



LUND UNIVERSITY

Lund School of Economics and Management

Department of Business Administration

FEKN90, Business Administration

Examensarbete på Civilekonomprogrammet

Spring semester 2014

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

A qualitative analysis of how consumers identify
themselves on Instagram

Authors:

Caroline Garsbo

Emilia Sörensson Wittberger

Supervisor:

Jon Bertilsson

ABSTRACT

TITLE

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words - A qualitative analysis of how consumers identify themselves on Instagram

COURSE CODE

FEKN90 – Master Thesis in Marketing (Level D), 30 ECTS

AUTHORS

Caroline Garsbo and Emilia Sörensson Wittberger

SUPERVISOR

Ph. D Jon Bertilsson

KEYWORDS

Instagram, Consumer Identity, Self, Personal Branding, Narrative

PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute with knowledge on consumer identity in a social media setting and how companies can utilize this behaviour for effective marketing.

METHOD

The thesis adopts a constructivist perspective on how we interpret our interviewees, the reality and our own research role. The interviews have been inspired by both ethnographic and a phenomenological approach. Our visual observations are inspired by a netnographic approach. We have chosen to use narrative analysis in order to analyze the empirical material.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical focus point has been on narrative theory. We have looked at theories related to narratives and also ones concerning the self.

EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION

The empirical findings have been divided into two main themes: ego boost and fabricating a genuine identity. We have noted that the participants create a new identity on Instagram.

CONCLUSIONS

The participants have created a new identity that resembles their ideal self. This created identity acts as a personal brand in their private sphere.

PREFACE

We would like to thank Jon Bertilsson for his valuable help and guidance throughout this process. We would also like to acknowledge all of the participants who provided us with insights into their lives, without you this thesis would not be possible. Finally, we would like to thank our friends and family who supported us during this time.

Caroline Garsbo and Emilia Sörensson Wittberger

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>1. INTRODUCTION</u>	4
1.1 BACKGROUND	4
1.2 PREVIOUS LITERATURE	5
1.2.1 CONSUMER IDENTITY	6
1.2.1.1 MATERIALISTIC IDENTITY	8
1.2.1.2 LEISURE IDENTITY	9
1.2.2 PERSONAL BRANDING	10
1.2.2.1 DEFINING THE TERM	10
1.2.2.2 NEW ERA OF PERSONAL BRANDING	12
1.2.3. SOCIAL MEDIA AND INSTAGRAM	14
1.2.4. CRITICISM OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE	16
1.3 AREA OF RESEARCH	16
1.4 PURPOSE	17
1.4.1 EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION	17
1.5 DELIMITATIONS	18
1.6 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS	18
1.7 THESIS OUTLINE	19
<u>2. THEORY</u>	20
2.1 NARRATIVE THEORY	20
2.2 THE IDEA OF SELF	22
2.3 EXSUSES FOR BEHAVIOR	25
2.4 STORYTELLING	26
2.5 WHAT IS REALITY?	29
<u>3. METHOD</u>	31
3.1 CHOICE OF TOPIC	31
3.2 SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AND OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN	31
3.2.1 INTERVIEWS	32
3.2.2 VISUAL OBSERVATIONS	35
3.2.3 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS	36
3.3 PREPARATORY WORK	37
3.3.1 CHOICE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	37
3.3.2 CHOICE OF PARTICIPANTS AND CONTENT	38
3.3.3 DATA PROCESSING	39
3.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	40
3.4.1. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY	41
<u>4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</u>	43
4.1 #EBOBOOST	43
4.1.1 #SELFIES	43
4.1.2 #LIKES	46
4.1.3 #HASHTAGS	49
4.2 #FABRICATING A GENUINE IDENTITY	51
4.2.1 #INSTAGRAM MOMENT	51
4.2.2 #FABRICATED REALITY	55
4.2.3 #FRAGMENTED IDENTITY	58
4.2.4 #GLAMOURIZED IDENTITY	62
5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	67
5.1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS	69
5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	71
5.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	73
<u>6. SOURCES</u>	75
6.1 ARTICLES	75
6.2 BOOKS	79
6.3 WEBSITES	82

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will present a background of social media communication and the historical development of the photograph. Then we will discuss previous literature, which will lead us to the purpose of this paper as well as our research question.

1.1 BACKGROUND

More and more people are changing their behavior in communication. As media is ever evolving, we adjust to new possible ways of socializing with each other. As of the digitalized world we live in today, more and more people are connecting through social media (LaRose, Connolly, Lee, Li & Hales, 2014). Social networking sites permits interactions between friends, new possible acquaintances as well as the business world. When new social networking sites appear and become popular, the consumer's behavior will change and adapt to a new set of guidelines. Even though social networking is all about communicating, the behavior of doing so is very different depending on the media and it is therefore important to understand these different types of behaviors (LaRose et al., 2014).

Many companies have started investing in social media activities to try to boost customer involvement and communication with their customers. While some argue that this action is expected of them, others are skeptical and believe that companies are not prepared and do not understand the jargon in social media (Kiss Metrics, 2013; The Globe and Mail, 2012). Then again, social networking sites present new opportunities to build strong customer relationships and try new marketing ideas, often to a very little cost. It is, however, very important to understand customer behavior on these sites and how people interact, to fully gain from social media marketing (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Social Media, and especially the social networking site Facebook, has been broadly studied in academia (e.g. Greenwood, 2013). However, when the landscape of social networking sites and the way we communicate changes, we need to understand these changes to better equip ourselves to the new climate (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang & Johnson, 2013). Based on the lack of studies on communication behavior and the demand from the business world to better understand how to market in social media, this topic is both current and relevant to investigate. We have chosen to investigate Instagram as our social networking site, where consumers' storytelling through photographs will be analyzed.

The concept of photographing has changed during the last 30 years. One of the first to study consumer photography was Richard Chalfen (1987), who introduced the *Kodak Culture*. According to his studies, consumers would typically share photographs or videos of traditional events that occurs within a family or a group of friends, such as birthdays and family holidays. The most important aspect, and what might differ from the social media society, was that people who were exposed to these images most often knew the people in the photographs and could participate in stories surrounding the pictures. He explains that “The narrative remains in the heads of the picture makers and on-camera participants for verbal telling... the story does not appear in the album or on the screen; it is not ‘told’ by the images” (Miller & Edwards, 2007: 347; Chalfen, 1987). By the late 1990’s new digital technology emerged and the camera phone was introduced. Okabe and Ito (2003) found that people, through the camera phone, elevate ordinary events into an event that is worthy of a picture. Makela, Giller, Tscheligi & Sefelin (2000) as well as Kurvinen’s (2003) findings support the theory that camera phone photos are used to tell stories with images, rather than verbally having to tell stories about the images. Furthermore, there is research indicating that today’s society is becoming more visually focused and graphically fixated (Allen, Woodward & Lamp, 2012). Telling stories with images is unique due to the fact that it awakens emotions between individuals who do not speak the same language or does not share the same culture (Scott 2013). It is therefore interesting to investigate Instagram, where the main focus is uploading images and see how consumers use that social media to deliver their personal stories.

Further, Van House, Davis, Ames, Finn & Viswanathan (2005) identified self-expression as well as self-presentation as important communicative usages of camera phone photos. All of these studies tend to suggest that camera phones have lifted the actual photographs into the center of the storytelling and that the narrator has taken a step back.

1.2 PREVIOUS LITERATURE

For this section, we have chosen to discuss two main concepts that will help the understanding of the subject. We will mainly discuss consumer identity, personal branding, social media and Instagram.

1.2.1 CONSUMER IDENTITY

It is necessary that brands fit into consumer's lives, rather than the consumers fitting into the brand, which makes it essential for organizations to understand people's identities instead of concentrating on their interests (Branding Strategy Insider, 2010). By doing so, the brand starts matching consumer's lifestyles (Chernev et al., 2011). Brands are shown to reaffirm individual's values and beliefs, which confirms their self-image (Chernev et al., 2011; Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993; Solomon, 1983; Levy, 1959).

Research has been made where the role of the brand as self-expression has been put into different scenarios. Chernev et al. (2011) present different contexts given by various authors, where Berger & Heath (2007) describe brands as being identity signals, Escalas & Bettman (2005) claim reference groups are the reasons for brand meaning, whereas it can also be described as a brand relationship (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998; Kleine et al., 1993), a way of expressing prestige through brands (Braun & Wicklund, 1989), and lastly as an emotional attachment from consumers to the specific brand (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). This emotional attachment occurs when seeing the physical aspects of a product as well as noticing other, less obvious factors. Physical factors such as the appearance of the product may appeal to an individual but with other factors such as the price, the invested advertising and the packaging may be just as appealing to a consumer who can associate with all these factors. If a certain stereotype or celebrity is associated with the brand as well, consumers might identify themselves even more with a brand in the pursuit of becoming this stereotype (Siegel, 1982).

Consumer identity can also be connected to a self-concept where a person has three different "self". The actual self is how a person sees his/herself, ideal self is how a person wishes to perceive him/herself and, finally, the social self concerns how an individual presents him/herself to other people (Sirgy, 1982).

Consumer and social identity can be said to originate from both social and personal identity. Consumers' relating to a specific group is considered social identity, whereas personal identity is originated from the consumer's sense of self (White & Dahl, 2007). Self-expressions can originate from relating to a brand, from self-expressive behavioral doings but also from non-brand expressions (Chernev et al., 2011). Self-expression is a relatively new concept, first mentioned by Campbell (1983), who

meant that individuals expressed themselves through various sorts of powerful and joyful experiences (Corrigan, 1997).

Social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter provide individuals with the opportunity to express themselves by sharing electronic messages, photos and videos. By sharing content on a social platform, individuals improve their social identity (Chernev et al., 2011).

White & Dahl (2007) argue that a key statement for social identity theory is the fact that consumers search for distinguishing themselves from out-groups, groups that are not of desirable belonging. In order to achieve the distinction, consumers avoid products connected to the negatively perceived groups as well as they bond with positively viewed groups (White & Dahl, 2007; White & Argo, 2007; White & Dahl, 2006; Tepper, 1994).

There are different degrees of group belonging, where the consumer can feel a higher or lower involvement with a group or a brand (Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; White & Dahl, 2007). Some identity social groups may be portrayed as a sort of moral protagonism where consumers view their identified brands as having sacred meanings. Together they share an identity in which the company is included. Some groups share an identity of taking moral responsibility where consumers and organizations, which do not match their ideological criteria, are viewed as villains. Individuals may interpret a company as something that threatens their moral perspective of an ideology. The possible threat may target for example people's well-being or the ecosystem. Individuals who consume a certain product identify themselves with the aspects of the object, whilst individuals who despise the company will most probably find themselves despising the consuming individuals as well. That way, a consumer conflict will arise where the moral aspects are the underlying reason for the issue (Luedicke et al., 2010).

There is traditional research on the subject of consumer identity and self-expression through brands and other channels (Luedicke et al., 2010; White & Dahl, 2007) as well as through social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Chernev et al., 2011) but so far no research has been found on self-expression through Instagram.

1.2.1.1 MATERIALISTIC IDENTITY

Consumption can be seen in different ways, but somehow they are all connected through a theme where consumers and their objects communicate various hierarchies in the social world (Corrigan, 1997). Both Veblen (1975 [1899]) and Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) mean that consumption of goods is a way of distinguishing oneself from other social classes. Conspicuous consumption is useful for showing ones wealth in big cities where no one is familiar to another and there are strangers everywhere. The only thing one will know about another person is what they see at first sight (Corrigan, 1997; Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Veblen, 1975 [1899]). Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) shares this view of goods as expressing oneself, but he sees the society as a war between social classes where goods are the weapons used for claiming ones position.

It is possible to extend ones consumption to other people within the surroundings. In order to claim wealth, it was not sufficient to dress in expensive clothes. A person could also consume by dressing all servants in expensive clothes, and the rest of the family was bought even more expensive clothes. As it is not as popular today with hiring servants, the wife has become essential in the excessive consumption perspective. Veblen (1975 [1899]) means that the wife is the person who displays the wealth of the family, and it is therefore vital that she consumes in order to claim a social status (Corrigan, 1997; Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Veblen, 1975 [1899]).

Other ways of extending ones consumption can be done through for example donating to charity or throwing parties. By throwing a party, all guests consume the wealth through the host, where they may eat and drink on the cost of the host. A big party can also symbolize an individuals' ability to throw away a huge amount of money on one event, and that is a way of showing ones prestige compared to rivals (Corrigan, 1997). An example of a person with the ability to throw extravagant parties is Jay Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's (1925) novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Mr. Gatsby threw the most prestigious and costly parties that everyone wanted to attend. By hosting all these parties, he was seen as one of the most prestigious men on Long Island. He managed to consume enough to make people talk about his wealth and high status (Fitzgerald, 1925). This can also be seen in high-class societies where people throw big charity parties. All guests are invited to join an extravagant party in exchange for donating money during the party. This way, they can show everyone

else how much they are willing to donate, hence how wealthy they are, and at the same time feel good about themselves.

Buying and wearing branded clothes makes an individual stand out from others. A glamorous brand has to be expensive otherwise they would lose their high-end customers. By paying more money for a product that fills the same functions as another, lower-priced product, shows others that one can afford to spend money and consume (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996).

When entering social networking sites such as Facebook and especially Instagram, one can see that some individuals post photos of all expensive objects they have worn or used that day. Through Instagram they may practice a new way of showing the whole world how good they are at consumption.

1.2.1.2 LEISURE IDENTITY

Conspicuous leisure arose in the 19th century where consumption no longer sufficed for displaying one's high social status (Corrigan, 1997). Conspicuous leisure is, according to Veblen (1975 [1899]), suitable in small societies where everyone knows of each other.

It was important to show others that your wealth was so great that you did not have to work or do anything yourself. Veblen (1975 [1899]) stated that the leisure class avoided everything that was associated to productive labor, and therefore they never produced anything. This way, they showed others that they did not have to work in order to survive. Instead, time could be spent on learning for example dead languages, stating that one was not associated with industrial labor. Other ways of showing one's wealth was having an absurd amount of servants, dressed in expensive clothing and not doing anything. An individual can be busy and still maintain his/her high social ranking, but it would have to be an activity that did not result in labor that produces anything (Corrigan, 1997; Veblen 1975 [1899]).

Practicing sports can be an honorable act if practiced in the correct manner. There is a distinction between players and gentlemen, which can still be seen today in sports such as tennis, cricket and golf. The players are professional and practice a sport for making money and earn a living while the gentlemen are amateurs and practice the sport for pure leisure. According to Veblen (1975 [1899]), the practicing of the sport

for the players makes them dishonorable, whereas the gentlemen only gain social status (Corrigan, 1997; Veblen, 1975 [1899]).

Sticking to conspicuous leisure in today's society is as good as impossible since almost everyone has to work for a living. Although, this does not mean individuals don't leisure themselves. However, instead of solely leisuring oneself, an individual may consume goods as well in order to display ones fortune.

Most people live in big societies and cities where you meet strangers every day and it is therefore difficult to claim wealth through leisure. It requires people to know parts or all of your background in order to understand the conspicuous leisure that is practiced. If an individual wants to claim his/her wealth through leisure, it is important that other people notice. A way of portraying this leisure, and consumption, would be through social media, such as Instagram, where you can post images to show the whole world as well as your closest friends and family.

1.2.2 PERSONAL BRANDING

Tom Peters was the first to introduce the concept Personal Branding in his article "The Brand Called You", in 1997. He stated that the most important task is to market the brand called "You". Every individual has the power to be his/her own brand through personal branding and his/her main job is therefore to be the marketer of this personal brand (Chen, 2013; Peters, 1997). When marketing the personal brand, the final aim is to develop the brand in order to facilitate the growth of a network, which will also build a reputation. As a result, the personal brand will be known and others will seek it out for its expertise (About.com Marketing, 2014).

1.2.2.1 DEFINING THE TERM

Personal branding is seen as a concept that merges networking, leveraging self-awareness and skill excellence into a personal value proposition for the individual's workplace. These personal branding actions will make the individual unique and therefore stand out from the competition, which might lead to becoming a candidate for new opportunities chosen by decision makers (Morgan, 2011). Shepherd (2005) states that individuals market themselves in order to get noticed in a marketplace, and consequently gain employment.

Personal branding is deeper than just an individual's appearance, even though it is very important. Physical appearance may differentiate an individual from others depending on the way s/he dresses or behaves. Appearance would communicate a positive impression that the individual is an appropriate fit within the company culture. Furthermore, it is argued that dressing and behaving in a unique way will not last for a long-term impression. It is therefore crucial to contribute with high quality work material that will market ones personal brand (Morgan, 2011).

According to the Entrepreneur, branding can be defined as “The marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products.” Jim Joseph (2013) compares branding of a product with personal branding. Once a pair of parents names their child, a personal branding process begins. As a person market him/herself for taking new choices and heading in new directions, s/he has to think the same way as a brand, which means staying true to who s/he is and who s/he wants to be. Joseph points out that a personal brand needs to be carefully managed and controlled through life, just like any commercial brand (Joseph, 2013).

Personal branding is, in this context, defined as:

The way individuals acknowledge their given name and create a personality around it based on the different choices they make throughout their lives (Joseph, 2013). The process of creating a personal value proposition, displaying the individual as unique compared to others, which includes both a first impression appearance and a long lasting impression (Morgan, 2011). As Joseph (2011) describes, personal branding is managed the same way as a commercial brand, which can be defined as “creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products” (the Entrepreneur). Therefore, personal branding concerns the way individuals market communicates their personal skills, personality and their values (About.com Marketing, 2014).

1.2.2.2 NEW ERA OF PERSONAL BRANDING

Alongside with personal branding offline, lies personal branding through social media. Using social media as personal branding is about reminding your friends and network about who you are, what you do, and why you are unique (American Marketing Association, 2014). The developing digital media is becoming more integrated with the traditional media (Wetsch, 2012), and research shows that employers consider the use of social media as an efficient and cost-effective way of hiring new, qualified staff. Since individuals have similar access to that of organizations, they can search for recruiters and, by marketing their personal brand, find potential employers (Wetsch, 2012).

It is recommended that individuals post status updates, liking other people's updates and update their personal profile in order to communicate the personal brand via the specific social media. People are more likely to spare extra time for others within close networking connections rather than to strangers (Blacksmith & Poepelman, 2014).

The development of personal brands is a fast growing trend within the social media (Chen, 2013). Individuals use the social media for personal branding by presenting, understanding and experiencing themselves as subjects (Chen, 2013; Pace, 2008).

Various authors argue that social media contributes to both the development of personal branding, but also establishes relationships with potential consumers for organizations (Chen, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; Vitberg, 2010). The concept of personal branding is also known as self-branding or self-marketing, and the use of it is increasing among leaders, celebrities, politics and the entertainment industry (Chen, 2013; Shepherd, 2005).

Personal branding through social media displays self-performances and offers an individuality that may facilitate a differentiation of the personal brand from other individuals (Chen, 2013). Shuker (2010) implied that personal branding could be seen as an art involving impression management, where the purpose is to project an impression leading to affect external parties. This results in an exchange of social relations (Chen, 2013; Shuker, 2010).

Blacksmith & Poepelman, 2014 mention benefits of branding within social medias such as LinkedIn and Twitter. LinkedIn provides the biggest professional

network online and help individuals find people and organizations closely connected to themselves. Using well-selected keywords for a profile will facilitate the process of being found by potential employers, and it is therefore essential to choose keywords wisely (Marketingpower). Twitter allows the possibility to use hashtags in order to find a bigger selection of a certain interest. Users of Twitter also receive suggestions of users who might be interesting to follow. As a result, the individual can read popular trends on his/her homepage and improve his/her personal brand thereafter (Blacksmith & Poeppelman, 2014).

Concerning consumer-brand relationships, it is argued that consumers seek and uphold relationships that may add meanings to their everyday lives (Chen, 2013). Aggarwal and McGill (2011) state that researchers have found that consumers are more likely to picture themselves as partners with a brand that has the personality that fits the characteristics of the individual (Chen, 2013; Aggarwal & McGill, 2011). Aaker (1997) defined five different brand personalities: sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence, and ruggedness, which consumers can associate themselves with.

It is possible to find guidelines on how to create a strong personal brand through social media (Blacksmith & Poeppelman, 2014; Marketingpower). If an individual fulfills the requirements such as: communicating ones interests both inside and outside of the organization, being aware of the results when searching for ones name on Google, being good at presenting ones expertise and knowing what distinguishes oneself from others, it is argued that this individual has a strong brand online (Blacksmith & Poeppelman, 2014).

There are different suggestions and guidelines on how to create an impeccable personal brand through social media. Some provide step-by-step guides to follow in order to improve and develop a better marketing of the personal brand (Forbes 2012; Guiseppi, 2009). The American Marketing Association (2014) discusses personal branding via Facebook and how to best utilize its benefits. Other websites such as Marketingpower handles the usage and benefits of LinkedIn as a social media for personal branding. Along with the suggestions from Marketingpower are the authors Blacksmith & Poeppelman (2014) who stress the importance of self-branding via both LinkedIn and Twitter, since they both provide different benefits. Chen (2013) refers to personal branding by posting characteristic videos through YouTube. Even though authors provide numerous guidelines about personal branding through various social

medias, there is still no solid material on how to utilize Instagram for personal development.

1.2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA & INSTAGRAM

Even though social media is used as a relatively new term, the concept has existed for some time. Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis created the Usenet in 1979, a discussion system where people could post public messages that could be viewed worldwide through the internet. As the accessibility to the Internet has increased, so has the concept of social media. Like Web 2.0, social media is characterized by connectivity and interactivity in which the content produced is essential to deliver experiences to individuals (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Through the creation of social networking sites such as MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004), the term social media was coined and became widely spread (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social Media could be defined as “an umbrella term that is used to refer to a new era of Web-enabled applications that are built around user-generated or user-manipulated content, such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites” (Smith, 2011: 2). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. There is no standard definition for social media, but we will use Kaplan & Haenlein’s definition for the purposes of this thesis.

Creating and networking online has become an important means of managing one’s social relations, identity and lifestyle (Livingstone, 2008). As mentioned before, social networking sites are good channels for communicating ones personal brand or expressing ones consumer identity.

Social media has been met with both positive and negative critique. Optimistic reviews stress the new possibilities of sociability, self-expression, creativity and new literacies. Others are more skeptical and critics argue that public anxiety can be linked with social networking and that younger generations have no sense of privacy. Other negative opinions have also been raised questions about online harassment and sex predators. Despite criticism, social networking sites gain more followers each day and critics have to work around the problems in new ways (Livingstone 2008).

In order to communicate a personal brand or practice self-expression, an individual needs a channel to go through. Instagram is a social networking site where users can take photographs or record videos, manipulate them using different filters and frames, and share them with their followers, a photography community. It is also possible to connect Instagram to other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to share the photographs or videos on these sites as well, which make it a non-isolated platform. The users have the option of commenting posts and hashtagging them to interconnect them with relatable posts, as well as photo mapping. Contrary to other social networking sites, Instagram is mainly a smartphone and a tablet application, which allows the users to update with their portable phone or tablet on the go. These aspects all speak for a good platform to perform self-expression, which is why we have chosen to concentrate on Instagram.

Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, who launched the application in October 2012. In February 2014 they had 150 million monthly active users according to their own numbers (Instagram 2014). Flickr, another photograph social networking site, relies on a more traditional model of photography. Here users take photographs with their camera, edits and process them later, and finally post them in a gallery or album (Miller & Edwards, 2007). In contrast, Instagram has combined this into one single step, using the smartphone, which encourages instant publishing and location awareness (Weilenmann, Hillman & Jungselius, 2013).

According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center's Internet Project (2013), Twitter and Instagram appeals in particular to urban dwellers and young adults. Both Facebook and Instagram users show high levels of engagement and the most part check these social networking sites on a daily basis. 57% of Instagram users visit the site at least once a day and there are indications that the amount of users is climbing (Duggan & Smith, 2013).

Even though the concept of social media has been a popular subject to study previous years, Instagram has rarely been the focus of these studies. Mostly, academics have focused on demographic and geographic differences, photographic compositions, privacy concerns or artistic differences in the usage of Instagram (Hochman & Manovich 2013; Hochman & Schwartz, 2012; Miller & Edwards, 2007). Davis (2007) researched the stories surrounding photographs and self-presentation on the social networking site Flickr, a photograph sharing site that in some ways resembles Instagram. The main purpose of this study was to understand how users

portray their everyday lives. Davis research is very much relevant today, however it is important to note that the object of Davis study, Flickr, is used more as a professional photo album whereas Instagram is used as a way of active storytelling.

The sharing culture has grown and photos that would earlier be kept private as a memory are now exposed as a public diary of the user's lives (Weilenmann, Hillman & Jungselius, 2013), this is especially true on social networking sites. No studies were found that connected the narrative use of Instagram to personal branding.

1.2.4 CRITICISM OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Our previous literature has helped in the understanding of how individuals behave and express themselves in different kind of ways. However, the literature is not sufficient due to the fact that it does not have any connection at all to photography or storytelling through images. Even though it helps comprehending how consumers act, it does not help in the understanding of the narrative on Instagram, nor the photography. Consumer identity and personal branding are two concepts that start a process of understanding but there are many gaps that need to be filled in order to get a complete picture of what the photographs on Instagram mean. Therefore, it is important to include a narrative approach in order to comprehend the images on Instagram.

1.3 AREA OF RESEARCH

With the change in communication behavior as a background, we have chosen to use one of the newer and very popular social networking sites, Instagram, as our subject of investigation. Many companies have already, both effectively and ineffectively, become active on other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (VentureBeat, 2013). However, the landscape is changing, and especially younger generations are moving away from Facebook into newer social media such as Instagram (Stern, 2013). Instagram has the potential to become a very powerful tool within marketing, and has already succeeded in doing so in the fashion industry. Retailers either own their own Instagram page or use hashtag campaigns to market their products (Dishman, 2014). The challenge for companies is to understand the logic in the new type of communication behavior, how consumers view their personal brand, to better be able to utilize these assets. Our research commences from personal

branding and consumer identity in a social media setting, where theories concerning the idea of self and narrative aid us in understanding this relationship. With regards to how widespread Instagram is, there are surprisingly few studies where Instagram is the subject of investigation.

To the best of our knowledge, no studies have yet investigated storytelling and expression of an identity as the basis of communication on Instagram. This will provide information to build better customer relationships and manage effective marketing techniques.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

How do consumers identify themselves on Instagram and how do they communicate this identity?

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to contribute with knowledge on consumer identity in a social media setting and how companies can utilize this behavior for effective marketing. This is done by investigating the thought process that is put into communication on Instagram.

It is impossible to understand every single consumer's behavior on social media. However, there are several visible trends and themes that can be observed as well as in-depth insights that are useful to understanding a general behavior.

1.4.1 EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION

Communicating solemnly through photographs and videos in the context of social media is a relatively new phenomenon. We want to add to already existing knowledge on social media communication by examining how this particular communication behavior differs from others. We especially want to broaden the understanding of personal branding and consumer identity in a social media context. Practically, we want to complement companies' understanding of how to engage in social media and contribute with guidelines for how to use Instagram as an effective marketing tool.

Our study adds to previous research by investigating how people communicate on Instagram, and how this communication is related to a person's personal brand and

consumer identity. Additionally, our study adds important insights on how narrative storytelling has evolved through photographs.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

We have chosen to narrow our study of social media to a social networking site, specifically Instagram. In doing so, we have limited our scope of communication behavior to focusing on communication through photographs, videos, short comments, likes and hashtags.

We investigate how people interact with each other on Instagram, what motivates them to post a picture, comment and like something. We will also to some extent investigate the penetration that a post may have. However, we will not focus on the geomapping application that is available. Neither do we look at demographic differences, but rather explore the use within a specific cultural and social group in this context.

1.6 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Social Media: Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”.

Social Networking Site: Social networking sites are platforms where one can build social network and relations, it is a social structure made up of several actors interacting with each other online (Edison Research, 2012).

Users: a user is, in this context, someone who has a social networking account on Instagram and hence can post pictures and videos, like, hashtag and comment on Instagram.

Hashtag: a hashtag is a word or a phrase preceded by a hash sign (#) that is used to identify messages on a specific topic. It is also used as a way of connecting and linking with other users concerning a specific topic.

Post: a post in the context of Instagram is referred to the posting of a picture or video on the user's Instagram account.

Feed: a feed is the collection of updates on the user's Instagram account that shows posts by other users that the user is following. This is sometimes also referenced to as a news feed.

Like: a like is used on Instagram as a way of appreciating a post. This is either done by pressing a heart button or by double clicking on the posts in your feed.

1.7 THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is divided into five main chapters: *Introduction*, *Theory*, *Method*, *Empirical Findings and Analysis*, and *Results and Discussion*. The introduction chapter includes a background to the topic, a literature review, area of research, purpose of the study, delimitations and definitions. The second chapter includes the necessary theory, which entails the base for our analysis. The third chapter describes the used method, which includes choice of topic, scientific approach and overall research design. The fourth chapter contains the study's findings and our analysis of the research. The final chapter is the results and discussion, which is based on the findings in our research. These are discussed and our research question is answered. This chapter also includes theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations of our study and suggestions for future research.

2. THEORY

In this chapter, we will go through the concept of narrative theory, which has evolved into storytelling. We will also review theories concerning the idea of self, reality, authenticity and justification.

Previous chapters have helped in the understanding of former literature connected to consumer behavior and self-expression. The previous literature has provided an understanding of consumer identity and personal branding but there is a need for an extended theory in order to answer our research question. Since the individual is so complex, we have looked at various theories to help in our understanding.

2.1 NARRATIVE THEORY

The word person originally originates from the word mask. Goffman (1959) writes that when an individual gets in contact with another individual, they generally seek information about that person or to act on information that they already have. The collection of this information could be seen as the goal itself, but serves also to practical purposes. These meetings can be viewed as performances, when an individual tries to, through his or her actions, influence other individuals. When these performances become regular, they become a role that the individual has to act.

A narrative is something that is told to create a picture of reality. Because of the complexity of the individual's identity, the individual searches for ways of making sense of one's self. Narrative is used as a strategy for coming to terms with elements of our experiences, such as time, process and change. We construct a narrative identity to comprehend ourselves and our lives by the stories we can or cannot tell (Ricoeur 1984, 1992). Weick (1995: 60-61) summarizes the most important aspects of sensemaking: "If accuracy is nice but not necessary in sensemaking, then what is necessary? The answer is, something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something which resonated with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to contrast. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story."

Sensemaking is aided by symbolic resources, where literature has played an important role. Literature gives structure and meaning to otherwise complex matters. Literature is easily put into a sequential manner, and by doing so, creating a casual model for linking separate life events together. Chronology is one of the easiest ways to explain a plot and the plot is also dependent on a chronology. If the chronology changes, the meaning of the plot will also change (Ricoeur 1977).

Greimas and Courtés (1982: 203) define narrative through three perspectives. “The term narrative is often used to designate narrative discourse of figurative character (involving personages which accomplish actions). Since it is then the narrative schema (or any one of its segments) already put into discourse and, by this fact, inscribed in spatiotemporal coordinates, that is being dealt with, certain semioticians define the narrative – following V. Propp – as a temporal succession of functions (in the sense of actions). Conceived thus in a very restrictive way (as figurative and temporal), narrativity concerns only a class of discourses.” They continue defining simple narrative as “at its minimum the latter is reduced to a sentence each as ‘Adam ate an apple’, analyzable as the passage from a previous state (preceding the eating) to a later state (which follows the eating), carried out through a doing (or a process). In this perspective the simple narrative comes close to the concept of narrative program.” And finally, “at the level of the discursive structures, the term narrative designates the discursive unit, figurative in character, situated in pragmatic dimension, and obtained by the procedure or utterative disengagement.”

A narrative in its most elementary form consists of three components: an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs (Czarniawska 1998). Narratives are often based on experiences. Experiences can be either lived or mediated (Thompson 1990). Lived experiences apply to practical activities and events that occur in our everyday lives, whereas mediated experiences are distant and the outcome of the mass-communication culture. Media lets us experience events that are at least temporarily distant from our daily lives. The postmodern consumer culture has enabled mediated experiences to be a part of the project of the self and narratives of self-formation (Thompson, 1995).

Barthes (1977a: 79), on the other hand, uses a broader definition of a narrative and includes any form of communication. He states that “the narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit

to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative." Barthes definition of narrative will be used in the purposes of this thesis.

2.2. THE IDEA OF SELF

According to Giddens (1991: 201), the postmodern individual is threatened by dilemmas of the self such as fragmentation, powerlessness, uncertainty and a struggle against commodification. Driven by a longing for a meaning for the self, the individual tries to construct and maintain a stable identity in a changing world. Even though the individual struggles against commodification, a diversification in consumer choice enables 'an ego-ideal which commands the respect of others and inspires self-love' (Gabriel & Lang, 1995: 98). In other words, creative consumers search for an identity through consumption. It is therefore essential to understand the concept and dynamics of the self.

Individuals do not solemnly make consumption choices based upon the product's user-value, but also from its symbolic value (Giddens, 1991; Dittmar, 1992; Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1988; Douglas, 1982; Goffman, 1959). The symbolic meaning of products runs in two directions: outwards constructing the social world, *social-symbolism*, and inward in constructing our self-identity, *self-symbolism* (Elliott, 1997). Brands are often used as a symbolic resource when constructing and maintaining one's identity (Mick & Buhl, 1992; McCracken, 1987).

When choosing what to wear, one decides how that outfit will portray oneself as an individual. Going back to eighteenth century, people dressed in a way of portraying themselves as a label, telling everyone else of their social status. Walking down the street was like a ceremony, where the person became an actor, portraying a certain type of person, and it was important that the audience understood it correctly.

This sort of theatre can also be connected to Barthe's say about theatrical costume, where the costume must make an argument (Corrigan, 1997). Before World War I, it was clear to see which profession one had just by looking at how they dressed. After the war, however, the population developed a working class, and Featherstone (1991) argued that the use of goods as a symbol for social status might not be readable much longer (Corrigan, 1997). Featherstone also stated that, in Western society, the meaning of one's clothing might vary depending on the wearer, the place, the viewer and many other factors (Corrigan, 1997). As for Veblen (1975 [1899]), dress expresses one's wealth more than any other consumer goods can. He means that the way we dress is an indication of our wealth to everyone else who observes (Corrigan, 1997; Veblen 1975 [1899]). The self in postmodernity is something the individual actively creates, partially through consumption (Solomon, 1996; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Giddens, 1993; Dittmar, 1992; Glover, 1988; Tyler, 1978).

The individual visualizes her/himself based on the imagined possibilities of the self. A possible self is something individuals would like to become, it is a sort of ideal self. According to Markus & Nurius (1986: 954), "an individual is free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual's particular socio-cultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual's immediate social experiences." Thus, the individual is very complex and may possess a variety of different selves and a variety of possible and ideal selves. A possible self may also be something that an individual is afraid of becoming.

When aspiring for becoming an ideal self, individuals picture themselves as that ideal. Someone who wishes to lose ten kilos will picture him/herself vividly, as a thinner person with an improved life. Possible selves have the function of affecting an individual's future behavior, acting in a way of avoiding or reaching towards a future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It is also important that each individual feels his/her life has a meaning, which results in individuals structuring their lives in order to create that feeling (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

The self-concept can be seen as a system combined of affective-cognitive structures. These can also be called self-schemas and they are constructed from an individual's past experiences as well as how they reflect personal concerns. In that way, they control which stimuli are selected for attention and which are to be

remembered, where the self-concept then becomes an important regulator for the behavior of the individual (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

People also have ideas about themselves that are not quite connected to their social reality (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As stated before, individuals have ideas and images about their potential selves as well as they have hopes and fears. Additionally, Markus & Nurius (1986: 955) state that “possible selves are views of the self that often have not been verified or confirmed by social experience”, which may indicate that individuals seek for social verification in order to pursue their possible selves. Having a possible self also provides a context of extra meaning for an individual’s present behavior. An individual does not evaluate his/hers abilities or activities of the self solely by him/herself, but is affected by the surrounding context of possibility. So, an individual with a lonely possible self is likely to perceive a cancelled lunch date with much greater negative significance than someone who does not have this sort of negative self. As a result, the individual will experience a temporary lower self-esteem that will require a possible happening in order to increase the self-esteem once again (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The construction of the individual’s self-identity is inseparable from the parallel construction of collective social identity. Jenkins (1996) describes this relationship as *internal-external dialectic of identification*; self-identity is validated through social interactions and the self is part of social practices. The social self is argued to arise from social interaction with other individuals. Mead (1934) states that the self is experienced through the opinions of what other people’s response is to one’s self. In that way, the self is created indirectly (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). A person’s identity is also dependent by relationships of dialog with other individuals as well as having dialogs internally (Taylor, Appiah, Rockefeller, Waltzer & Wolf, 1994). Taylor (1992) states that there is a need to re-claim the ideal of authenticity by arguing that authenticity is a valid ideal for an individual and that the value of authenticity is higher than any other aspect of value.

Some argue that a dark side of self may arise if one socializes with other individuals who are seen as “bad people”. After a while, that person will identify him/herself and his/her manners will become more alike the group in which s/he socializes with. It is also likely that a person will start acting and seeing him/herself as a “bad guy” if the society labels him/her that way (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

There is a tension between the meanings that we create ourselves and those that we are exposed to socially. Dittmar (1992) suggests that material possessions are important symbolic references, which express our own identity and perceive the identity of others, a way of negotiating between our self-identity and the collective social identity.

2.3 EXCUSES FOR BEHAVIOR

When expressing a narrative, individuals may act in ways that are not always socially accepted. In order to make their actions more acceptable, the individuals then come up with excuses or justifications. In a way, an individual needs his/her actions to be accepted by his/her surrounding and therefore it becomes important to justify a specific behavior or action.

Justifications and excuses are usually practiced when the social surrounding believes that a person has done something wrong or bad. To explain one's actions, a person must use some sort of linguistic, in form of words. These words can be motives, which are names for consequential situations that have been questioned by others (Mills, 1940). Mills (1940: 907) explains that "Motives are accepted justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts". A justification is when a person takes on responsibility for the act, but s/he denies the disapproving characteristic associated with the act. Using justifications for neutralizing an act may happen when an individual admits performing the act itself, but claims that it is not very relevant because other people commit these or even worse acts. Another method of neutralizing one's actions is to state that the action was acceptable since it is of interest to individuals who have a close relationship to the person (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

An excuse, however, is when a person admits that the act is wrong or bad, but s/he denies complete responsibility for it. An individual may try to defend an act or excuse him/herself from being blamed, by claiming that s/he did not have the free will or the knowledge to choose. Scott & Lyman (1968) explain that an individual's will and knowledge can be reduced under certain circumstances, when being affected by, for example, alcohol. A certain type of excuse called *scapegoating* is when an individual claims to have acted in a certain way because of the behavior of other people (Scott & Lyman, 1968).

This sort of behavior, making excuses and justifications, happens in an everyday life of consumers. It is imaginable that individuals see themselves as someone who makes justifications for every action taken, or as someone who does not care about other people's reaction of an act. As individuals are driven by a longing for a meaning for the self, it is important to keep a steady identity and aim towards their ideal self (Gabriel & Lang, 1995). Making justifications and excuses is a way of making other individuals accept one's behavior. When an individual notices that these explanations result in a tolerance of certain acts, s/he might receive emotions of belonging and acceptance, which will create an increase of self-esteem. These explanations may therefore aid consumers in their search of reaching their ideal self.

2.4 STORYTELLING

A popular word for narrating is storytelling. It is a way of communicating an identity or a specific event, where photographs and images are often used. Conversely the narrative used to consist of the verbal telling of the picture, in other words, the photograph by itself was not enough to tell a story (Chalfen, 1987; Miller & Edwards, 2007). However, with the introduction of new digital technology, the narrative has changed, and the stories are told with the pictures; the photographs speak for themselves (Kurvinen 2003; Makela, Giller, Tscheligi & Sefelin, 2000).

Van House, Davis, Ames, Finn and Viswanathan (2005) have identified the main social uses of the camera phone as constructing personal and group memory, creating and maintaining social relationships, self-expression and self-presentation. They found that telling stories about photographs helps to nurture their social relationships, but that photographs were also used as a personal diary. Through their study they also saw a change in behavior of what is photo-worthy. The photographer did not only take photographs of special events, but also of ordinary and spontaneous events. Through sharing these photographs, the participants were able to share their point of view of the world. Their research also showed that the sharing aspect was especially important, people wanted to show others what they were doing during their day. Not only did this express the participant's point of view, but it also influenced other's view of the participants. Further, Van House et al. (2005) found that the photographs taken by the camera phone served as a functional use that in some cases substituted

writing; the image could capture complex information that was easier to describe with a photograph rather than in writing.

In advertisement it is common to use photographs and pictures to tell a story. Advertising can also be used as a symbolic resource in the creation of narratives (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). The relationship between the consumer and advertising is dialectical. Advertising creates, modifies and transforms cultural meaning for the consumer (Lannon & Cooper, 1983). It also represents cultural meaning taken from the consumer's view of the world (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). In advertisements, images and signs are often used to tell different stories and it is therefore useful to understand how advertisements can be decoded for the purposes of this thesis.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1974[1916]) was one of the first to discuss the notion of a sign as being composed of a signifier and a signified, these two being separate. For example, the written letters of R-O-S-E or the sound stream [rose] are signifiers, but the idea of rose that pops into our minds is the signified, the combination of the two is a sign. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is subjective, therefore signifiers can create meanings that in fact have little to do with the signified. In Roland Barthes (1991 [1957]) work, he explains that this is in fact what myths are composed of. In the case of the word rose, this signifies of course a rose, but also passion or love for some people. The unity of this signifier and signified becomes a new sign (Corrigan, 1997; Barthes, 1991 [1957]).

Williamson (1978) describes in her book *Decoding Advertisements. Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* how advertisers link their products with other objects or other consumers, trying to create a natural linkage. However, these links are often not natural. Advertisers often put two objects together to create prestige and value around the object that in fact is of lesser prestige and value. The object of prestige usually symbolizes something more, for example the Eiffel Tower might symbolize Paris and fashion. In this context, the object being advertised would feed off of the prestige that the Eiffel Tower symbolizes. The hope of the advertisers is to create a natural linkage with their product and, in this case, the Eiffel Tower, giving their product a more prestigious aura than it had before. The objective for the advertisers is that in the end their product takes over this meaning. Williamson (1978:35) says that "the product itself comes to *mean*. It may start off as a reflection of something exterior, but will soon come to represent it".

Erving Goffman (1979) has identified five different themes of how gender is portrayed in images of advertisement: relative size, the feminine touch, function ranking, the family and ritualization of subordination. The first theme discusses that in various images, we tend to assume that the taller person has more authority. The relative size is in this case an indication of power whether it be social class or gender. The second theme speaks to the differences in how women and men touch things. Women in advertisement caress or cradle objects whereas men hold the objects in a utilitarian way. Corrigan (1997:71) explains “it is as if women do not want to impose themselves on the objects, but treat them as precious and to be admired in an aesthetic way. Men, by contrast, show the objects who’s boss, treating them as means to a particular end rather than as objects of beauty to be admired. (...) Men act with clear purpose, women just look on admiringly.” The third theme talks about function ranking. In Goffman’s research he found that men in the images were often taking action, whereas women were standing by. A common example that he found were of a man pointing to a building and the woman just looking towards it. This is another example where the indication of power is portrayed by the action in the image. The fourth theme concerns the family. Here, fathers and sons are often represented as in conflict with another whereas mothers and daughters are shown as older and younger versions of each other. “Often the father (or in absence, a son) stands a little outside the physical circle of the other members of the family, as if to express a relationship whose protectiveness is linked with, perhaps even requires, distance” (Goffman, 1979 [1976]: 39). The fifth and final theme discusses the ritualization of subordination. In images, the less powerful person is often portrayed in positions where it is difficult to defend themselves, such as lying on a bed or on the floor. The physical place in the image symbolizes the power relationship in between the people being photographed. “The resulting configurations can be read as an acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement” (Goffman, 1979 [1976]: 46). These themes are analyzed by Goffman in accordance to gender, but are equally important when analyzing images in general. These themes show how power relationships are portrayed in images and are useful when decoding photographs.

2.5 WHAT IS REALITY?

A narrative seldom gives the audience the entire story, bits and pieces are chosen. It is therefore important to understand why the narrator chooses to show certain aspect of the story and hide others. Goffman (1972 [1959]) has made a distinction of public performance as a front and back region. These are more commonly known as the front stage and the back stage. The front stage is often described as an appearance, whereas back stage is seen as reality. The back stage is used to hide everything that would discredit the front performance. Goffman (1972 [1959]: 144) explains this as “given a particular performance as the point of reference, we have distinguished three crucial roles on the basis of function: those who perform; those performed to; and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it... [T]he three crucial roles mentioned could be described on the basis of the regions to which the role-player has access: performers appear in the front and back regions; the audience appears only in the front region; and the outsiders are excluded from both regions.” Goffman sees human behavior as a performance in which people take on a role that they execute. He also discusses the problems that arise when this role is not executed consistently.

MacCannell (1973) has built on Goffman’s idea of the front and back stage when studying tourism. Since the back stage is perceived as the reality and hidden away from the audience, gaining access to the back stage is the same as being a part of “one of them” or “at one with them” (1973: 592). In tourism, tourists often search for the authentic, they want to gain access to the back stage. Rather than showing the tourists the real back stage, they stage the back stage. This is not only done within tourism, but also on company visits and in some restaurants. It gives the audience a feeling that they are actually apart of the authentic reality, even though it is not in fact authentic nor real. It is in fact a front stage appearing as a back stage. MacCannell therefore suggests a six-point model of different stages. Stage 1 is Goffman’s version of the front stage, where everything is fabricated for the performance. Stage 2 is a front stage that has in some aspects been decorated to appear as a back stage. Stage 3 is a front stage that is totally arranged as a back region. Stage 4 is a back region that is somewhat open to outsiders, but it is only a small part of the real back region. Stage 5 is the back region that has been cleaned up or slightly altered. Finally, stage 6 is based on Goffman’s version of the back stage, the authentic reality. Even though MacCannell’s work is based on tourism it also gives a greater understanding of the

search of the authentic reality, and also the need to hide it away. This becomes important aspects for our thesis when trying to understand what people are willing to share on Instagram.

The word “authentic” is usually associated with words like “reality”, “truth”, and “genuineness” (Peterson, 1997:209). These words can have a very different meaning depending on both the context and the person who is using the word. A person is perceived to be authentic if their expressions and actions appear to reflect who that person really is (Goldman & Papson, 1996). Someone who adopts their behavior to different social conventions or for the reason to make money is not perceived as authentic (Holt, 2002). Peterson (2005), however, believes that authenticity is constructed and subject to continual change. Drawing upon Goffman’s (1972 [1959]) work of remaining true to one’s role and Taylor’s (1992) work on self-reflexivity, Peterson discusses the authenticity of the constructed self. This becomes a particularly important aspect in certain industries such as the music industry. Musicians capitalize on a created role or an image, and it is vital for them to be consistent with this image. Failing to be constant in their authentic role will label them as fake.

3. METHOD

This chapter will provide an explanation of our approach and selected methods. We will motivate our research methods and our choice of topic.

3.1 CHOICE OF TOPIC

Our interest in social media and how companies can market themselves using this media was born through a guest lecture we had with P&G, who had successfully performed a campaign for Venus using Instagram. This led us to ponder over the possibilities that exist for marketing through social networking sites. During the fall of 2013, we noticed that our surroundings were abandoning the popular social networking site Facebook, and were becoming increasingly active on picture posting sites, like Instagram. People started using Instagram as a form of diary where the users could portray themselves in a certain way, a way of personally branding themselves. They were also sharing pictures to enhance certain characteristics and shed light on their personality. The posts were manipulated by using different filters to add characteristics to what would otherwise sometimes be an ordinary photograph. In combination with an increase of use of Instagram, there was also an increase in the use of hashtags, which connects the post to other posts. Even though the photographs posted often were of a private setting, users were hashtagging their photographs to make them visible to users outside of their immediate circle, aspiring to gain more followers and likes on their posts. The trend is very evident, but we found no relevant research regarding this phenomenon. There is a clear gap in current literature, which has mainly focused on social networking sites such as Facebook (e.g. Blacksmith & Poepelman, 2014). However, since people use Instagram in a very different way than Facebook, it is important to understand this new behavior to be able to best target this media.

3.2 SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AND OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

We decided to do a qualitative research, rather than a quantitative, to gain insights on a deeper level. We wanted to understand the human behavior and especially the reasons that govern this behavior. In order to achieve this, we need to observe this behavior and cannot solemnly rely on information that is directly given to us. By having less structured interviews, where we acted as participants-as-observers, we

gave the participants room to create their own perceptions. That way, there was a constructivist approach that was created (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Constructionism is about what individuals perceive and how they perceive the reality. Even though these perceptions act as reference points, they are still constantly in the process of changing and being formed into new perceptions. There is no definite reality but rather an individual's personal version of social reality (Bryman & Bell, 2007), which is the one we want to observe in our research.

For this study, we have adopted an abductive approach, where we develop a proposition based on the material acquired in our research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The material was gathered and then matched with a theoretical frame of reference (Bryman & Bell, 2007). We as scientists are however colored by our previous studies and knowledge within the business field, and this will be reflected in our study. This also implies that our choice of theoretical frame of reference is affected by our previous understanding and knowledge. The original framework is successively modified, as a result of empirical findings as well as theoretical insights gained during the process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

To fully get insights on consumer's behavior on Instagram, we have chosen a methodology that is inspired by ethnographic as well as phenomenological research. We have also made visual observations, which has been inspired by netnographic research. By combining these two research methods, we are able to gain a better understanding of different trends or incitements that affect the consumer's behavior, as well as understand the reasons that govern this behavior.

3.2.1. INTERVIEWS

In order to get a better understanding of how consumers behave when using social networking sites such as Instagram, we conducted 11 informal interviews in which we mainly acted as participants-as-observers (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003; Gold, 1958). We have taken inspiration from both ethnographic research as well as phenomenological research.

The essence of ethnographic research consists primarily of participant observation, in which "you are directly involved in community life, observing and talking with people as you learn from their view of reality" (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003; Agar, 1996:163). The main goal is to interpret and describe a social or cultural

group. Ethnographic research is usually conducted over a long period of time, where the researcher becomes actively engaged in regular interaction with people and participates in their daily lives (Bryman & Bell, 2007). If a time limit is applied, it is possible to conduct a micro-ethnographic research (Wolcott, 1995). This means that the researcher focuses on a particular aspect of a social culture, and not an overall understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Phenomenological research on the other hand focuses on gaining an understanding of the essence of a certain phenomenon. Welman and Kruger (1999:189) explain that “phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved.” The purpose is to describe and interpret the experiences of the participants in the research and is therefore mainly focused on the consciousness of the human experience. Phenomenological methodology concerns in many ways a narrative written by the participant, which makes it relevant for our research (Fournier, 1998). Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989:138) also state that the goal of a phenomenological interview is to “attain a first-person description of some specified domain of experience.” This is achieved through a circular dialogue, where the interview is intended to be more of a conversation. Thompson et al. (1989) also stress the importance of using conversational and accessible language in the interviews. The questions should be stated in the terms of the participant.

We have decided to draw inspiration from both of these research methodologies and create a hybrid, since our main goal is to understand a phenomenon within a social group. We believe that the phenomenon that we have observed and analyzed, is directly linked with the social group. We also believe that it is important to both portray the participant’s narrative and experiences, as well as our own observations of their behavior in order to gain a deeper and fuller understanding. Solemnly looking at one of these aspects would not enable us to answer our research question. The participants in this study are also from the same social group and the phenomenon will therefore be portrayed within this social group. We believe that the cultural setting within the chosen social group is of outmost importance, and that our results are dependent on this aspect. Both phenomenological research and ethnographic research advice a longer relationship with the participants to achieve deeper insights. Due to time limitations, we were unable to interview the participants on more than one occasion. Instead, we relied on our observations, which are based on our

interaction with the participants over the past couple of years as well as during the interviews.

Acting as participants-as-observers we were both participating as well as observing during our interviews, and the members of the social setting were always aware of our research (Gold, 1958). Gans (1968) suggests other classifications of a researcher's role during interviews such as total participant, researcher-participant, and total researcher. Gans advises that these roles should coexist in a project. In some situations and settings, we needed to act within Gans classifications and switch in between the different roles. However, our main target has been to act as participants-as-observers.

We decided to conduct semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews to be able to observe behaviors and practices that the participants might not be aware of or would not like to admit. It is also important to observe the relationships and conditions that might influence the participants' behavior. This information would not be captured in a structured interview, but is essential for our research question (Bryman & Bell, 2007). It can, however, be argued that we are dependent of the participants in this research when not giving them structured questions.

The observations and interviews took place in the participant's natural habitat and surroundings to ensure a comfortable atmosphere. The interviews were usually conducted with a single participant, but in some cases we conducted the interviews in pairs to create a more comfortable atmosphere. This insured a deeper understanding as well as increased trust with the participants. In some cases, it was impossible to conduct the interviews in person and we therefore used video interviews through the internet as an option. The participants were asked to show us their Instagram account and explain different pictures and situations that surrounded the pictures. The questions posed were in semi-structured form since there were some key elements that needed attention, but we still wanted the participants to speak as freely as possible and not control the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Complying with Thompson et. al. (1989) suggestions, the interviews were conducted in a conversational form. The authors also advice to avoid using questions such as "why". However, this was something we differed from since our objective was both to understand the participant's experience, but also observe their behavior and thought process. We therefore posed several questions that were meant to provoke feelings associated with the experiences. The interviewer took notes of the observations and recorded the

conversations during the interviews, which were later transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were conducted in either the participant's native tongue or English. Therefore, some aspects might have been lost when translating the material. To ensure a setting where the participants felt at ease and able to speak freely, their identities have been kept anonymous.

3.2.2. VISUAL OBSERVATIONS

To understand how Instagram is used and what creates or dictates a certain behavior, we need to understand the social and cultural setting by which the individuals act upon. This means that we need to observe and analyze the photographs and videos that are posted and discussed on the social networking site. This will portray a wider perspective and compliment the ethnographic research. We have been inspired of an observation-based online research method, namely Netnography. Netnography is a term coined by Kozinets (2002), which refers to a marketing research method that investigates online communication (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Specifically, nethnography research concerns itself with the observation of communities. Contrary to traditional ethnographic method, a nethnographic method allows the researcher to observe without participating. This will allow participants to act freely without the influence of the researcher. Participants of the study may feel freer to speak and act when being observed instead of interviewed, and things may be said during observation that would not have been mentioned during an interview (Bertilsson, 2009). It is also less time consuming, yet rich in data.

Our observations have been inspired by this research method in the sense that we observe discussions taking place surrounding our participant's photographs. However, it is important to note that our observations differ from the traditional use of nethnography. We have not observed Instagram as an online community, but rather certain phenomenon on the online community. Through the internet, individuals are able to communicate both within their social circle as with people who are outside of it. The communication on Instagram differs somewhat from other social networking sites, since photographs are the main communication tool. However, there are also other forms of communication as comments, hashtags and likes. These, as well as photograph and video posts, were observed and analyzed to gain a better understanding of current trends and the interaction between users. Besides looking at

different phenomenon, we have carefully studied the 2697 pictures posted by the respondents in our interviews. The content of Instagram is voluminous and it has therefore been important for us to stay true to our research question. The content that has been observed and analyzed are of a manner that we thought was interesting, relevant or showed a type of insight or pattern (Kozinets, 2002). The material was documented through print screen shots as an individual photograph and then mapped together with others to analyze structures and patterns. All of the photographs have been made anonymous to insure the privacy of our respondents.

3.2.3. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The empirical data in this research is based on observations and narratives. Therefore we need an approach to analyze these narratives. We have chosen to analyze the narratives as storytelling. Analyzing interviews as stories is a method of revealing meaning in an interview (Mishler, 1999). Narrative analysis is an approach that is sensitive to the temporal sequence that individuals detect in their lives and surroundings and inject into their account (Bryman & Bell 2007). It is an approach that has become increasingly important, especially in management research. Narrative analysis is not predetermined in what way data is constructed or collected, but is especially suited for field research (Czarniawska, 1998). Other analysis approaches neglect the fact that people perceive their lives in terms of continuity and process. Therefore, analyzing the data without this aspect in mind would also neglect the perspective of those who we have studied (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Interviews, however, have usually no clear sequence, but are instead consisting of different episodes that the informant and researcher are involved with in the creation of a story. The way these previous events are made sense of resembles storytelling. The narrative analysis here accounts to relating events and the interconnections between them (Mishler, 1986; Cassinger, 2010).

There are different views on how to analyze a narrative and what is of importance. Miller (2000) suggests that narrative interviews are more concerned with provoking the interviewee's perspective that is revealed through the telling, rather than actual facts of what have occurred. The interest is to investigate how this perspective changes in different contexts, which makes the interviewer an important part of the construction of the story. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) proposes that

narrative analysis should be based on the functions that the narratives serve for the teller. The reconstruction of connections between events and the context is therefore the main object for analysis. We have chosen to mainly look at Coffey and Atkinson (1996) definition of narrative analysis since it serves the purposes of our research question.

Based on these views, we have detected different narratives in the interviews as well as in the sequential posting of photographs. How the participants have chosen to portray different events will be analyzed, as well as what was not portrayed. Barthes (1977b) suggest different techniques for decoding photographs. Barthes (1977b: 17) sees the photograph as “a *denoted* message, which is the analogan itself, and a *connoted* message, which is the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it.” These two messages co-exist and we have therefore looked at the denoted message as well as the connoted message. Barthes (1977b) highlights that the pose or objects in photographs are used as signifiers, therefore we have also paid special attention to these elements in the pictures. These techniques have been used to analyze the composition of different photographs and the narratives that these compositions entail. The narratives from the interviews have therefore been matched with the specific photographs discussed to understand the participant’s perspective of the narrative.

3.3 PREPARATORY WORK

3.3.1. CHOICE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

For the choice of social media, we wanted to use a social networking site that has many users, is becoming increasingly popular and where companies are trying to market themselves. We chose Instagram since it has several of the attributes that we are looking for. Instagram is one of the largest social networking sites at the moment and is globally the fastest growing site. Between quarter 2 and 4 in 2013, Instagram gained an increase of 23 % of active users (Lunden, 2014). In February of 2014, Instagram had over 150 million active users and 55 million photographs shared on a daily basis (Instagram, 2014).

Younger generations are abandoning Facebook and are moving into newer social networking sites such as Instagram (Stern, 2013). The fashion industry has worked actively with marketing themselves on Instagram either using own personalized

profiles or creating campaigns were other users market their products for them, using hashtags (Dishman, 2014). These numbers indicate a trend and an increase of the use of Instagram. This, in combination with the lack of research conducted on Instagram makes it ideal for our research.

3.3.2. CHOICE OF PARTICIPANTS AND CONTENT

In this section we will discuss our choice of participants for the conducted interviews. The choices were made on the basis of certain criteria as well as of snowballing sample. We will also discuss the choice of content for our visual observations, which is based on relevance, interest, structured patterns, and new angles.

Our objective of this research is to understand how a certain social group narrates their identity on Instagram. The social group that we have decided to investigate consists of men and women in the ages of 20-30, who are studying at a university. We have therefore limited our selection to a smaller segment. We selected respondents from our acquaintances who we knew fit into this criteria and were active on Instagram. We also decided to use snowballing sample to find participants. This was done after making contact with a small amount of individuals in our social circle who were relevant to our topic of research. Then we have used these people to get in to contact with other, relevant individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2007). There is no way of knowing what kind of people the snowball sample will contribute to, which means there is no sampling frame for the sample of individuals and from where they will be taken (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, it has been important that the participants fit our criteria of social group as well as having both male and female informants. One of the benefits of using snowball sampling is that it reflects relationships between individuals, which has enriched our study (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

We have aimed for a variety of participants in our study, yet staying true to the social group. We wanted to observe different aspects of usage for an Instagram account, and by extension different identities portrayed. The underlying reason for creating an Instagram account can vary a lot between individuals as well as how they utilize the online network for personal use and expression. Some individuals may use hashtags as a tool for generating more followers and likes, while others might utilize their profile for creating a portfolio of photographs. We have therefore aimed for interviews with different kinds of Instagram users. The variety may differ between

users with thousands of followers, and users with more moderate amount of followers. With a variety of participants, we are also able to link the narratives used to privacy aspects of Instagram.

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Location	Amount of pictures posted	Followers
Lucy	24	Student	Lund	41	48
Steven	27	Student	Malmö	72	59
Monica	23	Student	Lund	197	74
Leo	20	Student	Stockholm	48	69
Charlotte	22	Student	Lund	292	130
Joey	24	Student	Lund	131	123
Sandra	23	Student	Lund	348	209
David	23	Student/Entrepreneur	Lund	405	525
Emma	22	Student	Lund	97	89
Michael	27	Student/Politician	Stockholm	712	1254
Maria	22	Student	Lund	354	110

Table I. Summary of the respondents in our interviews.

The selection of content for the visual observations have been based on the material gained in the interviews. The narratives that are told are connected with different themes and specific pictures that are posted. We have therefore actively searched for different hashtags, accounts and pictures that were related to the material attained in the interviews. We have also actively observed the photographs and videos posted by the participants in the interviews, in current time, but also how these narratives have evolved throughout time.

3.3.3. DATA PROCESSING

In order to ensure quality and trustworthiness in our research, all our interviews were recorded. The recordings were later transcribed and analyzed together with our field notes. Our observations from Instagram have been documented through screenshots. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have shown that different readers interpret the same text in different ways. We have therefore decided to initially analyze the material separately and then discuss our findings together. This is done to gain a more complete understanding of the interviews and to minimize the possibility of affecting each other when interpreting the material. From our discussion and analysis we have divided our interpretations into two main themes.

3.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has some limitations that should be discussed. The essence of a qualitative research is subjective, and this study will therefore not expose an objective truth (Bryan & Bell, 2007). The observations that are made are based on our previous knowledge and perception, therefore they cannot be viewed as an objective truth. Our previous experiences and relations with the participants will inevitably affect the results of our observations. We have been conscious of this dilemma throughout the process, and have therefore broadened our minds and knowledge base. We believe that this has helped us to understand our own observations in a more diverse way. The transcripts from the interviews have been analyzed separately at first and then later discussed together in the hope of eliminating subjective feelings towards the participant. Even though this study cannot prove an objective truth, we believe that the findings are essential and that they will generate general insights to the subject.

Due to time limitations, we were only able to observe and interview participants during a short amount of time. Ethnographic studies as well as phenomenological studies are usually conducted over a longer period of time. The researchers normally follow the participants in large aspects of their lives to reach a deeper understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This limitation was acknowledged when analyzing our results. To minimize the risk of not gaining a deeper understanding, we combined our interviews with observations. The observations are based on a combination of visual observations of photographs dating back in time as well as personal observations of the participants during the last couple of years. This combination helped us achieve both a shorter and deep perspective, as well as a longer and narrative perspective.

Throughout our research, we have tried to be as critical to our sources as possible. If possible, we have used sourced that are greatly cited rather than unknown authors. The probability that a cited article has gone through a more thorough inspection is quite high, which enhances the trustworthiness. Still, in the sources concerning Instagram, we were unable to find greatly cited journal articles and were therefore forced to look at what was available. Instagram is a relatively new subject for research, which could be a reason why these articles have not been subject for discussion to the same extent as others.

3.4.1. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

There are different views on how to regard reliability and validity in a qualitative research. The general discussion concerns the ability to generalize the results across different social settings which is closely connected to objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have presented for criteria for evaluating qualitative research as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. Below, we will discuss how we perceive this criteria in relation to our study.

Credibility: credibility concerns the method for gathering data which can be controlled through triangulation. Triangulation demands the use of more than one method or source of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). We have achieved this through using a variety of methods and seeking our data from several sources. This has been done both online and offline through observations and interviews. We have also achieved this through choosing participants who have different characteristics, ages and occupations, to minimize the risk of only analyzing one characterized group. The interviews are also recorded to ensure that citation are of high credibility. We have also to some extent shown the participants the citations and interpretations to control the validity. The transcripts from the interviews have been interpreted separately and later discussed to uncover differences in our analysis.

Transferability: transferability in a qualitative research concerns the ability to apply the findings to another social context than the one being studied (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Since we have in our research focused on the users of Instagram and their identity, contrary to Instagram as a phenomenon, it is possible to achieve transferability. The core of our research is to uncover the construction of one's identity in a social media setting. The theories of identity is applied in the setting of Instagram, but we believe that our findings are applicable in other social settings as well.

Dependability: dependability concerns whether the same results could be achieved if the study was to be performed on another occasion. Dependability in its original meaning is hard to achieve in a qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1985) propose that in order to achieve dependability in a qualitative research, the researcher should adopt an auditing audience. To enhance the dependability of our study, all material has been saved and surveyed by a preceptor throughout the thesis process. Our thesis has also been audited by our peers during the mid-seminar as well as in the

final seminar. It is also recommended to meet the participants of the study once again to see if some behavior has changed. Due to the time limitation of this thesis we were unable to reconnect with our participants in a large extent. However, our ethnographic study helped us observe our participants behavior dating back in time, and we were in this sense able to evaluate any change in behavior.

Confirmability: complete objectivity is not possible in a qualitative research, therefore confirmability in this aspect concerns the researcher's ability to act in good faith. There is a risk in qualitative research that the researcher has an effect on the participants' responses (Bryman & Bell, 2007). To minimize this risk we have posed open ended questions and tried to let the participants lead the discussion of the subject.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, we will present the empirical findings of our research. These findings will thereafter be analyzed through the angle of narrative theory and the idea of self. By studying the empirical material, we have discovered some underlying behaviors of Instagram users and how they portray themselves by uploading images.

4.1 #EBOBOOST

From the empirical material, it is shown that most consumers having an Instagram account feel that receiving acceptance is an essential part of the social network. There are many ways of receiving confirmation. On Instagram, however, every uploaded picture ends up on the individual's profile and is then expected to obtain acceptance in form of "likes". In a way, it can be said that Instagram is about increasing one's personal self-esteem along with establishing an identity online.

4.1.1 #SELFIES

In this section we will discuss how some people focus on their looks and themselves when portraying a story. When portraying a story by uploading a picture of oneself, it is called "taking a selfie". What is especially particular about a selfie is that the person is taking a picture of him/herself. Instead of asking someone to take a photo of him/her, the person takes up his/her phone, poses by him/herself and at the same time snaps a picture. The camera is usually turned so that the screen is visible when taking the photograph and the photographer/poser can see how s/he looks when taking the picture.

The term selfie is both loved and hated by Instagram users but it was revealed that almost all of our interviewees have at least one selfie on their Instagram feed. One reason for taking a selfie and justify it, could be to argue that "everyone else uploads them too". That would be a justification as explained by Scott & Lyman (1968). Lucy said she would never take a selfie. She feels that uploading selfies is a way of trying to get many likes. However, she admitted that a selfie with other people was acceptable for her. Another participant, Monica, feels that the written text should be connected to what the picture displays.

Monica: "...that the text has nothing to do with the picture. Why would you take a picture of yourself if you're going to the gym? They're just not connected. And it becomes obvious that you just want to take a picture of yourself. It's just to fish for likes."

But, Monica says that she has nothing against selfies when they represent something fun. Taking a photo of yourself and make a joke about yourself or when you're on a vacation to show others that you're having a good time. Those kinds of selfies are fun to look at according to Monica. Emma has other opinions about selfies. She would, like Lucy, not take a picture by herself but she would post pictures where someone else has taken the photo of her. Both Emma and Sandra feel that the selfie is a concept for showing off. Sandra states that she could take a selfie but it would require a solid reason for being uploaded, as for example, when getting a new job.

The participants were asked if they see selfies as provoking because they have an ego focus. Emma stated the pictures are "so 'look at me'", while Sandra feels that people who upload selfies are so self confident with their perfect make-up and perfect hair, they look too perfect.

Posting a selfie can be seen as giving away a glimpse of Goffman's (1972 [1959]) backstage scene. But, when interviewing the participants, it becomes clearer that each selfie is carefully chosen, and sometimes even staged, which would disqualify the meaning of Goffman's (1972 [1959]) backstage scene. Instead, MacCannell's (1973) six-point model would be better fitted in order to get an understanding of the level of backstage selfies portray. Stage three of MacCannell's (1973) model is a front region that is staged to looking as a back region. This stage could be said to fit the definition of a selfie. The participants want to show their followers special happenings and meaningful events, but these are only at the surface of what is going on in their everyday life. When the picture is to be taken, the individual seems to have the perfect outfit and hairdo, which has been mentioned during the interviews. When taking a selfie, individuals usually place themselves in front or behind some object, or they display their "look of the day". These pictures are thought to be special but are rarely seen as being authentic and it does not show the individual's backstage. Furthermore, this sort of perfection and "showing off" is what the consumers think their followers want to see, but it can also be perceived as being unauthentic and staged.

Even though the majority of the participants say that they feel reluctant towards selfies, they still post them themselves. When others post selfies, they are perceived as annoying or egocentric. But, when individuals themselves post selfies, they expect their followers to like the picture. As Markus & Nurius (1986) discuss, individuals possess a possible self, which determine one's future behavior. Individuals may possess one or many possible selves, some are desirable while others are feared. When an individual has a fear of becoming something undesirable, s/he will act in way of avoiding the outcome of the unwanted possible self. If a person sees him/herself as someone who gets many likes from a picture, they have that image already in their minds and will therefore become disappointed if not receiving enough likes. In that state, the individuals might experience a lower self-esteem, where social confirmation is needed in order to increase again. It is also possible that the individual believe that s/he has reached an unwanted possible self and may therefore start acting in a way of getting out of that state. An example of how to act in order to receive social confirmation might be to post even more pictures, and also selfies, on Instagram and hope that these will generate many likes. A result of this action could be an increase the self-esteem and Maria sees no problem in searching for an egoboost by uploading a picture.

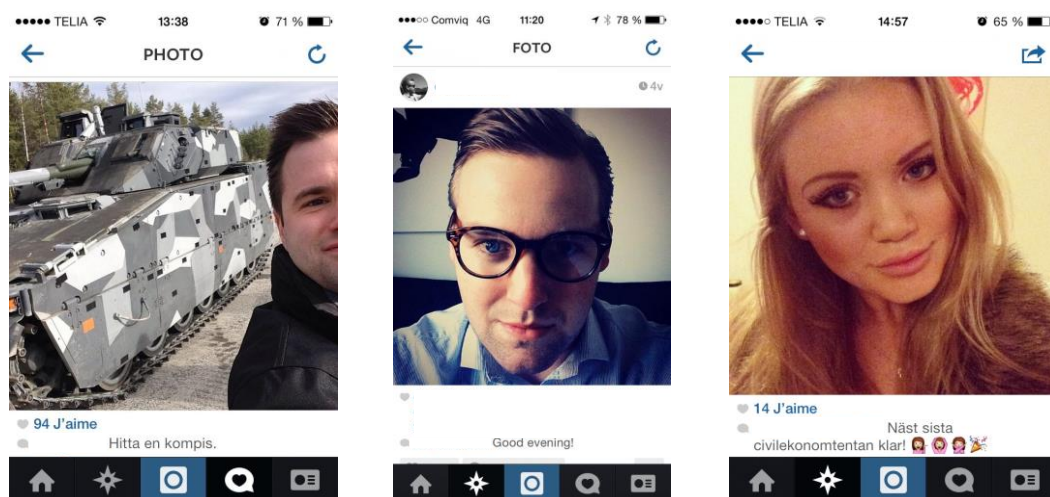
Maria: "... for example this one 'before the last exam'. It is something that has to do with me and it's something that I have done well, kind of like egoboosting myself."

During the interviews, most of the participants have revealed that a selfie is accepted as long as there is a reason for uploading it. The participants have stated that when they post selfies, it is always connected to a special event or happening, they mean that their selfie always has a meaning in order to make it qualify as an accepted selfie. During an interview, Michael stated that he does not think selfies contribute much, except for when something special is happening. He then referred to his selfie with a tank and explained that the picture could be interesting, at least for people who are interested in the military. It can be imagined that Michael has a possible self of being in the military and then sees this selfie as having a meaning and being special enough to be shared with his surrounding.

Even though there is no special occasion or event at the time, consumers invent or come up with something they can classify as special and, in a way, make an excuse for uploading their picture of themselves. One of our participants, David, stated that he always has a meaning behind every picture being uploaded.

David: “I don’t upload anything just because”

Yet he has a selfie with the text “Good evening!” instead of having a justifying text of how his selfie is special or connected to a certain happening. Looking at it, the picture is simply an image of a person. Therefore, the selfie can be seen as a postmodern self-portrait where the individual is in focus. Another example could be if someone posts a picture of themselves with the text “going to the gym”. The picture itself has nothing to do with the text of going to the gym. When going to the gym, one would perhaps expect a picture of the gym or something related to the subject of exercising. Instead of posting an image related to the gym, the person uploads a picture of him/herself and comes up with a story that can disguise the fact that they are uploading a selfie just for the sake of it. By making up a story, individuals justify for their act and seek acceptance.



4.1.2 #LIKES

Another way of receiving confirmation is by getting many likes on a picture. Although most participants stated that receiving many likes is not of importance,

some accidentally blurted out that it is. The importance of likes is noticeable when the participants were asked to compare two of their Instagram pictures, one with many likes and another with fewer likes. When asked, Monica said that likes were not of importance to her. However, when she compared two of her pictures, she stated that she was disappointed when she did not receive an expected amount of likes on her fashion show picture by stating:

“I thought, why does not anyone like a picture that cool? If any of my friends, I mean I’m not bitter, but if any of my friends were at fashion week, sitting on the second row in Copenhagen, I would think that that’s cool.”

When saying this, Monica stated in a subconscious way that likes do matter for her even though she does not admit it. Another participant, Sandra, also said that likes do not matter and she only uploads pictures for her own sake, like keeping a diary. During the interview, Sandra was asked what kind of pictures she would not upload.

Sandra: “(...) I wouldn’t just put up that it’s 9 p.m. and I am in the sofa, drinking tea and watching TV (...) That wouldn’t have gotten many likes (haha)!”

When talking about her pictures, Sandra accidentally reveals her true opinion about likes. That way, it becomes obvious how individuals, both consciously and unconsciously modify their choice of pictures in order to get likes and receive confirmation. As the self is created through the opinions of other people’s response to one’s identity, the self can therefore be said to be shaped indirectly (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). If individuals feel that other people have negative responses of their identities, in this case on Instagram, they might start shifting their opinions of seeing their selves in a negative aspect as well.

Two other participants did however acknowledge the importance of likes on their pictures. Charlotte said that if she gets under ten likes on a picture she feels that the uploaded picture was not good enough and she gets a little disappointed.

It also came out that not receiving any likes on a selfie was more sensitive than any other kind of picture. Charlotte explained that she would never post an ugly picture of herself and not getting any likes on a selfie could therefore be seen to

possibly lower her self esteem, as discussed by Markus & Nurius (1986). The reason for why selfies are more sensitive than other pictures could be that the individual is, in that scenario, exposing him/herself to his/her surrounding. Getting likes or comments on an image is the way of receiving confirmation that other people have seen, liked and officially pressed on the like-button. Without the last step on pressing the actual like-button, some individuals feel that they are not receiving enough confirmation, and then not feeling that their looks are good enough. Steven even said that he once removed a picture that did not get any likes at all.

Steven: “(...) sometimes you post too many things about the same thing or you post too many pictures in a row. And you think that you don’t need all of them so you take two pictures away, or one picture. (...) I sort of care about other people when I post a picture. My purpose is never to get likes on a picture. I just upload a picture if I like the picture personally and if I want to share them. (...) it’s nice if people like them (...).”

Even though he admitted to removing a picture with zero likes, he still claims that likes are not of a big importance to him. Steven also states that he would never upload a picture of himself where he looks ugly, just as Charlotte said. Being consequent in what kind of pictures to upload seems to be an important behavior to the participants. By keeping a consequent story on the Instagram feed, the participants uphold a consistent image as well. It has been stated that ugly pictures are not considered as “Instagram material” and that can be argued to the fact that the users need to uphold their created Instagram identity. Individuals have usually built up an identity where they portray themselves as good-looking, stylish people. In order to fully believe in this role, they need approval, in this case in the form of likes. If they do not receive this confirmation, they will not be able to live up to their created role. As Peterson (2005) discusses, when failing to be consistent in portraying one’s identity, other people may label the individual as non-authentic and fake. This could also be connected to MacCannell’s (1973) six-point model. If an individual was to upload a natural, more authentic picture of him/herself, it could qualify as Goffman’s (1972 [1959]) backstage scene. However, Steven tries to put on different filters to make his pictures look better but sometimes that does not work and he crops his pictures instead. It can be noticed how important the uploaded images are. It can be thought

that Steven believes he will not receive enough likes needed for an egoboost if the picture is not appealing enough. The likes then become important enough that modifying the pictures is needed in order to increase the amount of likes.

Overall, getting likes is about receiving confirmation and strengthening one's self esteem. Not many of the participants stated that this is the case, but in the end it was still said either accidentally or unconsciously.

4.1.3 #HASHTAGS

An Instagram user can actively try to get more likes by adding hashtags to the text belonging to a picture. Although this is a common concept for Instagram users, our participants did not seem to have embraced it. All of the participants have used hashtags once or more, but generally not for the purpose of getting more likes on a picture. Steven said that he sometimes creates fun hashtags that probably no one will find just because it is entertaining. Joey, another interviewee, says that he uses hashtags as well but not in order to make people follow him.

Joey: "It can be fun with hashtags because then you can go in and see what other people have uploaded from the same place. (...) then I do a lot of nonsense as well, it doesn't mean anything, things you wouldn't search for, like #ajajajajaj. I usually don't take photos and then bomb them with hashtags and think that people is going to search for this and find me (...)."

Here it can be said that Joey mostly uses hashtags for making funny words. Other participants such as Charlotte and Leo have also stated that they use funny hashtags or make up words that no one would search for. Going through Leo's Instagram feed, it is shown that when hashtags are being used, there are always some that have no meaning or are not real words.

During her interview, Charlotte said that the purpose of her Instagram was to convey a happy feeling to others. By identifying herself as a person who conveys happy feelings, making funny and unique hashtags is a way of achieving that sort of identity.

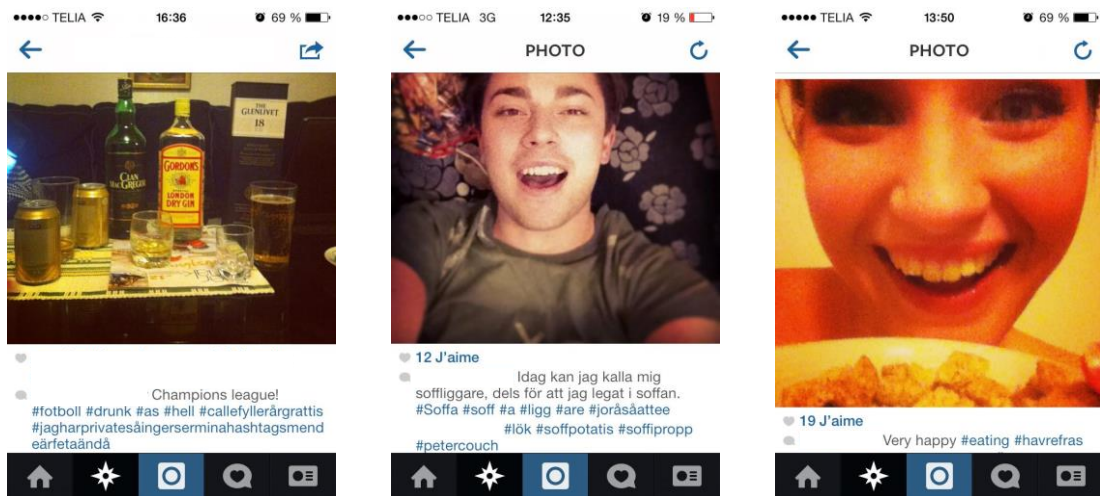
Joey, Emma and Sandra have all used hashtags when participating at events. At Joey's event, all hashtagged pictures were shown on a big screen in front of everyone

participating, and during Emma and Sandra's event they were encouraged to hashtag the happening. However, they said that they would not have used hashtags if they were not encouraged to do so.

The overall impression from the interviews is that likes are important, however, it seems mostly important to get likes from friends and not from outsiders. If likes from outsiders were to be important, our participants would embrace the concept of hashtagging much more seriously.

Gabriel & Lang (1995) discuss the complications individuals face when trying to find a meaning for the self while constructing and maintaining an identity in a world that is constantly changing. The goal is to make the right choices that will later result in the creation of an ego ideal that is respected of others and simultaneously stimulates self-love. A way to achieve this goal is to search for an identity through consumption. Identifying oneself with a brand on Instagram would require either a picture of the brand and/or a hashtag of the brand name. Various campaigns and competitions on Instagram usually require that the users hashtag the brand in order to compete. During the interviews, it became evident that most participants feel reluctant about hashtagging a company or a brand in their pictures. Some participants have hashtagged brands and even participated in competitions, but these were things that the individual could relate to and felt that it represented their identity. It was not said, but rather noticeable, that the participants would not hashtag something they do not associate their identity with. Therefore, it is easier for them to make their own, funny hashtags that represent their identity on Instagram.

Hashtags have the effect of contributing to a wider spread and thus generating more likes. If an Instagram user types #summer in a picture, their image will be shown for everyone who searches for that particular hashtag or clicks on it. Instead of using this technique, the participants have shown a tendency of not caring that much about whether non-followers like their pictures or not. So, it seems that acceptance and confirmation in form of likes is essential to be originated from friends and followers.



4.2 #FABRICATING A GENUINE IDENTITY

From our interviews and observations, it has become evident that people fabricate an identity on Instagram that most of the time does not correspond to their identity outside the social networking site. They want to achieve a certain image on Instagram and therefore select certain aspects of their lives that they wish to portray. In some cases they even construct events and happenings for the sole purpose of posting a picture on Instagram. Their identity or image on Instagram becomes a part of them, and they feel a need to stay consistent with this image. Below we will discuss how the participants in our study fabricate an identity that they perceive as genuine on Instagram.

4.2.1 #INSTAGRAM MOMENT

All of the participants in our interviews recognized that the person they were on Instagram was only a small part of who they really are. We asked Lucy if she was the same person on Instagram as in real life, and she responded "No, I am not. You beautify your life a lot on Instagram." It was clear from all the respondents that they do not show their entire personality through Instagram. It seems that each photograph that is posted goes through a test of different criteria, which is different for each person. Both Monica and Lucy talk about something that they call an "Instagram moment". The Instagram moment can be viewed as an updated version of the Kodak moment. The Kodak moment is characterized by a rare moment that is either captured

by a picture, or should have been captured by a picture. The language has however evolved into a phrase that better suits the technology used and the moments captured today.

Lucy: “[Instagram moment] It can be very different. When I have been on a trip, then I have posted a picture of the beach, that is something that you want to show others. It can be things that you want to brag about, or a lot on friends when you are having fun. It feels like you want to show everyone ‘look at how good my life is!’ or ‘look at all the fun I am having!’.”

Monica: “When you are having a good moment, then you want to take a picture.”

For Monica, her Instagram becomes a sort of diary with the highlights of her life. This is consistent with Van House, Davis, Ames, Finn and Viswanathan’s (2005) work who identified that photographs are used to nurture social relationship but also acts as a personal diary. Both Lucy and Monica recognize the Instagram moments in their lives, and the need to document and share them. These photographs usually consist of special events that are being portrayed on their accounts, giving them both a glamorous image that might only reflect a small part of their actual life.

Lucy: “Sometimes I feel a bit silly, like I try to be cooler on Instagram than I am in reality. You get inspired by others who post lots of cool pictures, so then I have to post fun pictures.”

As Jenkins (1996) has identified, the self-identity is inseparable from the construction of collective social identity. The self-identity is validated through social interactions, it is therefore important to express these social interactions. Lucy feels that the lifestyle and image that she portrays has to live up to a certain glamorized standard that exists on Instagram. Most of the participants followed both friends as well as inspirational accounts and celebrities on Instagram. The celebrities document their glamorous life where they shop expensive brands, go to exclusive parties, look perfect, work out with a professional trainer or go to exotic places. The inspirational accounts often feature fitness advice in form of workout exercises and diet plans. The social context therefore demands certain behavior

that Lucy feels a need to live up to. She therefore constructs an identity that is applicable in this atmosphere.

Maria: “It is a bit boring with Instagram that everyone is trying to be something. Like ‘I am this healthy!’, ‘I am this good’ (...) But it is supposed to look a bit glamorous, you should say ‘God she is so perfect!’”

Emma: “I think that the pictures of friends and celebrities are pretty similar, in their image. Celebrities maybe do more things, fine, going to events and stuff like that but it is still pretty similar in what you post.”

The inspirational and celebrity photographs are mixed in the feed with friends and other “ordinary” people. This mixture has created a pressure on the participants. Both to live up to the life style of the celebrities as much as possible, creating this glamorized standard, and also to live up to a healthy standard. By extension, both Lucy and Maria post pictures like this increasing the pressure on their friends to also live up to this standard. As Emma mentions above, the photographs a very similar independent of whom is posting them. The standard to live a glamorous, healthy and perfect lifestyle is therefore elevated.

There are in general no sad faces posted on Instagram. The participants feel like they need to post interesting events. Therefore, activities that they do in their ordinary life is seen as something boring and therefore negative. The pictures portray positive events and feelings, there is no room for anything negative. The everyday life becomes something shameful that is not to be spoken of. As Goffman (1972 [1959]) points out, there is a clear front and back stage, the performance exists in the front stage and the preparations and reality exist in the back stage. Their ordinary life and sad moments belong in their back stage, and is therefore something that they try to hide.

Maria: “Yeah it should look like you are having fun. You rarely post anything negative. I maybe have a lot of boring things, but I don’t want to post regular things, it is often something special (...) It’s not like I would post something when I am sitting on a bus, or boring things like that (...) [Misery] it is very

rarely that you see something like that, you don't take a photo when you are sad.”

Monica: “It is mostly like a positive diary, sometimes you add a bit of everyday as well, but that bothers me afterwards, for example this picture. It is a fun picture, but when I look back at it I don't want to remember that moment so it bothers me. But I like the picture so I don't want to delete it. But I don't like that everything around it is like positive and pretty pictures and then I have this one which is negative.”



The picture above is the one that Monica describes as negative. The negative aspect here is that she finds it boring. Interestingly enough, as a student, this is what she usually spends her days doing. In reality, this is an ordinary day. However, why she thought that this was a fun picture to post at that moment, was that she was studying on a Saturday, something out of the ordinary. This justified posting what she otherwise considers a negative or a boring picture. Looking back though, it does not fit in with her front stage on Instagram and therefore does not live up to the role she has created for herself.

4.2.2 #FABRICATED REALITY

Many of our participants construct a reality on Instagram. Some of the photographs that are posted are either totally fabricated or are modified to suit the participant's purposes on Instagram. The participants feel a need to be interesting on Instagram, and if their life is uninteresting for the moment, they will create interesting events for the sole purposes of producing an interesting photograph. One of the participants, Monica, was challenged to each day during a period of five days, post a photograph showing off her regular life, which she thought was very hard.

Monica: "It almost feels a bit staged. What if I don't have a nice moment today that I want to show off, but you are forced to? So you fake it until it is not even the truth. You make a nice breakfast just to take a nice photograph, but it is not the truth. The truth becomes too vulnerable."

Her regular life becomes too vulnerable and unglamorous, so she created moments that were photo-worthy and would reflect positively on her. The breakfast alone was not the appealing aspect, but the photograph that it could produce.

This idea is closely linked with Goffman's (1972 [1959]) idea of a front and back region of public performance, known as the front stage and the back stage. In this case Monica feels that her ordinary and authentic life, her back stage, would discredit her image on Instagram, and therefore hides it. MacCannel (1973) has divided these stages into a six-point model, where different stages have certain resemblance to a back stage. The breakfast would here in fact be a fabricated back stage. What is interesting here is that Monica states that her Instagram is private.

Monica: "I don't want just anyone to be able to see my pictures or that they would be spread on the internet. Neither do I want an employer to see my pictures. I only want people who I know to follow me."

Even though she knows the people who follows her on Instagram and consider them her friends, she was still reluctant towards showing them her true back stage. She was

therefore only willing to show her followers something that would resemble a back stage, when it in fact was a fabricated front stage. Another participant, Sandra, also took part in this challenge.

Sandra: “I thought it was a fun idea. You really had to put up something that was typical for just that day. On the other hand, that’s what I think Instagram is all about, to show off what you are doing right now. But during this challenge I felt the need to actually do something to get a picture. You wouldn’t just sit around and take a photograph of your computer (...) I wouldn’t just put up that it’s 9 p.m. and I am in the sofa, drinking tea and watching TV. That wouldn’t have gotten many likes (haha)!”

So even though the purpose of the entire challenge was to portray their ordinary lives, the two participants felt a need to modify their lives to fit into their image on Instagram. Both Sandra and Monica have a private setting on Instagram and can therefore control who can view their pictures, but they were still reluctant and felt uneasy of showing off their back stage. In their minds, their back stage becomes too vulnerable and they were also afraid that it would be considered too boring. Sandra and Monica are very externally oriented and feel a need to be consistent in their created identity. Their idea of authentic is rather staying true to the created identity than to what is in fact real. This idea of consistency is closely linked to Peterson’s (2005) work of authenticity of the constructed self, it is essential to be consistent with the created role in order to not be labeled as fake.

Even though Sandra in the interview stated “that’s what I think Instagram is all about, to show off what you are doing right now”, she sometimes posts professional photographs taken by a real photographer at another point of time. Here, the activity in that moment is not as important as rather how she might be feeling in the moment. To portray these feelings on Instagram she uses photographs that capture that feeling. The picture below shows Sandra and her boyfriend, and is posted on their two year anniversary. Even though Sandra says that Instagram is all about showing what you are doing in this moment right now, we can assume that what she was doing in that moment of their anniversary belonged in her back stage and did not live up to or

would change her created identity on Instagram. Therefore, instead of showing her followers her reality in that moment, she used a fabricated photograph that speaks to her both visually as well as the story it tells. Through this front stage, she is able to tell her followers a story of a loving relationship. Drawing on Ferdinand de Saussure's (1974[1916]) work of signifiers and signified, this photograph can bear resemblance to an advertising campaign. This can by some of her followers signify perfection, creating a linkage between the couple and perfection. By extension, they can become a symbol for the perfect relationship.



Looking through Sandra's portfolio of photographs, we found a pattern of how pictures portraying her and her boyfriend were staged. Sandra often uses the feminine touch as discussed by Goffman (1979 [1976]) in the pictures, which further associates the photographs with an advertising campaign. They are also often portraying a romantic kiss, enhancing them as a symbol for the "perfect couple". Their back stage as a couple is however never portrayed on Instagram. Comments on these photographs often include hearts or comments like "how romantic!", which increases their story of perfect love.



4.2.3 #FRAGMENTED IDENTITY

Two of the participants, Michael and David, stood out from the rest in the sense that they entered a role when using the social media site. The idea of entering different roles is closely associated with Markus and Nurius (1986) idea of possible selves. Entering different roles was usually perceived by both Michael and David as an active choice. They also felt like they could switch in between these roles, or possible selves. These two participants differ from the rest since they mostly use Instagram for professional purposes. Even though their Instagram accounts are mainly used professionally, they still felt the need to add what they perceived as private aspects to make their account more interesting.

David: “I had a period when I only posted things I had done and no personal things, but I thought that I was becoming a bit boring on the private side. So I thought, would all of my followers disappear if I post that now? But they did not, in fact. They went along for the private journey as well, so now I mix it up (...) Sure, I want the private part too, but I don’t have the energy to have two accounts where one is for private and one is for my company.”

David: “I am very closed, I don’t show that much of the private and it is not something that I really write about. It’s a picture once in a while, what I do in my everyday life (...) It is also about integrity, it becomes too personal. This

is something very daring for me, I feel that this is enough. I think like that, there are barely any pictures of me, one once in a while. ‘Who is he behind the pictures?’ It is pretty fun to see the person behind the photographs.”

Even though David tries to add some private aspects as well, he is still very hesitant to how private he can be. The identity that David has created on Instagram is a front stage and the photographs labeled as “private” bear little resemblance to David’s real back stage (Goffman, 1972 [1959]). The “private” photographs are in fact just added to enforce David’s identity on Instagram and are used to give his audience a perception that they are partaking in his back stage, when in fact they are not.

Michael, the other participant that uses Instagram mostly for professional purposes, was asked if he was the same person on Instagram as he is in reality.

Michael: “Nothing is faked. I think that, especially all people who work with some kind of communication in a professional way, have to be honest. So it is the same Michael, just not all of Michael (...) I have thought about this from a marketing perspective, on just how I post the pictures, and I think that there is a lot that could be gained, especially for politicians who dare to be more open, more burly, more honest, and really dared to be themselves one hundred percent. But then you omit a lot of your private life to the public sphere and that is not something that I am willing to do.”

Michael believes that he is showing a true identity, but that it is just a fraction of who he is in reality. Even though Michael is not willing to show his entire private side, he still incorporates it once in a while. However, even though he believes that it is strategically good to show your private side as a marketing tool, he is very reluctant in doing so. The private role is too vulnerable for him.

Interviewer: “Would you say that you mix both private and public on your Instagram?”

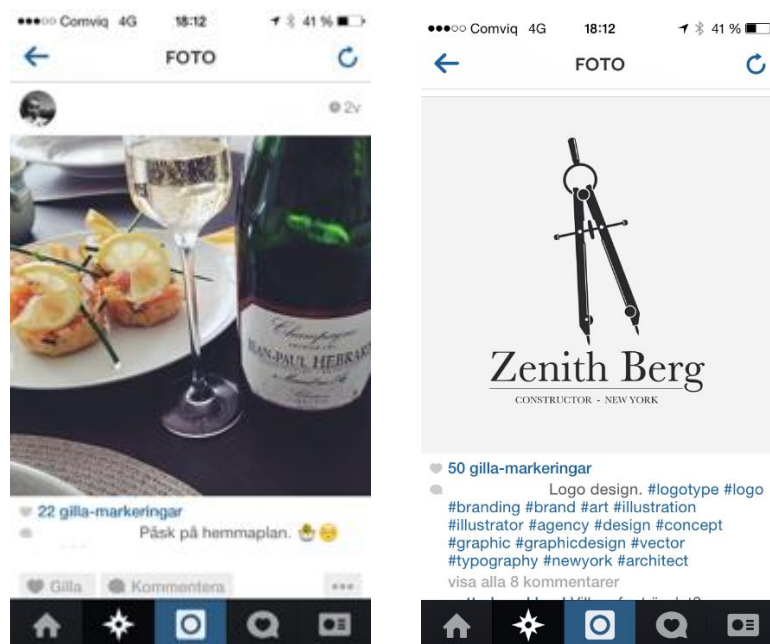
Michael: “I wouldn’t say that, or yeah, a little bit. But I am very restricted with the private, on all social networks, to keep it protected. If we go onto my Instagram and look we can see if we find anything that would be classified as

private. I have one, for example this picture that is eight weeks old, from a museum in New York, which is totally private. I thought it was a fun and interesting sculpture which I felt that this was something that I want to share. I thought it was a good picture that described where I was, but still was not too revealing of my surroundings (...) I am pretty restrictive with pictures of my social circle since I live in a pretty public position, so I don't think that that is something that like my friends and family really should be forced to be a part of (...) It is not like it never happens, but I am very restrictive with it (...) Personally, I feel a very small interest of giving people an illusion that they know me when they in fact do not.”

The photograph that Michael is talking about is shown below. Even though he classifies this as a private picture, there are no people in it. Neither does he mention that he actually is in New York or which museum he is visiting. The reason why Michael classifies this photograph as private, an inside joke that Michael shares with his brother, is not mentioned. Therefore, his followers are not allowed entrance to Michael's true private meaning of the photograph. Michael sense of private on Instagram is thus in some ways very different from the other participants in our study. Michael, as David, has a very clear distinction between his front and back stage (Goffman, 1972 [1959]).



David has many international followers, but his friends are mostly Swedish. So when switching to his private role, he usually writes his comments in Swedish whereas his work related photographs have comments in English. When David posts pictures in his professional role he also uses a hashtag frame consisting of multiple hashtags to reach a broader target group. The pictures below shows first a photograph that David classifies as private and then a photograph of his work which is considered professional. That he is successful in his targeting of different groups is shown in the amounts of likes, his professional photographs that he wants to spread to a larger group also gain a lot more likes than the photographs that David classifies as private.



David: "I write some of the comments in Swedish, when it is more of an internal joke or if you want to reach a targeted group that you think will read it."

This is another way he switches in between different roles, where he is very conscious of who he is aiming each specific photograph to. Even though both David and Michael possess an identity that exceeds the boundaries of both their private and professional life, they perceive these lives as different entities. They have different possible selves that they utilize in different social contexts. However, even though they perceive some images as private, they are not a part of what Goffman (1972

[1959]) would consider a back stage, but rather a front stage. Unlike our other participant, they are not trying to show an illusion of a back stage.

4.2.4 #GLAMOURIZED IDENTITY

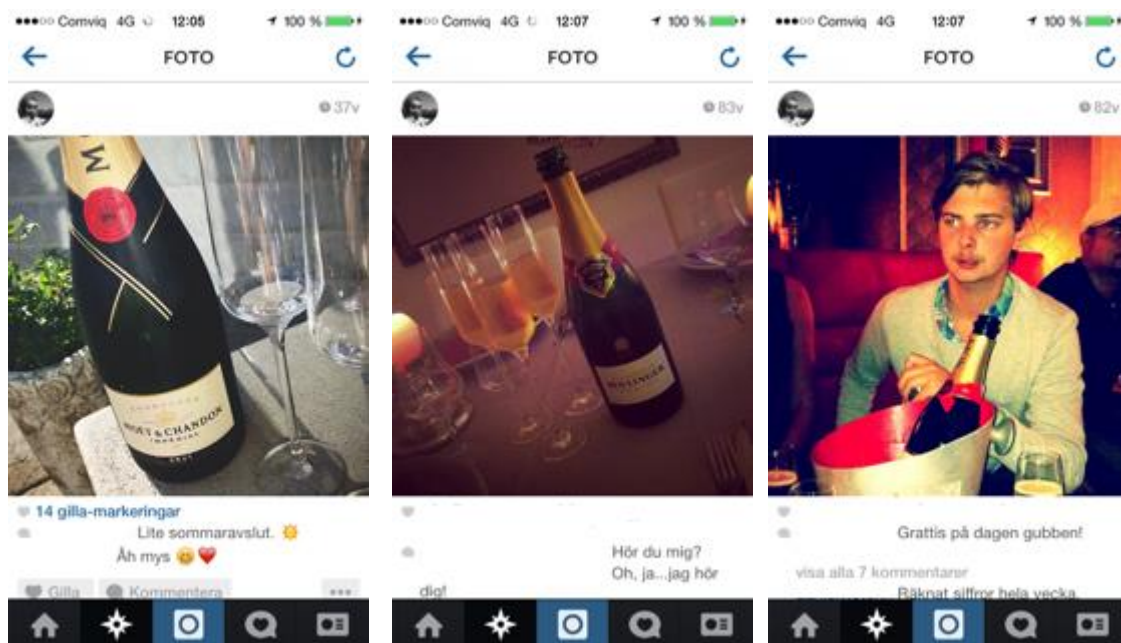
The participants in our study use various symbols that they want to be identified with. Ferdinand de Saussure's (1974[1916]) discusses in his work the use of signifiers and signified when creating a symbol. In our study, the most common objects used as signifiers are brands and famous landmarks. These can be used in an attempt to by extension become new signifiers for the signified meaning of the objects.

David is especially fond of using brands in his pictures. The photograph below portrays a watch from Emporio Armani showing the time 4.22 pm. The functional purpose of this photograph might be to capture that it is almost 5.00 pm and that he is getting ready to go home from work. Yet the focus of the photograph is not mainly of the time that the watch shows, but of the watch itself. Emporio Armani as a brand is often associated with wealth, Italian luxury and class. Through pictures like the one below, these associations become more closely related to David himself.



Consumers do not solemnly make consumption choices based on the product's user-value, but also from the symbolic value (Giddens, 1991; Dittmar, 1992; Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1988; Douglas, 1982; Goffman, 1972 [1959]). Brands are often used when constructing one's identity (Mick

& Buhl, 1992; McCracken, 1987). In other pictures that David has posted, there are several images of champagne bottles. These bottles are often of prestigious brands such as Moët & Chandon, Mumm, and Bollinger. These brands symbolize wealth and class, additionally enforcing this image. What all of these brands signify is a luxurious lifestyle. The last two pictures below are posted with a small time difference of maximum a week, enforcing this glamorous lifestyle. By posting relatively many of these types of photographs, David himself can by extension become the signifier and finally a symbol for a luxurious lifestyle. In postmodernity, the self is something that the individual constantly creates (Solomon, 1996). When David uses these brands, he is constructing an identity that entails wealth.



Emma, another one of our participants was on a trip and took the photograph of herself that is portrayed below. In this picture, she is standing in front of a Hermès store. Hermès is a brand often associated with France, luxury, and chic. Even though Emma is standing in this photograph, a portrait is not the central purpose of the picture. If a portrait of Emma was the main purpose of the photograph, it would be zoomed in and Emma would have been in the center of the picture. However, she is standing to the side and is therefore portraying herself in a certain environment. Once again, the logo of Hermès becomes important. Emma is feeding of Hermès as a signifier, essentially trying to project herself as someone who shops in this luxurious environment. Even though Emma did not shop in the Hermès store, she could

envision this as a possible self that she is aiming to become, and ideal self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This is not yet her identity in real life, but through Instagram she can portray her possible self and by extension create an identity on Instagram that captures the ideal that she wants to become.



Charlotte went on a trip to Paris in 2012. When she was there she posted the first picture shown below of her, her friend and the Eiffel Tower. As in Williamson's (1978) work of symbols used in advertising to create a natural linkage between the product and the symbol, Charlotte here tries to create a natural linkage between her and the Eiffel Tower. The first picture's objective might be to show her followers that she is in Paris. The other two are however posted after she got home and weeks after her trip. To justify these photographs she uses the hashtag #throwbackthursday, which is a hashtag used on Thursdays to post pictures that you have from a previous event or happening in your life. She also does a spin of this famous hashtag and calls it #throwbackfriday, another way of justify her posting an old pictures, but on a Friday. All of her photographs from Paris contain the Eiffel Tower, which could be either a conscious or an unconscious decision in trying to create a linkage between the landmark and Charlotte as a person. The Eiffel Tower is also centralized in all of the pictures, making it the important aspect of the photographs.



Most of the participants in our study have on numerous occasions tried to establish themselves as symbols for a luxurious lifestyles. There is however one exception, namely Michael. Throughout all of his pictures he has not a single exclusive brand represented. Neither does he post pictures next to famous landmarks when he is on vacation. The photographs shown below are very typical of him. These might not be exclusive symbols, but they are however symbols that are very essential for Michael as a personal brand. Since Michael works as a Swedish politician, his objective has been to maintain an image as down to earth and someone that people can relate to. An exclusive brand would therefore be harmful for him as a brand. Even though he consumes luxurious brands and travels, this is not something that he would openly portray. His more extravagant lifestyle is categorized in his back stage (Goffman, 1972 [1959]). Michael has created a front stage where he is acting as someone living on a student budget. He therefore posts pictures like the one shown below, of fast noodles. The fast noodles are also a signifier and is often associated with low budget and student life. By posting this picture he can maintain his image as someone who lives like a student and as a regular Swede, while secretly enjoying a more luxurious lifestyle. His authenticity as someone on a low budget is constructed, but it is essential to the image that he has created. Failing to maintain this image would label him as fake (Peterson, 2005).



52 gilla-markeringar
Kärlek.
Ping
En trogen vän, Både
snabbmakaroner och...



5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, we will present our findings. These will be discussed in relation to existing literature. We will also discuss limitations of our study and suggest practical implications as well as possible further research.

Through our research, we have observed how consumers identify themselves on Instagram and how they communicate this identity. The empirical findings have shown that individuals are complex human beings with various possible selves. Through Instagram, people have found a way of choosing and controlling how they are perceived by others. By choosing and controlling what is to be shown to others, they can eliminate all the negative aspects of their lives and persons, and solemnly focus on what is positive. They are creating a new identity for themselves that exists within the social networking site.

Markus and Nurius (1986) discuss the individual's imagined possibilities of the self. The possible self is a sort of ideal self that individuals strive to achieve. Through Instagram, consumers have found a possible channel to project this ideal self. In doing so they create an identity that only exists within the social networking site. It is possible through Instagram, to strictly control and maintain this online identity. The empirical findings have shown that the most important factor is not being truthful, but rather consistent. In accordance to Peterson (2005), it is essential for the consumers to stay consistent with their constructed selves. Being perceived as authentic is therefore more closely related to being consistent in their behavior than portraying their true reality. Their true identity is however not consistent with the constructed identity on Instagram. When individuals are unable to live up to their identity in real life, they either restrain themselves from uploading a photograph or they create events in order to stay consistent with their created identity. This behavior has generated a lot of anxiety amongst our participants. They have created a fictional identity that is hard to live up to.

In the beginning, the participant's Instagram identity was something that only existed within the social networking site. However, as things have progressed, this identity is moving into their everyday lives. The main reason why you go to a glamorous event is not for the personal satisfaction anymore, it is to share a photograph of the event on Instagram to enhance your identity. Brunches are staged

into nice photographs and luxury brands are put together to produce a nice collage. The ordinary life is not of importance, it is only the extraordinary life that counts.

If this behavior progresses, it could very well have an effect on society. When the standard is elevated, so are also the expectations of people. Chasing this behavior could quite possibly create even more anxiety, especially if the created identity moves even more from social media and into real life. Then, their identity is not as easily controlled, forcing them to either change their behavior in real life to fit their created identity or to close themselves off from the world in fear of showing their genuine self.

The participants in our study show signs of viewing themselves as an object rather than a person; they are objectifying themselves. They are creating their own personal brand that they need to maintain and promote. The brand most importantly needs to be controlled so that it stays consistent. These findings are coherent with Joseph's (2013) work on personal branding. After creating this Instagram identity, consumers have become very careful when considering which photographs are to be chosen to reflect upon their new identity. For some participants in our study, this created identity has evolved into a personal brand. The participants act like a communication agency that analyzes what will promote their brand and what could possibly harm it.

In the news feed, regular people as well as celebrities are competing for the space and attention from the viewer. This has created a pressure on our participants to live up to the standard set by people with greater means of living, and a different life style. The brand that they have created for themselves on Instagram therefore often resembles more of a multi-millionaire globetrotter than a student living on a tight budget. This behavior creates a distorted reality in which the participants have to live up to both their created personal brand and what is expected of them by their followers. This could be connected to Sirgy's (1982) idea of three identities. Especially the social self, concerning how an individual presents him/herself to other people. The social self is in this context built on the ideal self, which is how the consumer wishes to perceive him/herself.

5. 1 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study has provided some interesting insights into how consumers think, act and portray themselves on Instagram. The main concepts for consumer behavior that were found in this study are based on personal branding and consumer identity. By conducting a qualitative research we have developed these two streams of literature. Additionally, we have contributed to previous views of authenticity and the perception of a front and back stage.

Goffman's (1972 [1959]) and MacCannel's (1973) work of front stage and back stage have mainly been focused on the authenticity of tourism. We have contributed to this theory through establishing that this concept also applies in the individual's process of identifying themselves. When constructing an identity, the individual chooses which characteristics and events that are portrayed in the front stage and which are concealed in the back stage. It is not only tourists and consumers who seek authenticity, but also individuals who seek an authentic social context. In Peterson's (2005) work on authenticity, he has mainly focused on brands and branded individuals. We can however show that individuals who do not perceive themselves as brands, also strive to be consistent and by extension, becoming authentic. These two theories have therefore developed past a commercial sense and into the private sphere.

Consumer identity has been researched for many decades. Consumers are constantly in the search of associating themselves with some brand or identity that matches their preferences of the ideal self. Sirgy (1982) has identified the concept of self as three different dimensions: the actual self, the ideal self, and the social self. Our findings indicate that consumers strive for an ideal self, and through Instagram, they have found an outlet where they can project their ideal self. In doing so, they create a new identity, that in this context becomes their actual self. The identity that is created within Instagram is also a projection of the social self. The lines between these dimensions are therefore becoming more blurred and integrated. Consumers create different identities that serve different purposes. Through our findings, we have found that these created identities have an effect on the actual self. The actual self is losing power in relation to the ideal self and the social self. The ideal and social self are becoming so important for consumers that they neglect their actual self. We have

elaborated the concept of self and hopefully given a deeper understanding of how consumers perceive the concept of self.

Previous streams of studies on consumer identity, have been focused on real social settings (Chernev et al., 2011; Kleine et al., 1993; Solomon, 1987; Siegel, 1982; Levy, 1959). Our study has, however, been focused on analyzing consumer identity in a constructed social setting. The interactions between people on Instagram are made virtually, behind a screen. Expressions on Instagram therefore become more controlled than in regular life, which adds a different dimension to previous studies. The aspect of control makes the consumer more aware of their self-expression and identity.

Studies concerning personal branding have usually been conducted in a quantitative manner (Miller & Edwards, 2007; Chalfen, 1987). We have, however, chosen to conduct a qualitative research in the hopes of providing deeper insights into how individuals market themselves. When conducting personal interviews where the individual was allowed to speak freely, the focus shifts from a general understanding to the private individual. This thesis provides a deeper understanding of the narratives related to the personal brand on Instagram. This thesis also gives a richer comprehension of how people perceive their own personal brand.

Shepherd's (2005) work recognizes that people need to market themselves in order to get noticed in a marketplace with the purpose of gaining employment. Wetsch's (2012) work is similar to the concept created by Shepherd, when he states that individuals might find potential employers online by marketing their personal brand. Both Shepherd's (2005) and Wetsch's (2012) work have been focused on the purpose of a personal brand, being to attain employment. We have in our findings found that people also create personal brand for private and social purposes. Most of the participants in our study used their personal brand as a source for gaining respect and affirmation in their social surrounding, rather than marketing themselves for recruitment. There were, however, some participants that factored possible employment into their personal brands, but this was not the sole purpose of their brands.

Joseph (2013) compares branding of a product with personal branding. He maintains that a personal brand needs to be carefully managed and controlled through life, just like any commercial brand. Through our findings, we see a tendency that consumers' created identities on Instagram are also becoming their personal brand. In

other words, it is not only the personal brand that is controlled and maintained, but also the individual's identity. The lines between the personal brand and identity are becoming blurred.

We found that people use Instagram as a way of communicating their personal brand, providing a consistent image since it can be controlled. If their image is carefully maintained on Instagram, individuals sometimes feel free to act differently offline. An example of this is one of our participants, Michael, who maintains an image of living a student life on Instagram, but in private he feels free to enjoy a luxurious lifestyle. Michael feels that his personal brand is fabricated and consequently disconnected from his identity. Therefore, it is easier for him to act in different ways online and offline. Most of the participants in our study, however, have created an identity on Instagram that resembles their ideal self. For them, it is harder to separate the online and offline context, and their created identity on Instagram moves into their real life. When their created identity resembles their ideal self, they start viewing this identity as a personal brand.

5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our empirical findings of the created identity could provide valuable insights, which will hopefully aid in the analysis of consumers. These insights may facilitate the process of targeting consumer groups on social networking sites. By understanding the consumer's created and ideal identities, it is possible to more effectively plan a marketing strategy. Support for our findings can be found in both the consumer identity literature as well as in the personal branding literature.

Marketing on Instagram has previously consisted of mainly branded accounts, marketing through celebrities and competitions. Branded accounts are accounts in a company's name, which is used to promote products to their followers. Consumers who are following these accounts are generally interested in the brand and are loyal customers. Our findings show that this is an appreciated channel for updating the consumer about happenings or new product releases. The pictures posted by the companies do not reach out to the greater masses since the consumer has to actively search and follow the company's account. It is however a good marketing technique for keeping loyal customers as well as creating and maintaining a relationship with them.

More and more celebrities have joined Instagram and have created a personal account in order for fans to follow their everyday life. In the photographs posted on these accounts, they also manifest a variety of brands that are compliant with their glamorous lifestyle. From our research we found that these accounts were very popular amongst our participants. We also found that the participants are very influential and adapt their behavior to who they were following. This has created a glamourized standard that “ordinary” people strive to achieve, by posting comparable pictures. This is consistent with Siegel’s (1982) findings who found that consumers might identify themselves even more with a brand, if the brand is associated with either a celebrity or a stereotype, in the pursuit of becoming this stereotype. As the participant Emma in our study noted, the photographs portrayed on Instagram are very similar independent of who is posting them. Marketing through celebrities creates an indirect link between the consumer and the brand, where the consumer tries to mimic the behavior of the celebrity. Therefore, using celebrities for marketing of products is a useful channel.

The competitions have generally been oriented in increasing recognition and awareness of already existing products. The participants of the competitions have been encouraged to post photographs on their Instagram account and hashtag the picture with the company and brand name. For some competitions, the companies have created a special hashtag that is to be used for that special occasion. The participants in the competition take part in order to win a prize. Our findings show that consumers are reluctant in competing in these types of competitions if there is the slightest risk of harming their identity or brand. Neither is the prize of a competition as important as the company and brand that is the host. However, it was also found that the photographs posted by users who they did not know were not as closely inspected as those of their friends. Many of our participants stated that they would in fact participate in a competition, if the brand fit their identity. Thus, it is more profitable to get “ordinary” people to market the brand through either hashtags or pictures of products, rather than celebrities. In order to be successful in this marketing technique, it is essential to get the Instagram users to identify themselves with the brand.

In conclusion, all of these marketing tools can be useful for different purposes. For maintaining a consistent relationship with loyal consumers, it is important to be accessible. A brand account provides an excellent channel for communicating with

existing customers. Our findings prove that consumers are influential and adapt their behavior in order to live up to a glamorous standard. Celebrities serve as an inspiration in the creation of this ideal standard. However, it was shown that pictures posted by “ordinary” people, for example friends of the consumer, were more closely inspected. This indicates that the most profitable channel for marketing is through people who are perceived as trustworthy.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis has some limitations that need to be addressed. This study has been conducted with both time limitations as well as monetary limitations, therefore, our focus has been on students living in the Lund area. This has created little diversification in the pool of participants. To achieve an even greater understanding, it would be preferable to follow and interview the participants for a longer period of time. However, due to time limitations this was not possible. The qualitative research method is sometimes criticized for being subjective.

The purpose of this study has been to conduct a narrative analysis of consumer’s identity on the social networking site Instagram. This has contributed with new understanding concerning the consumer identity and personal brand, but it has also led to several questions that are yet unexplored within this area.

The social group that was chosen for the purposes of this thesis is middle-class, white, academics, living in Sweden and in their 20’s, thus it only reflects a small portion of Instagram users worldwide. It would therefore be interesting to replicate the study using different social groups in different countries. This might portray differences in consumption behavior in relation to social groups as well as geographical differences.

During the period of this thesis, Instagram was fairly new and the participants had only actively used it for a maximum of two years. However, our findings suggest that the created identity is no longer isolated to the social networking site, but is moving into the user’s real life. Is the idea of a personal brand limited to a social media context where it can be controlled or are we viewing ourselves more as an object and personal brand in all contexts? In this case, is there a risk that the level of authenticity might come into question as suggested by Peterson (2005) if they do not live up to their created brand or will the brand evolve into several different brands for different

social contexts? We believe that further research of personal branding in relation to authenticity could be very interesting and would increase the understanding of the idea of self.

In conclusion, we hope that this study will benefit theorists within marketing and communication research. We also hope that we have contributed to a greater understanding of consumer identity in a digitalized world.

6. SOURCES

6.1 ARTICLES

- Aaker, J. (1997), Dimensions of Brand Personality, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 347-356
- Aggarwal, P. (2004), The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 87-101
- Allen, D., Woodward, J. & Lamp, M. (2012), Show me a story: How visual content is transforming social media, *Public Relations Tactics*, Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 16
- Bagwell, L. S. & Bernheim, B. D. (1996), Veblen Effects in a Theory of Conspicuous Consumption, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3, pp. 349-373
- Belk, A. (1988), Possessions and the extended self, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15, No. 9, pp. 139-168
- Berger, J. & Heath, C. (2007), Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34, No. 6, pp. 121-134
- Blacksmith, N. & Poepelman, T. (2014), Personal Branding via Social Media: Increasing SIOP Visibility One Member at a Time, *The Industrial Organizational Psychologist*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 113-119
- Braun, O. L. & Wicklund, R. A. (1989), Psychological Antecedents of Conspicuous Consumption, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 161-187
- Chen, C. (2013), Exploring Personal Branding on YouTube, *Journal of Internet Commerce*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 332-347
- Chernev, A. Hamilton, R. & Gal, D. (2011), Competing for Consumer Identity: Limits to Self-Expression and the Perils of Lifestyle Branding, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 75, No. 5, pp. 66-82
- Davis, J. (2007) Display, identity and the everyday: self-presentation through online image sharing, *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*. Vol. 28, No. 4, pp. 549-564.

- Dubois, A. & Gadde, L. (2002), Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research, *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 55, No. 7, pp. 553-560
- Elliot, R. (1997), Existential consumption and irrational desire, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 285-296
- Elliot, R. & Jankel-Elliot, N. (2003), Using ethnography in strategic consumer research, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 215-223
- Elliot, R. & Wattanasuwan, K. (1998), Brands as symbolic resources for the construction of identity, *International journal of Advertising*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 131-144
- Escalas, J. E. & Bettman, J. R. (2005), Self-construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 378-389
- Fournier, S. (1998) Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research, *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 24. No. 4. pp. 343-353.
- Gold, R. (1958), Roles in sociological field observation, *Social Forces*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 217-223
- Greenwood, D. N. (2013), Fame, Facebook, and Twitter: How Attitudes About Fame Predict Frequency and Nature of Social Media Use, *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 222-236
- Hanna, R., Rohm, A. & Crittenden, V.L. (2011), We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 265-273.
- Heller Baird, C. & Parasnis, G. (2011), From Social Media to Social Customer Relationship Management, *Emerald Group Publishing Limited*, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 30-37
- Hochman, N. & Manovich, L. (2013), Zooming into and Instagram City: Reading the local through social media, *First Monday*, Vol. 18, No. 7
- Holt, D.B. (2002) Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29, No. 6, pp. 70-90.

- Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M. (2010), Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media, *Business Horizons*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 59-68
- Kleine, R. E., Kleine Schultz, S. & Kernan, J. B. (1993), Mundane Consumption and the Self, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 209-235
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002), The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 61-72
- Kurvinen, E. (2003), *Only When Miss Universe Snatches Me: Teasing in MMS Messaging*, *Proc. of the International Conference on Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces (DPPI 03)*, pp. 98–102
- Lannon, J. & Cooper, P. (1983), Humanistic advertising: a holistic cultural perspective, *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 195-21
- LaRose, R. Connolly, R. Lee, H. Li K. & Hales, K. (2014), Connection Overload? A Cross Cultural Study of the Consequences of Social Media Connection, *Information Systems Management*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 59-73
- Levy, S. J. (1959), Symbols for Sale, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 117-124
- Livingstone, S. (2008), Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: teenager's use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression, *New Media & Society*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 393-411
- Luedicke, M. K., Thompson, C. J & Giesler, M. (2010), Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 36, No. 6, pp. 1016-1032
- MacCannell, D. (1973) Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 79, No. 3, pp. 589-603
- Makela, A., Giller, V., Tscheligi, M. & Sefelin, R. (2000), Joking, storytelling, artsharing, expression affection: A field trial of how children and their social networks communication with digital images in leisure time, *Proceedings of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 548-555

- Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986), Possible Selves, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 41, No. 9, pp. 954-969
- Mick, D. G. & Buhl, C. (1992), A meaning-based model of advertising experiences, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 19, No. 12, pp. 317-338
- Mills, C. W. (1940), Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 5, No. 6, pp. 904-913
- Morgan, M. (2011), Personal Branding: Create Your Value Proposition, *Strategic Finance*, No. 8, pp. 13-14, 60
- O'Brien, C. (2011), The emergence of the social media empowered consumer, *Irish Marketing Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, pp. 32-40
- Okabe, D. & Ito, M. (2003), Camera phones changing the definition of picture-worthy, *Japan Media Review*, August 29, 2003
- Pace, S. (2008), YouTube: An opportunity for consumer narrative analysis, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 213-226
- Peterson, R.A. (2005) In Search of Authenticity*, *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5, pp. 1083-1098
- Rauniar, R., Rawski, G., Yang, J. & Johnson, B. (2013), Technology acceptance model (TAM) and social media usage: an empirical study on Facebook, *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 6-30
- Scott, N. (2013), 9 Steps to Instagram your business, *Director*, pp. 72-75
- Scott, M. B. & Lyman, S. M (1968), Accounts, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 46-62
- Shepherd, I. D. H. (2005), From Cattle and Coke to Charlie: Meeting the Challenge of Self Marketing and Personal Branding, *Journal of Marketing Management*, Westburn Publishers Ltd, Vol. 21, No. 5-6, pp. 589-606
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982), Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 287-300
- Solomon, M. R. (1983), The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A Symbolic Interactionism Perspective, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 319-329

- Taylor, C., Appiah, K. A., Rockefeller, S. C., Waltzer, M. & Wolf, S. (Eds.). (1994). *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton, NJ: *Princeton University Press*, in Gee, J. P. (2001), *Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education*, *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 25, pp. 99-125
- Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B, & Pollio, H.R. (1989) Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: the philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 133-146
- Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J. & Park, C. W. (2005), The Ties That Bond: Measuring the Strength of Consumers Emotional Attachments of Brands, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 15, No, 1, pp. 77-91
- Van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M. & Viswanathan, V. (2005), The uses of personal networked digital imaging: An empirical study of camera phone photos and sharing, *Extended Abstracts of the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pp. 1853-1856
- Vitberg, A. (2010), Developing your personal brand equity, *Journal of Accountancy*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 42-45
- White, K. & Dahl, D. W. (2007), Are All Out-Groups Created Equal? Consumer Identity and Dissociative Influence, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 525-536

6.2 BOOKS

- Agar, M. (1996), *The Professional Stranger*, London: Academic Press
- Aggarwal, P. & McGill, A. L. (2011), *Partners and Servants: Adopting traits of anthropomorphized brands*, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research
- Barthes, R. (1977a), *Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives*, pp. 79-124
- Barthes, R. (1977b), *Image, Music, Text*, New York: Hill and Wang
- Barthes, R. (1991 [1957]), *Mythologies*, Translated by Annette Lavers, New York: The Noonday Press

- Bourdieu, P. (1984 [1979]), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Translated by Richard Nice. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007), *Business Research Methods*, Second edition, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Cassinger, C. (2010), *Retailing Retold: Unfolding the Process of Image Construction in Everyday Practice*, Lund: Lund Business Press
- Chalfen, R. (1987), *Snapshot Versions of Life*, Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University, Popular Press
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996), *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Corrigan, P. (1997), *The Sociology of Consumption, An Introduction*, London: Sage Publications Ltd
- Czarniawska, B. (1998), *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies*, Qualitative Research Methods Series 43. London: Sage Publications Ltd
- Dittmar, H. (1992), *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have is To Be*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Douglas, M. (1982), *In the Active Voice*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1925), *The Great Gatsby*, New York: Scribner, 2004th edition
- Gabriel, Y. & Lang, T. (1995), *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumption and its Fragmentations*, London: Sage Publications Ltd
- Gans, H. J (1968), “*The Participant-Observer as Human Being; Observations on the Personal Aspects of Field Work*” in: Becker, H. S (ed.), *Institutions and the Person; Papers Presented to Everett C. Hughes*, Chicago: Aldine
- Giddens, A. (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Giddens, A. (1993), *Sociology*, Second edition, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Glover, J. (1988), *The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity*, London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press
- Goffman, E. (1979 [1976]), *Gender Advertisements*, London: Macmillan
- Goffman, E. (1972 [1959]), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

- Goldman, R. & Papson, S. (1996) *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising*. New York: Guildford.
- Greimas, A.J. & Courtés, J. (1982), *Semiotics and language. An analytical dictionary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (2000), *The Self We Live By, Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Jenkins, R. (1996), *Social Identity*, London: Routledge
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009) *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun 2:3*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- McCracken, G. (1987), *Advertising: meaning or information?*, Advances in Consumer Research XIV, (Ed.) Wallendorf, M. & Anderson, P.E. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research
- McCracken, G. (1988), *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Mead, G. H. (1934), *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Miller, R. L. (2000), *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories*, London: Sage
- Peterson, R.A. (1997) *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1977), *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Ricoeur, P. (1984), *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Ricoeur, P. (1992), *Oneself as Another*, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- de Saussure, F. (1974 [1916]), *Course in General Linguistics*, translated by Wade Baskin, London: Fontana/ Collins
- Shuker, L. (2010), *It'll look good on your personal statement: A multi-case study of self-marketing amongst 16-19 year olds applying to university*, University of Cambridge, UK: Homerton Collage

- Solomon, M.R. (1996), *Consumer Behavior*, Third edition, London: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited
- Taylor, C. (1992), *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Thompson, J.B. (1990), *Ideology and Modern Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Thompson, J.B. (1995), *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of Media*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Tyler, L. (1978), *Individuality: Human Possibilities and Personal Choice in the Psychological Development of Men and Women*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- Veblen, T. (1975 [1899]), *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Augustus M. Kelly
- Weick, K. E. (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Weilenmann, A., Hillman, T. & Jungselius, B. (2013) “Instagram at the Museum: Communicating the Museum Experience through Social Photo Sharing” in: *CHI '13 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. New York, NY: ACM.
- Welman, J. C. & Kruger, S. J. (1999). *Research methodology for the business and administrative sciences*. Johannesburg, South Africa: International Thompson.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1995), “Making a Study More Ethnographic” in: J. Van Maanen (ed.), *Representation in Ethnography*, London: Sage

6.3 WEBSITES

- <https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B&dLetter=B> [Accessed: 2014-03-14]
- Branding, The Entrepreneur [available online] <http://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/branding> [Accessed: 2014-02-25]
- Dishman, L. (2014), Instagram Is Shaping Up To Be The World’s Most Powerful Selling Tool. Forbes [available online]

- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/lydiadishman/2014/02/13/instagram-is-shaping-up-to-be-the-worlds-most-powerful-selling-tool/> [Accessed: 2014-02-27]
- Duggan, M. & Smith, A. (2013) Social Media Update 2013, Pew Internet [available online]
[Accessed: 2014-03-14]
 - Guiseppi, M. (2009), *10 Steps to Defining Your Authentic Personal Brand: The Personal Branding Worksheet*, Executive Resume Branding [available online] <http://www.careerdirectors.com/members/articles/r26.pdf> [accessed: 2014-03-12]
<http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/12/30/social-media-update-2013/>
[Accessed: 2014-02-26]
 - Hochman, N. & Schwartz, R. (2012), Visualizing Instagram: Tracing cultural visual rhythms, AAAI Technical Reports [available online]
<http://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM12/paper/viewFile/4782/5091> [Accessed: 2014-02-26]
 - Instagram (2014), Our Story, Instagram [available online]
<http://instagram.com/press/#> [Accessed: 2014-02-26]
 - Joseph, J. (2013), What It Really Means to Have a Personal Brand, The Entrepreneur [available online] <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/228462>
[Accessed: 2014-02-25]
 - Lunden, I. (2014), Instagram Is The Fastest-Growing Social Site Globally, Mobile Devices Rule Over PCs For Access, Tech Crunch, [Available online]
<http://techcrunch.com/2014/01/21/instagram-is-the-fastest-growing-social-site-globally-mobile-devices-rule-over-pcs-for-social-access/>
[Accessed: 2014-03-03]
 - Miller, A. D. & Edwards, W. K. (2007), Give and Take: A Study of Consumer Photo-Sharing Culture and Practices, ACM, [Available online]
<http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1240682> [Accessed: 2014-02-25]
 - Peters, T. (1997), The Brand Called You, Fast Company, pp. 83-94, [Available online] <http://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you>
[Accessed: 2014-05-05]

- Smith, A. (2011), Why Americans use social media, Pew Internet [available online] <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/11/15/why-americans-use-social-media/> [Accessed: 2014-02-25]
- Stern, J. (2013), Teens Are Leaving Facebook And This is Where They Are Going, ABC NEWS [available online] <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/teens-leaving-facebook/story?id=20739310> [Accessed: 2014-02-27]