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### Understanding social media use for work

*Content, causes, and consequences*

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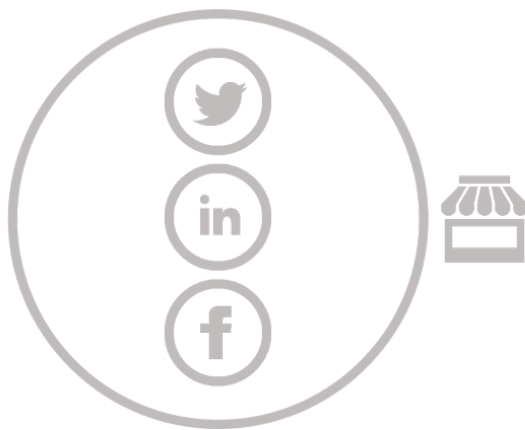
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# Summary



## Summary

The multivalent involvement of public social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in both social and organizational life has raised a number of questions about how, and to what extent and effects organizational members use these technologies for work-related purposes. Yet research has fallen short of providing adequate answers to questions about the content, causes, and consequences of public social media use for work. The central aim of this dissertation is to provide a more thorough understanding of public social media use for work.

In the first chapter of this dissertation work related social media content is examined. The study presented in chapter one aimed to provide a categorization of work-related social media messages. The study employed a manual content analysis, categorizing 38,124 tweets. The results show that work-related messages can broadly be classified into individual experiences, organizational news, and industry-related information. The categorization implies that employees who use social media to share work-related content adhere to individual –i.e., display experiences and knowledge – or collective goals – i.e., sharing organization related information. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that almost half of all work-related content is shared outside regular work hours, in the evenings and during the weekends. This confirms social technologies' ability to facilitate perpetual connectivity.

Chapter *two* builds on the findings presented in study one by exploring both individual and social drivers of work related information sharing on social media. Study *two* presents a mixed-methods study combining survey data with content analysis data. Survey measures on employees' desire for professional success and organizational identification were used to explain variance in manually coded work-related social media content they shared on Twitter. The results indicate that pride and respect are important predictors of desire to succeed and organizational identification. These underlying mechanisms, in turn, are related social sharing work-related social media messages. Specifically, a desire to succeed is associated with sharing individual experiences and knowledge about the industry, but to organizational information sharing. In turn, organizational identification is related to sharing work-related social media messages directly related to the organization, but not to content associated with individual experiences or knowledge about the industry. Furthermore, these mechanisms were not affected by encouragements of the organization for sharing information. These findings indicate that employees voluntarily use their public social media accounts to share individual

experiences or organization-related information, depending on their identification with the organization or their commitment toward their own career.

The *third* chapter places social media center stage and combines this dissertation's focus by examining the mediating role of social media use in the relationship between boundary management preferences and work engagement.

There is general agreement that communication technologies—and social media, in particular—have made boundaries between work and life domains more permeable and destabilized the enactment of domain-specific roles in time and space. This chapter demonstrates that employees with a desire to integrate work and life domains enact these boundaries on public social media by sharing work-related content. In turn, this study aimed to unravel the causal ordering especially in the relationship between social media use and work engagement. The findings suggest social media use has causal priority over engagement, indicating that work-related social media use increases engagement.

The *fourth* chapter acknowledges that the relationship between social media use and engagement might be more complex by including opposing mechanism. Communication technologies and social media are associated with several advantages and challenges. This chapter draws on the job demands and resources model to propose a framework of social media related resources – i.e., advantages – and demands – i.e., disadvantages – which in are related to engagement and exhaustion. The findings suggest social media, on the one hand, increase work-life conflicts and interruptions, while on the other hand increasing communication efficiency and accessibility. These opposing mechanisms are in turn related to engagement and exhaustion.

The *fifth* chapter draws on paradox literature and examines the presence of an autonomy paradox the context of social media use. Additionally, this study examines the role of the norm to be responsive to technological demands. The findings demonstrate that employees who feel a stronger need to being responsive fail to reap autonomy benefits from social media use. The effect of social media use on work pressure was not affected. These findings add to the paradox literature by demonstrating that there are specific conditions – i.e., the norm of responsiveness - under which positive or negative effects might be more profound.

Finally, chapter *six* addresses social media's dark side. Over the past decades advancements in communication technologies have been increasingly linked to the blurring of

boundaries between different life domains. As groups (e.g., family, friends and colleagues) and content (e.g., professional and personal) collapse into one context on social networks the potential for role conflicts increases. This suggests that social media use for work induce time, strain and behavior-based based work/life conflict, as it complicates, rather than aids, role transitions. This suggests social media use for work requires psychological expenditure that extracts from the finite resources available causing role conflicts. Additionally, this study demonstrated that the presence of social media policies in organizations did not hamper these effects.

## Nederlandse Samenvatting

De veelzijdige toepassing van sociale media platforms (zoals Facebook en Twitter) in een sociale en professionele context werpt allerlei vragen op over hoe, waarom en met welke gevolgen deze technologieën gebruikt worden in de context van werk. Tot op heden heeft onderzoek nog geen adequate antwoorden opgeleverd met betrekking tot vragen over de werk-gerelateerde inhoud die medewerkers delen, en vragen over waarom zij dit doen en met welke individuele gevolgen. Dit proefschrift richt zich op deze vragen en hoopt zodanig ons begrip van werk-gerelateerd sociaal media gebruik te vergroten.

De basis hiervoor wordt gelegd in hoofdstuk *één*, waarin een inhoudsanalyse van 38,124 werkgerelateerde sociale media berichten gepresenteerd wordt. De resultaten laten zien dat werk-gerelateerde berichten geclassificeerd kunnen worden als individuele ervaringen, organisatienieuws, of sector-gerelateerde informatie. Deze categorisatie impliceert dat medewerkers persoonlijke doelen nastreven, door eigen ervaringen en kennis te delen, of collectieve doelen, door organisatie gerelateerde informatie te delen. De resultaten laten verder zien dat ongeveer de helft van alle werkgerelateerde berichten buiten ‘normale’ werkuren geplaatst worden, zoals ‘s avonds en in het weekend. Hiermee lijken sociale media continue connectiviteit tot het werk te faciliteren.

In hoofdstuk *twee* borduren we voort op deze bevindingen door te kijken naar mogelijke oorzaken voor het delen van werkgerelateerde informatie. In dit hoofdstuk wordt een *multi-method* studie gepresenteerd waarbij we survey data koppelen aan inhoudsanalyse data. De survey data wordt gebruikt om de mogelijke drijfveren van medewerkers te meten, zoals ambitieniveau en organisatieidentificatie. Deze informatie wordt vervolgens gebruikt om variantie in inhoudsanalyse data te verklaren. De inhoudsanalyse data bestaat uit de handmatige codering van werk-gerelateerde tweets. De resultaten laten zien dat respect en trost belangrijke voorspellers zijn van ambitie en organisatieidentificatie. Deze onderliggende mechanismen hebben invloed op het type werkgerelateerde berichten dat medewerkers delen. Zo blijkt, dat ambitie vooral een voorspeller is voor het delen van individuele kennis en ervaring, en dus niet van organisatie gerelateerd informatie. Organizeidentificatie aan de andere kant is gerelateerd aan het delen van organisatie gerelateerd nieuws, maar niet aan het delen van individuele kennis en ervaringen. Het delen van werk gerelateerde informatie in het algemeen werd niet beïnvloed door aanmoedigingen vanuit de organisatie. Hiermee laten de

bevindingen zien dat het werk gerelateerde gebruik van sociale media vooral een vrijwillige keuze is, en dat het type informatie dat medewerkers delen afhankelijk is van de mate van individuele ambities or collectieve orientaties in de vorm van organisatieidentificatie.

Hoofdstuk *drie* plaatst social media gebruik centraal door de medierende rol van werk gerelateerd social media gebruik te onderzoeken in de relatie tussen *boundary* management voorkeuren en betrokkenheid. Over het algemeen bestaat er consensus over het idee dat communicatie technologieën, waaronder sociale media, de grenzen tussen werk en privé vervagen, of in elk geval flexibeler maken. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat de manier waarop medewerkers deze grenzen willen beheren van invloed is op de mate waarin men sociale media gebruikt voor het werk. Concreet betekent dit dat medewerkers die werk en privé rollen graag integreren dit doen door hun publieke sociale media ook te gebruiken voor werkgerelateerd communicatie. Daarnaast had dit hoofdstuk nog een ander doel, namelijk meer inzicht geven in de cuasale relatie tussen social media gebruik en betrokkenheid van medewerkers. De resultaten laten zien dat social media gebruik voor werk van invloed is op betrokkenheid, maar betrokkenheid niet van invloed is op werk gerelateerd sociaal media gebruik.

Hoofdstuk *vier* gaat dieper in op de relatie tussen social media gebruik en betrokkenheid, door tegengestelde indirecte effecten te onderzoeken en hiermee te erkennen dat de relatie tussen sociaal media gebruik en betrokkenheid wellicht complexer is. In dit hoofdstuk gebruiken we het job demands en resources model om de voordelen en nadelen van social media gebruik voor het werk in kaart te brengen. De resultaten laten zien dat social media gebruik leidt tot verschillende voordelen, namelijk efficiëntere communicatie en betere toegankelijkheid, maar tegelijkertijd ook verschillende nadelen met zich mee brengt zoals meer werk-privé conflicten en meer onderbrekingen tijdens het werk. Deze voor en nadelen zijn weer gerelateerd aan betrokkeheid en uitputting.

Hoofdstuk *vijf* belicht de literatuur over technologische paradoxen en test of de autonomieparadox in relatie tot social media gebruik bestaat. Daarbij wordt gekeken of er bepaalde condities bestaan waaronder voordelen of nadelen van social-mediagebruiker intensiever ervaren worden. De resultaten laten zien dat social media gebruik voor het werk het gevoel van autonomie verhoogd, maar tegelijkertijd ook de werkdruk verhoogd. Als we vervolgens ook de rekening houden met de responsiviteitsnorm (het gevoel hebben snel te

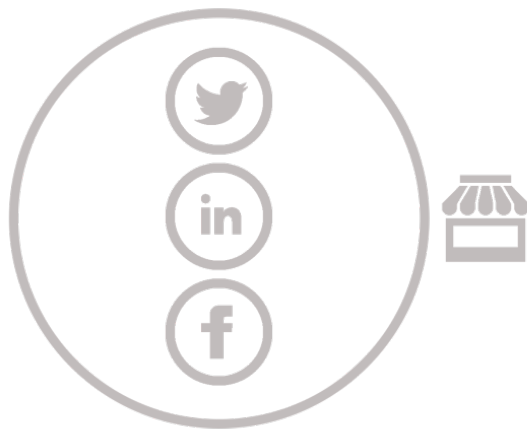
moeten reageren op inkomende berichten), dan valt op dat het positieve effect op autonomie verminderd, terwijl het effect op werkdruk ongewijzigd blijft.

Tot slot gaat hoofdstuk zes verder in op de duistere kant van sociaal media gebruik. Zoals eerder in dit proefschrift al aangestipt zorgt technologische vooruitgang er ook voor dat de grenzen tussen werk en privé verder vervagen. In de context van social media gebruik is vooral belangrijk omdat op deze platforms inhoud en mensen uit verschillende domeinen samenkomen. The resultaten laten zien dat social media gebruik voor het werk zorgt voor meer werk naar privé en privé naar werk conflicten. Dit komt vooral doordat tijd, inspanning en gedrag moeilijker te verdelen zijn over de aandacht die elk domein vraagt. Het lijkt er dus op dat sociale media het switchen tussen verschillende rollen moeilijker maakt in plaats van makkelijker. Tot slot is gebleken dat de aanwezigheid van sociale-mediarijnen deze negatieve effecten niet reduceert.





# Author contributions



## **Author contributions**

This dissertation is based on six empirical articles. The authors Ward van Zoonen (WvZ), Joost W. M. Verhoeven (JV), Rens Vliegthart (RV), Jeffrey W. Treem (JT), Ronald E Rice (RR), and Scott G. Banghart (SB) and their contributions to each paper are listed by initials below.

### **Chapter 1 - How Employees Use Twitter to Talk about Work: A Typology of Work-Related Tweets**

WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, coder training, and manuscript development. RV and JV provided guidance by critically reviewing several versions of the manuscript, contributing to the overall development and final text as it appears in this dissertation.

### **Chapter 2 - The Role of Organizational Identification and the Desire to Succeed in Employees' Use of Public Twitter Accounts for Work**

WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript development. JT provided critical feedback on the paper and actively participated in developing theoretical underpinnings of the model presented in this study. RV and JV provided guidance by critically reviewing several versions of the manuscript.

### **Chapter 3 - Work/life Boundary Management Preferences, Employee Engagement, and the Role of Social Media: A Three-Wave Panel Study**

WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript development. SB provided critical feedback on the paper and actively participated in developing theoretical underpinnings of the model presented in this study. JV provided a critical review of an earlier version of this study

### **Chapter 4 - Identifying Social Media-Related Resources and Demands**

WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript development. RV and JV provided guidance by critically reviewing several

versions of the manuscript, contributing to the overall development and final text as it appears in this dissertation.

#### **Chapter 5 - The Shackles of Freedom: Paradoxical Consequences of Social Media Use.**

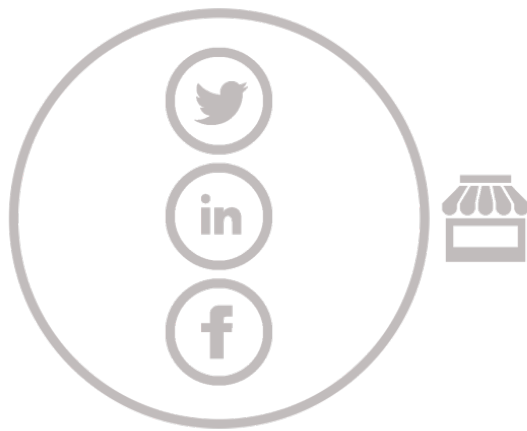
WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript development. RR provided guidance by critically reviewing several versions of the manuscript, contributing to the overall development and final text as it appears in this dissertation

#### **Chapter 6 - Social Media's Dark Side: A Source of Boundary Conflicts**

WvZ designed the study and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and manuscript development. RV and JV provided guidance by critically reviewing several versions of the manuscript, contributing to the overall development and final text as it appears in this dissertation.



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CE4A1 also known as Dave, Paul, Daan & Harm. My dearest friends. Blehehh [REDACTED] die jullie zijn [REDACTED]. The fact that you made my life easy and fun while we were still studying isn't even that important. The best thing is you guys are awesome and I couldn't wish for better friends. Marco, as we both know having a mentor and a role model is important. Ever since we met, you have been both but above all a very dear friend. I cannot overstate the

role you played in getting me here. Rick, Kevin & Arno thank you for your friendship, for the time we spend in the gym, having dinner, and hanging out.

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I want to thank Ron for all his support and feedback on (nearly all) my papers. You are a great mentor. I enjoy discussing our ongoing projects together and hope to see a lot more fruitful collaborations. Also, I highly appreciate all your efforts in making me feel at home while visiting Santa Barbara. Thanks to you and Claire I now miss California on a weekly basis.

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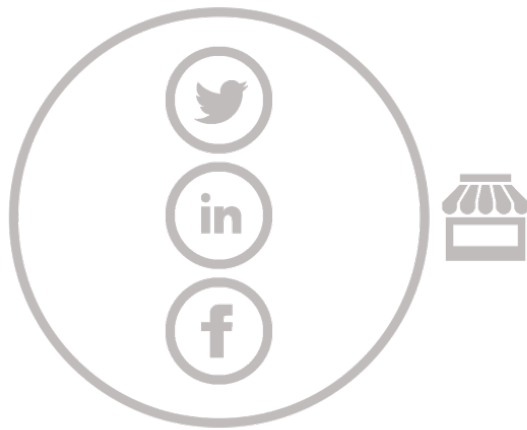
Piet, I want to thank you for all the opportunities that you gave me. From working on the ECOPSI project to giving me the opportunity to teach more courses. Not to mention all the letters of recommendation you wrote for me over the years. Your contributions to my professional development are highly appreciated and respected. Pytrik, thank you for the projects we worked on, but more importantly for all the times, we had coffee. I also want to thank Rogier Schmit and Jochem Koole for their efforts in helping me with my research and advising me on a variety of topics. I hope our paths will continue to cross in the future.

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# About the author



## About the author

Ward van Zoonen was born in Amsterdam on August 29, 1985. After climbing all the rungs of the Dutch educational system, he graduated from the Research Master in Communication Science at the University of Amsterdam in 2013. His master's thesis on employees' social media use has been published in public relations review. Before obtaining a Ph.D. position within the corporate communication group at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, Ward worked as a lecturer at the Communication Science department. Between September 2014 and December 2016, he wrote his dissertation on social media use in the workplace. His paper on social media's dark side (*chapter six*) received the top student paper award from the International Communication Association. Ward presented his work at several national and international conferences such as the international corporate communication conference in New York and the annual international communication association conference. His work on social technology use has been published in a various international ISI-ranked journals.

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