**Aalto University
School of Business**

"Like getting a recommendation from a friend" - A case study of Bonnier Publications' blog reader perceptions on blog content and commerciality

International Business Communication

Master's thesis

Jutta Tuomi

2014

Department of Communication
Aalto University
School of Business

"Like getting a recommendation from a friend" – A case study of Bonnier Publications' blog reader perceptions on blog content and commerciality

Objective of the study:

The present study was based on media convergence, which has caused media companies to alter their business and incorporate new digital communication channels to better serve consumer needs. The purpose of the study was to focus on Bonnier Publications' blog readers and research their relationship with blogs. The objective was to gain a thorough understanding of how blog readers perceive blog content and commerciality, and what kind of relationship they have with Bonnier Publications' blogs.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework:

The study was conducted as a qualitative research project using thematic interviews with sixteen readers of Bonnier Publications' blogs as empirical data. Semi-structured, thematic interviews were applied to discover the relationship the interviewees had with blogs as well as their perceptions on blog content and blog commerciality. The data was analyzed through coding and categorization, basing the analysis on the theoretical framework which was built through previous literature presented in the literature review. The framework focused on media convergence, the blog-reader relationship, personal and commercial content, communication methods and eWOM.

Findings and Conclusions:

The findings provided an in-depth answer to the main research question of this thesis from the perspective of three elements: relationship, content and commerciality. The findings showed that generally interviewees feel a strong emotional bond and a friend-like relationship with the blogger, which is based on the relatable and personal content that blogs publish. They also showed that the relationship was built on one-way communication from the blogger as interviewees rarely sought for interaction. Based on the findings, commercial content showed more fragmentation in opinions in terms of the type, amount and communication. Generally however, the interviewees perceived commercial content positively and perceived advertising in blogs more influential than many other media.

Key words:

communication, business communication, media industry, social media, blogs, blog content, blog commerciality, blog advertising

"Kuin kaverin antama suositus" – Case-tutkimus Bonnier Publicationsin blogilukijoiden näkemyksistä blogien sisällöstä ja kaupallisuudesta

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet

Tämä pro gradu –työ perustui median murrokseen, jonka seurauksena media-yhtiöiden on täytynyt sisällyttää toimintaansa uusia digitaalisia viestintäkanavia vastatakseen paremmin kuluttajien tarpeisiin. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli keskittyä Bonnier Publicationsin blogilukijoihin ja heidän suhteeseen blogeihin. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli luoda ymmärrys siitä miten blogilukijat mieltävät blogien sisällön ja mainonnan, sekä mikä heidän suhteensa on Bonnier Publicationsin blogeihin.

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja teoreettinen viitekehys

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena käyttäen teemahaastatteluja 16 lukijahaastattelussa. Kaikki haastateltavat olivat Bonnier Publicationsin blogien lukijoita. Puoli-strukturoituja, temaattisia haastatteluja käytettiin jotta löydettäisiin miten lukijat kokevat suhteensa blogeihin ja mitä näkemyksiä heillä on blogien sisällöstä ja kaupallisuudesta. Aineisto analysoitiin koodaamalla ja kategorisoimalla, ja analyysin pohjana toimi teoreettinen viitekehys, joka muodostettiin kirjallisuuskatsauksessa esitettyjen aiempien tutkimuksien pohjalta. Viitekehys keskittyi median murrokseen, blogi-lukija-suhteeseen, henkilökohtaiseen ja kaupalliseen sisältöön, viestintäkeinoihin ja eWOM –käsitteeseen.

Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Tutkimuksen tulokset tarjosivat perusteellisen vastauksen tutkimuksen päätutkimuskysymykseen avaamalla sitä kolmesta näkökulmasta: suhteesta, sisällöstä ja kaupallisuudesta. Tulokset osoittivat että yleisesti haastateltavat kokevat vahvan tunnesiteen ja kaverimaisen suhteen bloggaajiin, joka perustuu samaistuttavaan ja henkilökohtaiseen sisältöön joita blogit julkaisevat. Tulokset myös osoittivat että suhde perustuu yhdensuuntaiseen viestintään bloggaajan suunnalta sillä haastateltavat harvoin hakivat interaktiivisuutta. Tulosten perusteella kaupallinen sisältö aiheutti hajaantuneempia mielipiteitä sen tyylin, määrän ja viestinnän suhteen. Yleisesti kuitenkin haastateltavat kokivat kaupallisen sisällön positiiviseksi ja pitivät mainontaa blogeissa vaikuttavampana kuin monissa muissa kanavissa.

Avainsanat:

viestintä, yritysviestintä, media-ala, sosiaalinen media, blogi, blogisisältö, blogin kaupallisuus, blogimainonta

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Through technological advances in communication channels, the media landscape has changed drastically (Colapinto, 2010). As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) explain, media is in a state of convergence in which the content of previously separate media platforms can now be distributed through one digital platform. The effect of media convergence has been studied extensively to understand how it is changing the operations of media companies. According to Troland (2005), printed media, including newspapers and magazines, have been affected by new digitalized channels; consumers are increasingly drawn to alternative, faster channels which creates a challenge for print media to stay relevant to consumers.

Guenther (2011) states that "the traditional world of print magazines is in a gradual yet unmistakable decline" (p. 327), and explains that although magazine brands still appeal to consumers, overall consumption habits continuously shift towards digital channels. Statistics on mass media by Statistics Finland (2011) shows the same effect: growth in print media has been low in the past years, roughly 2%, whereas electronic communication has increased its turnover and grown over 7%. These statistics indicate that digital communication channels are increasingly entering the territory of the print media market.

Media companies are aware that adapting to changes in the media landscape requires the companies to rethink their brands, but also to reconsider advertising within them due to the fact that media advertising is continuously shifting towards digital channels as well (Finnmedia 2011a). McPhillips and Merlo (2008) agree, emphasizing that as media convergence has given consumers the power to choose which media and advertisements they consume, choosing the right channels and targeting is all the more important for companies.

Based on a 2011 industry review, Finnmedia (2011b) states that magazine brands can maintain a strong position, given that the magazine brands are also strongly linked to online media channels and services that readers prefer. It seems that media companies

are aware of the fact that to keep their audience and advertisers interested in their print media brands requires innovative new solutions. As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) highlight, to strengthen their brands, companies need to put consumers at a central focus and develop their offerings based on changed consumer needs, but also cooperate closely with advertisers to find a balance between traditional and non-traditional advertising solutions (p. 251).

McPhillips and Merlo (2008) describe several industry and consumer trends that relate to the fact that media companies are facing competition from the digital media landscape in which a significant part of the content is produced by consumers themselves. This phenomenon is called social media, which is defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) more specifically as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61).

Several researchers (e.g. Huang et al., 2007; Colliander & Dahlén, 2011) indicate that in today's market, print magazines especially face competition from one social media platform, blogs. Although the growing popularity of blogs is an international phenomenon, it does seem unlikely that blogs would entirely replace print magazines. Instead, as Huang et al. (2007) state, media companies have been experimenting with the opportunities that blogs provide. According to Huang et. al. (2007) although some media companies are trying to avoid any effects blogs pose on magazines altogether, others see blogs as an interesting new channel and have attempted various methods of being present in or cooperating with them.

More recently, some magazine brands on a global scale have begun collaborating with bloggers and hired bloggers to become part of their magazine brand. This approach has been adopted by Bonnier Publications, which according to Jutila (2013) was one of the first Finnish media companies to hire a blog under its brand. When Bonnier Publications hired the blog "Paras aika vuodesta", it received a lot of media attention and since then Bonnier Publications has continuously hired new bloggers under its brands.

Blogs are defined as "personal journals on the internet arranged in reversed chronological sequence that facilitate interactive computer mediated communication through text, images, and audio/video objects" (Huang et. al., 2007, p. 473). Blood (2002) has categorized blogs into three groups: personal journals, notebooks and filters. This present study will focus on blogs that can be classified as personal journals which according to Schmidt (2007), form a major part of the so called blogosphere. Such blogs are maintained by individual people who write about their personal lives and experiences (p. 1410).

What makes blogs significant is their social networking aspect, which is highlighted in blogs due to the strong relationship that readers and blogs build; Colliander and Dahlén (2011) describe the relationship as "similar to – and as powerful as – a word-of-mouth relationship" (p. 314). The benefit of blogs is that they are able to create and provide similar content to print magazines, but compared to magazines the content is free and enjoys what McPhillips and Merlo (2008, p. 247) call "peer to peer engagement". Scott (2009) emphasizes that blogs also differ from magazines due to the fact that blogs present opinions on issues from one point of view – the blogger's – while magazines present a balance of many viewpoints due to their journalistic nature.

When compared with magazines, blogs are also a considerable alternative advertising channel. Whereas print magazines used to be a popular channel for consumers to find product recommendations and other advice, research by Colliander and Dahlén (2011) demonstrates that blogs affect brand attitudes and can influence purchasing decisions more than for example magazines. Blog readers show trust towards bloggers' opinions (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011), and companies can try to cooperate with bloggers to use this feature to their advantage and to gain positive exposure. The researchers continue by explaining that blog readers consider bloggers as friends, and when bloggers sincerely promote brands, readers will form friendships with the brands as well (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011).

Blog content and especially blog advertising are a current and debated issue globally. For example in the United States, blog advertising practices have been discussed for

several years and the Federal Trade Commission published its first guidelines for public comments in 2009 (Pradnya, 2009). In Finland, similar guidelines were developed by Asiakkuusmarkkinointiliitto (ASML) together with key media industry players and published for the public's comments in June 2013 (ASML, 2013). The aim of the guidelines was to provide a standard for clear communication of blog advertising that is applicable to all types of blogs (ASML, 2013). After the data for the present study had already been collected during June and July 2013, Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority published official instructions for recognizable advertising in blogs in November 2013 (Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority, 2013). Focusing on blog readers' perceptions on blog advertising, the present study will give more insight into how blog readers actually perceive blog advertising and how they would want the media to develop.

Whereas blogs have been researched extensively from the point of view of bloggers, there is scarce research on the blog readers' perspective. Some studies have been conducted to study e.g. reading motives or publicity effectiveness on readers (Huang et al, 2008; Colliander and Dahlén, 2011) but a deeper understanding of reader perceptions on blog content and blog commerciality is lacking, which presents the research gap for this study. From a business communication perspective this research is relevant as it focuses on how consumers of an emerging communication channel perceive different types of content they encounter in this channel.

The present study is positioned in the field of International Business Communication as part of corporate communication. Cornelissen (2011) defines corporate communication in the following way:

> *"Corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent" (p.5).*

The present thesis will focus on Bonnier Publication's readers as a stakeholder group. Also advertisers as a stakeholder group are considered, however the assumption is that

by addressing reader needs, also advertiser needs will be considered. Blogs are a significant communication channel as their content is mainly produced by individual bloggers instead of for example the company's communication or marketing unit. Still blogs are a communication channel of Bonnier Publications and developing their content will benefit the company.

The international aspect of this research comes from the fact that it studies blogs as a part of media convergence – changes in the media landscape are affecting the entire field of communication internationally. Convergence is affecting media companies in a similar way globally and hence companies are all around the world trying to find new methods of engaging consumers and increasing profits. Also due to the rise of digital platforms and social media, content that was previously offered locally is now available on a global scale. Although this research focuses on blogs of a Finnish company that are primarily written in Finnish, they have some international readership and overall are a part of social media which in itself is a global phenomenon.

The following section will present the case company Bonnier Publications and the relevance of this study for the company.

1.1.   Case company: Bonnier Publications

Bonnier Publications, a Finnish company belonging to the international media company Bonnier AB (BONNIER AB, 2013), has incorporated bloggers extensively into its online presence. After the data for the present research was collected during summer 2013, Bonnier Publication's magazine brands were purchased by a Finnish media company, Aller Media (Mainonta & markkinointi, 2014). As the brands and blogs that are being studied in the present research remained the same, the acquisition has not had an effect on the results portrayed in the present study and therefore, the media company behind the magazine brands and blogs will be referred to as Bonnier Publications. Bonnier Publications can therefore be seen as one of those media companies that Huang et al. (2007) identify as having an interest in the opportunities that blogs pose on the magazine industry. The company's print magazine brands (Olivia, Costume, Divaani and Evita) all have a wide-ranging digital presence and several bloggers contribute

under the company's brands. As stated above, the present study focuses on personal blogs, and it is also how Bonnier Publication's blogs that are included in the research can be classified.

Bonnier Publications will serve as the case company for this research and the study will focus on the perceptions of Bonnier Publication's blog readers. To ensure a deeper connection between readers and Bonnier Publication's brands as well as to benefit more from the commercial side of blogs, Bonnier Publications is interested in reader preferences and opinions on blog content. In fact it is similar to other situations of business communication; a better understanding of the stakeholder in question will make it is easier to target messages effectively.

The motivation behind finding out readers' preferences is firstly to improve the blogs and their content so that readers' needs are better targeted and that readers positively recognize the blogs as part of the magazine brands. Secondly, company presence on blogs and advertising in blogs has shown increasing benefits, but according to Bonnier Publications, all advertisers are not yet convinced of the rising new channel. As explained by Colliander and Dahlén (2011), blogs do not only provide more effective publicity, but they allow advertisers to benefit from the close friend-like relationship between blogs and blog readers. Information on how blog readers feel about commerciality in blogs and how they experience or react to advertising in blogs is valuable information as it can also be used to persuade advertisers that blogs are an effective advertising channel.

As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) highlight, consumers understand that quality online content does not always come free and therefore may include some advertising, and Bonnier Publications has similar experiences. However, a deeper understanding of how blog readers want to be exposed to companies in blogs is necessary both for practical use as well as for convincing advertisers of the possibilities that blogs provide. Additionally, as Bonnier Publications has participated in developing blog advertising guidelines together with ASML and other players in the Finnish media industry (ASML,

2013), they are also interested in the reader's point of view on the current state of commerciality in blogs and how communication can be developed.

The case study will focus on the readers of blogs that are a part of Bonnier Publication's two brands, Olivia and Costume. Olivia is a magazine that targets women in their 30's (Bonnier Publications Oy, 2013), and its blogs include Strictly Style, Nelliinan vaatehuone, Kirjasieppo, and Paras aika vuodesta (Olivialehti, 2013). Costume is a magazine that focuses purely on fashion and its blogs include Mariannan, Fashionweek 2.0, Auroran henkarit, Nude, Jonnamaista and Thing for the Bling (Costume, 2013). Appendices 1 and 2 provide screen shots of the Strictly Style blog and Mariannan blog to demonstrate what Bonnier Publications' blogs look like. These two magazine brands were chosen for the study because of the similarities they share in readership and areas, i.e. fashion, beauty and lifestyle.

The following section will define the objectives, research problem and research questions.

1.2. Research objectives and questions

This section will introduce the research problem and its relationship to the case company Bonnier Publications. The objectives of the research will be presented and the research questions will be stated.

The purpose of the present study is to research the relationship between blogs and its readers by focusing on readers' perceptions on blog content and commerciality. The focus of the research is therefore on readers of Bonnier Publication's blogs. The objective is to gain a thorough understanding on how blog readers perceive blog content and commerciality, and what their relationship with Bonnier Publication's blogs is. Ultimately the study aims at presenting implications on how the blogs can be developed to better serve Bonnier Publication's reader needs. The results will serve Bonnier Publications to develop its blogs to better address stakeholder needs and to serve as an important communication channel. Stakeholders in this context refer to both blog readers as well as advertisers who can be expected to benefit when readers' needs are better adressed. The results will also contribute to academic research on the reader

perspective in blogs and provide useful information for other companies that are cooperating with blogs of a similar type as Bonnier Publications.

1.2.1. Research problem

The current changes in media landscape force media companies to rethink their brands and build an online presence on the side of their traditional media to better target reader needs. Bonnier Publications has incorporated personal blogs into its online presence to benefit from the unique opportunities that blogs provide, but a deeper understanding of the audience and their relationship to blogs is needed. Qualitative research on blog reader perceptions can provide a deeper understanding for a media company on what affects the blog-reader-relationship and blogs can be used as an effective communication channel to consumers.

1.2.2. Research question

By exploring reader perceptions on blogs, Bonnier will have a stronger understanding of its blogs' audiences and be able to develop blog content and target blog commerciality more effectively. It seems that blog readers form a relationship with blogs due to which content in blogs can have a strong influence on readers. The overall and commercial content seems to continuously affect and shape the relationship as readers are exposed to new content about various topics on blogs. The aim is therefore to understand how blog readers perceive the relationship they have with blogs and how it is affected by the blog content and commerciality that blogs publish. The research question (RQ) for this study is:

RQ: How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications' blogs?

In order to provide a concise answer to the research question, it will be approached with three sub questions (SQ) relating to three relevant elements: relationship, content, and commerciality. The three sub questions are:

SQ1. What kind of relationship do Bonnier Publications' blog readers feel they have with blogs?

This question aims to identify how blog readers perceive the different factors related to their relationship with blogs. This sub question is expected to provide an understanding of why readers want to read blogs, how they feel blogs affect them, and whether they feel an emotional tie to the blog.

SQ2. What do blog readers seek for in blog content?

This question aims to identify the perceptions that blog readers have of a blogs' visual and textual content, ranging from the structural layout of blogs, to topical content and visual elements.

SQ3. What perceptions do blog readers have of commerciality in blogs?

This question aims to identify the opinions that blog readers have toward commercial content in blogs, what type of commerciality they prefer, and how they perceive the advertisers that are present in blogs.

The main research question aims to tie together the sub questions in order to provide an understanding of factors that affect the relationship between a blog and its readers. The research question will provide a thorough understanding of reader perceptions of blogs content and commerciality which contribute to knowledge about how and why readers are influenced by blogs.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The present study is divided into six sections: 1.Introduction, 2.Literature review, 3.Methodoloy, 4.Findings, 5.Discussion, and 6.Conclusions. Firstly, the background, case study and objectives of the study have been presented in the Introduction. Next, the Literature review will present previous research on media convergence and the medium of blogs as well as introduce a theoretical framework for the present research. The Methodology –section will explain why a qualitative approach was selected, how the data collection was pursued, and how data was analyzed. Results are presented in the

Findings -section based on how they relate to the research sub questions. After that, the Discussion -section will identify how the results of the present study relate to the theoretical framework and previous research. Finally, the Conclusion will summarize the research, provide practical implications and identify the limitations of the study.

2. Review of literature

The literature review consists of two parts. First, previous research on changes and convergence in the media landscape will be presented, and the concept of social media will be introduced. The second part will focus on previous research on blogs.

2.1. Changes in the media landscape

According to Colapinto (2010), the media landscape has significantly changed through the emergence of technical communication channels. Media is in a state of convergence which affects the traditional business of media companies who are facing competition from online channels that empower consumers by allowing them to produce content (McPhillips and Merlo, 2008). This section will discuss how the media landscape has changed, what it means for media companies and how social media relates to the business of traditional media companies.

The media landscape has changed significantly in the past years due to technological advances that have allowed for new digital communication channels to emerge (Colapinto, 2010). Jenkins (2004) describes this change as media convergence, a process that is bringing the media landscape to an era in which media will surround everything and all media channels are interconnected. McPhillips and Merlo (2008) provide a more concrete definition by explaining that while the media landscape used to work in a way in which certain type of media content was transmitted through a certain channel, today all media content can be transmitted through one digital platform.

Media convergence affects not only the availability of new media channels, but also the actual business of media companies (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008, p. 237). Related to media convergence is Stöber's (2004) presentation of media evolution. The media evolution theory explains that new media go through a process of "social institutionalizing" (p. 484) in which media evolves from the stages of invention, innovation and diffusion to finally become institutionalized (Ströber, 2004). Stöber suggests that instead of emerging media merely being a result of technical inventions, they go through a process in which society adopts the new media – the society "formats new media functions and adapts new media; it develops new economic models; and, last

but not least, society accepts new media by creating a new political framework and new legal order for new media" (p. 485). While Stöber's study focuses on historic media evolution, the stages are identifiable in the current media convergence as well. New media has evolved into the institutionalization phase; society is now building new economic models, implementing laws for new media and searching for business opportunities that the emerged media have enabled (McPhillips and Merlo, 2008).

According to Jenkins (2004), media convergence is altering "the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences" (p. 34) which indicates that the whole media industry and business of media is experiencing changes. As Guenther (2011, p. 328) explains, changes in the media landscape also mean that although consumers may not entirely abandon traditional media channels, they are continuously shifting towards digital channels. The following section will depict how media convergence is affecting the traditional business of media companies.

2.1.1. Towards a new media business model

Several studies have researched and discussed the effect of media convergence on different types of media companies (Jenkins, 2004; McPhillips & Merlo, 2008; Colapinto, 2010; Guenther, 2011). Both negative and positive views of the development exist; while Colapinto (2010) states that media companies "face immediate threats from new entrants" (p. 69), McPhillips and Merlo (2008) find that businesses are provided with many new opportunities due to the rise of new digital platforms and communication channels (p. 251). Jenkins (2004) states that while convergence provides opportunities for spreading content across multiple platforms it also provides a risk for fragmentation of the market (p. 37). A majority of researchers however seem to agree with Guenther (2011) who states that the new state of the media landscape affects media companies in a way which requires media companies to reassess their traditional business (p. 330).

Figure 1 demonstrates the traditional media business model by McPhillips and Merlo (2008). According to McPhillips and Merlo (2008), in the traditional media business model the media company, consumers and advertisers have functioned in a sort of

balanced triangle. Advertisers buy advertising space from media companies to benefit from the media company's audience. Media companies provide consumers with media content and advertising, and consumers pay for the content as well as respond to the advertising. As the model shows, a media company is focused on pairing the needs of two stakeholders, consumers and advertisers.

Figure 1: The traditional media business model (Phillips & Merlo, 2008, p. 238)
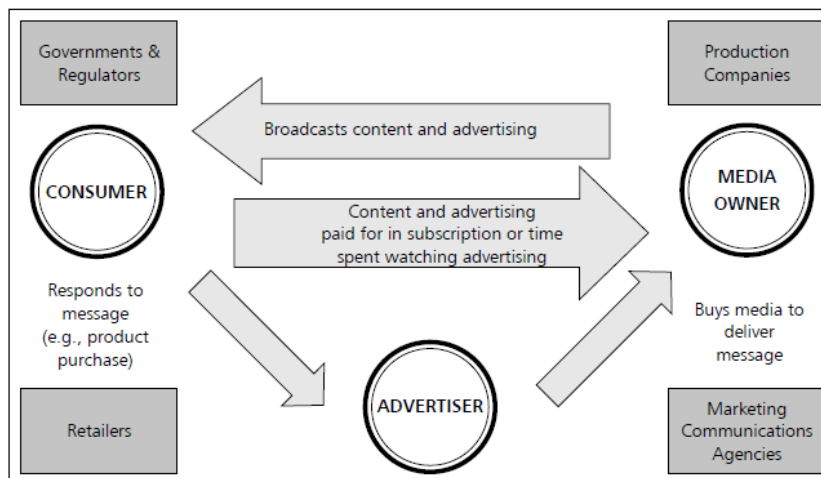
McPhillips and Merlo (2008) highlight that the effectiveness of the traditional model is decreasing due to several trends posed on the media industry, on consumers and on advertising. Media industry trends listed by McPhillips and Merlo (2008) include the following: globalization, horizontal integration, consolidation of media ownership, vertical disintegration, and creation of new media channels. Consumer trends listed by McPhillips and Merlo (2008) consist of: democratization of content, user-generated content, personalization of schedules, social networking and virtual reality, and divergence of consumer groups.

As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) explain, many of the above mentioned trends are related to the fact that "media convergence has empowered consumers" (p. 251). Jenkins (2004) on the other hand goes to explain that convergence is not only related to consumers, but rather "a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process" (p. 37). This means that while companies are learning to make use of the multiple channels available and finding new sources of revenue, consumers are

learning to use new technologies for engagement with media and other users (Jenkins, 2004, p. 37).

Jenkins (2004) has also addressed how consumers have changed during the convergence. Old consumers are described as inactive, predictable and isolated persons while today's new consumers are described as active, migrant, socially interactive and resilient towards the dominance of media companies (Jenkins 2004, p. 37-38). Jenkins' (2004) view seems to agree with McPhillips and Merlo (2008) view that media companies need to gain a new understanding of how media is consumed in order to attract the new consumer.

McPhillips and Merlo (2008) highlight that while previously media companies, advertisers and consumers were in balance in the media business model, both advertisers and media owners need to develop a so called consumer-centric approach to adjust to the changes in the industry (McPhillips & Merlo, 2008, p. 251). Jenkins' (2004) research does not address the role of advertisers in media convergence, but it does highlight that when both parties' needs are met, media companies and consumers can benefit from each other and develop better relationships during media convergence (p. 37).

As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) explain, a reason for media convergence seems to be highlighted by empowered consumers and the content they produce in different social media applications. Different social media applications seem to pose competition to various traditional media channels. The following section will explain what social media is and how it is affecting the traditional media industry.

2.1.2. Social media and the media industry

To demonstrate how social media is affecting the media industry, the concept and dimensions of social media will first be explained. Social media and its channels have risen in popularity and are finding a place on the side of traditional media channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 65). As explained by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), "social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61).

To understand social media, it is necessary to also understand the meanings of the two underlying terms that Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) mention: Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. Web 2.0, as explained by McPhillips and Merlo (2008), "describes the development of the internet into a tool that enables users to engage with one another, knows as peer to peer (P2P) engagement" (p. 247). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain the concept further and describe Web 2.0 as a platform in which any user can modify and produce content interactively (p. 61). User Generated Content (UGC) on the other hand is described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as "various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users" (p. 61).

Social media consists of different platforms and applications which are categorized by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in the following way: blogs, collaborative projects, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. Each of the categories will be explained briefly to provide an overview of how each channel contributes to the social media landscape. After introducing social media overall, the literature review will continue with focusing on the media of blogs.

Blogs are defined as "personal journals on the internet arranged in reversed chronological sequence that facilitate interactive computer mediated communication through text, images, and audio/video objects" (Huang et. al., 2007, p. 473). **Collaborative projects** are pages in which content can be created and modified by many end-users with an underlying idea that the more people work together, the better the result will be (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). **Content communities** are explained by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as applications in which users can share different types of content together. **Social networking sites** are on the other hand sites in which users can interact and connect with each other through personal profiles (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). **Virtual game worlds** consist of online environments in which users can create own characters and engage with one another in the context of a virtual game (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). **Virtual social worlds** work in a similar way technically as virtual

game worlds but differ in the fact that users of virtual social worlds can "essentially live a virtual life similar to their real life" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 64).

Social media channels seem to have become competitors of and an alternative for traditional media channels. As Colliander and Dahlén (2011) explain, social media can be more effective in persuading consumers than traditional media channels. This is because of word-of-mouth communication that occurs in social media and is based on the "unbiased nature of the message sender", meaning that they represent an individual's opinions instead of being guided by a company (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011, p. 318). So while traditional media channels may provide similar content as social media channels, the latter enjoys the benefit of higher publicity effectiveness because messages come from peers are generally more influential on consumers than messages which come directly from a company (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011, p. 319).

One of the clearest forms of competition between traditional and social media seems to exist between magazines and blogs. According to Colliander and Dahlén (2011), magazines and blogs can be seen as competing media because of the similar readership the two media attract and the type of content the readers seek. Colliander and Dahlén (2011) further explain that blogs and magazines also attract the same advertisers (p. 314). As Colliander and Dahlén (2011) explain, blogs and magazines however differ in aspects which affect how readers are affected by these media. Based on Colliander and Dahlén's (2011) findings, readers form a personal tie to a blog which is close to a real-life friendship. Due to deeper emotions involved in blog reading than magazine reading, the readers are more easily or personally influenced by content in blogs (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011).

Pihl and Sandström (2013) explain that it is the mix of private and commercial content that make blogs a unique channel which makes readers connect to blogs more intimately (p. 318). Readers have a less personal affection to magazines and regard them as professionally produced content whereas bloggers are regarded as individuals expressing their own personal opinions (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011, p. 315). That is why blog content is more effective in persuading readers than magazines, but the

relationship is also more frail as it is dependent on the trust readers have in the blogger (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011).

This section discussed media convergence and its effect on the business of media companies. The traditional media business model by McPhillips and Merlo (2008) was presented as it provides a framework for explaining how media companies' operations are changing. Current changes in the media landscape and the rise of digital media channels are relevant to the present study as they provide a basis to understand case company Bonnier Publications' shifting business needs. Furthermore, the concept of social media and how it competes with traditional media was presented in this section as it explains why companies such as Bonnier Publications must rethink their business operations and incorporate digital channels. The following section will focus on blogs and present previous literature relating to factors such as the relationship between blogs and readers, blog content, and commerciality in blogs.

2.2. Blogs as a medium

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe blogs as the first form of social media; they seem to have emerged several years before other forms of social media have gained dominance. Several researchers have attempted to categorize blogs. One of the original categorizations was done by Blood (2002) who categorized blogs into personal journals which are diary-like entries, notebooks which usually contain lengthy and focused content, and filters which mainly provide external links. Blood (2002) also concluded that the latter are the most common type of blog. However a later study by Herring et al. (2005) concluded that in fact personal blogs have since developed into the most common type of blog. Moreover, while filter blogs are most commonly written by men, personal blogs are mainly written by women and youngsters (Herring et al., 2005). Filter blogs on the other hand are mainly written by men (Herring et al., 2005). As Lövheim (2011) explains, the reason why filters may have been considered more common earlier on is that ranking systems have previously favored linking while they have disregarded personal and social aspects of blogs, which are the factors that distinguish blogs from other media.

Herring et al. (2005) explain that blogs are typically written by one person, a blogger, and focus on topics that are of interest to that blogger. Huang et al. (2007) show that bloggers perform many tasks relating to their blogs including the following: communicator, producer, explorer, collector, and player in terms of their consumption of information (p. 472). As blogs are managed by individuals, Herring et al. (2005) found that the purpose of blogging is also mainly "to express the author's subjective, often intimate perspective on matters of interest to him or her" (p. 152).

According to Herring et al.'s (2005) findings, personal blogs usually cover the personal interests and life of the blogger (p. 152), while Kozinets et al. (2010) go further to explain that personal blogs can simultaneously also be focused on just one certain topic area. Kozinets et al. (2010) categorize blogs in forums based on the topic they focus on, giving examples of technical, fashion, sports or mommy forums (p. 74). According to Lövheim (2011), the forum of the blog quite strongly relates to the gender of the author; women tend to write about topics such as fashion and parenting, while men tend to write about politics and sport (p. 5). So while the majority of blogs can be described as personal and focused on a specific forum, more recent studies show that personal blogs also involve a commercial aspect as they engage with companies and advertising (Kozinets et al., 2010; Lövheim, 2011; Kulmala et al., 2013). The emerging commercial factor has made personal blogs relevant for advertising companies (Segev and Wang, 2014) and provided bloggers with the possibility of financially benefitting from blogging (Lövheim, 2011).

Herring et al. (2005) state that most blogs are a "hybrid of public and private, personal and professional" (p. 160) meaning that although a blog in a sense can be categorized as e.g. a personal blog, notebook, or filter blog, today's blogs tend to contain features of each type. Lövheim's (2011) research focuses on popular blogs in Sweden, which combine both personal and professional aspects - the blogs contain personal, private issues as personal blogs generally do, but popular bloggers also get paid for blogging in some way which makes it professional at the same time. Lövheim (2011) goes on to claim that the more popular certain blogs have grown, the more they seem to fall between different categories and are building a new type of personal blogs (p. 5). In

fact, Lövheim's (2011) study of popular blogs in Sweden shows that many of the blogs are personal blogs in terms of content but they are written professionally to the extent that these blogs can be seen as companies. Lövheim (2011) highlights that despite the professional aspect, "references to personal and everyday life are framed as the main setting of the blogger's identity and outlook on life" (p. 8) which indicates that these blogs can still be categorized as personal blogs, but due to their popularity and the fact that they are getting paid for blogging, the blogs have become a profession for their authors.

Lövheim's (2011) research evaluates blogs based on how they integrate aspects of popularity, professionalism, commerciality and personality (p. 14). Closely related to the hybrid blogs that Herring et al. (2005) describe, Lövheim (2011) has used this categorization to demonstrate the dimensions that personal blogs today seem to entail. While having made blogging a profession, the personality factor in blogs still seems to be especially important to readers (Lövheim, 2011, p. 13). Commerciality in blogs may increase, but according to Lövheim (2011), bloggers aim to maintain a friend-like relationship with readers, which is also the factor that attracts companies to blogs (p. 14). The relationship between blogs and readers will be further discussed in the following section as it is meaningful in identifying why blogs' personal and commercial content affects readers.

2.2.1. Relationship between blogs and readers

The unique feature of blogs compared to other media is the relationship that forms between a blog, its blogger and its readers. As Colliander and Dahlén (2011) describe, readers seem to perceive blogs as "fashionable friends" (p. 314). Kretz and de Valck (2010) seem to agree by explaining that "bloggers who tell stories about themselves and their favorite brands are finally perceived as friends for many readers" (p. 326). Although the relationship is beneficial to both the readers and the blogger, based on Chu and Kamal's (2008) study it can be stated that the relationship relies mainly on the credibility and contribution of the blogger.

Colliander and Dahlén's (2011) study evaluates the relationship between blogs and readers based on the level of parasocial interaction (PSI), described as "the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with a media performer" (Horton and Wohl, 1956, as quoted in Colliander and Dahlén, 2011, p. 314) and concludes that it plays a bigger role in blogs than in online magazines. According to Colliander and Dahlén (2011), several factors contribute to the level of PSI on blogs. Firstly, bloggers expose much of their private life to readers which helps readers to get to know the blogger. Secondly, readers can experience engagement with bloggers through commenting. Thirdly, blogs are updated regularly, which makes continuous exposure possible to readers. Colliander and Dahlén conclude that due to this "perceived intimacy, readers may start to consider the blogger a friend" (p. 314).

Huang et al. (2007) identify five motivations for bloggers to write blogs: self-expression, life documenting, commenting, forum participating, and information searching (p. 474). According to Huang et al (2007), several of these motivating factors can apply to blogging motivations simultaneously. Some of these motivating factors are linked to the interactive aspect of blogs and seem to indicate that the engagement that occurs with readers on blogs is important to the blogger. Lövheim's (2011) study supports this assumption by explaining that through different communicative decisions, bloggers aim to build friendships with readers who become "someone who values their opinions and whom they can identify with and trust" (p. 13).

Commenting appears to be the primary area of interaction between readers and blogs (Lövheim, 2011, p. 11). Lövheim (2011) identifies that bloggers use deliberate methods to encourage commenting and interaction from readers. Lövheim (2011) describes a method in which bloggers arrange question sessions in which they first ask readers to post any questions they have, and later the blogger writes one or several posts in which all questions are answered (p. 11). Similarly, Kulmala et al. (2013) found that bloggers ask questions from readers and focus on "giving, sharing, and asking for tips and advice" in order to increase two-way communication (Kulmala et al., 2013, p. 33).

According to Kretz and de Valck (2010) people have various reasons to read blogs, such as "to grab information or recommendations about brand and products, for fun, to better understand the world they live in and also to consume insights, secrets, gossips, and some of the bloggers' privacy" (p. 326). In other words readers seem to seek exactly the same type of content that Lövheim describes modern day blogs with: popularity, professionalism, commerciality and personality (p. 14). It seems therefore that apart from personal content, readers also seek commercial content in blogs.

However, although it seems that commercialism is to some extent expected in blogs, several researchers also note that commercial content puts a strain on the relationship between blogs and readers (Kozinets et al., 2010; Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Lövheim et al., 2011; Kulmala et al., 2013). According to Lövheim (2011), it seems that growing popularity, professionalism and commercialism in blogs "challenge a relation between bloggers and readers built on intimacy and identification between friends" (p. 11). Kozinets et al. (2010) have similar findings and state that the "dual role of the communicator" (p. 83) creates tension since readers see the blogger both as a friend and as someone who seems to push commercial messages.

Colliander and Dahlén (2011) highlight that although blogs have higher publicity effectiveness than some other media, meaning that due to a closer relationship blogs can have a stronger influence on its readers, the relationship depends highly on the credibility of the writer. In other words, if the blogger seems untrustworthy or biased, readers are less likely to be convinced by the message he or she is sending (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011). Chu and Kamal (2008) present the source credibility theory, which presents that credibility is a sum of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (p. 27). Expertise refers to the qualification that a communicator has to discuss a topic (Chu and Kamal, 2008, p. 27). Trustworthiness refers to how receivers perceive the communicator's messages (Chu and Kamal, 2008, p. 27). Attractiveness refers to "the source's perceived social value, such as physical appearance, personality, social status, or similarity to the receiver" (McCroskey and McCain, 1974, as quoted by Chu and Kamal, 2008, p. 27). Chu and Kamal (2008) claim that blogs' credibility mainly depends on expertise and trustworthiness because of a lack of images on blogs that

would contribute to the attractiveness factor. However, based on Kretz and de Valck's (2010) and Kulmala et al.'s (2013) studies, images seem to play an important role in fashion related blogs, making attractiveness a relevant factor in the context of fashion blogs.

As Kozinets et al. (2010) highlight, bloggers are consciously putting their trust relationships with readers at stake when including commercial messages and content in blogs (p. 83). This finding is supported by Lövheim (2011) who claims that bloggers are aware of readers' expectations for authentic, personal content which is why bloggers use specific communicative methods to downplay negative effects of commerciality by expressing "intimacy, trust and spontaneity" in posts (p. 13). So while Herring et al. (2005) earlier expressed concern for how commerciality will affect the nature and personal aspect of blogs (p. 163), Lövheim (2011) has found that young female bloggers consciously increase commercial content in their blogs but also continue to write about personal things in order to maintain the existing relationship with readers (p. 14).

2.2.2. Blog content

Herring et al.'s (2005) study showed that blogs contain mainly text with a scarcity of images and other content. Also Chu and Kamal (2008) claim that "many bloggers do not include visual images on their blogs" (p. 27). These claims can be considered as outdated information, or at least inapplicable to the blog forums of fashion blogs or blogs written by young women as e.g. Kretz and de Valck (2010) highlight that visuals are an important aspect of bloggers' storytelling and self-presentation in blogs.

As Kretz and de Valck (2010) explain, blogs generally include an editorial line which is the element that contains the postings written by the blogger, as well as other elements such as "banners, blocks and advertising links" (p. 318). Depending on the type of blog, apart from textual elements, blogs' editorial lines can also contain visual elements (Kretz and de Valck, 2010). According to Kretz and de Valck (2010) the visual elements, mainly referring to images, can play a meaningful role in the story telling of the blogger and range from artistic images to direct, informative pictures (p. 318-319).

Within the editorial line of a blog, bloggers write posts that generally relate to personal, forum related or commercial content (Herring et al., 2005; Kozinets et al., 2010; Lövheim, 2010). The personal content generally contains references to the everyday and real life of the blogger (Herring et al., 2005) whereas forum content, as explained earlier, relates to a specific topic area such as fashion, sports, politics etc. (Kozinets et al., 2010). Commercial content is related to companies and brands, and it can occur organically without a company's involvement (Kulmala et al., 2013). More increasingly however, companies act as advertisers and pay bloggers in order to gain publicity in blogs (Kulmala et al., 2013).

In relation to how blog posts are written, Huang et al. (2008) identified two types of blogging behavior: content gathering oriented and interaction oriented. Based on their research, the orientation of the blog has a strong effect on the communicative aspects of the blog; content gathering blogs tend to apply one-way communication whereas interaction oriented blogs apply two-way communication (Huang et al., 2008). Popular blogs with high readership seem by default to be more interaction oriented as a blog's position today is determined by its visits and interaction with readers (Lövheim, 2011, p. 13).

With increased commerciality in blogs, it seems that content is not produced to please only readers anymore, but also other stakeholders (Kretz and de Valck, 2010). According to Lövheim (2011), writers of more popular blogs are aware and want to fulfill the expectations of several stakeholder groups, such as readers and advertising companies, which causes them to purposefully target content to meet differing needs. Lövheim (2011) claims that bloggers for example address reader needs through "inviting questions, answering comments and sharing decision with their readers" in order to enhance personal and friend-like engagement (p. 13). As Kretz and de Valck (2010) point out, advertisers' needs are on the other hand met through mentioning brands in a positive light. Advertising can get significant publicity for their brands in blogs which is why blogs are an attractive advertising channel (Kretz and de Valck, 2010).

This section presented blogs as a medium by discussing the purpose and background of blogs as well as presenting previous studies on the relationship between blogs and readers which help to explain why blogs are a unique communication channel. The relationship between blogs and readers are a main focus of the present study and therefore it is necessary to present previous findings in order to build new knowledge on the topic. Also previous literature on the textual, visual and topical content of blogs were presented as they are relevant for identifying reader perceptions on blog content in later parts of the study. The next section will go on with presenting previous studies on company and advertiser involvement in blogs which, due to the blogs' personal aspect, is a complex matter.

2.3. Commerciality in blogs

As Segev and Wang (2014) have identified, blogs provide a significant advertising channel for companies as they usually focus on a specific topic forum and therefore attract readers who have a significant interest towards that topic (p. 17-18). Moreover, as Colliander and Dahlén (2010) have noted, because readers trust bloggers' opinions and recommendations, they are likely to be more influenced by brand-related messages in blogs than other media. Methods and effectiveness of brand publicity and commercial content on personal blogs has been researched from several perspectives (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Kozinets et al., 2010; Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Kulmala et al. 2013). According to Kulmala et al. (2013), a developing aspect of blogs is their commercial side which ranges from the unintentional mentioning of brands to carefully thought-out advertising campaigns, banner advertisements and extensive cooperation with companies. Kretz and de Valck (2010) point out that while companies cannot control how they are portrayed in bloggers' posts, they also should not try to interfere. According to Kretz and de Valck (2010), companies should let bloggers freely write about them in posts because posts written by the blogger are the element in a blog's content in which companies can benefit from the relationship between bloggers and readers. Kretz and de Valck's (2010) recommendation in other words indicates that other elements in blogs such as banners and advertising links lack the blogger's voice and are therefore not as influential for readers.

24

As explained by Kretz and de Valck (2010), commerciality in blogs can occur in the "non-editorial line", such as side banners and advertisements, or within the bloggers posts in which the content is created by the blogger. According to Kozinets et al. (2010), the benefit of bloggers expressing commercial and brand related messages to their reader networks in the "editorial line" and with their own voices is that companies gain access to the relationship that blog readers have with the blog (p. 83). In their study of brand publicity effectiveness in blogs compared to other media, Colliander and Dahlén's (2011) found that due to the fact that blog readers see bloggers as friends and trust their word, brands gain valuable publicity when mentioned in a blog. Therefore Colliander and Dahlén conclude that "as long as bloggers genuinely follow brands, their readers form friendships with the brands as well" (p. 318).

Pihl and Sandström (2013) argue that what makes blogs a unique media for readers is the way that blogs naturally include brand and company related content into stories about the bloggers' daily lives - this makes the commercial content relatable to readers and enables a relationship (p. 319). According to Phil and Sandström (2013), bloggers most commonly do this by mentioning brands in their 'today's outfit' posts, in Q&A session in which bloggers encourage readers to ask questions about their lives, and in competitions (p. 317). As Kulmala et al. (2013) explain, companies are also aware that consumers tend to trust brand related messages that come from consumers more than those that come from companies (p. 20). That is why companies have an urge to boost the brand related communication occurring in blogs and encourage bloggers to write about companies and brands as readers are expected to find such content trustworthy (Kulmala et al., 2013, p.20).

As Kretz and de Valck (2010) explain, companies cannot define how bloggers should write about them and should therefore be aware that, depending on the blogger's style of writing, the way companies and brands are presented can vary. Kretz and de Valck (2010) explain that when being present in the "editorial line" of the blog, the blogger has the power to decide how brands are portrayed, ranging from explicit to implicit textual and visual methods (p. 318). Although blogs' advertising space on side bars and banners offers more control for companies, Kretz and de Valck (2010) highlight that

companies should not expect to succeed through banner advertising but instead find an influential blog whose blogger and audience expectations fit the brand identity (p. 237). As for the control aspect, Kulmala et al. (2013) found that in general bloggers aim to keep the overall tone of their blogs positive and therefore texts referring to companies and brands rarely contain negative aspects (p. 33). Also Kretz and de Valck (2010) have discovered that although bloggers have different styles of expressing themselves, even those bloggers whose style includes giving critique mainly provide milder critique in order to not upset advertisers or companies (p. 322).

What makes blog commerciality debatable and risky is that blog readers and advertisers seem to have differing expectations and needs in terms of blogs. As explained by Kozinets et al. (2010), bloggers who cooperate with brands play a dual role; they act as a brand communicator while also being a member of the online community of consumers (p. 83). Kretz and de Valck (2010) also state that bloggers act between the needs of advertisers and readers, which may differ depending on the original content and style of the blog (p. 321). According to Kozinets et al. (2010), many bloggers seem to find the commercialization aspect of blogs to be benefitial, partly due to the fact that, as Lövheim (2011) explains, bloggers are increasingly able to make a living out of their blogs.

Readers, again, react in ways that indicate an opposite feeling towards commerciality in blogs. Lövheim (2010) notes that readers often raise questions and concern for the commercial aspects of blogs and especially the fact that bloggers gain economic benefit from including commercial content in blogs (p. 10). Kulmala et al. (2013) explain that this is due to the fact that readers get wary of the bloggers' trustworthiness when they write about brands, knowing that bloggers get compensated for the content. Therefore bloggers seem to have a need to justify the commercial content they publish through various communication strategies (Lövheim, 2010).

Kozinets et al. (2010) suggest that bloggers are aware that when they intentionally write about a company and a certain campaign, it changes "interpersonal communications into an intended persuasion effort" between blogs and readers (p. 83). Bloggers therefore use

various strategies to justify or defend the inclusion of commercial messages in blogs. According to Kozinets et al. (2010), some bloggers want to spread their luck by ensuring that readers gain benefit as well, while others "write as if they were entitled to receive this honor" because of the work that the blogger puts into the blog (p. 83). Lövheim (2011) found that bloggers make an effort to communicate that they recognize readers' concerns about growing commerciality in blogs. Lövheim (2011) further pointed out that some bloggers are concerned about how commercial content affects readers and go as far as to include readers in the decision making regarding commercial content in blogs (p. 11).However, Lövheim (2010) has also found that some bloggers attempt to communicate in their blogs that they deserve the economic benefits that come with increased popularity and readership (p. 10).

According to Kozinets et al. (2010), the blog forum can also affect how readers react to and digest commercial content. Kozinets et al. (2010) give an example of blogs related to illnesses, in which commercial messages would most likely not be perceived positively, and compare them to blogs that focus on less serious or personal issues, such as lifestyle and entertainment, in which commerciality can be better understood by readers (p. 85). Also Kulmala et al. (2013) agree and go further to explain that in order to produce credible brand messages, the specific brands and companies should not only suit the overall topic of a blog, but also fit "the blogger's personal style and the general atmosphere of the blog" (p. 35). Colliander and Dahlén (2011) explain that when being exposed to companies and brands on blogs, readers will evaluate related messages based on any perceptions they have of the writer (p. 315).

In relation to how well advertisers fit the forum of a blog, Segev and Wang (2014) have studied the congruency of ads in relation to how likely it is that readers are affected by messages. Segev and Wang (2014) found that when a blog is focused on a specific single topic, readers are more easily persuaded by advertising which relates to that single topic. On the other hand, if a blog is related to multiple forums it is also more difficult to attract readers to an advertisement as their interests can be more fragmented due to the variety of topics that are discussed in the blog (Segev and Wang, 2014). Segev and Wang's (2014) study however focuses on banner advertising in blogs, which

according to Kretz and de Valck (2010) is not as influential on readers compared to advertising content which occurs in the bloggers' self-written posts.

Colliander and Dahlén (2011) have found that in the case of brand messages on blogs, perceived credibility of the blogger plays a significant role in the way readers perceive messages and consequently feel about brands. An earlier study by Chu and Kamal's (2008) on the other hand found that although credibility plays a role in how readers perceive messages, a more decisive factor is the argument quality of the message. Chu and Kamal (2008) discovered that when readers perceive a blogger as untrustworthy, the quality of the argument will not play such an important role as the readers are likely to already reject the message based on their initial perceptions of the blogger. In cases in which the blogger is seen as credible and trustworthy, messages will on the other hand be evaluated based on whether the arguments are weak or strong (Chu and Kamal, 2008). As Chu and Kamal (2008) conclude, what this means for companies is that "sponsorship by bloggers with high perceived trustworthiness and strong arguments combine to generate the most positive attitudes towards the brand" (p. 33).

Researchers have identified several ways for companies to cooperate with blogs and gain visibility. Lövheim (2011) identifies ways in which brands have been promoted in blogs: advertising space, product reviewing and selling, competitions, and events or meetings. Kulmala et al. (2013), whose study focuses on fashion blogs, give the following examples of company cooperation with blogs that occurs within the editorial line of the blog: "organizing competitions with bloggers, feeding bloggers with products or gift vouchers, or establishing a continuous relationship with a blogger through co-operation agreement" (p. 34).

As Kozinets et al. (2010) explain, the friend-like relationship between blogs and its readers is what makes blogs such a distinctive medium in terms of how much influence it has on readers. Kulmala et al. (2013) and Kozinets et al. (2010) both classify commercial content in blogs as a form of the word-of-mouth -phenomenon (WOM). The following section will explain how WOM occurs in blogs and how it benefits the commercial messages of companies and brands.

2.3.1. Word-of-mouth communication in blogs

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined by Colliander and Dahlén (2011) as "consumer to consumer brand communication" (p. 314). As Kulmala et al. (2013) explain, the benefit of WOM for companies is that consumers trust the opinions and messages from other consumers more than those which come directly from companies (p. 20). Although according to Kozinets et al. (2010) WOM as such has been a concept for many decades, the rise of new online communication channels have allowed for WOM to develop to a new level (p. 71). Today consumers engage in eWOM, meaning that they interact with one another and communicate about brands in an online environment (Kulmala et al., 2013, p. 20).

Kulmala et al. (2013) explain that consumers "deem the posting of other consumers more trustworthy than those of the marketing proffesionals" (p. 20) which is why companies are eager to enhance the eWOM communication that occurs in blogs. As Kozinets et al. (2010) present in Figure 2, WOM used to be simple and direct consumer to consumer communication about companies and brands, which then evolved into companies trying to indirectly convince opinion leaders in order to increase WOM among consumers. The online environment has helped WOM to develop even further into a model which can be described as a coproduction of consumer networks (Kozinets et al, 2010, p. 72). In the model, the eWOM message is first influenced "deliberately and directly" by a company, after which a consumer, in this context the blogger, transmits the message to its network and network members then form opinions on the message through exchanges of meaning between network participants (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 72-73). In other words, not only does the blogger influence its readers, but the exchange of meaning among network participants also influences opinions.

Figure 2. The Evolution of WOM Theory (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 72)
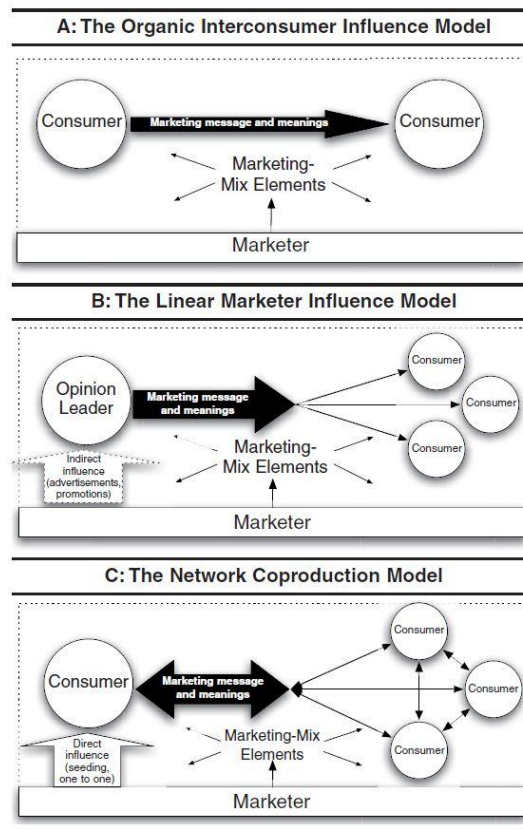
Kozinets et al. (2010) identify several factors that influence how an eWOM message about a company or brand is received by blog readers. The blogger's characteristics and writing style, the topic forum of the blog as well as the "promotional characteristics of the WOM campaign" all influence how the WOM message is perceived (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 74). The goal of successful WOM according to Kozinets et al. (2010) is that the sender transforms the brand message "from a commercial promotion to communally valuable information" (p. 74).

Kulmala et al.'s (2013) research focuses on the nature of eWOM on blogs from two perspectives: organic eWOM which occurs between the blogger and readers, and amplified eWOM which has clearly been influenced by a company. In organic eWOM, the blogger transmits brand related content to readers due to personal interest and without any external motivation (Kulmala et al., 2013). Amplified eWOM on the other hand means that the brand related message that a blogger sends out has in one way or

another been encouraged by the brand or company in question (Kulmala et al., 2013). Generally this means that the company has paid the blogger or provided some other form of economic benefit to the blogger in order to gain visibility in a blog post (Lövheim, 2011). From the reader perspective, identifying between organic and amplified eWOM can be difficult as they are often communicated purposefully in a similar way (Kulmala et al.,2013).

While it seems obvious that bloggers engage in amplified eWOM because they receive economic benefit from it, the reason why bloggers include organic eWOM in their posts is for more personal reasons. Kretz and de Valck (2010) identify that bloggers often include brands in their blogs for the purpose of building a certain image of themselves. In their study that focuses on fashion blogs, Kretz and de Valck (2010) define various blog types which selectively include brands and communicate about them in a certain way. According to Kretz and de Valck (2010), bloggers use brands for example to build an image of expertise by assessing various brands' performance (p. 319), to present objects of desire (p. 320), and to construct a desired identity (p. 320). However, bloggers may engage in amplified eWOM also to enhance their image which makes it generally difficult for readers to identify between organic and amplified eWOM (Kulmala et al., 2013).

Kulmala et al.'s (2013) study focuses on fashion blogs. Their results state that organic eWOM usually occurs in postings that relate to personal style, brands, designers and retailers, tips and advice, and purchases (Kulmala et al., 2013, p. 25). Amplified eWOM on the other hand seems to occur in postings that relate to products received, brands, designers, and retailers, tips, and competitions (Kulmala et al., 2013, p. 29). As Kulmala et al. (2013) point out, organic and amplified eWOM messages do not differ from each other significantly, and in fact bloggers tend to consciously communicate amplified eWOM messages in a similar way as organic eWOM messages in order to purposefully avoid advertising for standing out radically from other blog content (p. 32). Therefore, as both Kozinets et al. (2010) as well as Kulmala et al. (2013) argue, amplified brand messages need to be in line with the overall tone and character of the blogger and blog

in order for the commercial content not to stand out or cause negative reactions in readers (p. 32).

Kulmala et al. (2013) explain that critique towards amplified eWOM often occurs in the commenting of readers: while bloggers tend to highlight positive eWOM in their posts, negative eWOM is more likely produced by readers who criticize bloggers through commenting when they feel that eWOM is too amplified or obvious (p.33). Kretz and de Valck (2010) also seem to agree and point out that the aspect of credible communication is highlighted in commercial content, and bloggers should therefore only write about brands and companies that are not only in line with the blog's and blogger's own style, but also with the expectations of the audience (p. 326). According to Kulmala et al. (2013), companies should also not push their own messages and content to bloggers but instead aim at respecting the open relationship between the blogger and audience" (p. 35).

As presented above, eWOM on blogs can occur due to organic or amplified eWOM (Kulmala et al., 2013). Kozinets et al. (2010) focus on seeded eWOM campaigns in which bloggers specifically write about a company's campaign created for blogs - similar to what Kulmala et al. (2013) have called amplified eWOM. As Figure 3 demonstrates, Kozinets et al.'s (2010) findings introduce four communication strategies that bloggers use to communicate eWOM messages about brands: evaluation strategy, embracing strategy, endorsement strategy, and explanation strategy. The strategies were identified based on their interpersonal orientation of communication and its commercial-cultural tension (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Figure 3. Bloggers' communication strategies for WOM campaigns

(Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 84)
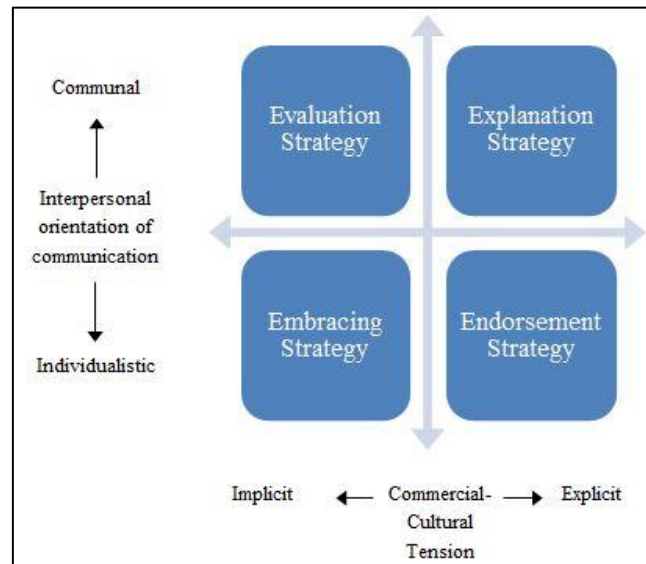
The evaluation strategy aims to address the commercial-cultural tension implicitly while taking a communal orientation in communication (Kozinets et al., 2010). In other words, the blogger tries to avoid negative reactions from readers by trying to take focus away from the actual WOM campaign and acknowledging readers' concerns by highlighting the blogger's trustworthiness in any communication (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 84). According to Kozinets, this strategy can have unwanted consequences as readers question the blogger's motives and object to the fact that the blogger will personally benefit from trying to persuade the community (Kozinets et al. 2010, p. 84).

The embracing strategy addresses the commercial-cultural tension implicitly and uses an individualistic orientation in communication (Kozinets et al., 2010). In this strategy, the blogger focuses on personal interest more than trying to act as a part of the community and in that sense tries to avoid the commercial-cultural tension by not addressing readers' concerns (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 84-85). According to Kozinets et al. (2010), this orientation can have both positive reactions from readers who appreciate the blogger's honesty, but also negative when the WOM message does not fit into previous the narrative of the blogger (p. 85).

The explanation strategy takes a communal orientation and explicitly communicates about the WOM campaign on the blog (Kozinets et al., 2010). In this strategy, the blogger openly addresses the contradiction between the communities' and companies' interests and highlight that the blogger is a part of the community (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 85). According to Kozinets et al. (2010), when a blogger does this successfully, it will result in the community having a positive feeling about the WOM campaign and perhaps even increasing their level of trust in the blogger (p. 85).

The endorsement strategy uses individualistic and explicit communication when writing about brands and companies (Kozinets et al., 2010). The blogger openly reveals the WOM campaign and explains his or her own affiliation to it while also highlighting that there may be a conflict of interest between the advertising company and the overall community (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 85). Kozinets et al. (2010) explain that the success of this strategy depends on the emotional bond between the blogger and the community; if it is disrupted, readers will act negatively towards the campaign (p. 85).

According to Kozinets et al. (2010), endorsing and embracing strategies are likely to be accepted by readers in blog communities that relate to commercialism and brands (p. 85). On the other hand, blog communities which are more "secretive, personable, local, and 'caring and sharing'", react more negatively towards commercialism and therefore are likely to prefer explicit communication strategies (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 85). Finally, the blog forum plays a role in a suitable WOM strategy as well. Kozinets et al. (2010) claim that lifestyle and entertainment blogs are less personal due to which the embracing strategy best suits their blog audiences' expectations. However, as Lövheim (2011) explained, popular lifestyle blogs contain content of personal, professional, popular, and commercial aspects (p. 14) which indicates that reactions of the blog community to the various WOM communication strategies may vary depending very much on the situation and blog in question. To conclude, Kozinets et al. (2010) highlight three points for a WOM campaign to be successful in a blog: 1) it is consistent with a blog's forum and previous style, 2) it reacts to communal tension or explains an individualistic approach, and 3) it adapts to the common standards of the community (p. 86).

Commerciality in blogs was the final part of the literature review and it presented previous studies on the nature of blog commerciality as well as its effects on a blog's credibility and readers' perceptions. As the literature shows, commerciality in blogs has been studied from various perspectives which provide a good basis for the present study to focus on the blog readers' point of view. This section also presented the concept of eWOM and how it appears in blogs, which provides a relevant point of comparison for identifying how readers of Bonnier Publications' blogs prefer to be exposed to commercial content in blogs. The literature review has covered media convergence, blogs as a medium and blog commerciality, which will be tied together to form a theoretical framework in the following section.

2.4. Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical framework of the present study which is based on literature covered in sections 2.1. to 2.3. The framework illustrated in Figure 4 defines the relationship between a blog and readers as well as how it affects reader perceptions within the media business model.

Figure 4. Theoretical Framework
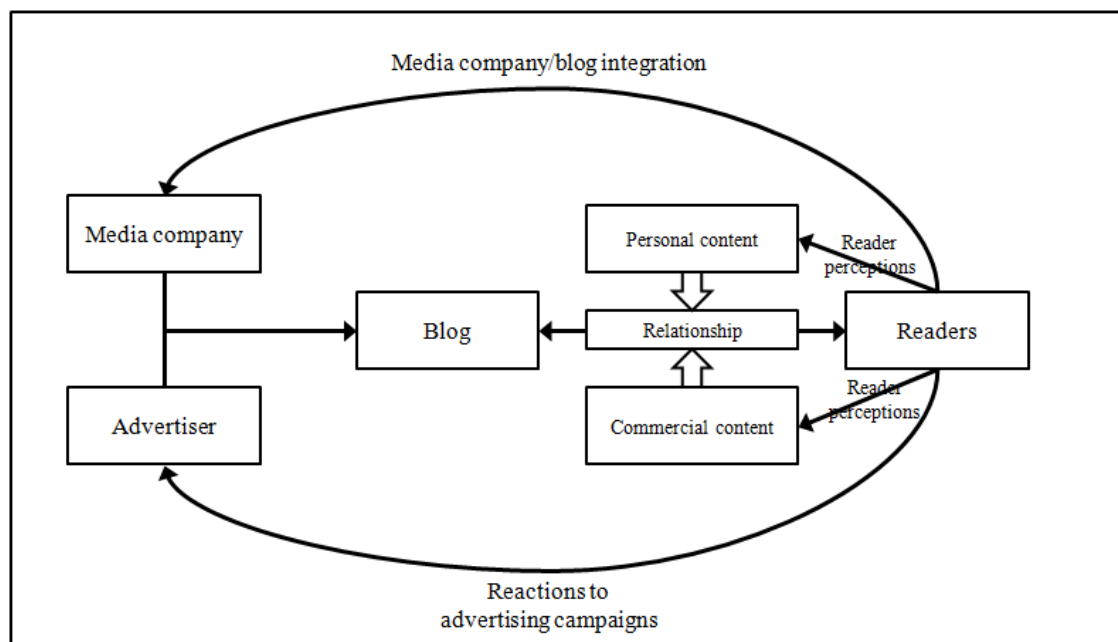
The framework is adapted from McPhillips and Merlo's (2008) traditional media business model by adding blogs in between the interaction of the media company and advertisers to readers. The idea of the framework is to portray how blogs have been integrated into media companies to act as an intermediary between the media company and advertisers as well as readers. Both the media company and advertisers wish to communicate their own message via the blog to the readers, which is shown by a merging arrow from the 'Media company' and 'Advertiser' to the 'Blog'.

Communication between a blog and readers is guided by the relationship that forms between the two parties (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Lövheim, 2011). In the framework, it is portrayed by the 'Relationship' –element between the blog and readers. As Colliander and Dahlén (2011) explain, readers build an emotional tie to the blog due to which the blog can have a strong influence on its readers. However, both Colliader and Dahlén (2011) and Chu and Kamal (2008) also highlight the fragile nature of the relationship which is strongly built on how credible and trustworthy readers perceive the blog to be.

The overall content in a blog affects how readers perceive the relationship they have with a blog. In this framework, content is divided into two categories: personal content and commercial content. Personal content refers to what Herring et al. (2005) as well as Lövheim (2011) describe as relating to the personal life and experiences of the blogger. Personal content also contains different elements such as text or visuals, which Kretz and de Valck (2010) explain are an important part in building a blog's image. Pihl and Sandström (2013) explain that blogs are a unique media due to the way they combine both personal and commercial content, which means that readers' personal feelings towards a blog partly affect how they are influenced by commercial content.

Commercial content refers to what Kulmala et al. (2013) describe as organic and amplified eWOM; it either occurs organically through a blogger personally and without external incentives writing about a company, or content which is amplified as it includes a company paying for or rewarding a blogger who writes about them. Also relevant for commercial content are Kozinets et al.'s (2010) eWOM communication

strategies which relate to how readers can distinguish between organic and amplified eWOM. Further strategies are also various collaboration methods that both Lövheim (2011) and Kulmala et al. (2013) distinguish for advertisers and blogs.

The personal and commercial content does not only affect the relationship between a blog and readers, but within the media business model it also relates to the perceptions that readers have of the media company and advertisers. These perceptions are portrayed by the arrows leading from the 'Readers' to the 'Media company' and 'Advertiser'.

The theoretical framework depicted in Figure 4 summarizes the most relevant elements for the present study that emerge from earlier literature. The framework forms an analytical lens through which the empirical data will be examined.

3. Methodology

This section will introduce the methods of the research by explaining how, where and when as well as what type of data will be collected. Data analysis methods are also briefly introduced.

3.1. Data collection and methods

The empirical part of the study was conducted as a qualitative study on blog readers. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) explain, quantitative research is especially appropriate for research on the extensiveness or force of a phenomenon that requires standardized measures (p. 27). Qualitative research on the other hand seems to be especially appropriate when the objective is to build an understanding for social behavior or other issues (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 28). A qualitative method for this research is most appropriate because the goal is to develop an understanding for blog reader's perceptions on blog content and blog commerciality. Bryman and Bell (2007) note that for qualitative research, it is important to provide a description of the process, which is why this section will aim to explain in detail the steps through which the study has been conducted.

Out of several qualitative data gathering methods, semi-structured interviews were selected as a suitable way of researching blog readers' perceptions. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) point out that interviews are beneficial for researching deeper meanings and highlighting people's subjective role in the research (p. 35). The purpose of interviews is to bring out "the interviewees thoughts, perceptions, experiences and feelings" (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 41). Based on this, interviews are an appropriate medium for giving the subject of research, blog readers, space to bring forth their thoughts and opinions in the present research. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) also highlight that interviews are beneficial when the answers of interviewees can go many ways and provide unexpected content, which is another reason interviews are appropriate for this research.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) introduce semi-structured interviews that focus on a specified theme as thematic interviews [in Finnish: teemahaastattelu]. The benefit of

these interviews is that while they are semi-structured, the focus of the interview is on specified themes which are the same for all interviewees (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 48). Like semi-structured interviews, thematic interviews follow a question scheme, but the way in which questions are posed does not need to be specified – it all depends on the development of the interview and gives room for the interpretations, meaning and interaction in the interview (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011). As this research has a clear theme and several contributing parts that are being examined, thematic interviews seem like a fitting method for discovering the interviewees' perceptions of the overall theme of blogs.

Initially focus group interviews were considered as the type of thematic interview that would extensively provide the type of information this research is seeking. The benefit of focus group interviews is that interviewees usually discuss freely amongst each other and bring out multifaceted observations (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 61). Single interviews were a second alternative, and as it was not possible to get selected interviewees to attend an interview session at the same time, single interviews were finally selected as the type of interviews that would be conducted in this research. Single interviews provide several benefits compared to group interviews; interviewees are not affected by group dynamics and there is no problem with certain interviewees dominating the discussion in groups (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 63). Also, as the interviews of this research were conducted during vacation time in June and July 2013, it was much easier to practically arrange single interviews as they were not affected by interviewees' overlapping timetables.

As the method selection has now been explained, the following section will explain the data collection: how interviewees were selected, where interviews were held and how the interviews were structured.

3.1.1. Single interviews with blog readers

In thematic interviews, an obvious criterion for selecting interviewees is that the interviewees have experienced the same situation (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 47). In the context of this interview, the experience and common knowledge that interviewees

share is their interest in blogs, especially Bonnier Publications' blogs. To ensure that the interviewees shared this common ground, as the first step interviewees were invited through Bonnier Publications blogs. In June, a side banner announcement with an invitation to join a discussion on blog content and advertising was placed on five of Bonnier's blogs: Olivia magazine's Strictly Style, Nelliinan vaatehuone, and Paras aika vuodesta, and Costume magazine's Mariannan and Fashionweek 2.0. Additionally the blog Strictly Style wrote a post about the invitation which resulted in slightly more activity than the announcements. Out of nine email contacts, finally six reader interviews were conducted. To gain a wider perspective, an additional ten interviewees were then invited through the researcher's own networks. This other group of interviewees consisted of the researcher's acquaintances who were known to read blogs actively and also having knowledge on one or many of Bonnier Publication's blogs.

Consequently two interview groups were formed: Group 1 who joined the research through Bonnier Publications, and Group 2 who joined the research through the researcher. Table 1 gives an overview of the interviews and interviewees. To ensure anonymity, interviewees were given a code from I-1 to I-16 depending on the order they were interviewed in. All interviews were conducted during June and July 2013 in Helsinki and lasted between 31 to 59 minutes. The interviewees were mostly between ages 20 and 27, except for two who were somewhat older at ages 31 and 44. As the table shows, all interviewees read either Costume's or Olivia's blogs, or both. Reading activeness among the interviewees was also high as all but one read blogs daily. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011), recording interviews is essential, and therefore all interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees.

Table 1. Thematic interviews

Group 1	Time	Place	Duration	Age	Costume	Olivia	Reading
I-13	12.7.2013	Kamppi	56:06:00	24	x	x	daily
I-10	1.7.2013	Kamppi	40:31:00	23	x	x	daily
I-7	27.6.2013	Aalto BIZ	59:31:00	26	x	x	daily
I-1	19.6.2013	Aalto BIZ	43:05:00	31		x	daily
I-6	27.6.2013	Kaivopiha	36:02:00	20	x	x	daily
I-2	19.6.2013	Sörnäinen	31:19:00	44		x	daily
Group 2	Time	Place	Duration	Age	Costume	Olivia	Reading
I-5	26.6.2013	Aalto BIZ	37:03:00	22	x	x	daily
I-16	16.7.2013	Töölö	31:11:00	23	x		daily
I-11	9.7.2013	Home	40:42:00	24		x	weekly
I-12	10.7.2013	Aalto BIZ	46:18:00	22	x	x	daily
I-9	1.7.2013	Kluuvi	43:42:00	25	x	x	daily
I-3	25.6.2013	Aalto BIZ	33:47:00	27		x	daily
I-14	16.7.2013	Aalto BIZ	44:09:00	26	x	x	daily
I-15	16.7.2013	Aalto BIZ	46:22:00	23	x	x	daily
I-4	25.6.2013	Aalto BIZ	29:50:00	22	x	x	daily
I-8	30.6.2013	Home	49:34:00	21	x	x	daily

Initially, the two groups were intended to serve as a comparison of two types of reader groups, very active readers as well as moderately active readers. However there were no obvious differences between the two groups in how active or passionate the interviewees actually were about blogs so the two groups were analyzed as one single entity

3.1.2. Interview structure and question scheme

As stated above, Hirsjärvi and Hurme's (2011) thematic interviews were selected as the data collection method for this research. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) explain, in thematic interviews, subthemes are selected to contribute to the main theme of the interview. When a question scheme is designed, these subthemes are presented as topics, not in a form of questions (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011, p. 66). The idea is for the question scheme to act as a checklist for the interviewer while the question formulation and sequence of the interview depend entirely on the course of the interview itself (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011).

The question scheme for the interviews was based on Hirsjärvi and Hurme's (2011) example of a thematic interview question scheme (p. 67). The overall theme of the interviews was blog readers' perceptions of blogs and three subthemes were selected based on previous literature to ensure that the theme was approached thoroughly. The subthemes of the interviews were chosen based on the objectives of the present research and themes raised from previous literature. The first theme was the overall relationship that readers have with blogs because it was expected to affect how the interviewees also perceive blog content and advertising. The other two themes were, consequently, blog content and blog advertising.

The final question scheme for the interviews was the following:

1. Background information
- Age
- Gender
- Activeness (blog reading activeness)
- Olivia and / or Costume blogs

2. Blog relationship (Blogs in general)
- Reading blogs (why do you read blogs)
- Types of blogs (what types of blogs, bloggers)
- Social media (overall following (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest))
- Interaction (commenting)

3. Blog content
- Topical content (topical content of posts)
- Elements (variety of content (pictures, text, videos, other interactive content))
- Structure (blog layout and visual aspects)
(- Bonnier compared to others)

4. Blog commerciality

- Campaign experiences (positive campaigns & negative experiences)

- Persuasiveness (blogger's effect on commercial message)

- Blogs & magazines (blogs compared to magazines)

- Company/brand publicity (company perspective)

(- Bonnier compared to others)

As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) explain, thematic interviews do not have to follow a specific order and that was the case in the present interviews as well. Questions were posed randomly depending on whether the interviewees naturally answered certain themes or naturally guided the interview. In order to help interviewees to provide concrete opinions about themes 3 and 4, readers were shown Bonnier Publication's blog Strictly Style on an iPad (see Appendix 1). This allowed the interviewees to identify and show what they meant regarding visual or structural aspects in blogs. The overall layout and main advertising campaigns remained the same on Strictly Style throughout the different interviews; however the readers saw different posts as new ones were published frequently. In some cases the interviewees wanted to show their own examples of blogs on the iPad. When comparing Bonnier Publication's blog to other blogs, independently published blogs were shown to the interviewees. This comparison was necessary to identify reactions to various visual aspects, and to compare if readers found any differences in independently managed blogs compared to a blog that was part of a magazine, blog portal or other company. Also the relationship between blogs and magazines was examined in the interviews.

3.1.3. Data analysis

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) state that data analysis methods should be considered before beginning data collection (p. 135). In this study, the data collection was planned in a way that supports analysis – by conducting thematic interviews initial analysis categories were also formulated.

All 16 blog reader interviews conducted for this research were audio taped and transcribed on the same day or within a few days of the interview. The transcribed

interviews were between 8 and 12 pages each, adding up to 160 pages altogether. Eskola and Suoranta (1996, quoted by Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2011) describe three ways of approaching the analysis phase: 1) transcribe the data and move then to analyzing, 2) transcribe the data, then code it and then proceed to analyzing, or 3) simultaneously transcribe and code the data, then start analyzing (p. 136). In this research, each interview was first transcribed before it was coded according to the main themes of the question scheme. Once all data was transcribed, further analysis was conducted.

The interviews were transcribed by transcribing all spoken words, which allowed for a thorough set of data although the actual transcribing took more time than was expected. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2011) also highlight that transcribing is extremely time consuming and considering methods in which the researcher does not need to transcribe the whole interview in detail. However, the researcher wanted to ensure no details were lost in the transcribing stage so interviews were transcribed completely. As the language of interviewing was Finnish, the transcripts were also written and analyzed in Finnish. All interpretations made from the interviews are by the researcher, who is also responsible for translating the interview quotes presented in the following section into English.

After transcribing the first interview, it was first coded by marking which main theme specific sections of the data related to (blogs in general, blog content, and blog commerciality). As new interviews were conducted and transcribed, they were coded in the similar way. Then, once all interviews were coded on the basis of the three themes from the question scheme, eight more specified themes were created based on the question scheme and the researcher's interview notes. These categories served as a basis for further analyzing the different aspects that affect blog readers' perceptions on blogs, their content and advertising. Each of the interviews was analyzed using the same, final categories, which were given the following names and descriptions as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Categorization themes of data

#	Category	Description
1	Purpose	Why do readers read blogs?
2	Content	What type of content do readers seek?
3	Visuality	How do visual elements affect readers?
4	Relationship	How do readers perceive their relationship with bloggers?
5	Perception	How do readers perceive commerciality in blogs overall?
6	Communication	How should commercial content be communicated?
7	Magazine	How do readers compare blogs and magazines?
8	Company	How do blog readers perceive on blogs?

3.2. Trustworthiness of the study

This section will discuss the trustworthiness of the present research by examining the study from various perspectives. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain that the evaluation of the trustworthiness of a qualitative research takes place continuously throughout the research process

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), the classic evaluation criteria for social sciences and business research are the following: reliability, validity and generalizability (p. 291). However, as Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain, in qualitative research there are not as clear common evaluation criteria available as in quantitative research because the evaluation focuses more the quality than quantity of data as well as on the logic of decisions (p. 291). Also Bryman and Bell (2007) note that there is an alternative way of evaluating qualitative research that does not focus on reliability and validity; qualitative research can be evaluated by assessing trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincold and Guba 1985, as quoted in Bryman and Bell, 2007). As Bryman and Bell (2007) note, "authenticity criteria are thought provoking but have not been influential" which is why the present research will be evaluated on the following 'alternative but common criteria for qualitative research'

developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as quoted in Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 294): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

As Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain, **credibility** of the research addresses issues such as how familiar the researcher is with the topic, how well data supports claims, whether there is a clear link between observations and categories, and whether another researcher could come to similar interpretations (p. 294). The topic itself is familiar to the researcher as she has a common understanding of the media of blogs in Finland and internationally. However, the process of the present research has been thoroughly recorded in order to ensure that claims are made based on the collected data instead of assumptions or opinions of the researcher. The steps and collected data in the research are logically presented and hence the process can be traced by another researcher.

Transferability of the research refers to how similar the present research is with previous research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 294). Previous research is thoroughly discussed in section 2.Literature Review, in which previous studies and theories on media convergence, blogs as a media, and commerciality on blogs are discussed. To demonstrate how the present research relates to previous studies, a research framework is presented and applied in the section Discussion, where findings of the present study are compared to the theories and results of previous research. Furthermore, Geertz (1973, as quoted in Bryman and Bell, 2007) introduces a concept of 'thick description' that refers to thorough accounts in the findings. The data of the present research was firstly transcribed in detail and is secondly thoroughly explained from different angles in the Findings section to ensure that valid findings are presented.

Closely related to credibility is **dependability**, which according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) relates to the researcher's "responsibility for offering information to the reader, that the process of research has been logical, traceable and documented". Also Bryman and Bell (2007) highlight that the process of research is to be recorded in an "accessible manner" for peers to be able to evaluate it (p. 414). The process of conducting the research is explained throughout the report to identify what the researcher did in various steps to demonstrate that the research has been conducted

logically. The section Methodology explains steps that were made in the process of collecting and analyzing data. The interview transcript and categorization of data which were applied similarly in each of the 16 interviews are presented and explained in the Methodology section of the study. All audios of interviews have been saved and thorough interview transcripts are documented, so all the data of the present research is available for reviewing.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain that the final criteria, **conformability**, relates to "linking findings and interpretations to the data in ways that can be easily understood by others" (p. 294). Bryman and Bell (2007) explain that conformability relates to the fact that "the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith" (p. 414). When presenting findings, quotes and references to the interviews are presented to demonstrate that they stem from the interviewees. Some findings, which stem from the researcher's deeper observations and interpretations of interviewees' comments are not as easily traceable, however in these cases findings are presented in a way that explains what the researcher bases her interpretations on. As the researcher is relatively familiar with the topic of this study and has personal interest in blogs, the conformability of the study has been at focus throughout the process. During interviews, the researcher has been careful not to provide her own opinions in discussion but to encourage interviewees in further explaining their perceptions. Also in the analysis of data, the researcher has been careful to make the conclusions based on collected data and previous research, and not on personal opinions or feelings.

4. Findings

This section will present the findings by dividing them into three sections according to the sub questions: readers' relationship with blogs, readers' preferences in blog content, and readers' perceptions of blog commerciality. Each of the sections will support the main research question of the present study:

> *How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications blogs?*

The following sections will first go through the three sections, after which the final section will aim to provide a concluding answer to the main research question. All of the 16 interviewees are observed in the presentation of the findings and the researcher has aimed to provide relevant quotes from as many of the interviews as possible.

While the present study's focus is on Bonnier Publications' blogs, it is relevant to mention that the interviews not only related to Bonnier Publications' blogs but also the blog phenomenon on a more general level. Blog readers seem to consume several blogs from different platforms, and during interviews blog content and blog commerciality were therefore frequently discussed on a general level as well as by comparing Bonnier Publications' blogs to blogs on different platforms. General discussions about the blog phenomenon allowed for more insight into how Bonnier Publications' blogs are perceived in contrast to blogs in general.

It should also be noted that while the same questions were discussed in each interview, it was clear that some interviewees had much stronger opinions about certain topics and that the researcher was not able to activate all interviewees to engage in deep discussions regarding the topics. This is also apparent in the relevant quotes provided in findings, as certain interviewees are quoted more often than others, due to the relevant comments they made.

Overall, especially the commercial aspect caused divided opinions among the interviewees whereas the preferences readers had in content were more similar. Also the perceived relationship of readers and blogs differed among interviewees; a few

interviewees strongly expressed that they did not feel at all influenced by blogs. The majority felt strongly the opposite and expressed trust and admiration towards the bloggers, even describing them as friends at times.

4.1. Readers' relationship with blogs

The first sub question of the present research was: *What kind of relationship do Bonnier Publications' blog readers feel they have with blogs?* The question was approached by studying how readers perceive blogs in general, what is important to them in blogs, and how they feel about bloggers, especially focusing on Bonnier Publication's blogs.

In regard to the purpose of reading blogs, the interviewees were asked to discuss what makes them read blogs and what is the hook that makes them return to certain blogs. The answers followed a clear pattern – many of them saw blogs as a channel for free, easily accessible inspiration for specific parts of life. Most frequently readers expressed that blogs are a source of inspiration for clothing, cosmetics, interior design, photography and other parts of daily life that so called lifestyle blogs regularly relate to. What seemed to be most important is that the interviewees' personal interests meet with the blog content so that they can take away something that affects the interviewees' own lives. The interviewees also emphasized that compared to other media, blogs are easily accessible on various devices, their content is free, and the content is light to read so it is suitable for an easy form of entertainment.

A significant part of the readers also expressed that a key reason for reading blogs is the interest in bloggers' personal lives, indicating that readers not only are interested in the blog itself but want to learn about the person behind it, as the following quotes portray:

> *"The topic of the blog is in fact not the most important part of the blog, but it is what the bloggers reveal about their own lives". (I-1, 19.6.2013)*

> *"And then I am also a curious person, so I am interested in what is happening in those girls' lives. So that is what I like a lot, if it is a blogger who writes about something like her studies or relationships." (I-10, 1.7.2013)*

Only one of the interviewees, Interviewee 11, stated that she does not have any interest in the bloggers' personal lives, emphasizing that to her, wanting to read about someone's personal life equals being a fan. While only three of the interviewees said they read blogs purely for entertainment, the other readers explained that an important aspect in blogs is that readers can identify themselves with bloggers for example in terms of age, style of life situation. Based on the interviews, it actually seems that readers tend to use blogs as a form of comparison of their own lives to the bloggers' lives, as Interviewee 15 explains:

> *"Well on some level I am interested in these people's lives, because they are in the same life situation as I am so in a way I look at what they do daily and what they think about things and through that I get inspiration for my own life." (I-15, 16.7.2013)*

The purpose of Bonnier Publications' blog readers to read blogs therefore seems to relate to both the actual content and forum of the blogs as well as the personal aspects of the blogger. It seems that blog readers seek experiences which fulfill inspirational, entertainment and personal factors simultaneously, whereas readers may turn to other media to find content that specifically focuses on only one of these areas.

In all interviews, interviewees brought up the perceived relationship between a reader and a blogger. Three of the interviewees reported that they do not relate to bloggers or feel a deeper personal relationship, whereas others fully acknowledged that they saw bloggers as a unique type of friend relationship. For example Interviewee 10 described her relationship to bloggers in the following way:

> *" They do not have to tell everything, but in a way we are friends, I follow how their lives are going. It is a very interesting relationship that develops - I have never met this person but I know an awful lot about her. It is like one kind of a friend who tells me how she is doing." (I-10, 1.7.2013)*

Based on the interviews, readers seem to feel that they personally know the blogger due to the matters that bloggers publish and reveal about their personal lives. By appearing in the blog's pictures, combining personal experiences with other content and by writing

about familiar things, bloggers build a certain image of themselves that evokes feelings of trust and credibility. Several interviewees especially described the importance of seeing who the blogger is – identifying the bloggers face significantly seemed to increase the credibility readers feel towards a blogger. Several of the interviewees directly described bloggers as friends, whose stories, tips and recommendations are valuable and trustworthy. Interviewee 3 described her trust in selected bloggers in the following way:

> *"I trust their certain judgment in a way. A person I have never met. But everything from what they have brought and what type of people they are what they do and everything... So I somehow think they have similar values and everything as I do." (I-3, 25.6.2013)*

Although the interviewees showed deep interest in the personal lives of bloggers, they also showed concern for bloggers' privacy. The interviewees discussed bloggers' privacy in relation to comments, expressing their concern for the amount of inappropriate, rude or classified messages that are written in blog comment areas. Furthermore, the interviewees showed concern for bloggers' privacy by discussing the amount of information that bloggers reveal about themselves, their lives and personal relationships. For example Interviewee 10 discussed her concern for how much a blogger reveals about her personal life:

> *"I find it strange how much she reveals about relationships. She has just started a new relationship so I think it is very strange how much she tells about it, and that she tells about her break-up and I just do not understand how she has the courage to write so many things publicly on the internet".* *(I-10, 1.7.2013)*

Bonnier Publication's blog readers overall seem very supportive of bloggers not revealing everything about their personal lives and in fact prefer not to know all details. Interviewees up to some point seem to even admire how bloggers are able to convey their personality and life to readers and be so relatable, despite the fact that they do not discuss or show anything too private or personal.

How well readers relate to bloggers seems to play a significant role in determining which blogs readers choose to read in the long run. One finding was that the interviewees commonly related to Finnish bloggers much better than to foreign bloggers. According to the readers, various factors made foreign blogs feel more distant, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> *"And part of it is probably that when blogs present something, say they write about a local store in Rome which has amazing pastries. Well I can't go and buy those pastries anyway. So there is no point of connection." (I-2, 19.6.2013)*

> *"I actually do not read foreign blogs at all. Somehow life in them feels so distant. I do not know if it is because of the foreign language or what." (I-12, 10.7.2013)*

When further comparing Finnish and foreign bloggers, the interviewees seem to find that foreign bloggers have more of a celebrity factor - they feel more distant and make readers want to follow them more because of admiration than of feeling a close relation.

> *"Then on the other hand foreign bloggers, they may be more inspirational because they have better images and cooler outfits. But then when I look at how they live, they have so much more money and live such different lives that it just depresses me." (I-9, 1.7.2013)*

Although Bonnier Publication's blog readers did identify a relationship with the blogger, they showed little interest toward the interactive aspect of blogs. Out of the sixteen interviews, ten said that they never comment on blogs, five comment very rarely and only one reader comments frequently. Moreover, of those who comment, only one expects a response from the blogger whereas the others said they hardly remember to go back to the comments they have written. As Interviewee 1 expressed, a comment is more like a one-way message from her as a reader to the blogger - she does not need a response. These quotes present interviewees' views on interacting with bloggers:

> *"Mainly I read. I comment on some blogs. But I hardly have two-way dialogue so I do not expect answers to my comments. I do not in that way remember to*

even go look at my comments and see if they have been answered."
(I-1, 19.6.2013)

"Somehow I do not feel it is necessary to engage in a discussion with those bloggers but for me it is enough to look at the content they produce"
(I-14, 19.6.2013)

The reasons for wanting to contribute to blogs by commenting varied – most commonly readers want to give tips or answer a blogger's question, but also giving positive feedback and commenting on a blogger's personal life events were mentioned as reasons for commenting. Another notable factor was that readers, whether they personally comment or not, tend to read comment sections. It appears that especially when blogs contained posts that the interviewees perceived would raise a lot of discussion, they would read the type of discussion that was raised. It seems to relate to the entertainment factor of reading negative comments, but also to see more of the personality of the blogger in terms of how she responds, as the following quotes demonstrate:

"I don't write comments, but I like reading the comments because I think it is funny that some people take another person's life so seriously and feel like they have a right to bad mouth and judge people so much to their face. Weird."
(I-8, 30.6.2013)

"But if it is like a post that raises opinions, then I want to read if it is negative or positive. But rather the negative comments. I want to see how they respond to the feedback." (I-5, 26.6.2013)

Only one of the interviewees, Interviewee 6, explained that she engages in the overall discussion that occurs in blogs' commenting sections. This indicates that it is not common for readers to seek interaction with other readers or the overall blog community either. As for Interviewee 6, her motive to engage in discussion and react to comments was mainly to protect the blogger or to react to a general negative atmosphere:

"Or then when some people give horrible bad mouth comments there, then I can comment that hey take it easy people, or that they could stop the conversation that they are having there." (I-6, 27.6.2013)

As for those interviewees who never comment, the most common reason seemed to be the nature of the blogs – interviewees explained that the blogs they read relate to superficial or light topics and therefore interviewees do not feel like there is a need for contributing. Moreover, the interviewees explained that they do not consider commenting on blogs to be open conversation between readers and the blogger - bloggers have the power in blogs as they are able to moderate readers' comments. Although none of the readers considered it to be a negative thing, they anticipated that blog comment areas do not provide an open area for interaction. It seemed as if interviewees do not see blog comment areas as a channel for open communication and therefore do not have an incentive to write comments or interact with the blog community. Interviewee 14 comments on censoring comments in the following way:

"Well, primarily I think it is ok that they can use censorship in the sense that they have some control about what they make public about their own lives... - ... But then again as a reader, when you read those comments you do not perhaps get the entire picture, like if it seems that someone always gets comments like 'wow you are beautiful and lovely' so you react like is this a bit selective, or are these readers really so infatuated." (I-14, 16.7.2013)

Although most Bonnier Publications' blog readers did not see a need for personally interacting with the bloggers or blog communities, interestingly readers mentioned that blogs were a frequent topic of discussion in their own groups of friends. As Interviewee 10 expressed, she does not feel a need for boosting the bloggers' egos, but instead discusses blogs continuously with her own friends so feedback is given in that channel. Interviewees mentioned that especially the personal lives of bloggers were frequently discussed among friends, by for example discussing blog content, bloggers' relationships, advertising in blogs, or bloggers' spending habits. Interviewee 9 assumed it is because Bonnier Publications' bloggers are so close to the readers, perhaps because

they live in Helsinki or they have mutual acquaintances with readers, that it is easy to know many details and gossip about them.

In this section, findings on the relationship between blogs and readers were presented. In summary, the interviewees read blogs for entertainment as well as to be informed about a blogger's personal life. The interviewees generally felt a strong, even friend-like bond to blogs and felt their lives related to the blog content, although the majority only felt they related to Finnish blogs and therefore rarely consumed international blogs. Finally, the interviewees acknowledged that interactivity was not an important part in forming a relationship to blog. The majority either did not comment on blogs at all or expects answers to comments, although reading comment sections on blogs was common among the interviewees. The following section will go on with presenting findings on readers' perceptions about blog content.

4.2.   Readers' preferences in blog content

This section will address the second sub question: *What do blog readers seek for in blog content?* It is addressed through providing findings on reader preferences in the structural, textual and visual elements in blogs. The content and visual aspects of blogs play an important role in the perceptions that blog readers build of the blogger's style, personality and credibility. As stated by Interviewee 6, the visual appeal of a blog can even be a decisive factor in whether she continues reading the blog or not.

For this part of the interviews, the interviewees were shown Bonnier Publication's blog Strictly Style on an iPad (see Appendix 1). The interviewees were asked to freely browse the blog and comment on things they look at first and what appealed to them. The interviewees most commonly first commented on the banner advertisement and magazine name that appear to take up the whole screen so that readers are required to scroll down to view the blog. The interviewees considered it frustrating that the blog banner hardly stands out, while advertising images almost appear as blog banners. The banner of a blog, which generally contains the blog's name and some visual elements, seems to visually play an important role – as readers explain, it is the first image that a blogger wants to present of the blog. According to readers, it is best when the banner

gives an indication of the blog content, such as Strictly Style whose banner contains her image, outfit, and family, which are the elements she also focuses on in the context of her blog.

Strictly Style's blog follows a common layout with a single column and sidebar on the right, the interviewees' seemed to prefer this common layout and have in a way trained themselves to reading it by only focusing on the editorial line in the single column. Nine of the interviewees claimed they never look at the sidebar while four interviewees explained that they only review the sidebar in new blogs to check the blogger's profile. It seems that blog readers are quite trained in the layouts of blogs, knowing where new content by the blogger is located and where direct advertisings are generally placed. Furthermore, the blog readers directly stated that they are consciously trying to avoid those sections in blogs that are known to contain advertisements.

According to the interviewees, Bonnier Publications' blogs are visually appealing due to their calm, plain and composed nature. They mention that blogs which operate under any company or magazine appear to have a more professionally looking structure and layout than independently operating blogs. For example Interviewee 11 explains that she has a better image of Bonnier Publications blogs' visual structure compared to independently operating blogs. However it does not mean she considers the bloggers to be more skilled, but rather that they have a team behind them to take care of technical factors. For other interviewees, the visual image of a blog has a deeper effect on the image they have of the blogs and bloggers. Interviewee 16 explains that in the blogs she follows, the professional visual aspects of blogs have convinced her that those blogs and bloggers are trustworthy.

Another aspect when analyzing the visual aspects of blogs are images, which are very important to readers based on the interviewees' perceptions. According to the interviewees, high quality images catch the eye and make readers want to focus on the blog. Although the interviewees explain that they want to read blogs that have a balance of text and images, what catches the interest of readers are the images. Visually readers

seem to have expectations for blogs to have well-structured posts that balance images and text in a way that adds to skim value and pleasance in reading.

Visually the balance of text and image in the content plays an important role for readers. While ten interviewees state that images are more important than the actual text in their reading experience, it is clear that the interviewees expect blogs to contain both. As Interviewee 10 explains, she likes to and needs a combination of both image and text in this forum of blogs – while there are pure photo blogs, she highlights that she has never been interested in them. As it seems, visual elements make the blog appealing and tempting to read, whereas the textual elements are what distinguishes blogs from other media. As interviewee 15 explains, when there is none or very little text, as a reader you do not get a grasp of the bloggers life so it is important that there is writing in blogs.

For the interviewees, it seemed to be important that the overall content of the blogs builds an image of and resembles the blogger. In other words, they expressed that it is not only interesting but also quite important that bloggers reveal their identity and face in images, especially in fashion and cosmetics related blogs. What the interviewees commented on frequently was that they do not have high expectations for the written content of blogs. According to the interviewees, many bloggers are not exceptionally good writers so texts do not catch the readers' interest as images do. Still, readers do focus on writing quality – although the text does not need to be written in a catchy way, readers do seem to be annoyed by spelling mistakes or poor grammar. Interviewee 15 gave the following comment:

> *"The blogger does not always have to be super good writer, as long as the text shows she is a pleasant person and in a way, you can tell that she has put time into thinking about the text and writing it." (I-15, 16.7.2013)*

Although two of the interviewees said they want to avoid content that revolves merely around the blogger's life, other interviewees expressed clear interest in the blogger as a person. For example Interviewee 10 stated that she especially enjoys a diary-like blog that tells about what the blogger has done throughout the day. Interviewee 13 also highlighted that deeper content relating to the personal issues of the blogger are the

most activating and inspiring – the kind which from time to time give her motivation to comment. In terms of content therefore, interviewees generally expected the personality of the blogger to be visible so that they are able relate to the content and blogger's life. It appears that while the interviewees want to read about specific forum related content, such as clothes, food, or interior design, they want to read about them as part of the blogger's life and in relation to more personal details about the blogger.

Content-wise those interviewees who read both Finnish and English blogs seem to consider Finnish blogs to be less professional or unique in terms of content. Interviewees described content in Finnish blogs as homogenous – blogs copy trends from each other, ranging from the style of posting to photoshop images to the topics that are written about. According to the interviewees, foreign blogs in general give a more professional image of their work. Interviewee 11 commented in the following way:

> *The professional side shows more, that it is clearly their profession. And Finnish bloggers, although they make money out of it, seem like they are doing it as a hobby. It is not as far developed. (I-11, 9.7.2013)*

Several interviewees mentioned that they read blogs daily and therefore prefer one, if not several, posts per day. Moreover, the interviewees also highlighted that although they want to see both images and text in a balance, the amount of content per post is critical. Too much text or too many images will make readers lose interest. Based on the interviewees' comments, it seems that they prefer reading short posts continuously, rather than one longer post more rarely. This can be related to the fact that the interviewees consider blogs as an easy, accessible form of entertainment which they do not need to actively focus their attention on for too long.

In summary, it was found that visual aspects in blogs play an important role for the interviewees. Structurally Bonnier Publications' blogs fill the interviewees' expectations for a visually appealing, clean and clear layout. The interviewees paid attention to the amount, balance, and quality of both visual and textual content; however the quality and style of images seemed to be more important than text. An imperative part of blog content for the interviewees was that it resembles the blogger's personal

life. For example images should therefore preferably show the blogger's face. The following section will present findings on the interviewees' perceptions of blog commerciality.

4.3. Readers' perceptions of blog commerciality

The third section focuses on the last sub question: *What perceptions do blog readers have of commerciality in blogs?* Commerciality in blogs was approached from various perspectives in order to build an understanding of how the interviewees felt about 1) commerciality in general, 2) the advertisers involved, 3) the blogger's role in posting commercial content, 4) the types of collaborations and campaigns they have seen, and 5) blogs' relation to magazines.

It became obvious that the interviewees felt strongly about increased commerciality in blogs and had varying perceptions in regards to the type of commerciality they prefer, how much they trust bloggers who post commercial content and how they are affected by advertising in blogs. In general however, the interviewees showed quite positive reactions towards advertising and commercial content in blogs and specifically in Bonnier Publication's blogs. Moreover, the interviewees seemed to acknowledge how influential blogs are in affecting blog readers' needs and preferences, as the following quote by Interviewee 14 shows:

> *"But I do notice that if I compare for example myself to friends who do not read blogs, merely the fact that I read blogs and see what the bloggers are wearing affects my mindset and what I think is trendy or nice looking or something. And through that it definitely effects how I dress and what type of clothes I want to buy." (I-14, 16.7.2013)*

Many of the interviewees expressed respect for the work that is put into blogging and felt that economic benefit that bloggers receive from advertising is a well-deserved recognition for their work and effort. In general, the interviewees seemed to find it fully understandable that bloggers earn money and did not understand why bloggers were generally critiqued about it. Interview 6 felt that the point of blogging is that anyone can

do it and stated that critics could open their own blogs and try to succeed. It can also be said that the interviewees may find bloggers' way of making a career out of blogging to be inspiring, as in the case of Interviewee 10:

> *"I find it pretty amazing that young women have come up with that kind of a way to support themselves. I respect that they can make money in that way."* (I-10, 1.7.2013)

As for companies that are present in blogs as advertisers, the interviewees had very positive perceptions relating to them. It seemed that the interviewees were very open to seeing advertisers in blogs and had positive opinions about advertisers embracing the new media and creating new advertising methods. Interviewee 13 described her feelings towards companies who advertise in blogs in the following way:

> *"I think it is natural that online fashion stores collaborate with bloggers, but then when it is for example, what would be, some unexpected company or brand that you would not expect to take part in that kind of things, well then I think it is especially nice because it shows a certain open-mindedness to try a new thing."* (I-13, 12.7.2013)

Advertising companies in blogs were described as open-minded and courageous, and interviewees overall were also very understanding of the fact that blogs in general are a hazardous advertising medium for companies as they cannot control how they are portrayed. Moreover, in cases in which the interviewees had some negative experiences and perceptions regarding blog commerciality, the negative connections mainly related to the bloggers and not the advertisers. Based on this it can be assumed that the interviewees held any type of content that is published in blogs as the blogger's responsibility.

4.3.1. Communication of commercial content

Communication of commercial content was approached by discussing what is important to the interviewees in terms of advertising, their preferences in campaigns, and how well they recognize blog advertising in general. What emerged from the interviewees'

comments was the importance of the fit between a blogger and a company that was being advertised in the blog. The interviewees expressed that when the companies that were being advertised fit with the perceptions that readers have of the blog and blogger, they were more likely to positively remember the companies as well. As several interviewees noted, advertising that is done in a stylish way that fits in well to the overall blog content makes a good and convincing impression. It seems that the closer and deeper the relationship between a blogger and a company, the more readers are affected by it as well. Interviewee 13 expressed that she feels most trusting towards advertising in which she can sense and see how closely the blogger and company work together, giving an example of a blogger and a hair saloon's continuous collaboration.

In most occasions the interviewees also felt that many bloggers already perform quite well on this front – they rarely write about products, brands or companies that in no way relate to the blogs' overall content. Interviewee 7 expressed that she easily understands collaborations between clothing or cosmetics companies and fashion or lifestyle bloggers, whereas the fit between other companies is harder to build. Interviewee 14 on the other hand stated the opposite and highlighted that as many of the blogs in question relate to overall lifestyle it is hard to classify what does or does not relate to the blogger's life. Still the interviewees perceived that it is obvious that bloggers do not generally write about all the advertisers who approach them but carefully select which companies are mentioned on the blog. Interviewee 9 described her perceptions in the following way:

> *"Well I just started to think that generally the majority writes about products that look like the blogger and are in line, and I think that has changed. So what is maybe understandable is that they all get thousands of cosmetics so they are not writing about every single bottle they have received. But there is a lot of difference in this among blogs." (Interviewee 9, 1.7.2013)*

The interviewees expressed that they are easily thrown off by commercial content that does not smoothly fit to a blog's overall style. This was also evident when the interviewees were asked to recall positive and negative blog advertising experiences –

whereas many could not come up with good examples, several negative memories emerged, such as fashion bloggers writing about a game console, coffee machine or sports car. In each of these cases, the interviewees expressed that they did not understand the context of the advertising or why the advertisers would want to collaborate with those specific blogs. Moreover, advertisements that seemed random or not fitting to a blog's content seemed to emphasize the interviewees' feeling that the blogger was blogging for money's sake more than any other reason.

What and how bloggers write about advertisers was crucial for how the interviewees trust and feel towards content. The way products and brands are described in blogs' advertising and recommendations cause for suspicion among the interviewees. Too much appraisal or overly positive descriptive words make most of the interviewees skeptical of how freely bloggers are allowed to write about the companies they collaborate with, while content written in a negative tone would be refreshing and add to the credibility of the blogger as well as the commercial message. Interviewees 4 and 7 reported their views about authentic reviews in blogs as follows:

> *"Because sometimes it is, especially if it is a collaborating advertiser, it is like so obvious that they even praise them too much. Especially if you have already been reading the blog anyway, you kind of know how the blogger generally writes, and then there are things that absolutely do not sound like she wrote them herself." (I-4, 25.6.2013)*

> *"...because the fact that you dare to say that this was not a good product about a product which you have received shows a certain level of independence, that you do not only write positive things as a thank you." (I-7, 27.6.2013)*

While discussing the type of advertising preferred, emphasis was put on the importance of bloggers personally using or showing experience with the products. As Interviewee 9 stated, one picture of a blogger wearing or using a product is a thousand times better than hundreds of links or advertisement pictures. Showing personal experience is important to the interviewees for several reasons; it makes the bloggers' comments more trustworthy, it makes the advertisement feel less like an advertisement, and it

shows the blogger is making an effort for the content. All in all, as Interviewee 7 highlighted, the fact that it is an ordinary person trying out, using and recommending products is very influential.

It seems that different types of advertising raised different types of reactions among the interviewees. They seemed to be most impressed and influenced by collaborations in which bloggers write about experiences with products they frequently use or test. Several interviewees expressed that through such posts they have come across new products and decide to test out new things. Whereas the interviewees described posts in which bloggers write about personal experiences of testing a product as friend-like recommendations, some other forms of advertising did not raise equally positive reactions. Especially so called affiliate programs, in which blogs advertise products through traceable links and get rewarded for purchases that readers make via those links, were deemed by several interviewees as misleading and greedy. Affiliate advertising was seen as spamming of commercial content and often seemed to lack the feeling of a friend's recommendation from the readers' perspective, and the interviewees make an effort to avoid such advertising, as the following quotes shows:

> *"Well I... I have the kind of attitude that I do not touch those links. Or even if they seem good, I open another tab and go to the website by myself that way. I do not know why, even though it does not take anything away from me, but I still do no support that kind of thing..." (I-5, 26.6.2013)*

> *"It is greed for money. The function of that post is in my opinion to get money and not to give out some good ideas or say I like this so much."*
> *(I-10, 1.7.2013)*

Overall, all interviewees agreed that when done excessively, advertising in blogs takes away from the reading experience and decreases interest in the blog. Two concerns were raised by readers in regards to too much commercial content. Firstly, as Interviewee 8 explained, too much advertising portrays a greedy image of the blogger and makes it appear as if the sole purpose of blogging was to make money. Secondly, excessive advertising makes it appear that the blogger does not put as much effort in creating

content for the blog and, hence, is not as worthy of getting the economic benefit from advertising either. Interviewee 14 expressed her perceptions on excessive advertising in blogs in the following way:

"... yes, it decreases the value in the sense that I feel that the blogger does maybe not deserve it or should not be making so much from it because she only advertises. So in that sense it does affect me, but I am in no way against advertising so that it should be taken away or that it takes away all the authenticity." (I-14, 16.7.2013)

When asked whether readers feel they recognize advertised content in blogs, the general view was that advertising is recognizable. However, there seemed to be differences in what interviewees consider as advertising – some considered only the advertisements in sidebars or banners, whereas others expected any mention of a brand or company to be paid advertising. To illustrate, Interviewee 3 said she felt that in the blogs she follows, the bloggers do not write about any products as part of advertising, whereas Interviewee 11 expressed an opposite view by stating that she has become so skeptical that she perceives any mention of a brand to be deliberate advertising.

In relation to recognizing advertising, one topic that was discussed and highlighted by the interviewees was that commercial content should be pointed out clearly. The blogs under observation mainly provided a disclaimer "produced in cooperation" [in Finnish: "toteutettu yhteistyössä"] and the company's name in posts that contained commercial content. Many interviewees felt that a similar short mention for advertising content was enough, as long as it was stated clearly and at the beginning of the text. So called code language, such as marking advertisements with signs such as a "*", was not approved by readers as they felt it was vague. The interviewees also highlighted that they are not interested in details of contracts or how bloggers are paid for specific types of advertising. Interviewee 9 described her need for informed advertising in the following way:

"A statement like "made in cooperation" is a little vague in terms of what it actually means, but for me it is enough because then I know they have not bought it or paid for it completely themselves. I do not need, if you think about

the advertising guidelines, any warning signs or more information."
(I-9, 1.7.2013)

Some interviewees on the other hand had very contradicting opinions and expressed that they did not want to be specifically notified about advertisements. It seemed that these interviewees were not concerned about whether they can make a distinction of organic content or paid-for content, but rather did not want to see a disclaimer because it made them want to skip content that was categorized as commercial. Interviewees 4 and 5 gave the following comments about advertisement disclaimers on blogs:

> *"Well somehow it would be better without them. It gives me the feeling that does she really at all think that way or is this just done because she gets some kind of benefit out of it." (I-4, 25.6.2013)*

> *"Oh I don't actually know why it has to be written there, probably there are laws for that. But in my opinion it just tells that the content is paid for and they get money for it, so I just skip it completely." (I-5, 26.6.2013)*

Interestingly, when the interviewees evaluated their own ability to recognize advertisements and commercial content in blogs, many interviewees felt they had a better eye for advertisements or a better understanding for the topic compared to the general public. They were not so concerned about whether they themselves recognized advertisements but felt that for the sake of younger or less educated readers, it was important that bloggers clearly express if a post contains advertising. Interviewee 11 expresses her feelings towards advertising in blogs in the following way:

> *"...it is somewhat questionable because I would assume that many or the majority of people who read those blogs, they are not aware that they [bloggers] are being paid for it and that it is product placement per se. But instead when they see their idol using that specific product, they want it too. So I do not like that style." (I-11, 9.7.2013)*

In relation to notifying about commercial content, some interviewees also mentioned the ongoing debate over creating advertising guidelines for blogs and the first draft

which ASML had just recently published. It seemed that especially those interviewees who either had a background of working with advertising or had studied subjects relating to communication, marketing or law had a special interest in the formulation of guidelines and criticism towards published suggestions. All of the interviewees who were aware of the guidelines seemed to agree that while it is good that advertising in blogs was made clear, many traditional channels for advertising, such as magazines and television, were equally vague in informing about advertising. According to the interviewees, most popular bloggers already work in accordance with the guidelines by informing about what is commercial content in enough detail. Interviewee 9 reported that she feels it is good that media consumers understand that each medium can contain advertising; however, explicit warning about each single advertisement with warning texts and signs decreases the positive reading experience.

4.3.2. Blogs' relation to magazines

What became evident in the interviews was that many of the interviewees perceived blogs as a medium that provided practically the same content as magazines and in many cases had completely replaced the need for consuming magazines. Only two interviewees highlighted that they did not see a resemblance between blog content and magazine content, especially because they highly valued the work of professionals in magazines. What seemed to play a factor in why the interviewees more frequently consumed blogs was that the content was timelier - in blogs content was published daily whereas monthly magazine content was easily already old and outdated, as Interviewee 9 explained. Blogs also seem to provide more personal content and to better serve the interviewees' hectic lifestyles whereas magazines are a more luxurious. Although the interviewees in the present research tended to consume blogs more than magazines in general, they felt that magazines and blogs were suitable for different purposes, as the following quotes show:

> *"Well they are pretty different, in magazines I read longer articles and interviews, in blogs they are then again shorter and I could just quickly skim*

through. I concentrate more on reading magazines, and from here [blogs] I take recommendations for normal life." (I-12, 10.7.2013)

"Yes, in fact I get more out of them [blogs] sometimes because I can get into the, well not life, but the interests of a person and that way get to hear more about topics than I would in magazines." (I-15, 16.7.2013)

The interviewees had very positive feelings about collaboration between blogs and magazines - overall it was seen as a natural fit, especially in the case of Bonnier Publications and its blogs at the time. According to the interviewees, blogs and magazines complement each other because of the similar content they provide. However, as some interviewees expressed, even in Bonnier Publication's case it is partly difficult to identify the blogs as an actual part of the magazine brands, which is why the interviewees wished for more obvious collaborative projects between the blogs and magazines, as well as for the magazines to be even more visible in blogs' content and vice versa.

Overall, the interviewees seemed to positively evaluate the professionalism and quality of blogs that were part of magazine brands. In comparison with independently operated blogs, not only did the interviewees evaluate the structure and visual layout of magazine brands' blogs as more professional and appealing, but they also evaluated the personal and commercial content as more credible and trustworthy. It seems that by having a magazine hosting the blog made the interviewees more sure that they can trust the blog content and be sure that advertising is done responsibly.

When considering how they are affected by advertisements in magazines versus blogs, the majority of interviewees agreed that they are more influenced by the advertising they come across in blogs. Three of the interviewees stated that they feel equally influenced by advertising in magazines and blogs whereas the others stated that they feel they are more affected by blogs. Presumably this is because of blogs' personal nature which makes advertising both more memorable and relatable to interviewees. The interviewees explained that blogs are more influential because the content and

writer are relatable, which provides a "recommendation from a friend" -feeling which is lacking in magazines. According to Interviewee 7, relatable advertising is what makes blogs differ from magazines:

> *"... if you take a blogger into a campaign to use the 'hey you can relate to this' - factor, there is such a clear difference, like if a super model uses a shampoo compared to a blogger who might be in the same school as you or something. That she is using it." (I-7, 27.6.2013)*

Interestingly, although the interviewees seem to prefer and feel more influenced by advertising in blogs, half of the interviewees still feel that magazine advertising is more honest, credible, objective, and professional. Moreover, the interviewees felt that magazines dare to publish negative comments and openly state if a product does not work – an aspect that the interviewees desire to see in blogs as well. Some interviewees felt differently and critiqued the fact that blog advertising is being scrutinized and observed much more harshly than magazine advertising. Many of the interviewees questioned why only blogs are being observed so much as, according to the interviewees, also magazine content feels like it is all paid for content. Interviewee 7 even considers that it is because of magazines that blogs are being put under a microscope:

> *"...this spring it has been discussed a lot how some large cosmetics companies dominate women's magazines markets and advertising, and through that also content. So I think that it has somewhat decreased, or maybe even a lot, it has decreased both magazines' and blogs' credibility. So everyone knows that 'hahaa, it is that company's product, it has to be paid-for content!'" (I-7, 27.6.2013)*

The interviewees' perceptions on blog commerciality were discussed in this section. In summary, the interviewees overall had a very positive attitude toward blog commerciality, blogging as a profession, and companies engaging in blog advertising. The interviewees preferred commercial content to be easily identifiable; however the

less commercial content struck out from other content in blogs the better. Personality was also important in blog commerciality; the interviewees wanted to see and read about bloggers' personal experiences as well as to only come across commercial content that fit the blog. Due to the interviewees' experiences a type of relationship with a blogger, the interviewees reported that advertising in blogs is persuasive and more effective on them than advertising in more traditional channels. Finally, the interviewees reported that they see commercial content in blogs as the blogger's responsibility and hence negative perceptions on blog commerciality rarely affected the interviewees' perceptions on a media company or advertiser. As for magazines and blogs, the interviewees saw them to some extent as competing media and reported that through increased blog consumption, their magazine consumption had decreased. As for Bonnier Publications and its blogs, the interviewees reported that there is a natural and clear fit between the blogs that have been incorporated under Bonnier Publications' magazine brands.

Whereas the last three sections provided answers to the three sub questions of the present study, the following section will address and provide a summarized answer to the main research question.

4.4. Effect of content and commerciality on readers' relationship with blogs

This final section aims to provide an answer to the main research question of the present study: *How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications' blogs?* What became apparent in the interviews was that all interviewees acknowledge a relationship between blogs and readers, either through the fact that they themselves experience a relationship or that they feel that other readers experience such a relationship. Furthermore, it seemed that the relationship, content and commercial aspects in a blog are interlinked and constantly affect one another; the existing relationship determines how blog content and commerciality are perceived, and continuously published personal and commercial content affect how the relationship develops.

In terms of blog content, it became apparent in most interviews that the interviewees wanted content in blogs to relate closely to the personal life of the blogger. This was obvious in terms of the interviewees wanting to read about bloggers' life events and through seeing the blogger and the environment she lives in through many pictures. It seems that through personal content, readers form a clear image of the blogger as a person; while several interviewees noted that they do not completely know what type of person the blogger is in real life, they can build a strong opinion and view because of the many details about a blogger's life which they were exposed to. Interviewee 10 described her relationship with blogs in the following way:

> "...so I know what street they live on and where they work and... Yes I do know a lot about them. Of course I don't know about their inner soul and values so much, but I would say I know them a lot better than I know my colleagues for example." (I-10, 1.7.2013)

Furthermore, blog content relating to the personal life of the blogger is the factor that keeps the interviewees of the present research interested in the blog and, hence, ensures the relationship between the blog and reader continues. As interviewee 15 explained, the catchy part of blogs is the personal content which shows you the kind of person the blogger is and makes you want to know more about her life. On the other hand, several interviewees highlighted that readers did not want to know too many details of a blogger's life, partly because some felt that it made the relationship turn into the reader being a fan of the blogger, and partly because of concern for the blogger's privacy. The interviewees in many cases seemed to highlight that they did not want to see bloggers as having a celebrity-like status, but rather view them as relatable and friend-like characters.

It can be concluded that blog content in a way builds the basis for the relationship that readers perceive to have with blogs. The interviewees explained that through personal content in blogs, readers learn to know about the blogger's life, style and personality which allows them to build a strong image of the kind of person a blogger is. Through the various things that bloggers reveal about their personal lives, readers feel they relate

to the blogger, identify similar values and opinions, and build trust towards toward topics that the bloggers publish.

In terms of commercial content on the other hand, the interviewees seemed to use it more to evaluate the continuous relationship with bloggers. Firstly, the interviewees expressed that as they relate to the style, trends and personality of blogs, they can also expect to find likeable commercial content in the blogs. Therefore, if the blogger publishes commercial content that does not fit with the blog community's opinions and styles, it will have an effect on how readers evaluate the blogger.

While the interviewees in the present study were generally in favor of commercial content in blogs, they did express opinionated criteria for the amount, type and way of expressing commercial content in blogs. In general, it can be said that if commercial content exceeds personal content in a blog and if readers cannot easily identify whether content about a product is organic or paid-for advertising, it does negatively affect how the interviewees perceive the blogger, as the following quote shows:

> *"But sometimes even though it [commercial content] is honest and open, but if there is too much and the blogger does not post about anything else than events she has been invited to or some products she has received, it starts to become boring because you have after all started to follow it because it is that person and her things you are interested in. So if it is just sponsored, and even though the blogger personally likes those things, you get a feeling that she doesn't she reject anything anymore." (I-15, 16.7.2013)*

Interestingly, commercial content that the interviewees considered unappealing seemed to affect strongly on interviewees' perceptions of the blogger. Although the interviewees seemed to acknowledge that commercial content was often produced in collaboration with blogs, advertisers and also the media company, they still saw the content of blog posts as the blogger's responsibility. Generally therefore the interviewees did not seem to let poor commercial content affect their perceptions of the advertiser or Bonnier Publications.

"Well now that I start to think about it, the critique that I have about the topic is targeted more towards that blogger than the companies, which feels somewhat dumb. But I do understand the companies' thought about it, that it must be a very effective way to make products visible to customers plus advance the matter so that on the consumers' side it leads to all the way to a purchasing decision." (I-11, 9.7.2013)

To provide a final answer to the main research question, it can be stated that blog content which relates to the personal life of the blogger affects the relationship by letting readers create their own image of the blogger as a person and create an emotional bond. Blog commerciality on the other hand can reinforce the relationship through valuable commercial recommendations and tips, which the interviewees seem to expect. However, commercial content also serves as a tool for the interviewees to evaluate whether their image of the blogger is consistent with what is being published; if readers perceive that certain content does not fit the blog's style, is poorly done or is excessive compared to personal content, it can negatively affect the relationship they have with that blog.

5. Discussion

This section aims to evaluate the findings of the present research by comparing them to reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2. The objective of the present study was to gain a thorough understanding on how blog readers perceive blog content and commerciality, and what their relationship with Bonnier Publication's blogs is.

The research question and sub questions were discussed in the previous section. The main research question of the present study is: *How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications blogs?* It can be concluded that personal content is the main reason for readers to engage with blogs and the factor which readers use to build an image of the blogger. Commercial content on the other hand is also expected by readers, but also raises strong reactions in readers; while they value good recommendations and well done blog advertising, they are critical towards the amount, type and style of advertising. It also seems that personal content builds the basis of the relationship that readers perceive to have with blogs, whereas commercial aspects affects how the relationship develops.

The findings of the present study supported the theoretical framework presented in the Literature Review in Figure 4. The framework showed that readers and blogs share a relationship which is continuously affected by the personal and commercial content that blogs publish as well as how readers perceive the blog's communication. The framework also showed that, as blogs are situated within a media business model, a media company and advertisers gain advantage of blogs' relationships with readers by having the blog publish about them. Readers' perceptions not only affect the blog-reader-relationship but, based on the blogs' communication, perceptions also affect the opinions that readers form of the media company and advertisers. The findings of the present study support this framework by indicating that readers pay strong attention to what and how blogs publish as content, and moreover evaluate all messages of a blog by reflecting strongly on the emotions they have towards a blog. Furthermore, the findings showed that how readers perceive messages guides their personal feelings

toward a blogger, whereas readers share a positive feeling about advertisers in blogs which is hardly affected by how readers deem the actual blog advertisements.

As McPhillips and Merlo (2008) explain, media is in a state of convergence which has affected the traditional business of media companies; consumers are drawn to digital channels in which peer-produced content is constantly increasing. Digital media therefore provides new competition for traditional media companies (McPhillips and Merlo, 2008); magazine brands and blogs seem to be an obvious example as they provide similar content as well as attract similar readership and advertisers (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011). The present findings support that consumers are increasingly moving towards digital channels as several of the interviewees explained that they consume less traditional media than digital media, especially when comparing magazines and blogs. In the present study, the interviewees held positive attitudes toward digital media especially due to features such as easy accessibility and free content. Furthermore, traditional media received critique from the interviewees in terms of dated content and advertising methods, which further showed that the interviewees increasingly preferred digital media over traditional media.

The purpose of reading blogs quite closely relates to the kind of relationship that has developed between blogs and readers. Bonnier Publication's readers consume blogs firstly for entertainment purposes as well as for getting tips and inspiration for their personal lives. Secondly, the emotional bond that blog readers feel toward a blogger seems to play a strong role in Bonnier Publication's blog readers as well. Kretz and de Valck's (2010) research also shows that both entertainment and personal factors are important reasons for people to read blogs (p. 326). As mentioned in the findings, the readers of Bonnier Publication's blogs seek relatable blogs in which they feel connected to the blogger's life situation, blog forum or other details. Furthermore, blog readers show strong interest in the personal life of the blogger and therefore, most obviously the overall relationship that a reader shares with a blog is based on the perceptions that the reader has of the blogger.

Colliander and Dahlén (2011) explain that because blog readers are exposed to extensive details about a blogger's personal life and personality, readers form a friendship-like relationship to the blogger. Apart from a few exceptions, Bonnier Publication's readers expressed that they felt a strong connection and emotional tie to bloggers. Based on the content that bloggers continuously post, interviewees seemed to have formed a distinct image of the blogger as a person, causing them to feel trust towards the blogger.

Whereas Lövheim (2011) and Kulmala et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of interactive aspects in blogs for the blogger, it seems that the interviewees of the present study do not value interaction in blogs as much as could be expected. While it was not surprising that many of the interviewees do not provide comments on blogs at all, what did seem striking was that out of the interviewees who do comment on blogs, only one interviewee stated that she expects a blogger to respond and hence expected two-way interaction. Many of the interviewees, both those who comment and those who do not, explicitly expressed that they are not interested in the interactive aspect of blogs. So while Lövheim (2011) and Kulmala et al. (2013) both suggest that bloggers make an effort to increase interaction with readers and further develop the relationship through encouraging commenting by readers, the present findings indicate that readers perhaps do not even long for two-way communication in blogs. On the other hand, Kulmala et al. (2013) state that bloggers try to increase interaction through asking readers questions and advice (p. 33). Based on the findings, it seems to be a successful strategy because interviewees commented that one key reason for commenting is to answer a blogger's question.

Structurally readers seem to also prefer the general layout with an editorial column and one side bar on the right, as the lay out is in Bonnier Publication's blogs. However, Kretz and de Valck (2010) emphasize that elements in other locations than the editorial column of a blog do not receive attention and such is the case in Bonnier Publication's blogs as well. The interviewees seemed to have a trained eye for finding the content they seek for in blogs, and therefore readers expressed irritation towards large banner

advertisements or pop-ups which required scrolling, clicking or other active reactions to be able to read the blog.

The editorial column in which a blogger writes posts is naturally the main focus of blog readers. In terms of content in the posts, readers seem to have high expectations of both textual and visual elements. Herring et al. (2005) and Lövheim (2011) both indicate that readers seek private and personal content about the bloggers, whereas Kozinets et al. (2010) also emphasize the blog forum. The findings of the present study agree that readers seek both – they want to read information related to the blog forum, such as fashion, food, or lifestyle, but they want it to resemble the personality and life events of the blogger, preferably even as a recollection of a blogger's daily activities.

A part which has not yet received much attention in previous literature seems to be the visual elements of blogs, especially in relation to the forum of fashion and lifestyle blogs. Kretz and de Valck (2010) have argued that bloggers use visual content to build a desired image of themselves. Based on present findings, readers also seem to value visual content in blogs partly for the same reason – to see the blogger's face and through that be able to build a better picture of the blogger. Huang et al. (2008) have stated that visual content in personal blogs is not common, but clearly this has change as Bonnier Publication's blog readers in fact emphasize that photos in a blog are more important than text. That does not however mean that the importance of text has decreased – it seems that while images catch readers' attention, text brings out the personality of the blogger and therefore is a key part of building the emotional tie that readers feel towards a blog.

Pihl and Sandström (2013) have furthermore shows that apart from private content, blog readers also seek commercial content, which seems to apply to the findings of the present study as well. Bonnier Publication's blog readers in general seem to have very positive reactions towards commercial content in blogs and want to read about various advertisers. The interviewees expressed that they purposefully seek for tips and advice about various products in blogs, and that they have enjoyed coming across new advertisers in blogs which they have previously been unaware of.

Lövheim (2011) indicates that blog readers show some objection towards the fact that popular bloggers are able to make money out of blogging. In the case of Bonnier Publication's however, readers show very positive reactions towards bloggers earning money – readers seem to value the effect and time spent on the blog, and express respect towards bloggers having developed a new profession. In the present research blog readers seem to only object blog advertising in which a reader's transaction directly benefits the blogger, such as in affiliate marketing which is based on links to online stores. It seems that especially affiliate linking from the blog reader's perspective lacks so called friend-like recommendation that Colliander and Dahlén (2011) describe as a common characteristic of blog advertising. In the present research, the interviewees expressed that they feel taken advantage of in such type of advertising because they feel as if the blogger only advertises in order to make money.

Overall, the increase of advertising does not seem to have strongly affected the trust and credibility that Bonnier Publication's readers feel towards the blogs and bloggers. Several researchers mentioned in this study (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Kozinets et al., 2010; Lövheim, 2011, Kulmala et al., 2013) highlight that commercial content puts a strain on the relationship between blogs and readers, and while this seems to be true in the case of Bonnier Publications as well, readers seem to perceive that commercial content is quite well managed in Bonnier Publication's blogs. In other words, readers feel that advertisers and blogs fit together quite well, and the style of communicating commercial content fits the blogs' general style. Furthermore, the interviewees in general seemed to trust that the recommendations the bloggers made were genuine. Only a few of the interviewees expressed strong caution towards blog advertising and seemed to be skeptical of whether to trust any company or brand related content in blogs, regardless of whether it is a as a part of a collaboration or not.

It seems that one reason why overall skepticism towards advertising in blogs is so low is that readers perceive especially Bonnier Publication's blogs to be very open and honest about advertising content. When assessing interviewees' preferences in communication of commercial content in the light of Kozinets et al.'s (2010) WOM campaign communication strategies, it seems that the interviewees of the present study prefer

blogs to act according to the 'endorsement strategy'. In this strategy, readers want bloggers to explicitly state when commercial content is related to a WOM campaign and to be aware that readers' and advertisers' interests may not always be in line (Kozinets et al, 2010, p. 85). As Kozinets et al. (2010) explain, this strategy can be expected to work with readers of a blog that relates to commercialism and brands, which are quite obvious aspects in fashion and lifestyle forum blogs.

Kretz and de Valck (2010) have noted that readers prefer commercial content to be in line with the overall style of a blog. Also Kozinets et al. (2010) emphasize that successful commercial content should be in line with the blog's style and adapt to the common standards of the community (p. 86). The present findings agree completely, as interviewees in practically all cases emphasized the importance of the commercial content to fit with a blog's style. As a part of the fit, the interviewees also noted that the most positive reactions to advertising come from collaborations in which readers can see just how close the relationship between a company and blog is. It seems to convey to the readers that the blogger truly wants to recommend the company. This supports Colliander and Dahlén's (2011) claim that "as long as bloggers genuinely follow brands, their readers form friendships with the brands as well" (p. 318). Furthermore, Segev and Wang (2014) have found that when blog advertisements relate closely to the main theme of a blog, readers are likely to be more affected by it. In the present research, the interviewees did state that certain advertisers, such as cosmetics companies and online stores, are expected to engage with blogs as there is an obvious relation, but interviewees were keen on seeing more surprising advertisers getting involved as well.

In general the interviewees of the present study feel that they recognize advertisements and commercial content in blogs, especially because Bonnier Publication's blogs as well as many other Finnish blogs explicitly inform about commercial content. As mentioned above, readers prefer the commercial posts fitting to the overall style of the blog which is why Kulmala et al. (2013) seem to be correct when stating that it is hard to recognize the so called organic eWOM from amplified eWOM, which makes it important for blogs to clearly inform about commercial content. However, several interviewees brought up the blog advertising guidelines and expressed that authorities

were putting too much emphasis on advertising content in blogs. Readers felt that in general, advertising in blogs is not much different from advertising in magazines, yet only blogs are getting such strict guidelines and are being put under a microscope because it is a new medium. In other words, the readers seemed to feel that too much restriction on how blog advertising is done will decrease the new media from developing further.

Chu and Kamal (2008) explain that the way readers are influenced by commercial content in blogs firstly depends on how trustworthy and credible they perceive the blogger to be, and secondly, and more strongly, on how good the argumentation of the blogger is. In the present study, the first criteria of Chu and Kamal (2008) clearly seems to hold true as several interviewees expressed that if they feel negatively about a certain blogger, they will not trust any commercial content that is given. As for the argument quality, it was not so obvious that readers of Bonnier Publication's blogs evaluate argument quality. Several interviewees did criticize text related to commercial content as generally being too positive or unauthentic in that it was copied from the advertiser's product description. In a way it can be said that visual argumentation plays a significant role in how readers evaluate commercial content. Blog readers expect to not only read about but also see actual experiences that bloggers have with things they advertise, meaning that they want to see photos of bloggers using the advertised products.

Lövheim (2011) and Kulmala et al. (2013) present several ways for advertisers to be present in blogs: advertising space, product reviews, co-operation agreements, competitions, free products, and events. No clear preferences of certain collaboration methods were indicated in the findings, however what could be concluded is that the deeper and closer the collaboration is between a company and blog, the better it is also transmitted to the readers. On the other hand, readers also expressed that when campaigns run across many blogs simultaneously, they are more memorable. For media companies, it can be noted that campaigns which run in a blog simultaneously with a magazine were also recognized by readers. Overall, readers' own opinions were very much in line with studies such as Colliander and Dahlén's (2011) which showed that blog advertising is more influential on readers than for example magazine advertising.

Blog readers noted several benefits of advertising in blogs: advertisements were timely and constant as blogs are published daily, readers hardly read other media so they were more exposed to blog advertising, and tips or recommendations seem trustworthy when coming from a peer.

In general blog readers had mainly positive comments about advertisers in blogs. Previous studies (Kretz and de Valck, 2010; Kozinets et al., 2010; Kulmala et al., 2013) bring up risks in blog advertising for companies when readers perceive the fit between a blog and company negatively, or when readers for some other reason perceive an advertising campaign in blogs negatively. Based on the findings in the present research, it seems that when readers come across poor blog advertising, readers mainly assign it to the blogger's responsibility. On the other hand, if readers come across commercial content in blogs which they like, it positively affects how they feel about both the company and the blog. Kulmala et al. (2013) and Kretz and de Valck (2010) have both found that blogs do generally not contain much negative information about advertisers, which is why in general, readers see brands in blogs in a very positive light. The findings agree as the interviewees stated that they had rarely come across negative company-related content in blogs. Therefore, based on the present study, it seems that the risk for companies to engage in blog advertising can be somewhat smaller than what previous studies have claimed.

All in all, the present research provides many findings similar to what previous research has concluded. Some differences can easily be explained by the fact that the field of blogs has continuously developed and changed, which makes certain previously demonstrated claims outdated in the present situation. An example is Huang et al's (2008) study claims that images are not a common aspect in blogs seems outdated in the light of the present study which shows that images and visual content have become one of the most important aspects of blogs.

The present research provides support for studies by Kozinets et al. (2010) and Kulmala et al. (2013) who have studied eWOM from the blog's perspective; the findings from the readers' perspective support that Kozinets et al.'s (2010) suggested 'endorsement'

strategy is a preferred method for conveying commercial content. The interviewees' perceptions in the present study also support Kulmala et al.'s (2013) findings that amplified commercial content is hard to distinguish from organic commercial content, and furthermore, the present study shows that readers in fact do not want the amplified commercial content to stand out from a blog's general style.

What clearly stands out from the present research opposed to previous research are the findings on interaction in blogs; in previous research it is described as a significant factor whereas the findings in the present research indicate that readers do not value or feel a strong need for interactive aspects. All in all, there is however a clear link between the findings previous studies have presented and the findings about the blog-reader-relationship as well as readers' perceptions on blog content and blog commerciality presented in the present thesis.

6. Conclusions

The final section of this thesis will first summarize the present study and view the main findings. After that, managerial implications will be provided and limitations will be discussed. The section will end with recommendations for further research relating to the medium of blogs.

6.1. Research summary

The objective of the present study was to gain a thorough understanding on how blog readers perceive blog content and commerciality, and what their relationship with Bonnier Publication's blogs is. The study stems from the phenomenon of media convergence which has altered the traditional business of media companies forcing them to find new solutions for attracting consumers, growing business and creating new sources of income (Colapinto, 2010; McPhillips and Merlo, 2008). Bonnier Publications, in line with many other media companies and as a front-runner in Finland, has incorporated blogs into its operations as online extensions to its magazine brands. As blogs and especially their commerciality are rather new aspects, a deeper understanding of blogs' readership is needed in order to better develop their content and to understand how blog commerciality is perceived.

As blogs are a new and developing medium, scarce knowledge is available of the way readers are affected by blogs, especially in terms of the commercial side which has become a part of blogs only quite recently. Based on previous studies (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Pihl and Sandström, 2013), a strong relationship is formed between blogs and readers which determines how strongly blog content influences readers. Furthermore, the personal and commercial content that blogs publish seems to relate to how blog readers perceive their relationship with blogs, which led to the following main research question:

> *How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications' blogs?*

In order to provide a concise answer to the research question, it was divided into three sub questions which addressed three different elements: relationship, content, and commerciality. The three sub questions are:

> *SQ1. What kind of relationship do Bonnier Publications' blog readers feel they have with blogs?*

> *SQ2. What do blog readers seek for in blog content?*

> *SQ3. What perceptions do blog readers have of commerciality in blogs?*

A theoretical framework for the present study was designed by connecting previous research on the topic and demonstrating how they relate to the present research. The framework observes the relationship between blogs and readers within a media business model to demonstrate how companies and advertisers are involved in the commercial aspect of blogs. The key focus of the framework is on the relationship between blogs and readers as it affects how readers perceive the blog as well as how they perceive the media company and advertisers. When examining the blog-reader-relationship, the relevant theories reviewed related to 1) personal content and friend-like relationship, 2) textual and visual content, and 3) commercial content and eWOM.

The findings of the present study were presented in relation to the three sub research questions which were then tied together to answer the main research question. Although many of the findings were in line with the findings of previous research, some aspects seemed to be more important than before which indicated that the medium of blogs has changed and is continuously developing. The findings provided in-depth insight into the emotional connection readers feel towards blogs and how differently they feel blogs compared to other media affect them.

In relation to the first sub question, *What kind of relationship do Bonnier Publication's blog readers feel they have with blogs?,* the emotional bond that readers felt with blogs became evident. Overall, the interviewees consumed blogs partly for entertainment and past-time activities, but also due to a curiosity towards reading about another person's life which they could relate to. The interviewees also demonstrated strong trust towards

bloggers' opinions and recommendations and felt that based on the things bloggers reveal about themselves the interviewees could form a clear image of the blogger as a person.

In sub question two, *What do blog readers seek for in blog content?*, generally the need for personal content about bloggers' lives was highlighted both in terms of textual and visual content. Personality needed to show through the writing style and topics, as well as in images which showed the blogger's face and other aspects of her life. What was new compared to previous research was the emphasis that the interviewees put on the visual side of blogs; the interviewees demonstrated strong focus on the visual structure, layout and images used in blogs. Most interviewees stated that the visual aspects were more important than textual aspects and they seemed to have higher expectations for the visual side of blogs than the textual side.

Based on how much previous research also highlighted the controversy of commercial content in blogs it was not surprising that the strongest discussion in interviews related to sub question three, *What perceptions do blog readers have of commercial content in blogs?*. In contrary to how much previous literature highlighted how commerciality is negatively perceived by blog readers, the findings in the present research showed that not only were interviewees supportive of blog commerciality, but they consciously expected and looked for it in blog content to some extent. One reason why the interviewees had such positive attitudes to blog commerciality may relate to their general open-mindedness towards blogs; they all took part voluntarily in the study and had initial positive emotions towards blogs. The interviewees seemed to see personal benefit in being exposed to advertisers and commercial content in blogs by getting e.g. information about new brands, recommendations and discounts. However, if the interviewees perceived that an advertised brand was not fitting to the blogger's style and life, they expressed negative reactions to the commercial content.

The way how commercial content was communicated seemed to be a factor which had the highest impact on how commercial content was perceived. Firstly, interviewees expected to be clearly informed when commercial content was presented. Secondly, the

type of advertising and campaigns affected perceptions. All of the interviewees expected bloggers to show personal experience and use of brands that were advertised, both in text and images. Interviewees wanted to see campaigns in which advertisers and blogs had a long-lasting, close collaboration; however interviewees deemed campaigns which spread over several blogs as more memorable.

Finally, in relation to the advertisers on blogs, the interviewees expressed very positive reactions and desire to see more surprising companies collaborating with blogs. In cases which the interviewees expressed negative reactions to blog commerciality, they seemed to identify that the blog portrays the blogger's voice and is independent from advertisers. Hence the interviewees felt that what was published in blogs was the blogger's responsibility and affected the blog-reader-relationship, whereas it did not seem to have an effect on how the interviewees perceived the advertiser.

In conclusion and to answer the main research question, *How do blog content and commerciality affect the relationship that readers perceive to have with Bonnier Publications blogs?,* the findings showed that interviewees continuously evaluate the relationship they have with blogs based on the personal and commercial content published. The personal content helps readers in building an image of the blogger and creating an interest in the blogger's life. Commercial content is sought for; however the interviewees also have strong opinions about how commercial content is communicated. The interviewees also felt that commercial content is the blogger's responsibility and hence the perceptions the interviewees had about commercial messages affected how the blog-reader-relationship develops.

6.2. Practical implications

The results of the present study provide managerial and practical implications within the field of blog communication. As the present study has been conducted as a case study of Bonnier Publication's blogs, the results obviously provide the most relevant and accurate results for that company's operations. However, as blogs are a new and multifaceted channel in terms of the increasing commerciality in them, this study also

provides some general implications that are useful for any company involved with blogs, especially blogs in the forum of fashion and lifestyle.

At the start of the present research, Bonnier Publications explained that its interest in the present study related to gaining an understanding of how to develop the content of its blogs and for using the findings to increase advertisers' interest in blogs as an advertising channel. For Bonnier Publications, the present study provides concrete implications for understanding the relationship that readers have with their blogs. Furthermore, Bonnier Publications gains insight on the type of personal and commercial content that its readers want to see in blogs, and how readers perceive the blogs as part of Bonnier Publication's magazine brands. As the findings of the present study also directly relate to how readers perceive commercial content in Bonnier Publications blogs and overall, the present study provides Bonnier Publications with concrete justifications that the company can use for persuading advertisers to engage in new forms of blog advertising.

The findings of the study show how blog readers are influenced by bloggers and describe the emotional tie that is built between a reader and a blog. In terms of companies this provides some basis for further considering the criteria based on which they choose which blogs to collaborate with. Generally, page visits are commonly used criteria for determining the popularity of a blog. However, based on the findings of the present study, the strength of the relationship that readers have towards a blog has a strong effect on how commercial content is perceived. Therefore, it would be recommendable that companies aim to find alternative ways in which they can measure the actual effect of advertising in blogs.

A second implication to note is the shift from personal to commercial blogs – currently it seems that media companies and advertisers are increasingly interested in cashing in on the readership of blogs without having a strong understanding of the audiences' needs. Previous research has already emphasized that companies should not try to interfere with the blog-reader-relationship, and the present study gives further insight in the expectations and preferences that readers have in terms of commercial content. The

present study highlights the importance of blogs tying commercial and personal content together, so in terms of companies this means that they should give blogs enough space for sharing opinions. Moreover, readers want to see advertisers and blogs collaborating closely because readers seem to be especially impressed and influenced by collaborations in which blogs are involved over a long period of time or from the early phases of a project.

The present research also gives insight into the types of campaigns and collaborations that blog readers want to see in blogs. These implications are especially relevant for the fashion, cosmetics and lifestyle forum blogs, but can perhaps not be as strongly generalized for readers of other blog forums as preferences and perceptions on commerciality can differ strongly within them. For fashion, cosmetics and lifestyle blogs, what companies should consider is whether to build a convincing, influential and close campaign with only one or a few bloggers or whether to aim for broad visibility by interacting with as many blogs as possible at once. Based on the present findings, close and deep campaigns with a limited number of bloggers works best for unexpected advertisers or for campaigns related to emphasizing a brand. Broader campaigns on the other hand were found to be more memorable in advertising for example clothes from online stores, new cosmetics and other similar products.

6.3. Limitations of the study

Some limitations to this study were presented in section 3.2. which addressed how limitations regarding data collection and analysis were approached. Some further limitations can be defined in relation to the present research which relate to the challenge of studying a new area, conducting a case study and some details regarding the interviews.

A notable limitation in the present study is the constant development of the field of social media and blogs. This affects the relevance of previous research: some studies that have been published in recent years provide somewhat outdated findings especially relating to the technical features of blogs which in general make it difficult to find

appropriate research. Therefore, there were some limitations in building the theoretical framework as some previous studies were not applicable to current blogs.

Another limitation relates to the nature of this research which is a case study of Bonnier Publications. The data and findings of this study are quite focused on a certain forum of blogs and readers of certain demographics, which makes the generalization of results limited. Especially since the field itself has not been studied extensively and it is in a continuously developing phase, the findings in the present study may not be directly applicable to blogs which relate to significantly different forums or which attract significantly different readership. In other words, a case study relating to a generally young field makes it difficult to determine the extent to which the results could reflect generalizable trends.

In terms of the empirical part of the present study there were limitations in the process of inviting interviewees. The first method, inviting interviewees through a banner ad in blogs, resulted in a very limited number of interviewees. This required for the researcher to collect interviewees through personal networks. Although all interviewees were active blog readers and consumers of Bonnier Publication's blogs, getting all interviewees via the same channel would have been desirable. Furthermore, due to channels via which the interviewees were acquired, all interviewees generally had quite positive attitudes toward blog content and blog commerciality. Many of the interviewees also had a background in business or law studies, or work experience that related to blog commerciality, which can have had an effect on how they perceive blog commerciality. This provides some limitations to the results as they could show very differing results for interviewees who come from varying backgrounds or have differing prejudice to blogs.

The common ground that the interviewees of the present study shared was their activeness, interest and knowledge in Bonnier Publication's blogs. However, these criteria turned out to be quite subjective in terms of what can actually be classified as strongly active and knowledgeable, as there was a lot of variety in the depth of answers that the interviewees provided. Although the purpose was to study reader perceptions

and as such, the present study provides reliable findings on that part, the actual interest and knowledge the interviewees had did affect the flow of interviews and the depth of discussions. Furthermore, it should be noted that although the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, the interview questions were quite personal. Therefore the interviewees were at times quite reluctant to further explain their thoughts or personal feelings or even stated that they were somewhat ashamed in talking about their blog-reading behavior. It is therefore reasonable to mention that the interviewees may have even stronger opinions or forms of behavior than what they actually revealed in the interviews.

6.4.   Suggestions for further research

As a constantly developing and changing field, blogs provide several interesting and relevant further areas of research. As the commercial side in personal blogs has developed, there is even more incentive to study blogs from the perspective of communication and business. Blogs are not only relevant for companies any more in the form of corporate blogs, but also through collaborating with personal blogs and finding new advertising channels in them. As such, blogs provide an interesting field for continuing business research.

Media convergence is the underlying phenomenon of this research and it is highly relevant in affecting the business of media companies. Blogs are only one solution for media companies to be more involved with emerging online media and building new revenue channels. Therefore, researching further options of how media companies can benefit from various forms of social media, identifying new models for creating revenue, and perhaps comparing benefits of various channels are all relevant for providing concrete implications for current business.

To further develop the present research, studying readers of different activity levels, such as those who constantly engage and interact with blogs or those who do not read blogs at all, can provide a deeper perspective of reader perceptions and needs. Furthermore, to gain a broader view of reader perceptions, it can be recommended that other blog forums are targeted. The present research focuses on fashion and lifestyle

blogs which are generally read by young females, but looking at different demographics and blogs from a different forum will provide interesting comparison. For example studying both male and female readers' perceptions would be interesting in terms of understanding what forums of blogs both are interested and the type of content they seek. Another focus could be on comparing international blogs. As was found in this study, readers do not commonly read blogs from different countries especially because they are harder to relate to, but studying readers from different backgrounds could provide findings on whether international readers have similar perceptions on blogs content and commerciality.

In the present study, it was found that while previously visual aspects and images were not considered to be a relevant or common part of blogs, readers of the blog forums in question have high expectations for such content. This is an area that has not yet received much attention in previous research but seems to be very relevant. That is why studying the structure, layout and visual content in blogs would be an interesting and important aspect to study as it seems to strongly affect the overall communication of a blog and a factor that readers emphasize in their reading experience.

The relationship between a reader and blog is so unique compared to other media that readers build an emotional tie and trust the blog's content even though they are aware that it is paid-for advertising. Based on the findings of the present study, although readers feel they have a friend-like relationship with blogs, this relationship is, in most cases, based on one-way communication from the blogger. Generally, two-way communication is relevant in building a strong relationship and it has also been identified as a key aspect in social media, yet in the blogs of the present study the majority of readers do not seem to value that aspect. Therefore one recommendation would be to further study the reader-blog-relationship to gain a thorough understanding of how it is built and how readers form such a strong emotional bond without the traditional interactive aspects that are present in real-life friendships.

Finally, the commercial aspect of personal blogs deserves more attention in business related blog research. In blogs, and social media, advertising effectiveness and methods

should be more thoroughly studied in order to understand how it is perceived and has influence on consumers. From the communication perspective, understanding more thoroughly how consumers want to be exposed to commercial content in this emerging and developing medium, is important in order to provide well-targeted, effective messages. Overall, further research of the commercial side of blogs and social media is relevant for the development of the media field.

7. References

Armstrong, C. & McAdams, M. (2011). Blogging the Time Away? Young Adult's Motivations for Blog Use. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 19, 113-128.

ASML (2013). Luonnos blogimainonnan ohjeistukseksi nyt kommentoitavana. Retrieved May 19, 2013 from http://www.asml.fi/luonnos-blogimainonnan-ohjeistukseksi-nyt-kommentoitavana/

Blood, R. (2002).The Weblog Handbook. Perseus Publishing, Cambridge.

BONNIER AB (2013). About us. Retrieved May 3, 2013 from http://www.bonnier.com/about-us/

Bonnier Publications Oy (2013). Lehtemme. Retrieved August 18, 2013 from http://www.bonnierpublications.fi/tutustu/lehtemme

Chu, S. & Kamal, S. (2008). The effect of perceived blogger credibility and argument quality on message elaboration and brand attitudes: An exploratory study. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), 26-37.

Colapinto, C. (2010). Moving to a Multichannel and Multiplatform Company in the Emerging and Digital Media Ecosystem: The Case of Mediaset Group. *The International Journal on Media Management*, 12, 59-75.

Colliander, J. & Dahlén, M. (2011). Following the Fashionable Friend: The Power of Social Media. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(1), 313-320.

Cornelissen, J. (2011). *Corporate Communication – A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications, London.

Costume (2013). Blogit. Retreived June 1, 2013 from http://www.costume.fi/blogit

Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2008). *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*. SAGE Publications, London.

Guenther, M. (2011). Magazine Publishing in Transition: Unique Challenges for Multi-Media Platforms. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 27(4), 327-331.

Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (2013). Mainonnan tunnistettavuus blogeissa. Retreived March 5, 2014 from http://www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/File/fbfb5981-68a1-4e80-9370-9da682352fea/Mainonnan_tunnistettavuus_blogeissa.pdf

Finnmedia - The Federation of the Finnish Media Industry (2011a). Mediavuosi 2011. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from http://www.vkl.fi/faktaa_alalta/toimialakatsaus_2011

Finnmedia - The Federation of the Finnish Media Industry (2011b). Aikakauslehden brändissä on voimaa. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from http://www.vkl.fi/faktaa_alalta/toimialakatsaus_2011/aikakauslehdet

Herring, S., Scheidt, L., Wright, E. & Bonus, S. (2005). Weblogs as a bridging genre. *Information Technology & People*, 18(2), 142-165.

Hirsjärvi, H. and Hurme, H. (2011). *Tutkimushaastattelu – Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.

Huang, C., Shen, Y., Lin, H. & Chang, S. (2007). Bloggers' Motivations and Behaviors': A Model. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(4), 472-484.

Huang, L., Chou, Y. & Lin, C. (2008). The Influence of Reading Motives on the Responses after Reading Blogs. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 351-355.

Jenkins, H. (2004). The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 33-43.

Jutila, H. (2013). Email interview. Answers received June 26, 2013.

Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68.

Kaye, B. (2010). Going to the Blogs: Towards the Development of a Uses and Gratifications Measurement Scale for Blogs. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 18, 194-210.

Kozinets, R., de Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. & Wilner, S. (2010). Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Communities. *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 71-89.

Kretz, G. & de Valck, K. (2010). "Pixelize Me!": Digital Storytelling and the Creation of Archtypal Myths Through Explicit and Implicit Self-Brand Association In Fashion and Luxury Blogs. Research in Consumer Behavior, 12, 313-329.

Kulmala, M., Mesiranta, N. & Tuominen, P. (2013). Organic and amplified eWOM in consumer fashion blogs. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 17(1), 20-37.

Markkinointi & Mainonta (2014). Aller ostaa Olivian, Costumen ja Divaanin. Retrieved April 19, 2014 fromhttp://www.marmai.fi/uutiset/aller+ostaa+olivian+divaanin+ja+costumen/a2231140

McPhillips, S. & Merlo, O. (2008). Media convergence and the evolving media business model: an overview and strategic opportunities. *The Marketing Review*, 8 (3), 237-253.

Lövheim, M. (2011). Personal and Popular – The Case of Young Swedish Female Top-bloggers. *Nordicom Review*, 32 (1), 3-16.

Olivialehti (2013). Blogit. Retrieved June 1, 2013 from http://www.olivialehti.fi/blogit/

Pihl, C. & Sandström, C. (2013). Value creation and appropriation in social media – the case of fashion bloggers in Sweden. *International Journal of Technology Management*, 61 (3/4), 309-323.

Pradnya, J. (2009) Approval by a Blogger May Please a Sponsor. Retrieved March 1, 2014 from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/13/technology/internet/13blog.html?_r=0

Schmidt, J. (2007). Blogging Practices: An Analytical Framework. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12, 1409-1427.

Scott, D. (2009). *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey.

Segev, S. & Wang, W. (2014). The effects of ad-context congruency on responses to advertising in blogs – Exploring the role of issue involvement. *International Journal of Advertising*, 33(1), p. 18-36.

Statistic Finland (2011). Mass media market 2010 – growth was weak in printed media. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from http://www.stat.fi/til/jvie/2010/jvie_2010_2011-12-16_tie_001_en.html

Statistic Finland (2012). Turnover of electronic media doubled since 2001. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from http://www.stat.fi/til/jvie/2011/01/jvie_2011_01_2012-12-12_tie_001_en.html

Stefanone, M. & Jang, C. (2008). Writing for Friends and Family: The Interpersonal Nature of Blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 123-140.

Stöber, R. (2004). What Media Evolution Is: A Theoretical Approach to the History of New Media. *European Journal of Communication*, 19(4), 483-505.

Troland, T. (2005). Seeing Ahead: Underpinnings for What Is Next for Magazine Publishin. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 20(4), 3-13.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Strictly Style blog, http://www.olivialehti.fi/strictlystyle.
Screen shot taken May 9, 2014.
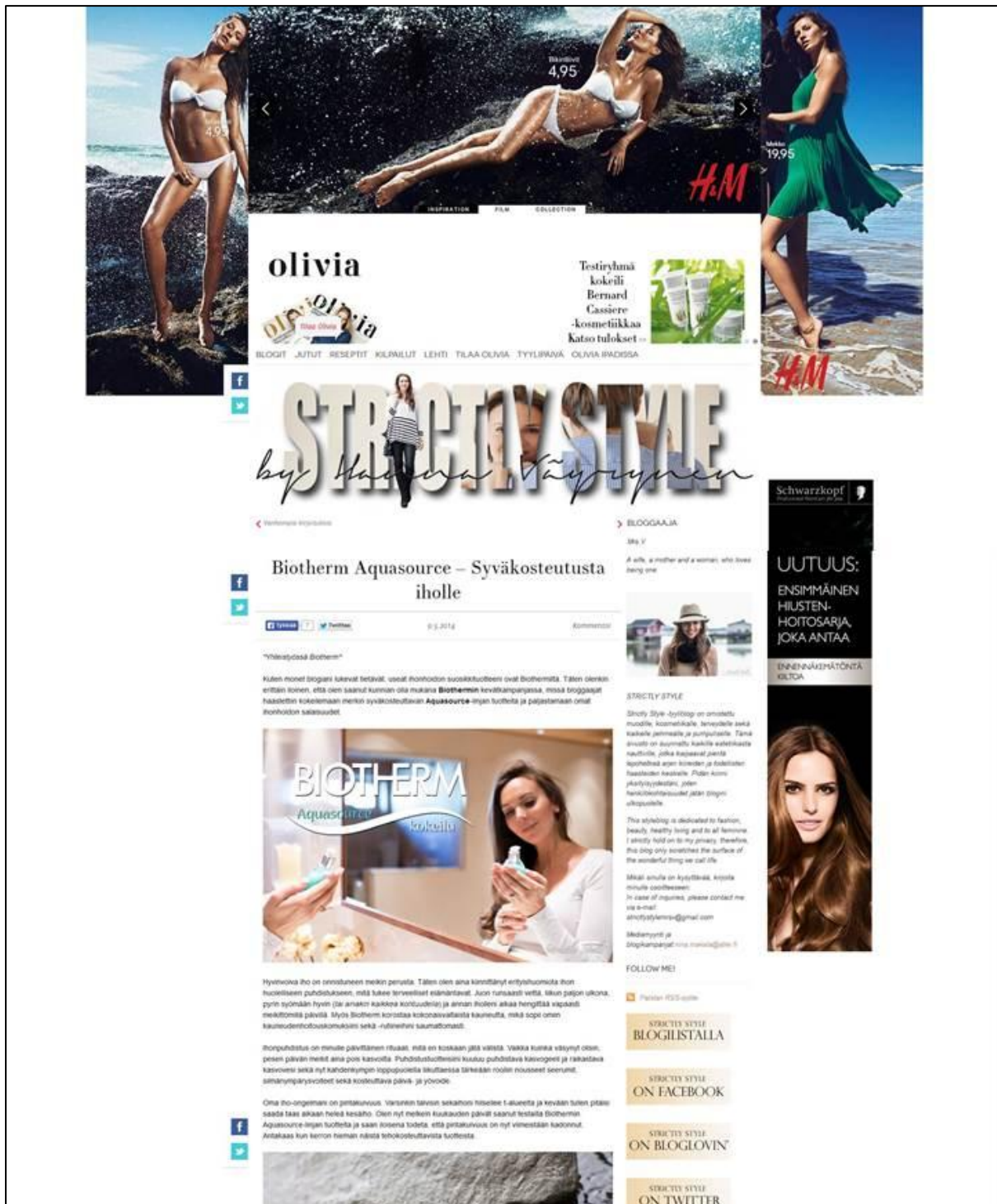
APPENDIX 2. Mariannan blog, http://www.mariannan.costume.fi.
Screen shot taken May 9, 2014.