

Negotiating the Meanings Of Blogging Practices in the Blogosphere

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ABSTRACT:

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to understand the phenomenon of blogging, the practices in blogging and the reasons to blog. We focus on the blogging practices and their meanings in personal blogging and when blogging for companies. Blogging is looked from the perspective of consumer culture theory and postmodern marketing. For understanding the meanings of blogging practices, Bourdieu's theories on practices and power as capital are utilised.

METHODOLOGY

The findings are based on 6 interviews with bloggers. The bloggers ranged from 20 year olds to 40 year olds, male and female with shorter (4 months) and longer (9 years) experiences in blogging. Interviews were done as theme interviews following the techniques presented by McCracken (1988). Autodriving technique (Heisley and Levy, 1991) during the interviews was used with a computer showing the blogger's blog to enable the blogger to scroll down her/his blog while discussing blogging. In the data analysis, hermeneutic of faith was utilised taking the bloggers words quite transparently. The blogger was seen as the expert of her/his own life and her/his own experiences and as trying to describe these as best she/he is able.

FINDINGS

The blogging practices found were: blogging, reading blogs, commenting, taking pictures, and checking statistics to see how many readers the blog has and who the readers are. Blogging practices were found to be part of identity management, gaining or maintaining social connections, creating cultural capital, evaluating the worth of the gained capital and gaining economic capital. Blogging in general was found to be a way for the bloggers to create cultural capital to further their careers in the field they were interested in. The bloggers were found to present only one identity in their blogs, which is against the idea of postmodern consumer (Firat et al. 1995) and some past research (Schau and Gilly, 2005) but supported by some studies (Huffaker et al., 2005; Ahuvia, 2005). Blogging for companies was found to be done for economic capital (free products), identity management and for reciprocity to give something back to the blog readers. In general blogging was seen as a common way of communicating and connecting with people and blogging for companies to be a normal part of the phenomenon of blogging.

Keywords blogging, blogosphere, identity management, Bourdieu, postmodern marketing, consumer culture theory

“Before people asked what is your MSN messenger account and nowadays it’s probably what’s your blog.”

-Paula, 20, Blogger

Table of Contents:

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 Research gap, research objective and research questions..... | 7 |
| 1.2 Outline of the study..... | 8 |
| 1.3 Definitions | 8 |
| 2. Pierre Bourdieu's world view | 10 |
| 2.1 Bourdieu's logic of practice | 10 |
| 2.2 Habitus | 10 |
| 2.3 Power as capital | 11 |
| 2.3.1 Cultural capital | 12 |
| 2.3.2 Social capital..... | 13 |
| 2.3.3 Symbolic capital..... | 13 |
| 2.3.4 Conversions: | 14 |
| 2.4 Field | 15 |
| 3. Consumer culture theory (CCT)..... | 16 |
| 4. Postmodern marketing..... | 20 |
| 4.1 Consumption in the postmodern world | 20 |
| 4.2 Hyperreal..... | 20 |
| 4.3 Fragmentation | 21 |
| 4.4 Marketing in the postmodern world | 22 |
| 5. Research on blogging, blogs and bloggers | 24 |
| 5.1 Motivation to blog and gained gratifications | 24 |
| 5.2 Identity, self-presentation and impression management in blogging..... | 25 |
| 5.3 Using bloggers in marketing campaigns | 26 |
| 5.5 Theory of capital and social capital in blogging..... | 26 |
| 6. Theoretical framework for the study | 28 |
| 7. Research methodology | 31 |
| 7.1 Hermeneutics | 31 |
| 7.2 Hermeneutical analysis | 31 |
| 7.2.1 The two interpretive stances of hermeneutics | 32 |
| 7.2.2 Features of hermeneutical analysis..... | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 7.3 Research process | 34 |
| 7.3.1 Data collection | 34 |
| 7.3.2 Interview structure | 35 |
| 7.3.3 Data analysis | 37 |
| 8. Research findings | 39 |
| 8.1 Blogging practices | 39 |
| 8.1.1 Blogging | 39 |
| 8.1.1.1 The start of blogging | 39 |
| 8.1.1.2 Pressure to blog regularly | 41 |
| 8.1.1.3 Pictures | 42 |
| 8.1.1.4 Privacy and identity management in blogging | 43 |
| 8.1.1.5 Blog as a part of the CV | 45 |
| 8.1.2 Reading blogs | 46 |
| 8.1.3 Comments | 47 |
| 8.1.4 Linking | 52 |
| 8.1.5 Checking statistics | 55 |
| 8.1.6 Finding out who the blog readers are | 56 |
| 8.2 Company cooperation projects | 57 |
| 8.2.1 Company cooperation projects and benefits | 58 |
| 8.2.1.1 Company cooperation projects and economic benefits | 58 |
| 8.2.1.2 Company cooperation projects and identity management | 59 |
| 8.2.1.3 Company cooperation projects and giving back | 60 |
| 8.2.2 Comparing the gains and losses of company cooperation projects | 61 |
| 8.2.3 Marketing campaigns as a common thing | 63 |
| 9. Discussion | 64 |
| 9.1 Blogging practices | 64 |
| 9.2 Company cooperation projects: | 66 |
| 9.3 The new meaning of blogging | 68 |
| 9.4 Contributions to CCT | 69 |
| 9.5 Criticism towards Bourdieu's theories | 70 |
| 10. Conclusions | 72 |
| 10.1 Managerial implications | 72 |
| 10.2 Limitations of the research | 73 |
| 10.3 Future research | 73 |

10. References:.....75

List of Figures and Tables:

Figure 1: The theoretical framework29

Table 1: Respondent information.....36

1. Introduction

With the change brought by Web 2.0, creating and sharing content by anyone to anyone has never been this easy. Blogs and other social media platforms are one way to do it.

At the end of 2011 (over one and a half years ago) there were 181 million blogs and 19 million bloggers in the world. The number of blogs has grown rapidly from 2006 when there were 36 million blogs, and has now in 2013 surely passed 200 million. (Nielsen, 2012)

So why are these bloggers sharing some of their most intimate issues in their lives to the rest of the world to read? Many bloggers have been able to gather a big follower base who comment and share the blogger's blog posts on the Internet and on numerous social media platforms. The bloggers are connecting with other bloggers and their readers through comments and links. Some bloggers have even gained a status comparable to movie and music celebrities and some are blogging for a living. Bloggers are gaining more and more publicity and a growing number of people are listening to their opinions.

When thinking about the blogs from the marketer's perspective it is no wonder companies are more and more utilising bloggers in their marketing. The consumers of today want interactional marketing, something where they feel they can be part of something and feel more individual (Cova, 1996). Internet and blogs are one way to do exactly this. For many companies bloggers have become just one of the channels to connect with their consumers. For companies bloggers are an easy way to target the core consumer segment of the company since people with similar interests are reading the same blog. Bloggers are also quite cost effective compared to the traditional marketing channels. The blog readers use bloggers and their recommendations when purchasing products (Evans, 2010). Online word of mouth often has more authority than traditional media forms since it is owned and controlled by the consumers (Maurya 2011). In a research conducted by Nielsen (2009) of the average consumers 90 % trust the recommendations made by their friends and 70 % trusted consumer opinions posted online such as blogs. Blogs are ideal for word-of-mouth since every blog post is ready to be shared by the readers in other social media platforms through the simple buttons next to the blog posts and often other bloggers share blog posts by other bloggers. In addition, blog entries come up quite easily on search engine results (Sernovitz 2006).

Because of all the possibilities it is important to better understand the bloggers, their practices and why they take part in the company initiated marketing campaigns. When the companies understand the bloggers, their practices and their motivation and reasons to blog the companies can be better at targeting the bloggers suitable for them. In addition, companies can be better at offering the bloggers what they are looking for.

1.1 Research gap, research objective and research questions

In the next sections I will describe the research gap found, research objective and research questions.

Research gap:

Research on blogs, blogging and bloggers often has concentrated on identity management in blogs (Kretz, 2010; Sima & Pugsley, 2010; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2004) and motivation to blog (Nardi, et al., 2004; Chung & Kim, 2008; Hsu & Lin, 2008). What has not been studied is how profit-seeking companies are utilising external third party bloggers and more specifically how blogging for a company affects the bloggers motivation or perceived gains from blogging. This gap has been noted in the previous research on blogging motivations and gratifications (Sepp, et al., 2011; Huang, et al., 2007). One of the only studies concentrating on bloggers and their cooperation projects with companies is by Kozinets et al. (2010), which mentions the importance of better understanding the blogger when performing in a dual role: as a marketer for a company and as a part of the blog community.

Research objective:

The research objective is twofold. Firstly, the study will research the reasons for blogging, what kind of practices the bloggers have when blogging and what are the benefits from these different practices. In previous research the reasons behind blogging have been studied especially from the perspective of motivation (Nardi, et al., 2004) and gratification (Sepp, et al., 2011). Using Bourdieu's theories on practice and power as capital, this study focuses on how and through what kind of practices the bloggers perceive to gain, transform and exchange their different forms of capital. How different practices in blogs such as linking, commenting and posting are linked to creating and exchanging different forms of capital. These issues have been studied in previous research but by using a different theoretical background than what will be utilised in this study.

Secondly this research will focus on how bloggers gained capital and practices are affected when a company offers compensation for blogging about their products or services. This is an issue where no previous research was found, hence, the second research question will focus on this issue.

Research questions:

1. How do bloggers narratively construct meaning from their blogging practices?
2. How do the bloggers negotiate their relationship with companies regarding their blogging practices?

1.2 Outline of the study

In chapter one the background of the phenomenon of blogging, the research gap, research objectives and the research questions were presented. This will be followed by the key terms and their definitions.

Chapters two, three, four and five will present the theoretical background for the study. Chapter two focuses on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu on habitus, power as capital and the field. Chapters three and four will lay the theoretical background for the study by chapter three focusing on consumer culture theory (CCT) and chapter four on postmodern marketing. Chapter five will present some of the past studies related to our research questions on blogging. In chapter six, the theoretical framework of this study will be presented. Chapter seven presents the research methodology hermeneutics, hermeneutical analysis and the research process. Chapter eight will describe the findings from this research and chapter nine will relate these findings into the context of the existing research in the field. Chapter ten will present managerial implications, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

1.3 Definitions

Blog is usually like a personal webpage, which presents blog posts including text and pictures by the owner in a reversed chronological order. (Kaplan and Haenlain 2010)

Blogger is the writer and the owner of the blog.

Blogosphere means the world of blogging, all the blogs, bloggers and the blog readers. These different parties are connected to each other creating a network that is the blogosphere (Zhou and Davis, 2007).

Self-presentation, Impression management and identity management refer to the performances by the agent when in the presence of others. Performances mean the ways the agent behaves in order to give a wanted impression of her/himself to the others. (Goffman, 1959)

Social capital is a relational form of capital, which is developed through the networks of connections and friends (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital is for example a university degree (Bourdieu, 1986).

Economic capital is money and other financial resources such as real estate property (Bourdieu, 1986).

Symbolic capital is a disguised form of the other capitals. An example of this is the reputation of a man and using that reputation to buy without economic capital like money. (Bourdieu, 1990).

Habitus provides us with operating principles that help us to behave and act in various situations. Habitus is the unconscious rules, values and dispositions that we have gained during our history, which usually stay with us across contexts. (Bourdieu, 1977)

Field is a micro cosmos of its own, which has its' own rules regularities and forms of authority. Field is a structured space of positions, which is also a force field, an arena of struggle where agents and institutions seek to save or change the existing distribution of capital. The amount of power and the amount of capital one has defines the position of the agent in the field. (Wacquant, 2006)

2. Pierre Bourdieu's world view

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French sociologist, anthropologist and a philosopher. The theories of Bourdieu give an excellent theoretical background for investigating the practices of the bloggers and how through these practices the position of the blogger in the social world and in the blogosphere is negotiated. Bourdieu's theories have been widely used in sociological studies but during this research process, only one study (Chittenden, 2010) on blogging where Bourdieu's theory is applied was found. In the following chapters Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the logic of practice, the term habitus, the theory of power as capital, the different forms of capital and how the different forms of capital are transformed into one another will be discussed. Lastly, what is the field and how the struggle over the capital is performed on the field will be described.

2.1 Bourdieu's logic of practice

Bourdieu is interested in practices that agents have when mastering various situations. He defines a term practical knowledge as something that has a logic that develops from the situation. The logic is not the end-result of long calculations and thinking, but it emerges from the situation that has certain ordinariness and blend of convenience and principles. (Bourdieu, 1977)

According to Bourdieu (1990) all practices are oriented towards the maximisation of material or symbolic profits. Actors pursue material and symbolic profits and exchange one for the other (Bourdieu, 1990). For Bourdieu action is strategy meaning individual practices are fundamentally interested and actors try to benefit from situations but it is not calculated and goal oriented (Swartz 1997). Action as strategy means that individual actions are patterned and interest-oriented on an unconscious level. The cultural legacy such as habits, traditions, customs and beliefs shape the actions and responses in our everyday life (Swartz, 1997).

2.2 Habitus

Habitus is one of the cornerstones of Bourdieu's theories. Habitus provides us with operating principles that help us behave and act in various situations. Bourdieu refers to habitus as the

unconscious rules, values and dispositions that we have gained during our history, which usually stay with us across contexts. Habitus is the habitual way we enter into relationship with the social world. The principles that help us in daily situations are durable and are embedded in dispositions. An agent's disposition gives the ways of acting in an acceptable and predictable way, when we are engaged in practical activities. What agents consider reasonable or unreasonable comes from habitus (Swartz, 1997). Certain practices have been repeated over time and create the basis for the disposition. Habitus helps us not to think about unthinkable practices. (Bourdieu, 1977)

Habitus is the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which we perceive, judge and act in the world. This unconscious schemata is acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings via the internalisation of external constraints and possibilities. People with similar experiences share the same schemata although with individual variant. (Wacquant, 2006)

Conditioning associated with a particular type of existence, based on shared cultural trajectories produces habitus. Habitus is durable and oriented towards the practical: dispositions, knowledges and values, which are always potentially subject to modification, which happens when the narratives, values and explanations of the habitus no longer make sense. (Webb, 2002)

Habitus is the product of history (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and results from early socialisation experiences, in which external structures are internalised (Swartz, 1997). Habitus generates perceptions, aspirations and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialising (Swartz, 1997). The structures of habitus are constantly subjected to experience and therefore either reinforced or modified (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

2.3 Power as capital

Individual agents and groups seek for variety of cultural, social and symbolic resources to maintain and enhance their position in the social order (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu conceptualises such resources as capital when they work as social relation of power and when they become objects of valued resources under struggle (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu (1986) defines capital in its simplest form as accumulated labour. Capital is power over the

accumulated product of labour and thereby power over the mechanisms of production of goods, which also represent revenues and profits (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986; 1990) defines four forms of capital:

Economic capital: money and other financial resources such as property (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital: the bodily incorporation of various forms of taste and expertise such as educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital: relational form of capital, which is developed through the networks of connections and friends (Bourdieu, 1986).

Symbolic capital: is a disguised form of the other capitals. An example of this is the reputation of a man and using that reputation to buy without economic capital like money. (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu's theory of capital as power offers a good background for our study to understand the meanings of different practices by the bloggers. The theory of capital as power helps us to define the different practices and look at the meanings given to the practices from the point of view of how the practices are related to gaining, losing and exchanging the different forms of capital and what are the bloggers trying to achieve with the practices.

In the next sections cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital will be described in more detail. In the last sections, the conversion of these different forms of capital on the field will be discussed.

2.3.1 Cultural capital

Cultural capital is one of the biggest contributions of Bourdieu to the field of sociology. Cultural capital can have three forms: embodied state, objectified state and institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986).

Embodied state sees the cultural capital as linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. The cultural capital presupposes a process of incorporation, which costs time that the agent needs to invest personally. Examples of this are suntan and building muscle. (Bourdieu, 1986)

Objectified state of cultural capital has properties that can only be defined in relationship with cultural capital's embodied form such as a work of art. Cultural objectified capital consists of

objects that are owned and can be converted into economical profit. One can possess a work of art but to understand and “consume” the artwork one needs to have prior cultural capital. (Bourdieu, 1986)

Institutional state of cultural capital can be seen as institutional recognition such as academic degrees and qualifications. This is important especially in the labour market since through the institutional form agents can be assessed and compared against each other. The institutional form of cultural capital eases the transformation of cultural capital into economic capital that the agents can use to describe their capital and employers can use to describe their needs for capital. (Bourdieu, 1986)

In modern societies, access of income in the labour market depends on cultural capital in the form of educational credentials and social capital in the form of networks. (Bourdieu, 1986).

2.3.2 Social capital

Social capital means the network of social relationships and recognition, or in other words membership in a group, which provides its members with collectively owned capital, credential, which can be used to credit. These relationships may exist only in practical state through material and symbolic exchanges but they may be socially instituted and guaranteed by the use of a common name such as a school name. (Bourdieu, 1986)

The amount of social capital an individual possesses depends on the size of the network of connections he can mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) possessed by the individual and to whom she/he is connected. Social capital is reproduced through continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is affirmed and reaffirmed. This exchange involves spending economic capital directly or indirectly in the form of time and energy . (Bourdieu, 1986)

2.3.3 Symbolic capital

The modes of domination have shifted from physical violence to forms of symbolic manipulation. Different cultural processes, institutions and producers maintain inequality in societies. Bourdieu has defined three functions that symbolic systems perform: cognition, communication and social differentiation. (Swartz, 1997)

Cognition means the structuring structures that give the means for ordering and understanding the social world. The different modes of knowledge: language, art, religion and science represent different ways for understanding the world. (Swartz, 1997)

Communication means the structured structures, which see the symbolic systems as “codes” that channel deep structural meanings shared by all members of a culture. These systems work as instruments of communication and knowledge. (Swartz, 1997)

Social differentiation means that the cultural systems serve as instruments for domination meaning that these symbolic systems provide integration for dominant groups and hierarchies for ranking groups. The symbolic systems are classification systems with the logic of inclusion and exclusion. Symbolic systems divide and group items into opposing classes. (Swartz, 1997)

Bourdieu (1990) defines symbolic capital with an example of a man in a market purchasing something with a ridiculously high price just to show he can. With this he enhances his reputation and his prestige. Bourdieu (1990) continues that the man can also use his name, face and his reputation for honour as well as for wealth to buy something without giving any cash.

The source of the power is in the relationship of symbolic systems to social structure and not in the symbolic system in itself. This means that the power is not in words or symbols but in their relation to social structures. Symbolic power is defined in a relationship between those who exercise the power and those who undergo it in the structure of the field where belief is produced and reproduced. (Swartz, 1997)

For Bourdieu symbolic capital means ways and forms to disguise economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

2.3.4 Conversions:

Economic capital is the root of all the other types of capital meaning the other forms of capital are disguised forms of economic capital. Another way of putting it: other forms of capital can be derived from economic capital. This transformation usually takes great effort for example in the case of social capital of relationships. To build and maintain a relationship usually takes a lot of time but through the social relationships one can have a better access to economic

capital for example by getting a job. On the other hand certain goods and services are instantly at hand by economic capital. (Bourdieu, 1990)

Social capital and cultural capital are more closely related to economic capital than symbolic capital. Economic capital is more easily converted into cultural capital and social capital than vice versa. (Swartz, 1997)

2.4 Field

Bourdieu defines fields as their own micro cosmos, which have their own rules regularities and forms of authority. Field is a historical constellation that changes shape and grows or even disappears. Field is a structured space of positions, which is also a force field, an arena of struggle where agents and institutions seek to save or change the existing distribution of capital. The amount of power and the amount of capital one has defines the position of the agent in the field. The struggle arises between the agents in the field who want to better their position in the field and need to change the distribution of capital and those with a good position who want to keep the current distribution. Habitus informs practices from within. Field structures practices from without. The position of the agent serves particular patterns of thought and conduct. (Wacquant, 2006)

The agents in a position of power are used by other agents or groups to designate what is authentic capital. Generally the value or the specific forms of capital are confined to particular fields. (Webb, 2002)

Arsel and Thompson (2010) describe the field as the field of consumption where consumers consume market myths not just to take them into their identity projects, which drives social distinction, but to use them in the game for status and acquisition of social and cultural capital. A devaluing myth creates the fear of devaluation of the investments and gained capital in the field and makes the consumers protect the gained capital through demythologising practices, which create symbolic boundaries between their identities and the devaluing myth. They conclude that knowledge of another's field-dependent knowledge and social centrality can be as important in sustaining the value of the capital gained than the way of consuming.

3. Consumer culture theory (CCT)

Consumer culture theory (CCT) is a theoretical perspective that addresses the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings. CCT is not a grand theory and it does not try to be one but it gathers the common theoretical orientations of many research efforts. CCT sees a social arrangement where the relations between lived culture and social resources and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources, on which they depend, are mediated through markets. CCT is interested in the consumption of market-made goods and marketing symbols and how this system is based on the exercise of free personal choice. Through overlapping and conflicting practices, identities and meanings, individuals make collective sense of their environments and orientate their experiences and lives. Individuals embody and negotiate these meanings in social relationships, roles and situations. Culture is the fabric of experience, meaning and action for CCT. CCT does not see action as a causal force but more like a game where individuals improvise according to the rules, consumer culture and consumer's point of view on what is conceivable action. CCT sees consumption as a sociocultural practice, which is historically shaped, and emerges within the structures of the marketplaces. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005)

Arnould and Thompson (2005) argue that Consumer Culture Theory has four different research domains:

1. Consumer identity projects

CCT focuses on the productive aspect of consumption meaning how consumers iterate and transform the symbolic meanings in advertisements, brands and material goods into their identity. The marketplace provides consumers with a wide variety of resources to build their personal or shared group identities. These consumer identity projects, which are typically goal oriented can also be vaguely understood. The relationship between consumers' identity projects and the structuring influence of the marketplace is seen as producing consumer positions, which consumers inhabit. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005)

An example of this is the study by Schau and Gilly (2003) where they studied how self-presentation strategies are used in personal web spaces. Websites offer consumers possibilities to self-present themselves through the brands on their website without financial expenses. They conclude that consumers consciously consider brands' symbolic values before posting them to their personal website and that it is possible to self-present multiple me's through online websites although these "selves" are consistent to some extent with the real life self. Belk (1988) studied how the possessions of a consumer are an extension to the consumers' self. We tend to express ourselves through the possessions we have and seek happiness from and remind ourselves about our accomplishments. These possessions tell us who we are, where we come from and where we are going. Noble and Walker (1997) studied the liminal transition of going from high school to college and the symbolic consumption in the process. They conclude that possessions symbolising the past and the new role were used to facilitate the transition and the re-establishment of the extended self. Continuing from Belk's findings Ahuvia (2005) found loved products to help find solutions to identity conflicts. Loved products were used in demarcating and compromising solutions but especially synthesising solutions where the consumers were able to combine two different identities by taking the best aspects of both. Üstüner and Holt (2007) found three collective tactics among the poor migrant women in a Turkish squatter when they were faced with identity conflict. Strategies found were: to recreate the old village culture in the new place and shut out the dominant culture, collectively pursue the dominant ideology through ritualised consumption or not to pursue either of the identity projects resulting in a shattered identity project.

2. Marketplace cultures

In CCT consumers are seen as the producers of culture. Consumption as a dominant practice has its' effect on habits, which steer action and interpretations. With common consumption interests, consumers create cultural worlds with feelings of social solidarity. These consumption communities foster collective identification, which is based on shared beliefs, meaning, rituals, social practice and status systems. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005)

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) studied the subculture of Harley Davidson motorcycle owners. The findings were that the motorcycle owners defined themselves according to their activities, objects and relationships that give meaning to their lives. Through physical objects

and consumer goods, they related to other people and through consumption activities they formed relationships through which they were able to share meanings.

3. The sociohistoric patterning of consumption

Consumers are seen to have certain roles and positions, according to the institutional and social structures such as class and ethnicity, which affect the consumption practices. CCT is also interested in the relationships among consumers and their belief systems and practices and underlying institutional and social structures. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005)

Using the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu on cultural capital Holt (1998) researched how the form and amount of different capitals affected the consumption choices of a consumer. He found that people with more economic capital than cultural are materialistic consumers where as consumers with less economic capital tend to try and get small glimpses of the elite life by attaining some goods sought after by the elite. This kind of materialism is about acquiring prestige through consumption practices, which structure the game for status. Research by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) found brand communities, which are structured sets of social relations among the brand enthusiasts. A specific brand is what binds these consumers into a social commercial collective. Goulding, et al. (2002) studied the phenomenon and dance culture of raves. They found that for the people attending raves the right clubs, wearing the right brands and style and listening to the right music were all part of their identity projects as well as gaining cultural capital in the eyes of the other ravers. The club culture as well as the music and fashion help ravers make sense of their world and their place in it.

4. Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies

CCT researches consumer ideologies, which reproduce actions and meanings. Some consumers take on a tacit level mass-media such as advertisements and their portrayed ideal lifestyles as ready identities, which they endorse when others consciously act against these ideological instructions. In CCT consumers are seen as interpreters who create meanings. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005)

Kozinets (2002) in his study on the Burning Man festival researched how consumers come together to manifest their ideas against capital consumerism. During the festival, the participants create temporary and local communities where to escape the market and in order to do that practice different kind of social logic and practices. In their study on advertising Mick and Buhl (1992) were interested in the factors that motivate and shape actualised advertising meanings from the consumers perspective. They specify two factors: life themes and life projects. Life themes can rise from sociocultural backgrounds and transformational experiences. Life projects can be described as role taking where individuals create and modify roles. Life projects and life themes were found to have an effect on the perceived advertising meanings.

Arnould and Thompson (2007) emphasise that these four theoretical domains of interest in CCT are not locked into any specific topics or methods and can therefore be used in a broad and flexible way. One study can simultaneously tap into all four research domains though more commonly two domains are in the primary focus and two stay in the background (Arnould and Thompson, 2007).

4. Postmodern marketing

Modern marketing has attempted to create rational models that can be generalised to different situations and phenomena. Postmodern marketing is above all against these generalisations (Brown, 1993). Postmodernism questions and rejects the possibility of absolute truths with the aim of defining, naming and knowing the world (Goulding, 2003). Modern marketing theories such as the 4P's, product life cycle or the Boston Consulting Group matrix, which try to generalise phenomena, should be abandoned and one should try and enjoy the uncertainty and learn to live without definitive explanations (Brown, 1993). Postmodernism highlights the limitations of many marketing models and theories (Brown, 1993).

4.1 Consumption in the postmodern world

In the modern theory value was created in production and consumption was seen to destroy this value (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993; Firat and Dholakia, 2006). In postmodern thinking, value is created during consumption (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). The postmodern consumers no longer consume the products but the image and the symbolic meanings of these products. The importance of the functional aspect of the product is losing value (Cova, 1996). In postmodernity the consumer is the one who chooses and consumes the market offerings she/he is interested in and creates her/his own consumption experience (Firat, et al., 1995; Firat and Dholakia, 2006). The consumers are producers who are linked to other consumers and to the firms in the value-producing and value-transferring networks (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). In the modern world consuming was something to hide but in the postmodern times consumption is the way to establish one's social standing, what one is able to consume (Firat, 1992).

4.2 Hyperreal

Hyperreal means the image of hype such as the brand promise of a clothing brand. Through the consumption experience of buying and using a product of a certain brand the consumers can be part of this hyperreal offered by the brand. Modern marketing sold a product for the

needs of the consumers. Postmodern marketing sees the image as the marketable entity, which the product tries to represent. (Firat, et al., 1995)

Rose and Wood (2005) described hyperreal as taking the signs (brands) as real and connecting them to the real self. When studying the consumption of reality TV shows they described another term hyperauthenticity as something where the individual blends fantasy with the real. The consumers were seen to take their lived experiences and connecting them with the similarities in the TV shows but also to take the TV show's fantasy-like elements and letting their imagination play. They conclude that the consumers accept this fantasy, which the consumers coproduce, as authentic.

Reversal in production and consumption describes how consumption of these images has become the way consumers define self-images for themselves and others. Through this representation of self-images consumers have begun to realise the self as a marketable "product" that can be produced, customised, positioned and promoted. The postmodern conditions also offer the opportunity for consumers to represent different self-images, which would have been considered inconsistent and even schizophrenic in the modern world. The postmodern consumer enjoys these juxtapositions offered by the different self-images that on the other hand create challenges for the brand managers seeking brand loyal consumers. (Firat, et al., 1995)

Decentering of the subject means that the modern theory placed the consumer at the center and the consumer independently pursued to achieve her/his goals but in the postmodern theory the objects around are seen to determine the conditions and procedures of consumption. This is also part of the phenomenon, which is that consumers inhabit different images to portray in different cases to be acceptable in different situations. (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993)

4.3 Fragmentation

Marketing communication fills all the free space from building walls to the Internet and newspapers. These advertisements are becoming more frequent and shorter in time. Each of these advertisements sells a different image that the consumer can then incorporate into her/his self-image (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). Consumers are engaging in numerous separate acts of consuming during the day without a common purpose and through these acts

the consumers are able to represent numerous self-images (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). Part of this fragmentation is the fragmentation of the markets into smaller and smaller segments, which are served by a greater number of products designed specifically to certain segments (Goulding, 2003).

In the postmodern conditions we are freed from the collective ideals such as education, sex and family. In the postmodern world the individual has to produce and show one's own existence and uniqueness. (Cova, 1996)

The fragmentation in the postmodern world fits with the postmodern consumer's lack of commitment to a single project, lifestyle, brand or self-image and at the same time being open to difference (Simmons, 2008; Firat and Dholakia, 2006). The postmodern consumers present instead a fragmented collage of multiple representations of selves and preferences (Simmons, 2008). This kind of appreciation and tolerance of difference does not mean the consumers have no preferences and that everything goes but the postmodern consumers support the tolerance and respect for difference (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). It is recognised that there are many ways of living and being instead of just one (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). Consumption has become the way the consumers construct social images to become more desirable in various situations (Simmons, 2008).

Although the postmodern consumers are individuals and want to show their uniqueness, they are still looking for a social link. The social link is achieved in so-called tribes or micro-groups, in which the consumers share strong emotional links, subculture and a vision of life. The consumers in these tribes stay together through shared emotions, styles of life and consumption practices. The postmodern consumer values products not for their use value but for their linking value, which supports their interaction in the tribe. The consumers belong to several tribes and in these different tribes the consumer can have several different roles. (Cova, 1996)

4.4 Marketing in the postmodern world

Modern marketing saw marketing answer the needs of the consumers and marketers to act on their own. Postmodern marketing has quite the opposite perspective seeing companies and consumers working together creating needs and desires of and for human life and life meanings. In postmodern marketing, marketing cannot be detached from the consumers.

Where customer satisfaction was the goal of modern marketing in postmodern marketing the goal is consumer empowerment where the consumers use marketing in constructing their communities with particular ways of life. (Firat and Dholakia, 2006)

Postmodern marketing is interested in dealing with the customer as an individual and retaining existing customers, products or services. Where modern marketing was interested in the mass or big segments of consumers, postmodern marketing is about the uniqueness and diversity of each individual. (Brown, 1993)

The postmodern consumers don't have the commitment to be part of big projects and universal images but instead they are looking for different and local experiences. They are not looking for finished products but they want to be part of the creation of the process and experience. Marketing in the postmodern world has to let the consumer participate into the experience and not just target consumers with products (Cova, 1996; Firat and Dholakia, 2006). The marketing messages need to be one-to-one and not aimed at big masses. (Cova, 1996)

The postmodern consumers insist on experience-based and interactive marketing (Cova, 1996). In these postmodern conditions technology and especially internet presented itself as the answer to the problems of modern marketing (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). The exchange of information and the two-way communication between one-to-one or many-to-many is abled through the internet. Internet also makes it easier to create hyperrealities to market (Cova, 1996). Internet enables marketers to create and share meanings to the postmodern consumer and through the Internet the consumers are able to express, define and differentiate themselves to those that matter through their consumption (Simmons, 2008)

Firat and Dholakia (2006) describe that postmodern marketing should develop collaborative rather than managerial modes of marketing. What this means is that companies should collaborate with the consumer communities as a partner in constructing their modes of life. Marketing would act as a coordinator and facilitator of the efforts of the members.

Firat and Dholakia (2006) describe postmodern marketing to go towards diffuse marketing where consumers and marketers with their increasing interchange blend into one. In the end every single consumer is a marketer through their creation of desires to be experienced as modes of living.

5. Research on blogging, blogs and bloggers

In the next sections, some of the existing research on blogging will be presented. This is not supposed to be an exhaustive list of the past research but to give an idea of what have been some of the findings in studies related to the research questions. Research has especially concentrated on the motivations to blog and the forms of gratitude gained from blogging. Other topics have been self-presentation, self-image and image management in blogs. In the interest of this research I will present one study, which specifically concentrated on the issue of using bloggers in a marketing campaign. In the last section, I will present a few studies on how Bourdieu's theory of capital and the theory of social capital have been used in the context of blogging and social media.

5.1 Motivation to blog and gained gratifications

Researchers have been interested already in the past about why bloggers blog. This has been studied especially from the perspective of motivation and gratification. In the following sections I will present some of these studies and their findings.

Nardi, et al. (2004) studied why bloggers blog from the perspective of motivation. They found five motivators for blogging: documenting one's life, providing commentary and opinions, expressing deeply felt emotions, articulating ideas through writing, and forming and maintaining community forums. Huang, et al. (2007) continued on their findings to create a framework for understanding the relationships among blogging motivations and behaviours. They conclude that blogging is driven by the motivations of self-expression, life documenting and commenting. Content gathering was found to be motivated by commenting, forum participation and information seeking.

Using the theory of reasoned action Hsu and Lin (2008) studied the motives of people to participate in blog activities. Not surprisingly, they found blogging need to be perceived enjoyable for people to engage in blogging. Other important motives were helping others through their blog and obtaining an online reputation through the sharing of information. Also bloggers wanted to identify themselves with the community and gain a sense of belonging through the blog.

A bit different perspective on understanding blogging was taken by Sepp, et al. (2011) in their study on gratifications gained from blogging. Using gratifications theory perspective they categorised the gratifications found in previous research (Stafford, et al., 2004) into three gratification types: content, process and social gratifications. In their research on Estonian fashion bloggers they found three content gratifications: emotion management, self-improvement and enjoyment; six content gratifications: life-documenting, commenting, promotion, advertising, entertaining others, enlightening others and six social gratifications: discussion, communication, finding friends, image management, vanity and getting support. They found vanity to be an important gratification for bloggers, i.e. the attention they get from the readers and other bloggers including status. The blog audience needed to be big enough to satisfy one's vanity. Chung and Kim (2008) studied the gratifications gained from blogging by cancer patients and their companions. For them blogs were especially important resources for getting information and for information sharing as well as for emotion management. Emotion management appeared in the blogs as sharing frustration through the blog and the importance of information as linking and getting links to articles and other information resources.

5.2 Identity, self-presentation and impression management in blogging

The motives and gratifications gained from blogging have been linked to self-presentation and impression management. Internet and blogging has offered an interesting field to study these topics.

Schau and Gilly (2003) studied how self-presentation strategies are used in personal web spaces. They conclude that consumers consciously consider brands' symbolic values before posting them to their personal website and that it is possible to self-present multiple me's through online websites although these "selves" are consistent to some extent with the real life self. Continuing from Schau and Gilly's (2003) research Kretz (2010) studied the self-digitalisation in fashion blogs. Kretz also found proof of the real life self-presentational goals to be often translated into the virtual web space. This kind of self-consistency is pursued especially in professional and expert blogs when ingratiation is pursued when wanting to create an idealised character. Kretz describes four options for self-digitalisation depending on the authenticity and likeness of the real self and the digital self.

Sima and Pugsley (2010) studied the Chinese bloggers and how through blogging they construct their symbolic identity and self-presentation around individualism and consumerism. They found the main motivations for blogging to be self-expression and social interaction through commenting, interlinking and mentioning.

Trammell and Keshelashvili (2004) studied so called A list bloggers meaning the most popular blogs and how they employ self-presentation strategies in their blogs. They found the A list bloggers to demonstrate their competence through presenting their intellectual abilities without being boastful and often praised others rather than criticised. The bloggers presented themselves as likeable and competent by using the ingratiation strategy, which includes opinion agreement, favours, compliments and understanding. To be likeable the bloggers also linked back to others linking to their blog.

Huffaker, et al. (2005) studied blogging and how adolescents construct their identity in blogs. They found that adolescents use blogs to present online identity but also to express their ideas, experiences and feelings. In their study they didn't find signs of multiple online identities but on the contrary through language the adolescents were creating a consistent public identity, a cohesive representation of who they are.

5.3 Using bloggers in marketing campaigns

Kozinets, et al. (2010) studied the strategies of bloggers when acting as a marketing agent for a company and at the same time as a trusted community member. They found three services the bloggers performed for the marketer: 1. Communicating the marketing message 2. Putting her/his own reputation and relationships on the line and to the marketing message 3. Changing the marketing message with substance and language to a more believable and relevant form for the community. Kozinets, et al. found the bloggers to perform four different communication strategies differing between being implicit or explicit about the blog post being commercial and whether communicating individualistic or communal orientations.

5.5 Theory of capital and social capital in blogging

Bourdieu's theory on capital has not been used extensively in the research on blogs, blogging and bloggers. Actually, during the research only one article that specifically uses Bourdieu's

theory to understand blogging was found. However, when widening our perspective, the theory on social capital has been used in the research on facebook and other social media forms.

Chittenden (2010) studied teen fashion bloggers and how they build their identities through their blogs. Bourdieu's theory of capital was used to understand the actions that take place in the blogosphere between blogs and bloggers. Chittenden sees the interaction such as commenting between bloggers as a process to increase the value of their social capital. Fashion blogs where the bloggers display their clothes and accessories are a visual representation of the bloggers cultural capital. Wearing clothing by a certain brand affords the bloggers popularity, which gives them social power meaning social capital. This is how cultural capital (brand) is transformed into social capital. Popular teens are seen to have large amounts of social capital and when they like a certain product or a brand the other owners of these products and brands increase their cultural capital. This is seen to happen in the blogs by commenting, linking or posting. The followers of the bloggers were seen to share many characteristics with the blogger, which was seen to validate the blogger's cultural capital (the displayed products in the blog). The teen fashion bloggers said that comments and their big amount validate their blog and through this their self-presentation.

Ko and Kuo (2009) studied self-disclosure in blogging and its' effect on social capital and through this the effect on subjective well-being. They found that the more the bloggers self-disclose the more they will gain social capital through the more tightly knit social relationships. The amount of social capital was also found to have a positive effect on the perceived quality of life through the social bonds and social integration.

Social capital in a broader term than specifically defined in Bourdieu's theory has been used especially in the research on facebook (Johnston, et al., 2010; Burke, et al., 2011; Ellison, et al., 2007; Valenzuela, et al., 2009). In these studies the findings implicated that facebook usage correlated positively with the amount of social capital.

6. Theoretical framework for the study

In the second chapter the theories of Pierre Bourdieu on the logic of practice and the theory of power as capital were presented. Consumer culture theory was presented in the third chapter and the fourth chapter focused on the issues of postmodern marketing. The fifth chapter presented some of the past research on blogging. Next, I will describe shortly how these different theories and concepts create the theoretical framework for this study.

Bourdieu's theory on capital will be used to understand the reasons for blogging and the motives behind the practices. The theory on capital is especially suitable for understanding the negotiations in the blog about the bloggers position in the social world. Bourdieu's view on practices will be applied to blogging practices and to how through these practices capital is created, exchanged and transformed.

The chapters on consumer culture theory and postmodern marketing outline the basis for the theoretical framework of this research.

As in consumer culture theory we are interested in the practices the bloggers practice when negotiating the social relationships, roles and situations as well as in how the consumption of symbolic and material resources on the blog is part of this negotiation. I described the four research streams of consumer culture theory defined by Arnould and Thompson (2005). My research will contribute especially to the research stream of consumer identity projects.

We described above postmodern marketing of which blogs are a great example. On the internet brands have a great chance to create hyperrealities around their brands. On the other hand, bloggers have a great chance to create value and define their self-images by consuming these hyperrealities by blogging about their possessions. Postmodern marketing is all about participating the consumers and not bombarding consumers with mass slogans. This is why companies are utilising external bloggers for example to create contests for the blog followers and to participate consumers with blog commenting and to make the marketing feel more individual.

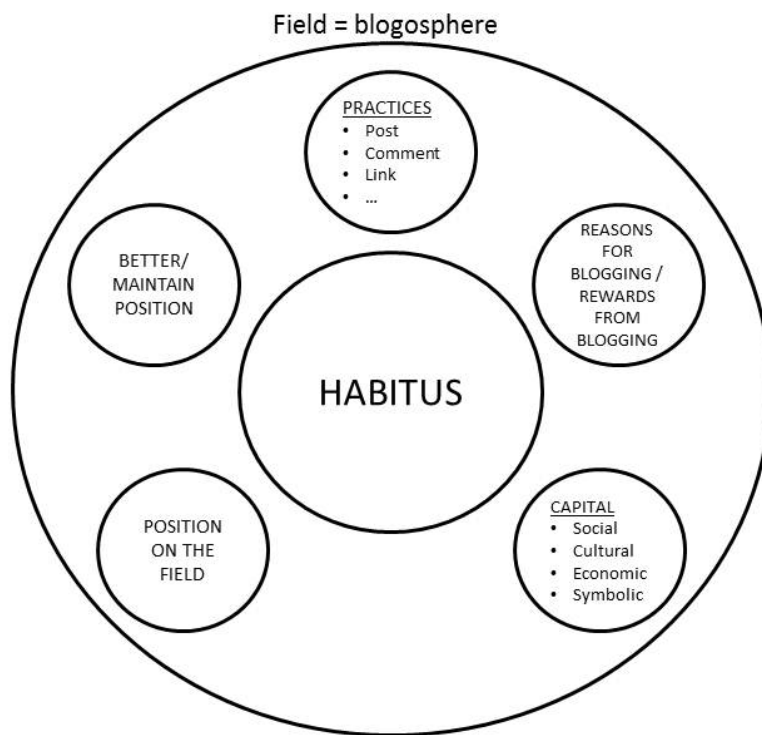


Figure 1: The theoretical framework

Figure 1 describes the theoretical framework for this study. Starting from the Practices, blogger's common practices in blogs are creating and posting a blog post including pictures and text, commenting other blogs, answering the questions from blog readers and linking blog posts by other bloggers.

The reasons behind the bloggers practices are for example for self-presentation (Sima and Pugsley, 2010) and status or reputation (Hsu and Lin, 2008; Sepp, et al., 2011), to create relationships and interact with other people (Sima and Pugsley, 2010) and to identify with the community (Hsu and Lin, 2008).

These perceived gains or rewards from blogging and at the same time reasons for blogging can be categorised further into the different forms of capital defined by Bourdieu (1986; 1990): social capital, cultural capital, economic capital and symbolic capital.

Blogger either is satisfied or unsatisfied with her/his position in the blogosphere (field), where she/he is positioned according to the amount and distribution of the different sorts of capital she/he possesses. If the blogger is unsatisfied, she/he will try to better her/his position by obtaining more capital or if satisfied try to maintain the same amount and distribution of the capital she/he possesses (Wacquant, 2006). The distribution of the capital and the position in the field affects the following practices.

Habitus gives the principles on how to behave (Bourdieu, 1977) in the blog and blogosphere. These ways of doing have been structured in the past (Swartz, 1997) but habitus is constantly reinforced or modified according to new experiences (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This means that according to what happens in the blog and blogosphere the blogger learns new practices and ways of doing or reinforces the old practices. Habitus is pictured in the middle as the biggest circle since habitus is what guides our practices and affects our behaviour at all times although on an unconscious level.

7. Research methodology

This study is interested in how through practices bloggers construct the social world and create meanings. This is why qualitative research methods were chosen. Quantitative research is interested in explanation, testing of hypothesis and statistical analysis, whereas we want to understand and interpret. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

In the following chapters the chosen methodology for the study will be discussed. Starting with hermeneutics and continuing with hermeneutical analysis we conclude by describing the research process.

7.1 Hermeneutics

Interpretivism and constructionism are interested in subjective and shared meanings. We are interested in the meanings the bloggers give to their practices, how they are shared, and how the bloggers as individuals or groups understand these social situations. Interpretivism and constructionism see that the access to these individually constructed realities is through language and shared meanings. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008)

Hermeneutic philosophy sees all understanding as linguistic (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). The only way to understand the individually constructed realities is through interaction between the interviewer and the respondent (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Experience is filtered through language and encoded and communicated in speech and dialogue. Stories are the linguistic form through which lived experiences can be expressed (Ricoeur, 1991). It is not to get inside another person and relive her/his experiences to understand them but to come to an understanding about the matter (Gadamer, 1989). This process of coming into understanding is verbal and through language the understanding and agreement can take place between two people (Gadamer, 1989). Hermeneutic philosophy is about interpretation of understanding (Gadamer, 1989). Hermeneutic philosophy is not restricted to any specific research method (Arnold and Fischer, 1994).

7.2 Hermeneutical analysis

The ontological status of understanding in hermeneutic philosophy is according to Gadamer (1989) about coming into understanding. Understanding is always seen in interpretations.

The interpretation can take two different stances, which will be described in the next section. Then special features of hermeneutical analysis will be described and also how understanding is achieved in hermeneutical analysis.

7.2.1 The two interpretive stances of hermeneutics

Ricoeur (1981) describes two different interpretive stances in hermeneutics. The first stance is restoration of a meaning in the message given to the interpreter. Important in the restoration of the meaning is listening and taking as much as possible from the message in the form it is given, although the meaning can still lie deeper than what can seem apparent on the surface. This type of hermeneutics can also be called hermeneutics of faith.

The second stance is demystification of meaning. In this type of hermeneutics the meaning is seen as disguised from the interpreter and it can be described as skepticism towards the given. The symbols are seen as cues to the underlying meanings. (Ricoeur, 1981)

The difference between these two types of stances in hermeneutics does not refer to the text itself but to the stance the interpreter takes. It is about whether the interpreter sees the process of interpreting as distilling the intended meanings or discovering the hidden meanings from the false consciousness. (Josselson, 2004)

In this research hermeneutics of faith will be utilised. This means that the informant is taken as the expert of her/his own life and her/his own experiences and trying to describe these as best she/he is able. Meanings will be taken in a relatively transparent manner although many researchers have recognised that interpretation happens on every stage of the analysis (Josselson, 2004).

7.2.2 Features of hermeneutical analysis

Autonomy of the text:

The text can be seen as autonomous meaning once it has been created the interpretation can be something that the author had not on the first hand intended but something unnoticed can

be discovered. On the other hand, the text is not autonomous from its creator when the interpreter is trying to find the authors unique perspective. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994)

Pre-understanding

(Pre-) understanding is something that is emphasised in the hermeneutic philosophy. The (pre-) understanding, or sometimes called prejudice, means that the interpreter and the interpreted are linked by tradition. Tradition means for example the accumulated beliefs, theories, myths and practices that the interpreter has beforehand. These traditions are often taken as granted and usually go unnoticed. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994)

Philosophical hermeneutics emphasises that this kind of understanding actually helps the interpreter rather than constrains, since this prejudice actually enables us to make sense of the events and find meaning in the words and actions of others. We should try and make use of the (pre-) understanding rather than try to put it aside (Arnold and Fischer, 1994), since in a situation where we have no knowledge of the experience or situation we cannot speak of understanding (Bernstein, 1983).

At the same time we should be aware of our (pre-) understandings and not approach text directly with the (pre-) understandings. By staying open to the text and acknowledging our own bias, the text can present itself and its truth against our own (pre-) understandings. (Gadamer, 1989; Bernstein, 1983).

In this research this kind of (pre-) understanding is made into use and openly acknowledged. The researcher of this study has over six years of experience in reading blogs and also having his own photo diary –blog while working and studying abroad. We believe this kind of understanding only enables the researcher to truly understand the complexity of the blogosphere and the practices. The understanding gives excellent background information when preparing for the interviews and getting the informants to discuss their experiences in depth.

Hermeneutic circle:

The hermeneutic circle means that when analysing text, the text is understood through small elements in the text and at the same time the small elements are understood through the whole text. When analysing specific elements over again with a slightly different perspective

on the whole, little by little a more integrated and comprehensive picture of the small elements and the whole text emerges. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994; Bernstein, 1983)

Fusion of Horizon:

The horizon is the interpreters (pre-) understanding when analysing the text. When the interpreter changes perspective through the hermeneutic circle the interpreter's horizon changes. It is important to change the horizon and not to take what is first at hand to be able to understand. The fusion of the horizons of the text and the interpreter's is when the interpreter is able to make sense of the text and (pre-) understanding becomes understanding. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994)

7.3 Research process

7.3.1 Data collection

Six bloggers were interviewed for this research. The respondents were informed that the interviews are made anonymous by changing the real names in the final study. This was done to make the respondents discuss more openly about their personal experiences and because few of the respondents specifically requested to be presented anonymously. Four of the bloggers were chosen through snowball sampling according to the recommendations of two other bloggers known beforehand. This was done to find bloggers who would be open to share their experiences and be talkative so that the gathered data would be as rich as possible. All of the interviewed bloggers were unknown beforehand to ensure an objective point of view as possible. One of the bloggers was found by a hyperlink in another blog that was interviewed and then contacted and interviewed to see how these connections between the bloggers affect their practices and experiences.

| Blogger: | Work: | Blog Category: | Unique visitors/month: | Age | Time of blogging | Interview length: |
|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----|------------------|-------------------|
| Tuomas | Online Marketing Specialist | Fashion/Lifestyle | 4000-5000 | 25 | 7 years | 72 min |
| Paula | Sales Assistant | Lifestyle | 3000-9000 | 20 | 9 years | 71 min |
| Eerika | Communication Specialist | Interior design | 8000-13000 | 32 | 4,5 years | 60 min |
| Petri | Marketing Coordinator | Fashion | 500 | 28 | 4 months | 92 min |
| Maija | Stylist/Visualist | Interior design | 20 000 | 40 | 3,5 years | 64 min |
| Tuija | Student | Food/Well-being | 500 | 22 | 4 months | 90 min |

Table 1: Respondent information

Two of the bloggers were male and four were women. The aim was to interview both male and female bloggers to make sure the gender would not affect the findings.

Three of the interviewed bloggers categorised themselves as fashion/lifestyle blogs, two as interior design focused blogs and one as food/well-being blog. Research did not focus on a certain blog category to make sure the data would reflect the varying motivations and practices in blogging.

Four of the interviewed bloggers had blogged for several years from three and a half years to nine years. Two of the interviewed bloggers had started to blog during the year of the interviews, around 4 months before the interviews took place. This was done to get a fresh point of view on the reasons why start blogging and how the different practices would differ in the early stage of blogging compared to the bloggers who have blogged for years. As the second research question focused on the issue of companies utilising external bloggers in their marketing campaigns, these two quite new bloggers were also new with the company cooperation projects making them a good sample to understand the view on the cooperation projects when just starting to blog.

7.3.2 Interview structure

In this section the interviewing process and used elicitation tactics will be discussed in more detail.

Interviewing and question categories

Five of the interviews were conducted in a restaurant or a cafe. The restaurants and the cafes were previously familiar to the respondents and were chosen by them. One of the interviews was conducted at the home of the respondent.

The interviewing tactics followed the guiding lines by Grant McCracken's (1988) *The Long Interview*. Narrative interviewing enabled the interviewee to produce stories (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) narratives are always about human action and experience and narratives are one of the fundamental ways we organise, explain and understand our life and social realities and stories. In narrative interviewing, there are no prior hypotheses to be tested but the idea is to let the interviewee to talk openly (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). To enable the storytelling and discussion like interviews open-ended interview with question categories were used without predefined questions. According to the research questions and the literature review five categories were created that would enable to tackle the research questions. After the first two interviews the categories were reiterated according to the initial findings from the first two interviews. The categories were designed as broad as possible to enable rich descriptions of experiences (Hirsijärvi and Hurme, 1982). The final categories used can be found below:

1. Start of the blog
2. Blogging practices
3. Blog self vs. real self
4. Blog followers/readers
5. Company marketing campaigns

The aim of the interviews was to get the bloggers to discuss and describe in a narrative style their blogging. Therefore grand-tour questions such as "Can you describe how you construct a blog post?" were used to get rich data of the bloggers practices. During the interviews the interviewees were encouraged to discuss further certain specific terms and issues used by the interviewee with floating questions such as "what do you mean by X?". In the end of a question category if the answers had not gone deep enough, planned prompts such as "what do you think is the difference between you as a blogger and the blogger X if he is getting a lot of comments?" were used. At all times the interviewee was allowed to take the interview to the direction she/he wanted and was encouraged to talk as much as possible. (McCracken, 1988)

Autodriving

During all the interviews a laptop with the bloggers blog was displayed and used as elicitation material. This is called autodriving, where auto means self and the response got from the interviewee is driven directly by the stimuli from her/his own life (Heisley and Levy, 1991) – from blogging. With autodriving it is easier for the interviewed person to make the actions meaningful for an outsider (Gould, et al. 1974) and communicate about themselves and their actions in more detail (Heisely and Levy, 1991). The autodriving method is based on projective and visual research methods and has been used in consumer research (Heisley and Levy, 1991). Autodriving can help the interviewee to remember experiences better, help articulate better when it is hard to express their thinking verbally and when talking about sensitive issues (Rook, 2006).

The laptop with the blog turned out to be an excellent discussion elicitation tool. The bloggers seemed to enjoy discussing and showing examples of their stories by referring to certain blog posts or other things in the blog and many things seemed to pop into their minds when scrolling down their blog posts. It seemed that many things would have gone unmentioned without autodriving.

7.3.3 Data analysis

All the interviews were conducted within a time span of two weeks with transcribing the interviews from Finnish to English usually on the day following the interview. Transcribing was done as soon as possible to make sure the interviews were fresh in mind when transcribing.

The length of the interviews varied from 60 minutes to 92 minutes (see Table1.). Altogether 55 pages of transcribed data was gathered with approximately 35340 words.

After transcribing, all the interviews were read three times making notes while reading. The aim was to find similarities from the theories discussed earlier and to understand each blogger as a whole.

After reading the transcriptions, an excel-chart was created to separate different practices, gathering similar practices by the different bloggers into one place with quotes by the bloggers describing the practices. After this, the practices were gone through one blogger at a

time not forgetting the whole interview with the blogger. After this notes related to the theories discussed earlier were made relating to the different practices with an eye on the first notes made after transcribing.

8. Research findings

Following the two research questions, in this chapter the findings will be presented. Chapter 8.1 will focus on research question one, the blogging practices. Chapter 8.2 will focus on the research question number two regarding the company cooperation projects.

8.1 Blogging practices

From the dataset, six categories of practices were identified that were especially part of exchanging and gaining different forms of capital. The first category is blogging in a broad term meaning the creation of a blog post and blogging related other tasks such as photographing for a blog post. The second is reading other blogs. The third category, comments, means posting comments to blogs, getting comments from the readers and answering blog comments. The fourth category is linking, which includes hyperlinking to another blog in a blog post or having a permanent list of hyperlinks, called “blogroll”, to different blogs on the sidebar of the blog. The fifth practice category is checking statistics, meaning checking google analytics or other service providers about how many visitors the blog has and from where the blog readers are coming to the blog. The sixth category is finding out who the readers are. These different practices were mentioned by all the respondents and clearly had significance to the bloggers.

8.1.1 Blogging

When discussing blogging in a broad term, the reasons behind starting a blog and everything that goes into creating a blog post, interesting issues and practices were discovered. In the following chapters the varying reasons to start a blog, the pressure to blog, the importance of pictures, the blogger’s privacy and blogging for advancing one’s career will be discussed.

8.1.1.1 The start of blogging

The reasons to start blogging differed widely among the respondents. When for some it was an open diary for recording the life events, for others it was a channel to upload ideas or create a portfolio for future career moves or even to learn to use the computer better.

As *Paula* describes, the reason behind starting to blog was a big change in life – moving from one city to another and leaving old friends behind. For *Paula* blogging offered a good way to keep old friends back home up-to-date on what was going on in her life and keep in touch.

“When I moved from another city to Helsinki I started to do it as a diary kind of for my old friends and I thought that since we don't have time to call each other every day and when there is something new and everything, so I thought that it's an easier way to keep in touch with them..” -Paula

In *Paula's* case blogging was a way to make sure the social relationships and the network of friends back home would not be lost. With the blog *Paula* made sure her friends would not forget her. Blogging was a way to maintain the social capital once gained and not to be lost due to living in another city.

For many blogging was not only a hobby to spend time but a tool to learn something new that could also be utilised later in life. As *Eerika* describes in the following passage, blogging was a channel to share inspiration, but also something to learn about and develop herself with:

“It started from that we had been looking for an apartment with my husband and I was thinking about it a lot so I needed like a channel where to put it and about the ideas and why not then blog. And it was back then kind of young the whole blogging, so I thought that I could try it and professionally, since I am writing so then I thought like a bit different way of expressing.. since usually it may be more like this corporate communication I'm doing, so this is like I was interested in the way of writing too and how I develop in it.” -Eerika

This kind of learning was common among the respondents whether in blog writing as in the case of *Eerika* or then learning to take better pictures as in the case of *Tuija*:

“I have never had a DSLR (Digital single-lens reflex camera) before so it started with me buying a DSLR during Christmas because of a trip. I then learned to take photos and through this blog I have learned to take better photos.. and I want to learn to take photos.. really nice pictures..” -Tuija

Also other respondents (*Petri, Maija*) mentioned learning to write and taking pictures as something they wanted to achieve with blogging. Learning new skills and knowledge can be seen as the embodied state of cultural capital where one invests time and effort to gain something, which then can be utilised in something else (Bourdieu, 1986). In *Eerika's* case the

new skills of blog writing are a clear advantage in her career in the field of communication as well as in the case of *Tuija* who wants to work in the field of communication after graduation. With these skills the position of these bloggers on the job market may be better and at the same time the access to economic capital.

8.1.1.2 Pressure to blog regularly

All except one of the bloggers discussed the stress of blogging and the pressure they felt about the need to write a new post after a certain time had passed without a new post.

“I just thought that I have to write because I haven’t written in a month.. but then again my readers are used to that there may be a month that they don’t hear from me.. I write or I don’t even write that I will not be writing for a while but then they of course write back like where have you gone.. help what has happened..” –Paula

When the bloggers described the pressure they were feeling, it was clear that they felt they were obliged to blog to keep the readers happy and make sure they would not abandon the blog. At the same time the bloggers seemed to enjoy getting comments asking what has happened and when the next blog post would come. These questions created a feeling of being needed as if the blog readers were dependent on the blog and the blogger. It seemed to make the bloggers feel important. The bloggers were also worried about not wanting to just post something for the sake of posting but wanted to provide quality for the readers. This was clearly a part of building the wanted and consistent self-image in the blog.

For half of the respondents blogging had changed into something they were not enjoying at times and had had to ask themselves whether they should stop blogging.

“At times I have been like now I will stop this.. if there is no motivation like the personal motivation and excitement for blogging.. you really can’t blog... if you do it because of reasons from outside I personally feel that it is impossible. It has to be the burn inside you and sometimes it kind of wears off and I feel that I will stop this, but now that I have had this kind of back and forth motion going on I have decided that I will not stop it but then I’ll just be a few months pretty quiet and I’m not going to take stress about it because at some point I did.. like OH NO! now they are going to be mad at me because I’m not updating and then my 14000 unique

followers are not anymore 14000. Now it doesn't have that much meaning. The people who are there are there and those who are not interested anymore are not.” –Eerika

Especially Eerika and Maija mentioned the whole blogging to be quite narcissistic. It seemed that on one level they felt that they were blogging for themselves and blogging for self to be the right and approved way of doing it but at the same time the actions in the blogosphere were often performed to satisfy the readers.

It was clear that the number of readers was important to the bloggers although the importance seemed to have changed during the years of blogging. The amount of readers and the stress of losing readers was a clear representation of social capital and blogging a practice to maintain the amount of social capital gained through regular blogging.

8.1.1.3 Pictures

When blogging in the form of both text and pictures usually created by the blogger him/herself, text seemed to be the less important form of content at least for the bloggers interviewed in this research. Every one of the bloggers said they to put a lot of effort into taking pictures and often pictures were the starting point for a new blog post. Pictures were clearly seen as a representation of the bloggers identity and often a critical criteria for evaluating a blog post and the blogger.

“Maybe it's because I would prefer to look at beautiful pictures.. food, there the pictures have a big meaning and maybe I think that if I am looking at some food blog with really disgusting food and somebody googles you and they look like vomit. I think like there is a person with a blog full of vomit looking food I would never want that..” –Eerika

The blog is clearly seen as something open to everybody to read and everybody to judge and make their own conclusions of the blogger. With this in the background the bloggers create a certain image of themselves with the blog where pictures seem to be an effective way.

“With pictures you can fake a lot.. it's not like your life is really what it looks like in the blogs. You get a really rosy picture about everything, but really the food may not always be like it is in the pictures.” – Tuija

As *Tuija* describes, bloggers are consciously faking or even lying about their lives through their pictures to create and support the wanted image.

It seemed that the pictures are also often seen as a representation of the bloggers professional capability. The quality of the pictures was seen to represent the skills and talent that the blogger had regarding taking photos and those skills seemed to be valuable. At the same time good quality pictures were also easily interpreted to mean that the blogger had a good quality expensive camera as *Maija* describes:

"I had not even taken any photos with a DSLR camera.. haha.. so it began really from scratch.. I was looking at these young bloggers and blogs and when you see those you are like AH! They have a certain way of taking photos, so that you can see that they have been taking photos for a while and they have owned DSLR for like five years and probably it's some pretty good one and they really know what they are doing" –Maija

Pictures seemed to be an interesting form of cultural capital in the sense that a lot of time was devoted to taking pictures and the pictures are owned by the blogger, which is the objectified state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The direct possibility to convert the pictures into economic capital may be complicated. It is evident that with the pictures the bloggers can be directly compared and assessed against each other like the institutional state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). With the pictures the bloggers are also managing their self-image and creating one that they believe will please the readers and bring more followers. Although the link to economic capital may not be direct, at least it seems that pictures as cultural capital can be transformed into social capital with the growing number of blog followers, which then again can be transformable into economic capital.

8.1.1.4 Privacy and identity management in blogging

Something all the bloggers had had to decide at one point of their blogging was how much of themselves they want to share with the world. Some had very clear rules not to include their family members or friends in the pictures and to try to keep pictures of themselves also to the minimum or completely absent. On the other hand, many of the bloggers blogged with their own names and faces appearing in almost every blog post. Some had put more effort into planning how open they are and some had just started to blog without thinking about the privacy issues and their consequences.

Almost all of the bloggers had noticed from their own blog consumption that the blogs they were most interested in and kept following were open at least to the extent of sharing the bloggers picture and some everyday life related facts. This personal information made relating to the blogger easier when they found similarities with themselves and the blogger. Understanding blogging from their own blog consumption some of the bloggers had decided to share to some extent their personal information and pictures of themselves in the blog like Maija describes in the following passage:

"I am keeping my own life in the background but I have noticed that when you read blogs that are completely neutral. I feel that.. I like that when.. I notice that I like when the writer gives something of her/himself so if it's completely anonymous and just pictures of sofas and you know just picked from the web like just mass of pictures that is circling all around the web and saying wow this is nice. I'm not interested. I notice that when I have this certain personal connection to the writer that I know a bit like what age group the writer belongs to and you know that sort of stuff I feel then it's a lot more interesting so that's why I am keeping there all the time a bit of that.. but then I have noticed that if there really is everything like about their life and relationship stuff and everything and you know that they are really going through the stuff in their blogs then I feel like keep the distance.. I feel that it is nice to give something but not too much." -Maija

Also by blogging about certain topics and excluding others the bloggers were creating an image they wanted to be associated with. Few of the bloggers specifically mentioned not wanting to blog about certain products they found interesting because there were already so many other bloggers blogging about them. It seemed that through this the bloggers wanted to create a certain image of uniqueness and individuality.

"Let's say some product can be cool but then I'm like I have seen this in hundreds of different blogs in the last week so why would I write about it anymore.. it would not bring any more value.." -Tuomas

All but one blogger did not want to share negative issues or extremely intimate issues in their blogs. By excluding negative issues from the blog the bloggers wanted to create a positive image of themselves. This is quite evident in the following passage by Tuomas:

"Well of course in the blog you can see a very narrow part since I don't tell that I go to the toilet and go to the Tesco to buy a salad. So it's not the point. Of course, it only shows you one part of

my life but these days I feel that it tells quite a lot. These days it is really well in line that these are the things during a week that I am interested in and inspire me. So of course.. I don't find any reason to tell any negative personal stuff like if I would be fired from work or something like that. I keep the blog away from that part. I don't want to be associated with that.” –Tuomas

The bloggers were aware of the fact that by sharing intimate issues of themselves they were exposing themselves to the world and critique from the readers as *Paula* describes:

*“I mean you can't please everybody and then you need to be ready if you are ready to share your world with the whole world .. so you have to be ready to take the anonym (negative) comments..”
–Paula*

By being open the blogger is balancing between giving readers what they want and gaining more readers and on the other hand getting negative comments from some readers hurting the feelings and the self-image of the blogger.

It seemed that through their own experiences as blog readers the bloggers knew they needed to be open and share intimate issues to some extent to gain the interest of the readers. At the same time choosing the topics to share they specifically created the image they wanted to give to the readers. By blogging about products and other topics other bloggers did not, the bloggers were trying to create an image of uniqueness. All this was done in order to gain more readers and social capital and to maintain the amount of readers they had at that moment.

8.1.1.5 Blog as a part of the CV

Almost all of the bloggers described their blog and blogging as something of a career-advancing tool. As discussed earlier, the bloggers knew they needed to a certain extent to discuss their personal life in their blog to keep the interest of the blog readers. At the same time they saw that in the blog there had to be their whole name and possibly their picture to be identifiable to further their careers.

“Well of course it's like.. I want to work in the creative industry and fashion, it (the blog) is my business card in a way. And I know the more it spreads the better my possibilities are career wise like hey this is the guy who has the respected blog. In theory I see it as a thing that can advance my career.” - Tuomas

“If not straight forward a job but in the sense of networking.. I want to change into a career in creative business so this is like part of my CV so let’s say if I send my job application the blog is one of the most highlighted things in it because I feel it tells about me so much and it shows what I can do and how I see things. I don’t think about the money but that right people would see me and get a good feeling and maybe help me with their networks.” –Tuomas

Tuomas describes his blog as a “business card “ and “part of my CV” as if the blog was a university diploma or a previous work experience. These terms really describe the blog as cultural capital, something *Tuomas* has spent time to create and with it can further his career to gain more economic capital. The blog readers with their social capital are seen as valuable resources in connecting him with other people with capital that they could use to further his career. Tuomas also described the reason for writing in English by saying that with English as the language more people could read his blog and again advance his career.

It was interesting to notice that for many of the bloggers the blog was the place where they were able to actually focus on the issues and topics they were interested in while working in other fields at the same time. *Tuomas* was interested in working in the fashion industry and *Tuija* in the well-being field, at the same time they were working or studying fields quite far away from their personal interests. Through the blog they were creating their CV or business card as *Tuomas* described from the field they were interested in working in. The blog was the place where they were able to show their interest, knowledge and skills from the field where they really wanted to work in. They saw their blog as a way to get to know people from the fields where they wanted to work in and from which they did not have working experience or education.

8.1.2 Reading blogs

All but two of the respondents had read blogs actively for years before starting their own. Blogs seemed to be a valuable source of information and an inspiration for starting their own.

“And anyway back then I was reading blogs all the time so it was my first source of information like hypebeast and other blogs and for me I went daily to look and when I found something cool I was like I want to do this kind of blog and when I found something cool I was like I want to share this in my own channel.”. –Tuomas

By reading blogs the bloggers had noticed how other bloggers are blogging and what kind of things have an effect on the readers like *Maija* describes:

“Although I feel that by following some blogs you learn yourself.. you kind of.. I noticed that you know I was like “ahaa these pictures have a big effect” “ahaa I don’t know how to take photos, ahaaa!” and then I just took like a ready template from the blogger and then you try and mold it from the point zero.” - Maija

The blogs read were often used as a reference and something the bloggers compared their own blog with and even noticed to be writing in the same way:

“I have read for a long period of time these sort of well-being blogs that are not only about food but well-being.. like lifestyle blogs so the way they are written I have really absorbed the style so when I write I notice that I am writing in a similar way..” - Tuija

By reading blogs the bloggers have learned the way the blog posts are structured: what kind of pictures should be taken and how to write. The bloggers were imitating to some extent the blogs they were reading and taking the best practices to their own blogging. This imitation and learning can be thought as the Bourdieu’s (1977) construction of habitus, the ways of doing. After years of reading blogs the bloggers know what kind of pictures to take and how to write, most likely they know what kind of topics are suitable and unsuitable for a blog. Habitus has absorbed these practices and ways of doing during their years as readers and now habitus is guiding how they construct their blog.

8.1.3 Comments

Blogs have a section for comments after each blog post, where the readers are able to comment and ask questions. These comments enable two-way communication and make blogging interactional. Practices found during the interviews related to comments were getting comments, answering back to the received comments and commenting other blogs. In the next sections, these practices will be dealt with individually.

Getting comments

All respondents mentioned enjoying getting comments but at the same time a few bloggers explained their blog not to be a place for comments and discussion. On the other hand few of

the bloggers specifically explained how through certain type of blog posts they were proud to have woken a lot of discussion. The bloggers seemed to know how to design a blog post to get comments if that was their intention.

Few of the bloggers explained their lack of comments, by getting many comments to be a thing of the younger bloggers since they discuss nonsense in their blogs as *Tuomas* and *Eerika* explain:

"Well I dont write anything about going to bars so I dont get a lot of comments" –Tuomas

"I really think it's about the blog genre (getting lot of comments).. so like teenager blogs and fashion blogs where the person is more in the front and her/his personality is really in the front.." –Eerika

Interestingly Tuomas even felt proud of the fact that he doesn't get a lot of comments:

"Im kind of proud of it since I can see there are a lot of followers and they are not commenting so they have to be satisfied at least when talking about the Finnish readers.. Everything is always OK when people are not saying anything.. When something is wrong then they start to talk.." –Tuomas

Tuomas is taking the lack of comments as verification for his blog – as something telling him that everything is fine. By looking at the visitor statistics, he can still see that there are people coming to his blog so he must be doing a good job although the visitors are not commenting. *Tuomas* seemed to see himself in a powerful position in the blogosphere, which was supported with the lack of comments. From his own blog consumption he had noticed many blogs he looked up to being left without comments and then again trivial blogs to have long discussions in the comment section.

The ways to increase the amount of comments and waking up a conversation seemed to be clear to everybody. Being provocative, stating opinions as facts or asking questions with yes or no answers were some of the tactics used for getting comments.

"When following the blog world, there are most comments when there is a reason to say yes or no.. I just want to share good feelings it's not about waking a conversation like is this good or not." - Tuomas

"I know how I can get a lot of comments and achieve.. you can wake up a conversation by stating extremely strong opinions. That's the way to do it if you want to establish a comment war." - Maija

Only Paula described getting comments as something she tries to do from time to time:

"In the beginning I was doing like really all around posts but at some point I started to think that I have to have the courage to say my own point of view and then I said something in a really pushy kind of a way and then there came a lot of comments all kinds of.. so maybe in those situations I get like Yes! I made something happen." - Paula

Paula describes getting comments and starting a conversation in her blog as something that she feels that she has made something happen as if it was an accomplishment:

"Yeah like a reaction that people react then I get a feeling like I have done something that will wake up conversation.. - Paula

For Paula the comments and getting a reaction from the readers seemed to be a way of getting confirmation for her power that she has with the blog. The comments were a way to see that she was able to make people react and to see people were actually paying attention to her message. When comparing Tuomas' and Paula's blogs, Paula's blog is comprised of her everyday events whereas Tuomas concentrates in presenting selected personal interests. The different setups of their blogs may explain the difference between the meanings Tuomas and Paula give to the readers' comments.

Overall, this kind of strategy to increase the amount of comments was seen by most of the bloggers as a ridiculous game of collecting comments as if they were some sort of social media points. At the same time comments were clearly something the bloggers were paying a lot of attention to. It seemed to be embarrassing to openly seek for comments but at the same time comments were appreciated.

Getting negative comments was described as something the bloggers have got used to during the years but had in the beginning taken extremely personally. When talking about negative comments it was clear that the bloggers felt like sharing their world with the readers and negative comments stabbing directly into the bloggers heart. At the same time, the bloggers knew that they needed to be open to be able to get more followers and make the blog popular.

The bloggers needed to take the risk and open their life to the followers in order to gain more readers and social capital.

Commenting back

Commenting back to the blog comments was seen as something the bloggers were in a way obligated to do. It was seen as being nice to the readers, giving something back to them and at the same time a way to manage their own image. The bloggers referred to themselves as blog readers when thinking about the situation of commenting back. They remembered situations when they had commented another blogger and had not received an answer.

"I somehow feel that I don't anyway want to give a rude picture of myself. I mean the best thing is that I have a certain effect there so I feel it is stupid that if I get questions and comments and if I would never give them any attention I feel it's really kind of like hey I'm the king of the hill and thanks that you are here but don't be.. haha.. Sometimes it is kind of funny to answer the questions but I feel that it is something I have to give back." -Maija

Maija seemed to see herself in a position of power and the readers to be followers who she needed to give attention. Not answering the readers' questions was like disregarding and underrating the followers.

The bloggers specified bloggers who get many comments to be in a situation where it is understandable not to answer every single one. For *Paula* answering the comments had already brought stress and made her feel bad about herself when not answering the comments.

"The kind of responsibilities we have and I have tried to answer all the comments but sometimes there are so many comments that it's really hard to handle. So when you have a lot of other stuff going on.. so I feel a bit bad." -Paula

It seemed that through commenting back to the comments the bloggers felt themselves being nice to the readers and keeping up the image of being a nice person. At the same time through the comments and giving the readers what they want the bloggers were able to maintain their social capital and keep the readers coming back to their blogs. The time spent on commenting back was already overwhelming to some such as for *Paula* but it was something they needed

to do. The time spent on commenting back can be seen as the economic capital spent on maintaining or gaining more social capital through the satisfied readers commenting and visiting the blog.

Commenting

It seemed that among the bloggers who had blogged for several years commenting other personally unknown bloggers was quite rare. They felt that to comment somebody the blog post needed to have something special and go over a certain point to earn their comments. They knew it would make the blogger feel good but did not want to comment with a random positive comment such as complimenting the pictures in the blog post. The comment would have needed to have something more. In the situation where the blogger knew the other blogger, comments were exchanged quite easily, more as a form of everyday chitchat.

The two respondents with only four months into blogging had a completely different perspective to commenting. *Tuija* saw commenting other bloggers as a good way of getting more visitors to her blog:

"I may have commented that "hey nice recipe" and said that I have put the recipe to my blog. I think that maybe the person may visit my blog. I have also commented in the comment section other people's comments like hey you could test this, when somebody has said something like you could try this juice recipe that I have done here. So then I have noticed that through that link a lot of people have come." –Tuija

Tuija goes even further by starting a discussion by advising other commentators on what to do in someone else's blog and through this trying to get the commentator and other readers to visit her blog.

It seemed that the bloggers who had blogged for several years saw commenting as not just an everyday thing. For them to comment an unknown blogger there needed to be something special. These bloggers had more followers and at the same time more social capital to lose than *Tuija*, which may explain the differences in their practices when it comes to commenting. It seems that the amount of capital, determined the practices of commenting. For a new comer in the blogosphere like *Tuija* with the smallest follower base, commenting was seen as a good way to promote her blog and gain more social capital through the increase in blog followers.

8.1.4 Linking

The bloggers interviewed found linking other blogs with hyperlinks as something they did when they found something interesting and thought it could be interesting to their readers. Through this kind of links, the bloggers had found the blogs they were now reading. This fact made the bloggers aware that by sharing a link to another blog they were at the same time sharing their social capital of readers through the link to the other blogger.

Maija and *Paula* discuss the battle over the social capital in the blogosphere and how through linking, social capital is shared. *Maija* described even getting requests from other bloggers to share links to their blog in her blog. *Paula* described another case of a person who she barely knew asking her in real life to post a link to her blog:

“But then again like just saying that can you link and even putting a message on facebook that remember to link me in the picture.. so Im like whaaaat! I think it’s a bit like they are using me since we are not even that good friends.. she was looking for more readers and many people have that certain way that they are really putting a lot of effort into getting more readers” -Paula

Linking was a way to share social capital but it was also a way to get verification for their blog and their self-image. The bloggers had noticed from the blog statistics that certain blogs brought readers to their blog. *Paula* describes one incident where she noticed from the blog statistics one of her favorite bloggers having a link to her blog:

“Kind of felt like help.. and she put a message saying I have been following you and I did not know she was following me and we had been following each other all a long and then I got like a feeling that’s cool it’s kind of the same as if somebody knows you like somebody that you admire.. If you really admire somebody a lot and then she/he is like yeah you are that person there and there and then I’m like WOW.” – Paula

In *Paula’s* case finding out that a person she admires was reading her blog was something that clearly verified her blog to herself to be something other than just a blog in a dozen.

Blogroll

Some of the bloggers had permanent links to other blogs on the sidebar of their blog called blogroll. The blogroll is usually comprised of the blogs the blogger reads and wants to recommend to the blog readers. The bloggers interviewed seemed to feel a certain need to return a favour when noticing that other bloggers have their blog in the blogroll. This kind of swapping of blogroll links was also described as cooperation, as *Tuomas* describes:

“Like this one blog has linked to my blog of course I have linked back because I think they are nice people and they have a nice blog.. then I thought like it’s a fair game that I link back..” – Tuomas

Although the links in the blogroll were done because of reciprocity some thought beyond that and tried to get their blog into the radar of other bloggers with a lot of readers and a certain kind of status in the blogosphere:

“Well they are the blogs I respect. I have not actively updated it (blogroll) just added some and in a way I have though that there are some blog idols that I have been a fan of and it would be cool to link to them and then they can see that from my blog there are people coming to theirs. – Tuomas

Tuomas describes in more detail the meaning of getting the attention of a “blog idol”:

“If I’m a fan of a blog or something and I am directing visitors through that (blogroll link) to their blog so through that he finds my blog and starts to be a fan of my blog so then I could reach that person.. I mean I wouldn’t comment the blog like come and check out my blog, but in this way it would be more natural.. and it would be.. like hmm.. well like how should I describe it like a partnership or something.. I give something and I get something back..” – Tuomas

The possibility of getting the attention of the “blog idols” was something valuable to *Tuomas*. *Tuomas* was clearly looking to get a piece of the “blog idols” social capital and get those readers to visit his. At the same time a blogroll link was seen as a more neutral way of promoting a blog compared to commenting and sharing a link in the comment section, which was seen by many of the bloggers as somewhat embarrassing. It seemed that all the bloggers had the same goal of getting more readers and the attention of a renowned blogger but the ways to do that were also important in creating the wanted self-image. Links in the comment section for example were seen as too desperate but a blogroll link as a more subtle way.

During the interviews, when looking at their blog and their blogroll from the laptop, many of the bloggers noticed that they had not given much attention to the blogroll and mentioned that they really should update their blogroll. At the same time they mentioned that updating the blogroll would bring problems in the sense of who to delete and who to add. Deleting a blog from the blogroll was seen to be quite rude and offensive towards the blogger being deleted.

“Now I should really update that .. there are a few that I am not following anymore but then it’s kind of like if I take one away.. it is a bit offensive towards that person.. if she/he visits my blog and it’s not there anymore or if she follows through google analytics where people are coming from and then all of sudden there are no people coming from my blog.” –Eerika

It’s clear that linking a blog in the blogroll created a certain kind of a relationship with the other blogger. Taking the blog away from the blogroll meant not only the lack of readers going to that blog but saying to the other blogger that there is something wrong with the blog.

For *Petri* who had only blogged for about four months the blogroll consisted of five blogs, which he said were blogs he doesn’t read but are there only for supporting his blogs image and brand:

“Well yeah there are the blogs I follow, which is in a way really misleading because I don’t follow them at all I mean really like follow follow but I have put some that are style wise close to my blog and they are all pretty much photograph blogs. So it’s maybe more to support my blog’s style or image.. it’s really just because of that and not to get visitors” –Petri

The blogs *Petri* has in his blogroll are clearly for building his and the blog’s image by the content those blogs have as if through the link they became part of his blog and his self-image.

It seems that links in blog posts are a clear way of sharing social capital and bringing new readers to other blogs. It is a way of creating new relationships for the bloggers and getting social capital at the same time. Blogroll has the same qualities as regular blog links but the permanent quality of a blogroll made bloggers even more careful of who to include in the blogroll. Also blogroll was used to support and create the image of the blog and the blogger.

8.1.5 Checking statistics

The blog platforms the interviewed bloggers are using provide a service to see how many readers the blog has and how the readers come to the blog. All of the bloggers knew approximately how many readers they have and admitted checking the statistics from time to time. The bloggers who had been writing the longest described the importance of the number of readers to have diminished during the years of blogging. In the beginning, many of them had a clear goal to increase the number of readers and said to have checked the statistics almost daily. As *Eerika* describes:

“Well actually previously I was really addicted to following the readers and always when there were more followers I was really excited.. Like cool again it has increased.. But now it's not really the thing since I am not following the numbers..” –Eerika

Eerika described her blogging to have changed after having a baby. Before this the number of readers had a big importance and seeing the number of followers grow was actually growing the hunger for more followers. This kind of enthusiasm towards following the number of readers, checking the statistics and trying to grow the number of followers in the beginning of blogging is quite evident in the case of *Petri* with only 4 months in blogging:

“Yeah I follow really actively how many readers and where the readers come from.. my blog is on blogger platform so there is everything ready and really good tools for following.. so yeah I have been following and it has grown a little like little by little so I just need to keep doing or I already from the beginning knew that I just need to do it systematically and long but it has been growing” –Petri

Checking the number of readers is a clear practice of defining the amount of social capital one has. The more readers, the bigger the network of people is and the more social capital one has, the better ones position in the blogosphere becomes. Interestingly, the importance of the amount of readers diminished during the time of blogging. This may be due to having achieved certain a follower base and the practices changing more into the direction of maintaining the amount of readers than growing it. Another reason may be a big change in life such as getting a baby filling the free time. Who the blog followers were became more important than the amount of readers after years of blogging. In the following chapter practices and especially the importance of facebook in the process of defining who the readers are is discussed in more detail.

8.1.6 Finding out who the blog readers are

From increasing the audience of the blog, the importance of who the readers are became more important with time. All of the bloggers said to be extremely curious of who their followers are. The initial idea and picture of their readers was that their readers are somewhat similar to themselves. This idea is probably based on their own blog consumption, where they had noticed to be following blogs where they can identify themselves with the blogger.

Most of the bloggers had their own facebook page for their blog for two reasons: to increase the audience through facebook links and likes, but especially to see who are the readers of their blog.

“When you have facebook you can see who likes and you can get a small idea of who are reading your blog. Of course I’m interested in who likes my blog. It’s more.. nowadays I’m following more facebook than google analytics because for me the numbers iare kind of whatever but I’m more interested in who and what kind of people are interested in my blog. When I launched the blog’s facebook page it was flattering because this is a bit narcissistic that certain type like interior design magazine’s editor in chiefs are following me. I did back then check when I was getting them more and I was thinking like oohh this many.. then I went to check that this kind of people like it.. that then this blog really has to be.. there has to be something if this kind of a person likes it.. it is flattering.. But maybe the similarity... that you think the people are similar with you. I think everybody has a yearning to belong together with similar kinds of people.. so then the blog is one way to do that and then in facebook you can get confirmation to that image or not.. and usually you do.” -Eerika

As *Eerika* describes, the facebook page works as a tool to define the worth of her social capital. It’s not about the number of social connections through the blog but actually who the readers are. Facebook is a way to verify the blog as something valuable through the influential readers who again have a lot of social and other forms of capital of their own. It seems that the influential readers verified the blog to be good with their forms of capital and at the same time the bloggers self-image. As Bourdieu (1986) describes it is not just the number of people in your social network but also who you know and what other forms of capital that connection has.

Interestingly Eerika described the blog as a way of being part of a group by thinking that the readers are like her. Although the bloggers are blogging as individuals, through the readers and the fan base they can feel a connectedness to their readers and belonging to a group.

In facebook showing that you like a page (in this case the blog) people are sharing that with all the people they know on facebook. In this sense the influential reader with her/his social capital is able to give social capital to the blogger with new readers from her/his facebook friends. These likes and shares on facebook were also seen as an important way to confirm a successful blog post. These were seen as easier ways for the readers to show their feelings than commenting in the blog but at the same time for the blogger these practices had a bigger impact since the blog post received more visibility.

8.2 Company cooperation projects

All the interviewed bloggers had done some sort of cooperation with companies in their blogs. The reasons to take part in the company cooperation projects were multifaceted. In the most straightforward cases, it was about the economic capital like free products when in many cases it was about supporting the identity of the blog and the blogger or to support the company or to give something back to the readers. Company cooperation projects also created stress for the bloggers in the form of fear of losing their own voice and control over their blog when cooperating with a company. Another issue were the negative comments from the blog followers because of the free products the bloggers were getting in return from blogging for companies. From the interviews, it was also noticed that the meaning of company cooperation projects and the attitude towards the projects has changed during the years.

These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters by first focusing on the different benefits sought after by the bloggers from the cooperation projects then taking a look at the reasons behind the worries of the bloggers in cooperation projects. In the last chapter the change in the blogosphere towards these campaigns among the bloggers will be discussed.

8.2.1 Company cooperation projects and benefits

During the interviews three clear incentives for taking part in the company cooperation projects were found: economic benefits, identity management and giving back. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

8.2.1.1 Company cooperation projects and economic benefits

The economic benefits from company cooperation projects were not vastly mentioned by the bloggers as a reason to take part in a cooperation project. The economic benefits like free products seemed to be taken as granted and was only mentioned briefly as if it wasn't the thing the bloggers were really after.

Many of the bloggers were getting so many offers from PR agencies and companies on doing a cooperation that the bloggers felt overwhelmed by the amount of products they would have got.

The bloggers clearly felt they have the power over the companies and they are the ones that can choose which products to recommend. Three of the bloggers interviewed said they are doing only marketing campaigns where they were the one who contacted the company to suggest making a cooperation blog post. They chose the companies that they liked already beforehand and knew what products they were interested in and wanted for their personal use. As *Petri* describes contacting one company to make a blog post of their products, he has already another cooperation project in the making:

“Now Im trying to make a similar kind of thing happen with “AAA” so for the summer these sunglasses stuff. I just sent them an e-mail. Let’s see what happens. Pretty much I present stuff that I like myself or what I use myself. I mean of course “AAA” sunglasses are cool or in that way but so of course the reward is in a way in my mind but partly it’s if I think about some other sunglass brands like “BBB” is something I’m using then “AAA” could be something that supports my style in the blog and my style anyways.” – Petri

Petri mentions the sunglasses quite briefly as a “reward” but more important than the sunglasses as an object is their value in supporting his and the blog’s style.

Interestingly *Tuija* saw company cooperation projects as a way to gain more blog followers. For *Tuija* this kind of cooperation was a great way to expand her reader base and gain more

social capital. *Tuija* was following a food producer on facebook, whose products such as nettle she uses daily and knew about their marketing tactics on facebook.

“I knew that since they share (on facebook) them (blog posts) so I thought I’ll try how it works as a marketing trick. So then I put a message to them on facebook that I wrote this blog post and I’m using your products so if you would like to you can share this.. and then they shared it and said like thanks a lot like really good story and then they sent me like chocolate and some more nettle .. that was kinda nice and during that day I got a lot more readers..” –Tuija

From the interviews it was clear that economic capital in the form of products or money was not the main reason to take part in the company cooperation projects. This gives a clear idea that there are other bigger reasons for the bloggers to participate in the cooperation projects such as *Tuija* with getting more blog followers and social capital and *Petri* with supporting his self-image.

8.2.1.2 Company cooperation projects and identity management

All the bloggers said that the cooperation projects they are doing with companies about products needed to be something they would use or buy themselves. If it was about a product, the product needed to be something they would be willing to use and recommend to friends or blog readers. Another thing was that even though the product could have been something they could use the product also needed to fit their personal image, the image of the blog as well as the blog genre. As *Tuomas* describes when talking about doing web store cooperation and linking products from the web store in his blog:

“Yes it’s a big deal and would not link it if it didn’t suit my blog.. like the quality.. it has to go hand in hand with the blog, the image and what the feeling is of the web shop.. if it’s in contradiction with the image of the blog I wouldn’t link it.” –Tuomas

These findings go well in hand with the study by Schau and Gilly (2003) that bloggers are representing themselves through the links and objects in their blogs. In this case *Tuomas* clearly compares the image of the web shop and his blog image and whether they fit together.

When describing the situation where the bloggers were first contacted by a company for a cooperation project, the bloggers felt this kind of attention from the company as something of a compliment. As *Tuomas* describes:

“But of course I got like a WOW! feel like they appreciate me and they want to.. I have accomplished something..” –Tuomas

This kind of wording was also present among the other bloggers. The company wanting to cooperate with the bloggers was seen as a recognition or as if the bloggers had accomplished something. It seemed that the bloggers thought that if a company contacts them, then the blog has really gone over a certain point and become something more. It seemed to be another way of verifying the blog and their self-image. It indicated that they were doing a good job and the blog and their self-image to be worth a company cooperation project.

8.2.1.3 Company cooperation projects and giving back

Through the cooperation projects, the bloggers also wanted to help and give something to their readers. The bloggers clearly felt gratitude towards the blog followers and wanted to give something back. Through raffles organised together with the companies the bloggers were able to raffle products from the company to their readers and at the same time give something to their readers.

“if there is a competition and many times these things (company cooperation projects) are competitions, I think it’s cool to give something for my readers. I mean they can win jeans or a gift card so of course it is nice to give. Sometimes I feel like it would be cool to have these competitions like anyway on my own money because it would be cool to get responses to questions and see how people would react to them.” –Tuomas

For *Tuomas* competitions seemed to be a way to also wake up conversation and get reactions in the blog since *Tuomas’s* blog posts usually were left without comments.

Eerika also had had raffles of her own raffling a bottle of her own Champaign to celebrate her blog anniversary:

“My husband gets a lot of Champaign. So it kind of came from there like wow I could celebrate this so I thought I could give and I have had others especially in the beginning. I was travelling somewhere so I gave the guidebooks to the readers. So products that I have bought with my own money.. that was something I thought it was a festive moment and so I have done that kind of too with my own.. in the beginning people were doing them more since there were no companies that would have contacted.” –Eerika

Also in some cases the bloggers wanted to just help certain companies through their blog like *Eerika* describes:

“I was raffling these decoration paintings so that one person got the painting so when I was thinking about it I was like this is quite an interesting concept (the paintings) and that these young dudes had started this kind of business so I was kind of impressed about it so I wanted to support them for the enjoyment that they have started to do this.” –Eerika

It was common among the bloggers also to help friends and their businesses by promoting their products or services in the blog.

It seems that the bloggers felt a certain kind of debt to the blog readers since the readers were giving social capital to the blogger and verification to their blog by reading and following the blog. Therefore the bloggers wanted to compensate for that. Company cooperation raffles were a way to raffle economic capital in the form of products to the readers. On the other hand, these raffles seemed to be a good way to get more social capital like comments and reactions in their blog, which was evident in Tuomas’s comment or even to help the company itself as in the example of *Eerika*.

8.2.2 Comparing the gains and losses of company cooperation projects

Most of the bloggers saw company cooperation projects as something where they were losing their own voice. The bloggers felt they were giving something personal of themselves into the use of the company. These feelings made the bloggers quite hesitant to take part in some cooperation projects. In addition, the demands from the companies at times seemed to be too much. *Paula* describes how she was asked to become a blogger in a Finnish blog portal with 300 other bloggers where the blog portal is using their blogs to sell advertising space in the form of banners:

“In the beginning I was kind of like help! I have always said to everybody that I will not blog for anybody else like magazines.. or if I would it would be a completely different thing than my current blog. My blog is like mine. It’s my diary. It’s mine. I don’t want to give it to anybody else. So thought for a long time whether I should do it and is everybody going to hate me because I have always said that I am not going to blog for anybody else where I am not in charge..” – Paula

As *Paula* describes, her blog is clearly part of who she is and cooperating with a company makes her lose her saying. *Paula* was also worried about losing her credibility since she had specifically said she would not take part in company cooperation projects.

The bloggers have created their blog and gathered their followers during the years. Companies are seen as taking advantage of the blogger's social capital and making straightforward economic capital with the bloggers. It seemed that in the cases where the company gave the bloggers free hands without too many demands the bloggers were most willing to take part.

Eerika describes the feeling of stress that blogging for a company can bring:

"I have always said no because I have wanted to keep it as a hobby that it starts from me and nobody gives me orders that I need to update because then it becomes quite stressing when it comes from outside. So that's why I have had that way of doing, so that it stays in my hands. I can decide what is in my blog. And I feel also that I have noticed that the commercialism has increased. The commerciality has increased so much and the number of blogs has increased so much so is there going to be a dip that people's interest goes down when it's all about the advertisements. So also because of this, I have been really picky. I write the blog in a way I would like to read the blog. So I don't like to have a lot of advertisements." – *Eerika*

Eerika is afraid of at the same time losing her own saying and with an increasing amount of advertisements, her blog followers. *Eerika* is mirroring herself with the readers and thinks that what she would want to read is what her readers also want to read. The fear of losing social capital because of the advertisements is a big issue.

Some blog readers also commented negatively to blog posts regarding company cooperation projects when the blogger had received something from a company. As *Maija* describes:

"Every time there is a competition like offering them (readers) something they are really happy but if I'm presenting something that I have received through the blog there often comes a bit of complaints.. it's probably the basic Finnish jealousy it has to be.. I don't know.. but I have then answered like "Blogging is work too" –Maija

The bloggers wanted to include in their blogs the products they had received from companies although they were aware of the possibility of getting negative comments. It seemed that the

value to creating the wanted self-image was more important than the risk of annoying the readers.

8.2.3 Marketing campaigns as a common thing

The bloggers who had been blogging at least three years all said that blogging had changed during the years in many ways. The biggest changes were the increase in the number of bloggers and the amount of company cooperation projects. For the bloggers with over three years of blogging, company cooperation projects were in the beginning a thing that some bloggers were able to do but it was not an everyday thing. This attitude seems to have changed at least when looking at the two bloggers *Petri* and *Tuija* who had blogged for only four months.

Petri and *Tuija* had contacted the companies they were interested in for a cooperation project. It seemed that company cooperation projects were seen as a part of blogging. *Tuija* describes this view on the cooperation projects:

“But then again these days it’s so common these sort of product sponsorships. If you start a blog you can get a cooperation partner. These days everybody is doing a campaign.” –Tuija

It seemed that for a new blogger after reading blogs for some time and seeing all the company cooperation projects these projects were taken as granted, as something the blogger can and is maybe even supposed to do. Using Bourdieu’s (1977) definition of habitus the bloggers of today have already learnt behaviours towards cooperation projects and have learnt to deal with them and this is recorded in the habitus. From habitus the bloggers see these cooperation projects as something normal and know how to behave.

9. Discussion

In this chapter the findings in chapter eight will be discussed in more detail in the light of the theories and the previous research presented in chapters two, three and four. In the last section, previous criticism and our criticism towards Bourdieu's theories will be discussed in more detail.

9.1 Blogging practices

As Bourdieu (1986) defined, in modern societies, the access to income is defined by the person's cultural capital in the form of university credentials and social capital in the form of social connections. Based on the analysis in the previous chapter bloggers are creating cultural capital by blogging. Economic capital is sought after using the blog as a tool comparable to a university degree on the job market. For the bloggers, the blog is the place to show their personal competence in a certain area of life from which they do not have experience or cultural capital. It is a place for personal learning and also for showing the results of the learning in the form of good pictures or writing, which again are cultural capital in the form of skills. The blog is also a tool for gaining social capital in the form of blog readers and using those social connections for furthering ones career.

The bloggers practices: commenting, linking and blogging (openly by disclosing personal information), were all ways of gaining more social capital. Blogging openly about personal issues the bloggers were gaining more followers, which is in line with the research by Ko and Kuo (2009) and their findings that by blogging openly the bloggers are able to gain more social capital through the more tightly knit social relationships. Commenting and linking other bloggers were ways to promote their blog and gain more social capital by growing the number of blog followers. Getting comments and answering comments, swapping links and blogging (creating new blog posts) regularly were ways to affirm and reaffirm the social connections, which is important in reproducing social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In the study by Chittenden (2010) commenting was found to be a crucial way for the teenagers to affirm their cultural capital and their self-image. In our study the findings were quite contradictory to these findings with even one blogger describing the lack of comments validating his self-image and

the blog. One explanation for the differing meaning of comments may be age with Chittenden focusing on teenage bloggers and the 20-40 year old bloggers interviewed in this study.

Checking statistics to see how many blog followers there are and defining who the readers are through a facebook fan-page were all ways of defining the value of the social capital. The importance of who the readers were, gained more significance after a few years of blogging and after gaining a certain amount of blog followers. As Bourdieu (1986) describes it is not just how many social connections one has but who you know and what kind of capital that person has.

Blogging in general and linking were ways for the bloggers to manage their self-image. Based on this study we can confirm the findings of Schau and Gilly (2003) that bloggers were designing their blog links to support and create their blog image and self-image. In our study, we found that pictures were also an important way to create the wanted self-image. Firat, et al. (1995) stated that the post-modern consumers want to represent multiple self-images, which was also something Schau and Gilly (2003) noticed bloggers doing through their blog links. Contradictory to these findings in our study the bloggers seemed be interested in representing only one self-image, which is in line with Huffaker, et al. (2005) and Ahuvia's (2005) findings. The products and topics were chosen to be in line with the blog image and the image of the blogger. It seemed that they were aiming to present only one self-image and everything in the blog needed to be consistent with that image. At the same time one can ask whether the bloggers were able to detect the different self-images they were representing in their blog. The chosen products and topics to be included in the blog were designed to support the image of the blogger. This consumption of the displayed products was designed to support the self-image of the blogger and become more desirable, which follows the ideas of Simmons (2008). With these practices of image-management, the bloggers aim for more social capital and with that again affirmed their self-image through the increase in blog followers.

The bloggers as postmodern consumers indicated that they wanted to represent themselves as unique in the blogosphere by blogging about topics not covered by other bloggers. This follows the ideas of Cova (1996) in the sense of postmodern consumers being individuals. Cova (1996) presented the consumption of products to be something through, which the consumers are able to find a social link with other people and through the consumption, consumers are creating their own tribes or micro-groups with shared emotions and styles of life. We found the bloggers to be looking for a social link to their readers. This social link was

not directly found to be created through the consumption of products but this cannot be closed out either. Yearning for a social link was found in the form of bloggers defining their readers to be like themselves. The bloggers also referred to themselves as blog readers when describing what to include in the blog as if what she/he would like to read about is what the blog followers are interested in too. The blogger and the readers seemed to be creating a micro-group of their own. Through the facebook fan page confirmation of the readers' similarity to themselves was sought by stalking who the followers are and often confirmation was received. These findings are similar with Chittenden's (2010) findings with bloggers identifying themselves with their readers and the readers' similarity to verify the blogger's cultural capital. The increase in the number of readers reinforced the blogger's feeling of a link between the readers and the same time the consumption in the blog. Blogroll links and hyperlinks in blog posts were also found to be ways for the blogger to identify with other bloggers and to create a social link.

The ways of blogging were learned during the years of reading blogs, which was the case with most of the respondents. The bloggers knew for example what kind of pictures to take, how to write a blog post to get comments and had also noticed to be imitating other bloggers in the way of writing. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus seems to have recorded the right ways of behaving in the blogosphere during the time of reading other blogs. During the time of blogging, they had learned even more when coming into new situations. From these new situations, the ways of coping and handling these situations were again recorded into the habitus and retrieved when confronted with a similar situation in the future.

9.2 Company cooperation projects:

As discussed in chapter five there is an extremely limited amount of studies concentrating on companies utilising bloggers in their marketing. The gains found from blogging for companies were economic capital in the form of products or money, self-image management, and giving back and reciprocity.

Preliminary expectations were to find bloggers to be interested in the economic capital gained from the cooperation projects but at the same time expecting this equation not to be just that straightforward. These expectations proved to be right when the economic capital turned out to be secondary to the other benefits. Although the cooperation was benefiting the bloggers

with economic capital it also had to support the self-image of the blogger. The company cooperation projects were seen as validating the blog and the blogger's image as if the companies would not be interested in all the bloggers out there in the blogosphere but were interested specifically in them. Kozinets et al. (2010) also found this feeling of being flattered. At the same time, the products and the companies in the cooperation had to be in line with the bloggers self-image and they were clearly used for supporting the bloggers image, which is in line with the findings of Schau and Gilly (2003). When the cooperation project fits with the bloggers self-image and the expectations of the blog community the cooperation project is also perceived more positively by the blog followers (Kozinets et al. 2010).

Company cooperation projects were also utilized as a way to maintain or gain more social capital. By raffling economic capital in the form of products in cooperation with the companies, the bloggers were able to give something to their readers. Hsu and Lin (2008) found one motivation to blog to be helping others. In this case, the bloggers felt company cooperation projects also as a way to help their readers. It seemed that the bloggers felt a certain kind of debt to the readers because the readers were following and commenting their blog and at the same time offering their social capital to the blogger. Through the raffles, they were able to give something back.

According to Firat and Dholakia (2006) postmodern marketing is about everybody being a marketer. The marketers and consumers are blending into one through the increasing interchanges between the marketers and consumers. In our research it was quite evident in the sense of bloggers nowadays even asking the companies to become a marketer of their products and through the consumption of these products creating their wanted self-image. This self-image was the desired mode of life that the bloggers were sharing with the consumer community - the blog followers, at the same time the blogger being a marketer of the company. Blogging and the company cooperation projects were seen as such a normal way of connecting with people that it seemed that the marketers and the consumers are actually becoming one.

According to Kozinets et al. (2010) the bloggers are transforming the marketing message into a social one by converting the message to suit the norms and expectations of the blog followers. According to our interviews the bloggers are carefully choosing the cooperation projects that suit their image but at the same time the bloggers are able to make the company, the products and the marketing message suit the social norms of the blog readers with their

use of language and tone if they want to. How far the bloggers are willing to go with their company projects most likely depends on how they see the cooperation project to benefit them in gaining more social/cultural/economic capital, achieving their end goal and on the other hand, how much it will hurt their current self-image and current distribution of capital.

The worries related to the cooperation projects seem to have grown during the years of blogging. The worries on the bloggers side were especially related to giving their own voice to the use of the companies, which was also found by Kozinets et al. (2010). The companies were seen as taking advantage of the bloggers social capital in the form of the blog readers and at the same time of the bloggers symbolic capital, the reputation and credibility of the blogger. The bloggers were afraid of losing symbolic capital, hurting their image and reputation with the advertisements when talking with the mouth of the advertiser or the company not fitting the image of the blogger. At the same time the bloggers were afraid of losing social capital when the advertisements were annoying the blog readers. For the blogger this was a situation of comparing the gains and losses of taking part in a company cooperation.

9.3 The new meaning of blogging

The reasons behind starting to blog among the respondents differed especially according to how long the respondents had blogged. Especially Bloggers *Petri* and *Tuija* with only about 4 months of blogging had already a strong picture of blogging and the possibilities blogging can create career wise as well as company cooperation wise. For the other bloggers with a minimum of three and a half years of blogging the main reasons behind starting to blog was to share content with other people consistent with the findings of Hsu and Lin (2008) and documenting one's life, which was found in many previous studies (Nardi, et al., 2004; Huang, et al., 2007; Sepp, et al., 2011). The whole idea of blogging seems to have changed during the time the respondents have blogged. When before the idea was channeling their interests, now it seems to be in creating cultural capital through which the bloggers can be able to build their network (social capital) and in the end change their careers (economic capital) or gain direct economic capital in the forms of products through the company cooperation projects. The motives to blog seem to be going towards more straightforward economic capital when blogging used to be more like a hobby and fun of sharing things with your friends.

The changes are most likely due to the ever-increasing number of blogs and the easiness for everybody to start a blog. More and more people are reading blogs or writing their own. At the same time we are learning how to behave in the blogosphere. Our habitus is recording the normal practices and behaviours in different situations. Company cooperation projects as well as just creating a blog post are becoming more and more familiar to people who do not even have a blog. We know what to expect when it comes to company cooperation projects and take them as something the blogger is even supposed to do. We know how to post just the right kind of a picture and how to write in the right way to get many comments. We are starting to see blogging as just one way of communicating and connecting with people and creating our self-image, which can benefit us in many ways.

9.4 Contributions to CCT

The blog and the blogosphere was found to be a place for the bloggers to make sense of their lives and self-identities while at the same time creating the wanted self-identity. Through different practices described earlier, the bloggers negotiated meanings in social action with the other bloggers and readers.

This research in relation to CCT and the four research domains of CCT contributes especially to the research domain of consumer identity projects. Our findings support the findings of Schau and Gilly (2003) in the context of blogs. In our study as in Schau and Gilly's (2003) linking in the blog was done carefully considering the webpage being linked and the brand or the products behind the link. In our study bloggers were not looking for representing multiple self-images through the links as was the findings in Schau and Gilly's study. In our study the bloggers were looking to support the one and the same self-image consistent with the blogger's own self-image although these presented self-images can often be vaguely understood (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). The same finding was made in the context of company cooperation projects: the companies and their products, which they were presenting and linking in the blog needed to fit the blogger's self-image. The products from the companies and the hyperlinks to the companies' websites were seen as a way to support the image of the blogger. If the company and the products being presented or linked in the blog did not fit with the blogger's image it was seen to destroy the wanted image and to drive away blog followers.

9.5 Criticism towards Bourdieu's theories

Pierre Bourdieu who is one of the first thinkers of practice theory, has also received criticism from the second wave thinkers such as Schatzki (1996), King (2000) and Gartman (1991). A lot of the criticism has concentrated on habitus and the power of habitus in determining all action. According to our findings this criticism is well deserved.

Schatzki (1996) concentrates on criticising especially Bourdieu's view on habitus determining all activities. Bourdieu claims habitus to understand the logic of maximising capital, which in the end determines the chosen activities. According to Schatzki (1996) if habitus is always concentrating on maximising capital then the agent can't have a one overall end goal. We understand Schatzki's problem since we found the respondents not to maximise capital in every action and situation. The respondents did know how to get more comments and even readers (social capital) with only one blog post but did not want to do it on the expense of ruining their consistent and well-designed image of themselves or valuable social relationships, which after years of blogging could be used for furthering their careers. It was clear that the bloggers had end goals and dreams often related to the careers they were trying to reach with their actions in the blogosphere. Actions were not done to get an instant access to capital and to maximise the amount of capital with every action. Another issue for Schatzki (1996) is that the concept of habitus does not take into consideration the effect of emotions and moods on actions. In our study especially one respondent (*Paula*) described the mood and her feelings to widely dictate actions and the way of writing, almost as if she needed to have a certain feeling of anger or other strong emotional feeling to start writing a blog post. These feelings were at the same time openly disclosed in her writing.

King (2000) concentrated on the issue of Bourdieu's concept of habitus actually being against Bourdieu's practical theory. The problem is that if habitus is something that is determined by objective conditions, then people would always act in the same way and there could never be social change. New and different situations, which according to Bourdieu can change habitus would never arise with people repeating the same practices in the same way over and over again. King also points out that any practice we perform is social, meaning situations with other people and how we act in those situations can't come only from habitus but also from the social interaction. In our findings, the bloggers were learning from the other bloggers ways of writing and taking photos. These bloggers used as reference points were often

bloggers with a better position in the blogosphere with a bigger follower base. According to our findings the “lower class bloggers” are often imitating the “upper class bloggers”. The bloggers have subjective goals and with the imitation the bloggers want to grow their audience and improve their position in the blogosphere and with that their careers. Bloggers change their practices when imitating and with the change they try to change their social status. In this sense the criticism from King seems to be on point. On the other hand, if the bloggers are imitating the “upper class bloggers” then the practices of the bloggers should be evolving into the same and at the same time there would not be any social/class differences in the blogosphere.

Gartman (1991) criticised especially Bourdieu’s ideas on class society and how according to Bourdieu class habitus defines the consumption of physical goods. In his criticism, Gartman gives an example how popular culture and mass culture products break the barriers between classes and unite the different classes. We find blogging to be a communication tool of the popular culture that seems to be breaking these class barriers too. With an access to Internet, blogging can be started by anyone anywhere despite the class one belongs to. With links to physical goods the bloggers are able to create their self-image and create a sense of consumption regardless of whether they actually have a chance of owning the physical goods. With company cooperation projects even the bloggers with only 4 months into blogging and most likely in the lower class in the blogosphere had a chance to get physical goods consumed by any class in the blogosphere.

10. Conclusions

In this chapter, the findings from this study regarding managerial implications will be concluded and the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research will be presented.

10.1 Managerial implications

It is clear that for companies bloggers offer a good way to target the wanted consumer segments. At the same time it is quite a cheap way to market. From the interviews, it was evident that the bloggers have noticed companies contacting them quite randomly for cooperation projects, which have nothing to do with their interests or the blog. Bloggers seemed to understand companies' aims in the cooperation projects and often saw the companies as trying to take advantage of them.

Companies need to make sure the products fit the blogger and her/his blog. It is important that the companies research beforehand what the topics the blogger discusses in her/his blog are. Are the products or the services of the company similar in style and image of the blog and the blogger? Does the blogger even present products or services in her/his blog? When contacting the blogger companies should indicate that they are familiar with the blog, show their own interest in the blog and show why their cooperation project would go hand in hand with the image of the blog. Something that should never be forgotten is being nice and friendly to the blogger. It seemed that this simple strategy of being nice by the companies had a big impact on whether the cooperation projects took place or not.

The bloggers were extremely worried about losing their saying and their own voice in their own blog when cooperating with companies. These worries were many times reinforced by companies giving strict demands on how the blogger should blog for example how many blog posts the blogger should do about a certain product. Some bloggers had understood these projects as a situation of negotiation but most of them had not. Companies should make it easy for the blogger to take part in the cooperation projects and make sure the blogger has free hands to blog in the blogger's own way just like the blogger would blog about a product normally. This is something that the company will also value in the long run because the most

valuable thing the blogger is offering to the company is the blogger's own voice. The blogger is translating the company's marketing efforts into the language that the blog followers understand and trust (Kozinets, et al., 2010). Letting the blogger blog in her/his way makes the marketing more powerful.

10.2 Limitations of the research

Limitation of this study is the fact that only six interviews were conducted. The conclusions from this study are by no means generalisable to a broader context. At the same time we have to note that generalising the results from this study was not our aim at any point of this study but to increase the understanding of the researched phenomenon, which is often the case in qualitative research (Alasuutari, 1993).

Another limitation is the fact that in the analysis, hermeneutics of faith was utilised meaning the respondent and her/his meanings were taken in a relatively direct manner as the respondent was seen as the expert of her/his own experiences. The limitation is whether a respondent can actually understand and describe all the meanings of her/his experiences. Also the non-objectivity and the linguistic of hermeneutics of understanding mean there is no one single correct interpretation (Gadamer, 1989). We as researchers have interpreted the data to the best of our knowledge but as Josselson (2004) emphasises: are we really able to read in a text what is not there?

10.3 Future research

A few issues rose from the dataset, which could be interesting research topics to continue with. These topics were left outside of this study since they were not in the scope of this study.

Something that was not discussed is how the blogger's position in the blogosphere is determined. According to Bourdieu (Wacquant, 2006) the position is determined according to the amount and distribution of different capitals possessed by the agent. In this study it was evident the bloggers are aiming to gain more of the different forms of capital through the different practices, which according to Bourdieu would improve ones position in the blogosphere (Wacquant, 2006). This question should be tackled with new data concentrating

on how they rank bloggers in the blogosphere and making the bloggers compare bloggers between one another.

Another issue that was mentioned especially by *Paula* is how real life events clashed with the blog in everyday life. For *Paula* meeting random blog readers on the street recognising her clearly had an effect as well as blogger meetings arranged by companies where Paula met other bloggers. All these meetings with other bloggers or blog readers seemed to be a way to get approval for her self-image. Due to the research questions focusing on the practices and the company cooperation projects inside the blogosphere these issues happening in the real life were left outside.

When collecting the data and reading other blogs by bloggers outside of the collected data it was noticed that many other bloggers were cooperating with the same companies as the bloggers interviewed for this study. It would be interesting to study how the fact that other bloggers are organising the same raffles with the same companies affect the blogger's perceived gains and motivation to take part in the cooperation.

The consumption of hyperreal was discussed when describing postmodern marketing. From a more theoretical point of view it would be interesting to continue this research with new data concentrating on the brands and the meanings related to the products when displaying and consuming them in the blog.

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