



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND IMAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

**A study of how young adults
perceive the Swedish Armed
Forces**

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how social media are used to communicate organizational identity and image. The studied research question is how do young adults perceive the identity and image of the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) through the organization's use of social media. The research on organizational identity within government agencies and people's perception on organizations is limited. Therefore, we aim to expand the research on this subject using organizational identity as a theoretical concept. As organizations exist in the social context of today's digital society, it is valuable to investigate how an organization's identity and image is perceived externally. We conducted semi-structured reflective interviews with young adults and with an organization representative. Our findings show that young adults view the SAF's social media use to improve their image and for recruitment purposes. In conclusion, our findings show that this social media use and perceptions of it, are reflective with the theories of organizational identity and image and highlights the importance of the external organizational image.

Keywords: social media, organizational identity, organizational image

1. Introduction and research question

Today, organizations are gradually increasing their communication on various social media platforms. Organizations have access to these platforms anytime and anywhere, which means they can be constantly connected with the public. The direct technological connections have made organizations able to reach their target audience much faster and more efficiently through these platforms. Organizations communicate who they are via social media and thus the organization's identity and image on social media becomes important to understand. Occasionally, the adoption of social media can be mandatory in the form of being a guideline from the government for various public agencies so that citizens can easily communicate and get in touch with the agencies (Parveen Tajudeen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2018). Therefore, the adoption of new technologies in the form of social platforms contribute to organizational changes in the public sector, which in turn changes the relationship between citizens and the public administration (Todisco, Tomo, Canonico, Mangia & Sarnacchiaro, 2021).

The increase of government agencies using social media have contributed to the development of strategies for the use of these platforms, such as monitoring, analyzing and interpreting content produced by the users. This is in an attempt to understand the public mood, and also monitor how receptive the content produced by the agency is (Wukich & Mergel, 2016). Research has also shown that government agencies have begun to adopt incorporated tactics to engage citizens and other agencies (Wukich & Mergel, 2016).

Social media platforms have changed organizational communication and public relations. They have contributed to open communication that has helped organizations understand the public and given the organizations the opportunity to respond in a proactive and efficient way (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). Furthermore, besides building and improving the relationship

with the public, by building and maintaining social media channels the organization gets a chance to enhance the interest of the organization (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015).

Organizational identity aims to answer who they are as an organization. The concept is specified by Whetten (2006, p. 220) as “the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations” and it is often developed in connection with when organizations want to create or strengthen the image of themselves and strengthen the internal and external communication. Gioia, Corley & Schultz (2000) claims that organizational identity is dynamic and changing because it is constantly redefined and revised through organizational change and through the members of the organization. The identity is formed in relation to culture and image as they are the internal and external definitions of the organizational self (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Organizational identity is also about self-examination. If the organizations internal image isn't in line with the external image, the organization might want to revisit and reconstruct their sense of self.

An organization must navigate in its unique context, which will vary depending on the type of the organization, the sector the organization operates in and the geographical location. These contexts can vary depending on the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies of the organization. An important context that almost every organization must navigate through is the social context. These social contexts influence the organization both from within in form of culture, shared beliefs and values among employees and management, and externally which is the perceived image of the organization among the target audience. Although the internal social contexts are very important for the organization, the external ones are of great importance, because even if organizations succeed with the internal ones, the external are crucial for the organization's existence, survival, and sustainability. With this in mind, we are interested to contribute with knowledge regarding how organizations such as government agencies use social media to build and improve organizational image and identity. This by examining how an organization's target audience perceive the identity and image of the organization through the organization's social media. Thus, this study will focus on an important and less explored government agency, namely the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF), and will investigate how the organization succeed in using social media to communicate organizational identity and image with the following research question:

- How do young adults perceive the identity and image of the Swedish Armed Forces through the organization's social media?

The SAF has undergone major changes in recent years. In connection with these changes, the SAF started to be seen more and more in the public through various media channels, including social media. What makes the SAF even more interesting is the journey they have made in surveys measuring how much the citizens' trust the organization. According to Sifo (Swedish Armed Forces, 2021a), which annually measures trust amongst citizens in institutions, parties, the media, and companies, the SAF has shown 63% trust among citizens in 2021 compared with 2016, which was 36%. Among the reasons that are believed to have contributed to this increase in trust is that citizens have become more aware of the SAF's abilities, responsibilities, and the improved image of the organization through the increased media appearance (Swedish

Armed Forces, 2021a). Therefore, we see that the perception of the organization among the citizens is of great importance. Since, the social environment both internal and external of the organization has been shown to be crucial in the organization's development and improvement of its identity and image.

We will in the following section present previous research to highlight the important aspects of the area of interest. In section 3, we present our theoretical framework and highlight three concepts that we have chosen to study our phenomenon, namely organizational identity, culture, and image. Following in section 4, we make a short presentation about the SAF as an organization to provide a background and insight into the organization. We present our methodology in section 5. We write about our data collection method, sample and how we conducted our interviews and transcription. Further in section 6, we present our results with the three main themes that we have been able to distinguish. Section 7 move on with a discussion and conclusion, and finally we present suggestions for future research based on the results of the study.

2. Related research

Qualitative and quantitative research focusing on the use of social media by organizations have most of the time been directed to the understanding and the explanation of how social media is used, the benefits and risks of using social media, and the impact of social media on organizations. In addition, research has previously focused most on the private sector and its use of social media, while research with a focus on the public sector, are to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the previous research focusing on understanding and the explanation of the use of social media within organizations were based on several overarching themes, which we will highlight in this part of the study.

2.1 The adoption of social media

The adoption of social media has changed the organizational communication and public relations. Social media is based on open communication which helps organizations understand their target audience and motivates the organizations to respond proactively and efficiently to those needs. Social media differs from other IT innovations and IT-based systems in the sense that social media is open and public-oriented, which has been both beneficial and risky for organizations (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

There are three different factors that are linked to the adoption of social media: the technological, organizational, and environmental context. The connection between technological factors and social media use is that an adoption of such technology facilitates and increases obtaining several different data, which can be very beneficial for the organization. This data provides input and information, among other things, about the target audience and competitors, which in turn can help organizations shape new businesses or improve an existing one, improve realizations and increase the number of connections. The technology of social media is also very cost effective in the sense that it does not cost much to obtain and manage such technology (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

When it comes to the connection between organizational factors and social media use, it is based on the fact that social media can be both beneficial and harmful at the same time. Among the concerns about social media use is the use of social media among the organization's employees, which can affect productivity, as employees can waste time on social media. Another concern is that audiences and/or employees may post negative content about the organization that may affect the reputation. Furthermore, social media requires continuous monitoring and proper staff to update the information and connect with the organization's target audience that are on various platforms, therefore it also requires legitimate resources for successful use (Zyl, 2009).

The third factor for implementation of social media is the environmental factors. These factors are based on environmental forces that refer to institutional pressures that drive the organization to adopt innovations. These institutional pressures can induce organizations to adopt shared norms and routines. The actors that may utilize such pressures could be the organization's target audience, competitors, or the government (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

The discussion about the positive and negative aspects of social media, makes many organizations doubt its adoption. However, previous research has shown that effective use of social media has a very strong positive impact on an organization's performance. This in terms of improving communication and building relationships, improving citizen participation and transparency, increasing information accessibility and cost effectiveness, resulting in the top management being motivated to provide initial and continuous support for the use of social media (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

2.2 Improved communication and relationships

Social media platforms facilitate information sharing and participation from the users to create and/or distribute the content. This has contributed to shift the emphasis of Internet services, from previously being consumption-based to now be more interactive and collaborative which has contributed to creating new opportunities for interactions between organizations and the public (Parveen et al., 2015). Another important factor that determines the use of social media in the organization is the interactivity of the platforms. The interactive nature of social media provide a new way of communication with the public, which is often referred to as two-way communication which means that both organizations and the audience can reach each other (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). This two-way communication is used to build good relationships, offer efficient service, reach new users and obtain opinions and feedback from the public (Parveen et al., 2015). This results in enhanced relations between the organizations and the public (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

Research has shown that social media as a tool is becoming a beneficial method of communication for public relations practitioners in organizations such as, non-profit and government agencies. Furthermore, organizations with defined public relations departments are more likely to adopt and use social media to achieve their goals (Parveen et al., 2015). The enhanced and strengthened relationships between public organizations and citizens, often results in encouraging citizens to interact more and to be more involved in defining policy

reforms and give feedback, which some authors argue increase the support of the consolidation of democracy (Todisco et al., 2021).

2.3 Citizen participation and transparency

Social media is an important platform and very useful tool for government agencies, which contribute to transparency, accountability, citizen involvement, and improved trust and democracy (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Social media give government agencies the opportunity to communicate more efficiently with the public, reduce costs and resources. The nature of social media also contributes to convenience, as users receive information from government agencies faster and much easier. This is information about the agency's work, which encourages transparency and accountability. Social media also contribute to citizen involvement, by giving citizens the opportunity to participate and collaborate, for example, through feedback on the content shared and services offered by the government agencies (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Kuzma, 2010). Several studies indicate that the involvement of governments in those processes contribute to improved democratization and increases citizens' trust in the government (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval-Almazan & Hovy, 2010; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Kuzma, 2010). To best succeed in conveying information, organizational image and services through the use of social media, government agencies need to understand and know the citizens and other important components, such as demographics, social networking, and forms of collaboration, and continuously measure citizens' satisfaction (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012).

Social media platforms facilitate information exchange across a broad array of users. Government agencies use these platforms to promote public participation through implementing tactics on how to reach and engage diverse audiences (Wukich & Mergel, 2016). In recent years government agencies are increasingly shifting from the use of traditional digital tools to social media platforms, since social media can improve the efficiency in the public sector and facilitate the design of policies aimed at improving transparency (Todisco et al., 2021). The impact and effectiveness of social media in the public sector is dependent on three conditions, transparency, participation, and collaboration. If these three conditions are successfully achieved, it leads to accountability and trust, consultation, deliberation and satisfaction, and community building (Todisco et al., 2021). Through improved sharing of information, both internally within the public administration and externally with citizens, government agencies can achieve high level of transparency. Researchers argue that social media platforms can create a culture of transparency and accountability within governments (Mergel, 2013). Accountability and trust are linked to the need to achieve a high level of transparency in public administrations. This can only happen through improved sharing of information, both internally within the public administration and externally with citizens. Authors argue that social media can expand the audience that are taking part in public policy and increase the sharing of government information, which in turn generate more trust in government actions. The increased level of shared information and active participation through social media contribute to increased level of social interaction, collaboration and participation (Todisco et al., 2021; Mergel, 2013).

2.4 Information accessibility and cost effectiveness

Social media enable organizations to reach a large number of audiences with minimal cost and time, and the organizations get immediate return on limited investments in marketing and customer service activities. Social media also give organizations the ability to access large amounts of data about the public and potential competitors, allowing them to understand the public needs, demands and frustrations, which helps them to enhance their products and services, resulting in a great impact on organizational performance (Parveen, Jaafar & Sulaiman, 2017).

Cost effectiveness is an important aspect of the adaptation of new technology (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). Social media give organizations the opportunity to engage and connect with the public directly and at any time. This results in organizations being able to achieve a level of efficiency in comparison with traditional communication tools. This cost-effective nature of social media attracts small to large organizations, as well as non-profit and governmental agencies (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010). Social media is relatively adoptable by any organization and is highly compatible with the existing infrastructure. Since the technology is very simple, basically anyone with internet connection can use social media (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018).

However, there are studies that indicate that cost-effectiveness is not significant in relation to social media use. Because in relation with the adoption of social media, there are also costs for employees who must continuously monitor, update, and respond to customer queries. In addition, running campaigns on social media, also increase the costs (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). The adoption of social media in government organizations encounter several barriers such as privacy and security issues, accuracy, and administration-specific requirements (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). There is always a risk that the exchanged information will reveal sensitive or personally identifiable information. Therefore, the agencies should take reasonable steps to protect the information. Since the government agencies often use different social media platforms, it contributes to ambiguity around ownership of the information and raises concerns about the limited control over the information (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011).

2.5 The Armed Forces and social media

The Armed Forces throughout the Western world have been required to develop in several areas, and in order to achieve societal acceptance of new tasks and practices, communication have played a very important role. These changes in communication purposes, principles and practices have been driven by new tasks, recruitment systems and social media (Deverell, Olsson, Wagnsson, Hellman & Johnsson, 2014). Social media is a powerful weapon in shaping and influencing opinions, however, one of the big challenges with social media is verifying the authenticity of the content. Harmful and inaccurate content often affects emotions and can shape and influence negative opinions, which can also create an atmosphere of distrust. Therefore, it is important for organizations in general and the Armed Forces specifically to address these inaccuracies and harmful content, otherwise the absence of the Armed Forces would lead to speculation and rumors. Thus, social media enable the Armed Forces to communicate in new ways, to a larger audience and faster than ever before and, most importantly, without any distortion of the content (Ashwani, 2017).

Previous research has pointed out that eighty-five percent of the Swedish authorities communicate according to a logic tied to boosting the agency's external reputation and perception by expressing the agency's identity, visibility, image, and trustworthiness (Deverell et al. 2014).

However, it is important for the Armed Forces to have clear social media guidelines, both how the organization's official channels should be managed but also how the Armed Forces employees should use these platforms, to ensure that confidential information, equipment and areas of activity are not published on these platforms. Therefore, it is important and to the advantage of Armed Forces to have a dedicated branch within the organization that handles social media. It would help the organization to counteract negative perceptions and interact with the public to obtain information and measure reactions. Nevertheless, the army's digital efforts must be proactive to form a positive opinion about national security issues and the organization itself. Furthermore, it is very important that the official channels are managed and guided by the organizations own basic principles of honesty and integrity (Ashwani, 2017). On the other hand, previous research has indicated that the emergence of new information technologies stress that public organizational image and reputation building are no longer solely in the hands of managerial functions but are also dependent on coworkers and clients using platforms such as social media (Deverell et al. 2014).

Another aspect of the use of social media within the Armed Forces, is that it connects employees with senior officers. Social media platforms give senior officers the opportunity to extend their span of influence beyond the chain of command, cut through multiple layers of bureaucracy, and potentially develop a personal form of "soft power" (the ability to change someone's decision through attraction, rather than through coercion).

Social medias potential is great, and it is a powerful tool for giving information, give a picture of and shape public opinions. "With its unprecedented reach as well as constructive and destructive powers, it is imperative that the armed forces learn to harness this potent tool for achieving organizational goals" (Ashwani, 2017, p. 105).

Previous research on social media and the SAF more specifically, has some traits that they share. The work that we found for this thesis analyzes the organization's social media sites and webpage. Some of them conducted interviews and some only go through the text and visuals on their chosen medium using different methods and theories. Ågren (2018) wants to identify how the military profession is represented and does this by analyzing the organization's Instagram posts during a six-month period based on strategic communication, multimodal CDA and identity.

Björklund & Tesanovic (2018) also use methods of strategic communication to analyze the organizations webpage. They use the theory of new institutional perspective for their analysis, which they state is "how organizations actions are shaped by its surroundings" and thereby clarifies the meaning of social and institutional prerequisites (Björklund & Tesanovic, 2018, p. 18). For their research, an email interview was done with the organization's Communications Department to complement their analysis. Björklund & Tesanovic (2018) find it relevant for all organizations, public and private, to have the knowledge and understanding for the conscious and unconscious of the new institutional perspective to have an understanding for how their communication really happens.

Smolicz (2018) performs a multimodal analysis together with systematic functional linguistics on two Facebook pages for the SAF, one official and one un-official. She also uses netnography to consider how the audience on these Facebook pages behave on them. Smolicz (2018) does this to examine how the SAF shape their strategic communication through official and unofficial Facebook pages.

Borjanovic & Gelin (2016) examined how a state military authority could work towards being an attractive employer, internally and externally, with the theory of employer branding at hand. They interviewed both employees within the SAF and recruits undergoing the basic military training program. A part of the external work of being an attractive employer is through social media, campaigns, website, and a mobile application. The interviewed recruits' perceptions of this external work were that it is a little misleading to how it actually is to be in the basic military training program, it was a more positive experience than they imagined.

What the previous research on social media and the SAF have in common in their analyzes of the organization's social media is that neither of them examines how the content on the different channels are received by users external to the organization, the people the organization wants to attract. This gap in the previous research is favorable for the research aim and question of this thesis.

2.6 Organizational identity and social media

There is previous research on organizational identity and social media, however, we found it limited compared to the literature on organizations and social media. Young (2013) presented his conceptual framework for strategic use of social media based on the literature on organizational identity and social identity. With a symbiosis of transparency, accountability and authenticity, nonprofit organizations will present their identity in the social media environment. Although, being in the mentioned environment, interaction as a core concept must not be forgotten. Young (2013) sees organizational identity as fluid, dynamic and socially constructed based on the effects of social interaction and the environment. Rasmussen (2017) interviewed communication professionals working in the emergency services sector about the use of humor from organizations on social media and suggests six evaluative themes that factor into organizational identity construction. These themes are frequency of humorous posts, types of humor adopted, levels of discourse formality, time-curve of social media adoption, number of social media users and levels and types of organizational control. The results of these themes were potential organizational identity effects. Rasmussen (2017) also mentions the consideration of the risks associated with the use of humorous communication on social media by public agencies. Dawson (2018) states in her article that little is known about how the interactions between organizational representatives and stakeholders on social media platforms impact organizational practices like identity construction. It focuses on the organizational impact of social media brand-based community interactions through community managers' interpretations and outlines which community members the organization listens to. By treating organizational identity discursively with emphasis on i.e., language and co-authoring, it is seen as a collective process of consubstantialization, "co/creating the substance of organization in interaction and through identification." (Dawson, 2018, p. 1).

3. Theoretical framing

In an attempt to understand the studied phenomenon, we have used a theoretical framework for this study that focus on three concepts used in organizational theory, namely organizational identity, organizational culture and image.

3.1 Organizational Identity

The theory of organizational identity stems from and often attempts to apply sociological and psychological concepts and theories about identity to organizations. In this theory framework, it is also important to clarify that although organizational culture and organizational image are related to organizational identity, they are separate (Whetten, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). An organization's identity refers to what the organization is and stands for. Albert and Whetten's concept of organizational identity aim to answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Whetten, 2006, p. 220). The concept of organizational identity was first introduced in 1985 by Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten, and later updated and clarified by Whetten in 2006, which we used in this study. Organizational identity contained three principal components. One, the *ideational* component that aims and is linked to members' shared beliefs regarding the question who are we as an organization. Two, the *definitional* component that aims to define the organization's concept and what makes the organization unique characterized as the central, enduring, and distinguishing (CED) attributes of an organization. Third, the *phenomenological* component that suggests that identity-related discourse is likely to be observed in connection with deep organizational experiences (Whetten, 2006).

The concept of organizational identity is specified by Whetten (2006, p. 220) as "the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations.". *Central attributes* are those that have changed the history of the organization, without these the history of the organization would have been different. *Enduring attributes* are those that are rooted in the organization, and which are often seen as embedded in the organizational history. *Distinguishing attributes* are those that the organization use to separate itself from other similar organizations. Distinguishing attributes can also set minimum standards and norms for that type of organization. Whetten talks about how central, enduring, and distinctive (CED) attributes function as identity referents for organizational members when they are acting or speaking on behalf of their organization. The CED attributes are likely to be invoked in organizational discourse when they are dealing with profound choices that can alter the collective understanding of the organizational identity. Although, the definition has been discussed. Whetten's view on organizational identity has been interpreted as static and others view organizational identity as dynamic and that it is influenced by external forces on the organization (Gioia et al., 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Organizational identity is often defined and developed in connection with when organizations want to create or strengthen the image of themselves and strengthen the internal and external communication. Gioia et al. (2000) believe that organizational identity can arise through identification among the organization's members. This through the organization's members identifying with the values and characteristics that the organization communicates, which creates a strong identity and a better understanding of the organization. Furthermore,

Gioia et al. (2000) claims that organizational identity is dynamic and changing because it is constantly redefined and revised through organizational change and through the members of the organization. Based on the communicated values and norms from the organization's management and how the organization's members interpret these, the organization's identity is created. How these communicated values and norms are interpreted depends on the type of culture and interpretive framework within the organization. The view of an organization's identity can be influenced by several different factors which in turn contribute to it being changeable. Two of these factors are, that the organization constantly tries to adapt to changes in the environment and the changes that take place in the organization's image, which in turn affects the members' view of the organization and its identity (Heide, Johansson & Simonsson, 2012).

A clear organizational identity is very beneficial for the organization in the sense that it can be applied in the organization's branding work and strengthen both internal and external communication (Heide et al., 2012). In order for organizations to be able to communicate a unified message about what the organization is and stands for, it is important that the organization's members agree on and understand the organizational identity. Furthermore, if the organization's members identify with and have common perception of the organization, it would connect the members and create a strong and clear organizational identity (ibid).

3.2 Culture and image

The connection organizational culture and image have to organizational identity is how they influence each other. The three concepts are all a part in a mutually dependent system of meaning that defines what an organization is (Heide et al., 2012). Hatch & Schultz (2002) states that the four processes of *mirroring* (identity mirrored in the images of others), *reflecting* (identity is embedded in cultural understandings), *expressing* (culture makes itself known through identity claims) and *impressing* (expressions of identity leave impressions on others) together construct the organizational identity as a conversation between organizational culture and organizational image. Processes that are influenced by the access and exposure of organizations, which has only increased since the emergence of social media. The identity is formed in relation to culture and image as they are the internal and external definitions of the organizational self.

Hatch & Schultz (2002) define image and culture based on Meads theory of social identity. This results with the definition of the organizational image as "the set of views on the organization held by those who act as the organization's 'others'." (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 995). Organizational culture is defined as "the tacit organizational understandings (e.g. assumptions, beliefs and values) that contextualize efforts to make meaning, including self-definition." (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 996). The organization's "others" are people external to the organization. Organizational culture is more tacit compared to organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Heide et al., 2012). Hatch & Schultz (2002) also state that organizational culture is contextual and emergent in comparison to organizational identity. Organizational culture has also been described as a deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members, that operate unconsciously and define in a basic fashion the organization's view of itself and its environment (Senior & Swailes, 2016).

Hatch & Schultz (2002) also points out that organizational identity is also about self-examination. A negative image from the external others can make an organization question the definition of itself. The image people outside of the organization have does not have to be negative for the organization to find it different from their own view of the organization's identity. If the internal image does not match the external image, the organization might need to revisit and reconstruct their sense of self. Matters of organizational self-definition are a matter of organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

4. The organization

The SAF has undergone major changes in recent years, from new management and the restructuring of the organization to the new law regarding compulsory military service. The SAF's previous mission was based on peace rationalization efficiency, which contributed to increased centralized governance. This centralization did not reflect the external situation, which created a vulnerability that needed to be addressed. This resulted in restructuring the organization and a new management, which would increase the robustness and perseverance in leadership. Which in turn, would enable the SAF to meet the challenges and threats resulting from the new direction and the changed external situation (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017). In 2018, the government reintroduced the obligation to enlist and carry out basic training with military service. As the law is now gender-neutral, the obligation applies equally to women and men, which in turn means that a large number of 18-year-old men and women are now enlisted for undergraduate education (GMU) (Swedish Armed Forces, 2021b). The new law on compulsory military service has contributed to the increased recruitment and specifically more female recruits during the past year, which the SAF believe will continue to increase (Swedish Armed Forces, 2020).

The digital transformation we have seen in recent years has contributed to new organizational features, which in turn have contributed to changes in the internal processes and the relation between the public sector and the citizens. The process of digital growth has contributed to the increased use of social media in the public sector and public agencies, as an important strategic tool. On the one hand, as a way to reach the majority of the population in a short time. On the other hand, to improve the relation between public agencies and citizens through the modern way of content sharing, which contributes to openness, participation, collaboration, transparency, and democratization (Todisco et al., 2021; Parveen et al, 2015; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012).

For the past five years, the goal of the SAF has been to increase the agency's relevance and trust both among the citizens and the political leadership (Swedish Armed Forces, 2021c). The SAF does this by having a clear digital presence through, among other things, the use of social media. Through social media, the SAF wants to be available and able to give information about the agency's mission and facilitate a dialogue with the public (Swedish Armed Forces, 2021d). The SAF is today on various social platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn and sometimes on Snapchat in connection with advertising campaigns. With the help of social media, the agency wants to challenge the stereotypical image of how a

soldier looks and acts, as well as increase confidence in the SAF in order to attract more recruits, especially females (Kommunikationsanalys, 2021).

It is clear that in connection with the restructuring of the organization in recent years, the SAF has also worked to strengthen the organization's identity from various aspects and through the press, web and social media. This work of improving the organization's image and identity have contributed to the citizens' trust of the agency increasing from 36% in 2016 to 63% in 2021, which is a very noticeable and unique increase of a government institution (Swedish Armed Forces, 2021a). Among the reasons that have contributed to this growing trust is the changed image of the organization through the recruitment campaign, which in turn has contributed to the citizens being more aware of the SAF's capabilities and mission. Especially in support for health care during the pandemic and support for rescue services in forest fires (ibid).

The adoption of social media change and affect the relationship between citizens and the public administration (Todisco et al., 2021). These social platforms have changed organizational communication and public relations, which has contributed to open communication that has helped organizations understand the public and given organizations the opportunity to respond in a proactive and efficient way (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). Furthermore, besides building and improving the relations with the public, by building and maintaining social media channels the organization gets a chance to enhance the interest of the organization (Parveen et al., 2015). Social media has played an important role in strengthening and communicating the SAF organizational image and identity to the citizens in general, but more specially to their target audience. A target audience represented by young adult citizens who will be attracted to the organization, enlistment, and the various services within the organization.

5. Research methodology

In this study, we have used a qualitative research method with an interpretive philosophical perspective. All research is based on some underlying assumptions about what the researcher see as valid research and which research methods should be used. This refers to the epistemological view which describes how the researcher gains knowledge and on what grounds the researcher argues for the knowledge that he or she believes to have (provided that the researcher understands the limitations of that knowledge). Thus, it is very important for the researcher who is aiming to use qualitative research methods to have an understanding of their knowledge, regarding the validity and scope of the knowledge that they have. Interpretive research is described as being able to approach the given or socially constructed reality, through social constructions, such as shared meaning, language, consciousness and instruments (Myers, 2020).

With our study we have the opportunity to deepen the understanding about how the SAF has managed to navigate the social context externally by examining how young adults perceive the identity and image of the organization through the organization's social media. Through a qualitative research method, we want to highlight a relatively young area, namely social media, and a relatively unexplored area in informatics which is how organizations operate and

manage the social environment that surrounds and influences the organizations culture, image, and identity, through the users' perceptions of the organization. A qualitative approach thus enables a more narrow but deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Hjerm, Lindgren & Marco, 2014). This is done by capturing how young people experience and reflect on the organization's content on social media.

5.1 Data collection

For this study, we conducted semi-structured interviews. Preece, Rogers & Sharp (2016, p. 295) mention interviews as “a conversation with a purpose”. The characteristic of semi-structured interviews is the use of pre-formulated questions but with no strict rule to follow them as new questions might arise during the interview (Myers, 2020). It is a way to understand the participant on their own terms and portray the world from their perspective (Yin, 2013). This kind of interview format takes the best of structured and unstructured interviews as the pre-prepared questions provides consistency across multiple interviews and can still be improvised depending on the responses from the interviewee. Perhaps an interviewee brings up something you haven't thought about that pique your interest. With the semi-structured interviews, the researcher can ask the interviewee to tell them more about it. The prepared questions should contain both closed and open-ended questions and the follow-up questions should help the interview to continue forward in a neutral manner (Preece et al., 2016). To keep a neutral stance in an interview is more than not being dominant or asking insinuating questions. Neutral also entails to present oneself in a neutral way, both with body language and tone of voice, and by that do not affect the interviewees response (Yin, 2013).

To prepare for our interviews, we constructed two interview guides (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). One for our interview with the SAF and one for our interviews with our participants. These contained different themes that we wanted to cover in our interviews. By having prepared questions to use as a guide for the interviews, we made sure that we knew what we could ask next when the interviewee didn't come with more information about a subject. We made sure that our questions were short and clear to avoid potential confusion (Preece et al., 2016).

Furthermore, as the organization's social media is managed by one person which we have interviewed, we have also chosen to reinforce the data collection with documents and relevant information from the organization's website. Among other things, we collected and used, the guide in social media for employees, documents about the organizational restructuring and decisions related to social media. We also collected relevant information from the organization's official website and information channels such as official blogs and media interviews to gather more data about their guidelines and the organization's work with social media. Such documents have helped us gain a deeper understanding of what we are aimed at studying and have helped us to get answers to our research question. We have used these document and sources together with the interview with the organization representative, in order to examine how the organization works and strategically operate with their social media.

5.1.1 Ethical considerations

We prepared a document of agreement for the participants to read before the interviews. This document made sure that the participators knew that the interviews were being taped for later

analysis, the participation was voluntary and that they would be anonymous. With this, our study is along the lines with the Swedish Research Councils (2017) good research practice. In short, this practice helps researchers make well-considered decisions on research ethics and research. The recommendations can be summarized into a few general rules, such as the researcher shall tell the truth about the research, shall strive to conduct the research without doing harm to people, animals or the environment and shall openly account for the methods and results (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 10). A part of the good research practice is the criterion of protection of the individual. It has four general requirements, the requirement of information, of consent, of confidential and of usage (Swedish research council, 2002). These requirements build the foundation for the criterion of protection of the individual. The information requirement entails that the participants shall be informed about the study's purpose and a broad description on how it will be conducted. They shall be informed of the voluntary participation and that the data only will be used for the study. The consent requirement entails the participants rights to determine for themselves if, how long and on what terms they shall participate. The researcher must have their consent. The participant shall be able to discontinue their participation without any kind of consequence. The confidential requirement entails that personal information collected during the study shall be stored in a safe place out of reach for the unauthorized. The participants shall not be identifiable in the study's report. The usage requirement entails that collected data on individuals shall only be used for the purpose of the study. The data cannot be used for commercial use or other non-scientific purposes.

5.2 Sample

The best form of analysis object is interviews with enough participants to create an overall picture of a phenomenon, but at the same time small enough not to lose focus from what it is we are actually trying to investigate (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). To ensure that we have enough participants and at the same time relate to what we intend to investigate, we had eight interviews with qualified participants and one interview with the SAF. However, due to the low number of interviews with the organization, we have, as mentioned above, chosen to also collect data via documents and other official sources. We perceive this to be appropriate based on the amount of information we received from the interviews, documents and the time that was available.

According to Graneheim, Lindgren & Lundman (2017), one of the challenges effecting the selection is namely the credibility to find participants who have formed an opinion about the phenomenon that is aimed to be studied and can talk about their experiences. To ensure that we collect the right data for our research question, we have conducted our interviews with young adults who are between 18-29 years of age being four males and four females. The reason for the chosen group is because it is the group that the SAF tries to reach by using social media in order to improve the organization's image and attract these young people as recruits.

To gather participants, we have used snowball sampling and convenience sampling. We have used these sampling methods due to the resources and conditions we had, as well as the time frame for the study. Snowball sampling is to choose new data collection sources based on existing ones and convenience sampling is to make the data selection process based on its

availability (Yin, 2013). By combining the two methods we could contact acquaintances and their friends who were relevant to our study, young adults aged 18-29.

	Age	Gender	Snowball sampling	Follows the organization's social media
Participant 1	28	Man	2nd	No
Participant 2	25	Man	2nd	Yes
Participant 3	25	Man	2nd	Yes
Participant 4	24	Woman	3rd	No
Participant 5	28	Man	3rd	No
Participant 6	24	Woman	1st	No
Participant 7	25	Woman	1st	No
Participant 8	24	Woman	3rd	No

Table 1 – Information about the participants.

To ensure that our participants could reflect on what perception they got of the organization's content on social media, we chose to show content from the SAF's social media during the interviews. In this way, we could guarantee that all our participants have come into contact with the SAF's content on social media and could reflect on it. We chose to look at the past year and picked out two pieces of content from each social media account. We picked the content with the most interactions and the latest content posted (counted from the 30th of April 2021), from the SAF's accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter (see Appendix 4). Since the SAF focuses most on their two biggest accounts on Facebook and Instagram, we chose to pick one piece of content from each of these platforms that have received less interaction during the month of April 2021. In total, we showed our participants eleven posts from the different platforms. This in an attempt to see how the participants reflect on this, to create an understanding of why some content has succeeded while others have not.

5.3 Interviews and transcription

We conducted semi-structured interviews, one with a representative from the SAF who works with the organization's social media channels, and eight interviews with young adults. Both essay authors were present at all interviews, one acted as the main interviewer while the other took notes and, if necessary, asked follow-up questions. The reason why both authors were present at all interviews, was because we wanted to minimize the risk of missing out on important follow-up questions that may arise during an interview. The interviews were conducted in Swedish because all our participants, including the organization representative, were native Swedish speakers, and our goal was for our participants to feel comfortable in order to be able to reflect and answer our questions in an unhindered way. Due to this study being conducted during a pandemic, the interviews were conducted digitally via Zoom and Skype to minimize the risk of infection for both the participants and the authors. With digital interviews our participants could be in an environment where they felt comfortable and relaxed. They could choose where they wanted to be during the interview and did not have to come to a possibly strange environment. With the possibility to have video during the

interviews, we could still see the participants' facial expressions and reactions to make sure we had an appropriate approach to their feelings. During two of our interviews, the interviewee did not have their camera on. One interview experienced some technical difficulties with out of sync sound and picture from the participant. This was solved by the participant turning off their camera and some material we showed from the organization's social media was sent via link for the participant to see outside the videoconference program. The interviews lasted between 20-45 minutes and we used interview guides (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Before the interviews were recorded, we reminded our participants that their participation is anonymous and that they can refrain from answering certain questions or cancel the interview at any time. Although the interviews were conducted digitally, we got a general impression that our participants were relaxed and enthusiastic before the interview. Since the first part of the interviews was about general social media use, the answers were short and concise. However, regarding the more reflective questions, the participants gave more elaborate answers about their thoughts and reactions to what they were shown. During these questions, the length of the participants' answers varied a lot. Our final questions also got varied length of response depending on the participant's previous experience and opinions on the organization.

Soon after our interviews were complete, we began the work of transcribing them. We recorded our interviews on our mobile phones and through Zoom. This way, if one recording was lost, we had a backup and didn't lose our collected material. We did the transcription work ourselves and as precise as possible. When we weren't able to hear exactly what the interviewee said, it was marked in the document.

5.4 Data analysis

For our analysis of the collected and transcribed data, we conducted two thematic analyses. It is a qualitative research technique that identifies, examines and records themes within a dataset with an inductive or deductive approach (Myers, 2020). Braun, Clarke, Hayfield and Terry (2019) describe two conceptions of what a theme is, shared meaning-based patterns and domain summaries. Shared meaning-based patterns is to see a theme as reflecting a pattern organized around a core concept (Braun et al., 2019). By this, themes capture the essence of a dataset and unite meaning that occurs in multiple contexts. Themes are built from smaller codes and can explain large portions of the data collected of abstract entities or ideas. Domain summary themes, on the other hand, summarizes what participants said about a topic or issue typically at the surface level of meaning (Braun et al., 2019). The issue is often based on responses to a specific interview question and is exemplified by Braun et al. (2019, pp. 846) as "bucket themes". The information about a topic is gathered in one place, without regards to shared meaning or differences.

Thematic analysis is an uncomplicated and straightforward qualitative method which does not require some theoretical details and technical knowledge in comparison with other analytic methods. Thematic analysis is different from other analytic methods that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data. Essentially thematic analysis does not require detailed technological and theoretical knowledge of approaches, which means that thematic analysis can offer a more accessible form of analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). However, this

does not mean this analytic method is risk-free and lacks pitfalls that can result in a weak analysis. It is important to be unbiased when doing thematic analysis and avoid unprofessional and simplistic views that could destroy the value and the validity of the research which leads to serious damage. It is also important for the researcher to refrain from personal inferences and specific prejudgments on the research content and pay attention to explicit or latent content of the message as it is. Furthermore, there is a risk for the interview questions being impacted by the researcher's presumptions, leading to the researcher presenting presumptions instead of the data itself. Additionally, Gibson (2006) raises main issues regarding thematic analysis. First, he points out a theoretic issue, being interpretivism, which in fact is the interpretation of people's actions through our understanding. Moreover, the second issue raised is language, being how we can make sense of our experiences of the world (Javad & Zarea, 2016).

As we have interviewed a representative from the SAF and eight young adults using social media, we have two different voices around the organization. Both an internal of how the organization wants to be perceived from their work and several external of how the organization is perceived on social media. Because of this, two separate thematic analyzes were done. One for the representative from the SAF and one for our interviews with the study's participants.

Thematic analysis is a process containing six steps, familiarization with the data, initial coding, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing the end result (Braun et al., 2019; Myers, 2020). To make sure these steps were followed in this study we did the following. The first three steps of our thematic analyzes were done by each author individually, inspired by consensus coding. This was done by extracting the content of value for our research to make the later work of the analyzes more time efficient. With the extraction of the material, there was no need to search for the wanted content over and over again in all the transcription documents. The collected codes and themes was compared between the two authors', to ensure similarity in the generated codes and themes. We found that the themes we generated individually from our data were very similar and therefore we could in our review of them discuss our thoughts behind our themes. In the process of defining our final themes, the total number of themes got fewer encompassing more codes of the data. The final themes are; *organizational change*, *content vs. impressions* and *personal and formal content*.

6. Results

Based on the analytic process, we have been able to distinguish three main themes with several categories. These three themes are *organizational change*, *content vs. impressions* and *personal and formal content*. These themes are closely linked to each other and many of the categories have a complex context that became clear during the analysis process. Below we present our themes in order to provide an understanding of how the organization operates internally by improving the culture of the organization and how it is reflected through the organization's work with social media and how young adults perceive, experience and reflect on the organization through the new image that the Swedish Armed Forces try to convey,

through their content on social media. The quotes presented in our result are directly translated from Swedish.

6.1 Organizational change

Based on our interview with the organization representative, documents, and other official sources, we have been able to identify an umbrella theme of goals and strategies, where these goals focus on the fact that the organization is currently in a changing phase. This changing phase is partly due to the changes in management and the organization's structure that the organization has begun to work on in recent years. This is due to the change in worldview and the risks Sweden faces based on these changes. This has contributed to the SAF's mission changing from peace rationalization efficiency to increasing the robustness and perseverance in the organization and its leadership to increase its ability to respond to risks and carry out peacekeeping missions abroad. This change within the organization has in turn contributed to the need for new and increased staff within the organization. However, in order to attract young adults to recruit in the SAF, the organization needs to wash away and break the stereotypical image of the military in general and of the SAF in particular. This leads to the SAF aiming to change the existing stereotypical image and address rumors and preconceptions that have haunted the organization for generations. They do this by focusing on giving a picture of the SAF as an inclusive organization, which is communicated via various channels, including via the organization's official channels on social media.

By openly acknowledging the previous environment within the organization and openly trying to address preconceptions and work to create a better environment that includes everyone, contributing to a change in the organization's deep-rooted traditions and norms.

“When other understand the value, I think they will want to join the Swedish Armed Forces too. We use it a lot to communicate our work on equality and we know we have a, many have an image that they might have gotten from their grandfather talking about his time doing the mandatory military service. What you don't think about is that the person's story is 60 years old.” – Representative from SAF

The organization is aware of the previous norms and attitudes that have contributed to a stereotypical image of the organization and want to break the stereotypical image of the organization. Via social media channels, the organization can easily and smoothly reach young adults, who are the target group for recruitment. Social media also give organizations opportunities for new functions that traditional media do not offer, including targeting ads and content to the target audience, statistics functions, and feedback from the audience in the form of likes, reactions and comments. This contributes to the fact that the ongoing change process in the organization can be evaluated through observations, experiences and feedback. Through the content on the official channels, the organization tries to convey the new modern SAF. This is done by sharing the staff's experiences and the organization's work with gender equality issues and conveying an image of an open and inclusive workplace.

Through content of experiences in the organization on social media in the form of text, image and video, the organization tries to attract young adults with a focus on attracting more

women. This is done by highlighting female staff with positive experiences in the various parts of the organization. This, together with the law on compulsory military service, has contributed to a total increase in the number of applicants and an increase in the number of female applicants.

6.2 Content and Impressions

When we talked to our participants about their personal use of social media, all but one use it daily. The reasons for the use of social media varied between enjoyment, contact with friends, interests and as a way to pass the time. Only two of our respondents actively follow the SAF on social media, but everyone had come in contact with the organization on their social media. This was mostly in the form of marketing.

Our participants expressed neutral to positive opinions about the organization's social media use with their reactions and reflections to the SAF social media content selected from the past year and with their answers to our follow up questions.

Everyone thought that it was good that the SAF has a social media presence. There was a lot of focus on their visual elements and sometimes confusion was expressed about the connection between the picture and the text. Social media was viewed as a way for the organization to show what they do and who they are. By showing how your next-door neighbour can be a part of the SAF, common phrases used among our participants was about inclusiveness, diversity, and recruitment. Users pick up how the organization wants to show with their social media how the preconception that there are only men within the organization isn't true. Everyone is welcome no matter what background, gender, or sexual orientation you have. Some participants said that it was nice to see a woman in pictures, but it was also seen by some as "a thing" organizations do when they want to recruit more women. Participant 4 expressed their positive view on the organisation's take on this. They liked that both men and women are present in the organization's social media posts and found it good not to exclude men when you want to recruit women.

"What I like about the Swedish Armed Forces is that it isn't just women on their Instagram now because they want to attract women, they hold it more like what Sweden is about that we want equality, it shall be equal for all. You can't exclude one just to highlight the other, in with women but still show the men." – Participant 4

The SAF's social media use was seen as informational when they expressed what they do. With this the preconceptions of what the organization does are also challenged. Just like the organization representative expressed in our interview about the possibilities in the organization, our participants picked up on this desire to show what they do and how it is not armed soldiers running in the forest but many more areas of employment. Compared to other organizations and companies use of social media, the SAF is seen by the majority of our participants as having a purpose to recruit more people to the organization, that they do a good job on their platforms and that they want to sell themselves as an organization when others might want to sell a product. However, Participant 1 expressed their view of the organization's

social media as a lot of PR and did not see any difference between the SAF's and other organizations' social media and described it as "here is my product, look at me".

Many of our participants expressed how the organization wants to improve their image with their social media posts. The second participant's image of the organization is that it is a growing one and Participant 3 thinks they have good values but are working with their culture. Through some of the posts most popular and most recent in the past year, April 2020 to April 2021, the organization show their work with important questions many organizations have. Questions regarding the work environment for example. Participant 6 expressed a positive feeling from the content on the organization's social media platforms but understands that it is also the thought behind it. No organization want to generate negative feelings about them from their own content. Many of our participants say that some of the content from the organization makes them question if they are as good as they want to be portrayed. Participant 5 holds the organization high as an agency but don't believe they are as good as they appear in their social media. Participant 8 picture the organization with a lot of men and as a familiar organization, you protect each other, but in a negative way so that it is hard to be a woman in that environment. During this interview a story from a previous female employee was mentioned where the woman explained her experience in the organization with harassment on her social media that got shared and spread on the platform. Participant 3 also brought up a story of unfair treatment and harassment in the SAF during the interview when a post about pride was shown from their Twitter. But this participant also found in the posts shown during the interview that the organization present their stance on issues like these. They don't accept instances of harassment and they aim to solve the issue. Participant 2 also view the organization's content in this way, that the SAF are working away from the macho-culture, that Participant 8 had preconceptions about, and towards a more equal armed force. As our only participant with previous work experience in the SAF, Participant 2 think that those who are interested in doing the basic training should take the chance.

Overall, the image our participants have of the SAF varies. Some have a positive image where the organization is held high as an agency, seen as a necessity, an inclusive and growing organization. Participant 7 sees the organization as hard work and as a given that you don't think about much. This participant also explains that they haven't kept track of the organization.

"I don't know. (...) When I think about the Swedish Armed Forces in terms of what the organization is, I don't know really. Training, hard work. Yeah, no it's hard. It feels like a, the Swedish Armed Forces feels like a given but you might not think about it much more than that. That it exists. (...) So, I don't have, haven't had so much insight on them really." - Participant 7

This is also stated by Participant 8 and 6. The two explain that they don't have a great image of the SAF. The organization is seen as male dominant with a tough environment if you're not one and more as a career choice now compared to before. The last view of the organization is that they are very secretive, but they are more open now and more visible in the last few years with social media.

“Um, I don’t have a great image if I’m being honest because it feels like you got to see a lot of new things of what you showed. But I know, my image is that you have seen a lot more of them now on social media, especially a couple years ago when they started to appear in my feed, than you did before. And it feels as if, the image I have had of them before that is that it always feels like they are very secretive and stuff like that. (...) So, it is interesting to see them open so my image of them is probably that they have been very secretive but that they now have opened up but I still don’t know everything that’s going on in the Swedish Armed Forces.” - Participant 6

6.3 Personal and formal content

The final theme we defined in our analysis was regarding organizations’ existence on social media. Participant 4 was positive towards the SAF being on social media but could understand that some people might question why they are. Some of our respondents made comparisons of the content on the SAF’s social media to other public agencies and companies.

One of the posts shown from Facebook during the interviews got strong reactions among the participants. Most of them saw this post of a gingerbreadhouse in the shape of a military vehicle as a fun post that stood out from the rest and reacted with laughter. Participant 5, however, thought it felt like when companies try to be cool and funny on social media instead of mediating their message. Posts like these got described as pandering.

“No this feels also just like.. Yeah when companies try to be hipp and cool, I think it is like when all companies when they try to make a joke or something trying to follow along instead of sending out what message they have. So I feel this is like.. In English it’s called pandering (...)” - Participant 5

Participant 8 said that the post was fun and probably an easy way to get followers and interaction as it is more personal but questioned how personal the organization can be without becoming silly. When an organization posts more personal content it is a bigger risk of posting something that makes the followers lose confidence in them. Participant 8 continues to compare the SAF’s social media to another agency’s social media practice with channels on Instagram and Tiktok with individuals representing that authority with i.e. uniforms visible in the posts. A social media use that this participant described as uncomfortable and embarrassing, a feeling that follows outside social media for them. A feeling Participant 8 does not want to have about the SAF. Participant 5 also mentioned this other agency’s social media as an example of an organization doing a poor job on social media and that they are patting themselves on the back in the participant’s opinion. As this participant places themselves outside the target group of the SAF social media, some of the content could feel cringe. Meanwhile, Participant 1 mentions that the more personal content on the SAF social media channels felt more genuine and less like the common marketing which was appreciated. An example was made to one of the organization’s series on their Youtube channel with interviews with the soldiers and material of their everyday life in their training. Content with a similar nature that was shown in the interviews made Participant 8 feel that it was a little strange with

people on a personal level on the organization's social media, wondering if the identities of employees should be secret because of the specific organization they work in.

7. Discussion

We now return to our theoretical framing to better understand and analyze the results. To better understand and be able to analyze the results theoretical framing was used. As mentioned in section three on the theoretical framework, that although the concepts of organization identity and image are two separate concepts, they can interact closely (Whetten, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Our results show that the SAF as an organization has undergone major changes that have changed the organization's identity. These changes in identity come mainly internally within the organization in the form of changed norms and values and by working with gender equality. This is in order to attract new young recruits. On the other hand, only changing and improving internally does not help the organization to attract young adults, because the organization have an external stereotypical image of them. Our participants have expressed that this image of the organization comes from stories and experiences that have circulated for decades, through family, acquaintances, and others, which have contributed to the SAF being painted as a tough, masculine and non-inclusive environment, especially for women and LGBTQ people. In order to attract more young adults, the organization needed to wash away this negative image of the organization, this by using various media, mainly social media. The organization has tried through social media, to convey the great change in the organization's identity and provide a picture of a more modern and inclusive SAF. This has resulted in most of our participants perceiving that the SAF is in a process of change, where the SAF is redefining themselves and their identity. Most of our participants reflected on the fact that they clearly see that the organization is trying to improve and give a new image of the organization through their content on social media, content that reflects a more inclusive image.

7.1 Organizational identity and social media usage

Whetten (2006, p. 220) describes organizational identity as a matter of asking the question "Who are we as an organization?". As mentioned in section three, Whetten (2006) highlights three components that fall within the concept of organizational identity. The "ideational component" that we see as the clear change in the SAF that took place in 2017, which contributed to changes in the organization's mission, management, and organizational structure. This change in the organization resulted in a changed shared beliefs among the organization's members and above all in the management. Beliefs in the form that the organization needed to adapt to the new worldview, external threats, and societal changes. The "definitional component" is defined as what makes the organization unique. We argue that the SAF identity is described by how the organization openly acknowledges the previous environment within the organization and openly trying to address preconceptions and work to create a better environment that are inclusive. This in turn contributes to a change in the organization's future (central attributes) and try to imbed new traditions and norms that are deep-rooted in the organization (enduring attributes). By being aware of the previous norms

and attitudes that have contributed to the preconceptions for their external image, the organization have a good foundation for the process of changing their organizational image. The “phenomenological component” in Whetten’s organizational identity theory can be described in how the SAF can follow up the ongoing change process of their identity and how their new image are perceived through, among other things, public opinions, and feedback via their social media channels.

Social media gives the SAF the opportunity to understand their target audience and motivates the organization to respond proactively and efficiently to those needs (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). The technological factors and social media use facilitate and increase obtaining several different data, which can be very beneficial for the SAF. This data provides inputs and information, among other things, about the target audience, which in turn can help the organization shape the new image or improve the existing one (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). Since social media platforms are open communication channels, the SAF runs a great risk of negative backlash in the form of negative comments, feedback, and stories from the public and employees, which may affect the reputation and organizational image (Zyl, 2009). The use of social media also drives environmental forces in the organization in the form of institutional pressures like adoption of shared norms and routines that could be utilized by the target audience or the government, which in turn influences the organizational identity (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). Clearly, the SAF has managed to use social media in an effective way that has resulted in a strong positive impact on an organization's performance, in terms of improving communication and building relationships, improving citizen participation and transparency, and increasing information accessibility, which can result in top management being motivated to provide initial and continuous support for the use of social media (Parveen Tajudeen et al., 2018). The nature of social media also contributes to convenience, as the public receive information from the agencies faster and much easier. Information about the agency's work, which encourages transparency and accountability. The use of social media contributes to the public having the opportunity to participate and collaborate, through for example, feedback on the content (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Kuzma, 2010). Several studies argue that the involvement of governments in such processes contributes to improved democratization and increases citizens' trust in government and governmental agencies (Chun et al., 2010; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Kuzma, 2010).

7.2 Organizational image – on social media and in practice

Our findings from our interviews can be connected to Hatch & Schultz (2002) view of organizational image being the external definition of the organizational self and as “the set of views on the organization held by those who act as the organization’s ‘others’.” (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 995). Everything that our participants of young adults express about their view of the SAF make up an external definition of the organization that influences the organizational identity. An image that some of our participants build on rumors and preconceptions around the organization’s culture. The fact that the organization representative talked about a journey of change in our interview with the organization proves a point that Hatch & Schultz (2002) make around organizational identity being about self-examination and the fact that organizational image influences an organization’s identity. How

Gioia et al. (2000) describe organizational identity as dynamic and changing as the external view of the SAF is influenced by old stories of them in young adults today, making the organization actively work to portray themselves as a modern organization that wants to attract young adults just like any other organization or company.

The work the SAF does on their social media to break preconceptions and show that they are a modern organization is also an example of an organization working with the process of expressing, making identity claims by which culture is presented (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). The fact that some of our participants questioned the organization's claims in some of the posts presented during the interviews show how the process of impressing from the organization is influenced by their, above mentioned, rumors and preconceptions. These rumors and preconceptions are in themselves influenced by the increased access and exposure on organizations today because of the existence of social media. This has an impact on social media users' image on the organization as they get impressions on the organization from outside sources. The organizational images leaving impressions from outside sources then compete with the image an organization wants to project of themselves (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). This also connects to the social context that organizations operate within in today's digital society. As mentioned previously, the social context influences organizations in multiple ways. With the SAF, we see how they work with their organizational image in a social context where they compete with other organizations for the young adult's attention by their work on social media. A social context where parts the SAF's target group might have inherited old and outdated views of the organization together with stories from previous recruits of their experience of being inside the SAF. A valuable insight for an organization, connecting to Björklund & Tesanovic (2018) use of new institutional perspective of how organizations actions are shaped by the environment. By being aware of their social context, the SAF can gain more understanding for their communication.

The balancing act of retaining a suitable organizational image described above in 6.3 is a bit similar to the risks that Rasmussen (2017) talks about in his study. Even though his focus is on the use of humour in social media, that type of communication makes an organization more relaxed in its content. Rasmussen points out that a more private identity can create a popularity around grounds separate from the organization's performance of primary duties (2017, p. 107). It might depend on what type of organization it is and what it does to how personal an organization can be on social media, but this point to distinguish between private and professional identity is something that is touched upon in the last section of our result. Rasmussen's (2017) first and second theme on frequency and type of humours content used by the organization can get different reactions from the users, as demonstrated in our result, further proving what organizations has to keep in mind for an organizational image and external definition of the self that is in line with the organizational identity.

7.3 Conclusion

The impact social media have on organizational identity and image was studied with a research question on how young adults perceive the identity and image of the SAF through the organization's social media. We tackled this research question by conducting a set of interviews, one with the SAF and eight interviews with young adults within the SAF's target

group. Our interviews have given a great variety in the answers and a large amount of data, which we saw as a positive sign that increases the credibility of our study. Our results show that the SAF is in a process of change that involves a change in the organization's identity. The organization tries to convey this change through social media in order to change an image that is influenced by preconceptions and has existed for decades. By highlighting and working with important societal issues such as gender equality, to give an image of a modern organization that is open, responsible and inclusive. This is in order to attract more young adults as recruits. Our participants could see clearly this attempt to improve the organizational image. Although a few were skeptical about whether the organization is exactly as it is portrayed today via social media, all participants were positive about the SAF raising these issues and trying to overcome the harmful norms and build a more inclusive environment. Overall, our participants experienced the organization as more interesting today than it did before and were positive that the organization is on social media and communicating openly their work and the organization as a whole.

On an overarching level we found that the notions of organizational image and organizational identity to be useful for this study and analysis of how organizations present themselves online and are perceived by people. The notions helped us to formulate our result from our thematic analyzes to connect social media users to change of organizational identity.

8. Suggestions for future research

For a broader view and understanding of opinions of young adults perception of the SAF, future research could study the image of the organization using a larger sample than this particular study could provide. For a broader understanding of the organizations work on social media, interviews could be done with the organizations military units different communication departments to get a larger picture representative of the entire communication collaboration within the SAF. To get more insight to the organization's change over time, a study could follow the SAF's organizational change and provide indepth insight on the organizational identity over time. Interviews could also be done with the organization's management for a deeper understanding for the organizational change in terms of vision and goals.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – interview guide for participants

Intervjuguide (användare)

Allmänna frågor

Hur ofta använder du sociala medier?

Varför använder du sociala medier?

Vilka plattformar använder du dig av?

- varför just dessa plattformar?

Har du stött på försvarsmakten på sociala medier?

Har du stött på Försvarsmaktens reklam allmänt?

Följer du någon av Försvarsmaktens sociala medier?

- Vilken i så fall?
- Brukar du gilla, kommentera eller dela?

Reaktioner på Försvarsmaktens mest populära inlägg det senaste året och det senaste inlägget från deras kanaler

Upplevelse av Försvarsmakten

Tycker du att det är skillnad i innehållet på de olika kanalerna?

Vad tycker du kring att Försvarsmakten finns på sociala medier?

Vilken bild har du av Försvarsmakten?

- Har din bild av Försvarsmakten har förändrats senaste tiden?

Hur upplever du Försvarsmaktens innehåll på sociala medier?

Hur ser du på Försvarsmakten som arbetsgivare?

- Skulle du kunna tänka dig jobba hos Försvarsmakten? Varför?

Hur upplever du Försvarsmaktens användning av sociala medier jämfört med andra organisationer/företag du stött på?

Appendix 2 – interview guide for organization

Intervjuguide (Försvarsmakten)

Allmänna frågor?

- Beskriv Försvarsmakten som organisation/myndighet?
 - Har din uppfattning av organisationen förändrats under tiden du jobbat där? hur och varför?
- Vilka sociala medier/plattformar använder ni idag? Vad kom först? vad är nästa tror du?
- Vad har du för ansvar?
 - Jobbar du med en eller flera sociala medier?
- Hur många är ni som jobbar med sociala medier?
- Har ni en specifik målgrupp som ni jobbar mot?
- Har ni olika innehåll för olika medier? varför?
- Vad ser ni för fördelar med att använda sociala medier?
- Vad ser ni för nackdelar / risker med att använda social media?
- Samarbetar flera avdelningar inom arbetet med sociala medier?
 - Samarbetar ni med någon extern partner gällande ert sociala media?
- Använder ni er av något specifikt verktyg för att hantera ert sociala medier?

Organisationsidentitet

- Vi såg era riktlinjer om sociala medier för personalen privat, hur upplever du de riktlinjerna?
- Upplever du att representerar Försvarsmakten som privatperson på dina sociala medier?
 - På vilket sätt?
- Finns det riktlinjer hur organisationen ska använda sig av sociala medier?
 - Är riktlinjerna specificerade eller mer allmänna?
 - Kan man ta del av riktlinje/policydokument?
- Hittar ni inspiration från andra organisationer och myndigheter som använder sig av sociala medier?

Organisationens användning

- *Hur interagerar ni med era följare på era kanaler?*
- Använder ni er av de kommentarer ni får på era inlägg?
 - på vilket sätt?
- Hur förhåller ni er till de trender som sprids eller blir stora på sociala medier?
- *Används sociala medier som en feedback kanal för organisationen?*
 - Hur?

Uppfattningen av organisationen

- Vilket syfte har ni med användningen av sociala medier?
 - Är syftet formulerat enbart för Försvarsmakten eller är det gemensamt för fler statliga organisationer?
- Finns det någon strategi bakom hur ni använder sociala medier?

- Vilken?
 - Varför ser den ut som den gör?
- Vilken bild av organisationen vill ni förmedla på era sociala medier?
- Hur tror ni att ni upplevs som organisation av era följare? Hur får ni den informationen?

Avslutande frågor

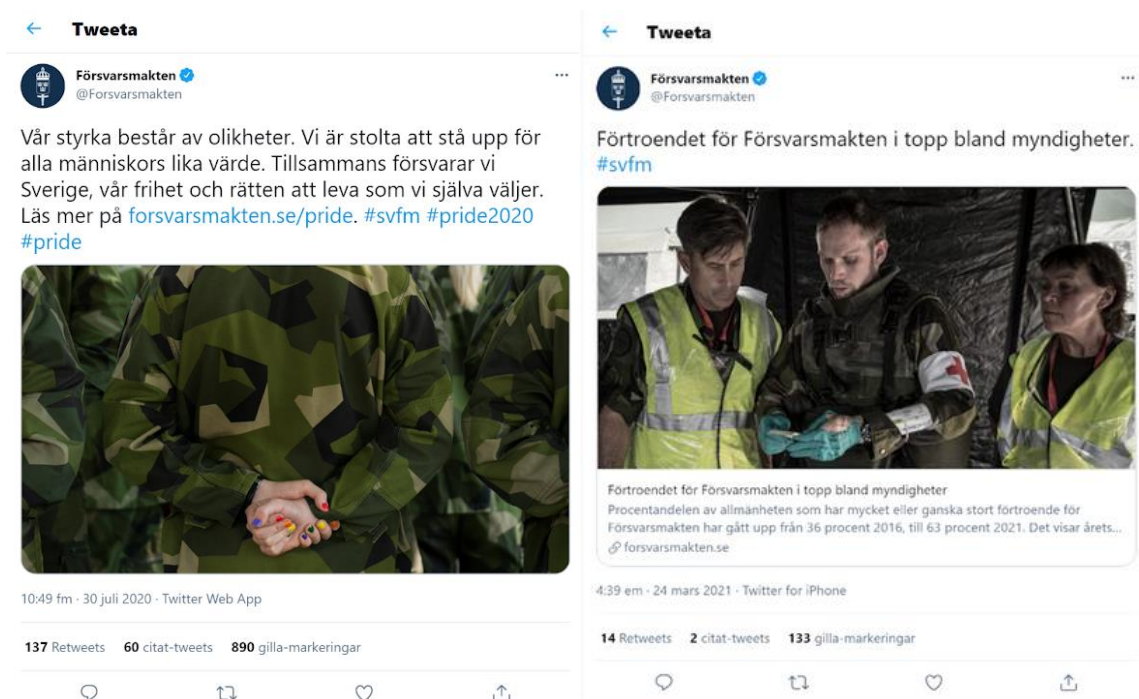
- Har ni sett någon förändring i rekryterings siffrorna under pandemin?
- Har det skett någon förändring i er strategi kring användandet av sociala medier under pandemin?
- Tack för din medverkan!
- Finns fler som är intresserade av att prata med oss om sociala medier på organisationen?
- Kan vi mejla dig om det kommer upp fler frågor?

Appendix 3 – student contributions

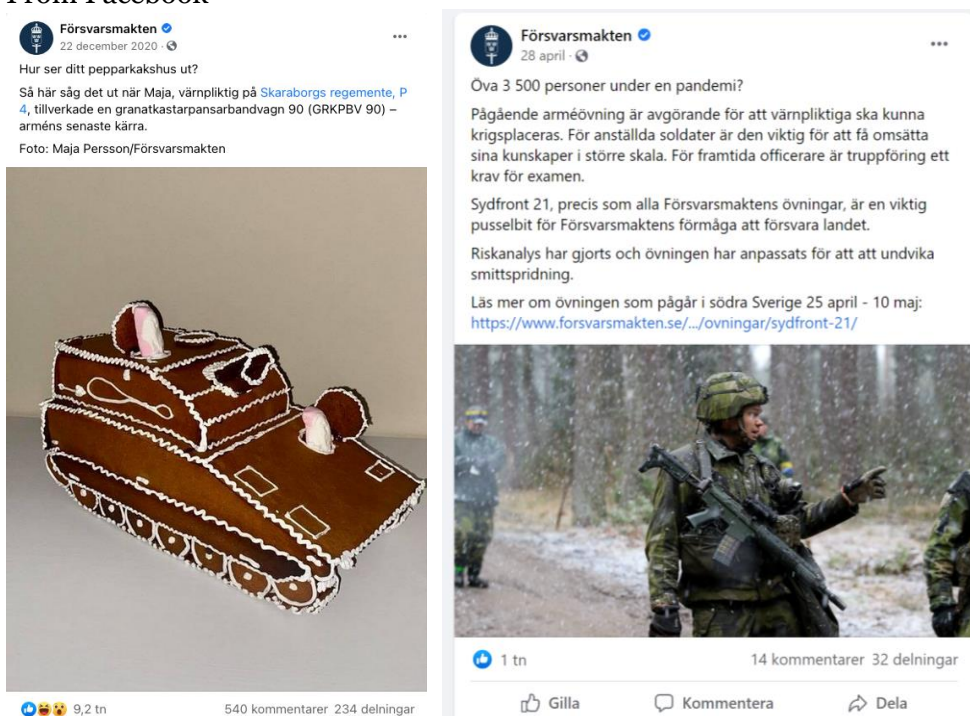
Both authors find that they have contributed equally to the work of this thesis. There has been a continuous collaboration with gathering research articles, contacting potential participants and transcribing their interviews. Malin did 5 transcriptions and Ismail did 4. We have both done the writing job on all parts of the paper and before submitting the essay, the authors did a final reading together.

Appendix 4 – social media posts from the organization's channels

From Twitter



From Facebook

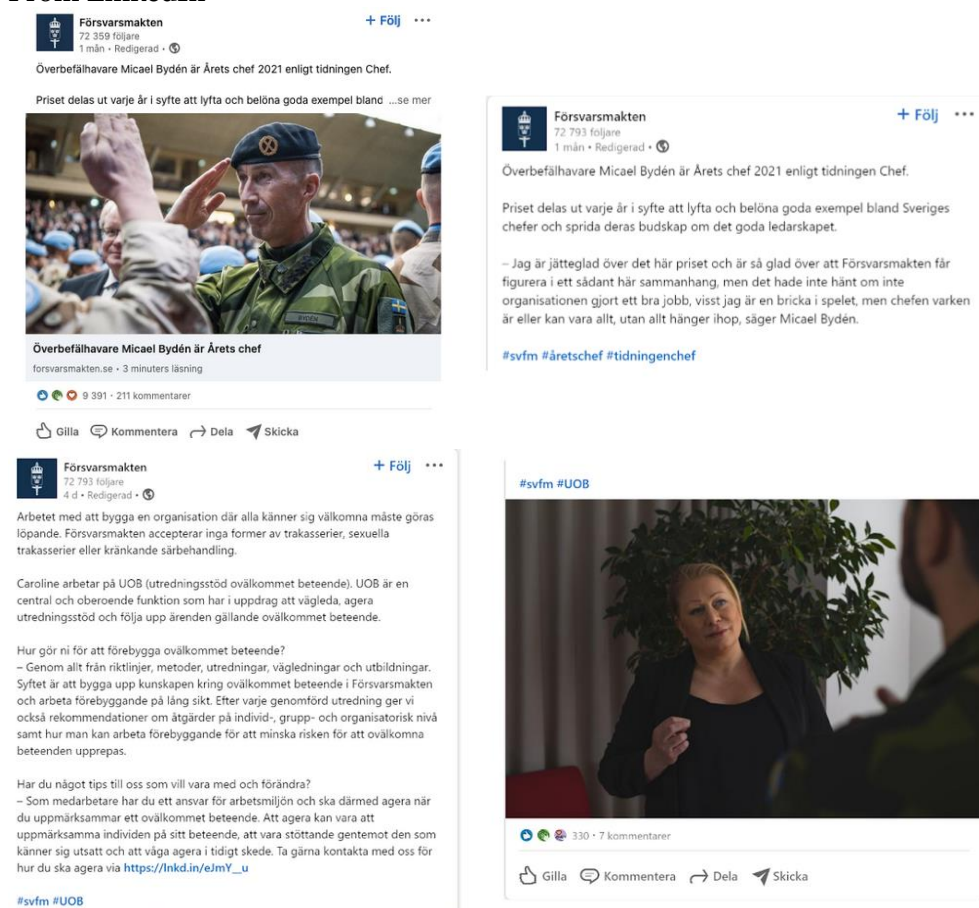


From Instagram

Appendix 4 – social media posts from the organization's channels

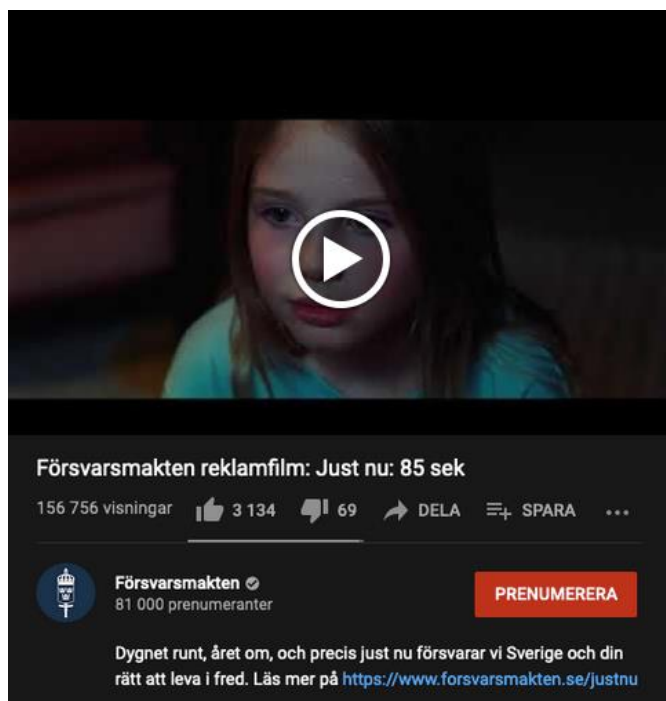


From LinkedIn



From Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUge7lk-pPg>



Second Youtube post is the same as Instagram video post

Posts with less interaction

