

Constructing Organizational Identity on Internal Social Media: A Case Study of Coworker Communication in Jyske Bank

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Vibeke Thøis Madsen¹

Abstract

This study explored how coworkers use internal social media (ISM) to contribute to the construction of organizational identity. The study analyzed 3 months of interactions among coworkers at a large Danish bank on ISM. In addition, 17 coworkers were interviewed to provide additional understanding about the online interactions. The study found that these coworkers constructed organizational identity when they challenge, negotiate, and discuss organizational issues on ISM. They use phrases from vision and mission statements to support their arguments and to push the understanding of organizational identity so that it is in line with their perceptions of what the bank really is or should be. Some of these discussions on ISM develop into organizational stories, which are shared and discussed in informal, in-person conversations among coworkers. The stories become narratives, which contribute to the organizational identity, help coworkers make sense of the organization, and help them identify with the organization.

Keywords

internal social media, organizational identity, internal communication, coworker, organizational identification, social intranet

¹Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Corresponding Author:

Vibeke Thøis Madsen, Business and Social Sciences, Department of Business Communication, Center for Corporate Communication, Aarhus University, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 4, Bygn. 1483, DK-8000 Aarhus, Denmark.

Email: vtm@bcom.au.dk

Introduction

Internal social media (ISM) provide coworkers with a communication platform for sharing viewpoints and knowledge across departments and geographical distances. Coworkers become visible to the whole organization when their pictures and names appear next to their comments and likes, and this visibility alters social relations and interactions (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). So far, research has highlighted that communication on ISM leads to improved workplace productivity (Bennett, Owers, Pitt, & Tucker, 2010), new forms of organizational collaboration (Valentini, Andersen, & Agerdal-Hjerminde, 2013), knowledge sharing (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012), and engagement (Koch, Gonzalez, & Leidner 2012, Parry & Solidoro, 2012). As several scholars have concluded, little research has looked at what coworkers actually communicate about on ISM, and how communication on ISM contributes to the construction of organizational identity (El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2015; Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Koch, Gonzalez, & Leidner 2012; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Welch, 2012).

Scholars argue that ISM provide a communication arena (Leonardi et al., 2013; Parry & Solidoro, 2013) in which any coworker can start a conversation and comment on other conversations (Beers Fägersten, 2015). This environment creates an opportunity for multivocal communication, where voices act and communicate to, with, against, past, and about each other (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010; Johansen & Frandsen, 2007). This is especially interesting seen from a communicative constitution of organizations perspective, which views organizations as constituted in the conversations of organizational members (Putnam, 2013). Coworker conversations on ISM are therefore proposed to construct organizational identity.

The concept of coworker is used by the author to draw attention to horizontal communication and to indicate that in postbureaucratic organizations, coworkers are no longer viewed as passive, subordinate employees but as active communicators who can influence and change the organization. Their communication roles “are broader and more consequential than the roles they have traditionally been given” (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 202).

The article presents the findings of a case study of coworker communication in ISM in Jyske Bank, the third biggest bank in Denmark. The research was conducted from 2014 to 2015 with the aim of understanding how coworkers construct organizational identity on ISM and to explore the implications for the organization.

Theoretical Background

Organizational identity has received a lot of scholarly attention in recent years (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; He & Brown, 2013). This section sketches out theories that explain how and why coworker communication can contribute to the construction of organizational identity. The review will address literature about organizational identity, sensemaking, and organizational identification.

Identity is a way for individuals and organizations to define themselves in relation to others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Literature on organizational identity views it as either stable or dynamic (Cheney et al., 2014; Christensen & Cheney, 2000; T. S. Johansen, 2010). The static approach sees organizational identity (who we are as an organization) as that which is *central*, *distinctive*, and *enduring* about an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). It implies an understanding of organizational identity as a stable entity, which can be described, planned, and managed. The dynamic approach revolves around the same three characteristics but defines organizational identity as “what organizational members believe to be its central, enduring, and distinctive character” (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 520). This approach depicts organizational identity as “less stable and more malleable, less the product of senior executives’ decisions and more open to political influence at different levels, and less clearly and more ambiguous” (He & Brown, 2013, p. 8). In this social constructivist perspective, organizational identity is believed to be continually under construction. Coupland and Brown (2004) thus describe “organizational identities as discursive achievements, and stakeholders in organizations as rhetors (persuaders) engaged in ongoing identity-centered debates” (p. 1325). However, Gioia and Patvardhan (2012) argue that the distinction between static and dynamic is somehow artificial, and that organizational identity “can be construed both as some sort of entity and some sort of process” (p. 53).

Gioia et al. (2013) found that a change in organizational identity can be initiated by different situations such as a discrepancy in the present organizational identity, or a gap between who we are and who we want to be. They found that unplanned changes in organizational identity have not received much scholarly attention. This is likely because literature about organizational identity mainly takes a managerial approach and regards organizational identity as something that can be managed (Scott & Lane, 2000). In other words, the role of coworkers in the construction of organizational identity has remained an underresearched field. Many stakeholders constantly influence organizational identity (Scott & Lane, 2000), and coworkers are likely to play a role as well when organizational identity is understood as “contested and negotiated through iterative interactions” (Scott & Lane, 2000, p. 44). This communicative process, where organizational identity is constructed, is linked to the way coworkers in an organization develop and negotiate organizational norms and unwritten rules (Jabs, 2005). Discussing *who we are* as an organization and *how we should act* as members of this organization are closely related, and ISM introduce a new communication arena for negotiating rules, norms, and organizational identity.

To shed light on the process of constructing organizational identity, Scott and Lane (2000) built a model in which management is seen as holding the power to define organizational identity, while other stakeholders can provide feedback. This can create misalignment between coworkers and managers because, as Corley (2004) found, top-level managers are concerned with strategy and constant changes, while the lower level employees are more interested in behavior, organizational culture, and a stable identity.

The perception of organizational identity being negotiated between organizational members makes it relevant to adopt a sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995). In this context, “sensemaking refers to processes of meaning construction whereby people interpret events and issues within and outside of their organizations that are somehow surprising, complex and confusing to them” (Cornelissen, 2012, p. 118). This definition shows that sensemaking processes are triggered when the organization changes, when the organizational identity is threatened, and when coworkers “simply become uncertain about what the organizational identity is” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 75). In this way, sensemaking processes are not only triggered when unusual situations occur but also when coworkers experience ambiguity and uncertainty in everyday work processes and situations. Sensemaking then becomes a social process whereby coworkers communicate with each other to arrive at a shared understanding of a situation (Weick, 1995).

Coworkers’ need to make sense of organizational identity is rooted in a basic need to belong to and to identify with the organization (Cheney et al., 2014). The ongoing construction of organizational identity creates patterns of shared meaning and collective sensemaking. This provides coworkers with a sense of belonging and a common orientation (Cornelissen, 2012), also known as organizational identification (Cheney et al., 2014). Organizational identification has been found to influence coworkers’ creativity and their willingness to improve the organization and their way of working (He & Brown, 2013). Coworkers are more likely to identify with attractive organizations than with less attractive organizations since it enhances a positive self-image (He & Brown, 2013). Coworkers who identify strongly with their organizations are therefore more likely to engage in conversations to improve the perception of organizational identity than coworkers working in organizations perceived as less attractive.

Beers Fägersten (2015) conducted one of the few studies about coworker communication on ISM in relation to organizational identity. She analyzed an intranet discussion among coworkers about whether a Swedish web consultancy should have a tobacco company as a customer when the organization at the same time has antismoking organizations as their customers. The topic creates a heated debate among coworkers about what the identity of the organization is and what it should be. The study shows how the coworkers discuss organizational identity, but there is no explicit reflection on coworker contribution to the construction of organizational identity. The discussion is seen as a threat to the organization, and the conclusion is that social responsibility and moral accountability of the organization are of great importance to the coworkers. ISM give the coworkers an enhanced “opportunity to influence corporate decisions that could reflect on their own, shared, professional identities” (Beers Fägersten, 2015, p. 156).

So the question remains whether coworker communication on ISM about organizational identity is an exceptional situation or part of a constant self-reflection about who we are as an organization (Gioia et al., 2013) in an ongoing, unending process (Coupland & Brown, 2004). In other words, we still know very little about coworker communication on ISM and how the communication contributes to the construction of

organizational identity. The aim of this article is to address these issues with the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are coworkers talking about on ISM?

Research Question 2: To what extent and how do coworkers use ISM to contribute to the construction of organizational identity?

Research Question 3: What are coworkers' perceptions of the implications of having discussions about organizational identity on ISM?

Research Design

A case study (Yin, 2014) was conducted to understand how communication on ISM contributes to the construction of organizational identity. Since there is scant research in this area, it is appropriate to build theory from case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989). A single case study can richly describe the existence of a phenomenon (Siggelkow, 2007) and "elevates a view of life in its complexity" (Thomas, 2010, p. ix).

Selection of the Case

The Danish bank, Jyske Bank, has 4,000 employees in 110 locations. The bank was selected as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) because the management in the organization has promoted a culture of open communication for many years. Coworkers are known for voicing opinions on both work-related and organizational matters in the various discussion forums. The organization has received a digital communication award for the best internal communication in Europe in 2014 ("Digital Communication Awards Winner List 2014," 2014; Larsen, 2014) and for the best social media intranet in Europe in 2015 ("Digital Communication Awards Winner List 2015," 2015; Ingemann, 2015).

Jyske Bank introduced a new intranet technology with social media features in spring 2014 and named the communication platform *JB United*. When coworkers start their computers, JB United automatically opens as their daily gateway to work. The front page appears with six sections: (a) top corporate news presented with four news items; (b) a discussion forum named *The Word is Free (Ordet er frit)*, where the headlines of the three last discussions are visible; (c) a television channel called *Good Morning Jyske Bank* with an 8-minute issue of morning news; (d) webnews (*netnyheder*) with the headlines of the last three news items drawing on more than 100 different news channels, which coworkers can choose to follow or not; (e) news from the press; and (f) *JyskeTube*, a video channel where coworkers can upload videos. One of the top news items is likely to be a link to the latest edition of the monthly television program, *Inside*, which has replaced the employer magazine. All the coworkers can start a discussion, comment, or like the news items and discussions. When they do so, their pictures, names, job positions, and locations appear to everyone in the organization.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in two steps based on a netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2002, 2010): (a) a content analysis of coworker communication on ISM for 3 months from September to November 2014 and (b) semistructured interviews with 17 coworkers in December 2014 and January 2015 about their communication on ISM.

The content analysis was conducted to explore what coworkers talked about and to identify different kinds of coworker communication behavior. The coworkers were interviewed to shed light on the findings in the content analysis and to explore their perceptions of communication on ISM. The two steps are described in more detail in the following two sections.

Netnographic Study of Forum Discussions. During the 3 months from September to November 2014, a netnographic study (Kozinets, 2002, 2010) of the communication on ISM was conducted. Netnography is an ethnographic method applied to the study of online communities to understand and analyze online conversations and networks. Since communication on ISM happens online, it is appropriate to use a netnographic approach to study communication on ISM. Netnography is naturalistic and unobtrusive (Kozinets, 2010), meaning that the presence of the researcher does not affect the data.

A contact person at the bank (referred to in this article as the *ISM coordinator*) downloaded screenshots of conversations on ISM during the selected period. The researcher paid a visit to the organization and met with the ISM coordinator once per month for 3 months to examine communication during the last month and to discuss which communication to include in the study. After the first month, a sequence analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989) was made to analyze the content to that point and to start identifying patterns. This process was repeated after 2 months and 3 months.

Five channels on JB United were initially chosen (see Table 1) because they had the most activity in terms of posts, comments, and likes from coworkers. Screenshots of the initial posts, comments to the posts, and likes were collected from the five channels. The screenshots were used to explore what the coworkers communicated about, who communicated with whom, and how conversations developed. The 357 posts contained a lot of variety. Relatively few posts created a lot of activity, while most posts got no or only a few comments or likes.

Semistructured Interviews With Coworkers. After the 3 months of netnographic research, 17 coworkers were interviewed to explore their perceptions of the communication on ISM. The coworkers were purposively selected (Neergaard, 2007) to represent a variety of communication behaviors and types of coworkers. The screenshots were first analyzed to identify coworkers' communicative behaviors based on Brandtzaeg and Heim's (2011) five distinct user types found in closed social networks: sporadics, lurkers, socializers, debaters, and actives. In addition to identifying each of these social network user types, other parameters, such as job position and geographical location, were used to purposively select which coworkers to interview. Convenience was applied when two of

Table 1. Posts, Comments, and Likes on JB United, September to November 2014.

ISM channel	Description	Posts	Comments	Likes	Period
<i>The Word is Free</i>	Discussion forum	57	397	2,580	3 Months
<i>Private</i>	News for coworkers working with private customers	120	80	914	3 Months
<i>Business</i>	News for coworkers working with business customers	49	20	316	2 Months
<i>United</i>	News for all coworkers	110	101	2,010	3 Months
<i>JyskeTube</i>	Coworkers own videos	21	25	464	3 Months
Total		357	623	6,284	

Note. ISM = internal social media.

the coworkers who were initially selected could not participate in the interviews. As a result, two coworkers with similar profiles were asked to participate in the interviews. The interviews were semistructured and lasted from 1 to 1½ hours each. The interview guide consisted of 11 main questions and a total of 47 possible questions. After 17 interviews, a point of saturation (Eisenhardt, 1989) was reached in the variety of answers.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting case studies and netnographic research involve reflections about how to collect data without harming anyone (Kozinets, 2002, 2010; Thomas, 2010). First, a contract of confidentiality between the researcher and the bank was signed, which allowed the organization to see all the discussions being published to ensure that no coworkers or the organization were harmed. Second, all the coworkers in the content analysis interviewed were anonymized. Third, the interviewed coworkers were asked to approve the quotations included in this article. The bank requested removing the gender of the coworkers, the names of competitors, and the names of products. One discussion was removed because of confidentiality issues. The coworkers did not see a need to remove their quotations.

Analyzing the Data

A content analysis inspired by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a stage-by-stage process (Burnard, 1991) involving thematic coding (King, 2012), was conducted. All the screenshots were read and coded to describe the different types of posts. To ensure the validity of the codes, the ISM coordinator went through the codes and helped discuss them. This resulted in 23 different codes, which were grouped into seven categories.

The second step was to analyze all the comments to the posts. Forty discussions appeared to be especially significant as they had several if not many comments and developed around crucial themes for the organization, such as how to attract young

customers, how to be a customer-oriented bank, and how to work fast with slow IT systems. The 40 significant discussions were analyzed in two ways. First, the development of the discussions were analyzed and patterns identified in terms of who communicated with what kind of comment and what was the reaction to the different types of comments. Second, the 40 significant discussions were analyzed and categorized into nine different themes. The nine themes were then reduced to four categories/themes, which seemed to represent four different levels of discussion. The four themes were the following:

1. *Customers and products*: Sharing knowledge, generating ideas, finding solutions to challenges, and other task-related communication.
2. *Working conditions*: Discussing IT systems, work routines, and employer benefits.
3. *Organizational issues*: Discussing organizational issues and organizational identity.
4. *ISM-specific issues*: Metacommunication about how to communicate on ISM.

Some of the discussions would start in one category and end in another as the discussions developed. Generally, a discussion started with a concrete problem that developed into an organizational issue. About 22 of the discussions could be perceived as discussing organizational identity, thus making the category the biggest one. These discussions were further analyzed to understand the content of the discussions and how they evolved.

After the analysis of the discussions, the 17 coworkers were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed, reviewed several times, and analyzed with a stage-by-stage process (Burnard, 1991) involving thematic coding (King, 2012). These interviews helped search for patterns and themes that could shed light on the findings from the content analysis of discussions.

Findings

The findings in the study are presented in four sections. The first section presents how discussions on JB United typically developed. The second section goes more into detail with the four categories of discussions. The third section illustrates how interactions between coworkers lead to the construction and negotiation of organizational identity. The last section presents coworkers' perception of discussions on JB United, especially those leading to discussions about organizational identity.

Development of the 40 Significant Discussions

The 40 significant communication situations analyzed in the study occurred and developed in two ways. Either an article authored by a specialist from the main office prompted a comment by a coworker or a coworker wrote a post in the discussion

forum, which generated support from one or several coworkers. A coworker described the process of commenting in the discussion forum in the following way:

I do not know, who I should direct my frustration to, but now I try to describe it in a nice, decent and sober tone of voice. Then what happens? Then eight others say: I feel the same way. Then the message starts gaining weight. (Interview 8)

The discussions started by coworkers in the branches, who work closely with the customers, were perceived by the coworkers to be the most significant ones (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14). In this way, the interviewed coworkers underlined a perception of ISM as a coworker communication arena.

The Topics Coworkers Communicated About

The 40 significant communication situations that occurred in the 3 months of observation were divided into four different categories of discussions.

The customer and product-related themes category consisted of 10 discussions with proposals like the following:

- It should be possible for customers to do a specific task in the bank's online banking service.
- It could be an advantage to call customers instead of writing letters to them when trying to sell a specific product.
- How a branch can support a campaign running in the media.

Coworkers discussed the suggestions and often a specialist, responsible for the product or service, responded by thanking coworkers for their suggestions or explaining why the ideas could not be applied or implemented.

The working conditions themes category consisted of eight discussions revolving around IT systems or work procedures. These had the most negative tone of voice. These contributions included questions such as the following:

- Why is it so difficult to book a meeting room?
- How can we be more efficient when our IT systems are so slow?
- Why do we need to register so much information?
- How can you discuss your pension when it is almost impossible to get an appointment with a pension advisor?

The organizational themes category was the biggest with 22 relatively different contributions. The discussions touched upon organizational issues and they challenged the organizational identity of the bank by discussing how the bank should act in society, how the bank should compete with other banks, and whether the bank could live up to the image used in marketing campaigns and materials. Six examples of these discussions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of Discussions About Organizational Identity.

Headline of the post [named by the author of the post]	Summary of the discussion	Examples of comments in the discussion
CSR-innovation culture	What causes should Jyske Bank support?	<p>"I can clearly see a match between being a bank and supporting . . ."</p> <p>"From my point of view Jyske Bank has always been a responsible player in society."</p> <p>"I hope that in Jyske Bank, we can be more concrete about, what do we or do we not wish to do in terms of CSR."</p> <p>"The nice guy in class should give some slaps instead of bending the head."</p>
JB product versus X product - sales inspiration	How should Jyske Bank act in the market?	<p>" . . . I just have to say that Jyske Bank is REALLY way behind on the concept for young people. We have nothing to offer, that cannot be matched by the other banks . . ."</p>
Frustration about 18:27 concept ^a	How should Jyske Bank compete - with prices or by developing relations with customers?	<p>"If the concept is not improved we will lose customers in the long run."</p> <p>"We have chosen a strategy focusing more on the relation than the price."</p> <p>"The best we can give our customers is time."</p> <p>"We have to be careful not to become like the blue ones in this field. There are several smaller banks with a direct telephone line to the branch. A good telephone culture is important, and it becomes even more important with the new telephone system."</p>
Fed up with waiting at Y Bank	A critique of waiting times when phoning to another bank leads to self-criticism about whether it is the same in Jyske Bank.	<p>"I think we become too much the younger brother, when we try to insult X-product instead of finding out why their product is perceived as being better designed than ours."</p>
Is the "name" ^b doing a good job?	Discussing a new campaign for a banking product, which leads to a discussion about how the product is compared with the product of the competitor.	<p>"If we focus too much on slating X-product and pinpointing the shortcomings of that product, then I honestly think it resembles a bad election campaign. I think, we are better than that!"</p>
Consciously satisfied employees	Discussing whether Jyske Bank should survey employees' satisfaction.	<p>"This is an obvious opportunity to make Jyske Bank a little bit better bank."</p> <p>"Jyske Bank value employer satisfaction highly."</p>

Note. CSR = corporate social responsibility; JB = Jyske Bank.

^a 18:27 is an abbreviation for customers between 18 and 28.

^b Name of a Danish news presenter used in a campaign for a product.

Some discussions ended when a specialist within a certain product area or a middle manager took one of two actions: justifying the bank's behavior or thanking employees for their input, which would be taken into consideration. Other discussions got the attention of top managers and the topics were brought up in the monthly internal TV program *Inside*. One discussion started by a coworker about whether to measure employer satisfaction was picked up by a senior manager, who wrote a blog post about the topic. These discussions got many likes and were mentioned and remembered by the interviewed coworkers. A coworker, who was the manager of a small branch, even pointed out, "The good topics, which create debates, are the self-critical ones, which are critical to our own organization and ways of doing things" (Interview 8).

The last category with *ISM-specific themes* was represented by three discussions, which raised issues about the content and language in the discussions. The first one was a coworker advertising a holiday house for rent in the discussion forum, which quickly got a comment that it should be advertised in another channel, "Green and for Free," where coworkers could advertise things for sale. The second comment pointed out that a coworker should not disclaim a certain brew of beer since the brewery might be one of the bank's customers. The coworker quickly posted an apologetic comment. The third discussion revolved around whether spelling and grammar should be 100% correct or whether "The Word is Free" meant that any writing was acceptable. According to the interviews with the 17 coworkers, these kinds of discussions had been much more frequent initially but had decreased as coworkers gained more experience with the platform. Prior to the period of netnographic observations, the coworkers referred to the presence of a "language and order police": Coworkers who commented on topics being discussed as well as spelling mistakes to the point where others in the discussion forum called them the police. Self-regulative behavior seemed to have developed over time.






The Construction of Organizational Identity on JB United

Discussions about organizational identity were typically initiated by a discussion of a concrete issue or challenge, and then it developed into a discussion of organizational identity. In order to understand how coworkers contribute to the construction of organizational identity, two examples are presented and analyzed.

The first discussion (see Table 3) has four comments and 15 likes. Only the three first comments are included since the last comment returns to the concrete issue addressed. The photos, names, and locations have been anonymized, but the titles are maintained. The bank has many managers at all levels, and the analysis of the discussions showed that the managers from the branches and the specialists in the head office participated like other coworkers and were most of the time perceived as coworkers and not as managers.

In the first post, a challenge with the telephone system is presented. The author quotes a possible new customer who compared Jyske Bank with the main competitor. The author talks about "our telephone system," which activates a collective in-group identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The first comment reflects on the comparison and

Table 3. Discussion About the Telephone System.

“You remind me of X-Bank!!”	Author
<p>“Statement from a possible new customer today, who for two days had tried to contact the undersigned . . . ”</p> <p>“Our telephone system is a huge problem!”</p>	 Name Manager International Business Branch A
<p>“That was a very nasty comparison. Something has to be done about it . . . ”</p> <p>It should not sound like that when you are a customer in ‘Denmark’s most customer-oriented bank’.”</p>	 Name Bank advisor—Private customers Branch B
<p>“Ouch!”</p>	 Name Journalist Jyskebank.tv
<p>“On the other hand the door is not closed between 5 and 6 pm on Thursdays. So the two-three customers who come in this period can indeed feel that we are ‘Denmark’s most customer-oriented bank’;-)”</p>	 Name Check-out assistant Branch C
<p>“Our telephone system has great priority - it has to work for both our customers and employees.”</p> <p><i>[This is followed by a longer text where the issue of the telephone system is addressed.]</i></p>	 Name Managing director Home markets

perceives it as a “nasty comparison.” By doing that, the bank advisor interprets it as an insult, implying that Jyske Bank is a much better bank than the other bank. A “them and us” distinction is activated, and it relates to a perception shared by coworkers in the bank, unifying them as known from theories about social identity theory by distinguishing between in-group and out-group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Then, the coworker holds it up against the vision of the bank to be “Denmark’s most customer-oriented bank.” This slogan, which has been communicated to both internal and external stakeholders, is used by the bank advisor to point out the misalignment between what the bank says and what the customers experience. In other words, the bank advisor activates a need to make sense of how the bank can be a customer-oriented bank when it does not answer the phone. The comment and the concern is supported by an “ouch” from a journalist at Jyskebank.tv. A check-out assistant from one of the branches then tries to rebuild the organizational identity as “Denmark’s

most customer-oriented bank” by arguing that the bank is open for longer hours than other banks.

The second example (see Table 4) is from an exchange of knowledge and arguments for developing a new product for young people. The knowledge exchange develops into a discussion of how the bank should compete with other banks. The whole discussion has 10 comments and 79 likes. Selected sentences referring to organizational identity in the initial post and six of the comments are presented in Table 4.

In this discussion, the organizational members use the pronouns “I” and “we.” The “I” is used to present a personal viewpoint or experience, and the “we” sometimes refer to a group of people in a branch and sometimes to the organization as a whole. “We” as a group is addressee-exclusive (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999), and “we” as the organization is addressee-inclusive (De Cillia et al., 1999). The last one, the collective “we” is especially interesting since it activates coworkers’ membership of the in-group. This shows that they identify with the organization, and it may activate other coworkers to identify with the organization. At the same time, using “we” is also a way to persuade others of their argument.

The initial discussion is about the product for young people, which is compared with a product of other banks. The discussion develops into a discussion of the organizational identity of Jyske Bank in relation to other banks, a way to establish organizational identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cheney et al., 2014). Jyske Bank is presented as both better and different from other banks by focusing on the relationship with the customer, but the possibility of maintaining this identity is challenged and questioned by the coworkers. A consensus is not really reached, and different perceptions are revealed. The interesting thing is how the coworkers build their arguments. The operations specialist writes that the young customers “have become very conscious and perhaps not quite as loyal?” This comment is a rewriting of the bank’s mission to create “consciously satisfied customers.” This is picked up in the next comment: “If the customers have become very conscious and not quite as loyal . . .” In this way, they challenge whether it is possible to connect “consciously” and be “satisfied” and whether the bank can focus on relationships when it comes to young people.

The same tactic is used by a bank advisor, who comments that “Nor do we make a difference any longer, when it comes to the concept for young people . . . :(.” This refers to the official image of the bank, which is promoted as “Jyske differences.” In this way, they are questioning something that has previously been perceived to be central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985) about the organization. The managing director tries to maintain the perception of the organizational identity by writing a long comment, but the coworker who started the discussion does not entirely buy the argument since she repeats her argument that it is difficult to attract young customers. This shows the organizational identity of the bank is contested and negotiated, and a new understanding of the organizational identity emerges.



The two discussions show how coworkers use the organization’s values, mission, and vision statements to negotiate organizational identity on ISM. In other discussions, the coworkers use organizational metaphors to negotiate the organizational identity. Many of them come from the language of sport, especially football, and are

Table 4. Discussion About Product for Young People.

"Frustration about 18:27 concept"	Author
<p>"I wrote a post about a year ago, when we had been to the university trade fair at Aalborg University. Now we have been there again, and I just have to say that Jyske Bank is REALLY way behind on the concept for young people. We have nothing to offer, which cannot be matched by the other banks. On top of that the other banks had stands, which were addressing the young people a 100 percent, and we just had Jyske Welcome."</p>	 Name Bank advisor Branch D
<p><i>[The bank advisor then goes into details about what other banks offer in comparison to Jyske Bank.]</i></p>	
<p>"I will therefore ask the question: Do we want to put our stakes on young people or do we not?"</p>	
<p>If the concept is not improved we will lose customers in the long run!!"</p>	
<p>"Agree entirely! "We had exactly the same challenges at the university trade fair in Aarhus last week - and last year. In Aarhus it was just some other banks we were fighting against."</p>	 Name Bank advisor Branch E
<p>"It is not only the 18:27 concept, which has to be looked at. 12:17 ought to be looked at as well, if we have to maintain the good experience and hold on to the customer relationship - Or??? Just thinking, that I have a daughter, who looked very much at what all "the other" banks offered. And what she could not get at JB. Am thinking, that "the young ones" have become very conscious and perhaps not quite as loyal?"</p>	 Name Operation specialist Head office
<p>"If the customers have become very conscious and not quite as loyal, then it is perhaps more a question about targeting our offers to the time, when they actually become interesting and potentially profitable for the bank."</p>	 Name Senior specialist Investment tools
<p>"I have never understood why one do not have a targeted offer to university students through for example student unions etc. . . ."</p>	
<p><i>[The senior specialist then comes with a lot of concrete examples of how to attract the young customers.]</i></p>	
<p>"I completely agree with 'name' and the others - Neither on the concepts for young people do we make a difference any longer . . . :("</p>	 Name Bank advisor Branch F

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

"Frustration about 18:27 concept"	Author
<p>"Hi "name"</p> <p>Thank you for your post about young customers and your report from "the battlefield." As you write there is a big competition at the moment for the young customers . . ."</p>	 <p>Managing director Private products</p>
<p>[The managing director explains in detail how the bank has chosen to focus on the relation rather than the price, when competing for the young customers.]</p> <p>[The discussion continues and becomes an issue about whether the bank should compete with prices or by developing relations with customers.]</p>	
<p>[Toward the end the initial author steps in:]</p> <p>"Thanks for all the comments. The relation is of course a very important factor. I agree completely. But with our concept/ products it is very difficult to attract new young customers from for example the university. Then does it make sense at all to participate in various student fairs, if we only want to focus on existing young customers? A stand is not entirely cheap + manpower."</p>	 <p>Name Bank advisor Branch D</p>

in line with the metaphors used in the internal branding of the bank, like the name JB United. The bank is seen as *the green ones* especially fighting against *the blues ones*, the biggest bank in Denmark. Other metaphors come from the language of war, like *the battlefield* and *the front*. The metaphors are somehow collectively shared, and they are used to serve the coworkers' arguments. In other words, the language created to initially describe the organizational identity is also used to negotiate it. This is in line with the understanding that collective sensemaking "takes place in interactive talk and draws on institutionalized resources of language" (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010, p. 16). At the same time, the metaphors and the distinction between them and us help coworkers identify with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Coworker Perception of the Discussions About Organizational Issues

In the interviews, the coworkers paraphrased a lot of the discussions about organizational issues that elicited many comments and likes. The general impression was that the discussions made a difference, and the coworkers perceived that ordinary coworkers could push the organization in different directions. One coworker stated, "I think it is possible to point the crowd in a certain direction and change people's viewpoints and attitudes" (Interview 1). The same coworker describes how the organizational identity was negotiated:

Someone writes something about the corporation, and someone comments. Then I think it is very interesting to see people's opinions. Someone might like it. Someone has an

input pointing in another direction seeing things from a different perspective. It can help open your eyes, because you might have a one-sided way of seeing things, but by seeing different people expressing themselves. (Interview 1)

The discussions could change coworkers' opinions about organizational identity and create an understanding of other viewpoints, even if they only watched other coworkers discuss (Interviews 4, 14). At the same time, coworker accounts of various significant communication episodes revealed that they remembered different viewpoints, and that the discussions helped them gain a nuanced and insightful knowledge of the different topics discussed. Several coworkers told how discussions on ISM led to discussions among coworkers informally and in person in the office (Interview 15), which might even lead to two or three coworkers formulating a response to a running discussion (Interviews 6, 7, 8). In this way, organizational issues were constantly discussed both on ISM and across the desks in the organization. This created awareness among coworkers, as stated by one of the coworkers: "It gives some sort of idea about what the organization thinks about the issues put forward" (Interview 6).

Several coworkers mentioned their role as ambassadors for the bank when talking with friends and family, and the discussions on ISM made the coworkers well equipped to discuss current issues and the organizational identity of the bank. One coworker explained:

It gives an enormous insight into how everyday life is. Also when you meet people on the street . . . and then you get asked about Gibraltar (an incident where Jyske Bank got a lot of media coverage), then you are equipped. (Interview 5)

The ISM arena thus became the site of negotiations between viewpoints, interests, and perceptions of organizational identity. The possibility of pushing or pointing the crowd in a certain direction created a sense of the organization as always on the move (Interview 9). In this respect, ISM became an arena where coworkers continually constructed the organizational identity. Discussions would start as discussions about services, working conditions, and how to communicate on ISM, and then develop into questions about whether such products, services, or behavior were typical for the organization's identity by comparing the actual and the perceived ideal identity. They would do that by either discussing who we are or by using phrases from the vision and mission statements to underline an argument.

Discussion

The study made two contributions to the literature about ISM and organizational identity. First, the study described coworkers' discussions on ISM in terms of content, structure, and development. Second, the study showed how the discussions contributed to sensemaking processes that constructed organizational identity in the bank. Jyske Bank is in this context an exceptional case, and the findings from the case study cannot be generalized to other organizations. However, based on analytical generalization (Yin,

2014), the study can be used to explore the potential of having ISM, which will be discussed in the following sections along with the implications for the organization.

Discussions on ISM

The study showed that coworkers mainly initiated discussions on JB United, indicating that ISM has the potential to empower coworkers to put organizational issues on the agenda as applauded in several articles about social media (e.g., Castells, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The discussions would either start as a comment to internal news or as a post in the discussion forum. The discussions could be divided into four different categories, namely customer- and product-related, working conditions, organizational, and ISM-specific themes. The discussions often started as concrete discussions about how to improve services or tackle challenges in the daily work. The discussions helped coworkers make sense of services to customers, working conditions, organizational issues, and how to behave on ISM. At the same time, 23 out of 40 discussions developed into more abstract discussions about organizational identity. This is in line with Karreman and Alvesson (2001) who find that coworkers construct organizational identity as they discuss work. The present study showed how this phenomenon happened on ISM.

Beers Fägersten (2015) argues that discussions about organizational identity can develop into an internal crisis since these discussions appear suddenly and unexpectedly, perhaps even being perceived as a threat to organizational reputation. However, the present study seems to indicate that coworkers in Jyske Bank challenge and negotiate organizational identity not to damage but to improve the organization, and that memorable discussions are likely to develop into organizational stories supporting organizational identity. So, rather than perceiving communication that challenges and negotiates organizational identity as a threat to the organization, it could be perceived as a way to develop and encourage organizational identification, which has the potential to influence coworker creativity and coworker willingness to improve the organization and working tasks (He & Brown, 2013).

The Construction of Organizational Identity on ISM

Coworkers in the study perceived that there was something that was “central, distinctive, and enduring” (Albert & Whetten, 1985) about the organizational identity of Jyske Bank. On ISM, they would comment if they perceived a gap between how different external stakeholders saw the bank and the organizational discourses about the identity of the bank. In this way, the organizational identity was in a constant dialogue between the external image and the internal organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000). But “the product” or the perception of what Jyske Bank should be was somehow taken out of the hands of the managers and left to coworkers’ sense-making both in the discussions on ISM and through discussions in the lunchrooms and across the tables in the offices. In this way, organizational identity was “less stable and more malleable, less the product of senior executives’ decisions and more open to

political influence at different levels, and less clearly and more ambiguous” (He & Brown, 2013, p. 8).

Coworker communication on ISM contributed to the construction of organizational identity in at least three ways. First, coworkers discussed who Jyske Bank was in relation to other banks by applying a them-and-us rhetoric as shown in the findings. Second, the interviewed coworkers paraphrased several memorable discussions on ISM. In this way, some discussions on ISM became organizational stories and types of milestones in the construction of organizational identity. These types of organizational stories help coworkers identify with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cheney et al., 2014), and coworkers who identify with their organizations are more engaged and willing to make a difference to the organization (He & Brown, 2013). Third, the discussions on communication behavior contributed to *organizing* (Putnam, 2013) by developing and maintaining group norms, which indirectly affect organizational identity. As an example, a coworker is told off for disclaiming a certain brew of beer on ISM since it could be one of the bank’s customers, which constitutes a perception of the bank as loyal to the customers. The three different ways of constructing organizational identity are also concrete examples of how communication constitutes organizations (Putnam, 2013).

Implications of Discussions About Organizational Identity on ISM

The study showed that coworkers contribute to the construction of organizational identity when they discuss and negotiate organizational identity on ISM. There are at least four implications for business communication.

First, the discussions made coworkers across the organization aware of different viewpoints and made them understand and more or less accept the diversity of viewpoints. A specialist in the head office (Interview 10) mentioned that a discussion about coworkers in the branches having too many administrative assignments made him reduce the number of things he wanted bank advisors to register for statistical surveys. In this way, communication on ISM became a social lubricant (Leonardi et al., 2013), building an understanding of the challenges in the different corners of the organization. This helped create social cohesion in the organization.

Second, ISM are primarily a coworker communication arena. Some discussions would be sparked by initiatives from management and could have been expected, but most of the discussions grew out of coworkers’ personal perceptions and experiences. In other words, coworkers set the agenda when organizational identity was discussed, and coworkers perceived the discussions to make a difference. This is in contrast to most literature on organizational identity, which emphasizes how management should manage changes in the organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000). In Jyske Bank, changes to the organizational identity grew organically, and they popped up whenever one or more coworkers perceived a need to adjust or get back to the perceived essence of organizational identity. The coworkers thus had the power to change the collectively shared perceptions if enough coworkers supported an argument, which supports a communicative constitution of organizations perspective on

coworkers as active communicators who can influence and change their organization (Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Mazzei, 2010; Zerfass & Franke, 2013).

In this way, organizational identity in Jyske Bank was not only constructed by management or a communication department but by coworkers as well, and this could make a difference to the organization. Corley (2004) found that managers were more concerned with “labels,” while coworkers were concerned with “values and beliefs” (p. 1169). When coworkers contribute to the construction of organizational identity, they will perceive it as more authentic, especially since they have followed or even been part of the reflections and arguments either on ISM or in the lunchroom. Certainly, it is valuable for organizations when coworkers not only feel that they were asked, as suggested in Scott and Lanes’s (2000) model, but that they were actually the drivers behind changes in the perception of organizational identity.

The discussions were perceived as unfiltered and authentic, and when a manager responded in a corporate or formal language, the coworkers scorned it (Interview 12). This could indicate that attempts to control or manage the way coworkers ought to perceive different issues are likely to backfire. In this respect, the proposition of the study is that communication on ISM is a coworker communication arena, and to develop the full potential, managers should refrain from using ISM as their information channel. However, ISM could still be perceived as a management tool in terms of giving managers insights into what goes on in the organization, and they should follow the discussions and answer questions when needed. At the same time, the study indicates that managers should not answer immediately but allow discussions to develop, as coworkers might otherwise get the impression that management tries to close the discussion. In this respect, managers have to be visible in the ISM arena, but they should be careful not to dominate or take the lead. They have other channels where they can do that. This is a challenge for the organization, which has to take a less active role in relation to communication in the ISM arena, and the organization constantly has to live with the uncertainty of what might come up in the discussions and be prepared to tackle the storm. On the other hand, organizations that are willing to live with this uncertainty are likely to become more robust, because organizational identity and organizational practices are constantly contested and debated. On top of that, coworkers become well equipped to discuss current issues with friends and family, and can thus act as ambassadors for the organization. At least this seems to be the case in Jyske Bank, and future research has to explore the relation between elaborate discussions on ISM, coworker identification, and organizational robustness.

Third, the construction of organizational identity is also likely to happen in other communication arenas, such as meetings and lunches. However, the visibility of the ISM discussions to everyone in the organization made it possible for coworkers in the whole organization to become aware of different viewpoints and the ambiguity in different issues, which they would try to make sense of. Local interpretations would arise when discussions continued across the desks in the local branch. In this way, the communication had a much bigger influence on the organization than when a topic was discussed over lunch in one office. The organizational identity is continually

renegotiated as argued in social constructivist approaches to organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013; He & Brown, 2013).

The final implication is that the study contributes to literature about organizational identity by showing how unplanned and small changes of organizational identity occur as a constant dialogue between coworkers in the organization. Occasionally, discussions on ISM develop into organizational stories, which become important milestones in the perception of organizational identity. The discussions and stories on ISM might also develop into multiple organizational identities, which can coexist as found by Henderson, Cheney, and Weaver (2015). This way of constructing organizational identity is an area of research that needs to be further explored. Christensen and Cornelissen (2010) found that attempts to manage and control organizational identity could stifle and undermine creativity and innovation, and they therefore suggest to embrace polyphony to foster identification and reduce tension. This will allow different coworkers to apply different interpretations and at the same time be part of the organization.

Conclusion

The study showed that coworkers in Jyske Bank contributed to the construction of organizational identity when they challenged, negotiated, and discussed organizational issues on ISM. They used metaphors and language from managers' internal communication as well as vision and mission statements to support their arguments and push the understanding of organizational identity so that it was closer to their perception of what Jyske Bank is. Some of the discussions developed into organizational stories, which were shared and discussed over the desks and in the lunchrooms. The stories and the discussions on ISM helped coworkers identify with the organization. The opportunity to comment and like made coworkers perceive themselves as active communicators who could influence the organization, especially in the discussions about organizational identity. Communication on ISM in Jyske Bank thus became an example of how coworkers can construct organizational identity through communication on ISM and how communication constitutes organizations.

Limitations

The findings in the study are based on a case study in one organization, so future research has to show in what way coworker communication on ISM plays a role in constructing organizational identity in other organizations. Coworkers commenting on organizational issues are not likely to occur in all organizations (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Jyske Bank has developed an organizational culture that encourages coworkers to speak their mind, which is likely to make a difference on coworkers' willingness to discuss organizational identity on ISM. Future research has to explore how organizational culture can affect coworker construction of organizational identity on ISM.

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Author Biography

Vibeke Thøis Madsen is a PhD student in the Department of Business Communication at Aarhus University in Denmark. Her research interests are organizational communication, internal communication, internal social media, and organizational identity.

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