The passionate 'sharing' of creative women:
A Study of self-portrayal on Facebook and Instagram

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Abstract

Online Self-portrayal has been attracting attention since the rise of social networks and their integration into everyday life. Social media have been said to support the idea of an "endlessly constructed self," transporting culture and shaping people's online experiences. Research often focused on the *if* and *why* when mostly college students portrayed themselves on social networks and in online communities. The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of how a certain demographic of women uses *Facebook* and *Instagram* for self-portrayal and what it means to them. The focus is on interesting but seldom studied personalities: well-educated, urban women in their late 20's up to their late 30's that are well integrated into the labor market. A combination of netnographic study and semi-standardized interviews of *Facebook* and *Instagram* activities are conducted within the framework of Erwin Goffman's "representation of the self in everyday life." Results show a high appreciation of Instagram in order to present a curated portrayal of one's life and a communication through 'likes'. Interestingly, the women, although highly skilled, often successful and living in one of the most appreciated urban centers of the world, occasionally feel pressure and insecurity to live up to the expectations of their networks.

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# 1.	Introduction

Over time, I myself have observed a change in my network's and my own behavior on social media: we became much more concerned and careful about how we interact on social media. People have developed and revised their ideas about *Facebook* and other social networking platforms over time. Many were skeptical in the beginning, while some – in my opinion – exaggerated the sharing and posting. All of them evolved over *Facebook's* eight years of existence and have even started using different social networks for different purposes.

The objective of this Master Thesis is to explore the nature of social media behavior. To be more concrete: to explore the way women who are active on social media shape their 'self' online – why and how they interact in the social networks such as *Facebook* and *Instagram*; with what purpose and eventual goals of self-portrayal they 'post', 'like', 'comment on' or 'share'. Although the purpose of this study is to draw conclusions on how individuals use social media for self-portrayal, this is not to say that it could elaborate on how broad masses use it. Therefore the focus will be on a limited demographic.

1.1. Research aim and research questions

This study aims to deepen the understanding of social media behavior, focusing particularly on the self-presentation of well-educated, urban women in their late twenties up to their late thirties on *Facebook* and *Instagram*. The focus will be on the social and behavioral aspects rather than the technological use of social networks. The research questions are the following:

RQ 1: How do the studied individuals want to be seen on Facebook and Instagram?

RQ 1.1. What are their reasons to actively post and share on *Facebook* or *Instagram*?

RQ 1.2. How actively shaped is their online self-portrayal? How much awareness is there to the self that is portrayed online?

RQ 1.3. What are the different uses or purposes for *Facebook* and *Instagram*? And how are they connected (if)?

RQ 2. Can we assume that the nine women use approaches and behavioral patterns to accomplish the virtual identity they seek to portray on Facebook and Instagram?

RQ 2.1. What kind of content/topics can we observe? Is it possible to outline more dominant topics that might be considered as supporting the online self-portrayal?

RQ 2.2. Are there patterns and are they different on *Facebook* or *Instagram*?

1.2. Positioning in the research field

The research field concerning how people use media since the introduction of the Internet and the following decades of increasingly rapid evolution of applications and features is broad. The introduction of the Internet and the rise of social networking have had a noticeable influence on people's lives and the way they use and interact with media. Users have continuously developed and refined the skills they use to find their way in the online world. More and more, they are able to distinguish the good sources from the bad ones, which at the same time raises questions concerning how such skills have developed and with what eventual aim (Johnson & Kane 2010: 3).

Newer research has also detected a use for political information seeking (Kaye 2010: 213). Individuals furthermore participate in social media dialogues to ratify unique needs, for example: convenience, identity, peer pressure, as well as "[...] personal fulfillment, social surveillance, expression/affiliation, self-documentation, letting off steam, and anti-media sentiment" (Johnson & Kane 2010: 3-4). Papacharissi (2010) concluded that, instead of isolating the effects of social networking site use, it would be important to investigate and contextualize them with the individual's habits and routines in order to relate them to emerging consequences for sociality. The goal of this is to investigate the purpose and characteristics of social media use in relation to the construction of an online self, drawing from Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of the representation of the self, which implies that individuals are constantly performing and shaping their own digital self through actions and interactions. "The self, in late modern societies, is expressed as fluid abstraction, reified through the individual's association with a reality that may be equally flexible" (Papacharissi 2011: 304). The self-presentation is seen as a process that becomes an ever-evolving cycle in which the individual's identity is introduced, compared, adapted or justified on the background of different realities: social, cultural, economic, as well as political (Papacharissi 2011: 304). This is what Goffman called the 'information game': "a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery" (Goffman 1959: 20).

The following research will focus on today's most popular social network, *Facebook,* and the fastest growing one, *Instagram*. The focus on *Facebook* is, to a certain extent, based on its huge popularity. TechCrunch, an acknowledged technology media property (blog) that reviews new Internet products and developments has published statistics on the penetration of social media platforms. Facebook is still, according to that rating, the worlds most popular social network platform in terms of penetration, followed by *YouTube, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn*. *Instagram* (nowadays owned by Facebook) comes fifth, but is the fastest growing. The active usage of *Facebook* and *YouTube,* on the other hand, are falling according to the same study (Article by Ingrid Lunden, published on TechCrunch on January

21, 2014). The above mentioned video-sharing platform, *YouTube*, Google's own social network *Google+* or the extremely popular micro-blogging site *Twitter* as well as the professional network and career oriented platform *LinkedIn* serve as stages and allow people to shape their self-portrayal in a Goffman sense and would obviously attract interest for a researcher. Also, there are countless social networking sites, for example the photo sharing platforms *flickr* and *Pinterest* or *MySpace*, which became huge during the first decade of the 21st century, due to the symbiotic relationship that emerged between bands and their fans (Boyd & Ellison 2008). These would be interesting to investigate or include as a broader range of social networking platforms, but in terms of scope and time the amount of platforms had to be limited. The focus on *Instagram* on the other hand comes from a personal growing interest and fascination of extensive use that has been observed over the past years. There is also a strong trend for an image genre that emerged with mobile photography: the selfie. A selfie is a self-portrait, casually taken with a smartphone camera held at arm length or catching the reflection in a mirror and uploaded to social network profiles. Selfies gained yet another importance after the 2013 Academy Awards, when entertainer and moderator Ellen DeGeneres' selfie with a group of Hollywood celebrities became the most forwarded tweet ever. A recent Swedish study of teenager's social media habits focused on image communication, through uploading and sharing of images. The teenagers seemed very aware and considerate of what pictures they published (often trying to look older than they were). They showed strong image conventions that were gender coded as either 'masculine' or 'feminine': Boys took on emotionless or serious poses, pretending not to care, whereas girls would often retouch images and change their profile pictures more often. The older the kids, the more attention they gave to the way they shared their pictures and the more work they put in their self-representation (Forsman 2014: 8). One focus will be on the selfie as a particular form of self-portrayal.

Contrary to other social networks, people tend to use their real name on *Facebook* due to a high online-offline integration. *Instagram* since it is linked to *Facebook* is similar, but people use a self-defined username. *Facebook* allows people not only to post and share (publicly or in a selected group), but also to comment on other's 'walls' (the profile page, where all activities are collected) or 'tag' someone (refer to a profile) in photographs. With that, people are creating a searchable digital trail of social activities. A 'news feed' displays friends' activities that can be commented on. A profile therefore is not a static entity, but works as an ever changing central of social interactions that mirrors dynamics within networks and communities (Tufekci 2008: 546). These profiles and trails of social activities will be matter of the following study.

The choice of the target group can be motivated from several angles. Access to literacy and certain skills

had been concluded essential to draw on the full potential of social networking sites (Papacharissi 2011). And: "[…] redactional acumen becomes a survival skill, as individuals exercise, become comfortable with, and play with a networked sense of self." (Papacharissi 2010: 317) This is why clear criteria were developed: women in their late 20's up to their late 30's with a higher education background, that live in an urban center, who are well integrated in in the labor market (financial independence) and, most importantly, are active on *Facebook* or *Instagram*. The choice of female actors is based on a personal interest in women and how they use social media to express themselves and influence other's perception. Due to my professional background, I feel very familiar with the women I aim to observe. Nevertheless, I have spent time on a pilot study in order to deepen my understanding of the target group.

Social networks have confirmed, the idea of an 'endlessly constructed self' which transports sharable culture to shape experiences and help building connections which again situate the individual in the world and to itself (Aufderheide 2010: 273). Joseph B. Walther et. al. (2011) introduced *Facebook* 'posts' as masspersonal communications and raised several interesting questions, such as how public visibility in usually private conversations affected individuals' construction of 'posts' on a *Facebook* wall, or what conscious or unconscious influence the joint construction of online personal identities might have on individuals. Or if there were rules and definitions of a grade of friendship or relation, or users' thoughts when constructing such masspersonal messages: "What communicatory utility does a *Facebook* posting provide for other conversations—or, what communicatory utility does "real life" offer for self-promotion and relational signification on *Facebook*?" (Walther et. al. 2011: 34). Those questions will later be reflected in the discussion.

Even though this introduction might have given a first idea of why people use social media, it does not give much indication of how people use social networks for self-portrayal yet. Social network studies are by far not a new field, but representation of the self online is quite young (Mehdizadeh 2010). Earlier studies of self-representation-strategies have focused on personal websites (Schau & Gilly 2003) or on MySpace profiles (Manago et. al. 2008), which provide yet another setting other than the social networks *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Scholars have often asked what kind of individuals appear due to social media, rather than what they do with it (Papacharissi 2011). Previous studies have often seen participants in online dialogs as a homogenous mass, which could be studied most easily on college students. This study aims for a more sensitized, personalized study that dives deeper into the individual's behavior, interactions and view of themselves. College students could be thought to have a very particular interest in using social media, and so would other demographic groups, that have not been in the focus so far. It is therefore the aim to fill some of those gaps and explore a particular demographic.

2. Background – Terminology

In order to secure a consequent use, a brief clarification of the terminology social media, social networks, and social networking sites seems useful here.

Although the terms 'social media' and 'social network' are often used alike, and are not mutually exclusive (Boyd & Ellison 2008), it is suggested to make a distinction here: Social media has been defined as the medium in which everyone can create their own content and their own news – contrary to previous news that was created by journalists and mass media exclusively (Murthy 2012). Social networking sites (SNS) – maintaining pre-existing social networks – have been considered a special form of social media which supports computer-mediated communication. As web-based services, they would allow for interaction within a bounded system built of public or semi-public profiles, managed by individuals; sharing and administering their lists of connections (Boyd & Ellison 2008). The key features include: allowing someone to view, share, and manage connections while communicating with other users within the same network (Boyd 2011: 42). *Facebook* and *Instagram* will therefore be considered social networks or social networking sites (Murthy 2012).

3. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter will introduce and elaborate the framework and supporting theories for the following research. The study will be based on Goffman's (1959) theory of every day self-representation as a main framework and be embedded in other media and communication studies which will be introduced separately.

3.1. Previous research on self-portrayal on Facebook

There is a vast amount of literature on self-presentation in the digital space, and some of it has been introduced above. This section aims to briefly introduce the previous research that focuses on self-presentation on *Facebook* exclusively. Since there is no significant study about self-portrayal on *Instagram*, it cannot be addressed here.

Robert E. Wilson et. al. presented a summary on identity representations within a collection of *Facebook* research which concluded that, although narcissistic or introverted people with lower self-esteem made themselves appear more positive online while knowledge about the audience influenced the self-portrayal, most people represented themselves quite accurately on *Facebook*. However, the profile owner was not only influencing the impression of others, but by the amount and type (attractiveness) of friends she or he had (Wilson et. al. 2012). The study again underlined that more cross-cultural studies will be

required in the future. Also, the importance of researching trends within specific demographic groups and different age groups (Wilson et. al. 2012, 208) having in mind that *Facebook* is an ever changing platform and that interactions within it will constantly transform (Wilson et. al. 2012, 208).

Shanyang Zhao et. al. (2008) underlined the importance of looking at *Facebook* as a non-anonymous online environment when researching identity-construction. Their study showed that identity was not looked at as a non-individual characteristic or as a person-initiated expression, but as a social construct that was the result of a performance depending on social environment and context. They concluded that most participants aimed to portray a socially-desirable self often indirectly through friend lists and photo albums, as well as through sharing consumption preferences and tastes rather than by completing their profile (Zhao 2008).

Ashwini Nadkarni and Stefan G. Hofmann (2012) summarized Facebook research from a psychological perspective and concluded that two needs drove people to use Facebook: to belong and to present oneself. Although most research drew from college or undergraduate students, it concluded that Facebook profiles mirrored the user's public persona, which was motivated by a desire of self-presentation influencing choice of pictures and interactions with friends, as well as pointing out future interest for special cultural groups (Nadkarni & Hoffman 2012).

3.2. Main framework – Goffman and the presentation of the self everyday

Erving Goffman, famous 20th century Canadian Sociologist, has researched social behavior and interaction from the 1950ies up until his death in 1982. In his key work and countlessly cited *The representation of the self in everyday life*, Goffman introduced self-representation as a part of social interaction that happens whenever two or more individuals meet; they attempt to obtain information about each other, such as status, attitudes, skills, trustworthiness etc. (Goffman 1959: 13). And explained the natural aim of an individual that performs in front of an audience as: "Regardless of the particular objective [...], it will be in his interests to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him" (Goffman 1959: 15). Goffman (1959) built a framework for understanding human interaction order based on the idea, that whenever an individual interacts with others, it will have several motives to be in control of their perceiving and would focus on what impression he or she will leave (Goffman 1959: 26). And that at the same time for an individual to be a certain person didn't mean to possess the attributes in order to display, but to strengthen that particular image through behavior and a credible and consistent routine of performance (Goffman 1959: 75).

Even though published before the introduction of the Internet, Goffman's (1959) analysis of apparent

trivialities in everyday life are still frequently referred to by scholars and are considered classics in social science that are not locked in time or space (Jacobsen 2010). The concept of the representation of the self is still rated a useful framework to explore social media interactions and self-production (Murty 2012: 1071). Goffman's (1959) theory will set the base for this study; the presentation of the self will be analyzed and compared as a constant performance on two parallel platforms. One of Goffman's (1959) focuses was the expressiveness of the individual, which acts differently when in presence of others. He defined a 'performance' as all activities of an individual in front of a certain audience during a given occasion. An individual would accentuate certain matters and keep from sight others. Discrepant roles may develop when audience or team-members discover non-obvious information about the performance that challenge it's credibility, which influences the honesty and realness with which individuals interact. According to Goffman (1959), an individual would often involve its ego in a part of social interaction, and identification with another individual or group:

> "The expressive component of social life has been treated as a source of impressions given to or taken by others. Impression, in turn has been treated as a source of information about unapparent facts and as a means by which the recipients can guide their response to the informant without having to wait for the full consequences of the informant's actions to be felt" (Goffman 1959: 241).

According to Goffman (1959) there are two different sign activities: An active 'giving' through verbal symbols or substitutes and a passive 'giving off' characterized by the individual's surroundings (Goffman 1959). Many individuals would feel that they could not just stay within a gentlemanly way of influencing the individuals observing them, but felt that they at some point had to manipulate the impression that they were about to give (impression management). They wanted to live up to expectations by which they were judged. The observed in that sense become a performer and the observer the audience (Goffman 1959: 243).

Countless essays and works have been published dealing with Goffman's work, indicating and strengthening his importance in social science. "[...] Goffman's original framework is not only still applicable, but also of great usefulness as an explanatory framework for understanding identity through interaction and presentation of self in the online world" (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 206: 110). Offline interactions were viewed as Goffman's back-stage production in preparation for performance on-stage, which corresponded with the online interactions on social media platforms. Due to greater control over what was expressed online, individuals were enabled to more strategically manage their expressions, which in Goffman's language would mean that online expressions were 'given' rather than 'given off' (Ellison et. al. 2006). Not least because one of the most important changes, since the introduction of the Internet, is that physical co-presence is no longer the game-maker in impression management (Jenkins

2010). Richard Jenkins (2010) stretched that social networking sites were the new settings to present oneself and mobile devices have become the instruments for our impression management in non-physical face-to-face interactions.

Nevertheless the digital interactions are not insulated from the everyday life because behavioral norms are transferred to the digital space. *Facebook* is seen as consisting of one back-stage as the private space and one front-stage as the public space, in that sense further observation will focus on the front-stage activities and gain information about the back-stage through the interviews.

3.3. Self-presentation and other communication theories

The following study of self-presentation was embedded in existing communication theories, with a focus the driving forces for individuals to use media and engage in online communication, touching upon transformations with the introduction of the Internet.

3.3.1. The concept of identity

Self-presentation and identity are strongly intertwined. This chapter therefore aims to elaborate on the concepts of identity and it's importance and influence on our everyday life, and relates identity to the construction of the self-portrayal online.

The concept of identity has been extensively discussed in the last decades. Historically, identity was seen as a composition based on acceptance of familiar and shared values and experiences that associate feelings such as belongingness and unity which eventually resulted in a cultural identity, often related to ethnicity, religion, culture, geography etc. (Hall 1996). Whereas nowadays, identity is no longer seen as stable or enduring construct, but as constantly negotiated, reassembled and reproduced (Shankar et. al 2009). Identities are in a constant process of change. They are never singular, but are repeatedly constructed through discourses, in historical or institutional environments (Hall 1996). Asking about someone's identity means asking who one is. Individuals construct their identity, based on their self-definition including experiences, values, goals etc. (Schwartz et al. 2011). Identity construction is defined as the process, during which an individual is making sense of a self (Gilpin 2011). Identities are characterized by difference and exclusivity, rather than unity and are seen as a project more than as an attribute (Hall 1996).

Connections on social networking platforms add value and validity to that performance (Gilpin 2011). The facilitation of self-expression is one of the Internet's very much appreciated functions. It has been

rewarded with a more honest self-expression online in comparison to offline, not least because of its relative anonymity and for overcoming a face-to-face disclosure of negative or taboo aspects of oneself (Bargh et. Al. 2002). Based on the idea that identity is the strained relation between self-definition and the way one connects with others, Hope Schau and Mary Gilly (2003) analyzed reasons for individuals to create their own private website. They showed that individuals strategically strived for certain self-presentation in their private webspace in order to create their online self, which they were well aware of shaping, and at the same time constantly explored several selves while anticipating a watching crowd (Schau & Gilly 2003: 394). People communicated a self through places and things such as choosing particular brands etc. Consumption for example can serve as a tool for self-definition and self-expression (Schau&Gilly 2003).

Other scholars claimed a sociotechnological context: Online presented and performed identity was not only up to the individual, but also defined by software, (in)formal rules, as well as social or technological relations in which interactions occur (Schmidt 2013: 372). Shanyang et. al. (2008) concluded that identity was not individual or expressed by only one person, but was a social product, the result of social environments and performances (Shanyang et al. 2008: 1831). Social processes such as adaptation to cultural contexts influenced identity to a great degree. Liam Bullingham and Ana Vasconcelos (2013) showed that college students used MySpace for exploring their own identity, compared and tried out aspects of different selves that they would want to become (Mangao et. al. 2008). Online environments also gave potential for anonymity, adoption of different characters, personas, cultures, genders, and races (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013).

Identity construction has become explicit through social media: users self-consciously create their online persona by choosing information and materials that others can see and by interacting with each other (Marvick 2013). The use of avatars as figures or masks representing a particular person or role enables identity tourism such as the adoption of a different gender or race, thanks to anonymity of an online environment (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013). It has been shown that social media at the same time contextualized individual's representation while misrepresentation lead to lack of trustworthiness or suffering of reputation. Even though the Internet might have changed the way people express their identity, it hasn't lead to a complete different presentation of a self. People used different platforms for different purposes, but often interconnect those platforms by utilizing the same name (Marvick 2013).
Stuart Boon and Christine Sinclair (2009) separated *Facebook* from the 'real world' and claimed that the multiplicity of identities that *Facebook* allowed for challenged this real world and the cultural frameworks, as well as identities within it. Profiles that were to a certain degree 'unreal' would disturb

users and create an ambivalence of identity (Boon & Sinclair 2009). Whereas Dhiraj Murthy (2012) saw posting as a way for individuals to maintain their identity that kept up their activity and associated social networks with an important function for self-production (Murthy 2012). Due to individuals having greater control over self-representation in the digital space than in the analogue it has been suggested that misrepresentation would lead to deception (Ellison et. al. 2006: 418, 419). More recent studies interpreted that people, although keen on representing themselves in a certain way (e.g. specially feminine, professional etc.), were driven by societal pressure and the desire to 'fit in'. They often strived for recreation of the offline self (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013). Based on that assumption, patterns of self-portrayal will be explored.

3.3.2. Reasons to interact in the digital space – Uses & Gratifications approach

"[…] the notion of an active audience has steadily moved from an assumption to obvious reality" (Sundar & Limperos 2013: 504). In that sense scholars no longer talk about an audience but about users that pursue their own goals. Therefore it seemed important to briefly introduce the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) approach.

The basic idea of U&G was that users acted and selected goal-directed because they knew their needs and aimed for satisfaction through media use (Papacharissi 2011: 212). Alan Rubin (2009) defined motivation, activity and involvement as the core driving forces for individuals in the U&G theory anticipating and forming expectations. The Internet reviewed the interest in U&G studies. It was assumed that consumers – through the Internet – were forced to be more active and selective and at the same time were enabled greater access: Being in control of what to explore and to actively search for content that gratified needs. Early online studies had adapted gratifications from the analogue world, suggesting that the gratified needs were similar for Internet use: entertainment and escape. However, recent studies showed more instrumental needs, namely surveillance and voter guidance due to the Internet's fundamental difference to traditional media; the merging of producer and consumer. Papacharissi (2009) concluded that the value of a U&G approach as a strong theoretical perspective dated back more than fifty years in a relatively young field:

> "The strength of the perspective lies in its ability to describe, explain, and expect media uses and consequences. [...] Timeless assumptions of the perspective contains about individual preference and interchangeability of communication channels allow its explanatory power in a traditional and convergent media environment" (Papacharissi 2009: 146).

The approach has been adopted for social media as well and will in that light be introduced in the next abstract.

3.3.3. Uses & Gratifications and social media

Earlier studies have focused on the influence of *Facebook* on social capital creation, that is, resources individuals gained by interacting with others in a social network which would later-on influence performance in academic, professional, health and other aspects of life. Intensity of social network use influenced the two kinds of creation of social capital: *Bridging* – expanding horizons based on weak ties of relationships, and *Bonding* – emotional support based on tight relationships between friends or family members. *Facebook* was found to be especially significant for *Maintained social capital* – the technological support and extension of existing offline relationships (Ellison et al. 2007). Users of social networks most often appreciated the expressive use of the Internet: "[...] to perform and realize social interactions, self-presentation, public performance, social capital management, social monitoring, as well as the production, maintenance and furthering of social ties" (Tufekci 2008: 548). Information seeking and knowledge-building seemed to be less important (Tufekci 2008: 548). Mehdizadeh (2010) examined online portrayal of offline personas, and detected that narcissism and self-esteem were reinforced on F*acebook* profiles, pointing out a gender related influence on the content – men sharing more personal data, women sharing more pictures (Mehdizadeh 2010: 360).

An interesting angle was introduced by S. Shyam Sundar and Anthony M. Limperos (2013) suggesting that the technological innovations and social networking sites in particular had challenged new affordances while also cultivating new needs to be gratified through media experience. They suggested new technology-driven needs in addition to the traditional focus on social and psychological needs. They introduced numerous new gratifications as a result of emerging media technology aspects:

> "Realism, Coolness, Novelty, Being There, Agency-Enhancement, Interaction, Community building, Bandwagon, Filtering/ Tailoring, Ownness, Activity, Responsiveness, Dynamic control, Browsing/Variety-Seeking, Scaffolds/Navigation aids, Play/Fun" (Sundar & Limperos 2013: 513).

Although the above-mentioned research findings mostly focused on university or college students and were in that sense not representative for other demographics, they gave an idea of what gratifications users strived for in the digital space. Before this background, and based on the above introduced gratifications, the use of social media to shape one's online self will be explored.

3.3.4. Forms of online interactions – Gatekeeping and Gatewatching

With the introduction of the Internet, scholars had recommended to refashion the traditional gatekeeping theory in order to discuss gatekeeping functions carried out by those who were formerly known as the audience. Online gatekeeping, has been introduced to describe relationships between diverse news actors. Gatewatching was presented as the curating, filtering, and multiplication of media content

through active audience actors. Social networks were associated with an important role of processing collective intelligence through the social practices of voting, filtering and commenting (Meraz & Papacharissi 2013). Gatewatching did not aim to cover everything, but relied on the decisions of the user on what was interesting and important for their peers to know. Gatewatchers framed and combined stories or news and highlighted and publicized them in their community (Bruns 2008). Based on that theory, the women will be asked what kind of interest they had to curate content for their network and what they expected from their networks.

3.3.5. Topics discussed in the digital space – The Agenda Setting approach in mind

Another approach that claims individual's influence on what the network thinks about and deals with is the Agenda setting theory. Sharon Meraz (2009) has researched the influence of independent political blogs on the public agenda and their relation with traditional newsroom blogs. Agenda Setting has traditionally been defined as the influence of the mass media on the recipients' understanding and construction of a public consensus. Meraz (2009) found that traditional mass media's influence was not unique any longer, especially since (micro)bloggers were not attached to the same quality standards and reliability. Even though the media still occupied an important position, their status was likely to shift (Meraz 2009: 701). In that sense, the women will be asked with what aim they shared content and whether they aimed to bring topics and themes to the agenda of their networks.

After this elaboration of theory and concepts that the study was based on the introduction of the methodology and explanation of how the research questions will be operationalized follow next.

4. Methodology

In this chapter the choice of methods will be discussed and elaborated in relation to the earlier introduced research questions.

4.1. Epistemology

Before discussing the Methodology, I would like to elaborate how I aim to generate knowledge during the following study. As it has been introduced, the aim is to deepen the understanding of how a certain demographic group uses *Facebook* and *Instagram* to portray themselves online. In that sense, one will not be able to come up with generalizable assumptions for online self-portrayal, but will investigate in a not yet much illuminated part of the field. In order to understand and analyze the behavior from the

individuals' point of view, it is the aim to build a concept for interpretative research based on grounded theory.

4.1.1. A grounded theory-inspired case study

Grounded theory is the discovery of theory through systematically obtained data and it's interpretation, providing the researcher with: "[…] relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications" (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Following research can be seen as a case study inspired by grounded theory. Case studies serve as a method for open research questions as well as investigating a "why" or "how", which don't require control of behavioral events but focus on contemporary happenings. Case studies often concentrate on decision making of individuals or organizations, they center on processes, programs, and events (Yin 2003). And therefore seem a suitable form for this study. The influence of grounded theory here was limited to the adoption of concept-building based on a grounded theory approach, meaning that concepts are formed in a dialogue of observation and analysis while the researcher moves between observation and analysis (Schrøder et. al. 2003: 81). In that sense, the elaboration of research guidelines, the observation and the analysis did not happen independently or one after another, but parallel and influenced each other. Grounded theorists part from the idea that the researcher's existing knowledge influences the selection, rather than previous studies (Schrøder et. al. 2003). In order to guide the reader through the study, the methods and steps of the observation and analysis that lead to the conclusions will be explained.

4.2. A qualitative research approach

This study was based on a combination of qualitative analytical methods: netnography and interviews and in a second step also making use of qualitative content analysis, when making sense of the study report and the interview transcripts. Qualitative research allows examining and revealing motives and activities (Silverman 2010: 288). The methods will later be introduced separately. The choice of method combination has been based on first insights during a pilot study, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

In order to make assumptions on how people present themselves online, one might suggest going for quantitative methods such as a survey. However this method has been neglected for the following reasons: the presented research field is, although not entirely new, relatively little explored. Therefore, I suggest that a qualitative study will allow for more initial insights, based on which further, broader studies can be conducted. Surveys can give insights into people's attitudes or opinions but they are far more useful when it comes to researching representative populations – which had to be neglected due to

the limited time. Also it is rather unsuited for newer cultural or community studies (Kozinets 2010). Another potential method that seemed worth considering, but after thinking it through, was found unsuitable, is focus group interviews. Mainly because of the surprisingly low awareness of the self-portrayal, which came out of the pilot interview and therefore the need for more tailored questions on activity on one hand, and questions concerning idea of target groups and self-view, as well as avoiding having the interviewees influence each other.

4.2.1. Pilot study

The pilot study, planned and executed in mid-February, consisted of an observation of five individuals who were followed on *Facebook* over a time period of five days. All their activities were collected in form of screen shots. One of the individuals was interviewed face to face as a pilot interview. The pilot study showed that individuals would rather share and like than comment on other's activities. It also indicated a tendency of sharing posts that can be associated with certain topics such as art, music, and friends (pictures of friends or the individuals with friends). The interview showed that the interviewee was either surprisingly unaware of her self-portrayal online, or did not want to or wasn't able to share. It became clear, that the interview questions needed to be more concrete and focus more on how the individuals use social media and how they act and interact on one hand, and how they think they are seen as well as how they would like to be seen on the other hand. Direct questions about self-portrayal strategies would not lead to much knowledge either due to the interviewee's unawareness or not actively following a personal strategy. The interview guide was adapted accordingly and can be found in the appendix.

4.3. Netnography

In order to answer and discuss *RQ 2 (Can we assume that the nine women use approaches and behavioral patterns to accomplish the virtual identity they seek to portray on Facebook and Instagram?)* and its sub-questions, a netnography study was conducted. Netnography aims to provide insights by analyzing online communication and interaction of individuals, giving the researcher a window into other's natural behaviors. It is an online form of ethnographic field research. In a netnographic study, a researcher constructs an image out of observations: collecting data by taking field notes of actions and interactions through different technologically mediated channels (Kozinets 2010). The researcher has to continuously balance between reflexive and even subjective observations and keeping the observers distance and a scientific approach when taking field notes. The computer and the Internet play a key role in netnography, where data is effortlessly accessible and easily transcribed. The researcher groups the transcription and makes sense of it by adding notes that serve for interpretation (Kozinets 2010: 113).

While Flick (2009), underlines that the researcher himself, his subjectivity as well as his interaction with the field forms part of a qualitative research (Flick 2009: 16), Kozinets (2010) stretched, that netnography studies could be conducted purely observational, which is what this study was limited to: observing individuals, without getting involved in their actions. When doing ethnographic research it is important that the researcher's reflections become data as well (Kozinets 2010). Online ethnographic studies have been judged as partial or not entirely real, which lead Kozinets (2010) to the conclusion that netnography based exclusively on online data can be insufficient but is therefore often combined with analogue methods.

4.3.1. Operationalization

The interpretations were based on a summary of all the individuals' activities on *Facebook* and *Instagram*. The nine women were 'channeled' in a separate 'feed' (in form of a friend list) on *Facebook* and followed on a separately created *Instagram* account in order not to miss any posts. Drawing from Goffman (1959) the *Facebook* wall and *Instagram* feed were seen as the stage. Postings were interpreted as on-stage acting and therefore assumed to contribute to a conscious shaping of self-portrayal and impression management.

4.3.2. Sampling

In qualitative studies, sampling follows different logics from quantitative studies, where the sample needs to be random and representative for a larger population. Sampling for qualitative research aims to set up a collection of purposely-defined cases, a corpus of empirical examples in order to study the phenomenon of attention. In order to compare and summarize results from interviews and observations, a tighter and more formalized research design is advantageous, which resulted in a structured procedure to select individuals based on demographic characteristics (Flick 2009).

Due to limited resources in terms of both time and manpower it was aimed to consider nine individuals from the beginning. In that sense, a group of nine individuals has been put together based on a catalogue of criteria which has been introduced above and are briefly repeated here: active women in their late 20's up to their late 30's, which have a higher education background, who are well integrated in the labor market and are living in New York City.

Based on those criteria a convenience sample followed by snowball technique has been applied. I handpicked two women within my own network and asked them to participate in the study, and to suggest other individuals that meet the criteria. I have also asked three independent acquaintances living

in New York who are very well connected to identify active women within their own networks who meet above criteria and are either: active (in terms of posting, liking) on *Facebook,* active on *Instagram* or are active users of both networks.

Those people have sent out an introductory message stating the purpose and intention of the study to the women they judged as representatives of the targeted demographic and inquired about their availability. Out of all the positive answers, I have selected the nine most suited ones – who fulfilled the criteria and were active enough according to a first scan of their *Facebook* walls or *Instagram* feed. I have sent out an email with an introduction and further information as well as some initial questions concerning, age, profession, country of origin, and city of residence. This selection of individuals can be justified based on Kozinet's six characteristics of an appropriate target group for netnographic studies (Kozinets 2010: 89). Data-richness, relevance, activity, and interactivity were interpreted as the need for active and engaged individuals that have a broad network or followership on *Facebook* and/or *Instagram*. Other criteria are Substantiality, which was explained as the individual's contribution to their online self-representation and Heterogeneity, which was understood as (although nowadays belonging to or acting within a similar community) the individuals coming from several different backgrounds such as country of origin and therefore cultural heritage. Nevertheless it was kept in mind, that the observed women have a strong similarity, since all of them are somehow creative, either professionally or in private: designers, artists, poets and writers. This choice for creative people could be criticized as a too similar sample, or on the other hand as a demographic group that can be analyzed and compared. In that sense a more narrow focus, will enable to maybe understand and discover behaviors and attitudes of that certain demographic group. To fulfill ethical guidelines all names were anonymized and replaced with an ID, that only I as the researcher am able to match with the observed individuals and will therefore not be mentioned in the table below:

Age	Profession/Position	Background and Profile
39	Handbag design director	Swedish living in NYC for five years.
33	Graphic designer	New Yorker. Creative professional. New passion skateboarding.
30	Project Manager	From Philadelphia, living in NYC since 2012. Lived in Barcelona for years.
29	Project Manager	American, living in NYC. Passionate writer and poet.
33	Fashion designer	Belgian, living in NYC for seven years. Just started her own swimwear brand.
37	Illustrator	Swedish, living in NYC for three years.
29	Fashion stylist/writer	Californian, living in NYC since 2000.

37	Fashion and textile designer	Japanese living in NYC for ten years. Lived in London before.
30	Graphic designer	Concept designer at foursquare / painter, Swedish-Austrian, living i for two years. Has lived in the US and Canada almost all her life.

Figure 1: Participant Profiles

4.3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data collection can become time consuming, which is why one has to decide on an adequate way of collection and visualization. Computer mediated research allows not only for computer readable data collection such as plain texts, but for a visual caption in form of screen shots (Kozinets 2010). The following study made use of the latter; all the observations were captured as images (screen shots) and visualized in a research diary. It was decided to use manual rather than dedicated/computer assisted qualitative data analysis based on the amount of data, size of research field site and academic field conventions as well as my own preferences (Kozinets 2010). Although the observation of nine individuals over a time period of three weeks was likely to generate an enormous amount of data, it had been decided in favor of manual coding, categorization and interpretative analysis, in order not to lose closeness to the data, and also hence in grounded theory, data, and interpretation are always inseparable of the observations, as mentioned above, and the reflective field notes here gained importance (Kozinets 2010).

Some of the activities were videos, in that case the videos were watched and saved for later use. Also, sometimes a posted link to external sites did not give enough information, which is why the link had to be followed and the provided information was read, in order to make sense of the context. The comments or hash tags on Instagram were considered as specifying the meaning of an image. Both platforms, *Facebook* and *Instagram,* were checked upon regularly during three weeks – the pilot study had shown, that one could cover all activities by checking the two platforms 3-4 times a day, which was the frequency with which the two feeds were checked.

The analytical process grounded in Kozinet's (2010) suggestion to base interpretation on analytic coding combined with hermeneutic interpretation: All activities, in form of screen shots were affixed with topics (color coding). They were also marked with a star for 'likes', a person for events and a square when it was posts of others. Selfies were signalized with a red dot and 'new friends' with a blue oval figure. Notes and reflections (memoing) were added to the images where it felt required (see visualization below and in the appendix). They served as a textual or image interpretation, or abstraction, which helped classifying a post.
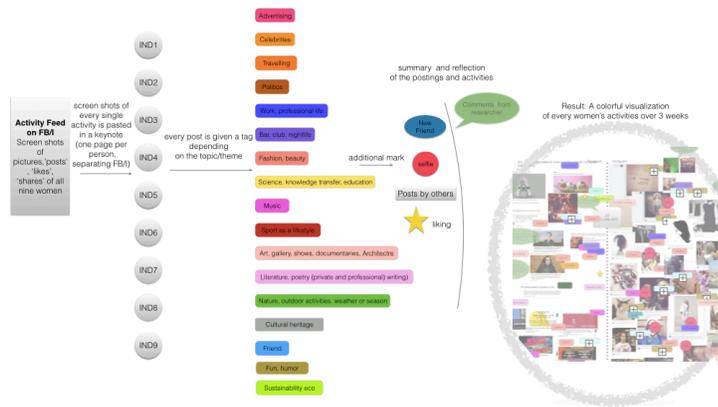
Figure 2: Visualization of the observation (the full size image can be found in the appendix).

According to Kozinets the process of observation is reactional and it includes questions such as: does the researcher feel shocked, surprised, touched? How does the network feel? In that sense, I also kept track of what the community's effect was on my own social experience and described in my comments, what I had seen and experienced on the screen (Kozinets 2010: 114-115). "[...] nethography in the end must be able to describe and evoke a social world and the people who are members of it" (Kozinets 2010: 116).

Those reflective field notes added to the collection of the screen shots, eventually became part of the body of research data themselves. In a third step, the whole body of data was structured, based on type of entry ('status update', 'image/photo post', 'going to an event', 'liking' and 'sharing an article or video") and transformed into words by describing and summarizing the observations. Each profile was summarized individually. Through this logical reasoning – called induction – general statements about the observed social media behavior of each individual were made but also conclusions for the whole group were drawn. This limited set of generalizations, explanations for habits, and behavior was deducted and collected in a separate document were eventually theorized and related to existing bodies of knowledge (Kozinets 2010: 119).

Going through the posts twice and more helped refining the understanding of the individuals. Nevertheless, when reflecting on findings and presenting results, participants awareness was considered: although a netnography as the analysis of dialogues that emerge online doesn't attract attention itself, the participants were aware that someone was watching them because they had been contacted and asked for permission prior to the study. It had therefore been decided that the observation would go on for three weeks so that reaction of the observed individuals could be minimized. It could be suggested that a shorter time period of observations could have influence on the genuine and carefree postings of

individuals, because they might still have in mind that someone was watching. It was assumed that after a while, none of the women would have thought of being observed. A longer time period seems always useful, although for this study it wasn't believed to have generated crucial information. The guide and description to associate one or more topics to each post was elaborated while conducting the observation. It can be found in the appendix.

4.4. Interviews

Netnographic studies are often intertwined with interviews, allowing researchers to deepen the understanding of how people think and act based on observations, although they don't allow for drawing conclusions representing broader populations (Kozinets 2010). *RQ 1 (How do the studied individuals want to be seen on Facebook and Instagram?)* was therefore addressed through interviews. Semi-standardized face-to-face interviews were conducted which allowed the asking of open questions and aimed to motivate the respondent to answer based on their own assumptions. Interviews enabled to get the interviewee's personal ideas and views (on their social media behavior), as well as reconstruct the interviewee's subjective theories (Flick 2009). Semi-standardized interviews allow theory driven questions and to conduct a content analysis of the transcripts after the interviews (Flick 2009: 156). A subjective understanding of the individual's social situation, online experiences, perspectives, recollections, and interpretations were concluded through the interviews (Kozinets 2010).

4.4.1. Data collection and analysis

The interviewees were the previously observed individuals from the netnographic study. An interview guide was developed based on the insights of the pilot interview and first observations during the netnography. The strategy was to ask open questions on several predefined topics and following-up with more concrete questions (Schrøder et. al. 2003). The interview guide was oriented on the research questions and touched upon motivation for *Facebook* and *Instagram* use, consciousness of self-representation, view on the given impression, and differences on *Facebook* or *Instagram* use.

It is important to make sure that the interviewees feel in a safe environment, so that they could relax and discursive consequences depending on the setting could be minimized (Schrøder et. al. 2003). The interviews took place either at an interviewee's home or office. One interview was conducted in a café which turned out to be less convenient for recording. The interviewee nevertheless seemed comfortable.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed word-by-word. As it is common in grounded theory, the aim was to let the data speak for itself. In that sense the analytical procedure aimed to inductively gain

data from each individual (Schrøder et. al. 2003).

The interview transcripts generated seventy pages of text, out of which statements were strategically extracted using two analysis approaches introduced by Kim Schrøder (2003): 'meaning condensation' of quotes touching upon interesting or repeating themes that have been detected when reading through the transcripts and in order to answer the research questions. And 'interpretation' as the extraction and interpretation of either theories that the individuals came up with, of themselves or of contradicting answers. This analysis was then summarized. During that procedure, conceptual categories to organize the content analysis have been gradually developed. Quotes were used to give the interviewees a voice and to underline or explain interpretations. As mentioned above, all interpretations and analysis were based on the nine women that were interviewed. One is not able to make assumptions for a broader audience than those particular individuals.

The research summary and presentation of the interviews was eventually mirrored with the findings of the netnographic study and culminated in a limited set of generalizations, and explanations for habits and behavior on *Facebook* and *Instagram* (Kozinets 2010).

4.5. Research evaluation and limitations
Thanks to computer-mediated fieldwork, the study benefits from repeated scanning, anonymity, accessibility, and the possibility of archiving (Kozinets 2010: 68). The agreement of the individuals not only sets the base for the participation in an individual interview after the observation, but also guarantees to fulfill ethical approval.

When talking about limitations in netnographic research, an oft-mentioned weakness is that the Internet allows for anonymous interactions, which can lead to artificial representation. Since the study examined the representation of 'real' people, it has been guaranteed that the studied profiles link to an offline persona. It had been mentioned that *Facebook* is most often used with a real name and connected to an offline identity. Although one of the individuals uses a nickname on *Facebook*, the profile represents a person which is known to her network as such. All other individuals used their real names on *Facebook*. On *Instagram*, on the other hand, all users create a username which is often also linked to a *Facebook* profile and, consequently, to an offline identity. Except for two individuals (one of them the woman who used a nickname on *Facebook*), all observed individuals revealed their real name on their *Instagram* profile.

Thinking about limitations for the following study, one needs to reflect on the sample, which was

chosen. Critics might rise concerning the Sample. In what way this sample of successful, creative and independent women is interesting and provides insights and benefits for society and further studies. As introduced earlier on, this sample was chosen based on personal interests and curiosity.

4.5.1. Reliability

Reliability was approached by following a systematic data gathering and analysis, which was directed by clear coding guidelines, as well as interview guidelines and a detailed research report, documented with screen shots and quotes. In order to guide the reader through the analysis, the subjective observations and interpretations were elaborated and explained step by step and conclusions were made transparent (Schrøder 2003). Coding and commenting has been repeated in order to secure a consistent interpretation and analysis by the researcher, also called intra-coder reliability.

4.5.2. Validity

Validity for qualitative analysis is first of all the criteria, whether one is able to draw conclusions that answer the research questions. It has to do with faithful drawings from a study that represents the real world (Schrøder 2003). Here again, the key was a step-by-step and truthful analysis of the data gained in a natural and, for the individuals, comfortable environment – when speaking about interviews. Transparency of the research was ensured at all times due to clear deduction from the data and explanation of the conclusions.

The overriding concern to serve validity and reliability in content analysis of interviews is to search of patterns and to be as systematic and explicit as possible (Schrøder et. al. 2003).

4.5.3. Netnographic quality

Kozinets (2010) stretches the importance of netnographic quality which requires unified and coherent interpretations throughout the entire process. The study was theoretically built, based on Kozinets' (2010) methodological guidance and considered a large amount of previous research and netnographic research standards. Subjectivity during observation was considered part of the study. Abnormal external influences have successfully been avoided because the research period did not coincide with any specific larger happening, such as Christmas, a catastrophe, or any other bigger external influences. Due to the limited observed group, the analysis had one very important objective: to understand the individuals as a unique entity and to connect with them through the study instead of portraying the cultural 'other' in them. Online interactions and dialogues weren't looked at as a different 'thing', but as a part of our everyday life – that we live in a 'technosociety' (Kozinets 2010: 166).

5.   Research Results – Summary and Analysis

During the netnographic study conducted over a time period of three weeks and the nine semi-structured – approximately thirty minutes – interviews, a vast amount of data was collected. Analysis and interpretation were conducted systematically and in several steps going back and forth between observation data and interpretation as suggested in grounded theory.

5.1. Netnography – elaborating the basis

The netnography analysis followed Kozinets' (2010) analytic moves, which were introduced earlier. The observations eventually resulted in nine colorful representations of all activities of each individual, divided into *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Going back and forth between the visual data collection and the interpretations resulted in a systematic description for each woman and her behavior.

Those summaries for each individual provided data to draw conclusions on behaviors, patterns, dominant topics and major focus of attention and to interpret and mirror the interview answers, which is why the analysis of the interviews will be presented first.

5.2. Interviews – content analysis

The individuals had been informed that the study treated the subject of social media behavior, but they weren't told until after the interview that the focus was online self-presentation. Nevertheless, most of them – assuming that they were influenced by the interview questions of course – came up with their own theories of self-presentation, and meanings of their own or other's posts. Interestingly enough, their theories did not concern their own behavior, but what they observed every day in their network's activities. They showed very strong opinions on why people acted in certain ways, and about what was good, interesting and belonged on the platforms and what to them was just disturbing. They interpreted others based on their activities ("you get some imagination, of what type of people they are" IND8) which will be elaborated on later.

5.2.1. Use of the platforms Facebook and Instagram

Naturally the women had a clear idea of *Facebook*, why they were active on it, and what benefits they got from it. Basically all the women, without being asked, underlined that their use of *Facebook* had changed over the years. This confirmed my earlier presented assumption; that with the use of a platform or scene, we change the way we interact on it.

However, *Facebook* still seemed to play an important role in those women's lives. They expressed curiosity and a permanent desire to know 'what is going on' as the driving forces ("I usually use it for planning and strategizing," IND7). Questions concerning passive (reading through the feed) and active (sharing and posting) use of *Facebook* were asked. Not all of them described themselves as active content contributors ("for me posting things is almost the last thing on my mind" IND5), nevertheless all of them said they were active networkers or communicating with friends ("connect with people through my network or through networks that I want to be a part of" (IND3). And some expected inspiration. The ones that confirmed active use stated that they just want people to see stuff, which was why they posted links or videos. Others used it for professional life as a tool for self-promotion, invites to events and happenings, showing their artwork, or looking for collaborators and partners etc.

It was interesting how emotional the women's reactions often were, when asked how they used *Facebook*: "I've become really fed up with *Facebook*" (IND4) or "I try to limit the gossip and waste of time aspect because it's very time consuming" (IND9). Some of the women complained about the 'quality' of other's posts on *Facebook*: "I really don't care what you had for breakfast" (IND4). 'Crappy' was an oft-used adjective to describe posts that were not appreciated. But none of them would want to quit it, because it's become a part of their life ("It's kind of a default thing […], this habit thing" IND5). Two women mentioned that they recently quit *Facebook* for a few months because they were frustrated or tired of it. One woman felt depressed and didn't have anything to share herself, and also didn't want to see anyone else's 'great life'. *Facebook* seemed to be uncomforting for people who weren't happy with or in their life in the first place.

Another interesting conclusion was that it almost seems to be 'cool' to dislike *Facebook* without ever having to deal with the consequences, since one can always refer to the practical and organizational function of *Facebook* in order to keep being active on it.

In contrast, *Instagram* seemed very different. The women were much more excited and positive: "I love *Instagram* […] it's a great way to share photos versus sending texts, and it is more storytelling in that way" (IND3) and that they rated it as 'deeper' than *Facebook*. They seemed to use *Instagram* more spontaneously: "to me it's impulsive, and I use it a lot more" (IND7) or "I'm kind of a compulsive 'instagrammer' […] sometimes I just have an opinion right away take a photo, like 'this is my observation'" (IND2).

The women clearly separated the two platforms, and elaborated how they used *Instagram* differently

from *Facebook* ("they're two different worlds" IND7). "*Facebook* is more like a social arena, but it's kind of very chaotic and it's trying to do a lot of different things" (IND3). One called *Instagram* a "visual diary," where she shows "what I'm looking at […] *Instagram* is my eyes" (IND6). She felt like it was a place to hang out with people. Another one responded that *Instagram* was more fun; a "visual world that you are in. So it's more about snapshot communication versus on *Facebook* you have to read and think and plan" (IND7). *Instagram* was often described as an addictive thing, that one goes back to, over and over again to see who liked your pictures. One woman compared it to a Tamagotchi: "it's like if you're nurturing a little thing" (IND1).

Although or maybe because valuating *Instagram* more, some of the interviewees seemed to be more selective and critical about following and accepting people on *Instagram* – they might have a much smaller friends circle on *Instagram* – or were more strategic about it: "I will unfriend people if they're just posting pictures of their family, it's not interesting to me" IND9.

This high appreciation for *Instagram* seemed to ground on personal preferences. On one hand, the individuals seemed to have greater control over content and followership and in that sense might feel more confident to share. But on the other hand a great love for sharing what one was thinking and doing could be discovered – as long as it was positive, and the polished sides of life. One might conclude, there is a little narcissist in all of us. It could also be interpreted, that since images are much easier to process, and they enable an easier and faster consumption of content when it comes to other people's posts. And last but not least, some women expressed confusion due to the many things that *Facebook* offered, which is why they might prefer *Instagram* for the sake of its one dimension.

5.2.2. Performances – posting and sharing

Goffman defined performances as activities in front of an audience that accentuate specific matters and hide others. The interviewees, although some of them liked to believe that they were nonchalant about what they post ("I kind of just go loud" IND7), seemed to be very aware of what they share and what not ("I'm very careful of the presence I have on social media and that doesn't mean that I don't share personal information" IND9 or "I don't like to just flood people's universes" IND4 or "I'm also a little bit of a control freak" IND5). It seemed they followed kind of a loose sharing concept. They mentioned mutual criteria: that they would most probably post things that in their opinion were funny, humorous, interesting, thoughtful or beautiful, but also valuable for the network.

Most of the women indicated that they didn't want to post negative things – negative mostly in the sense

of complaining. Negativity, was kept out of the audience's sight: "I don't want to be whining or complaining, I don't think people go online to see that, it's nice to have positive things to say instead of negative" IND2.

An interesting discovery was that IND2 seemed to have mixed feelings about her numerous status updates, despite considering herself a passionate and immediate sharer ("Sometimes I just have an idea, sentiment I want to share […] and that's really easy with a status update"). She had thoughts on how her network might perceive her: "I feel like I'm constantly annoying people with everything I do online," which she deduced from the fact that she herself got annoyed by some people in her network. She elaborated that if she felt she already had too many status-updates, she would not post anymore or even go back and delete some posts. She then again justified herself saying that she actually posts for the ones who find it interesting. This could be interpreted as having a lower tolerance towards the network compared to her personal standards.

Deleting seemed to be quite a controversial thing for the interviewees. All of them had an opinion on deleting. Specifically on *Instagram*, they might go back and delete once in a while, if they changed their mind about a post, felt ashamed by daylight, didn't get the expected response or thought it was simply too much sharing in one day. An interesting reason to delete was provided by IND7, who felt her posts might be occasionally misunderstood or not understood at all, and that people found her updates weird: "If there weren't automatically a couple of likes, then I would know that it actually was weird". IND8 mentioned that she didn't want to be repetitive or too late, so she would delete links or articles when she realized that someone else has shared them as well. Others shared very carefully, so that they would not have to go back and delete. IND6 said: "I usually think about it. Yea I try not to impulse write", and if she felt, she had something to say, she would think about it, then sit down and write a post. Some of the women had a certain group of people in mind when posting, such as friends who are into music, other artists as well as potential or existing clients. This deleting culture and the thoughts surrounding it seemed very interesting. One could interpret that the wish or even the urge to share could occasionally be stronger than one's concept or idea of value or quality. But, being reflective and concerned about their own image, the women would decide to revise or delete some posts. Which could be seen as a struggle between disclosure, keeping up a consistent 'brand' and 'posting' for the love of sharing.

When being asked what they would not want to post or be associated with, many answered 'food' or 'crappy'/stupid things ("I don't want people seeing me posting so many stupid things" YH).

Most of the women indicated that they didn't share pictures on *Facebook* anymore, except for profile pictures. But, on the other hand, they really enjoyed the attention and reactions when changing a profile picture. Only two said they did occasionally share photos through *Instagram* on *Facebook*, but very selectively and one justified her action by saying that her sister was asking for updates via *Facebook*.

The women seemed to have even clearer ideas of how and what they posted on *Instagram*. Active sharing there seemed more important than on *Facebook* for all of the women ("it's important I mean it's kind of like a way to feel like you're seen and that you're alive" IND6). Which of course might have to do with the focus on the visual: An often mentioned criteria to post on *Instagram* was 'beautiful things'. That posts depended a lot on how they were feeling or on the season (IND9). While on *Facebook* they didn't want to share 'negative things', it was sadness or being unhappy that they kept from their followers' sight on *Instagram*. Another woman who also didn't post much during the observation time mentioned that she felt intimidated by the beautiful pictures of her network, and that she felt that her posts were boring ("about my little life" IND5), so she would mainly post when she was travelling, because that seemed more exciting. Someone underlined the change of how much time she invested in a post, ("Now […] I edit them with VCL camera software and then I post them two hours later than I took them" IND6). As mentioned above, this could be translated as the narcissist drive to share, not necessarily in an optical way, that people would think they were more attractive, but in terms of love of exposure as a whole and a need for a reaction to that.

One of the women actually applied a storytelling or what she called 'event series' strategy, where she posted various pictures in a row, to narrate a day, afternoon or evening that she spent with friends. She had a clear concept of how that had to look in terms of filters or frames, which should be the same for the whole series. She said she would get upset, if it didn't work ("I wish that on *Instagram* I could move them [pictures] around so that the flow was attractive" IND4).

All of the women had a hypothesis about what their followers or network wanted to see, IND2 suggested, that if she posted less, people would probably find the posts more interesting and was disappointed that cats and dogs frequently got more likes than what she thought was really cool or artistic. IND1 had observed that selfies got a lot more 'likes' than any other post. They also draw conclusions on how other people think and use social media: that many people were just interested in posting or that some just liked so many pictures because they wanted attention themselves. This clear opinion and justification of other's behavior was especially interesting before the background information that many of the women didn't have a clear concept themselves, but all of a sudden they had

very concrete view and interpretation of other's.

Seeing others' posts on *Instagram* seemed although important, mostly less prioritized than sharing ("well that's important too but that's, I mean, that's also kind of the backside; when you get jealous" IND1). Nevertheless *Instagram* jealousy was expressed several times and seemed to be a real issue for most of the women. Thinking of *Instagram* as the window into someone's carefully curated world, this jealousy could be interpreted as a competitive thinking of how one would want to be seen.

5.2.3. Impression management and self-promotion

When asked how they would preferably be seen, the women became hesitant. Most said they didn't have a concrete idea of what that would be. But as Goffman (1959) had put it, the individuals couldn't just stay to a gentlemanly (although that expression feels misplaced here) way; the interviews supported the assumption that the women, although they would not always admit it, consciously manipulated or influenced the impression to a certain extent ("That's not really who I am, that's the curated version of my life" IND6) and have an idea of what works with the self that they are creating. IND9 elaborated that, while sometimes she wanted people to see or notice topics that were important to her, she didn't want to be seen as 'preachy' and explained: "that's also not my brand". One of the women said she appreciated that she could decide how people saw her (IND6) and another one, said she was aware that *Facebook* was a great place to show who you were and show off at the same time. She felt that society expected a successful person to be extroverted, which she wasn't. IND7 said she would go back to her feed before accepting a friend request and check what was going to be that person's first impression of her, and occasionally delete some of her posts with regard to that.

The women responded they often used *Facebook* to promote themselves for different things ("I am mostly hyping shit I'm working on" IND7). Many wanted to be relevant: "unless it's something that's important, like really important, that I want people to see then I don't just post" (IND4). IND9 said she wanted to be seen as an artist, as a person that likes music, is tech savvy, and travels a lot. She also mentioned, that she would often have to 'untag' pictures and other things that her sister shared of her, because she thought it didn't represent her, and although she assumed, people didn't pay that much attention, it mattered to her and she wanted to be consistent in the image she built.

It was remarkable to hear they were anticipating different people depending on the interview question and the hypothetical occasion. It sounded like, when thinking of who was going to see a post (specially on *Instagram*) some of the women mentioned role models. But when talking about what they saw on

other's feeds (mostly on *Facebook*), they often rated the people more ordinary than themselves and expressed rather low interest. Some mentioned, on *Facebook* they didn't care what others thought, which they often contradicted when discussing their posting habits or criteria. One could conclude that *Instagram* and *Facebook* occasionally underlined self-confidence, or reduced humbleness, because of a missing face-to-face feedback.

Showing-off seemed to be even more important on *Instagram*. It was seen as "idealizing your own life, making sure life looks amazing." IND3, since an average experience captured and shared with a filter on top would all of a sudden look like an incredible experience. She wanted to be seen "like a rock star" and further explained "You know, it's not to make me […], to make someone look bad. It's really to idealize loud". Another one wished she were more inspiring to others. The women often mentioned, they wanted to share 'aesthetically pleasing' or 'beautiful' pictures in order to be seen as more artistic, creative or be acknowledged good taste. Several women mentioned they wanted people to like their pictures for artistic reasons rather than for being 'funny' or 'cute'. Some wanted to show off their work as an artist, or get feedback on it. They often wished for other artists or creative people to like their posts and to think they had good taste or knew 'cool stuff'. IND4 admitted she wanted to be seen as creative, creatively successful, strong, and beautiful. IND3 said she thought about her posts a lot, and although they showed a polished picture, and her life might seem a bit too easy in her pictures, they represented herself as a busy person, that is happy with her life, which was how she felt. IND6 said she would avoid to post pictures of her staying out late, because she had clients, that were waiting for work to be done, and could misunderstand such posts. She said she just wanted show professionalism: "like I have my shit together", without lacking the fun parts in life. She wanted to be an interesting person that brands wanted to be associated with.

5.2.4. Idea of other's perception of oneself
A frequent attitude was "I'm not like others" or "I don't care what others think" (IND9) which – although one could guess that this came from a perspective of being individualistic and special – seemed inconceivable.

The women had a hard time formulating how they thought others saw them. Nevertheless all of them touched upon ideas of how they thought they were perceived, not as much on *Facebook* but more on *Instagram*. Some didn't like to share ("because then I look like an asshole" IND4). They had received feedback from their network ("He said I seem to be 'a really strong and funny carefree person' and he didn't expect me to be different and he was kind of surprised" IND2). Although the feedback they

received was not exactly congruent with how they saw themselves, they were not surprised ("I'm actually aware of that" IND2) nor disappointed, but rather felt appreciated – saying they thought that was 'cool'.

Keywords that they mentioned to have heard about themselves were 'working a lot', 'strong', 'funny', 'busy' 'charismatic', 'artist', 'creative', 'crazy', 'eccentric' or having an 'exciting life', which mostly have positive connotation. One might suggest those descriptions were occasionally a bit wishful or at least just the most appreciated selection of the feedback one might have heard. Anyhow, since unable to verify, they will be looked at as biased answers. Two women showed a bit less confidence: one thought her life might seem boring and the other one thought she was perceived as serious and unapproachable. She elaborated that she didn't think she was approachable, but that she certainly also did stupid stuff once in a while, which indicated she wasn't entirely happy with the perception of herself.

It was interpreted, that in all, the idea of perception was strongly related to the aspired self-portrayal.

5.2.5. Trading likes

Thoughts behind 'likes' seemed to vary but were not entirely different. The women considered 'liking', as showing affection, approval or support. They also used 'liking' as a way of communication ("like a high five or a thumbs up" IND9), to remind others that they were around and they were 'following'. Someone expressed relief when someone she owed an answer via email or any other channel, 'liked' one of her posts, because she interpreted it as a sign of endearment: "like a little wink, it's a little 'I'm thinking about you' […]" (IND5). One of the women had observed that liking someone's posts, would increase her chance to hear back from them in another matter. IND1 said she felt that it was giving and taking. And that some were considerate about not liking everything, although she herself was very generous with likes. Another one would 'like' her sister's pictures, although she didn't actually like them, just because she knew that it meant a lot to her. Only IND7 said she didn't "feel the pressure to like", and that 'not liking' a friend's picture, didn't make her appreciate the person less.

When it comes to liking pages on *Facebook*, one might assume, that the women would like brands or sites, artists etc. that they wanted to be associated with. After considering the women's answers, this concept was dropped as too elaborate. Most of the times they 'liked' pages because someone had asked them to do so or because they wanted to check out their competitors. Except for IND8, who said she was invited to 'like' pages a lot, but she would only do so if she really appreciated the brand or person, because she wouldn't want to be spammed with updates, most of the women said they would 'like' the

suggested pages. IND7 joked about 'liking' funny pages because people would stumble upon it and think it was weird or funny.

After all people seemed to give the 'liking' on *Facebook* and *Instagram* quite some thoughts. The idea of 'trading' likes – 'liking' in order to get some kind of a response on it – seemed quite common. Which would lead to the conclusion that if one was aiming for a lot of likes and attention, one would have to like other's posts.

5.2.6. The selfie – a love-hate relation

Inquiring the interviewees about posting selfies created some emotional reactions and reflections: "A selfie is kind of a funny weird thing" IND8 or "selfies are so complicated" IND4. A selfie turned out to feel like an ambivalent thing, that everyone wanted to post but also felt a bit embarrassed of, because it was seen as a shameless self-promotion, and IND8 even thought that people must be very pleased with themselves, or think they were beautiful in order to post a lot of selfies. Most of the women admitted to posting selfies, but only on *Instagram* ("I wouldn't accept tags [on FB], but when you look at *Instagram*, it's nothing but selfies" IND7). Some of them thought selfies were kind of ridiculous, or they didn't do it because they didn't think they were narcissistic or beautiful enough: "I keep them to a minimum, because I don't want to be a selfie queen."

IND4 said she had observed that people often took selfies that weren't typical ones, but pictures of themselves while they were doing something, and it would almost look like a selfie by accident. She thought that was faking a selfie: "I know what's you're doing, like it's cute and I like it, but still you're not fooling anybody". She herself admitted that she took forever to post a selfie ("embarrassing long amount of time"). This ambivalent attitude towards selfies seemed very interesting, and could be interpreted as yet another indicator for a rather narcissistic use of *Instagram*.

6.   Discussion of Results and Key Findings

6.1. Mirroring the interview analysis with the netnography study

As mentioned earlier, strong key statements or findings from the interview analysis were analyzed based on and mirrored with the netnographic study results and are presented following.

More frequent and passionate active 'posting' on Instagram – a matter of interpretation

Most of the women indicated using *Instagram* more than *Facebook*, which at first sight didn't match the

image the netnographic study had shown. For the majority of the women over-all, more activities had been recorded on *Facebook* than on *Instagram*. This divergent result could be explained: as on *Facebook* every single activity such as 'likes', 'signing up for events', 'comments' on other's walls but also 'new friendships' had been registered and analyzed. On *Instagram* only active postings could be recorded, because no complete documentation of 'likes' and 'new followers' could be obtained. *Instagram*, allows a glimpse on what other users 'like' – displayed in the app under 'following' – but no detailed documentation. Unless it's connected to *Facebook*; where all images that the person 'liked' on *Instagram* show up in her feed. Since only two of the women had their *Instagram* 'likes' linked to their *Facebook* feed, it was impossible to interpret them. One would have missed too many 'likes.'

It could be interpreted that the women thought they were more active on *Instagram* because they felt they used it in a more expressive way – sharing more. They didn't think of 'liking', 'adding friends' and 'signing up for events' on *Facebook* as being active, but as separate functions. This perception and distinction of activities sounded reputable and strengthened the women's idea of Facebook use as a practical organizational tool, and their focus on sharing on *Instagram*. After all, when separating the actions on *Facebook* and only counting 'posts' such as photos, 'status updates' or 'sharing links', the reflection of the interviewees could be confirmed: the women posted more frequently on *Instagram* than on *Facebook*. It was the 'other functions' that dominated the activities on *Facebook* and increased the impression of its use.

It was remarkable to see what status and importance *Instagram* has gained in only a few years. People seemed to be losing interest in *Facebook* as a platform for sharing. Connecting back to the self-presentation, one could therefore conclude, that *Instagram* played a much more important role than *Facebook* for the self-portrayal. Thinking of the saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' this attitude or behavior seemed to make sense – whoever wanted to come across in a certain way, was much more likely to use a picture to express it and was therefore more interested in posting on *Instagram*.

Topics on Facebook – creating an interesting and exciting image
All the women's 'posts' had been assigned one or more topics, and so were the pages they 'liked' and events they signed up for. It has been concluded that the topics were rather limited.

By far most popular were the topics of art, literature/poetry, fashion/beauty, and music. Posting songs, linking to videos or articles about artists or art, fashion runway shows or sustainable clothing were rated as such. When signing up for events on *Facebook*, that was almost exclusively gallery openings, poetry

readings, clubs and concerts – which could be interpreted as the individuals showing an exciting life or being busy and creative.

Similar to *Instagram*, travelling was often mentioned in the interviews and reflected in the *Facebook* posts. It seemed that travelling supported the women's self-portrayal. Associating oneself with travelling might be interpreted as portraying an interesting, educated and open-minded personality. Travelling could, to a certain extent, also be associated with and therefore portray wealth, culture, and freedom.

There were also some work related 'posts' – mostly pictures or status updates, which confirmed the women, who had indicated they use *Facebook* for professional relationships or promotion, being seen as busy or hard-working. A picture of a photo shoot, an office space, a computer and supposedly a work colleague were interpreted as such. It was interesting to see, that the work related posts were always positively framed, sounded like fun and the women were enjoying it – which again might be interpreted as portraying the best part of work life.

Fun and informational 'posts' such as status updates, videos or articles, confirmed the wish to share fun things but also valuable content for the network. An example of a fun post was a video of a cat playing an instrument. The sharing of news articles was interpreted as information transmission and the aim to bring relevance to their networks. Those again concerned mostly topics such as art, fashion and literature, but also life in NYC, sustainability and more serious articles such as the death of an artist, etc. Only two of the women did actually share slightly political topics.

Sentiment expression through status updates – creativity and fun first
The ones, that did post status updates seemed to use it as a way to express a feeling or sentiment, often a bit wishful, poetic, maybe in some way romantic. It seemed as if they were putting it out there without expecting a reaction or not expecting everyone to understand. It could be concluded that status updates replaced pictures on *Facebook*, since closest one could get to a personal statement. It seemed difficult to rate or interpret most of the status updates, such as "the Internet is a dude". Which one could think of it as poetic or as fun, which again left space for interpretation about what that woman wanted to tell her network about herself. On the other hand such statements could be explained as the individuals talking to a certain audience, who will understand the 'post' – as some of the women explained during the interview.

No negativity on Facebook – complainers keep out

The women explained that they didn't want to be seen as negative or complaining. The observations confirmed that attitude. There were indeed no negative or complaining posts on any of the *Facebook* profiles. In that sense one could conclude that the women were actually more considerate about what they posted than they had indicated when saying they didn't care much about what others thought of them.

6.2. Self-portrayal on Instagram

Self-portrayal on *Instagram* seemed to have a higher meaning to the individuals and it will be treated as a separate chapter. As developed above, a personal and emotional preference of *Instagram* had been detected, which lead to the conclusion that *Instagram* might be used more specifically and more directly to shape the online self. To elaborate a discussion basis, trying not to be too categorizing, the women had been described based on the observations during the netnography study. That description has been mirrored with their own view and desire of their online-self and will be elaborated and interpreted here:

IND1 – A happy social person
- *Instagram* summary: Very active on *Instagram*. Mostly 'posts' of friends, but also nature and often animals in the photos. A lot of pictures from travelling – mostly Sweden or outside NYC, most of her pictures are taken outdoors. A few pictures were taken inside a bar or a hotel. Some selfies – mostly with friends or an animal in the picture. The tonality of the pictures was rather dimmed and cozy.

- When being asked, she didn't express a clear idea of how she wanted to be perceived other than as a happy person. Concretizing that she wouldn't share sad moments. Based on her behavior and answers one could interpret, that to her, happy moments were when she was with friends, which is why the conclusion of her self-portrayal was: A happy social person. And traveling as an equally dominant topic of her feed could lead to the conclusion of being interesting.

IND 2 – Cool girl next door
- *Instagram* summary: Her *Instagram* feed looked quite artistic. Lots of well propositioned pictures in soft colors. A lot of photographed art; supposedly at galleries. Or things on the street such as an empty lemonade can. Some nature and some pictures with friends in them. Lots of skateboarding related images. Metaphoric pictures. Very creative about how to take selfies, often in a mirror, or the phone at arm length but also in a shop window or a traffic mirror.

- Declared: No special theme, but would want people to like her pictures for artistic reasons. It could be concluded, that her wish to be artistic was quite visible, although the feed portrayed more of a cool, social, relaxed person. Which is why the conclusion was: the cool girl next door, rather than the artist. Would she want to be seen more as an artist, she might have to drop the everyday snap shots. Though they make her impression sympathetic and approachable.

IND3 – Thoughtful musician
- *Instagram* summary: Not that active on *Instagram*. All posts showed her and/or friends. No

'things'. Four selfies, which was quite a lot for her amount of pictures shared. Only one picture was taken outdoors (in a backyard) all others are from parties, work, band rehersal or her on the way somewhere (on subway, car). Friends and music seemed to play an important role in her life. Tonality of the pictures was rather dark and serious, a bit melancholic. She appeared as a social person because there were a lot of people in her pictures, the selfies on the other hand were very serious.

- Said, she wanted to be seen as a rock star. Although rock star of course is an exaggeration, one could conclude that she comes quite close to that image with all her music related posts. Anyhow some kind of a star-alike or overly dramatic portrayal could be suggested, when looking exclusively at the selfies.

IND4 – The dreamer and poet

- *Instagram* summary: Very unique way of storytelling on *Instagram*: series of pictures (often 3-6 pictures in the same setting) of friends, or her hanging out with friends. Each post showed a happening somewhere (at a bar, a gallery, a gig or a rehearsal etc.). Posting lots of 'arty' posts due to blurry filter and color combinations. Tonality was at times dark, a bit dramatic or bright and muted, but a bit blurry, romantic. Six selfies, some with a dog or friends.

- She declared, she wanted to be seen as: creative, creatively successful, strong and beautiful. It was concluded, that she succeeded quite well when drawing the creative and beautiful person. Based on the tonality of the filters and images, she was called: dreamer and poet.

IND5 – Fashion and Friends

Instagram summary: Very little activity on *Instagram*. Some shopping goods, picture symbolizing spring and images from friends dinners. Not especially artistic pictures. Sometimes very dark pictures inside of a restaurant or bar.

- Had no clear idea, but wanted to be more inspiring to her network. It was difficult to conclude any type of portrayal due to very few posts. What one could draw from this was that as she mentioned she would at times feel intimidated by other's posts and therefore not post much. In that sense she could be seen as a quiet and shy person.

IND6 – The creative

- *Instagram* summary: Very engaged on *Instagram*. Many things or moments in the street or out of every day life, which are put into an arty/beautiful angle. She created hash tags where she collected series of pictures under themes. Some posts showed friends, which were most of the time equally 'arty' as the rest of her pictures; people were placed in front of a nice background, centered, faces were illuminated. She 'posted' quite a lot of fun pictures as well, although never ridiculous, but more like: look at that, just found that, isn't that funny? Lots of architecture and facades of houses. A weekend out of the city generated a lot of 'travel' 'posts'. Also she seemed to portray themes like sport and lifestyle, holidays, local, ecological products, arts and architecture.

- Declared, she wanted to be seen as: Professional but fun. An interesting person that brands wanted to be associated with. Concluding from her feed, one would expect a creative person behind that lens. Although professionalism wouldn't have been the first conclusion, it kind of corresponded with the feed.

IND7 – Busy and cool New Yorker

- *Instagram* summary: A lot of people, less things, a lot of selfies (always well dressed, wearing

lipstick and often sunglasses), alone or with someone else or with a pet. Pictures of well-dressed and (what one might call) fashionable people, some cats, some dogs, and some snap shots from a trip. A lot of fun pictures. This *Instagram* feed felt like a window into the everyday life of a well connected, self-confident, exciting person and what's on her mind.

- She felt flattered that everyone thought her life was so cool, busy, and that she was charismatic. But said, she saw herself as a pedestrian and said she would get *Instagram* envy all the time. One would not necessarily conclude her feed as the one of a 'pedestrian'. That statement was interpreted as her being humble or understating her portrayal and self-awareness. In contrary she was seen as a busy and cool person.

IND8 – The funny, creative
- *Instagram* Summary: Posted less than most of the others. The pictures showed what she was experiencing without showing much of herself. Friends, parties, view from an office. Not especially artistic, but had mostly to do with fashion. She used some sort of storytelling when adding several pictures from one event or putting several pictures in one *Instagram* picture.

- Her aim: Creative people 'liking' her pictures and her as a person for her good taste and feeling for colors. It was concluded, that although difficult to interpret due to little posts, she came across quite funny and as a social person, and in that sense not as the creative she might have aimed for – at least not during that time.

IND9 – An artist
- *Instagram* summary: Clear focus on art; showed her own drawings (photo taken out of a note book, or from a canvas painting) and some friends. But also a bicycle and pictures from a concert and a show. She came across as a creative, social individual, posting very selectively.

- Said she wanted to post esthetically pleasing pictures. She wanted to be seen as an artist, a person that liked music, was tech savvy, and travelled a lot. Most of those aims were represented in her pictures; still her overall impression was that of an artist.

Summary and Interpretation of the self-portrayal

It was very interesting to hear how the individuals perceived themselves and their own activities after the observation. Their ideas and the aim of their self-portrayal eventually corresponded quite well with the image they portrayed on *Instagram*. Some were very quick in describing who they were and how they used *Instagram*. Others took a while to elaborate their ideas and use based on several interview questions. This could be interpreted as not being as aware as one might have anticipated, or feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable to share. It also confirmed the conclusion from the pilot interview: that the women didn't have a clear or set strategy but an idea.

The idea of using *Instagram* seemed based on having something to tell and the women appeared to have high expectations for themselves of what was interesting enough. Although one could assume all of the women had an interesting enough life to share snapshots, an interviewee reported having a hard time finding moments she would want to share because she didn't think she was interesting enough. Others

seemed to think of their life as exciting and expressed their love for *Instagram* or sharing which lead to very frequent postings. These feeds were often interpreted as a bit eccentric, often showing exciting moments of the day: a photo shoot, a night out, a gallery opening, band rehearsal etc. and was concluded as the aim to appear interesting and creative but maybe also as wanting to be special and as aiming to attract attention. This was also reflected in the comments and hash tags the women used which had a funny or poetic connotation. Some of the women seemed to use *Instagram* for self-promotion in the sense of keeping people interested in, and excited about them. Everyone saw *Instagram* as some sort of a stage or a portrayal channel but the use differed significantly. Some of the individuals confidentially seemed to use *Instagram* as a stage, which was interpreted in connection with the amount and type of selfies they 'posted'. Others seemed more shy and either hid behind artistic posts or diary-like snapshots.

This leads to questions regarding what those aims for self-portrayal are grounded in. One possible approach seemed to focus on the studied demographic group of women. Those women could be described as strong, colorful, talented and driven individuals that were used to defending and proving themselves in the work environments. It could be concluded that the women have grown up in a liberal but competitive, judging society, and might therefore have a competitive approach to self-portrayal on social networking platforms. This would explain the strong sense for what was good or bad, right or wrong to post when reflecting on their networks. It might also explain their aim for a positive and sophisticated impression management. It was concluded that the women, had potentially developed identities that matched their social life: pursuing a career, potentially self-employment and entrepreneurial spirit, and aiming for acknowledgements and hypothetically admiration in their professional and private life. This is why the insecurities that some mentioned seemed to contradict the image of a generation of self-confident women. On the other hand, the exposure to that exact generation and many self-assured individuals might cause uncertainty about oneself and lead to a more hesitant self-portrayal.

Another interesting criteria that most women expressed for their 'posts' was aesthetic quality or beauty, which naturally turned out to look completely different for each of the feeds. Which lead to the question of if those criteria were exclusively for the individuals themselves and disregarding of others. When thinking through that, one could again assume there were certain role models, an anticipated audience or criteria that the women might have in mind when posting. It might point back to one earlier finding: that *Instagram* served personal expression rather than catering to other's tastes. An interesting, related discovery was that some expressed being torn between keeping an artistic feed and smuggling in more ordinary or every day pictures, such as selfies but also pictures of friends. It seemed that the women had

a trade-off between both modes, and they didn't want to decide one or the other. As it had been mentioned earlier on, all the women were working in creative fields, and the focus on artistic pictures in many of the *Instagram* feeds might not be surprising. But still one could wonder if *Instagram* was really about being as poetic or artistic as many of the women mentioned. It could be suggested, that we might over interpret our own images or at least give them more importance than the people who saw and potentially 'liked' them.

Others aimed for pictures of friends, which could be interpreted as some sort of reward for a friendship or a way to express the joy or gratefulness to hang out. There seemed to be a complex and sometimes contradictory conception of *Instagram* use for communication. Most of the women indicated they used *Instagram* as a place where they communicated with friends. This communication was interpreted to be very one-way unless the reactions came on channels other than *Instagram*, for example as a text message etc. Or they have remained unseen, because the 'likes' or comments on other's pictures could not be analyzed as mentioned earlier, which made the use of *Instagram* look one-way.

Where interview answers and observed portrayal didn't correspond, it was often concluded that the individuals overestimated their feed. It seemed they thought of themselves as more active than they actually were. This was delicate and seemed to be an unfair conclusion, since the observation only covered a short time period. Analyzing for a bit longer, and checking back with separate posts, what they meant or expressed in the individual's eyes could have been interesting.

Instagram – the visual diary of the shiny side of life
The thought of a visual diary, that some women had expressed, was definitely reflected and confirmed in the women's *Instagram* posts. They might include a picture on the way to work, a happening at work or with friends etc., which were interpreted as such. While someone mentioned aesthetically pleasing, most declared, they aimed for beautiful and creative posts or that they wanted to be seen as happy, professional, or creative. Based on those expressions it has been concluded that it wasn't surprising that *Instagram* was full of pictures that could be associated with art – many 'posted' art gallery visits or exhibition objects. But also nature – pictures of a visit in the forest, a flower or the sun reflecting in a lake, etc. were mostly taken when travelling, which was another theme that had been detected and interpreted as presenting oneself as someone interesting (travelling, getting out of the city etc. were interpreted as standing for such). Many posts on *Instagram* showed friends, which could be interpreted as an example of the highly valued social aspect of *Instagram* and the feeling of having actual conversations. One could conclude that the women were shaping their own self when posting pictures of

friends: showing friends could be interpreted as self-portrayal or associating oneself with the portrayed people. Many of the women also posted animals, often pets, which might be understood as cute and pleasing and safe way to get attention or 'likes' on *Instagram*.

The feeds seemed to reflect an individual's taste in pictures – that could be interpreted based on a dominant use of filter, colors, objects etc. Some would repeatedly use the same filters or frames. Others used special apps in order to 'post' something other than the 'classic' *Instagram* format (square), which again could be seen as being especially artistic or creative, which seemed to be an important association that the women wanted to provoke.

The pictures and topics could be interpreted as reflecting the wish to show beautiful things, happy moments, artistic skills and another wish that some women had mentioned: to be taken seriously as an artist or professional. After all, this beautiful and happy portrayal was interpreted as showing off the shiny side of one's life while keeping unspectacular or sad moments from the public eye. All of the women seemed to tell a story via *Instagram* that corresponded with their idea of their use and in that sense shaped how they wanted to be seen.

Selfies – there is an extrovert in every introvert on Instagram
As one of the women said: "selfies are complicated" (IND4). Some of the women expressed dislike towards selfies or said they felt it was a bit ridiculous or they weren't 'selfie-persons,' to use their own words. It had been suggested that every woman liked her selfies, since they all have posted at least one self-portrait on *Instagram* in the observation period. The tonality of the selfies was very diverse: it was sexy, smart and well dressed (which could be interpreted as a self-confident selfie) or the more 'showing off' selfie that other's might feel envy while viewing. There were also a lot of romantic-melancholic selfies (specially two individuals) that likewise could be valued as self-confident and explicit. Selfies were often sporty or fun – such as selfies after a run, on a skateboard etc. – and seemed more difficult to interpret. It had been concluded that those might have tried to come across less narcissist or as more approachable and underlining the activity rather than the person. Selfies with an animal/pet or with friends in the picture, were interpreted as more approachable or casual but also as potentially disguising the fact that one was taking a selfie. However, they were counted as such, remembering one of the women who said, "a selfie is a selfie." It could be concluded that, on *Instagram*, at some point everyone had to or wanted to be an extrovert and post a selfie, especially because the way of self-portrayal is entirely up to the person. *Instagram* was interpreted as *the* place to portray oneself in a certain way.

7. Conclusion and Outlook

This final chapter summarizes the research findings, discusses challenges and gives an outlook for potential further studies. The aim for this study was to deepen the understanding of self-portrayal on the current most dominant social network, *Facebook,* and the fasted growing one, *Instagram.* A certain demographic group was selected: well educated, creative and urban women in their late 20's up to their late 30's. For the study, the self-presentation theory introduced by Goffman (1959) was used as a framework. Goffman (1959) concluded that people, when interacting with others, performed as if they were on a stage and constantly tried to shape the other's perception of themselves. With that in mind, the nine women were observed and interviewed. Their *Facebook* wall and *Instagram* feed were interpreted as 'stages' where supposed self-presentation took place. An extensive literature review placed the study in the field and established the context. Theories on why people interacted in social networks such as *Facebook* and *Instagram* were introduced, and their use for the study was elaborated. The conclusion starts with a summary of the findings structured within the research questions.

RQ 1. How do the studied individuals want to be seen on Facebook and Instagram?
RQ 1.1. What are their reasons to actively post and share on *Facebook* or *Instagram*?
The interviewees mostly supported or confirmed the Uses and Gratifications approaches that have been elaborated on in earlier research and had been introduced in the beginning of this study. One aspect that the women rejected was negativity. They didn't think of social media as a place to be negative or to complain about things. One benefit that could be noted was the communication through 'likes,' e.g. supporting and showing affection towards their network, and to trigger reactions or answers on other channels – for example waiting for an email reply from someone. This might answer the question Walther et. al. (2011) raised concerning the communicatory utility which *Facebook* posting could provide for other conversations. The women seemed to start, continue or maintain discussions in other spaces through 'liking' on *Instagram*. They communicated through 'liking' because they wanted to express support, give a sign of affection or show that they were "there". They themselves appreciated 'likes' a lot.

It has been shown that *Facebook* activities were clearly dominated by curiosity and the wish to know 'what was going on' at any time. It seemed to be about staying in touch and keeping up to date with the network in general, but even more with certain types or groups of people such as good friends, role models, current or potential clients and business partners. Which was discovered to be in line with Ellison et. al.'s (2007) conclusion that *Facebook* maintains social capital while providing technological

support and the extension of existing offline relationships. Most of the women said they often used *Facebook* to organize parts of their (professional) life, to build their network and meet future clients. The agenda function – inviting or being invited to events – on *Facebook* was mentioned as important by every single one of the women. Posting articles, videos and status updates seemed to be founded on the desire to participate in a big dialogue and the wish for other's to see the things one considered important or interesting, although not all of the women displayed a frequent posting behavior on *Facebook*. They wanted to provide useful and interesting information but also fun content such as videos or music suggestions for their network, which matched the gate watching function introduced in the literature review. Some informative posts in the form of status updates, videos or articles, confirmed the wish to share valuable content to the network. Which underlined the individual's gate watching function as introduced by Bruns (2008). They seemed to elaborate, highlight and publicize information that they wanted their community to see (Bruns 2008). Some also mentioned, they wanted their network to think about certain topics, which could be related to the Agenda Setting approach, earlier introduced.

On *Instagram* on the other hand, active sharing was perceived as very important. A high appreciation and excitement for *Instagram* was detected. It was often seen as the place where one could visually narrate what one was doing or experiencing, and to portray a better version of oneself.

RQ 1.2. How actively shaped is their online self-portrayal? How much awareness is there to the self that is portrayed online?
The pilot interview had shown, that asking the individuals how, or with what strategy or tactic they pursued to shape their self, did not lead to any result. Which is why the questions were adapted: "how do you think other's perceive you?" And "how would you like to be seen?". The women didn't necessarily like to share, or couldn't formulate how they would want to be seen on social media. Nevertheless during the interviews, it became clear, that all of them had spent time thinking about their posts. They seemed to evaluate what kind of pictures and with what tonality and message they wanted to share and had an idea of how they wanted to be seen, particularly on *Instagram*. It was especially remarkable what importance *Instagram* seemed to have gained in the few years of its existence. *Facebook* apparently had lost a lot of its attractiveness. Which is why *Instagram* was deduced to be the place to shape and communicate oneself. Self-portrayal on *Instagram* was therefore given more attention in the following paragraphs.

The self-presentation on *Instagram* was interpreted as showing the best of oneself. The women associated themselves with apparently highly valued topics such as art, fashion, literature, nature, and travelling. The described sharing habits differed from a more spontaneous manner – having an opinion

right away, taking a photo and showing one's network an observation – to a visual diary that was quite curated, and that might even have a clear style. Some mentioned that they took time shooting or deciding on pictures or would use a special camera app and post several hours later than they had taken a picture in order to maintain a certain standard. Some, at first, said they would consider themselves immediate sharers. But even those would go back and edit or delete posts if they reconsidered them as unsuitable, unnecessary or weird. Others underlined that they were as careful as possible with what they communicated or shared. One clarified that she had exclusively close friends as followers on *Instagram*, which made it possible for her to post very personal pictures.

The women occasionally struggled with staying true to a certain criteria or style because they wished to share a thought or a story by posting images that didn't match the rest of their feed. This finding was underlined by a closer look at selfies. All of the women posted at least one selfie during the observation and all of them had an explanation or thought behind it/them. It was concluded that the selfie seemed to provoke ambivalent feelings. The women seemed to a certain extent to appreciate posting selfies, but not all of them would share selfies, as they didn't want to be seen as a 'selfie queen', or because they felt ridiculous or preferred to remain in the background of their own feed and letting their photographic eye speak for them.

Most of the women had at some point received feedback on their activities from their network, and mentioned keywords how they had been described; as 'working a lot', 'strong', 'funny', 'busy' 'charismatic', 'artistic', 'creative', 'crazy', 'eccentric' or having an 'exciting life'. Reflecting on those, the women expressed little surprise. Although not exactly congruent with their self-awareness, the feedback seemed to be quite similar to how they would describe themselves or would want to be seen. Which on one hand could be concluded as an apparently subconscious but successful self-portrayal. On the other hand it was interpreted that those reflections might as well have been based on a wishful thinking and therefore rather represented how the women like to think of themselves, than how others saw them.

When talking about other people's *Instagram* feed, the women expressed a more or less clear idea of what kind of images or topics they appreciated as interesting and what in their eyes was annoying – in the sense of what they didn't want to see or be bothered with. They also emphasized that whenever they saw through exaggerated activities or what they might interpret as false portrayals, they would 'unfollow' people. This was interpreted as confirming Papacharissi's idea of self-presentation as a process and as an ever-evolving cycle where an individual introduced his or her identity and was

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compared based on the portrayal.

RQ 1.3. What are the different uses or purposes for Facebook and Instagram? And how are they connected (if)?

As mentioned above, the women showed clear distinction for the two networks that could be reduced to a positive attitude towards and high appreciation of *Instagram* while being negative or critical and a bit annoyed towards *Facebook*. They expressed a much more passionate sharing philosophy on *Instagram*, which corresponded with the observations only if one excluded 'likes', 'events' and 'new friendships' on *Facebook* and counted the status updates and 'posts' of photos, videos and links exclusively. The prominence of the event-function was interpreted as a very practical use of *Facebook* to stay up to date and to network. Which again reflected in how the women explained the benefit of *Facebook*: easily gaining news, inspiration and other's information, and distribute their own info. *Facebook* and *Instagram* were used parallel, but weren't in that sense connected.

RQ 2. Can we assume that the women use approaches and behavioral patterns to accomplish the virtual identity they seek to portray on Facebook and Instagram?

RQ 2.1. What kind of content/topics can we observe? Is it possible to outline more dominant topics that might be considered as supporting the online self-portrayal?

During the netnographic study 17 topics were detected (among others: fashion, literature, music, traveling, celebrities, nature, science, education, etc.) out of which many were used only sporadically. A few repeating topics were discovered and therefore identified as dominant. Most popular seemed posts related to art, literature/poetry, fashion/beauty, and music (mainly on *Facebook*), from what it was concluded, that the women desired to be associated with cultural topics and come across as well-educated and literate but also as trendy and artistic. On *Facebook*, this related to the sharing of photos, articles, videos, status updates and likes as well as for signing up for events: gallery openings, poetry readings, clubs and concerts. Another conclusion was that the individuals were very rarely political, but maybe sometimes aspired to be a bit disruptive, or forward thinking, when posting within topics such as science, education, or sustainability on *Facebook*.

Work related posts were typically found on *Facebook* in form of pictures or status updates. This was interpreted as supporting the wish to be seen as busy or hard working, which some women expressed during the interviews. In line with the idea of exclusively positive posting, the work related posts were always positively connoted and sounded like fun, or as working with things they were proud of, such as fashion, education or literature and writing. Status updates which were often fun or poetic were

interpreted as a way to portray oneself as imaginative, light hearted and funny, which the individuals regularly mentioned they would strive for in the interviews. An interpretation of communicatory utility of 'real life' for self-promotion and relational signification on *Facebook*, that Walther et. al. (2011) questioned, might be the desire to be up to date, and communicate within a network that helps keeping track of the networks agenda, but also showing off as intellectual, literate, and creative.

The topics portrayed on *Instagram* were similar. Since the women communicated the desire to share beautiful and creative posts or aimed to be perceived as happy, professional, or creative they seemed to focus on posting images that could often be associated with art – such as photos from an art show, or artistic pictures such as interesting color compositions etc. Fashion as in fashionable people, or people working in the fashion industry. Literature and poetry were also often represented in the posts, in the sense of tonality or pictures from readings, poetic statements etc. As well as nature and travelling, which was also rated as escaping from the city. It seemed, the individuals aimed to appear more interesting due to posting travel related images, or it was interpreted as they were specially happy or felt that they had something to tell – which they often indicated as criteria to post, that triggered the wish to show the network what they were doing. Spending time with friends seemed to be an important resource for posts. The women often portrayed friends in their pictures on *Instagram*, which might be interpreted as portraying themselves as social. But also as a study had shown, portraying good-looking friends lead to a higher estimation of the individual's own looks (Wilson et. al. 2012).

RQ 2.2. Are there patterns and are they different on Facebook or Instagram?
As mentioned above, clear tendencies and similarities concerning topics – patterns – could be discovered. Although the popular topics seemed to be similar for the different individuals applied on *Facebook* or *Instagram*, they differed in terms of amount and way the women used them. The overall impression for every woman on *Instagram* was summarized and mirrored with her own ideas of use and portrayal, which lead to a short description and analysis and was concluded as representing her communicative focus or pattern: A happy social person (IND1), who shared mostly pictures of friends or travelling. The cool girl next door (IND2), who portrayed herself as interested in art and culture, but also skating and being out a lot. The thoughtful rock musician (IND3) posted mainly pictures of herself or friends out or playing music with a band. The dreamer and poet (IND4) used a romantic tonality on most of her pictures. A fashion and friends person (IND5) shared friends and collections. The creative's (IND6) eye for the detail and beautiful compositions dominated the pictures. The busy and cool New Yorker (IND7) portrayed a colorful, very active life. The funny creative (IND8) focused on art, fashion and fun color combinations. And finally the artist (IND9), who shared mostly her own paintings.

Self-portrayal on Instagram

The most important finding was the appreciation and focus on *Instagram*, and was interpreted as attributing *Instagram* a higher importance for self-portrayal. The women expressed joy when being active on *Instagram* and valued to be able to curate their feed. They underlined the closeness with their friends and 'followers' and that they communicated with them through 'likes'. *Instagram* had gained remarkable significance in the past few years and seems to have replaced some of Facebook's utilities and features. It was shown that the women had lost quite some interest in *Facebook* as a place to share what was happening in their life. They even felt bothered by it and expressed that they would not use it if it didn't provide them with important information and help them keeping up to date.

It was concluded that the women wished to be seen as interesting, successful, creative, fun and having good taste. Which leads to the interpretation that they represented a generation of self-confident women that seemed to be entrepreneurial, driven, and individualistic in many interesting ways. Some of them also expressed, that they appreciated living in New York City, which would give them inspiration for 'posts'. Nevertheless some of the women had expressed, that sharing wasn't always easy or natural, but sometimes felt like a pressure, that not all of them seemed to handle well. Not all the women expressed a concrete idea of how they wanted to be seen or they didn't pursue to come across in a certain way. Some expressed insecurity or hesitation when 'posting' and fear of seeming boring. This lower self-esteem reflected in the perception of their selfies: some expected little interest in their life and said that they felt awkward to 'post' self-portraits. An interesting finding was the culture of deleting. Most of the women admitted to deleting posts when changing their mind or realizing later on that either the images didn't match their feed, weren't supporting their ideas, or they thought they were weird in some way. Another remarkable discovery was, that the preferences for type of *Instagram* posts apparently changed, depending on season, feelings and what phase in life the women were in; the amount of 'posts' on *Instagram* were said to depend on the women's well being and feeling comfortable in whatever situation they were.

Reflection, limitations and outlook

The methods chosen for this study have enabled an interesting in-depth analysis of self-portrayal from different angles and on different levels, considering that self-portrayal not only happened online, but also during every interview. An independent and non-interfering three-week netnography seemed to have generated a good overview of activities, which was later useful to reflect interview answers. The Netnographic study however led to a rather descriptive approach. Together with the nine fruitful interviews, it generated a vast amount of information that was challenging to approach for the analysis.

The data was therefore structured and interpreted systematically. This substantial and descriptive analysis seemed needed as a first step in order to be able to draw conclusions on the way. Another insight was, that the interviews did not always provide consistent images of the nine women. The great challenge was therefore to ask unbiased and not emotionally loaded questions, to receive honest answers from the interviewees. As mentioned above, it could be assumed that the interviewees although feeling comfortable with the interview situation were mostly, but supposedly not entirely, transparent in their answers. They might even have downplayed or disregarded the importance of how they portrayed themselves online. The face-to-face interviews enabled another level of self-portrayal. When discussing their online identity the women weren't necessarily dishonest, but might have shaped their answers, and were supposedly talking slightly more of an ideal use, rather than a real one, again portraying a certain desired self. Another limitation or potential critic was that the observed women all had a creative background. The finding of a very creative and art-focused self-portrayal might therefore be seen as not surprising but a rather evident conclusion. Nevertheless, a description of the portrayal and logical conclusion of motivation and drivers for sharing had been discovered. In that sense the findings were satisfactory and create a base for further studies. The choice of qualitative analysis could therefore be justified. In a next or future step the methods could be extended with a quantitative survey for example, in order to generate findings for a larger demographic and through anonymity guaranteed, non-biased answers.

This study built successfully on previous research, which, as it was shown in the introduction, often focused either on college students or only looked at *Facebook* and other social networks, while *Instagram* seemed to be a very new field of investigation. In that sense the study focused on a demographic that hasn't particularly been studied and an additional social network that, although a few years old now, had not been given much attention previously. Compared to earlier research, this study has also addressed different questions, such as how the self was portrayed rather than asking if there was a certain self portrayed online or why. It became evident, that the individuals themselves had thought of similar questions when looking at their own network. The study showed that the women expressed to have changed their activities and with it the self-portrayal over a short amount of time. Which raised new questions on how much behaviors change, based on what, and with what potential reward. The theories themselves served as a solid base, nevertheless they are rather old and new theories will eventually become necessary to successfully make sense of self-portrayal and people's behavior in the online space. To provide an outlook, it would be interesting to explore a larger or various demographic(s), including comparison of industries, age, and gender. A focus on the selfie, the topics that were 'shared' and the ideas of other's impression, seemed to be a good starting point to explore the topic of self-portrayal.

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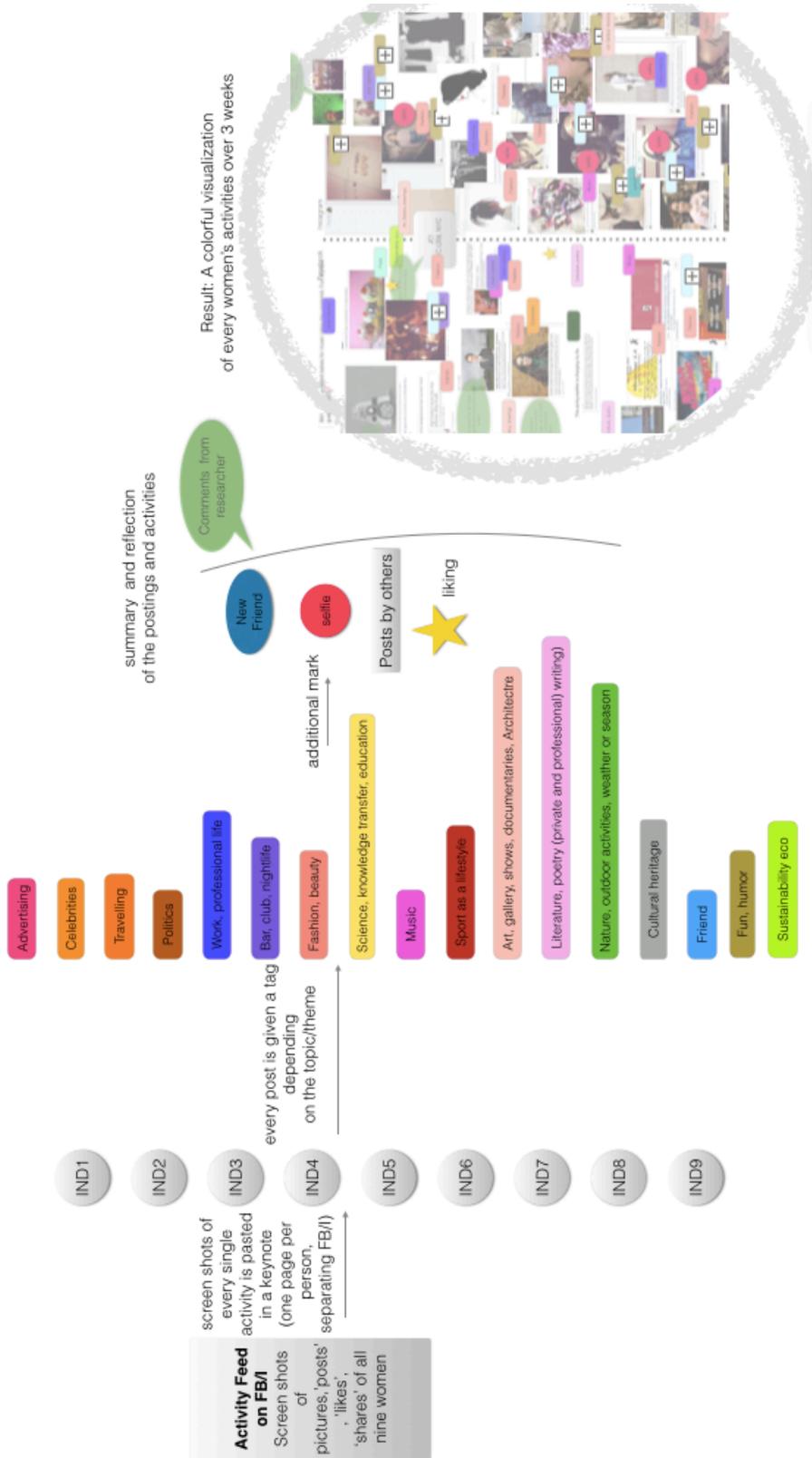http://mashable.com/2011/12/19/friend-unfriend-facebook/

APPENDIX

The appendix contains research guidelines that were elaborated during and used for the netnographic study in order to systematize the research and a visualization of the observation process. The sets of research questions from the pilot interview and the actual interviews are included as well.

Netnography study
1. **Coding guidelines to associate one or more topics to the 'posts'**

THEME/TOPIC	CODING GUIDE
Advertising	Brand posts, advertising videos. Advertising for own purpose such as one's own products, services, but also one's employer's services, a friends or other products, publications etc.
Art, gallery, shows, documentaries, architecture	Can be art such as photographs taken of art work, or within a museum or a gallery. But also day to day street art. Architecture if clearly portrayed as art.
Celebrities	All posts that show or mention someone famous.
Science, knowledge transfer, education	Schools, science articles, informational posts such as referring to newspaper articles.
Literature, poetry (Books, Magazines, private and professional writing)	Mentioning of poetry or literature events such as readings. Poem or poetic statement/post. Poetic statements, about life, the city one lives in, nature, light etc. Can also be a picture (out) of a magazine or book reading suggestions or cover pictures.
Travelling	Pictures taken while travelling or being on vacation. Can be detected as not from the usual environment, but also comments such as "Paris!" or "finally back" etc.
Work, professional life	Image or mentioning of colleagues, posts about work meetings, challenges, success stories etc.
Politics	Any kind of political comment, statement. Linking to newspaper articles that treat political issues.
Bar, club, nightlife	Mentioning or portraying of a bar, drinks, DJ's, parties, or people/friends in a bar or club environment.
Fashion, beauty	Pictures, articles, videos of clothes, cosmetics, hairstyles, fashion shows.
Sustainability eco	Any statement that has to do with environment, sustainability, taking care of nature and the environment.
Sport as a lifestyle	Pictures, links or likes but also comments of sports equipment such as a bike, a yoga mat, running shoes etc. Statements about completed exercises etc.
Fun, humor	Fun comments, pictures: can be fun "sweet" or "cute" or "ridiculous". Also fun connotation, for a picture that might be rated as food, but if the alimentary have a fun name or shape.
Music	Spotify or YouTube or other music suggestions, comments, videos. Liking of band or artist pages.
Nature, outdoor activities, weather or season	Flowers, lakes, trees. Everyting that stands for nature, can also be the blue sk
Tradition, symbol for culture, cultural heritage	Posts that relate to tradition or habits or cultural heritage such as typical clot can be nostalgic or melancholic comments as well.
Friend	A friend is mentioned in a picture or post or the way a person is portrayed, o suggests the author knows the person in a picture.
Food	Pictures, mentioning or linking of a restaurant, food posts (image, comment)

2. Visualization of the observation process and guide for the research diary

Result: A colorful visualization of every women's activities over 3 weeks

summary and reflection of the postings and activities

Comments from researcher

New Friend

selfie

Posts by others

liking

additional mark

Advertising

Celebrities

Travelling

Politics

Work, professional life

Bar, club, nightlife

Fashion, beauty

Science, knowledge transfer, education

Music

Sport as a lifestyle

Art, gallery, shows, documentaries, Architectre

Literature, poetry (private and professional) writing)

Nature, outdoor activities, weather or season

Cultural heritage

Friend

Fun, humor

Sustainability eco

every post is given a tag depending on the topic/theme

IND1

IND2

IND3

IND4

IND5

IND6

IND7

IND8

IND9

screen shots of every single activity is pasted in a keynote (one page per person, separating FB/I)

Activity Feed on FB/I
Screen shots of pictures, 'posts' 'likes', 'shares' of all nine women

Interviews

3. Interview guide pilot interview

PERSONAL QUESTIONS
- Who are you?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- What do you work with?
- What are your special interests?

GENERAL IDEA OF HOW YOU USE FACEBOOK
- What are your reasons to be active on Facebook?
- How much time do you spend online and how much on social networking sites a day?
- How much of that is active (posting)?
- How much of that is passive (checking)?
- How much do you work on your posts?
- How many are impulsive or on-the-go?
- What kind of posts do you usually post?

GENERAL IDEA OF HOW YOU USE INSTAGRAM
- What are your reasons to be active on Instagram?
- What kind of posts do you usually post?

HOW DO YOU CONSCIOUSLY SHAPE YOUR SELF ONLINE
- Do you have a strategy?

4. Interview guide final

PERSONAL/CONTEXTUALIZING QUESTIONS
(age, profession, city of living, country of origin have been asked via email before)

1. Can you briefly describe yourself? What are your interests? Your hobbies? What do you like to do? What are important topics for you?

GENERAL IDEA OF FACEBOOK USE

2. Can you describe how you use Facebook?
Follow-up questions in case they haven't been answered on above question:
- How much time do you spend on Facebook a day?
- How much of that is active (posting, commenting)?
- Do you ever comment on other's posts?
- How much is passive (reading)?
- How much time do you invest in average posts (can be text, image, status update)?
- Why do you post (should the reader do something with that info)?
- Where do you take the content/ideas/inspiration from for a post?
- Do you think you are selective on what topics you post on Facebook?

3. Why do you like a brand, a band, an artist or a place etc. (what makes you hit the like button)?
- You liked xx, etc. why was that?

4. How important are Facebook friends to you?
- How do they contribute to your everyday life with their posts?
- And how important is their reaction to your posts?
- Do you anticipate reactions to your posts (in general and from certain people)?

CONSCIOUSNESS OF ONLINE SELF-PRESENTATION – FB

5. Do you have an idea of how you are perceived on Facebook?
6. How would you ideally want to be perceived on Facebook?
Follow-up questions:
- Are there things you would never post/topics you would not want to be associated with?
- Do you delete posts, that you regret having posted?
- If you delete posts, why do you delete them?
- Do the topics you post, mirror topics that you are concerned with in your everyday life?
- Who can see your posts (status update, events, pictures you are tagged in)?
- Do you have a favourite person or a role-model on Facebook (can be because of the content he/she shares that is useful, entertaining or in any other way beneficial or satisfactory to you)?
- Why do you appreciate this person's posts more than others?

GENERAL IDEA OF INSTAGRAM USE

7. What role does Instagram play in your everyday life?
Follow-up questions:
- Can you describe how you use Instagram?
- How important is checking other's posts?
- How important is sharing your pictures?
- How much time do you spend when creating a post?
- What feeling/state of mind are you most likely to share?
- What makes you decide to Instagram a picture (do you have criteria)?

CONSCIOUSNESS OF ONLINE SELF-PRESENTATION – INSTAGRAM

8. Do you have an idea of how you are perceived on Instagram?
9. How would you ideally want to be perceived on Facebook?
Follow-up questions in case they haven't been answered on above question:
- Are there things you would never post?
- Do you delete posts, that you regret having posted?
- If you delete posts, why do you delete them?
- Do you have certain themes of what you post?
- Do they mirror topics that you are concerned with in your everyday life?
- Are there things you would never post/topics you would not want to be associated with?
- Do you have a favorite person or a role-model on Instagram (can be because of the content he/she shares that is useful, entertaining or in any other way beneficial or satisfactory to you)?
- Why do you appreciate this person's posts more than others?

10. How connected are Facebook and Instagram to you?
11. Some individual questions based on the data collected during the netnographic study