Aalto University
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Me, My Brands and I - Self-presentation through brand-related UGC

Marketing

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Abstract

Objective of the study

The aim of the research is to investigate how consumers tell stories about creating visual brand-related user-generated content (UGC) to identify themes that appear most comprehensive and most revealing for explaining the individual and collective experiences. First objective is to explore in-depth how consumers engage in this process of creating brand-related UGC in order to gain a better understanding of the concept of UGC itself in terms of consumer research. Second, the objective is to study how creating visual brand-related content and sharing it on social media plays a role in individual's identity construction and self-presentation.

Research method

This research is qualitative and adopts the narrative paradigm, as it allows forming an intimate and unique understanding of consumers' personal experiences. The research seeks to extend the existing research on self-presentation in nonymous (the opposite of "anonymous") online environments; therefore it examines identity construction on social photo-sharing network Instagram. The data was collected thought narrative interviews of eight participants, with total of 32 stories. The data was then analyzed by using analysis of narratives to identify commonalties and themes that exist and appear most comprehensive and most revealing for explaining the individual and collective experiences of creating visual brand-related UGC.

Findings

The data revealed multiple motivations why consumers produce brand-related photos to Instagram that were categorized to five broader themes: 1) Entertainment, 2) Documentation 3) Social interaction 4) Empowerment 5) Identity. Consumers may have simultaneously multiple motivations and the motivations may change through out the process. The consumers evaluate their motivations and possible outcomes and make a decision whether to move on to the next stage of the process of creating brand-related photos: 1) Initial impetus 2) Creating the photo 3) Sharing the photo 4) Social interaction 5) Leave it or remove it. These steps do not necessary follow in this certain order and can jump from one to another forwards and backwards. Through the photos, consumers intended to communicate and tell something about who they are; what matters to them; and, how they want others to perceive them. The research identified six self-presentation strategies that were used to when presenting self through creating and sharing brand-related photos to Instagram: 1) Culture, Rules and Norms 2) Publicity vs. Privacy 3) Constructing Digital Self 4) Digital Association 5) Real Self vs. Ideal Self 6) Narrative Memory. In conclusion, the research introduces a model (Figure 1, p. 45) that combines the process, the motivational drivers and the self-presentation strategy as illustration of the process of producing brand-related photos to Instagram as mean for self-presentation.

Keywords

User-generated content, UGC, Brand-related, Identity construction, Self-presentation, photo, Social media, Instagram

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1. Introduction

The rise of web 2.0 and the huge popularity of social networks have had a great impact on consumer behavior (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram provide almost unlimited means for consumers to interact, express and share content about anything they want, including brands (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit, 2011). One form of consumer engagement that is rapidly growing is brand-related user-generated content (UGC), as millions of ordinary people are publishing their own brand-related content in online environments (Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian, 2012; Burmann, 2010). This exponential rise of user-generated content has deeply altered the way consumers experience brands (Muñiz and Schau, 2007).

Now especially a revolution is taking place around visual social content, as consumers are creating increasing amounts of brand-related photos and videos (Burmann, 2010). Visual sharing platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Vine, Pinterest, and Snapchat are allowing consumers to play a critical role in defining brands, amplifying their experience and influencing their peers (Muntiga et al. 2011). Today, these photo-sharing platforms are less about photography, art, and memories and more about communication. For example, Instagram has become a visual wall to tell friends, family and strangers all around the world about the people, places, and things that we love. Consumers use their phones to snap and share photos to show off the new gadgets and vehicles, parade about the handbags and shoes they just purchased or simply let everyone know what they ate for dinner in the hip new restaurant. As a result, today's photos are much more likely to be brand affiliated. A striking example of this phenomenon is a blog "Rich Kids of Instagram" that publishes Instagram photos of young men and women indicating wealth by associating themselves with high-end luxury products and brands (Rich Kids of Instagram, 2014).

It seems that consumers are constructing their own identities and presenting themselves by creating and sharing brand-related UGC. Both researchers and marketers are becoming increasingly interested in the various ways how consumers express their own identities (Ahuvia, 2005, 179), as it plays critical role in explaining consumer and sociocultural behavior.

1.1 Research Background

The term user-generated content (UGC) can be defined, as consumer produced content that is made publicly available through Internet (OECD, 2007). Furthermore the content needs to be created for free outside professional and institutional practice and needs to reflect some degree of creative effort (OECD, 2007).

In the recent years the user-generated content has received increasing interest in the academic literature (Arnhold, 2010). However, most of the current research concentrate on investigating user-generated content in general, but do not specify on brand-related UGC. This research will focus on brand-related UGC, which can be defined by the same principles as UGC. In addition to these principles, brand-related UGC explicitly addresses user-generated content about a brand, regardless its positive or negative purpose or connotation (Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme, 2012).

It is not new that consumers are involved in creating and communicating about the products and brands they consume. Christodoulides et al. (2012) point out that word of mouth (WOM) was one of the earliest subjects that the nascent market-research industry got interested in. Therefore, Burmann and Arnhold (2010) note that it is important to recognize that the aspects of UGC are strongly related word-of-mouth research and to other user centered research fields such as user innovation, open source, collective intelligence and brand community research. These grassroots concepts are regarded as the foundation of UGC in the broader sense and help to understand the practice of creating brand-related user-generated content (Arnhold, 2010).

The present study attempts to link the research on UGC to the theoretical framework of consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). CCT offers an interesting theoretical framework to explore the consumption of brand-related UGC as an exchange of symbolic meanings in the marketplace of social media. Especially, the research program of identity projects opens new possibilities to study how the consumption of UGC affects the building of self-identity and particularly how UGC is used for the purpose of self-presentation. Person's possessions, as well as digital possessions, are major contributors that reflect his or her own identity, as people make their identities tangible and self-present, by associating with various material objects and places (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Self-presentation has been widely researched field in academic literature (e.g. Goffman, 1959), but introduction of digital environment has challenged these theories based on bodily enactment, material acquisition and physical proximity (Schau and Gilly, 2003; Belk, 2013). Schau and Gilly

(2003) argue that virtual worlds allow consumers to present themselves using digital rather than physical references.

The first studies on identity constructions in anonymous virtual online environments suggested that, as users would be emancipated from their physical bodies and are without actual material, users could take whatever persona they wished and play-act at being someone else (e.g. Castronova, 2007; Turkle, 1997). However, more recent examination of identity performance in less anonymous online settings such as Internet dating sites (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs, 2006) and personal web sites (Schau and Gilly, 2003) reported that people act differently in such environments and online self-presentations varied according to the nature of the settings. Moreover, the previous findings were challenged with what Bolter (1996) called the "breakout of the visual" online, which led to "new constructions and definitions of the self" (as cited in Belk, 2013). This was due especially to the more visual online environments of social media, photo- and video-sharing sites, virtual worlds, online games, and so forth.

Especially the rapid growth of social media and peer-to-peer interaction has offered new types of online environments and forms of self-expressions that have become interest of researchers (e.g. Heinonen, 2011; Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin, 2008). Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram provide a new space for the consumers where they can easily augment their identities. Identity constructing and self-presentation is particularly easy in social media where status updates, posts and photos can be linked and associated to people, places, objects, possession, and even to brands. Especially visual features (e.g. sharing photos) seem to be a significant way of self-presentation, as Zhoa et al. (2008) suggest that users on the social media site Facebook predominantly claim their identities rather by "showing" than "telling".

In spite of the growing interest in UGC there is a lack of consumer research studies explicitly on how consumers themselves experience creating brand-related UGC, how individuals tell stories about the process and its underlying meanings for self-presentation. Therefore, the present study seeks to extend this existing line of research by exploring the practice of creating visual brand-related UGC as medium for self-presentation on the social media network Instagram.

1.2 Research Objectives & Questions

This study builds on previous research on user-generated content and self-presentation to make two primary contributions. The first objective is to investigate in-depth how consumers engage in this process of creating brand-related UGC. The research investigates how consumers tell stories about creating visual brand-related content to identify themes that appear most comprehensive and most revealing for explaining the individual and collective experiences. I want to understand what, where, how and why consumers create and post brand-related photos.

The second objective is to study how creating visual brand-related content and sharing it on social media plays a role in individual's identity construction and self-presentation. The study explores the meanings of creating brand-related photos in consumers' lives and what may be socially and identity wise accomplished through such activity and subsequently how consumers' achieve other personally salient experiences through it.

The empirical part of the study is of the qualitative manner and adopts the narrative paradigm, as it allows forming an intimate and unique understanding of consumers' personal experiences of producing visual brand-related UGC. The research uses narrative inquiry in which stories are used to describe human action (Polkinghorne, 1995). As this research seeks to extend the existing research on self-presentation in nonymous (the opposite of "anonymous") online environments, I chose to examine identity construction on social photo-sharing network Instagram. The research explicitly focuses on studying the shared brand-related photos as a mean for self-presentation – "a picture is worth a thousand words." In a way, by interviewing people I want to form a deeper understanding of consumers' authentic meanings and experiences of creating visual brand-related content in our postmodern society.

The main research questions that guide this study is:

- *How do consumers tell stories about creating visual brand-related UGC?*

The main question is supported with the sub-questions that help to address and discuss the findings from the gathered data of this research.

- *What is the process of creating brand-related photos to Instagram?*
- *What is the role of brand-related photos in self-presentation?*

1.3 Research Structure

The present thesis is divided into ten chapters. The present chapter introduces the research topic as well as explains the aim, the objective and the research questions of the study. The second chapter defines the concept of brand-related UGC and reviews prior literature. The third chapter will briefly analyze Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and focus on the 'consumer identity projects' research program. The chapters from four to five discuss theories of self-concept, identity and self-presentation in real life as well as in digital environments. The sixth chapter summarizes the presented literature and theories that are used as framework to investigate the ways in which consumers construct identities and present self by digitally associating themselves with the brand-related photos they create and share. The seventh chapter discusses the research methodology and the method for collecting data through narrative inquiry. Chapter eight presents the findings of the study and chapter nine links the findings to a broader scientific discussion. Chapter ten summarizes my conclusions and suggestions for future research.

2. Defining Brand-related UGC

Since the concept of user-generated content (UGC) and especially brand-related UGC are relatively new in the academic literature, therefore a more specific focus on the defining the terms and their relationship to other similar concepts and near research fields are in order.

In this chapter, I first define the concepts and the relationships of user centered research, user-generated content (UGC) and brand-related user-generated content. After that I focus on discussing the prior research on brand-related UGC such as the various types of environments, content, consumers as well as motivational drivers.

2.1 User Centered Research

This section briefly explores the user centered research field and explains its relationship to brand-related UGC. The research done specifically in the area of brand-related UGC and its outcomes are somewhat limited. However UGC is strongly linked to other, better-documented streams of user-centered research, such as user innovation, open source research, collective intelligence, brand community and word of mouth (Burmann and Arnhold, 2010). These grassroots concepts are regarded as the foundation of UGC in the broader sense (Arnhold, 2010), and therefore help to understand the practice of creating brand-related user-generated content and position it in the user centered research field.

The previous study on user innovation research such as prosumers (Toffler, 1980), lead users (Von Hippel, 1986) and open source (e.g. Von Krogh and von Hippel, 2006) contributes insights on individuals who innovate and create and how users become part of media production (Burmann, 2012). The research on collective intelligence (e.g. Lévy and Bonomo, 1999), provide understanding how the technology of cyberspace allows individuals to interact and provide a commune for "minds to meet", where ideas and information are exchanged around the globe, faster than ever. Whereas brand and online community studies (e.g. Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, Kim, and Roberts, 2002) contributes insights on communities and networks where users are gathered around brands and shared interests (Burmann, 2012).

Particularly, word-of-mouth (WOM) is strongly related to brand-related UGC. Word of mouth research (e.g. Gladwell, 2001) provides understanding on how the word about brands spreads from consumer to consumer and influence people's perceptions (Burmann, 2012). Furthermore the

research on the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (e.g. Cheung and Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004) specifies this research in online environment. eWOM is defined as being "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p. 39). Cheong and Morrison (2012) distinguish between eWOM as content that *travels* because of consumers and UGC as content that is actually *created* by consumers.

2.2 User-generated Content

The online environments are empowering consumers, as their role is changing from being passive recipients of information to becoming active creators of content and information (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002 as cited in Heinonen, 2011). Producing user-generated content (UGC) is currently one of the mainstream activities among web users (Ochoa and Duval, 2008). According to Horrigan (2010) 45% of the Internet users in USA have produced at least once a user-generated content to Internet. The OECD (2007) reports also similar trends in Europe, Japan and Korea. Now the media landscape is increasingly evolving into more complex and dynamic mixture of traditional and interactive media that seek to fulfill the needs of the postmodern consumers' needs. Websites utilizing UGC are not only forming new consumption patterns and social interactions, but also developing new business models and opportunities (Cha, Kwak, Rodriguez, Ahn, and Moon, 2007).

The term user-generated content (UGC), refers to various types of media content primarily produced and distributed on the Internet and created by the common people and general public rather than by paid professionals (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright, 2010). Although consumers have been creating their own content for ages, the potential for common people to share it and communicate with mass audience has only recently been possible by the advent of Web 2.0 (Christodoulides et al. 2012). Especially the fast growth of social networking sites has supported the development of UGC and possibilities to interact with other consumers (Christodoulides et al. 2012).

UGC has quickly become an important electronic medium as millions of people use UGC websites to consume content generated by other common people. Today, UGC has become omnipresent in e-commerce and has created some of the most successful digital brands that support the creation and consumption of UGC, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia, Flickr, Blogger, and

Instagram (Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008). In these UGC media environments, consumers are producing, designing, publishing, and editing wide range of different types of content that has made this medium very attractive and vibrant. Quick observation shows that there is a numerous different forms of UGC across various social media sites, such as Twitter tweets, Facebook status updates, YouTube videos, and photos on Instagram as well as consumer-produced reviews (Dhar and Chang 2009; Muñiz and Schau 2007).

Terms such as consumer-generated media (CGM), user created content (UCC) and user-genrated content (UGC) are used to a large extent interchangeably (Arnhold, 2010). Numerous researchers (e.g. Arnhold, 2010; Daugherty et al. 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Stöckl et al. 2007) have come to similar conclusions of the requirements of UGC. Stöckl et al. (2007) refer to UGC as special form of content, which is created independently by a user with the help of the Internet for an undetermined public without a direct profit. Daugherty et al. (2010) define UGC as media content created by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet. This research applies the generally well-founded definition of UGC by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), which argues that user-generated content needs to fulfill three basic requirements. The three-part definition is presented below along with discussion of the views of other researchers.

First of all the content has to be made available through publicly accessible transmission media such as the Internet (publication requirement) (OECD, 2007; Arnhold, 2010). This can be either on a publicly accessible website, blog, wiki, online video site, bookmarking site, podcast site, virtual world or on social networking sites accessible to a selected group of people (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). According this definition the publication requirement excludes non-publicly accessible forms of two-way communication such as instant messages and emails. Furthermore Stöckl et al. (2007) state that UGC is mass media orientated content that is produced for an uncertain number of recipients. This does not mean, however, that any self-created content will reach a mass audience. On the contrary, it may be said that a large part of user generated content reach only few recipients (Stöckl et al. 2007).

Second requirement is that the creator of UGC has to add own value by reflecting some amount of creative effort to either by adapting and mixing existing works or constructing new ones (creative efforts requirement) (OECD, 2007; Arnhold, 2010). The user-generate content needs to be more than a replication of already existing content. Therefore simply posting a copy of third party-produced content such as an existing newspaper article without any modifications or commenting is

excluded (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Needed creative efforts can be argued, but the required amount of creative work could range from simply sharing comments and other forms of opinion expressions (e.g. advice, review, peer-to-peer discussions, personal experience), to purely self-made content (e.g. homemade videos, recordings, own poems) and remixes of prior existing work (e.g. re-cut trailers, remixed songs) as well as hybrid forms adapting self-made work with existing content (e.g. lip synching) (Arnhold, 2010). Furthermore the creative effort might also be a collaboratively produced, modified, shared and consumed to create content (Arnhold, 2010), and "can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61).

Third, now consumers have become the producers of the content (Arnhold, 2010; Daugherty et al. 2010). UGC is separated from content produced by the traditional media producers (creation outside professional routines requirement) (OECD, 2007; Arnhold, 2010). UGC is understood as non-professional grassroots movement outside institutional, commercial and professional routines and practices. This is the most prominent characteristic of UGC, as now customers take on an additional and active role to become the producer of content (Bowman and Willis 2003; Stöckl et al. 2007). Furthermore it should be noted that currently UGC is considered to be created for free without expectation of remuneration or immediate profit (Christodoulides et al. 2012)

However this three-part definition by OECD is not universally accepted (e.g. Koskinen 2003; Miller, 2005). Furthermore Ochoa and Duval (2008) argue that some UGC is merely accessible for a closed group (such as private social media account) or is just rather a repackaging of content without any actual contribution or is created by professionals such as brand-sponsored blogs. However Ochoa and Duval (2008) admit that the OECD's definition reflects the main characteristics shared by the numerous and very various content types published by the online users.

2.3 Brand-related UGC

Today a significant amount of user-generated content involves brand-related material (Burmann and Arnhold, 2008). Furthermore recent evidence shows that about 70 percent of brand-related searches on social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter relate to user-generated content, and only 30 percent of searches try to seek content created by marketers (360i, 2009; Burmann and Arnhold, 2008). This exponential rise of UGC has deeply altered the way consumers experience brands (Muñiz and Schau, 2007).

This research will focus explicitly on brand-related UGC, which is also called as consumer generated media (CGM) or consumer-generated content (CGC) (Christodoulides et al. 2012). In order to elaborate the definition of brand-related UGC, the research applies a brand-related focus to the well-founded OECD definition of UGC discussed in previous section. The three general UGC principles, i.e. publication requirement, creative effort, and creation outside of professional routines are adopted as foundation of brand-related UGC. In addition to these principles, brand-related UGC explicitly addresses user-generated content about a brand, regardless its positive or negative purpose or connotation (Christodoulides et al. 2012). Arnhold (2010) suggests that brand-related UGC is a consumer's personal interpretation of a brand that is visualized in a certain way.

Brand-related UGC cover opinions, experiences, advices, feedbacks, reviews and commentary about products, services, companies and brands. These are usually based on consumer's personal experience that is then published on forums, blogs and social media sites (Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008). However, Arnhold (2010) suggest that definition is not restricted only to a customer of the brand, as consumption and customer experience are not needed for creating brand-related UGC.

Similar to UGC, also brand-related UGC can include text, images, photos, music, videos, and other forms of media and requires a certain degree of creativity by either adapting and modifying existing content or producing new content (Krishnamurthy and Dou, 2008; Arnhold, 2010). The definition excludes merely copying and sharing original brand content, e.g. posting a recorded TV-ads on YouTube or re-publishing a print magazine ads or brand-related articles (Arnhold, 2010).

Applying the UGC principle of creation outside professional routines implies that the producers of the brand-related UGC are the consumers and not the professional marketers or assigned agencies of the respective brand (Arnhold, 2010). However this does not limit the professional or quasi-professional producers who engage outside their own primary employment and have created brand-related UGC without monetary expectations.

2.4 Diverse World of UGC

Similarly to the history of traditional media (e.g. television, radio, and print media), the online media landscape has moved through evolutionary lifecycles and evolved into a robust information space that provides both consumers and brands with wide range of possibilities for social interaction and place for sharing content and ideas (i.e. information) with each other (Daugherty, 2008). This section discusses the various environments, contents and the consumers of the heterogeneous world of UGC.

2.4.1 Online Environments

The possibility to publish and share content in online environments has been possible since the rise of the Internet, as the publication mechanisms are inborn to the structure of the information space (Daugherty, 2008). However, the more adjustable content became possible through the innovation of Web 2.0 applications that gather information and UGC according to their subscriber's specifications (Daugherty, 2008). These technological tools and applications made the consumption, creation, and distribution of UGC more usable and accessible. Over time, the Internet has become a highly robust information space that offers consumers with wide range of possibilities for efficient and rapid way to create and consume UGC.

Examples of the prominent Web 2.0-based internet sites that support both the creation and consumption of user-generated content include question-answer databases, forums, review-sites, video sharing sites (e.g. YouTube and Vimeo), social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), blogging (e.g. blogger), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), photo-sharing (e.g. Flickr), podcasts and personal Web pages, among many others (Arnold, 2010; Daugherty, 2008).

Guo, Tan, Chen, Zhang, and Zhao (2009) have classified existing social networks into two categories according to their different purposes: the networking oriented social network and the knowledge-sharing oriented social networks. The networking oriented social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, emphasize the networking aspects, and the social interaction and relationships are in the core of these platforms. In these social platforms, the content sharing is mainly done among friends in semi-closed environments (Guo et al. 2009). In contrast, the knowledge-sharing oriented social networks, such as Wikipedia, blog networks and question answering networks, the emphasis the knowledge or content sharing publically. The people in these

social platforms are not driven by the need for social relationships, but rather the network is formed through the users' common interests on the shared content (Guo et al. 2009).

However, the public distribution of UGC is not limited solely to the Internet. Platforms for distributing and consuming brand-related UGC may also include all new media technologies such as mobile and other electronic devices (Arnold, 2010).

2.4.2 Content and Creation

In the extensive landscape of the different UGC environments, consumers are producing, designing, publishing, and editing wide range of different types of content that makes this medium very vibrant and attractive. There are obviously huge differences among the UGC, for example a Facebook wall post does not look anything like a YouTube video. It is clear that the wide variation of the different UGC generates different types of processes for creating and consuming the content as well as the purpose and the salient meanings of the UGC (Smith etl al. 2012).

The production of various types of UGC are similar, but not the same (Ochoa and Duval, 2008). Similarly to the content itself, also the process of creating YouTube video is not same as writing a Wikipedia article. Therefore it can be argued that consumer behavior varies among different social media when it comes to creating and consuming UGC (Smith etl al. 2012). For example, Daugherty et al. (2008) argue that people are more willing to post to discussion forums, to create blogs, and develop websites than to consume these types of user-generated content. In contrast, UGC audiences would rather view pictures, watch videos, listen to audio, and visit wiki-sites than create such type of content (Daugherty et al. 2008). Daughtery (2008) suggests that UGC consumers appear more inclined to adopt a passive approach, as looking at photos, following video or listening music does not involve same active involvement as reading and following discussions in text. In contrast, the creators of UGC seem to be able express themselves better by engaging in behaviors that give them a voice to present their individual thoughts (e.g., writing to blogs or creating personal Web sites) (Daugherty, 2008).

2.4.3 Consumer Types

Ochoa and Duval (2008) argue that there is no such thing as an average online user, especially when it comes to producing UGC. There are numerous factors that distinguish consumers' own interest and possibilities to create UGC, everything from knowledge, creativity and personality to personal interest as well as material possession and monetary possibilities (Stöckl et al. 2007). The recent research on consumer's activities and motivations being active or passive in social media suggest that users are either active as posters or contributors or in contrast passive as lurkers or consumers of content (e.g. Shang, Chen, and Liao 2006; Shao, 2009).

Using this approach, de Valck, van Bruggen, and Wierenga (2009) categorized six different online user types that are based on identified communication and participation patterns: "1) Core members contributed to the community the most by retrieving, supplying, and discussing information. 2) Conversationalists focused on discussing information. 3) Informationalists retrieved and supplied information. 4) Hobbyists focused on maintaining and updating their personal information on the website. 5) Functionalists were interested in retrieving information. 6) Opportunists only retrieved marginal content from the website" (Heinonen, 2011, p. 357).

Even that online users are often potrayed as creative and active, however the fact is that, depending on differences in the user's interest and resources, only a small number of consumers are responsible of producing the majority of the UGC (Courtois, Mechant, De Marez, and Verleye. 2009; Heinonen, 2011). Ochoa and Duval, (2008) suggest that approximately 90% of the users who contribute produce few items, while the res 10% create major part of the content. The findings of Guo et al. (2009, June) indicate similar result, as according to their study, distribution of user contributions in online social networks roughly follows the "80-20" rule, i.e. 20% users contribute 80% total content in the network. Many of the online platforms utilizing UGC rely heavily on the core users, as a single user can be responsible for creating more than the 10% of the site's content (Ochoa and Duval, 2008). And when the users produce UGC, it is most often to social networking sites (Heinonen, 2011).

The core users are not only responsible for the quantity of the content, but more often also for the quality. Guo et al. (2009, June) argue that different types of users contribute different types of UGC content, for example high-quality content tends to be produced by only (a few) core users. Might be added that some of the UGC can have surprisingly outstanding quality to it and involve high production expenditure (Stöckl et al. 2007).

2.5 Drivers of Brand-related Content

As user-generated content is becoming more extensive, understanding what drives users to create content becomes increasingly important (Daugherty, 2010). In the literature motivations are understood as intentions of behavior that arise from the interaction between person, situation and motivational structure of a person (Rosenstiel 2000; (Stöckl et al. 2007). Motives are defined as generalized and sustained human behavioral objectives (Steinle 1978), e.g. the list of motives from the well-known theory of "Maslows Hierarchy of Needs" (Maslow, Frager and Cox, 1970).

Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade (2004) suggest that people have three main drivers or motivational factors for using the internet: information, entertainment, and social aspects. This finding has been supported and extended by more recent research what drives consumers to create UGC (Heinonen, 2011). However, as UGC is an emerging field of study, there is limited knowledge explicitly on the motivational factors of involvement with brand-related UGC (Christodoulides et al. 2012). Therefore the present research will first review and discuss typologies and findings of three different studies concerning motivational themes that drive consumers to create UGC in general. Then I will introduce the few prior studies regarding motivational factors for producing brand-related UGC and discuss the correlation and diversity of these findings.

Previous studies of UGC have suggested that there are a various reasons why individuals choose to participate in creating user-generated content. Stöckl et al. (2007) developed a model that introduces six motivational sources for creating as well as consuming UGC: external economic incentives (monetary and signaling incentives), personal documentation (self-presentation and recording of experiences), enjoyment (fun and entertainment), passing time (e.g. diversion), information dissemination (presenting and sharing information) and contact (communication with others). The research argued that the most relevant motivations were enjoyment, information dissemination, desire for contact, and personal documentation. These primary factors can be considered to be intrinsic motivations, which suggests that the activity of creating UGC itself is part of the desired satisfaction. Whereas the more extrinsic motivations, such as monetary and economical purpose, had an inferior role. However, the study (Stöckl et al. 2007) suggested that the desire to enhance reputation and recognition from others seemed to be relevant.

Katz's (1960) typology suggests that any given attitude serves one or more of four distinct personality functions: utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive, and value-expressive functions (Daugherty et al. 2010). To this typology Daugherty et al. (2010) added a 'social function', as they argued that it seems be a strong motivator to create UGC. Based on their study Daugherty et al.

(2010) found that creators of user-generated content relied predominantly on the ego-defensive and social functions when forming attitudes towards UGC. The UGC works as ego-defensive function, as it helps consumers minimize their self-doubts and to defend one's self-image from internal insecurities and external threats. The social function refers to motivation for social adjustment, as it aids consumers to be part of activities that are perceived favorable by important others and gives them the opportunity to associate with friends. Interestingly, Daugherty et al. (2010) claim that the study indicated a negative correlation with the value-expressive function and there were no significant relationships with the utilitarian and knowledge functions in contributing to attitudes toward creation of UGC.

Even though most of the existing studies refer to UGC in general, Christodoulides et al. 2012 suggest that the findings can be regarded transferable to the branding context. In their research Christodoulides et al. (2012) analyzed the prior literature on UGC and summarized the previous findings in to four types of motivational factors for creating brand-related UGC: co-creation (e.g. interaction, ex-chancing information), empowerment (e.g. to be heard, influence others), community (e.g. sense of community, being part of something), and self-concept (e.g. self-presentation, self-expression, self-assurance). Their research suggested that three of the four of these factors (co-creation, community, and self-concept) had a positive impact on consumers' involvement with brand-related UGC (Christodoulides et al. 2012). Although the existing literature suggests a correlation between empowerment and involvement in UGC, Christodoulides et al. (2012) argue their results did not show that empowerment had a significant influence on UGC involvement.

Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) found similar motivational factors with Christodoulides et al. (2012) research: personal identity (self-presentation, self-expression and self-assurance), integration and social interaction (social interaction, social identity and social pressure), entertainment (enjoyment and pastime). However Muntiga et al. (2011) argued that empowerment was also found to be a motivational factor. The interviewees who articulated this motivation were seen as brand ambassadors, who wanted to display their enthusiasm for a brand and, importantly, enjoyed convincing others that the brand is worth using or purchasing (Muntiga et al. 2011).

The research by Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell (2008) did not explicitly study brand-related UGC, as it rather focused on user-generated advertising (UGA). UGA can be seen as a sub-category of brand-related UGC, where the content is not only brand-related, but also endorsing and advertising the particular brand. The study summarized findings into three motivational factors. First, intrinsic

enjoyment explains consumers' involvement with brands that they feel passionate about or are highly involved with. Consumers want to explore the brand and the products and are create content that they find interesting, insightful or creative. Second, self-promotion can be seen as motivational factor to consumers who want to piggyback on the brand image. This type of content focuses on the creator rather than on the brand or the message involved. The brands that are featured in such type of content are usually high-profile brands that are in the news or have a positive connotation. The third motivational factor is to change perceptions of others. Consumers want either to promote a brand that needs support (e.g. Greenpeace) or disturb a brand that is viewed as disingenuous (e.g. oil companies). Here the focus is on the message and not on self-promotion.

Although the literature suggests a number of common motivational factors for creating brand-related UGC, it should be noted that no such individual as an "average" UGC user exists (Ochoa and Duval, 2008). Similarly there are motivational differences in creating UGC among various online environments and types of UGC. For example Stöckl et al. (2008) found that video producers and bloggers differ in their motivations. The research noted that video production is more associated with fun and time passing, whereas blogging is rather regarded as being more useful in the spreading out information.

However, one thing that becomes clear across is that extrinsic motivations play an inferior role and especially the majority of active users were not (yet) attracted by monetary incentives. The primary motivational drivers were described to be intrinsic motivations, where the activity in itself is part of the aspired satisfaction. In contrast, Stöckl et al. (2008) also explored motivational themes against producing UGC and found out that the main reason was that it was seen time consuming. Other barriers were that consumers felt that they did not have anything interesting to say or show, as well as concerns about privacy and lacking pleasure in producing UGC (Stöckl et al. 2008)

3. Consumer Culture Theory

The present study attempts to link the research on UGC to the theoretical framework of consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). The study uses CCT to explore the consumption of brand-related UGC as an exchange of symbolic meanings in the marketplace of social media.

The birth and evolution of CCT rose from the field of consumer research due to growing interest in sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption and a need to study marketplace phenomena from cultural and postmodern perspectives. Arnould and Thompson (2005) do not find consumer culture theory to be a unified, grand theory, but rather as "family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relation ships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and the cultural meanings" (p. 868).

CCT abandons the traditional ways of categorization people, such as gender, nationality, social class, and sees culture as a phenomenon that rises from similar ways of consuming (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Most importantly CCT conceptualizes culture as the very fabric of experience, meaning and action (Geertz, 1983). This cultural approach to consumer behavior is formed on the idea that people live in a culturally constituted world, and that in contemporary Western society this constitution largely takes place in and though the market (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Penaloza (2000) suggest that marketplace is a joint cultural production of marketers and consumers. From this perspective, the cultural approach is concerned with the processes and practices through which marketplace actors produce and make use of products and services as cultural artifacts or symbols (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). CCT puts consumption to a central role in how people socially construct their worlds and how they socially interact with each other.

Arnould and Thompson (2005) distinguish four different research programs of consumer culture theory: 1) the consumer identity projects; 2) the marketplace cultures, 3) the sociohistoric patterning of consumption and 4) the mass mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. This research is mainly concerned about the research program of identity projects, which studies how consuming affects the building of self-identity: 'Who am I as a consumer of...?', 'How did I become a consumer of...?', and 'What does it mean to me to be a consumer of...?' The research does not focus so much on the psychological research on identity, but rather takes a consumer research view and links the concept of identity together with consumption.

4. The Self-Concept and Consumption

This chapter explores the self-concept by discussing the previous research on identity construction, extended self and self-presentation in real world. The next chapter will then continue from these findings to discuss how digital consumption has impacted the nature of self and the nature of possessions as well as identity construction and self presentation in digital environments.

4.1 Self, Sense of Self and Identity

Belk (1988; 2013) suggests that the terms "identity", "self," and "sense of self" are synonyms for how an individual subjectively perceives and defines himself. The concept of self is defined by Stets and Burke (2000, p. 130) as "set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. It is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations of us". These meanings and observations how a person perceives and defines who he or she is as an individual and how he or she connects to other people and social groups in affiliative relationships are based on social roles, personal characteristics, as well as other aspects and attributes (Kleine, Kleine III, and Allen, 1995; Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010).

According to McAdams (1993) to know a person, one needs to know his or her story. McAdams builds an identity theory around the idea that to gain insight in to meaning of our lives and who we are, we need to know and create stories of our lives and ourselves. The researchers (e.g. McAdams, 1993; Giddens, 1991; Thompson 1997) suggest that the person's sense of self is structured in terms of a narrative. This means to make sense who they are, people do not see them not only as a list of qualities or attributes (e.g., I am short and thin, I value freedom), but these qualities are connected in to the memory of certain moments in person's life, which together construct a story that connects person's identity from past, to present, and into the possible imagined future self (McAdams, 1993). Every life story or myth is composed of various events, developments and characters etc., which more than anything else is what makes every life and everyone unique. Narratives are not there that we "discover ourselves" but rather "make ourselves" through myth. As Giddens (1991, p. 54) suggest, "identity is not to be found in behavior, nor in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going."

4.2 Possessions and Extended Self

One of the first attempts to link consumption and identity comes from Belk (1988, p. 139), who claimed, "knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves". Consumption is used to extend, strengthen and maintain people's sense of identity through time and to define themselves in relationship to others. The possessions one owns are a significant contributor and reflection of his or her identities (Belk, 1988), as Tuan (1980, p. 472) argues, "our fragile sense of self needs support, and this we get by having and possessing things because, to a large degree, we are what we have and possess". The suggestion "that we are what we have" or "that we are sum of our possession" are perhaps the most basic and insightful idea of consumer behavior (Belk, 1988). This relationship becomes notable especially when person looses a possession through theft or loss and results in diminished sense of self.

Throughout our lives, consumers use material, symbolic, and experiential resources to prescribe personal and collective identities (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Belk (1988) suggests that identification with objects and possessions begins as early as the child learns to distinguish self from the environment and from other people who may envy his or her possessions. People use material possession to express themselves, seek happiness, re-mind themselves of experiences, important moments, accomplishments, and people in their lives, as well as even to create a feeling of immortality after departed from this life (Belk, 1988).

Belk's (1988) much-cited article posited an individual self with an inner core self as well as various levels of group affiliation ranging from family to community to society, which become further from the core self as they become larger and more impersonal. Belk sees that the core self, the true and authentic self, are likely to consist of the body, internal processes, ideas and experiences. When the core self is expanded to include various possessions, such as things, people and places, they then become part of the extended self. Moreover the things, which are part of the group identities, such as buildings, monuments and flags, are also seen as part of the extended self to the extent that the individual identifies with the group. In contrast, the items to which people do not feel attached are not part of the self. Belk (1988) suggest that possession can be incorporated into the extended self by several ways. These self-extensions can occur through mastery and control of an object, through creation of an object, through knowledge of an object, and additionally through positive or negative contamination via proximity and habituation to an object.

The tangible and intangible possessions reflect individual identity as they indicate e.g. a person's tastes, accomplishments, skills, or creative efforts (Schultz, Kleine III, and Kernan, 1989 as cited in

Schau and Gilly, 2003). Simultaneously, the possessions are part of affiliative identity as they play a major role for situating and reflecting the self within the social world and for expressing identity to the intended others, such as family, peer groups or community (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Individual identity may be said to demonstrate "me," whereas affiliative identity establishes "we" (Schau and Gilly 2003) and these two can be described as "primary drivers of consumer behavior" (Arnould and Price, 2000, p. 140). Through possessions consumers are able to express both types of identities and to categorize and label people and the environments around them to make sense of the world (Kleine, Kleine III, and Allen, 1995).

The relationships between the object and the individual are not simply two-way relationships, but rather three-way person-thing-person relationships, because the possessions communicate aspects and impressions of the owner to others (Belk, 1988). Furthermore the possessions do not serve not only as cues for others to form impressions about each other but also both intentionally and unintentionally holds and recalls individual and collective memories of our prior experiences, linkages to other people, and our previous selves (Belk 1991). The attributes of these possessions, people, places and selves are linked in memory to key episodes in one's life, which in turn are structured as stories to make sense of identity (Ahuvia, 2005). The narratives explain one's affiliations with certain people, places and possession based on their roles as other characters in the stories (Ahuvia, 2005).

4.3 Fragmented Self

After Belk (1988), one of the major developments in consumer research on identity has been a concern with the complexities, conflicts, and challenges of identity construction (Ahuvia, 2005). Today consumers have a great deal of choice about who they want to be and the kind of life they want to lead, which has led consumers to face difficulties when developing and maintaining a coherent sense of self.

Belk's (1988) view that people have a single identity where certain possessions are more or less central, was contested by postmodernist researchers such as Kleine III, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) and Firat and Venkatesh (1995). They argued that we all have fragmented and multiple identities, which can vary in importance over time and that different possessions contribute to the construction and maintenance of different parts of personalities. Furthermore, Firat and Venkatesh (1995) argue that contemporary consumers do not have need to combine identity contradictions to produce a

unified experience, which represents freedom from having to seek centered connections or an authentic self. Arnould and Price (2000) argue that the fragmentation of the self is a result of three postmodern forces due globalization technologies that are de-contextualization, deterritorialization (lack of master narratives such as what constructs national culture), and hyperreality that blur reality from the image that is seen in media.

In contrast to the postmodernist view, Cushman's (1990) empty-self critique argues identities to be more like black holes into which the consumers continually feed objects but which never fill up. Cushman argues that because significant lack of traditions, sense of community and shared meanings, people experience social absences and a lack of personal conviction and worth. This emotional hunger provokes people to engage in serial (and potentially endless) rounds of lifestyle consumption in attempt to identify and master the lifestyle and possessions that will bring fulfillment.

4.4 Presentation of Self

As discussed above, the act of consuming is a self-defining and self-expressive behavior (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Consumers tend to desire and select products, services and brands that are self-relevant and communicate their own given identity. By associating with material objects and places consumers make their identities tangible and self-present (Schau and Gilly 2003). These products, places and brands that consumers associate with tend to also give signs to others about who they are and what they represent. This "effort to express a specific image and identity to others" (Zywica and Danowski 2008, p. 6) is called the performance of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman (1959) suggests that people's understanding of society is supported by the social interactions how people exchange information with each other, as well as how these exchanges collectively contribute to their social world. Goffman describes social interactions as a kind of theatrical performance. His dramaturgical framework contends that people perform numerous roles in their everyday lives just like actors in a theater (Goffman, 1959). As in a theater, front stages are spaces where social performances take place and the roles are executed. These performances are maintained and managed in back stage. Where as front stages are the public spaces where we express ourselves to the world, back stages are concealed spaces where people can temporarily suspend these performances. For example teachers play a role in the classroom to the students, but

in the break room they may drop their performance, complain about the work, and come up with new ways to keep the classroom in order. (Goffman, 1959)

Goffman's research on self-presentation explains how a person can engage in strategic activities ''to convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey'' (1959, p. 4). Social roles are the principal ways by how people convey information to each other (Goffman, 1959). People use specific scenes, roles and scripts to express their selves. People announce their roles though social information. For example, when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to get information about his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his trustworthiness, etc. On the other hand, the individual who enters the room may wish others to think highly of him, or that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels toward them, and so forth. Regardless of the objective, it is in the person's interests to control the conduct of the other people, especially the responsive treatment of him. A person can influence and have an impact on this by expressing himself in such a way that gives others the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan. Therefore he will try to self-present an impression to others, which it is in his interests to convey. Ultimately, social life becomes complex as people simultaneously performer multiple roles, such as teacher, co-worker, sibling, and spouse. Furthermore, simultaneously individuals also serve as the audience to other people's performances. (Goffman, 1959; Ellison et al. 2006)

Goffman (1959) argues that self-presentation is the intentional and tangible component of identity. The impression of self is maintained or managed through consistent performance of coherent and complementary behaviors (Schlenker, 1975; Schau and Gilly, 2003). The impression-management behaviors are formed of communication in the traditional sense, e.g. spoken communication (expressions given) and of unintentional communication, e.g. nonverbal communication cues (expressions given off) (Goffman, 1959; Ellison et al. 2006).

Impression management relies on bodily expressions and displays to communicate the desired identity (Schau and Gilly, 2003). However, the social actions needed for self-presentation are consumption oriented and are made visible by people showing symbols, signs, brands, and practices to communicate the desired impression (Williams and Bendelow, 1998; Schau and Gilly, 2003). This manipulation of the sign, symbols and brands as well as embodied representations and experiences form the art of self-presentation (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Goffman (1959) claims that the self-presentation is contextual, based on a particular context and facing a definable and anticipated audience.

Self-presentation strategies have been found to be especially important during relationship initiation (Derlega, Winstead, Wong, and Greenspan, 1987). Therefore it is suggested that when a person encounter a potential dating partner, the person changes his self-presentational behavior in to match the values desired by the potential date (Rowatt, Cunninghan, and Druen, 1998; Ellison et al. 2006). Furthermore, even when interacting with strangers, individuals are prone to engage in self-enhancement (Schlenker and Pontari, 2000; Ellison et al. 2006). However, Ellison et al. (2006) suggests that even consumers feel the pressure to highlight one's positive attributes; they also feel the need or desire to present the true and authentic self to others. This tension between authenticity and impression management is inborn in many sides of self-disclosure (Ellison et al. 2006). Self-disclosure is the propensity a person has for revealing personal information to others and therefore relates heavily to self-presentation (Collins and Miller, 1994). Strategies of self-presentation often deal with suppressing personal information or replacing it with modified details more coincident with the desired self (Berg and Derlega, 1987; Schau and Gilly, 2003). When deciding what and when to self-disclose, people often have hard time to combine opposing desires and needs such as autonomy and openness (Greene, Byrne, and Everett, 2006; Ellison et al. 2006).

It is commonly accepted that there are numerous aspects of the self, which are expressed or made salient in various contexts (Ellison et al. 2006). Higgins (1987) suggests that there are three domains of the self: the actual self (attributes an individual have), the ideal self (attributes an individual would ideally have), and the ought self (attributes an individual ought to have). Therefore, people might be what they have self-presented, but they can also a great deal more (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Especially digital environments have given people much more freedom to express their identities through digital association rather than simply through ownership or proximity (Ellison et al. 2006; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Moreover consumers' ideal self may be revealed more clearly in online environments than in real life. In next chapter I will focus on the research of concept of self, identity construction and self-presentation in the digital world.

5. Self in Digital World

In this chapter, I will discuss the previous research on the self-concept in digital world and how digitalization is affecting identity construction and self-presentation. The concept of the extended self to link consumption and identity was first presented by Belk in 1988 in his much-cited article. Today, digital technologies, especially online environments, have allowed the consumers to self-present 24/7 around the globe to the virtual world and the possibilities for self-extension have never been so extensive (Schou and Gilly, 2003; Belk, 2013). It is evident that the current fast growth of digital technologies are changing consumer behavior in ways that have significant implications for the extended self and form new opportunities for self-presentation (Belk 2013).

In the next sections, I will especially utilize the research by Belk (2013) and Schau and Gilly (2003) to discuss the previous findings of identity construction and self-presentation in the digital world. Belk (2013, p. 477) identified five changes emerging from the current digital age: "1) dematerialization, 2) reembodiment, 3) sharing, 4) co-construction of self, and 5) distributed memory". Whereas Schau and Gilly (2003, p. 391) identified four strategies involved in digital self-presentation: "1) constructing a digital self, 2) projecting a digital likeness, 3) digitally associating as a new form of possession, and 4) reorganizing linear narrative structures".

Based on these findings, the first section discusses the identity construction and self-presentation in digital environments. Second section focuses on digital association. Third section explores digital sharing. And finally the fourth section investigates the connection between digital possessions and memory.

5.1 Digital Self-presentation

The first wave of studies on self-presentation in online environments focused on identity constructions in anonymous online environments where content were mostly messages consisting of text written to MOOS, MUDS, e-mails, and discussion forums (Rheingold, 1995; Surratt, 1998; Turkle, 1995). These studies suggested that, as users would be emancipated from their bodies and are without actual material, users could take whatever persona they wished and therefore often acted as someone else or played out their underlying negative impulses online (e.g. Castronova, 2007; Haraway, 1991). More positive suggestion was that without the physical, gender, race, and class "handicaps", people would become equal in online environments (Belk, 2013).

However latter examination of identity performance in less anonymous online environments, such as online dating sites (Ellison et al. 2006) and personal web spaces (Schau and Gilly, 2003), suggested that people acted differently in such environments and users wanted consciously to convoy themselves to external social observation in online environments. Schau and Gilly (2003) found that as in real life also in personal web spaces consumers self-present because they desire communicate the constructed selves. These findings indicate that the online world is not monolithic, as consumer behavior varies according to the nature of the settings of the digital environment.

The further development of digital world challenged the previous findings based on the textual environments with what Bolter (1996) called the "breakout of the visual" online, which led to "new constructions and definitions of the self" (as cited in Belk, 2013). This was especially due to the more visual Web 2.0 online environments, such as social media sites, blogs, virtual worlds and photo sharing sites, and so forth. Now in these graphical and content rich environments users are being disembodied and re-embodied as avatars, videos, photos and other virtual contents and with the help of image manipulation and other customizing software users have considerable freedom in selecting and modifying their visual online self-presentations (Bryant and Akerman, 2009; Belk, 2013).

Similarly to real world also users in online environments experience the same pressures and desires when deciding what to present or disclose of themselves, but the increased control over self-presentation in digital environments allow individuals to manage their online interactions more strategically (Ellison et al. 2006). As online environments consist mostly of verbal and linguistic communication rather than less controllable nonverbal communication cues, online self-presentation is easier to mold and to self-censorship than real life face-to-face self-presentation (Walther, 1996). As Goffman (1959) would express it: more expressions of self are ''given'' rather than ''given off.''

Researchers (e.g. Bryant and Akerman, 2009; Meadows, 2008) have noted that users tend to make their avatars, or the "digital representations of themselves", of the same gender, age, and race to be quite similar to their own physical aspects. This way the avatar feel more like the user himself on a psycho-physiological level and allows identifying with it (Meadows, 2008). Schau and Gilly (2003) refer to this as digital likeness, which is defined as the effort to reference to the individual's physical body in the construction of a digital self. Simplest strategy for digitizing a likeness is to reference the real life body directly through pictures, videos and textual descriptions (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Schau and Gilly (2003) found that some individuals are concerned to construct their digital self to have an impression similar to their real life presence so that friends and family can "really" connect with them (Schau and Gilly, 2003). For others the digital self is dedicated to presenting themselves to e.g. potential romantic partners through marketing tactics and the digital self can be highly airbrushed and polished. This has led some researchers to suggest that user's online self represents the image of ideal self (Kozinets and Kedzior, 2009), possible self (Young and Whitty, 2012), aspirational self (Wood and Solomon, 2010), or a canvas on which user can sample different alternative selves (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010) (as cited in Belk, 2013). Schau and Gilly (2003) suggests that some users consciously draft a digital selves what they believe to be their most attractive self-presentation, including what they felt were their best attributes and ignoring or even concealing elements they deemed undesirable, such as age, gender, and appearance.

However, this greater control over self-presentation in online environments does not necessarily lead to misrepresentation (Belk, 2013). Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons (2002) suggest that in comparison to real life interactions, the relative anonymity in online environments and the lack of a shared social network may allow to better express aspects of their true selves, such as aspects of themselves that they wanted to express but felt unable to. Clearly the digital identity construction makes it possible for individuals to express their concealed and nested identities or to more fully reveal aspects of them selves that are difficult to represent physically in real life (Herb and Kaplan, 1999; Bargh et al. 2002).

James (1892) suggest that people can have as multiple social selves as the amount of social contexts they encounter. Now online users are merely limited by their own imaginations and technological capabilities to create multiple digital identities with alter egos or subselves through digital manipulation of text, images, videos and other digital content. Belk (2013) suggests that the online environments tend to loosen people's inhibitions and make it easier to try out new selves online and for others to give feedback for the co-creation of self. These digital selves do not have to be related to one another or correspond to their real life identities (Turkle, 1995; Schau and Gilly, 2003). However, in digital environment it might be a challenge to segregate different personas and control content that different audiences see, such as self-presentation in social medias, such as Facebook, among friends, family and co-workers.

Social networking sites have now become important for psychological development, especially for teenagers whom are in process of "growing-in" and "finding themselves" (Steinfield, Ellison, and Lampe, 2008). What makes social networks interesting environment for research is that the process

of self-construction and self-presentation online is no longer conducted in isolation. As online environments and especially social networks have become interactive and social in nature, the construction of digital self is strongly influenced also by others whom we interact and communicate with (Belk, 2013). Turkle (2011) refers to this as the collaborative self. As people construct their identities by posting content online, such as photos, videos and status updates, they also expose them selves to the constant observation and interaction with others online. The photos people upload and the received comments, likes and tags by friends and strangers are not only part of the extended selves, but also part of the process of co-creating self (Belk 2013), either by reaffirming or undermining the sense of self (Belk, 2013; Drenton, 2012).

5.2 Digital Association

The rapid growth of digital technologies has moved major part of everyday communication and interaction to digital mediums. This digitalization of world has caused the dematerialization of objects, information and possessions. Now our possession, such as texts, book, letter, photos, videos, music and messages are largely transformed into invisible and immaterial bits of data and are only tangible through digital devices (Belk, 2013; Siddiqui and Turley, 2006).

Dematerialization of possession brings up some key differences that should be noted. Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010) argue that virtual consumption is different from material consumption as the object of consumption is not made of real matter and cannot be used in material reality. Furthermore virtual possessions are intangible, can be used only through digital devices, are fairly easy to reproduce and do not "age" nor gather "patina" (Watkins and Molesworth, 2012). Siddiqui and Turley (2006) continue that people tend to feel uncertainty about the control and ownership of many of the digital possession, which leads to making backup and hard copies, and yet people regard them as less authentic. For example digital maps, photos, cards, letters and artworks are often seen as less valuable than physical counterparts (Petrelli and Whittaker, 2010; Belk, 2013).

However Dibble's (2000) findings on music and CDs suggests that even that consumers might feel some aspects are lost with the dematerialization of possessions, digitalization makes it easier to acquire music through internet and especially makes the sharing of music and playlists with distant others faster than ever. Belk (2013) argues that what was once a more private act of music procurement and appreciation, has now become a more of a group practice. Similar changes can be

found with other dematerialized possession too, such as photos and videos (Belk, 2013).

Introduction of digital environments and the dematerialization of possessions have challenged the prior theories of how consumers associate with possession, products, services and brands and the requirements of physical presence (Belk, 1988; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Digital association refers to efforts to reference relationships with possessions, objects, places, and so forth in digital environments (Schau and Gilly, 2003). As in the material real life, where possession, products and brands convey meaning and are used as social stimuli to construct self (Solomon, 1983), consumers use digital possessions, products and brands in online environments to portray to others who they are, as well as who they are not (Schau and Gilly, 2013).

Through digital association, online environments offer a new space for consumers add depth to their selves and to represent more complex meanings. Especially social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram provide a new space for the consumer, where they can easily augment their identity (Zhao et al. 2008). This identity constructing and self-presentation is particularly clear in social media where status updates, posts and photos can be linked and associated to people, places, objects and even to brands. Consumers actively use and mix brands and their images to present themselves to an assumed audience (Schau and Gilly, 2003), as the chosen products, services, and brands have different types of value (Kotler, 2000).

Compared to material real life, in digital environments much of the truly functional value is absent and rather the only value is semiotic. Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that in digital environments people associate themselves to the symbolic meanings and the public interpretations derived from these symbols. However, online environments make it possible for consumers to literally associate themselves with any brand by using and manipulating digital symbols with no physical or financial constraints and no dependent on ownership or proximity (Schau and Gilly, 2003). In digital environments, consumers' associations are limited only by their computer skills and imaginations, where as in real life this kind of association are linked to the financial, space, or proximal limitations (Schau and Gilly, 2003). However, interestingly, Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that the self-presentation strategies often reflected the real material realm of the individual.

5.3 Digital Sharing

User-generated content is all about sharing. Whether it was information, ratings, comments entertainment, images, films, music or videos, consumers are creating it and sharing it online for free for others to access, download and be shared forwards. The rise of digital technologies and online environments has made it easier to share more and to wider audience than ever before. As Belk (2013) points out that it is likely that those who are active in social networks, their social media friends know more about their daily goings and comings than their family members. People are sharing more and more information and content about themselves online and especially on social networks. Possessions and information that were once seen as private or semi-private, such as diaries containing inner thoughts or albums of embarrassing photos, are now posted to personal websites, blogs and social networks and shared with the whole world (Belk, 2013).

Especially photos have seen a major change in consumption. Now the traditional family album has become an individual digital photo gallery full of self-portraits or "selfies", shared on one of the social networking sites (Schwarz, 2010). Photo-sharing sites like Facebook and Instagram together with other types of social networks, blogs and web pages are now playing a major part in self-presentation and self-reflection (Belk, 2013). Especially visual sharing seem to be an significant way of self-presentation, as Zhoa et al. (2008) suggest that users in the social media site Facebook predominantly claim their identities rather by "showing" than "telling".

The fact that social media lacks privacy in many aspects and almost everything is publicly or semi-publicly shared, can cause users to feel vulnerable and lead to compulsively need to check news feeds and continually post status updates and photos to appear active and interesting to others (Belk, 2013). This phenomenon is being named as "FOMO" or "the fear of missing out" (e.g. Grohol, 2011).

Researchers (e.g. Ridley, 2012) have suggested that the reason for the extensive volume of sharing and self-disclosure online is somewhat due to the lack of real-life face-to-face interaction, mixed with the perception of anonymity and invisibility. This veil of invisibility tends to make users feel that they can express their "true self" better online than real life communication (e.g., Bargh et al. 2002; Tosun, 2012). Belk (2013) suggests that some of the self-presentation through writing to blogs and forums as well as engagement and sharing in social networks can be therapeutic as users are able to talk thinks through and express their feelings. Casual observation suggests that people now do a lot of identity work online, which is not that surprising, because as Belk (2013) points out that websites are constantly asking questions like "Who are you?" or "What do you have to share?"

Additionally to sharing the positive moments online, many of users also tend to share the bad and embarrassing aspects of life they experience (Belk, 2013). Especially, social media has become a digital place where confessions are shared, as well as the photo- and video-sharing sites that are full of people's bad moments and "fails" (Strangelove, 2011). As Internet has made once private confessions far more public, it seems that users are willing to share the aspects of their lives that are considered often most private and personal (Belk, 2013)

As users are now communicating and sharing content on the Internet to an unseen audience, both the number and feedback of readers can provide self-validation for the user and a sense of admiration, celebrity and fame (O'Regan, 2009 as cited in Belk, 2013). The tension between privacy and the potential admiration and fame challenges users to evaluate how far they are willing to go with their sharing and confessions. However, Belk (2013) warns that once uploaded to Internet, the content is no more in the control of the uploader and might be shared forward to wider and more public audiences by others. It seems that the ability to publish and share content online has made it much easier to connect with others and present our selves, but also in contrast to be judged according the preferences (e.g., Belk, 2013; Rentfrow and Gosling, 2006).

Moreover, sharing content on public online environments is affecting our real life behavior consumption patterns. The consumption experiences that were once private experiences and involved only the people, who were physically present, are now shared for public viewing and feedback on Internet thought photos, videos and tweets etc (Drenton, 2012).

5.4 Digital Possessions and Memory

Real life objects, such as souvenirs, photographs, letter, books, records, and collections, that form a part of the extended self are often create a feeling of past through association with special moments, events and people in our lives (Belk, 1991; 2013). Thanks to the rise of digital photography, social networks, photo- and video-sharing, blogs and personal webpage, are helping to people document, record and archive their lives to online environments (Belk, 2013). Especially social networks help individuals to remember other people, emotions, and events that are significant in their lives (Belk, 2013). People may search old friends, look up photos with comments, and interact with others who help to construct the memory of a shared event.

Individual's memories benefit not only from their own online actions, but also of those others who post photos of them and "tag" them into the photos and events. Thus, Van Dijck (2007) suggest that just as self is co-created online, so is part of our memory co-created with others on social media.

The resulting memories may not be are accurate, just as Belk (1988) notes that the traditional family photo albums were most often selected representations of good times, new possessions, and other celebratory occasions. Similarly, Chalfen (2002) suggests that with the rise of digital cameras and video cameras, people are not any more just "taking pictures" but rather "making pictures", as digital technologies has made it possible to easily create, edit, alter and fabricate self-relevant information for the purpose of self presentation (Kernis and Goldman, 2005). Belk and Yeh (2011) suggest that photos play a key role in facilitating autobiographical memory, as a photo can convoy a message that recreates the emotion of the original experience. Furthermore, thanks to digitalization there is so much inexpensive digital storage that people are able to keep everything and then just search for what they want to reconnect with at a later point in time (Cushing, 2012).

Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that online environments are reorganizing the traditional linear narrative structures of life stories, as now narratives do not have distinct beginning, middle, or end but, rather, many modes of elaboration, as hyperlinking allows narratives to jump to from site to site and tell different stories with the click of the hyperlink. However, the introduction of Facebook's timeline feature as well as blog archives appears to attempt to mimic a linear narrative rather than random mixture of photos, updates, and comments (Belk, 2013). These narrative forms help people to memorize significant events in their lives and construct more coherent life stories of these events, but also is presentation of self to others.

6. Summary of the literature

As the literature overview proposes, user-generated content has received increasing interest in the academic literature in the recent years (Arnhold, 2010). However, most of the current research concentrate on investigating user-generated content in general, but do not specify on brand-related UGC. The second chapter defined the terms UGC and brand-related UGC as well as explored the diverse world of UGC: various types of content, environments, consumers and motivational drivers.

The present study expands the research on brand-related UGC, as it links the research on UGC to the theoretical framework of consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). CCT offers an interesting theoretical framework to explore the consumption of brand-related UGC as an exchange of symbolic meanings in the marketplace of social media. Especially, the research program of identity projects opens new possibilities to study how the consumption of UGC affects the building of self-identity and particularly how UGC is used for the purpose of self-presentation.

As presented in the fourth and fifth chapter, self-presentation has been widely researched field in academic literature (e.g. Goffman, 1959), but introduction of digital environment has challenged these theories based on bodily enactment, material acquisition and physical proximity (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that virtual worlds allow consumers to present themselves using digital rather than physical references. Especially the "breakout of the visual" online (Bolter 1996) has led to "new constructions and definitions of the self" (as cited in Belk, 2013). This was due to the more visual online environments of social media, photo- and video-sharing sites, virtual worlds, online games, and so forth. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram provide a new space for the consumers to construct their identities, associate with object, places, people and possession as well as share content and create digital memories of their lives.

In spite of the growing interest in UGC there is a lack of consumer research studies explicitly on how consumers themselves experience creating brand-related UGC and its underlying meanings for self-presentation. Together with presented theories, the present study seeks to extend this existing line of research by exploring the practice of creating visual brand-related UGC as medium for self-presentation on the social media network Instagram.

7. Methodology

The empirical part of the study is qualitative and adopts the narrative paradigm, as it allows forming an intimate and unique understanding of consumers' personal experiences of producing visual brand-related UGC. The research uses narrative inquiry, which refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives or stories are considered to be a fundamental way by which people structure and make sense of their lives (Shankar, Elliott, and Goulding, 2001). Accordingly, allowing consumers to tell stories about their own experiences of creating and sharing brand-related photos on Instagram, the narratives contribute to the understanding of how consumers structure and make sense of this consumption process. These stories provide a context for understanding the process itself as well as the underlying salient meanings and backgrounds, e.g. the role of UGC in identity construction and self-presentation. Narrative inquiry can be a powerful method in the qualitative researcher's toolbox, as compared to participants answering to specific predetermined questions, personal descriptions and stories in the context in which they are told most often provide much richer data and lead to more profound in-sights (Polkinghorne, 1995).

In the first section, the worldview and assumptions for the narrative paradigm are introduced and then continues to discuss each of the paradigm elements (ontology, epistemology and methodology) for this study. This is followed with the rationalization for the chosen research context. In third section, I will discuss the method for collecting data through narrative inquiry and finally the analysis of narratives is introduced.

7.1 Narrative Paradigm

A paradigm is essentially a worldview, a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place. The main purpose in interpretive research, as well as in narrative research, is to understand human behavior rather than to create to predictions (Rubinstein 1981; Hudson and Ozanne, 1998). The interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it (Love, Holt, and Li, 2002).

Narrative paradigm proposes that all meaningful communication is a form of storytelling or narrative of events (Fisher, 1985). Polkinghorne (1988) suggest that narratives are the most important means by which experiences are made meaningful. Humans experience and make sense of life as a series of ongoing stories or narratives, each with its own conflicts, characters and

beginning, middle, and end (Fisher, 1985). These narratives also help researchers to study how humans make sense of the events and actions in their lives. Stories can express knowledge that uniquely and intimately describes human experience in which the actions, events and happenings together contribute positively or negatively to reach a certain goal (Polkinghorne, 1995). In a story, a plot provides a red line to follow as it draws diverse events, happenings and actions together into an organized whole. (Polkinghorne, 1995)

7.1.1 Ontology

The ontology concerns itself with the questions, 'what is the nature of our reality?' and 'what is there to know?' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A narrative perspective is underpinned by a belief that no single real world exists and reality is not composed of facts (Shankar et al. 2001). Rather there are multiple realities that are constructed and mentally perceived by every human through language, but shaped and modified by the social and cultural world within which the individual is embedded (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Shankar et al. 2001).

7.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the 'what is knowledge' and "the relationship between the knower and what can be known" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As was discussed above, multiple realities exist, meaning that any understanding or interpretation of behavior is subjective. Moreover, as these realities are constructed there is no way of apprehending that reality before the research (Shankar et al. 2001). As, such any knowledge that is gained through research will inevitably be subjective and time and context related (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Therefore the goal in narrative research is to understand, not to explain.

7.1.3 Methodology

The ontological and epistemological position determines the methodological assumptions or 'the way we can go about finding out about the things that are there to be known' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Shankar et al. 2001). Narrative paradigm draws heavily on hermeneutics. A main theme in hermeneutic philosophy is that people's understanding of their life experiences reflect a broader cultural system and are implicitly expressed through language (Thompson, Pollio, and Locander,

1994). Hermeneutics traditionally deals with texts and is in broad sense seen as a theory of the interpretation of meanings of text (Shankar et al. 2001). Therefore, as all behavior, as well as consumption, can be interpreted as a text and therefore could be subjected to a hermeneutic analysis (O'Shaughnessy and Holbrook, 1988). Narrative paradigm adds to this that a fundamental way that language is indicated is through narrative (Shankar et al. 2001). Therefore, the 'reality' is presented by the story that is created by the individual. For example, the self-telling of life narratives gain the power to structure personal experience, to organize memory and build the events of life (Shankar et al. 2001). In the end, one becomes the narrative that is "told about". In that process of making sense of lives, individual constructs his own realities (Shankar et al. 2001). Therefore there is no single truth, but rather we can only research the current understanding (Gadamer, 1989).

7.2 Research Context

As the purpose of the present research is to extend the existing research on self-presentation in nonymous (the opposite of "anonymous") settings, I decided to study identity construction on Instagram, a mobile location-based social networking application. The reason for choosing Instagram is because it has a strong focus on visual content as users present themselves almost exclusively through photos. Moreover, at the moment there has not been much academic analysis in the context of Instagram, therefore I feel it would have more impact that doing the research of self-presentation in Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.

The photos that users post to Instagram fulfill the definition of UGC: the photo is publicly or semi-publicly published on the site, it is created by a consumer, and it has a certain aspect of creativity involved. Furthermore, the effort placed in taking a photo and editing it means the user is engaged with the photographed object and desires to express something with the photo. Because of the visual appeal of the photos, photos tend to have a strong potential to convoy message, emotion, personality and consequently brand perception. As it is said, "a picture is worth a thousand words".

Instagram is still a fairly young but it has become the recent fad in mobile photo sharing applications. Instagram provides a simple way to snap photos, apply different manipulation tools (e.g. filters) to tweak the appearance of the photo, and share them instantly with friends, family and strangers (Hochmana and Schwartz 2012, May). Although only launched in October 2010, and purchased by Facebook in April 2012, its 150 million users share average 55 million photos per day from all over the globe (Instagram 2014).

7.3 Data Collection

The research makes use of narrative inquiry for the purpose of data collection. Furthermore, in order to better understand the social online environment and the whole process of creating visual brand-related UGC, I have created an account to the social photo-sharing network Instagram. This section presents the concept of narrative interviews, introduces the eight participants of the study and finally explains the specifics of conducting the actual interviews.

7.3.1 Narrative Interview

Researchers (e.g. Bruner, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1995) have identified two forms of narrative inquiry: the paradigmatic type gathers stories as data; the narrative type gathers descriptions of moments, happenings, and actions. The present research will focus on paradigmatic type of narrative inquiry, as the interviews provide consumer narratives or stories for database. The paradigmatic analysis results in descriptions of themes that hold across the collected stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings (Polkinghorne, 1995). Through the interviews, the research seeks to collect a type of diachronic data, referred as the storied narratives.

According to Polkinghorne (1995) interviews appear to be the most often used source of storied narratives in contemporary narrative inquiry. The narrative interview is one the many kinds of methods that are classified under the umbrella of qualitative research methods and takes form of unstructured, in-depth interview (Bauer, 1996). However, narrative interview goes further than most of the other methods to avoid restructuring the interview. The narrative interview attempts to go beyond questions-response-type interview and rather makes use of a specific type of everyday communicative interaction, specifically story telling and listening (Bauer, 1996). The narrative interview uses open-ended questions to avoid suppressing participants by limiting their answers by too specific and narrow questions (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The interviews should be rather informal and have a relaxed mood like in a normal conversation. However, the influence of the interviewer should be minimal and the interviewee should do most of the talking to gain more valid account of the informant's perspective (Bauer, 1996). The interviewees are instructed to speak freely and allowed to take the 'stage' without interruption for long periods of time. Mishler (1986) suggests that if interviewees are let to speak freely, the responses will often be given as stories. People tend to construct stories to understand and recapitulate the things that happen to them (Mishler, 1986). These narratives help researchers to

understand how humans make sense of the events and actions in their lives and the salient meanings and backgrounds.

The interviewer can acquire stories by simply asking the subject to tell how something happened (Polkinghorne, 1995). The interviewees form the stories as reminiscences of how and why something occurred or what led to the particular action (Polkinghorne, 1995). The interviewee must acknowledge that the stories told from memory often tend to be quite unstructured and have a life of their own. However (Bauer, 1996) argue that the purpose of narrative interview is, in a way, to surprise the interviewee and not give time to prepare a well-thought structured statement beforehand in order to gain access to more salient insights. Therefore stories should be allowed to develop freely as long as it contributes to the purpose of the research. In the end, stories of lived experiences can confirm something that is already known or it can even raise totally unforeseen insights of the topic (Atkinson, 1998).

7.3.2 Participants

To address the objectives of the research, eight participants were interviewed, out of which five respondents were women and three were men. All of the informants were young adults currently living in Helsinki, Finland. The requirement for the participants were that they had produced visual brand-related UGC and published these brand-related photos on Instagram. Each of the participants was asked to tell personal stories of the chosen four brand-related photos they had shared on Instagram. Altogether from the eight interviews I gathered 32 stories that revealed detailed data about creating visual brand-related UGC on Instagram.

All of the participants were my prior acquaintances whom had accepted me to follow them on Instagram and view the photos they had shared. This was crucial for the interview process as I was able choose the proper participants as well as the photos used in the interviews. The informant profiles are summarized in the table below as well as the general idea and subject of the used brand-related photos of each participant.

Table 1: Informant profiles

INFORMANT PROFILES						
Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Photo 1	Photo 2	Photo 3	Photo 4
Adam	25	Male	Advertisement on a shop / Burger King	Vodka bottle / Finlandia	Various take away coffees / Multiple brands	Beer bottle / Shinga
Bob	33	Male	T-shirt / Footdown	Bike / Brooklyn Machine Works	Beer bottles / Brooklyn Brewery etc.	Shoes / Nike
Charlie	24	Male	Shop window / Filmtown	Candy box / Fazer Salmiakki	Japanese candy bag / Milky	Restaurant / Martinsillan Grilli
Daniela	26	Female	Ice cream / Kolme Kaveria	Beer bottles / Brew Dog	Gift box / Victoria's Secret	Burger / Burger King
Elisa	23	Female	Summer dress / Samuji	Nutrients / Herbalife	Lunch meal / Puro Deli	Newspaper / Helsingin Sanomat
Fiona	26	Female	Energy drink / Red Bull	Earrings / H&R	Burger / Roslund	Magazine / Wired
Gloria	23	Female	Bag of shoes / Minna Parikka	Longboard / Roxy	Magazines / Vogue	Espresso maker / Bialetti
Hanna	26	Female	Winter hats / Villawool	Take away coffee / Starbucks	Event & cans / Red Bull	Beer mug / San Miguel

7.3.3 Conducting Interviews

According to (Bauer, 1996) narrative interview is conducted over four phases. It starts with the initiation (formulate initial topic for narration, use visual aids), move through the main part of narration (no interruptions; only non-verbal encouragement to continue telling the story) and the questioning phase (no opinion question or arguing on contradictions), and ends with the small talk (stop recording memory, protocol immediately afterwards). Finally the orally acquired stories need to be transcribed and transformed into written texts for the process of analysis and interpretation (Polkinghorne, 1995). These phases and rules were used as guidelines for the present study.

The interviews were conducted in person by the author of this research. The interviews were done in the spring 2014 and lasted between 50 to 70 minutes. The interviews took place in various locations including cafes, bars and restaurants; wherever the participant felt relaxed and comfortable for the interview.

The interviews were open discussion including basic and general outline for the interview and some predetermined open- ended questions and topics as a supportive tool. The participants were asked to describe their experience through a story without directing or suggesting their description. However, the participants were encouraged to give a full description of their experience, including their thoughts, feelings, sensations and memories along with a description of the situation in which the experience occurred.

The participants were interviewed separately face-to-face with respect to how they experienced creating the chosen brand-related photos. The participants were shown one of their own photos at a time and asked to freely tell detailed story about his/hers experience of creating that photo:

- *Can you tell me about the time when you created this photo?*

When necessary, descriptive follow up questions were asked to keep the conversation and story going. The questions were mostly originated from the conversation.

7.4 Data Analysis

The data and the interview transcripts were processed through analysis of narratives and used paradigmatic reasoning for the analysis. Paradigmatic analysis is a powerful method to uncover commonalties and themes that exist across the stories of creating visual brand-related UGC and to develop general knowledge about the phenomenon. This section introduces the method of analysis of narratives and then explains the process of conducting the analysis.

7.4.1 Analysis of Narratives

Based on Bruner's (1985) distinction between paradigmatic cognition and narrative cognition, Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes narrative inquiry into analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. The present study uses analysis of narratives as it employs paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis. As described in previous sections, the raw data that was gathered through the narrative interviews were a type of diachronic data, the storied narratives. Analysis of narratives examines these gathered stories to identify common features and themes in different stories in order to define them as belonging to a broader category (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995). By pointing at features that different experiences have in common, researcher can construct descriptions of themes or cognitive conceptual frameworks (Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001). Since the researcher examines the data to find aspects and themes that appear across them, it is most often required that the data consists of multiple stories rather than a single story.

Polkinghorne (1995) identifies two types of paradigmatic search possibilities. The first one derives the concepts from prior theories or logical possibilities and applies to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are found. The second one derives the concepts inductively from the data. This research uses the second type, inductive analysis, which is also more closely identified with qualitative research (Hammersley, 1992). The purpose of inductive analysis is to develop concepts from the stories (data) rather than applying prior theoretically derived concepts (Polkinghorne, 1995). The noted similarities in the data are used to form the researcher-proposed categorical and conceptual definitions. Paradigmatic analysis can be a powerful method to uncover commonalties and themes that exist across the narratives that then used as the study's database. The strength of paradigmatic analysis is the capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories.

7.4.2 Conducting Analysis of Narratives

The first step was that the orally acquired stories were transcribed and transformed into written texts for the process of analysis and interpretation (Polkinghorne, 1995). The analyzing and interpretation was done using analysis of narratives presented above. In practice this is an iterative process that included reading, documenting and systematizing the interview transcripts. The analysis starts with close reading of stories of different interviewees in order to gain a sense of the whole and detect themes and commonalities that appear most comprehensive and most revealing for explaining the individual and collective experiences of creating visual brand-related UGC. These commonalities and thematic relationships are derived, structured and then again challenged and compared until the "best fit" is found to make sure that they reflect the real experiences. The goal is to present interpretations on how consumers create, think and experience the process of creating brand-related UGC and how consumers present self by digitally associating themselves with the created visual brand-related UGC.

8. Findings

Out of analyzing the data from the interviews I was able identify several themes that emerged from the stories of the informants. The first section will explore what drives consumers to create brand-related UGC. I have identified five broad motivational patterns that help us to understand why consumers take and share photos on Instagram. The second section will continue to build on this and introduces a model for the process of creating brand-related photos. The model will try to describe the stages of how consumers create and share photos to Instagram. After presenting the motivational factors and the process itself, the third section will explore the consumer's strategies for self-presentation management through brand-related photos.

Figure 1 presents my findings by illustrating the process of producing brand-related Instagram photos as combination of motivational factors, stages of the process and self-presentation strategies. These findings will be presented in more detail in the next sections along with illustrative quotes from the interviews. It is to be noted that there are many ways to interpret the text and to categorize it. The presented findings are only one way of looking at these stories.

Figure 1: Producing Brand-related Photos

PRODUCING BRAND-RELATED PHOTOS
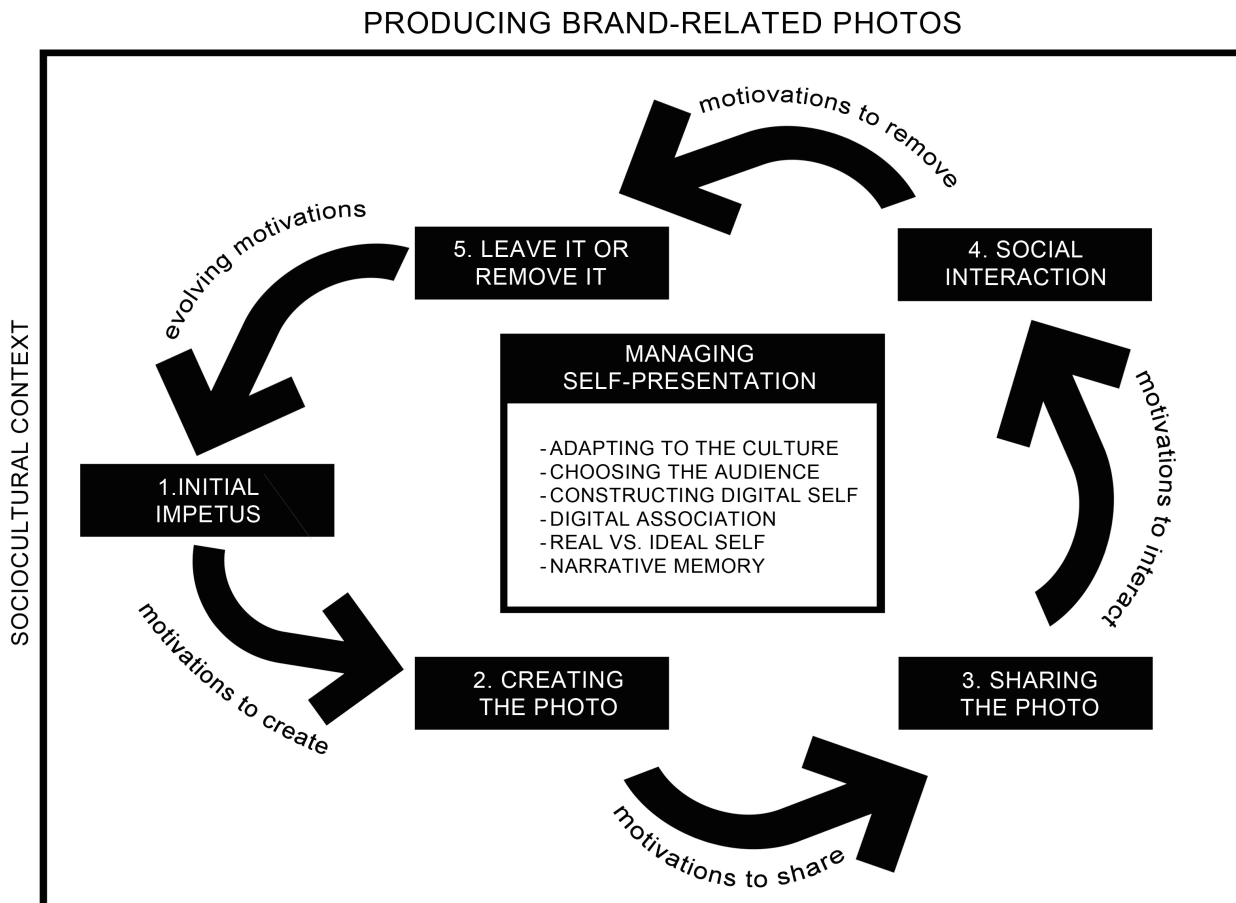
8.1 Motivational Drivers to Create Brand-related Photos

Social media sites like Instagram have allowed consumers to tell their stories faster and to wider audience than ever before. Therefore, the relevant question rises that what motivates consumers to share their life and their stories with followers and strangers from all over the world? Identifying motivational factors that drives the attitudes toward creating user-generated content may also result in a better understanding of consumer behavior, which is increasingly important to both scholars and industry professionals (Daugherty, 2010). This research will define motivations as intentions of behavior that arise from the interaction between person, situation and motivational structure of a person (Rosenstiel, 2000; Stöckl et al. 2007).

First of all, it is important to understand that informants rarely posted brand-related photos in order to just purely promote or complain about the brand. They rather posted photos of personal life moments and them selves where the brand was part of and played a certain role. Some informants were quite surprised that so many of their Instagram photos featured brands and acknowledged that they had not consciously included them, let alone indented to promote the brand. Even that the brand might have been important contributor for the experience; however, most often the motivation for taking and posting the photo was more complex and ambiguous.

There are most likely as many motivations as there are people who take and share photos on Instagram. However, they all intend to communicate and most often people try to tell something about who they are; what matters to them; and, how do they want others to perceive them. The targeted audience can be anyone from friends and family to strangers to future self. By understanding people's motives to create photos to Instagram, also provides an insight for more general motives for self-presentation. Based on the stories of the informants, I have developed model that introduces five motivational sources for creating brand-related photos to Instagram:

- Entertainment (enjoyment and passing time)
- Documentation (recording of personal experiences)
- Social (communication, interaction, sharing information; social pressure)
- Empowerment (influencing others' opinions)
- Identity (self-presentation, self-expression, self-assurance, social identity)

These motivational factors are source of both rational and emotional thinking as well as on conscious and unconscious reasoning. Furthermore, consumers may have simultaneously multiple motivations and the motivations may change through out the process of creating brand-related visual UGC. In the next subsections I will first discuss each of the motivational factors in more detail and then also introduce findings on why participants have decided not to take or share photos.

8.1.1 Entertainment

Even thought taking photos and sharing them on Instagram often have deeper salient motivational factors and meanings, however informants found that they did it also simply for entertainment purposes. The act of taking, editing and sharing photos was seen as a pleasant activity and a way to pass time that led to personal enjoyment and satisfaction:

> *Elisa: Instagramming itself is already a way to spend time and something to do. Like if I take a photo with a friend and I tag her there. It is often quite fun and something to do together.*

Especially in situations where participants felt bored they started taking photos, trying on different filters and sometimes even publishing them on Instagram simply to pass time.

> *Charlie: In simplicity it is entertainment. Like when I am alone and I am bored, this is a way to spend some time. Like playing a game where you take a good photo, share it and try to get lot of likes.*

However, in most of this type of situations participants rather chose the role of contributor or consumer as they simply viewed, commented and liked the photos of their friends rather than created their own photos.

> *Adam: Most of the time I just follow what others have shared. It is just a way to pass time when you are for example on a bus and you scroll down your feed and go through the photos.*

8.1.2 Personal documentation

Similarly to the traditional paper photos and family albums, also digital Instagram photos serve a purpose as a mean for personal documentation, recording experiences and storing interesting moments along one's own life.

> *Gloria: That longboard was just so cool, that I needed to have a picture as a memory. Of course I wanted to show it to others too, but most importantly I want to memorize the nice things and moments of my life and be able to look them up from my album.*

The advances of the new technology, especially camera phones and applications like Instagram, provide consumers a simple and fast way of taking and storing almost limitless amount of photos to a safe virtual storage. Elisa found this quite important when she lost all the files from her personal

computer and was there on even more motivated to store her photos to Instagram.

> *Elisa: We were giving my laptop to my dad and my boyfriend took it for service. He had thought that I had back upped all my files, but I hadn't saved anything. And then in the service they cleared all of the memory and all the photos disappeared. I was of course really sad. ... But then I browsed my Instagram and saw that lot of the good photos were there. I just went thought all them and started to remember all the good times from the last years.*

The informants of the study indicated that they felt comfort knowing that their photos were stored in a place where they were easily accessible whenever they felt going down the memory lane. Especially the fact that as soon as the photos had been uploaded to Instagram, they are arranged chronologically, so that the feed looks more like a visual gallery that tells a sequential story of that person's life. Elisa saw her own Instagram as a diary where she could post and collect photos as memories of important moments of her life.

> *Elisa: These photos could be exactly like my last week. So for me this is somewhat a diary… These photos are personal memories, as I don't write any diary. But this is like writing diary through photos and its much more visual. It is nice to see own life in pictures and look back, as you often tend to forget what you have done.*

8.1.3 Social Interaction

The meaning of a photo has changed during the digital era. Now the photo is not merely a memory of a moment but most often a mean for connecting and communicating with others. Unlike many other consumer-orientated activates, which are conducted in private space and witnessed only by the people on the spot, the digital environments such as social media site Instagram offers a much more public domain to consumer activities. Instagram provides an easy and fast way to interact, communicate and share information with friends, family and even strangers around the world for example about where they are, what they are doing and what they are thinking. Among the stories of the informants, this possibility for social interaction was a major motivational factor to share photos to their friends to keep them updated of their lives and show what they have been up to.

> *Bob: This is a bit like showing others that what's up today. 'Please, have a peak into my life and see how I live.'*

For example, Charlie communicated by posting an Instagram photo to tell to his friends that he had went to the restaurant they had discussed before.

> *Charlie: One of my friends had been joking about that when I am in Turku I should go get breakfast from Martinsillan Grilli. I had heard worse ideas, so then I drove there and ate the meatpie for breakfast at ten in the morning. It was a fun experience and I wanted to take a memory of it, but also to communicate to my friend that I was there and the place was still rocking strong.*

For many this was also the reason to consume other users' photos, in order to see and "spy" on what was going on in their friends' lives. However, informants, such as Fiona, did not only just want to show what she was doing but she was also motivated to share the photo in hope that his online friends would interact with her by commenting and liking of the photo and giving her their support and sympathy.

> *Fiona: With this photo I was trying to get sympathy from others, as I was all alone and I felt the need to satisfy my social needs. But then it started to disrupt my concentration as people started liking and commenting the photo… but in other hand it was quite refreshing and cheered me to carry on. So I felt kind of lonely and needed to be in contact with others.*

This possibility for social interaction with friends, family and followers all around the world motivated informants to share content and made them feel part of a group or community where they were seen and heard. Informants expressed that the social interactions of consuming other people's photos and interacting with each other often created social pressure to be more active. Informants told that they were motivated to take and share photos due the actions of friends, family and other social influencer in online and offline environments. For example Daniela felt that she needed to show and communicate through photos that she was also living an interesting life.

> *Daniela: My friend Mike shares a lot of photos where he is casually enjoying some great coffee or other drinks in some nice café or other location, which makes his everyday look awesome. So therefore I thought this moment would be good too and would come out nicely as a photo… and I would be able to brag, for example, for my co-workers that I am having some great beer now and they are not.*

Simply "fishing" for likes and positive comments on Instagram were something that the informants were well aware of, but none of them really admitted to be motivated to share photos to simply get

likes. However they acknowledged that likes and positive comments made them feel good as any other positive feedback in general and therefore unconsciously boosted their motivations to share more content.

> **Bob:** *It makes you feel good when someone reacts to your photo… it is a bit silly… you almost feel a bit guilty as the feeling is so good when getting a like and then you think 'am I really like this'.*

The social media engagement, of posting photos and collection followers, comments and likes and growing their social power, has become for some almost like a game where persons score or even status is determined by the amount of interaction and influence in social media. This did not only drive users to share more, but has even sprung some Internet sites that evaluate people's "online social power" based on his social activity and influence and then might exploit users for marketing purposes.

> **Daniela:** *Klout Score is like a service for people to boost their self-esteem. It measures your social online influence. Which is kind of ridiculous, as it does not have any meaning if you are not Obama or something. But it has become a game among some of my coworkers. In USA people get free stuff when they use you as brand ambassadors. In Finland they don't and this annoys me, as I want free stuff. And I have even shared photos that my score would rise.*

8.1.4 Empowerment

When sharing information and communicating, person often has a certain message and purpose that the she wants to convoy to her audience. One of the motivational factors for creating visual brand-related UGC was empowerment, e.g. the intent to influence others. As the present study focused explicitly on brand-related UGC it was clear that some participants were motivated to promote brands they liked and felt positively about.

> **Daniela:** *This ice cream ridiculously good. And this was like a new flavor. I have eaten loads of the three other flavors before. First this was purely love affair, but then it changed to an addiction. But this is really a good example of a photo that tries to endorse a product. I wanted to tell all my friends to buy this ice cream now!*

> **Elisa:** *When I found a shop in New York that was close to our home in West Village and they sold Samuji there… so I posted a photo from there because I was so excited about seeing*

Finnish brands there... so I kind of wanted to market a brand that I like and show others that it was there.

In controversy, Instagram photos could be also used to complaining or bad mouth any product, service or a brand. However, the only informant who recalled using Instagram to complain about a brand was Bob.

Bob: I had ordered this t-shirt from their online store and after it had been in the washing machine for the first time it lost all the colors. And the handling and shipping took like a month. And when I saw that all the colors of were gone and I was like 'god damn it'. So I took a photo of it and shared it on Instagram. I put the hastag of the brand hoping that they would see it from there. But I actually also send an email afterwards as a reclamation, but it was a day later. But the point was to show my friends that 'what the hell happened here'. So it was important that my friends would see it. I didn't really believe any one from the brand site would react to it.

Most of the informants felt that Instagram was not the right place to complain or give customer feedback even that it would provide a large audience and possibility to address the complaint to the brand with use of a brand name as a hastag. The informants expressed that they saw Instagram as personal site and therefore did not want to associate it with negative content, but rather keep it polished and positive.

Elisa: If I like something I want to tell about it, but if I don't like or I get bad service... I am usually bad at telling bad news. It is good to give constructive feedback, but I would never post anywhere that 'this restaurant was bad don't go there'. I think I would just cause bad mood to myself and Instagram is not about that. Maybe Facebook is more where you can whine about your horrible day.

The informants were aware that they might have power over some of their followers, whereas similarly their online friends' opinions, suggestions and disclaims had also influence on them. However, the empowerment as motivation to create UGC were not often the sole motivation, but rather a supporting motivation and most often with positive intent.

Elisa: I have lot of same spirited friends, so I know that if I post something like this what I like they usually will like it too. ... Similarly I am a victim if some of my friends recommends

some place or posts a photo of something, and I am like 'what is this, looks good, I have to go and try it out.'

Empowerment was most clearly noticeable when users tried to promote a brand or company they had personally a professional link to. Due their occupation, Gloria, Bob and Adam, had created and published photos from their private Instagram profiles that tried to influence their followers' opinions and boost e.g. the awareness, image and sales of the company they worked for.

8.1.5 Identity

The fifth broader motivational source was the need to create own digital identity and desire to express and presents self through the brand-related photos. Among the informants, one of the most frequent reasons for sharing brand-related photos on Instagram evolved around brands that the participants liked, loved and felt strong connection towards. Most often the photo was of a product or a service that consumer had recently purchased or acquired and was now part of their lives and therefore wanted to share the enjoyment with their friends online "Look at me! See what I'm consuming." This association with products and brands through sharing photos is a way for consumers to construct their personal identities; who am I; what matters to me; and, how do I want others to perceive me? Participants were motivated to take and share photos of their favorite brands and products as they felt those brands were part of their lives and expressed something about themselves (self-expression). For example, Bob, a bicycle enthusiast, had finally been able to purchase his dream bike and was very proud of. Simultaneously he was able to strengthen and construct his own identity and the image he wanted.

> **Bob:** *In this case my dream had came true... This was one major step that I had finally reached – a bicycle that I had been long looking for and dreaming about. And then you finally get it so you feel kind of proud of yourself and want to share it.*

By sharing of brand-related photos and associating with certain brands, the informants felt that they were able to adopt and play certain roles that present the wanted self to their online audience (self-presentation). In addition, the brand-related photos also seemed to work as self-assurance. Posting a photo e.g. from trendy restaurant was a way for participants to self-assure that they were "living the life" and were not left out (self-assurance). Similarly to the phrase "pics or it didn't happen" (used on online forums to counter claims by users involving personal brag-worthy accomplishments or

extraordinary occurrences), some participants told that they felt that if they were doing something great, it did not matter until they posted it to social media where everyone (hopefully) sees it.

> **Gloria:** *Instagram is about sharing life moments, but it is a bit superficial and not always so truthful. As you just post things that you want others to see. So sometimes it is more about trying to show and prove to others what interesting things happened in your life.*

All in all, informants acknowledged that they did personal self-promotion and self-branding, but for many it was a hard subject to discuss about. They felt that it was something silly and not what one should do, but suggested that everyone was doing it consciously or unconsciously. However, informants such as Adam, Gloria and Fiona, were much more open to discuss about self-branding and self-presentation when it involved their professional selves. For them Instagram photos also provided a possibility for professional self-branding, which motivated them to share.

As posting content on social networks are social in nature, therefore sharing brand-related photos tend to also create social identity. Tagging friends, places and brand as well as commenting and liking others photos can create a sense of belonging to a certain group, network or community. This motivated some informants to share photos to be identified as a part of a certain group and enforce the personal feeling of community. For example Bob expressed how he and his friends use hastags as a private joke to strengthen their group bondage and this ultimately motivates to share photos.

> **Bob:** *Usually when you arrange something with your friends... like a weekend event or some party or travel somewhere together… so we come up with our own hastag that we use to post photos. This then drives us to post and really motivates to share more photos.*

Similarly, by featuring a brand in the photo or using brand as hastag can create a sense of community towards the brand that motivates to share. Furthermore, the instances where the brand interacted with the informants by liking, commenting, forwarding the photo or even becoming followers of the users were seen as possible motivation to share photos.

> **Elisa:** *It was quite funny story… I had used a hastag 'Samuji' and who ever takes care of their social media had found my photo and posted it to their site on Facebook. Like 'Elisa liked our panda print'. And I didn't know anything about it or who reposted it, but they had found it from Instagram. … But in the end I took it as positive thing as it was quite fun to see that they had posted it there.*

8.2 The Process of Creating Brand-related Photos

The purpose of this section is to present the findings on how consumers engage in the process of creating brand-related UGC in order to gain a better understanding of the concept of UGC. This section summarizes and describes the process of creating brand-related Instagram photos based on the stories of the interviewees.

It should be noted that, as there are probably as many possible ways to describe this process as there are users, the purpose is not to give a full description but rather to identify the main steps that individuals tend to go through when taking and sharing photos to Instagram. This gives us an understanding of what, why and how consumers create and post brand-related photos. The process is divided into five stages or decision points, as illustrated on Figure 1 (p. 45), where consumer evaluates his or her motivations and possible outcomes and makes a decision whether to move on.

1. Initial impetus
2. Creating the photo
3. Sharing the photo
4. Social interaction
5. Leave it or remove it

These steps do not necessary follow in this certain order and can jump from one to another forwards and backwards. Next, I will present these stages in more detail along with illustrative quotes from the interviews to elaborate the diversity of this process.

8.2.1 The Initial Impetus

The initial impetus to start the process of creating brand-related photo was found to emerge from an external or an internal trigger or combination of both. Internal trigger is considered here as consumer's own personal motivations, desires and needs to create and share content as presented in the previous section. Whereas external trigger can be any external factor, situation or event that person interacts, witnesses, experiences or is part of and could be then captured and communicated as a photo. This trigger could be something meaningful or interesting to the person, something that is "worth of a photo." Most often these two, external and internal triggers, need both to exist that the whole process of taking and sharing the photo is carried through. The findings propose that in the case of Instagram photos, external impetus was often the triggering factor that created the desire or need to start the process and then was supported or terminated by person's internal motivations. However, consumers may have internal motivations to take a photo and to share it, but the external

factors made the process too hard or impossible to carry out.

The initial trigger for taking a photo could have been either the desire to capture the moment or the desire to share and communicate the moment to others on Instagram. For example, Hanna's initial purpose was just to take a photo as a memory of the moment, but then later on felt that she wanted to share it with others on Instagram.

> **Hanna:** *I didn't really think that I would post this to Instagram so I just quickly snapped this. Even that the idea in Instagram is to share photos in the moment, but I quite often later own decide to share something and publish like 'throwback' photos.*

Whereas Fiona's initial intention was that she wanted to communicate and share the moment to her friends on Instagram and therefore decided to take a photo of it.

> **Fiona:** *With this photo I was trying to get people's sympathy as I was all alone and I wanted to satisfy my social needs. ... So I felt kind of lonely and needed to be in contact with others.*

It is impossible categorize all the typical moments that might lead to the act of taking photos. However, for instance, many of the situations seemed to be a special moment such as pleasant surprise as in the case when Daniela got souvenirs from her boyfriend.

> **Daniela:** *My boyfriend came from Dubai and I knew that he would bring some souvenirs. I did not except anything big… then I went to living room and there were all of these gift boxes. And I really like of pretty gift boxes and those were so cute. ... Then I just assembled them on the sofa… it took quite long time that I got everything in the photo. ... But this was definitely a special moment that I wanted to share.*

But in other hand the act of taking photo might be triggered from everyday situation that person just wants to communicate to his audience. For Bob taking pictures of his everyday meals and sharing them on Instagram was a hobby and away make his everyday meals more exciting and fun.

> **Bob:** *When there is good food it needs to be shared. It is of course a bit silly that before eating you first focus on what the food looks like that it looks good in the photo. Then I just take a photo and it feels like to most stupid thing but in away it is a lot of fun.*

However, as the name Instagram suggests, most of the informants' photos were taken spontaneously of a moment and shared immediately to others on Instagram.

Adam: Usually the situation and the sharing is quite spontaneous. You quickly snap a photo or two. Like today when I was renovating I found an original invitation to the opening of my bar from the year 2012, so I had to take a photo of it. And once you take the photo with your mobile phone, you most likely share it on Instagram too.

8.2.2 Creating the photo

The second stage is the act of creating the photo. I purposely talk about creating a photo rather than simply taking a photo, as this stage contains all the steps from arranging and adjusting the subject of the photo, the act of taking a photo(s), to editing the photo with the application itself or other digital software. This stage fulfills the second requirement of the definition of UGC (creative efforts requirement), as the creator adds own value by reflecting some amount of creative effort (OECD, 2007). Furthermore, also the third requirement (creation outside professional routines requirement) is fulfilled, as the studied photos were produced by a consumer rather than by the traditional media producers (OECD, 2007).

Before the actual act of creating the photo informants analyzed their own motivations and needs for the photo. Furthermore, they evaluated the overall situation and the external factors to make a decision that is it possible and appropriate to take a photo of the wanted subject "do I bother take the photo", "do I really need it". For example Elisa expressed that she especially avoids situations when she is with other people, as she self gets annoyed when people just focus on their phones.

Elisa: If I am with my friend I might take photos, but then again I get really frustrated when everyone are just focusing on their phones and no one talks with each other. … Therefore I don't take that many photos when with other people. But I might take photos with friends if they are in it, but when I am alone I can take the photos in peace.

Furthermore, Charlie explained that he felt shamed for taking out the camera and taking the shot especially in public spaces or when with unknown group of people.

Charlie: I was with a good friend that I know very well, so just announced to him that I will take a photo. I knew he would not judge me if I take photos of his books to Instagram. But if I had been to someone house for the first time or I did not really know the people who were around I would not have done this.

Most of the informants' stories suggested that a major part of the Instagram photos were personal

processes. However, Fiona also expressed that taking and sharing photos as a group can be social process.

> *Fiona: Sometimes it is a social process… like especially when we are with my girl friends at our summer house or someone has a birthday and then we take photos and it is a communal moment and process that we do together. Like some go to do their hair and others take photos. And today it doesn't just stop there. Now we evaluate the photos there and choose the best ones to be shared. … So there is definitely some type of process you go through, from taking and evaluating them, as you cannot share any photos where someone looks bad.*

Moreover, informants' stories revealed that taking the photos were not as homogenous as one might first think. The variety of different types of processes for taking a photo are almost limitless to ones creativity. Some situations were quick and dirty snapshots of a moment.

> *Charlie: Some people are good at just standing in a public place and taking photos, but I don't really feel comfortable doing it. I remember taking this photo really quickly as I just walked past it. And then I edited and posted in the metro. Because I remember I was not satisfied with the cropping of the photo, and if there had not been anyone else there I could have taken another photo. But Instagram is great way to make your ideas come true instantly.*

Whereas, others were more like professional photo shoots where the subjects of the photo were carefully assembled to make it look nice and visually appealing. Furthermore, the digitalization of photographing has made it possible to take limitless numbers of photos with no additional cost. This was quite obvious when photographing to Instagram. If people had the time, they took multiple photos to get the right quality, angle and mood they were after. However, even that people took multiple photos they tend to only publish one of the photos they found best.

> *Elisa: I'm real esthetician, so if I take a photo I tend to take at least like six photos. Like here I first took from this angle and then from top and then from other side… and then I realized they did not fit the Instagram frame and then I had to redo it.*

Some went even further, as for example Bob took photos of his beloved bike with a professional SLR-camera and edited it with professional software's on his computer and then uploaded it back to his smart phone to share it on Instagram.

> *Bob: I took my bike an my SLR camera and went to get official photos of my bike. … This time I just wanted to share photos taken with professional camera. So I made a lot of effort*

for this photo. I found a good spot and background, then took the photos with the SLR camera, edited them on computer and then through Dropbox I was able to get them back on my phone and share them on Instagram.

Overall, the visual, creative and artistic aspects of creating Instagram photos rose from the interviews stories was an important part of the process. The Instagram application enables consumers to show their creativity and artistic skills by utilizing the build-inn editing abilities that allow users to edit their photos such as rotate, add a frame, create a blurring effect, or brighten the photo. The application provides multiple filters that users can easily use to edit the color, contrast and atmosphere of the photos.

Fiona: Most often my photos need little bit retouching. And as it (the application) has the possibility, therefore it is kind of like part of the process that you go through the editing stages.

Furthermore, if the photo did not simply turn out as nicely or did not after all seem that interesting or meaningful even for the creator himself, the photo was most often rather deleted than shared with the online audience.

Daniela: Sometimes you take a photo and think that this could be nice one for Instagram. But then you try on all the filters and it still looks bad. Then I decide not to post it, as I will rather post something better some other time. I kind of want to keep up some quality standards with my photos.

8.2.3 Sharing the photo

The third stage of the model is the process of sharing and posting the photo to the social media site Instagram. This stage fulfills the first requirement of UGC (publication requirement), as the photos were made available through publicly accessible transmission media such as the Internet (OECD, 2007). As some of the informants had a private or rather semi-public Instagram profiles, the photos were not accessible to all online audiences. However, similarly to findings (Ochoa and Duval, 2008) I would argue that this meets the necessary publicity requirement to be considered as UGC.

Again the users are driven by their personal motivations as well as external motivations, such as social interaction and social pressure from both online and offline environments. These motivations are in some degree consciously or unconsciously evaluated together with the possible outcomes of

posting the photo to the public environment of Internet.

After sharing, the photo appears in the personal page or feed and also in the feed of other Instagram users that are following the user. Simultaneously the photo can be published to many of the other social networks that the user has selected and linked his profile to, such as Facebook. As soon as the photos have been shared and uploaded to Instagram, they are, by default, arranged chronologically, so that the feed looks like a photo gallery that tells a sequential story of the person's life.

Users can also optionally add information, description and hastags (keywords), all of which impact on meaning to their photos. Adding descriptions, hastags and location info to photos enforces the meaning as communication to others users and provides a searchable query for others. For example, informants used the name of the brand as hastag to connect the photo with the brand as well as to highlight the presence of the brand to others. The original main purpose of adding hastags is to make the photo easier to be found and more public as it will appear in the results when someone searches that hastag.

The descriptions and hastags can be used to tell what the photo is about, but the informants noted that they also sometimes used them rather as a twist or as a meta text to create more complex meanings to the photo. Especially photos that were shared sarcastically or included inside humor often included some indication or enforcement in the description.

> **Adam:** *Usually people use hastags to highlight what you see on the photo. But my friends and I use hastags that don't have any relation to anything and when you check the hastags you find photos of the whole group of friends.*

> **Daniela:** *I use hastags rather as a joke or to give extra flare to the photo and to give some contrast or to underline something.*

Even that Instagram is mostly about sharing photos instantly in the moment; however, informants explained that photos can be shared later on. The reasons for this might be, because the user did not simply have time to share it then or was not motivated enough or because there was no Internet connection to connect to Instagram.

8.2.4 Interaction

Web 2.0 and especially social media has allowed consumers not just to publish and present content e.g. photos to each other, but also to interact, comment and like them. The fourth stage after sharing the photo is the interaction with the photo and the audience. Now person's creation and own experience stretches from offline to online context. Guo et al. (2009) classified existing social networks into two categories according to their different purposes: the networking oriented social network and the knowledge-sharing oriented social networks. Instagram is a networking oriented social network, as it emphasizes the networking aspects, the social interaction and relationships. Similarly as Guo et al. (2009) suggest, in Instagram the content sharing and interaction is mainly done among friends in semi-closed environments. Informants felt that the interaction with friends and followers was on of the most important aspect of Instagram. Fiona explains that there would not be much idea for creating and sharing content on Instagram with out the possibility for someone commenting and liking your pictures and then doing it yourself to your friends' photos.

> *Fiona: It is all about the interaction, you share photos and people like them. … It is fun because there is the interaction that I like your photos and you like my photos. The possibility to like and comment is very important… there is the feeling of community. If I just had a profile that no one would see, I don't think that would be much fun at all.*

The interaction with online audience is often seen as the measure how the photo is perceived and received by the audience. The two main ways to interact with photos are commenting and liking photos. The informants acknowledged that the feedback in comments and especially the number of likes are often meaningful, even that it might not play that important role to all people or at least is hard to admit.

> *Elisa: I don't think about likes so much, but I am aware that if I share a photo and it receives a lot of likes, I know it will feel really good. … But I don't add photos to simply get likes.*

The meaning of the 'like' can be complex and have multiple levels and purposes. However, for most of the informants the meaning of a 'like' was simply descript that some one appreciates the photo and likes it. Daniela expresses the meaning for her quite simply and aptly.

> *Daniela: For friends I easily give likes and whom I like or those who I would want to like my photos. Like is 'Hey! You have a nice photo and I have seen it.' So there is not often anything more meaningful or deep, it just a nice gesture and compliment.*

Whereas commenting was found to be more meaningful, as it requires more attention, time and investment to interact with the photo.

> *Bob: I appreciate comments far more than likes. Sometimes people might ask something about the photo like is that yours or what size is that. Something that they want to know more about. And some things about the content of the photo. But not really any long or deep conversations. Just a comment and a comment to that. But commenting shows that person is more interested than when he simply likes the photo.*

The interaction, it is not merely limited to the user's friends and followers, but can also include strangers, celebrities, companies and brands. Especially brands have become more active interacting with user-generated content such as Instagram photos that feature the brand's products or have a brand as hastags. Gloria for instance found this quite pleasant surprise and felt somewhat honored and more connected towards the brand.

> *Gloria: I tagged Minna Parikka to the photo and then she liked it. So in the end it is quite nice to get likes. ... Especially if the brand likes the photo it really awesome. Little bit like if you play soccer and you would tag Ronaldo on a photo and then he would like the photo. It is just one thing but its quite nice addition.*

8.2.5 Leave it or Remove it

After publishing the photo on Instagram the photo will be stored and displayed on the users profile theoretically forever. However, user may later on remove the photo from his own profile if they want to. Most of the informants were aware of an instance when they had removed photos that they had shared. For instance, Bob explained that he had removed photos because remorse and realizing later on that the photo was not suitable for public eyes.

> *Bob: I have removed some photos from Instagram. For example in the next morning I have realized that maybe everything is not suitable to be shared on Instagram.*

Whereas Elisa had removed photos because she started re-evaluate that does the photo give a right image of herself or she was concerned about was that photo too personal and private. Fiona, in other hand, wanted to clean the feed from older and not so meaningful photos or photos that were bad quality and did not fit in with the new photos.

Fiona: It really irritated me that my old phone had much worse camera and the photos were all blurry and also they were photos that I didn't want to show others anymore. So I have removed some of the earlier photos that I had.

However, none of the informants admit that they had personally removed a photo because of the comments the photo received or rather because of the lack of comments or likes for the photo. Informants acknowledge, however, that the likes matter in some degree, but were not really a reason for deleting and removing the photo from Instagram.

Fiona: But I have never removed a photo because of likes or comments. It doesn't bother me that if people do not like my photo or my Facebook update. Most of them will see it anyways and they might like it with out pressing the like button.

Elisa: Sometimes if no one likes I start to wonder that was my photo totally random and start to reevaluate it. But it is just human nature I think.

8.3 Digital Self-Presentation Strategies

In this section I will present the findings on how creating visual brand-related content and sharing it on social media plays a role in individual's identity construction and self-presentation. This section will try to answer the second research question: *"How creating visual brand-related UGC plays a role in individual's self-presentation?*

The data revealed six strategies involved in the digital self-presentation in the context of creating brand-related photos on Instagram. In the next subsections, I will present my findings on these strategies in this order:

- Culture, Rules and Norms
- Publicity vs. Privacy
- Constructing Digital Self
- Digital Association
- Real Self vs. Ideal Self
- Narrative Memory

8.3.1 Culture, Rules and Norms

After creating an account and signing up to Instagram most of the teens and young adults feel right at home and know how everything works in just matter of minutes. Holt (2012) argues that each market is influenced by its cultural and social history and practices. Similarly, also Instagram has certain norms, values and habits that are influenced by its cultural and social history and practices. As consumers are already familiar with other social media sites and online communities, it does not take long from them to learn and adapt to the rules, norms and culture of Instagram. The findings suggest that, as the informants consciously or unconsciously adapt to the written and unwritten rules and norms of Instagram, it influences their behavior such as self-presentation on Instagram. The informants acknowledged that in various online environments they tend to behave according the prevailing rules, culture and trends to please their audience. This influenced on how the informants evaluated what to take the photos of and what to share on Instagram.

> *Fiona: But yeah you always tend to look at what others have posted. In away there are rules and norms about what people share and how they relate and react to them. For example I would never post photos of my friends with out asking them first. ... Especially any photos them being drunk and wasted.*

Of course persons own interests, hobbies and life events strongly contribute the to the content what is shared on Instagram. However, the strong social aspect and interaction with other users clearly amplified the fact that many of the informants were influenced by the behavior of other users and consciously or unconsciously imitated or even copied the photos of others. As Goffman (1959) suggests that people's understanding of society is supported by the social interactions how people exchange information with each other, as well as how these exchanges collectively contribute to their social world.

> *Gloria: Everyone follows others in Instagram so of course I share at least unconsciously same kind of photos that others do and what I have liked… You might like certain style what others post or something… but maybe not directly copying someone, so that you would post something that someone had shared and got a lot of likes.*

> *Daniela: I tend to look what others post and you get ideas what to photograph self. I sometimes like look others' photos and realize that 'wow that look really good in a photo'. But I don't really actively search anything. But just as blogs that you read for fun and then you get ideas how to dress for example.*

Elisa consciously followed other users and professional profiles to find inspiration to her own life as well as to the photos she then shared.

> *Elisa: On Instagram I maybe follow some bloggers and some awesome architecture offices just as a source for inspirations. Things like fashion, interior designing and things that I am interested in. So yeah those surely influence also my own photos.*

Especially the way informants' own friends interacted and what they shared were a major influence on what informants felt was appropriate, interesting and fun to share.

> *Daniela: For example, those photos where you set up and assemble all the things before taking the photo. And just because Mike did that I started to do it too. Whenever we had a coffee he assembled everything… all books and stuff. First it irritated me, but then I though it was so silly phenomena so I started to do it too.*

Similarly some of the friend's photos might cause negative feelings, as Hanna felt that she did not want to share similar photos that irritated herself.

Hanna: But in other had some type of photos people share really start to irritate, then you just want to avoid making them your self. If someone posts same kind of photos all the time… Like this one girl posts selfies everyday… you kind of start to think that she is really vain and narcissistic.

Broad look to the content on Instagram verify that most of the photos featured in the person's feeds are quite similar to each other. Informants acknowledged that there are some major trends that people become part of and ultimately influence their behavior.

Gloria: There is lot of trends, of course like 'selfies'. And then the people assemble their things for photos. Like if I went to scuba dive, I would assemble all my things on the beach in nice order… so that is something you see a lot on Instagram. And it is fun to do the same things, but sometimes you want to do something different so you don't end up like the stereotypic Instagram user. So don't do all the clichés.

Not all want to follow trends or other popular types of content, but rather create their own versions or even try to do the exact opposite. Daniela found the trend about posting photos under the trend "healthy living" quite irritating and decided to present her own version of the trend.

Daniela: This was kind of a joke. I had just talked with my co-worker how we get really irritated at the moment in Instagram that people post photos of their fresh green smoothies. Like on Saturdays you just woke up and someone has already been to yoga and whatever. So that type of 'healthy living' really makes me angry. So I wanted to take a photo of this burger, as burgers are awesome. Then I added hastag 'wealthy living' to get the contrast to the 'healthy living'.

8.3.2 Privacy vs. Publicity

All of the informants had created and used their Instagram accounts as a personal profile. Even that these personal profiles present the self and display aspects of people's own lives, the Instagram accounts are publically or semi publicly accessible to wide audience. This self-presentation to public audience creates a certain conflict between the opportunities and risks of social networking (Belk, 2013). Among the informants this was one important factor that influenced what they were willing to share and reveal about their selves and their lives.

Instagram offers two opinions for privacy. User can choose to be fully public where all the content

is visible to anyone online. Second opinion is to be private or rather semi public where the user needs to personally accept every user that wants to follow his profile, view his photos and interact with him. Interestingly most of the informants had chosen to have their profiles fully public, as they felt it easier and less of a hassle or were not that concerned about who is viewing their photos.

> **Adam:** *I used to have a private profile, so I needed to accept everyone who wanted to see my photos. But then I changed it to public because I tended to accept everyone, as I don't really care who sees my photos. So I just changed it.*

However, for example Elisa found the public profile a bit disturbing as she realized that all of her photos and the information was publically available as well as displayed on search engines and other websites. She felt that her private property was distributed with out asking from her.

> **Elisa:** *Someone told to me that you can see your profile on Internet, so I googled my name and I saw all of my Instagram photos there and I was like oh my god. And then suddenly there was the case that my picture were on Facebook that I hadn't even shared it there. So it makes you a bit concern what to share, as everything is so public.*

These privacy issues were one of the major factors that limited what persons were willing to share on Instagram. This barrier also limited the capabilities to present the wanted digital self. Bob felt that he rather posted photos of places and objects than the physical self. Gloria limited her sharing to protect her personal life, as she felt that not all of her audience was close enough to know about her personal life.

Moreover, it was not only the stress about strangers seeing or exploiting private photos, but also the concern that e.g. certain friends, relatives or family members would see content that was not indented for or not suitable for their eyes. Strangelove (2011) notes that social media has become a digital place where confessions are shared, as well as the photo- and video-sharing sites that are full of people's bad moments that might not be indented and suitable for all the audiences.

> **Elisa:** *For instance, like my cousin started to follow me on Instagram and I saw that she had liked ten of my photos in a row. She is my cousin and a second grader! So I was like 'oh my god' I don't want that she follows me and sees everything what I do. But as I have a public profile I cannot really do much. So that kind of stresses me as anyone can see my photos.*

Choosing the audience, however, was not only a matter of privacy, but also question who one wants to communicate and interact with i.e. "who is my target audience?" The privacy settings allow, in

theory, users to determinate and control "who do they want to connect with?; who is their audience?; who do they want to show their personal life to?" The informants expressed that even that the audience could theoretically be anyone in the world, however, the informants were mostly interested that their own friends would follow them and see the photos.

These decisions about audience can largely affect the image a person wants to present of himself and what type of content he is willing to share. The role one plays when communicating with own mother is most likely a lot different when communicating with friends from university. Too wide mix of different groups of people might hold back users from sharing content. For example, some of the informants expressed that they had learnt from the mistakes of accepting friends on Facebook. Hanna felt that she had ruined her Facebook by accepting too many people over the years and now she felt unease sharing any content there. Now Instagram offered a fresh start for her and therefore she wanted to keep Instagram more intimate and personal.

When considering their audience, the informants were not only concern about the privacy and the intimacy of their profiles, but also about the attraction of their own content. After acquiring followers and online audience user begins to interact and publish content. The need and desire to share content caused another type of dilemma "What will I share with my audience?" For Charlie, Instagram was more personal network than other social medias such as Facebook. The idea that the true friends would understand him better as they know his past and current life situation better than e.g. a friend he had once met when partying in foreign country. Therefore, he felt that he could express himself better and more openly as his audience consisted mostly of close friends who knew and understood his line of thought.

> *Charlie: Instagram is the most personal of the social medias, as I have met everyone face-to-face who follows me there. So I kind of feel that those people understand the subtle nuances of my photos. So I can share more personal and more complex content. As it is more personal I can open up little bit more and show more personal and private moments. So the photos are closer to my core personality and that makes it also more interesting.*

Informants also expressed that they felt that they were obligated to entertain or at least create content that is interesting to their audience and followers. If users want to get the attention of their followers informants acknowledged that the content needed to be interesting or meaningful to their audience.

> *Charlie: I kind of feel that I have an obligation for my Instagram followers to justify why they*

follow me and that's why I need to produce high quality content. And of course you need to foster your own self-brand as you try to make great content. So when I take these photos, of course I think also my audience who sees them that is this fun, entertaining or informative.

Furthermore, informants were concerned that the photo they were going to share was not meaningful or interesting enough for their Instagram followers and therefore decided not to publish.

Elisa: Quite often I think about if the photo is interesting to anyone else. Therefore I don't post so often or use Instagram so actively. Especially in the beginning I was wondering what can I post here... like 'is this just another meaningless photo? Who wants to see another photo of café latte?'

Similarly, some informants told that sometimes they have decided not to share the photo because they might have felt unsure of the content and how would their online and offline audience understands it and react to it. This fear was mixed with feel of shame and social pressure that made the user to question the motivations to share the photo. Informants were concerned that the audience would not understand the photo right or see it as too self-centered or self-promotional and create certain stigma of the person.

Hanna: Sometimes I am concerned that someone will understand my photo totally wrong. Like someone will think that I am trying to brag with these hats for example. So I tend to first think what others might think. This is one of the reasons that I sometimes decide not to post.

8.3.3 Constructing Digital Self

Similarly to real world also users in online environments experience the same pressures and desires when deciding what to present or disclose of themselves, but the increased control over self-presentation in digital environments allow individuals to manage their online interactions as well as to construct their digital self more strategically (Ellison et al. 2006; Schau and Gilly, 2003). As discussed in the previous subsection, consumers have different target audiences and messages that they wanted to convey in different social media sites. Therefore informants felt necessary to present and emphasize different aspects of their selves and their lives on the various social media sites. As James (1892) suggest that people can have as multiple social selves as the amount of social situations they encounter. The presented self on Instagram was not exactly the same as e.g. in LinkedIn.

Even that every social site is a separate medium and often requires a creation of new account and profile; however, informants saw them rather as pieces of larger network of online presence that created the digital self as a whole. Informants even noted that their Instagram audience consisted for the most parts of the same friends and followers as in Facebook and Twitter. The informants explained that they evaluated how they would present themselves and what they were willing to share in different online contexts, not because they were trying to hide something, but because they rather wanted put forward what was relevant in that specific context. On Instagram the subject and intention of the shared photos play a major role in constructing person's digital identity.

> *Fiona: It feels like people believe almost everything you put there. So in away you can build your own brand systematically. I think that it is one kind of a project. And especially that you build different types of profiles to different social media sites. So it's a way to boost your presence and possibly create new contacts.*

As all the informants appeared in Instagram with their true names and made their own identities acknowledged as well as most of the followers consisted people whom they interacted in real life, the digital selves were heavily connected to the true offline selves. Especially, Instagram is interesting as it is connected to real life so strongly, as the shared content is basically snapshots of one's life. Only the things, places and moments one has seen and experienced can be captured as a photo and shared to others. All of the informants carried a camera phones with them all the time, which enables them to capture and share almost any moment of their lives they want to. As discussing with the informants, it was clear that majority of the shared photos definitely showed what the person were interested in as well as valued and treasured in life.

Furthermore, as presented before, one of the motivations to create Instagram photos was "identity" that consisted of the desire and need for self-presentation, self-expression and self-assurance. These motivations, desires and needs can heavily contribute to the construction of digital self and what type of image one ultimately conveys to his or her audience. Next I will present three different cases of how informants constructed their digital self and how they wanted to present of them selves.

Fiona - Not Just Another Marketing Blond

Fiona, 26-year-old marketing student, expressed that she had often felt that people imagined her just as a "dump marketing blond". For her Instagram was a medium where she could show more sides of her life that her friends and followers might not know about.

> *Fiona:* So on Instgram I kind of bring forward aspects of myself that that might break the stereotypical images that others might have about me.

She shared photos of her interest, passion and hobbies to communicate aspects of her self that endorsed the "manly" and "geeky" sides to break the image of a she was concerned of.

> *Fiona:* For example that I practice savate... its not because I just want to share it on Instagram to show off, but I think it is also fun to share things that are seen as 'guy' things... even that I am not really a that 'manly'. ... And here again I wanted show that I am really interested in all new technological inventions and that I am a bit nerdy when it comes to certain things.

She acknowledged that because of her concern she tended to selectively highlight certain aspects and moments of her life that she felt that would change the "wrong" image some might have. However, she added that what she shared on Instagram was rather the true self that her closer friends knew her as. Whereas the people who she was not in daily connection might see only one side of her and underestimate or misunderstand her intentions. It is clear that for Fiona creating and constructing the digital self was more conspicuous act where she had a certain motive and goal that she tried to accomplish. For her it was important to construct a digital self that presented the true self, as she was not scared to share both the ups and downs of her everyday life.

> *Fiona:* I think these photos give quite realistic picture of my life. I kind of want to present my true self and my own feelings and preferences and situations... I want to share what I am like and in what moment I am in and what I am doing.

Elisa – beautiful snapshots of my everyday life

The act and the process of creating Instagram photos is a possibility to express oneself creatively and artistically. Therefore for many of the informants the visual and aesthetical aspects of the photos played an important role. The importance visuality and quality seemed to link to person's own personal attributes and self. Most of the informants expressed that they were not willing to post photos that were visually inferior e.g. shocked or the colors were distorted.

It was interesting to hear that it did not only matter what the photo was about, but also the visual aspects of the photo played a important role in presenting and branding self. Beautiful pictures were

found more interesting, and therefore people who were able to produce beautiful pictures were also more interesting to follow and interact with. Whereas the poor quality photos often were ignored and even might have caused negative attention towards the photographer. This caused that informants decided not to share a photo simply because it did not meet the visual quality requirements. The importance of visuality might be because the fact the Instagram application itself is so strongly focused on idealizing visuality though the artistic add-ons such as editing capabilities and filters build in the app.

Especially Elisa, a 23-year-old fashion-marketing student, was motivated by the creative and artistic side of photographing and editing her Instagram photos. For her Instagramming was a hobby that she used to express herself and her creativity.

> **Elisa:** *I see that Instagram is a bit artistic, as you find something beautiful and then you photograph it your own way and edit it. So for me this is really visual channel to express myself.*

Elisa's own interests were strongly connected to visuality, such as fashion, interior designing and decoration. This passion to visuality was also strongly part of her digital self and desire to make her Instagram photos look aesthetically pleasant. She admitted that most of times the subjects in the photos were somewhat assembled and posed to construct a visually pleasant image.

> **Elisa:** *In life in general I want everything to look good, like at home. That way you kind of get more out of life when you have beautiful things around. And because this is my personal Instagram account and I share photos there so rarely I don't want to post any photos that have bad colors or are out of focus. So I want it to look good and that I am are personally happy with it.*

Similarly as the visual harmony brought more enjoyment to her life e.g. at home, the constructing the digital self on Instagram was also a type of visual designing, where the visuality of the photos expressed a part of herself. Elisa describes her photographing style as "beautiful snapshots of my everyday life."

Adam – Professional vs. Personal Self

Adam, 24-year-old bar and restaurant entrepreneur, expressed that his Instagram photos are created by two to different roles of himself – private self and professional self. Both of these roles were presented on the same personal Instagram account. One half of his photos were about his free time, such as him playing golf or traveling around the world. Whereas the second half was created by the professional entrepreneur in order to market his companies to the online audience.

> *Adam: I guess that I have two bigger general topics. One is my work... because I basically market my own work and try to take photos of my bar and use hastags to boost it to my audience. And then there is the private side... it's about 50-50... other photos are for my friends and others are made for bigger marketing purposes.*

Both these two sides were mashed and mixed on his personal Instagram profile. However, Adam expressed that sometimes it was hard to say which of the photos were shared because of personal reasons or because of professional interests.

> *Adam: But in a way these work photos are also my own time so they kind of tell something about my life too ... But if I am having a great drink somewhere and I take a photo of it, so in a way it is a work thing, but then again it is part of my free time.*

This divided digital self was also quite accurate reflection of his real life, as an entrepreneur he often felt that he was working during his free time, but also having fun on work time. For him it was sometimes hard to separate the two roles as the professional and private self, as entrepreneurship had become a huge part of his personal life.

8.3.4 Digital Association

The digitalization has started a process where our possession, such as texts, book, letter, photos, videos, music and messages are largely transformed into invisible and immaterial bits of data and are only tangible through digital devices (Belk, 2013; Siddiqui and Turley, 2006). Even that consumers might feel some aspects are lost with the dematerialization these possessions (Dibble's 2000), digitalization makes the sharing of content and presenting these possession as part of self with distant others faster than ever. This association in online environments is referred as digital association. Digital association refers to "efforts to reference relationships with object, places and so forth" (Schau and Gilly, 2008, p. 396). Through digital association, online environments offer a

new space for the informants to add depth to their selves and to represent more complex meanings. Similarly, through digital association Instagram provides a space for users to express themselves by associating with certain objects, places and even brands in the photos they share.

All of the chosen photos in the study included product or other clear indication to a brand. However, interestingly, in some of the cases informants were quite unaware or did not simply consider that they had photographed and shared a brand. Daniela explained that she had rather posted photos of personal life moments where the brand just happened to be part of and played a certain role for the experience. The purpose was not to promote the brand or communicate others any aspects of the brand.

> *Daniela: In most of these I did not consider that I was sharing a photo of a brand. When you called me I was like 'damn I have lot of brands in my Instagram.' So I had not really paid attention to that. Even that I have read a lot about brand ambassadors, but never thought that I am doing that. So it's been quite unconscious.*

However most of the cases the informants acknowledged that the brand was there in the moment and in the photo, but they did not want to promote or highlight the presence of the brand. Hanna for example felt that the brand itself was quite indifferent and was not part of the message she wanted to communicate.

> *Hanna: I was aware that the photo shows the brand, but I did not really consider about adding a Villawool (name of the brand) on the photo. I knew it was there but I did not want to highlight it.*

Hanna also expressed that the brand can sometimes be part of the photo even that it might not be something she wanted necessary to include in the photo as it might give a wrong impression of about her and her life values.

> *Hanna: I knew that everyone would know that this is from Starbucks, but I did not really want to show it that we were there, as it is not that cool anymore. ... It is like huge global chain, which kills all the smaller coffee shops. So it is not my favorite brand...*

In other cases the brand played a much more important role as presenting the brand was the purpose of the photo; such in the cases where the photo was used as empowerment to suggests a certain product or brand. For instance, Daniela wanted to shout out the brand name of her favorite ice cream and it was clear that she wanted to associate as a consumer and fan of the brand.

For Bob, a 32-year-old self-claimed food enthusiast and passionate bicyclist, Instagram provided a mean to showcase his own hobbies and passions. Therefore, most of the photos evolved around his number one passion bicycling. The photos featured bikes, bike parts and other bicycling accessories. The story behind the photo of his dream bike tells a lot about him and his passions. By photographing his bike and sharing it on Instagram Bob was able communicate the story of making his dream come true to a wider audience.

> **Bob:** *In this photo my dream had come true. This is like the 310 bike and they have produced fewer than 400 in Brooklyn. So it is quit rare and hard to find. ... But this was a one major step that I had finally reached – a bicycle that I had been long looking for and dreaming about. And then you finally get it so you want to share it. So this bike and the building process is my own vision. Choosing all the components and how it is put together. And I just wanted to show all the details.*

Bob rarely featured his own physical body in his photos. He explained that he rather posted photos of objects and places than photos of his own physical body or of other people, as he did not want to violate his own or his friends privacy.

> **Bob:** *I avoid posting too personal stuff like photos of people. I rather post photos of things and objects and stuff like that… as the account is public and the photos are not in closed distribution.*

By focusing on photographing places, objects and brands, Bob expressed that he could tell more about what matters to him than just simply telling what he physically looked like. The audience he wanted to communicate with was his friends who already knew what he look liked, therefore he rather focused on communicating what he had been up to and what mattered to him. Similarly, as associating with certain people, places or objects, Bob acknowledged that through presenting certain brands in his photos he was able to express not only his own interests but also his own life choices and values.

> **Bob:** *There are quite a lot of brands in my photos. I kind of want to highlight what brand some of the things are. Especially those brands that I value I highlight in the hastags and in the description. It's like… things can be cool in the value how they are used and they work so well. But then the story and the background need to be in order too. That makes the combination. So in away you brand yourself the same way. If you had to tell who you are... I could do it by showing different logos and I bet most of these logos would be featured in the*

photos and hastags on my Instagram. It sounds a bit perverted, but you kind of create personal image of yourself, about the things you value. But it is same with brands as some people show in their photos that they went fishing to some great place or something…

Informants expressed that Instagram photographing was quite personal, as the user of the profile is the "creator" of every photo. This excludes in some degree the need to show persons own physical body in the photos. The audience automatically assumes that the person is part of the moment that is shared from that certain profile even that person is not physically present in the photo. This allows people to associate with different things and present their self through photographing objects, places and brands.

Informants expressed that most often the reason for photographing a product and sharing it on Instagram was because they had recently acquired it or were currently consuming it. Most of the informants felt necessary that they owned or at least were consuming the product, service or brand featured in the photo to be shared on Instagram.

Elisa: I bet if I was in the store and I hadn't bought this I would have taken a photo of it but had not shared it on Instagram. I would have taken a photo of the print as it is really nice and I would want to remember it, but I had not shared it on Instagram. So if I own it, it is easier to share it, as I kind of have the rights for it… I bought it so I can share it…

However, Charlie in contrast had taken a photo of Japanese candies in a shop that he did not own or consume at that moment. However he felt that the other connections to his own life and to his past were so strong that he felt a connection to the brand even with out consuming it. Charlie wanted to simply take a photograph of a candy bag that he had once enjoyed when he had visited Japan.

Charlie: Actually I did not buy these candies. So in away it is not always important that I own it. How would I explain this. … I have taken photos of things that I own and some how showed it that this is mine. So if I own something it is important to show it. But in general if there is a brand in my photos it is secondary that if I own it or not. And the fact if I am going to buy it or not is quite irrelevant.

One could argue that seeing and experiencing something e.g. beautiful or interesting is also an act of consumption. Similarly as people might consume a beautiful view, Gloria felt that she was consuming a product simply by seeing and admiring it. This was enough for her to want to share a

photo of a longboard that she did not own or did not consume its core functionalities i.e. ride with it. However the photo did not only express what she had found on her trip but also her own interest.

> *Gloria: I rarely take photos of things that are just in a store. It is of course whole different thing when it is your own… then it is more personal and closer… like a part of me. But here as a stupid tourist it was kind of ok. We were in Chamonix in a board shop and I thought the longboard was so cool, so I had to take a photo as a memory… but also to show it to others.*

When looking at the product and brands featured on their personal feed, the informants expressed that most of the featured brands were something that they tend to choose and consume or would prefer to consume. However, Charlie expressed that not all brands featured in his photos were something he consumes or idealizes, but rather he felt he had something to say about them.

> *Charlie: Most often I am a consumer of these brand featured in my photos at least in some level. But I might photo products and brands just as to show others like 'look at this'. It might become thing I want to comment or be sarcastic about or anything, but I don't need to be the consumer of them. I indicate it some how in the description of in the photo itself that this brand is not really me. Where as if it is part of my life I tend to just have it with out any descriptions, as it is more pure and true in a way.*

8.3.5 Real Self vs. Ideal Self

As discussed previous subsection the presentation of digital self can be done through digital association e.g. through objects, places and brands. However self-presentation as simples is to create a specific teleprecence through presenting the physical self in digital form. Schau and Gilly (2003) use the term digital likeness, which is defined as the effort to reference to the individual's physical body in the construction of a digital self. Simplest strategy for digitizing a likeness is to reference the real life physical body by directly showing pictures, photos, videos and textual descriptions (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Another interesting question is how realistic versions of the digital self users try to construct on Instagram. Researchers have suggested that user's online self represents the image of ideal self (Kozinets and Kedzior, 2009), possible self (Young and Whitty, 2012), aspirational self (Wood and Solomon, 2010), or a canvas on which user can sample different alternative selves (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010) (as cited in Belk, 2013). As Instagram is all about photos and furthermore

the photos are most often photographs of person's own real life, which somewhat ensures that the person has experienced or witnessed the subject of the photo and was able to take photograph of it. Therefore this type of UGC is also heavily connected to the offline real lives of the person. Most of the informants felt that the photos reflected their true every day lives. Elisa explained that one could get a pretty good idea of her and her life through the Instagram photos she shared.

> *Elisa: I believe these photos reflect my life and me pretty well. If you would look through my every Instagram photo, you get to know me pretty well in some way at least. Because I post just those things that I am interested in and what I personally like and like to do on free time.*

However, informants admitted that the chosen photos were most often collection of the better and high moments of life, rather than the down falls. Daniela admitted that she mostly shared special moments and did not really show the everyday of her life as she did not see that was the purpose of Instagram. For her Instagram was more about communicating and storing positive aspects of life.

> *Daniela: I don't know if these photos give really realistic picture of my life. I put mostly photos that are of some special moments. Some one said to me once that she did not want to use Instagram because everyone has so awesome photos. ... So it is true that the photos give a bit ideal version of person's life.*

Hanna explained that sometimes she felt like posting photos to not just keep her friends updated but she also wanted to show and highlight the interesting things she had been up to. Hanna felt that on Instagram people are often 'pretending to have more interesting lives than they do'.

> *Hanna: Like this photo, I hadn't posted any holiday or travel photos for long time. So I kind of wanted to post this just that people would see that I have been to somewhere… it sound so stupid when I say it out loud… or it could be just that I am going out with my friends or anything. So you try to tell something about yourself and when you see your friends you don't have to start over telling everything you have been up to.*

However, Bob felt that Instagram was not about faking or trying to tell lies, but the people just tend to choose the more positive and better moments of life. Furthermore, Bob noted that the photographing style and culture in Instagram demand that the photos need to be interesting to their audience, therefore the subject is selected and assembled as well as the visually enhanced and edited. This enhancement of photos is even built in to the application as it provides editing capabilities and filters.

> *Bob:* But yeah… sometimes I tend to set up the things in the photo that the photo looks more interesting. … So the reality would not be exactly like that, but you adjust it for the photo.

Elisa continues that she is even worried about how will different people and various groups perceive her photos. She was concerned that the image would be misguiding and others would think that she is trying e.g. to brag with her life. Therefore she sometimes avoided sharing images that were about the more glamorous high-end moments of her life. She saw that it was better to keep her digital self modest and down-to-earth.

> *Elisa:* Sometimes I worry about what others think about me when they look at my photos. Especially when I see someone who I know in a bar. And then she says that I looked at your photos and you are always traveling. … And like now when we were in Mexico and I might had like ten photos that I wanted to post, but then I unconsciously started to think that I cannot post that many, because someone might get irritated 'hey we know you are in Mexico'. But for me it is more about that when I see nice things I want to share them with others.

Informants were some what balancing between to create interesting and meaningful content but not to shoot it too far that would possibly cause negative reaction such as envy or grudge in their audience. The informants felt that the presented digital self had an impact how other people saw them. Especially people, who were not so close to them or did not see them that often, constructed the image of them through the digital presentation on social media sites.

> *Elisa:* I believe people do a lot of judgments about what person is like and just what they share on Instagram. I have some childhood friends that I follow on Instagram and I sometimes wonder why they post that kind of photos of them selves… like many of the girls… you kind of start to think that if they don't have anything else to share than those kind of photos that do they have really low esteem or what is wrong. But it is just that Instagram is so personal so you get a certain image of someone easily.

8.3.6 Narrative Memory

Schau and Gilly (2003) argued that online environments are reorganizing the traditional linear narrative structures of life stories. However, similarly to many of other the social media sites also Instagram features a chronologically archiving profile and feed that attempts to facilitate a linear narrative rather than random collage of posted photos, comments and updates. Social networks help individuals to remember other people, emotions, and events that are significant in their lives (Belk, 2013). Not only does this help people to memorize significant events in their lives, but also construct more coherent life stories and more consequent presentation of self.

All of the informant's photos had a story behind them and as they were published the story was presented to the online audience. These stories are a glimpse to the person's life and as the photos are published in chronological order, together they create a diary like feed to one's life. Belk and Yeh (2011) suggest that photos play a key role in facilitating autobiographical memory, as a photo can convoy a message that recreates the emotion of the original experience. The more photos from the longer time period the better idea one gets of persons life story e.g. "Where the person has been? What matters to her? How has she changed over the time? Where is she now?"

> *Fiona: In some degree I want to follow myself on Instagram too. Like you can see your own memories… just browse downwards and see your photos. So Instagram is also about that you can remember your own past, as it is like a timeline and you can see the evolution of yourself. Where I was then and what I was doing and the whole development.*

As the photos construct identities through the stories of personal life moments, this influenced the self-presentation of digital self and what photos informants wanted to save to Instagram as well as look at and remember later on in the future.

> *Daniela: Instagram is also about memories. Therefore I share photos that are about good moments and you can make your life to look even better. So in away you save the better moments of your life. Like this burger looks really good even that in reality it wasn't that good. … So because the photos stay in the gallery you don't want to get any negative energy.*

9. Discussion

The presented Figure 1 (p. 45) illustrates the process of producing brand-related Instagram photos as combination of the identified motivational factors, stages of the process and self-presentation strategies. In this section, I will ground my findings to the theoretical framework and elaborate them through previous literature on user-generated content, identity construction and self-presentation in digital environments as well as other relevant subjects.

I start by discussing the overall process of producing brand-related photos that is supported or diminished by the consumer's motivational factors through out the stages. After that, I will focus on discussing the management and the strategies of self-presentation on Instagram.

9.1 How and Why Consumers Create

The first part of the research was to get a better understanding of why and how consumers produce brand-related photos to Instagram. The findings revealed several motivational factors as well as identified and illustrated the process of creating brand-related photos. As illustrated in Figure 1 (p. 45), consumers evaluate their motivations and possible outcomes to make a decision whether to move on to the next stage of the process: 1) Initial impetus 2) Creating the photo 3) Sharing the photo 4) Social interaction 5) Leave it or remove it.

These steps do not necessary follow in this certain order and can jump from one to another forwards and backwards. Furthermore, it is clear that, as there are probably as many possible ways for this process as there are users, the model does not to give a full description but rather to identifies the main steps to give us an understanding of what and how consumers create and post brand-related photos. The overall creation process of Instagram photos met the definition of UGC by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), as the findings indicate that the three basic requirements (1. Publication requirement, 2. Creative efforts requirement and 3. Creation outside professional routines requirement) were fulfilled.

The findings indicate that informants rarely posted brand-related photos in order to just purely promote or complain about the brand. They rather posted photos of personal life moments and them selves where the brand was part of and played a certain role. Even that the brand might have been important contributor for the experience; however, most often the motivation for taking and posting the photo was more complex and ambiguous.

Consumer may have simultaneously multiple motivations and the motivations may change through out the process of creating visual brand-related UGC. Furthermore, there are most likely as many motivations as there are people who take and share photos on Instagram. However, they all intend to communicate and most often people try to tell something about who they are; what matters to them; and, how do they want others to perceive them. By understanding the people's motivations to create photos on Instagram provides also an insight for motivations for self-presentation. The data revealed multiple motivations that were categorized to five broader themes: 1) Entertainment, 2) Documentation 3) Social interaction 4) Empowerment 5) Identity.

These motivations are similar to the previous findings on creating UGC (Stöckl et al. 2007) and brand-related content (Christodoulides et al. 2012; and Muntiga et al. 2011). However, the previous researchers (e.g. Christodoulides et al. 2012) argued empowerment to be less important motivational factor for sharing UGC. The present study focused explicitly on brand-related UGC it was clearer that some of the participants were motivated to promote brands they liked and felt positively about. Similarly to findings of Muntiga et al. (2011), the informants can be seen as brand ambassadors, who want to display their enthusiasm for a brand and, importantly, enjoy convincing others that the brand is worth using or purchasing. Especially when the informants had a personal connection to the brands interest, such as Adam used his profile to post photos and to promote of bar he owned.

Stöckl et al. (2007) argued the primary motivational factors can be considered to be intrinsic motivations, which suggests that the activity of creating brand-related Instagram photos itself is part of the desired satisfaction. Whereas the more extrinsic motivations, such as monetary and economical purpose, had an inferior role. However, similarly as Stöckl et al. (2007) suggested that the desire to enhance reputation and recognition from others seemed to be relevant.

It is clear that all of the presented motivational drivers have influence on person's digital self-presentation, however most dominant significant is the "identity" that consisted of the desire and need for self-presentation, self-expression and self-assurance. Theses motivations and desires express and present as well as assure self can heavily contribute to the construction of digital self and what type of image one ultimately conveys to his or her audience.

9.2 Managing Digital Self-Presentation

Schau and Gilly (2003, p. 391) identified four strategies involved in digital self-presentation: "1) constructing a digital self, 2) projecting a digital likeness, 3) digitally associating as a new form of possession, and 4) reorganizing linear narrative structures". These general broader themes are similar to findings and categorizing of the digital self-presentation strategies in the present research. However, several new strategies were indentified as well as differences in how these strategies were implemented and used by the users.

In the next subsections, I will first discuss on how the informants found the society, the culture and trends of Instagram to influence their behavior and digital self-presentation. Secondly, I will discuss on the matter of choosing or constructing the audience as well as the publicity and privacy issues on Instagram. Third, I will discuss how informants constructed the digital self and explore what type of self informants presented and was it rather the real self or the ideal self. Finally, I will discuss on how the self-presentation is a collection of photos that are chronologically arranged in the person's profile that hold certain memories and create a life story.

9.2.1 Adapting to the Culture

Holt (2012) argues that each market is influenced by its cultural and social history and practices. Moreover, each market is formed by specific marketplace ideologies. Ideologies are systems of meaning reproducing and influencing consumers' behavior and thoughts (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and form the collection of norms, values and habits (Kilbourne, 2004). They are powerful in influencing consumption and giving consumers sense of personal and social identity (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). Similarly to other markets also Instagram had certain norms, values and habits that were influenced by its cultural and social history and practices. Not only did these prevailing norms, values and habits influence the behavior of the users, but also simultaneously the users were participating in the culture creation of Instagram.

Furthermore, Goffman (1959) suggests that people's understanding of society is supported by the social interactions how people exchange information with each other, as well as how these exchanges collectively contribute to their social world. Similarly, the research suggests that the users create an understanding of the online society and the social culture of Instagram by following and adapting the behavior of others. By mimicking others users in online environments learn to

behave according the prevailing rules, culture and trends. As Goffman (1952) suggests that to behave accordingly people choose different roles to suit the various contexts.

The findings show that the informants consciously or unconsciously adapt to the written and unwritten rules and norms of Instagram to play a role that pleases their audience. For example, informants acknowledged that sometimes associating with brands could be seen as showing off, however, they noted that it did not really matter, as subtle bragging was part of the fun and allowed in the culture of Instagram. The prevailing culture did not only influence informant's online behavior but also offline behavior, such as how informants evaluated what to take the photos of and what to share on Instagram.

Similarly as, Lee (2005) and Hjorth (2007) found that self-portraits or selfies often mimic conventions of mass media or stereotypical feminine poses, so did the informant's brand-related photos mimic broader trends and photographing styles of other users on Instagram. It is interesting that the prevailing behavior models and the overall culture is nowhere written, but however they influence users behavior. Social networks tend to prove that there are a lot of ways in which social dynamics are about agreed-upon fictions, and agreed-upon fictions have value (boyd, 2014).

The prevailing culture is also heavily influenced by the limitations and possibilities of the online environment. In the early online environments, where content consisted mainly of written text such as MUDS, discussion forums and emails, users were allowed to take whatever persona they desired and therefore often acted as someone else or played out their underlying negative impulses online (e.g. Castronova, 2007; Haraway, 1991). Whereas identity performance in less anonymous online contexts, such as online dating sites (Ellison et al. 2006) and personal web spaces (Schau and Gilly, 2003), users wanted consciously to convoy themselves to external social observation in online environments. As the old online environments emphasized verbal and linguistic communication, online self-presentation was easier to mold and subject to self-censorship (Walther, 1996). In Goffman's (1959) terms, more expressions of self are ''given'' rather than ''given off.'' Now the "breakout of the visual" (Bolter, 1996) and social medias have given new possibilities for digital identity construction and self-presentation through sharing photos and interacting with online audience under person's true name and identity. The new functions and environments offer people more ways to express themselves, but also may create limitations and concerns e.g. of personal privacy or social pressure.

What makes social networks interesting environment for research is that now the producer of the content is simultaneously also the consumer his own and his peer's content. This influences both the motivations and processes of producing the content. Furthermore, the process of self-construction and self-presentation online is no longer conducted in isolation. As online environments and especially social networks have become interactive and social in nature, the construction of digital self is strongly influenced also by others whom we interact and communicate with (Belk, 2013). The strong social aspect and interaction with other users clearly amplified the fact that many of the informants were influenced by the behavior of other users and consciously or unconsciously imitated or even copied the photos of others. Turkle (2011) refers to this as the collaborative self. Especially the way informants' own friends interacted and what they shared were a major influence on what informants felt was appropriate, interesting and fun to share. The questions such as "What is acceptable; What is interesting?" were answered by learning or rather adopting the culture of Instagram.

Broad look to the over all content of Instagram photos verify that most of the content featured in the users' feeds are quite similar to each other. There are some major trends that people become part of and influence their behavior, such as recently photos of food, self-portraits (selfies) or most recently belfies (selfies of person's own bottom). However, the Instagram trends are not only created online, but most often are influenced by the trends from real life, such as the informants identified "hipsterism" and cross fit exercising. These trends influence what types of photos users share, how users create their digital identities and how they desire to present their selves. Social networking sites, infused with behavior and cultural models, have now become important for psychological development, especially for teenagers whom are in process of "growing-in" and "finding themselves" (Steinfield et al. 2008).

When discussing identity we should not forget the social aspects of consumption. Individuals consume not just for themselves but also within broader networks of social relations (Schau and Gilly 2003). As people construct their identities by posting content online, such as photos, videos and status updates, they also expose themselves to the constant observation and interaction with others online. The photos people upload and the received comments, likes and tags by friends and strangers are not only part of their extended selves, but also aid in the process of co-construction of self, either by reaffirming or undermining the sense of self (Belk, 2013; Drenton, 2012). It seems that the ability to publish and share content online has made it much easier to connect with others and present our selves, but also in contrast to be judged according the preferences (e.g., Belk, 2013; Rentfrow and Gosling, 2006).

9.2.2 Choosing the Audience

The rise of digital technologies and online environments has made it easier to share more content to wider audience than ever before. As Belk (2013) points out that it is likely that those who are active in social networks, their social media friends know more about their daily goings and comings than their family members. Similarly the informants in the study actively used their Instagram accounts as a personal profile to present their selves and their daily lives to the online audience. Even that these personal profiles present the self and display aspects of people's own lives, the Instagram accounts are publically or semi publicly accessible to wide audience. Therefore, similarly to real world also users in online environments experience the same pressures and desires when deciding what to present or disclose of themselves, but the greater control over self-presentational behavior in digital environments allow individuals to manage their online interactions more strategically (Ellison et al. 2006).

This self-presentation to public audience creates a certain conflict between the opportunities and risks of social networking (Belk, 2013). The study revealed that the informants were constantly battling between the privacy and publicity issues. The users had the urge to share content and to communicate with their audience, but the concern about their own privacy and violation of personal photos made them to rethink what to share on Instagram. This barrier and concern to share limited the capabilities to present the wanted digital self.

Moreover, it was not only the stress about strangers seeing or exploiting private photos, but also the concern that e.g. certain friends, relatives or family members would see content that was not indented or not suitable for their eyes. Informants seemed to struggle with Instagram how to deal with multiple contexts simultaneously. Strangelove (2011) notes that social media has become a digital place where confessions are shared, as well as the photo- and video-sharing sites that are full of people's bad moments that might not be indented and suitable for all the audiences. The role one plays when communicating with own mother is most likely a lot different when communicating with friends from university. These decisions about audience can largely affect the image person wants to present of himself and what type of content he is willing to share. As Belk (2013) notes that in digital environments it can be a challenge to segregate different personas and control content that different audiences see e.g. among friends, family and co-workers.

Unlike personal web-sites (Schau and Gilly, 2003), Instagram offers two privacy opinions. User can choose to be fully public where all the content is visible to anyone online. Second opinion is to be private or rather semi public where the user needs to personally accept every user that wants to

follow his profile, view his photos and interact with him. These privacy settings allow, in theory, users to determinate and control "Who do they want to connect with? Who is their target audience? Who do they want to show their personal life to?" The informants expressed that even that the audience could theoretically be anyone in the world, however the informants were mostly interested that their own friends would follow them and see the photos.

Interestingly, however, most of the informants had chosen to have their profiles fully public, as they felt it was less of a hassle or they were not that concerned about who is viewing their photos. Therefore, even that the users might have the intention to share content only to their friends, it seemed that many of the informants forgot or did not consider that their photos were visible to everyone because of their privacy setting. This had caused some surprises and concern about their own privacy, as the photos were reposted or visible in other online contexts. Belk (2013) warns that once uploaded to Internet, the content is no more in the control of the confessor and might be shared forward to wider and more public audiences by others.

When considering their audience, the informants were not only concern about the privacy and the intimacy of their profiles, but also about the attraction of their own content. The need and desire to share content caused another type of dilemma "What will I share with my audience?" The data revealed that Instagram was seen as more personal network than other social medias such as Facebook. Therefore, informants felt that they could express themselves better as their audience consisted mostly close friends who knew and understood their line of thought.

As users are now communicating and sharing content on the online environments to an unseen audience (Serfaty, 2004), both the amount and the over all feedback from other users can provide self-validation for the user and a sense of admiration and fame (O'Regan, 2009) (as cited in Belk, 2013). This desire and the need to be heard influenced the informants as they felt necessary or even obligated to entertain or at least create content that is interesting to their audience and followers. If users want to get the attention of their followers informants acknowledged that the content needed to be meaningful to their audience. Belk (2013) suggest that the fact that social media lacks privacy in many aspects and almost everything is publicly or semi-publicly shared, can cause users to feel vulnerable and lead to compulsively need continually post status updates and photos to appear active and interesting to others. This phenomenon is being named as "FOMO" or "the fear of missing out" (e.g. Grohol, 2011). The tension between privacy and the potential admiration and fame challenges users to evaluate how far they are willing to go with their sharing and confessions.

9.2.3 This is Digital Me

Casual observation suggests that people do a lot of identity work online, which is not that surprising, as Belk (2013) points out that the websites are now constantly asking users questions like "Who are you?" or "What do you have to share?" The study indicates that the visual photos of Instagram are no exception when in comes to constructing digital identity and expressing self. However, for the informants Instagram was not the same as Facebook or LinkedIn. As consumers have different target audiences and messages that they wanted to convey in different social media sites, therefore the informants felt necessary to present and emphasize different aspects of themselves and their lives on the various social media sites. James (1892) suggests that people can have as multiple social selves as the amount of social situations they encounter. The informants used these multiple "identities" to put forward different facets of who they were. As in real life the digital self is fragmented and can have multiple identities, which according to Firat and Venkatesh (1995) can vary in importance over time and that different possession contribute to the construction and maintenance of different parts of personalities.

This fragmentation of identities is emphasized, as every social site is a somewhat separate medium and often requires a creation of new account and profile. However, informants saw these various profiles and online environments rather as pieces of larger network of online presence that created the digital self as a whole. Informants even noted that their Instagram audience consisted for the most parts of the same friends and followers as in Facebook and Twitter and furthermore, they were also friends and acquaintances in real life. Moreover, in digital environment it might be a challenge to segregate different personas and control content that different audiences see (Schau and Gilly, 2003), such as self-presentation among friends, family and co-workers. Therefore, it is not to say that consumers are trying to be separate individuals in different online environments, but rather played different roles, as one does when in company of family or friends.

The type of information and content person shares as well as how he interacts with other users on each site supports these roles. The informants explained that they evaluated how they would present themselves and what they were willing to share in different online contexts, not because they were trying to hide something, but because they rather wanted put forward what was relevant in that specific context. Chalfen (2002) suggests that people are not any more just "taking pictures" but rather "making pictures", as digital technologies has made it possible to easily create, edit, alter and fabricate self-relevant information for the purpose of self presentation (Kernis and Goldman, 2005).

Turkle (1995) and Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that digital selves do not have to be related to one another or correspond to their real life identities. Furthermore, researchers have suggested that the reason for the extensive volume of sharing and self-disclosure online is somewhat due to the lack of the perception of anonymity and invisibility that make users feel that they can express their "true self" better online than through real life communication (e.g. Ridley, 2012, Bargh et al. 2002; Tosun, 2012; Belk, 2013). However, as all the informants appeared on Instagram with their true names and made their own identities acknowledged as well as most of the followers consisted of people whom they interacted in real life, the digital selves were heavily connected to the true offline selves. This publicity of the real identity made the Instagram profile and photos to link straight to the person's real life persona. It was clear from the informant's stories that the online selves on social media sites and the offline self are not separate, but rather a single connected identity that allows presenting different aspect of self. The online audience formed their perception of a person through combination of the self presented in online and offline environments. Especially people, who are not so close to person or do not see him that often, construct the image through the person's digital presentation on social media sites.

Instagram is interesting as it is connected to real life so strongly, as the shared content is basically snapshots of one's life. Only the things, places and moments one has seen and experienced can be captured as a photo and shared to others. All of the informants carried a camera phones with them almost all the time, which enables them to capture and share almost any moment of their lives they choose to. When discussing with the informants, it was clear that majority of the shared photos definitely showed what the person were interested in as well as valued and treasured in life. Therefore, all of the informants felt that the photos reflected their selves and their lives.

This raised a question "how realistic versions of digital self users construct on Instagram?" It is commonly accepted that there are numerous aspects of the self, which are expressed or made salient in various contexts (Ellison et al. 2006). Higgins (1987) suggests that there are three domains of the self: the actual self (attributes an individual have), the ideal self (attributes an individual would ideally have), and the ought self (attributes an individual ought to have). Therefore, people might be what they have self-presented, but they can also a great deal more (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Some of the informants wanted to construct their digital self to have an impression similar to their everyday real life presence so that friends and family can keep up what's happening in their lives and "really" connect with them. Whereas some of the Instagram users were more interested to make their lives look more interesting and presented more ideal and polished version of self. However,

this greater control over self-presentation in online environments does not necessarily lead to misrepresentation. Similarly to the findings of Herb and Kaplan (1999) and Bargh et al. (2002) informants also expressed that digital identity construction made it possible for individuals to express their concealed and nested identities or to more fully reveal aspects of them selves that are difficult to represent physically in real life.

As Schau and Gilly (2003) suggests, it was quite clear that most often users consciously draft a digital selves what they believe to be attractive self-presentation, including what they felt were their best attributes and somewhat ignoring or even concealing elements they deemed undesirable. As Hanna described humorously that Instagram is a medium where people 'pretended to have more interesting lives than they do'. However, for informants, Instagram is not about faking or trying to tell lies, but the people just tend to choose the more positive and better moments of life. Rather the culture of Instagram demands the users to make the photos interesting to their audience; therefore the subjects of photo are selected and assembled as well as visually enhanced and edited. This enhancement of photos is even built in to the application as it provides editing capabilities and filters.

However, Ellison et al. (2006) suggests that even consumers feel the pressure to highlight one's positive attributes; they also feel the need to present one's true (or authentic) self to others. Whereas some of the informants were even worried how would others perceive their authentic photos and worried of being misjudged. Informants were some what balancing between creating interesting and meaningful content, but avoiding not to shoot it too far that would possibly cause negative reactions such as envy or grudge in their audience. This tension between authenticity and impression management is inherent in many aspects of self-disclosure (Ellison et al. 2006). When deciding what and when to self-disclose, people often struggle to combine opposing needs such as openness and autonomy (Greene et al. 2006; Ellison et al. 2006).

9.2.4 My Brands and I

On Instagram the subject and intention of the shared photos play a major role in constructing person's digital identity. It was clear that users found the visual aspect of photos an interesting and important mean to communicate and present their selves. Zhoa et al. (2008) suggest that users predominantly claim their identities in social medias rather by "showing" than "telling". The visual photos allowed people to associate with different things and present their self through photographing objects, places and even brands.

Digital association refers to efforts to reference relationships with possessions, objects, places, and so forth in digital environments (Schau and Gilly, 2003). As in the material real life, where possession, products and brands convey meaning and are used as social stimuli to construct self (Solomon, 1983), consumers use digital possessions, products and brands in online environments to portray to others who they are, as well as who they are not (Schau and Gilly, 2013).

Consumers actively use and mix brands and their images to present themselves to the assumed audience (Schau and Gilly, 2003), as the chosen products, services, and brands have different types of value (Kotler, 2000). However, when discussing about the brand-related photos, it become clear that the intention to associate with brands however was not always that apparent and conscious act. Even that all of the chosen photos in the study included product or other clear indication to a brand, however, in some of the cases informants were quite unaware or did not simply consider that they had photographed and shared a brand. Informants rather posted photos of personal life moments where the brand just happened to be part of and played a certain role for the experience. Whereas some cases informants acknowledged the presence of the brand, but informants did not want to highlight it and felt the brand itself was quite indifferent and was not part of the message they wanted to communicate. However, whether it was conscious or unconscious act to include the brands to the photos they however tend to tell something about the person, as consumers tend to desire and select products, services and brands that are self-relevant and communicate their own given identity (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Informants expressed, as the user of the Instagram profile is the "creator" of every photo, this excludes in some degree the need to show persons own physical body in the photos. The audience automatically assumes that the person is part of the moment that is shared from that certain profile even that person is not physically present in the photo. This allows people to associate with different things and present their self through photographing objects, places and brands. By focusing on photographing places, objects and brands, informants expressed that they could tell

more about what matters to them than just simply telling what he physically looked like. The tangible and intangible possessions reflect individual identity as they indicate e.g. a person's tastes, accomplishments, skills, or creative efforts (Schultz et al. 1989 as cited in Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Through digital association, online environments offer a new space for consumers add depth to their selves and to represent more complex meanings (Zhao et al. 2008). Similarly, as associating with certain people, places or objects, informants acknowledged that through presenting certain brands in the photos they were able to express not only their own interests but also own life choices and values. Furthermore, the featured brands can be used as a self-promotion as the consumer tries to piggyback on the brand image. Berthon et al. (2008) found that the brands are most often high-profile brands that are trending or popular and especially have a positive connotation in the eyes of the creator. Kates (1997) suggests that digital association displays the link and interaction between corporately influenced meanings of the brand and those meanings consumers derive and perpetuate (as cited in Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Ellison et al. (2006) and Schau and Gilly (2003) argue that digital environments have given people more freedom to express their identities through digital association rather than simply through ownership or proximity of objects and possessions. For example, one can post an image of a Ferrari that he had copied from Google and then shared it on his personal web page. However, this type of action in Instagram would be considered somewhat fake and not appropriate. Instagram photos are most often photographs of person's real life, which makes it necessary that the person has experienced or witnessed the product or brand and was able to take photograph of it.

Furthermore, as in real life to associate with a brand one must consume or be in physical contact with it to be fully associated with the brand, whereas in digital environments the person does not need to own the product or even to consume it to digitally associate with it (Schau and Gilly, 2003). However, informants expressed that most often the reason for photographing a product and sharing it on Instagram was because they had recently acquired it or were currently consuming it. Most of the informants felt necessary that they owned or at least were consuming the product, service or brand featured in the photo to be shared on Instagram. As Belk (1988) suggests that the possessions one owns are a significant contributor and reflection of his or her identities. Therefore, as Instagram photos seemed to reflect the real material realm and possession of a person, it also present quite accurately the real life self.

9.2.5 My Digital Memories

According to McAdams (1993) to know a person, one needs to know his or her story. McAdams builds an identity theory around the idea that to gain insight in to meaning of our lives and who we are, we need to know and create stories of our lives and ourselves. The researchers (e.g. McAdams, 1993; Giddens, 1991; Thompson 1997) suggest that the person's sense of self is structured in terms of a narrative.

When it comes to digitalization; Schau and Gilly (2003) argued that online environments are reorganizing the traditional linear narrative structures of life stories. Now, because of hyperlinks, online websites have lost the structure of narratives that have distinct beginning, middle. However, similarly Belks (2013) findings, many of the social media sites as well as Instagram features timeline or chronologically archiving profile that attempts to mimic a linear narrative rather than random mixture of posted photos, updates, and comments. As soon as photos have been uploaded to Instagram, they are, arranged chronologically telling sequentially the story of that person's life. Not only does this help people to memorize significant events in their lives, but also construct more coherent life stories and more consequent presentation of self. This helps the people to make sense who they are, as they are not just presented as a list of qualities and attributes (e.g., age, height, weight, values, passions), but these qualities are connected in to the memory of certain moments in person's life, which together construct a story that connects person's identity from past, to present, and into the possible imagined future self (McAdams, 1993).

These stories constructed of photos are a glimpse to the person's life and as the photos are published in chronological order, together they create a diary like feed to one's life e.g. "Where the person has been? What she has been up to? What matters to her? How has she changed over the time? Where is she now?" Every life story is composed of various events, developments and characters etc., which more than anything else is what makes every life and everyone unique (McAdams, 1993). Narratives are not there that we "discovers ourselves" but rather "make ourselves" through stories. As Giddens (1991, p. 54) suggest, "identity is not to be found in behavior, nor in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going."

Now this once personal "diary" to person's life is available publicly or semi-publicly to online audience. Belk (2013) notes that the possessions and information that were once seen as private or semi-private, such as diaries containing inner thoughts or albums of embarrassing photos, are now posted to personal websites, blogs and social networks and shared with the whole world (Belk, 2013).

Real life objects, such as souvenirs, photographs, letters and collections, that form a part of the extended self can often create a feeling of past through association with special moment, events and people in our lives (Belk 1991). Similarly, consumers are documenting, recording and archiving their lives to online environments. As the photos construct identities through the stories of personal life moments, this influenced the self-presentation of digital self and what photos informants wanted to save to Instagram as well as look at and remember later on in the future. Belk and Yeh (2011) suggest that photos play a key role in facilitating autobiographical memory, as a photo can convoy a message that recreates the emotion of the original experience.

However, the resulting digital memories may not be are accurate, just as Belk (1988; 2013) notes that the traditional family photo albums were most often selective representations of good times, new possessions, and other celebratory moments. Similarly the informants acknowledged that stored photos on Instagram would give rather positive and ideal image of the past lives to the future self. Some saw it important to select and store only the positive moments that are pleasant to go through and remember in the future. Even that, thanks to digitalization, there is much inexpensive digital storage that people are able to keep and store everything (Cushing, 2012), however, Instagram users were very selective when deciding what to post and store to Instagram. It was clear the posted photos needed to construct an interesting and meaningful entity and the photos that become later on less meaningful or disturbing were removed. Instagram, therefore, was not seen as simple storage for photos but rather a digital photo album that was shared publicly.

Especially social networks help individuals to remember other people, emotions, and events that are significant in their lives (Belk, 2013). People can search old friends, look up photos with comments, and interact with others who help to construct the memory of a shared event. Individual's memories benefit not only from their own online actions, but also of those others who post photos of them and "tag" them into the photos and events. Furthermore, Van Dijck (2007) suggests that just as self is co-created online, so is part of our memory co-created with others on social media.

10. Conclusions

In this section, I will present the conclusions for my research. First I will present the theoretical implications followed by the managerial implications in order to address the usability of the research results in the corporate environment. The section is concluded by the limitations of the study and the possible future research avenues.

10.1 Theoretical Implications

The aim of this research was to look at the creation of visual brand-related UGC and how it is used as self-presentation. Through interviews and analysis of narratives of eight participants I have attempted to give a description of the process itself and what are the underlying salient meanings and purposes for self-presentation. By investigating how consumers tell stories about creating brand-related photos to Instagram I was able to identify themes that appeared most comprehensive and most revealing for explaining the individual and collective experiences.

The first objective investigated in-depth how consumers engage in this process of creating brand-related photos in order to gain a better understanding of the concept of UGC. The aim was to understand what, where, how and why consumers create and post brand-related photos. To answer the "Why?" question I introduced a model that consisted five motivational factors that drive consumers to create and share brand-related photos. The "What, Where and How?" questions I answered by introducing a model that illustrated the six stages or decision points of the process of creating brand-related photos on Instagram.

The second objective was to study how creating visual brand-related content and sharing it on social media plays a role in individual's identity construction and self-presentation. The study explored meanings of creating brand-related photos in consumers' lives and what was socially and identity wise accomplished through the activity. Together with interesting insights the research indentified six self-presentation strategies: 1) Culture, Rules and Norms 2) Publicity vs. Privacy 3) Constructing Digital Self 4) Digital Association 5) Real Self vs. Ideal Self 6) Narrative Memory. Through the photos, consumers intended to communicate and tell something about who they are; what matters to them; and how they want others to perceive them.

In conclusion, I formed a model (Figure 1, p. 45) that combines the process, the motivational drivers and the self-presentation strategy as illustration of the process of producing brand-related

photos to Instagram as mean for self-presentation. Together with the presented descriptive quotes from the interviews and discussion of the previous research, the study gives a good overview of the social phenomena of UGC and provides deeper understanding of consumers' authentic meanings and experiences of creating visual brand-related content in our postmodern society. The study did not only address the association with brands, but gave a wider view to the identity construction and self-presentation through user-generated photos on social media. Furthermore, by studying identity construction on relatively new and extremely popular social photo sharing network Instagram, this study contributed by extending the existing research on self-presentation.

10.2 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study will increase the understanding of brand-related UGC in general as well as self-presentation in the social media environment in particular. Gradually the research can draw managerial implications out of this study, such as identifying different 'intentions' and 'motivational' themes that consumers share when producing visual brand-related UGC. These motivations, as well as understanding the process itself, may help marketers to determinate how to stimulate consumers to create and share user-generated content.

The findings indicate that informants rarely posted brand-related photos in order to just purely promote or complain about the brand and often the brands were unconsciously or unintentionally included in the photos. Therefore, it is quite hard to manage this process from the marketer's perspective. However, majority of the brands featured in the photos were brands that the consumers tend to choose and consume or would prefer to consume. The brand-related photos were rather moments of person's life where the product or the brand was part of and played a certain role. This is a important notion, as it is considerable hard to make consumers create content about the brand as part of a advertising campaign, as consumers rarely want to be told what to share if there is now deeper meaning to them. However, as the brand is part of their own life experiences, a positive consumption moment can trigger the need to express self by photographing and sharing the moment with the brand.

Furthermore, if the consumer finds the brand's story meaningful or the brand image reflects his or her own values, it is more likely that the consumer wants to share and associate with the brand. Therefore creating strong brands with meaningful stories may lead to more user-generated content about the brand.

10.3 Limitations and Future Research Avenues

This has been a study on self-presentation with the context of social media among young Finnish adults in their twenties and early thirties. Even that online environments are breaking the traditional boundaries between countries and cultures, however I believe that Finnish culture and the over all Finnish mentality as well as behavior models had huge impact how, why and what the informants shared on Instagram. Furthermore, the way the informants told the stories of the process were also heavily linked to the Finnish culture and language. As Holt (2012) argues that each market is influenced by its cultural and social history and practices, therefore if the study had been conducted by interviewing consumers from Los Angeles or Singapore the result may have been different.

Moreover, the narrow age range also gave only a glimpse to a certain age group. Even that CCT abandons the traditional ways of categorization people, such as gender, nationality, social class, and sees culture as a phenomenon that rises from similar ways of consuming. However, I argue the studied age group has influence on the findings. Therefore, it would be interesting to do a comparing study on younger teenagers whom have lived their whole lives under the influence of social media. Similarly this could be compared to the self-presentation strategies and identity construction of older adults. I would imagine that the meaning and importance as well as the used strategies to manage the digital identity and self-presentation are quite different between the age groups. Furthermore, I argue that the younger teenagers are likely to have hard time to see the difference between true offline self and digital online self, as they see online as real as the offline life and together them rather as a whole entity.

The research has expanded the deeper understanding of consumers' authentic meanings and experiences of creating visual brand-related content as digital self-presentation in our postmodern society. Only by understanding the multitude of ways by which identity work and self-presentation is carried out the various online environments can we understand what social media can truly mean in the future with more and more social interaction carried online. Therefore, as the digital and online environments are constantly evolving and creating new possibilities (and limitations), they offer consumers new ways to construct their identities and to present them selves in a ways that was never before possible. Therefore, I see that the digital self-presentation will in future offer interesting research possibilities.

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