly popular tools in use. Flick allows users to download pictures, organize them and share with the chosen audience. Digg works in a similar way, but with links and users can like, dislike or comment a shared link (Chapman 2009). Many of social media tools have united or joined their forces lately on, and Flickr has also merged with Yahoo. The year 2010 was difficult for Digg, since they have had decline in the number of visitors and launched of a new version, which only accelerated their decline (O'Dell 2010).

YouTube, a video sharing tool, saw its daylight at February 2005 and was purchased by Google in 2006. 2 billion YouTube videos were viewed daily during 2010 (YouTube 2010). The year 2006 had two major events, when Twitter was launched and Facebook became available to everybody. Both Twitter and Facebook have gained most of attention during the last year and they both are growing rapidly. In 2006, an interesting new tool in social media arena was JustIn.tv, which is a host for video streaming, which allowing users to broadcast their own live videos. Later on, new broadcasting tools have become more and more in use, but Justin.tv was the first.

2010 was a very interesting year, when social media tools like Blippy, Google Buzz, and Sportpost were created (Cavazza 2010). Google Buzz, for example, integrates into Googles email program gmail, where user can share links, photos, videos, status messages and comments with other users, with all information organized as conversations in gmail inbox. Google buzz, on the contrary, has not really taken off, since privacy problems and several law suits has reduced the number of its users (Bryant 2011).

Overall, social media development started roughly 30 years ago, but the last decade has really become a decade of social media.

## 2.2   Major Players in Social Media Landscape

Social media has become a multimillion business, where revenue amounts to millions or even billions of dollars. This section describes a selection of companies and their business behind social media tools.

Main incomes for social media companies are collected from advertising. Facebook, Google and new comer Twitter has optimistic view on their future. Financially speaking, all of them run successful businesses. As a result, Facebook and Twitter are already used in some contact center environment. Genesys and many other software companies, which are described in the later section, have introduces Facebook and Twitter modules into their contact center solution.

Facebook

The Facebook provides a tool for people to keep in contact with their friends, upload photos, share links and videos, and communicate with others. A user can create a profile, where all activities can be shared with a group of friends. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, who started to run Facebook as a hobby while he was studying in Harvard. At that time, it was called thefacebook.com. The core idea of Facebook was well received, in Harvard, and it quickly spread to other universities in the United States. In September 2006, Facebook was opened to anyone over 13-year-old with an email address (Facebook Press Room 2011a).

Facebook web-site is privately owned by Facebook Inc. Facebook Inc earned $1.86 billion (milliard) revenue in 2010 only from advertisements, and its revenue is estimated to rise up to $4 billion in 2011 (Williamson 2011). Figure 5 shows Facebook advertisement revenue from 2009 to 2010 and predictions from 2011 to 2012, according to eMarketer.com.
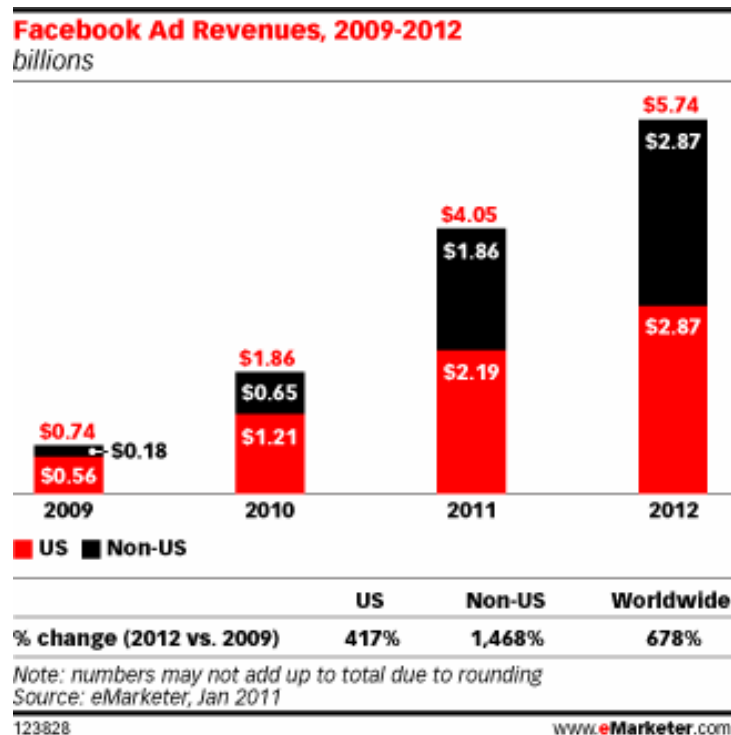


Figure 5. Facebook advertisement revenue (Williamson, 2011).

Figure 5 show estimations of the United States advertisement revenue figures in red and non-United States figures in black. During 2009 and 2010, major part of Facebook revenue came from the United States and, according to Williamson's (2011) estimation, Facebook revenue streams outside of the US will increase.

Presently, Facebook is a big business with a bright future. If this estimation come true, companies' investments in Facebook and other social media should be exceptionally beneficial.

Twitter

Twitter is a microblog web-site, where users can send short and brief news and update bits of information, which are called tweets. Twitter website was founded in 2006 by Odeo. Soon after, it was acquired by Obvious Corporation and in 2007 by Twitter Inc. Twitter has 175 million registered users, with 95 million sent tweets per day and the staff of 300 employees (Twitter Inc 2010). Twitter website is owned by Twitter Inc and is a valuable possession. According to SharesPost (Parr 2011), Twitter's market value rose to 4 billion dollars in January 2011. In 2010, Twitter's advertisement revenue reached $45 million and it is estimated to rise to $150 million in 2011. Twitter's revenue for 2010 and its predicted revenues for 2011 and 2012 are illustrated in Figure 6.
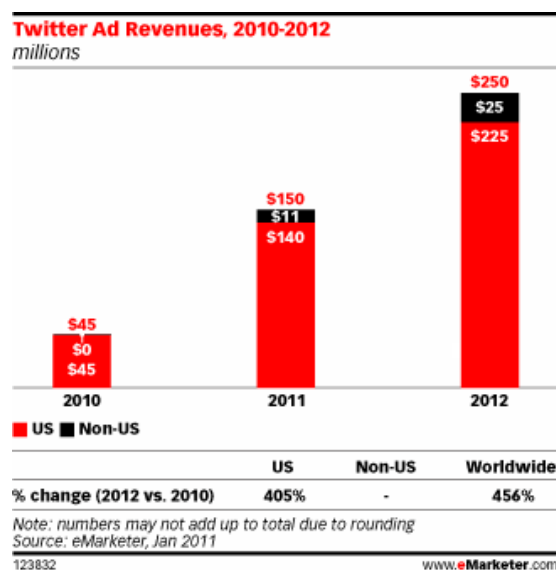


Figure 6. Twitter advertisement revenue (Williamson 2011).

In Figure 6, estimations for Twitter's revenue in the United States are marked in red and the revenues for non-United States in black. The Twitter revenue estimations are slowly increasing in other countries, but the main revenue streams for Twitter will still be collected from the United States market, at least, in 2012 (Williamson 2011).

Google

Compared to Twitter or Facebook, Google plays a different role in the current social media landscape. "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" (Google Facts 2011). In addition to this, Google's business relies on advertising through tools and services for advertisers (Google Ad-Words 2011). Google has a significant portfolio of products and service. Major Google products and short description of them are listed in Appendix 2. One of the reasons for Google's rapid growth is its successful acquisitions and continuous development of its products (Google 2010).

Google was founded in 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin. The business idea was successful, and in 2010 Google revenue was $29 billion dollars (Google Investor Relation 2011). At the moment, Google estimated market value is 192 billion (milliard) dollars (Levy 2011).

Google has done several attempts to concur social media. It has acquired several companies in social media field, such as Blogger, YouTube, Jaiku and some others. Google has also developed social media applications, such as Google Buzz in 2010, Google Wave in 2009, and Google Docs in 2007. Although Google has not yet been successful in all its attempts regarding social media, in general, Google is considered to be a major player in the social media field (Sniderman 2010).

## 2.3   Users of Social Media

Volumes of social media posts are important to acknowledge it as a phenomenon and consider a social media processing challenge in contact centers. To process Social media posts, contact centers will require a large amount and high usage of social media

tools. Statistics Finland (Hartala 2010) has already executed surveys regarding general usage of internet and social media usage among the Finns. Statistics Finland has approached social media usage from two different angles, either from the Internet perspective in general or from the inside of social media.

Reading On-line Materials and Writing on the Internet

According to the Statistics Finland survey (Hartala 2010), the most common use of social media is related to mass media. Traditional media, such as newspapers and TV channels, have adopted the use of the Internet as a channel to deliver news and articles. Most of the traditional media give readers and users a chance to comment and interact, which is also one of the functions of social media (Hartala 2010).

Table 1 below presents the map of how many Finns read internet media in reference time of 3 months.

| | Men, during 3 months | Women, during 3 months | All, during 3 months | All, at least weekly | All, At least daily or almost daily |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Read online newspapers and internet webpages. | 76 | 73 | 74 | 62 | 44 |
| Read discussions based on news or articles on online newspapers or television website | 49 | 40 | 45 | 26 | 12 |
| Read blogs | 41 | 39 | 40 | 21 | 9 |
| Read foreign online newspapers or TV channels web pages. | 37 | 23 | 30 | 17 | 8 |

Table 1. Percentage of the population according to reading of internet media by sex and reference time in 2010 (Hartala 2010).

Table 1 illustrates the reading of the Internet material by the Finns. According to the survey three out of four of all 16 to 74 year-old Finns have followed online magazines and Internet pages (in the course of three months), and almost every second Finn follows them daily. In a group of 16 to 74 year-olds, 55% read printed newspapers daily, which is nearly as many as online magazines and web-page readers (Hartala 2010). Less than half of the Finns read discussions based on news or articles, blogs or foreign online newspapers. There is no significant variation between men and women, thought on average more men read daily online magazines, blogs or tv-channel web-pages than women. According to Table 2, men also write more in discussion forums and comment news more often than women.

| | Men, during 3 months | Women, during 3 months | All, during 3 months |
|---|---|---|---|
| Written to internet (discussion forums, blogs, community services, or elsewhere) | 41 | 44 | 42 |
| Written to discussion forums | 24 | 17 | 21 |
| Downloaded self-produced material to any site (other than discussion forums, dating services nor online sales outlets) | 16 | 15 | 15 |
| Has commented a blog | 13 | 11 | 12 |
| Sign an address | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| Discussed on open chat pages | 10 | 5 | 7 |
| Commented news on magazines or TV channels web pages | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| Has written a blog | 3 | 4 | 3 |

Table 2. Percentage of the population that writes on internet media by sex and reference time, in 2010 (Hartala 2010).

When all possibilities (excluding e-mail) are taken into account, four out of ten Finns write on the Internet (Hartala 2010). The most common form of writing into the Internet is discussion forums, with 21% of the population surveyed having written into the Internet during the last three months. The most common media for the Internet writing is social network sites (Hartala 2010). Table 3 shows the figures for the frequency of following up social network sites. For this activity, the differences between the age groups decrease (Hartala 2010).

Use of Social Media Tools

The use of social media tools, where users can create and maintain social networks and relationships, has also been studied by Statistics Finland. Figure 7 illustrates the registration percentage in different age groups.
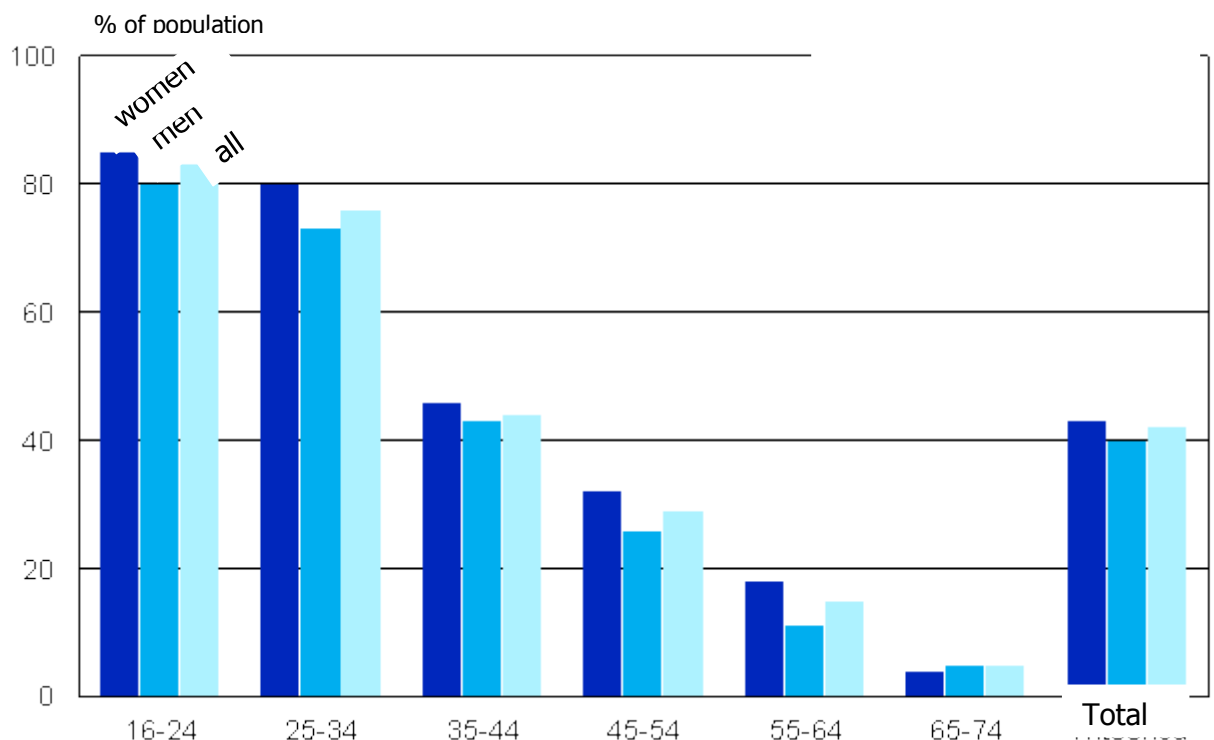


Figure 7. Registration to social media sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) (Hartala 2010).

The highest registration percentage to social media is among the population of 16 to 24 year-olds, and its number decreases by age. These figures follow the same trend with the Internet usage and the Internet writing in general, where younger population is the most active. As many as 83% of the population of 16 to 24 year-olds, and 76%

of 25 to 34 year-olds, were registered as users in 2010. In comparison only 44% of the population of 35 to 44 year-olds were registered to social media. It was noticed that interest towards social media network sites in older age groups is lower, with women slightly more interested in social media than men (Hartala 2010). As it can be seen from the above mentioned trends, social media sites are used quite frequently, especially in the audience of young people.

In all, 8% of Finns follow at least some social media sites several times a day, and one fifth follow them daily. Young people often use social media as part of their social network. In group of 16 to 64 year olds, one fifth follow up at least one social media site several times a day and 44% follows it daily. In age group of 25 to 34 year-olds, the corresponding proportions are slightly lower and older age groups active usage is low. The figures of frequency of social media sites usage are listed in Table 3.

| Age | Several times a day | Daily | Weekly | Less | Not Anymore |
|-----|---------------------|-------|--------|------|-------------|
| 16-24 | 23 | 44 | 12 | 3 | 1 |
| 25-34 | 16 | 44 | 9 | 6 | 1 |
| 35-44 | 7 | 18 | 11 | 6 | 1 |
| 45-54 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 2 |
| 55-64 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 65-74 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 8 | 20 | 8 | 5 | 1 |

Table 3.  Social network sites frequency (Hartala 2010).

# 3   Contact Center Operations

This section describes the contact center functions and gives an overview of social media posts processing opportunities in contact center environment.

A contact center collects all customer contacts from the phone, email, chat and social media sources and forwards them to a skillful customer representative. The Contact received by customer representatives can be integrated into a company internal solution, thus enabling a full customer profile to the customer representatives. Major parts of the contact centers use management and monitoring tools for monitoring contact center functionalities (Brasche et al. 2007: 5-6).

## 3.1   Contact Center Concepts

Contact centers usually develop their own terminology. In contact center environment, customer representatives are commonly referred to as *agents* (Genesys 2001: 1), while incoming customer interactions are called *inbound* (Genesys 2001: 8). Calls made by the company sales, most commonly known as phone sales, to their customers are often referred to as *outbound* (Genesys 2001: 19). Terms inbound and outbound are inherited from the time when contact centers were known as call centers, and the only customer contact was a phone call. Queue is a holding point for a number of contacts (Genesys 2001: 22). Queue, or virtual queues, are used in real-time and historical reporting, when customer contacts are waiting for an agent to reply. Thus the *queue* refers to a phone call, and the *virtual queue* refers to various Internet-based contacts, such as emails, chats or social media posts (Genesys 2001: 22). Most of the contact centers bases their contact routing decisions to an agent of skill value. A *skill* is a term used for parameters that determine agents' knowledge (Genesys 2001: 25).

## 3.2   Functions of a Contact Center

Contact centers started as basic service organizations, which were focused on controlling costs in service. Over time, the importance of contact centers as part

of customer service was acknowledged. Today, the contact center has a unique position to serve as the gateway to all customer interactions. (Brasche et al. 2007: 7)

The contact center key functions of today are illustrated in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Functions of contact center (Newman 2010: 12).

Figure 8 presents a model, which divides contact center functions into five categories. These categories include the most common contact center products and services of contact center solutions.

Most of the contact center products and services belong to the *cross channel conversa- tion* category. Cross channel conversations cover customer contacts through voice and non-voice channels. Inbound, outbound and telephone self-services are voice chan- nels; while emails, chat, web collaboration, text messages and social media presents non-voice channels. Over 50% of contacts represent inbound and outbound calls (Newman 2010: 13). The importance of a phone call decreases, over the time, since

non-voice channels usage by consumers' are now increasing. Cross channel communication includes a *proactive contact*, in which agents contact the customer regarding some specific issues. Proactive help is used specifically through non-voice channels, such as chat in on-line stores (Newman 2010: 14).

*Enterprise resource optimization* enhances productivity and customer experience through forecasting, scheduling and adherence management of resources (Newman 2010: 23). Forecasting aims to allocate the right number of agents to the contact center, and scheduling aims to set agents breaks at the right time during the agent working day. Adherence management measures contact centers and agents' performance through various statistics (Newman 2010: 25). Enterprise resource optimization uses WFO (Workforce Optimization) technology to make the best use of available resources and to provide means of measuring and monitoring workforce. WFO includes several functions. A major function of WFO is WFM (Work Force Management) and UC (Unifies Communication) (Newman 2010: 24). Work Force Managements goal is to match resources and the workload together (Newman 2010: 25). Unified Communication connects mobile agents to contact centers. Ideally, the entire enterprise can be used as a resource to customer service through back-office consulting (Newman 2010: 26).

Another important operation in contact center is *enterprise application enablers.* The enterprise application enablers connect contact center applications to other applications in an organization by integrating infrastructure outside the contact center, such as in CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system or unified communication (Newman 2007: 29).

In *service delivery optimizations,* managers build contact center SLA's (Service Level Agreements) and KPI's (Key Performance Indicators), which give an possibility to prioritize customer contacts according to the contact media or customer priority. Ideally, all contacts are routed and handled according to the predefined business rules (Newman 2010: 34 - 35).

*Operational Performance Management,* such as monitoring through historical and real-time reporting, gives a manager an effective tool to observer agents' performance, as well as current situation in the contact center. Furthermore, a variety of advisor tools

can be set up to alarm management when contact center issues are detected in contact center operations (Newman 2010: 38-40).

## 3.3 Social Media Utilization in Contact Centers

Contact Centers can use social media as one contact among various other contacts to connect them to customers. Social media came to public awareness in 2000s, but it is looking for its place both in enterprises and in contact center environments. Several companies have formed a social media strategy, where they set up ground rules for social media usage in the company. So far, social media has been used mainly for marketing or, for example in online sales departments. This, in fact, creates a gap between the contact center and the other departments. Despite this existing gap, the actual customer service and assistance still happens in the contact center, where agents or customer representatives, these trained people, to handle customer interactions. If, and when, social media arrives to companies contact center (as a one way for customer to contact), it will be highly recommend to form a strategy on how social media should be used and for what purposes (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 7-8).

In 2010, several companies has introduced products to help companies in their interactions in social media. At the end of 2010, Cisco published SocialMiner, Avaya released their Social Media Manager, Aspect has added Social Communications Solution to their contact center product; and Genesys released their first generally available version of Genesys Social Engagement Solution in January 2011. All these solutions can be integrated into other contact centers software. Some companies, such as Interactive intelligence, RightNow and eGain, provide purely social media monitoring software without any contact center functionalities. Another example is CRM, which has also woke up towards the coming of social media by launching SocialCRM solutions. On the contrary, RightNow and Jive provide software for SocialCRM, which quite commonly are tightly integrated in contact center environment (Mackey 2010).

Accordin to Abbott (Genesys), social media can be used in contact centers in four different ways. Abbott's social media strategy is presented in Figure 9.
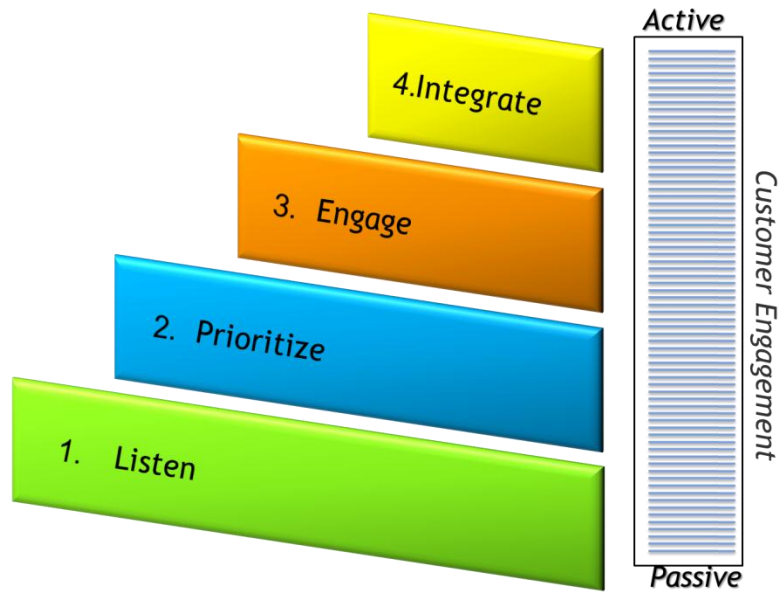
Figure 9. Genesys social media stategy (Abbott 2010: 6).

Figure 9 illustrates a social media strategy developed by Genesys and the four phases of it, which are *listening, prioritizing, engaging* and *integrating* (Abbott 2010: 6). Interestingly, inContact has also announced a similar strategy, where the phases are *monitor, access and establish trends, create social media agents* and *learn and evolve* (Hurst and Duehlmeier 2011: 29).

According to the social media strategy suggested by Genesys, there are four basic steps which the company can take, when putting social media into use. First, a passive approach, when the company is only listening to discussion in social media, but it does not react in any way. A company can use social media tools to listen to social media and can apply special products for social media listening. By listening to social media, the company can gain valuable knowledge about their brand or customers opinions of it (Abbott 2010: 7). For example, inContact suggests to employ a person as a gate-keeper, who would forward posts to proper stakeholders, already at this monitoring or listening phase (Hurst and Duehlmeier 2011: 30).

Secondly, *the prioritization phase* in Genesys model, involves more than just following the customer discussion on media. This phase includes analyzing and prioritizing social media posts. To do this, the company monitors social media messages and reflects only to most important posts and prefers other channels to contact customer than so-

cial media. The prioritizing phase can be considered as a proto-phase before the next one, where service level agreements are made to handle different types of messages, and the company can justify their keywords for social media searches. InContact refers to this stage as their *access and establish trends* phase and suggests expanding monitoring to industrial trends and assessing company social media system (Hurst and Duehlmeier 2011: 32).

Thirdly, the *Engagement* phase in Genesys model, involves interacting with the customers and holding active discussions through different social media tools. In this phase, a number of special agents are assigned to handle social media posts. Engaging phase also includes capturing user profile information as part of the customer record. For example, RightNow and Jive provide special SocialCRM solutions for capturing data from profiles (Mackey 2010).

The third phase of inContact's social media model, *creating social media agents*, is illustrated in Figure 10.
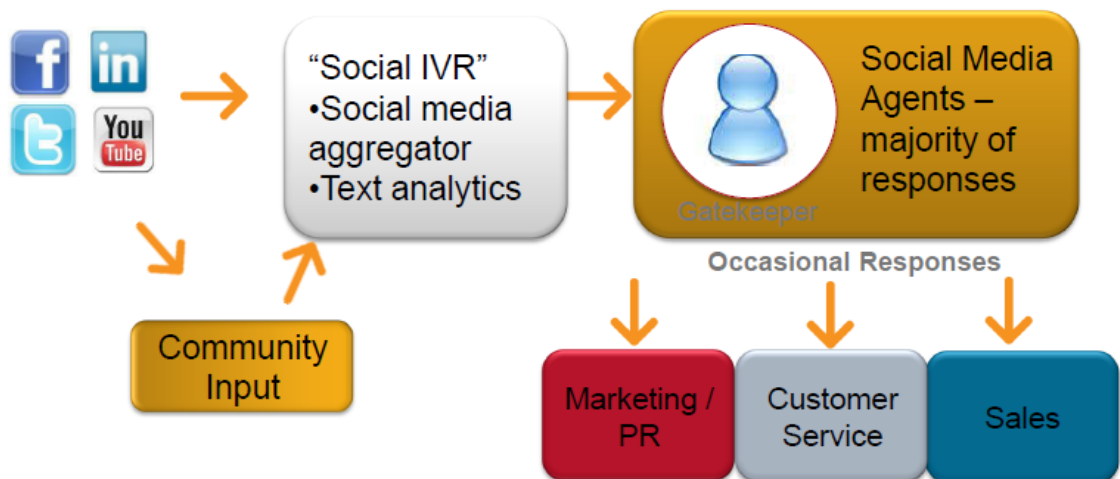


Figure 10. Creating social media agents phase (Hurst and Duehlmeier 2011: 35).

The third phase in inContact's model suggests a process for active discussion. The model uses automatic preprocessing of social media posts, at which a social media agent handles the majority of replies (Hurst and Duehlmeier 2011: 35).

The fourth and last phase in Genesys model integrates social media to other contact center products, in terms of allowing posts to queue, enabling real-time monitoring and historical reporting handled in same way as any other customer contacts. The integration phase can be considered as a very near future, since most of the contact center solution providers can offer this social media software (Abbott 2010: 11).

Social media posts routing by Genesys solution is illustrated in Figure 11.
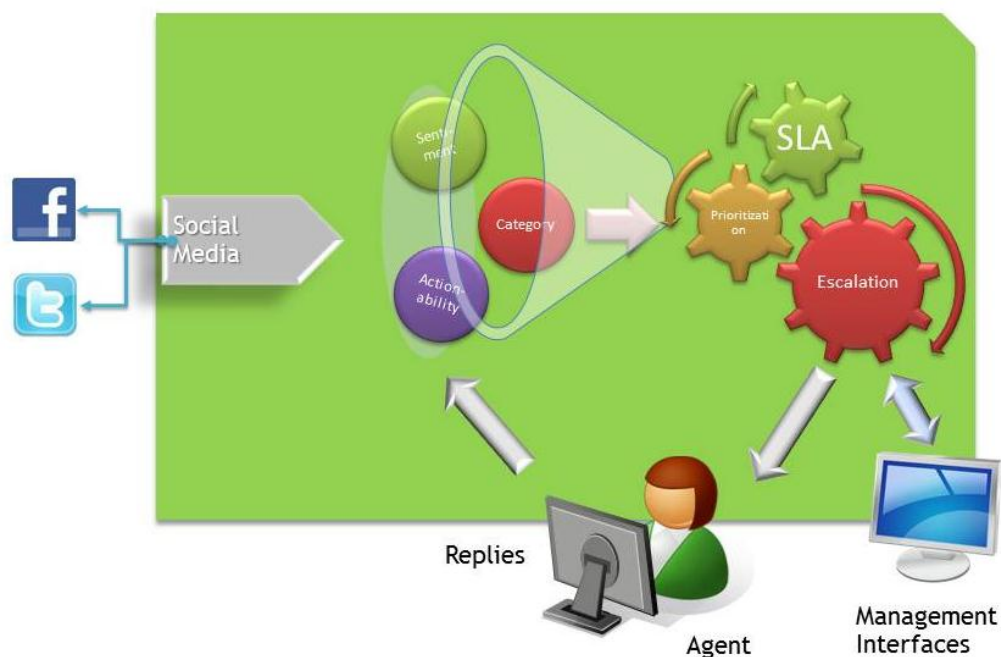


Figure 11. Social media routing (Abbott 2010: 11).

As Figure 11 illustrates a social media routing to an agent is based on an initial categorization, segment decision and action ability. Based on the keywords, the posts are categorized according to their tone and they are segmented to, for example, the categories of feedback or support (Abbott 2010: 11-12).

The fourth phase of inContact model is to *evolve and learn*. In this phase, the company constantly looks for new trends and reassesses its system (Hurs and Duehlmeier 2011: 39).

### 3.4 Measuring Social Media Activities

Activities in social media can be and should be measured with meaningful and doable metrics. Possible topics for metrics, when measuring social media, are *activity-based metrics, contact metrics, customer support* and *marketing and sales*. The company can choose some of the metrics from these topics to follow contact center operations regarding social media activities (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 35).

The *activity-based metrics* is a group of metrics, which measure the activities and attraction of company in social media. Two metrics are introduced to measure attraction. Attraction of the company's social media profiles is measured by the number of followers or fans. At the same time, the number of comments measures a conversational index, which is the number of comments which the company's own posts receive. Activities in the companies' own social media profiles, and elsewhere in social media, can be measured with the number of mentions and the frequency of interactions. The number of mentions measures the actual number of times the company's name or product is mentioned in social media. This metric is used to measure the social media listening results and to evaluate them. The frequency of interactions measures customers' involvement in the discussion on company related subjects (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 35).

The *contact metrics* measure the quality of discussion and the customer service ability to form a community around the brand. For example, a tone of discussion can be measured through positivity and negativity regarding the issue of discussion. Also a specific metric of NPS (Net Promoter Score) is set to measure customer's likeness to become an advocate for the company (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 36).

The *customer support metrics* measures the costs for giving support in social media and evaluate customer satisfaction. The support costs are measured by measuring agents' time-consumptions in social media. The customer satisfaction, on the other hand, is measured by evaluating the tone of customers' replies (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 36).

The last category of *marketing and sales* prospects is derived from several metrics. The numbers and costs of prospects and actual sales figures make up the basic metrics and they communicate about the direct impacts on revenue (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 36).

Thus, a certain number of metrics can be used to measure the company activities in social media. A choice of the proper metrics should be based on the company strategy and goals, which the company wants to achieve through the use of social media (Dunay and Diamond 2010: 36).

# 4   Forming a Strategy Model

This section consists of the overview of the strategy models, which is used to form a new proposed model for social media posts processing in contact centers.

## 4.1   A Strategy Model

According to Kehusmaa (2010) the company strategy typically consists of four main parts, which are shown in Figure 12.
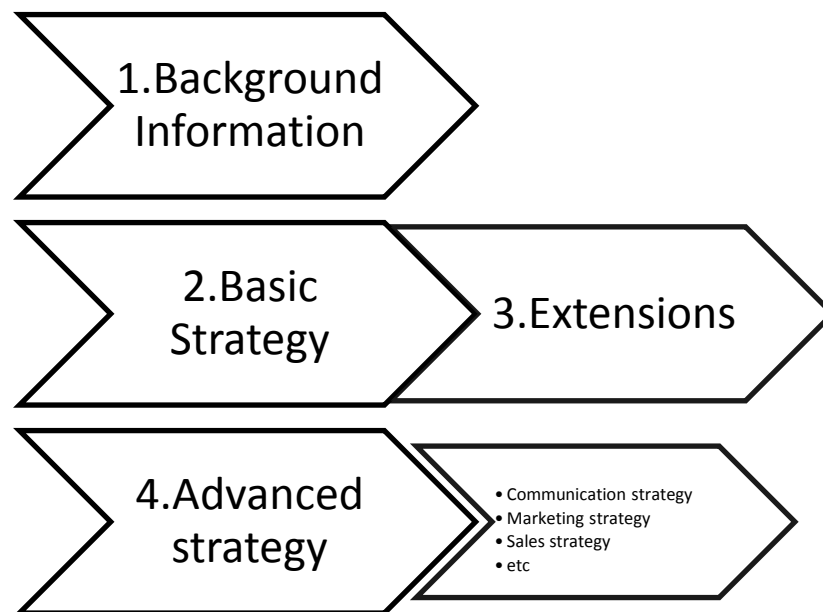


Figure 12. A strategy content (Kehusmaa 2010: 65).

The first part of the scheme is made up of the background information, which is used to analyze the current situation of the company. Kehusmaa (2010) suggests to apply SWOT analysis in order to find out the points that can be included into the strategy. The second part of the strategy scheme is formed by the basic strategy, which describes the current situation, goals and means of how these goals are achieved. The

third part consists of the extensions to the basic strategy, which are mainly used for handling new transactions, acquisitions, outsourcing or investments. The last part of the scheme is the advanced strategies, which are smaller and particularly aimed at one department or a smaller unit of the organization (Kehumaa 2010: 63). The proposed model for processing social media posts, therefore, belongs to an advanced strategy, which can be a part of communication strategy, customer service strategy, brand strategy or some other strategy.

This Thesis uses a BSC (balance scorecard) model as a basis for creating a model for social media post processing in the contact center. The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system that is used extensively in business to align business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organization performance against strategic goals. The BSC strategy model is well-suited for the achievement of the Thesis result, because one of the main objectives of the Contact Center is a cost-effective and swift treatment of all sorts of social media contacts.

The original balance scorecard framework was created by Kaplan and Norton in 1996. This framework is presented in Figure 13.
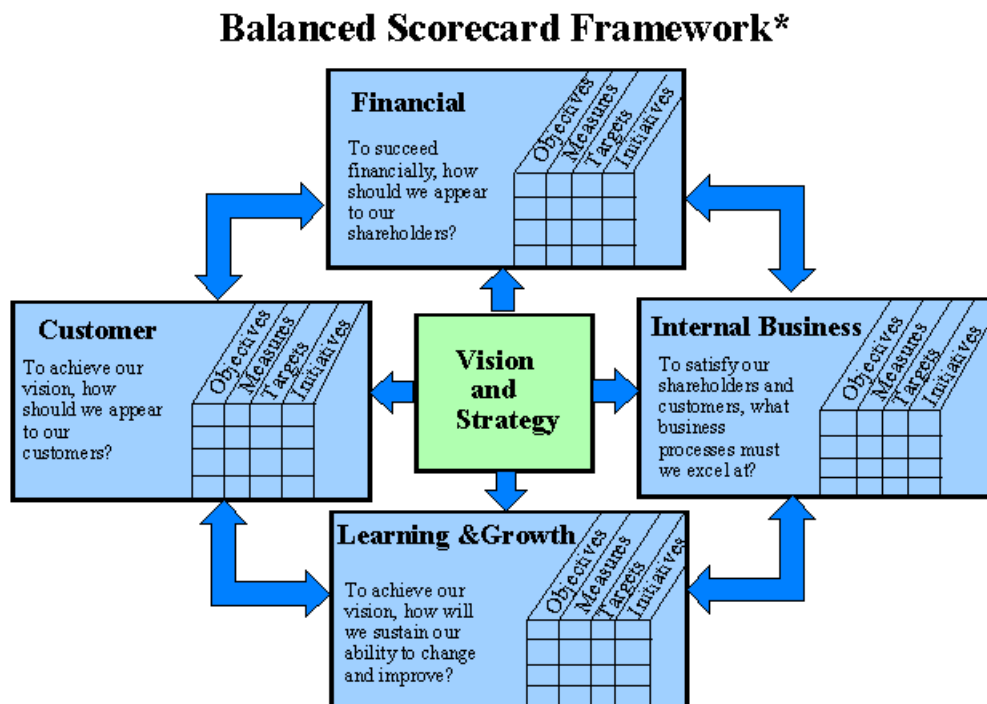
Figure 13. The original Balance Scorecard model, by Kaplan & Norton (Hakanen 2004: 119).

As Figure 13 shows, the balanced scorecard suggests that the strategy of the organization should consists of four aspects to develop metrics, collect data and analyze them considering, each of these aspects separately. These are *the learning and grow*th*, the business process, the customer* and *the financial aspects*. Although several variations of the BSC model have been made over the years, the model guiding principles have remained the same. One of the models presented by Hakanen (2004) is used in this Thesis as a starting point for creating a proposed model (in Section 7). The steps for forming a strategy by Hakanen are shown in Figure 14.
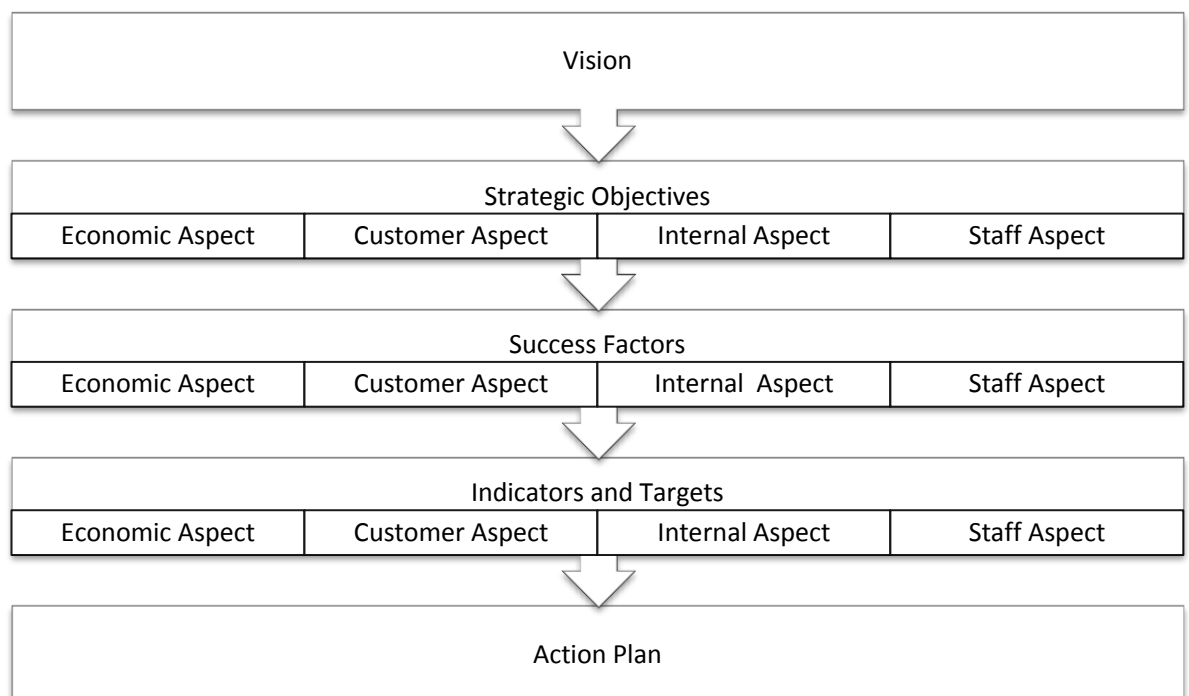


Figure 14. A model for creating a strategy (Hakanen 2004: 116).

A Figure 14 shows a BSC model for creating a strategy. The strategy creation starts from vision, since the strategy must be in line with the company vision. There are four aspects, which are taken into consideration when forming a strategy. These different aspects are the economics, customers, internal and staff viewpoints (Hakanen 2004: 116). Later, in the proposed model for social media posts processing in contact centers, only three aspects would be used. These are *customer, process* and *economic*

*aspects*. Internal and staff viewpoints would be combined into the unified process aspect, due to the nature of the proposed model (see Section 7).

For every aspect the *strategic objectives* should be set. These objectives are more concrete than vision, and they are usually set for the next few years. The goal for these strategic objectives is to gain the vision (Hakanen 2004:116). For every strategic objective, a one or two *success factors* are set. These success factors enable the company to achieve objectives and vision and are the determinants of competitiveness and performance. To be able to measure them, *Indicators and targets* are set for every success factor. Indicators are the key performance indicators (KPI), and the target values are set for each KPI for the next few years. The last part of the BSC strategy model is an action plan, which describes the needed actions to achieve targets set for KPI's (Hakanen 2004:117).

In the results of the Thesis neither a vision, an action plan nor target values are set, because the Thesis result is a general model, not a proposal for a specific company.

## 4.2 Social Media Strategy in Companies

This section presents the current practices and issues to consider when creating a social media strategy. Several companies have formulated their social media strategy or considering of doing so. The goal for building a social media strategy is to build a guideline for activities in social media. With such a strategy, the company can concentrate on their expertise area, at the same time, offering services to customers (Kroll 2010: 1).

### 4.2.1 Forming a Social Media Strategy

One way of forming social media strategy is to follow steps of setting up goals defined by Crepeau, which are as follows: *defining success criteria, creating a high level strategy, creating the tactical plan, seting interim measures* and *picking tools and processes* (Crepeau 2010a).

Goals in social media strategy are business goals: action-oriented, succinct and measurable. For example, a goal could be to drive up new registrations or get users to provide customer support to one another. An understandable goal with an obvious cost-saving target, revenue generation or strategic objectives can use social media only as a tool for business. Succinct and action-oriented goal would imply a short goal with a plain message to achieve something. An important part of a goal is also its measurability, since a measured goal can be rated to be successful or unsuccessful (Crepeau 2010b).

Based on these goals, various criteria to measure goals success can be set and the high level strategy will define means and tools to achieve goal successfully. A tactical plan then sets the tasks as for how the actual goal will be achieved. During the last step, the interim measures are set. In this stage, the goals success criteria and measurements are evaluated and, if necessarily, justified. This step tests the goals, criteria and tactical plan and suggests adjustments to it.

The final step is to establish the tools and processes. At this point, the tools and processes are picked in order to be able to execute the needed task and measure it to determine success (Crepeau 2010a).

### 4.2.2 Key Points of Building up a Strategy

According to the current discussion in scientific and other publications on social media, when developing a social media strategy, there are some key steps to be taken into consideration. First, social media is essentially another channel of communication, where the customer can ask questions or look for support from the company. A good starting point for building up a social media strategy is to identify how the customer is using social media in general, and which tools they prefer (Herrell 2011). Also, listening to and monitoring social activities, which concern the company, are advisable before determining a social media approach. When the company has decided to establish its presence in social media, they have to pay special attention to refreshing their Facebook page or Twitter head frequently. Any social media presence without updates would become interpreted as a signal of neglect and apathy (Kroll 2010: 2).

According to analysis in the various publications on possible social media strategies, a typical strategy should include drawing up a plan as for how to address some specific topics in social media. This plan should highlight certain key words associated with the company's name and give recommendations regarding the defected posts (Kroll 2010: 2).

Another part of such a strategy may concern suggesting the ways of how to engage the users of social media into social media activities. Engaging requires proactive approach by raising positive discussion. When the customer makes a contact through social media, a reply using the same channel is highly advisable. Also, negative writings should require answers, but probably not a sales talk. While answering to social media posts, the company employees should identify themselves, so that the customer can recognize and reach them reasonably easy (Kroll 2010: 3).

It is also stressed that the customer interaction in social media should be followed through to the end. Integration and communication between departments would help to follow and track back such customer interaction. There is no need for marketing to act as customer service, but the marketing team needs feedback on what is happening in social media. According to the current practices, escalation rules should be rethought and written into the social media strategy (Kroll 2010: 3). Finally, the constant analysis of discussion in social media is considered to give useful information about the customer behavior and interests (Herrel: 2011). These were some of many guidelines for setting a social media strategy.

In addition, Gartner has listed five recommendations how to succeed and five typical failures in social media strategy. The five points of successful social media strategy include *consistency, coordination, charter, conversation* and *creativity* (Rozwell 2011:19). Gartner especially highlights *consistency* in terms of strategic goals, audience needs and the response authentic as particularly important. *Coordination* aims to make sure that forays into social media are not disconnected from other business functions. By *charter* Gartner means assigning responsibility for the plan development, education, execution, governance and refinement. In *conversation*, a company collective-

ly creates diverse opportunities for discussion and collaboration. The last point, *creativity*, lets individual creativity, passion and energy emerge (Rozwell 2011:19).

The five typical failures in social media strategy, according to Gartner, are *goal incongruity, process disconnect, multiplicity, monologue* and *inauthenticity* (Rozwell 2011:20). By *goal incongruity* Gartner means the same issues as Crepeau, when they describe strategic goal mismatch in business needs and audience desires. Another reason to fail is the *process disconnect*, when social media processes are not connected with other business functions. The third point, *multiplicity*, refers to uncoordinated efforts, which cause ineffectiveness and confusion. The *monolog* refers to ignoring potential for discussion and collaboration with customers. The fifth and final point is *inauthenticity*, meaning that the process and policies submerge individual creativity (Rozwell 2011: 20).

In general, these are the most important points in building social media strategy as they are described by current literature sources and publications. The strategy can be considered as a vision, which aims to highlight the essential issues and context, enabling the company to develop and manage the future (Hakanen 2004: 15). More precisely, the strategy gives consistency and illustrates the company's choice of marketing position (Kehusmaa 2010: 13-14). The model for social media posts processing can be used as a guideline to form a social media strategy for a specific company.

# 5   Method and Material

This section outlines the research methods used in the study. The Thesis was conducted by using qualitative methods, with the case study research used as a main method for data collection. Case study as a research method is discussed in this section followed by the description of the data collection. The final part of this section concentrates on reliability and validity considerations.

## 5.1   Case Study Research

A research method chosen for the Thesis is the qualitative case study research. The case study research was the most suitable choice, since this Thesis studies social issues through interviews in case companies and is based on the knowledge obtained from them. The steps of the qualitative research of this study are shown in Figure 15 (Lodico et al. 2006).
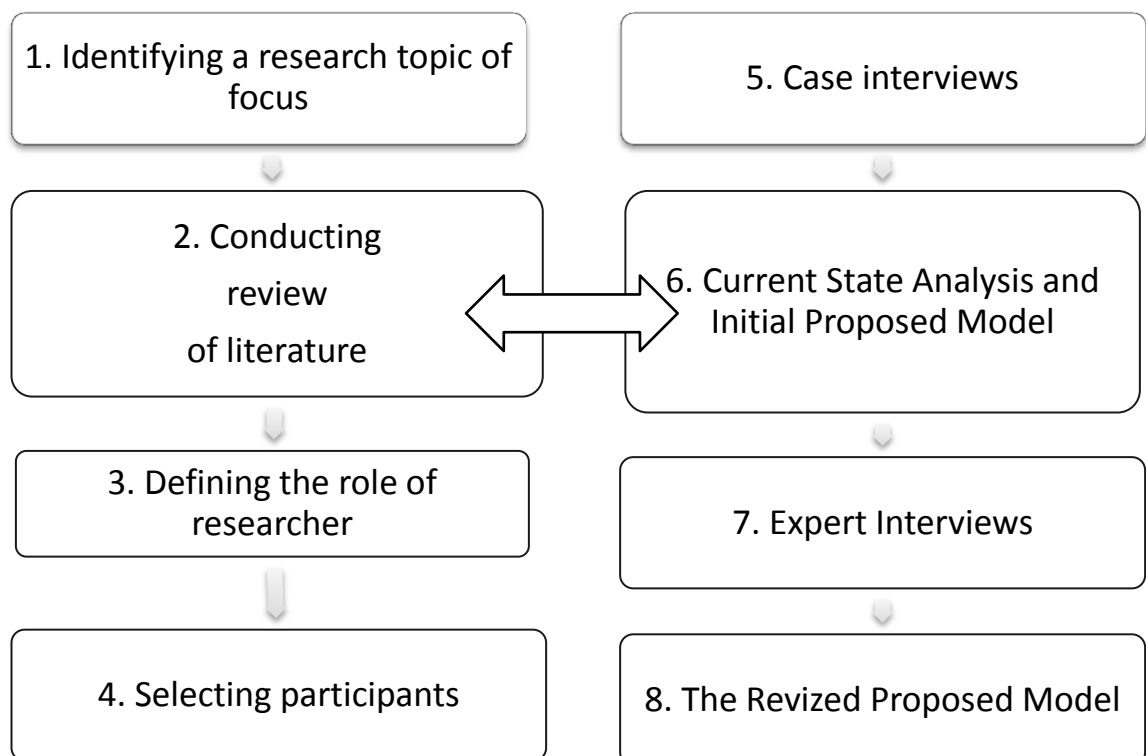


Figure 15. Steps in conducting research in this Thesis.

Figure 15 illustrated the consequence of steps in this study. The first step for this qualitative research is to identifying a research topic of focus. The focus of this Thesis is narrowed down to a problem of processing social media posts through contact centers. The researcher is an employee of Genesys Telecommunication Laboratories, and therefore, she has practical experience in contact center services. Processing social media posts through contact centers was formulates as the topic of this Thesis, when this study was done, in spring 2011.

The second step was to conduct a literature review.  In this Thesis, the literature review concerned social media and contact center overviews, as well as the balance scorecard strategy model. The third step defines a degree which the researcher is involved with participants. The role of the researcher varies depending on the research material. A researcher may have different roles with the interviewees. For the interviewees in this research, the researcher plaed three main roles; she was either a stranger, or an acquaintance, or a colleague.

In the fourth stage of this research, the companies were asked to take part in the interviews, and the interview questions were composed. In the sixth step, the data collection was conducted based on the interviews. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2006: 77). The interview data were analyzed, and the first, initial model was formed. The initial model was then reviewed in the second round of interviews and, based on the reviews of the initial model, the final proposed model was formulated.

## 5.2    Data Collection

In addition to the case study method, other methods were used for the data collection, thus forming a triangulation of methods. During the research, it became obvious that social media is a very new phenomenon, and the interviewed companies are still looking for the right approaches. To improve the accuracy of data and complement information with other sources, the triangulation method was utilized in this study. Figure 16 shows how triangulation was applied in this research.
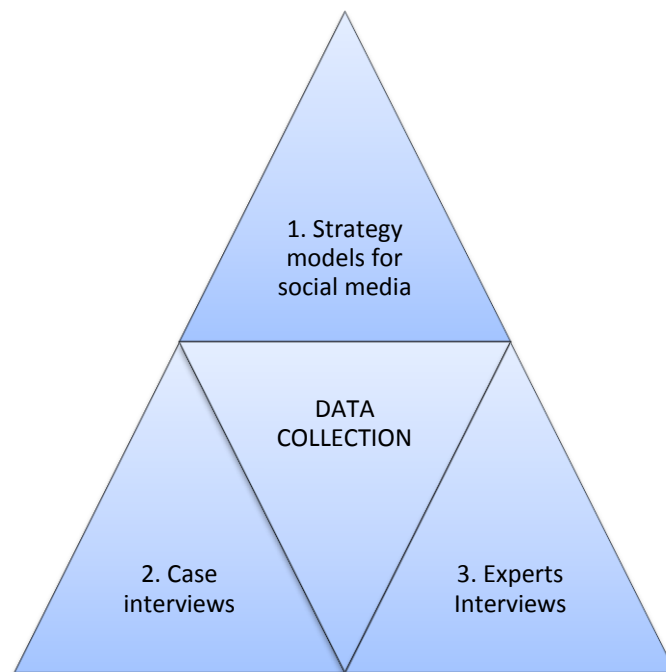
Figure 16. Triangulation of research methods.

Triangulation, illustrated in Figure 16, means having three different perspectives on the research topic. In this study, literature review of strategy models for social media and background research gives the first perspective.  This Thesis literature review helped to formulate a strategy model and steps in forming the strategy. After collecting information from the literature review, several case companies were interviewed as the research part of the study. These companies operate in a variety of industries; therefore, they were divided into the following three groups: business to business (B2B), business to consumer (B2C) and the public sector companies. A similarity in all the interviewed companies is that they all need to listen to social media or even actively discuss issues there. These companies are not customers of Genesys; they have their own customer services. The interviews with these companies bring a second prospective to the study and the initial proposals.

The third prospect in triangulation comes from a partner of Genesys and another contact center solution producer. In these interviews, a discussion based on the evaluation of the initial proposal was conducted. As a result, the final proposal takes into consideration the finding from all these three perspectives.

The three prospective of the triangulation were implemented to improve the reliability of this study.

## 5.3  Reliability and Validity Considerations

Reliability "generally considers weather a research instrument is neutral in its effect and consistent across multiple occasions of its use. This is frequently translated as the question 'Would the research instrument produce the same result on different occasions?" (Denscombe 2010:298).

A research instrument of the study is an interview. Three out of seven case interviews were conducted as telephone interviews. The other five interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews; and one interview was broadcasted by YLE Radio 1. This interview is recorded and the podcast is published in the YLE Areena publications (Lahtinen 2010).

It is well known that telephone interview differs from a face-to-face interview, which can affect, to some extent, its reliability. The telephone interview may decrease a respondent's time and effort to answer, and consequently, a quality of interviews might decline. In a face-to-face interview, an interviewee usually thinks carefully, due to the time and effort she or he has donated to the interview, in comparison with a typical telephone interview (Holbrook. et al 2003: 83). In a face-to-face conversation, a researcher has a possibility to collect data also by interpreting nonverbal communication (Holbrook et al. 2003: 83). A second negative aspect of the telephone interview is the discomfort of silence. Therefore, the interviewers may feel pressure to move telephone interviews along more quickly than they would do, if conducted as a face-to-face interview. Also, an interruption of an interview is easier with telephone interviewee (Holbrook et al. 2003: 83). A third disadvantage of a telephone interview is multitasking. During the interview, the interviewee can watch TV or read emails, and therefore, the interviewee does not pay enough attention to the questions. In a face-to-face interview, the interviewer can sense the absence of attention on the interviewee's side, which is far more difficult in a telephone interview (Holbrook et al. 2003: 84).

Nevertheless, three interviews were conducted as telephone interviews, due to the wishes of the interviewees. The researcher realizes that the interview results have probably been different, if an interview would have been conducted face to face. To avoid these reliability challenges, a majority of the meetings were conducted as face-to-face interviews. These interviews were executed as standardized, open-ended conversation, with the same open-ended questions asked from all the interviewees. The interview results were coded and transcribed in order to find trends and patterns from the interview data analyses.

Due to the nature of the subject, a majority of resources are internet documents, mainly from the years 2010 and 2011. This study uses official internet pages, internet magazines, companies press releases and blogs as its sources of information. Any printed sources of information on social media were difficult to find, therefore, internet sources were widely employed instead.

Validity, in its turn, refers to the accuracy and precision of the data. It also concerns appropriateness of the data, in terms of research question being investigated. The basic question is as for validity of research is whether "the data represent the right kind of material for investigating the topic, and have they been measured correctly" (Denscombe 2010:298).

Three out of nine interviewees were acquainted with the researcher prior to this study, and six other interviewees were strangers to the researcher. The researcher realizes that an acquaintance might act more openly towards the interviewer than a stranger representative of a company; but, on the other hand, a bias of an interview also increases. To avoid bias, a vast majority of interviews were conducted with companies, which are neither the researcher's employer's customers nor their acquaintances.

Summing up, this study focuses on the model, which can be used to utilize social media as a channel for customer contact in contact center environment. Since usage of contact center software to detect social media posts and route them to contact center agents is still rare today, the research interviews were forcused on finding a common current practice, or trends, and identifying a future vision by the case companies. In order to find a model for effective social media posts utilizations in contact centers, a

model was developed and suggested for reviewing by the experts in the second round of interviews.

# 6 Results and Analysis of the Case Company Interviews

In this section, case interviews finding are displayed and analyzed. The interviews were conducted in five blocks of open-ended questions, and therefore, the findings are also presented accordingly.

## 6.1 Results of the Case Companies Interviews

Altogether, seven case companies were interviewed, and
Table 4 below displays the interview details.

| Interviewed Company | A Customer Base | Title | Initials | Type of interview | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Case Company 1 Food Producer | B2C | Head of Communications | P. K. | Phone interview | 15.2 2011 |
| Case Company 2 Agriculture Machine Manufacturer | B2B | Social Media Representative | P.E | Phone interview | 20.2 2011 |
| Case Company 3 Food Producer | B2C | Head of Communications | A.S. | Phone interview | 23.2 2011 |
| Case Company 4 Clothing Manufacturer | B2B | Head of Communications | P.M-M. | Face- to face interview | 4.3 2011 |
| Case Company 5 Church | Public Sector | Pastor | M. A. | Face- to face interview | 8.3 2011 |
| Case Company 6 Finish Police | Public Sector | Virtual Local Police, Senior Constable | Jutta Antikainen | Interviewed by YLE Radio Suomi (Lahtinen 2010) | 17.12 2010 |
| | | Head of Communications from the Police | Marko Luotonen | | |

| | | Board | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Case Company 7 Electronic Manufacturer | B2B | Marketing Representative | P. K. | Face- to face interview | 22.4 2011 |

Table 4.  Case companies interview details.

Table 4 above lists the details of the interviewed case companies (1 to 7). This table presents interviewee's initials, their job descriptions, and the interview types and dates. As
Table 4 shows, the interviewed companies represent various areas of businesses, with different customer bases. Since the subject of the study is social media, the customer base is very important to take into account, and therefore, the first block is focused on indicating the companies' customer bases.

Block 1, Questions: Customers of Interviewed Companies

The first block of questions concentrates on identifying the company's customer base and their activeness in social media. Figure 17 shows the interview questions in the first section.
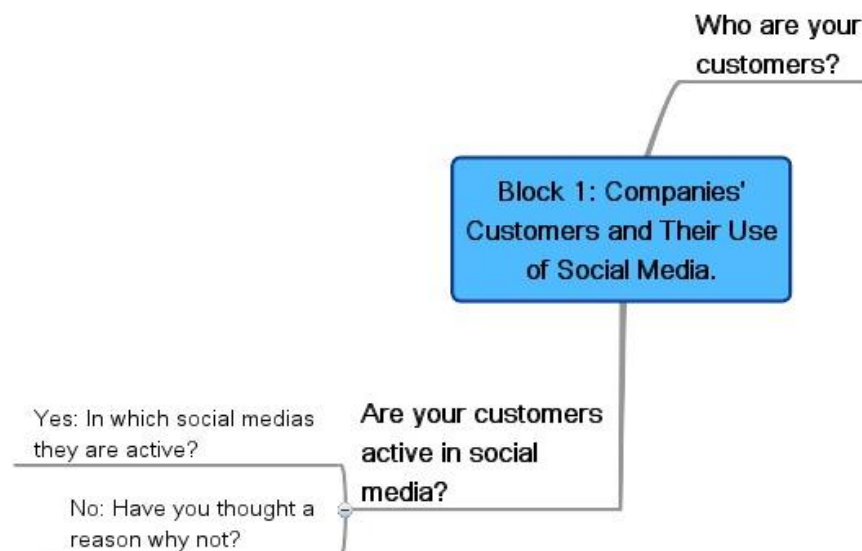


Figure 17. The questions regarding customer base and their activities in social media, the first block of questions.

As Figure 17 shows, the company's customer base and their activeness in social media can represent three different types, which are: other businesses, consumers and public sector customers. Four of the interviewed companies considered that their customers are active players in social media, while three of the interviewed companies view their customers as passive actors.

The companies could not suggest any particular reason for their customers' activeness in social media, but a couple of reasons for their customers' passiveness towards social media were mentioned. For example, the case companies mentioned a marketing orientation elsewhere and a nature of business as possible reasons for their customers being passive in social media. Surprisingly, the results were sometimes quite contradictory. For instance one of the same category of B2C companies considered their customers as passive, while another one viewed them as active players in social media. Interestingly, both of these companies operate in same industry. Thus, we cannot identify any clear trend concerning the current state of the consumers.

Furthermore, the companies themselves differ in their own activeness.  An active B2C company generates reasonable amount of interesting material and strives to respond quickly to its customers' messages. The researcher noticed that business customers represent a more diverse group, which is more difficult to activate. One of the interviewed B2B companies has succeeded in creating an active community around its brand. Creating such a community was their important business goal, and they have begun to create this community several years before the actual entry into social media. Interesting results were also received from the public sector. Both case companies which operate in the public sector, consider their customers to be active in social media, although one of them has experienced difficulties in getting customers' attention.

Thus, in the interviewees' opinions, a considerable number of all kind of customers are present in a social media. It turned out, since social media tools are customer-driven rather than business-driven, that based on the interviews, this seems to confuse the companies. Furthermore, it was notices that it is not easy to get customers' attention in social media, where users are spending their free time discussing matters with their friends.

Block 2, Questions: Current Practices in Companies

The current social media practices in companies, evaluated with questions from Block 1, are illustrated in Figure 18.
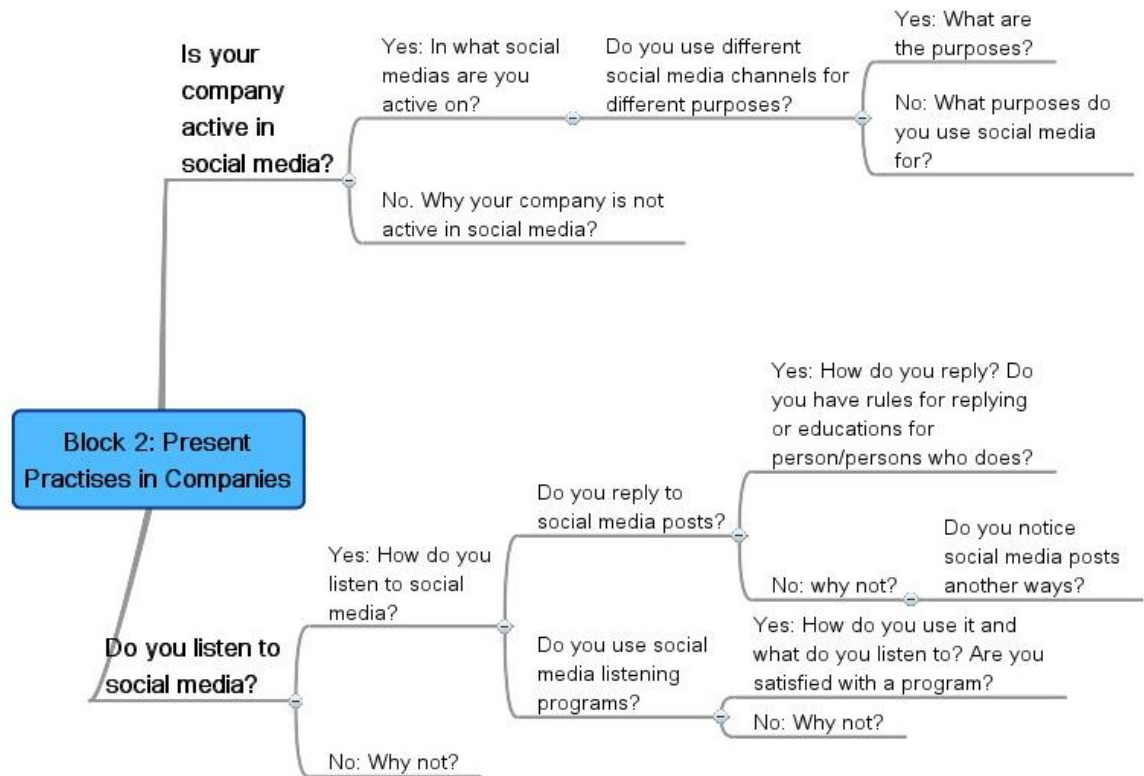


Figure 18. Questions regarding current practices in the company in Block 2.

Block 2 of questions shows, in Figure 18, relates to the activity of respondent companies in using social media. Another important part of this block was to find information on how companies are listening to social media.

All but one company considered themselves as active users of social media and listened to social media manually or through some software. Three companies used software to listen to social media, and two of them outsourced listening to an external company. Such outsourcing is done by listening to social media using some software and is based on a key word -search. However, out of these three companies only one was satisfied with the current situation. The reasons for dissatisfaction were, first, diffi-

culties to get relevant results from the company or industry and, second, not being able to listen sufficiently to a broad-based variety of social media tools.

Based on interviewed data, these companies can be considered to be active in social media; they believe that, since their customers are in social media, also the companies must be. Through listening to social media, a company can gain valuable data about customer behavior and attitude towards companies or industries, but listening to it can be difficult, if manually done. One of the possible causes for dissatisfaction with the existing listening software could be a difficulty in finding the right key words. The interview reveled that key words for social media listening can be very difficult to find from a cloud of words, since the customer can use self-made nick names, acronyms or make spelling mistakes while typing short and quick messages to social media.

From the interviewed companies, five openly admitted to be active in social media. They have created profiles in different social media tools, write blogs and participate in discussions. All active users of social media have created a profile in Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Communication rules in the companies also vary. Two of the companies allow a broad number of employees to communicate from the companies' profiles, while the rest of the companies channel the discussions through a small number of the staff. Only one company wants to narrow the discussion down to specific subjects. On the contrary, two companies mentioned specifically a style desired of communication as relaxed and friendly like.

The data from the case company interviews show that social media usage varies from company to company. There are many "right" ways of using social media, and most of the companies still search for the best practice that would suit them. Common for all interviewed companies is the time consumption character of social media. A company, which have several social media profiles and actively writes blogs, needs to follow their profile and try to activate discussion. All this takes time and a proper division of duties. An interesting finding was that the company with the most active customers has allowed a broad number of employees to use social media, with clear escalation rules written for its consumer service. Intriguingly, they have only few restrictions on conversation, but a clear process of handling customer posts.

Block 3, Questions: Taking Stakeholders into Consideration

This category evaluates the stakeholder roles in the company by questions shown in Figure 19.
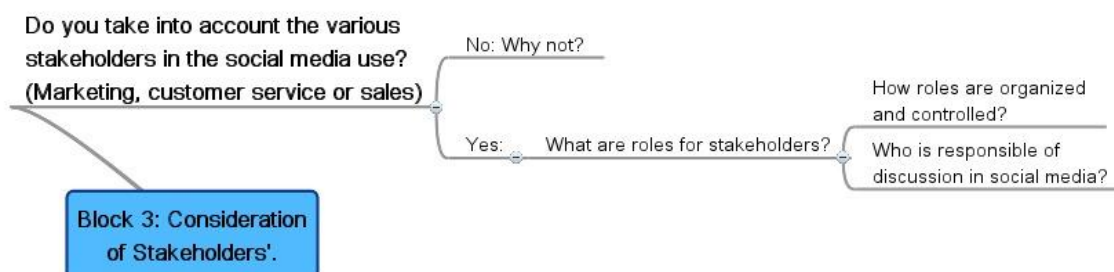


Figure 19. Stakeholders' role in the company.

Social media messages can address almost any topic. Therefore, Block 3 examines the companies practices of taking into account their various stakeholders.

Five interviewed companies have taken stakeholders into consideration. Their stakeholders are cared for by educating the staff, redirecting social media posts and dividing social media responsibilities between the stakeholders. The main responsibility of social media commonly belongs to marketing or communications. Only one company said that there is no consideration of stakeholders and the interviewee admitted that social media usage is unorganized. On the contrary for example, the Finnish police has openly declared in different profiles, as well as in the description of social media strategy, that the persons responsible for the specific subjects might be addressed through social media. One of the interviewees mentioned, that a lack of clear responsibilities between different stakeholders inevitably causes confusion.

Furthermore, all the companies acknowledged the need of taking stakeholders into account, but they did not agree on its practical implementations. The stakeholders responsibilities in practice are still quite immature; as a result the companies are looking for the best available practices that would suit their business.

Block 4, Questions: Social Media Strategy

Social media strategy is designed to define the company's existing practices and rules regarding social media. Block 4 explores the companies strategy details and current state as for social media utilization. Figure 20 shows the questions regarding their social media strategy.
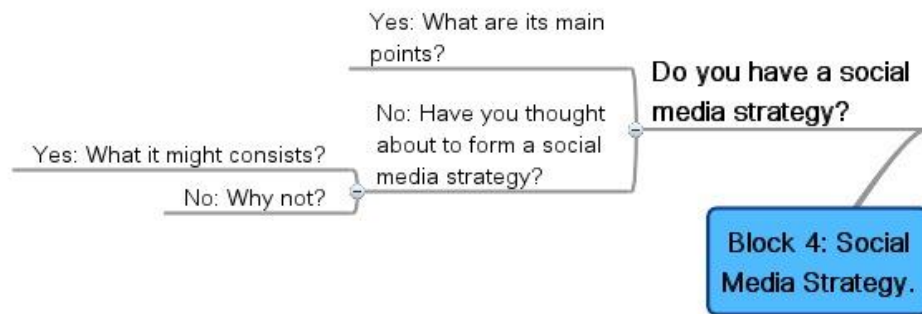


Figure 20. Questions regarding the companies' social media strategies.

Block 4 explores the companies' social media strategies in their current state and context. Three interviewed companies said that they have formed a social media strategy; one company is in the process of forming it; and three others have not even considered of forming one. Usually these strategies consist of issues about writing styles, building community, raising discussion on particular issues and changing public attitude towards the company. The companies that considered forming a strategy were mostly concentrated on the context and the company's role in discussions and choosing the right social media tools for doing it.

According to the case companies, a social media strategy gives a company certain goals to be achieved and requires metrics to measure in order to follow the performance and to track the needs for further development. Several interviewed companies agreed that the social media strategy should be part of some other, bigger strategy. It is good to remember that social media is only one of the tools, among many others, that can be used to add to a company's vision.

Block 5, Questions: Opinions on Social Media and Its Development

In Block 5, the questions shed light on the future development of social media usage in the case companies. Figure 21 illustrates the questions regarding the possible advantages and disadvantages of social media use, as viewed by the case companies.
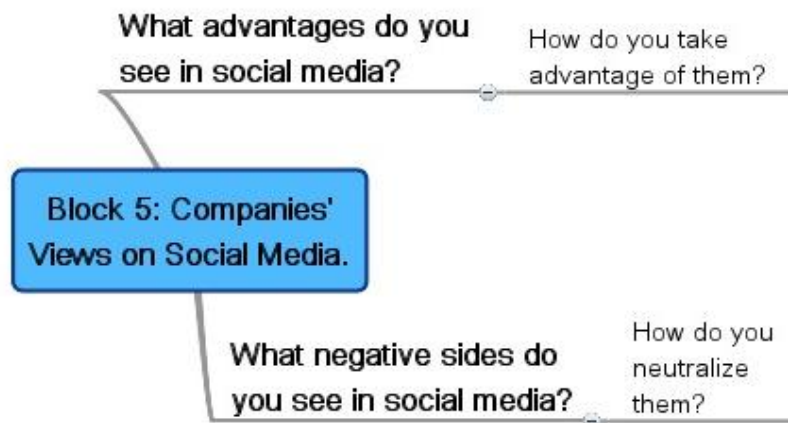


Figure 21. Opinions on advantages and disadvantages of using social media.

Questions in Block 5 address the positive and negative aspects of social media, relating to the companies opinions on both strengths and threats of social media.

Three interviewed companies saw more positive sides of using social media, which rest in a direct contact to customers and information dissemination. Other positive sides mentioned were a customer feedback, an information gathering and interactivity. In the interviews, only one interviewee mentioned a community building, and none of the interviewees mentioned loyalty building as a possible positive aspect of social media. Overall, the case companies agree upon the importance of social media in building customer relationships.

Three companies saw time consumption and the lack of resources as associated with social media problem. Without help from any software, an agent or a communication officer must manually search for posts on the company's profiles and manually log into social media profiles. In such a case, a contact center agent is specially trained for customer service, and therefore, it is a more economical choice to manage the discussion in social media, compared to the communications or marketing staff.

At least two companies saw vilification and the spread of negative information as possible negative sides to social media. They have experienced vilification in discussion forums, anonymous discussions, and therefore, they see this danger of a long memory of written information, along with the lack of rules in the discussion forums, as major negative sides of social media. Overall, the companies saw more positive rather than negative features in a social media, and all of them agreed on the necessity of establishing their presence in social media.

6.2     Analysis of the Current State of Social Media in the Interviewed Companies

Analysis of the current state of a social media usage in the case companies is presented in a form of a SWOT box in Figure 22.



**Streghts**
- Provides a direct contact to customers.
- Disseminate information effectively.
- Provides customer feedback
- Provides a possibility for information gathering.

**Weakness**
- Absence of rules in discussion and a long memory of written information.
- Needs to attract customers to visit profiles.
- Absence or incomplete preparation of social media strategy.

**Oportunities**
- Increasing discussion and activity from business side to build the brand
- A new way to contact customers.
- Increasing company's visibility
- Building a community around the brand.

**Threats**
- Time-consumping of social media discussion
- Vilification and the spreading of negative information
- Whole organization, all stakeholders, should be taken into consideration.
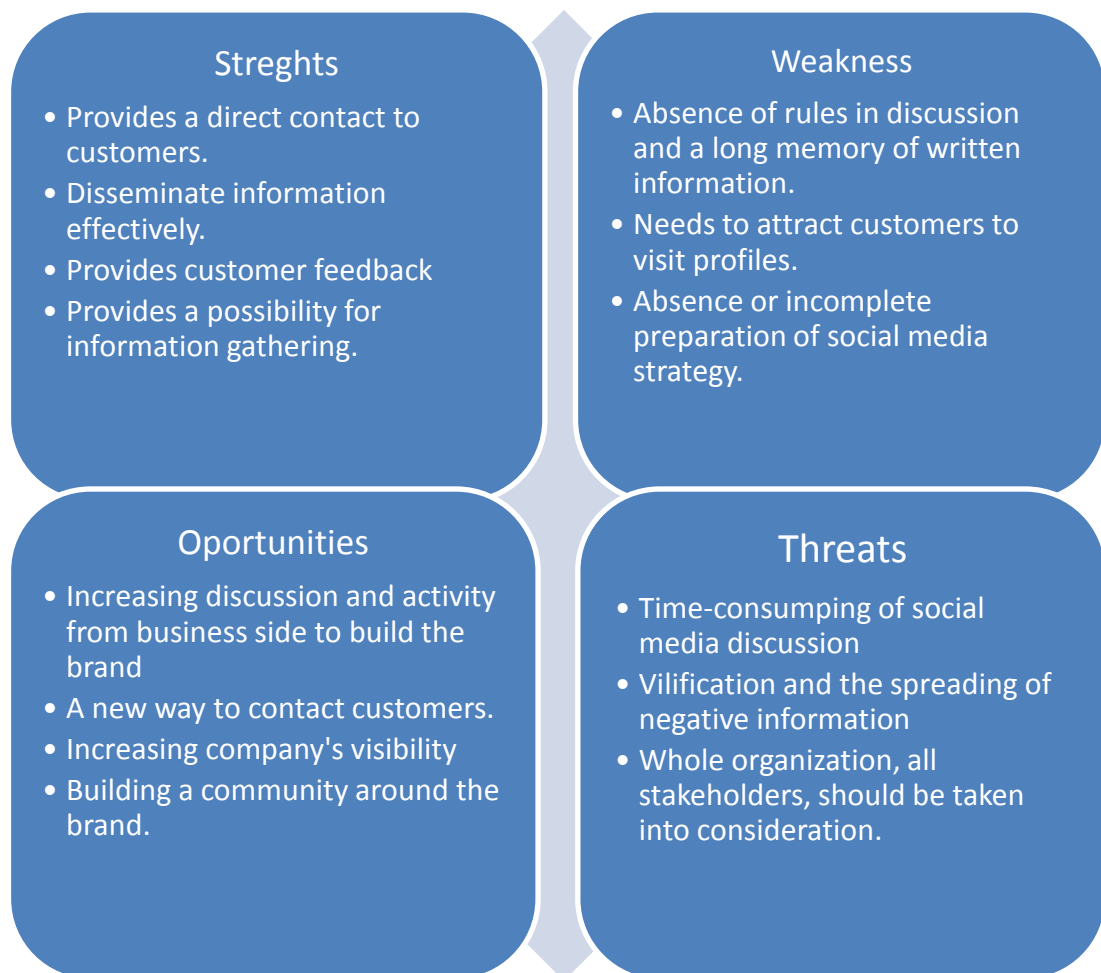
Figure 22. A SWOT analysis of current state of social media usage in the case companies.

According to the interviewees, there are several strengths of using social media. Through social media, a company can have a direct contact to its customers and can disseminate information effectively. Social media also provides a new tool for collecting customer feedback and a possibility for gathering new kinds of information about the customers.

The main weaknesses of using social media are perceived as the absence of rules in discussions, especially in anonymous discussion forums, and a long memory of written information. Some companies experienced difficulties in attracting their customers to visit their profiles or read their blogs. Another weakness is the absence or incomplete state of social media strategy, which ends up in a situation where not all stakeholders are taken into consideration.

The opportunities provided by social media are believed to be an increasing discussion and activity on the business side to build up the brand, to neutralize negative discussion and correct wrong information. The companies saw several reasons for the need to increase discussion in a social media. Besides neutralizing negative discussion, social media can offer a new window on customers, especially in the public sector. Both interviewed companies operating in the public sector stressed this direct and open contact to customers. Finally, the companies saw an opportunity to disseminate information more effectively, even though this goal requires planning to be successful.

Overall, the biggest threats, according to the interviewees, are the possible vilification and the spreading of negative information. Several companies mention negative writing of all kind as a possible danger, although only some of them have experienced it. Also time-consumption was mentioned by several interviewees, since manual usage of social media is very ineffective in mass communication. The last challenge was the need to take the whole organization, with all the stakeholders, into consideration, while operating in social media. It is perceived as a challenge, since it requires a new kind of cross departmental communication. The SWOT box with the current information (Figure 22) is a starting point for building up a comprehensive model in the forthcoming sections.

Summing up, the case companies are finding their ways to take advantage of social media benefits, and most of the companies have no negative experiences associated with social media so far. Both benefits and drawbacks of social media are for the future to verify and fall by trial and an error how this trend will be developing.

# 7  An Initial Proposed Model

This section describes the initial proposed model for social media posts processing through contact centers.

The Thesis uses a time scorecard model presented by Hakanen (2004) with slight modifications. After a SWOT box, a model formulation continues with balanced scorecard elements of strategic objectives, success factors and KPIs (key performance indicator) from different aspects. Finally, strategic objectives of all three aspects are combined into a model, which is presented at the end of the section.

## 7.1  The Aspects of the Model

To create a proposed model, balance scorecard elements, namely strategic objectives, success factors and key performance indicators were chosen. These elements are perceived as the most important to build a model. For the purposes of this analysis, they are called the customer, the process and the economic aspects. Unlike the original time balance scorecard method, this Thesis does not use the learning and growth constituents since it is the elements, which are embedded into the process aspect.

### 7.1.1  The Customer Aspect of the Model

The proposed model for social media post processing in contact center, representing the customer aspect, suggests the following three strategy objectives. Figure 23 shows the proposed customer aspect.
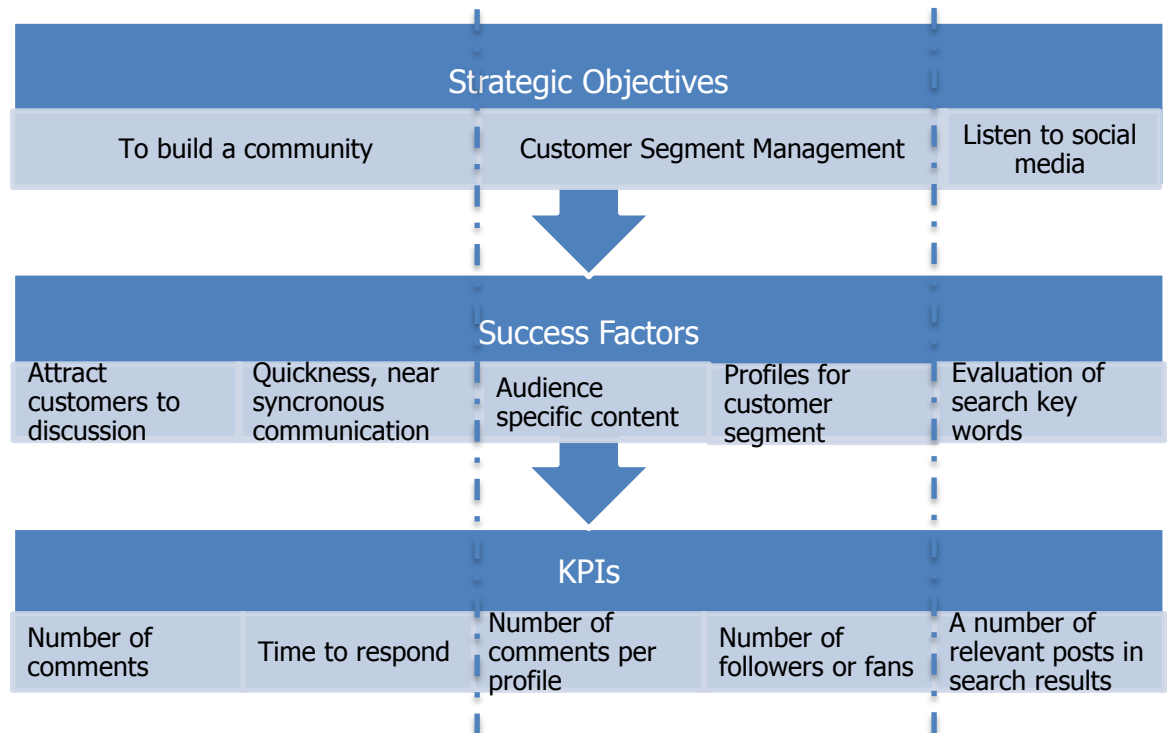
Figure 23. Strategic Objects, Success Factors and KPIs (the customer aspect).

Figure 23 presents the initial model, which suggests three strategic objectives, as parts of the customer aspect. The first strategic objective is to build a community around the brand together with the customers. In the interviews, an importance of community building and interaction was stressed many times. In addition, the proposed model suggests two success factors for this strategic objective. The first success factor is to attract the customers to the discussion or to visiting the company's profiles. It is in line with the opinion by Gartner (2011), who mentioned monolog as a critical failure fact, and stressed the importance of keeping up the discussion. The suggested KPI metric for this success factor is a number of comments given by the customers. The second proposed success factor is the company quickness in replies. According to Kroll (2010), a quick reply shows care towards the customer's opinions and questions, which is important for building a community around the company name or brand. A KPI for this success factor is a time to respond to such a post. This metric is a standard reporting metric in contact center solutions, which measures a total time spent waiting in the queue for a social media post and a time spent by an agent to reply to this post.

A second proposed strategic objective is the customer segment management. Five out of seven interviewees mentioned that they have created several profiles to different audience, which represents the majority of the interviewed companies. Social media

tools can bring a solution to establish interaction with the new customer segments and become a means to enhance interaction with some exiting customer groups. A proposed success factor here is to analyze the customers' base and define what social media tools they use. Based on these analyzes, a company can created profiles directed to specific customer segments. A proposed KPI for this success factor is a number of registered users, followers or fans. The second proposed success factor is to create the specific content to a particular customer segment. A several interviewed companies used, for example, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for different purposes. Also, in general, younger customers were reached more easily through social media (Hartala 2010). A proposed KPI for this success factor is a number of the customer comments per profile. This metric indicates an interest towards the company's profile and discussion in it.

The third strategic objective suggested for the customer aspect of the proposed model is to listen to social media. As mentioned earlier, most of the companies listen to social media, and they all consider it important to get information about both the customers' and the industry's behavior. A success factor for social media listening is a constant evaluation of key words used for social media searches. Three interviewed companies use keyword searches to listen to social media, but only one of them were satisfied with the results. Due to the nature of social media, changes of topics and places of discussion seem to be extremely rapid. The proposed KPI is a number of relevant posts in the search results, which would indicate how accurate the key words for a search are.

Overall, for a contact center and social media the customer aspect is important and it is connected tightly to the other aspects, especially to the process aspect.

### 7.1.2 The Process Aspect of the Model

One of the contact centers roles is to implement the company's customer service process. Therefore, it is important to consider the strategic objectives on how social media posts are handled. In this study, three strategic objectives are suggested for a pro-

posed model for processing social media posts in contact centers. The whole process aspect is presented in Figure 24.
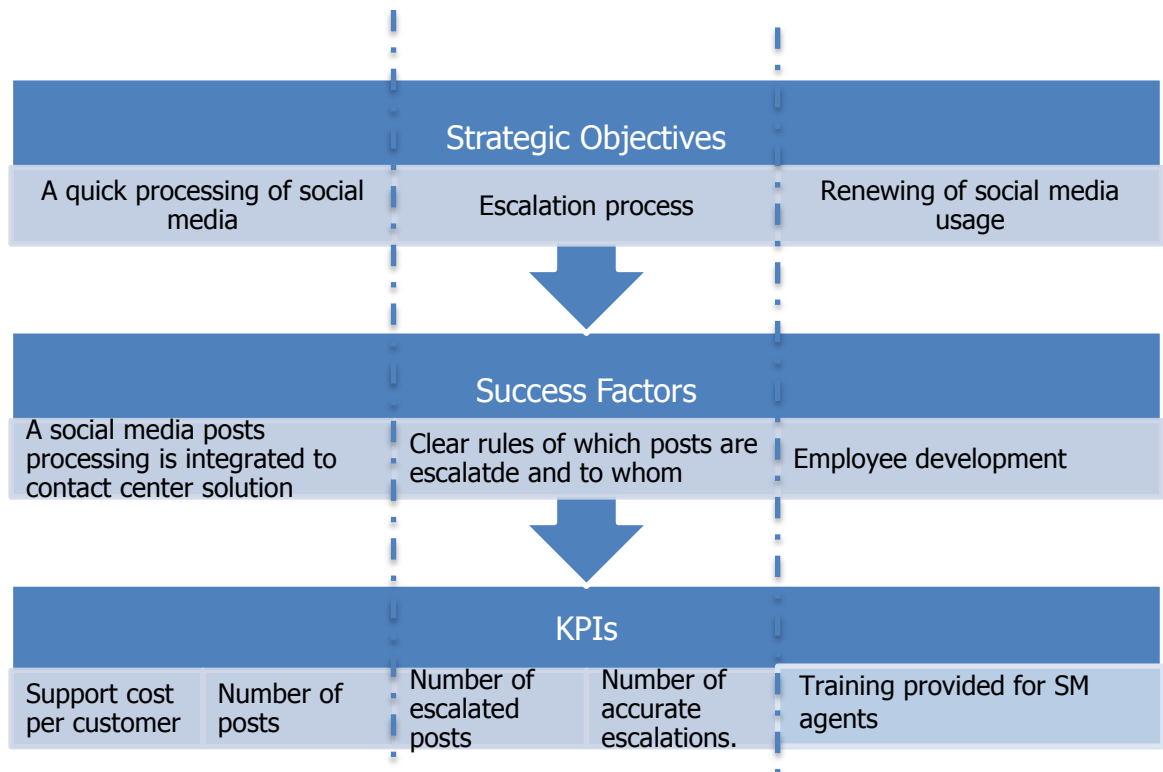


Figure 24. Strategic objectives, success factors and KPI's from the process aspect.

Based on Hakanen's model (Hakanen 2004) and the findings from the case companies, the strategic objectives proposed in this study suggest three components: a quick processing of social media posts, escalation process and renewing of social media usage, as presented in a Figure 24.

For its first strategic objective, this model suggests a quick processing of social media posts. To achieve quick processing of social media posts, a proposed success factor is to integrate social media to existing contact center solutions. There are several metrics, which can be used to measure success and the need for such integration. The given strategy model proposes two such KPIs. A support cost per customer using social media value is used to evaluate cost efficiency of social media usage in support issues. Another important value is the number of posts, which indicates contact volumes of social media posts. The number of posts and the cost per customer would help a com-

pany to make a decision on the need and level of integration of social media into the existing contact center solution.

The second proposed strategic objective is an escalation process. Through the escalation process definition, an agent establishes clear rules as for what kind of posts should be escalated to others, and where a post should be escalated to. A success factor proposed for escalation process is to sign, first, a responsible person for social media and then, build an actual process of when to escalate a post and to whom. A suggested KPI for the escalation process is a number of escalated posts and a number of accurately escalated posts. Interestingly, those companies that did not have any escalation process, or those who did not take stakeholders' into consideration, were unorganized and reported more negative sides of social media.

The third success factor in the proposed model is the renewing of social media usage. Three interviewed companies mentioned agent training to develop friendly writing style, and one interviewed customer mentioned training for communications and marketing personnel, due to the different nature of social media, as what these professionals should be used to. KPIs for training personnel are social media agents initial trainings and both the number and content of available information to agents.

Thus, the process aspect is tightly related to the customer aspect, and these strategic objectives are set to establish smooth and effective environment for the employees of the company.

### 7.1.3 The Economic Aspect of the Model

Strategic objectives, success factors and KPI's from economic aspect are listed in a Figure 25.
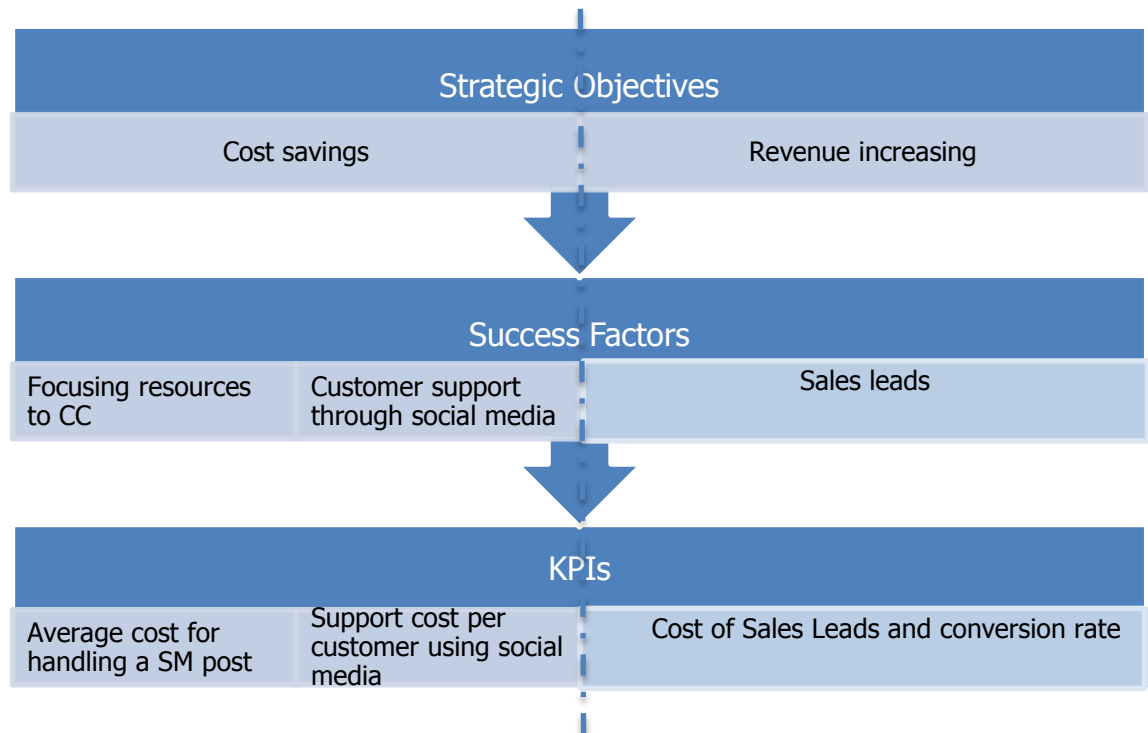
Figure 25. Strategic objectives and success factors from the economic aspect.

Figure 25 illustrates the economic aspect of the proposed model. Cost savings and revenue generation are the proposed strategic objectives for the economic aspect. To achieve cost savings, a proposed model suggest two critical success factors. The first success factor is to allocate resources from the contact center environment and reduce the resources from others. In company interviews, several companies mentioned time consuming as a negative side of social media. To address this worry, skillful staff in contact centers, who are trained in customer service, can answer most of the posts in social media. A KPI metric for allocating resources could be the average cost per handling a social media post. This can be obtained through measuring the average time, which an agent spends on handling a post. Another success factor for cost savings is the customer support through social media. A KPI for this success factor could be a support cost per customer using social media, and this value can also be measured by the time, which an agent spent on handling a support ticket.

The second suggested strategic objective in this model is the revenue increasing. The proposed success factor for the revenue increase is sales leads. A direct sales opportunity from social media can be considered as a success factor, which can be measured by the number of leads and the cost per lead based on the time spent on handling

social media. An ultimate goal for social media strategy is to increase the revenue. All the other aspects also aim to the revenue increase.

## 7.2 A Map of the Proposed Model

Based on the analysis described in the previous section, a map of the proposed model for the companies to utilize social media post processing in contact center is suggested. A map of the proposed model describes the path from non-economical strategic objectives to the economical strategic objectives. To do this a different aspects and strategic objectives are grouped together into a map of the proposed model. A map of the proposed model in the Figure 26 shows connections between the aspects and the strategic objectives.
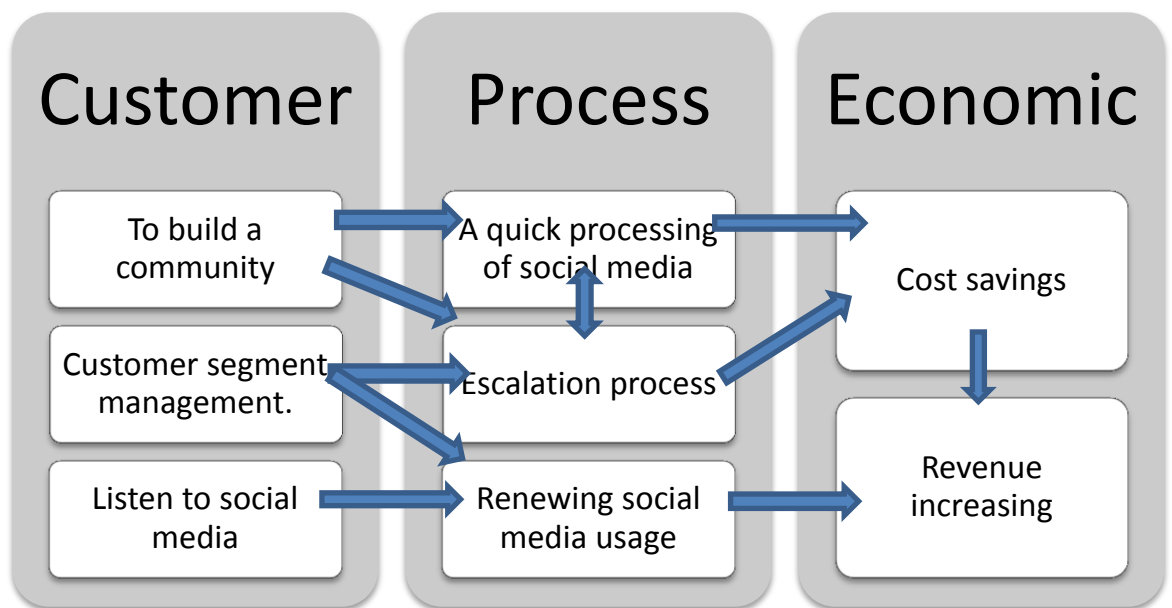


Figure 26. A map of the proposed model for social media posts processing in contact centers.

A map of the proposed model, illustrated in Figure 26, presents three main aspects of the social media strategy, namely of the customer, the process and the economic aspects. The suggested map of the proposed model shows strategic objectives for all these three aspects. In all, the proposed model is grounded in the customer aspect and, through the process aspects, the model aims to reach the economic aspect.

The strategic objective of building a community, indicated in the customer aspect, can be achieved through a quick processing of social media posts and a well-defined escalation process. As a result, the community can bring cost savings in short time perspective, and in the long term, a loyal customer of this community will bring more revenue to the company.

The strategy objective of customer segment management can be achieved through strategic objectives of escalation process and renewing in the process aspect. These strategic objectives aim to cost savings and therefore also, to increase revenue. A final strategic objective, in the customer aspect, is listening to social media. This objective aims to increase revenue, although indirectly, through the renewing of social media usage by being able to follow changes in the industry and react to these changes.

Although not everything can be measured by economic indicators, the majority of objectives are intended to lead to economic outcomes, at least indirectly. This map of the proposed model is intended to show the economic reasons why the non-financial strategic objectives are important. The model is mainly built around the customer aspect, which aims to lead to the achievement in the economical aspect, and the process aspect forms a bridge between these two.

# 8 Validation of the Model by the Experts

This section shows a final, modified proposed model for social media processing in contact centers, which takes into consideration the validated results suggested by the industry's experts. The changes to the initial proposal mainly consist of the adjustments in the in process aspect part. Table 5 shows the expert interview details.

| Interviewed Company | Title | Initials | Type of interview | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Expert 1 A contact center solution vendor | A presales engineer | J. B. | Face-to-face interview | 5.4 2011 |
| Expert 2 Contact Center solution retailer | Senior Application Expert | S. O. | Face-to-face interview | 6.4 2011 |

Table 5. Expert interview details.

Table 5 above presents the interviewed experts (1 to 7). This table lists the interviewee's initials, their job descriptions, and the interview types and dates. As Table 5. Expert interview details.Table 5 shows,

Table 4these expert interviews were conducted as unstructured interviews with two experts, in which the interviewees can tell freely their thoughts regarding the proposal formed by the first set of interviews with the case companies. Although there were only two expert interviews, they represent different companies and different contact center solutions, which they operate with.

The suggestions by the experts are presented as a proposal with the three revised aspects, thus following the structure initially developed in the first proposed model. The revised model follows the same division as the initial one, separately analyzing the strategic objectives, success factors and KPIs of each aspect of the model (the customer, the process and the economic one).

First, the customer aspect was discussed in the interviews with experts, and they suggested adding another, additional strategic objective. Figure 27 shows a revised scheme for the customer aspect of the proposed model.



Figure 27. A Revised Customer Aspect, from the proposed model of the social media posts processing in contact centers.

Figure 27 illustrates the result of the expert interview additions to the proposed model concerning its customer aspect (in red). In the expert interviews one strategy objective was added to the customer aspect of the proposed model; namely the experts highlighted the importance of loyalty. A loyal customer helps other customers in a form of support, and at the same time, brings a straight revenue increase by staying loyal to the company's products. The experts found it so important that it cannot be embedded into the next strategy objective of community building. The success factor for loyalty

was considered to be vested in a friendly discussion. Some of the case interviewees mentioned specifically the importance of friendly and short discussion in the social media tools, which the experts considered to construct and enhance loyalty. A metric for loyalty is the net promoter score (NPS), which measures how likely a customer was converted to advocate for the company. The experts considered the NPS to be a very important KPI, due to its straight impact on revenue.

The interviewed experts agreed that four strategic objectives could be too many for one company to be achieved, and they recommended choosing one to three strategic objectives. Although all of the strategic objectives are, of course, attainable, it is not at all simple or easy. If the company, for example, is able to create a community in social media, or gain valuable information about the customers and the industry through listening to social media, their activity can be regarded as successful already.

The most important topic of discussion in the expert interviews concerned *the process aspect* of the proposed model. Figure 28 illustrated a revised process aspect, with the changes to the initial proposal marked in red.
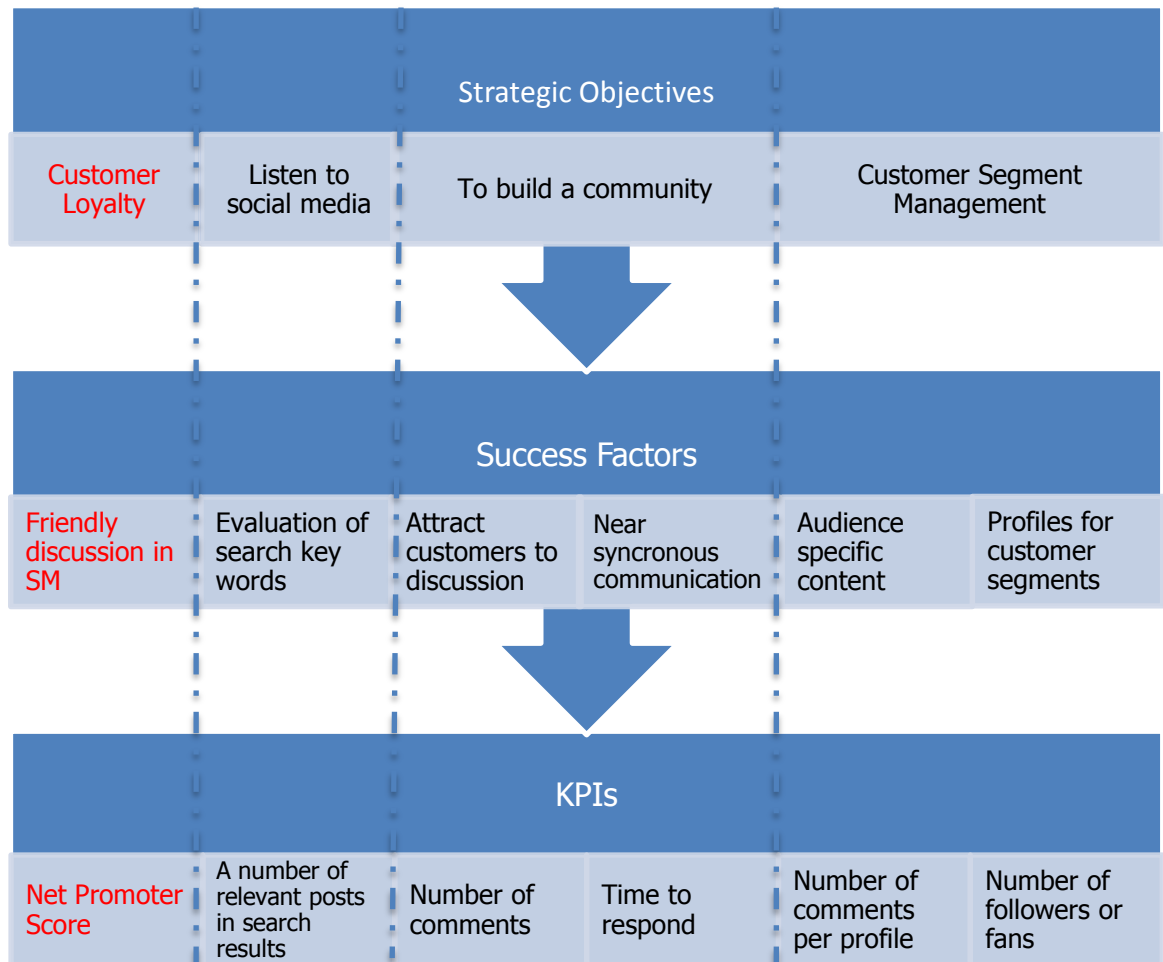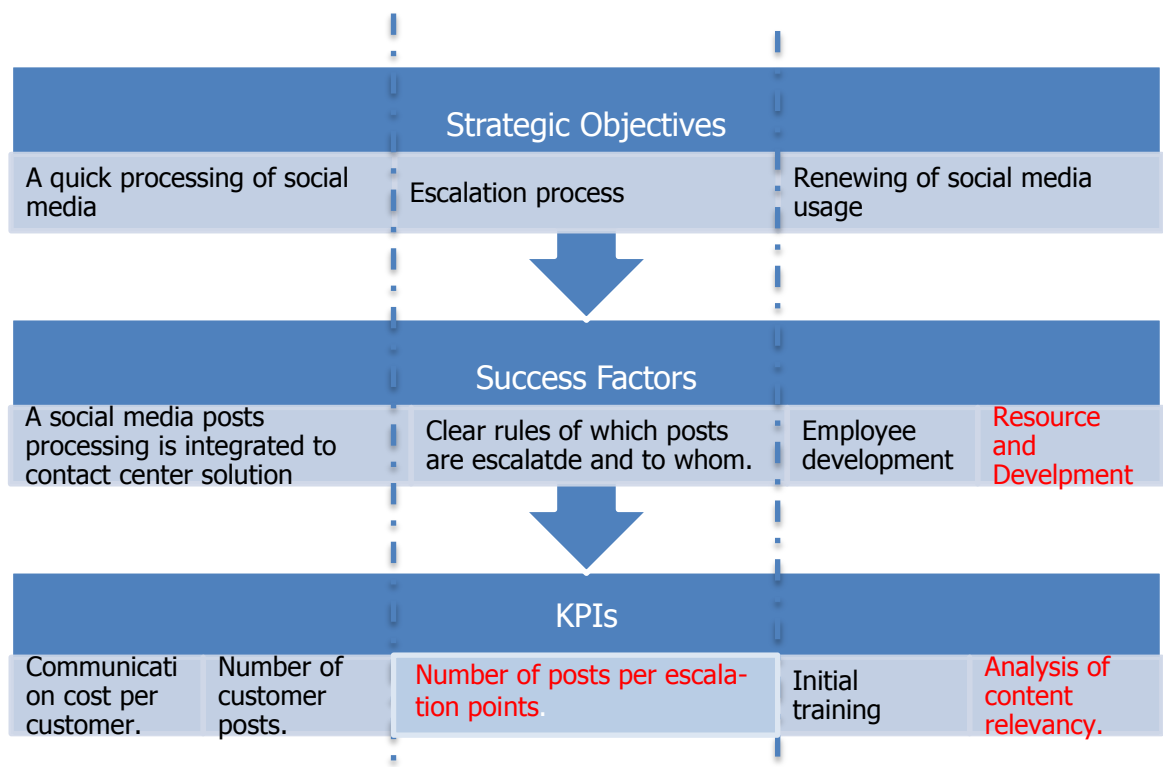


Figure 28. A Revised Process Aspect, from the proposed model of the social media posts processing in contact centers.

All the experts agreed with the strategic objectives illustrated in Figure 28, but they suggested changes to the success factors and KPIs. A KPI for escalation process was narrowed to one, and they also suggested changing a number of escalated posts per escalation points. The experts found it important to follow where the posts are escalated. Through this KPI, a company can analyze the functionality of the whole escalation process, as well as the amount of the escalated posts.

Another change to the initial proposal is a new success factor added to the strategy objective of renewing social media usage. The experts considered research and development of social media a good opportunity, which such social media contexts with the customer provide. In social media, a company can ask about the customers' opinions or ask the customer to choose, for example, a new logo from a number of suggested logos. One case company also mentioned possible research into product development as an opportunity provided by social media context. A proposed KPI for this success factor is an analysis of content relevancy. A goal of this KPI is to analyze the relevance of the discussion in social media.

The third aspect of the proposed model is an economic aspect. The experts analyzed the initial proposal's economic aspect and suggested to add a new success factor, which is illustrated in Figure 29 (marked in red).

| Strategic Objects | |
|---|---|
| Cost savings | Revenue inrcreasing |

| Success Factors | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Focusing resources to CC | Degreese number of time consuming contacts. | Customer supports other customer in social media | New sales leads |

| KPI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of contact handled without escalation | Ratio between different contacts. | Number of support insidents. | Revenue derived from social media leads |

Figure 29. A Revised economic aspect, from the proposed model of the social media posts processing in contact centers.

The company's main objective for the introduction of social media is the revenue increase, therefore, the experts wanted to add new sales leads as a new success factor. In contrast with their opinions, a several literature references highlight the importance of not using social media as a marketing or sales tool. Despite this discrepancy, the experts agree that the company's sales can discreetly use social media to look for new sales leads. As a KPI for this success factor, the revenue derived from social media leads was suggested by the experts. The companies can evaluate, based on this KPI, whether the sales opportunities through social media were profitable or not.

Based on the experts' opinions on every aspect of the proposed model, a revised map of the model is suggested in Figure 30.

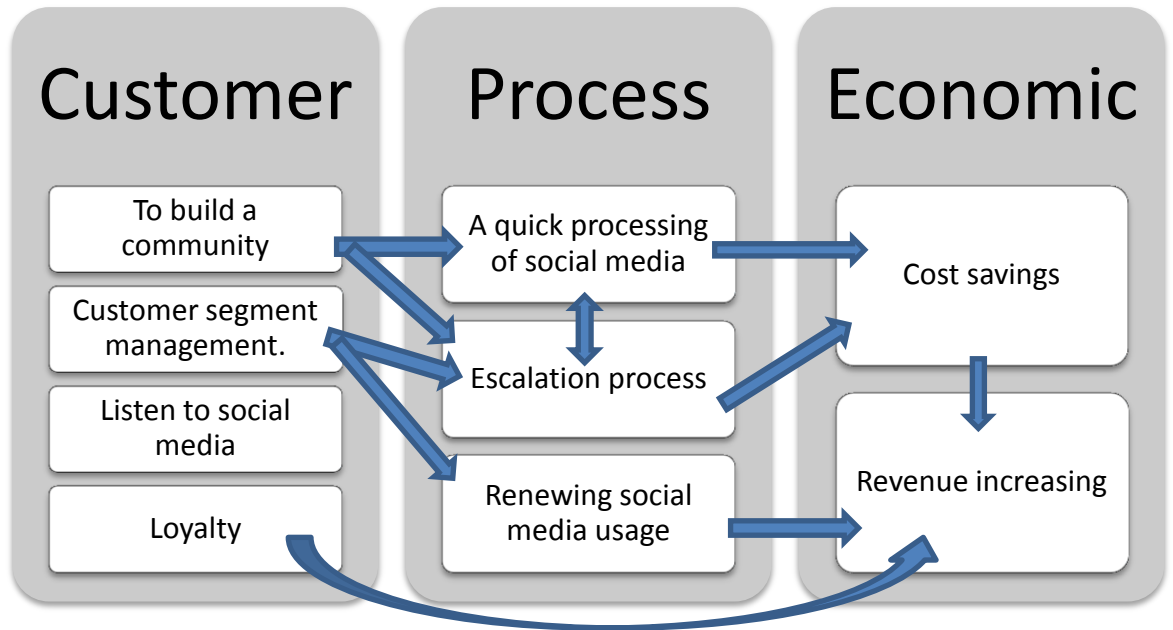Figure 30. A revised map of the proposed model for social media posts processing in contact centers.

In general, the experts approved of the suggested strategy objectives, with only the loyalty added to the customer aspect. This revised map of the proposed model can be used as a guideline for the consultants, when they choose the appropriate strategy objectives to apply to individual cases in their case companies.

## 9 Discussion and Conclusion

This section summaries the finding of the Thesis and suggest possible conclusions as for the proposed model for social media posts processing.

Social media utilization through contact centers aims to introduce a cost effective and swift usage of social media. This Thesis considers social media as a tool to achieve the company's strategic objectives or its certain specific strategic goals. Social media is a relatively new phenomenon in company-customer communication, so that the case companies are only starting their activities in this field. In other words, none of the case companies uses software to process and route social media posts. Furthermore, some of the case companies hesitate to trust handling discussions in social media to the hands of customer representatives. Only time will tell how fast social media tools will develop during the next few years. If social media continues its triumphant march, as fast as they are doing it, at the moment, interested companies have to allocate more personnel to handling social media discussions and, from the cost point of view, a contact center will be their most logical choice for such a service.

Contact centers, on the other hand, have also grown from simple departments of customer representatives all the way to the companies' single points of customer contact. By now, the importance of contact centers has been widely acknowledged. Therefore, a natural conclusion would be to combine social media communication needs with contact centers service opportunities. The main point of this study is to manage such customer care effectively and preferably, with the minimum expenses. In comparison to the salary costs of marketing or communication personnel, the contact center customer representatives are obviously most cost effective. The customer representatives are also specially trained to provide customer care and, with fairly small initial trainings, they will be able to handle social media posts very effectively.

After studying this problem, the researcher argues that contact center solution is needed to pre-handle and route social media posts. Contact centers in particular, among other departments, are chosen for this mission due to their effectiveness in handling contacts. In an effective contact center, all customer representatives handle phone calls at peak hours, and during slower times, they can spend time on answering,

for example, emails and social media posts. Most importantly, a contact center solution takes care of detecting peak hours and quiet times, when it routes customer contacts to agents. From utilizing this approach comes major cost savings in the form of working hours, as any model would suggest. Another important advantage a contact centers can bring to social media post processing is reporting. A contact center already provides a great number of metrics which are used to measure contact centers performance. When social media posts are processed by a contact center solution, effective reporting becomes possible. To be able to detect opportunities for cost savings or revenue increase contact centers must be able to measure them. Therefore, a proposed model suggests respective measurable KPIs (Key performance indicator) for every success factor.

An answer to research question of ("What model could be used for processing social media posts through contact centers?") can be found from the results of this study. A clear process of handling social media posts was suggested, which includes escalating the posts outside contact centers, which is believed to be particlarly important. When the customer representatives know who to escalate social media posts to, they can work effectively, saving time of other departments.

However, the unpredictability of social media creates a large element of uncertainty. Although the Statistics Finland's studies predict an increase in social media usage among the Finns, some expectant feeling of social media slowdown can also be felt. Therefore, the companies hesitate to invest money and allocate employees to social media posts processing. And, in general, the companies find it difficult as for now to exploit the benefits that social media can offer. Getting the customer attention in social media has proved to be difficult, and for that purpose the companies need an effective strategy helping them to achieve their goals. Only time will tell how social media will be changing and how companies could manage to exploit the benefits of social media in the future.

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## Appendix 1. Social Media Categories

| Social Media Category | Subcategory | Example platforms |
|---|---|---|
| Publish | Blog platforms | WordPress, Typepad, Blogger and Overblog |
| | Microblog | Twitter |
| | Social stream services | FriendFeed, Tumbir and Posterous |
| | Wikis | Wikipedia, Wikia and WetPaint |
| Share | Share videos | YouTube, Dailymotion and Vimeo |
| | Photos | Flickr, Picasa and Instagram |
| | Links | Delicious and Digg |
| | Music | Last, iLike, Spotify and Deezer |
| | Documents | SlideShare and Scribb |
| Discuss | Bulletin Boards | PhpBB, bbPress, Phorum, 4Chan and Gravity |
| | Comments | IntenseDebate, Cocomment, Disqus, JS-Kit |
| | Management Systems | and Backtype |
| | Social Search Tools | Quora, Aardvark and Mahalo |
| Commerce | Customers Reviews Solutions | BazaarVoice and PowerReviews |
| | Collaborative Feedbacks Tools | UserVoice and GetSatisfaction |
| | Recommendation and Inspiration Communities | Polyvore, StyleHyve, Weardrobe and Hunch |
| | Localized Coupons | Groupon and LivingSocial |
| | Purchase Sharing Tools | Blippy and Swipely |
| | Co-Shopping Tools | Look'n'Be |
| | Facebook-shopping Tools | ShopTab and Boosket |
| Location | Social Location Platforms | Foursquare, Gowalla, MyTown, Facebook Places and Google Places |
| | local social networks | Loopt and Whrrl |

|  | Mobile Social Networks | Mig33 and MocoSpace |
|  | Events Sharing | Upcoming, Plancast, Zvents, Eventful and Socializr |
| Network | Personal Social Network | MyYearBook, MyLife, CopainsDavant and Badoo |
|  | professional social network | LinkedIn, Viadeo, Xing and Plaxo |
|  | « Traditional » Social Network | Facebook, MySpace, Orkut, Tagged and Hi5 |
|  | Social Networks Creation Tools | Ning and KickApps |
| Games | Casual Gaming | Zynga, Playfish, Playdom and SGN |
|  | Mobile Gaming | Ngmoco and OpenFeint |
|  | Virtual Worlds for Teenagers | Habbo, Club Penguin and Poptropica |

## Appendix 2. A Google Products

| | |
|---|---|
| Gmail | The most popular email platform in the world. Google opened up the email market diminishing the worry of storage space. |
| Google Maps | Google Maps has been around for a good while now, but really took over when Google Maps was installed into cellphones as mobile applications. Google maps allow navigation around the world. |
| Google News | Google news was launched in 2002 by Google. The front page of Google news is controlled not by editors but by the aggregation algorithm. This is one of the main sources of news for many people on a daily basis. |
| Google Earth | A user can view Google Earth on phones with maps or different types of terrain. Google Earth offers a change to explore different places. |
| Google Apps | With Google Apps a user can store documents and applications into the Google servers for later use. |
| Google Chat | Google Chat is the chat or IM chosen by many, it is part of Gmail or Google Apps products. |
| Youtube | Google bought the video sharing site YouTube for $1.5 billion and the site has continued to grow massively. |
| Google Alerts | Small product that is used on to keep alerted of personal or brand mentions. |
| Android | Google bought Android and it has fast become important operating systems for mobile phones in the world. |
| Google Chrome | Google Chrome is a simplistic and stripped web browser. |
| Picasa | Picasa is a photo sharing site that seems to have fallen by the wayside in terms of growth when compared to Flickr and Facebook. |
| Orkut | Orkut was bought by Google to compete with Facebook in the social landscape. |
| Blogger | Blogger is one of the biggest blogging platforms. It was bought by Google from Evan Williams, who created blogger and twitter. |

Blogger competes with WordPress.

| | |
|---|---|
| Feedburner | Feedburner powers many of the RSS feeds on blogs around the world and is another source of data for Google. |
| Google Calendar | Google Calendar collaborates with Google Apps and Gmail allowing sharing and synchronization with many mobile applications. |
| Adsense | Website owners can enroll in this program to enable text, image, and video advertisements on their websites. |
| Google Reader | Essentially Google Reader is an RSS reader that allows users to pull in the latest blog posts. Google Reader users use application to pull in the latest information. |
| Google Analytics | Google Advertising platform was a success and Google Analytics allows analytics regarding Google Advertising. |
| Google Ventures | Google Ventures is the venture capital investment arm of Google Inc. that makes strategic investments in technology companies. Google also makes some investments through the main company but ventures were set up as a standalone entity. |
| Adwords | Anyone can display ads on Google and Google advertising network. Advertise pay only if people click their ads (Google Adwords 2011). |
| Google Voice | The Google Voice allows a user to receive calls through various phones and has been integrated in to Gmail in recent times. |
| Google Check Out | Check out is the service that Google provides to merchants and websites to sell goods online. |
| Book Search | Book search scans books and make them indexable in search engine. |
| Google Search | For over 10 years, Google have been working at constantly improving their search results and, as a result, over 70% of users prefer Google as their search engine. |
| Webmaster Tools | Webmaster is a tool for web-publishers, who want to see information about how their website is seen, by the eyes of the |

Google

| | |
|---|---|
| Double Click | Google bought Internet ad serving network Double Click in 2008. |
| iGoogle | iGoogle can be customized using widgets and RSS to create a customized landing page tailored to users own personal interests. |
| Google Finance | Google Finance offer stock prices and all sorts of financial information including currencies, equities and the latest financial news in one central hub. |
| Google Video | Users can upload videos to Google video as well as searching through millions of videos on the service. Google Video was started before purchase of the YouTube, and since then it is hard to see viable long term option for Google Video. |
| Google Trends | Google Trends is a product that based on the main Google search and helps show what is happening in the world, based on search trends. |
| Google Street View | Google Street View shows images of streets and people's houses around the world, and funny pictures of everyday things happening. |
| Google TV | Google TV is the latest product that Google, which aims to take over TV advertisement sales. |
| Google Goggles | Google Goggles is a visual search application for Android Phones. A search can be done by taking a photo. |

**Appendix 3. Metrics to Measure Social Media Activities**

Activity-Based Metrics

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Mentions | The number of times your company is mentioned on forms of social media. |
| Number of Comments | The number of comments a given post receives, which is also known as the Conversational Index |
| Number of Followers or Fans | The number of people following or fanning you on specific social media sites. |
| Frequency of Interactions | The number of times you get involved versus the number of mentions. |

Contact Metrics

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Contacts to Resolution | The number of interactions required to resolve a given inquiry. |
| Quality of Issue Resolution | The tone and sentiment of the interaction. |
| Net Promoter Score | How likely this interaction was to create an advocate for your organization. |

Customer Support

| | |
|---|---|
| Customer Satisfaction | How satisfied customers are with their support |
| Time to Respond | The time from a post until the Contact Center or designated owner responds |
| Number of Support Tickets | The number of support tickets initiated because of social media inquiries |
| Support cost per Customer Using Social Media | Time spent in aggregate across the agent base using social media for support |

Marketing/Sales

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Social Prospects | The number of prospects identified using social media |
| Number of Leads/Period | How many of those prospects graduate to leads |
| Number of Qualified Leads/Period | How many of those prospects become qualified leads |
| Ratio of Qualified to Non-qualified Leads | The resulting ratio of leads to qualified leads |

Cost of Lead          The cost per lead based on the time spent using social media and the number of leads.