Unpacking the relationship between employee brand ambassadorship and employee social media usage through employee wellbeing in workplace: A theoretical contribution

Georgia Sakka[a], Mohammad Faisal Ahammad[b],*

[a] University of Nicosia, Cyprus
[b] CIBUL, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, UK

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the importance of SM in fostering employee wellbeing and promoting through this relationship employee brand ambassadorship in new innovative lines. In this paper, we have proposed a conceptual framework on the role of SM usage to advance the theoretical understanding of SM usage and employee wellbeing, and employee brand advocacy. In doing so, we have framed a model embracing the effect of SM usage on employee wellbeing and employee brand advocacy, and how employee brand advocacy can act as vital communicational activity with various stakeholders of the organization. This study contributes in the literature, as the ending point of this paper is the theoretical formulation of a new relationship between SM employee usage with employee wellbeing and employee advocacy. This paper is proposing a model embracing the effect of SM usage on employee wellbeing and advocacy and, set up the boundaries for future empirical work.

1. Introduction

The substantial development of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technology has led to the technological explosion of social networking, which has brought the evolution of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), leveraging innovation in the workplace settings and organizations' competitiveness (Garrigos-Simon, Alcami, & Libera, 2012). As innovation is an important tool that organizations could take advantage of to create new opportunities via change, social media (SM) has brought several vital changes in workplaces, moving internal and external organizational stakeholders' relationships in promising new dimensions (Ernst, Brem, & Voigt, 2014). SM fosters innovation due to its technologies that are continually advancing, offering new opportunities for innovative marketing (Dreher, 2014). The fluid and interactive characteristic of SM communication may leverage opportunities and benefits in the business context, especially from marketing and human resource (HR) approaches, and hence, it should be further investigated (Wu, 2016). Organizations that want sustained effectiveness cannot overlook these opportunities (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2012), because they would be effectively denying themselves of the rewards these tools may reap if properly understood and managed (Ali-Hassan, Nevo, & Wade, 2015, p. 80). Consequently, SM has become an extremely popular method of communication, dominating peoples'

personal lives and workplaces (Lam, 2016).

Online work-related communication is generally connected with employee well-being (Fonner & Roloff, 2012) and with relevant organizational outcomes, for instance, corporate reputation (Helm, 2011; Van Zoonen, Van der Meer, & Verhoeven, 2014). Firstly, employee well-being could be influenced by the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook, since using them could enable horizontal communication among employees and inspire work group support or employee support of workplaces (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Schimidt et al., 2016, Stawnicza, 2014). However, use of social media such as Twitter may make it hard for employees to disconnect from work after hours (Chesley, 2014). Secondly, employees could positively influence the organization's or brand's reputation (Dreher, 2014; Van Zoonen et al., 2014) by communicating reliable and authentic information. Conversely, employees could send SM messages that harm an organization's image and reputation (Helm, 2011; Dreher, 2014). Consequently, SM usage by employees can be advantageous or damaging for employees and the organization.

Regardless of SM's critical importance to employees and the organization, there is a lack of understanding about the connection between SM usage and possible benefits (Schimidt et al., 2016; Kluemper, Mitra, & Wang, 2016; Men & Muralidharan, 2017; Hanna, Kee, & Robertson, 2017), such as enhancing employees' levels of well-being and giving

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: geosakka@cytanet.com.cy (G. Sakka), m.f.ahammad@leeds.ac.uk (M.F. Ahammad).

employees a more active role in brand ambassadorship. Moreover, prior literature on brand engagement has focused on consumers (e.g. Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013), whereas Kumar and Pansari (2016) point out that other stakeholders, particularly employees, must also be understood. Hence, researchers see brand ambassadorship as positive external communication from employees (Xiong et al., 2013). It is related to the external promotion of the brand, as employees are willing to say positive things and promote their organization to others (King, Grace, & Funk, 2012). Under this scope, employees work as word-of-mouth (WOM) communicators sharing their own positive perceptions of their company to their friends, family and personal network, and most importantly to stakeholders, networking to support the company's brand and products (Morokane, Chiba, & Kleyn, 2016). Thus, it is seen as a significant measure of productive employee branding behavior (King et al., 2012), and a relatively new area of focus that needs further attention (Morokane et al., 2016; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

Therefore, we propose to focus more on the power of social media as an indispensable tool in workplaces, which empower employees to be their organization's brand ambassadors, advocates and contributors, enhancing the brand's reputation through SM. Addressing calls for research (e.g. Brodie et al., 2013; Morokane et al., 2016; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017) on brand engagement beyond consumers, this paper intends to explore how SM usage influences employees to be brand ambassadors and to network with stakeholders.

The paper theoretically explores the importance of SM in fostering employees' well-being and their role as brand ambassadors of new innovative lines, underlining the need for empirical research in this specific area. Specifically, the aims of the paper are two-fold. Firstly, the paper theoretically examines the role of employee SM usage in the workplace and its relation to their well-being in the workplace. Secondly, this paper discusses an updated literature review on how employee SM usage could affect their psychological and social employee well-being and their role as brand ambassador in networking with stakeholders. Employee brand engagement can be used as a mediator or oven moderator in this relationship. Therefore, the research questions deriving from this study are:

RQ1 How does employee SM usage (personal or work-related) affect employee psychological and social well-being?

RQ2 How does employee SM usage (personal or work-related) affect employee brand ambassadorship into stakeholder networking, via the role of employee well-being?

The paper also contributes to the areas of marketing, Internet and social media, and stakeholder management. Earlier research examined a number of marketing aspects including smart retailing (Vrontis, Thrassou, & Amirkhanpour, 2017), customer loyalty (Shafei & Tabaa, 2016), corporate image (Giovanis, Athanasopoulou, & Tsoukatos, 2016), importance of social media (Kavoura & Stavrianeas, 2015), Internet of things (Santoro, Vrontis, Thrassou, & Dezi, 2017), and internal marketing (Vrontis, Thrassou, & Razali, 2010). This paper contributes by developing a preliminary framework that includes the previously neglected area of employee well-being (Atkinson & Hall, 2011; Wesarat, Sharif, & Majid, 2015; Wright & Cropanzano, 2015) and the considerably new but greatly interesting area of employee advocacy, under the umbrella of SM in the workplace (see Fig. 1).

A review of relevant literature on employee use of SM, employee well-being and employee brand ambassadorship is provided. This describes previous research and incorporates it with theories and outlines the research problem through which the new framework is derived. Further, the new comprehensive framework is discussed and explained. The paper closes with general conclusions and observations on theoretical and managerial implications and statement of limitations for further research.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1. An introduction into employee usage of social media

Social Media are advanced technological platforms that have been created with the evolution of Web 2.0 technologies (Bolton et al., 2013) and have been further developed with Web 3.0 technologies (Choudhury, 2014). Specifically, Web 1.0, well known as the web of documents, enabled users only to read online in a passive way (Choudhury, 2014). However, Web 2.0 gave users the opportunity to create and upload content (UGC – user-generated content) (Lam, 2016), and Web 3.0 further enhanced communication and interactive tools (Choudhury, 2014). In this vein, SM platforms were introduced and evolved to help users communicate in various ways with different technological tools (Kietzmann, Hermkens, & McCarthy, 2011; Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2015).

Precisely, the category of SM includes: social networking sites (SNSs), virtual words, blogs, microblogs, content communities and collaborative projects, wikis, e-pages, and photo sharing sites (Conner, 2014; Doyle, Sammon, & Neville, 2015). There are two types of SNSs: public and internal. Internal SNSs are developed by individual organizations mainly for enhancing communication among colleagues, whereas public SNSs are open to the public and free of charge (Lam, 2016). Public SNSs are the most popular and widely used SM category, and one of the most popular examples of a public SNS is Facebook (Doyle et al., 2015; Kluemper et al., 2016). A clearer picture of what an SNS is can be illustrated by articulating their common features. According to those characteristics, users can create a semi-public or public profile and develop a list of other users to connect with, and they can finally connect with people on other users' lists (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This collaborative technology, as it is called by researchers, has specific characteristics according to Doyle et al. (2015). The first one is 'social interaction', where users can interact with each other. The second is 'social collaboration', which is mainly achieved with the help of SM platforms and users participate in virtual communities that are based on common interests and values, such as friendship. Next is 'content sharing': with the help of social media platforms users can share content in different forms, such as texts, photos and links. In addition, with 'user-generated content' (UGC), users can create content, which is not necessarily professionally made, and publish it on an SNS platform for others to view. The final characteristic is 'social connectedness': SM platforms offers various ways for users to connect through different technological tools (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Therefore people create, share, distribute and spread knowledge very easily through SM either for personal or work-related purposes (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017).

According to the literature and previous research, employees use SM either for social, or personal, reasons or work-related reasons. Social/personal use is related to interaction with friends, family or even colleagues, passing time, entertainment and communication (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Employees want to maintain contact with friends and create new relationships for either friendship or romantic reasons. They talk, discuss, arrange meetings, comment on new postings, view the profiles of other users and get personal or academic information about them (Ellison et al., 2007). On the other hand, work-related usage mainly means participating in discussions related to work, creating or sharing content and developing contact with stakeholders, such as colleagues, for work-related issues (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Work-related reasons for using SM are for seeking information, for convenience and for participating in the knowledge creating-sharing process where colleagues share work-related information to achieve organizational goals (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).
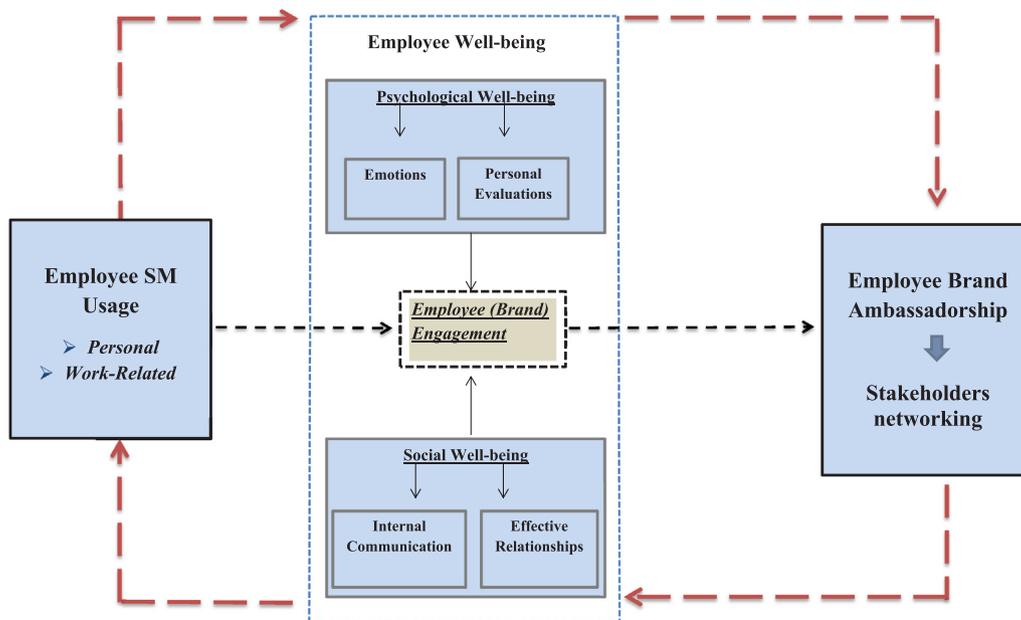
Fig. 1. Initial conceptual framework.

2.2. Employees as a key stakeholder group

Employees are almost exclusively identified as a primary stakeholder group (Greenwood & Freeman, 2011). Closely integrated with the firm, employees hold a unique role among stakeholders (Crane & Matten, 2004). These individuals can both affect and be affected by organizational activities and thus play a key role in the success or failure of their organization (Freeman, 1984). Specifically, the stakeholder perspective sees employees as a key organizational stakeholder in relation to corporate social responsibility. Collier and Esteban (2007) highlighted the dependence of organizations on employee responsiveness to and engagement in the effective delivery of CSR interventions. Accordingly, employees' CSR engagement plays a critical role in the implementation of effective CSR activities. Nevertheless, most studies of CSR have focused on external stakeholders (e.g. consumers), with the effects of CSR on internal stakeholders left comparatively unexplored (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Kaler, 2009).

Expanding the notion of consumer engagement to the stakeholder context, Viglia, Pera, and Bigné (2018) examined the determinants of multi-stakeholder digital engagement. Moreover, Korschun (2015) proposed framework revealed that how strongly an employee identifies with an organization affects the way the employee views external stakeholders in the social landscape at work. In addition, Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, and Berg (2013) built a framework to theorize how work-nonwork boundary preferences and self-evaluation motives drive the adoption of four archetypical sets of online boundary management behaviors (open, audience, content, and hybrid) and the consequences of these behaviors for respect and liking in professional relationships. In the context of large Japanese business, Kobayashi, Eweje, and Tappin (2018) identified the nature of conflicts that arise when promoting employee well-being: resources, family, stakeholders and partners; meritocracy as opposed to gender equality; indirect discrimination due to uneven care responsibilities; and external pressures on work hours.

2.3. Employee SM usage and employee well-being

Academia and the business press regularly feature articles about employees who use social media platforms privately at and about work in ways that cause damage to their organization's reputation (e.g., Johnston, 2015; Rokka, Karlsson, & Tienari, 2014). Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, and McGrath (2004) argued that employees'

perceptions of their organization affect their perception of the climate, which impacts the way people relate to their job and see their future in the organization, ultimately impacting their work adjustment, health, and well-being. In addition, Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper (2001) discussed the impact of workplace transitions on employee well-being and focused on four issues that are concerns for organizations and the workforce: job insecurity, work hours, control at work, and managerial style.

Research indicates that social media (SM) has made the work environment more complex and diverse, as it has changed the way employees feel, behave, and therefore perform. One such employee behavior or attitude, as Atkinson and Hall (2011) argued, is employee happiness or otherwise employee well-being. Employee well-being has already been a subject of interest in a considerable number of researches, either from a psychological, physical, or even social view (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007; Fisher, 2010; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Mainly, employee happiness is considered to be subjective employee well-being, or otherwise psychological well-being, according to the hedonic approach, as it is related to the perceptions, evaluations, and emotions of each employee on an individual basis (Warr, 2007; Wesarat et al., 2015).

Employee well-being and happiness are conceptions that contain different constructs, related to either moods and emotions or attitudes (Fisher, 2010). Philosophers and previous social researchers described happiness in eudemonic and hedonic approaches (Grant et al., 2007). The hedonic is related to pleasant feelings and emotions, while eudemonic is based on what is virtuous and morally right. The hedonic approach that will be adopted in this study is represented by research on subjective well-being, as it is related with subjective experiences of pleasure. This theoretical term is based on two features: judgments of life satisfaction and the superiority of positive feelings in relation to the negative (Grant et al., 2007; Fisher, 2010; Wright & Cropanzano, 2015). It is argued that in the past the term *happiness* and well-being at work overlapped with other related terms such as *job satisfaction, commitment, job involvement* and typical mood at work (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Fisher, 2010; Wright & Cropanzano, 2015). Therefore, previous research on employee happiness was based on three components and measurements: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Chen, Lee, & Tseng, 2012; Moqbel, Nevo, & Kock, 2013). Consequently, there are studies that focused solely on the relationship of happiness with satisfaction (Grawitch, Gottschalk, & Munz, 2006)

while neglecting employees' emotional well-being and new constructs such as having pleasant relationships with other people at work (Cadmus, 2012), despite the well-known importance that interpersonal relationships play in well-being (Fisher, 2010).

Employee well-being, according to recent managerial practices, refers to psychological, physical, and social well-being. Psychological well-being is mainly related to satisfaction with ones' job and life, physical well-being with health, and social well-being is related to aspects such as interpersonal relationships, participation in community, and acceptance (Grant et al., 2007). However, this study will include only employees' psychological and social well-being that is related to employee SM usage in workplaces. This is because social well-being is based on interaction among employees and what characterizes their relations, such as trust, collaboration, and integration (Adler & Kwon, 2002). According to the literature, social interactions are an important source of creativity and innovation in workplaces (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2012; Ali-Hassan et al., 2015).

Similarly, significant previous research proved that positive psychological emotions lead to enhanced performance outcomes, while negative lead to lower performance (Chia & Chu, 2016). Fisher (2010, p.2) claimed that evidence is available at all levels indicating that happiness has significant consequences for individuals as well as for organizations. This is because individual productivity and performance impact the overall performance of an organization. The importance of employee attitude and behavior lies upon the fact that happy employees are more productive. Research indicated that workplace happiness on a personal or group level leads to better performance, customer satisfaction, and safety (Fisher, 2010). This is because positive emotions lead to lower levels of absenteeism and higher retention rates (Atkinson & Hall, 2011). Romano's study (2011) showed that the higher employee happiness levels are, the higher the productivity is Chia and Chu (2016) investigated the moderating effects of presenteeism on the stress-happiness relationship with a sample of 358 employees in the hotel industry in Malaysia. They used specific items in order to measure job stress and happiness levels. A stressful working environment is correlated with lower levels of happiness. Similarly Grant et al. (2007) underlined that employee well-being is related to higher job performance and to the reduction of absenteeism and turnover. Further, it is suggested that happy employees work harder and are more likely to achieve career success (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). On the other side, unhappy people may not only perform less but they may also impact negatively on the performance of their colleagues (Wright & Cropanzano, 2015). However, in relation to the concept of this study, the question is how SM could affect the social and the psychological well-being of employees in the workplace?

2.3.1. Negative effects

Employees' SM usage may result in negative outcomes, especially without management control (Miles & Mangold, 2014). Irrespective of whether employees express negative or positive sentiment, each SM post may be attributed to the employer when employees provide their own and their employer's real names at the time of posting in SM (Schaarschmidt & Walsh, 2018). In some cases, inappropriate statements in employees posting in SM could put the reputation of the organization at risk and may even create legal implications (Miles & Mangold, 2014; Walsh, Schaarshchmidt, & Von Kortzfleisch, 2016). For instance, one employee of Addition-Elle, a company that sells plus-size clothing, was sacked after making an inappropriate statement on SM in 2016, which was 'Conquering the world, one well-dressed fat lady at a time'. By removing the employee, Addition-Elle attempted to reduce the risk of negative reputational damage to the company (CBC, 2016). This example tends to indicate that normative expectations exist in relation to employees' SM usage in their private lives (Walden, 2018). These expectations include conduct in direct relation to the employer, as defined in the example, as well as indirect ones, for example, promoting vicious government decisions or liking anti-Semitic posts. A risk-

reduction perspective suggests that employers' benefit when employees follow recognized wider social norms as well as community-specific social norms (Roos, Gelfand, Nau, & Lun, 2015).

There are different SM risks in relation to employee SM usage, according to literature. To start with, there is the problem of privacy, as the professional and the private boundaries are not clear (Frampton & Child, 2013). For example, employees may experience tensions when they must integrate personal and professional life (Van Prooijen, Ranzini, & Bartels, 2018). This is because they may not feel comfortable sharing personal information with their colleagues or even with their boss, and do not know how to set and maintain a limitation (Walden, 2016). Further, employees use their own personal devices for SNSs, and therefore they are reachable by other people online everywhere and anytime, even in the workplace. Consequently, they may experience a sense of uncertainty (Bucher, Fieseler, & Suphan, 2013).

Similarly, it is said that there should be a borderline between life and work, as users may be harmfully impacted from the mass of information available through SM and therefore it may not be possible to focus on their job tasks (Al-Busaidi, 2014). This situation may lead to stress and nervousness. This may also be related to cyberloafing, where employees spend time on SNSs for issues not job-related, such as socializing with friends or family (Kluemper et al., 2016).

Further, technostress is a negative emotion related to SM usage where users may feel fear and anxiety because they do not know how to use appropriately and safely new technologies and media (Brooks, 2015). This has a negative impact on their attitude and behavior. This is also related to the fact that SM users have little control over or knowledge of how to access their information on SM (Lewis & West, 2009; Bolton et al., 2013). For example, they may do not know how to protect themselves, as they are not aware of specific safety tools, and do not know how to filter the information they upload or receive or to use protection filters (Sakka & Spyrou, 2015; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Finally, due to employees properly using SM, there are examples of misbehavior, harassment, and even cyberbulling in the workplace (McDonald & Thompson, 2016). Specifically, like in real society, there may be users that use SNS to threaten employees and exercise psychological violence (Sakka & Spyrou, 2015).

2.3.2. Positive effects

Taking into consideration the aforementioned inconveniences, there are organizations that try to prevent employees from using SM during work in order to prevent possible risks (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks, & Cox, 2010). However, other researchers believe that preventing employees from using SM at the workplace means that the organization will lose potential organizational benefits, according to encouraging research outcomes (Bennett, Pitt, & Owers, 2010; Gibbs, MacDonald, & MacKay, 2015).

The literature has argued for the benefits of employees' psychological and social well-being. For example, it is said that interaction and communication among employees is enhanced for different reasons. The advanced technological tools facilitate open conversation, where employees can exchange information and even facilitate in finding solutions to work problems (Fraser & Dutta, 2008). Flow of information and the exchange of ideas and messages is achieved in easily and efficiently, providing in this way efficient communication (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Additionally, it is argued that employees feel they are members of the same organizational culture through the common use of SM (Bennett et al., 2010). Therefore, there are higher levels of employee commitment and satisfaction (Moqbel et al., 2013) and even better teamwork (Stawnicza, 2014). If employees feel more connected with their companies, then absenteeism is expected to be reduced (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). Employee well-being is also linked with employee productivity because people have social needs to be in contact or to live with other people, and if this need is satisfied then employee well-being is enhanced and consequently productivity is increased (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017).

Wang, Jackson, Gaskin, and Wang (2014) accomplished research in four China's universities, where they discovered that social usage of SM is positively related to users' well-being, while hedonic use is not. Similarly, Nduhura and Prieler (2017) examined the job-related and the social usage of SM. They found that private usage is related to employee well-being, because it has a positive affect on employees' moods, as they are able to sustain interaction with friends and family. Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) also discovered that the frequency of SNSs usage affects indirectly adolescents' social self-esteem and well-being. Specifically, positive feedback of postings positively affects employee well-being, while negative decrease it. There is also significant work on the importance of SM usage in relation to the work-life balance. Moqbel et al. (2013) investigated this aspect of SM and identified that the levels of job satisfaction and employee commitment are increased because employees, through SM usage, achieve contact with family and friends and therefore are happy and pleased, as they manage their work-life balance. Therefore, SM usage could contribute positively to employee well-being.

In addition, a recent research by Nduhura and Prieler (2017) examined qualitatively SM usage in the functioning of the public sector in Rwanda. The results indicated that employees use SM for staying updated and getting informed, for promoting their organization, and finally for private use and communication. They claimed that, especially, personal usage is relaxation from job duties. Further, they expressed happiness and that they feel safe if they are updated on news about their family and friends. Therefore, they concluded that the usage of SM benefits productivity in organizations. Similarly, Mark, Iqbal, Czerwinski, and Johns (2014) asserted that online socializing with friends and colleagues make an employee's mood better. Last but not least, Robertson and Fee (2017) highlighted the importance of SM usage, as it can create positive feelings and emotions, feelings of connectedness and advanced levels of happiness. This means that personal SM usage has a direct connection with the advancement of psychological well-being of the employee.

The aforementioned discussion on employee usage of SM for either personal or work-related reasons seems that it can change the psychological well-being of employees – their emotions and personal evaluations – and the levels of social well-being in terms of effective relationships and effective internal communication, and this needs further investigation.

Wesarat et al. (2015) explained that not only is workplace happiness crucial, as it enhances the productivity of the organization, but also the maintenance of happiness could lead to sustained productivity. They added that there are different factors that affect happiness in the workplace, and future research is needed to explore them. They concluded that happiness has been rarely seen in the past, and now is the time that this concept is effectively conceptualized. Taking also into account the huge number of SNSs users worldwide and their impact on both social and psychological well-being, more research is needed for examining this mechanism further (Wang et al., 2014).

Interestingly, it is claimed that, while the psychology literature significantly examines employee happiness, there is a limited recognition of its importance within the HR framework, and that this concept needs to be further researched so organizations and employers can identify the factors that enhance the levels of employee well-being if they want to increase employee and organizational performance (Cropanzano and Wright, 2006; Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Atkinson & Hall, 2011). More light is needed on employee mental health and the factors that improve employee well-being, as few researchers have contributed to this area, especially in the SM area. According to Van Zoonen, Verhoeven, and Vliegenthart (2016), the use of personal social media by employees for work remains an under-explored phenomenon. However, it is vital to gain understanding of these online behaviors, as they might have an impact on the individual and organizational levels. Therefore, it is argued that these online behaviors, influenced by SM usage, may lead to other positive or negative activities. A positive employee activity is brand advocacy.

2.4. Employees role in building corporate reputation

Corporate reputation is critical for cultivating stakeholder relationships and, specifically, for regaining public trust (Helm, 2011). Employees influence an organization's reputation in two ways. Firstly, other stakeholders' perception of an organization is actively shaped by its employees (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). In the service industry, employees help develop corporate reputation through quality interaction with customers (Helm, 2007). Secondly, public perceptions of an organization influence its employees. Employees' self-esteem improves as a result of their affiliation with a reputable organization (Cable & Turban, 2003), and attracts potential employees to join the organization (Svendsen, 1998). This raises the question of how corporate reputation can be created. Several authors claimed that corporate reputation is based on the firm's actions and how these are communicated to, and among, its stakeholders (Dowling, 1994), with Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever (2000) clarifying that the greatest reputation leverage can be achieved through employees.

The preceding section reviewed the general literature on the role of employees in building corporate reputation. The following section presents literature on the role of employee in building corporate brand through SM usage.

2.5. Uncovering employee brand advocacy

In addition to using SM for personal or work-related reasons, employees also represent organizations online through personal SM profiles (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Despite there being official corporate accounts, employees can express themselves through their personal SM accounts (Dreher, 2014; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017), and they can represent their company as ambassadors, and even as 'evangelists' (Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi, & Mäläskä, 2015). The literature names employees who engage in this activity *corporate advocates*, *brand ambassadors* or *external communicators*. Brand ambassadorship is also know as *brand advocacy* (Dreher, 2014; Huotari et al., 2015; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

There are two aspects of an organization's brand or reputation and employee engagement. Employees actively shape perceptions of other stakeholders of the firm (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). In the context of services industries, employees help establish corporate reputation through their customer interactions (Helm, 2007). Conversely, employees are affected by public perceptions of their employer. Affiliation with a reputable organization improves employees' self-esteem (Cable & Turban, 2003), thereby attracting potential employees to apply for positions, and devolving the safeguarding of the employers' reputation to current employees.

Employee branding is an activity on the part of the employee to interiorize the organizational brand image to various organizational stakeholders such as customers, colleagues or potential hires (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Schweitzeer and Lyons (2008) described it as the willingness of employees to work as 'marketers', by promoting the organizational brand to customers and potential employees at no cost, thus enhancing interpersonal interaction with stakeholders. Ernst et al. (2014, p. 174) described that innovation processes are not taking place within a single organization and that the process have to be opened up to all stakeholders of the organization. Generally, employee advocacy is related to activities such as sharing and promoting information in relation to their organizational brand, promoting their organization's online advertisements, making positive comments on their organization's brand postings, recommending the companies programs, and endorsing the brand's values (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Specifically, Cervellon and Lirio (2017) identified four dimensions of employee branding behaviors in SM. In each dimension, employees are engaged in specific actions that are favorable for the company. The first

dimension is positive employee WOM, the second is 'employee endorsement' such as recommending the organizational brand products or services via SM, the third is 'employee sharing' where employees share or 'like' links of their organization's brand, and finally 'employee culture' where, for example, employees behave appropriately online, according to the organizational brand values and culture.

Employee branding through SM, is an extremely important activity for organizations nowadays. Bruhn, Schöenmuller, and Schafer (2012) postulated that the rise of SM has resulted in organizations no longer being the only source of information about brands, as employees and consumers can engage with millions of other users and use social media to search for information directly. In addition, the speed and spread of social media means that news and opinions, both positive and negative, are instantaneously distributed throughout the world, hence making the importance of these internet-based networks essential for branding (Jones, Temperley, & Lima, 2009).

Taking into consideration the fact that there are more than 2 billion users of SM today globally, every employee has contact with key organizational stakeholders through SM (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Everything they do and say about their organization online can benefit or harm the reputation of a company and nobody can stop or control their participation in SM (Dreher, 2014). Through employees' SM activities, the culture of an organization is revealed to stakeholders such as business partners, vendors, suppliers, shareowners, existing or potential customers, colleagues or even candidates, and members' communities; employees can contribute in developing and fostering these essential relationships as they incorporate and represent corporate values (Dreher, 2014; Cervellon & Lirio, 2017; Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Cervellon and Lirio (2017, p. 65) explained that employee branding is the outcome of a process that starts with employees internalizing the brand, leading them to recommend the brand externally to customers as well as to potential employees.

Further, these informal online interactions between employees and organizational stakeholders may be considered more authentic because they are more personalized. Previous research has shown that stakeholders see employees as reliable and credible informants (Van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). Therefore, companies, such as L'Oreal and Pernod Ricards, that try to engage their employees in becoming online 'brand ambassadors'. The organizations may even adopt specialized programs for this or offer benefits to employees (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). There are also various advanced, innovative technological tools that organizations provide to employees in order to motivate them to be more active online as brand advocates, such as the Share Online button where they can share brand-related content such as advertisement messages, stories, information and companies, news such as new products, new positions and company's events through their personal SM accounts (Dreher, 2014).

However, there are also risks associated with employees' SM usage, as was aforementioned, as employees may spread inaccurate information or messages that could harm the organization's reputation in the eyes of stakeholders (Walsh et al., 2016). As a result, further research is needed on preventing those risks, as well as on realizing benefits (Dreher, 2014). Looking at the opportunities or risks of employee SM usage, Van den Berg and Verhoeven (2017) examined qualitatively the SM governance that managers adopt. They found that managers who saw opportunities behind SM usage were focused on advantages in improving stakeholder relations. Conversely, managers who were mostly prevention-focused set regulations focusing on the risks of SM.

Similarly, Huotari et al. (2015) argued that organizations must carefully evaluate internal corporate and employee roles and activities on SM, as they influence the SM content that reaches external users, such as existing or potential customers. Along the same lines, Van den Berg and Verhoeven (2017) argued that organizations, managers, and human resources must examine further the influence of SM usage on attitudes and behaviors. According Cervellon and Lirio (2017), it seems that employees have low brand engagement. There is a research gap in

how companies can unpack employee online branding. There is limited empirical work examining the role of employees in promoting the brand to customers (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). The question is how organizations can integrate employees' SM usage into the overall organizational marketing strategy and create brand-building behaviors (Dreher, 2014). For this reason, recently there is great interest in business-to-business (B2B) marketing, because it develops more personalized contact among customers and suppliers (Huotari et al., 2015). Therefore, the question is '*how can organizations encourage employees to become brand ambassadors*?' (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017, p. 63).

In relation to this, there are also alarms over Generation Y that is now entering the workplace, as it uses different forms of communication and has different needs and experiences in relation to technology at work (Bolton et al., 2013). Organizations need to reflect on the future in order to effectively engage this new generation with their organizational environment. Generation X or baby boomers usually do not separate professional and personal information on SM sites (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). It is expected that Generation Y will be involved more easily in online brand ambassadorship. Therefore, organizations are expected to find ways to foster brand engagement in order to achieve high levels of employee brand advocacy (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

Dreher (2014) claimed that further research on the benefits of employee SM usage is important to understand the type of motivation and encouragement that could enhance the levels of employee ambassadorship disposal. One way could be through examining their attitudes, feelings, interests, and emotional dimensions. Consequently, social media audits should aspire to understand employees' attitudes towards SM and the reasons why and how they use it (Dreher, 2014, p. 347). A necessary prerequisite for an employee to become an active brand ambassador is to be brand engaged, and employee brand engagement embraces emotional and psychological attachment (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). SM user engagement may be connected with improved employee well-being (Lampe, Vitak, & Ellison, 2013), which could lead to marketing advantages such as employee brand ambassadorship (Huotari et al., 2015). Therefore, this paper is arguing that employees' psychological and social well-being could be the engagement drivers that foster brand ambassadorship. This study aims to encompass the aforementioned relationship into a framework, with the main intention to constitute a theoretical 'map' for further research, as indicated below.

3. Constructing a new comprehensive framework

Based on the discussed theories on the role of SM in the workplace related to employee well-being and employee brand advocacy, this study proposes a model (Fig. 2) embracing the effect of this relationship, and sets up the boundaries for future empirical work. Bearing in mind that modern organizations are expected to engage their employees in current marketing approaches, this study suggests an innovative framework that has not yet being investigated empirically before in the organizational settings. Specifically, this framework is examining if employee brand ambassadorship is influenced through a correlating effect between SM employee usage and employee well-being. At first, it is important to examine the way that SM employee usage influences social and psychological well-being of employees, and then analyze the way that employee well-being influences employee brand ambassadorship, by inducing employee brand engagement as a motivational mediator.

Employee engagement is important for encouraging and actuating employees to become brand ambassadors. However, for the motivator to work successfully, it needs emotional and psychological stimulators (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017), which can be found in employee well-being constructs of positive emotions, positive self-evaluations, positive social interactions, and effective relationships through employee SM usage (Lampe et al., 2013). However, this relationship or mechanism could work also inversely, as employees who engage more in employee
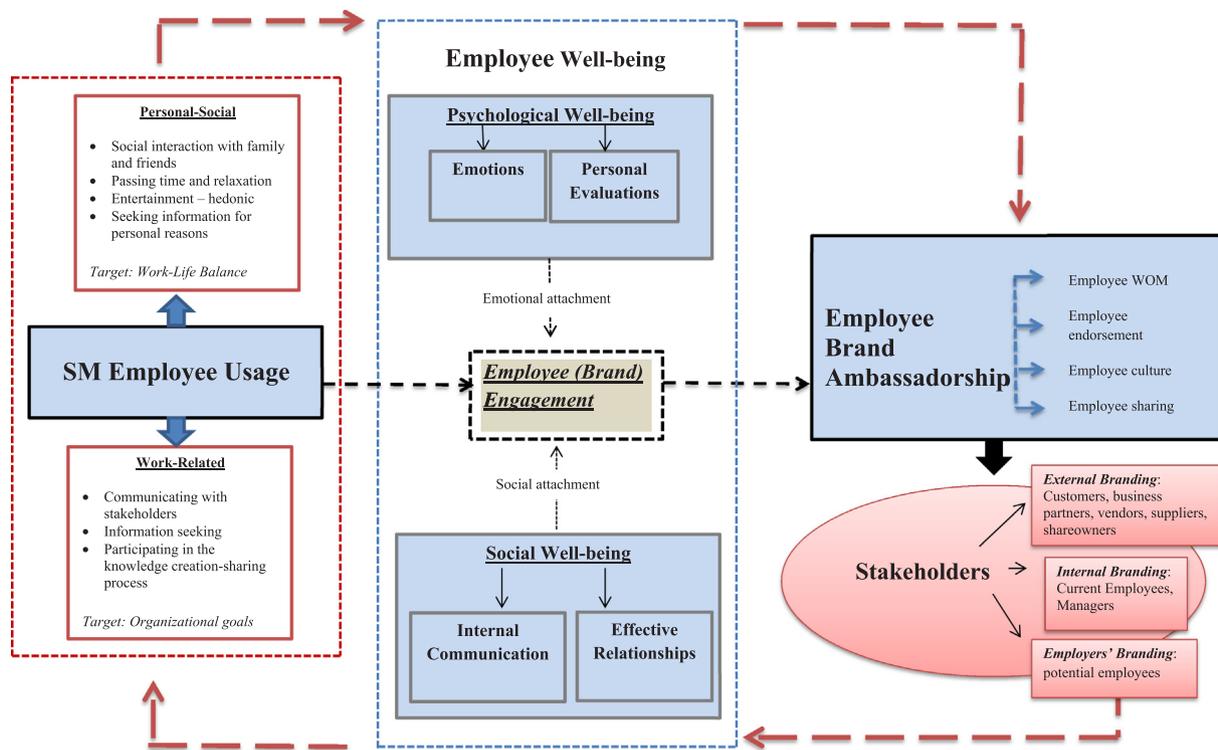
Fig. 2. An integrated framework for employee brand ambassadorship in correlation with employee SM usage and employee well-being.

ambassadorship via SM may experience increased well-being levels and engage more in SM usage.

Therefore, the framework presented in Fig. 2 is an innovative and modern propose that contributes to developing new and innovative mechanisms and strategies, corresponding to recent calls for marketing innovation to increase employee advocacy through SM.

4. Conclusions, implications, limitations, and further research

4.1. General conclusions

Observing the latest technological innovations, it seems that the traditional forms of organizational management look obsolete in front of the new era of organizational strategy. This era suggests that while a company's intranet was considered innovative a few years ago, it is no longer enough in workplace contexts (Bennett et al., 2010). On the other hand, SM is now considered one of the most definitive new products or tools of advanced and sophisticated technology (Lewis & West, 2009) that influences new behaviors and patterns not only in people's life but in organizational environments too (Gibbs et al., 2015).

SM have changed the way people interact with each other and with companies (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Consumers have shifted their information seeking behavior with regard to products and services from offline sources to electronic word-of-mouth sources, like social networking and review sites (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006). While traditional commercial information, like advertisements and promotion, is becoming decreasingly effective (Sethuraman, Tellis, & Briesch, 2011), consumers tend to increasingly rely on peer consumer opinions available online (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007) such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

With the incorporation of SM in everyday and workplace life, new opportunities appear and therefore new approaches are needed to effectively transform modern workplaces in innovative ways (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). SM employee usage may appear as a threat or as a promising opportunity, if organizations look at it anew. SM can no longer be used by organizations only as a tool for enhancing their brand

image, with the aim to attract external customers only (Kluemper et al., 2016). Specifically, Eren and Vardarlıer (2013, p. 859) clearly stated that social media was used as a tool for communication and marketing, but social media has started to be used in the human resources area and other areas. SM can constitute an important resource for innovation management. This is because employees' SM usage can be an important source for marketing and promoting brands via online stakeholders' networks. Therefore, this paper has attempted to assemble a richer picture of the effective impact of SM in internal and external marketing approaches in modern organizations.

Specifically, this study focuses on employee SM usage and employee well-being literature and previous research results that complete the picture of negative and positive effects on the psychological, social, and organizational levels. Then, it correlates this effect relationship with online employee branding by theoretically conceptualizing how this effect relationship can influence online employee branding intention. Finally, this study highlights the importance of employee brand ambassadorship as an important communication activity with stakeholders that could benefit modern organizations.

4.2. Theoretical implications

In this paper, we have proposed a framework for the role of SM usage to advance the theoretical understanding of SM usage and employee well-being, and employee brand advocacy. In doing so, we have modelled the effect of SM usage on employee well-being and employee brand advocacy, and how employee brand advocacy can act as a vital communication activity with various stakeholders of the organization. This study, therefore, contributes meaningfully to the literature, as the ending point of this paper is the theoretical formulation of a new relationship between SM employee usage and employee well-being and employee advocacy. In addition, this study proposes a model embracing the effect of SM usage on employee well-being and advocacy and set the boundaries for future empirical work. Our paper highlights the importance of finding new innovative ways for enhancing employee brand ambassadorship. While an innovation strategy is suggested at a

theoretical stage for the specific purpose, this study also proposes and calls for further theoretical implications for new concepts and theoretical relationships in this direction.

In considering the role of employee brand ambassadorship to be a critical communication activity with stakeholders, we advance research on stakeholder engagement and management. As such, our framework provides an understanding of how SM usage could affect employee well-being and brand advocacy, and how employee brand advocacy with stakeholders could offer tangible benefits to modern organizations.

Despite the fact that this paper is conceptual and descriptive in nature, it suggests a developed but preliminary framework for further empirical research, in order to be tested and redefined. Taking into consideration the needs and the nature of this study, a qualitative approach is suggested for future methodological approaches. This is because the analysis of qualitative data is expected to reveal new dimensions and influence of SM usage in the workplace, which quantitative data could not (Wang et al., 2014). Further, for providing insight into the psychological and social constructs of employee well-being, qualitative methods are preferred because they are more suitable for exploring deeper into sensitive relationships and emotions (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015).

4.3. Industrial and managerial implications

From a practical point of view, this study merits potentiality. Employee brand ambassadorship presents new innovative marketing opportunities for organizations (Harris & Ogbonna, 2013). Consequently, organizations should be in place to respond to the new and interactive era of SM. Managers must be aware of the possible drawbacks that SM usage could have on employee well-being and employee brand advocacy (Wang et al., 2014), as well as the benefits of the SM communication dynamic for the organization's internal and external stakeholders, in developing new and innovative marketing tools. This innovative marketing-related employee attitude will offer sustainable competitive advantage to organizations of today.

Employees can influence the opinions of members of their private social networks, who then might engage in WOM about the firm, thus enhancing corporate reputation (Clardy, 2005). Managers need to decide whether to recognize and reward such extra-role behavior. Due to positive and negative impacts of employee SM usage, managers should consider outlining the boundaries of employees' social media presence. Employees display brand-building behaviors when they understand their role in the branding process. When employees perceive they can play a role in the success of the brand online, they are willing and able to perform brand advocacy roles through their digital networks and on social media sites.

Further, due to the quick growth of SM, organizations have not yet identified the policy and the strategy they should follow for meeting HR requirements relevant to employee well-being and healthy workplaces (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Gibbs et al., 2015). Bolton et al. (2013, p. 258) argued that a lack of attention has been paid to the impact of Generation Y's social media use on its members' social identity, psychological and physical well-being, and market-related behaviors. Therefore, firms need guidance on how to include insights about Generation Y social media usage in their HR strategies and policies. If modern organizations are aware of and prepared for the changes that SM will bring to employee well-being and manage to control the effects of SM in the workplace, then they may be able to take advantage of the unique bond this new generation has with SM to reach new innovative marketing and managerial benefits. As empirical research recently has started showing, such benefits may be related to workplace social capital gains (Lin, Spence, Sellnow, & Lachlan, 2016) and enhancement of employee satisfaction (Wnuk, 2017; Robertson & Fee, 2017).

In essence, managers can improve the effectiveness of their organization or work systems, by introducing new and innovative methods and practices in relation to these relatively new forms of

communication technology. This is because internal benefits, such as employee well-being, are linked to external and organizational benefits, such as brand ambassadorship and employee advocacy. The behavior of employees, in terms of advocating for their own organization, is correlated with their organization's branded products and services, with the influence of existing or potential customers and other stakeholders, and with the impact or influence of essential job and organizational characteristics, such as its recruitments procedures. Therefore, both researchers and practitioners considered WOM and employee advocacy as a powerful competitive advantage for organizations and called for further research, as it may drive organizational effectiveness (Lages, 2012; Chang & Busser, 2017).

4.4. Limitations and further research

Ultimately, the framework of this study describes the interrelations of the aforementioned elements on a conceptual basis not with the intention to give answers but to generate further discussion and research that will give light to and validate these interrelationships. Therefore, empirical testing is necessary to further contribute to the development of the specific framework.

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