Conducting the Personal Brand

Sociological investigations on brand and identity for one-person enterprisers at social networks sites
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Abstract

The object of this master’s dissertation has been to investigate one-person enterprisers’ (OPE) experiences of conducting both personal identity and brand at social network sites (SNS). The purposes of this research have been to elaborate on sociological theories of brand and identity in a network society context and to present hypotheses on how SNS can be developed to empower all OPEs.

Since this field is rather unexplored in sociological research, and because it is the experiences of the OPEs that are the focus of the research, ethnographic methods, i.e. qualitative interviews, were chosen. These interviews were then analysed, primarily through Erving Goffman’s theory of self-presentation, Manuel Castells’s theory of identity, and the sociological concept of life-conduct deriving from Max Weber.

The findings provoked both theoretical and empirical conclusions. The theoretical hypothesis is that Castells’s and Goffman’s respective theories should be used as back and front end interpretations of everyday life conduct. The empirical hypothesis provoked is that some OPEs have a strategic (as opposed to a sincere) approach to SNS. These OPEs are experiencing alienation and anomie. To manage this, SNS need to focus more on tools for social communication and less on methods for making SNS ends in and of themselves.

Keywords: social media, social network sites, sociology, entrepreneurship, Goffman, Castells, identity, brand, ethnographic methods.

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1 Introduction

Small-scale business has become increasingly more important in labour policy and the labour market in Sweden the last 20 years.\(^1\) During the same time-span digital media and new means of communications on a global level have risen to a major, everyday position.\(^2\) Leaving large structures and narratives behind, this development favours small, flexible, individualised, and information-based strategies for everyday life-conduct.\(^3\) This master’s dissertation aims to investigate an intersection between these two fields: how self-employed conducts their lives in social media, focusing on the relation between brand and personal identity.

This dissertation is based on a qualitative study on one-person enterprisers (OPE) and their experiences of the relation between private identity and brand in their use of social media, or social network sites (SNS). The idea behind this project emerged while I was writing my one-year master’s dissertation in sociology during the winter 2010-11, which conceptualised an update of Max Weber’s ideal-type of bureaucracy, imbuing it with the concepts Network society and Governmentality.\(^4\) Regarding what was defined as ‘virtual bureaucracy’ there, small-scale businesses and social network sites emerged as a mode for increased bureaucratisation – through economisation and individualisation of everyday life.

The OPE is to be interpreted as “embedded”, to use Mark Granovetter’s concept, in a social reality of relations, experiences, and situations – both personal and professional.\(^5\) Here economy and economic action are interpreted as two of the most significant attributes of contemporary western culture. This role of economy has been theorised and analysed by numerous sociologists.\(^6\) Also, this dissertation aims to take its origin in two unfortunately unrelated fields of sociology: Economic sociology and cultural sociology. To bridge these concepts theories from Erving Goffman, Manuel Castells and Max Weber, among others, are used.

Aiming for a further sociological understanding of OPEs and SNS, the conclusions are primarily to be viewed as hypotheses. These provoke the interpretation that there are two discrepant ideal-typical attitudes towards SNS: sincere and strategic. The

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1 Ahrne et al. 2003: 72
2 Castells 2010a: pp. 147
4 Bååth 2011
5 Granovetter 1985: pp. 481
6 e.g. Ritzer 2010; 2005, Sennett 2004; 1998
consequence this generates is that the strategic OPEs, using SNS as a means to another end, experience a stigma, interpreted as meaninglessness or stress in relation to SNS. The main theoretical development that was provoked is that Goffman's theory of everyday presentation and Castells’s theory of identity can be meaningfully interpreted as front and back end of everyday life-conduct.

This dissertation has four main parts. (1) The introduction, where research questions, theoretical framework and research methods are presented. (2) The fist part of the analysis originates from an actor perspective. It analyses the IPs experiences of self-presentations on SNS, how they relate to an experienced primary identity and possible risks of alienation. (3) The second part of the analysis focus on SNS as a social structure. This focus on how idealisation of SNS life-conduct and distinction between front and back stage on SNS constitutes certain conditions for OPEs. (4) The conclusion, where empirical and theoretical hypotheses about brand and identity, as well as the Internet society, are presented. In addition, some ideas on future research are offered.

1.1 Research questions and purpose
This dissertation is constituted by an over all research question:

- **How does the relation between brand and identity work on social network sites for one-person enterprisers?**

The main idea here is to research the experiences of one-person enterprisers using social network sites for communicating both their brand and their private identity. This question is therefore approached through two more qualified ones:

- **What insights can be drawn to empower one-person enterprisers and their use of social network sites?**
- **How can an analysis of the questions above develop sociological theory on one-person enterprises and identity in network society?**

The reason for using two sub-questions is the dual purpose of this thesis. The first question constitutes a more empiric approach, but also aims to empower OPE’s. The purpose for this research question is to suggest concrete hypotheses for producers of social network sites, social media experts and one-person enterprises. This can improve the site-designs to better fit the needs and wants of one-person enterprisers for communicating and handling both identity and brand through them.

The second sub-question aims to create one or more theoretical model(s), or hypotheses for future research. The purpose is to present a developing critique of some sociological theories of one-person enterprise, identity and social network site theories.
1.2 Theory: The sociological toolbox

The sociological theory of this dissertation derives from a set of concepts, rather than specific schools or persons. However, these concepts have been the focus of certain sociologists and philosophers. Yet, it should be noted that these theories above all else stand on the shoulders of Karl Marx and Max Weber. This chapter defines these concepts within the context of this dissertation. This is because the concepts will be used as tools for the sociological analysis below.\textsuperscript{7} It should however be noted that this is not a full presentation of the dissertation’s theory. Rather, this chapter constitutes a presentation of the theoretical framework for this dissertation. Some concepts that are (only) relevant in specific parts of the analysis will be presented there, for enhanced readability.

1.2.1 Abstract networks: A theory of Internet society

Contemporary western society can be interpreted as a network society, where the Internet plays a major part. One of the strongest advocates for this conception is Manuel Castells. To research identity and brand in an Internet context, this interpretation is important for understanding the society’s part this research.

On the Internet, Social Network Site(s) (SNS), e.g. Facebook or Twitter, are used for social interaction and exchange of information. These are spaces where OPEs have the possibility to express both their identity and their brand. danah boyd and Nicole Ellison define SNS as:

\begin{quote}
[W]eb-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

In the context of this research SNS is used as the definition of social media, as an ideal-type.

However, SNS demands a new understanding of the distinction between mass and personal media. SNS is de-professionalised; it does not qualify as a mass media, but rather as a new form of personal media.\textsuperscript{9} In the SNS, conceptualised as a society, this interpretation is crucial to understanding how information, as will be discussed further below and the exchange of it is the core feature of contemporary network society.

\textsuperscript{7} Cf. Blumer 1931
\textsuperscript{8} boyd & Ellison 2007: 211
\textsuperscript{9} Lüders 2008: 694
The society of informational networks is on a structural level interpreted as an abstract system – a virtual mode of organisation.\textsuperscript{10} Castells uses the concept of network society to define how society is made into an obscure network of information.\textsuperscript{11} These concepts have many attributes in common. The network society as a concept is the notion that (digital) information-networks, e.g. the Internet, are the fundamental structures of contemporary network society.\textsuperscript{12} Networks are abstract systems of relation in an ever-changing structure – the space of flows; flows of information in the broadest definition.

As society changed from a rigid system of institutions for controlling society to an abstract and obscure system of self-governing, Marx & Friedrich Engels classic quote “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned”\textsuperscript{13} is brought to mind. This notion is relevant in contemporary society, when weak ties constitute networks of friends and associates on SNS. Weak ties here are to be interpreted as connecting different groups – on a global level – through sharing the same spaces, and exchanging a small, but significant, amount of information with people the only have weak ties to. Relating micro networks to macro networks and vice versa.\textsuperscript{14}

Metaphorically, an SNS can be interpreted as a vast bar, with a very keen and thorough bartender, who profiles the people within this system based on their self-presentation and life-conduct, knows ‘who knows who’, and give them the possibility to communicate, cooperate, and self-organise as long as the bartender can tap into their interaction. In the same way as the bar is a community or society so is the SNS. Of course it is integrated in a larger society, as the bar is. The more time people spend there, the more contacts the bartender can mediate.

This is the bar where the OPEs try to sell their wares and promote their business. Not in the manner of a dope pusher, but as a general salesperson making contacts and prospect for markets. Thus, acting according to certain social codes and conducting one’s life and brand in a certain way will increase profit. It is this mode of conduct that this dissertation aims to investigate, researching the relation between social and economic action on SNS.

\textsuperscript{10} Giddens 1991: 18
\textsuperscript{11} Network society is interpreted as a form bureaucracy, from Max Weber’s theories. His definition of bureaucracy is “technical superiority over all other forms of domination”\textsuperscript{11} (Scott & Marshall 2009: 54).
\textsuperscript{12} Castells 2010a, Fuchs 2008.
\textsuperscript{13} Marx & Engels 1984[1888]: 16
\textsuperscript{14} Granovetter 1973: 592-601
1.2.2 Identity and life-conduct

Theory of identity is the one of most crucial theoretical component for this dissertation. The analysis of relations between brand and identity is still ruled by an identity discourse. This is because identity became the ruling discourse during the interviews. It goes without saying that all IPs hade identities before they had enterprises of their own.

Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*\(^\text{15}\) analyses identity in everyday life as dramatized; situated on or behind a ‘stage’. The individual takes on a specific role depending on their position in relation to the site and the other people in it.\(^\text{16}\) The most important account on roles in this dissertation will be Goffman’s account of *sincere roles*, as believing in the role as ‘myself’, and *cynical roles*, as roles used deliberately as means to an end and thus not experienced as ‘my true self’.\(^\text{17}\) This wording is however pejorative, giving me the impression that sincere is ‘better’ than cynic. To aim for a less biased language, I will use *sincere* and *strategic* instead. The idea is that these concepts define two opposite extremes of how OPEs take on their ‘presentation of self’ on SNS – both as a person and as a brand.

Another part of Goffman’s theory that will be important in this research is the question of “front and back stage”. The *front stage* is a more formal region relative to the back stage; it is in general a site where there are certain codes and traditions for behaving in a ‘formal’ way.\(^\text{18}\) The *back stage*, on the other hand, is a site with less formal codes and traditions, where “impressions and illusions [for the front stage] are openly constructed”\(^\text{19}\) and discretely screened from the front stage.\(^\text{20}\) I interpret the back stage as screened in a cognitive way, rather than a physical way. However, it seems safe to assume that physical screening would increase the possibility for a cognitive one.

Goffman inspired Anthony Giddens’s theory of ‘self-reflexivity’ and identity.\(^\text{21}\) However, this theory has a more ‘atomistic’, or essentialist, understanding of identity, where the individual expresses it through actions based in self-reflexive reasoning. Here ‘self-reflexive identity’, where reflexive reasoning is the primary method for self-development can be interpreted as empowering the person both as brand and identity.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^\text{15}\) Goffman 1990[1959]
\(^\text{16}\) Ibid: pp. 32
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid: pp. 28
\(^\text{18}\) Ibid: pp. 109
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid: 114
\(^\text{20}\) Ibid: pp. 114
\(^\text{22}\) Ibid: pp. 75
In the context of this research Giddens’s conception is illuminating for in understanding how people act on SNS to define an identity, contributing to the interpretation that OPEs have power over their self-presentation.

It should be noted that Giddens is rather obscure on what he means by ‘self-reflexivity’ in his writings. My interpretation is that reflexivity should be interpreted as a person’s possibility to reason over his or her strategies, experiences and choices in life.23

Giddens write that the need for self-reflexivity to manage one’s identity is based in the declining of large institutions and narratives. This creates a demand for active individual conduct of the desired identity.24 However, he can be criticised for disregarding the social environment in his theory, not taking into account interactions with other self-reflexive beings and social structures. Matthew Adams presents a similar critique to Giddens:

[T]he extended reflexivity thesis [employs] an excessively weak concept of social structure, which fails to account for the restraints on agency which either persist in contemporary societies, or are novel to them.”25,26

With basis in Giddens ‘self-reflexivity’, Castells writes:

In the network society […], for most social actors, meaning is organized around one primary identity (that is an identity that frames the others), which is self-sustaining over space and time.27

Castells uses “the networked self” to describe this primary identity in the information age. The basis of this concept is that the individual is a part of many different networks (digital as well as non-digital), which he or she takes part of in a reflexive manner.

However, it is crucial to understand identity as a contextualised process. A ‘self-reflective’ primary identity thesis that still accounts for environmental influences demand another concept: Life-conduct. The concept originally derives from Weber as “Lebensführung”, inspired by the writings of Georg Simmel.28,29 This concept is defined, in the style of Weber, as

23 Giddens 1991: 14
26 Adams (2006) use Pierre Bourdieu’s concept Habitus to criticize the apparent ‘free will’ of the self-reflexive subject.
27 Castells 2010b: 7
28 Heidegren et al. 2007: pp. 17, pp. 35
29 The concept life-conduct has thus been largely absent in contemporary sociology. Heidegren proposes two reasons for this. First, life-conduct is not a very good translation of the concept from its German origin (though maybe as good as it gets). Second, lifestyle has been heavily present in the sociology of the last 30 years, used as ‘life-conduct’ but not really filling the same conceptual space (Heidegren 2007: 6). On several occasions has ‘Lebensführung’ been translated as ‘lifestyle’. This conception is however faulty, since Weber uses the idea of ‘lifestyle’ in a different way (Heidegren 2007: pp. 17).
A life-conduct can thus, according to Weber, be both a phenomenon of adaption, which tends to cement the ruling order, and a world-changing element. In both cases is thus the life-conduct a mode to actively master and perform one’s life through ideas, beliefs and values (in opposite to the forced and ignorant conformism that lie in the fully developed capitalist society).\(^{30}\)

Life-conduct is a theory of actions, but of the multitude of actions that are needed to live a life on a day-to-day basis. Heidegren differentiates between the two interpretations above based on the degree of autonomy with which the individual get to choose ‘ideas, beliefs and values.’\(^{31}\) He gives two definitions of the concept; moral-ethical and everyday life-conduct, in this dissertation the focus will be on the latter one.\(^{32}\)

Further on, Heidegren defines everyday life conduct as a combination of two ideal-types. On the one hand, there is a moral-ethical ideal-type of how one ought to live or behave; on the other hand there is an aesthetic ideal-type of the good life, a lifestyle detached from any moral restraints or responsibilities.\(^{33}\)

The reason to use life-conduct is that it constitutes a conception of everyday life that regards it as both an expression of identity and organisational strategy; actor and structure.\(^{34}\) Life-conduct adds the social “embeddedness” that Granovetter stresses as the subject for an economic sociology, underlining that running a one-person enterprise is not only a business model, but also a feature to the design of everyday lives. However, this use of embeddedness takes private social life in account to a larger extent than Granovetter promotes.\(^{35}\)

### 1.2.3 Entrepreneurship, one-person enterprise and branding

Richard Swedberg defines economic sociology as “[t]he realization of economic interests within the borders of social structures”\(^{36}\). However, my definition is: the role of economy and business in social, intellectual and cultural processes of everyday life and society sui generis — as a whole. **Embeddedness** stresses the need to understand the social processes in economic life; how economy is intertwined with social processes. Granovetter and Swedberg mainly discuss this on the terms of business, and the social processes ‘inside’

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30 Heidegren 2007: p. 41, author’s translation, italics in original.
31 Ibid: pp. 45
32 For more on moral-ethical life-conduct see Heidegren 2007: 49.
33 Heidegren 2007: 49
34 Isenberg 2007: 57
35 Granovetter 1985: p. 504
36 Swedberg 2002: 2, author’s translation, italics added.
the business world. Thus, their position on economic sociology differs somewhat from this dissertation.\textsuperscript{37}

Entrepreneurship as a subject for research has not been of large interest in contemporary sociology. Swedberg writes: “social sciences have a very important contribution to make, not only to the theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship but also to entrepreneurship as a practical enterprise.”\textsuperscript{38} Now ten years later, this contribution has yet to be produced. Since this dissertation aims to research OPEs, a sociological understanding of entrepreneurship as a sociological phenomenon becomes crucial.

Entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur are not easy concepts to define. First, entrepreneurship can have two different, though related, lexical definitions: small-scale venture or creating profit by taking economic risks. In this dissertation the first of these two definitions will be relevant. However, most sociological research on entrepreneurship has focused on the latter one, investigating structures and innovation in larger organizations and ‘charismatic authorities’ leading this risk management, from the theories of Weber, Granovetter and Joseph Schumpeter.\textsuperscript{39} Even more problematic are the theories on how to define entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship discourse is not a coherent and stable discourse, held together around a stable centre. Rather, it is a paradoxical, incomplete and worm-ridden symbolic structure that posits an impossible and indeed incomprehensible object at its centre.\textsuperscript{40}

Thus, in this dissertation you will not find a comprehensive, general definition of entrepreneurship – since the research for making such a claim is lacking. Rather, a case-specific definition will be used.

The type of entrepreneurs this dissertation will focus on is not as hard to define as the one above. For the fieldwork the interview persons of interest were defined as one-person enterprisers (OPE), meaning that their enterprise does not have any employees or active partners. However, they could have passive partners, since it would be hard to differentiate between having a formal but passive business-partner and being economically supported by family members in day-to-day life. Fuchs uses a clear definition from a neo-Marxist point of view.

Self-employed persons who don’t employ other themselves are forced to sell their own labor power by contracts; they control their means of production but produce surplus for others who control capital and use the appropriated labor for achieving profit.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37} Swedberg 2002, Granovetter 1985
\textsuperscript{38} Swedberg 2001: 7
\textsuperscript{39} cf. Ruef & Lonsbury 2007: 1-29, Swedberg 2001: 7-45,
\textsuperscript{40} Jones & Spicer 2005: 236
\textsuperscript{41} Fuchs 2008: 204
As it comes to *branding*, all enterprises, products and services on a market are assumed to have some kind of brand – so does OPE’s. The relation between the one-person enterpriser and the brand is considered to be strong since there are no physical borders between enterprise and individual. The brand is the name, personality and body of the OPE. Branding is the method of creating, developing and maintaining a brand. Its purpose is to increase the accumulation of profit. Additionally, a brand should be able to create loyal subjects, accumulating ‘faith’ and elevate consumption to an experience of spiritual fulfilment, with the brand as the mark of ‘the chosen one’.

Branding is something that has changed and developed during recent years, now being one of the core tasks for an enterprise. Douglas B. Holt attribute this “shift” to three “causes”: (1) That products has become more and more similar in quality and appearance; (2) the increased profits to gain in symbolic economies and ‘lifestyle’ consumption; (3) the need for an effective method for enterprises to a multinational market. A similar analysis is found in Castells’s research; pointing out the need to efficiently signal information throughout a network, and that the connotations of a brand has this ability.

In the analysis below, the word branding will not be used explicitly to a large extent. However, when the ‘business’ of the OPE is discussed, this indicates a process of branding – a commercial life-conduct. Thus the concepts above are important to keep in mind, and that everything an OPE does publicly on SNS can be interpreted as branding, despite if it is intended to be interpreted that way.

### 1.3 Research methods

This dissertation has two distinct methods of research, due to its dual research questions. (1) Qualitative interviews, to gather the experiences of OPEs in contemporary Swedish society. (2) The method of ideal-types is used for assessing the theories and creates a theoretical interpretation for the relation between identity and brand at social network sites.
1.3.1 Methodology

To gather material for this dissertation qualitative interviews were used. The reason for using qualitative methods is mainly the small amount of previous research on the relation between brand and identity for OPEs at social network sites found in social sciences. Henceforth, qualitative methods give the researcher the possibility to discover how OPEs reason about this subject. To create a possible theory for this relation, it is necessary to gain a deep insight in the OPEs’ experiences of social network sites and how they perceive the relation between their identity and the brand of their company.

In a Weberian tradition, different methodologies are interpreted as ideal-types of research. In the actual fieldwork, different methodologies are bound to mix and blur into the craft of the researcher. However, it would be false to claim that the research has not been inspired by certain methodologies rather than others.

Primarily, the school of Ethnomethodology has inspired this research, as Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein define it:

Ethnomethodology [...] holds the natural in particular awe, not so much for its richness and authenticity, but for the masterful handicraft that goes into its construction [...] [It] ‘steps back’ in order to gain purchase on just how every day realities are experienced and conveyed as such.\(^\text{48}\)

It focuses on

[T]he ways through which the world comes to be experienced as real, concrete, factual, and ‘out there’. An interest in members’ methods of constructing the world supersedes the naturalistic project of describing members’ worlds as they know them.\(^\text{49}\)

Brand and identity is not to be treated as objects, but rather as processes (using the concepts branding and life-conduct). Ethnomethodology shares this ideal.\(^\text{50}\) Also, it demands a ‘heuristic distance’ from the researcher, aiming to break down preconceptions about the IPs and the information they provide as well as keeping a social distance to the IPs.\(^\text{51}\) However, it would be naïve to consider this possible in an absolute sense. Rather, it should be treated as an ideal where unspoken consent should be avoided during the fieldwork. Yet, the heuristic distance demands that the researcher should not oppose or contest the IPs. Some researchers have defined this as indifference,\(^\text{52}\) but this should not be the case. I would rather describe it as an analytic curiousness, with a critical but empowering ambition. Gubrium & Holstein presents this as “the convicts’ code”, i.e.

\(^{48}\) Gubrium & Holstein 1997: 39
\(^{49}\) Ibid: 41, italics in original.
\(^{50}\) Ibid: p. 38
\(^{51}\) Ibid 1997: pp. 41
\(^{52}\) Ibid: p. 43
how to gain your interview persons’ trust.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore it is a constructional practice of a social world, defining its limitations and possibilities.\textsuperscript{54}

1.3.2 Interviews and interview persons

The ideal for the interviews was to find an as diverse group of interview persons (IPs) as possible, regarding age, sex, and ethnicity. The two criteria that all of them had to fulfil was to be an OPE and to use SNS both private and in their business to some extent.

To contact OPEs Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and emails to organizations for small-scale enterprisers were used. In general, posts was publicised and shared forward by my contacts on these SNS and information was forwarded from the contacted organisations directly to possible IPs. A minority of the interview persons were contacted through snowball sampling. A blog was created for the project, where information about the research could be accessed by potential IPs.\textsuperscript{55}

During the fieldwork 11 interviews with OPEs who use SNS were made. All interviews were conducted in Swedish during early autumn of 2011. In recorded time they ranged from 75 to 120 minutes each. The group of IPs consisted of 6 females and 5 males, within the span of late 20’s to early 50’s of age. A majority of the interview persons had a primarily Swedish background, however three of the interview persons expressively underlined their ‘non-swelishness’ (these were all female and in the older half of the interview persons). Seven of the IPs were full-time OPEs, two were OPEs on 50% of working hours, one held a more than 50% employment, one was a full time student, and one could not account for how much of the working hours that was as OPE. All the IPs ran businesses that worked with some kind of media or communications, ranging from fashion design to labour market coaching. The sampling was strategic, mostly depending on geographic access and general interest from the IP. However no potential IPs were discarded in the process. That the sought diversity was achieved should be considered the outcome of a fortunate coincidence.

The interviews were made in a loosely structured, or conversational, manner. A mind-map of themes and questions, in relation to the research questions, was used as the origin for the initial interviews, but discarded for the latter ones.\textsuperscript{56} In the end, the interview questions were developed with the IP in a reflexive manner during the

\textsuperscript{53} Gubrium & Holstein 1997: pp. 45
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid: p. 52
\textsuperscript{55} http://varumarkeochidentitet.wordpress.org 10/1-12.
\textsuperscript{56} See Appendix A, p. 60
interviews. The reason for this was to empower the IP’s experience and to use a language familiar to the IP. This type of interview technique was strategically chosen to gain insight in the researched field, but at the same time highlight and empower the IPs’ own opinions, thoughts and experiences.

1.3.3 Data processing
To find suitable trends the interviews were thoroughly listened through and a majority of the content was transcribed into Swedish. This was done using ExpressScribe for Mac OS X software. After this, the quotes were marked and grouped into different categories. These are represented by the chapters in the below analysis. The categories were extracted from the material, and not constructed beforehand. The idea behind this was to enhance meaningful interpretations of the IPs experiences, not to force them into a certain theoretical model. To categorise the quotes, margin notations for the different categories were made.57

All quotes have been translated into English by the author. Because of this activity, the language of the interview quotes may have become more similar to that of the author than was the case in the original quotes. It should however be noted that the aim of the translation has been to as accurately as possible communicate the IPs experiences to the reader of this dissertation.

The quotes used will rather work as examples to base sociological reasoning on than to create any strictly empirical conclusions. However, they are all examples of broader trends discovered during the fieldwork. A selection of quotes according to each trend had to be made. The chosen quotes were selected based on their clearness in relation to the trends. Thus there are quotes that appear more than once.

1.3.4 Research ethics and IP relations
Research ethics in the context of this dissertation have focused on the anonymity of the IPs. The IPs were all informed about the interview’s purpose and its privacy policy beforehand.58 This was presented initially during the interviews as well, combined with general information on how the interview would work and the possibilities for the IP to not answer questions and stop the interview at any time.

I have regarded full secrecy regarding the identities of the IPs and their businesses. The IPs were informed about this but were not encouraged to keep their participation

57 Cf. Aspers 2011: pp. 169
58 See Appendix B, p. 61
secret if they did not feel like it. Thus no list of the IPs pseudonyms and their respective personal attributes will be presented. However sociologically relevant information, this measure was taken to avoid identification of the IPs. This is of importance since the IP’s ventures could be compromised resulting in both commercial and private problems.

In general, I have striven to minimise possible inconveniences for the IPs. All interviews were conducted in a space designated by the IP. Some chose a public space while other chose to do it in their workspace. No direct compensation was given to the IPs, since this could affect their answers. However, occasional coffee and cake was bought for IPs.

When quotes from the interviews have been used they have, if needed, been edited for readability and anonymised for the IPs’ discretion. Thus all names are pseudonyms and resemblance to any specific person is to regard as a mere coincidence.

1.3.5 Theoretical development and analysis

The ideal-type from Weber has got several suiting properties to interpretative sociology, as will be further presented below. This following notion underlines the use of ideal-types as tools for sociological analysis. As a method, the ideal-type aims to create a conception of a sociological phenomenon. Here, I draw upon the methodology presented in my one-year master’s thesis *A New World Order: Towards an Ideal-Type of Bureaucracy 2.0*.

Working with interpretative sociology, the ideal-type is used as a method for finding out research directions to investigate what concepts, theories and methods that a social or cultural science needs to interpret the ‘meaning’ in historical phenomenon for people.\(^59\)

Weber defines the structure for ideal-typical methodology as *Primary* and *Secondary historic individual* (PHI, SHI). PHI is i.e. the phenomenon that is to be explained. SHI on the other hand is, essentially that which explains it.\(^60\) The ideal-type is the method used to elaborate an explanation for a PHI using SHIs as tools, i.e. conceptions of social phenomena.\(^61\)

Ola Agevall writes, from Weber's research, that “the spirit of capitalism” is an PHI and “the protestant ethic” an the SHI, used to explain the emergence of the former.\(^62\)


\(^{60}\) Agevall 1999: pp. 171, pp. 234

\(^{61}\) Ibid: p. 174

\(^{62}\) Ibid: pp. 234
The causality here should be noted, even though the protestant ethic was a prerequisite for the spirit of capitalism; it was one of many other essential factors. Weber’s study does not refute that the spirit of capitalism could not arise under other circumstances – only that, up to this point, it has not.63

The PHI in this dissertation is the “the relation between brand and personal identity in OPEs use of social media”. The theory, i.e. the concepts presented in the theory chapter64, is the SHI.

1.4 Theory of science: Interpretative sociology

For an account of theory of science this dissertation draws upon the theories of Weber, and his ideas of an interpretative sociology. Klas Gustavsson defines Weber’s theory of science as a “pragmatic theory of a break between everyday life and social science.”65

According to Weber, social science needs to be interpretative. Thus, it cannot account for ontological truths about society, but rather meaningful interpretations.66

The meaning of this account is to understand the scientific framework of this dissertation. It does not present ontological proof about the conditions of OPEs and social network sites. Rather, this is my account of how these sociological phenomena can be interpreted in a meaningful way. To regard this way of conducting research as ‘pragmatic’ is certainly self-righteous in a way. However, pragmatism is rather to be regarded as an ideal, than a factual state of the research. One of the most basic tools of an interpretative theory of science is the ideal-type. Gustavsson presents this as:

The ideal-type is created for the purpose of managing the different levels of subjectivity in the social sciences. On one hand, it relates to the actions of human beings and thus the motives for those actions, but it also regards that the researcher is omitted to make an assessment of the relevant attributes in the phenomenon researched.67

In the words of Weber, the ideal-type

is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct.68

To do this, the researcher has to combine the experiences from both outsiders, in this case the researcher, and insider, the OPEs interviewed.69

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63 Ibid: pp. 246
64 Sec. Ch. 1.2, pp. 6
66 Weber 2003[1958]: 183
68 Weber 1999:248
69 Cf. Merton 1972: 9-47
The intrinsic idea of Weber’s interpretative sociology is that it is not truth, but meaningful interpretations, that are the aim of sociology. Yet, it is the usefulness or meaning to the reader that will determine the dissertation’s relevance. Thus, theoretical concepts throughout the dissertation will be interpreted and used as ideal-types, e.g. reflexivity or network society, as Weber did with Marx’s theories of e.g. classes.

\footnote{Weber 1968: p. 4}

\footnote{Ibid 1994: xvi}
2. Is social media for social media people?

The question above may seem banal and yet obscure, who would social media be for if not social media people? In this first part of the analysis the individual (in the context of SNS) will be analysed from the perspectives of ‘attitudes on presentation’, ‘fun and progress’ and ‘time and stress’. The reasons for this are two: (1) To elaborate on how to meaningfully interpret the way OPEs perceive their presentation and possibilities to presentation of identity and brand on SNS, and (2) to discuss the relation between Erving Goffman’s theory of roles in relation to Manuel Castells’ theory of identity, and how they relate to branding and a general life-conduct. This part will focus on the OPE as an ‘actor’, i.e. someone who conduct actions.

2.1 Attitudes on the presentation of ‘self’

Starting off discussing identity and brand on SNS, the concepts of ‘strategic’ and ‘sincere’ identities, drawing upon the theories of Goffman, will be discussed to analyse the interview material. In this context, both these concepts are to be regarded as ideal-types, and thus both have been present in the interviews conducted, and none of the interview persons can be said to be ‘pure’ strategic or sincere. However, all of the IPs showed an attitude relating to an ‘ideal’ of being sincere or strategic. From a late modern, or informationalist, sociological standpoint Castell writes on identity:

By identity, as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attribute, or a set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning.

Discussing different strategies of how to use social network sites as marketing, Sandra said:

Sandra: There are they who, both as companies and private persons, use [social media] to communicate their message [without interacting]. You grow tired of them very fast, because, at least in my opinion, they have misunderstood the idea of social media. But, of course, here is a big difference between Twitter and Facebook. If

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72 Throughout the interviews ‘Social media’ was used, not social network sites. The reason for this was that social media is a more widely common conception of SNS, such as Facebook, Twitter etc. Some of the interview persons also thought of blogs as types of social media. This notion has been regarded in the analysis and thus quotes where social media is interpreted to mean blog and there have been reason to believe that the experience does not apply to SNS, the quotes has not been used or the context of blogs is stated explicit.

73 Manuel Castells discusses his typology of identity as a theory for collective identities (2010b: p. 5). However, there are, as will be shown further on, no objection to use this theory for understanding individual behaviour, as long as it is understood to exist in a societal context. OPEs have collective attributes, as does SNS, being part of these groups – collectives – are thus relevant to understand the life-conduct of OPEs on SNS.

74 Castells 2010b: 6
you’ve got a business page on Facebook you can more easily use one-way communications.

This conception shows a discrepancy, between a more traditional use of media and a ‘social’ use. The goal of both types is of course to communicate something, but it is how this communication is done, i.e. the methodology of communication, that is different. The kinds of communication I define as sincere are the ones who present themselves as enjoying their position as communicating themselves on SNS. These OPEs are not working a conscious strategy of how to communicate their ‘self’ in a sincere way.

**Christoffer:** My private and commercial communications are mixed with abandon. I distinguish very little between private and professional, I am myself, I have one identity rather than anything else, and it’s very hard to differentiate between what’s private and not…

I: Are you comfortable with it?

Christoffer: Absolutely […] I enjoy it very much. I have a hard time trying to create a picture of myself that is not true; if you look at my Facebook timeline you’ll see that it’s very honest. I try not to say anything that isn’t ‘me’. […] Some people say about me that ‘he is social media’, ‘he breathes social media.’

The way Christoffer presents his communicational identity is very similar to Castells theory of a primary identity:

> *in the network society*, […] for most social actors, meaning [as symbolic identification of the purpose of his/her actions] is organized around a primary identity (that is an identity that frame all the others), which is self-sustaining across time and space.  

In addition, this frames Goffman’s conception of a sincere role in a way

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on – and this seems to be the typical case – then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the ‘realness’ of what is presented.

There is however one difference. Goffman does not elevate the sincere role to a level of ‘framing all the others’ as Castells does with ‘primary identity’. The conclusion of this part will elaborate further on this discrepancy. However, when identity and role are used here and below, these are not to be interpreted as equivalent. They are only used that way in a pedagogical sense, to show the reader how these concepts can be used to create similar meaningful interpretations.

Above, Christoffer does not perceive his actions as strategic, but as an expression of a genuine self. The statement of enjoyment is important here, appreciating to present

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75 Castells 2010b: 7, italics in original.
76 Goffman 1990[1959]: 28, italics added.
and communicate oneself in the SNS context in relation to the ruling rules and norms. This is not perceived as labour per se, but as ‘being me’.

It should however be noted that sincerity must be based both in the self-reflexivity of the agent, understanding oneself as sincere (this is ‘me’) and in the experience of the audience, perceiving the person as sincere. The strategic role on the other hand is much more complex, since it can take three distinctive forms; not to be perceived as sincere by one, or both, of the above criterion. However, no account can be made of the audience’s experience, since it was not a part of the empiric study.

To define the cynical (strategic) role, Goffman write:

At the other extreme, we find the performer who may not be taken in at all by his own routine. […] Coupled with this, the performer may be moved to guide the conviction of the audience only as means to other ends, having no ultimate concern in the conception that they have of him or the situation.77

This is similar to what Castells define as a “project identity”:

When social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build up a new identity that refines their position in society, and doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.78

My account of project identity is that within a project the identity is in itself a kind of strategy to attain a life-conduct that has an element of the project identity in itself, but not that the project identity should be the form of a future primary identity. The ‘project’ of the ‘identity’ is to change one’s life-conduct or possibilities to a life-conduct to something more in-line with one’s primary identity. For OPEs this can take the form of strategic usage of SNS to attain a life-conduct where one’s business is prosperous.

This can be found in a way more similar to Goffman in the writings of Anthony Giddens, whom Castells bases a large part of his theory of identity upon.79

The narrative of self-identity in [disembodied] instances is woven in a manner which the individual to witness the activities of her own body with neutral detachment, cynicism, hatred or ironic amusement.80

One critique that should be posed to Giddens statement is that he only defines the experience of disembodiment in neutral and negative words; there can of course (at least in theory) be a positive sense of disembodiment in e.g. ‘doing what had to be done’ or ‘taking one for the team’.

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77 Goffman 1990[1959]: 28
78 Castells 2010b: 9
79 Ibid: 10
80 Giddens 1991: 59, italics added.
The core for a strategic role in this case is the ‘self-reflexive’ understanding of one’s own actions as rational; strategically aimed for a specific goal. In the quote below, Kristin discusses what she posts on her private and her business page on Facebook.

**Kristin:** I guess that I brag more on my private page, for example I wrote that I’m doing [this interview] today on my private page today, and I’m certain that some people will like it. I guess it’s some kind of bragging… to show that I’m interesting. On the other hand… it’s kind of silly, but I’ve discovered that it’s the way Facebook works. I didn’t write anything about this on my business page, there I posted a link to a meeting for entrepreneurs at [the public library in a neighbouring municipality] and something about how hard it is to create routines in a business, […] things that are more directly related to my business.

Kristin describes how she has started to act more strategically on Facebook recently, posting business-related posts on her private Facebook page. Through “bragging” more she aims to communicate: “I’m interesting”, to the people who visit her private Facebook page. Yet, she perceives her actions as “kind of silly”. However, she accepts that “it’s the way Facebook works”.

This reflexive conformism is similar to what Heidegren et al. define as a kind of life-conduct, since it is “a mode to actively master and perform one’s life through ideas, beliefs and values”. This is interpreted as a form of branding; presenting a commercial persona to potential customers and clients, being perceived as interesting and thus relevant for the customers’ and clients’ wants and needs of these. This opens up for the idea that life-conduct can at the same time become a method for branding on SNS.

In that way, the presentation of the ‘self’ – the commercial self – can be interpreted as a form of media labour - branding. In Kristin’s case to show ‘I’m interesting’, in Land & Taylor’s research for the company to show ‘I’m interesting’. The idea that one should present oneself as interesting is a rationalisation of the use of the personal media, and a professionalisation. Of course, Christoffer also shows, or tries to show, ‘I’m interesting’. However, he perceives it as being ‘himself’ rather than using a strategy. Branding and life-conduct thus merge into an action *sui generis* in Christoffer’s case.

These two different position is however not as polarised as they may seem. Goffman describes the relation of sincere and cynical (strategic) as a *slider* between these

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81 Heidegren et al. 2007: 42

82 This notion, to include the over-all life-conduct into marketing oneself, is a strategy that’s not only found in one-person enterprises. Researching a larger networked company Chris Land & Scott Taylor experienced to be integrated in the marketing blog of the company, despite the findings of their research (Land & Taylor 2010: p. 409).
extremes of roles. Castells rather interprets them as different levels of identity: ‘primary identity’ and ‘project identity’. There can thus occur conflicts between the idea of being sincere, and the ideas of efficient strategies in using SNS.

**Sandra:** Sometimes, when I have ‘Twittered’ very much, [I fear] that people will ‘unfollow’ me now, because I’ve been spamming them... but when most people ‘unfollow’ me is when I’ve been silent, on vacation maybe abroad and away from an Internet connection.

Additionally, this can be interpreted as a blurring of the lines between private and commercial contacts.

**Richard:** I see no point in dividing [between my private friends and my business contacts] at the moment, I am my company at the moment, I’m promoting myself and what I can do for other businesses. However, I don’t start to discuss left-wing politics and ideology with them, but I don’t prevaricate that I hold left-wing political views. [...] On ‘G-Plus’ I do filter a lot, what I share as public and whom I share with... and maybe I don’t write the most controversial posts. [...] I put a lot of time into defining whom I share with, because it’s possible on ‘G-Plus’.

Both Sandra and Richard aim to be sincere, but in some cases use strategies to domesticate their sincerity in favour of their brand. This is not due to any formal rules or norms, but rather the conception that a business that communicates in a certain way is a business that works well – and thus becomes interesting.

It should be noted that this is not to be interpreted as a psychology-sation of their position, making the interview persons or OPEs more rational, strategic or cynical than anyone else in general. However, Richard and Sandra share an experience; some kind of actions makes you ‘uninteresting’, which are problematic, despite if it is ‘spamming’, being absent or strongly promoting left-wing political views. These actions are part of their life-conduct, become problematic when they are a part of the way their business is presented in everyday SNS.

This shows that strategies are needed, if this kind of action does not come ‘naturally’ to you, i.e. this is a technique to conduct your life that you experience as intuitive.

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83 Goffman 1990[1959]: p. 29
84 Castells 2010b: p. 7
85 Foucault writes that one should not substantialise power, reducing it to something other than a technique that exists only in exercise (Gordon 2000: pp. xiv). In the same way, actions should not be psychologised, reducing them to be without context or incentives from a surrounding culture. This idea is similar to Matthew Adams’s critique of Giddens’s psychology-sation of identity when focusing too much on the individual’s self-reflexivity and to little on the social structure, i.e. habitus (Adams 2006: p. 512).
2.2 Experiences of fun and meaning

A topic often discussed during the interviews is the need for ‘fun’ using SNS. The previous chapter elaborated on strategic and sincere approaches to SNS. Here the main idea is to argue for ‘fun’ as a means to being sincere, and a possible variable for understanding developing OPEs’ relation to SNS in the future. This chapter will centre on the two assets that emerged as the core of OPEs use of SNS during the interviews: contacts and information.

In the quotes below, two of the IPs discusses fun and progress using SNS:

**Sandra:** Of course, there has to be an element of fun to it... one has to like communicating with people and read what other people have to say, otherwise it’s meaningless. […] If one think it’s fun it’s easier to contact people and getting jobs and of course one must have some courage and if you like it I think that you are more courageous and have the guts to contact possible business associates and so on.

**Daniel:** I reckon that the private and commercial merge, whatever social media we’re talking about. […] Social media helps me both professionally in my career and for the film festival when making contacts. Then, when you meet a producer or director, I often become friends with them on a personal level and create a lasting professional and private relationship… it’s very hard to explain […] your largest asset is your contacts, and that makes social media important, no one can deprive you of your contacts.

Contacts are assets, and if you like to use your assets it becomes more fun to work. Sharing is something that is a core feature to SNS as phenomena and for using them in everyday life. In the quote below, the other core asset of SNS – information – is discussed (using the word knowledge).

**Christoffer:** Social media is about something else than marketing, at least marketing in a traditional sense that is more of a one-way communication. Social media is about being you, sharing and meeting others. Does someone need help? Then, you share your knowledge – you’ve got knowledge of things. […] It’s very satisfying to help people this way.

These sincere accounts of usage do not lack strategies, however, they are not formulated as strategies in themselves. Rather, strategies are formulated, as the OPEs make conscious of his or her actions on SNS. You must like to communicate and to share your knowledge, you must tend to your contacts more and more as friends – and for the sincere OPE there is little or no difference between these two.

Having specific strategies, or to be strategic can sometime seem strange to the OPE.

**Daniel:** Because my business is that small, I don’t really see the point in separating it from me, using a separate business page [on Facebook]. [As an OPE] one becomes rather synonymous with one’s business; I am my company, my company is I. […] Then it seems rather silly to have a business page.
In addition, the aim to present oneself can take the form of being sincere:

**Helena:** If I find any amusing pictures or home pages, then I post them on my business page, if they have anything with photography to do.

I: Could you post them on your private page too?

**Helena:** Yes, I could, I choose the one or the other, but it’s still things that I think is amusing. I’m a part of my business page; I want people to get to know ‘me’.

Above, Daniel and Helena stress the need of ‘me’, or the self, in their commercial use of Facebook. The personality is important, to be something more than any other company, as the following two quotes present:

**Sandra:** You should be personal, but not private.

**Richard:** The hardest task as a small-scale business is to establish oneself and make contacts. The amount of small-scale enterprises today is that many that you have to jut out from the mass, and it’s hard if you don’t have significant capital. Then [free] social media is essential.

To be appreciated as a sincere person, you thus need to be personal; you have to be met as human. This way, you must ‘personalise’ your brand, give it ‘the breath of life’ to speak metaphorically – to make it interesting and human. You do this by communicating the right information with the right people. You have to be something different from other companies, presenting a certain life-conduct of one’s brand that gives clients and customers a certain impression. Giving of the impression of ‘fun’ – it seems sincere. And by having fun one gets to be sincere while branding.

As a contrast, there are of course those who are of another opinion:

**Kristin:** I don’t like Facebook in reality; I get so tired of what people write there, it’s so much crap really. But, since I have decided to make it one of my marketing channels, then it’s just to ‘roll with it’. In the beginning I didn’t think that I should be that active on my personal Facebook profile, but now I’ve started to reassess, [...] I’ve been looking on what other people do and I realised that ‘ok – they market their business in their personal too’ and then I also started to do that. Primary it’s to mention what you’re doing and where you’re going to because then you’re someone important, thus you can rub it in a little (laughter).

**Maria:** I’m not a technological person, and I really don’t get Twitter. I just don’t understand what it’s good for.

The interesting part is that the IPs who stressed that it is fun with SNS focused on information and contacts, i.e. the content of these networks. But the ones who did not appreciate a sincere approach focused on the technological aspects, as technologies – tools – rather than a means to satisfying work-environment and tasks. This questions whether it is running a business or being on SNS that is the driving force for some sincere OPEs.
A social meaning found on SNS is somewhat apparent to some of the IPs:

**Hanna:** *I never feel alone; I always have someone to contact. But at the same time, you miss the physical presence of meeting someone ‘face-to-face’, which is the case if you have colleagues.*

In this quote Hanna stresses both a meaning for SNS – never feeling alone – but at the same time lacking the ‘physical presence’ of meeting someone face-to-face. Looking to the above reasoning, the quote as stresses the meaningfulness ‘inside’ SNS. But, at the same time, the rationalisation of social interaction lead to decreased meaning, because of the technological constraints the SNS depend upon.

Above I define satisfaction in labour as something that is overall positive, drawing upon a general sociological opinion that an experience of meaning in everyday life lowers the risk of alienation and anomie.

Alienation is here to be interpreted as material ‘meaninglessness’; the ‘material’ in this sense is primarily the technologies of information society, e.g. computers and SNS. This takes the form of ‘I don’t get this computer program’ or ‘I don’t like computers’.\(^\text{86}\) Furthermore anomie, defined as idealistic or moral ‘meaninglessness’, focusing on ideals for SNS; work-ethics of producing surplus value and meaning inside them.\(^\text{87}\)

These two types of meaninglessness are interpreted as the consequences of a strategic approach to SNS. As the quote below indicates, these strategies may develop over time to more imitate the methods of a ‘sincere’ OPE.

**Kristin:** *I try to log in to Facebook at least every morning and write a post on my business page. It’s extremely important that you attend to your business page if you have one, if you log in to write something only once a week, then you don’t need a business page. [...] The last fortnight I’ve tried something new, to write something [business related] on my personal page every day, even in the weekends. I never write on my business page during the weekends.*

In this way, Kristin has adopted an ideal on writing business related posts during the weekends on her private Facebook page. However, denoting that she would never write on her business page then, defining this ideal somewhat unappealing to her personal norms and ethics. Strategies become necessary to cope with this ideal that the OPE experience is alienated from one’s personality.

This strategic approach to SNS as a project for conducting one’s life is not in line with an overall norm of ‘fun’, as expressed in the more sincere quotes. Kristin underlines a need to spend more time on SNS to create a presentation of someone who is sincere in


\(^\text{87}\) Seeman 1959: p. 787
her use of SNS as an OPE. Deviating from this norm can be interpreted from a front end perspective as a stigma of ‘doing it wrong’ or ‘not fitting in’ at SNS. From a back end perspective this questions the primary identity – since a project identity is needed. This project is crucial to fulfil a life-conduct that is not integrated with spending time at SNS – i.e. labour. Thus, the norm of ‘being personal’ is questioned.

2.3 Experiences of time and stress

Much of what the IPs experiences can be illustrated by Arlie R. Hoschschild’s wording “when work becomes home and home become work.” However, ‘home’ should be interpreted as something more abstract than the space containing one’s belongings, possibly shared with family or close friends. Rather, if one regards the old saying ‘home is where the heart is’ in relation to this quote, is say a lot about the time spent on the usage of SNS for OPEs. Time is important for the SNS life-conduct in two distinct, but related, matters; the time spent on SNS as labour time and how time consuming SNS can be to the OPE. Discussing structured labour time on SNS Sandra said:

**Sandra**: You know, I don’t work that way, I work with my passion and thus I experience it that way... I think it’s that fun that the issues that emerges are things that I would discuss on a Sunday morning. [...] Sometimes I have business communications on weekends and evenings, but only if it’s something interesting or very special. However, I always answer direct if someone contacts me, but most communication is done at business hours.

Below, Lars present that labour time on SNS have been stressed as consciously non-structured, to enforce creativity, quality and spontaneity.

**Lars**: I don’t have any structured work time with social media. If I had, I think that things would be forced and lack in quality if I had structured work time… I rather write something when I have something to say, but my own demands on quality apply mostly to the blog.

Here, again, the concept of sincerity becomes important. The ideal of ‘working with one’s passion’ or ‘being spontaneous’ is polarised towards strict business hours. In the network society, Castells argues, we live in a ‘space of flows’ where traditional borders of work and leisure (and many others) are individualised according to one’s position in the network. This is the case for the ‘network enterprise’ too, when entering the informationalist era, changing from mass production to flexible production. This has called for a ‘crisis of the large organization’ not being flexible enough.

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88 Hochschild 1997, cover.
89 Castells 2010a: pp. 407, pp. 467
90 Ibid: pp. 166, pp. 467
There is another aspect of this. Some IPs regard their contacts’ presence as disturbing when they are online on SNS ‘all the time’:

**Hanna:** Entrepreneurs that use Twitter, Facebook and everything else... then I loose my confidence in them, in one way since it gets me to wonder ‘how do they have the time to do all this?’ And in another way as ‘don’t they have anything better to do?’ Then I sometime feel stressed by the knowledge that an entrepreneur always thinks about his tweets and Facebook updates instead of just focusing on here and now. It becomes so exaggerated.

Another IP presented a similar account but added more of an analysis to the issue:

**Kristin:** I experience that there are some [people] that are online on Facebook all the time. Then I think ‘don’t these people ever work?’ Then I’m an ambassador for female entrepreneurship, it has become a huge ‘site’ on Facebook with a lot of posts, and it’s the same 20 to 30 persons who post them. And I get a little surprised – ‘don’t they work?’ That’s another side of female entrepreneurship, it is not as substantial as it is said to be, and a lot of women have a hard time to break even.

Likewise, the other position relating to this issue was found among the IPs:

**Helena:** I don’t want to stuff my business [Facebook page] with pictures of my daughter; I don’t want it to look like I don’t have anything better to do than to photograph my own daughter, it must be a mix. There are a lot of pictures that I post to my private page instead.

This calls for a conflict between roles, or identity levels. Hanna and Kristin polarises the use of SNS with ‘being an entrepreneur’ or ‘to work’. Here, SNS is posed as sometimes be more primary or sincere to the OPE than running a business. Hanna feels stressed about it and thus experience alienation from these people, as she does not agree with their actions, and a kind of anomie, in that they does not act according to her norms of being an entrepreneur. The same can be said for Kristin. Helena on the other hand uses a strategic approach, because she aims to avoid exactly that reaction that Hanna and Kristin have presented.

Here Goffman’s concepts of ‘discrepant roles’ and the risk of ‘destructive information’ become important. He writes:

> Given the fragility and the required expressive coherence of the reality that is dramatized by a performance, there are usually facts that, if drawn attention to, would discredit, disrupt, or make useless the impression that the performance fosters.\(^\text{92}\)

This theory is vital for the experiences above, since it is the experience that there is a discrepancy between the OPE and SNS roles. This creates anomie, through diminished

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\(^{91}\)This crisis is however partly a myth since large enterprises outsource a lot of their production in a global network, but still have the same impact on the global market. In this way risk, or uncertainty, is externalised to the small and medium sized firms of the word. They run the factories, clean the floors and fix the printers for the companies that need it, always taking the risk that this demand will change rapidly (Castells 2010a: 164-84).

\(^{92}\)Goffman 1990[1959]: 140
trust. This way, the dramatization of the presentation is rendered useless. The fragile coherency of the OPE’s reality is the risk that someone or something would draw attention to that one is not sincere as an OPE or at an SNS. In this way, the OPE could come off as using SNS as means to another end.

This is not only vital for the above examples, but has a more general status in the relation between roles or identities. Researching labour time, a similar experience is presented by Hochschild, where “Eileen” is approached as not being sincere at work, asking to be granted part-time to spend more time with her kids:

As Eileen’s boss saw it, the work bargain was a given. ‘Part time,’ as its name implied, was only a part of a whole. To work part time was to renege on an agreement to do the whole, complete job. Formerly, he had more of Eileen’s effort, as he saw it.93 A further interpretation is that there is not only a quantitative difference between ‘home-time’ and ‘work-time’ but a qualitative one too. This makes “Eileen” seem strategic about work – only working enough to support her sincere role as a mother.94

The experiences that marketing consumes time when you do not have enough customers exist.

Helena: Marketing probably consumes the major part of my labour time; unfortunately I don’t have that many customers. [...] In private I’m addicted to Facebook, so I’m there all the time.

This is similar to the experiences stressed above that those who are ‘too much’ on SNS are questioned in their sincerity as OPEs; having too few customers to work a full day, i.e. not working hard enough. However, to make the conclusion that the OPEs that spend a lot of time on SNS by default would be running unsuccessful businesses or not be working hard enough would be faulty.

Rather this may be attributed to two other similar possibilities. The major one to is that to be a social media person is more sincere or primary to the OPE. The other one, that being an OPE is a strategic role, to support something else, maybe to present a sincere role on SNS.

Discussing the topic of stress in relation to SNS, the experience (to my surprise, I must add) was, over all, that ‘not being there’ was the main source of stress experienced, according to the IPs.

93 Hochschild 1997: 93
94 Hochschild has on many the occasion stressed the dual, oppressed and problematic position of females and traditionally female labour spheres in the new economy, never gaining the same status as males and traditional male labour spheres, but rather demanding women to masculinize or feminize themselves into disembodied gender roles (e.g. Hochschild 1989; 1997; 2003).
Helena: *I feel a lot of guilt and stress if there are something that I should do but don’t have the time to do... my business blog or my daily Facebook post [on my business page]... My goal is a daily post but during this summer I started to frivol a bit.*

Christoffer: *I feel more isolated right now [when the 3G is offline], than I did with functioning Internet in Southeast Asia. [...] I try to avid places on earth without Internet. [...] I become stressed when I cannot be ‘there’ and respond to possible criticism in the social networks.*

In the above examples there are accounts of both a time strategy and a general sincerity relating to stress. There is something, to both these IPs, which give them the impression that they should be ‘there’. This relation to performing is described by Goffman as “idealisation”, drawing upon the theories of Charles H. Cooley:

> When the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially credited values of the society, more so, in fact, than his behaviour as a whole.

> To the degree that a performance highlights the common official values of the society in which it occurs, we may look upon it [...] as an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community.

Here, ‘society’ can be interpreted in both a broad and a narrow sense. In a narrow sense an SNS is a ‘virtual society’ with all that comes to it. Due to similarities with other SNS, in e.g. history, participators and purpose of participating, the ‘officially credited values’ will become similar among SNS. In the broad sense there are ‘officially credited values’ in society as a whole. However, different performances will of course communicate different values within the respective society.

The ideal, or norm, of ‘being there’ on SNS is present for both of the above IPs, but take different forms. To Helena, it is being unable to continue with the ‘project’ of presenting herself according to her strategic notion of ‘what one should do’; working with SNS to establish one’s brand.

Christoffer, on the other hand, experiences not only stress, but also isolation. I interpret this experience of isolation as due to disconnection from the Internet society, not being able to interact with the other people in his networks. This is not failing a project in the same sense as Helena presents, but rather failing an ideal of ‘being there’, which seem more important for Christoffer’s ‘self’ than a geographic position in the world.

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95 The 3G service of the Christoffer’s smartphone was unexpectedly offline during the interview. It should be noticed that this is a rather exceptional case (in Sweden). However, this example is thought to have relevance outside that situation and the lack of 3G service is thought to make the example more clear than making it into an exception.

With Castells’s theory in mind, Christoffer is isolated from his primary identity, or position in his network, taking on a “resistance identity” to delegitimise ‘being offline’ and disconnected from the network. In addition, Christoffer’s behaviour can be interpreted as taking on a strategic role, accepting to be ‘offline’, but presenting himself in a way that promotes ‘going back online’.

Being online becomes a core feature of the primary identity:

**Christoffer:** *I think it’s a prerequisite in a relationship* [that both are active in social media] *it become very awkward otherwise. If one pulls out the cell phone all the time to reply and comment... it become hard to understand each other, one feels excluded.*

**Sandra:** *It’s important to be perceived as honest in social media channels.* [...] *And it’s important to be aware of that you come off differently in writing [than verbally], [otherwise] it opens up for misunderstandings.*

Here, Sandra stresses ‘honesty’. In my interpretation being honest is very similar to being sincere. Withal you have to incorporate ‘media awareness’ in how SNS work to just not ‘talk the talk’ but also to ‘walk the walk’ – to be perceived as sincere.

Some IPs mentioned that specific times are consciously chosen for a professional use of SNS. This is similar to the ideas of Helena in the latest example.

**Alice:** *I plan to write on my blog every Sunday, so that it gets done. I check my email daily and try to check Facebook at least twice a day.*

In this way, the SNS can be put aside when ‘it is done’. Likewise, this strategic approach to SNS and the time spent on them were problemised as time consuming:

**Hanna:** *My over all experience is that Facebook is very time consuming... suddenly an hour has passed. Social media in general are vast time consumers, but at the same time a great asset, given that you have a strategy and not only surf about. If one does that, as I often do, then it’s more of a time thief.*

**Helena:** *I’m not on Twitter or on Google Plus, because that would take too much time.*

This creates a risk within a strategy, compromising the project of having a working brand on SNS. From a Castellian view, this compromises the goal of the project, while from a Goffmanian point it takes the performer further away from the ideal of the situation, with the risk of making the brand less sincere – and thus less interesting.

Another approach was thus presented, denoting a more strategic approach to leisure time instead.

**Lars:** [Working with computers] *full time, it cannot be my past time any more. So now I have started to cook and bake bread, do something with my hands. I felt that I had to do something that does not require technological solutions.*

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97 Castells 2010b: 8
Hanna: iPhone have changed a lot for me, I can check my Facebook and my email all the time. It’s a source of stress too, because you can never really relax, you always have [the iPhone] with you and when you’re as enthusiastic about your business as you usually are as an entrepreneur, it consumes you. [...] On many occasions I leave [the iPhone] at work and then I feel free as a bird.

This approach to be more strategic about time shows an impression that some things, despite if they are leisure or labour, ‘have to be done’. This underlines that you have to form some kind of project to do this – cooking and baking, checking Facebook or leaving the smartphone at work. Overall this supports something else, these leisure-time strategies or projects are not ends in themselves, but means to other ends – ends of labour.

2.4 Concluding discussion

In the above analysis I have elaborated on different ideal-typical approaches to OPEs’ presentation of themselves and their brands on SNS. What I have tried to show is that by polarising their experiences through the theories of Goffman and Castells, an understanding of an SNS divide emerges. Metaphorically, some people can surf the wave of the broken down levee between identity and brand, while others have to float along the best they can in the crushing waves. Thus the main experience is that if you can surf, SNS are great assets for an OPE, making it fun to conduct one’s personal brand. However, if you do not appreciate surfing it may become a kind of labour that you find meaningless, and thus give of a strategic approach on SNS just to get it done.

On theory of identity, I propose that identity, as defined by Castells should be interpreted as a ‘back end’ understanding of individual actions in the network society, drawing upon Giddens’s (not entirely unproblematic) concept of ‘self-reflexivity’. This ‘back-end’ interpretation does not try to account for some kind of essential identity.98 Rather, the primary identity is ‘back-end’ in that it must be interpreted as a blueprint – an ideal-type – for the life-conduct of the actor. The project identity is a pragmatic position of how to change the environment for this blueprint to actually work – an ideal-type of social change.99

Goffman on the other hand, wrote in a different time and could of course not be expected to foresee the role of the Internet. However, the general level of his theories

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98 Where ‘self-reflexivity’ originates from, if it is something culturally taught or something biologically inherited, is never defined by Giddens (1991). Over all, Giddens make a (more or less) implicit assumption that humans are ‘self-reflexive’. To be less critical, one could read Giddens from the notion ‘assuming that humans in late-modern society is self-reflexive, identity is...’ However, he overall gives the impression that humans are essentially ‘self-reflexive’ which I perceive as problematic for a scientific theory.
99 Cf. Castells 2010b: 419-29
make them possible to apply even in this very different case from his research on the 1950s Falklands etc. This rather presents a ‘front-end’ idea of how behaviour is perceived and adds up to an experience of a life-conduct, with both sincere and strategic parts to play.

Relating to Castells theories, sincere roles are the ‘everyday life’ execution of the primary identity, taking the form of either a “resistance identity” (‘this is not OK’) or a “legitimising identity” (‘this is OK’) in the situation. The primary identity is to be interpreted a blueprint for sincere behaviour, the narrative for the idea of ‘me’ – life-conduct. Fulating this blueprint is to create meaning in everyday life, since acting out the sincere role is experienced as being ‘myself’, with a ‘reflexive’ relation between blueprint and execution, going back and forth to check that it is done right.

Some of the IPs, experiencing meaninglessness on SNS can thus not conduct their life. This opens up for the relation between a strategic role and project identity. Means to another end; a different or non-SNS life-conduct. The project of doing something to another end is in itself a strategy, aiming to change something, but not changing one’s sincere or primary ‘self’, e.g. using SNS to be able to work with one’s passion. It would however be faulty, in my experience, to say that project identity and strategic role is the same thing. This is because identity and role must be interpreted as different concepts. To continue the metaphor of construction work, the project identity is the scaffold of the primary identity, executed though a strategic role, but not something that is a part of the final construction.

Going back to the initial question of this chapter, I would not claim thon SNS are only for social media people, using social media to execute their primary identity. However, there is a norm to present oneself as sincere in one’s actions as both OPE and on SNS – being prosperous and interesting. My hypothesis is that social media people are making the means – SNS – into an end in itself. Social media people, or a mere ideal of a social media person make the tools into an end in and of itself. This relates to Goffman’s theory of idealisation in one’s self-presentation, where being sincere – honest and having fun – is credited on SNS. This kind of development has however been discovered on other occasions in the history of sociology, e.g. Weber’s The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit

100 Castells 2010b: 7
101 Ibid: 192-301
of Capitalism, where capitalism is found to evolve from a tool for achieving salvation to an end in itself.¹⁰²

Any developer of SNS reading this may learn one of the most important lessons here. If an SNS aims to be more suitable for all kinds of OPEs, it has to be able to work both for sincere and strategic users, not stigmatising the strategic ones. Thus, SNS attributes that are made only for killing time or to make the user kill time do not seem to empower all OPEs – but creates discomfort and stigmatisation of some.

¹⁰² Weber 2003[1958]
3. From public space to market place

This second part aims to take the analysis ‘up a notch’; focusing on the structures that the actors are embedded in. From analysing the personal presentation and its discontents in the previous part, now the ‘site’ in SNS will be in focus. The themes that will be the centre of this part are: entering the SNS space, going ‘commercial’, and techniques of privacy on SNS. The theories primarily discussed here are Erving Goffman’s theory of ‘front and back stage’ in relation to Manuel Castells ‘space of flows’. Here IPs’ experiences will be analysed from an ideal-typical dichotomy of private (identity) and commercial (brand).

The reason for this lays the framework of this dissertation. The relation between a personal and a commercial sphere, rather that a public sphere, is at issue. A public sphere, in this context, may both take the form of a private and a commercial space - as the header indicates. A city park e.g. is a public space, but can be used as a private space for leisure activities, such as playing football, and for commercial activities, such as selling ice cream. In other words, the previous part analysed ‘agents’; this part will analyse ‘structures’ on SNS.

3.1 Entering the structure

One core aspect of the IPs’ experiences of SNS discussed during the interviews was how they begun using these sites. Discussing how the IPs first got to use SNS, both professional and personal ambitions were presented.

Daniel: It’s hard to determine but I think that it was a business thing; I have a hard time differentiating those two. Almost everything I do, 99%, is related to my branch in some way. I’m quite an early adopter; I was the first with a lot of social media services among my friends.

Hanna: I started out primarily private [on Facebook] but I had in mind [from the beginning] that ‘here I can reach out to customers easily’.

As Daniel and Hanna imply, they predominately entered SNS for the possibility to Interact with prospective customers, creating profitable (professional) weak ties. Thus, they had to follow the ideals of the respective SNS

Goffman present the idea of a ‘front region’, or front stage, as:

Given a particular performance as a point of reference, it will sometimes be convenient to use the term ‘front region’ to refer to the place where the performance is given. […]

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103 However, it should be noted that some of the IPs started off at some kind of early SNS many years ago – some of them in the 1990s – e.g. IRC. This is only an account of their present idea of how and why they adopted SNS.

104 Front and back stages are used here instead of front and back region. It is however the same concepts.
The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards. From the above quote, Goffman differentiates between “manners” and “decorum” on the front stage. Manners indicate how one directly interacts with other people in the region. Decorum, on the other hand, indicates the indirect interaction at the front stage, mediating the presentation visually, socially etc. These are the forms for a self-presentation that Daniel and Hanna have to adjust to when introducing themselves as professionals on SNS. This can be strange to one’s primary identity – demanding a strategy to cope with this techno-social embedding of business.

However the above case is not typical for everyone:

**Helena:** I've been [on Facebook] for some years... about three years maybe? It didn't take long for me to become addicted, since I discovered some old friends from [my home country] that I had a hard time keeping in touch with before. It was the private socialising that was fun. [...] It took more than a year for me before I created a business page; [...] it took a long time for me to understand the point of being on Facebook as an entrepreneur.

Helena's approach to entering SNS is rather aimed at the possibilities for personal communications in private sphere, what Goffman defines as ‘back stage’:

...may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. [...] It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something is painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed.

This other part of SNS is where the “private socialising” takes place. This is where the self can be explored and negotiated without having to answer for it in a professional sense, where one can not be but sincere in one’s presentation. Thus, one OPEs back stage can be another ones front stage. As Helena implies above, she entered SNS for the possibility to use it for private communication. To communicate with her personal friends, without having to bother with her position as an OPE and her brand.

It is however important to underline that it is from how a space is used that it can be labelled front or back stage. The above quotes show that what Daniel and Hanna perceived on SNS as a front stage for communicating one’s brand was perceived as a back stage by Helena. As the previous part discussed a slider between sincere and strategic roles, the above quotes promote a similar understanding of the relation between commercial and private on SNS – sliding between private communication and marketing

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105 Goffman 1990[1959]: p. 109
106 Ibid. 110
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid: 114
or other commercial uses. This is a structural interpretation of how actions can (and eventually should) be conducted on SNS. Goffmans theory presents a front end interpretation of SNS as a social structure.

Castells’s theory on the ‘space of flows’, i.e. the (flexible) social structure of network society, gives a different conception of how to understand SNS as a social structur, focusing on the back end. Castells writes: “The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through a flow.”\textsuperscript{109} This is further described as “three layers of material supports that, together, constitutes the space of flows”\textsuperscript{110}. The first layer (1) is “the material support […] constituted by a circuit of electronic exchanges”\textsuperscript{111}, being the computers, smartphones and other digital hardware and their Internet connections in the world. The second layer (2), being “constituted by [the network’s] nodes and hubs”\textsuperscript{112}. This means the different places (e.g. SNS) found online and their specific “well-defined social, cultural, physical, and functional characteristics”\textsuperscript{113}. The third layer (3) is “the spatial organization of the dominant, managerial elites […] that exercise the directional functions around which [the space of flows] is articulated”\textsuperscript{114}. These elites are the social actors whose interests (financial, political, technological etc.) shape the social structures on SNS though their organisational capacity and influence.

To the IPs above SNS were either attractive because of the possibilities to communicate with people already known to them – maintaining personal strong and weak ties – or to find new ones for a commercial purpose. As Daniel indicates above, the border between these are quite fuzzy to many OPEs since it is not uncommon to work with one’s passion. Helena was however initially more interested in maintaining her previous relations. Thus, the reason for become a node – creating new weak ties – demands an ambition to not only maintain relations over SNS but to present oneself to others, aiming for a sincere presentation to be regarded as interesting at SNS – as was discussed in the previous part.

Daniel and Hanna imply that they entered SNS as persons, even if their ambitions doing so was primarily professional. Helena had no other (initial) ambition than to act as an individual in this structure. Thus, the possibility this structure gives to be less of an

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\textsuperscript{109} Castells 2010a: 442, italics removed.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, italics removed.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid: 443, italics removed.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid: 445, italics removed.
individual and more of a non-personal brand or a company seems small. This are the consequences of that the manners and decorum that are at play in these structures – the structuring of the space of flows – are shaped for private persons. When brands are communicated, this makes the private communication very similar. In that way, the blurring of the lines between labour and leisure become plausible consequence of this structure – and that entering SNS can increase this blurring for the OPE – which may not be good for their business or their personal life, or at least undesired.

3.2 Censorship and marketing – a dynamic duo?

As presented in the quotes from Goffman above, some things are hidden away when at ‘front stage’, aiming to present oneself from a specific angle. Some kind of censorship, or at least censoring strategy, seems to be at work for many of the IPs.

**Sandra:** Sometimes I censor myself in my private use of Twitter since I know that there are those I have business contacts with there. [...] However, I try to keep Facebook private since I want to have contact with my family and friends there.

**Lars:** I’ve got two different Twitter accounts, one private for the late-night drunk tweets, and one for my business. I try not to mix it up to much. That’s the way I am. I guess I’m quite transparent, I write quite frank and not that flattering about myself from time to time, and I think that it’s good to separate that from my trade. [...] Most people that follow me private follow my business as well; I guess that’s natural. [...] I do not even have a private Facebook account [for private communication] I only use Google Plus.

In both examples above, SNS are perceived as front stages – where certain manners and decorum are perceived as common practice. Thus, both Sandra and Lars have tried to ‘fortify’ some kind of back stages on SNS, consecrating certain channels for private use, where they do not have to act in a way befitting their businesses. I deliberately use the word consecration since this strategy never was presented so much as an economic-rationalistic strategy as it was presented as a general principle of conduct during the interviews. This conception of a consecrated back room will be analysed more thoroughly below. Important here is the experience of some SNS as front stages, leading the IPs to censor themselves.

IPs who were active on SNS before they introduced their business there overall seemed to have changed their behaviour and practice there after doing so:

**Alice:** At first I did not know that you could be more private on Facebook, but when I comprehended that I changed my settings to more private. [...] When I introduced my business to Facebook I made it public again. It means that I present myself in

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Here, censorship is used in a quite broad manner, defining techniques or strategies for hindering something that is perceived as a ‘genuine’ part of the self to be visible in one’s presentation.
another way on Facebook today. [...] There are still some private... you can see my values because they must imbue me all the time, they are thorough in both my business and in my private life. I cannot have one set of values in my business and another private.

Maria: I don’t use my personal Facebook that much [any more]; I don’t post very often on it. I was a more active user before... I don’t post anything that could affect my brand in a negative way.

I: Is this different to how you used Facebook before you introduced your business there?

Maria: Yes, absolutely, there is a difference. But I don’t know if it was conscious or not... during my college education I took a class on labour psychology and we were drilled, over and over again, that people... our future employers, they check our Facebook pages and check us out on Internet. [...] You’re told to ‘never post any pictures - don’t do it! Don’t do it! Think about your brand before anything else’. I have a former course mate who have one ‘brand page’ for possible employers and one ‘private page’ for her ‘drunk photos’... then she mix a status update of anxiety about dying with showing of her new production. One doesn’t really take that seriously.

Both examples above show a kind of rationalisation of SNS used when introducing a business to one. Also, it is a kind of commercialization, shaping social interaction fore commercial purposes. Thus, the structure used by (some) non-OPEs for spreading private information changes to a professional structure for branding and marketing – a structure of presentational idealisation, as was discussed in the previous part.

Similar accounts are found throughout sociological literature from the last two decades. Arlie R. Hochscild, researching the change in emotional work, from being based in affection and tradition to be one more way of gaining profit. According to her, emotional work has changed through commercial and rational approaches to domestic labour. Care becomes a commodity, since the reason, or meaning, of care has changed from affection/tradition to capitalisation. This opens up a market for nannies, sex workers and relation advice books, selling (only) the instrumental value of care.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the emotion workers’ feelings are understood as ending up in some kind of limbo between home and work, ends and means.¹¹⁷ Another researcher that has discussed the commercialisation and rationalisation of private life is Richard Sennett. He argues that the ‘self’ in the new capitalism is fragmented between commercial and private sets of norms, and where one can easily feel lost without anything else than one’s business position as identity.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Profit should here be attributed to both the buyer and the seller, rationalising the care for e.g. children and elders, to increase the temporal and psychological possibilities to labour.


A conception of making SNS as the end rather than the means was discussed in the previous chapter. To understand this process; the above quotes show censorship of the primary identity, to favour a strategic presentation at the front stage, forming a project identity. This is a way for the OPEs to accommodate their actions to the manners and decorum of this social structure that are expected from a respectable or serous person – defined by their weak ties. This strategic presentation of the OPE life-conduct is what constitutes branding.

What are then the consequences of this conduct – this strategy? It is fair to say that individualisation play its part here. As Marika Lüders writes,

Personal media combine generally accessible communication with possibilities for social interaction. [Suggesting a] model that situates personal media and mass media differently according to two axes. On the horizontal axis, personal media are more symmetrical, facilitating mediated interaction, whereas mass media are more asymmetrical. On the vertical axis, personal media are closer to the de-institutionalized or de-professionalized content pole, whereas mass media are closer to the institutional or professional pole.\footnote{Lüders 2008: 698}

Here, SNS is conceptualised as personal media, being more symmetrical in the exchange of information. However, this spans between institutionalised and de-institutionalised communication, depending on strategy, as SNS mix commercial, public and private users depending on the social structure of the specific SNS. Still, it demands a ‘personal approach’ as discussed in the previous part, making it seem de-institutionalised, maybe more than it actually is. Here the previous interview quote from Maria and Hanna’s quote below are illuminating.

\textbf{Hanna:} Often, [other people in my branch] only post about what great jobs they have done [in social media]. It would be intriguing with some other feedback… I lack variation from my colleagues.

This promotes that in an individualised media space and a tendency toward a homogenising of communicational strategies occurs – an ideal to shape presentations on the SNS. In this way, social media marketing defies the form of traditional advertising, promoting symmetrical communications (dialogue) but at the same time homogenising that dialogue. In other words, the structures of SNS demand homogeneously flexible OPEs, conforming to the structure constituted by one’s interpretation of the ideals of one’s weak ties. Still, there is a norm that promotes being personal – however not private – as Sandra explains.

\textbf{Sandra:} My opinion is that you should be able to treat a person based on whom they are and understand that the person has a private ‘self’ and a professional ‘self’ that do not interfere with each other. You know, I get tired of people who censor
them­selves so that they do come of as who they really are; a honest impression of themselves.

This shows a quite narrow mode of manners and decorum that many people would find being both hard and time-consuming to manage if it doesn’t come ‘natural’ as some of the IPs in the previous part described it.

Being in the space of flows opens up for a discussion about the ‘managerial elites’ of SNS, from a Castellsian perspective. In the previous chapter the sincere SNS-person was postulated as a problem, alienating and ‘anomie-ating’ the ‘not as sincere user’ to a strategic point of experienced meaninglessness or discontent. Here, only an academic distinction of the third and the second layer can be made, since these ‘elites’ constitute nodes – the core nodes – of the network society. Their primary assets are their contacts and their communication with them. As a space of flows, more precisely information flows, the primary skill that one has to use is assessment of information, and how to make it flow to the right nodes at the right time.

This may sound trivial, but the point of writing it in plain text is to pose that this is the same idea as the fundamental idea in advertising and propaganda\textsuperscript{120} – how to get people to ‘know’ the ‘right thing’ at the ‘right time’ to make the ‘right choices’ (both in new and traditional media). This means that there must be experiences of how one should behave on SNS to be perceived as a core node – someone who has a core position in the structure and a vast network of weak ties, e.g. followers.

In the previous part ‘interesting’ was a positive attribute that was connoted to prosperous use of SNS. Another vital attribute seems to be ‘humble’:

\textbf{Sandra:} It’s important to be aware of that you come off differently in writing [than verbally] – which opens up for misunderstandings. Thus, it’s important to be clear and to be humble. If I write that I have read a book that I thought was fabulous maybe someone replies that they thought it was lousy. If it was directly to someone I know I would maybe write ‘Why? I don’t think you got it’ but [publicly] in social media I would write ‘Really intriguing that we experienced it that different – what was it you disliked?’ [...] you keep it on that level instead, it’s a way to create confidence in my opinion.

\textbf{Christoffer:} Now that I think of it... the more I’ve done consultant jobs, the harder I think it is to find a space [in the social networks] for certain... ehm... notions, some thoughts that a client or customer could be offended by, direct or indirect. You know, if one’s got an opinion about a certain tool, that one dislikes [...] The closer to release, and now after the release, the more cautious I’ve been about having opinions about other [digital media] services [...] I recall that I’ve changed my way of commenting to other services, being more... wondering, not as ‘pissed off harsh’.

\textsuperscript{120} Here it should be said that on a basic level advertising and propaganda both are information, more or less deceptive, aiming to sell something.
From the above quotes, it seems fair to interpret potential customers and contacts as these ‘managerial elites’. They are the nodes one aim to have in one’s network – the weak ties that can tell others about the OPEs business. As both Sandra and Christoffer underlines, this demands a humble presentation on SNS, much more humble than when they were less commercial users. This provokes a conception of what not to write:

**Kristin:** I don’t appreciate when people share links and such things if I cannot stand for politically, then I don’t ‘like’ them or write comments on them.

Granovetter writes that in an “egocentric” network of weak ties, relations are more fickle. One of the main reasons for this is that weak ties have many others for “the ego” unknown ties.\(^{121}\) This structure of ties demands a personal mass communication that takes this network of weak ties into account, regarding possible future ties. The second part of Christoffer’s quote above shows this, since he is aware that many of the ties of his ties may be interested in his product and him as a consultant.

This discourse of censorship is however frames as ‘common sense’ from time to time, being framed as a mode of manners, more or less connected to the business.

**Hanna:** I do not share that much private fuss [on Facebook], what mood I am on or how bad I feel as do some private persons. For me it rather mirrors my business workday, all exciting projects one’s doing. It’s mostly work and very little personal, not much at all. I’m there in my enterpriser role most of the time. Otherwise I write private messages and on the walls of my friends. I don’t think that anyone is that interested in if I have a headache for example.

**Daniel:** I try not to post too private things. […] It’s private in two aspects, Facebook does not have anything to do with it, and it’s me in a private situation. I’m against tagging other people in pictures and so on. […] It becomes a kind of stalking. There are a lot of people who check the Facebook page for employments and so on, and they won’t hire someone who is too drunk or half-naked in the pictures. […] I try not to censor myself; I only try to use common sense, since social media is more public than most people think.

Still, it is no strange phenomena that people post somewhat unfavourable pictures (and other information) of themselves on SNS. What here are discussed as ‘common sense’ is rather, sociologically speaking, an implicit, or ‘natural’, strategy – an experience of the expression of a sincere self. It is fair to assume that Daniel, when claiming “I try not to censor myself; I only try to use common sense”, means that he does not apply a formal strategy of censorship to his actions on SNS, rather he presents himself in a sincere way, according to his primary identity. Still, this can from a more systematic approach be understood as an informal strategy of censorship. Common sense is best understood as a

\(^{121}\) Granovetter 1973: pp. 1369
concept for naturalising ‘intuitive’ strategies of life-conduct according to contemporary discursive powers and one’s perceived primary identity.\textsuperscript{122}

However, some IPs experience differences between different networks, demanding other manners – adapting to different media cultures. All kinds of customers are not found in every network and they do not appreciate the same kind of networking.

**Hanna:** My business is mostly directed towards CEOs and similar, which are often 50 plus [years old]. They are not on Facebook, but on LinkedIn. [...] But, I do not get what you actually do on LinkedIn. [...] Facebook is for hoi polloi, often as private persons.

As well, Daniel describes the invite-only SNS *ASmallWorld*\textsuperscript{123}:

**Daniel:** It’s a more exclusive community, or, I don’t feel that exclusive being there, but it’s more for jet set people, trading yachts and such. [...] I have maybe ten friends there, if you approach someone you don’t know you’re kicked out. [...] It’s however great if you happen to be in Barcelona for example, you get a lot of invites to VIP-parties and so on.

Here, as well, the strategies show. Not only in the way you act within an SNS, but as well when SNS you choose. In the writings of Castells, it is easy to get an impression that the world is moving towards one network, the global space of flows.\textsuperscript{124} This is however not a plausible conception. In the writings of Castells and Fuchs there are several accounts of how the network society becomes stratified through the emergence of parallel networks, where some contain a net-elite, and strategic cooperation for mutual economic interests.\textsuperscript{125,126} This is two ways to say a similar thing – that social and economic stratification does not end when the world becomes ‘virtualised’, but rather take on new forms.

Censorship – in a slightly broadened sense – has here been showed to be part of the SNS life-conduct of OPEs. Taking the form of the IPs perceived structures of ideals or norms that promotes increased disclosure presenting one’s business. This kind of activity shows a (possibly fuzzy) line between work and leisure based in how SNS are chosen to work as a marketing platform and a means of private communications, and how strategic one’s presentation is thought to be. Moving about at the SNS these OPEs

\textsuperscript{122} Robinson 2005: 469-81, Boudon 1988: 1-22
\textsuperscript{123} http://www.asmallworld.net/ 6/12-11
\textsuperscript{124} However, I do not hold the view that this is the intention from Castells.
\textsuperscript{126} Fuchs claim that Castells does not elaborate on this, aiming for an understanding of a “global capitalist network economy”, rather than “network economy” defined by Castells (Fuchs 2008:156). However, Castells is rather clear on several points that his definition of network society, and thus the network economy, is both ‘global’ and ‘capitalist’, but that the visage of contemporary capitalism is rather different form the modern era (cf. Castells 2010a: pp. 1, 101-163). It is however fair to say that Fuchs’s critique of contemporary network society is of a more radical and alarmist kind than Castells’. 
shows that you have to know where to tread intuitively or use a strategy to be able to work in this kind of structure. Different SNS also have different cultures on how to network your brand. Up until now, the explicit discussion of brand has been somewhat scarce. This will be further analysed in the next chapter, which more explicitly discusses the front stage.

3.3 The front stage: Marketing and networking

Entering the front stage, one has to deliver the lines and – manners and decorum – with the right attitude according to the views of one’s weak ties, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The form this takes for the IPs is primarily that of dialogue on SNS.

**Sandra:** Twitter has always been very open and people are great at communicating with each other, that’s really the core of the service. There are of course those who only work as ‘megaphones’, only distributing their own message. However, most still are very communicative and the environment is still very open. You can contact people you couldn’t contact otherwise – not only famous people but companies and entrepreneurs too.

**Christoffer:** If I see that someone in the social networks looks for someone with the qualities I have, and then I just write them back that ‘I think that I can do this’. But I get a lot of recommendations, other people recommend me, through the social networks too. […] I share a lot of my knowledge, links and such, things I explore - I do a lot of experimenting. And then other people see it, because I do it very transparency, and thus maybe they think that ‘it seems like he is cutting edge’.

The concept of ‘viral marketing’, used by marketing professionals and scholars, is close to these above quotes. One has to make the business into a topic that both professionals and private persons discuss. This method is not something new in SNS marketing but has worked as a method for marketing ideas and products since the beginning of society – making them a topic of interest. The rationale for this method is (1) that it is more effective to make people talk to each other about the product than hiring someone to talk to people, and (2) that someone not employed by the company who promotes the product is thought to impart an impression of more sincere opinions than a salesman.\(^\text{127}\)

This mode of conduct is related to Granovetter’s research on social structuring, since viral marketing demand both a social embeddedness of economic actions and weak ties between potential customers and their ties. Thus, communicating through a social network of weak ties becomes a way for the brand to become a topic of interest, and everyday conversation.

To understand networking as marketing, one must focus at the branding process that takes place, rather than focusing on more traditional accounts of advertising. It is a

way of networking one’s brand rather than advertising it. As was explained above, it is a matter of conforming to certain manners and certain decorum.

**Christoffler:** *Social media is about something else than marketing, at least marketing in a traditional sense, more like one-way communications. Social media is about being ‘you’, sharing and meeting others. Does someone need help? Then, you share your knowledge – you’ve got knowledge of things. […] It’s very satisfying to help people this way.*

**Alice:** *I don’t believe that Facebook is really a way for me to find clients; it’s more about networking. […] You know, I work together with another woman, and we have created a product together, and in this way I create networks [among practitioners in my branch] to work in.*

This change in mind-set – from competition to collaboration – is found in both Christian Fuchs and Castells writings. Collaboration is a way for the OPE to interact with their weak ties, and thus be a part of the SNS as a social structure. However, promoting one’s business in a conversation with one’s weak ties is a way to network one’s brand in the everyday life-conduct of OPEs. This structural disclosure indicated in the above quotes is further refined in the below ones:

**Niklas:** *My marketing is mostly based on that I talk directly to people in the social networks. I use the large social networks since a social network never is more useful than its size. […] It’s a lot on Facebook, more and more on Google Plus, and some on Twitter, but it doesn’t really fit me as a person, I’m not comfortable with the format.*

**Daniel:** *About movies, it is important to share a lot of material, to create marketing campaigns, even with very small short films. I started to do that before Facebook; create and share posters or to create a ‘buzz’ in some sense in social or interactive media.*

Fuchs elaborates on this fine line between gift economy and marketing through sharing of information at the SNS front stage (though he never uses Goffman’s words). His main points are (1) that hierarchy is exchanged for cooperation in an informational capitalism, and (2) that information can take the form of both commodity and gift in network capitalism.129 However, Fuchs overlooks one aspect, the blurred line between gift and commodity that informational sharing in SNS dialogues constitutes. This is not something new. Advertising gifts have existed for a long time, the difference here is their informational form, and how it relates to conducting the brand – and conducting one’s life at the same time. Relating to Daniel’s quote above, he uses SNS to spread information about his movie – for free – and hopes that people will share this

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129 Fuchs 2008: pp. 209
information to make him reach out in the social structure and connect to more weak ties. Here he shares as an individual, even though he is networking his brand for marketing.

This is advertising, but it is something more. A film poster can have e.g. an aesthetic value to the potential film consumer. If commercial aesthetics did not have a non-commercial value then people would not e.g. wear clothes with large logotypes from the manufacturer.

However, sometimes the notion that ‘sharing is caring’ is presented (as Christoffer does above). When it comes to information, e.g. pictures, film clips, newspaper articles and knowledge, this is not entirely true either. For the apparently free (or at least discounted) information, one is disclosing the power over one’s everyday life-conduct – talking about the information and sharing it in informal social networks with one’s weak ties. Thus, the social action becomes crucial for the economic one. The information gift has a Janus face when it comes to this distinction, since it is still free in a monetary sense. And it would not be fair – or even true – to claim that Daniel only shared film posters that he thought had the most commercial potential, but did not appeal to him aesthetically.

The “dramatic realization” of the brand is rather vital to understand this. Analysing marketing above is also the mode of analysing networking. Using the right lines and the right decorum of information, branding on SNS transform into personal ‘bragging rights’ to commercial ‘bragging rites’.\(^{130}\) When something of commercial value happens, the ritual is ‘post it on an SNS’. The consequence is a dramatization of the brand, into an idealised person. It has a life-conduct – more or less. Not so much a moral life-conduct as an everyday life conduct promoting business values. It should however be noted that since a business, OPE or not, must gain profit or at least break even, other values may not be possible to communicate in the end. Here the knowledge of ‘what to post’ become vital for the OPE, dramatizing ‘the ideal life’ for one’s brand. Richard dramatize his brand on SNS, to give the impression that he ‘knows what he claims to know’:

**Richard:** I have made a lot of posts on things that relate to the things I do in my business and that is good if you want to be hired. Now, I have worked with the things I my business on an academic level, but that's not a very good merit when you come out into reality. Most people want to know that you have actual work experience, and then the conversations and discussions are important, despite where they take place.

Dramatization, it should be noted, is not about lying or not even necessarily exaggerating, it is about communicating something that you want to communicate. The point is to

\(^{130}\) Goffman 1990[1959]: pp. 40
steer the impression; this impression is, as Richard implies, the image of the brand and the OPE’s life-conduct.

At the front stage, there is the need to channel the ‘right’ information, that’s the main (and seemingly trivial) point of this chapter. However, doing this – or acting it out – does not always appear sincere to the OPE, who demands strategies for presentation at the SNS front stage. In the next chapter, the back stage of the OPE on SNS will be elaborated on.

### 3.4 Back stage: Where the magic happens?

If there is a front stage, there must be a back stage. Two places, first and foremost, occupied this function according to the IPs: private message systems and non-internet places.

If any consensus was found during the interviews, it was the increased use of private messages when the SNS role as marketing channel increased in magnitude for the OPE.

**Alice:** You know, it becomes… I still have some private conversations [on Facebook] but it’s not that private and intimate any more… it has changed… of course, if it is something private then I send a [personal] message.

**Sandra:** If I communicate with my closest family members and friends I use Facebook most of the time if I do not use text or call them. But with the friends that I have on twitter and communicate with in that way, we use the direct messaging function so that other people do not have to intercept our endless discussions on where to have lunch etcetera. Not that it’s private, but I think that anyone else’s would perceive it as uninteresting. And it’s important not to be perceived as uninteresting in social media.

I: Do you have any private communication during working hours?

**Sandra:** Yes, it happens all the time.

Again, the anxiety of being uninteresting appears. And to avoid it, private messaging functions are used. This private messaging takes place ‘all the time’. Thus, there seem to be an experienced desire to communicate privately in a way that is not possible at the front stage, both during work and leisure time. This is a part of both the life-conduct, and the branding process. However, the thin or obscure line between personal and private, as presented earlier, is at work here again.

For some of the IPs, the level of privacy on SNS differed.

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131 I do not assume that this communication has been able to take place at front stage in any other historical contexts; the point here is to show that the desire to communicate something is domesticated into a private channel.
Daniel: On my private Twitter account, I can write anything ranging from ‘I am happy today’ to ‘my latest commercial is airing tomorrow’.\footnote{Daniel uses his private Twitter account for both private and commercial use, despite that he has several other accounts.}

Christoffer: I don’t believe that anyone is interested by all of your thoughts, there is a difference between what you think and what you say and I think that there is a reason for that.

Again, this brings up the case of sincerity and strategy. Daniel seems comfortable with revealing sincere personal information on SNS. Maria however is not. Noted here, and on occasions above, is that the rationale for private messaging is not secrecy but to obscure uninteresting information. This poses that the experience of privacy, as an environmental experience, is more important than privacy \textit{per se}. A similar tendency has been found researching back stage behaviour on Internet forums. At these SNS back stage behaviour takes place somewhere perceived as a back stage, but that can be read by virtually anyone.\footnote{Ross 2007: pp. 321}

This choice of channels between the front and the back stage is of course relevant in relation to the brand and its public image – hopefully as an interesting brand.

Helena: Sometimes, when it’s things that are only between me and someone else, then I use private messages [on Facebook], but if it’s something amusing that you want to share with someone else, then I post it on their wall. I have come to the insight that I use email less and private messages more.

Creating the ‘right’ image of the brand, it has to be surrounded by the ‘right’ information. The dramatization of the brand is at work here – it should be related to something amusing to be a brand that is related to positive ideas. This conduct embeds the viral marketing in a normative social context of having fun, or at least not experiencing discontent.

The other back stage is outside the SNS: AFK (away from keyboard) or IRL (in real life). This seems like a relatively extreme measure – a ‘when-all-else-fails’-strategy.

Sandra: I shut my Internet connection down for a few days – I cannot really control myself when it’s something that I care a lot about. It was too hard to censor myself… However, this is a back stage for both positive and negative:

Lars: Over all, responses are scarce in social media, but when you meet people, they put forward the blog.

Lars discussed this primary in the context of his blog, but in the discourse during the interview this seemed to be applicable to SNS in general. SNS and in the end the Internet are not discrete worlds – they are structural parts of a vast amount of everyday
life-conducts. They are topics for discussions and means of both professional and private communications. In this way SNS structure social interaction, creating a mode for how and in what networks information flows on a collective scale. This makes the actors direct influence over his or her information virtually impossible, since it is part of the global space of flows. As the Eagles sang in Hotel California “You can check out any time you like – but you can never leave”.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the structure of SNS as space and a prerequisite for everyday life-conduct on SNS. However, brand and identity are still the concepts making ‘space’ important here.

The empirical hypothesis promoted is that marketing of the personal brand would benefit form a certain – increased – structured distinction between commercial and private communication. As shown above, OPEs move their private communication from the open places of SNS to more closed ones that the OPEs can control. Also, it changes the use of language promoting a more humble, or self-governed, approach in online discussions. As a metaphor, some OPEs have to give up some part of their home for their business, to use as e.g. storage or an office. Additionally, they have to think about what their home in general communicate to the managerial elites – the (potential) customers. This creates a restructuring of one’s approach to SNS, demanding different behaviour from OPEs than from other users. This is a consequence of trying to ‘please everybody’, nurturing one’s weak ties among which viral communications are embedded with the ‘right information’ – that the primary identity is expected to be disclosed through one’s business and business related communications. Thus, one has to present oneself as disclosing it in a humble and honest way.

On the theory used, this chapter – again – proposes that Goffman’s theories present a front-end interpretation, here of the social space. Additionally, Castells’s theory of the space of flows, presents a back-end interpretation. However, it would be false to claim that front or back end interpretations of social phenomena would have a stronger explanatory power by default. Here, I rather aim to promote the use of both front and back end theories, to combine their explanatory power to interpret and explain how the everyday life-conduct of the OPE is structured on SNS.

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134 Felder, Frey & Henley 1976
On a theoretical level, SNS works as a ‘stage’. But when the play becomes a commercial spectacle, the fortification of the back stage seems to become more vital to the OPE. The social structure of the SNS however demands this, since they are created for personal interaction, demanding the professional communication to be shaped in a personal way. The show must go on. The commercial consequence for life-conduct is that it cannot be perceived as meaningless, promoting a homogenisation of how an OPE brand should be conducted on SNS. Relating to the above hypothesis, this gives the impression that to conduct a brand on SNS as an OPE; you have to give up more of your back stage for planning and preparing this conduct to flow in the right direction.
4. Concluding remarks

The initial research question presented was “How does the relation between brand and identity work at social network sites for one-person enterprisers?” In the analysis this question has been approached from two different angels: actor and structure. These approaches have had some further consequences for the research, vouching for differentiation between strategic and sincere actions, and between private and commercial space on SNS.

This research question does not have any clear-cut answer; rather, some ideas for applications, theoretical development and future research have been proposed. These are both on the level of actor and structure, and it would be naïve to think that changing the structure would not change the possible actions of the actor, and vice versa. Yet, on general level, one could safely say that different positions for OPEs in relation to SNS seem to give very different experiences and possibilities to use SNS for both everyday life-conduct and branding.

4.1 On theoretical developments

“How can an analysis of the questions above provide to and develop sociological theory on one-person enterprise and identity in network society?” was the theoretically aimed research question.

First, on identity, it seems like there is an explanatory value in regarding Erving Goffman’s theory of “presentation of self”, within the concepts strategic and sincere, as a front end to identity, and Manuel Castells’s and Anthony Giddens’s theories of self-reflexive identity, primary and project, as a back end explanation. What then happens in this usage of the theories is that the scepticism towards conducting a project identity – strategically branding – generates a colonisation of the private identity. This colonisation generates a diffusion of the relation between life-conduct and branding, making life-conduct a model for “sincereisation” branding. Thus, to further understand how OPEs work at SNS, a thoroughly elaborated distinction between personal and commercial, actions and actors respectively, may be fruitful. This is kind of the other way around from Arlie R. Hochschild’s research. Thus the hypothesis is that there is an ‘intimatisation of commercial life’ in contemporary society, leading to de-professionalisation and homogenising everyday life, when intimate life is commercialised at the same time. This may, in the end, lead to an increased ideal of labour as leisure.
In the end, a theory of homogenisation comes to mind, where commercial and intimate life – brand and identity – become more and more similar. As a mode for structuring everyday life-conduct, this is very similar to the idea of new public management: managing government, non-profit, organisation as if they were profit-driven, private, businesses.\textsuperscript{135} As this tendency homogenises public and commercial organisations, identity and brand become homogenised, and thus professional and personal uses of SNS.

This could be said to be an example of individualised government, conducting one’s life according to societal norms but without large institutions. To make this plausible, there must be a force in society advocating that labour is more desirable than anything else. Roland Paulssen has suggested that this is the case in contemporary Sweden.\textsuperscript{136} In this way, labour becomes the preferred form of leisure – which must be said to be a kind of paradox. Withal, this advocates that there are no real difference between labour and leisure other than it is potential for generating material surplus value. Thus, the homogenisation of everyday life seems to be further developed, from surrounding the individual, as in George Ritzer’s work, to imbuing the socio-cultural mind-set promoted in contemporary society.

There is no ground in this research to prove this to be good or bad for society \textit{sui generis}. That analysis is for the reader to conduct. The critical interpretation promoted above is underlining the risks of the capitalist network society. If people are happy conducting personal brands, instead of everyday life to a larger extent – it is a good method; if they are unhappy doing it – it is a bad method. However, the academic question to ask – in my opinion – is: Who profits from this conduct? If the answer is not society \textit{sui generis}, then it is bad.

\section*{4.2 On empiric applications}

The other question to discuss here is “What insights can be drawn to empower one-person enterprisers and their use of social network sites?” First, it seems to be the case that SNS are primarily fitted for those who are sincere users, giving their weak ties a trustworthy but still market oriented disclosure of conducting the ‘right life’. This is a problematic culture if SNS should be inclusive for all OPEs, since it marginalises and stigmatises the use of SNS as a tool – a mean to another end – that may fit a broader range of OPEs. The risk with the contemporary system is that it does not promote the

\textsuperscript{135} Dawson & Dargie 1999: 459-81
\textsuperscript{136} Paulssen 2010: pp. 9
OPE who does the best job, but the one who can disclose the most idealised individual everyday life-conduct on SNS. Why this has been the result for SNS is for historians to answer, but a hypothesis on how to improve goes as follows:

- **The SNS must be interpreted as a tool and not an end in itself.**

Three suggestions on how this can be achieved are:

- **The application of the SNS as a tool must imbue the development process from the beginning.**
- **Open up more spaces for personal communication, making better possibilities for conscious filtering of information and the user more in power of that filtering.**
- **Develop more and better ways for ‘self-presentation’ that does not demand the user to act as an individual per se.**

Here, it is important to understand what the purpose of the SNS should be – if no one had anything to transport the wheel would have been without purpose. Also, it is important for SNS developers to acknowledge that the idea of personal communication, or personal media, makes it hard to interact in a way that is not structured as a person. Thus, a strategic role is something that probably larger companies have to adopt in some way.

I do not claim that these ideas in any way will increase or maintain the profit of an SNS – that is not my intention – I however do not claim the opposite either. However, my hypothesis is that they will empower how OPEs can use SNS for both life-conduct and branding, without having to conduct them as integrated in each other. This empowers the strategic user of SNS primarily. However, an OPE’s purpose – professionally – is to run a business. Creating SNS as an intrinsic goal and provoking the OPE to act as an individual per se hinders that.

However, it is my impression that to promote SNS as a tool and to promote the users power over that tool would not decrease the non-commercial use of the SNS. It would be false to assume that all users’ of SNS use it in a sincere way. But making more ways of self-presentation attainable for users in general would open up for a broader range of communications. However, conducted in the wrong way, this could lead to an increased homogenisation of both branding and life-conduct if not done with the tool conception in mind.
4.3 Future research

From this research several related areas seems to be in need of further research. The main reasons for this are digitalisation, economisation and individualisation of the public sphere and everyday life-conduct.

The hypotheses above need to be tested with methods more adept for generalisations, i.e. quantitative research. More longitudinal studies of OPE, small-scale business and the use of SNS and other Internet phenomena are needed, such as how one introduces a business and a thus brand to SNS, and how usage of SNS by OPEs evolves over time.

My fieldwork has provoked several questions on this topic. Primarily, those questions have to do with obscurity. There have been discussions on how ‘female entrepreneurship’ obscures financial dependence on male partners and partial unemployment and unpaid domestic work.

How the Internet influences work environment – from both front and back end – is also important to investigate. This is because the workplace could be at home or at a café just as often as in an office for OPEs and the computer is accompanied by smartphones and tablets promoting increased use of the Internet in everyday life. The digital environment of SNS, software and hardware thus constitutes a more general approach to work environment than the physical place per se.

From a more theoretical perspective, there are several interesting approaches to understand contemporary society in relation to theories of social structures and societal development. Interesting approaches could be Michel Foucault’s theories of normality and deviance or Max Weber’s theory of profanation and the role of a capitalistic ethos in society, making means into ends and thus risking loss of social meanings – anomie and alienation. Additionally, the risk for society to become “the polar night of icy darkness.”

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137 Weber 1994: xvi
5 Sources


138 The social landscape: A sociological description of Sweden from the 1950’s to the early 2000’s


139 Life-conduct – A basic concept in sociology

140 Modern moralister: On live-conduct and contingency as the core question for sociology


### 5.1 Popular sources

7 Appendix A

The interview guide focused on four general topics: The enterprise, personal life, information customs, and social media. It should be noted that this interview guide was used very little during the first two interviews and then fully discarded from the fieldwork due to the experience that it was more of a distraction than help.
8 Appendix B

Varumärke och identitet
En sociologisk studie av enpersonsföretagares strategier i sociala medier på internet

Skulle du vara intresserad av att bli intervjuad om ditt företag och hur du använder sociala medier? “Varumärke och identitet” är en studie av enpersonsföretagares, dvs. personer vilka driver företag som uteslutande består av en person (utan varken anställda eller aktiva delägare), strategier och erfarenheter angående relationen mellan privat identitet och företagets varumärke i sin användning av sociala medier. Jag söker allt från avancerade användare till nybörjare.

Studien har två övergripande syften: (1) att ligga till underlag för min masteruppsats i sociologi och (2) att därigenom komma med förslag på hur sociala medier kan förbättras utifrån enpersonsföretagares erfarenheter och strategier gällande identitet och varumärke i sociala medier.

Intervjuerna kommer att fokusera på sociala medier, men även andra relationer mellan företaget och privatlivet kommer självklart vara en viktig del. Intervjutiden är beräknad till c:a 1 – 2 timmar. Du som intervjuperson bestämmer helt var och när intervjun äger rum, med fördel antingen i hemmet eller i företagets lokaler under kontorstid. Om det inte passar går det säkert att hitta någon annan lösning, t.ex. på kafé under kvällstid. Om ingen geografisk möjlighet finns att träffas så är också intervjuer via Skype möjliga f.o.m. nästa vecka.

Jag vill understryka att alla intervjupersoner kommer att vara helt anonyma i alla publikationer. Eventuella citat från intervjuerna kommer att förekomma under fingerat namn, och innehållet kommer att anonymiseras efter behov (t.ex. namn på företag, personer eller platser). Intervjuerna kommer att spelas in med diktafon, ljudfilerna kommer dock inte att publiceras och enbart användas i forskningssynpunkt av undertecknad.

Vem är jag? Mitt namn är Jonas Bååth, är 26 år och bor i Lund. Jag skriver min masteruppsats i sociologi under hösten 2011 vid Umeå universitet. Den inriktning jag har på min utbildning är frågor som berör organisation, marknadsföring, informationsteknologi och ekonomi i relation till människor i samhället. Om du är intresserad av att ställa upp på en intervju, eller om du har några andra frågor, kontakta mig på:

baath.jonas [snabel-a] gmail.com

0709 [-] 747119
Om du är intresserad av att läsa mer om mitt projekt skriver jag om det på bloggen http://varumarkeochidentitet.wordpress.com/ och på Twitter under användaren JonasBaath. Du hittar mig även på Facebook och Google+.

English translation

Brand and identity
A sociological study of one-person enterprisers’ strategies in social media on the Internet

Would you be interested in being interviewed about your business and how you use social media? "Brand and identity" is a study of one-person enterprisers', i.e. persons who run small-scale businesses that only consist of one person (with no employees or active partners), strategies and experiences on the relation between private identity and the business brand in one’s use of social media.

The study has two general purposes: (1) to be a base for my master’s dissertation in sociology and (2) to present proposals on how social media can be developed from an one-person enterprises’ experiences and strategies on identity and brand in social media.

The interviews will focus on social media, but other relations between your business and private life will of course also be an important part. The interviews are expected to take about 1-2 hours. You as interview person decide where and when the interview takes place, preferably at home or at the business premises during work hours. If that does not suit you, another solution can be found, e.g. at a coffee shop during the evening. Skype can also be used for the interview from next week, if there is no geographical possibility to meet.

I would like to stress that all interview persons will be fully anonymous in all publications. Possible quotes will be presented with a pseudonym, and the content will be anonymised if needed (e.g. names, companies or places). All interviews will be recorded with a dictating device. The recorded sound files will however not be publicised and only used for research by yours truly.

Who am I then? My name is Jonas Bååth. I am 26 years old and live in Lund. I am writing my master’s dissertation in sociology during the autumn of 2011 at Umeå University. My education is directed towards questions on organisation, marketing, information technologies and economy, in relation to people in society. If you are interested for taking part in an interview, or if you have any other questions, pleas contact me at:

baath.jonas [snabel-a] gmail.com

0709 [-] 747119
If you are interested in reading more about my project you can read about it at the blog [http://varumarkeochidentitet.wordpress.com/] and on Twitter from the user JonasBaath. You will also find me on Facebook and Google+.