‘Use your megaphones’-

Managers in the Role of Corporate Ambassadors on LinkedIn

by

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Abstract

Title	'Use your megaphones'- Managers in the Role of Corporate Ambassadors on LinkedIn
Course	BUSN49, Degree Project in Managing People, Knowledge and Change
Authors	Danika Brodam & Nadeh Ali
Supervisor	Stephan Schaefer (PhD), Lund University, Sweden
Purpose	The primary purpose of the study is to get a deeper understanding about managers inheriting the role of corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn, and how it impacts their sense of managerial identity. One aspect of this topic is the interrogation of the blurred lines between the professional and private identities of the managers.
Methodology	The study was conducted in line with the qualitative research technique while following an interpretative perspective and adopting an abductive research approach. We adopted a cross-case approach to get a deeper understanding of the phenomena of corporate ambassadors and conducted eight semi-structured interviews via zoom.
Theoretical Perspective	The theoretical perspective of our study discusses literature about identity, managerial identity, identity work, corporate ambassadorship, boundary management, and control. The study focused on these major themes in the online world of social media, mainly on LinkedIn. Besides our empirical results, findings of identity intrusion of employees working as ambassadors by Andersson (2019) and identity regulation by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) provided us with a deeper understanding of the managers' role as corporate ambassadors and the identity work resulting from it.
Contribution	This study contributes to the existing literature about corporate ambassadorship on LinkedIn by examining the impact of this role on managers and their identity work with regard to normative control, boundary work and identity regulation.
Key Words	Identity, Identity work, managerial identity, corporate ambassador, boundary management, control

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We hope you will enjoy the reading!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

“My company is just asking their employees to, you know, use their megaphones to spread the word on social media”

More than 3.8 billion people around the world use social media, and that number is continuously increasing (Mavrodieva et al., 2019). Over the past years, social media and especially social networking sites have become a substantial tool of communication for the general masses but also for business and therefore have changed the way people interact with each other (Castillo-de Mesa & Gómez-Jacinto, 2020). Some of the most popular social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Some people use it to disseminate information and push messages while others use social media to build their professional networks, connect with people around the world who share similar interests, and express themselves freely (Vuori 2012; Dolan et al., 2019). It has become an important part of our everyday life, reducing distances across continents, helping people in making selective choices for consumption, clothing, employment, and/or sharing their reviews about the objects (products, services, jobs, and policies). It further provides a place where professionals can demonstrate their work and advocate for themselves.

One of the most important networks when it comes to business contexts is LinkedIn, which has evolved into the largest social networking site of professional nature with a total number of 645 million users worldwide (LinkedIn, 2019). This social network invites users to spread information about themselves, their business lives, and their accomplishments and is therefore a vital tool for self-expression and self-promotion (Castillo-de Mesa & Gómez-Jacinto, 2020). Employers and job seekers alike continue to use it as their go-to social media platform when looking for the best and brightest (Koch, Gerber, & Klerk, 2018). According to eMarketer’s Digital Trust Benchmark Report, LinkedIn is the most trusted social media platform, as information there is mostly shared by professionals. When it comes to maintaining one's professional brand, having a LinkedIn page is nowadays seen as a necessity for every professional (McCabe 2017).

The widespread use of social media in business nowadays has opened up a whole new field of business research in different fields. Many possible tensions that can evoke through the use of social media in the workplace have been studied, possible examples include but are not limited to the usage of private social media in the labor market or during work time (McDonald & Thompson 2016), the change of power relationships between employer and employee (Wilner, Christopoulos & Alves, 2017), and ambiguities between the understanding of professional or public and private life (Wilner, Christopoulo & Alves, 2017). Quite a lot of attention has also been given to the topic of the identity of managers and leaders within online networks (e.g., Kratzer, Leenders, & Van Engelen, 2005; Korzynski, 2012; Zaccaro and Bader, 2002).

One way how social networking sites are used by organizations is for branding and marketing activities (Korzynski, 2013). While it is most common to use company-owned channels in order to communicate to possible stakeholders like clients and prospects, it gets more and more common to leverage employees as spokespeople for the brand online (Andersson, 2019). We call this concept in the following study corporate ambassador, however different literature might also refer to it as corporate influencer (e.g., Hesse, Schmidt, & Baumgarth, 2020) employee advocate (e.g., Gilbert, De Winne & Sels, 2011), employee ambassador (e.g. Andersson, 2019), etc. Corporate ambassadors carry the reputation of the company since they are the face of the organization in the online world. They have insights into the organization (Zoonen, Meer & Verhoeven, 2014) and communicate on behalf of the organization (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Zoonen, Verhoeven & Vliegenthart, 2016). Their audience is not specific and consists of followers that are known to them (colleagues, classmates) to strangers (peer-network, friends of friends). Andersson (2019) studied how employees deal with the role of “employee ambassadorship” and found that employees working as corporate ambassadors consider the work as an interruption in their private life and therefore suffer from identity tensions.

1.2 Research Problem

The concept of corporate ambassadors has found its way into practice in recent years and is mostly studied as a normative ideal that is expected by employees to be carried out (Heide et al., 2018). As Andersson (2019) states, little is known about how employees themselves think about it and relate to it. That is why we were interested in exploring this phenomenon further from the employee’s point of view. By chance, our initial two interviews happened to be with managers who perceived themselves as corporate ambassadors. The answers we got from them were so puzzling, that we chose to focus on (middle) managers working as corporate ambassadors for our further research, as we found that they related to their role differently than how we have read it so far within the literature. One possible theme we found was to look at what it does to the identity of managers if they work as corporate ambassadors alongside managing their job within a company. Similar to literature referring to management and leadership in the offline world, literature about managers in the online world is often about how managers and leaders should behave to strive (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016; Zaccaro & Bader, 2002).

We were curious, however, to find out whether the online appearance on LinkedIn as a corporate ambassador has an impact on shaping the managerial identity, as this phenomenon adds a new community of followers to the managers' audience and another layer of work, while managerial work has already before been loaded with many different tasks (Alvesson, Blom & Sveningsson, 2017). With an open mind, we opted for a cross-case approach to talk to individuals having diverse backgrounds to get a deeper understanding of corporate ambassadors and their impact on identity. The interviews provided us with a broader picture of corporate ambassadors, who they are, what role they have in an organization and how much influence they can exert. As the concept of corporate ambassadors is still a rather rare phenomenon in practice and every organization defines it in its own way, the initial two interviews helped us in setting the direction of our thesis. We realized that the role of being a corporate ambassador is impacting the role and the self-perception of being a manager. We wanted to find out more about this interconnection, hence the underlying research question of this study is:

How do middle- and senior managers relate to their role as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn and how does this affect their managerial identity?

1.3 Main Findings

Our empirical findings facilitated us in interrogating the role of middle-managers as corporate ambassadors and how they make sense of their role and how this impacts their identity. Our study showed that the role of a corporate ambassador on LinkedIn plays a significant role in how managers build their image on both an internal and external level. As a result, we observed that their managerial identity was enhanced through positive feedback, being perceived as role models for their subordinates, and being somewhat famous within their audience on LinkedIn. We also found that they want to be perceived as experts and that this further strengthens their sense of identity. Next to these positive effects of corporate ambassadorship on identity, we also saw how their roles blurred the lines between their private and professional lives. As proposed by Muller (2017), this is an effect of strong normative control, which she refers to as brand-centered control, that is also reflected in the answers of our interviewees. Albeit this intrusion of their private lives, the managers did not feel pressured or harmed in their private identity, which we explain with the concept of identity regulation as proposed by Alvesson & Willmott (2002) and their well-developed boundary management tactics. In addition, we found the managers to be aware of the power that their roles give them over their organizations and that they utilize it for what we call reverse control. Overall, we therefore find that the managers' role as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn mainly supports their managerial identity work and at least in our case can be seen as less critical than as proposed for example by Andersson (2019).

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The thesis paper comprises six chapters. Chapter one contains an introduction to the study that leads the reader to the background of the corporate ambassador phenomena and significantly to understand the purpose of the research. In chapter 2, we discuss and critically analyze the various literature on the ideas and concepts surrounding image creation and managerial identity of corporate ambassadors. In the following chapter, we discuss our way forward in carrying out the research. It includes an introduction about the case, the rationale behind using a qualitative method, the data collection, sorting technique, reflexivity and limitations. In the 4th chapter, we analyze the abstract of the interviews and share our preliminary interpretations and findings. In chapter 5, we discuss the findings of the interviews and relate them to the literature as presented in chapter 2. In the last chapter, we present the conclusion of the thesis and recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

The following chapter will discuss the current literature that exists concerning identity, especially with regard to the concept of identity work and managerial identity. Furthermore, it will outline aspects of the concept of ambassadorship, especially with regard to the connection between ambassadorship and on the one hand corporate control and on the other hand boundary work in a digital environment.

2.1 Identity

Reflecting on identity is nothing new, in fact, it is a very ancient concern, with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle already discussing questions on "Who am I as a person?" and "What is my place in the world?" (Gioia, 1998). Giddens (1991) defined self-identity as the self as understood by the person in terms of his or her biography. In his book, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* he explained that self-identity is not a distinctive trait, nor is it the collection of traits, possessed by the individual. The identity in late modern society is under consistent construction of self, carrying unique meanings and interest (Giddens, 1991). When it comes to social identities, Goffman (1959), Erickson (1964), and Gergen (1985) all made an influential contribution to the field, arguing that individuals assign themselves socially constructed labels, or masks, as Goffman calls them, through interactions with others. This implies that people identify with a group by supporting and acknowledging the values of the group they are with (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The degree of identification with a group ensures the commitment to this group by their individuals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

We want to put some specific attention to a concept developed by Erving Goffman, who stated in his book in 1959 that individuals tailor their identity for specific audiences and hence introduced the concept of front stage and backstage identity (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman (1959), especially in the workplace, individuals tend to have a very well worked-out identity that is usually different from the one that is shown in private life, with professionalism and competency being the goals of this 'performance' (Goffman, 1959). This implies that employees are able to play their role at work without feeling really attached to it, meaning that they keep a psychological distance from their professional mask to protect their real selves (Goffman, 1959). When Goffman published his famous work, a prerequisite of his assumptions was that individuals tailor their identities based on immediate disclosure and clear physical feedback provided by the audiences they were interacting with (Goffman, 1959).

However, this immediate and clear feedback is a major factor that has changed in the world we live in today. Authors including Goffman and others wrote their books well before the digital revolution that happened over the last 40 years. Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg (2013) claim that the digitalized world of social media platforms resulted in employees' interaction with their colleagues and professional contacts on online social networks. However, these sites make the adaption of identity in some way harder, as people, including employees, talk to a broader, often not clearly defined audience without receiving clear feedback about what this audience thinks of the identity adoption (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013; Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2013). Identity research further shows that social media as well as technical devices like laptops and mobile phones that are commonly used for work nowadays blur the lines between professional and individual identity (Abril, Levin & Del Riego, 2012). Hence, the introduction of social media sites opens up a new way for employees to engage in identity work, which is a concept that will be reviewed in the following sub-chapter as it is a main concept used within the later discussion of this thesis.

2.1.1 Identity work

As stated above, people tend to adapt their identity to the group they are socializing with. Identity is thus clearly not a static construct, but evolves and changes constantly (Pratt, 2001). Therefore, identity exists on two levels: the current level of identification of an individual, which is by some authors referred to as "state", and the adaption of that current identification through individual and situational influences, which is referred to as "process" (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006). As an active response to this dynamic process, an individual reacts with identity work, sometimes also referred to as "identity negotiation" or "identity management" (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006). The concept of identity work is defined for example by Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003, p. 1164 f.): "The concept of identity work refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness. Identity work may either, in complex and fragmented contexts, be more or less continuously on-going or, in contexts high on stability, be a theme of engagement during crises or transitions." This definition builds upon the findings of Alvesson & Willmott (2002) who demonstrate that conscious identity work is based on at least a bit of self-doubt or worries together with inconsistencies that are faced when people encounter other individuals or groups or are faced with images of them.

Especially in organizations where employees are faced with various roles, demands are influencing their ways of how to feel and think about themselves and their work (Kunda, 1992). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) point out that employees are not passive in their way of answering to these roles, but rather engage in ongoing identity work. Cooley already formulated in 1922 that the individual sense of identity is a product of interaction with other members of the society, which led to researchers like Watson (2008) adapting this to the organizational level, showing that employees negotiate their own identity in referring to social identities that are available in the discourse. One of these possible "social-identities" is the managerial identity (Watson, 2008). The following sub-chapter will take a closer look at managerial identity and connect it further to the concept of identity work.

2.1.2 Managerial identity (work)

Identity research of managers and leaders has gotten an especially huge amount of attention within the literature in the last decade (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016). Managerial life is full of contradictions and high expectations, which is why many managers try to work actively in developing an identity that works as a safe space and confirms them in what they are doing (Hill, 1992). However, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016) show that it gets increasingly difficult for managers to develop such an identity, as the tasks are getting more diverse and there is a constant need for flexibility and different forces are having an impact on their sense of self. In their book, *Managerial Lives*, Sveningsson & Alvesson (2016) provided an overview of managerial work experiences and how meanings are created in managerial work.

The book talks about the different images of managerial life, one amongst which is 'being influential'. It refers to an impression of the manager, who formulates theories and controls organizational change and is expected to exert leadership. Subsequently, the resulting managerial life is complex since the middle managers are subordinates to executives and at the same time are superiors to the staff working under their jurisdiction (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016).

Due to the ongoing digital transformation of organizations, authors like Miller (2005) suggest that all managers will work in an online working environment within a few years. This is where our research question adds up to the existing research on managerial identity, which mainly focuses on identity work in the offline world. What we were trying to find out within this study is whether the shift to online networks like LinkedIn and the additional role as corporate ambassador will lead to another form of identity work. All of a sudden managers have the chance to form their identity with the help of an audience outside of their organization and receive feedback for their work from their followers that only get to see what they make them want to see. Therefore, this review contains literature concerning ambassadorship in order to gain insight into the recent findings of this concept and how it can be connected back to identity work.

2.1.3 Identity, image and role

Before heading on to the concept of ambassadorship, we shortly want to address the concepts of identity, image and role and explain how they can be differentiated from each other, as they are all used within our study. As Alvesson (2004) states, some literature refers to identity and role being the same, however, he further claims that they should be carefully separated from each other. Role refers more to an external expectation that is taken over because others are expecting it or in the context of relationship with others (Alvesson, 2004). Individuals can distance themselves from their roles, while this is not possible with their identity (Alvesson, 2004). Identity therefore goes way deeper than a role, it is really how people understand and make sense of themselves and it is processual and not stable (Alvesson, 2004).

The concept of image must be further distinct. As Alvesson (2004) claims, there are different ways to refer to images. Bernstein (1984) defines image as something that is created in order to appeal to the audience and therefore is not necessarily real. Alvesson (2004) further states that an image hence is created in order to give a certain impression, however, “it must not be perceived as untrue, and the manufacturers must avoid producing images that might too easily be proven false.” (p. 71). Image is, therefore, same as role, not completely connected to the individual, but can be seen as an impression that is sent by a communicator to an audience and is hence produced based on the views and projections of both, sender and audience (Alvesson, 2004).

In the following study we will stick to Alvesson’s (2004) way of distinction of these concepts. In conclusion that means that we see role as something individuals take over as expected by others while image is produced to appeal to an audience and is created between sender and audience. In contrast to identity, an individual can distance itself from a role or an image. Identity however “implies a certain form of subjectivity, and thereby ‘ties’ a person’s feelings, thinking, and valuing in a particular direction” (Alvesson, 2004, p. 189). In that sense, employees can have the assigned role of a corporate ambassador, but do not necessarily have to identify with the corporate values and norms. They can use LinkedIn as a way to work on their image but may not identify as the person they pretend to be on the platform.

2.2 Ambassadorship

Literature on corporate ambassadorship highlights the reasons for employees for being strong in co-creating the reputation of an organization. On a general note, employees are recognized as day-to-day representatives of their organization (Helm, 2011) and stakeholders acknowledge that they probably have insights into how the organization works from the inside (Zoonen, Verhoeven & Elving, 2014). Other authors summarize corporate ambassadors as employees who know their company's business and spirit so well that it makes them credible and most importantly authentic representatives of their organization (Agresta & Bonin, 2011).

Research about the concept of employees as ambassadors with a focus on social media networks however is still quite rare as this topic has emerged in practice only recently (Opitz, Chaudhri, & Wang, 2018).

There are some studies referring to the use of social media for work purposes focusing on communication with different stakeholders about their organization (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Zoonen, Verhoeven & Vliegenthart, 2016). They found that two-thirds or eight out of ten employees use social media for work-related tasks. A McKinsey Report from 2009 shows that employees are able to embody an organization's corporate identity and their social media use is substantial for leveraging the benefits of social media as an organization. Other authors even state that employees are the essential asset on social media that forms the reputation of the organization (Cravens, Goad Oliver & Ramamoorti, 2003) Employees as ambassadors are expected to deliver the organizational values on social media as part of their own identity while interacting with the external stakeholders (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001; Karmark, 2005; Andersson, 2019).

Dreher (2014) states that employees' participation on social media has the power to increase the organization's reach and visibility when they share the brand image and brand identity with their own networks. Additionally, they are able to use social media networks to build relations and contacts with target groups like customers or prospective talents (Dreher, 2014).

However, literature on the role of employees as ambassadors on social media also reveals risks for organizations, which are based on the characteristics of social media networks:

- There is an uncountable number of social media tools and networks to be found online and these sites are mostly impossible to be fully regulated or controlled, neither is the behavior of employees within these platforms. Their actions cannot be fully monitored and hence also not be stopped or undone by their organizations, leading to an overall loss of control by organizations over the behavior of employees online (Grunig, 2009). This leads for example to risks of brand image inconsistencies or exposure of vulnerable data like company secrets (Dreher, 2014)
- Once something is put online, it is mostly impossible to remove, meaning that messages will be accessible to everyone over the globe for an unlimited amount of time, without demographic or economic boundaries, including for example also competitors or journalists (Agresta & Bonin, 2011). This factor intensifies the loss of control even more, as organizations are dependent on the behavior of employees online to avoid possible crises (Agresta & Bonin, 2011).
- Smith, Wollan & Zhou (2010) show that social media tools are highly emotional, employees are able to verbalize their satisfaction or happiness, but at the same time their frustration. It is furthermore a fast-moving environment, which forces organizations to react with quasi real-time communication without having precise information about what is going on (Dreher, 2014)

While Grunig (2009) states that corporate communication managers have never actually been in control over messages and actions of employees, social media has now really made this impossible.

All these reasons show the importance for organizations to rely on trusted employees as ambassadors have been growing so much in recent years. This is further a reason why companies are putting more and more effort into working with ambassador programs or assigning actual roles of online ambassadors to their employees in order to make them spread positive brand images on social networks. In the literature about corporate ambassadors, we merely find condensed definitions of the phenomena of ambassadorship online. Many researchers still either mix ambassadorship in the online and offline work in their research or focus on the online appearance in general (including media other than social media, like corporate blogs or websites), or focus on all kinds of employees and their behavior on social media (Andersson, 2019; Dreher, 2014; Zoonen, Verhoeven & Vliegenthart, 2016). We intended to focus on the rising phenomena of employees who are actually inheriting an official role as ambassadors and on a special social media network. In order to distinguish the wording from pure employees, as we focused on managers only, we define the phenomenon of "corporate ambassadors" as follows:

Corporate ambassadors are employees or managers of an organization who are active on social media platforms, especially LinkedIn, in favor of their organizations. They got the official mission from their organization to be active for them and partly follow social media rules and guidelines set up by their organization. They are spreading the values and information of their organizations via their personal pages.

Further, we want to put a special focus on the work of Andersson (2019), who already connected the concept of, how he calls it, employee ambassadors to the concept of identity work, as he criticizes that literature about ambassadorship is most often focusing on the implications on how to exert this from a managerial perspective. Hence, he investigated how employees perceive their role as ambassadors with a critical lens, focusing on their identity work (Andersson, 2019). He found that the role of an ambassador can be perceived as an identity intrusion for employees in their private life, as they perceive it as a duty even off work to represent their company, leading to identity tensions (Andersson, 2019). With our study, we want to add up to his findings, focusing on a special kind of employee - middle- and senior managers- and narrowing the ambassadorship down to online ambassadorship on the social media platform LinkedIn.

2.2.1 Ambassadorship & control

When discussing the phenomena of corporate ambassadorship, literature oftentimes refers to control in some way or another. As touched upon above already, organizations are experiencing a loss of control through social media and their employees being active in this fast-moving environment. Some researchers describe the role of a corporate ambassador as a positive shift of control over the brand or organization they work for, as it gives them the power to shape the brand from within (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001; Karmark, 2005). In support of that point of view, employees working as ambassadors are considered to feel empowered by shaping the identity of a brand (Ind, 2017).

Muller (2017) in contrast examined the concept of internal branding from a critical viewpoint. Internal branding methods can be partly compared to the concept of employee ambassadorship, as it can be seen as a prerequisite for employees becoming active as ambassadors (Andersson, 2019). Internal branding describes methods for aligning "employees' behaviors, attitudes, demeanors, outward appearances and language use" (Muller, 2017, p. 896) to the brand image. Muller (2017) describes this form of employee branding as "brand-centered control" which can be seen according to her as a new form of normative control (Muller, 2017). She argues that empowering the employees and making them advocates of the brand has the potential to regulate the identities of employees and make them adjust their identities to the brand identity (Muller, 2017). Normative control is described as strong identification with the norms and values of an organization, and making employees work towards the companies' goals without exerting actual physical coercion or sanctions (Kunda, 1992). The concept of normative control has been extended in several ways before already, for example by Fleming and Sturdy (2009), who introduced the concept of neo-normative control, which is based on the new attempts of organizations to let employees bring their selves to work and thus invite their private identities to the workplace. Within her study, Muller (2017) extended both concepts of normative and neo-normative control and showed that brand-centered control is a form of control that is extending into the private lives of the employees, that also affects their external audience like friends and family, as employees perceive themselves as brand representatives, during time off work (Muller, 2017).

Andersson (2019) adds to her research by connecting brand-centered control to his findings on the identity work of employee ambassadors. His findings augment Mullers observations about the blurred lines between private and professional life and show that employees working as ambassadors often suffer from identity tensions, during work as well as in their free time (Andersson, 2019).

One way employees deal with these tensions is through boundary management, which is a concept that will be used in this study and therefore will be reviewed in the next chapter.

2.2.2 Boundary management

As we are talking about the identity work of managers online, we also want to touch upon the very closely related topic of boundary work. The concept of boundary work originates in the offline world and describes how individuals form boundaries in order to categorize external stimuli (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996).

Kunda describes boundary management as follows:

"Members are active participants in shaping themselves and others. They may— at various times— accept, deny, react, reshape, rethink, acquiesce, rebel, conform, define and redefine the demands and their responses" (Kunda, 1992, p. 21)

On an organizational level, this means that individuals are not passively under control of normative demands, but rather actively form and manage boundaries (Knapp et al., 2013). Especially in the bureaucratized society, employees have to develop and maintain different identities depending on whether they are in a professional setting or in a personal setting along with friends and family (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Kossek**,** Noe, & DeMarr, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard, Phillips & Dumas, 2005).

Boundary theory is therefore an interesting concept to understand how individuals behave when challenges such as work-life balance or the individual identity vs. corporate identity need to be addressed (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The concept of boundary management is built on two characteristics, ranging from highly segmented to highly integrated individuals, while segmentation refers to individuals who separate their different domains really strictly and individuals who act more integrative rather than have permeable boundaries (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000)

Within our study, we will draw on findings of the study of Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) who investigated the boundary work of employees on online social networks like Twitter and Facebook. They claim that with social media networks rising and being more prominent in the working world, collisions of professional and private domains are increasing online (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2012). They developed a framework that is built on the preferences for segmentation and integration of the employees mixed with their motives of self-enactment and self-enhancement (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2012). In our discussion, we will draw on their online boundary management behaviors that they developed through this framework.

2.3 Chapter Summary

In our theoretical review we pointed out different concepts that are interrelated to the topic of identity and identity work. Most of them have their origins in the offline world, however, we discussed how recent literature has adapted concepts for their use in the online world.

We outlined how the topic of identity was discussed centuries ago but is still getting revised regularly. We showed how specifically managers are constantly working on their identities.

Furthermore, we distinguish the concepts of role, image, and identity from each other, in order for the reader to understand what we are referring to when using the different concepts.

We then outlined the concept of ambassadorship and how it is connected to control and boundary management. While Muller (2017) provides a critical view of ambassadorship, calling it a new way of normative control, boundary work theory suggests possible ways employees are coping with the blurred lines of their private and professional identities.

3 Methodology

In the following chapter, we will present the methodology that is the basis for our thesis, including the philosophical grounding as well as the way we collected our data. We will shortly introduce our interviewees to the reader in order to provide a better understanding of the following analysis. Furthermore, we are going to explain how we analyzed the interviews and, in the end, give some space for critical reflections that come along with our research.

3.1 Research Approach and Philosophical Grounding

The aim of our study is to find out more about the phenomena of middle and higher managers acting as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn. To gain more knowledge about this topic, we engaged in qualitative research, which attempts to make sense of phenomena from the view of the participant (Merriam, 2002). We are following the ontological standpoint that states that reality does not exist in social actors, but rather needs to be crafted through the participants' actions and thoughts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Hence, we are following an interpretive perspective, in which objective truth does not exist, but is rather created subjectively and defined by meanings and contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This implies that, unlike the positivist approach, we do not believe that there is an absolute truth existing out there, but we rather recognize multiple truths that are generated by different opinions and perceptions of different people (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Therefore, we take into account the ontological view of how the world is understood and address the nature of knowledge in the sense that we call accepted knowledge into question (Crotty, 1989).

Especially when it comes to the topic of identity and people's daily work experience, we perceive answers to our questions as highly subjective and recognize that these are constructed based on the interviewees' own sensemaking and construction of meaning. In our case, semi-structured interviews allowed us to explore our respondents' feelings, impressions, and beliefs (Kvale, 1983). These interviews were supposed to give us a deeper understanding of how our interviewees perceive the phenomena of corporate ambassadorship. This was especially interesting to us as corporate ambassadorship is still a quite new phenomenon in practice and contains different meanings for each company and sometimes every department of the same company defines it in its own way. This is why we started each interview with some basic questions about their specific programs and in which way they perceive themselves as corporate ambassadors.

As proposed by Alvesson & Sandberg (2011), we did not want to take part in gap-spotting as a way of problematization, but rather challenge existing assumptions in the literature. As elaborated earlier, existing assumptions in literature are mainly having a negative view of the effects of corporate ambassadorship on employees' identity. However, as the topic of corporate ambassador is emerging and there is not much research on it, we want to partly follow the mystery approach. Partly, according to Alvehus (2018), this abductive approach is an ideal, and few studies are purely deductive or abductive. However, the mystery approach uses empirical data as a point of departure to turn the familiar into the unfamiliar and can be used to question basic assumptions (Alvehus, 2018). In our case, it is thus very helpful to make sense of an emerging phenomenon. Nevertheless, after using the mystery approach for our problematization process, we used the synergetic effects between deduction and induction, meaning that we kept on re-interpreting our empirical material with the help of generating theories from research (Alvesson & Sködberg, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection

In the following paragraph, we want to provide insights into our collection of empirical data, as all of our findings are based on this raw material, and it is hence important to display the process of collecting this material (Styhre, 2013). As outlined above and aligned with the interpretivist approach, we chose semi-structured interviews and interviewed eight managers in total. We worked with a cross-case approach, meaning that the interviews did not stick with one organization and their managers, but instead we talked to corporate ambassadors with management positions in various organizations. This has the practical reason, that there are mostly not (yet) that many corporate ambassadors working within an organization and even fewer who have a managerial background. We wanted to talk to several managers, however, to gain a deeper understanding, so we decided to work with several organizations, trading a possible loss of depth against a variety of different voices that add up to each other.

3.2.1 Case Description

We shortly want to describe the platform LinkedIn that we focused our studies on. In line with the work of researchers like Van Zoonena et al (2018), we believe that the researchers' choice of social media networks does make a difference. Each social media network has a specific purpose and characteristic and is therefore unique in its way of usage. For example, as Skeels & Grudin (2009) show, Facebook is a network that is mostly used privately. Users on Facebook commonly connect to friends and family and share private information including but not limited to things like stating the current state of the relationship, their existing location and/or leisure activities and others. Conversely, LinkedIn is mainly used as a professional network wherein users mostly connect to professional contacts and do not reveal much private information, but rather talk very specifically about their work experience or projects they succeeded in at work (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). In our study, we thus aimed to examine one social network specifically, not mixing different ways of usage and ways of expressing one's self in our survey.

As LinkedIn is a network commonly known for being a business network, where users engage in self-promotion and exchange work-related information (Basak & Calisir, 2014), corporate ambassadors are recognized as an active and important part of this network.Research has found that each profile can paint an idealized portrait of a person's professional identity on LinkedIn (Van Dijck, 2013). The platform offers the opportunity for its users to spread information about themselves, “fostering users’ conscious self-promotion and unconscious self-expression” (Castillo De-Mesa & Gomez-Jacinto, 2020, p. 104). However, the image of users on LinkedIn is not only built by themselves, but also by the activity of their network. By activity, we refer to their replies, reactions to the post and commitment (Pempek et al., 2009).

3.2.2 Sampling

While learning more about the concept of corporate ambassador, we found out that there are different definitions of this concept and no clear boundaries of when a person can be called or calls themselves corporate ambassador. Technically, every employee who is being vocal about their company to internal and/or external audiences can be seen as an employee ambassador. This is why our first step was to come up with a reasonable sampling, meaning we needed to find suitable interviewees to generate empirical material that can answer our research questions (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

As mentioned above, we wanted to be very open in our research approach to respect the fact that the phenomenon of corporate ambassadors is still quite new, especially when we are talking about corporate ambassadorship on social media.

Due to this reason, we conducted two pilot interviews, one with Danika's former colleague Isabel and one with a connection of Isabel, Kiara, who both see themselves as corporate ambassadors. During these interviews, we asked about how they define the concept of corporate ambassadors and why they perceive themselves as such. We used this knowledge to come up with a set of criteria that we applied to the selection process of our candidates. Within our two pilot interviews, we realized that it is easier for our interviewees to reflect on their social media activities if they are more active and post more themselves. Furthermore, Isabel and Kiara emphasized that since corporate ambassadors talk to a broader network, companies mostly choose people as ambassadors who already have bigger followership. Hence, the first criteria set was to look for people who posted at least 6 posts about the company in the last 3 months and had a community of at least 500 people following them. Through our pilot interviews, we found out that corporate ambassadors may perceive themselves as such because they are part of a company program that is actively designating chosen employees to become ambassadors for the company which is sometimes connected to corporate benefits. Consequently, an additional search criterion was people who added the wordings that describe corporate ambassadors in their job descriptions. This last criterion however was not a must-have, as Isabel stated that she was not part of a real company program herself and hence would not put it in her job description, but still perceived herself and was called like that within her workplace as a corporate ambassador on LinkedIn.

After we had our initial two interviews, we realized that we, without having it planned, had spoken to two managers: Isabel being a senior project manager, and Kiara being a communication manager. Going through the interviews, we found that we had collected interesting and surprising answers, that differed partly quite a bit from what we expected. We focused on the parts that surprised us and found out that these parts were mainly connected to their roles and self-perceptions as managers. We thought this was very interesting and decided to revise and adapt our research question, adding the focus on middle and higher managers acting as corporate ambassadors, not only "normal" employees. This was aligned with our goal to follow the mystery approach, as we were led by our empirical material in the formulation of our research question.

Hence, we also added another criterion to our selection list: We reached out only to people who were at least middle managers. All of the above-mentioned criteria (6 posts in 3 months, 500+ contacts, job position) are openly displayed on every LinkedIn profile, which made it easy for us to apply and check these criteria.

In order to find such profiles in the first place, we entered multiple groups on LinkedIn (e.g., corporate influencer: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12274970/) where we checked various profiles of the members. Other than that, we also put different keywords like "corporate ambassador", "corporate influencer", "employee ambassador" in the search bar of LinkedIn and checked these profiles for our criteria. That way, we tried to randomize our selection as well as possible, however, we have to acknowledge that the randomization was somehow restricted, mostly for technical reasons. LinkedIn settings allow you to see full profiles only if you are connected to the person on the first level (direct contacts) or second level (contacts of direct contacts). This is why we only get access to those profiles that are somewhat within our bubble of connections.

To put together our final set of interviewees, we made a list of 20 prospects whose profiles fit our criteria and contacted them via direct message on LinkedIn, asking straightforwardly if they want to participate in interviews for our Master Thesis. We did not reveal the topic of our thesis for them to not try and prepare a set of answers. Regarding the fact that we contacted strangers working in higher management positions, we were surprised and happy about the number of positive replies we got, leading to six more interviews that we were able to schedule in addition to our two pilot interviews.

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

In total, we interviewed eight managers who fall into the above-mentioned category. The following table gives a short overview about who we talked to and which kind of management position they were having. Furthermore, it provides some insight in which way they are active as corporate ambassadors, whether there is an official company program and if they were given specific guidelines on how to act as an ambassador. The names of the interviewees as well as their companies have been changed for confidential reasons.

Table 1*: Overview about Interviewees*

Name (synonym) & Position	**Corporate Ambassador Program & Guidelines**
Katia Communication & Marketing Manager	● Took part in an official program that motivated the employees to be active on LinkedIn ● No corporate benefits for being active online ● Specific guidelines for posting company related topics on social media

Annika PR and marketing manager	● Not part of an official program ● The company offered a special LinkedIn workshop for interested employees ● General guidelines on social media use when starting to work for the company, but no rules for corporate ambassadors
Karl Senior Sales Key Account and Branding & Imaging Manager	● No official program, but being active on social media on behalf of the company is “welcomed” by the company ● Company offers training for social media in general
Karlotta Head of Marketing	● No official program, but marketing department tries to motivate employees to be more active on LinkedIn ● No official rules, just “don’t post crap”
Carolyn Client Account Lead	● The company organized a MS Teams Group in which they post information about what could be shared ● Company offers social media templates they can use to post ● Special onboarding for corporate ambassadors with guidelines for correct social media use
Ken Team Lead	● Company at the very beginning of the program, first steps were taken last year ● No official guidelines
Kiara Marketing & Communications Manager	● New program within the company including a report on how many likes their corporate ambassadors get ● Orientation calls in the beginning of the program to know which topics are more interesting for which audiences and to talk about guidelines
Isabel Senior Project Manager	● No official corporate ambassador program ● No guidelines for social media use

Source: *Own representation based on the interviews conducted*

The interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted via Zoom. This way, we were able to record the interviews easily and not only analyze the spoken words later, but also the facial expressions or gestures that our interviewees made. Furthermore, we also did not have to take notes during the interviews and were able to focus on the interview itself, creating a nice environment for the interviewee, listening carefully and responding to interesting statements with further questions. Therefore, the analysis of our interviews partly started during the data collection process (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018)

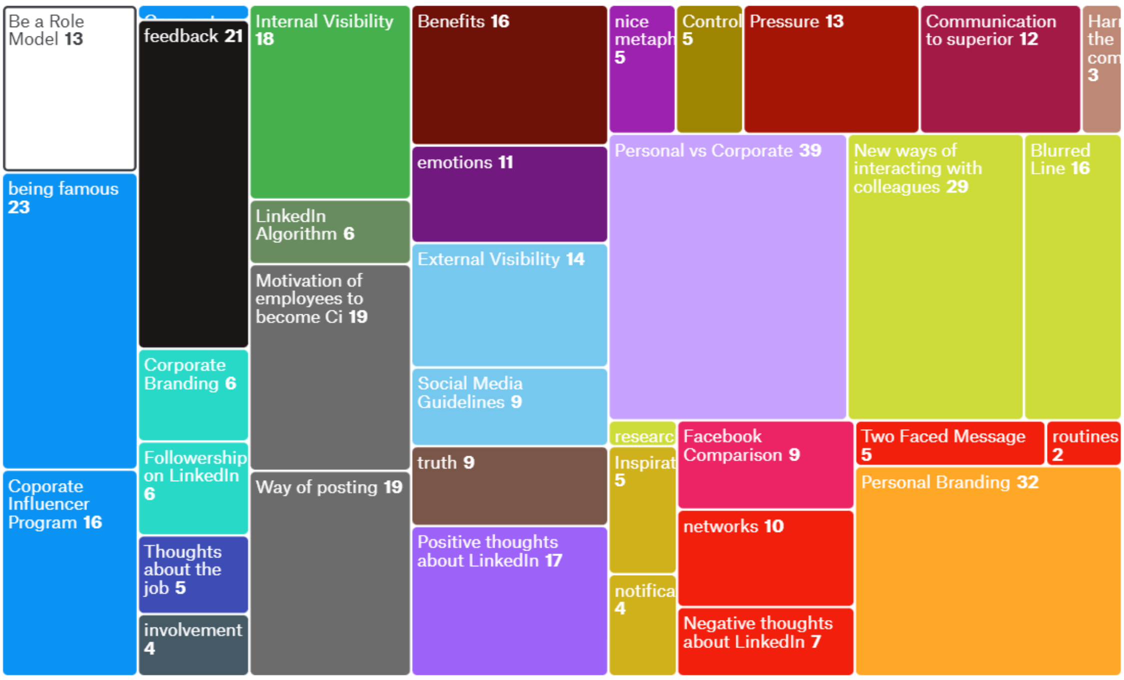
We prepared an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, that we followed in every interview but that also allowed us to ask additional questions dependent on the answers of the interviewees. This way, in line with the interpretivist tradition, we encouraged an open dialogue and did not just look for answers that we expected (Kvale, 1996). Additionally, participants were thus able to describe their perspectives in a lively and detailed way (Bryman, 2016). In order to find out more about how they were really feeling and being able to ask more specific questions, we partly followed the show-and-tell method as proposed for example by Crawford, Chiles and Elias (2020). In their paper about long interviews, they propose shifting from passive "question-and-answer" interviews to more interactive sessions, in which interviewees can cope easier with the complexity of topics and questions (Crawford, Chiles & Elias, 2020). As we interviewed the managers about past activities, for example asking about their way of posting and how they perceive their own actions on LinkedIn, we thought it was a good way to let them tell and show us their own posts within the interviews. That is why at some point in the interviews, we asked our interviewees to share their screens with us and to log into their own LinkedIn page. In preparation for each interview, we connected with the interviewees on LinkedIn and looked at their posts, so we knew what to expect. Through showing us their profile themselves, we hoped to get a deeper understanding of how they felt about it and having explicit examples made it easier to ask more focused questions. Usually, activities in the past cannot be looked at concretely and the researcher has to believe in the credibility of his or her participant, however with this method we were partly able to uncover whether the perception of the managers of what they did in the past is aligned with their real activities in the past (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020).

3.3 Data Analysis

As we conducted semi-structured interviews where we encouraged participants to speak freely, our material obtained a certain amount of disorder. That is why, after transcribing, our first step was to sort the material, which we did by dividing it by content, meaning by its whats and hows as proposed by Gubrium and Holstein (1997). In that sense, we first had a look at the topics that were discussed in the interviews, followed by the way the interviewees communicated that message. (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). As proposed further by Gubrium and Holstein (1997), we shifted between video material and the transcribed text to scrutinize not only what the interviewees said, but also the way they said it, in regard to body language and humor or ironic statements. Thereby, we were able to uncover emotions, ideals, and understandings of reality in a better way, consequently linking them to the content of what was said (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). As mentioned above, we proceeded like this at first with our two pilot interviews, in order to gather some initial findings that we would then use to put together criteria for our further interviewees. Additionally, we used the data we got from our first two interviews to adapt our interview guide a little bit to firstly take the information we got from two practitioners into account and secondly pay respect to the shift of our focus to managers as corporate ambassadors.

After sorting our data, we coded our interviews with the help of an online tool (atlas.ti), which allowed us to highlight important statements and put one or several codes to them while having the interview itself open on our second screen. After coding every interview, the program helped us to get an arranged overview of our themes and which codes we used most often. That way it was easier for us to perform a categorical reduction and to go on with the analysis of our themes.

Figure 1: *Screenshot of our atlas.ti dashboard showing some of our codes*



Source: *atlas.ti dashboard*

After achieving this improved overview, we started with the sensitive procedure of reducing our material to deal with the problem that we could not include all our empirical material in our project (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). As mentioned, we used categorial reduction, hence we categorized the material and prioritized certain categories over others (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Thanks to our two pilot interviews, we have already shifted our focus a bit to the managerial identity theme. Nevertheless, we found many more topics that were touched upon by our interviewees, which surprised us quite a bit and went in different directions than we had expected. We also looked for repetitions, metaphors, and analogies that our participants used to describe their thoughts, like Ryan and Bernard (2003) describe it and cross-referenced between the different interviewee statements, to better understand how they make sense of the phenomena of corporate ambassadorship.

In multiple discussions, we tried to set a focus for our upcoming analysis on the themes we wanted to touch upon. At this point, we tried to stay abductive in treating our data so that our theoretical background does not steer our analysis into a specific, pre-defined direction. However, we also want to give space to the fact that we as researchers come along with a specific pre-understanding of a) possible theoretical backgrounds through our study program, and b) practical insights into the topic of corporate ambassadors, as Danika works part-time for an agency that works with corporate ambassadors. Strauss & Corbin (1997) already described this factor of one's personal experiences that researchers bring with them to a study. There is no way of denying this fact and we certainly did recognize our pre-existing knowledge within our discussion about our findings. We tried to see it as a chance to have an open dialogue with our empirical material while at the same time we kept reflecting on our interpretations (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). At this stage, it was especially helpful to us to write this study in tandem, as we were able to challenge each other. This led to an improvement in the quality of our work.

In the end, we put our focus on the following two main themes, which we want to analyze further in the following chapters:

- **Image**: We saw several sub-themes that we clustered together under one broader topic which refers to the image of the managers. Within this theme, we will cover the sub-themes of internal image creation and external image creation, how managers are involved in these activities on LinkedIn and how this is connected to their managerial identity.

- **Blurred Lines:** This theme was uncovered quite easily as most managers refered to boundaries that exist on LinkedIn and how they perceive their private life on the network. This theme refers to our research question in the sense that it covers the blurring of the private and professional identities of our managers.

To analyze our findings, we used the Emerson method of constructing excerpt-commentary units, which are based on the four elements analytical point, orientation, empirical excerpt, and analytical comment (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Hence, we first indicate what we want to present, then introduce the reader to the empirical excerpt we want to show and insert it, and then make the analytical point, using the excerpt as support (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

3.4 Reflexivity and Limitations

Before moving ahead to the analysis section of our study, we want to take into account that with the abductive approach we have chosen for our thesis and the interpretative lens that we are using, there is some need for reflexivity in our content and the influence of our empirical material.

As stated at the beginning of this methodology part, we accept that qualitative research comes with a high level of subjectivity, both from our researchers' and the respondents' perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018; Bryman & Bell, 2011). This leads to our research and the conclusions we draw being very connected to our individual setting, making it not replicable to different contexts. In spite of this, we are still aware that we must constantly question and reevaluate our assumptions in order to move beyond mere reflection (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

As our findings rely on the empirical data from qualitative interviews, we want to start with our handling of source critique. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018) describe two ways to critically reflect on the empirical data collected in the research. Firstly, it talks about the criticism of distance, which describes the level of remoteness the source has from its described event in time and space. The more they are apart, the less valuable the source is. (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). We were aware of this way of criticism in our research, which is one of the reasons that we only chose interviewees that were active on LinkedIn within the last month. Furthermore, we only asked questions about those postings that were published within the last 6 months and tried not to talk about events that lie far in the past. However, we acknowledge that in the fast-moving online world, events that happened 6 months ago might seem ancient already, hence whenever we talked about concrete posts, we let the participants read through them again before answering our question.

The second criticism described by Alvesson & Sköldberg (2018) is the criticism of dependency, which describes how many hands the information went through before it got processed by the researcher. In our case, this factor is very low, as we collected all of the data we used on our own and the participants also talked about themselves and not anyone else's experiences (primary data).

However, we acknowledge that even though our empirical sources are low in the two named critics, there is more to be aware of. Schaefer & Alvesson (2020) state, that it is hard to even connect the statements of interviewees to them subjectively, as the empirical material may not reveal any kind of truth, since interviewees might follow social norms or state things out of political interests. This is why they ask for a careful balancing act between what people say in interviews and critically reflecting on these sources. As proposed by Schaefer & Alvesson (2020), we wanted to find a way to handle our sources with care and check the trustworthiness of the answers we got in our interviews. In order to improve our source-critical practices, we involved extra source critique in our data analysis, which is necessary because "we cannot readily accept what people tell us but need to have a set of different sources which are immediately related and used for the support or questioning of a focal source" (Schaefer & Alvesson 2020, p. 41). When talking about the way our interviewees craft posts or what they think of their appearance on LinkedIn, we had a look at their online profiles again to testify whether this is aligned with how they make sense of themselves in our interviews. This furthermore helped us to unravel deeper meaning in our data and interpret what was said based on norms and values we uncovered.

At this point we also want to mention again that our interviews were held via digital format with the help of Zoom, hence our interviews lack a personal connection. This for sure restricted our possibilities in the interpretation of body language and gestures. However, as shown above, we believe that this way of interviewing also has its advantages and allowed us to focus on the interviewee during our talks, as we were able to record video and voice through zoom. We further believe that through the COVID-19 pandemic having digital meetings is much more common and at least for our interviewees this way of talking was fairly normal and did not lead to any perplexity or unease. There was no shaky internet connection, and we did not happen to have any technical issues, either on our side or on the participants' side.

Lastly, as proposed by Mason (2002), next to staying reflexive about our research, we further tried to enhance our qualitative work by making our research process transparent by providing the reader with detailed insights into what we have done.

3.5 Chapter Summary

To summarize, in this chapter we discussed the way we carried out our research thesis. Since our research is primarily based on people's daily work-life experiences and their identities, we recognized that empirical material obtained is based on our participants' thoughts, actions, sense of objects, and construction of meaning. This led us to explore the topic with the help of qualitative study. We have assigned our study to an interpretative perspective that assumes that social reality is created subjectively and is defined by meanings and contexts.

As corporate ambassadorship is a quite new phenomenon within practice and research, it can be understood that every industry specialist we contacted defines it from their own perspective. To find out more about their individual perceptions, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews with managers in the role of corporate ambassadors of different industries to understand our topic from diverse points of view. We maintained the mystery approach throughout and kept on re-interpreting our empirical material to explore the topic more in detail while maintaining the sense of our material. We analyzed our material using the Emerson method of constructing excerpt-commentary units to make a case for our argument with a real-life example. Lastly, as researchers of this study, we have critically evaluated the responses and sources and aimed to stay reflexive throughout the course of this study.

In the following sections, the role of middle and senior managers as corporate ambassadors and the impact on their identity work is discussed in light of the empirical material obtained.

4 Empirical Findings

In the following, we will present our empirical findings on the two themes and their sub-topics that we derived from the interviews.

Whether our interviewees liked or disliked LinkedIn as a platform, all eight of them realized that it is a very good platform to present an image of themselves, even though they rarely called it like that. Most of them referred to it as "*personal branding*" or "*social selling*" or some other keywords, however, we will gather all these wordings under the head topic of the image, as the managers are actively sending out their image to a receiving audience. We were aware before our study, and most interviewees pointed out as well, that social networking sites are a tool for putting up a picture of yourself that you want others to see. Hence, we were not surprised that it was so present in the heads of our interviewees. However, we found it interesting which kinds of images they produce of themselves and how this influences their sense of managerial identity. That is why in the following abstract we will analyze the way they create an image of themselves on LinkedIn on two levels which we call internal and external. Internal in this context can be understood as communication within the own company. By external we refer to the rest of their audience, meaning basically everyone but their colleagues, as you are free to connect with whomever via LinkedIn. We are aware that their communication, in general, is happening on an external network, however, we want to use this wording in order to distinguish the different audiences that the managers are talking to. When talking about internal and external, we are therefore not looking at the post itself (which is always external) but at the direction of communication and the intended audience of the message.

4.1 Internal Image Creation

We were especially surprised by the effort the managers put into creating an image of themselves within their own company as we would not have expected LinkedIn as a tool for internal communication. In the following subsections, we will shed light on the different ways of using LinkedIn for internal image creation and how this has implications for the identity work of the managers.

4.1.1 Feedback - Is the CEO responding?

While some posts are openly directed to colleagues– like a heads up for a very well-written article for example– others have been surprising to us, as the managers put an underlying message to it that differed from the openly displayed message they were sending.

The first matter that almost all managers confirmed was that they used their posts to get feedback for what they did on LinkedIn from their colleagues or higher managers. Via LinkedIn, as with every other social media network, it is easy to give and receive fast feedback by just pressing the "like"-button or writing a short, sometimes pre-formulated, comment. When asked whether our interviewees were interested in that kind of feedback by anyone, most of them said they would not care so much about the number of likes or comments they get after posting, however nearly all of them checked their profile more regularly after publishing something. Some mentioned that they sometimes go back to their posts to examine the analysis that LinkedIn is providing per post. There has been some agreement that "celebration posts" are the most successful and that you get the most feedback in the form of reactions to these. Some mentioned that this is what LinkedIn is for, posting things you have achieved and celebrating them. We realized that within these celebration posts they commonly tagged colleagues or managers. Some mentioned that tagging colleagues in the posts is very common for them, in order for the tagged people "to see the post" and to know that they shared something with or about them. Depending on the topic, some used their online appearance as a way to prove to their bosses that they were engaged with the topics they were talking about. Often, they also tagged their CEOs, even when there is no obvious connection between the topic of the post and the CEO as a person. When we asked Annika about why she tagged her CEO in a post that did not have any concrete connection to him, she mentioned:

"So that he can see that I am engaged. But not to get like positive feedback from him or 'Oh, God, I'm so proud to share the article'. But just to give him a sign "Hey, I also do a lot to share this, to get a broader network to see these posts." (Annika)

Even though she says in her first sentence that she did not tag him to get direct positive feedback about the article she wrote, the last part of that statement implies that she is expecting some positive feedback or at least acknowledgment of him for sharing this article in order for more people to see it. Annika was also the one who stated within a later answer that she once shared a post that she was really proud of but then did not receive a lot of feedback via LinkedIn to it which left her to be sad. What we can see from these two statements is that she uses LinkedIn as an additional source of receiving feedback, not directly for her achievements, but also for putting it out there.

Our interviewee Katia mentioned how within her company it was very normal to use LinkedIn as a way to get feedback from superior management, that she would in the real world never have access to:

“And so when you share the official posts on your personal page, you would often get, you know, likes or comments from people higher up in the organization, who would say, oh, yeah, this is gonna be great. So that was good to get visible internally for your own career growth.” (Katia)

Another interesting example of internal feedback was given by Isabel, our senior project manager. She recently posted her 1-year celebration of staying with the company where she named clients and "passion projects" she worked with and published it with a cheerful picture showing herself together with her colleagues saying that she is incredibly thankful for her team members that make work-life amazing. We took this post as an anchor for our questions. On the question of why she tagged her clients and projects in there, she stated:

“Fellow employees or other people who are connected with me can look at their [the clients’] profiles and say: ‘See what she’s doing.’”

This comment implies that her direct message of the post is not the same as her indirect message. While the direct message is about her celebrating her one-year celebration, the underlying message of the post is also to show off to her network of fellow employees who and what she is working with. This shows how receiving feedback is really connected to creating an image of yourself on LinkedIn. Colleagues can see what Isabel is doing while at the same time she receives some positive feedback for it. When looking at the statements about the posts and the managers’ achievements, one has to keep in mind that they create these celebrations all by themselves - there is no one actually proving whether or not they really did a good job. Interestingly for example, when asked about these “passion projects” Isabel mentioned in her post, she stated that she was indeed passionate about two of them, but the third one was actually a “pain in the ass”. This statement alone shows how she uses LinkedIn to create an image of her and her work that does not necessarily match with her real work-life but will give her some good feedback within her company.

Hence, most managers claim that they use LinkedIn in some way or another to get positive feedback from their subordinates or higher managers.

4.1.2 Being a role model - Hey, you can do it, too!

What we furthermore heard a lot from our managers as a reason to become active on LinkedIn in favor of their company was that they wanted to be a role model for their team in different ways. This is also a means of internal communication and can moreover be seen as image creation and formation of identity for themselves. In no case were the managers asked by someone to take over a role model role, for example by superior management, they rather felt this need themselves. Some interviewees wanted to motivate their employees to become active on social media by being a good example in going ahead with posting on LinkedIn. As Karl expresses it, he is mostly talking to internal colleagues to "*use their megaphones*" as well. Some connected their managerial position directly to the role model position on LinkedIn, so they felt kind of obliged through their position to be active on LinkedIn, even when they did not get any other benefit out of their online activity. Karlotta put it like this:

"It was really my motivation to get more outsun employees to come up with the idea of writing something, maybe sharing my post or writing something themselves based on that. […] That's why it's important to me to give the developers who work for us a little push and say, 'Hey, posting isn't that hard, why don't you give it a try?'. And I can talk a lot, of course, but if I don't do it myself, it wouldn't be cool."

What we can see from this quote is that Karlotta is aware of the benefits that being active on LinkedIn can have for the company and that she wants more of her employees to use it for that reason. She sees herself as a role model online and establishes this image of a thought leader in her company. As she is the head of marketing, she knows how important the employer brand building activities are on LinkedIn. She further stated that she often reaches out to her employees to ask them to become more active and post more on social media. However, she feels that she cannot ask it without becoming active herself and being a role model for her employees. Of all managers we talked to, Karlotta was the one who emphasized on being a role model the strongest, she talked about it several times, how she also wants to set up templates through her posts, that other employees can just reshare and how she wants to educate them about the positive influences that being active on LinkedIn can also have on their brand.

Even though Karlotta was an outstanding example of the role model identity, other interviewees emphasized that theme as well, most of them see themselves as a precursor for others to follow their activities or to multiply their posts, as can be seen in the following quotes:

"We are setting an example for other colleagues for how they can be brand ambassadors as well." (Katia)

"[...] then more company people can multiply my posts, and it's, you know, good for the company." (Karl)

In no case did the managers reach out actively to their employees and ask them to multiply the posts or to talk about the topics that they thought were interesting. Katia and Karl never even mentioned to their colleagues that they want them to share topics online as well. Karlotta did mention that she tried to convince her employees to become active as well.

However, we thought it is particularly interesting, how they used their activity on LinkedIn in order to create an image of themselves that they want to see in their employees, by exhibiting positive behavior that they hoped would just emulate naturally in their subordinates as well.

4.1.3 Reverse Control - making it public

Another interesting aspect we found in our interviews was the connection between the image our managers set up on LinkedIn and how they used this to exercise control over their own company. We did not focus on any questions relating to the use of power and control internally, instead, we did ask whether the companies and brands exercised some kind of control over the corporate ambassadors in the form of providing guidelines and rules on what to post. As we are still talking about private profiles that are getting used for corporate messages, we initially thought that this might be an issue for the managers and their sense of identity.

What we found out, however, is that first of all the companies exercise quite little control over the content that is getting published or the way that they publish it. Only a few companies had a set of guidelines for corporate ambassadors, most of them only provided some "general social media guidelines" during the onboarding phase. Others provided some general LinkedIn training, which was mostly less about rules on LinkedIn but more about how to boost performance and visibility. Only a few did get an actual set of rules and guidelines on how to act as a corporate ambassador on LinkedIn, what is allowed and what is not. Furthermore, only one of our eight employees, Katia, reported that superior management also controlled what was posted and how often. She mentioned that the controlling authority would now and then go through the posts published "just to make sure there isn't anything needed to be flagged for them like anything related to corporate branding or internal information or something". Isabel even stated that she asked her CEO whether there are any specific guidelines she needs to take care of when posting on LinkedIn on behalf of the company and the reply was no. Direct, open control is hence less used by the organizations in our cases, which surprised us as the image of the brand is so vulnerable on social media and already way less controllable for organizations, as shown in chapter 2.2.1. We will cover this topic further at the end of our analysis.

What we discovered however is that most interviewees were so well connected to their company culture and their values in general, that they felt like they had the right sense of how to "behave" online. Most of them said they would never talk about politics or engage in emotional discussions. Moreover, we were talking to middle or higher managers, who had an impact on the factor of control, as some of them had a double position where they were acting as a corporate ambassador but at the same time were in charge of setting up the guidelines and being somehow involved in the execution of the program.

Karlotta for example stated that "At the end of the day, I'm actually the one who can dictate it [the program]." Hence none of the managers actually felt like they were getting controlled by their company and felt mostly free in their social media activities.

A surprising factor concerning the theme of control and image creation was how they used their online image to exert some kind of what we will call reverse control. To illustrate this we refer to Isabel, who we talked to about her one-year celebration post.

By showing publicly what she is achieving and who she is working for, she wants to send the message of being strongly linked to the company and its identity:

"It is good for them [her employer] as they are very active on LinkedIn to see that I identify with the company and also to post stuff that they cannot take from me afterward" (Isabel)

The first part of the sentence implies that she knows that it is good for her when other people see she identifies with her company. However, it does not show whether or to what level she truly identifies with it. Furthermore, the way she uses the platform so that her bosses cannot take benefits or the identification away from her shows how LinkedIn as a public platform gives some control over her benefits to Isabel. When asked to elaborate further on what they could take away from her and what she means with this part of the sentence, she stated that it "will look bad" for the company if they take something away from her that she stated in public. In this case, she was referring to her remote position, which she was afraid of losing after the pandemic ended, so it is very interesting to see that she thinks she can keep this position by showing off publicly that she is allowed to work remotely.

Karlotta was also referring to this kind of reverse control when talking about a posting she made about lightning talks, which is an internal education program at her company. She stated that she let it look like she holds lightning talks on a regular basis in her post about the event, even though she only did it once. However, she wants the company to have more lightning talks about marketing topics, as the following statement shows:

"I think it would be cool if the lightning talks go beyond the tech topic and more people share their knowledge, so I thought posting about this topic can increase awareness to have more lightning talks like mine." (Karlotta)

She emphasizes less strongly the control she is exercising, yet it gets obvious that she wants to achieve a change within her company with her post, which is originally just about her sharing her experience with her own lightning talk. This shows how she is using her public image on LinkedIn to put more pressure on the decisions made within her company.

All in all, we draw from this first section, that the managers actively form an image of themselves on LinkedIn that is directed towards their own company, meaning subordinate and superior co-workers. LinkedIn as a platform is here used to either receive additional (positive) feedback for things they have achieved or pretend to have achieved and to take on the identity of a role model in being a spokesperson for the company. Furthermore, against prior expectations, direct control exercised towards the corporate ambassadors is less strong but rather works in the opposite direction, meaning that the managers use their online image to exercise control over their company, what we like to call reverse control.

4.2 External image creation

We further want to pay some attention to the external image creation that we also saw our managers engaging in.

Again, the wording external is referring to their communication to everyone who does not belong to their own company. The managers reported that on LinkedIn they are connected to clients, former colleagues or fellow students, fellow industry experts, recruiters, or also just random people with whom they made a connection for reasons like sharing the same name. All these people form the external network of a profile on LinkedIn and hence are an audience that the managers are talking to when being active on the platform. We want to focus on two ways the managers are using LinkedIn in this way, one refers to “adding value”, the other one to “being famous”.

4.2.1 LinkedIn should not be a second Facebook

A subject that was touched upon surprisingly often within our interviews was the platform Facebook as a negative example. This turned out to have an impact on how the managers constructed their own image on LinkedIn and how they perceived others.

The first encounter of the comparison with LinkedIn to Facebook we had when talking to Karlotta. She told us that she uses LinkedIn less these days because it “has degenerated into a second Facebook” for her. When asked about what she meant by that she clarified that the content on LinkedIn has become *“a lot of, let's say, subjective exchange of opinions, sometimes not so professional anymore”.* This implies that to her, LinkedIn should be a professional platform, with professional meaning that you should not display subjective opinions too much. When asked which topics Karlotta would like to see instead, she replied as follows:

“I think it would be cool if there were more concrete marketing strategies. At the moment, even those who bring a lot of expertise are somehow all in a completely different bubble and deal with completely different topics, which are of course also important, but don't bring so much added value for me professionally right now.”

Other managers who also talked about this Facebook/LinkedIn comparison added that for them, what distinguishes Facebook from LinkedIn the most is the “added value” part. Isabel, for example, stated the following:

“I'm really not a big fan of just sharing random things because this is the stuff I don't like to read. I don't like to read posts about people who say "Hey, this is me", is just pretty random and there's no added value in it.”

Her statement indicates that she prepares content that has some value for herself to read and that she would like to be perceived as someone that is reputable and has something important to share.

Karl adds that he tries to “weed out” the content, meaning that he separates more professional content from the “garbage” or “dirty discussions”. He also tries not to add up to this garbage content and instead post more valuable knowledge. From the way managers perceive other posts, we tried to figure out how they perceive and actively build their own image on LinkedIn. Drawing on their statements, there should be plenty of helpful, quite scientific content or at least some kind of “hands-on” content that draws learnings from own experiences and shares this as *added value* for the community. All of them agreed on the fact that LinkedIn should not become a “weird corporate Facebook environment”, as Katia expressed it.

We assume that the managers themselves want to present an image to their followers that seems to be very professional, and they want to achieve this through posting content that adds some value. When going through their personal profile pages, we can see that some managers like Karlotta really stick to this plan, meaning that she is posting learnings from corporate events that she attended, or whitepapers. Others, like Isabel, Karl, or Katia, post a lot of private or “celebrating” content on LinkedIn, even though they said in the interviews they do not like to read content that is private or without added value.

What we take from this is the desire of our interviewees to post content that is not meaningless in the sense that they really want to add value to their network with what they are saying. Through this, they are trying to put out an image of themselves as being experts in their roles. However, most of our interviewees do not succeed and most often share random information about their companies or celebration posts. Therefore, we felt some hypocrisy within the statements of the managers when they reflected upon their own behavior on LinkedIn. What we cannot draw from the interviews is whether they believe that they add some value on LinkedIn or not, but we interpret their hypocrisy as an attempt to build an image of professionalism.

4.2.2 Being famous

One of the questions asked during the interviews was related to the target audience and the subsequent expectation of our interviewees about posting on LinkedIn. The most common responses were about a) promotion of the company product, b) showcasing their expert opinion about the topic, c) availing themselves of the potential benefits of career progression, and d) increasing the reach of the post.

Though none of our interviewees talked explicitly about the need for acknowledgment and recognition, the responses to our questions reflect the impression that alongside conveying their professional identity to the greater masses, our interviewees intend to grasp the attention of the masses with these posts.

Kiara shares her contrasting experience with her posts. To her, LinkedIn was kind of intimidating in the beginning when she started to become active on the platform. She was careful about the selection of words and evaluated each post on the basis of its coherence and relevance to the topic in hand. This indicates an interesting insight about Kiara, who is sensitive about her image building from the viewpoint of her network. The underlying aspect behind her action speaks louder about the attention and recognition of her online identity which consequently is nourishing her image creation.

The quantifiable numbers in terms of connections, followers and likes on the posts created a feeling of excitement amongst our interviewees. Some of them tagged the people and some used hashtags to enhance the outreach of the post. This element of recognition can be seen in the following post:

"And then I had likes from people all over the world. And people are also commenting on this, like, congratulations, Annika. People that I just don't know. And I was a little bit shocked. But also, I mean, it was nice. But then again, it's like, okay, this is so random that I just posted the certificate. People don't know me, and I didn't have any more text on this. But it got so many likes. (Annika)"

Similarly, Isabel likes to tag her accomplished projects on the post with an intention to invite her fellow employees and all other connections of hers to look at her profile and say, "See what they're doing". She is achieving a manifold purpose here; letting her connections know about her expertise and the clients she is working for. All she needs in return is a recognition of her efforts and work that is enhancing her image building.

Annika shared the following interesting feedback when asked about her existing role in the company:

"I am actually proud, because what I think is cool working in the PR and communications field that I am in is that, I don't mean this in an arrogant way, but everybody knows your face. So when I join meetings, we are like 250 people from all over Europe. And when we have like these All-Team meetings, you don't even recognize faces sometimes because there are too many people. Since I am communicating for the company, internally and externally, I am talking a lot, you know, and people know me. And this is cool, because they also reach out to me when they need help and everything like this, which I think is very cool. And this is also why I am proud being able to communicate externally, also on LinkedIn." (Annika)

What we see from the abstract is a great level of satisfaction in the current role of Annika which has kept her in public attention. As a focal person of the company, everyone approaches her for any kind of help. This is the image that has been created in the minds of the other employees, it defines Annika and it has been created through the role she is in. Her need for recognition is satisfied here, which is nurtured through the All-team meetings. Similarly, Ken is clear about his goal as a corporate ambassador, i.e., to be perceived as an expert. This is helping him in generating attention on the LinkedIn platform in terms of nurturing his image as an expert and attracting clients for the company.

To conclude, we can establish the importance of the professional network of individuals that is helping them in expanding their peer network. Being recognized will eventually provide them with fame and subsequently, help in crafting their identity.

4.3 Blurred Lines

While conducting the interviews and during the phase of analyzing them, we observed that the interviewees' opinions about LinkedIn differed from each other. The difference of opinion led us to deep dive into interviews to highlight the commonalities and discords amongst the interviewee's viewpoints. All of the interviewees stressed the professional practice of LinkedIn, as demonstrated before. However, we realized during the interviews that their own posts depicted an overlap between their professional and private identities. In the following section, we will analyze how the use of the private profile on LinkedIn in favor of the company is having an impact on the sense of identity of our interviewees and the overlapping of their professional and private roles.

4.3.1 Crossing boundaries of professional and private life

As mentioned before, our interviewees value LinkedIn as a professional network and mostly do not appreciate its use as a private platform. Nevertheless, they were aware of the fact that there is always some personal note on LinkedIn, as we were talking about their private profiles. Even if they were posting in favor of their companies, they often added their own voice and style to it. Even Karlotta, who of all of our interviewees has the most company information-driven profile, mentions that "you always have to put some emotion into the LinkedIn posts somehow though", as otherwise, it will sound too corporate and not yourself.

We asked the interviewees at which times they are using LinkedIn, in order to find out if the network is intruding on their private lives. Nearly all of our interviewees mentioned that they are indeed using it in their time when they are off from work. Only Ken mentioned that he is "privately not at all" using the platform. Some of the interviewees mentioned some coping strategies on how to avoid the platform having too much impact on their private lives, for example Annika who is active on LinkedIn and uses it on her company phone only and turned down the notifications of LinkedIn on her private phone. Others mainly tried to use LinkedIn during their working time, Katia for example mentioned how LinkedIn is a "sometimes acceptable social media break" to "just scroll through mindlessly" at work, meaning that she uses it at work to have a little break and get distracted.

When asked about the use of LinkedIn, Karolyn, the sales manager in her company said:

"I'm not working the whole day, but sometimes it's in bed in the morning and late at night, sometimes on the sofa. And of course, during the day. For me, it's not like I'm working from eight to five but it's a fluid process, also on the weekend." (Karolyn)

The above quote of Karolyn demonstrates how the private and professional lives of the managers can be mixed. Even though Karolyn might be an extreme case, we saw hints of this blurred lifestyle in most of our interviewees. Her quote does not refer to her work as a corporate ambassador, but it was her response to our question about whether she is more active on LinkedIn during working hours or off work. She could not give an answer to that, as she, in that case, does not distinguish anymore. Her reference to work on the weekend shows that she is actually posting company-related topics on LinkedIn during her private time. This makes us believe that at least she is a person who incorporated her professional identity partly in her private life.

Some of the interviewees were vocal about the latest personalized adaptation of the LinkedIn platform. This gives strength to our assertion of increased vagueness between professional and personal life on LinkedIn. According to them, the platform has taken a more personal position for the users rather than having a professional outlook, which links back to their claim of LinkedIn becoming the second Facebook. Most of our interviewees declare that they use the platform for staying up to date on the recent business developments and the underlying topics. So, during the interviews they mentioned that they are not content with other people adapting this platform more and more for private topics and rather want to sustain the core theme of LinkedIn being a professional platform. In this regard, Annika at her company stated the following about the increased personalized posts on LinkedIn:

"I mean, I see a lot of people posting selfies from the vacation, and I'm just like, please, I don't want to see this on your LinkedIn" (Annika)

In connection to sustaining the professional usage of LinkedIn, our interviewees showed their concern about the personalized opinions of the individuals on the platform. When asked about the content of the posts on LinkedIn, they stated the following:

Somehow everything gets blurred and this professionalism and expertise is lost because everyone thinks they have to add their five tips and it's all somehow nothing new anymore, you know? I'd like to see something again where I think "Wow, that's got me excited". (Karlotta)

And I really have to say that some people on LinkedIn or on social media, in general, should really think more before they post something…. I'm doing this, and then also having these kinds of extreme opinions. Yeah. So this made me feel a little bit frustrated to see that people don't really think what they post. (Annika)

Yes, it's more personal. That people sometimes attack each other personally and even go below the belt. That didn't exist on LinkedIn before, and now it's there, too, and everyone has an opinion on everything. (Karlotta)

These statements underline a frustration of the interviewees about LinkedIn becoming more and more personal, especially with private opinions that they do not want to see. This goes in hand with the desire to add value on LinkedIn and not just share private opinions or even private events. Hence, we can assume that our interviewees want to avoid an intrusion of their activities on the platform into their private lives, which is not always possible. This connection to their private lives and identities leads us to question whether the role of corporate ambassador hence puts extra pressure on them.

4.3.2 Feeling corporate pressure?

To find out more about this, we first asked the interviewees how they relate in general to their role. Karl spoke highly of his role as an ambassador, as he considers himself a company representative on the LinkedIn platform. Other interviewees stressed the importance of compliance with the social media guidelines implemented in their companies even if they are posting with their personal profiles. Annika, for example, mentioned how she "thinks about every word" when constructing a post and that it needs more "brain juice" to post as a corporate ambassador. Karolyn mentioned how she takes care of "inclusive language and so on" even if she is posting with her private opinion, as "there is still a company behind it". Kiara gets a bit "nervous" when she publishes content that could be seen as a bit more controversial (here she referred to a post about the representation of women in her field).

While these above-mentioned quotes show that the managers put more effort into their posts when they are publishing for their company, we were surprised about their answers to our question concerning whether they felt worried or pressured about it. Karlotta, for example, mentioned the following:

"Especially when I say I'm not going to position myself in a big way with any topic, but just give some information about the company, not much can happen and then I just send it out" (Karlotta)

This quote implies that especially when she is posting for her company, she feels less under pressure as she is not positioning herself, but just resharing her company's positions or even information. Then she sends it out with the feeling that not much can happen, which we interpret as not feeling stressed about it.

This statement is supported by Karl, who claims his positive motivation behind being a corporate ambassador. As he was asked about his feelings when he puts a corporate message out there with his private profile, he stated that he mostly feels "energized":

"Yeah, usually, it's energizing, quite positive. And, you know, it's something that I think I'm good at. Writing or putting into words, you know, what other people maybe can't express so I do enjoy it." (Karl)

Karl is therefore connecting very positive emotions with his role as corporate ambassador, mostly as he believes that it is something he is good at. This implies further that he does not feel pressured in his role at all.

In Karolyns answer to this question, she gave us a reason for why she does not feel stressed out about her position. Even though she mentioned in the beginning, that she is "aware which words [she is] using" and that you have to be careful that there is "no trap, you tap into", this is how she talked about the feeling of representing her company privately:

"I'm comfortable. Yeah, I am used to being on these kinds of platforms. And I know that some people might, you know, feel uncomfortable and not doing it because they think it's risky, and they want to ensure not to do something wrong or something, but I don't feel like being at a risk. You know, I'm not seeing a big risk there." (Karolyn)

When asked why she does not see the risk here, this was her reply:

"[…] luckily, my personal values are aligned to the company values. So maybe that's also a reason why I don't have any doubts posting something because it just fits and if I wouldn't be happy with my company and aligned with the values and the way we do in business and how they treat people and so on, I think I would not do it" (Karolyn)

This was a key answer for us, as it shows how being aligned with the company and their values takes off the pressure of the managers to be active on their social media in favor of the company. We can also connect this answer back to our findings in the part about control, as it shows how even though there is no direct control exerted, there is a strong normative control in place, as the interviewees do seem to not have any resistant identities and are very aligned with the values of the company. We have to add here, that all our interviewees mentioned that they are happy in their current role and within their company, so this might be a reason for all of them to not feel the pressure of being a representative with their private voice for that company on their LinkedIn profile. We will touch upon this further in our discussion.

4.4 Chapter summary

In this section of the research, we analyzed our empirical material and found how interviewees used their role as corporate ambassadors to set up an image of themselves within communication to an internal (within the company) and external (everyone else connected to them) audience. When talking about internal image creation, they used LinkedIn in order to receive positive feedback for projects or achievements and therefore get confirmation in their identity work. Furthermore, they positioned themselves as active role models for their co-workers or subordinates in the sense that they connected their work as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn with their managerial identity, perceiving themselves as leaders who want to push their subordinates into following their activities. Another way they use LinkedIn is to exert what we call reverse control over their company, meaning that they actively use the audience they have and their role to adapt the power relations and influence company choices or their own corporate benefits.

We found that the organizations exerted little direct control over them. In terms of the interviewees feeling stressed about their role, it became clear that there is normative control in place, as they mentioned how aligned they feel with company values and are therefore carefully drafting their posts. Furthermore, we found that the managers we talked to were dealing with blurred lines between their private and professional life, yet they were using some coping mechanisms to avoid this intrusion a little bit. Additionally, these blurred lines didn't stress them out much, which reflects their aligned values with those of their employer. They didn't feel there was a conflict between what they had to say for the company and what they wanted to say.

5 Discussion

In the following discussion, we aim to achieve a deeper understanding of the findings in our analysis by connecting them to theoretical findings that are already existing. With the help of these and our literature review, we will answer our research question.

5.1 Identity work of three roles

Our interviewees are inheriting three roles at least at the same time. They are managers, employees of their organization, and corporate ambassadors. When discussing the interviews, it became clear that these roles are all interrelated with each other, and this relation is affecting the way the managers are engaging in identity work. Drawing upon Goffman and his work about identity, Kunda (1992) defines organizational roles as enforced prescriptions for how employees should think and feel. Hence, these roles are considered to have a significant impact on the identity work of employees.

Identity work is a concept described for example by Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) as a way of constantly shaping and revising your ability of what you can do and who you are to create a coherent picture of yourself. As Sveningsson & Alvesson (2016) further claim in their book, identity work usually only happens under two circumstances: when there is a change of scenery incoming, like a new job position, or when there is some crisis ongoing. That is why at first, we were not sure whether we could put our findings under the label of identity work. Our interviewees were neither unhappy nor feeling unsettled in their roles, nor had they just entered a new role; on the contrary, most of them underlined how happy they are in their current job and that they feel like they know what they are doing and why they are doing it. However, we see clear signs of identity work within their answers. Through producing an image of themselves for internal and external audiences on LinkedIn, it also seems like they create and add up to their identity. We see LinkedIn as a platform to engage in managerial identity work, as it is tailored specifically to business contexts and the manager's roles as corporate ambassadors. The image that they build on this platform helps them to confirm their managerial identity in a positive way. The three main parts of how they are doing so are through receiving lots of positive feedback, entering a role model position within their organization and gaining power by exerting reverse control and achieving some fame on the platform. To showcase this, we will discuss each topic a bit deeper in the next sections. To achieve a better overview and an easier understanding of the theory, we separated the three roles, which are all incorporated by every manager we talked to.

1) The corporate ambassador role: Every manager we talked to got the official mission to act as corporate ambassador for their organization.
2) The managerial role: They were either middle- or senior managers, who were in some way responsible for subordinates.
3) The role of the member of the organization: As every other employee, the managers are part of the organization and are impacted by this relation.

These roles influence each other on different levels. These levels all have an impact on the way the managers engage in identity work. Our understanding of the interplay between the different roles is illustrated in figure 2. We see there how as a member of the organization the interviewees are following norms & values, but also exert reverse control towards the organization. Further, the managers perform as corporate ambassadors for their organization, but get rewarded with support for their managerial role and even with their sense of managerial identity. The organization additionally expects a specific managerial role from the interviewees, which makes confirmation of this role necessary in the first place. We will further elaborate on each of these interplays in detail in the following chapters.

***Figure 2**: The interplay between the different roles*

***Source:** Own representation*

5.1.1 Managerial role & corporate ambassador role

As already stated before, managerial work does not always live up to its normative ideals and can get very complex, therefore it can be hard to define whether a manager is doing the right job, neither by other people nor by themselves (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). This is a reason why managers are specifically dependent on feedback from others. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2016) present four feedback situations that are worth noticing: absence of feedback, positive feedback, negative feedback and ambiguous or inconsistent feedback. In our study, the corporate ambassador role on LinkedIn is always a source of positive feedback, the interviewees have never experienced negative feedback on this platform. They are aware that negative feedback exists out there as well, but they try to behave in consensus with the platform and their company values so that they do not get confronted with negative feedback.

They are certainly looking out for positive feedback as it connects to identity work in a way that this sort of feedback gives a strong identity confirmation (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016). Mostly when the managers upload posts, they connect past achievements to talk about the present and include an outlook on the future to it. According to Giddens (1991) and McAdams (1996), it is not unusual to create stories and identities that way, and they showed how crafting a story around one's identity like this can lead to uncertainty or anxiety since they can be challenged every time. Hence, the managers constantly look for positive comments, likes and attention from colleagues and superior managers. LinkedIn helps them accomplish this by crafting new parts of their identity through sharing work or company-related content. They receive nothing but positive feedback from this.

Therefore, the corporate ambassador role in the case of managers has a supporting impact on their sense of managerial identity as illustrated in figure 2.

5.1.2 Managerial role & role as member of the organization

Another interconnection is shown between the managerial role and the members of the organization. As Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016) emphasize frequently in their book, working tasks for managers do not always have a precise definition and managers often do not know what is really going on in their organization. This is derived from the complex situations and tasks they have to deal with. All of the managers we interviewed have a complex work environment and sometimes multiple tasks and team members they have to deal with. If we take Karl as an example here, the name of his position is already proof of the high complexity of his work – his official job description is “Senior Sales Key Account and Branding & Imaging Manager”, and he has this responsibility for several countries. After analyzing our empirical findings, we found that even though the managers are posting on behalf of their companies, they manage to use LinkedIn as a platform for ongoing identity work.

As Watson (2009) states, the self-view of a manager’s identity varies from time to time and has underlying constant changes. Furthermore, managerial life is full of contradictions between practice and ideal (Hill, 1992). That is why it is no surprise that managers often engage in identity work. Our case shows that the managers in some ways can work on their identities as thought leaders, who are role models for their organization's members, as well as being experts in their fields, which they show by adding valuable content. In this way, they are attempting to meet the high managerial expectations of representing their organization, being a leader, being well-informed and many more (Watson, 2008).

Nevertheless, they are not always telling the truth on LinkedIn, and we detected quite some hypocrisy in their posts, which in turn affects what the organization is expecting from them. The interplay between the organizational role and the managerial role is thus connected through expectations that are led and co-determined by the managers themselves by the image they produce of themselves.

5.1.3 Corporate ambassador role & role as member of the organization

Another aspect of the identity work of the managers on LinkedIn is the aspect of control and fame. As touched upon before, Muller (2017) argues in her research about brand-centered control, that employees who are supposed to take over control of the brand and internalize their values are exposed to organizational control. She shows how this kind of normative control blurres the lines between the private and professional lives of employees (Muller, 2017). We can see from our interviews that the managers are exposed to normative control, as they follow unwritten rules guided by their norms and values that are aligned with the company values. Although there is no direct control in place, which Friedman (1990) referred to as detailed tasks with close supervision, the managers feel they need to adhere to unwritten social media guidelines and avoid posting information that is harmful to the company.

Andersson (2019) applied the concept of brand-centered control to corporate ambassadors in his study and outlined how the role of being an ambassador controls the lives of his investigated employees. Even in private situations they felt under pressure and obliged to behave in line with company values even though it did not fit their private identities (Andersson, 2019). However, within our research we did not find these identity intrusions. We found that the managers do not feel under pressure in the way they are exerting their corporate ambassador role. To explain this, we want to refer to Alvesson & Willmott (2002) who refer to identity regulation as a form of organizational control. Their study illustrates how employees are subjected to a form of identity control, so that their self-image aligns with managerial objectives (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). They argue that identity work is also a manifestation of organizational control, since the individual is compelled by different factors to align his or her own identity with that of the organization (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). In their paper, they propose nine ways of identity regulation that we partly discover in our interviewees. They refer for example to the defined context as a form of identity regulation, in which through the "scene and its preconditions for the people acting in it, a particular actor identity is implicitly invoked" (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 631). While this might not be the only form of identity control, we detect this specific one very much in the answers of our managers, who are clear about their organizations telling them mostly how to behave on social media and how it implies that they present themselves as knowledgeable industry experts. The context of social media, especially the narrowed focus of the platform LinkedIn, is well-known by the managers which makes them knowledgeable about the way how to behave accordingly on these platforms, so there is no direct control needed in place. When other people within their network do not behave like they have learned it – for example, if they put private vacation pictures on LinkedIn – they dislike it, as it is against the regulation of the context. We see the organizational identity regulation as a reason why the managers feel so little pressure on them: because their own identity has very much adapted to the organizational identity, caused by normative control and their role as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn.

This is the reason why in figure 2 we see the organization as a normative guide for the role of the corporate ambassador. Even though identity control is in place, we saw this surprising factor of reverse control that is exerted by the managers over their organization. Alvesson & Willmott (2002) describe in their paper that the identity work of employees is only "informing" (p. 627) at the regulative level, however we show in our study that the identity work of the managers is also having the power to influence the discursive practices that define the regulation of identity. This power that we call reverse control is accomplished in two steps, the first one being a prerequisite for the second one:

(1) Having many followers from inside and outside the organization; being famous in a way

(2) Using this fame to make benefits/values/intentions public and as control mechanism

The first factor is more or less unintentional. By being active for the company as corporate ambassadors, the managers are quite active on LinkedIn and therefore grow a bigger community every day. As mentioned, they all have more than 500 followers, most of them even a lot more with for example 2.000-3.000 people they talk to every time they publish a post, plus even more people that get to see their publications as second-degree connections. The more people the managers have as followers, the more famous they are as managers of their organization and the more they have some power over the image of the ladder. Dreher (2014) has shown already how the concept of employees as ambassadors can be risky for organizations as they are gaining power through advocating publicly for the organization. We can support this view with our findings and want to emphasize on the fact that the managers were mostly aware of the new level of control that this publicity is providing them with. While step (1) was unintentional and happens along with having the role of a corporate ambassador, step (2) is intentional and an active way of adjusting values, benefits and ideas about the organization. Hence, their role as corporate ambassadors allows them to take control over how they behave in their role in the organization.

We showed how the managers are engaging in identity work on different levels by uniting these three roles in one person. Mostly, the interplays between the roles support their sense of identity. Though most interviewees felt no pressure to be the company's ambassador, not even in their private lives, a few got offended when they came across unprofessional or too private LinkedIn content. We therefore want to discuss the boundary management the managers engage in in the next section, as we believe this impacts their identity work in further ways.

5.2 Boundary work as part of identity work

In addition to acting as managers, corporate ambassadors, and serving as members of the organization, managers must also serve as their private selves.

Goffman (1959) debated about his famous concept of back-stage and frontstage and how individuals tailor their identity with respect to their audiences, meaning that they also include the direct feedback they get from their audiences into their own front stage appearance. This concept was developed before the digital revolution and is referring to a time when social interactions happened in a very controlled environment (see Abril, Levin & Del Riego, 2012). On social media however, the audiences we talk to are most often bigger and feedback is not prompted directly to the sender (Boyd, 2007; Donath & Boyd, 2004). This makes it harder to tailor the identity suitable to the audience (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2012).

Our managers are proof of that statement. They all refer to crafting an online identity that can be seen as their frontstage. While social media in general can be seen as a platform to do so, we see this behavior within our managers at an extreme level, as they are producing their image very carefully and take an especially long time in consideration before publishing a post, as they need to align their private identity with their corporate identity, which can be connected back to the identity regulation as proposed by Alvesson & Willmott (2002). However, this is also a form of boundary management, which is a concept that got originally defined in the offline world and describes the ways how individuals create boundaries in order to effectively navigate the world around them, especially with regard to the boundaries between personal life and professional work-life through segmenting and/or integrating domains (see for example Ashforth Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Kreiner, 2006; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). It is therefore closely connected to the concept of identity work, as individuals are proven to use identity work tactics in order to create these boundaries between work and private life (Knapp et al., 2013). Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) elaborated on that concept further and investigated the question of how employees manage their boundaries within online social networks. In their article, they developed four types of boundary management behaviors that are derived from the level of self-verification vs. self-enhancement and integration vs. segmentation that their sample displayed.

Within our interviews, we saw the tendency of our managers to be very self-enhancing on LinkedIn, as they mostly presented themselves in a positive way and wanted to avoid negative or even controversial topics. What they loved to share most were what we call celebration posts, meaning something positive to share or achievements they have made.

The way they use LinkedIn is very integrative, as there are little boundaries between private and professional lives as shown in the analysis. Even though they state that they wish to use the platform mainly for professional reasons, most of them are connected with friends and colleagues at the same time and use LinkedIn in their free time as well as during work hours. However, they try to address their audience in a very professional way, which shows that they at least partly try to segment, and they feel discomforted to see other people acting very privately on LinkedIn. Their identification as corporate ambassadors surprisingly puts this discomfort a bit at ease, as it allows them to share company information or information that feels like an added value to their audience (at least in their opinion), which is connected to their professional identity. Hence, even though they spread it over their private profile, it allows them to stay within their professional identity on the network and makes them feel superior to fellow networkers who publish private topics.

Through crossing the explained identity navigation processes in a 2 x 2 matrix, Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) developed four types of boundary management behaviors that are shown in the following figure:

Figure 3: *Online Boundary Management Drivers, Behaviors, and Consequences*

Self-evaluation motives	Integration	Segmentation
Self-verification	**Open boundary management behaviors** • *Decrease average respect* • *Decrease average liking*	**Audience boundary management behaviors** • *Protect but do not increase average respect* • *Decrease average liking*
Self-enhancement	**Content boundary management behaviors** • *Increase average respect* • *Increase average liking* • *Moderated by online boundary management capabilities*	**Hybrid boundary management behaviors** • *Increase average respec* • *Increase average liking* • *Moderated by online boundary management capabilities (most demanding behaviors)*

Source: *Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg, 2012, p. 653*

As stated above, the managers were mainly integrative and motivated by self-enhancement on LinkedIn. This leads to what Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) describe as Content boundary management behaviors. Typical of that behavior is publishing content that is flattering (celebration posts) or makes one look smart, which we see in their desire to publish content that is valuable for their audience. Furthermore, keeping content noncontroversial, meaning e.g., sustaining from political discussions, is a key element of content boundary management (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2012). All interviewees have stated how important it is for them to stay away from controversial topics as this might have negative interpretations not only for them but also for their company. Furthermore, they state monitoring tagging and commenting as another typical behavior, which we saw as well as the managers were mainly looking for positive comments and would get nervous for negative comments. The behaviors of acting as a role model position or tagging CEOs for positive feedback in the posts are further behaviors that we can add from our study to the existing behaviors proposed by Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012).

They further claim in their study that content boundary management behaviors allow the employees to share both, their private and their professional identity, without suffering from identity conflicts, as they carefully monitor what content they share (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2012). We have stated multiple times now that we strongly saw this behavior in our managers as well – the careful monitoring of what content to put on their private page on LinkedIn, not allowing anything on there, even if it is about the company. Therefore, we can confirm their theoretical framework with our empirical findings on a managerial level and see it at the same time as further explanation, next to the identity regulation, for the little pressure that is felt by our interviewees.

Furthermore, our findings together with theirs can serve as an add-on to the study of Andersson (2019) who discusses identity tensions that are enacted through the ambassadorship of employees. As stated before, our interviewees altogether claimed that they do not feel under pressure or stressed with having the corporate ambassador role and mixing up their private and professional contacts. As shown, a possible reason therefore could be because they cope with content boundary management behaviors which allow them to live up to both of their identities at the same time and still be in control over what they display to their audience on LinkedIn. We further want to refer to the trade-offs that Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) name in their study, in order to make content boundary management behavior possible for employees. They state that this kind of behavior needs "online boundary management capabilities, which consist of the time, effort, and technical skill required to avoid the accidental disclosure of too much or inappropriate content to professional contacts" (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg, 2012, p. 659). Hence, we do believe that our interviewees had more of these capabilities, as they were more or less in an official corporate ambassador role plus their managerial role probably provided them with more insights into technical requirements and professional content as the interviewees of the study of Andersson (2019). We still believe that this is an interesting insight that we will get back to in our practical implications in the following chapter.

6 Conclusion

With our qualitative research, we wanted to find out how middle- and senior managers relate to their role as corporate ambassadors on LinkedIn and how this possibly affects their identity. We appreciated the widespread information and insights provided by our interviewees that we outlined in our empirical findings and connected to existing literature within our discussion.

Within this concluding chapter, we will briefly outline our empirical findings again and demonstrate how they can add up to existing theory. We will further relate to practical implications derived from our study. Lastly, we will outline the limitations of our study that partly lead to possible approaches for further research.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

I. **Mutual influence of roles enhancing managerial identity work**

The managers stated how they use their role on LinkedIn in order to receive positive feedback from superior managers and subordinate employees which enforces their self-understanding as managers. Additionally, they emphasized on perceiving themselves as role models for their subordinates within their role on LinkedIn, which is a further indication of how the role of a corporate ambassador affects their identification as a manager who is at the same time a thought leader and a predecessor for his or her employees. Our study hence builds on and adds up to existing studies about managerial identities like for example the one of Sveningsson and Alvesson (2016). Our findings support their statements that a manager's identity work is mostly dependent on feedback from others within their organization (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2016). While within their study they showed how managers receive various kinds of feedback and how it influences their identity, we found out that LinkedIn is an option for them to receive positive feedback in the form of appreciation and applause. With our study we were hence able to add a new organizational discourse within which managers find a way to "create a sense of self" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p. 1164). We found out that LinkedIn and the role of a corporate ambassador is not only a way of crafting an image of themselves for an external audience but is also influencing their identity work as managers as they use this positive feedback and their role modeling to foster their managerial identity. We further found that being active on LinkedIn also impacts the identity work on the level between the managerial role and the role as a member of the organization. They act as expected by the organization and at the same time form the expectation of the organization by creating a LinkedIn profile that shows them as thought leaders and good managers.

II. Identity regulation and reverse control

We noted a strong influence of normative control in our study, as the managers stated their commitment to values and norms and their willingness to act without direct oversight in an essential manner. Even though the lines between their private and professional life got blurred through their activities as corporate ambassadors, they did not feel under pressure for representing the company. In line with the findings of Alvesson & Willmott (2002), we explained their behaviors with identity regulation as a form of organizational control, showing that through the roles they acquire and the context they act in, their identities get aligned with the corporate identity.

Moreover, we stressed that identity regulation is not restricted to the direction of organization to manager. Managers intentionally exert control over their organizations as well and shape the norms and benefits of the organization through their positioning as corporate ambassadors and industry experts on LinkedIn. Their image on LinkedIn is therefore influencing not only their own identity work but also the identity of the organization.

III. Boundary work influencing identity work as corporate ambassadors

We identified further that the managers are actively using boundary work tactics within their identity work as corporate ambassadors in order to cope with the blurred lines between their private and professional identities. Our empirical material therefore proves the theoretical concept of Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) in which they build a framework to describe boundary management behaviors in online social networks. We identified that the managers of our study were seeking self-enhancement on LinkedIn and were very integrative in the way they published their content (their network consistent out of private and professional contacts). As shown by Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012), these to identity navigation processes lead to content boundary management behavior, which allows them to control their content very accurately and at the same time build bridges between the different kind of contacts, private and professional ones. We see this as an interesting add-on to the study of Andersson (2019), who showed how employees suffer from identity intrusion in their private life when acting as corporate ambassadors. Our interviewees did not feel threatened in their sense of identity, which we suggest is a result of their successful boundary management techniques.

6.2 Practical Implications

With corporate ambassadorship becoming increasingly a trend for organizations, we believe that our study is not limited to theoretical contributions, but also allows us to extract some practical implications that might be interesting for organizations to consider when allocating this role to their employees and managers.

Firstly, we draw from our interviewees that most of them were chosen by a communications or PR department and officially got the role of an ambassador assigned to them. This fact was more important to them than any corporate benefits that came with the ambassador role. Many of them further emphasized that they have been quite active online before and that it felt flattering for them to be elected as a corporate ambassador for their company. This implies that organizations should select their ambassadors carefully, to choose the ones who are really interested in the role and further give them an official title. This will make employees feel more motivated than any benefits they might get.

Furthermore, we also want to draw attention to the well-being of employees and managers acting as corporate ambassadors. We believe that boundary work is important, but also show how there are boundary management tactics that still allow employees to be active as corporate ambassadors. In order to facilitate for example content boundary management work or even hybrid boundary management tactics, we suggest organizations support and teach their employees how they can possibly do that. As Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard and Berg (2012) suggest, employees need to have a high level of technical knowledge and need to be provided with professional content. Organizations could therefore offer workshops in order to provide some knowledge about the different strategies for efficient boundary management.

Lastly, we want to mention some practical implications for the usage of the platform LinkedIn. As our interviewees mentioned quite often, they are more and more disappointed with what they read and see on this platform, some even mentioned that they feel it is bad for their mental health to consume the content that is published on this platform. However, they all agreed that LinkedIn itself actually has the potential to be a nice networking platform where one can consume highly valuable professional content and insight from peer practitioners. We would therefore like to remind all users of LinkedIn to think twice again before putting a post up and check whether the information is in fact adding some value, as our interviewees liked to emphasize. It is the content generated by its users that makes social media sites successful.

6.3 Limitations

Before heading on to the further research questions that arise from our studies, we want to touch upon some limitations of the study. The limitations concerning the methodology were already discussed in chapter 3.4. However, there are some overall issues we want to address. First of all, we would have loved to conduct a more longitudinal study, in order to do more interviews to have more insights into what is really going on. Especially when it comes to the topic of managerial identity, it would have been interesting to combine our interviews with real-life observation of the managers at their workplace, as we could have connected this to the way they present themselves on LinkedIn and thus could have put everything into a larger perspective.

We are further aware of the self-selection bias that came along with selecting our interviewees. We were the ones who reached out to them, and it was up to them whether they replied to our inquiry or not. The ones who did reply in the end chose themselves that they want to reply, which indicates that they want to talk about the topic and have very specific feelings about it. Therefore, the answers we got could be, for example, more positive than those of a randomized sample. However, the interviewees were very open in their way of describing their feelings and shared negative parts of their roles with us, so we consider their answers as validated enough to take them as a starting point for further research.

We are further aware that our study captures a moment of time and just a few voices of managers that do not represent the numerous different kinds of managers that do exist in various organizations. Therefore, our findings are not intended to be generalized, but we hope to enable the reader to evaluate the applicability of our findings to different situational contexts.

6.4 Further Research

The limitations mentioned above at the same time represent multiple options for further research. As stated, it would be interesting to further investigate the managerial identities in real life and how they connect to the LinkedIn identities that the managers presented. Indicators like everyday interactions but also opinions of subordinates could be integrated in a further study in order to get a holistic overview about how the managerial identity is crafted on

LinkedIn and to work with some extra source critique as proposed by Schaefer and Alvesson (2020) and have some stakeholders included in the interviews.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate how identity perception changes again when focused on a different social media network. Even though most of our interviewees mentioned that their primary network for their corporate ambassador role is LinkedIn, some said that their companies are also starting to explore other networks like Instagram and Facebook, that are usually more related to private use (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). We would be very interested in knowing how managers and employees cope with this kind of intrusion in their private lives. Related to that is the often-mentioned development of LinkedIn into what our interviewees referred to as “becoming a second Facebook”. We would be very much intrigued to investigate whether the rise of employees acting as corporate ambassadors will blur the lines between professional and private social media networks more and more.

Another topic that we were only able to touch upon briefly is the connection between LinkedIn and the crafting of an image on the platform connected to the topic of leadership. As Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) state, leaders are defined by having followers. Within LinkedIn and social media in general, everybody is easily enabled to build up a community of followers, so we wonder what this does to the self-esteem and self-enactment of managers being active within these platforms. Within our study, we briefly showed how they tried to be famous and act as thought leaders on LinkedIn, but the connection between social media and leadership opens more in-depth possibilities for research.

Ultimately, we would like to suggest a research option in order to find out how to best support employees who are active as corporate ambassadors. Even if our study leads to the conclusion that identity tensions within managers acting as corporate ambassadors are not that strong, we do believe that there is a lot that organizations can take care of to ease these tensions for their employees. Hence, it would be interesting to conduct an in-depth employee-centered study to investigate motivational drivers for ambassadorship and how to enhance boundary management tactics for employees, to make it smoother for them *to use their megaphones to spread the word.*

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1: List of Interviewees (anonymized)

S. No	Name	Position
1.	**Katia**	Communication & Marketing Manager
2.	**Annika**	PR and marketing manager
3.	**Karl**	Senior Sales Key Account and Branding & Imaging Manager
4.	**Karlotta**	Head of Marketing
5.	**Carolyn**	Client Account Lead
6.	**Ken**	Team Lead
7.	**Kiara**	Marketing & Communications Manager
8.	**Isabel**	Senior Project Manager

Source: *Own representation*

8.2 Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. Introduce ourselves, our studies in general and that we are researching about corporate ambassadors.
2. Let interviewee introduce him/herself and ask about the career in their company

Questions related to corporate ambassadorship:

3. Can you explain, in what way you are working as a corporate ambassador? How does it work?
4. Did you apply for it yourself or did someone approach you with the idea? What was the motivation behind it? (or: What is your motivation to be active on LinkedIn?)
5. How do you feel about LinkedIn as a platform? How do you use it?
6. Have you been provided with the guidelines about what you can post and what to abstain from? Do you have a plan, what to post when?
7. Is it important for you to be seen as an ambassador of the company?
8. Do you like working at your company? Are you proud of being a manager within your company?

Questions related to LinkedIn and their platform use:

9. Concerning LinkedIn: How much time do you spend on the platform on average within a week?
10. When do you mostly spend time on it? During work or outside of work?
11. Do you know how many Followers you have on LinkedIn?
12. What do you do there mostly? Answering private messages, browsing, posting yourself, networking under posts, other?
13. Would you say that through LinkedIn you get in contact with people you normally would not talk to?
14. How do you feel when you are writing a post on LinkedIn (in general, but also when it's about your company)?

Questions related to specific posts:

15. What is the first thing you look for after reviewing the comments on the post?
16. What do you hope to get out of the post shared on LinkedIn?
17. Who is your audience on LInkedIn? (Maybe: What is the message behind this post?)
18. How did you feel while setting up the post?
19. How long does it usually take you to create the post? How much time do you spend with it on average?

20. Last question: Do you remember any moment where you were either very happy or very sad about an action on LinkedIn?