Fashion Bloggers

And their ongoing journey to increase their capital

Mirre van Tilburg
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The goal of this research is to understand more about a bloggers’ way to success. By analyzing the tool they use to reach this success, namely their blogs, I will try to give an insight in the way they establish and improve their identity within the fashion world. The content of their posts, which is pictures, text and other visual forms of communication, will be analyzed. Since the relationship between the bloggers and their followers plays a central role in the development of a blog, I will analyze how the consumers are influenced by reading a blog and how they, at the same time, are influencing blogs and make it possible for bloggers to increase their capital within the field of fashion.

Keywords
Fashion, blog, capital, status, consumer, image, identity, desire, reference, advertise
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1. Introduction

With the use of internet, the distance between fashion, consumer, designers and other people in the fashion industry is getting smaller and smaller. This development already started two decades ago, with the rise of the internet. In the last few years however, there is a new development within the fashion world. A new type of character puts herself in the spotlight: the blogger. They found a way to combine consumerism and a passion for fashion in such a way that they reach a certain status. This status is already higher then the consumers’ and seems to get even higher.

There is a certain mystery around the blogger. For me, this mystery is created by the urge to justify their status since there is no obvious proof that shows their expertise on the fashion topic. I do not simply want to accept the fact that they are a fashion expert, since their way to becoming a fashion expert is so vague. There is of course a big difference between the bloggers and not all of them are successful. The bigger part of them might not even increase their status with simply putting some pictures of themselves on the internet. Those are not the bloggers I am focusing on. In this thesis the focus lies on the bloggers that increased their status within the fashion world and turned this into an influential voice. The way they obtained this high status is a little bit different from the way this goes for other celebrities who have a more concrete talent like singing or acting. Successful bloggers build up a talent and use this to be heard, but what this talent exactly is and where it comes from are questions without a simple answer. Using media to make yourself visible is not new, it might not even be possible to do this without the internet any more, but in most cases there is a more concrete talent that is easier to recognize.

In the fashion world there are different roles and each role has his own influence and status. The fashion world needs the system of the modern world where we still have different social classes, but at the same time have the possibility to cross the borders between these classes. The fashion world needs it to be desirable to cross these boundaries (Kawamura, 2005, p.19). The existing roles in the fashion field are all based on established relationships. Designers need editors from fashion magazines to help them show their products and make their name famous, fashion editors are related to retail stores and need them to take the role of a stylist (Kawamura, 2005, p.79-80). We
see that everybody has his own role and they need each other to be successful within this role. Designs need to be shown, models need to be given the chance to show themselves, fashion magazines need advertising money and so on. The role that is not yet established, is the one from the fashion blogger.¹ How they are able to obtain this status as a fashion expert by simply putting their photographs and experiences online is my main question. In order to answer this, I will look at the content of the information they make available and at the way they make this information available.

Within the past five years, there have been quite a few bloggers that have been put in the national or even international spotlights. In the short history of bloggers, there are quite a few success stories. Different bloggers have sold their products in collaboration with big fashion companies (Elin Kling for H&M², Werelse for Mango³ etc.) In these collaborations, the blogger is placed in the role as the fashion expert since they become the designers. The collaboration between Elin Kling and H&M is a very special one since H&M uses to collaborate with world known designers. The fact that Elin is able to collaborate with them and design her own, very small, collection, makes it easier to relate her to influential people within the fashion world. The criteria for being a fashion expert seem to get lost within the shipping boundaries in the otherwise hierarchical fashion world. The boundaries are shifting to make place for the fashion bloggers. Their status is not as easy to determine as the status from a designer or a chief of Vogue. The most people in the fashion world followed a more tangible road to their success, while in the case of the blogger, this road is blurry and not as easy to keep track of. Of course even for the bloggers the road to success does not happen over night and the process from starting a blog into collaborate with H&M takes time and work. In order to understand this journey from beginning blogger, to successful fashion expert, we have to look at the reason behind the rise of fashion blogs, and at the same time the reason behind their increasing popularity.

¹ The division of classes and it’s influences will be explained further in chapter 4.
² http://stylebykling.nowmanifest.com/projects/
³ http://werelse.com/index.html
2. Aims and questions

In order to discover a small, rather new, part of the fashion world, I will be looking at fashion bloggers and the way they obtain their place within it. My starting point is based on Bourdieu’s (1979) theory on different kinds of capital. This theory focuses on the things that people own and how they use this in order to develop themselves. By ‘owning things’, Bourdieu does not only mean concrete products, but he also looks at other, less concrete, things that people can posses. With the latter he means characteristics, social connections, status, etc. I will look at how fashion bloggers have been able to increase their capital by profiling themselves on their blog. That they did this, is based on several cooperations between bloggers and fashion brands and the increasing attention for bloggers within the media.\(^4\) This resulted in the following research question:

*How do fashion bloggers use their blogs and the relation to their followers to increase their capital within the fashion world?*

To answer this question, I will follow a few steps. First, I will analyze the information that is given on the blogs. This information consists mainly out of pictures and a little bit text. This analysis will help to understand in which way they are profiling themselves. Secondly, I will look at the followers’ role within the blogger-follower relationship. A bloggers’ followers are very important, since without them, there would be no one to share their information with. That is why an other part of understanding a bloggers’ career is to understand why followers want to follow a blog. The interaction between bloggers and their followers is what makes a blogger successful. After analyzing the relationship between bloggers and followers from both sides, I will look at the effects the blogs have on the fashion part of society. I assume that the blogs bring a difference within the fashion world since they are creating a new role for themselves within the fashion scene. By comparing several blogs\(^5\), who have a number of similarities, I hope and expect to find even more similarities between those blogs and between the way the bloggers present themselves. The truth or falseness of information

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\(^4\) See chapter 5.1.  
\(^5\) See chapter 5.1.
on blogs is not the main point in my research, since I think that the main point is that the information is marked as valuable by the consumers and not if they tell the truth about their backgrounds and personal lives. Thus, within this research, it is not as much the actual information that bloggers bring to their followers, no matter if it is false or truth, but it is the way they provide this information that is subject of research. Based on their amount of followers (see figure 5.1) and their increased status within the fashion world, we can conclude that the information on their blogs is not only interesting enough for followers to return to a blog, but it is also labelled as valuable by the fashion society. It is therefore not about truth or false, but about the credibility and the way that bloggers provide their information.
3. Previous research

Blogging is a relatively new phenomenon. It is within the past few years that bloggers use their blogs to establish their role in the fashion world. It is therefore that there is not that much research done about the way bloggers use their blog to reach other goals than to share their experiences with their followers. However, there are starting to come more and more minor publications about the blog phenomenon. At this moment, there is very little research done about fashion bloggers and the way they increase their capital by blogging. The research that is been done, can be seen as a starting point for further research in this field. Most previous research is however, done on a small scale and has a different focus than the blogs that I will focus on. Based on what is published on this part of popular culture, there are results and conclusion that will be useful for mine and further research. Since the field of fashion bloggers is so young, there is a lot that is not been said yet. Of course they use media, the Internet, which is more widely discussed and researched. This, and other types of related research, can of course help in the further research on fashion blogs.

3.1 What can we learn from previous research?

Previous research shows how the normal consumer takes a more democratic position within the fashion world. The blogs are seen as a platform that consumers can use to create their digital self-presentation with the help of visual stimuli like videos and links (Kretz, 2010). Also, there is research done that compares the influence of blogs and other social media such as magazines (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011). This gives an insight in the way blogs work and the way that people use and read the blogs. Colliander and Dahlén (2011) mention an other interesting point, namely the influence that the writer’s credibility has on the consumers. I will talk about the way fashion bloggers increase their credibility in chapter 6. Pham (2011) focuses on the debate about the meaningfulness of fashion blogging. This is an important aspect when it comes to blogging since blogging is something that everybody, with a computer and access to the Internet, can do. This makes fashion blogs more interesting from an economic point of view. Namely, it can be used as a way of free commercial. I will say more about this in chapter 6.
One of the main points, which seems a central focus point in all the three mentioned researches, is the way that people use blogs to create their identity. Within the previous mentioned researches, the fact that people are able to influence themselves and their identities with the help of online tools is acknowledged.

3.2 What can be done differently?

In the previously mentioned researches it is noticeable that the fashion bloggers’ status is improving. In most of the previous research the blogger is equal to the consumer, but this is something that is changing today. The bloggers are more and more divided into two categories. In one category the bloggers can be seen as normal consumers, but in the other category we see bloggers who become more than just consumers. In my research I will focus on the last group. The bloggers I will talk about already achieved some successes within the fashion world and can therefore be placed on a higher rank than the ‘normal’ consumer. In contrast to the mentioned previous researches, I will write about four specific blogs and not just about blogs or fashion blogs in general. This will give a more detailed idea about the way bloggers use their blogs.
4. Theories

4.1 Bourdieu’s capital

The starting point for my research is based on Bourdieu’s (1979) theory about different kinds of capital. The term ‘capital’ can be divided into an economic, social, cultural and a symbolic part (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.98). Economical capital is the availability of economic resources, social capital includes relationships and networks and cultural capital expresses how taste and the perception of beauty and value is placed within society (Kawamura, 2005, p.54). Both economical, social and cultural capital can be turned into symbolic capital when ‘[…] it is grasped through categories of perception that recognize its specific logic […]’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.119). When it comes to fashion and clothing, symbolic capital can thus be obtained when people value consumption and use products in order to express their social identity (Kawamura, 2005, p.54). In relation to fashion bloggers this could mean that the symbolic capital they have is knowing how to dress themselves. This symbolic capital can be obtained with the help of economical capital, which gives them the tools to obtain symbolic capital.

The relations between different kinds of groups are based on the conditions in which they acquired their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979, p.13). Children that are raised in different classes are most likely to have a different perception of values and beauty. This is something that influences the bloggers and might make them different from each other and from their followers.

According to Bourdieu (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.135), people can use their capital in order to get closer to the things, people and places they desire and keep their distance from undesirable places, people and things. For instance, if you have a lot of economical capital, it gives you the economic resources to stay within that part of society that suits your capital the best. However, when it comes to bloggers, it is not that clear what kind of capital they have and how and if they use it in order to obtain more capital. The use of the medium Internet does, hardly, costs something and it is something that can be used individually. Blogging is therefore, in the parts of the world where Internet is a standard, no proof of economical or social capital.

When an amount of capital, no matter the type, is obtained, ‘[…] players can play to increase or to conserve their capital […] but they can also get in it to transform, partially
or completely, the immanent rules of the game’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.99). Thus, when bloggers increase their capital, they can become an influential player within the fashion world. Since the structure within the fashion world is already defined by its members and their economical and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979, p.260), there are two things that bloggers have to accomplish. First, they have to become one of the members and secondly, they have to change the current structures in order to be a valuable member. The already existing relationships between the members can then be changed (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.99). In this way, the bloggers can create a place within the fashion world where they can place themselves as being influential.

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) it is not only the amount of capital that influences your status within a certain field, but it is also the ‘[…] state of the relations of force between players that defines the structure of the field’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.99). The bloggers are a good starting point to show how economical, social and eventually symbolic capital can be obtained. ‘[…] in order to construct the field, one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it […]’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.108). The bloggers, thus, have to understand the way that capital works within the fashion system.

4.2 Social structures

One of the starting points of this research is that the fashion world is divided into classes. This class system is important in the field of fashion since it decides the way that fashion works it’s way into society. Kawamura (2005, p.21) gives as example the upper class ladies who invent a new style and pass this on to the lower classes. As soon as the lower classes are imitating their styles, the upper class ladies come up with new styles. This game of imitating can be recognized within the blogger scene where the blogger functions as an upper class lady. I will look at the way the bloggers take this role and how they become a starting point for imitation. In order to be imitated, they need capital to create a high status. At the same time I want to know how bloggers are able to reach this influential status. Where the classes and social roles in times of the earlier upper class ladies were fixed and immobile, the bloggers are not born in a time where those rules are this strict (Kawamura, 2005, p.25). This gives them the opportunity to change social classes and thus change the requirements to belong to a specific class.
4.3 Seducing consumers

Bloggers can not influence their capital only by them selves. They need other players to make it more valuable. Players from higher and lower classes form a frame of reference for the bloggers. Therefore, another important aspect when it comes to the role of bloggers within the fashion world has to do with how they are able to influence consumers. It is the consumer who has to be turned into a follower. The followers are needed in order for the bloggers to obtain a high status. To turn consumers into followers, the blogger has to help them to fulfil their needs and wants. In order to understand how consumers are turned into followers and to give an inside in this mechanism I will look at the way consumers create identity and the way that desire directs them into wanting certain objects. There is a lot that lies beneath the feeling of desire. Desire can go hand in hand with the fear of being without desire, self-seduction, struggle between desire and morality etc. (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.326). This does not only apply on the readers, but it influences the bloggers as well. The way bloggers create their image and the role that desire plays within this image-building influences the way their followers look at them.

4.4 Analyzing pictures

We live in a world where visual images are such a big part of our daily life that we do not always notice them any more (Schroeder, 2002, p.3). This can be dangerous since photos then become a source of information which is mostly seen as reliable. To understand the importance and the influence that pictures have, I will be analyzing the pictures on the blogs with the help of Schroeder’s (2002) theory on visual consumption. The main focus of this theory is to understand in which way images can influence consumers. To be able to answer this question we have to look at what and how images communicate and in which way the consumers decode and understand the images (Schroeder, 2002, p.3). This can give us more knowledge about the way in which bloggers create their image. Using this approach will give an insight into which extent pictures influence a bloggers’ image.
5. Methodology: Why netnography and why blogs?

Blogs offer a social interactive atmosphere, which gives the opportunity to create a platform for a certain culture. The opinions within this culture can be discussed on a blog. For my research I will use observational netnography (Kozinets, 2006, p.133), since I will not be interacting with the bloggers. One of the main goals of a netnographical research is ‘[…] the identification and understanding of the needs and decision influences of relevant online consumer groups’ (Kozinets, 2006, p.130). In my research the online consumer group is the bloggers and with them, their followers. Both groups are consumers who come together on a fashion blog. However, there is a clear difference in capital between those groups, which will be the object of my research.

The research will be purely based on observations since this gives the closest representation of the relationship between bloggers and followers. Directly communicating with them will not simulate the relationship they have with their followers, since they will then be the subject of research in stead of an inspiration. Kozinets (2006) describes three types of information that researchers can use for their research. Two of those are used here, namely the information that is directly copied from the internet, which gives access to the exact same information that followers have. The second type of information is based on interpretations. The two types of information together results in observational netnography, which means that the researchers will not reveal themselves to the online community (Kozinets, 2006, p.133). With this type of research, it is impossible to influence the subject of the research, namely the bloggers and consumers. At the same time is the information that is being observed the exact same information as the one that the followers will read. This makes it easier and more truthful to research the relation between bloggers and followers. Next, I will elaborate on the blogs that will be used for this research. Blogs are an interesting researching object since they are relatively new and still growing. However, the tools that bloggers use are not to be considered new any more. Using the internet to spread messages and information is something that we have been doing for the past decades, so it has to be something else then, or at least something complementary to, their use of media that gives them popularity. By looking at the content of their blogs and analysing this, I hope to get an answer to my in chapter 2 mentioned questions.
5.1 The Blogs

During this research I will be looking at four blogs: ‘The blonde salad’\(^6\), ‘Fashion squad’\(^7\), ‘Stylescrapbook’\(^8\) and ‘This chick’s got style’\(^9\). I started to follow them daily from the beginning of 2012. I have chosen those blogs based on several similarities between the blogs. The girls are all in their twenties and live in wealthy countries in Europe.\(^10\) All of the girls claim to do something else besides blogging. The biggest and for this research most interesting similarity between the girls is that they use their blogs to create their image. In order for them to be of importance in the fashion world they have to succeed in creating an identity that remains stable in an always changing society (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). That they spent a significant amount of time on their blogs and the fact that their readers keep coming back can be concluded when looking at the figure 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog</th>
<th>Starting date:</th>
<th>Posts:</th>
<th>Followers(^11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The blonde salad</td>
<td>12/10/2009</td>
<td>1178</td>
<td>101.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion squad</td>
<td>April 2006</td>
<td>3733</td>
<td>84.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylescrapbook</td>
<td>26/11/2007</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>61.394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This chick’s got style</td>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>12.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.1 Blogs and their numbers*

Based on their ‘about’ pages on their websites, they describe themselves with terms as ‘stylist’, ‘student’, ‘life lover’ and ‘blogger’. Non of them presents herself as only being a blogger. The reason behind this could be that they simply do not want to share the other parts of their lives, which seems slightly odd since they are now sharing their day to day experiences and do not seem to have any problems with this. An other reason could be that this selective information is part of their image building. On their blogs, the girls talk about the things, people and events that have an important meaning to

\(^6\) http://www.theblondesalad.com/
\(^7\) http://www.fashionsquad.com/
\(^8\) http://www.stylescrapbook.com/
\(^9\) http://www.thischicksgotstyle.com/
\(^10\) Holland, Italy and Sweden
\(^11\) The amount of followers is based on the numbers that are available on www.bloglovin.com [accessed 16 may 2012]
them. Since the things we love have a big influence on our selves, the bloggers show the products, people and events that make them who they are (Ahuvia, 2005, p.171). This means that they show their lives and personality, or at least a part of it, in terms of products and events.

All the girls succeeded in increasing their status within the fashion world. That they have increased their status is based on collaborations between the bloggers and several fashion brands that came to be during their time as blogger. The first three bloggers created a collaboration between the three of them. Together they are known as ‘Werelse’ and they recently produced a line for mango.12 Besides this collaboration, they all have their individual collaborations. Chiara from theblondesalad.com has her own shoe collection13, Andy from stylescrapbook.com is host of a TV-show14, Carolina from fashionsquad.com collaborates with the Swedish shoe store ‘Dinsko’15 and Yara from thischicksgotstyle.com is making, amongst many other things, a name as ‘fashion expert’ on Dutch television.16

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12 http://werelse.com/index.html
15 http://www.fashionsquad.com/din-sko/
16 http://thischicksgotstyle.blogspot.se/2012/01/tune-in-on-1830-for-my-tv-debut.html
6. Empirical material: What does the blogger do?

The blogger is creating her image and uses her blog to do this. It is obvious that everybody wants to represent themselves in the most positive way and does this with the for him or her nicest possible objects. If we show pictures, we choose to show certain photographs that help us represent ourselves and our lives in a way that we experience as positive. This representation will not only influence others to see us in a certain way, it also helps ourselves to see and create our image (Schroeder, 2002, p.53). It is therefore that a blogger will only update the pictures that represent the best version of herself. This gives a distorted image of the blogger. Since the bloggers are not represented as models in the photos and they are not trying to sell something in the beginnings, there is no particular reason why they should photoshop their photos other then just look their best possible selves. It is therefore that if and how a photo is edited, is not the main focus of this research. The focus of this analysis lies on the way the pictures are used.

6.1 Blogs and pictures

As the main representative from a blog, the blogger has a lot of influence on what to show on her blog. Everything that she shares with her followers will influence her image and has to be carefully chosen. An important source to do this with is pictures. It is the blogger that decides what pictures to take and which one of them will appear on the blog. This gives the bloggers an extra possibility to influence their image in a positive way.

\[\text{[...] photographs are subjective, transient images made by a particular person with special equipment at a specific moment in time} \]

(Schroeder, 2002, p.45).

Showing pictures is one thing that all the fashion blogs have in common. Almost all of their post consist out of multiple pictures with a little bit of text. In the rare case that a blog input does not contains a picture, there is always some other visual, other then textual, source of information such as a video. To give an idea bout the deviation of text
and images you will find the sum of pictures and text for seven posts from the four bloggers. In figure 6.1 you will find the numbers of sentences, pictures and videos used in an average week in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog:</th>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
<th>Videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.theblondesalad.com/">http://www.theblondesalad.com/</a> (04/05-08/05)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.thischicksgotstyle.com/">http://www.thischicksgotstyle.com/</a> (28/04-07/05)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.stylescrapbook.com/">http://www.stylescrapbook.com/</a> (03/05-08/05)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.fashionsquad.com/">http://www.fashionsquad.com/</a> (07/04-05/05)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6.1 Blogs and the amount of text and visual objects.*

The high amount of visual images responds to the consumers expectations since they see the Internet as a mostly visual source of information (Schroeder, 2002, p.22). We can conclude that in order to start a blog you need something to show. Bloggers have to communicate something that other people want to look at. Since the blogs for a large part contain pictures, it is mostly the pictures that influence your success or failure as a blogger. The pictures are a big part of a bloggers identity. It is therefore that it is important that they communicate the rights things. The image of the blogger has to fulfil certain aspects. At first, the blog has to contain pictures and information that appeals to the readers. Secondly, the readers have to want to return to the blog and become followers. Only if people become followers and consistently return to the blogs, the bloggers succeed in appealing to their audience in a good and adequate way.

6.2 Blogs and desire

To appeal to readers can be a result of combining recognition and desire. ‘Underlying and driving the pursuit of desire, we find self-seduction, longing, desire for desire, fear of being without desire, hopefulness and tensions between seduction and morality’ (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.326). Apparently, the feeling of desire is not just the result of seeing something that appeals to you in an aesthetical or practical way. The state of desire is combined with inner struggle and seducing yourself. This, and the fear of being without desires, can make it very interesting if someone brings you in contact with possible new desires. Bloggers can function as this mediator. Based on a post by
Chiara Ferragni\textsuperscript{17}, we are able to see an example of the creation of desire. In this post she shows a picture of a birthday present from her boyfriend. The post only contains one picture of a Prada bag and one sentence in which she says that her boyfriend knows her taste so well. With this post, she is implicitly, and maybe even unintentionally, sending out multiple messages. The first one, which is probably the one she wants to sent out, is that she is sharing her birthday happiness with her followers. This message is easy to accept by her followers. The second one is that she is the proud owner of a Prada bag. And the third message is that her boyfriend knows her so well. The second and third message might be a little harder for the followers to process since with these messages, she creates multiple desires. The central desire, central because it is a fashion blog, is owning a Prada bag. The second desire is a desire that has to do with lifestyle, which can be seen as part of fashion, namely being in a loving relationship where your partner not only knows your taste, but apparently has the money to buy a Prada bag.

In order to keep the desires, partly, within reach, the bloggers combine different products in different price ranges. In their posts, they always mention the brand names of the items they are wearing. This makes it possible for the consumer to trace a product and see it’s price. There is often a combination of products from the high segment and products from lower segments. An interesting combination of products is shown in the next pictures. This blog post contains an outfit with products from both high as low segment brands.\textsuperscript{18} The clothes and shoes come from ZARA and H&M, while the ring is from Yves Saint Laurent.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{YSL_ring}
\caption{Picture 6.2 YSL ring}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{Stylescrapbook_bag}
\caption{Picture 6.2 The Stylescrapbook for Kipling bag}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{17} http://www.theblondesalad.com/ 08/05/2012 ‘Prada cocktail purse’, picture added in appendices.
\textsuperscript{18} http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/look-of-day-tropicana.html 08/05/2012 ‘Look of the day ‘tropicana’”.

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By clicking on the link, which is available on the blog, the follower is leaded to the website where the ring can be bought. Here it shows that the ring costs $290. A few days later, she wears the ring in an other post, only now it is a silver version. For this version there is a link to the online web shop as well. An other interesting item in this post is the camera bag. This bag is the result of a cooperation between the Stylescrapbook and bag brand Kipling. Even though she is not mentioning the bag in the post, other than writing it’s brand, it is put in the spotlight by showing it in several pictures and even include a photo that is only showing the bag (picture 6.2).

6.3 Happiness in lifestyle

An important thing to keep in mind is that pictures and film are never able to be a perfect representation from reality. Simply because it is the people who hold the camera that decide where we look and where the focus lies (Schroeder, 2002, p.50). When it comes to blogs, the bloggers are the ones who decide what we look at. They can choose to post everything they want and leave out the things they do not want to show. When looking at the blogs I noticed the colourfulness and sun in a lot of the pictures. There is a post on Carolina Engman’s blog which contains the following two pictures of flowers and ice-cream.

![Picture 6.3 Cherry Blossom](http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/look-of-day-spring.html)

![Picture 6.4 Ice-cream](http://www.fashionsquad.com/cherry-blossoms/#more-19996)

The post contains seven pictures and four out of them only include, the same, pink flowers. The fifth picture is of this multicoloured ice-cream. If only three out of the

19 [http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/look-of-day-spring.html](http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/look-of-day-spring.html) 21/05/2012 ‘Look of the day ‘Spring?’”

20 [http://www.fashionsquad.com/cherry-blossoms/#more-19996](http://www.fashionsquad.com/cherry-blossoms/#more-19996) 02/05/2012 ‘Cherry Blossom’
seven pictures in a post, and than I am counting picture 6.2 as being fashion related, can be slightly related to fashion, the connection to fashion is hard to be found. However, posting three flower pictures, instead of one or even none, is a choice. The lack of clothes or accessories in these pictures tells us that the blogger chose to use these pictures for another reason then to show her outfit. Apparently, the pictures seem to fit the blogger’s image well and create an atmosphere that they feel comfortable showing. The fact that bloggers seem to be the most comfortable showing photographs where they smile, is not a coincidence. From a young age we learn to smile when our portrait is taken. When we are posing for pictures, we are expected to smile, this smile does not necessarily represent they way we feel at that moment, but it represents the way we want others to see us (Schroeder, 2002, p.54). However, I believe that this is not as much about other people as it is about ourselves. Smiling on pictures, even though happiness might not be the overruling feeling at the moment of photographing, is not only a representation thing. It is much simpler than this, since everybody who has experienced the feeling of happiness knows that this feels much better then being sad. Smiling on a picture is showing how we look when we feel our best. The knowledge that a picture will last longer then a moment of unhappiness makes the choice to pretend to look happy an easy one.

Another way of creating a certain mood amongst your followers is to show your lifestyle. By combining aesthetically evaluative and descriptive pictures, the bloggers combine showing fashion with showing their lifestyle and at the same time establish a ground feeling on their blog (Schroeder, 2002, p.56-57). Showing parts of their life is a selective process and negative happenings do not seem to pass the selection. In the past few months of following the bloggers, there is one post that has a negative feeling to it. This post was an apology for not being able to post as much as she wanted since her master thesis was not progressing as good as it should. Other then this, the blogs are filled with travels and attending different kinds of events and parties. If the bloggers write about things that, hardly, qualify as negative, it is often a downside to something good. Waiting for a delayed flight that will bring you to a sunny music festival hardly qualifies as negative.

21 http://thischicksgotstyle.blogspot.se/2012/01/not-best-time.html  25/01/2012 ‘Not the best time’
Here again, there are elements that can create a feeling of desire. Since a large amount of the pictures are not even showing fashion items, the desire is not only a desire for a specific fashion item. Of course the focus lies on the products that are shown, it is therefore that the brands and sometimes selling points, are mentioned on the blogs. The combination of a lifestyle that includes attending parties, fashion events, shopping, travel and being a owner of a lot of fashion clothes and items, puts the bloggers on a pedestal. Overwhelmed by positivity and all these events, that are often out of reach for the ‘normal’ consumer, the follower will develop feelings of desire.

6.4 Private sphere
Even though the post are mostly positive, the girls still manage to look human and create an intimate feeling by using the right images. ‘[…] for consumers, photography remains closely tied to memory, family, and identity’ (Schroeder, 2002, p.46). This feeling is increased by the private spheres the pictures are taken in. Bloggers show pictures from their homes. In these pictures we see furniture and clothing\textsuperscript{23}, but also their family, art and parts of the home where they grew up.\textsuperscript{24} The posts are only giving us an insight in their personal lives and therefore function to create an intimate setting. In these type of pictures, the relation to fashion is not that easy to find. That is, the fashion in a concrete form as clothing and accessories. Instead, fashion is shown in the form of lifestyle. When showing those homely pictures, the bloggers show how they achieved the information that helps them determine what they experience as valuable and beautiful. The reader gets a small insight in how the bloggers’ social position affects the choices the blogger makes (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.2).

The follower gets the feeling that he or she has the privilege to follow someone else’s life. The distance between bloggers and followers can be made as minimal as possible with the Internet. It is not only the intimate and private pictures that influence the relationship between blogger and follower, but it also works the other way around. Thanks to the intimate atmosphere that is created on the blog, the pictures seem to be a more realistic representation of reality and therefore of the bloggers’ life. The blog becomes more personal thanks to the pictures and at the same time, the pictures become more intimate since they are placed on a personal blog. Despite the raising awareness

\textsuperscript{23} http://thischicksgotstyle.blogspot.se/2011/12/welcome-to-my-home.html 23/12/2011 ‘Welcome to my home’

\textsuperscript{24} http://www.theblondesalad.com/2010/03/home-sweet-home.html 06/03/2010‘Home sweet home’

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that pictures do not have to be a perfect representation of reality, we should not forget the fact that pictures are able to show a realistic image as well (Schroeder, 2002, p.52). Not all the pictures are influenced in the same amount. Thanks to the intimate and private atmosphere on blogs, the followers are more likely to see the pictures as realistic and not manipulated.

6.5 Blogs and advertisements

Blogs are a form of advertising since the bloggers have to sell themselves to the public. If they are not interesting enough, the followers will not follow them any more. If the bloggers are not seen by anyone, they have no platform to create their status as a fashion expert. In order for the bloggers to do this, they need to be heard and listened to. Since both advertisements as bloggers try to sell something, it is important that we understand the differences and the similarities between blogs and advertisements. Based on the bloggers’ increasing popularity, we can conclude that there are certain bloggers that sell themselves very well. In those cases they know how to advertise themselves. Since bloggers are no official advertisements, they are selling themselves, and products in some cases, without giving their followers the feeling that they are advertising.

Looking at blogs as advertisements shows a lot of similarities between the two. They both are selling something and do this by choosing a positive aspect of the product and show this to the consumer. However, advertisements can even produce a meaning that has nothing to do with the advertised product (Schroeder, 2002, p.25). Bloggers can do this as well, since they decide what they want to refer to on their blogs. Bloggers, just like advertisements, seem to show a world that really exists, even though the pictures might be edited to create a certain goal (Schroeder, 2002, p.27).

An other similarity between advertisements and fashion blogs is that they ignore parts of society to influence their own identity. An important characteristic of photography is that photos often appear to function like transparent windows on reality (Schroeder, 2002, p.45). That this is not the case shows in blogs and advertisements, since both are choosing to only show what benefits them and leave the negative parts out. It even seems like they are ignoring the entire economy part of consuming. An example of this can be find on Carolina’s blog where she writes: ‘but when I stumble upon a great black
leather jacket with chunky zippers like this one, it’s hard to say no!’. Comments like this show followers that it was impossible for her to not buy such a nice jacket. Even though a lot of followers will understand her will to buy this jacket, for them, it is the price ($416.00) that plays a role in weather to do or do not purchase this item. When it comes to the readers, the financial barrier can keep them away from the desired product (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.340). Even without the text the picture would not be transparent since it is not revealing anything about a price or the way she obtained the jacket and therefore hiding a part of Carolina’s economical capital. The ignorance of the economical aspects of purchasing items could be caused by the possible free items bloggers receive from fashion brands. If they receive an item for free it is logical that they received this in order to increase the sales of this particular item. By placing a link on their website the product is easier to find. This could also explain the fact that there are no prices on their blogs. Everyone that is interested in a particular item, can now click on this link without being scared by the price. Even if they do not want to spent this amount of money, there is the possibility that they purchase an other product in the web shop. Those type of links, which guide you to a online shop, can be found on all the blogs. An example can be found on Chiara’s blog, where she posts outfit pictures and a link to a bag that costs $895. An additional point, that makes it even more believable that they get items for free, is that there are only a few items that are linked to a web shop.

6.6 Bloggers and references
Pictures, texts, videos etc. that are shown on a blog are related to each other. Even if things do not have anything to do with each other, like the earlier example (chapter 6.3) of the use of flower photos, they will influence each other since they are shown at the same time and in the same place. The entire blog is creating a frame in which the blogger places herself. ‘Without interpretive frames, it is difficult to make sense of images’ (Schroeder, 2002, p.52). In advertisements as we known them it is common to use existing references or even create new references in order to make the consumer think in a certain way. With those new references they are able to change the consumers’ culture and ideas (Schroeder, 2002, p.29). This is something that happens

25 http://www.fashionsquad.com/urban-jungle/#more-19706 27/03/2012 ‘Urban Jungle’
26 http://www.theblondesalad.com/2012/05/rain-go-away.html 22/05/2012 ‘Rain go away’
within blogs as well. References can be used to create the idea of a certain lifestyle. There are multiple factors that play a role in the creation of this image. There are references relating to their hairdo, make-up, clothes, accessories, but there are also less concrete references made by showing attendance at certain events or parties. Even things as weather and background of their pictures can help in creating a reference to a certain lifestyle.

Consumers do often not have an expertise about the products they are buying (Schroeder, 2002, p.32). What they do have are other products to relate to. If there is a new shampoo brand they can place this within their references. When looking at a shampoo advertisement, the consumer will decide if the product matches or not matches his or her image. The ad can for example be girly, manly, happy, romantic etc. This makes it possible to grade the shampoo even without any idea about the actual working of the shampoo.

6.5 Birthday

Picture 6.5 is posted by Carolina on the day of her 25th birthday\(^{27}\). In this picture, like mentioned in chapter 6.3, the relation to the concrete fashion items is pretty much hidden. However, there are references that can be recognized within this picture. By showing the brand of the champagne, Carolina uses the already established references with this brand and brings it in relation with herself. Even though the picture is not showing the fashion objects that are expected in a fashion blogs, like clothes and accessories, the reference that can be recognized have an influence on the representation of Carolina’s lifestyle.

\(^{27}\) [http://www.fashionsquad.com/happy-birthday-to-me-2/](http://www.fashionsquad.com/happy-birthday-to-me-2/) 05/03/2012 ‘Happy birthday to me!’
6.7 Change in status

If the blogger uses all the above mentioned, they might get more success and obtain a higher status. At this moment, the wants and desires of the blogger might change. The blogger has now created an identity for herself which is stable and well known amongst her readers. There is always room for improvement and the blogger has to keep working in order to keep her status stable. However, when a certain status is reached, and if an identity is stable and successful, the blogger might be ready to make some money of this identity. This can be done by brands and designers that sent free products to the blogger and want free advertisement in exchange. Another way is the previously mentioned collaboration with brands. In this way not only the follower keeps getting new desires, but also the blogger keeps satisfied.

The development of new collaborations and happenings in the blogger’s life is closely described on the blogs. At this point, their status does not only change, but their attitude on the blogs does as well. They are starting to sell their own products. One of the reasons why they do this, which is an accepted reason for showing of, is that they are proud and thankful. Another reason, which turns their blogs more into advertisements, is increasing their sales.
7. Consumers: what does the consumer want?

We have seen different ways in which the blogger can influence their followers, but every relationship has two sides to it. In this case the other side is the one of the follower. In order for a blog to become successful, there has to be a silent agreement between bloggers and their readers since they have to keep each other satisfied. In the following chapter I will look at the way followers influence and use blogs.

A big part of the relation between a blogger and a follower can be explained with the help of consumer culture theory. The latter ‘denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets.’ (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p.869). Bloggers and followers have such a social arrangement, in which the blogger has the biggest voice in deciding the value of, mostly material, sources. Both bloggers as well as their followers can be seen as consumers. The bloggers happen to have more influence since they are the ones making up the rules of their social arrangement. The readers are able to accept these rules, and thereby agree to the described value of products, or they can show their disagreement by commenting on a bloggers’ posts.

The reason why consumer accept those social agreements and let the blogger influence them can be explained with the act of decision making. Consumers are forced to make decisions. They are confronted with brands and they have to decide if they can identify themselves enough with a brand to buy their items (Hines and Quinn, 2007, p.83). Even though these decisions are often not combined with discussions and are not always conscious battles, they go hand in hand with an internal struggle. I argue that bloggers seem to offer consumers a break from decision making by giving them multiple and, most importantly, optional suggestions. The readers are able to visit a blog and just look at what they see. There are no choices to be made since the blogger already did this for them. It is the blogger that decided that what they wear is fashion. If it comes to consuming, the followers are still given options to choose to consume the same items as the bloggers did, but this choice is voluntary. The blogger world can therefore be seen as a voluntary part of the consumer culture. Followers are aware that the products on the blogs are in the stores and can be consumed, but at the same time they know that they are not forced to make a decision to buy a product or not. At the same time, this freedom of choice, makes it easier for the bloggers as well. They are not
expected to convince their readers to buy the same products as they did. The consumer has to be entertained, but not pushed to make decisions that they are not ready to make. This is the reason that it feels sincere if a blogger shows a product. If a fashion company would show this product, it is obvious that they want to sell their products. A blogger on the other hand might show this product because it is a good and beautiful product. However, I would like to relate the above mentioned to the amount of agency we ascribe to the consumers. It would be rather naïve to not describe any agency to the consumers at all. After years of increasing media use, the consumers might be able to recognize media strategies, but the bloggers can not be placed in the same category as the advertisers and marketers. This might be confusing for the consumers, even tough they are able to translate the messages hidden in advertisements, they are not used to the personal appeal that bloggers use and can therefore not recognize them as advertisements.

7.1 Consumer and their self-image

Consumers are motivated to act and consume in a specific way. This motivation is caused by their possible selves, which represents things that a consumer hopes for as well as fears (Banister and Hogg, 2006, p.219). In their search for their best selves, blogs can help consumers since the current feeling around blogs is that they are personal and allow a visit in the bloggers private life. This is the reason why blogs can be seen as a reliable source for other consumers. ‘Blogs offer a sophisticated and often relevant source of consumer information and feedback that marketers and researchers can view as an important source of counterinformation that needs to be noted and sometimes countered’ (Kozinets, 2006, p.138). The information on blogs does not always have to be truth, or at least it can be an opinion, which will differ from person to person. However, all the information that is sent out on the net will be visible for others and has therefore the possibility to influence others.

The previous does not explain the consumers’ need for help and the reason why they are opening up for influences on their self-image. To answer this question we have to take a deeper look at consumers and the way they see themselves. Consumers associate, or not associate, themselves with other groups based on what they desire and like, but also on what they dislike and disgust (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.329-30). Based on these likes and dislikes, consumers will, subconsciously, choose a group they want to
be associated with. This influences the things they desire, since the desire will now represent objects that will make the consumer fit in this group. Bloggers can be seen as one of these groups and it is therefore that they represent the objects that will make you part of this group. The consumer will start to envy the blogger since consumers envy the people who have what they desire (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003).

This is not the only reason why consumers might be open for the bloggers’ influence. The one-way street that blogs seem to be, with information that comes from only one person, can help the consumers in an other way. Namely, it can help them to overcome their fear of mass commodification (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998, p.131). This fear plays a role in the creation of a self-image. The bloggers are establishing themselves as fashion experts and might therefore be able to help consumers with this fear.

Amongst the followers seem to be a lot of other fashion bloggers. This shows in the comment part of the posts. Everybody has the possibility to comment on an outfit post and the followers seem to take advantage of this possibility. Not only do they comment the content of the blogs, the followers find the room to work on their identity. In one of the posts by Andy on the style scrapbook, there is a girl, Daisy Dicchi, that comments with a compliment on the pictures and then uses the rest of the space to write her own website and the fact that you can win a dress on her blog. The comment can be analyzed in two ways. The first one is that Daisy uses Andy’s blog, and her image, to improve her own image. By letting Andy’s followers know that she has a blog as well, she places herself in the same category as Andy. As a fellow-blogger, she compliments her colleague to show that she appreciates, and therefore knows, fashion. The other way to look at the comment is that Daisy is not only establishing herself as a blogger with the same status as Andy, but also tries to improve her own status. By referring to her own blog, she tries to get Andy’s followers, which is probably the same target group, interested in her own blog.

7.2 Consumers and justifying their desires

The blogger is not only able to create desires, but can at the same time fulfil desires. If they make a promise to their visitors to show a certain item, like Andy does when she is


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making her own sweater\textsuperscript{29}, the followers gets the desire to see this promise being fulfilled and this will eventually happen.\textsuperscript{30} The follower can also ‘use’ the blogger in order to justify their feelings of desire. Consumers want to find ways to see their purchases as being necessary (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.328). While doing so, they can find it helpful to rank a blogger both higher as lower in status. When placing the blogger higher in status, the follower make it easier for themselves to justify their desires. Taking advice from someone with more economical, cultural and symbolic capital is justifiable since they have the capital to prove that they know what they are talking about. In this case, the information on a blog can be seen as a suggestion in order to increase the followers own capital. On the other hand, it can be helpful to place the blogger in the same category as followers place themselves. This category would be the normal consumer with an interest in fashion. By doing this, the follower can justify the desires as normal, since other people within the same class, are also purchasing certain items and spending their money on fashion. No matter in which way, with all the support that the followers get from the bloggers, desiring something becomes much more an attractive state of being (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003, p.331).

\textsuperscript{29} http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/video-diy.html 09/05/2012 ‘video diy’
\textsuperscript{30} http://www.stylescrapbook.com/2012/05/look-of-day-result.html 10/05/2012 ‘look of the day ‘the result’"
8. Analysis/ what do they change?

Placing bloggers within our society seems hard to do. They can not be seen as normal consumers, since they are the ones that have more influence on their readers (consumers) than the readers have on them. They are therefore seen as higher in the fashion world. At the same time the bloggers are being influenced by the already existing rules and classes of the fashion world.

‘One man’s consumption becomes his neighbour’s wish’

(Galbraith, 1958, p.21)

People influence each other in creating new desires. If one consumer buys something, this object becomes more, or less if it is bought by someone you do not want to be associated with, desirable for other consumers. In a way this shows that consumers are constantly looking for confirmation of their choices. If there are other people who had the desire to purchase something, this means that it is justified to want this object.

Bloggers use this fact to create a desire amongst their readers. The objects they show on their blogs are not their own creation, but just products that they purchased or received. The products are not ‘self’ or ‘non-self’, but they are identifiable with the bloggers’ self (Ahuvia, 2005, p.180). It is not just the blogger who identifies herself with these products, but the followers identify the bloggers with these products as well. This works between bloggers and followers, but it also works like this between ‘normal’ consumers. However, I claim that there is a difference between the way consumers influence each other and the way bloggers influence consumers. This has to do with the status that is created by and around the bloggers. Their cultural and economical capital is made concrete on their blogs, something that is not the same for the regular consumer. The players of every field define the structures and importance of capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.99). Based on the defined structures in the fashion field, we can conclude that having economical capital is important and increases a status. This becomes clear when looking at the girls’ blogs where they, in a discrete way, link a high status with different types of capital. On the one hand they show their economical capital by posting pictures of their belongings and include the brand-name and possibility to find out the price of the items. On the other hand they show their status by informing the followers, who are probably all interested in fashion, about their fashion
related projects and work. The places where they shop and live become concrete utterances of their cultural capital (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.135). At the same time, the base for all their believes, values, tastes etc., their habitus, is shown by showing pictures and writing about their childhood and their family (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.11).

8.1 Innocence

The intentions of the blogger can be experienced as innocent. This changes the way they enter the fashion field and make them no easy target for prejudices. When they start writing their blog, there is no need to justify this move. Blogging is already something that is generally accepted and that is available for everyone in the presence of internet and a computer. Everybody is able to put information on the internet and a lot of people do this. Even if it is in another way, sharing information is something that we became used to within the last years. Since sharing pictures and status updates is already the standard, putting information about your self on the Internet is nothing new. When it comes to sharing information, the bloggers are no news. This part of their cultural capital, using the internet and posting information about themselves, is not something that has a high value within the western world. Since all their followers are possessing this same capital. However, the consistency of their posts and the information they show, which is a sign of their capital, makes them different from other consumers.

That the fashion world is influenced by makers of clothes, designers, clothing manufacturers etc. in order to make more money, is already a well-known conspiracy theory (Kawamura, 2005, p.5). Bloggers can, not yet, be placed within this theory since it is not clear that the bloggers’ priority is to make the reader spent a lot of money. Instead, she is using her blog as a diary and shares her live with her followers. However, this last point gives brands a possibility to advertise in a more innocent way. If a blogger wears their products and includes prices and possible purchase points, the products are advertised without using an expensive advertisement.

The things they show are apparently appealing for a lot of people, who then turn into their followers. Even though their blogs are accessible for everyone, in some way the blogs are still a private domain. It is private since it is only the blogger that has full control over what happens on her blog. Even with the possibility to comment on her
posts, the clear boss in this domain is the blogger. The bloggers never answer a comment, at least not visible on their blogs. This makes the communication one-sided.

8.2 Change in society

The bloggers are creating their own path into the fashion field. As we have seen in chapter 6, they partly do this by exploring the already existing characteristics of fashion. An important characteristic of fashion is that it changes (Jackson, 2007, p.169). Each year stores sell multiple collections, according to the season. These collections are expanding and most stores and brands produce more than two collections a year. ‘Put simply, consumers are free to construct and re/construct their identities and group affirmations in an infinite manner, fluidly and not bound by time’ (Hines and Quinn, 2007, p.79). Especially this last point is something that can be used as a big advantage by bloggers. They are not restricted by time, but they can practice their work day and night. This makes that bloggers have the opportunity to change even more than the brands. Together with this change, they keep an other important characteristic of fashion in tact, namely ‘novelty’ (Kawamura, 2005, p.6). This term applies on both the way they work as the content of their work. Not only do they discover the fashion world in a new way and with new tools, their blogs, but they can also adapt the content of their blogs, their clothes and accessories, to the weather and to other specific occasions. They can combine upcoming trends and current happenings to create their outfits. The bloggers and the blogs become an object to change. ‘Changes to the nature of a fashion season arise partly from changes in consumers’ lifestyles’ (Jackson, 2007, p.172).

Another advantage they have on other fashion companies is that they have more possibilities to keep the desire amongst consumers alive. Bauman (2001, p.10-11) uses examples of Don Juan and travelling to explain that the desiring part of doing something is more fulfilling than actually reaching your goal. Due to the daily update on fashion blogs, the desire will remain alive. The journey of following the bloggers is one that will never reaches it’s end since there is always a new desire created that keeps the reader busy. The reader is satisfied after every visit to a blog, this satisfaction then turns around in a feeling of desire for more. This is what makes the readers return to the blogs. However, if a blogger is not living up to this expected change, they have the risk to lose followers. This is why they feel the need to apologize when wearing the same item
twice or even more. An example can be found on Yara’s blog.\textsuperscript{31} Not only does she apologize for wearing the same sweater more then once, she even makes a promise to show a lot of new items as soon as the weather changes. She recognizes her ‘mistake’ while at the same time justifying it because of the weather.

Bloggers use a big change in our society in order to show us their voice. There has been a change in the way we communicate information and even though this change has been going on for a long time, the influence that people can obtain with this new way of communication becomes clear if we look at influential bloggers.

Fashion is something that we create. Clothes, shoes and accessories can exist and still have nothing to do with fashion. These garments need to be shown and seen in order for them to have the opportunity to become fashion. Fashion blogs are able to change the fashion world in this way. They offer a platform for fashion to become even more visible. There is also a vision that remains in tact, and might even be strengthened by the bloggers, even though it might not be truth. This vision is that consuming improves the quality of life and increases happiness (Shankar, Whittaker and Fitchett, 2006). Even though it is mostly the economical part of society who wants to keep this vision in tact, and bloggers can not mainly be subscribed to this part, the bloggers are definitely stimulating happiness. By simply addressing web shops that sell particular items they are not only advertising products, but at the same time they encourage their followers to buy. As an example we can look at a post by Chiara. Here she promotes her ‘favourite flat shoes’. She shows a picture of the shoes and says that she could not resist to buy a third pair of these shoes.\textsuperscript{32} In this post there are several links to web shops which make it easier to purchase the same shoes.

8.3 Further research

To get a better understanding from the journey of the fashion blogger, it can be interesting to look deeper into their lives. Comparing their lives before and after they started a blog will give a more detailed idea about the results the blog brought them. After following the four blogs I noticed that there is a big economical difference between the bloggers. It is possible that their economical status already differed from

\textsuperscript{31} \url{http://thischicksgotstyle.blogspot.se/2012/05/outfit-repeat-wardrobe-offender.html} 07/05/2012 ‘Outfit: repeat wardrobe offender’
\textsuperscript{32} \url{http://www.theblondesalad.com/2012/05/give-me-some-cheese.html} 16/05/2012 ‘Give me some cheese’
each other before they started their blog, but it is also a possibility that there is a difference in economical capital that they received from their blog. In order to give a more concrete image of their economical capital, we would have to look at the exact numbers. However, looking at a more concrete picture of their income and numbers of followers is no guarantee for a better understanding of their blogs.

During my research I came up with more and more questions that could be answered if there was more information about the blogger's social and economical history. Of course this would require a different method since in this case, it would be helpful to have interviews with the bloggers. Interviews would also be a helpful way in order to find out more about the relationship and agreements that the bloggers have with fashion brands and web shops. This would make it possible to determine the part of blogging that is used for advertising.
9. Conclusion

This research has been based on the information that is made available by the bloggers themselves. After analyzing their blogs I wanted to be able to answer the following question: How do fashion bloggers use their blogs and the relation to their followers to increase their capital within the fashion world?

I can conclude that they are showing their cultural, social and economical capital and form these into symbolic capital. In more concrete words this means that the bloggers use their blogs to show what they have. This can be bags, shoes, clothes, but also less concrete things as lifestyle, family and love. By showing their capital, they are able to obtain even more capital. The bloggers prove their qualities on their blogs and in reward for this, their capital increases. The way this happens in, is in basis the same on all the four blogs. There is of course a difference within the actual content of the blogs, but if we look at the bigger lines, the provided information has a lot of similarities.

In order to be successful, the bloggers need to have followers. By creating an intimate atmosphere they are binding their readers and turn them into followers. This private and intimate atmosphere is caused by their aim to be open about their life. The followers are personally addressed which makes them more involved within the bloggers life. The fact that the readers are allowed to take a look in someone else’s life makes them feel privileged. That the bloggers are aiming to do this can be seen in the variety of post-topics. They post while working, when they are tired, when on holiday, when they do not really have the time etc. By posting on different times, different locations and during different happenings, the follower get’s the feeling to be included in all the aspects of a bloggers life and thus prioritized.

At the same time is this variety of posts a way to express the bloggers’ social capital. By showing different types of events they attended, diversity in their relationships and social networks is shown. Everything seems to have a place in the bloggers life. There is time for fun, family, friends, parties, work, shopping etc. On their blogs, the bloggers are able to create an atmosphere where happiness and thankfulness are dominating. The bloggers show happenings in their lives and use pictures to show the associated mood. By using pictures that show light, colours and expression, there is no sign of negativity on their blogs. Everything that is shown seems harmonious and if there are parts in a
Bloggers' life is not always harmonious, but they have the choice to leave the less desirable aspects out or make them look nicer with the right use of words and pictures.

The pictures are very important for a fashion blogger as they influence both the intimacy and the happiness on a blog. Pictures are also used as a proof of what they are good at, namely fashion. The main reason why they post pictures is to show that they know how to dress themselves. At the same time, the pictures show that they are good in other parts of their lives as well. The diversity of topics is another proof of how bloggers know how to live their lives.

The bloggers decide what kind of information they want to share with their followers, which gives them the power to create their own image. The information is therefore selective. By showing selective parts of their already obtained social and economical capital, the bloggers are able to obtain even more. This is caused by the mechanism between the blogger and consumer, where showed products and events create desire. The followers are exposed to objects and events that could improve their own image. The life that the fashion blogger is living, including all the concrete items as clothes, are an example of what a life could be like. There are no specific qualifications in order for someone to become a blogger. The bloggers are not trying to show these qualifications either. Since they are not talking about the actual work they do or studies they follow, it seems like they want to keep the idea alive that their blogs are simply a representation of their passion for fashion.

Bloggers are in relation with the entire fashion world. They are mediating between the high status fashion brands and the ‘normal consumer’. Bloggers bring fashion both closer and further away from the consumer. They bring fashion further away from the consumer by placing themselves in between them. The bloggers have now an intermediary function which makes it harder for the consumer to put themselves close to the fashion world. Fashion bloggers use their blogs in the beginning to have a platform for their fashion-hobby and ambitions. With this, they automatically place themselves higher than the people who also love fashion but do not have a blog, since having a blog can be seen as being more passionate about fashion. At the same time they make the distance between the ‘normal’ consumer and the fashion world a bit smaller. The girls are an example of what you can reach when in the possession of a passion for fashion. Since they do not give us a lot of information about their social, but mostly their economical, capital before they started blogging, they seem to want to use their blog as a starting point for their fashion career. They do not talk about any other sources,
especially economical, that might be needed in order to increase your status within the fashion world.

Bloggers use different characteristics of fashion and translate this on their blogs. They use the 24/7 availability of the Internet to show a constant change of fashion. This makes them able to influence their image every hour of the day. They can contact their followers at all possible times. They also use the different price segments within fashion by combing them all. When they are combining items from a different price class, they use the diversity of fashion and show it’s availability. If bloggers play it well, they use their blogs to create a stable identity for themselves while at the same time helping their followers to improve their identity. If this is done well, the only choice that readers have to make is to visit a blog, after that point the blogger has the power and can take over.

The bloggers use their cultural capital, what they think is beautiful and valuable within society, in order to obtain economical and social capital. This economic capital gives them the tools, money, to purchase more goods. Their blogs offer even an other possibility to increase their economical capital. For instance, if they are given free items from designers or stores. Their social capital is increased since after starting their blogs they increased their social network. They made new relationships within the fashion world, which is shown in posts about fashion shows and parties. As a result of their blogging, the bloggers not only know how to increase their capital, but they also know how to turn this into symbolic capital. The latter makes their followers recognize and appreciate the bloggers’ capital and use it in order to influence their own identities. Both the followers’ as the bloggers’ identity is influenced by the bloggers’ capital.
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Appendices

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Footnote 19: YSL ring

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Footnote 21: Not the best time

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Footnote 22: Just arrived: Coachella


Footnote 23: Welcome to my home

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Footnote 24: Home sweet home

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Footnote 25: Leather jacket

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Footnote 26: $895 bag

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Footnote 30: The result

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Footnote 31: Repeated outfit

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Footnote 32: Favourite flat shoes

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