

# Privacy construction on social media

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Objective of the study:**

The aim of this study is to understand the construct of privacy on social media from the consumers' perspective and to gain a better grasp of the privacy concept in terms of consumer research. More specifically, the main objective is to understand the meanings of privacy in the consumption of social media through consumers' narratives. In order to understand this, the study also concerns on how the overall phenomenon of privacy on social media and its construction is related to consumer's identity. Therefore, the meanings of consumers' privacy through self-identity will be studied, i.e. what meanings privacy has in consumers' lives, why consumers look for privacy and what do they do in order to create privacy. In spite of increasing public and academic interest in privacy the overview of the previous consumer research literature revealed these questions to be unaddressed. Thus, the main idea behind this research is to enrich our understanding of privacy concept and understand the privacy meanings in consumers' minds.

### **Research method:**

In order to gain subjective understanding of privacy from consumers' perspective, the research data was collected by utilizing the narrative interviews, as individuals approach privacy from the context of their own actual practices, which constitute privacy and give it meaning, associating it with their individual and subjective experiences and concerns. During the research 15 interviews were conducted. The general analysis of the data obtained was made by using the framework presented by McAdams, and by using narrative analysis, which involves constructing coherent story of the interview. The research was followed with interpretation of interviews and identification of common themes of privacy meanings.

### **Key findings:**

The findings of this research has brought new insight into the topic of privacy and shed light on consumer's privacy meaning construction and negotiation, and, at the same time, by using narrative approach it allowed to uncover new aspects of the privacy itself. By clarifying the meanings consumers attach to privacy and its construction from the perspective of the consumer, this research contributed towards a better understanding of consumer privacy concept and therefore, it furthered the theoretical discussion of Consumer Culture Theory by offering categories for the privacy meanings in the context of social media. More specifically, this research looked from the consumer's perspective into privacy on social media through biographical consumption narratives and life-story telling. Drawing from Altman and Westin's classic theories of privacy the main findings of this research were represented by proposed four themes that illustrate the meanings of privacy specific for the context of social media consumption by combining theoretical knowledge of privacy and the self-identity. Based on the four privacy meanings it has been identified, that privacy on social media incorporates and represents personal meaning which is based on personal goal of the self-identity. More specifically, privacy allows for identity building and maintaining by presenting disclosed self and concealing private self, developing self-ego by isolating the self, and protecting own identity by appreciating others' privacy. Moreover, by presenting close relationship of privacy and identity through four privacy meanings this research expanded the field of theoretical discussion of privacy by introducing the concepts of disclosed and private privacy in the context of social media, which is balanced by an individual and present in all cases of social media consumption in various proportions. In addition, this research also raised the issue of privacy existence on social media. Therefore, majority of consumers do have a feeling of privacy when consuming social media, however, greater knowledge in the area questions existence of privacy and introduced a bigger question whether there is privacy on social media.

**Keywords:** Privacy, consumer, social media, consumer research, identity, narrative

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## **Introduction**

The dynamic development of technologies and digitalization of media brought many opportunities for business, communication and personal life activities. However, by becoming an integral part of our daily life and our culture digitalization also brought many privacy issues including intrusiveness into our private lives, collection of personal information and the commoditization of personal information (McAllister and Turow, 2002). As a result concerned consumers started changing their behavior: they refuse to consume certain media and provide information (Sheehan and Hoy, 1999), thus jeopardizing the aim of marketing and media - delivering personalized message and product to the customer (Culnan, 1993; Dolnicar and Jordaan, 2007), and as a result damaging the efficient workings of the market (Waldo, Lin and Millett, 2007).

Every day we use different digital media channels to express our opinions, to communicate with each other, to receive education or valuable information, and just to interact socially, but do we actually think about our privacy and its importance for each of us while doing those activities? A number of studies have investigated consumer privacy topic, offering recommendations on how involved stakeholders could contribute to protecting consumer from privacy violations. The main emphasis was on understanding consumer privacy concerns and providing suggestions on preventing consumer privacy violations by focusing strongly on implementation and improvement of regulations, laws and privacy policies. However, many offered solutions cannot work or cannot be implemented, because so far “consumer thoughts regarding privacy have been ignored” (Wu, Huang, Yen, Popova, 2012: 890). Hence, it is important to learn what meanings privacy has in consumers’ lives today, how and why they construct their privacy.

The question of privacy in a digital era of media is fundamentally relational, as it is concerned with the self (formed through autonomy) and its relationship to the social environment of other selves (Hildebrandt, 2006). If we share all of ourselves with everyone, that sharing loses all meaning and value, but privacy and selective sharing enables the creation of desired identity and the development of special relationship or social bond with others (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2011). Thus, the relationship between privacy and the autonomy of self-identity will be presented, as privacy is seen “to support social interaction which, in turn, provides feedback on our competence to deal with the world which, in turn, affects our self-definition” (Altman, 1975:24). In other words, privacy also defines who person is and how person defines oneself. At the same time, privacy provides

opportunities “for self-assessment and experimentation, which is a basis for the development of individuality that protects personal autonomy” (Westin, 1967: 13).

All in all, privacy is important because it supports our normal psychological functioning, stable interpersonal relationships, and personal development (Margulis, 2003: 246). In spite of increasing public and academic interest in privacy, the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) has not paid much attention to the concept of privacy, as there is still lack of a clear definition of privacy concept and understanding of how real social media consumers negotiate and interpret the concept of privacy. The findings of this research will bring new insight into the topic of privacy and shed light on consumer’s privacy meaning construction and negotiation, and, at the same time, by using narrative approach it will allow to uncover new aspects of the privacy itself. By clarifying the meanings consumers attach to privacy and its construction from the perspective of the consumer, this research will contribute towards a better understanding of consumer privacy concept and therefore, it will further the CCT by offering categories for the privacy meanings in the context of social media. Moreover, the results of this study will offer a basic understanding through which consumer privacy can be managed and gain improved outcomes for all (Yap, Beverland and Bove, 2010), as well as contribute to the understanding how to design products and services that provide better ways to protect and enhance consumers feeling of privacy.

## **1.1 Research Background**

In this chapter I will briefly discuss previous consumer research concerning privacy and I will present the key CCT articles that have influenced the choice of my research topic and the perspective I am taking in this research.

The concept of privacy has been defined in different ways according to the field being studied, ranging from a right in legal literature (e.g. Allen, 1988), to a state of limited access or isolation in philosophy and psychology (Margulis, 2003a), to information privacy or interaction privacy in marketing literature (e.g. Goodwin, 1992; Yap et al., 2010). Many attempts to define privacy and the variety of produced definitions lead to the fact, that “nobody can articulate what it means” (Solove, 2006: 477). As many researchers have referred to the difficulties involved in trying to produce unified definition, most research works currently resulted in multidimensional approach to defining privacy (Castañeda, Montoso, Luque, 2007; Paine, Reips, Stieger, Joinson and Buchanan, 2007).

There have been produced numerous works in diverse fields such as law, philosophy, psychology, sociology and computer science that improved our understanding of privacy, and made it clear that privacy is fragmented concept usually dependent on the discipline and the context it is researched (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005; Solove, 2006). In spite of growing interest to privacy issues especially in our postmodern and digitalized world only a few studies have been made in the field of consumer research mainly reviewing consumer privacy in two areas: consumer-related privacy concerns and behaviors, and firm-related privacy issues (Lanier and Saini, 2008). Currently, consumer research explores consumers' privacy concerns and ways in which consumers protect themselves online (Dommeyer and Gross, 2003; Milne, Labrecque and Cromer, 2009; Poddar, Mosteller and Ellen, 2009; Young and Quan-Haase, 2009), as well as change their behavior according to perceived privacy concerns (Milne, Rohm and Bahl, 2004; Castañeda et al., 2007; Jiang and Ji, 2009; Youn, 2009) leaving without much attention question what meanings and goals privacy actually has in people's lives (e.g. Yap et al., 2010). Being an important topic to consumers, privacy needs to be addressed by marketers in a responsible manner, given the association between privacy and changes in consumption behavior, as well as changes in willingness to provide personal information and to build stronger relationship with companies by, i.e. harming efficiency of segmentation, targeting, and possibility to propose specialized offers for consumers.

A great inspiration for this thesis was one of the classic CCT studies by Mick and Buhl (1992) on consumers' experience of advertisings and actualized advertising meanings as a reflection of their salient life projects conjoined by life themes. In this study three Danish brothers were interviewed separately in respect how they experienced five magazine advertisings and later in the second phase, they participated in a life-story interview, from which each person's own life theme and life projects were identified in order to study the interpretation of subjective experience of advertisings utilizing a meaning-based approach. Mick and Buhl presented the idea that life themes and life projects reflect on actualized advertising meanings, where life projects influence the meanings related to the self and extended self presented by another influential article by Belk (1988). In his study Belk examined the relationship between possession and sense of the self. According to Belk, in order to find the answers it is needed to "first gaining some understanding of the meanings that consumers attach to possessions" (p. 139). Only after gaining the understanding of the meanings it is possible to understand consumer behavior. By presenting a broad array of evidence and theory, Belk found that person's possessions are regarded as an extension of oneself, they contribute to the sense of the self and reflect person's identities. He also emphasized the importance of extended self as a "central

construct that can explain a variety of consumer and human behavior” (p. 160), and provided a framework for understanding the ways in which consumers use their possessions not only to reflect, but also to actively shape and maintain alternative views of the self during person’s lifetime period.

The ideas of classic CCT studies by Mick and Buhl (1992) and Belk (1988) made me think about importance and meaning of person’s privacy nowadays in the age of new information technologies and postmodern society, where consumer is less interested in material prosperity and seeks for emotions and experiential values (Firat and Dholakia, 2006) which privacy promotes. Therefore, by promoting various emotions and values privacy might have different meanings for each person. At the same time, possession of privacy and sharing of personal information represents and supports person’s identity and may be regarded as an extension of oneself, especially in the digital media realm, where consumer has control over own personal information dissemination and access to the self. However, there are no studies made in consumer research literature on the privacy taking into account consumer’s self-identity and possibility to control access to the own personal information and share the information of particular content, and it is not possible to understand consumer behavior without “first gaining some understanding of the meanings” (Belk, 1988: 139) people attach to ‘possession’ of privacy and personal information.

Recently Yap and colleagues (2010) conducted research on the topic of consumers’ privacy meanings and goals utilizing qualitative approach and depth interviews using photo-elicitation technique, where consumers were presented with 12-15 visual images and followed by depth interviews. However, presentation of specific visual images might narrow down consumers’ way of thinking and provide limited results on the issue, as given the variety of privacy definitions, interpretations, and its situated and dynamic nature, it is important to question how consumers negotiate their privacy and how it is viewed within the practices that constitute it and give it meaning. In other words, it is needed to study privacy within specific context (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005).

All in all, little is known what meanings privacy has in consumption of social media. In addition, according to recent work by Norberg, Horne and Horne (2009) there is a need to include the self into privacy research, as “privacy is not merely about the exchange of or access to personal information, but about identity-building and identification” (Hildebrandt, 2006: 2). As well as personal information needs to be described by an individual and individuals’ needs to define themselves. Thus, privacy has to be studied as an aspect of everyday practices from the self-



perspective, because this way it will lead to “more effective policy in the future” (Norberg et al., 2009: 495), it will provide many insights for researchers, practitioners, and make significant contributions towards highlighting consumer privacy as a critical business issue. Therefore, this research will study privacy meanings influenced by the self-identity as it has now been addressed by consumer research so far.

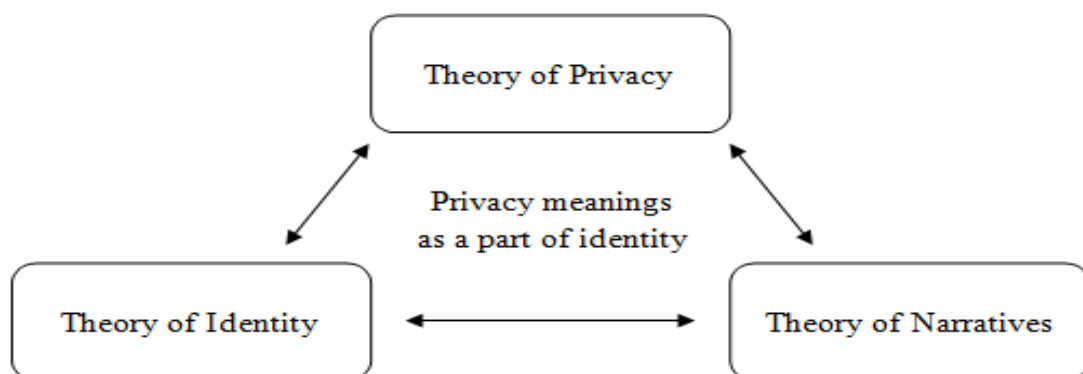
## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The main purpose of the research is to study and understand how consumers of social media negotiate and construct their privacy through biographical consumption narratives and life-story telling. First of all, for the purpose of this study, I will assume a multidimensional view of privacy, as there is no unified concept of privacy and as privacy is multidimensional in nature (Burgoon, 1982; Burgoon, Parrott, Le Poire, Kelley, Walther and Perry, 1989; DeCew, 1997). Thereby, it will be possible to enrich our understanding of the concept of the consumers’ privacy. Second of all, privacy will be seen as a contextual and dynamic phenomenon, as consumers’ privacy depends on the situation and environment, and has ability to change over time (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005; Solove, 2006). Third of all, individual approach will be taken through the use of narrative interviews and identity theory to study privacy phenomenon, as individuals approach privacy from the context of their own actual practices, which constitute privacy and give it meaning, associating it with their individual and subjective experiences and concerns (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005). By viewing the practices that constitute and give meaning to privacy, it will be possible to provide new deeper insights to the topic of consumers’ privacy and help to understand the root causes of privacy concept. Fourth of all, I will view privacy as positive phenomenon that “protects behavior which is either morally neutral or valued by society” (Warren and Laslett, 1977, in Margulis, 2005: 14). All in all, as CCT has paid relatively little interest in the concept of privacy, I will provide it categories in terms of the long interviews, and I hope to bring new insights to this topic.

The fundamental idea will be to study the meanings of privacy through consumers’ narratives. The meanings of consumers’ privacy through self-identity will be studied in the sense what meanings it has in consumers’ lives, why they desire privacy and what do they do in order to create privacy, as the overview of the previous consumer research literature revealed these questions to be unaddressed. Taking into account the elusiveness and context-dependent nature of the privacy concept, the idea behind this research is not to find a single definition of privacy, but to enrich our

understanding of privacy concept and, perhaps, understand the roots behind the privacy meanings in consumers' minds.

To explore possible interpretation of privacy or what meanings privacy has in consumers' lives in the context of social media will be central at this study. Moreover, the reasons behind the phenomenon, as well as the personal, social and environmental factors that affect privacy construction will be presented by reviewing literature on privacy in different fields. It is crucial to comprehend what drives privacy, as this will help in gaining understanding what makes consumers sharing with others or keep to oneself their personal information, and how it is controlled by self-identity. The present study will advance privacy research by providing a categorization of consumer privacy meanings. In turn, categorization of privacy meanings will expand the field of theoretical discussion of privacy and portray privacy as multidimensional phenomenon being interrelated with one's identity. Combining the theoretical background of privacy and consumers' identity construction, this research approach could be presented as illustrated below. By means of narrative approach this research is aiming to gain understanding of privacy meaning as an identity project. Therefore, the research approach could be illustrated as presented below:



### 1.3 Research Questions

On the basis of the presented research objectives, the following research questions were constructed for my study:

How do consumers of social media construct and negotiate their privacy through biographical narratives and life-story telling?

- What kind of privacy meanings do consumers ascribe to social media consumption?
- How is the consumer's identity related to privacy and its construction?

## **1.4 Definitions of Key Concepts**

*Privacy* is a need or ability to control over information about oneself or a desire of person to choose freely under what circumstances and to what extent one will expose oneself, own attitudes and behavior to others, and allow access to the self (Westin, 1967; Altman, 1975).

*Identity* is a subjective personal or social understanding of what the self is, which is created by person through socializations and experiences (Belk, 1988; Giddens, 1991).

## **1.5 Structure of the study**

In this first chapter I have presented the objective and questions for this research, as well as research background on the topic of privacy and defined key concepts. The second chapter starts with presenting literature review on privacy including previous researches from different perspectives, such as psychology, sociology, and consumer research in order to create a diverse and comprehensive understanding of multidimensional privacy phenomenon. In the third and fourth chapters, I will cover the theories of consumer identity and narratives in more detail in order to present the understanding of privacy interrelationship with other theories and form the theoretical framework of this study. In the fifth and sixth chapters I will present the methodology, including the belief system that this research is based on, and methods I utilize in researching and analyzing the topic of this study. Finally, I will present the findings of this research, discuss them in light of theory and conclude my study with theoretical and managerial implications, suggestions for further research, and possible limitations of this study.

## **2. Privacy**

Privacy is an important part of our life and it is an integral part of our everyday practices as with the introduction of new technologies, like computers, smart phones and iPads. The more and more information we provide in various environments and at various times our information becomes accessible also by others. Privacy represents not only our rights as a consumer, but it also helps us to create desired identities and different types of relationships with different type of people. This way privacy could be seen as a right of consumer and as a value or an interest for a person. In most aspects of daily life, we are expected to take steps to protect our own privacy interest which is especially true with development of digital media, and the easiness to access the Internet and make transactions.

In order to create better understanding of privacy, in this part of the study I will incorporate and present an overview of consumer research, psychology and sociology literature which studies privacy. Various perspectives on privacy are presented, because privacy is a very complex concept that combines social, physical, informational and psychological dimensions (Burgoon, 1982), which has not been well studied by prior consumer research literature.

### **2.1 Privacy in Consumer research**

In the past almost 30 years, the consumer research field has been widened greatly by developing and extending empirical view of consumption (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982a; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982b; Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and incorporating insights produced through alternative perspectives (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; McCracken, 1986; Mick, 1986). This widen view has emphasized an interest in the subjective and emotive aspects of consumption (e.g. Hirschman, 1980; Belk, 1988; Mick and Buhl, 1992). However, CCT has not paid much attention to the concept of privacy and privacy meanings, as well as its emotive aspects of social media consumption. Moreover, most of the studies were made utilizing quantitative research methods.

Reviewing consumer research literature on privacy revealed that there are basically two research directions on privacy: privacy concerns and its influences on consumer's practices. The first research direction is concerned with general consumer concerns, or what issues people have and how they perceive privacy in various contexts, such as when shopping online (e.g. Miyazaki and

Fernandez, 2001), reacting on direct marketing activities, like receiving direct advertisings (e.g. Phelps, D'Souza and Nowak, 2001; Dommeyer and Gross, 2003), using different services, like online banking (e.g. Liao, Liu and Chen, 2011) and social medias (e.g. Ellison, Vitak, Steinfield, Gray and Lampe, 2011), as well as assessment of consumer online privacy concerns (e.g. Sheehan and Hoy, 2000), sensitivity of the information (e.g. Phelps, Nowak and Ferrel, 2000), and consumers' knowledge, awareness, attitudes towards collection and use of personal information by businesses and third parties (e.g. Culnan 1993; Smith, Milberg and Burke 1996; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000; Graeff and Harmon, 2002; Milne, et al., 2004).

The second research direction examines the privacy concerns and people's behavior and practices influenced by various factors, such as consumers perception of privacy concerns influenced by business policies and governmental regulations (e.g. Culnan, 2000; Wirtz, Lwin and Williams, 2007; Wu et al., 2012), trade-offs consumers make between privacy and benefits (e.g. Culnan, 1993; Milne and Gordon, 1993), consumers willingness and motives for revealing and sharing their personal information influenced by relationship nature (e.g. Moon, 2000; White, 2004).

Currently, the usage and exchange of personal information by and between businesses increased dramatically and the recent privacy discussions focus upon control over personal information (Langenderfer and Miyazaki, 2009), as control over own information has been identified as one of the most important privacy dimensions (Culnan, 1993; Rust, Kannan and Peng, 2002). Thus, consumer research focus has shifted towards exploration of the consumers' privacy concerns and ways in which consumers protect themselves online (e.g. Dommeyer and Gross, 2003; Milne et al., 2009; Poddar et al., 2009), as well as change their behavior in accordance with perceived privacy concerns (e.g. Milne et al., 2004; Castañeda et al., 2007; Jiang and Ji, 2009; Youn et al., 2009) leaving without much attention question what meanings and goals privacy actually has in people's lives (e.g. Yap et al., 2010).

Aforementioned studies were made mostly utilizing quantitative research methods, and it has been found that consumers tend to be concerned about their privacy when they are not aware how their information might be used by others, but they are less concerned about their privacy when businesses request the permission to collect and use personal information, including demographic characteristics, purchase behavior, and their lifestyle habits (Sheehan and Hoy, 2000). However, a person will be more concerned to maintain own privacy, if a person has a great desire to control over personal information (Phelps et al., 2001), especially if the information is considered to be

sensitive or intimate to the person. Intimate information mostly includes person's emotions and feelings, while sensitive information includes one's finances, medical records, and personal identifiers consumers are usually not willing to disclose own information (Moor, 2000; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000).

It has been found that person's choice to share private information is strongly influenced by contextual cues, or the situation and the environment (John, Acquisti and Loewenstein, 2011). A closer and deeper relationship with particular business, familiarity of a website, trust and reciprocity in conversation usually decreases person's privacy concerns (O'Malley, Petterson and Evans, 1997; Moon, 2000; Phelps et al., 2001; Ashworth and Free, 2006) and consumer might share more information, especially if a person receives benefits for providing personal information (Goodwin, 1991; Culnan, 1993; Milne and Gordon, 1993; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000). However, the information that is perceived being embarrassing for a person will be less likely shared or exchanged for any benefits (White, 2004) and especially publicly (Lau-Gesk and Drolet, 2008).

Moreover, consumer's gender, age, education, Internet expertise and experience have a great influence on person's privacy (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Graeff and Harmon, 2002; Sheehan, 2002; Dommeyer and Gross, 2003; Singh and Hill, 2003; Milne et al., 2004). In general, women are more concerned with privacy than men, but at the same time, women tend to read more unsolicited email than men and, in case of social websites, after adjusting security settings women continue posting more personal information than men (Thelwall, 2011). In addition, women prefer to make anonymous postings in public group discussions, and to share more personal information with closest friends, whereas males' friendship tends to focus on shared experiences, such as sports and banter. Moreover, women prefer to post more modest pictures of themselves than men do (Thelwall, 2011: 7). It has been also found that men are more likely to use strategies to protect personal information than women, like refusing to give personal information, asking to remove or not sharing own name and address, deciding not to use a website and providing false information (Milne et al., 2004). However, younger people are more aware of personal information protection strategies than older people, as well as more educated people are more concerned with their privacy and protection of personal information than less educated people (Sheehan, 2002; Dommeyer and Gross, 2003).

The Internet expertise and past experiences influence people's privacy perception and willingness to make transactions and to share own information online. This way, person having low expertise and

negative past experience prefer to use other mediums than Internet (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Singh and Hill, 2003). At the same time, increased expertise might make consumers more cautious when sharing own information. Moreover, the level of involvement in privacy has been found to influence person's behavior, when consumers highly involved in privacy issues are likely to read privacy policies and be conscious about the information they provide (Larose and Rifon, 2007). While low privacy involved people are likely to rely on peripheral cues and ignore warnings about privacy dangers (Sheehan, 2002).

According to the literature, the most privacy problems arise when people are not provided with sufficient control over the solicitation, storage, use, and disclosure of various types of personal information (Culnan, 1999). Privacy issues also arise when consumer is not aware when and what kind of the personal information is collected and disseminated, especially, when the information is highly sensitive for a person (Phelps et al., 2000; Sheehan and Hoy 2000) and could have negative consequences like loss of anonymity, identity theft and observation by others (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Milne, et al., 2004). Consumer might share sensitive information only when the firm or a website is familiar and safe, when there is a security to ensure that information is protected from wrong usage, and when person knows where to find remedies if consumer's personal information is used improperly (Milne and Gordon, 1993). In other words, to protect own privacy consumer not only has to control own information, but also needs to understand the process of information collection and its usage (Culnan, 2000) - which represents a problem for most consumers even nowadays.

Another research stream has emphasized the "privacy paradox", or contradictions between reported privacy attitudes and actual behaviors. In case of young adults, it has been found that they are very concerned about their privacy and, at the same time, their behavior reveals that they freely share personal information and do not adjust privacy setting effectively on social networking sites (Norberg, Horne and Horne, 2007). The "privacy paradox" is that in an environment where many consumers experience concerns about their privacy, the growing number of them still create own social profiles, blogs and openly share private information in various Web sites without being forced by others (ibid).

All in all, review of the consumer research on privacy revealed, that there is no study made examining consumer's interpretation and understanding of privacy and its meanings in the context of social media from consumer perspective. Next, I will incorporate and present privacy knowledge

from various fields, including consumer research, psychology and sociology taking into account multidimensional nature of privacy.

## **2.2 Multidimensional nature of privacy**

Privacy is something that each person is aware of, something that is worthy of protection, it is something that relates to intimacy and autonomy that we value. However, when it comes to expressing one's privacy experience verbally - it is extremely difficult. Many attempts to define privacy and the variety of produced definitions lead to the fact, that "nobody can articulate what it means" (Solove, 2006: 477). Thus, the absence of the unified privacy definition and understanding of what constitutes privacy brings a challenge and an opportunity for this research.

With introduction of the new technologies and the Internet the concept of privacy and the issues occurred differ from those presented by previous research, and the traditional ways of understanding and defining privacy cannot be applied for the unique characteristics that technology has introduced (Solove, 2004). In other words, privacy on social media needs to be studied using multidimensional, rather than one-dimensional privacy approach (Burgoon, 1982; Burgoon et al., 1989; DeCew, 1997; Hugl, 2011). As many researchers faced difficulties involved in trying to produce a single unified definition, most current research works resulted in multidimensional approach to defining privacy (e.g. Castañeda et al., 2007; Paine et al., 2007). For example, *in the legal literature*, privacy has been conceptualized as the right to be let alone, and as the freedom to decide and to act in public or private as one deems appropriate (Solove, 2002). Privacy has been operationalized by four dimensions: intrusion, disclosure, false light and appropriation, without government interference (Allen, 1988). *The psychological literature* has emphasized privacy as control over or regulation of or, more narrowly, limitations on or exemption from scrutiny, surveillance, or unwanted access (Margulis, 2003a). *In the marketing literature*, privacy is divided among two dimensions: Information privacy or the ability to control the collection, dissemination and use of personal information, and interaction privacy or the ability to control the type and volume of marketing solicitations encountered (Yap et al., 2010).

Moreover, because of the disagreement about the boundaries of privacy dimensions, most researches view privacy as a positive phenomenon, as privacy is socially accepted behavior (Margulis, 2003a). However, some researchers view privacy neutrally, because it might support illegitimate actions, like lying (ibid: 244). For purpose of this research I will view privacy as



positive phenomenon. In this research, I will not concentrate on the privacy as a right, instead, I will view privacy as a control over personal information and access to the self by which person might achieve desired level of privacy and specific goals.

The difficulty in producing a single privacy concept has led to the development of multidimensional theories that incorporate the vagueness of a person's privacy zones. Based on numerous studies by Altman and Westin, Burgoon and colleagues (1982, 1989) presented dimensions of privacy including social, physical, informational and psychological. The first *social* dimension refers to a choice of a person to withdraw from or to interact and share personal information with others. In other words, how often and how long a person wants to interact with others, and what is the content of an interaction. The second *physical* dimension refers to the choice of a person to be accessible to others or to seek physical solitude in different environments. The *informational* dimension relates to a person's ability to control personal information and one's right to reveal it to others. The last *psychological* dimension refers to a person's ability to control social interactions, or under what circumstances a person will share own thoughts, values, feelings and personal information to others.

Later DeCew (1997) presented a similar concept, which included dimensions of information privacy, or "the control over information about oneself" (p. 14) when person can decide who can access personal information and for what purposes, accessibility privacy that relates to sensory or physical access to a person, and expressive privacy, or expression and protection of a person's "self-identity or personhood through speech or activity" (p. 77). In case of social media, where person can decide what information will be available to others, the content of the information may also include facts that will lead another person directly to the user. In this case, information privacy can overlap with accessibility privacy when information obtaining also involves gaining access to a person (DeCew, 1997).

### **2.3 Privacy concept - Two theories of privacy**

There are many definitions of privacy in the literature, but two classic definitions by Altman and Westin are still prevailing in the studies conducted even today. Altman (1975: 18) defines privacy as "a selective control of access to the self". Thus, privacy could be understood as a *dialectic* and *dynamic boundary regulation* process (p. 67). A dialectic process refers to the privacy regulation is conditioned by person's own expectations and experiences, and by those of others with whom the person interacts. A dynamic process refers to privacy being continuously negotiated and managed

by boundaries that distinguish privacy and publicity according to circumstances. This way, time and privacy are interdependent, as during life-time person gains new privacy experiences and during various life cycles person's "needs, abilities, activities, desires, and feelings change, and thus the concept and pattern of privacy should also change" (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977: 37). Thus, person adjusts own privacy from actual level to desired level by continuously reacting to internal and external changes.

Thus, based on the idea presented by Altman (1975) privacy does not necessary means withdrawal from others, it rather represents a continuous process of balancing between sharing and receiving among audiences with presence of need for publicity or disclosure. In other words, people selectively try to control their "openness" or "closedness" to others by being either open and disclosed or closed and distant at different situations and for different reasons. This is made in order to manage interactions with others by regulating interpersonal boundaries.

Westin (1967: 7) defines privacy as "the claim of individuals, groups or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others". Later, with rapid development and uses of technologies, Westin (2003) presented new definition of the privacy which is an extension of the previous definition, where privacy is "the claim of an individual to determine what information about himself or herself should be known to others" by involving the questions "when such information will be obtained and what uses will be made of it by others" (Westin, 2003: 431). Thus, privacy could be understood as a control of both information disclosure and the environment in which transactions of the information occur. In other words, privacy is understood as a series of actions that person takes in order to feel comfortable in particular environment. This means, that in case of social media person might decide to disclose or to not disclose personal information, as well as to interact with specific others or not. This choice involves consideration of the future consequences, as if a person who perceives potential negative consequences to be minimal will be more willing to disclose own personal information (Westin, 2003).

All in all, Altman's theory of privacy focuses on privacy as a process of regulating levels of social interactions, by opening and closing the self to others, and this way balancing between desired and achieved privacy, while Westin's theory of privacy focuses on personal information and the states or types and functions of privacy. According to both theories privacy is a continuing dynamic process of changing internal and external conditions by which person controls or regulates own

information and access to self in order to achieve desired level of privacy (Margulis, 2003b). Thus, privacy allows person to control over one's own state (solitude, intimacy, anonymity or reserve) (Westin, 1967) and social environment one interacts with (Altman, 1975).

In this research I will use a combination of Westin and Altman's privacy concepts as a basis for understanding factors influencing possible privacy meanings. This is made, because privacy is seen as multidimensional phenomenon in a nature that incorporates personal and social aspects (Castañeda et al., 2007; Paine et al., 2007), and taking into account social media context in which privacy will be studied, various situations might activate multidimensional aspects of privacy depending on personal goals, as well as the self and social environment.

#### **2.4 “How” and “why” of privacy**

Privacy is a complex concept taking into account person's needs for both solitude and interaction with others during different times. That is why privacy has different types and functions it serves. Therefore, privacy has own meaning for a person depending on the situation, but all the meanings are based on the psychological need to have control over who has access to information about the self (Westin, 1967; Altman, 1975).

In order to control one's own information consumer engages into “calculus of behavior” (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977). This way, in the new situations person engages into various behaviors, because one believes that the information and access to the self can be controlled also in later situations, and potential negative consequences can be minimized or even avoided. However, in case of conflicts between information and particular situation person needs to acknowledge what information to disclose or not disclose based on appropriate behavior in a particular situation. Thus, it is important to be able to control own information and to understand what information needs to be controlled. In other words, the existence of others and the possibility of a relationship with them need to be taken into account (ibid). On the other hand, person might not do certain things because the ability to control own present information is unpredictable and might even have negative consequences in the future, as changes in the socio-historical context and in technology are often unpredictable (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977). For this reason some consumers decide to not share personal information or consume social medias at all, especially if they want to have some kind of public career or if they have important social roles and responsibilities.

### 2.4.1 Types of privacy

Westin (1967) identified four psychological types or states of privacy consisting of solitude, intimacy, anonymity and reserve. Privacy type refers to the way *how* people can experience privacy. The first type is *solitude* meaning to be alone or free from observation by others. *Intimacy* means being alone with a small group, like with family or closest friends. In this case seclusion fosters development of the closer relationship with the group members. *Anonymity* refers to being seen, but not recognized or identified in a public place or blended into the crowd, where person experiences freedom from surveillance. *Reserve* means not revealing personal aspects of the self to others. This state is based on a desire to limit disclosures to others and it requires others to recognize person's desire and respect it. A person might negotiate own privacy states of reserve and intimacy to others by becoming more open (Westin, 1967; Margulis, 2003b; Westin, 2003). Westin's model was extended by Pedersen (1999: 398) by adding *isolation* or being distant from and free from observation, and by dividing intimacy into intimacy two types, including intimacy of being alone and intimacy with family or friends.

Each of the state can be managed and optimized by allowing access to the self or one's group by closing or opening boundaries to others. In case of one's group with family or friends, the access could be closed from outsiders in order to achieve intimacy with friends or family (Altman, 1975). According to Altman (1977: 67-68) in order to achieve desired state of privacy people employ "verbal and paraverbal behaviors such as personal space and territoriality, and culturally defined styles of responding", such as cultural norms and customs. This way, privacy incorporates in itself "much more than just the physical environment in the management of social interaction" (ibid). Thus, each type of privacy represents the approach a person takes in order to satisfy own privacy needs and goals by continually engaging in an adjustment process and using different mixes of behaviors in which desires for privacy are weighed in comparison to desires for disclosure and personal communication with others (Altman, 1977; Margulis, 2003b). This way, the adjustment occurs in various situations and is influenced by others, societal norms, and processes of surveillance that enforces those situations.

### 2.4.2 Privacy functions

There are four general functions of privacy or *why* people seek privacy presented by Westin (2003), including personal autonomy, emotional release, self-evaluation, and limited and protected

communication. *Personal autonomy* relates to independence and self-identity. It is the desire to avoid being manipulated, dominated or exposed by others. *Emotional release* is the release from tensions of social life and social restrictions, like social norms and rules, role demands and emotional states and minor deviances. *Self-evaluation* deals with integration of experience into meaningful patterns, and the opportunity to extract meanings from personal experiences and to plan and assess future actions. This way privacy provides opportunity for self-reflection and self-assessment (Margulis, 2003a). *Limited and protected communication* allows opportunity to share personal information with trusted people (Westin, 2003).

In turn, Altman (1975) emphasized the importance of privacy from social and self-identity perspectives. Thus, by effectively controlling the openness and closedness of the self to others it is possible to function better in society, as well as to define the self by defining own limits and boundaries. This way, when achieving optimum privacy level person can experience the desired solitude when a person wants to be alone or to enjoy the desired social interactions with others when a person wants to be with others (Altman, 1975). The possibility to control over one's own state and social environment provides person with opportunities for self-evaluation and contributes to self-identity and individuality (Westin, 1967; Margulis, 2003a; Hildebrandt, 2006). I will present the link between privacy and the self below in more details. Later, based on theories introduced by Altman and Westin, Pedersen (1997, 1999) empirically identified five basic functions of privacy, including contemplation, autonomy, rejuvenation, confiding and creativity.

In addition, previous research in consumer psychology suggests that people are seeking for privacy to maintain self-identity, establish personal boundaries and to avoid unwanted disclosure, intrusion, criticism and assessment by others (Goodwin, 1991, 1992). This way, people are trying to protect their privacy by reducing vulnerability (Margulis, 2003b) and by avoiding e.g. embarrassment, harassment, ridicule, shame, scrutiny or discrimination (Goodwin 1992; Norberg et al., 2007). Because of concerns connected to the identity theft or embarrassment of releasing of private facts (White 2004: 42), consumers give as little personal information as possible in online transactions (Sheehan and Hoy, 2000). Moreover, identity fraud in a digital realm might create online harassment, cyber-mobbing or cyber-bullying (Hulg, 2011). Thus, to protect from negative consequences that may arise, people might seek to protect positive feelings, like opportunity to relax, to be yourself, to escape from daily stress, to enjoy time, space, product or even experience, that in the opposite situation, person would have to share with someone else (Goodwin, 1992: 265).

In their recent study, Yap and colleagues (2010) identified six goals of privacy which help the consumer to achieve *i.e.*, safety, sovereignty, freedom, solitude, identity management, and ownership. However, Yap and colleagues studied privacy out of any specific context, and the results obtained represent general consumers' goals. Thus, it is important to remember, that privacy has different meanings and goals depending on the context being studied, for example, in case of nondeviant consumption, where consumption is associated with message communication and self-presentation, people seek for privacy in order to improve the consumption experience by escaping from unwanted intrusions and disapproval by reference groups (Altman, 1976; Goodwin, 1992). People are also trying to avoid self-disclosure (Altman, 1976), and reduce conflict and discomfort associated with self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987; Goodwin, 1992). This way privacy allows consumer to maintain presented self-identity to a specific audience, to try and experience possible selves by consumption that is, for example, not approved by a reference group (Goodwin, 1992) and this way to develop person's individuality (Westin, 1967; Goodwin, 1992). All in all, privacy depends on the context, and is important for each person, because it provides people with experiences that "support normal psychological functioning, stable interpersonal relationships, and personal development" (Margulis, 2005: 7).

### **2.4.3 Privacy meanings**

By having various types and functions that serve consumers needs and goals, privacy might have different meaning for each person being situated in various contexts and situations. In addition to the situations, personal factors, including personal need for privacy, interpersonal skills, openness, gender and culture can have impact on privacy preferences, and its meanings (Pedersen, 1999; Margulis, 2005). Previous studies have mostly emphasized a limited-access view of privacy, where privacy relates to "control over unwanted access, or the regulation of, limitations on, or exemption from scrutiny, surveillance" (Margulis, 2005: 2). Thus, previous studies on privacy identified several meanings of consumer privacy: Freedom from Invasion, interruption, intrusion, distraction; Freedom from Surveillance; Freedom from others, as well as being alone, managing access to personal information, and managing access to spaces (Solove, 2004; Margulis, 2005; Yap et al., 2010). From the self-perspective, person seeks for privacy also in order to protect, nurture, extend, and enhance the self (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977).

Therefore, depending on the context and environment being studied, personal understanding of privacy might incorporate in itself simultaneously both the meaning and the goal, because meaning

of privacy and its goal are interrelated (Margulis, 2005). The purpose of this study is not to find separate goals and meanings of privacy that consumers might have, but to uncover how consumers negotiate and understand their privacy in the context of social media. Thus, I will view privacy concept consisting of both meanings and goals that represents some kind of interest or value for a person.

In addition to the contexts and situations being studied, privacy has also different meanings for consumers in different cultures, because the culture of the particular country or society influences what individuals consider private, and the understanding of privacy and private strongly depends on a country's history, economy, and social structures (Altman, 1977). There have been made studies on privacy in different countries, such as Japan (Mizutani, Dorsey and Moor, 2004), China (Jiang and Ji, 2009) and Germany (Singh and Hill, 2003). However, this research is concerned with the understanding of privacy meanings of individual consumers rather than general understanding of privacy of the particular country.

All in all, review of numerous studies on privacy revealed that privacy might be seen from different perspectives and might have different meanings also depending on the context being studied. In general, philosophers understand privacy as a necessary part of human existence, psychologists see the self-development and its maintenance as an important part of privacy, and sociologists value privacy for possibility to sustain relationships, while lawyers view it as a basic human right (Newell, 1995; Margulis, 2003a; Solove, 2006).

## **2.5 Privacy, the self and others**

Each person has own zones of privacy or "circles of intimacy" as called by Westin (1967), where at the core of person is located the inner self that includes the most private and intimate information of the self, like desires, fears and hopes. This kind of information a person wants to safeguard the most, but also might share it only in some kind of stressful situations or with the closest people, like family members or closest friends. As the circles expand, the more and more information become less intimate and might be comfortably revealed to other people. However, as the circles spread out from the center, the individual loses some control over access to the self, information context and environment (Norberg et al., 2009). By comparing privacy and personal information with possessions by Belk (1988) it might be assumed that the loss of personal information might result in a reduction of the self and, afterwards, an attempt to restore the self (Norberg et al., 2009: 505).

Thus, personal privacy is connected to the self, and disclosing of the personal information influences people's social relationships.

As Hildebrandt (2006: 7) presented in her work, the core of privacy could be found in the idea of person's identity, as "the process of identity-building is what is at stake of privacy", where privacy allows freely to construct one's identity without "unreasonable constraints". Also Shoemaker (2010) view privacy as a "the right to manage certain public construals of my self-identity, or at least to have some sort of say in determining what others think about the type of person I am" (p. 14). In case of social media this means that person is not able to control other people's thoughts about a oneself, but person can have an effect on the ways others construe a person on social media, like Facebook, by disclosing particular information to specific others or by allowing access to the self without compromising one's sense of who he/she truly is (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2011).

By being an integral part of identity, privacy provides person with opportunities for self-control, self-assessment and experimentation, and is a basis for the development of individuality and self-identity (Altman, 1976; Goodwin, 1992: 275; Margulis, 2003a: 246; Westin, 2003; Hulg, 2011: 358). At the same time, privacy allows to support social interaction and a relationship with others (Margulis, 2005: 5), which, in turn, provides feedback on person's competences, develops a sense of oneself and affects self-definition (Altman, 1976; Laufer and Wolfe, 1977). Supporting social interactions and relationships also makes privacy and communicating person's identity more complex, because person is seen to act primarily as an individual, but at the same time, person might represent different roles in a society, e.g. professional affiliations set expectations that must be incorporated into individual behavior. Thus, privacy could be seen as a freedom to choose whether to be as one's self and functioning alone, or one's self as a separate individual interacting and functioning with others (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977).

All in all, privacy from the self could be viewed as a "gatekeeper to information flow", where person balances the desire for privacy and the desire for disclosure in order to enrich relationship and safeguard own identity (Norberg et al., 2009). By playing such a great role in privacy, Norberg and colleagues (2009: 502) suggested to include the self into privacy debate, because by introducing a new perspective and understanding person's privacy behind the self will lead to "more effective policy" and positive relationship in the future. For this reason I will view self-identity as a constituent part of personal privacy.



## 2.6 Privacy and Social Media

Digital media has a great importance in people's lives, as it has been emphasized in the study "LIFE-Digital Living" by Hess (2009) made based on the results of a representative Internet survey of 10 545 consumers in six countries. It has been found, e.g. that for around 86 per cent of Germans the interaction with digital media is an important part of their daily life. The introduction of new technologies, like the Internet and mobiles provided even greater possibility for access social media. It has been found that, for many people the Internet and smart/cell phones are very important in one's own private life, e.g. about 78 per cent of people find the Internet being important and about 75 per cent find Internet connection being important in their private lives. Moreover, majority of the consumers would like to have individualized services tailored to their interests. The question here arises, how it will be possible to create individualized services, if people concerned with their privacy are less likely to provide true private information.

In case of different communication media, after face-to-face communication, mobile communication is the most important means of communication. In addition to mobile communication, private social networks, i.e. Internet-based platforms for uploading and sharing digital content, were found to be very important for Internet users, providing possibilities to chat, tagging, commenting on posts, writing about themselves, writing posts and blogs, uploading and sharing pictures, videos and other content. For example, in well-known and popular social network site, such as Facebook, average user spends an average of 15 hours and 33 minutes and creates 90 pieces of content each month; as a result, more than 30 billion pieces of content are shared each day creating privacy issues (Hess, 2009; [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

As privacy will be studied in the context of social media, it is necessary to consider its specific characteristics from the privacy point of view presented by various fields of studies. First of all, social media makes it almost necessary to share some amount of the information about the self in order to get benefits, like becoming identified by an audience and interacting with others. People are doing many activities that can be potentially harmful for their privacy: they are posting identifiable personal information, they share it, tag photos of themselves and others, comment them, update status and openly discuss various issues of a personal matter. By doing those activities the consumer is understood by others through representations of shared information that person contributes explicitly and implicitly (Houghton and Joinson, 2010). Therefore, many users' social

profiles are co-created with other users within and without personal direct control and might have great privacy risks than disclosures made by a person himself (Houghton and Joinson, 2010).

Second of all, for privacy reasons person is also provided with the possibility to control access to private information, the self and audience through privacy settings, and own choices, including how and what information to share and who to add as a friend. Studies indicate that by providing personal information it is easier to start initial interaction, it facilitates formation of common ground and allows others just to make sense of the person, of who someone is (Ellison et al., 2011). In case of social media, it satisfies person's social and information needs, such as learning about and keeping in touch with others, as well as sharing information about oneself and increasing one's popularity. However, by having large, unknown and distant audience, social media involves privacy concerns as well, such as potential to damage one's image when sharing information and harm resulting from accessing information posted online by outsiders. Moreover, the information shared can be saved and used in the future, meaning that the audience will exist not only in the present time, but in the future as well (Forster, Francescussi and West, 2010).

In sum, privacy on social media represents balancing between benefit maximization and risk minimization, as well as struggling between the desire to reveal information and the desire to conceal information (Ellison et al., 2011). In case of social media, such as Facebook, it was found that privacy is achieved by controlling access using privacy settings and selective Friending strategy (audience control), as well as limiting the number and the content of disclosures (ibid). In order to disclose any information and maintain privacy it is important to determine what information might be disclosed, under what circumstances and how it could be directly controlled over time in order to represent and, at the same time, to maintain person's identity (ibid). Thus, when disclosing own information person needs to be cautious and willing to anticipate the possibilities of what might happen in the future and how the information might be interpreted by future audience as an artifact of one's past.

This research will consider privacy meanings that person can experience when consuming various social medias represented by the respondents during the narrative interviews. However, taking into account popularity of particular social medias in everyday lives it is expected that interviewees will introduce privacy experience, consumption practices, including disclosure, self-presentation, and usage of the information disclosed by others on such social medias, like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.

## 2.7 Meaning-based approach

Belk (1988: 139) mentioned in his study it is not possible to understand consumer behavior without “first gaining some understanding of the meanings” people attach to possession. In this study I will examine privacy utilizing the meaning based model, or what meanings people attach to their privacy. The insights from the meaning-based model’s perspective can be used to improve quality of consumers experiences when using social media. By focusing on the person’s experiences and privacy meanings, the meaning-based model investigates how the privacy meanings are constructed while consuming social media on every-day basis. Therefore, the meaning-based approach focuses on consumers usages of social media while being in a cultural context and engaging in a cultural project.

The meaning based model emphasizes the idea that consumer is an individual living in a cultural context and engaging in a cultural project (Belk, 1988). This way, both the context and the project are culturally constructed, where the cultural context consists of the culturally specified ideas or person, object, activity, time and space. A concept of cultural project is meant to convey the idea that the person is constantly constructing one’s experiences in a unitary self (McCracken, 1986, 1988). For example, the social media consumer is constantly constructing the meaning of what it is to be a member of, i.e. social media and what meaning privacy has for a consumer when using this social media. Hence, the meaning-based model focuses on the processes of social media consumers’ experiences and the meaning derived from their interactions with the social media content within a socio-cultural and situational environment.

A classic example of the meaning based model in CCT is the study by Mick and Bulh (1992) of advertising meanings, where authors emphasized that a person’s actualized advertising meanings are a function of the consumer’s salient life projects as conjoined by life themes. Thus, consumers of social media are seen as actively constructing own meanings as they seek to create coherence in their lives (Mick and Buhl, 1992).

Thus, privacy has different meanings for consumer, because it is constructed in a cultural context when person is engaging in a cultural project, where culture provides meaning making resources for the person to use in definition and orientation, but not as a blueprint for the same (Holt, 2002). Moreover, meanings represent a new property that might be changed for a person as unpredictable

circumstances arise or significant life situations and experiences influence the person's coherence of the self (Belk, 1988; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; John et al., 2011). Therefore, identity plays a great role in constructing person's own privacy meaning.

### 3. Identity

Literature review revealed that identity is seen as something that is “both under construction and of central importance for matters of privacy” for each person (Hildebrandt, 2006: 8). It is therefore important to understand how identity is constructed in order to find the meaning of privacy.

While being shaped by digital postmodern era and often described as someone unpredictable, expressive and individualistic today’s consumer’s freedom is still restricted by economic restraints, social regulations, conventions, routines and socialization with groups (Giddens, 1991; McAdams, 1996). Thus, the identity and the self are developed as person relates to the environment and interacts with others, and are shaped by the habits that are presented in the surrounding culture.

The construction and performance of identity on social media is interwoven with the complex social connections (Papacharissi and Giblson, 2011: 6). Taking into account the nature of the social media, where identity, and as a result privacy, is influenced and even might be co-constructed by other audience involved, in this chapter I will present identity theory from both personal and social self-perspectives. This is made because personal self-perspective assumes that people act primarily as individuals, but this perspective fails to take into account situations when person acts as representative or a member of social group. Thus, the personal self refers to the properties that constitute person’s learning abilities, while social self refers to the properties constituting person’s social relationships. At the same time, privacy and personal information represents Belk’s (1988) possession of a person that is regarded as an extension of the core self.

#### 3.1 The self – “I” and “me”

In order to understand the self, it is necessary to view *I* and *Me* introduced by James (1890) and later by McAdams (1996), who provided a basis for the psychology of the self by making distinction between the *I* and the *Me*. According to authors, the *I* represent the self as a knower and has features of continuity, distinctness and volition. The continuity of the self as a knower represents a sense of personal identity and sameness through time. At the same time, the subjective nature of the *I* has an impact on person’s individuality and as a result, makes person distinct from others. The *I* proves itself by personal volition or appropriation or rejection of thoughts resulting in one’s experiences. The *I* is presented as a unifying basis responsible for managing different aspects

of the *Me*. Thus, the *I* represents the process, while the *Me* is the product resulted from the processes (McAdams, 1996; Hermans, 2002).

The *Me* represents the self as known, and is composed of elements that are considered to belong to oneself, or everything that person can call own, including “not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account” (James, 1890 in Hermans, 2002: 8). Thus, people and all the objects available in the environment, including materials and feelings belong to someone (McAdams, 1996; Hermans, 2002). The possession of those various objects reflects on the person’s identity, and therefore it helps to create different identities and to extend the self while fit the environment (Belk, 1988).

### **3.2 The core self and extended self**

Belk (1988) presented the core self that is at the essence of identity. This way, the core self includes “body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences” (p. 141) and it could be seen as the true and authentic self. While the extended self represents various possessions, such “persons, places, and things to which one feels attached” (p. 141). Therefore, it could be assumed that each person has something intimate or things one do not want to share with others, and by possessing and being attached to private information person extends one’s identity. Thus, the closer to the center of the core self the possession or the information is, the more private it is for the person, the more effort to protect it person makes. Therefore, the information ranges from intensively identifying with the self and is more likely to be protected, to more interpersonal, and is more likely to be shared with other people.

By incorporating desired possessions, the core self reaches the extended self (Belk, 1988). From the privacy point of view, people are seeking for privacy in order to protect, nurture, as well as extend and enhance the self (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977). In other words, by controlling the information sharing and access, the core self can reach the extended self. Thus, through closer examination of the meanings people attach to the extended self, as Belk (1988) mentioned in his study, it is possible to better understand their behavior, values, in this case consumers’ privacy, which protects people’s everyday life practices, their safety, as well as their identity. Thus, possessions have value for their role in expressing or reinforcing the sense of self, as possessions are linked to the personal history,

they express personal values, they differentiate one from others, and this way, represent one's unique identity (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994: 507).

The concept of public or shared cultural versus private or personal meanings for possessions is also relevant here, as Richins (1994) found in the study that possessions have own public and private meaning for a person. The public meaning of the object of possession, in this case personal information, results from socialization and participation in shared activities. While the private meaning consists of the public meanings shaped by the private knowledge and experienced by person who possess, for example, the personal information (Richins, 1994). Thus, it could be assumed that for the extended self, possessions represent not only symbolic entities that have emotional, cultural and historical meanings (Belk, 1988), but from the privacy point of view, it is also an instrument to extend the self to the environment, protect the self and reinforce one's identity.

### **3.3 Personal and social self**

In his studies, James (1980) was very concerned about the social aspects of the individual self: "a man has a many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" (James, 1890 in Hermans, 2001: 247). Identity represents the uniqueness of the person, however, "the construction of identity does not take place in isolation nor is it a solitary activity" (Papacharissi and Gibling, 2011: 5). In other words, by having personal self-identity, a person has also social identity, because "the sense of self is developed through the collaborative, collective experiences of our social interactions" (Papacharissi and Gibling, 2011: 6).

Markus (1977) presented the idea of cognitive schemas also in interaction with social environment, where people construct knowledge structures about the self or self-schemas. Self-schemas integrate and summarize a person's knowledge, including one's own thoughts, experiences and feelings about the self, as well as others' evaluations of one's physical and behavioral characteristics (ibid). In the digital realm, people tend to perform the self that makes sense to multiple audience without compromising the truly sense of the self (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2011). In other words, the self seeks to achieve self-definition and self-interpretation, and incorporates multiple selves with the main two distinctive selves of personal and social self. The personal self refers to person's learning abilities and one's unique traits, which are achieved by differentiating from others in order to protect or enhance the person psychologically. While social self tries to protect or enhance significant other and maintain person's social relationships (Markus, 1977; Brewer and Gardner,

1996). Moreover, the complexity and contradictions of personal cultures provide people with different identities and, at the same time, with the choices of the self-identity components.

People define themselves in large part by the social roles they play. Those roles are provided by the society. Thus, people choose roles from those already recognized and understood by the society in which they live. Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) suggests that identity includes both personal or self-identity (i.e. a person's sense of self), and social identity (i.e. relates to groups to which one belongs). Different contexts can cause temporary shifts in identity, such that the person categorizes the self as being a member of one group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Thus, the person may see the self in terms of one of several possible social memberships depending on the context (for example, as a sister, a student) and to more strongly identify with the activated identity, and think, feel, and act as a group member rather than as an individual (Tajfel and Turner 1986). One's belonging to the group can become a vital part of the self-concept. Thus, people involved in particular social group are motivated to perceive the self and, as a result the audience involved positively. In addition, consumers are motivated to positively differentiate the self from the other out-groups (White and Dahl, 2007).

At the same time, (Hermans, 2001) presented the concept of dialogical self. This concept is based on the assumption that person has many *I* positions that can be occupied by the same person. The *I* in one position can experience variety of feelings, contradictions, with the *I* in another position, it even can ridicule another position. The dialogical self is always tied to a particular position in space and time. It is also social, it does not mean that a self-contained person enters into social interactions with other outside people, but it means that other people occupy some kind of positions in a multi-voiced self (Hermans, 2001). Thus, the person can act as if one were the other. Similar to the dialogical self, Higgins (1987) presented the theory of self-discrepancy, in which people evaluate themselves by comparing their actual self with the ideal or normative self by taking into account the viewpoint of three possible audiences, such as themselves, reference groups, or others. Thus, a discrepancy can arise when one aspect of the self conflicts with another (Higgins, 1987). However, according to the author, this discrepancy can be reduced by meeting the standards set by various self-guides.

All in all, the identity and its construction is a life-long process that requires continuous reconstruction and re-assessment. The identity construction can be viewed as two separate but simultaneous processes of social and personal self-identity. In social identity projects people are



trying to fit into the society, to reach sameness with the community, while in personal identity project the self is constructed by otherness and aims to present the uniqueness of the self to others. People can also have multiple identities that can change according to the situations and environment, as those multiple identities can also create conflicts. Thus, in order to escape conflicts, the consumer in the postmodern world cognitively and actively creates one's identities by taking into account the environment within person performs. The purpose of this research is not to identify specific identities of a person at the particular privacy type or function, but rather to see the influence of the self-identity when consuming social media and creating desired level of privacy. For clarity purposes, I will use the concept of the actual and personal self as *private self*, and as opposed, the ideal or social self as *disclosed self*. Here, privacy is essential if a personal self, defined by multiple social roles, is aiming to fulfill all those roles successfully.

#### **4. Narratives – life-stories**

The “linguistic turn” in the social science has transformed many disciplines by focusing on the interpretive activities by which people make sense of their lives and the roles that language and narrative play in shaping these interpreted meanings (Thompson, 1997). This turn has influenced consumer research field as well by realizing the fact that narratives can be used as an interpretive tool which helps to understand how consumers structure their consumption experience and make sense of their lives (Shankar, Elliott and Goulding, 2001). Consumers’ lives are intertwined with the stories they tell, listen to or even imagine, as they “live in an immerse narrative, recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the outcomes of our future projects, situating ourselves in an intersection of several stories not yet completed” (Polkinghorne, 1988 in McAdams, 1996: 160).

Narratives are socially and culturally constructed stories mediated through language (Giddens, 1991: 47). As language is “the universal medium in which understanding occurs” (Arnould and Fischer, 1994: 58), language constructs the reality and shapes the course and meaning of the human condition (Shankar et al., 2001: 437). Therefore, the reality or narrative is constructed by person through language, and is also shaped and modified by the society and culture within which the person is embedded (Shankar et al., 2001: 439).

This research interprets consumers’ narratives by utilizing the ideas of narrative paradigm, where consumers construct meanings and realities through their life stories, which in turn reflect their personal identity (Shankar et al., 2001). By providing deeper understanding of personal experiences of consumption, narrative is the most suitable way to study privacy from consumers’ perspective, as they provide an understanding of self-identity and the meanings and goals behind one’s privacy.

##### **4.1 Narrative identity**

The postmodern self can incorporate multiple identities and even construct own self-identity through consumption, as the marketplace provides variety of mythic and symbolic resources (Giddens, 1991; Arnold et al., 2005), and with help of narratives, as they generate knowledge about the personal and social construction of reality and represent various identities of a person (McAdams, 1996; Shankar et al., 2001).

Ricoeur (1984) presented the narrative identity theory according to which, in order to make time socially shared, person requires a narrative identity for oneself. In other words, narrative provides an opportunity for person to construct the self, to makes sense of oneself and one's life by telling the stories and by identifying with the stories told (Ricoeur, 1984; 1992).

According to Ricoeur (1991: 22) a good story always teaches people something. Each good narrative or story has its sequence consisting of a beginning, middle and an end, in which there is a point of the story supported by different causally linked events or plots (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). Moreover, those plots are narratively configured or arranged (Polkinghorne, 1995) in such a way that they connect events, actions and experiences and move them through time (Gergen and Gergen, 1988: 25). Therefore, the ability to arrange plots or events and actions in a way that represent connectedness or coherence and a sense of movement or direction through time is the most essential part of storytelling (Gergen and Gergen, 1988: 25). It is also called emplotment or “a synthesis of heterogeneous elements” (Ricoeur, 1991: 21). Emplotment is what makes a story intelligible or what creates understanding (Ricoeur, 1991). I will present this process in more detail in the later chapter.

## **4.2 Functions of stories**

Narratives are stories, accounts or descriptions of people's lives and experiences. Life without stories could not even be imagined, as people listen to, watch or read them, as well as tell them every day (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). As people grow up through the stories and by telling stories, they learn who they are, their history and culture. Narrative represents a story of one's experiences, feelings and beliefs (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narrative also illustrates how person acts and interacts with others, as well as how person makes sense of one's world (Ricoeur, 1992) by providing reasons why things happen and why person engages in a particular behavior.

Life stories serve several functions for people (Atkinson, 2001). First of all, stories guide people psychologically through the entire life time. They help to understand the essence of the self, to gain a clearer understanding of one's experiences, as well as feelings and meanings of those experiences. The narrative explains everything what happens around the person, it also explains why person has particular behavior at the current time by presenting the past experiences (ibid). Through narratives consumers make sense of their identity (e.g. Mick and Buhl, 1992), as identity attributes are linked

in memory to key episodes in one's life, and represent a form of story (Giddens, 1991; Thompson, 1997; Escalas and Bettman, 2000).

Thus, the story allows people to make sense of who they are, and it represents one's present identity by linking past, present, and potential future (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). The story also organizes one's experience and helps to see one's life from subjective and objective point of view, and at the same time, the story constructs one's identity, which stands out from the community person lives in and from own understanding of the self of "who am I" (Polkinghorne, 1991: 136). Therefore, the self is like a text, which is possible to unfold into a meaningful story (Ricoeur, 1991). Stories also awaken one's feelings and help people to acknowledge personal truth from the subjective point of view (Atkinson, 2001).

Second of all, by socially validating and supporting one's experiences, stories enforce one's moral norms and clarify one's bonds and relationships with others (Atkinson, 2001). Here, identity is viewed as sameness, or the identity that belongs to the community and answers to the question "where do I belong?" (Ricoeur, 1992).

All in all, by telling own story which mediates individual signs, rules and norms, person organizes actions and experiences of own life into coherent sequence and gives those experiences reasons, goals and meanings (Ricoeur, 1992; Escalas and Bettman, 2000; Atkinson, 2001). Moreover, stories make person's life and experiences intelligible not only to others, but to the person itself (Gergen and Gergen, 1988), as they support the process of developing the self, they help to create, reflect on, and verify one's personal identity (McAdams, 1996). Thus, each narrative represents one's identity, makes sense of person's experiences and gives them a meaning.

## **5. Methodology - The narrative paradigm**

This research uses narrative paradigm, as it allows exploring how people understand and negotiate their privacy meanings when consuming social media by providing lived personal experiences and uncovering motives, goals and feelings connected to it (Escalas and Bettman, 2000; Atkinson, 2001;). A paradigm refers to a set of basic beliefs and represents a worldview that, in turn, defines the nature of the world and the person's place in it, as well as various relationships to that world and its parts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 107). The basic beliefs are based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions.

The narrative paradigm is based on the assumption of the interpretive paradigm and shares many similarities with it (Shankar et al., 2001: 437). Narrative is being used as an interpretive tool to help understanding of the way consumer construct own privacy and makes sense of this particular aspect of their lives. This approach is seen to be more suitable, because the interest of this study is mostly concerned with understanding the interviewees and their lived and subjective experiences in order to grasp meanings of privacy in their lives rather than measuring or quantifying them (Atkinson, 2001). It allows studying privacy in natural settings in order to understand and interpret the meaning people attach to privacy on social media. Moreover, according to Paine and colleagues (2007: 527), because the concept of privacy is highly complex, it is unlikely that quantitative surveys can accurately reflect respondents' true meanings of privacy.

As the literature review has not identified the meanings of privacy in consumer's minds in the context of social media, the narrative paradigm will allow emerging understandings from the interviewees' own experiences and enable to conceptualize privacy contextually. After criticizing the contemporary privacy theories, Solove (2002) proposed new methods to analyze privacy. Thus, instead of trying to find a single definition of privacy he suggested to search for a pragmatic approach that allows emphasizing and exploring the situated and dynamic nature of privacy. In other words, privacy must be viewed within the practices that constitute it and give it meaning. In this chapter, I will describe the methodological, ontological, and epistemological assumptions for the narrative paradigm used in this research.

### **5.1 Ontological assumption**

Ontology refers to the assumptions of the nature of reality and social beings, or how things really are and how they really work (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108). This research is influenced by the narrative paradigm presented by Shankar and colleagues (2001).

According to Shankar and colleagues (2001: 439) there are multiple ‘realities’ that are actively constructed by human beings, because people exist within the social and cultural world and tend to continuously make sense of the world in which they live. Everything around the person only becomes ‘real’ once it has been interpreted and given a meaning. However, because the person is always a part of particular society, one’s narratives and interpretations of ‘realities’ are shaped and shared with others to the some extent. Thus, person writes one’s own narrative, but at narrative is also “written for us” to the some extent (Shankar et al., 2001).

Moreover, person exists in the particular time and in particular space. As everything around us changes by time, our narratives and interpretations change as well (Shankar et al., 2001). In addition, it is difficult to construct narratives without an understanding of time, as time presents in every event and in one’s past, present and it extends to one’s potential future. Thus, temporality is the primary characteristic of the human existence (Polkinghorne, 1991: 140; Shankar et al., 2001: 439).

All in all, Shankar and colleagues proposed a dynamic ontological position. According to it, narrative represents one of the multiple individually constructed ‘realities’, shaped within social and cultural context in which the individual exists and contextualized by temporality of our existence.

## **5.2 Epistemological assumption**

Epistemology refers to the nature of relationship between the knowledge and the knower, or what is knowledge, what can be known, and how this knowledge can be obtained (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108). The knowledge follows from the ontological assumptions.

In the narrative paradigm, the line between ontology, or the nature of reality and epistemology, or the nature of knowledge has been blurred (Shankar et al., 2001: 440). Therefore, the knowledge follows from the ontological assumptions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108). Epistemological view from the narrative perspective assumes subjectivity of realities, as the production of narratives, its’ understanding and interpretation is a result of co-production, and depends on both the researcher and the interview participant (Atkinson, 2001; Denzin, 2001: 325; Shankar et al., 2001: 440). Thus,

the goal of researcher is not to explain, but to present the understanding, which is naturally subjective and represents only one of the multiple constructed realities at the particular time within particular context (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Shankar et al., 2001).

Therefore, the knowledge and understanding of subjective reality depends on time and the context (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1991), as people's views and knowledge are constantly changing. As a result, it is not possible to gain the final understanding of the subject, but only obtaining temporary understanding is possible (Shankar et al., 2001).

### **5.3 Methodological assumption – Philosophical hermeneutics**

Methodological assumption refers to “how the inquirer can go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 108). It follows from ontological and epistemological assumptions and is based on philosophical hermeneutics, elaborated by Gadamer (Shankar et al., 2001: 441).

Originally hermeneutics idea comes from theology and times when people were trying to interpret the Bible (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Nowadays, hermeneutics represents a theory of the interpretation and understanding of meaning (Shankar et al., 2001). The basic idea of the hermeneutic philosophy is that a person's interpretation of experiences reflects one's broader cultural perspectives that “are implicitly conveyed through language” (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994: 432), and in turn, the “language manifests itself” through narratives (Shankar et al., 2001: 441).

The hermeneutics view deals with texts that could be interpreted, thus, hermeneutics could be applied when studying one's behavior (Shankar et al., 2001). In other words, one's behavior could be analyzed and interpreted through narrative by aid of text, and provide researcher with current understanding and meanings (Thompson, 1997).

Hermeneutics is relevant to marketing and consumer research, as it allows for providing understanding of consumers' understanding (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Hermeneutics approach is suitable also to study consumer identity and privacy, as it allows interpreting meanings in relation to a consumer's history and a narrative context (Thompson, 1997: 439). Thus, privacy could be studied within the context and from the personal self-perspective, as it was encouraged by previous

studies (Solove, 2002; Norberg et al., 2009). However, in order to understand consumer, it is necessary to manage tenets of hermeneutic philosophy presented by Arnold and Fischer (1994), including (pre)-understanding, and hermeneutic circle and fusion of horizons.

### **5.3.1 Pre-understanding**

As each human being belongs to particular historically inherited social world which provides one with particular pre-understanding and is a base for interpretations, it is impossible for researcher to escape from own pre-understanding and own 'roots' (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Here, own pre-understanding is regarded as opportunity to "capitalize as fully and as consciously as possible" (Arnold and Fischer, 1994: 57) rather than see it as an obstacle that needed to be put aside when doing research (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006), as pre-understanding helps to observe, make sense and create meaning (Arnold and Fischer, 1994).

Thus, interpreter's all prior knowledge including social, historical and cultural knowledge, as well as the disciplinary academic knowledge represents one's pre-understanding and influences one's interpretation and temporal understanding (Thompson, 1997; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). The background knowledge and the knowledge of accumulated theories influences on the way researcher makes sense and understands the complexity of the topic being studied. Therefore, pre-understanding provides an orienting frame of reference or horizon, from which person sees world from particular 'lenses'.

### **5.3.2 Fusion of horizons and hermeneutic circle**

A hermeneutic circle refers to the idea that the whole text's meaning is determined from the individual elements of a text, at the same time an individual element is understood relatively to the whole text (Arnould and Fischer, 1994; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). In order to understand the part, the researcher must grasp the whole. In this circle, specific elements are examined several times with a slightly different conception of the whole.

Thus, hermeneutic circle can be understood as an iterative part-to-whole mode of interpretation (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). In addition, hermeneutic circle can also be understood as a way of being in the world, such as being researcher, interpreting the text and gaining a holistic



understanding of consumers' life-stories in order to articulate the relationship of the meanings of particular stories in a broader narrative of personal history (Thompson, 1997).

The hermeneutic research emphasizes the idea that an understanding of a text always reflects a fusion of horizons between the interpreter's frame of reference and the text under interpretation (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Thompson, 1997). However, the final and full understanding is not possible to reach, as it is not possible to simultaneously share similar pre-understanding and as there is no single or correct interpretation (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006).

## **6. Method**

In this chapter, I present the actual method of my research or how I come to know what I am researching (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), as well as the research process and problems I faced. The method that I choose to acquire the knowledge in this research follows from the predetermined ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of the narrative paradigm.

### **6.1 Data collection – narrative interview**

Narratives are applied in different way in various fields. In qualitative research narratives provide an opportunity to gain the most insightful and rich information, which is less likely to be obtained by any other methods (Atkinson, 2001). Thus, data for this research has been collected using narrative interviews, as narrative interview is suitable method for gaining information, because it allows for understanding the interrelation of consumers' privacy and their identity. According to Atkinson (2001: 11-12) the life story narrative may be the most effective means for obtaining meanings, as well as subjective understanding of how *the self* evolves over time. In fact the self can be defined in narrative terms as an ongoing story. By telling the story, person organizes one's experience and verifies one's identity, as well as acknowledges one's values and attitudes that have been acquired over time.

In order to collect data by use of narrative interview, an interviewer encourages respondent to tell a story concerning the topic of the study (Ricoeur, 1991). This way it is possible to understand respondent's point of view and life experience, and to uncover the way the respondent views oneself and the world around (Polkinghorne, 1995). Through the stories told by respondent it is possible also to reveal one's personal meanings of a specific event, as well as goals and motivations that drive one's behavior (Escalas and Bettman, 2000). Thus, narrative interview provides interviewer opportunity to capture every moment that had special meaning for the respondent and to understand one's temporal reality through one's lenses (Riessman, 2001).

Narratives allows interviewer to investigate and co-create narrative (Atkinson, 2001). Narrative interviews are open-ended interviews, where respondents are allowed to present their thoughts without interruption for long periods of time, which in turn facilitates respondents to freely present their thoughts and as a result, leads to deeper and richer responses (Atkinson, 2001). As it is preferred to not interrupt the interviewee, it is important for interviewer to be sensitive and carefully

listen to the respondent's experience in order to encourage one's narrative by carefully choosing questions that preferably lead to respondent's feelings and true meanings (Atkinson, 2001; Riessman, 2001).

Thus, in the beginning of the interview, it is particularly important to ask descriptive interview question that encourages respondent to freely tell own story (McCracken, 1988). For this reason, it is necessary to ask open and broad questions, as it allows going into any directions and any comfortable zones for the respondent and starting one's narrative by gradually moving to the main respondent's experience and themes of the interview (Riessman, 2001).

### **6.1.1 Sample**

For this study, I conducted 15 interviewees, which consisted of 6 male respondents and 9 female respondents. This sample size was chosen based on the assumption of narrative being personal life-stories full of rich and detailed data and studied very closely. Thus, a large number of faceless and nameless subjects would be less useful (Riessman, 2001: 706).

The main criterion for choosing the interviewees was purposive sampling of particular consumption behavior (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), or the fact that interviewees are active and conscious consumers of social media rather than accidental users. Thus, the definition of privacy was not given in order to give respondents the opportunity to present and define privacy concept themselves the way they understand it. This was made because privacy represents different meaning for each person (Margulis, 2005). Moreover, none of interviewees asked for clarification of the term 'privacy' when they were introduced with the interview topic. This was also reported by researchers exploring privacy before (e.g. Viseu, Clement and Aspinall, 2003; Paine et al., 2007).

Majority of the respondents were my acquaintances. Interviewing particularly them allowed, in some extend, to have pre-understanding and some knowledge of each other and, at the same time, made interview process less restricted to what and how the respondent tells (Atkinson, 2001). Taking into account the intimate nature of the privacy topic, interviewing my acquaintances created trust between us and allowed 'to push' the private boundaries and make respondents' narratives richer, more personal and detailed. The rest of respondents, about a third of respondents, were friends of my friends. Despite the fact that we did not know each other before, due to mutual friends it was possible to form trust between us more quickly during the interview.

The specific context where privacy was studied within social media was not predefined. However, taking into account popularity of social medias in everyday lives it was expected that interviewees will introduce and emphasize privacy experiences particularly on social medias, such as Facebook, Twitter and others. A broad range of activities within social media was discussed during the interviews, including chatting, posting, commenting, updating, participation in the interest driven groups and usage of Web cameras. The most common context within social media where respondents experienced privacy issues was Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, activities on those particular Web sites were discussed more in-depth.

The absence of predefined context allowed respondents to express the most important situations involved with privacy. This, in turn, allowed respondents to negotiate the most essential privacy meanings in their lives within social media context. Studying privacy within situated context and personal practices, that constitute privacy and give it meaning, resolved the problem of previous privacy research mentioned by Solove (2002), when many difficulties involved in trying to produce unified definition, many attempts in defining privacy and the variety of produced definitions lead to the fact that “nobody can articulate what it means” (Solove, 2006: 477). As this research will concentrate on specific context of social media, it will be easier to identify the meaning that people attach to privacy. Therefore, privacy can also be studied deeper as being a part of a specific context, and this way, provide more clear understanding of the privacy concept.

### **6.1.2 Conducting the interview**

The interviews were scheduled at the convenient time for the respondent in order to avoid distractions or interruptions, as it is important to make respondent feel comfortable and unhurried. The interviews lasted from 50 minutes and up to 2 hours. The interviews were conducted one-to-one in the homes of respondents or at some other peaceful settings familiar to the respondents. The familiarity of environment makes respondents feeling comfortable and one-to-one interviewing encourages respondent to feel more relaxed (Atkinson, 2001). This particular relaxed environment helps to create trust and encourages respondents to tell their stories more openly.

In the beginning of each interview I had a general conversation and gradually I explained the purpose of the interview to the respondents, which allowed breaking the ice between us. I also assured the participants that the data collected during the interview will be strictly confidential and

their real names or places will not be mentioned in this study or provided to the third persons. I believe that this encouraged them to be open in their story-telling and freely express their significant experiences.

During the first interview I had basic questions that I used, however, I noticed that I did not asked them, as the question naturally originated from the conversation itself. After the first interview, I decided to have only a basic general outline for the interview that I used as a supportive tool. Thus, during the next interviews the conversation was flowing naturally and questions originated spontaneously and vividly from the conversation itself, but were carefully chosen in order to lead the conversation in the right direction and keep the story discussed (Atkinson, 2001).

The main goal of the interviews was to help the respondents tell a story and reflect their identities, lives, experiences, as well as how events, circumstances and perceptions were organized and influenced on their understanding of privacy and its meaning in their lives (Atkinson, 2001). In addition, the interviews were conducted gradually during the whole period of the thesis work in order to obtain most accurate and reach data. Moreover, the text transcribed was analyzed right after each interview was conducted. This allowed me to concentrate on the more specific privacy meanings and to obtain deeper results from the later interviews, thus, the quality of data obtained from the interviews was continuously improved.

### **6.1.3 Problems**

First of all, conducting interview on people's lives is relatively difficult, because in order to obtain rich data it was needed to establish trust with the interviewee first. Second of all, discussion of the privacy topic itself represents problem as well. This is due to discussion of the information that represents personal and even in some degree intimate for the interview participants. Moreover, privacy topic is something that everyone understands, but at the same time, it is very difficult to express it verbally. Third of all, some interviewees hesitated to describe their lives and experiences by providing more details. This may have been due to the fact that for some of the interviewees it was difficult to reflect on their own experiences, as from the individual's point of view most aspects of life and experiences are understood and taken for granted. Thus, sometimes it is even more difficult to talk about own life than someone else's.

In addition, because of the sensitivity of privacy topic, several potential candidates refused to give me an interview after introducing the topic. They justified their choice that they do not want others to know how they use social media. Moreover, they do not want others to know their private information as it represents their private life, which they do not want to share with outsiders.

In order to overcome above presented problems involved in the research process, I have chosen to interview people that I knew relatively well, the people I thought would trust me and feel comfortable when discussing their lives and their personal information with me. In addition, I chose to interview people I thought were more sociable and open to talk about themselves, their personal experiences and feelings.

## **6.2 Data analysis**

As narratives allow for studying of personal experience and meaning, narrative is particularly significant for representing and analysing identity in its multiple guises in different contexts (Riessman, 2001). Riessman (2001) described narrative analysis as a process of investigating the story being told by interview respondents. The purpose of narrative analysis is to grasp how respondents make sense of the events and actions in their lives. Method of data analysis from the narrative perspective could be divided into two analysis modes: analysis of narratives and the narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The first, “analysis of narratives” concerns stories as data, creating paradigmatic knowledge in the form of categories and types or typologies, in a similar manner as content analysis (ibid). The “analysis of narrative” identifies and presents themes within each story and themes common to all stories. This is essentially a paradigmatic approach to narrative research, which “moves from stories to common elements”, or from stories to shared common to all themes (ibid: 10). The main idea is to present themes in an appropriate paradigmatic structure, such as categories. This way it is possible to bring together the common themes and the individual themes. Thus, the variations of a theme remain explicit, while meaningful. At the same time, the common themes are identified and presented. The purpose of using stories is generally to understand a concept or an experience (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The second, “narrative analysis” analyzes actions, events, and happenings through utilizing narrative configuration or emplotment as an analytical tool to produce stories (Polkinghorne, 1995).

By means of “narrative analysis” researcher constructs a narrative using the data obtained from each narrative. The story “must fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves” (Polkinghorne, 1995: 16). Thus, in the constructed story the data is integrated.

Narrative configuration or emplotment represents a process of configuring the diverse temporal elements, like events and actions of one’s life-story into a meaningful whole (Ricoeur, 1991). Therefore emplotment transforms a sequence of disconnected events into a unified story with a point or theme, and gives it meanings after unfolding a plot of the story (Polkinghorne, 1991). In order to understand the story, it is necessary to identify its conclusion (Thompson, 1997). By being aware of the actual conclusion, researcher can choose the most significant plot of the story for further examination and arrange them into chronological order to configure the story by taking into account causes, influences and links. This created plotline represents an essential part of the story that fits to the main events, holds the story together, brings order and unfolds the meaning of the whole story (Polkinghorne, 1995).

By the means of emplotment it is possible for interpreter to unify the complex of events into a single story, and at the same time to take into account the influences of historical and social contexts (Thompson, 1997). In order to give a story some structure, plots needed to be imaginatively created and configured into a theme (Polkinghorne, 1995). This way, plots identify the roles of the most significant individual events. Thus, each plot of the story represents valuable part of the whole story. In order to create a coherent story, Thompson (1997) suggested an iterative part-to-whole mode of interpretation. The part-to-whole represents the process in which the researcher looks for patterns and differences across different interviews. The part-to-whole process consists of two stages (Thompson, 1997). In the first stage, a text is read in its entirety in order to gain a sense of the whole. The further readings develop an integrated understanding of the meanings conveyed by the text. In the second stage, the researcher looks for patterns and differences between the texts across different interviews in order to find common themes.

For the purpose of this research I will utilize the narrative analysis in order to gain an understanding of the interrelated actions and events that has link to the meanings of privacy, and as a result to the personal identity. Moreover, for the purpose of this research the hermeneutics of faith will apply. According to Ricoeur (1991) the hermeneutics of faith aims to restore meaning to a text. From the hermeneutics of faith point of view, researcher interprets the text by examining the various

messages of the interview text. In addition, everything that interview participants tell is received by researcher as trusted information. Thus, in order to understand participants the way they understand themselves, and to obtain their interpretation of the subjective experiences and meanings, participants are provided with voice in various ways (Ricoeur, 1991).

### **6.3 Analyzing the interviews**

After conducting the interviews I transcribed them and read the transcribed texts carefully several times in order to adjust my initial understanding. Moreover, as the interview data was obtained during the period of several months, I had an opportunity to analyze each life story right after I conducted the interview. This helped me to hold the most recent and pure understanding of the interview respondent's life story. In addition, I had an opportunity to read the first interviews I obtained also after some period of time and perceive the results from the new perspective. Analyzing the first texts obtained from the interviews one more time allowed me to concentrate on the specific features of privacy in more details and to gain deeper understanding. This new understanding was helpful during the interviews I conducted later. I found it really effective to analyze each interview right after it has been conducted, because the freshest understanding of person and one's life story allowed me to gain the purest understanding of the privacy meaning.

In order to create narrative the emplotment process was utilized during the analysis process. After that, the stories were analyzed by the "part-to-whole" process presented by Thompson (1997), at the same time I highlighted the most relevant and interesting parts. I draw mind maps about the prevailing themes and constructed timelines about the interview participants' lives, particularly about important events and turning points in them.

In order to identify privacy meanings I utilized a hermeneutically grounded interpretative framework described by Thompson (1997). The application of this framework is made in three levels of interpretation: Identifying the key patterns of meanings expressed by the respondents in their narratives; identifying the key patterns of meanings that appear in different narratives presented by interview participants; and drawing broader conceptual implications from the analysis of narratives based on understanding of the cultural, societal and historical processes behind the digital media consumption and privacy. The goal of the interpretation was to produce different interpretation through my theoretical knowledge in order to expand the horizons (Arnold and Fischer, 1994: 60). The interpretation was made to unsettle the obvious understanding of privacy



and to show it in a new light of the private and disclosed self-identity. My final and, at the same time, temporal and subjective understanding of privacy meaning was acquired through the process of writing.

## **7. Findings from narratives**

In this chapter I will first analyze the narratives presented by interview participants on more general level based on McAdams' (1996) framework in order to give a better picture about the interviewees and about the overall tone of the interviews. After that, I will present empirical data through two narratives and analyze the interviews according to the four different themes that emerged while close reading transcribed interviews. The interviews covered the topics of social media consumption and privacy meanings, ranging from social media consumption behavior, practices, privacy violation experiences, overall feelings and other topics concerning privacy and the self. The privacy meaning of everyday social media consumption, such as Facebook, was accentuated in the interviews. This is natural regarding that the informants told me about their everyday lives and activities, and taking into account the popularity of Facebook.

### **7.1 General findings**

McAdams (1996: 308-309) presented the main features of life-story, including narrative tone, imagery, ideological setting, nuclear episodes, imagoes, endings and themes, to which I paid attention during close reading of the transcribed interviews. Next, I will shortly present all of those features.

#### *Narrative tone*

The life stories typically manifest emotional tone or attitudes, thus it is possible to identify the overall tone of privacy narratives (McAdams, 1996). The overall tone of privacy narratives was mostly positive or neutral, because interview respondents are concerned with their privacy, but at the same time, they feel calm, peaceful, and even optimistic, because they think that they can manage their privacy the way they want. In addition, I felt like each of the interview responded care about their privacy, because it is something that they prefer to keep for themselves, something that they are conscious about, something that they did not want to lose if doing mistakes, and something that is heavily depending on their behavior.

However, when respondents were talking about their own or their friends' negative experiences of privacy violations, they mentioned that they felt angry or worried. At some point when talking about privacy violation experience, especially in the beginning the narrative often took a tragedy form, however, the end of each experience was presented in more ironic form. The feelings of

embarrassment and awkwardness were also present, as some stories touched upon in the interviews were sensitive and intimate topics, and sometimes interview respondents felt ashamed talking about them. All in all, the overall tone of privacy narrative was neutral, but closer to positive, because respondents believe that they are able to manage their privacy by their own.

### ***Imagery***

The imagery of the story is determined by the word pictures, the sounds, the metaphors, and similes (McAdams, 1996). Majority of the interview respondents strongly compare privacy on Facebook to the personal information, such as relationship status and other information being concealed and shared, and to identity being managed through adjusting privacy settings and controlling own behavior when updating statuses, posting, tagging, commenting, uploading pictures using private messages, and typing password in the presence of other people, would it be family members or outsiders. Privacy is also connected to acceptance of real and true friends on Facebook (Dan) and deleting friends with whom there is no connection anymore (Mika).

Interview respondents compare privacy with something “really-really my” (Paula), something that is “valuable” (Dan), and something that happens and comes from the “inside” (Krista), there “own life” (Maija), and something that they want to decide how to use. Privacy is compared with person’s “property” (Maria), meaning that if one has property, one has “power to decide yourself” (Nea) how to control your other images. Privacy is also “filtering the information” (Mika) or disclosing personal information that is appropriate for an audience.

One of the interview respondents used the “closed door” metaphor. It is like “in a shared house you want some privacy you close your door that basically means don’t stow, what goes behind the closed door is you don’t ask” (Steven) Most of the respondents connected privacy with trust. If there is something private, they prefer to share it with people who they trust, to people who will not “give any damage” (Steven), and who will not “use it against you” (Nea). Privacy also was connected to one’s self-confidence and social norms. Thus, if person is self-confident, person might share everything, because he or she does not care what others think and is not afraid of being judged by others.

Moreover, the question of time was present when talking about privacy. One of the interview respondents mentioned that “everything that happens at the current time in my personal life, life of my family members is private” (Krista), and thus, could be shared only in a private atmosphere,

either by private message or video call. It cannot be shared on public. In addition, publicity or public are the antonyms that were used as opposite to privacy, including posting and writing on the friends' walls, something being "exposed and viewed by others" (Krista).

Above presented images emerged from the interviews are similar with the factors presented by Young and Quan-Haase (2009) that influence on people's disclosure of personal information on Facebook, and the strategies developed to protect themselves against privacy threats. It has been found, that people most often use strategies, like the exclusion of personal information, the use of private messages, and changing the default privacy settings.

### ***Ideological setting***

The life story suggests an ideological setting or a backdrop of fundamental belief and value that situates the plot in an ethico-religious location (McAdams, 1996). The ideological setting refers to the person's religious, political and ethical beliefs and values as they are instantiated in the story (ibid).

There were four major ideological settings based on which the interview respondents presented their life stories as well as belief and values of privacy. First of all, social beliefs and values, especially social norms, rules of interactions and expectations by society being a basis for the person's behavior on social media through all the life stories presented during the interviews. Second of all, psychological view was present in the most life stories, as privacy being a part of the self, including one's psychological fears connected to the self-confidence. Psychological features and fears restrain one's quantity and quality of disclosures and set privacy boundaries. Thus, based on fears some of the respondents became isolated and deactivated own Facebook account, which is a result of privacy control gone wrong (Altman, 1975).

The third ideological setting introduced in the life stories is ethical beliefs and values. The interview respondents often mentioned that it is not appropriate to share someone else's personal information without owner's permission. Based on ethical beliefs and values most of the respondents are conscious of other social media user's privacy when they post, upload or share some kind of information which does not necessarily belong to another person. It might be some kind of information that might have affect on the message receiver's disclosed self-identity.

The fourth ideological setting introduced in one interview was regulation and law. One of the interview respondents believe that each profile needs to be created based on person's true and real information, in order to identify consumer as a real person, for example, based on the information in passport, so person can be responsible for own actions as in a real life, and this way it will be possible to control each other's privacy and private information. The fifth ideological setting mentioned in one of the life stories is person's religious beliefs and values. Thus, based on Muslim religious beliefs, it is not appropriate to share intimate information of one's private life and any information, including articles, pictures, jokes that are meant to be viewed "only for people over 18 years old" (Dan).

### ***Nuclear episodes***

The nuclear episodes or the most important scenes in the life story that affirm self-perceived continuity or change in the *Me* over time (McAdams, 1996). The nuclear episode is something that the memory of the key event symbolizes today in the context of the overall life story.

Privacy understanding of each person is based on person's childhood and the way parents raised and teach their children. Some of the interview respondents acknowledged that protective parents, who did not allow sharing personal information influenced on one's privacy boundaries and behavior. Another respondent mentioned that being raised by religious parents influenced the quality and quantity of the personal information being shared on social media. Because of religious perspectives on life respondent never shares too personal information with others. The nuclear episode involves also one's recognition that person is an adult being a part of society that needs to behave in acceptable way in accordance with social roles and norms.

For majority of the interview respondents at the time of introduction of social media it became a novel, popular and trendy place for sharing. At that period most respondents viewed social media as a place for sharing their true personal lives and feelings, they provided their actual personal information. The reason for sharing private information might be in the audience of social media at that time, when the majority of friends were respondents' genuine friends. For one of the respondents, media played an important role in change of privacy protection on social media. At the point when media emphasized importance of each user's privacy, interview respondent restricted access to own Facebook profile, while before paying attention to the privacy issue by media the profile was open to be viewed for everyone.

The rest of nuclear episodes that influenced respondent's privacy understanding and their behavior are connected to the experiences of privacy violations. One respondent mentioned, that after Facebook profile was hacked, and all private messages were read and sent spam to many people on the friends' list, respondent decided to not disclose any sensitive information that could be used against. Another respondent mentioned experience of a friend, when someone created fake profile duplicate and shared real, but inappropriate information including real owner's pictures and posted messages to the owner's actual friends almost for one year. This unpleasant situation made the interview respondent to restrict access to own profile from outsiders, to delete friends with whom there was no contact for a long period of time, and to delete all publicly available personal information even from genuine Facebook friends.

### ***Imagoes***

The imago represents the idealized personification of the self that functions as a main character in narrative and represents the idea of ideal or ought selves presented by Higgins in 1987, and at the same time, it shares conceptual space with psychoanalytic ideas of inner states. There are usually between two and five main imagoes in one's life story (McAdams, 1996). In the context of the each interview, it was possible to identify multiple self-imagoes. However, in case of privacy, two common self-imagoes were present in each of the interview, including open, active and communicative as well as autonomous, neutral or even passive digital person.

These self-imagoes represent social or disclosed self-identity, where person is trying to keep in touch with others by providing mostly positive, funny, smart and professional personal information, but at the same time, this information is usually 'filtered' and has neutral or passive nature. The disclosed self also shares space with ideas of one's inner states (McAdams, 1996). From the interviews conducted it was possible to identify the inner self that represents personal or private self-identity, and is slightly different from the social-self. This inner state is conscious, sometimes naive, it has weaknesses, is not always self-confident, it is emotional and goal- or future-oriented. In addition, the inner state is aware of social norms, as it is not sharing sensitive or intimate information. It gives comments rarely, and tries to conceal interests that will not be accepted by society in order to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral response from others.

### ***Endings***

Most endings of the interview respondents' stories emphasized personal ability to manage privacy and the importance of privacy protection and its maintenance in the future, as well as being

conscious every time one clicks on something. Interview respondents will continue sharing the same level of personal information as they provide it now. In case if they have to share something too personal they prefer to share it in more private environment, like private message and video call on Facebook, or face-to-face in real life. Most of the interview respondents mentioned that they will not change anything as it was at the time of interview. For example, the respondents will not 'clean' their friends' list, because they believe that they might be helpful in the future. However, these results obtained from life stories represent the respondents' thoughts at the time when the interviews were conducted. Thus, their behavior and understanding of privacy and its meaning have temporal characteristics representing only respondent's thoughts at the time. However, as privacy is a dynamic process, the understanding of privacy could be different by time as it was mentioned by Altman (1975).

At the same time, some of the respondents in the end of the interview acknowledged that they need to change their minor habits and behavior patterns in order to protect their privacy. Thus, I believe that the interview was not helpful only for this research, but for the interview respondents as well. Overall, respondents believe in their autonomy in controlling their privacy, as well as their capability to consume social media consciously.

In addition, a substantial proportion of interviewees tend to share identifiable information about them and not to restrict access to it for all the people in their friends' list. Interviewees were most willing to indicate their real name, birth date, school or job place, interests and became increasingly protective of their information regarding relationship status, address and mobile telephone number. Moreover, the most active users disclose the most information, and it was found (Jones and Soltren, 2005) that users who frequently update their profiles tend to be even more open and not concerned much about their privacy. This type of people falls into unconcerned people segment, according to Westin's typology of segments in accordance with privacy concerns.

All of the interview respondents use general privacy settings, and restrict access to their profile from outsiders by allowing all the people in their friends' list to view all the information they disclose. At the same time, the information they disclose is 'filtered' through person's mind and one's values and social norms.

## **7.2 Two life-stories**

In addition to McAdams' narrative features identified in the interviews, I will present my findings and analysis concerning the empirical data I collected through two narratives. All conducted interviews were used in the analysis to understand the topic and to find common categories and themes. Therefore, the themes were present across the research data obtained. Thus, particularly these two narratives were chosen to portray my findings, because they are representative and exhaustive of the whole research data.

### **7.2.1 Nea's life story**

The first story is about Nea, who is ambitious and active person, who always is trying to do her best in order to make her future even better. She is extremely motivated to achieve high goals in her life, to get prestigious job and to make career.

As a child, Nea was easygoing, extremely curious and communicative, and may be sometimes a little bit naive. She respected older people: "it was important to be a good at school, to study well, to please my parents in a way". By being such a nice and curious child and by having overprotective parents, everything in her life was constantly controlled by someone, including her consumption of the internet and social media. When Nea grew up and moved away from her parents, she decided that "everyone does it" and started to disseminate even more information than she did before, because she believed that the main idea of Facebook is to maintain and reinforce relationship with others. She decided to exchange some part of her private and her personal information for the benefits connected to the usage of Facebook, including creation of stronger relationships.

#### **Being controlled by parents - fear of consequences**

##### ***Isolation from outsiders***

She remembers that "already my parents started", when she was not allowed to give her whole real name, address and a phone on the Internet to anyone. By being obedient child, she even "didn't feel too comfortable, because I wasn't allowed to give it away..." Her parents were telling her stories, when children gave random people their information and later those children were stocked in a real life. Being raised by those stories, she "was afraid that they could find me in real life", and because of those stories she "didn't feel safe".



Nea's childhood was a ground for development of her privacy boundaries and its understanding. Later she did not use her "whole name, I only used my first name... always. I also used fake last name as well". If there was a need to provide her information, she always gave only her first name and the name of the city near her real city "just in case". By doing that, Nea was trying to isolate herself from outsiders, because she was afraid, she didn't want to become identified and have negative consequences: "I didn't want other people to find or to come to me in real life, knocking on my door". For this reason Nea did not have a picture of her on the Facebook profile, instead it was her "cat... because I did had a lot of online friends, so I just wanted to keep it at the distance, because I didn't want to be too personal... I did not want to be found". Nowadays Nea is still isolating herself from outsiders not because of the fear to be found in real life and being stocked, but because she does not like to show her life for outsiders and people she does not know at all. Sometimes Nea is also isolating herself from her own Facebook friends, because sometimes she is tired from social encounters and needs time for her own. "It is easier to get rid of people, you can just log off, you can just not reply, and if you don't like someone, you can just stop replying or logoff them, or just delete them".

### ***Isolation from shared spaces – concealing information***

In order to please her parents and to escape from negative consequences, Nea even accessed the Internet from the living room, where her parents could walk past and check any time what she is doing and who she is talking to. "It was annoying to share... but then I also understand that it was a way of insuring that children or teenagers are not doing anything stupid online"

Later Nea accessed the internet from her own room, because "at the certain point you just want them (parents) to not make such a big deal of it, you just want to not be bothered by others". Indeed in her own room she felt herself free to do anything she wanted and to talk about any topic she wanted, because there were no parents who could walk past, check and constantly ask "what are you doing?" However, even in her own room, when she was talking on the microphone, she never talked with her closest friends about her boyfriend, because she was afraid, that her parents would hear it. "It would be more awkward... because it is kind of personal, and maybe I'm not ready to share that, I would feel really embarrassed" Of course, she "didn't want to share everything" even with her closest family members, it is not because it was a secret, but because she "personally would feel uncomfortable with it... would feel embarrassed", and moreover, she was "afraid to be judged".

## **Being a part of society - presenting disclosed self and concealing weaknesses**

Before Nea was afraid of those stories that her parents told her. For this reason she never gave her personal information on the Internet, and even on her own website she created which was like Facebook, she never mentioned any names or anything about her family and friends. “I think it wasn’t too personal, it wasn’t like aww... my mom said that, or some person said that, but it was like I went to the store with my friend... it was not too detailed... I never put my real name and a phone there”.

Nowadays Nea thinks that people are living in a more open society on Facebook, where “everyone is open, and it is not a big deal anymore... it changed now... Nowadays it is less of the problem, because everyone shares own pictures, etc. it is not a big deal anymore, even all the information is on Facebook account, so it is not of issue, people share more, so I share more, I think”.

She also thinks that people should share more with each other, because without sharing it is not possible to learn another person: “It makes harder to really know other people, because they really shield stuff off”. For this reason, now Nea is not hesitating to tell her real last name and the place she lives, especially if she “would become like friends” with another person, “if they would tell me their last name” she would tell it too. Nea acknowledges that two-way communication and trust created by time encourage her to share her personal information: “Sharing is caring, you know, sharing is not one-way, it is two-way, people with whom you share mutual secrets, stories, people you trust... I would give it people who actually I met in person, like my real friends, but not to the people you really don’t know”. While Nea is more open on Facebook, she still finds it important to trust person with whom she shares her personal information: “if you are close with people it is mutual, you trust them... and it is a lot more possible that one person can get a lot more information and you don’t want to be a person who gives all that information, while you don’t know anything about the other”.

Now Nea is an adult, and now when she can decide herself what information she will share with others on Facebook, while she faced society which is less private at the same time, it is still judgmental, meaning that she has “to act like normal, like everyone else in a way”. Nea is trying to present herself in desired and acceptable way in order to avoid unspoken evaluations and behavioral responses from others: “I should not care about what others think, but I still do... I think everybody does care about their image”. Nea decided to represent herself on Facebook as being intelligent and

having active, intensive and happy life - everything what her parents wanted her to become when she was a child, and everything that her desired roles of the self want to represent. If Nea shares something publicly, it is usually academic articles, news, useful links for her friends, volunteering, pictures that represent happy experiences in her life where she is with her friends, like traveling. Therefore, Facebook represents a tool for her through which she can create more and closer connections with people she knows by balancing and managing her disclosed self-identities.

Nea is not hesitating to add pictures of herself on her Facebook profile: “Now I share more pictures about myself than I did before, because I care a bit less than I did before... because I’m maybe a bit more proud, like look at me, I went there and there... Now I’m having a bit much fun and I want to share it... I want to just be proud, self-confident ... Now I also made more friends, really good friends”.

While Nea is adding pictures herself, she does not trust other people who add pictures of her: “You make a decision how you want to be seen or that you don’t want people to have power to control you, because you are in charge of your own life”. She thinks that Facebook is a great place, where she can manage her disclosed social identity by untagging pictures she does not like, by taking away wall comments or posts.

### **Concealing private self**

Nea not only trying to present herself in desired way, but she is also trying to conceal things, because “when it is a mess, then it is personal... People don’t want others to know it”. Although she is trying to overcome her problems with self-confidence, she is still afraid to be judged especially now, when she is an adult person being a part of society and having particular responsibilities and social roles for her wide range of audiences on Facebook: “Nowadays I hate it, but my image is important... may be I’m not so confident”. She has her family members as her Facebook friends, her closest friends, common friend, her university classmates, she has also people who she has met only once and after that she have not talked to them, the people who do not particularly even know her as a person.

Because of her fears, Nea is trying to conceal her “mess” and her “deepest darkest secrets, opinions about other people” in various ways. Even when she does not want to think and just wants to have fun and read certain article, like gossip, she is still concerned with her reputation and prefers not to

put it on public. “I would not want to be seen it on public, because they would be like... Nea just read gossip, she is one of those girls. I should not think what others think.” Another interest that Nea feels embarrassed to mention on her profile is gaming, as when she was young she spent a lot of time playing computer games. However, becoming an adult she feels embarrassed to tell others about her addiction in the past: “When I was playing games at the public place I didn’t want to play with a screen really big. I didn’t want people to judge me, I would be a little embarrassed about it”. Nea believes that people will think that she does not have anything better to do in her life rather than playing games. She is afraid to show people her addiction to Facebook too, for that reason she still does not update her statuses too often. She is afraid to be judged based on those statuses as she judges people who update annoying “I just had coffee” statuses. She is afraid to “get rejected in a way”, especially when she does not have any big events and nothing special happens in her life: “I don’t really do anything spectacular”.

Nea is also do not like to share her opinions on public with her Facebook friends. If she has to say something she will rather send private message to particular person, instead of letting it into newsfeeds to be observed by all her friends. Nea thinks that it is easier to share her opinions by different online websites, because “it could be done more anonymously in different online places, where nobody knows who you are”, especially about sensitive topics, like medical issues.

She still has a short version of her last name, the way she created her Facebook account long time ago, when she was afraid of situations like in the stories her parents told her. However, nowadays there is also another reason for having short version of her last name, because she does not want others to find her “online, because there is so much information on it”. She does not want to “have like bad pictures on there for the future, because in the future, like your employer will look it up”. In other words, while being open, Nea acknowledges possible future consequences of her behavior at the present and the past time. Moreover, while she is trying to become even more open and communicative Facebook person, she still cannot represent herself in any specific, unique or “too personal” manner on public, because of the wide range of audiences on her Facebook friend’s list: “I guess later on you don’t want a scandal to happen, if you get a job... if you ever have political career, you know... you never know... like in the past you did this.. and here is a picture... you know I don’t want future me to be affected by what I do now and have like really troubles with that later... I don’t want to get punished by that in the future”. Therefore, while Nea is sharing more, she still controls what information about herself could be disclosed and what concealed: “I do wanna do things, but I don’t want to have the consequences for years and years after that”.

### **Being conscious about others' privacy**

While telling her life story Nea constantly was 'putting herself into others' shoes'. When she was telling about her room and how free she feels there, but still she is afraid to talk about on the microphone with her closest friends about her lovers, she imagined how she would feel to be another person: "If I would hear this kind of conversation [romantic], I would feel really uncomfortable, I would feel like I'm spying on them... it would be awkward". For this reason, if Nea have personal conversation with her friends, she prefers to walk away from shared space in order not to bother other people's peace and not to make others feel awkward.

Being an active Facebook user nowadays, Nea is tagging her friends, but she still thinks about others before taking any actions: "if person will be not comfortable with the picture if I tag him, like if he looks like a total idiot on the picture, I will not tag him". She also constantly thinks how person will feel if someone else will see the post, comment or a picture, and will it affect her friends' image and disclosed identity, because they "also might have family members and employers as Facebook friends" and "you never know how they will react". Moreover, wrong message could not only make harm to another person's image, but to the relationship between Nea and the friend. For this reason, Nea always sending neutral messages on public, and if she has something that she is not sure how will be perceive, she will rather send it by private message.

All in all, Nea finds privacy as "keeping your information, whatever you don't... controlling your other images, you can decide yourself... you have autonomy, you have control and power". For Nea, sharing more on Facebook in a way reassures that she is indeed communicative and self-confident person. While sharing her information she still remembers about her social roles and possible consequences in the future. Nea thinks that there is nothing wrong to share personal information on Facebook as everyone does nowadays, especially when she has power and ability to manage her privacy and the information she discloses. While Nea thinks that she is open and shares more information on Facebook than she used to share, Nea is still reserved with her opinions, comments, tagging and everything she does publicly in front of her Facebook friends.

#### **7.2.2 Maria's life story**

Maria is very communicative and friendly person, who has a lot of friends as in a real and as in a digital life. When social media was introduced, when it was new and trendy space to talk to friends, she became an active and open Facebook user. She “put all her life there” and shared pictures, updated statuses and posted various comments and links on daily basis. At that time Maria thought that it is “the best place for communication” with friends, because through Facebook she was able to organize everything: she was able to be closer to her friends and she constantly was aware about everything that happens. Maria could not even imagine that one day she will be “one of those who conceal everything”, she will be totally different and closed digital person.

### **New and trendy Facebook**

#### ***Presenting disclosed self***

Maria started using Facebook right after its introduction, when all her “friends were there”. She did not hesitate to create her account using real personal information, including her real name, because all the people in her Facebook friends’ list were her real friends she met in real life, and moreover, friends with whom she was really close. For this reason Maria put a lot of effort into her profile maintenance by continuously updating it with her real and even personal information. She was sharing all the information about herself, she shared her mobile phone number, address, previous schools list, places of work, her preferences and interests. Indeed she “put all her life there”.

While Maria was open about her life, she still shared only desired information about herself. She updated her statuses by telling mostly positive news or events that happened in her life, because she did not want “to come to the party and tell how bad your life is and how everything collapses around you”. She also shared only perfect pictures of her, and pictures that represented her active life, because Maria thought that in order “to upload pictures on Facebook, even for your friends, you need to do something fun and interesting”.

#### ***Concealing private self***

While being open, there was something that Maria hid not only from her Facebook friends, but from her closest family members and friends as well, because she did not want to have her “life being visible for everyone”, as she thinks that “no one can know more than I want them to know”.

Maria has her parents as Facebook friends, she had to hide her one album with photos from her father, because her father is really strict and Maria do not want to show him some photos where she is with her friends “having a few classes of wine”. Even though, those photos were available to be

viewed for everyone, including her husband, and she could present them “to the future employer”, but she still felt embarrassed to show them to her father: “I have one photo album on Facebook, which is not visible only for my father, because my father is really strict, he would never accept the fact that I do consume alcohol.... I don’t want to refuse to drink at all and there is no reason for my father to know about it, so it is better that he knows as much as he knows right now, it is better that he will not be upset about it”.

While Maria restricted access to some of her personal information from her father, she also told, that she actually has password from her father’s Facebook, and sometimes when being curious she loges into it and checks how her father is doing. Her father is aware about it and gave her his own password, because they “don’t have anything to hide from each other”. Thus, while some information is ‘filtered’ and restricted even from closest family member, some information is allowed to be accessed.

Maria do not want to let others know that she feels embarrassed in front of her friends when she played farming game, because each time she played it appeared in the news feeds, and by being annoyed by those friends who played similar games, she knew that her friends “will hate” her. For that reason she always deletes games she plays from her wall: “I don’t share my farming... when I have too much of farming on my wall, I go there and delete all of them, I don’t wanna... I don’t wanna show myself, like I don’t have anything else to do”.

## **Privacy violation experience**

### ***Isolating the self***

Everything was going well till the time when Maria went to check her friend’s profile. She was shocked to see inappropriate information including pictures of her friend, negative status updates and at the same time her real information, including real working place and address. Soon Maria received quite negative private message from her old, but ‘new’ friend. Because Maria knew her friend really well in a real life, she knew that something was wrong. After her real friend saw ‘own’ profile, both girls were extremely terrified, because someone created fake profile duplicate using real information, including date of birth, phone number, address, pictures, etc and, moreover, constantly updated it according to changes and events in real life. At the same time this person sent unpleasant messages to the real friends. This situation continued for almost one year: “We were terrified, we knew that it is someone who we know, but we did not know who exactly it was”.

Living in fear that someone is spying on her friend for almost one year changed also Maria's views towards Facebook: "I guess I just don't take it very seriously anymore". Maria also thinks that her privacy is "more vulnerable on social media nowadays, because there we cannot protect ourselves, while in real life it is much easier... May be that is why it is easier to share the minimum and more neutral information than constantly fighting, controlling, etc".

Maria did not have a chance to be open about her life for a long period of time, because after that incident with her closest friend she became more cautious what kind of information she shares, how she shares and with whom: "There is no much my personal information there anymore, because those who have contact with me they know everything about me, where I am and what I'm doing, so there is no reason to share this kind of information with every friend on Facebook".

After Maria's friend experienced unexpected privacy violation performed by their common friend, Maria felt betrayed too. Maria decided that she do not want to share any personal information with any Facebook friends, because she did not want "others to speculate about me and discuss about me when I am not present at the place", because "people can easily come up with false guesses and information". In other words, she prefers to discuss personal information in real life with real people, who can express their reactions right the way, without unnecessary speculation. She also does not like the fact that other users only by reading her statuses or by looking at her pictures "by evil eyes" will have negative thoughts about her and this way affect her wellbeing. For this reason and because it is easy to upload and download real pictures and use them any way one wants, Maria decided to not share pictures from her wedding: "People who were at the wedding they saw it and they took pictures, but those people who were not invited to the wedding were not welcomed. There is no reason to upload wedding pictures for them... so that they can look at them and leave their comments". Because Maria does not like sharing her personal information, sometimes she logs out from Facebook when she sees friends who most likely will ask something personal: "I just don't feel like talking with them, it is not their business".

Maria believes that "everyone is open till the time they face some kind of privacy violation situation", like she did. This unpleasant situation made Maria also to restrict access to her own profile from outsiders by deleting all the people she was not in contact with for a long period of time, people who is not representing any interest at the present time. Maria also decided to delete all publicly available personal information even from her genuine Facebook friends, because she realized that having real information on her Facebook profile might have negative consequences for



her in the future. For that reason she decided to delete all her personal information and started to 'filter it' by sharing the minimum of the most neutral information and only by private messages. In a way she became more diplomatic, as "diplomats talk using general phrases, they rarely talk about themselves... They do talk a lot, but you will never find out their true opinion neither their true personality".

On the other hand, Maria do not want to deactivate or delete her social media profile, because through it she can see how others are doing and what happens in their lives: "It is human nature... peoples are really curious about everything, maybe that is why I am curious too... I don't share much now, but I am still really concerned how my friends are doing... I understand that I'm not as interesting person to be observed as I was before, but it is my life, and I want to decide myself how to live it".

There is also another way Maria protects her privacy, by regulating access to the self. She never reads any posts that include violence and aggression and this way she protects her positive mood and enjoyment of social media consumption. She believes that by reading those posts people become even more aggressive and might do anything, like the girl did to her friend: "people will go insane... each person has own problems...why to share those unnecessary posts that make people even more aggressive". Because of overflow of negative information and protection from it Maria is not reposting any articles that may badly affect not only her, but her friends' mood as well.

### **To share or not to share – being conscious about others' privacy**

Maria is conscious about other's privacy, because some of her closest friends even asked her not to share some kind of information, when she was an active user. In one case it was a secret, about which their common friend was not supposed to know. In another case, it was a girl who did not like to upload any of her photos on social media, because she believed that by looking on her pictures other people will experience envy, which in turn, will affect her in negative way. For that reason, when Maria uploaded photos on Facebook with her friend on them, her friend sent her private message asking to delete all of the pictures.

After this awkward situation with her friend Maria became more conscious about others' privacy. She decided that she will "never post or write anything on another person's wall... if I have to say something I will rather send private message... because how can I know whether another person

wants me or not to write or post there... it is another person's property you know..." In other words, Maria thinks that it is not acceptable to decide for another user what is the right information to share and what is wrong. However, Maria finds that neutral information still could be shared, including "...birthday wishes, but not comment, question or ideas that can be viewed by other users".

Therefore, even if Maria's other friends never mentioned what information could be shared, she still does not share anything that might be considered sensitive, as people see and understand life from various perspectives, and it is not possible to know if something is acceptable by another person or not: "I don't know how they will take it". Today Facebook does not have control over Maria's privacy, today Maria controls it by not sharing any valuable information, by protecting personal information and information of her friends, and by changing her habits of social media consumption. Today Maria is checking Facebook once a week only to be aware that others are doing well.

In sum, Maria was open person, but after experiencing privacy violation by her friend, she decided that protecting her privacy takes too much time and effort, she decided that it is easier not to share anything or at least to 'filter' all of the neutral information she discloses. By isolating herself from crowded spaces she achieved desired level of privacy, because she is able to protect it by controlling what private information about herself is disclosed and who can access her profile. Indeed, no one can know more than Maria wants them to know.

All in all, I have chosen these particular life stories, because they represent an interesting development of privacy understanding and meaning based on private and disclosed self-identities. These two different views on privacy emphasize dynamic nature of privacy presented by Altman (1976), where there are variations in degrees of openness or distance in response to changes as in internal states, as in external environmental conditions. In Nea's life story privacy was developed according to external conditions of the childhood, influenced by parents and later by social needs. While Maria's privacy level changed after privacy violation experience. In both cases, external environmental conditions affected persons' internal states. Therefore, it could be noticed that privacy on social media is indeed dialectic process (Altman, 1976), which is co-produced by other people present in the environment, including social media users and people present at the place of its consumption.

It could be also noticed, that personal autonomy, presented by Westin (2003), in both life stories allowed Nea and Maria controlling disclosures of their personal information and allowed to control

access to the self. Thus, in order to function comfortably in their environments, Nea and Maria took a series of personal actions: they presented disclosed self-identity in a desired way, they concealed their private selves or their weaknesses that they do not want to make publicly available, they also isolated themselves in various ways and from various factors, and finally, they were conscious about other users' privacy. Here, I would like to emphasize the importance of reciprocity in privacy presented by Moon (2000). In other words, by being conscious what information Nea and Maria share with others, in a way they protect their privacy as well, because by caring about someone's privacy or personal information, as well as disclosed self-identity another user will protect owner's privacy too, as privacy is a dialectic process (Altman, 1976).

In both life stories during the life time a change happened in the desired level of privacy by increasing and decreasing the level of privacy from time to time. These two life stories also emphasize two main motives for the usage of social media, such as social motives and interest motives (Brocke, Richter and Riemer, 2009). Social motive includes the maintenance of relationships with other users and search for social encounters, as occurred in Nea's story, while the interest motives include all the interests connected to the people or users involved and topics discussed, as occurred in Maria's story.

Moreover, Nea's and Maria's life stories emphasize interdependence of time and the role of privacy in person's life as well as its meaning, when person's needs, activities, feelings and desires change over time as it was presented by Laufer and Wolfe (1977). In addition, privacy is neither static nor rule-based (Altman, 1975). Therefore, it is not possible to identify development of privacy or its stages, because it depends on time and changes in internal states of person and external conditions of environment or situation. Thus, both future internal and external changes are unpredictable.

### **7.3 Emerged privacy meaning themes**

After analyzing each interview separately, I identified common patterns of meaning that the interview respondents attach to their privacy experiences of social media consumption in their stories. I was surprised how similar thoughts and actual stories of interviewees were. It became clear that they acknowledged the problems and possibilities of privacy that have an impact on their way of social media consumption, and thus interview respondents were willing to pay attention to their own practices of information control and access to the self during the social media consumption. Based on empirical research results portraying consumers' meanings of privacy and

the prevailing patterns in the respondents' life-stories, four meaning-based themes of privacy were developed and termed as presenting disclosed self, hiding or concealing private self, isolating the self, and being conscious about others' privacy. The first three themes, including presenting disclosed self, hiding or concealing private self and isolating the self, relate to the privacy as control over own information and access to the self. While the last theme - being conscious about others' privacy or appreciation of others' privacy - was identified as a new part of the privacy concept.

The theme here refers to goal-directed sequences and conveys personal motivations, including what disclosed and private self-identities want, what they strive to get and avoid over time, where they seek some variation on agency and communion (McAdams, 1996). Agency refers to separation of the persona from the environment, and subsuming such motives as power, autonomy, achievement, control and isolation. Communion refers to union of the person with the environment and covers such motives as intimacy, love, reconciliation, caring, and merger (McAdams, 1996). Below I will present the privacy meaning themes with respect of agency and communion identified in the stories.

When consuming social media, people are always closer to their friends, because they can keep an eye on others' profiles, while they can stay away from them by, e.g. disclosing neutral information or ignoring their messages. Social media provides consumer with choice and an opportunity to experience various privacy situation by being able to choose under what circumstances and to what extent one will expose oneself, own attitudes and behavior to others, and allow access to the self (Westin, 1967; Altman, 1975; Goodwin, 1991).

Privacy on social media represented by four themes of privacy activities consists of both meaning making and the idea of goal. As identified from the life stories respondents make sense of privacy, they construct their meaning of privacy which simultaneously represents their goal of privacy and incorporates ideas of the self-identity.

<b>Presenting disclosed self in</b>	<b>Concealing private self's</b>	<b>Isolating the self from</b>	<b>Privacy appreciation including others'</b>
-Neutral	-Emotions	-Negative feelings	-Disclosed self
-Passive	-Interests	-Envy by others	-Feelings
-Active	-Opinions	-Own group members	-Space and peace
-Intelligent	-Sensitive information	-Outsiders or random people	
-Positive way		-Shared or crowded spaces	

The first theme is presenting disclosed self relates to the control over personal information and access to the self. This theme appeared in every interview I conducted. It represents the way person controls own information and how person wants to be viewed by others. The second uniting theme emerged is hiding or concealing private self, refers to sensitive personal information, weaknesses, interests and opinions that when disclosed or not protected makes the owner feeling embarrassed and awkward. This kind of information is not disclosed in order to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others. These themes highlight the interview respondents' boundaries of what information is perceived to be private and what information could be disclosed. The third theme is isolating the self. It mostly highlights person's psychological need to be isolated or being free from observation and distraction by others in order to increase enjoyment of social media consumption, to protect positive mood and to spend time for your own when social encounters and social roles are not desired. The fourth theme is appreciation of others' privacy, which highlights consciousness when consuming social media, highlights two-way communication, reciprocity and possible indirect influence on the disclosed self, as well as avoidance of awkward situations.

Each of the privacy meaning themes reveal interview respondents' motives of privacy and accentuates the importance of trust, fears of possible consequences in the future, as well as importance of social norms and accepted behavior when consuming social media. It is needed to be emphasized here, that four themes emerged from life stories and respondents' understanding of privacy meaning on social media are not mutually exclusive, as person can represent oneself, for example, as an active and positive person, but at the same time, person might conceal own weaknesses and sometimes isolate from even own social media friends, and at the same time, person might also be conscious about friends' privacy on social media. In other words, privacy meaning themes are interrelated and could not be achieved without any of four themes presented in life stories.

The first three themes, including presenting disclosed self, hiding or concealing private self, and isolating the self refers to privacy as direct control over own information and access to the self.

### **7.3.1 Presenting disclosed self**

After the interviews were transcribed, I read them several times each by each and I found from their life stories a similar meaning of privacy when respondents consume social media. The range of situations on social media continuously develops and creates experience with privacy through a complex relationship between the self, which has own roles and fears, and interaction with a wide range of groups that are familiar with a specific role of the disclosed self. This way, the first privacy meaning theme includes the subject of presenting disclosed self, as opposed to private self. Here, the balance between ‘openness’ and ‘closedness’ presented by Altman, between privacy as opposed to publicity, the access only to disclosed self and the personal autonomy in managing own identity become more evident:

*“You make a decision how you want to be seen or that you don’t want people to have power to control you, because you are in charge of your own life... controlling your other images, you can decide yourself... you have autonomy, you have control and power”* Nea

Social media users have very wide audiences. In the majority of the cases, people do not know each of their friends well, they do not know who their friend is as a person. Sometimes people even do not know their Facebook friends in reality at all. In this case, everything that they publicly do on social media might reflect them as a person and might create image for them not only in digital life, but in real life as well. For this reason even on social media consumer has to act according to social norms:

*“I have to act like normal, like everyone else in a way... I should not care about what others think, but I still do... I think everybody does care about their image”* Nea

In addition to the user’s own friends outsiders can access the profile and create image of the person only based on the information provided on the user’s profile:

*“One of my friends got very angry on another friend posted something on his wall, I don’t remember what it was, but he was written something, it was a joke... but actually the guy whose Facebook it was got really angry because he said... you know I’m looking for job at the moment, and if potential employers read that... it might reflect on me as a person”* Mika

The interview respondents believe that everything that they do on social media represent themselves in some way. In other words, everything person uploads, posts, tags and comments affects on how other users will perceive the person. By presenting various examples one responded emphasized that based on what he sends to his friends it is possible to create an image of himself in someone’s mind:

*“All the information that I send to my friends somehow represents me, who I am and what I like, my interest...”* Dan

Another respondent mentioned that when she even reads status update, she unconsciously constructs owner’s identity in her mind:

*“When I read someone else’s status update I feel like I get some kind of impression about the person, not about the status... I think others will get some kind of impression about me as a person too, they will access me”* Katri

Some of the interview respondents admitted that they do not perceive social media seriously, as a representation of themselves. Social media represents entertainment tool for some respondents. For this reason they prefer not to share too much of their information, especially their personal information. At the same time they are cautious what information they share and conceal, and how the information they share will be perceived. This means that in spite of the fact that some respondents do not perceive social media “not too seriously” (Dan), respondents still perceive social media as representation of themselves to the some extend.

Next, I will describe the ways the interview respondents present disclosed selves to the public. Through life stories four major topics were introduced, including neutral and passive disclosed self, active, positive, as well as intelligent disclosed self. The first topic is ***neutral and even passive disclosed self-presentation***. The main idea of this kind of self-presentation is to share the minimum of personal information, or sharing neutral information in order to create “diplomatic” image:

*“Diplomats talk using general phrases, they rarely talk about themselves... They do talk a lot, but you will never find out their true opinion neither their true personality”* Maria

All of the interview respondents who present neutral disclosed self use various strategies. Two of the respondents mentioned about the nature of the information they share:

*“I don’t share too much, I don’t tell about my life, I don’t tell everything... I don’t give any specific information”* Paula

*“I don’t post anything with any great value... the majority of it is not actually that important... I provide insignificant information, that’s why I’m not concerned about my privacy”* Mika

Another respondent is constantly cautious about what information she is disclosing on social media, even when she uploads pictures:

*“I might upload pictures that don’t reflect my life... it could be just a nice place, some trip, something completely neutral”* Krista

In order to represent themselves as neutral and even passive disclosed selves, the interview respondents do not share much of their personal information. It is mostly insignificant, neutral, and not too specific information, which is visible through user’s photos, status updates, comments, public posts and reposts. Moreover, people who disclose neutral information are careful what kind of information is disclosed, because the information disclosed could be used against the person or it could be used in inappropriate way:

*“I represent myself as neutral person, because I don’t want the information to be used against me”*  
Krista

Some of the social media users become neutral or even passive users, because they experienced privacy violation or negative consequences after disclosing personal information or they are just tired of being constantly cautious. For this kind of users it is easier not to disclose any kind of information:



*“I think that we are more vulnerable in social media, because there we cannot to protect ourselves, while in real life it is much easier. May be that’s why it is easier to share the minimum and more neutral information than constantly fighting, controlling, etc.”* Maria

Another option for neutral or passive users would be deleting all the outsiders from their friends list and openly sharing everything they want. Instead, the interview respondents admitted that they prefer staying friends with everyone or at least with their genuine friends, because they can be valuable in the future if needed:

*“There is no reason to delete all those people I don’t talk to, because who knows, maybe someday they might be helpful, maybe someday I will go to their country and we can meet up”* Krista

*“It is human nature... peoples are really curious about everything, maybe that’s why I am curious too... I don’t share much now, but I am still really concerned how my friends are doing... I understand that I’m not as interesting person to be observed as I was before, but it is my life, and I want to decide myself how to do it”* Maria

In other words, some of the respondents are willing to be neutral or passive in exchange for possible future benefits expected from their friends. However, instead of deleting outsiders or leaving social media these kinds of users still prefer being a part of it, because of the curiosity what happens with their friends and what happens in friends’ lives. These users like to observe others’ lives from the side without even being noticed by others:

*“This is actually really interesting, because I don’t like to upload pictures, update statuses, tell everyone my own information and at the same time, I really like to read my friends’ status updates, look at their pictures... but I don’t like sharing my own...”* Katri

*“I like to watch how others live, how they develop, only because of that, not because we talk to each other”* Anna

*“You are able to track the life of your friends”* Dan

Thus, because of curiosity people are willing to keep friends that they have nothing in common in order to track their lives, but in an exchange they have to give up their own personal information.

However, because people do not want to provide too personal information they choose to present disclosed self as neutral and passive and at the same time, they are able to gain benefits. They can satisfy their interest by observing friends' lives and satisfy their need for socialization by communicating through private messages - two main motives for the usage of social media presented by Brocke and colleagues (2009). In this situation, it is possible for user even stay anonymous while being able to observe others' lives. Users who create neutral profiles or who are passive users consume social media and behave in this particular way in order to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others, as well as possible consequences in the future.

The second topic is presenting an *active disclosed self*. These types of users usually are posting the information about themselves that represents user's active, rich and intensive life. If they do not have anything to share that represents active life, they prefer not to share at all. The user's active life could be identified from any publicly available information on user's profile. One of the respondents does not like to update her status if she does not have to say anything great:

*"I don't see the need to share everything, like... oh, I just bought coffee machine... it is not the most important occasion in my life"* Krista

*"I update my status not too often, usually if something big happens... or usually it is three-day conclusion"* Dan

*"Now I'm having a bit much fun and I want to share it..."* Nea

Social media users evaluate others based on level and quality of activities. Thus, when other users update not informative statuses, most of the users just ignore them. For this reason nowadays, social media consumers, and especially Facebook consumers try to update the most informative statuses:

*"It makes me angry when people put everything on Facebook, like oh... I just ate, oh... I just went sleep and so on, I feel like those people don't have anything else to do"* Krista

This representation of active life could be created by various strategies, by everything that could be viewed by other friends on social media. The main idea of representing active life is to create desired disclosed self-identity and even to reassure own status and own self-confidence:

“In real life I’m shy and I prefer to stay home instead of going outside, but on Facebook it is easier for me to be more active, to communicate with all the friends, to share with them... I guess those friends who don’t really know me in real life I guess they think that I’m really active in everyday life too” Leea

The person’s active life could be represented and seen from one’s pictures uploaded or tagged as well:

*“In order to upload pictures on Facebook, even for your friends, you need to do something fun and interesting”* Maria

*“To upload pictures not when I just sit at home on my couch, but something informative, like a trip or something”* Krista

The third topic presented in the life stories is **positive disclosed self**. In this case people are trying to share mostly positive information about them, like posting positive status updates and upload perfect pictures:

*“I do write not so often on Facebook, may be once a month... I don’t like to put everything there, everything that happens in my life, inside me... it could be either some phrase which I like, or some aphorism, so I can always see it, and it would cheer me up and my friends, something positive”*  
Krista

*“I mostly just post funny pictures, post something to my friends, things we like”* Steven

*“I update my status not too often... It is usually happy news... Of course sometimes, I would say I in 20 times, it is not so happy news”* Dan

*“I’m trying to share mostly happy events of my life or happenings, because I also like to read happy news of my friends”* Maija

*“I would post some joke, something sarcastic or ironic”* Mika

Respondents usually updated their statuses by telling mostly positive news or events that happened in their lives, because they do not want *“to come to the party and tell how bad your life is and how everything collapses around you”* (Maria). However, if person still wants to express some negative feelings publicly, they are usually expressed by coded public messages or posts or statuses that only specific people will understand, and usually these kind of disclosed messages are deleted very soon:

*“Of course, sometimes, I do write something sad, but it is like I write it and I delete it in 30 minutes... may be no one will even notice it. Because I think that everyone has their own problems, and they don't have time to deal with my problems... and I don't want to bother my friends with my problems”* Krista

*“If there is something I don't want let other know, I just put it in such a way so I know some people won't get it”* Steven

Presenting disclosed self in positive light is due to users' awareness of their possible audiences, and need to have control over their information disclosed and over access to the self:

*“If my future employer would see my profile on Facebook, he would get positive opinion, because the way I am in the real life (social life) the same way I am represented on my profile. He will not find anything new there”* Krista

As it was mentioned in the literature review consumers are motivated to positively differentiate the self from other groups (Markus, 1977; Brewer and Gardner, 1996; White and Dahl, 2007). However, above presented examples emphasize the importance of differentiation of the disclosed self in positive way also from their inside-groups, including their friends on social media.

The last major topic presented by interview respondents was presenting *intelligent disclosed self*. The age of the interview respondents varied from 21 to 35 years old. For this reason this topic was present during the interviews, as for the people of this age the major life-project includes academic development and development of career, and represents one of the significant goals during this period of person's life, which in turn is reflected in user's social media disclosed self-representation:

*“I like to repost some articles concerning technological developments, ecological matters, some political news that are important, although I don't like politics much”* Nea

*“I don’t like posting, but I might repost an interesting article about photography, technical news, they might be interesting for others” Tommy*

Thus, most of the interview respondents share articles, videos consistent with their disclosed self-identity and the audience involved in order to develop a sense of the self, to reassure the self-identity and to create desired social image (Atlman, 1976; Laufer and Wolfe, 1977; Margulis, 2003a; Westin, 2003).

Indeed, person is perceived based on everything one posts on social media, because consumption of social media also “serves to produce a desired self through the images and styles conveyed through one’s possessions” (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995: 151). Social media users construct their privacy by using symbols and signs to represent and express their self-concepts. In other words, they engage into “authenticating acts” where they can disclose their multiple and unique selves (Arnould and Price, 2000) and at the same time, they can conceal their private selves. These disclosed selves may relate to one another and even correspond to identities in real life.

### **7.3.2 Concealing private self**

The second theme identified within life stories presented by interview respondents is hiding or concealing private self. The main idea of this theme is the fact that each of respondents has their own weaknesses and something that they prefer to not tell other people, some information that they want to protect even from own friends on social media:

*“There is something you want to keep for yourself” Steven*

*“No one can know more than I want them to know” Maria*

One reason for concealing private self on social media is the fact that users have very wide range of audiences, usually there people do not know each of their friends well, they do not know who their friend is as a person. Thus, in case of person will open their private self to others, not all of them will actually understand a friend as a person:

*“If I will open up myself to others on Facebook, I know that some of people will perceive me in a wrong way, they will perceive me not the way I want them to be perceived, only because they don’t know me well, they don’t know me as a person”* Krista

Another reason for concealing private self is protection of psychological and physical weaknesses about which person knows, feels not confident and intentionally conceals them:

*“I don’t want to show my weakness, because you know, everyone has his own problems with self-confidence, and maybe that is why I prefer not to put my personal information, my pictures...”* Katri

When it is a mess, when there are some secrets, when there is some confidential information, respondents prefer not to share it publicly on social media:

*“When it is a mess, then it is personal... People don’t want others to know it, their deepest darkest secrets, opinions about other people”* Nea

Moreover, respondents conceal their private selves, because they are not sure whether privacy settings they use will always be reliable on practice:

*“If I use privacy settings by which I restrict access to some information from some friends, then I want it to be really not available for those friends, I want it to be reliable”* Maija

Respondents don’t feel open to talk about their *emotions and feelings* on social media publicly, especially negative emotions are expressed rarely or by coded public messages that only specific people will understand:

*“If you want to tell something to another person, you can’t tell it directly, it is better to say it this way (status update, post on own wall) – indirectly, because sometimes you want another person to realize it herself, to think about it for some time”* Dan

*“If there is something I don’t want let other know, I just put it in such a way so I know some people won’t get it”* Steven

This way, respondents prefer to hide their emotions, or if they are not able to hide them, they prefer to disclose it only by coded public message. Respondents hide their emotions or code them, because they are trying to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral response from others, and this way to protect their private self by not showing their emotional sides which might be perceived as a weakness. I would like to emphasize here, that majority of the respondents who conceal their emotions on social media are male respondents. This is probably because they are trying to protect masculinity of the disclosed self-identity.

Another topic presented in life stories is *concealing interests of private self*, including spiritual interests, gaming and reading gossip articles.

*“I would never post on Facebook anything concerning my spiritual interests, because simply people will not get it, they will just think... wow what that guy is reading”* Steven

*“I don’t share my farming... when I have too much of farming on my wall, I go there and delete all of them, I don’t wanna... I don’t wanna show myself, like I don’t have anything else to do”* Maria

*“If I would gossiping or if I would have a weird hobbies, like games, I would hide it”* Nea

*“When I was playing games at the public place I didn’t want to play with a screen really big. I didn’t want people to judge me, I would be a little embarrassed about it”* Nea

*“I would not want to be seen it on public, because they would be like ouhhh... Nea just read gossip, she is one of those girls. I should not think what others think”* Nea

People might conceal the interest which is not appropriate for their social role of disclosed self also for own family members. For this reason Maria conceals her photo album on social media from her own father:

*“I have one photo album on Facebook, which is not visible only for my father, because my father is really strict, he would never accept the fact that I do consume alcohol.... I don’t want to stop consuming it at all and there is no reason for my father to know about it, so it is better that he knows as much as he knows right now, it is better this way that he will not be upset about it”* Maria

By concealing their interests and “weird hobbies”, respondents are trying to avoid situations of being judged, they are avoiding unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from other. By concealing minor deviances or interests that are not accepted or positively perceived by social norms or society, including respondents’ friends and family members, respondents actually are trying to achieve desired level of privacy. In addition to emotions and interests, respondents also mentioned own opinions. Respondents *conceal their true opinions* especially when the opinion will not be perceived by user’s friends in a desired way. For this reason person will not leave own comments or feedbacks after reading or seeing something on social media, especially if the opinion can insult someone.

*“I prefer to be observer rather than state my opinions... You will not explain each person one-by-one your own point of view in fully, it takes time.., and then they will not understand you anyway”*

Krista

*“Diplomats talk using general phrases, they rarely talk about themselves... They do talk a lot, but you will never find out their true opinion...”* Maria

The reason for not sharing own opinion might also be absence of self-confidence and fear of sharing own opinions publicly:

*“I just didn’t feel like my opinion was that spectacular”* Nea

However, Nea believes that it would be easier to share her opinions publicly, but at the same time, anonymously:

*“It could be done more anonymously in different online places, where nobody knows who you are”*

Nea

Therefore, because social media is not anonymous space, respondents do not feel free to share their true opinions with their friends even by private messages. This could be a deeper problem with self-confidence, as Nea mentioned in her life story, as she is afraid to “get rejected in a way” (Nea). The main reason why respondents save their own thoughts for themselves is that they are trying to avoid judgments by others.



The fourth topic identified within life stories is *concealing sensitive information*, which might be also intimate and even valuable. This kind of information is usually not shared with others and even concealed, because it is not socially or culturally accepted.

*“I think my sexual orientation is my own business, I don’t have to talk about it over Facebook with my friends”* Maija

*“I would never share 18+ information, which has intimate nature, because of my religious views and education”* Dan

*“I would never share nude pictures of me or my friends. If you upload picture, there is high possibility that this picture will be copied”* Tommy

*“It would be more awkward (to share intimate information)... because it is kind of personal, and maybe I’m not ready to share that, I personally would feel uncomfortable with it... would feel embarrassed”* Nea

*“Personal information is perceived in a wrong way, by stereotypes”* Krista

*“I would never tell anyone about my intimate life”* Anna

Especially sensitive information is the information concerning everything that happens at the present time and that has value for a person:

*“I would never give anything about myself, especially what happens right now in my personal, family life... things that were before, I can share them with others, but of course in more private environment, not over Facebook... what happens right now, what was like one month ago and will happen in coming months it is taboo to talk about”* Krista

*“You don’t want to share it, otherwise you will get competitors”* Dan [about job offers]

By concealing sensitive information of private selves respondents are trying to act according to accepted social norms and this way achieve privacy by avoiding unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others.

All in all, concealing private self means to not tell everyone about own “weird hobbies”, interests, true opinions, to not share own emotions or feelings, because all of this information if disclosed might negatively affect private self and one’s self-ego in the future self-evaluation situations (Altman, 1976; Burgoon, 1982; Newell, 1998). Moreover, disclosure of private information might follow with concealing even the information about disclosed self from others or restricting access from others, as it happened with Maria through her friend’s experience. Respondents are trying to achieve privacy by concealing private self from their friends or what is called reserve privacy state according to Westin’s four psychological privacy states (1967), when respondents are not revealing personal aspects of their private self to others.

However, here I want also to emphasize, that the need to conceal private self diminishes with the duration of relationships as it was found by Altman and Taylor (1973) or in case of reciprocity, when one person opens the self as reaction on sharing own information by another person (Moon, 2000). However, the most valuable and confidential information is still most likely to be shared on social media only with trusted people and most likely by private message, or not to be shared at all.

Identifying the topics within this theme was quite difficult, because the interview respondents were not too open about everything that happens with their private selves, inside them. For them it was not easy to talk about their private interest on social media, about emotions, opinions, sensitive and valuable information, about their weak sides in a way. However, I decided to present this theme, because it might be a source of valuable information for the future researches, especially in consumer psychology field.

### **7.3.3 Isolating the self from**

The third theme is isolating the self includes topics of life stories, such as isolating the self from negative feelings, from envy by others, from own group members, from outsiders or random people, from shared or crowded space, as well as isolating the self from false information. This theme mainly refers to privacy as access to the self by adjusting level of openness and closedness not only to other participants of social media, but to the information available on it in order to protect both psychological and physical freedom of the self. The first topic within this theme is *isolating the self from negative feelings*. The interview participants mentioned in their life-stories that they usually skip the topics shared on social media which make person feeling sad:

*“I can’t stand those posts where a child being sick needs help or money, because I know that I can’t help them... In case when I’m able to help those children I can receive and perceive this kind of message”* Krista

*“I always skip topics that are about violence, sex and some kind of aggression... they make me feel bad”* Maija

Other topics that make the interview respondents feel sad are violence, sex and aggression, because they believe that by reading this kind of posts people become even more aggressive and might do anything, they even might violate someone’s privacy, like it happened in Maria’s case:

*“People will go insane... each person has own problems...why to share those unnecessary posts that make people even more aggressive”* Maria

Because of overflow of negative information social media users usually are not reposting any articles that may negatively affect not only person itself, but also their friends’ mood. This way they protect their positive mood, their nerves, as well as feeling of enjoyment while consuming social media. Here, I would like to emphasize that only female interview respondents were talking about protection of their feelings as a part of their privacy, where they restrict access to the self from negative feelings.

The second topic presented by respondents is *isolating the self from envy by others*, isolating from being evaluated by others. Surprisingly this topic was introduced by female interview respondents. They do not like the fact that other users only by reading statuses or by looking at their pictures “by evil eyes” will have negative thoughts about the person and this way affect one’s wellbeing. For this reason respondents do not upload their pictures of themselves and big events in their lives, like newborn, wedding, trip, etc.:

*“Someone will look at them and think wow, so pretty baby, and will send you negative energy”*  
Krista

*“The flow of negative energy... it kills me... I prefer to observe rather than being observed”* (about photos of her) Anna

*“People who were at the wedding they saw it and they took pictures, but those people who were not invited to the wedding were not welcomed. There is no reason to upload wedding pictures for them... so that they can look at them and leave their comments”* Maria

Because of fear of envy the respondents also do not update their statuses:

*“I don’t upload my pictures and I don’t update my status, because I don’t want everyone to know about my lucky events and my failures... envious people”* Katri

Therefore, by isolating themselves from envy respondents avoid not only unspoken evaluations by others and negative speculation, but they also protect themselves from negative energy, and from being observed.

The third topic is *isolating the self from own group members or people on their friend’s list*. This topic mainly refers to the respondent’s need to be free from intrusion and surveillance by their social media friends. By isolating themselves respondents experience a feeling of being closer while being away, meaning that they can leave social media at any time they want. This way they adjust their privacy by regulating the distance with others and access to the self (Westin, 1967; Altman, 1976; Margulis, 2003b):

*“I just wanted to keep it at the distance, because I didn’t want to be too personal”* Nea

*“Each person has own role on Facebook, some of them are allowed to know that much, and some of them that much”* Krista

*“I don’t want to have my life visible for everyone”* Maria

Thus, respondents might isolate themselves and their information not from all their social media’s friends, but only from some of the friends. In some situations the respondents isolate themselves from all of their social media friends, because they are tired of social encounters and they need time for their own. In their life stories respondents mentioned that sometimes they are logging out straight the way when there is someone else being online they do not want to see or talk with, especially those who are most likely to ask something personal:

*“It is easier to get rid of people, you can just log off, you can just not reply, and if you don’t like someone, you can just stop replying or logoff them, or just delete them”* Nea

*“I don’t particularly want... they are might be some people I don’t want to get in touch with me... I don’t want certain group to know what I’m up to”* Mika

*“I just don’t feel like talking with them, it is not their business”* Maria

People have choice to reply on message straight the way or not reply at all. One of the respondents told, that sometimes she does not reply on even private messages, when her friends ask her “how are you?”, because she does not want to share her personal information:

*“Sometimes people ask me “Hi, how are you?”, but I don’t want to reply on it, because they don’t really care how I am... I don’t want them to see or know that I’m really good or I’m really bad... they will judge me... I don’t want it...”* Katri

Because people do not want to share their too personal information they do not update their relationship statuses at all:

*“I don’t like updating my relationship status, because it gets too much attention, and people start asking too personal questions on which I don’t want to reply”* Dan

One of the respondents told that he deactivated his account because he realized how much effort it needs to maintain own profile, to share, post and comment. He realized that he was addicted to the social media:

*“A few years ago I sort of quit all sort of social media, because I realized that it was a waste of time really, ultimately, and I found myself one Saturday night, maybe at 3 of the morning, and I’m sitting there in from of the computer, clicking refresh... click... click... click... on the page that doesn’t need to be refreshed, it automatically refreshes itself...I sort of realized what I’m doing, it is 3 am in the morning, everybody I know are probably at the bed, I’m tired, but I sat here... refreshing a page that doesn’t need to be refreshed... at that point... I deactivated my account”* Mika

Another reason why Mika does not like social media is because in order to create a strong relationship on social media, person needs to have some kind of understanding of what is going on around, and what topic could be discussed with friends, or even why friends are talking about particular topic. However, it is time consuming:

*“On occasion I find myself researching some trendy topic that normally I have no interest or what so ever, I don’t care. But actually I was seen something that was trendy and I might see one of my friends told about this topic, but I don’t know what that topic is... so I have to research the topic... I google the name, so I read it on Wikipedia, and I still don’t know what that person is, because I need to know who that person is and why people are talking about it... and before you know it, you have wasted maybe an hour, on the topic that you wasn’t even interested in the first place... this is what I hated...because if you don’t know the information then you are excluded”* Mika

In this case, people restrict access to the self and isolate themselves from their friends also by deactivating their social media profiles in order to save their time and achieve desired level of privacy. Therefore, most of the respondents are not happy with their friends on social media. Usually it is the reason why people isolate themselves from their ‘friends’:

*“I would be happy to delete 70% of people from my Facebook friends, because we have nothing in common with them”* Maija

*“There is no much my personal information there anymore, because those who have contact with me they know everything about me, where I am and what I’m doing, so there is no reason to share this kind of information with every friend on Facebook”* Maria

One reason for isolating access to the self from their friends is the fact that friends are annoying or they use the information inappropriately:

*“Those stupid games that you can play on Facebook... when Peter needs 6 cows... I blocked them, because they make me angry”* Mika

*“I don’t want others to speculate about me and discuss about me when I am not present at the place”, because “people can easily come up with false guesses and information”* Maria

In sum, respondents told stories when they isolate themselves and restrict access to the self in the situations, when they need time to think about their own, they need time to relax and be free from social roles and social encounters. By balancing their involvement with social media and other social media participants, they adjust their desired level of privacy. In other words, respondents are trying to achieve solitude presented by Westin (1967, 2003), when they can be let alone and free from observation by their friends, as well as isolation, when they want to be distant from their friends presented by Pedersen (1999).

In the literature review (Goodwin, 1991; Culnan, 1993; Milne and Gordon, 1993; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000) it was mentioned that people tend to exchange their privacy on some benefits, but I also found from the life stories that in case of social media, people are also willing to exchange their socialization, maintenance of relationships and communication on the psychological need of own privacy and emotional release.

The fourth topic is *isolating the self from outsiders or random people*. By isolating themselves respondents are trying to achieve freedom from others and surveillance through friending strategy and adjusting privacy settings (also found by Ellison et. al., 2011), by regulating access to their profile:

*“I don’t think that I want to know that many people, I don’t care enough about other people’s lives... The only people I add as a friend, they know me as a person and they understand everything that I write or post”* Mika

*“If someone random person is asking to add him to my friends, I usually just ignore it, I don’t reject it and I don’t accept it, because if you add one (outsider), it means your Facebook is hacked”*  
Dan

*“I hate it when uninvited guests I don’t even know are trying to add me as a friend. It is like they don’t have anything else to do... I reject all of them, I don’t want to let random people in and show my stuff”* Maija

*“I do restrict access to my profile from others, when there is no your information at all or when it is a really small amount of information”* Krista

*“People I don’t know will not see my phone or know anything”* Steven

*“I just wanted to keep it at the distance, because I didn’t want to be too personal”* Nea

*“I don’t want some clearly, absolutely weird people to let so close into my personal life, into my own business. If I have no interest, I don’t need it”* Tommy

Therefore, by adjusting privacy settings and by adding only people they know, respondents achieve their desired level of privacy by creating distance between them and people they do not know or do not want to add as their friends, and by providing only a small amount of personal information based on which social media user can be identified. However, some of the respondents prefer to not provide any personal information at all when they want to be free from surveillance by outsiders and they do not want to be identified. In other words, respondents are seeking for anonymity, where outsiders can not recognize person (Westin, 2003). Therefore, by isolating the self from outsiders, people can control their audiences and thus, they protect themselves from undesired social encounters and can achieve limited and protected communication with people they are interested in and people they trust (Westin, 2003).

The fifth topic is *isolating the self from shared or crowded space*. This topic relates to the territorial space in real life and digital spaces in online life. Respondents mostly consume social media in their own rooms, alone without people who might interrupt them. It is calm and comfortable environment:

*“I don’t like to access the Internet from my mobile phone, it is not comfortable, you can’t see pictures, and the internet connection is slow... it prefer to access the internet from my own room, where is comfortable table, big screen, and there is no other eyes to control what I am doing”*  
Krista

*“I always log in into Facebook from my own laptop. I don’t dare to access it from someone else’s computer, because you never know... I mostly access it from home, from the kitchen while I’m having food or from my room”* Paula

One of the respondents consumed social media in the living room, because her parent wanted to check what she was doing and who she was talking to when she was a teenager:



*“It was annoying... but then I also understand that it was a way of insuring that children or teenagers are not doing anything stupid online... at the certain point you just want them (parents) to not make such a big deal of it, you just want to not be bothered by others”* Nea

One of the respondents does not have Facebook account and she does not planning to create it in the future, because she do not like to be a part of the crowd:

*“I don’t have Facebook and I’m happy, I don’t have to share anything with others, I don’t have to live on Facebook, I want to live in real life. If you create your account you constantly need to care about it, update it, it is time consuming... I can’t understand why people want to share their pictures and everything that happens in their lives on Facebook. So other people will look at you? If you have friends, real friends, they don’t need that information on Facebook, they know everything without checking it online... I don’t want to be like the crowd, I want to be myself, just to be who I am”* Emma

For Emma there is no benefit of creating her own profile and using social media, especially when she can observe others from her friend’s profile and, at the same time, she does not have to provide her personal information. Emma isolates herself from shared and crowded digital space, because she does not want to be observed by others. This way, she is trying to achieve solitude and at the same time, by viewing others using friend’s profile, she achieves anonymity. Emma does not “want to be like the crowd”, she wants to stand out of the crowd by not creating own account. Thus, by not creating own profile and not sharing personal information she achieves desired level of privacy, and through it she also achieves creativity, also presented by Pedersen (1997, 1999). While Emma wants social interactions, she feels herself better outside the crowded space, or “digital crowding” called by Joinson, Houghton, Vasalou and Marder (2011), because on social media her information can be aggregated across time and it is difficult to differentiate multiple audiences, who, in addition, constantly will observe her. At the same time, she satisfies her interest by observing people using friend’s account. Therefore, two main motives for using social media, including social and interest motives (Brocke at al., 2009) are satisfied without the need to create own social media account.

For other respondents who consume social media it is important to isolate themselves from shared or crowded territorial spaces in real life, because this way they can achieve more enjoyment by consuming social media in more comfortable and familiar environment, where no one will disturb

them by their physical presence in the particular offline space. It is environment where respondents can think about their own, where they can relax and be free from social roles and encounters.

All in all, by isolating the self from negative feelings, from envy or evaluations by others, from own friends, from outsiders and from shared or crowded spaces respondents are seeking for shield from excessive intrusions by others. Respondents are seeking for emotional release from social roles and social encounters, it is time for evaluating the self and extracting meanings from personal experiences in order to constitute more authentic self-expression, it is time for planning and assessing the future actions, it is also opportunity to share personal information only with trusted people (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2003b; Westin, 2003).

#### **7.3.4 Being conscious about other's privacy**

Because privacy is dialectic process, according to Altman (1976), other social media participants are active co-producers of value presented by privacy, including being able to enhance, protect or intrude into disclosed self or private self, or even preventing someone from being isolated. Therefore, the fourth theme emerged is being conscious about others' privacy. Here, communion is taken into account, which refers to union of the person with the environment and covers various motives as intimacy, caring, and merger (McAdams, 1996). This last theme has been found as a new part of the privacy concept that has not been presented by CCT literature before, and it incorporates three main topics identified from life stories, such as being conscious about others' privacy, including others' disclosed self, others feelings, as well as others' space and peace. This theme refers to the indirect control over own information and access to the self.

The first topic identified from the life stories is *being conscious about others' privacy including disclosed self*. Social media users are aware about presence of wide range of audience on others' profiles or possible participants. For this reason they 'filter' the information they publicly disclose, as they are not sure how the information disclosed will be perceived by the audience involved:

*"They also might have family members and employers as Facebook friends" and "you never know how they will react" Nea*

In order to protect other's privacy respondents actually developed own consumption methods by which they also take into consideration other social media users:

*“I tag people on pictures if I’m really sure that he will like it. If I will tag one person, this information will be visible for others as well, it will affect him and could result in some negative consequences for another” Dan*

*“I don’t like to upload provocative pictures of others and especially tag people on them... sometimes there are just some pictures that are like yeah... take me out of that one” Steven*

*“I prefer not to write any personal information about my friends, but I feel open writing about myself” Maija*

Because the message sender cannot actually know how the information will be perceived by the audiences of the message receiver, they prefer to protect other’s personal information and this way to maintain privacy:

*“I never post or write anything on another person’s wall... if I have to say something I will rather send private message... because how can I know whether another person wants me or not to write or post there... it is another person’s property you know...” Maria*

Through another person’s privacy promotion, social media users can actually develop stronger relationship and mutual trust:

*“Sharing is caring, you know, sharing is not one-way, it is two-way, people with whom you share mutual secrets, stories, people you trust” Nea*

Therefore, the main idea of being conscious about others’ privacy is not to disclose another’s personal information publicly, as it might affect the disclosed self:

*“I do think when I go to post on some pictures or comment, that actually...their mother might read this, because they do have their mother as a friend of Facebook... I’m conscious of what I write on others people’s walls, I’m aware that what I write could have negative affect on them as a person”*

Mika

Moreover, negative affect on disclosed self and changes in external conditions can also have an impact on one's internal state, and thus, on one's private self-identity. Therefore, affected disclosed self might have influence on the perception of private self and might change the level of one's privacy. In order to prevent these situations, users tend to ask not sharing some kind of information with others or not disclosing the information publicly:

*"I have a few friends who asked me not to upload their pictures... I respect their choice, and I don't upload anything if my friend doesn't want it"* Maria

There could be many reasons for doing it. It might be a secret, about which user's common social media friends are not supposed to know, including their family members or people who might perceive the information sensitively. In addition, it could be another user's beliefs or fears, i.e. religious beliefs or fear of envy. Thus, when posting, commenting or uploading any personal information publicly people are not able to predict how the information will be perceived by audiences involved and how it will influence another person's disclosed self-identity. The second topic within this theme is ***being conscious about others' feelings***. In order to protect other person's feelings, respondents use the same methods as they protect their own privacy. For this reason, most of the interview respondents prefer to presented positive disclosed self, as they are conscious about their friends' feelings.

*"Of course, sometimes, I do write something sad, but it is like I write it and I delete it in 30 minutes... may be no one will even notice it. Because I think that everyone has their own problems, and they don't have time to deal with my problems... and I don't want to bother my friends with my problems"* Krista

This way social media is perceived as a place for communication and entertainment, and for this reason users prefer to protect the private self and enhance enjoyment obtained from social media consumption. However, sometimes there are situations, when respondents decided to not share something with their friends in order to not offend their feelings or ego:

*"There are definitely certain times when I think if I write something when I have been odd... another friend of mine if would read that would be offended"* Mika

*"You never know if something is ok for another person or not... I don't know how they will take it"*

Maria

*"If person will be not comfortable with the picture if I tag him, like if he looks like a total idiot on the picture, I will not tag him"* Nea

The interview respondents care about others' privacy, because it might affect not only another person's disclosed self-identity, but one's private self-identity as well, as people constantly self-evaluate themselves on social media as well, and in case if they do not reach self-actualization, it affects their self-ego, their private self or internal state, and in turn, their privacy level (Newell, 1998; Westin, 1967; Burgoon, 1982).

The third topic within this theme considers physical and digital privacy or *others' space and peace*. In order to feel comfortable, to make others feel comfortable and not disturbing other's peace in the particular place, respondents prefer to have personal conversations outside the shared spaces, as they have experienced awkward situations themselves before:

*"If I would hear this kind of conversation (romantic), I would feel really uncomfortable, I would feel like I'm spying on them... it would be awkward"* Nea

People feel awkward especially when it is personal conversation, concerning sensitive information. Another respondent mentioned that he always walks away when consumption of social media can bother others' peace:

*"I just can't answer on it (video call) when people around are having coffee break or so, it is others time to rest and I don't want to bother them"* Dan

However, respondents still can consume social media when they are not disturbing others by their or by another user's voice:

*"...in this case I usually start chatting by sending messages instead of talking aloud"* Dan

In sum, the main goal of being conscious about others privacy is avoiding awkward situations, by which both parties' disclosed as well as private self-identities could be affected. By being conscious

what information users share with each other, in a way they protect their own privacy as well, because by caring for receiver's privacy, as well as disclosed self-identity the receiver will protect sender's privacy in return. Here reciprocity plays an important role in order to function comfortably in social media environment and achieve desired level of privacy. In addition, by being aware of how personally the receiver might perceive the information respondents protect other's feelings. In turn, they expect others to protect their privacy as well, whether it is disclosed self, one's feelings or physical territory or space. Thus, being conscious about others' privacy is a dialectic process (Altman, 1976) enhanced by appreciation of others' privacy with a goal of reciprocity (Moon, 2000).

#### **7.4 Meaning of privacy – dual perspective**

One interview respondent Tommy presented his own understanding of privacy meaning, which was quite different from above presented themes. This particular respondent has great knowledge about computers, programming, and technologies, he had experience of website administrating, thus, his understanding incorporates both user's and administrator's perspectives of meaning of privacy.

As a Facebook user, he never shares any personal information, because "...once you submit something on the Internet you have to be prepared for the faults. That the information will end somewhere where you don't want to... Either you accept it or don't use the Internet you know... I accept the fact that everything that I write could ultimately end up somewhere in the place I don't want to... but I make sure that there is nothing that I would not want to end up somewhere I didn't want to".

Tommy is not even sharing any personal information by private messages, because "private message is private only for other users... in reality it is not private at all", not for social media's administrators: "it could be showed to the third person, it could be copied and could be used against after some period of time". For this reason Tommy uploads only neutral pictures, such as nature, because "each uploaded picture could be copied and used in a wrong way". Therefore, if Tommy wants to share own personal information, he prefers to share it by showing it on his "own computer face-to-face", but not by sharing it on social media.

Tommy is really skeptical about privacy on social media: "There is no privacy on social media. It is almost impossible to regulate own information disclosed. The ability to control the information disclosed is minimal...." He emphasized that "social media is created for friends to share

something”. In other words, by becoming a part of social media, users exchange their privacy for friendship benefits. Moreover, “the more actively you become to use various applications the less information you will be able to control”, because by joining into groups or adding applications people’s privacy is automatically violated.

In sum, for this particular respondent privacy means control over “how the information will be shared and spread further after being disclosed”. As it is not possible to fully control own information, the best way to control it is not to disclose at all or to disclose neutral information, because “the more information is openly accessed, the easier it is to gain access to the most valuable information”.

All in all, majority of the interview respondents, except Tommy, believe that they have privacy on social media and that they control their information and access to it. However, the view presented by Tommy leads to the bigger question whether there is privacy on social media at all or no.

## **8 Discussion**

In this chapter the finding of my research will be presented and discussed in light of the theory. Considering how CCT has been interested in the life worlds of the consumption and the current personal and social concerns surrounding privacy issues, I offer new type of idea of privacy on social media from consumers' perspective, as there is a growing need to think about privacy in our postmodern and digitalized world from the personal perspective. In this research the importance of privacy was strongly present in the stories of consumption of social media by interview participants. Studying the consumer's identities allowed to better understand how the consumer interprets one's own privacy while consuming social media.

The goal of this research was not to produce generalized results about all the social media consumption, instead to produce my own view of the complex phenomenon of privacy and its meaning in the context of social media consumption. Thus, this view consists of my own interpretation of the previous literature on the privacy subject, and more importantly of my own interpretation of the interview respondents' stories. Thus, the findings of this study represent a mix of existing theoretical knowledge, my own interpretation of this knowledge, as well as my own interpretation of the interview respondents' life stories. In the following chapter I will discuss the main findings of this research.

### **8.1 Meanings of privacy in consumers' lives –theme findings**

As it was presented in the literature view, previous studies on privacy have mostly emphasized a limited-access view of privacy, where privacy relates to “control over unwanted access, or the regulation of, limitations on, or exemption from scrutiny, surveillance” (Margulis, 2005: 3). Thus, previous studies identified several meanings of consumer privacy, including freedom from invasion, freedom from interruption, freedom from intrusion, freedom from distraction, freedom from surveillance; freedom from others, as well as being alone, managing access to personal information, and managing access to spaces (Solove, 2002; Margulis, 2005; Yap et al., 2010). However, reviews of numerous studies on privacy also revealed that privacy might be viewed from different perspectives and have different meanings depending on the context being studied (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005; Solove, 2006).



The main findings of this research are represented by proposed themes that illustrate the meanings of privacy specific for the context of social media consumption. Through life stories I identified four privacy meanings: presenting disclosed self, concealing private self, and isolating the self, and being conscious about others' privacy. Therefore, privacy meaning themes emerged incorporate in itself simultaneously both personal meaning and personal goal for privacy, because as it was mentioned by Margulis (2005) the meaning of privacy and its goal are interrelated.

In case of privacy and social media consumption, both definitions of privacy by Altman and Westin need to be applied, as Westin's perspective emphasizes a series of actions, that person takes in order to function comfortably in social media environment. However, because social media is usually unpredictable, person should continuously react on changes. In other words, Altman's perspective on privacy applies here, as Altman (1977) views privacy as continuous reaction to the internal and external changes, according to which person engages in a continual process of adjustment from actual level of privacy to the desired level of privacy. Thus, in case when person intentionally discloses own personal information Westin's (1967; 2003) perspective on privacy as action applies. In this case person creates own privacy. However, if person reacts on the posts made by another person or if person reacts on own internal state changes, Altman's perspective on privacy as reaction applies. In this case person adjusts actual level of privacy to the desired level of privacy.

Moreover, Ellison and colleagues (2011) emphasized that privacy on social media represents balancing between benefit maximization and risk minimization, which in turn, is achieved by a continual process of adjustment from actual level of privacy to desired level of privacy (Altman, 1977). From the life stories I found that respondents' understanding of privacy represents continuous choice of whatever to reveal or to conceal personal information, as well as the choice how to adjust privacy settings and allow or restrict access to the self and to own psychological state. In other words, by presenting disclosed self in a desired way, by concealing private self or information about the self which is not desired to be disclosed, as well as by isolating the self at the needed time, and by being conscious about others' privacy, respondents maximize their benefits and at the same time, they minimize risks connected to the respondents' own identity, psychological and physical states, and the relationship with others. Therefore, it is clear from the themes presented that privacy on social media is considered as multidimensional concept, incorporating all the dimensions theorized by Burgoon (1982), as the interview respondents introduced by their life stories how they protect their information, social relationships, psychological states as well as physical privacy, not just informational privacy.

The first three themes, including presenting disclosed self, hiding or concealing private self, and isolating the self refers to privacy as *direct control over own information and access to the self*. Meaning, that person makes choice between disclosing and concealing, as well as restricting or to allowing access to the self.

### **8.1.1 Presenting disclosed self**

This research views privacy from the self-perspective, where each social media user is actually a “gatekeeper to information flow” as it was mentioned by Norberg and colleagues (2009), where person balances the desire for privacy and the desire for disclosure in order to enrich relationship and safeguard own identity. This idea is similar to the ideas introduced in the life stories, for example, Mika mentioned that privacy is actually some kind of “filter in your mind”, when person can decide what information to show to the others and how to control the information flow, especially on social media it is important to make right decision, otherwise negative consequences will not be possible to avoid. However, it is not enough only to control the information flow. Another important part of privacy is to understand the social setting in order to behave appropriately.

Privacy is not simply a matter of avoiding information disclosure (Altman, 1976), but privacy on social media is also more selective disclosure of information about the self in accordance with person’s social identity. Respondents try to present disclosed selves on social media in a way appropriate to social norms and their social role demands. This way, respondents achieve desired level of privacy by employing “culturally defined styles of responding” (Altman, 1977: 67-68), as person is perceived based on everything he publicly does on social media. Indeed, consumption of social media “serves to produce a desired self through the images and styles conveyed through one’s possessions” (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995: 151).

Shoemaker (2010: 14) mentioned that each person has “the right to manage certain public construals of my self-identity, or at least to have some sort of say in determining what others think about the type of person I am”. In case of social media this means that person is not able to control other people’s thoughts about a person, but one can have an effect on the ways others construe a person on social media by disclosing particular information to specific others or by allowing access

to the self without compromising one's sense of who he or she truly is (Papacharissi and Gibson, 2011).

Social media consumers control their privacy by constructing disclosed selves using symbols and signs to represent and express their publicly accepted self-concepts. In other words, they engage into "authenticating acts" presented by Arnould and Price (2000), where social media user can disclose own multiple and unique selves in a desired way and, at the same time, person can also conceal own private self. These disclosed selves may relate to one another or correspond to identities in the real life. Thus, most of the interview respondents share information, including, articles, photos, opinions and interests consistent with their desired disclosed self-identity also in real life and the audience involved in order to develop a sense of the self, to reassure the self-identity and to create desired social image (Altman, 1977; Laufer and Wolfe, 1977; Margulis, 2003a Westin, 2003).

Within this theme, the balance between openness and closedness presented by Altman (1975), between privacy as opposed to publicity, the access only to disclosed self and the personal autonomy presented by Westin (1967) in managing own identity become more evident: "You make a decision how you want to be seen or that you don't want people to have power to control you, because you are in charge of your own life... controlling your other images, you can decide yourself... you have autonomy, you have control and power" (Nea).

Previous studies indicate that by providing personal information it is easier to start initial interaction, it facilitates formation of common ground and allows others just to make sense of the person, of who someone is (Ellison et al., 2011). For this reason in order to create privacy respondents prefer to disclose own information in a desired way, instead of being disclosed by others, as it could have great privacy risks than disclosures made by a person himself (Houghton and Joinson, 2010). It was identified from life stories that respondents mostly try to present disclosed selves in positive way, which correspond to the findings by White and Dahl (2007). According to them, consumers are motivated to positively differentiate the self from other outside-groups. However, in case of social media respondents are positively differentiate their disclosed self also from their inside-groups, from their friends on social media.

Moreover, disclosed self could be also neutral or passive, which might be explained by the desire to minimize the risk involved and the time spent for communicating and maintaining disclosed social

identity. While saving their privacy respondents are still able to observe their social media friends. Thus, the idea that people are willing to exchange their privacy for the benefits (e.g. Goodwin, 1991; Culnan, 1993; Milne and Gordon, 1993; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000) from the social media point of view is partly true, because in order to be a part of social media, people need to provide some quantity of their personal information. At the same time, while some part of their personal information is being provided, usually it is name, age and current city, they are not obligated to disclose additional personal information, they can only present neutral or passive disclosed self. As by disclosing neutral or passive disclosed self, person do not have to spend time on maintaining and updating own disclosed social self-identity presented to their own friends. This way, social media consumers protect their privacy and reduce vulnerability, because as Maria mentioned each person's privacy is "more vulnerable on social media nowadays, because there we cannot protect ourselves, while in real life it is much easier... May be that is why it is easier to share the minimum and more neutral information than constantly fighting, controlling, etc".

Thus, it is usually even easier to protect own privacy by disclosing restricted quality and quantity of own personal information and thus, by controlling the information of disclosed self it is possible to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others, as well as creating desired disclosed self-identity. Therefore, by presenting disclosed self in a particular, desired way and simultaneously, by creating distance between private self and other users on social media, consumers achieve and protect desired level of privacy.

### **8.1.2 Concealing private self**

In addition to presenting disclosed self, respondents also conceal their private selves on social media. Previous research in consumer psychology suggests that people are seeking for privacy to maintain self-identity, establish personal boundaries and to avoid undesired disclosure, intrusion, criticism and assessment by others (Goodwin, 1991, 1992). In case of social media consumers control own information flow and understand the social settings, because they also conceal too personal information which, might make person to feel embarrassed if disclosed. Like Nea mentioned: "when I was playing games at the public place I didn't want to play with a screen really big. I didn't want people to judge me, I would be a little embarrassed about it". Indeed, through privacy people are trying to avoid embarrassment, harassment, ridicule, shame, scrutiny or discrimination (e.g. Goodwin 1992; Norberg et al., 2007). Moreover, the information that is

perceived being embarrassing for a person will less likely be shared or exchanged for any benefits (White, 2004) and especially publicly (Lau-Gesk and Drolet, 2008).

Nea told in her life story that “When it is a mess, then it is personal... People don’t want others to know it, their deepest darkest secrets, opinions about other people”. The “mess” needs to be concealed because of person’s psychological as well as physical fears, including problems with self-confidence (Burgoon, 1982) and fear to “get rejected” (Nea). It is also minor deviances or inappropriate personal information that is not corresponding to the cultural and societal norms, as well as one’s desired social roles. Thus, both person’s internal states and external conditions, as emphasized by Altman (1976), have impact on privacy and on what information person conceals about the private self in order to maintain the system and get restabilization (Burgoon, 1982; Newell, 1998; Pedersen, 1997, 1999).

Moreover, respondents conceal their private self, because they are not sure whether adjustment of privacy settings is reliable on practice: “If I use privacy settings by which I restrict access to some information from some friends, then I want it to be really not available for those friends, I want it to be reliable” (Maija). Indeed, it can be difficult for social media consumer to determine during adjusting the privacy setting what a privacy action actually does and who will see postings and other content (Ellison et al., 2011). Therefore, because respondents do not solely rely on adjustment of privacy settings and its solidity, they prefer not to share personal information on social media at all, because they believe that “somewhere all the information, would it be secrete or not is stored” (Mika). In other words, in order to protect own privacy consumer has to control own information and also to understand the principles of information collection and its usage as it was found by Culnan (2000). However, because respondents do not know where the information is stored, they prefer to conceal it and therefore, achieve desired level of privacy.

According to the literature review, person is more concerned to maintain own privacy, if a person has a great desire to control over personal information (Phelps et al., 2001), especially if the information is considered to be sensitive or intimate to the person and usually not desired to be disclosed (Moor, 2000; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000). This corresponds with findings of this research, where concealing private self means not to tell everyone about own “weird hobbies” (Nea), including interests, true opinions, emotions, feelings, and all the sensitive information, which is not desired to be disclosed by person to other users. This information is usually not accepted by social norms or not positively perceived by society, including respondents’ friends and family members on

social media. Through concealing private selves respondents actually are trying to avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others and therefore, to achieve desired level of privacy. This, in turn, corresponds with findings according to which, by being able to conceal sensitive or potentially harmful information, which diverges from social norms person achieves psychological feeling of privacy (Burgoon, 1982).

All the information about concealed private self if disclosed might negatively affect private self, and one's self-ego in the future self-evaluation situations, as was presented by Altman (1976), Burgoon (1982) and Newell (1998). Moreover, disclosure of private information might further influence one's restriction of the information about the disclosed self from others or restricting access from others, as it happened to Maria through her friend's experience. As it was mentioned in the literature review, person with negative past experience prefer to use other mediums than internet to share own information online (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Sing and Hill, 2003). Respondents are trying to achieve privacy by concealing private self from their friends or what is called reserve privacy state according to Westin's four psychological privacy states (1967), when respondents are not revealing personal aspects of their private self to others.

However, as it was found by Atman and Taylor (1973) the need to conceal the private self diminishes with the duration of relationships or in case of reciprocity, when one person opens the self as reacting on the situation when another person shares own information (Moon, 2000). However, the most valuable and confidential information is still most likely to be shared on social media only with trusted people and most likely by private messages, or not to be shared at all, because as it was mentioned by Forster and colleagues (2010), the information can be saved and used in the future, meaning that the audience will exist not only in the present time, but in the future as well. Indeed, some of the respondents acknowledged this problem: "... If you upload picture, there is high possibility that this picture will be copied and used in a wrong way", "it could be showed to the third person, it could be copied and could be used against after some period of time" (Tommy).

Therefore, by engaging into "calculus of behavior" (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977) and by weighting possible risks, consumers decide to conceal the information about private self, and this way, to avoid embarrassment, awkward situations, possible negative consequences in the future, and also to protect own psychological feeling of privacy.

### **8.1.3 Isolating the self**

The theme of isolating the self mainly refers to privacy as access to the self by adjusting level of openness and closedness not only to other participants of social media, but to the personal information available on it in order to protect both psychological and physical freedom of the self. Through isolating the self, social media consumers are trying to achieve solitude presented by Westin (1967; 2003), which means that consumer can be let alone and free from observation by others, including one's friends and outsiders. Person tries to achieve isolation presented by Pedersen (1999), meaning that consumer wants to be distant from negative feelings and envy on social media, and from shared and crowded spaces, in both digital and real life.

This way social media consumers protect themselves from the information that might create negative feelings, they protect own information from envy or evaluations by others. Surprisingly, these two topics were introduced by female interview respondents, as they do not like the fact that other users only by reading statuses or by looking at pictures "by evil eyes" will have negative thoughts about the person and this way affect one's wellbeing. These two topics within isolation theme emphasize the importance of gender and its impact on privacy preference and its meaning as was mentioned by Pedersen (1999) and Margulis (2005).

Consumers balance their involvement with social media and other social media participants by isolating the self from own group members and outsiders. Usually it is done by adjusting privacy settings and by adding only people they know, which is in line with findings presented by Ellison and colleagues (2011). Thus, by adjusting privacy settings and friending, respondents achieve their desired level of privacy by creating distance between them and people they do not know or do not want to add as their friends, and by providing only a small amount of personal information based on which social media user can be identified. However, some of the respondents prefer not to provide any personal information at all when they want to be free from surveillance by outsiders and they do not want to be identified. In other words, respondents are seeking for anonymity, where outsiders cannot recognize another person. Therefore, by isolating the self from outsiders, people can control their audiences and thus, they protect themselves from undesired social encounters and can achieve limited and protected communication with people they are interested in and people they trust to (Westin, 2003).

Social media consumers also isolate themselves from shared and crowded spaces in real and digital life. Those who isolate themselves from shared or crowded spaces in real life, achieve more enjoyment by consuming social media in more comfortable and familiar environment, where no one disturb them by their physical presence in the particular offline space. It is environment where respondents can think about their own things, where they can relax and be free from social roles and social encounters.

In digital environment, one of the respondents isolate herself from shared and crowded space by not having own social media account, because she do not want to be observed by others. This way, she is trying to achieve solitude presented by Westin (1967) and at the same time, by accessing and viewing other social media users using friend's profile, she achieves anonymity. She "don't want to be like the crowd", she wants to stand out of the crowd by not creating own account. Thus, by not creating own social media account and not sharing personal information she achieves desired level of privacy, and through it she also achieves creativity presented by Pedersen (1997, 1999). While she wants social interactions, she feels herself better outside the crowded space (Joinson et al., 2011). At the same time she satisfies her interest by observing people using friend's account. Therefore, two main motives for using social media, including social and interest motives (Brocke et al., 2009) are satisfied without the need to have own social media account.

Therefore, by isolating the self from negative feelings, from envy or evaluations by others, from own friends, from outsiders and from shared or crowded spaces respondents are seeking for shield from excessive intrusions by others and for psychological feeling of privacy. Respondents are also seeking for emotional release from social roles (Burgoon, 1982) and social encounters, when one can evaluate the self and extract meanings from personal experiences in order to constitute more authentic self-expression, as well as plan and assess the future actions (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2003b; Westin, 2003). It is also opportunity to share personal information only with trusted people.

The literature review revealed that consumers tend to exchange their privacy on some benefits (e.g. Goodwin, 1991; Culnan, 1993; Milne and Gordon, 1993; Sheehan and Hoy, 2000). In case of social media, by revealing their personal information and allowing access to the self consumers exchange their privacy on benefits connected to socialization. However, according to the life stories, consumers are also willing to exchange their socialization and relationship maintenance on isolation and thus, their own privacy which promotes emotional release.



#### **8.1.4 Being conscious about others' privacy**

This last theme within this research has been identified as a new part of the privacy concept on social media that has not been presented by CCT literature before. This theme represents *indirect control over own information and access to the self*, and incorporates three main topics identified from life stories, such as being conscious about others' privacy, including others' disclosed self, feelings, as well as others' space and peace.

Social media consumers have a need to interact with others, but in order to combine the interaction with others and protection of own privacy, consumers need to be conscious about others privacy as well, because privacy is a dialectic process as was defined by Altman (1975). Privacy is co-produced by other social media consumers and might directly influence information owner's disclosed self-identity and indirectly influence disclosed self-identity of the person who made the disclosure. Especially on social media, where many consumers' social profiles are co-created with other users within and without personal direct control, and might have greater privacy risks than disclosures made by a person himself as it was mentioned by Houghton and Joinson (2010). It could also indirectly influence private self, as social media participants can even intrude into private self and disclose private information, or prevent someone from being isolated and achieving peace and psychological relief. Therefore, the fourth theme emerged is being conscious about others' privacy. Here, communion is taken into account, which refers to union of the person with the environment and covers various motives as intimacy, caring, and merger presented by McAdams (1996).

The main goal of being conscious about others' privacy in addition to caring, is avoiding awkward situations, by which both parties' disclosed self as well as private self-identities could be affected. Being conscious what information respondents share with each other, in a way is a strategic tool to protect their own privacy as well. By caring for someone's privacy or the quality of personal information, and disclosed self-identity of another user, the person who discloses the information indirectly protects own privacy, as this another person will protect owner's privacy in return.

Here reciprocity (Moon, 2000) plays an important role in order to function comfortably in social media environment and achieve desired level of privacy. In addition, by being aware of how personally one's friend might perceive the information, consumer protects one's feelings, as privacy is "much more than just the physical environment in the management of social interaction" (Altman, 1977: 67-68). In turn, person expects others to protect his privacy as well, whether it is disclosed or

private self, one's feelings, or space. Thus, being conscious about others' privacy is dialectic process (Altman, 1976) enhanced by reciprocity (Moon, 2000), which goal is to appreciate others' privacy and indirectly protect own privacy.

## **8.2 Relation of identity and privacy**

Literature review revealed that identity is seen as something that is “both under construction and of central importance for matters of privacy” for each person (Hildebrandt, 2006: 8). Respondents learn, define, and remind themselves of who they are by having privacy and by choosing to share particular personal information with others or concealing it from particular friends, group of friends or everyone. Therefore, immaterial possession, like privacy and personal information, plays an important role in our postmodern digital life which allows social media consumers to build social self-identity by presenting disclosed self and concealing private self.

Privacy also helps social media consumers to protect their personal self-identity by concealing the information about private self as well as by isolating the self at the needed time in order to release from tensions of social life and restrictions, as well as to experience emotional release and enhance enjoyment of social media consumption. In addition, social media consumers are conscious about other users' privacy, as the user protects another person's privacy in return. Being conscious about other users' privacy actually indirectly helps to support own social self-identity, as personal information can cause different outcomes also for one's identity simply by being known. Therefore, one's privacy could also be seen as a protection of own social and personal identity.

### **8.2.1 Maintaining identity**

Privacy appears to be a project of the life, which includes both social or disclosed self-identity and personal or private self-identity projects that allow person to experience simultaneously closedness and openness on social media. Altman theorized that privacy is not to avoid information disclosure, but also selectively present the information about the self, especially in the context of social media. Therefore, respondents not only conceal private information, but they also choose what information about themselves to present on social media and how to present it in order to maintain desired social identity.

This way, by introducing particular information about the self, respondents also present social self-identity to other social media users, they claim their multiple and usually positive, intelligent and active identities. Therefore, respondents seek for intimacy with other social media users by presenting their identity, and simultaneously by presenting their identity they also try to limit accessibility to the personal self-identity and private information. In other words, when consuming social media respondents seek to protect their personal identity and also maintain their social identity. This represents privacy paradox on social media in a sense that by being private the information is still publicly disclosed in order to create desired social identity, which in turn limits the access to concealed private information.

Therefore, by controlling over own personal information and access to the self, in other words, by presenting disclosed self in desired way, as well as by concealing private self or the information which is not desired to be publicly disclosed, person aims to extend own self-identity (Belk, 1988), like Nea conceals her private self, which includes gamer, gossip girl, shy and unconfident person. Nea also presents desired disclosed self-identity, which includes fun, active and intelligent lady. Indeed, it was found by Baker and Oswald (2010) that person high in shyness is more likely to use Facebook and create stronger relationships through it by providing comfortable environment in which shy people can interact with others. Therefore, Facebook facilitates intimacy with Nea's friends by allowing Nea to feel more comfortable through this medium.

This way, respondents present the self that makes sense to multiple audiences without compromising their truly private sense of the self. Indeed, privacy and possession of personal information contribute to the sense of self, and could be seen as a part of identity and extended self presented by Belk (1988). Therefore, the possession of the information is an instrument to extend the self to the environment, to protect private self-identity and to reinforce social disclosed self-identity.

### **8.2.2 Developing self-ego by isolating the self**

Respondents also seek for distance or isolation of the self at the needed time in order to emotionally and physically release from tensions of social life and restrictions, as well as to enhance enjoyment of social media consumption. From one's identity perspective, isolation from others creates time for self-evaluation through which person extracts meanings from personal experience, and plans and

assesses the future actions by integrating the plan with own social and personal features of identity needed to be disclosed or concealed.

A good example here is life story presented by Maria. For her, privacy represents isolating from others, including her Facebook friends because of previously negative experience. Thus, if social media does not create positive emotions and does not provide experiential value as was presented by Firat and Dholakia (2006), as well as desired level of privacy for consumer, its consumption will be diminished till the time when person gains trust in it. Maria's life story emphasizes the importance of isolation in future public representation of identity on social media, as well as changes in internal states and their influence on self-ego and understanding of own identity.

### **8.2.3 Protecting own identity by appreciating others' privacy**

As it was identified from the life stories, social media consumers are conscious about other users' privacy by not publicly sharing too personal information, or the information that might be perceived private. The main goal of being conscious about others' privacy in addition to caring, is avoiding awkward situations, by which both parties' disclosed social identity as well as private personal identities could be affected. In other words, by protecting someone else's privacy social media consumers expect others to protect their privacy in return.

Thus, behind the actual idea of being conscious about others' privacy is usually an individual objective of indirect protection of own privacy on social media, and in turn, own social and personal identities. In case if one's personal information is disclosed it affects one's social identity and, as a result it also shapes one's personal identity. Therefore, being conscious what information respondents share with each other, in a way is a strategic tool to indirectly maintain own privacy, to support social identity and to protect personal identity as well.

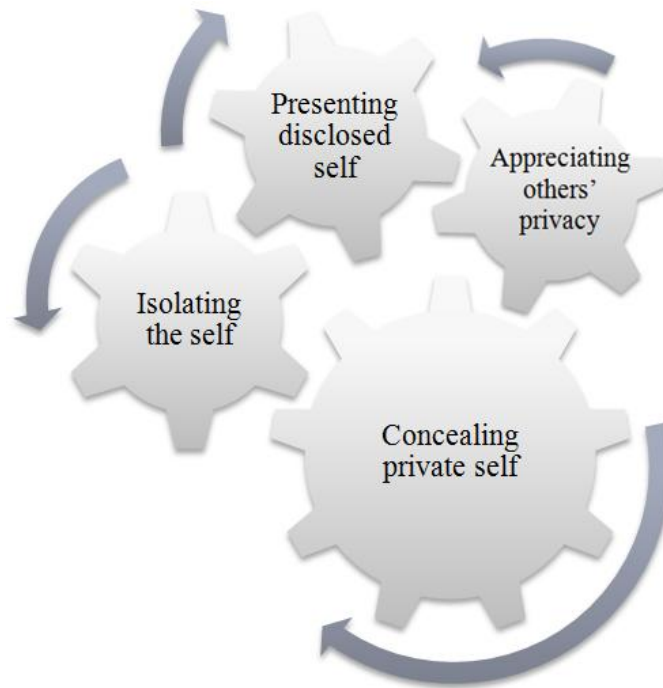
All in all, privacy as a social identity project allows person to present the self in a desired way, by selectively providing own information, by allowing access to the self to the some extend, as well as by being conscious about others privacy. Privacy as a personal identity project allows people to conceal their most personal information, it allows isolating the self and having time for self-assessment and planning of the future actions. Through both interrelated social and personal identities, respondents construct and achieve desired level of privacy.

Thus, privacy represents consumers' core social and personal values and physical and psychological features, which are transferred into their behavior during consumption of social media, including representation of disclosed social identity, concealing personal identity, isolating the self and being conscious about others privacy. Moreover, two presented life stories emphasize the fact that person's actualized privacy meanings of social media consumption is a function of the consumer's salient life-projects as conjoined by life-themes. Therefore, consumers of social media through their identity actively construct own meanings of privacy as they seek to create coherence in their lives (Mick and Buhl, 1992). The meaning of privacy might be changed during life time of one person, as unpredictable circumstances arise, such as significant life situations and experiences or nuclear episodes (McAdams, 1996), which influence the person's coherence of the self (Belk, 1988; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; John et al., 2011).

### **8.3 Private and Disclosed privacy on social media**

As it was presented previously, privacy is the major factor influencing consumer's identity, and at the same time, one's identity is a major factor when constructing consumer's privacy meaning on social media. The privacy meaning themes obtained from the life stories provide valuable results, as they also emphasize the goals of privacy from the self-identity perspective and the way respondents actually construct their own privacy.

Therefore, privacy on social media from the consumer self perspective could be presented as continual process of presenting disclosed self, concealing private self, isolating the self and being conscious about others privacy, where each of the identified themes are interrelated and could be illustrated as presented below.



However, because privacy is dynamic and dialectic process (Altman, 1975), each of the themes could vary in degrees in response to changes in one's internal states and external conditions by increasing or decreasing the desired level of privacy from time to time. Therefore, time in privacy is considered to be an important factor influencing privacy meaning.

An interesting view was presented by one of the respondents. According to Krista, time does matter, as the information about what happened in the past is not private anymore, it could not be changed. The present time includes the most private information, while the future is less private, but it is still private: "I would never give anything about myself, especially what happens right now in my personal, family life... things that were before, I can share them with others, but of course in more private environment, not over Facebook... what happens right now, what was like one month ago and will happen in coming months it is taboo to talk about" (Krista).

As it was mentioned in literature review, time and privacy are interdependent, as during life time person gains new privacy experiences and person's "needs, abilities, activities, desires, and feelings change, and thus the concept and pattern of privacy should also change" (Laufer and Wolfe, 1977: 37). This point could be observed from two presented life stories, where privacy states and privacy boundaries are neither static nor rule-based (Altman, 1975). Therefore, it is not possible to identify development of privacy or its stages, because it depends on time, the changes in internal states of

person and external conditions of environment or situation. Thus, both future internal and external changes are unpredictable.

Moreover, the information disclosed at the present time might influence person's privacy in the future, as other social media users can save one's personal disclosed information and use it in the future against owner's will. Therefore, past information, especially information that could affect one's identity is perceived to be private as well, as it was mentioned by Nea: "I guess later on you don't want a scandal to happen, if you get a job... if you ever have political career, you know... you never know... like in the past you did this.. and here is a picture... you know I don't want future me to be affected by what I do now and have like really troubles with that later... I don't want to get punished by that in the future".

Therefore, as privacy is heavily influences person's social or disclosed self-identity and personal or private self-identity, privacy on social media could be viewed by two privacy categories: private privacy and disclosed privacy. The private privacy includes control over personal information and its protection from public disclosures, and restricted access to the information and emotions of the core self, which is less likely to be shared with others, or which might be shared only in private and intimate environment and only with trusted people, who will not use the information against the person, and who will not judge.

As self-presentation is necessary part of social media, for this reason privacy also could be seen as disclosed privacy, which includes control over shared, but 'filtered' or selected personal information and allowed limited access to the self, which is done in order to reassure disclosed self-identity and simultaneously protect one's privacy. In the case of disclosed privacy, social media consumers are aware about need to disclose and at the same time, they want to enhance their privacy.

All in all, social media allows representing own identity, while privacy and its personal understanding allows freely control the information disclosed and concealed about the self by providing limited access to the self. Therefore, privacy on social media is essential if a private self defined by multiple social roles, is aiming to fulfill all those social roles successfully by presenting disclosed self-identity in a desired way.

#### **8.4 Is there privacy on social media?**

As it was identified from the life stories, privacy on social media has a great meaning for each person, as it allows to avoid awkward situations and to maintain psychological and physical privacy, and strong relationship with other users. Privacy on social media is a complex concept, taking into account consumer's needs for interaction with others, isolation from others or solitude, as well as desire to disclose the self and desire to conceal private self. Thus, privacy is based on the psychological need to have control over who has access to the information about disclosed self, as well as the psychological need to conceal secrets and fears of private self, and sometimes to isolate the self.

While majority of the interview respondents control their privacy by managing the quantity and the content of the information disseminated and concealed, one of the respondents do not believe in existence of privacy on social media. This is also could be explained by high knowledge that the respondent possesses in the field of computers and technology. Indeed, many authors emphasized that increased expertise might make consumer more cautious when sharing own information (Miyazaki and Fernandez, 2001; Sing and Hill, 2003).

According to the results obtained from the life stories, majority of consumers have a feeling of privacy when they consume social media. However, taking into account the experience and knowledge in computer science as well as technologies that Tommy possesses, the view by Tommy leads to the bigger question whether there is privacy on social media at all or no.



## **9 Conclusions**

In this chapter I will present the conclusions for this research by starting with theoretical and managerial implications, and by concluding with suggestions for future research and limitations of this study.

### **9.1 Theoretical Implications**

Privacy is an important factor in consumers' daily behavior and consumption of social media, as privacy helps to build own identity and stronger relationships by disclosing or concealing personal information and by providing or restricting access to the self. However, the consumer research field has not paid much attention to privacy concept, as there is still lack of understanding how social media consumers interpret privacy and what meanings privacy has in their lives. Therefore, this research looked from the consumer's perspective into privacy on social media through biographical consumption narratives and life-story telling. Drawing from Altman and Westin's classic theories of privacy I identified meanings of privacy for social media consumers by combining theoretical knowledge of privacy and the self-identity. The combination of the theories and perspectives taken in this research made this research more complex in a sense that I had to view privacy in both real and digital life, and at the same time, to identify privacy meanings from both perspectives of social and personal self-identities in order to understand how social media consumers construct and negotiate their privacy meanings.

Thereby, this research provided literature review on the topic of privacy in consumer research, it identified and provided meanings of privacy on social media by combining knowledge introduced by previous research in fields of psychology, sociology, consumer research and computer science. This research also emphasized the importance of the context in understanding the privacy and its meaning, as privacy has specific meaning for consumer depending on the context being studied (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2005; Solove, 2006).

The narrative approach appeared to be valuable in studying consumers' privacy on social media, as it provided good understanding of the respondents' ideas, goals, social and personal identities, the things they like and dislike on social media. It also allowed me to explore consumers' true feelings and fears concerning privacy, as well as their underpinning goals behind privacy in more depth. Moreover, narrative approach allowed me uncovering new aspect of the privacy concept and

provided new interpretation of privacy, according to which social media consumers are conscious about other users' privacy. Narratives obtained during the interviews emphasized the importance of time and personal experience as they tend to change understanding of privacy during the life time, as media dictates when and how person needs to protect own privacy, while the technologies and society tend to change personal privacy boundaries.

The main findings of this research are represented by proposed themes that illustrate the meanings of privacy specific for the context of social media consumption. Through life stories I identified four privacy meanings: presenting disclosed self, concealing private self, and isolating the self, and being conscious about others' privacy. Therefore, privacy meaning themes emerged incorporate in itself simultaneously both personal meaning and personal goal for privacy, because as it was mentioned by Margulis (2005) the meaning of privacy and its goal are interrelated.

The first theme, *presenting disclosed self* refers to privacy as not simply a matter of avoiding information disclosure (Altman, 1976), but privacy on social media is also more selective disclosure of information about the self in accordance with person's social identity, social norms and their social role demands, as information disclosure made by owner instead of being disclosed by others involves less privacy risks associated. Therefore, by presenting disclosed self in a particular, desired way and simultaneously, by creating distance between private self and other users on social media, consumers achieve and protect desired level of privacy by not disclosing too much private information and avoid unspoken evaluations or behavioral responses from others. This represents privacy paradox on social media in a sense that by being private the information is still publicly disclosed in order to create desired social identity, which in turn limits the access to concealed private information.

In addition to presenting disclosed self on social media, respondents also *conceal their private selves* or the information if disclosed that makes consumers feel embarrassed. The information, including one's interests, opinions, emotions and sensitive information that represent person as an individual is preferred to be concealed in order to avoid negative consequences in the future. Therefore, by presenting disclosed self in desired way, as well as by concealing private self or the information which is not desired to be publicly disclosed, person aims to reassure and to extend own self-identity (Belk, 1988).

The third theme is *isolating the self* refers to exchanging of socialization with others on isolation and own privacy. This theme mainly refers to privacy as access to the self, which is achieved by adjusting the level of openness and closedness not only to other participants of social media, but to the information available on social media, in order to protect both psychological and physical freedom and wellbeing of the self. This way social media consumers protect themselves from the information that might create negative feelings, they protect own information from envy or evaluations by others, they balance their involvement with other social media participants by isolating the self from own group members and outsiders, and they also isolate themselves from shared and crowded spaces in real and digital life. This way, social media consumers are achieving emotional release from negative feelings, from social roles and social encounters, they are also achieve more enjoyment when consuming social media in more comfortable and familiar environment. During the isolation time, consumers evaluate the self and extract meanings from personal experiences in order to constitute more authentic self-expression, as well as plan and assess the future actions (Altman, 1975; Margulis, 2003b; Westin, 2003). These three themes, including presenting disclosed self, hiding or concealing private self, and isolating the self refer to privacy as direct control over own information and access to the self. Meaning, that person makes choice what information to disclose and conceal, as well as when to restrict or to allow access to the self.

In addition, *being conscious about others' privacy* is a new theme identified within privacy concept, which refers to co-producing of privacy and social identity by other social media consumers through public disclosures. The main goal of being conscious about others' privacy in addition to caring, is avoiding awkward situations, by which both parties' disclosed self as well as private self-identities could be affected. Being conscious what information respondents share with each other, in a way is a strategic tool to protect their own privacy as well. By caring for someone's privacy or the quality of personal information, and social self-identity of another user, the person who discloses the information protects own privacy, as this another person will protect owner's privacy in return. Here, reciprocity plays an important role in order to function comfortably in social media environment and achieve desired level of privacy.

Therefore, it was established that privacy represents consumers' core social and personal values and fears, which are transferred into their behavior during consumption of social media, including creation and representation of disclosed social identity, concealing personal identity, isolating the self and being conscious about others privacy. Moreover, two presented life stories emphasized the

fact that person's actualized privacy meanings of social media consumption is a function of the consumer's salient life-projects as conjoined by life-themes. Therefore, consumers of social media through their identity actively construct own meanings of privacy as they seek to create coherence in their lives (Mick and Buhl, 1992). The meaning of privacy might be changed during the life time of one person, as unpredictable circumstances arise, such as significant life situations and experiences or nuclear episodes (McAdams, 1996), which influence the person's coherence of the self (Belk, 1988; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; John et al., 2011).

All in all, by presenting close relationship of privacy and identity through four privacy meanings, this research expanded the field of theoretical discussion of privacy by introducing the concept of disclosed and private privacy in the context of social media.

## **9.2 Suggestions for further research**

There are many possibilities for the future research within privacy topic, as it has been identified that the consumer research has not paid much attention to the concept of privacy. Future research should concentrate on further studying these four identified themes of privacy meanings. One possibility would be to conduct research in order to study further agency and communion presented by McAdams (1996) within privacy meaning themes.

As privacy seems to be an important issue for the coming years, I think that it is a research topic that has big academic and practical potentials. Studying how privacy relates to one's identity construction in various contexts would definitely be a fruitful subject for the future research. Concerning the future research I think that it would be also very interesting to study consumers' privacy meanings within specific society or culture, and privacy meaning differences. Moreover, I strongly suggest further studying privacy by utilizing narrative research method, as it provides unexpected results and definitely develops theory further.

## **9.3 Managerial Implications**

This research provided new insights into the concept of privacy, which could be very useful for companies. Privacy has strong impact on individual's identity and vice versa. Thus, both privacy and identity must be appreciated and guarded by companies as much as things that person wants to keep private information private. In other words, if someone has an access to person's private

information, they have to protect it as their own. Otherwise, it will be not possible to maintain strong relationship and trust between two parties. However, if trust will be created and achieved, consumers will be willing to provide even more private information they possess.

Consumers are willing to provide their private information not only on an exchange for some material benefits, but also in reciprocal situations. As it has been noticed from the interviews, people are still willing to share personal information in bilateral relations and for true purposes, which make relationship closer and our society better for the future generation. Thus, it is necessary to emphasize and to explain consumers, that providing personal information today will really make our society and our life better tomorrow. However, consumers are also willing to exchange their socialization with others and maintenance of relationships on isolation and thus, their own privacy. In this case, companies and other consumers need to appreciate their decision, as this way it will be possible to maintain and even make the relationship stronger.

Moreover, it has been identified from the interviews that it can be difficult for user to determine during adjusting the privacy settings what a privacy action actually does, what information will be available or visible and to whom, etc. For this reason, it is necessary to make privacy setting adjustment process as clear as possible for the consumer, for example, by introducing an option by which it will be possible to view own profile the way particular friend views it.

#### **9.4 Limitations**

An important issue, based on which the research can be judged is richness. I think that I managed to obtain quite deep and fruitful interviews, as straight from the beginning the trust between me and the interview respondents was created. One of the respondents even mentioned: “Its occurred to me actually a few minutes ago or actually more than a few minutes ago, that you are doing this topic about privacy and yeah... you already know more about me than most people know that I have known already for over a year... in 5-minute interview...so you know... is this the purpose of the interview to see how willing people are to give personal information?” (Mika). In spite of difficulties in the beginning and some awkwardness to talk about privacy with strangers, I think that I did my best trying to explore consumers’ true feelings and fears concerning privacy, as well as their underpinning goals behind privacy in more depth. I believe that asking direct questions would never provide me with such a deep answers as I received during the narrative interviews. However, the nature of narrative research allows only making interpretations of the respondent’s experiences

instead of making broader generalizations about the privacy meanings for consumers. This means that the results are applicable only to my interviewees, even if it is possible that similar narratives would be found if researching more people.

The limitation of this research is probably my subjective interpretation of the respondents' narratives. Therefore, this study is heavily dependent on the selections that I have made regarding to the interview participants' narratives. I have interpreted these life stories according to my own best knowledge, which is based on the broad literature review concerning privacy within consumer research, psychology, sociology and computer science. The same applies to the themes emerged, as they reflect my personal view of what was important in the life stories presented by interview participants. Thus, another researcher could have introduced other themes.

All in all, there are the usual limitations in this type of research that need to be taken into account, such as social desirability. Social desirability usually occurs when interview participants tend to tell their stories in a socially desirable way, or stories that participants might believe the researcher is looking for. This way social desirability may endanger the validity of this research. However, the topic of my interview was presented in more details just before the actual interview. Thus, my respondents did not have an opportunity to research privacy topic beforehand. All the interview participants were volunteers, and I do not see any reason for them to present false information. Moreover, as it was presented in the literature, sometimes people feel even more free to talk about private information with unfamiliar person. However, the age of the interview respondents varied from 21 to 35 years old. In other words, it represents only a certain type of demographics. Thus, further research could also concentrate more on studying privacy meanings of different demographic groups.

In conclusion, this research has provided new insights into privacy concept and I have to admit, that this research increased my personal knowledge about privacy and also changed my previous perspectives on privacy, as well as my own behavior and social media consumption patterns. I also believe that the topic of privacy will be increasingly important in the future, as with further development of technologies either more and more people will conceal their personal information in order to achieve privacy, or social norms of what is private and what is not will simply be changed by shifting privacy boundaries, which in turn, emphasizes that privacy is neither static nor rule-based concept.

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