A Personal Brand through Blogging –
Its position and influence on consumers

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Authors:
Anette Løken, Cand. merc - International Marketing and Management

Ane Beate Haugen, , Cand. merc - Management of Innovation and Business Development

Thesis Advisor:
Liana Razmerita - Department of International Business Communication

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Abstract

The use of social media and in particular blogs has increased rapidly the last years. Blogs are utilized by marketers but the field is lacking knowledge about bloggers ability to create value, and thus become beneficial communication channels to take advantage of. It is further required more research on how social media influencers, especially bloggers, are perceived by consumers. Perceptions are impacting bloggers’ influence, defines their brands, and consequently the credibility of their information and communication. It is researched how individuals have created a brand through blogging that is positively recognized and valued in the market. Additionally, the study is investigating how personal brands influence consumers. For marketers there is a need to achieve a clearer understanding of the effect of exploiting bloggers as a marketing tool to reach and influence consumers.

It is utilized Web 2.0, blogging, communication, and personal branding theories to build a foundation to analyze and answer the research question. A mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative methods has made it possible to identify factors and reasons to how a personal brand is created by a strong blog brand. The data also made it possible to detect how bloggers are influencing consumers.

The study shows that people create valuable personal brands through blogging by displaying authenticity, knowledge, new and inspiring information, and creating close relationships with readers. Bloggers are found to be credible communicators and hence perceived as valuable search options for information. This study demonstrated that bloggers are found to influence consumers’ choices, opinions, and actions. Commercial content communicated by bloggers is viewed as more credible than traditional marketing.

Findings indicated that blogging provides value to an individual’s personal brand in terms of self-expressing knowledge and passions that means that people can attract new businesses- or career opportunities. The position bloggers have in reaching and building close relationships with readers, demonstrates that markers should exploit bloggers’ communication channel and influence power to interact with relevant target consumers.
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1.0 Introduction

The Web 2.0 has opened up for new possibilities for business and communication through new media channels. In e.g. with social media some businesses have become obsolete while others have come to live, which can be seen in the fashion industry. The fashion industry has been dominated by traditional marketing channels. Products or brands covered in the media are considered to be superior, and fashion periodicals thus have become a vital source of information and inspiration. By this, fashion magazines and journals have been able to create a form of consumer intimacy that has provided them with credibility and a large readership. Yet, with social media becoming more central and popular, entrepreneurial consumers have started to increasingly dominate the digital media channels (Pihl & Sandström, 2013). Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of individuals who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions utilizing conversational media. Conversational media can be described as web-based applications that allow creating and transferring content in forms of words, pictures, videos, and audios. In former research, blogs have been identified as one of the various social media platforms (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012).

“In some industries, blogs have become popular and powerful intermediaries between firms and consumers, reaching more readers than regional newspapers” (Pihl & Sandström, 2013:310). In e.g. it has been identified consumers that write about fashion and trends through blogs that have become so popular and powerful that they are readership competitors to traditional media (Pihl & Sandström, 2013). Several fashion brands are using social media activities to gain direct feedback from their customers. An example is to invite fashion bloggers to front seats of fashion shows or to events. The bloggers updates their followers constantly with feedback from the show or event on their blog and other social media accounts (Kim & Ko, 2012). Hence, communities, networks, and the developments in information communication technologies have enabled the average consumer to become an active participant in creating and recreating value (van Heerden, 2010). However, even though blogs have become more professional with time, literature is still lacking information and data regarding the commercial aspects of social media and blogs. According to Phil & Sandström (2013) a lot of research has been
conducted on formation of blogging communities and several various usages of blogs such as knowledge management and data mining, but the level of knowledge about how bloggers make money and how they create value is small. Based on former research within social media, social media influencers (SMIs’) have been identified to impact the sphere. SMIs’ represent a new form of independent third party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through social media platforms and applications such as blogs, tweets and other social media networks. The characteristics of effective spokespersons have been identified, but little research has been done on how the audience perceives these SMIs’ (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2010). Hence, there is minimal information about what kind of position these individuals have in the consumers mind. This creates challenges for firms when linking SMI’s to their products or services through advertising or reviews. This is because consumers’ perceptions of the brand’s SMI’s are impacting its image, and thus vital to create a positive attitude towards the brand (Freberg et al., 2010).

Blogging has become one of the most popular social media and networking tools. A blog can be defined as a personal web page with content displayed in reverse-chronological order (Moen, 2012; Pihl & Sandström, 2013; Scott, 2011; Scoble & Israel, 2006). With social media consumers are directly engaged in creating content and news, and therefore becomes a part of the media. People share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other. Blogging is argued to be one of the most popular mediums where individuals are involved by being a part of a conversation (Thevenot, 2007). Approximately 120,000 new blogs are being created every day, equivalent about 1.4 blogs every second. Related to these blogs, about 1.5 million posts are created daily, which corresponds to 17 posts per second (Thevenot, 2007). A lot of resources have been invested to find out how firms can utilize blogs but there has not been a lot attention to how bloggers can create and capture value, especially in industries where blogs have become commercial intermediaries between companies and consumers. To become commercially successful, bloggers must create value for readers and be able to capture this value (Pihl & Sandström, 2013).
1.1 Problem Definition

With increased focus on developing a personal brand in a highly competitive marketplace it is valuable and interesting to research how certain individuals have created a successful personal brand through blogging. Personal branding entails being able to market one-self to others and manage their personal brand in terms of how one wish to appear and be perceived by others (Labreque, Markos, & Milne, 2011). Moreover, as Morgan (2011:13) states “Branding success indicates building value for the quality of your work and differentiating your future value potential”. A distinct and clear personal brand that attracts potential partner or opportunities is becoming more crucial in an online world where everyone is present. Thus, the ways individuals self-express are of high importance. It is a lot of literature, information, and advices on what a blog should contain, motivations for blogging and return of investment of utilizing social media in marketing. However, there has not been a lot of research conducted on the success factors that differentiate the most powerful bloggers in the market from others.

Based on the recent study performed by Pihl & Sandström (2013), there is lacking research on how popular bloggers have created a successful personal brand through their blog and what kind of position they have in the market. Thus, how value is developed, captured, and taken advantage of within blogging. In addition to the advantages above this research will also be beneficial for firms in order to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between bloggers and their readers. This relationship is of value because it will provide understanding of how consumers relate to the information and content the bloggers communicate, and the potential to influence. Accordingly, this might deliver knowledge to companies in how to utilize bloggers in a more advantageous way. Due to increased attention to bloggers and their popularity among consumers many brands choose to incorporate blogs in their marketing strategy. One of the reasons for why companies access blogs is that they can through blog text-mining\(^1\) estimate trends and analyze how brands are perceived by the bloggers and the readers (Pihl & Sandström, 2013). However, there is not substantial research conducted on if or how successful bloggers have impact on their readers. This information might be very important to

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\(^1\) Is one way to make qualitative data usable by a computer; http://infospace.ischool.syr.edu/2013/04/23/what-is-text-mining/
brands because it will provide insight of how much impact bloggers have on the consumers when advertising for the brand. Thus, marketers will have an indication on how to work with bloggers in terms of creating brand-awareness and loyalty, and reaching existing and new customers.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the problem definition the research aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How to create a personal brand through blogging that is valuable and positively recognized by consumers and marketers?

1.1. What does a personal brand through blogging provide of value, benefits, and opportunities for bloggers, consumers, and brands?
1.2. What kind of position do these personal brands hold in the market?

RQ 2: How do bloggers or personal brands influence consumers and trends in the market?

1.3 Purpose and Delimitation

When writing a thesis it is important to state a specific purpose, as this will be a guide to find the appropriate method to be able to answer the research question. According to Halvorsen (2008) the purpose is to prepare contingent and scientific assumptions. In the problem definition it is stated that this thesis aims to research how bloggers have created a successful personal brand and what kind of position they have in the market. The purpose of the thesis is therefore to uncover the underlying reasons to why these specific bloggers have succeeded in creating a personal brand. Furthermore, increasing the understanding of how bloggers are able to influence consumers which is argued to be very useful for marketers (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008).

The purpose of this thesis is not to offer recommendations to new bloggers on how to become a successful blogger. It is rather to offer an insight on elements that create strong blog brands, and the actions of both bloggers and consumers as to call attention to how firms can leverage this. The theoretical background together with analyzing data of
successful elements in blogging that leads to influence on consumers will provide findings and suggestions for further studies.

The research in this thesis is directed at Norwegian and Swedish bloggers, and thus will reflect a tendency in these countries only. According to Moen\(^2\), Norway and Sweden are the blogging spheres where it is most young girls writing about their daily-life. He further states that most blogs outside Norway and Sweden involves genres like technology, fashion, politics, or economics. Consequently, it might be that the data and results would be different if the study were carried out in other countries. Furthermore, it is assumed that the use of blogging might differ in other countries. Due to the limited scope of the thesis it is decided to emphasize on blogging, and not include other social media platforms they exploit such as Facebook (FB), Twitter, and Instagram. This is because the bloggers employed in this study have primarily built up their personal brand through blogging, but they are also utilizing the other social media platforms to communicate and gain awareness about their blog.

### 1.4 Motivation

The motivation behind the thesis originates from a fascination of how much focus and attention there is on social media, and that blogging are one of the social media- and networking tools that are widely used by individuals, professionals, and companies. Blogging has become widespread, and it is interesting that many have embraced this by establishing a blog or reading blogs. Bloggers have received much attention in various mediums such as newspapers, magazines and TV since some of them have become very popular and have a lot of readers. In addition, blogging has become business both for individuals and for firms that use bloggers to advertise for the brand.

It has been fascinating to witness how some of the leading bloggers have received celebrity status based on their blogging career, and the different opportunities they have obtained through blogging. Further it is interesting to achieve knowledge about how a personal brand can be created and established in the intensive social media world.

\(^2\) Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
Working in the fashion industry for several years has created a motivation to investigate bloggers that are blogging about fashion and daily-life. Based on this the authors wanted to research popular bloggers and their personal brand, and explore their impact on consumers. By acquiring knowledge about bloggers and their position in the market we can as marketers create improved promotion actions and strategies using blogs. Hence, developing insight of bloggers’ power and their influence in the market might produce a valuable understanding to what degree blogs is beneficial for marketers to employ when trying to create relations to potential consumers, awareness about the brand, products or services, and increase sales.

2.0 Theoretical Background

This chapter provides an understanding of the theoretical framework that the thesis is built upon. Theory within blogging, communication, and branding are scrutinized in order to investigate, collect relevant data, analyze, and answer the research questions.

2.1 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 theory is included in this thesis to show that new types of web pages, such as blogs, are focusing on socialization, openness, and networking. Web 2.0 is playing an introduction role in this chapter to provide the reader with background knowledge about the technological development that created and allowed new ways of communicating and advertising.

In 2004, Tim O’Reilly, founder and CEO of O’Reilly Media, popularized the term Web 2.0. At this point the web had been close to collapsing to becoming more important than ever. New applications and new sites appeared with surprisingly regularity (Vossen & Hagemann, 2007). The term Web 2.0 describes the upgraded, improved, and modernized internet people are using today. Web 2.0 can also describe particular websites, cultural trends like social networking and blogging, or the underlying technology and rich streaming media that make the “new” web possible (Funk, 2009). It has been a clear shift towards a “user-generated” techno culture, where web sites are focusing on openness,
socialization, and collaboration. These webpages stimulate each individual to take part in enriching the content and in the growth of the web itself (Devedžić & Gašević, 2009).

According to Funk (2009:XII) “Web 2.0 is a landscape where users control their online experience and influence the experiences of others; where success comes from harnessing the power of social networks, computing networks, media and opinion networks, and advertising networks”. Web 2.0 has made it possible for people to emotionally and creatively engage online and communicate with others. Web 2.0 develops services that allow people share to their own content and utilize the web as a platform. Examples of Web 2.0 sites are Wikipedia, YouTube, Flickr, FB, and blogs. All of these services have become valuable because they are being frequently used by consumers (Rettberg, 2010). Hence, the users perceive the web as a platform for collaboration and social networking. Social media platforms provide means of relationship building through communication. Social media platforms concern expanding network, establishing new contacts, connecting with old and new friends where one can share and discuss interests, passion, knowledge, information and, experiences.

Figure 1: Web 2.0 Framework: [http://bullseyenj.com/need-to-know/glossary/web-2.0/](http://bullseyenj.com/need-to-know/glossary/web-2.0/)

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3 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
Furthermore Web 2.0 has made it easier for consumers to publish new content, share information or photos, and also to comment and respond on other individuals’ content online. In addition, it allows people to create blog posts without much effort and knowledge about the underlying technologies (Devedžić & Gašević, 2009).

Gauntlett (2007) claims the spirit of “Web 2.0” is that individuals should be open for collaboration instead of seeking to create and protect their own material. Furthermore, with web 2.0 people are able to modify websites in the process of interacting with others, e.g. when they are posting comments and opinions, uploading and tagging photos, creating videos, and online conferencing (Funk, 2009). This shows a communicational shift, as users are moving from being passive receivers of information to becoming active senders of information. The term Web 2.0 does not refer to a new web, but it refers to a change in how consumers think about and utilize the web (Funk, 2009). The first personal web publishing phenomenon was the blog. Blogs are a crucial element of the Web 2.0 landscape because of the information bloggers publish, but also for the connections and relationships bloggers create (Funk, 2009).

2.2 The Blogging World

Blogging theory is included to describe its function as a communication and network tool that has allowed individuals to create a strong personal brand. Further, this theoretical background will provide readers with substantial knowledge about blogging and its characteristics that will work as foundation for the analysis and discussion of collected data, and lastly answer the research questions.

The word blog derives from weblog that is another word for an online journal (Rettberg, 2010; Safko, 2012). Peter Merholz separated the word weblog into “We Blog”. The entrepreneur Evan Williams were the first to use the word blog as a verb and a noun, and thus officially created the term “blogger” (Safko, 2012). The earliest blogs were simply continuous updates of a standard HTML website. This was a difficult process and required a certain level of technical knowledge to maintain the HTML code. However, the development of the Web 2.0 and the browser-based blog platforms made linking to
other blogs and web pages easier. It enabled posting of articles in reverse chronological order and one-click editing features such as permalinks, blog-rolls and trackbacks\(^4\) (Safko, 2012). Blogs were originally an online writing tool that assisted people keeping track of their online records but have in short time evolved to transform into a key part of online culture (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Open Diary was launched in October 1998, which made it possible for readers to comment on bloggers’ posts. This is one of the most important features of a blog because readers are able to interact with the author through comments, and the bloggers can provide a direct answer to the comments (Safko, 2012).

Blogs represents a potentially useful communication tool for both marketers and individuals. Blogs have achieved increased popularity in the virtual world today. They are believed to have great potential to influence the media, the public agenda, and thus the consumers, along with holding high credibility among blog readers. It is therefore argued that firms not only starts monitoring blogs but also starts engaging in them like they have done with other traditional media channels (Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007). Blogs offer a new form of online communication and interaction where users can share opinions and analysis of various current events, and other issues that are of interest (Kaye, 2005; Rettberg, 2010). Blogs are unique forums that combine news and information with self-expression. In e.g. bloggers publish posts, comments, and links, where the blog readers\(^5\) can but are not required to reply to the blogger’s post with their own links, comments, opinions or experiences (Kaye, 2005; Safko, 2012).

In this study the focus will be on daily life and fashion bloggers since these are the most popular blogs in Norway and Sweden at this time. Fashion blogs characteristically include information and a mix of images from personal to professional photographs of runway shows, magazine shoots taken from other sources, to images of products seen on websites, other blogs, or in the local neighborhood of the blogger. Written posts often discuss bloggers’ daily activities, their outfit choices, things they like, or fashion items encountered in other places or other media (Chittenden, 2009). In addition to publishing entries about fashion, outfits and wants, daily-life’ bloggers incorporate posts that include

\(^4\) A technology that keep track of linking and how much traffic those sites are sending to the blog (Scobe & Israel, 2006)

\(^5\) Blog readers are also referred to as followers in this study
more information about their personal. In e.g. information about events such as travel, recipe and food, home decoration and interior, family and friends, training, special occasions etc.

A blog presents content in reverse-chronological order. Thus, new posts are placed at the top of the site making it easier for readers to see what has changed since last visit (Moen, 2012; Pihl & Sandström, 2013; Scott, 2011; Scott & Israel, 2006). A blog can be defined as; “a blog is hyper textual web logs which individuals utilize for new forms of journaling, self-publishing, and media/news critique” (Kahn & Keller in Yang (2011:131). With the perspective and the research questions developed for this research, the common used conceptualization of blogs is found to be a suitable definition in this case;

“A frequently updated personal or collaborative webpage in the form of diarized journal containing opinions, information and web links that reflect the interest and personality of the author(s)” (Yang, 2011:131).

Blog posts are being tagged to appear in selected information categories on the blog, and often they include identifiers about the content of the post. Post tags make it easier for people to find the information either through the blog or search engines (Scott, 2011). Information categories can for example be outfits, fashion, food, daily life, make-up, blogger’s tip, readers’ question etc.

Most bloggers permit readers to leave comments to a post. Critical comments are usually accepted by the bloggers. People that disagree with the blogger or the message often create debate and engagement that in some situations can be informative and helpful. However, bloggers often reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments like spam, profanity or extreme rudeness (Scott, 2011). Moreover, Scott (2011) argues that blogs are independent, web based journals containing opinions and information about anything and everything. Blogs differs from journalists as they can express their own opinions directly while journalists are supposed to be objective parties. Hence, blogging offers marketers an easy way to make their voices heard in the web-based marketplace of ideas. Blogging is not defined as journalism. Bloggers today are striving for credibility and trustworthiness, thus they are spending a lot of time online searching for inspiration,
information, cross-checking their data and facts in order to create a page that is authentic and reliable. Many people consider bloggers to be individuals with a lot of knowledge about the subject(s) they write about. Thus, individuals read blogs to keep themselves updated with the latest trends. Hence, blogs are by many considered to be vital and valuable sources of information (Scott, 2011).

Blogs are often connected through hyperlinks. This linking indicates that any blogger who has something to communicate through their blog is a part of a global network. Consequently, the potential circulation rate of blogs is tremendous (Scoble & Israel, 2006). One of the most vital aspects of blogs is that it is conversational. Blogs enable the individuals to converse with others in multiple locations as long as there is internet access. Blogs are also one of the communication channels that provide the opportunity to reach thousands of consumers for a low cost investment (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

According to Scoble & Israel (2006), there are six key differences between blogging and any other communication channels:

**Publishable:** Everyone can establish a blog. Blogging is relatively cost efficient and posting is possible whenever one have time. Each posting is instantly available worldwide.

**Findable:** Through search engines, individuals can find various blogs by subject, author, or both. One of the most convincing strategic business arguments for blogging is the interrelationship with Google and other search engines. Today one can argue that a high ranking on Google is very valuable to the person or company being ranked (Scoble & Israel, 2006). People utilize Google when searching for information and the higher one is ranked the more likely is the opportunity for that particular site being visited by the searcher. According to Scoble & Israel (2006), blogging is one of the best ways to secure a high Google ranking. Since bloggers have to update often to become relevant and interesting for the followers, blogs receive more search engine attention. Hence, the blog becomes easier to discover. Every time a blogger publish a post, Google takes notice and boost the ratings.
Social: The blogosphere is one big conversation. Interesting topical conversations are being shared and discussed from blog to blog, linking to each other. Through blogs, individuals with similar interests build friendship unhindered by geographic borders. 

Viral: Information often spreads faster through blogs than through traditional news services.

 Syndicatable: Many visits blogs by using their web browser and they read it as a web page. However, with the RSS (Really Simple Syndication), encoding followers can choose to utilize an RSS reader to read the RSS feed of a blog. The benefit of using RSS is that readers can subscribe to a number of blogs and the RSS readers will notify the follower when a blog has new posts (Rettberg, 2010; Scoble & Israel, 2006).

 Linkable: Due to the links that can connect blogs, every blogger has access to millions of other bloggers (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

2.2.1 The Blogosphere

A blogosphere refers to all the blogs on the internet. Moreover, the blogosphere can be explained by bloggers’ and readers’ actions such as commenting on any individual posting, which is identified by a unique URL. With references to other web links, linking to favorite blogs or mentioning blogs in a post, blogs are creating a clustered network that is interconnected of text. This network is called “the blogosphere” (Safko, 2012; Schmidt, 2007). Furthermore, blog exists as networks based on sharing ideas, trends, and information by bloggers. In terms of social networks, links between blogs can imply that two or more bloggers know each other, and think of each other as friends or acquaintances in the virtual world. The links may also indicate that the bloggers enjoy reading each other’s blogs (Rettberg, 2010) Hence, blogs are able to create, form, and organize a virtual network regardless of geographical and time-based boundaries. Yang (2011) claims that a virtual network is capable of influencing members’ buying behavior, distributing product knowledge and awareness, and collaborating with consumers in a marketing context.
Similar to other social networking mediums, blogs rely on the formation of a large virtual network that is fascinated and captivated by reading blog postings. An example is fashion bloggers. Fashion bloggers tend to post photos and information about their own outfits, and outfits they have seen in the streets or in magazines. Further, they also post tips on where one can find and shop certain trend items, accessories, they post notes and photos from fashion shows, and comment on trends. Many fashion bloggers link to other fashion blogs, probably because the blogger reads the blog personally but also because the blogger believes that the readers are likely to be interested in them. Thus, by viewing the links between bloggers, one can identify a social network of interest for fashion. A social network through blogs is therefore based on sharing information. In these networks, trust, friendship, trends and styles are built and spread among bloggers and followers. Bloggers have to constantly search for new information and inspiration to keep its readers interested. Thus their connection to other people brings in new information and sustains the network (Rettberg, 2010).

According to former research conducted by Hsu & Lin (2008) it was indicated that most blog readers and creators are young, affluent males that are loyal online shoppers with high online occupation. These results are being questioned by the authors of this study. This is based on the increased numbers of fashion and personal blogs that have been established in Norway and Sweden the last couple of years seems to be dominated by women. The high proportion of male blog readers might be related to blogs that are more concentrated on technical and expertise-specific matters. This understanding is supported by Thomas Moen, a Norwegian blog expert. He started his blog in 2003. He built a blog community of approximately 15,000 active bloggers up until 2009 when he decided to sell it to blogg.no. In addition, Mr. Moen has written a book about blogging. At the time of the interview, Mr. Moen was the CEO of the digital production company “Good Morning”. The last four years, he has been involved in about 250 campaigns with bloggers and firms⁶. Based on our observation of the blogosphere and Moen’s knowledge, the Norwegian or Swedish bloggers are usually between 15 to 25 years old and are blogging about fashion, make-up, and daily-life (Moen, 2012;⁷). A survey made

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⁶ Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
⁷ Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
on Norwegian bloggers, “Bloggundersøkelsen 2010”, showed that the most common blog categories were daily-life, photo/video, music, fashion, and lifestyle (Moen, 2012).

2.2.2 Motivations for blogging

Substantial research has been conducted to identify the motivations for blogging and reading blogs. The former study of Hsu & Lin (2008) showed that enjoyment is a large part of users’ attitudes towards blogs. If users do not perceive blogging as enjoyable, they are unlikely to participate and contribute to it. Furthermore, individuals are participating in blogs to actively influence and increase others welfare. People that are blogging or participating in blogs are mainly motivated by the intention of providing valuable information to the parties involved. Additionally, research also shows that individuals are excited about sharing experiences and opinions with others, and by that obtaining an online reputation (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Another study found five other motives for blogging: documenting one’s life events, providing commentary and opinions, expressing deeply felt emotions, articulating ideas through writing, and forming and maintaining community forums (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004).

Huang, Chou, & Lin (2008) found affective exchange, information search or entertainment as motives for reading blogs. The affective exchange relates to communicating more personally than in traditional online discussion forums. People who mainly read blogs for information consider blogs as a trustworthy source of information. Hence, bloggers should safeguard the accuracy and newness of information posted on their blogs to preserve their reputation. For the entertainment factor, enhancing richness and interesting elements in blog design might be an effective way of attracting readers’ attention and deliver bloggers’ opinions (Huang et al., 2008). Other motivations for reading blogs are the sense of relationship a blog creates for the followers, where the sense of liaison is developed through interactions with similar-minded individuals and the feeling of being a part of the blogosphere. Information seeking is also a motivation for reading blogs. Bloggers generate information from traditional media, from insider knowledge, and from bloggers’ and blog readers’ expertise. Since blogs are being
updated more often than traditional media, followers are able to subtract new information faster through various blogs (Kaye, 2005).

2.2.3 How to create a successful blog?

Experts provide various tips on how to blog right in order to create a successful blog. These advices are fairly similar from author to author, which indicates that there are some shared guidelines that might secure a valuable blog. Overall, elements in successful blogs are considered to be transparent and authentic, showing passion for subjects the blogger has knowledge and write about, posts frequently, and the information Google’s well. Hence, this might provide the blogger with interviews or articles in magazines or radio, speaking engagements or cooperation with investors (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Thus, a blog can deliver a strong brand. Authenticity is considered as a vital element for blog success (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). This indicates that one should let the readers’ know who the blogger is and where he or she is coming from. Furthermore, it concern displaying knowledge about passions and being able to defend the information or facts. If not, there is a large chance that the readers will perceive the blogger as false, and communicate critical or negative opinions or link to the blog that leads to undesirable citing (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

Moen (2012) argues that content is the most important aspect in a blog. He states that, “You can have a fresh design and layout with a cool domain but without content people will not visit your blog” (Moen, 2012:15). Thus, interesting information that produces engagement is crucial to create a popular and successful blog. Further, Moen (2012:16) claims that, “A picture says more than a thousand words”. Hence, an advice to bloggers is to use a picture or video to reinforce their opinion or point. To post often and be interesting is vital to create loyal and engaged followers. This will create interest and curiosity with the readers, and they will revisit the blog, maybe several times a day (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Moen, 2012). Both Moen (2012) and Scoble & Israel (2006) are emphasizing on “to talk and not sell” on the blog. Individuals visit blogs to see what other people care about and know. One key factor for bloggers is to create credibility and trust. Thus, the authors argue that if the bloggers converse to their readers they might
create a relationship and establish some level of trust. If the bloggers on the other hand tries to sell to its readers they are likely to leave, and might also comment negative things about the blogger that might hurt the blogger’s reputation. Moen (2012) supplements this by stating that people love stories and stories produces engagement. In e.g. he suggests that a blogger should for example tell his or her readers that John Mayer’s new album has saved a lot of long and boring time in the car, and kept them singing along the whole way instead of just stating that they like his new album. The bloggers will then arouse feelings and emotions within the readers, and make them relate to the information shared (Moen, 2012).

Another tip to acquire loyal readers is to write on issues the blogger knows and care about. A successful and good blog is passionate and indicates authority. Passion can be showed through frequently posting about the subjects. As mentioned above, selling on a blog might be unfortunate but it might be possible to sell products or services if the blogger communicates knowledge, experience, and passion. This approach generates a more credible and interesting message, thus readers might try a product based on the blogger’s opinion and experience (Scoble & Israel, 2006). A personal writing style will also create a more personal bond to the followers. The more the readers feel they know the blogger the more loyal they become, and the likelihood of revisiting the blog increases (Moen, 2012).

Consumers tend to read quickly through a great number of blogs, hence bloggers should create simple and focused posts. Simple and focused posts make it easier for consumers to share the information. Hence, Scoble & Israel (2006) argues that each post should contain just one idea, subject, theme or one set of links. Moen (2012) shares this view and suggests that bloggers should not write posts that are too comprehensive and long but rather divide in several updates. People do not want to spend a lot of time reading a post, and people online tend to “surf” on if the blog post is too long and heavy to read. Moen (2012) underlines the importance of followers for a blogger. Without readers the blog loses its purpose, namely sharing and communicating with others. A good and successful blog can be defined as a conversation, and not a one-way communication channel. Dialog is everything because it creates and builds relations (Moen, 2012). By showing that one listen to the comments, information, and opinions the readers share, readers are likely to
be more polite and considerate when writing about the blogger, a post or opinion that the blogger has shared (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Moreover, it is vital to participate in the discussion, and add and reply to comments. If the blogger do not allow comments, the blog is likely to be considered as a sell out or PR channel, and might end up not being trusted or followed. However, the blogger should not allow comments that are abusing or extreme rude (Scoble & Israel, 2006). According to Moen (2012), bloggers should show their readers that they care about their opinions by ending a blog post with a question or provide their own opinions about the content in the post, such as “What do you think?” (Moen, 2012).

Being a good blogger takes time, although it saves money. Credible and trustworthy bloggers research what they write about, check and recheck facts and information, and keep themselves updated on subjects and other blogs. Creating a personal brand for oneself through blogging reduces costs compared to advertising oneself through other PR tactics but it requires a lot of investment in time spent on the blog. Brands that utilize bloggers in their advertising might also reduce costs, and can potentially have a larger coverage through a blog than with other traditional PR tools (Scoble & Israel, 2006). In addition, it is essential to be accessible for the readers. By disclosing contact information on the blog, the blogger has greater opportunities of receiving invitations, networking, and job opportunities (Rettberg, 2010; Scoble & Israel, 2006).

Another action that a blogger should perform is to link to other blogs because this provides trust and loyalty. By doing so, the blogger becomes a great resource for the followers, and they are likely to be the same in return (Scoble & Israel, 2006). A blogger wants followers that are genuine interested in one’s passion, and that will write comments because they want to deliver feedback, and share it with their relations as they believe the content is helpful. Hence, diffusion of blogs should be towards people that the blogger believes have a sincere interest of reading the information (Moen, 2012). Scoble & Israel (2006) suggest that popular bloggers should take on speak engagements when they can, attend meet-up events to initiate personal interaction.

Followers are the most important factor for blog when measuring success. Without readers the blogger will not be attractive to advertisers. The benefit of having loyal
readers is that one does not have to remind the followers to visit the blog, they will gladly recommend the blog to their relations, and are actively commenting on posts. According to Moen (2012) loyal readers are created when bloggers deliver quality, reply all inquiries, be polite and communicate clearly, and show the readers that one appreciate and respect all comments and feedback. If the blogger follows these advices, Moen (2012) argues that the blogger will gain respect, and have ambassadors that like what one write about and might consider the blogger as an ideal. It is suggested that bloggers should optimize their blog in order to ensure a well-defined, organized, and a good blog to read. This involves making it easy for readers to find new posts, and search for more information and inspiration (Moen, 2012; Rettberg, 2010). Hence, one should have a category that shows recommended posts that provides the reader with information about the person behind the blog, what they can expect to read about on the blog, and what the blogger stand for. Further one should create a category for most popular posts. This provides a good indication of what the followers like to read about and help new followers to find popular posts. A blog should also have a search function and an archive page (Moen, 2012; Rettberg, 2010).

2.2.4 The power of blogs - creating a personal brand

Blogging and passion has led to remarkable accomplishments for individuals. People have acquired dream jobs or projects based on the passion, knowledge and ideas they have expressed on their site. Thus, blogging has become a powerful tool when it comes to self-expressing and communicating a personal brand online. Steve Goldstein, CEO of Alacra said, “You are what you publish” (Scott, 2011:73). For many bloggers, the blog started as a hobby but has developed to be a full-time profession leading to additional projects as well. In e.g. publishing books, opening web shops or designing collections together with well-known brands. According to Rettberg (2010), bloggers who are able to make a living from individually managing blogs have usually created a strong personal brand or they have created or “own” a blog niche. In these cases, advertisers and partners match the blogger’s identity and hence will pay the blogger well to communicate their brand.
2.2.5 Blogging’s Key Advantages for Brands and Marketers

Blogs consist of considerable information available to the audience. Thus, due to blogs’ increased popularity and influence in the marketplace companies and advertisers are searching for ways to exploit blogs. I.e. to increase the effectiveness of online ads, Google has taken advantage of the uniqueness of each blog and connected its AdSense products to the individual blog. Other examples are Nike and Paramount Picture that also advertise through selected blogs as new ways of reaching consumers or potential new ones. The subject-focused nature of new blogs, such as fashion, sports and training have grouped internet shoppers with similar interests, making it easier for companies or marketers to search for target groups (Hsu & Lin, 2008).

Blogging is considered to be one large word of mouth (WOM) engine. Blogging can be viewed as an efficient, powerful, and fast way to reach others with opinions, recommendations, and information. Blogging enables marketers to monitor and respond to what consumers are conversing about the firm, product, service, or industry. Consequently, blogging helps brands become connected to a new kind of smarter and more efficient WOM network. Therefore, a key advantage of blogging is that due WOM blogs are easy to come across. Through search engines individuals can extract comments relevant to their search for information. Examples of such search engines are Technorati, Feedster, or PubSub which tracks millions of blog sites. Hence, marketers can discover what bloggers and their readers communicate about various brands, products or services that have been mentioned on the blog. Another advantage is that blogging allows marketers feed the network with information. This could be through paying a blogger to review and create an ad, or the blogger posts about a brand, product or service by themselves because they consider their opinion or experience as interesting and important to their followers (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

2.2.6 Blog advertisement

Firms utilize blogs in their marketing strategy to either establish or improve customer relations, to create a visible and popular presence on the web, or to achieve awareness (Rettberg, 2010). Due to blogs creating groups of consumers that have the similar
interests and desires, firms can utilize blogs to communicate with consumers, shape customer attitudes, and create high level of interaction, relationship and loyalty. Blogs might be very influential because they can provide high readers coverage, and they can produce strong persuasive influences at relative low costs, compared to traditional marketing and advertising. Consequently, a blog can play a significant role in the entire buying process from initial information search to considering choices and making final buying decisions. A former study shows that blogs have become a powerful advertising medium that can be used to reach a wide range of consumers (Fu & Chen, 2012).

The most popular blogs are more commercial and daily-life inspired in the sense that they make money from ads on their blogs (Rettberg, 2010). According to Moen, a Norwegian blogger can receive between 5000-15000 NOK for creating an ad. Advertising is the method of informing consumers by establishing corporate images, form positive attitudes toward targeted products or services, and persuade consumers (Fu & Chen, 2012). When blogger are publishing an ad or review, the customers become an important part of the advertising because they contribute to the message through comments. Comments can i.e. provide product information, express opinions, describe experiences, discuss issues, or exchange online word of mouth (oWOM). Research has found data that indicates that an increasing number of internet users utilize information on blogs to shape their attitudes towards companies, brands, products or services and make buying decisions (Fu & Chen, 2012).

An advantage with blogging and advertisement is that blogs usually contain reader comments which existing or new customers can use when evaluating the advertised products or services. Thus, it can be argued that blog advertising is somewhat successful. A former study indicates that 40% of the consumers that read blogs made a purchase. However, the outline or design of the advertisement has impact on how much influence it has on various consumers. The results show that informational appeals matches customer needs for consumers with high involvement. On the other hand, advertisement that has an emotional appeal is better suited for consumers with low customer involvement. The same research also found results that claim that portion of negative comments from readers have a negative effect, regardless customer involvement (Fu & Chen, 2012).

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8 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
Contextual ads are also found on blogs, which means that the ad is being matched with the blog content. For example, if a blogger posts about attending a wedding, ads for wedding products or services are likely to be connected to this post. Another way bloggers generate income is through ad-links or referrals. When readers’ clicks on an ad-link, they will be directed to the particular site if the product or service and the blogger will receive a certain percentage of purchases made (Rettberg, 2010). If the reader does not want to purchase that particular item but continues to surf on the web site and purchase something differently, the blogger might be paid for this activity or purchase instead.

There are different types of ads displayed on blogs. According to Moen (2012), the most common used advertisement forms on blogs are ads or banner-ads, reviews, competitions, and product placement.

*Ads:* Banner-ads are one of the most used forms to make income for bloggers. There are many ways to have brands advertising on ones’ blog, whether it is automatized ads from Google AdSense or Tradedoubler, contacting brands to offer advertisement or marketers contacting the blogger. Banners are sold via showings, clicks, or conversions. The more relevant the ad is to the readers to more clicks and conversions will be generated (Moen, 2012).

*Reviews:* The blogger receives access to a product or service from a company and writes a review about it on the blog. This is usually the method that creates most conversions if the review is positive and the blogger links well to the product or service. In collaborations like this it is important that the brand is not buying positive reviews but allows the blogger write his or her real and honest opinion in the review. If not, the blogger can be perceived as a sell-out and risks losing credibility. The review can also result in negative effect for the brand, product or service in terms of sales, oWOM, and reputation and so on. For Norwegian bloggers the payment for this is usually between 500-5000 NOK, or if the product or service is very valuable the item can be considered to be the payment itself (Moen, 2012). If companies *sponsor products or services* the blogger should mention it in the post to keep a serious and respectful impression, and to avoid being perceived as a sell-out. Moreover, Norwegian bloggers have to mark if a post
is an ad or advertisement for a brand, product or service so readers can clearly see if it is a commercial post or not. Therefore, a post that is an ad should be designed so it appears openly as advertisement (Moen, 2012).

**Competitions:** Many bloggers arrange competitions on their blog in cooperation with brands to create involvement and awareness about the brands’ products or services. This is argued to be positive for both the blogger and brand. The blogger are able to give something in return to its readers in terms of nice prizes, and the firm creates engagement for its brand, products or services. Competitions are usually arranged where the reader have to answer a question either by using own knowledge or visit a webpage to find the solution. The payment is often in the same range as mentioned in reviews but the brand or company is in addition charge of the winner’s reward (Moen, 2012).

**Product placement:** Product placement takes place by the blogger wearing the product in pictures. Another example is taking pictures when being at hairdresser or at a manicure salon, and links to it (Rettberg, 2010). The blogger is often paid on the basis of number of links to the webpage or percentage of sales generated by the blog (Moen, 2012). For Norwegian bloggers these post have to be marked as “sponsored”. When it comes to bloggers and their blogging income, Norwegian bloggers have to report their income of sponsoring and advertisement expenses to the Norwegian IRS (Moen, 2012)

### 2.3 Communication

Communication theory is chosen because blogs are considered to be a communication tool, where people and brands can reach others with their message, opinion, information, and activities. Furthermore, communication is a tool that contributes to brand development. Hence, it is argued that communication choices are impacting personal brands. Therefore, communication theory will work as basis for analyzing and discussing how individuals have managed to create a personal brand through blogging, and if and how these personalities influence market trends and consumers. Hence, this theory will support us in answering the research questions.
The word “Communication” derives from the Latin word “Communicare”, which implies to do something in common. In its application, it signifies a common ground of understanding. Communication is an exchange process of facts, ideas, opinions, feelings or attitudes, and works as means so that individuals or organizations can share meaning and understanding with one another (Eide & Eide, 2011). Communication is a process that involves a communicator or sender of a message, and a listener or reader that receives the message. Without communication there can be no mutual understanding between parties. Communication is not just means of individual progress, but it is a social process that affects the whole society. It enables everyone in the society to exchange information, as well as individuals are able to interact in the communication process to influence the society. In a communication process, people use symbols like words, actions, pictures or figures. The different symbols used in a communication process helps the sender in creating a message and likewise assists the listener to perceive and interpret the meaning of the message sent from the communicator. The purpose of communication is to create a mutual understanding of the message and thus generate desired actions. A communication process consists of different element, which is shown in the figure below (Rayudu, 2010).

![Communication process](image)

In blogging context the traditional communication process can be explained by bloggers being the sender of a message. Encoding is the process where the blogger converts the subject matter into texts, symbols, pictures, videos, or music. The communication channel is the medium utilized to send the message to the audience, which in this case is the blog. The receivers are the different blog readers that receive the message. The last element is where the followers decode or convert the content in order to produce an

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9 Source: Inspired by Rayudu (2010:10)
understanding. Thus, the message sent can be perceived in different ways by the blog readers, depending on how each person decodes the message. When an understanding is achieved the readers often provide the blogger with comments. Feedback enables the blogger to include its readers’ ideas, wishes, information, and etc. in future entries (Rayudu, 2010). To create a successful message, it is important that the blogger has a clear understanding of the desired response and knows his or her readers. The blogger need to code the message in a way that the readers are able to decode it. The more the bloggers’ experience-area overlaps the readers, the more effective transfer of the message (Kotler, 2006). Five factors have been proven to have significance on how effective communication can be (Fiske & Hartley, p.500 in Kotler, 2006):

- The stronger impact the communication source has on the recipient, the greater are the chances that the recipient is influenced in favor of the source
- The effect of communication is greatest when the message is in tune with existing beliefs, attitudes and mind set of the recipient
- Communication can create the most effective attitude change in the subject matter that are foreign, insignificant, and peripheral, and is not central rooted in the receivers values
- Communication has greater chance of success when the source is considered to have expertise and high status, is objective and well-liked, and especially if the source has power, and the receiver can identify with the source
- The social context, group, or reference group will disclose the communication and have influence as to whether it is accepted or not

### 2.3.1 Word of mouth

Traditional WOM communication is a way of sharing ideas, and has existed since people began to exchange information. Traditional WOM has been defined as “Oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as noncommercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service” (Arndt, 1967:3). Marketing often relies on WOM because it is considered to be the best way to increase sales. In example, first the firms communicates the product through marketing
and advertising, and the consumers listen. Then the consumers often discuss the message with their friends, family, and others, trying to help each other decide what choice to make. Hence, it is important for marketers to develop a relationship with customers that frequently communicate positive WOM (Silverman, 2001). As Silverman (2001:6), states that “Word of mouth is the center of the marketing universe and certainly the method of choice for selling products”. With the internet WOM is more important than ever. Consumers are inundated with overwhelming quantities of information, hence this period is called the information age. Since people do not have time to sort through all information, traditional advertising is declining. With WOM consumers has the opportunity to save time by taking advantage of others search of information or knowledge. Individuals are becoming dependent upon WOM to cut through the clutter to detect the most important information (Silverman, 2001). According to Silverman (2001), WOM is more credible than a sincere salesperson, and can reach more people faster than ordinary marketing. In addition, WOM has the power to initiate people to act. Silverman (2001) states, that several studies concerning various categories of buyers have shown that WOM is the common reason for purchase as WOM is often utilized before choice of decision.

Silverman (2001:30) has pointed out four reasons to “Why word of mouth is a powerful persuader”:

1) It is more relevant and complete; WOM is custom tailored to people who are participating in it and thus pay more attention to this information. The information is considered to be interesting and valuable to the receiver and hence the WOM communication is directed and adopted to this target (group).

2) It is the most honest medium; the information is custom tailored and the communicators are independent of a firm; “The inherent honesty of word of mouth further adds to its credibility” (Silverman 2001: 31).

3) It is customer driven; WOM is the most customers driven communication channel. The customer decides whom he or she will converse with, and decide whether if he or she will continue to listen or politely change the subject.
4) *It feeds on itself:* WOM is self-generating, self-contained, and it wastes nothing. WOM grows exponentially; if ten people have ten experiences each, that is one hundred direct experiences. If they each tell ten people about their own experiences, that is an additional 1000 (indirect) experiences, which can be just as powerful as the direct experiences (Silverman, 2001).

Hence, as times have changed, so has the nature of WOM. WOM communication has become very important in online marketing since traditional marketing methods are not as effective at reaching target audiences as they once were (Silverman, 2001).

### 2.3.1.1 Online Word of mouth

oWOM is regarded as the same as traditional WOM but in an online environment, such as internet forums, bulletin boards, and newsgroups. oWOM can be defined as “*Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet*” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gemler, 2004: 39).

The development of the internet has led to an easier way for individuals to connect with one another and share product information such as experiences, opinions, and knowledge online. Compared to traditional WOM, blogs allows individuals to communicate at all times, independent of time and geographical boarders. Another factor that differentiates traditional WOM from oWOM is anonymity. Traditional WOM is private and not anonymous, whereas in oWOM the sender can be anonymous in the same time as it can be more public and can reach more people (Van der Lans, van Bruggen, Eliashberg, & Wierenga, 2010).

With the use of social media, marketing is now about engaging in conversation with consumers, as recommendations coming through word-of-mouth communication are one of the most trusted sources (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Consequently, marketers can use interpersonal networks and to promote their products and services through forms of oWOM. As oWOM is public, firms can easily identify what is being communicated.
about them and react accordingly. However, firms have no power over consumers’ behavior online. This implies that consumers can express dissatisfaction, frustration or criticism online directly to companies if they have a company blog or forum page etc.

How consumer behavior is being affected by WOM exchanges is shaped by three key factors: tie strength, homophily, and source credibility. As most of WOM marketing takes place online, the diffusion of WOM messages is becoming more heavily influenced by predispositional ties. Predispositional ties imply that there are preexisting similarities between the sender and receiver in terms of attitudes and interests (Huang, 2010). Tie strength refers to the strength of an interpersonal relationship and is one of the most important factors that influence the distribution of WOM communication. The number and types of resources the ties exchange, the frequency of exchanges, and the intimacy of the exchanges between people determines if a tie is strong or weak (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). The stronger the ties, the more people rely on WOM information as a basis for purchase (Brown & Reingen, 1987). According to research conducted by Brown & Reingen (1987), tie strength affects information flows. Individuals in a strong tie relationship tend to interact more frequently and exchange more information compared to people in a weak tie relationship. Hence, it is likely that consumers have faith in and trust information from their virtual network members to whom they have developed close social ties with (Yang, 2011).

Homophily relates to tie strength, and determines how strong a tie is. Homophily explains composition of groups when it comes to the similarities of members’ characteristics, such as age, gender, education, or lifestyle (Rogers, 1983). The more similar individuals are the larger chance of being predisposed towards a greater level of interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding (Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003). Hence, it is argued that the more one have in common with another individual, the more one trust the information communicated. The stronger the social tie is the more alike individuals tend to be. Therefore, tie strength increases with homophily (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987).

Source credibility is another factor impacting the reliability of WOM information, because consumers are more likely to trust information coming from experts in a particular field (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). How consumers perceive the communicator
determines how credible they believe the information is. Communicators are assumed to be more persuasive if they possess positive attributes, based on tie-strength and homophily (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The more involved the recipient is, and the more credible the communicator is, the greater are the chance that the recipient will be persuaded by the information communicated. Moreover, communicators that hold great expertise are more likely to have greater awareness and knowledge about a market and the products offered (Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). Hence, expertise indicates that the person holds substantial knowledge and thus consumers tend to rely more on the information communicated. Experts within a particular field are often called opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are shown to have the ability to greatly impact the beliefs, behaviors, and values of individuals. Furthermore, opinion leaders are considered to be able to effectively reach masses of consumers through blogs and social networks (Acar & Polonsky, 2007). Consequently, bloggers might be perceived as strong communicators of information and knowledge.

2.3.2 Social media and blogs as a communication tool

It has been a significant change in how firms market their products and services due to an increased emphasis on customer relationship management. Moreover, there has been a shift away from mass media and one-way communication towards two-way and many-to-many communication. This shift is facilitated by social media and hence blogs. Social media is more about fostering communication with consumers rather than a one-sided push of a brand message (Rayadu, 2010). According to Kotler (2006), it is no longer enough for firms to ask how they can reach consumers. It is equally important to ask how the customers can reach the firm. It is viewed as an interactive dialogue between the company and customer. Brands must adopt new technologies to communicate and be present in the social media-world; otherwise, it will be difficult to survive in today’s competitive market (Rayudu, 2010).

Customers no longer want information from the brands; they seek information from people they know, share a bond with, and trust. Consumers wish to share their experiences with individuals who trust them. Social media and in particular blogs have
allowed customers to become more active parties in marketing relations. Therefore, these platforms act as a database for marketers because user-generated content creates a rich source of customer preference-, behavior-, and characteristic information (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Businesses often utilize social media to accomplish one of three goals; building awareness, increase sales, or build loyalty (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). To achieve one or all of these goals, marketers are often making use of communities on social media platforms or viral marketing. Viral marketing is a specific type of WOM communication, which exploits social networks and customers’ desire to contribute to and share message content with their peers. Compared to oWOM communication that is personal experiences or information viral marketing can be categorized as marketer initiated advertising. When initiating a viral campaign there are three types of strategies a marketer can use; seeding emails, online advertising, or offline advertising (Van der Lans et al., 2010). When the message content is able to highly resonate with the target audience and appeal to this group’s motivation for sharing information, the viral marketing campaign is more likely to succeed. A large part of viral marketing occurs on blogs. Firms exploit opinion leaders to communicate a message to their followers, which is defined to be in the brand’s target group. This is because bloggers are considered to have the ability to influence beliefs, behaviors, and values of consumers. In addition, bloggers are able to reach consumers through their blogs and other social networks (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

Blogging is a communication tool that encompasses all communication models: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many (Rayudu, 2010). Therefore, blogs are a powerful approach to drive positive WOM recommendations. In e.g. firms contact bloggers with products they want them to try, and create a review about their opinion on their blogs. It is believed that blog readers often possess some of the same interests or characteristic because they are likely reading the blog(s). Furthermore, the bloggers establish and build a relationship with their readers, which might increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the information communicated. This is one of the reasons to why this type of marketing is regarded as more valuable than traditional marketing. As Niederhoffer, Mooth, Wiesenfeld & Gordon (2007) argues “A blog is considered to be a successful marketing tool when the conversation on the blog turns into online buzz for the
“firm” (in Castronovo & Huang, 2012:123). Furthermore, internet users consider blogs to be credible because bloggers are often independent communicators. This allows bloggers to write their own opinions in a transparent manner (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Transparency is the key factor driving blog reader’s credibility judgments and engagement in blog-mediated messages (Yang & Lim, 2009). Blog content that is regarded as credible is focused, accurate, authentic, and insightful. In addition, authority and reliability impacts the credibility of the blog content (Banks, 2008).

Blogs are considered to be a communication channel because the bloggers offer tips and advices to their readers, arrange contests with prizes that are often sponsored by firms, hold Q&A sessions, and posts “todays outfit”. The blogs present a combination of private and commercial content, which creates a customer intimacy that differentiates them from traditional marketing channels (Pihl & Sandstrøm, 2013). Furthermore, bloggers tend to create a story around the products they refer to, and thus build a relationship with the consumers. Brands are utilizing bloggers to communicate information and messages to consumers, which can be visualized in the figure underneath.

![Diagram of companies, blogger, and consumer interactions](source-own-creation)

Figure 3: Source - Own creation

Another form of marketing firms often utilize in relations to bloggers is event-based marketing. Events can be essential to a brands’ marketing communications as they help build one-to-one relationships with the bloggers. This provides the blogger with a personal relationship to the brand. For example, companies invite bloggers to events such as product launches or next year’s collection showings. Occasionally, bloggers receive products on the events that the brands wants the bloggers to write about. This can also be
argued to be means of creating a positive impression of the brand, and hence create positive WOM for the product or brand. These efforts are creating brand and product awareness, and thereby the company has expanded their reach and impact of the marketing (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

### 2.4 Personal Branding

Branding is included to explain the essence in branding theory, which can be argued to be both connected and related to personal branding theory. Essential branding aspects are relevant and might produce value for the analysis and discussion of data, and answering the research questions. Personal branding theory is chosen to investigate how individuals have created a personal brand through blogging, and discuss how they are maintaining their successful brand. Furthermore, personal branding theory will also work as foundation for discussing if and how these bloggers influence trends and consumers.

#### 2.4.1 Branding

When discussing branding, marketing is a natural aspect to include as, branding is considered to be a tool within marketing strategy (Kotler, 2006). Branding is concerned about creating a unique name and image for a brand, product, or service in the consumers mind. Furthermore, branding seeks to establish a noteworthy and differentiated presence in the market that are attracting and maintaining loyal customers (http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/branding.html). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as “a name, term, symbol, or design or a combination of them intended to identify and differentiate the products or services of one seller to another” (http://marketing.about.com/cs/brandmktg/a/whatisbranding.htm). The definition of a brand has been developed to include and thus is explained as, “the visual distinctiveness of a brand may be a combination of the following factors, name, letters, numbers, a symbol, a signature, a shape, a slogan, a signature, or a particular typeface” (Clifton, Simmons, & Ahmad, 2003: 15-16). Therefore, it is argued that branding requires
marketing efforts to create and establish an association, identity, or image in the consumers mind.

One of the guru’s within marketing, Aaker (2004), claims that “establishing a unique brand allows a firm not only to improve its image but also provide a personality to its business” (in Nassar, 2012: 93). Accordingly, through branding, the quality and values of firms’ products and services can be elevated above similar commodities in the market (Nassar, 2012). It is identified an increased focus on investments in viral marketing to create relationships between brands and consumers. There is for example a lot of company, product, or service owned profiles on FB. Many brands communicate through a Twitter account or utilize bloggers that creates ads on behalf of the brand. The main goal of branding is to create awareness and interact with customers in order to create brand-recognition, -recall, and -loyalty in the long run. Thus, brand awareness is when consumers are in e.g. able to name the particular blogger when asked to name fashion bloggers they are familiar with (recall), or can name the blogger when shown the blog header or a picture of the blogger (recognition) (Rossiter & Percey, 1997 in Patra & Datta, 2012). Hence, brand loyalty is when the blogger have regular readers. With social media, this focus has also been turned to individuals where experts are emphasizing the importance of having a strong presence online and thus building a personal brand (Labrecque, et. al, 2011). It is therefore argued that one can draw similarities to marketing and branding products and services to marketing one-self online. Self-expressing and personal branding about communicating personality, interest, passion, qualities, attributes and creating a relationship with potential customers, partners or employers (Shepherd, 2005).

Social media marketing (SMM) is any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build brand awareness, recognition, recall, and action for a brand, business, product, service, person, or other entity. SMM is carried out by utilizing the tools of the social web, such as blogging, micro blogging, social networking, and content sharing (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). SMM includes the following goals:

Relationship building: the primary benefit of SMM is the ability to build relationships with actively engaged customers, online influencers, and peers.
Brand building: social media communication provides firms or individuals with great opportunities to increase brand awareness, recognition, recall, and loyalty.

Publicity: SMM provides a channel where brands or individuals can share important information and modify negative feedback and perceptions.

Promotions: Through SMM, individuals can offer exclusive discounts or opportunities like competitions to the audience to make these consumers feel valued and special, as well as to meet short term goals. People can communicate and offer their services, such as being a speaker or promoting published books.

Market research: social media tools provides businesses with easy accessible ways to learn about their customers’ needs and wants, create demographic and behavioral profiles of the customers, find niche audience, and learn about competitors (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). SMM is also considered to be beneficial for bloggers and their personal brand because SMM makes it easy for others to find information about the brands and create an opinion about them based on their profile. Thus, personal branding online is concerned about self-expression and providing a strong impression of oneself to others. With the development of Web 2.0, social media has created an unparalleled platform for consumers to publish and share their product- or service experiences and opinion, in e.g. through oWOM or consumer review sites. Hence, what people decide and wish to share with others are becoming a part of ones’ online profile, and in turn becomes a part of ones’ personal brand (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011).

2.4.2 Personal Branding

The marketplace is starting to recognize the importance of managing and controlling personal brands, and consequently providing strategic recommendations about how to project a personal brand identity through various social media channels. The concept of personal brand was first introduced by Tom Peters in his book “The Brand Called You” in 1997. Rampersad (2008) argues that branding is about impacting others by developing a brand identity that associates certain perceptions and feelings with that particular identity. Successful personal branding can therefore be said to entail managing perceptions effectively, and controlling and influencing how other people perceive and
think of you (Rampersad, 2008). Personal branding has for a long time been related to celebrities and leaders in business and politics (Labreque et al., 2011; Shepherd, 2005). The position a personal brand has had in creating success for personalities like Oprah Winfrey, Tiger Woods, and Michael Jordan among others is being highly recognized. This supports the fact that it is crucial to be the leader of one's own brand and thereby become the CEO of one's life (Rampersad, 2008). However, with online sites and applications, personal branding has become a vital marketing task for everyday people. Personal branding has often been explained by traditional personal branding concepts that mainly focus on defining personal branding from a personal marketing selling perspective. Rampersad (2008) argues that personal branding is much more than marketing and promoting oneself in the marketplace. According to Rampersad (2008:34) personal branding is:

“The synthesis of all the expectations, images, and perceptions it creates in the minds of others when they see or hear your name”.

In e.g. with celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, people tend to think about warmth and women’s empowerment when they hear her name. The names Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods are associated with basketball and golf, in addition to being two the world’s best players. With this in mind, a personal brand should be authentic, which indicates that it should give the connotations of the person’s true character, and be built on values, strengths, uniqueness, and genius. Rampersad (2008:34) claims that, “when one is to brand themselves in this organic, authentic, and holistic way, one’s personal brand will be strong, clear, complete, and valuable to others”. This new way of self-expressing and creating a personal brand involves being able to market oneself to others and manage the brand in terms of how one wants to appear and be perceived in the market. New platforms and applications allow individuals to manage their personal brand, fine-tune their profiles online, and share their thoughts and ideas through blogs and various social mediums (Labreque et al., 2011). With internet and social media sites the personal web site has become a vital platform for self-expression and self-presentation, as well as a good opportunity to learn more about other people. Social media sites and applications include good opportunities for self-presentations and to convey information to others. Thus, these pages allow people to create and maintain their brand identity (Labreque et al., 2011).
"Branding success indicates building value for the quality of your work and differentiating your future value potential" (Morgan, 2011:13).

According to Morgan (2011), every move or decision people make is in some way defining one’s personal brand. People dresses, communicates, and behaves in different ways. These actions make everyone unique. Hence, all actions are regarded to a part of one’s personal brand. Yet, Morgan (2011) argues that even though this distinguishes individuals from each other and raises awareness it does not bring any attention to the quality of their work and potential future value. According to Morgan (2011), personal branding speaks to a person’s unique selling points, key qualifications, and values within the competitive landscape of all other brands. Hence, personal brand is often the source of first impression when it comes to one’s professional career. Thus, an individual’s personal branding efforts will differentiate the person with decision makers in the company, with other potential employers or partners so one become the candidate of choice for assignments and opportunities (Morgan, 2011).

Individuals utilize brands, organizations, and other commercial enterprises as tools to form and communicate aspects of their personal identity to others through various virtual platforms. This could be to converse or comment about a product or service they like or dislike, post a picture of a brand or product, engage in discussions on different brand’s pages, participate in events and competitions that are being arranged and etc. (Labreque et al., 2011). Consequently, the result is that people have no longer full control over the information they convey on the internet due to accessing third party sites such as FB and blogs for social networking and digital branding. Even though people are the owners of their profiles, others contribute to the creation of ones’ brand identity through publishing content or link to their sites in form of for example comments and photo tagging (Labreque et al., 2011). This provides others with the opportunity and power to add content that will be connected to ones’ profile and personal brand, often without the owner’s permission. When information is online it is available permanently and widely accessible for everyone. This contributes new challenges in terms of posting information and interacting online. People have to keep in mind the role one is playing online, and how one wants others to perceive oneself with regards to the information and data people can locate online. If people is not controlling or managing their personal brand, the chances of others linking information and material to ones’ profile and brand that are not
consistent with the individuals’ personal opinion and preferences are large (Labreque, et al., 2011; Sheperd, 2005). People act differently online by displaying different amount of information and by what type of information they allow others to have or see. However, the difficult aspect is to control what others write or post on ones’ web sites that can affect ones’ perception and personal brand (Labreque et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the concept of personal brand is related to theory of personal selling since personal qualities often lead to sales success. But, in personal branding there is no employer involved so it is rather a person selling her or his self than a firm related brand. With Web 2.0, personal branding tactics are considered to comprise creating and maintaining social networking profiles, personal web sites, blogs, as well as using search engine optimization techniques to encourage access to people’s profile and information. Personal branding can also be compared to product branding which involves capturing and promoting a person’s strengths and uniqueness to a target audience (Labreque et al., 2011).

**Traditional brand identity vs. online brand identity**

“When looking into traditional practices brand identity can be explained as how the marketer wants the brand to be perceived; brand positioning as the part of brand identity to be actively communicated to the audience; and brand image as how the brand is perceived by the marketplace” (Labreque et al., 2011:44). However, in an online context, personal brand identity relies more on self-presentation because identities are created in computer-mediated environments utilizing social media profiles, blogs, and personal Web pages (Labreque et al., 2011). Brand positioning is considered to be the active communication of one’s brand identity to a specific target group. As Shepherd (2005) states, self-marketing involves the actions, activities and choices individuals take to make themselves known in the marketplace, usually but not exclusively for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment. Hence, when it comes to positioning oneself in the market, people use brand positioning to highlight their positive attributes and qualities that are of value for the their target group while simultaneously differentiating themselves from other people in the marketplace. Thus, for personal branding, brand positioning is about impression management. So in an online setting, brand positioning is about
maintaining a consistent image through choices that reveal pieces of personal information through blogs, and disclosure on sites such as social networks (Labreque et al., 2011). Furthermore, brand image is influenced by the information posted by the focal person or by others, and the marketplace reaction to this information, which is usually based on visible behavior, nonverbal behavior, and other observable cues. Therefore, peoples’ brand image in an online context is based on one’s own experiences and feedback from others with regards to if they have a brand image that is consistent with how one wish to be perceived and the personal branding goals (Labreque et.al, 2011). A former study conducted by Labreque et al. (2011), revealed that self-branding efforts and practices are dependent on and require feedback mechanisms to be successful and meaningful.

2.4.3 Creating a Personal Brand

According to Schau & Gilly (2003), personal web pages serve the purpose of communicating information about oneself to known and unknown people. Every action or choice people makes is considered to be a part of how one self-present and build one’s personal brand. Self-presentation is seen everyday through the way people select clothes, hairstyles, automobiles, and etc., to impress others in any given situation. With the internet and personal web pages, individuals can self-present themselves at any time (Schau & Gilly, 2003). It is a common practice to like and link to brands that people prefer or wants to be associated with on social networks like blogs, FB, and Instagram. Thus, this action becomes a part of one’s profile and personal brand. The study conducted by Labreque et al., (2011:44) supports this by identifying that “brands acted as metaphors for the image the consumers wanted to portray and often conveyed what they showed or the demographic to which they were trying to appeal”.

According to Montoya (2002), personal branding is a strategic process, which involves intentionally taking control over perceptions and managing those opinions strategically to support achieving peoples goals (in Wilson, 2009). Everyone has a personal brand but many are not aware of it and do nothing to manage it. The personal brand an individual possess impacts whether the person is considered for a job or other opportunities, it defines how credible the opinions and ideas are, and it also determines how much assistance other individuals are willing to provide. Furthermore, it affects the persons
seriousness in relation to competitors, tolerance received in negotiations, and the amount of payment companies or people are willing to pay for the individuals’ services (Montonya 2002 in Wilson, 2009).

Montoya (2002) uses the term “domain” in his book “The Personal Brand Phenomenon” to define the sphere where people can try to impact others with their personal brand. According to the author, there are three levels of influence that a person might try to achieve. The first level is “Advocate” where individuals are associating themselves with a trend even though this might be for a limited time. The second level is called “Trendsetter”, which involves influencing thinking but maintains presence in a larger sphere during the time in order to keep their personal brand when the trend period is over. The third and last level is the “Icon”, which is difficult to achieve and usually tends to develop progressively. Thus, Montoya (2002) defines a personal brand as;

“The public projection of certain aspects of a person’s personality, skills or values that stimulate precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the qualities and values that person stands for” (in Wilson, 2009).

Furthermore, Montoya (2002) explains personal branding through eight laws; Specialization, Leadership, Personality, Distinctiveness, Visibility, Unity, Persistence, Goodwill.

Within specialization, a brand is usually built on one area of expertise. When it comes to personal branding and specialization, a person can specialize in many ways. Montoya (2002) suggest that a personal brand can specialize by ability, behavior, lifestyle, mission, product, profession, or service. Yet, Montoya (2002) argues that it is important to keep one’s brand simple and avoid diversification so that one can become better at core quality.

Leadership is in this context related to the fact that people like to be influenced, and search for other sources to gain input and inspiration. Thus, an individual is a leader of its personal brand and in charge of how to impact others.
In the *personality* aspect, it is important to be perceived as authentic and act like a human being. According to Montoya (2002) it is four characteristics to being human; being related to, being imperfect, being positive, and being authentic. In order to become a popular and influential personal brand one has to show distinctiveness.

*Distinctiveness* involves creating a strong impression through self-expressing in ways that are different from others in the same area of business.

*Visibility* is also crucial to establish a well-known personal brand. Thus, a personal brand has to be identified in the market place constantly and repeatedly. Montoya (2002) argues that before an individual’s personal brand has become known, visibility is more vital than the person’s ability. Hence, people have to have awareness of the person’s profile and brand in order to learn about one’s expertise and skills. Consequently, to make a personal brand visible in the marketplace, a person has to promote and market one-self, and leverage any opportunity.

*Unity* is to live ones’ private life in accordance with ones’ professional life.

Lastly, it is important to be *persistent* and establish a lot of *goodwill* so that individuals’ has something to fall back on if one makes some unfortunate decisions (in Wilson, 2009).

### 2.5 Personal Knowledge Management

In relation to blogging, personal brand and influence on blog readers, personal knowledge management (PKM) theory will provide foundation to analyze and discuss how bloggers manage and utilize their personal knowledge on their blog. Moreover, the PKM model will be a valuable tool to link blogs with development of personal brands.

PKM was first introduced by Frand & Hixon in 1999. Today, PKM is concerned about knowledge management where the emphasis is on the crucial importance of the human being in every knowledge process. Thus, suggesting a model of knowledge management focusing on the individual. Knowledge is regarded as a competitive advantage both at corporate- and individual level. Hence, as knowledge is a key source, managing personal knowledge can be argued to be strategically vital. PKM emphasizes on the human beings’ needs, interests, and goals of learning, socializing, and the ability to finalizing work.
efficiently (Razmerita, Kirchned, & Sudzina, 2009). Therefore, PKM is considered to allow people to better manage their knowledge processes and interaction, and collaboration and knowledge with others. In result, efficient and developed PKM can build and support individual knowledge. PKM involves organizing personal information, making sense of information, negotiation of meaning, creating new ideas, developing networks, collaborating, sharing, and interacting. Individuals possess different forms of knowledge. Personal knowledge comprises knowledge gained from memories, personal relationships, books, notes, documents, photographs, intuitions, what has been previously learned from co-workers, and what people know about everything in the world. Furthermore, knowledge is also personal because individuals have different understandings and different ways of reasoning. With this, people can from the same type of information produce different understandings and assume different things. These various interpretations allow new knowledge to be created. It is argued that PKM tools should assist individuals to exchange pieces of information into something that can be systematically applied and thus support them in expanding their personal knowledge (Razmerita et al., 2009).

Former researchers have provided different versions of PKM tools that have helped control and increase personal knowledge. Apshvalka (2004) delivers an outline of traditional tools for managing personal knowledge such as calendars, to-do-lists, notebooks, emails, telephones, and discussion forums (in Razmerita et al., 2009). Other researchers have viewed PKM from another point of view, and have introduced a framework where PKM is defined as a set of problem-solving skills. These skills are regarded to be essential to possess in order to have successful problem solving in daily knowledge work tasks. The authors classified these skills into seven categories; retrieving, evaluating, organizing, collaborating around, analyzing, presenting, and securing information (Avery, Brooks, Brown, Dorsey, & O’Connor, 2001 in Razmerita et al., 2009). However, with Web 2.0 the ways people utilize and communicate online have changed to become more interactive and collaborative. PKM settings combine individual work environments and infrastructures to support joint creation, circulation, sharing, and application of knowledge. These opportunities are identified in concepts and tools such as blogs and micro blogs where people can more effectively interact, communicate, and share with others (Razmerita et al., 2009). Thus, blogs can be argued to be a tool for
knowledge management and further become linked to self-expressing and developing a personal brand. Hence, PKM trough blogs can be argued to be interconnected with personal branding. According to the researchers; 

“PKM on Web 2.0 is achieved by a set of tools that allow people to create, codify, organize, and share knowledge, but also to socialize, extend personal networks, collaborate on organizing knowledge, and create new knowledge” (Razmerita et al., 2009: 1022).

The variety of community tools available on Web 2.0 facilitates the introduction of a new knowledge management model, which is usually called KM 2.0 or Enterprise 2.0. With Web 2.0 the new model focuses on harnessing the use of collective knowledge and faster distribution of knowledge (Razmerita et al., 2009). A former study done in 2007 by Zerfass & Bogosyan revealed that most of the interviewees considered blogs as a good platform for sharing expert knowledge on different topics of interest. One of the reasons for this might be that bloggers are interested in reading new information, sharing knowledge, and being connected with others (in Razmerita et al., 2009). Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht (2004) identified five reasons for why blogs are used:

1) To update others on activities and whereabouts,

2) To express opinions to influence others

3) To seek others’ feedback and opinion,

4) To “think by writing” and

5) To release emotional tension (in Razmerita et al. 2009).

Bloggers are typically characterized as extroverted, whereas blog readers are considered to be more consumerist. In relation to personal brand and bloggers’ influence on consumers, it is found interesting that blog usage is being associated with a decentralized form of knowledge. Hence, blogs is a PKM tool that assists editing, presenting, and organizing information or knowledge by people or in collaboration with others. With Web 2.0 the traditional PKM has been developed to facilitate and support communication, social interaction, and collaboration. Moreover, the new model of PKM
improves not only management of knowledge on a personal level but also at a collective level. In addition, the new PKM model allows knowledge sharing and interaction by harnessing collective knowledge through informal and formal communication, collaboration, and social networking (Razmerita et al., 2009).

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Table 1: PKM MODEL

It can be argued that the Web 2.0 has been important for personal development of knowledge. This is because the Web 2.0 tools assists the simultaneously management of the individual and collective knowledge processes along with social processes. As mentioned earlier, individuals can organize bookmarks through social bookmarking tools, and share knowledge, experiences, and opinions utilizing blogs or wikis on the internet or on an intranet. With the Web 2.0 tools one might see a shift from organizational knowledge management towards personal knowledge management. The focus has turned from only extracting knowledge from experts, codifying it and making it available in databases to emphasizing on the whole life-cycle of knowledge processes in a human context. Hence, the new PKM model enables people to engage in virtual interaction, social processes, collaboration, and knowledge exchanges online. Thus, the PKM model

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10 X indicates that a characteristic is strongly supported, whereas an x indicates a characteristic is supported at a certain level; Razmerita et al., 2009: 1030
is viewed as a set of tools and systems such as blogs or social networking sites that can be used for managing knowledge and/or personal/professional relationships (Razmerita et al., 2009).

3.0 Methodology

This chapter introduces the methods that are chosen to collect data and how they are applied to answer the research questions. It will also be discussed why the various methods are chosen. A detailed description of how interviews and survey have been developed and conducted is also included in this chapter.

3.1 Research design

An explorative research is a valuable means to ask open questions to define actions and gain knowledge about a topic of interest (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Additionally, explorative design is appropriate when the area of investigation is relatively new or so vague that the researcher needs to conduct exploration in order to acquire more knowledge about the research subject (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2008; Gripsrud, 2010). Hence, explorative design is applicable for this research as the authors argue that marketers and firms are lacking knowledge about bloggers positions’ in the market. By exploring bloggers’ personal brand and influence this study might clarify the valuable resource bloggers can be for marketers. With an explorative study both qualitative and quantitative methods are applicable. However, exploration tends to rely more heavily on qualitative techniques such as search of the literature, interviewing experts in the topic, participant observations, case studies, street ethnography, conducting in-depth individual interviews or execute focus group interviews (Blumberg et al., 2008; Gripsrud, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012). This thesis will primarily rely on qualitative data. However, a survey is included to provide additional data that can enrich the analysis and discussion of findings, and further answer the research questions. This will be addressed later on in this chapter.
3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Primary data

Primary information or data is material collected by the researchers in order to answer the research questions. Hence, primary data is new research conducted for this particular research or purpose (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010). In this research, primary data collection includes an interview with blog expert Mr. Moen, netnographical research, email interviews with blog readers, and a case study of two Norwegian and two Swedish bloggers. In addition, primary data includes survey results. This data provides relevant and vital information about bloggers and the blog readers that will help analyze, discuss, and conclude with regards to the research questions. It was performed several attempts to reach popular bloggers with a wish of an interview but unfortunately none of the bloggers replied. However, it is believed that the primary data collection for this study delivers information of high relevance and quality. Thus, the primary data collection provides the research with necessary and valuable data for answering the research questions at hand.

3.2.2 Secondary data

Secondary data is information or data that already has been collected by other researchers and for other purposes (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). By reviewing secondary sources of information, researchers might achieve excellent background information regarding the research questions, and it might provide good and valuable leads (Blumberg et al. 2011). Furthermore, secondary data is very helpful because it allows the researchers to analyze already consisting information that might provide additional or different knowledge, interpretations, or conclusion for the current study (Saunders et al., 2012). It is important to be aware of the limitations secondary data might have. Secondary data can be categorized in units that are different from those than the researchers seek. Furthermore, secondary data can contain faults or liabilities due to errors in the collecting of or analyzing the data for the originally research, or because the secondary data may have been gathered in a biased way to support a particular point of view. Another limitation of secondary data is that the information may be outdated (Schifman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010). Secondary sources
utilized in this research were articles accessed through CBS library and database, academic books, and various web pages like for example blogglisten.no, bloggportalen.se. The researchers have emphasized on utilizing relevant and up to date sources of information that have been supporting or adding value to the study.

3.3 Mixed Methods

A mixed approach of quantitative- and qualitative research has been exploited as neither one of the methods alone would provide a fully answer to the research questions. By mixing qualitative and quantitative methods one will achieve a more complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2010). The mixed approach offers two key advantages when being applied in the same research. First, the mixed approach allows the researchers to utilize different methods for diverse purposes in the study. Hence, following this approach might safeguard that the researchers are addressing the most vital matters (Saunders, et al., 2007). Second, mixed methods facilitate triangulation to take place which also is known as cross-examination of results (Saunders et al., 2007). Consequently, combining more than one data collection technique and analytical procedure is supporting the researchers in checking and ensuring the validity of the results and findings (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

3.3.1 Qualitative research

With qualitative research, meanings are derived from words, sentences and narratives, and not numbers and figures (Saunders et al., 2012; Blumberg et al. 2011). “Qualitative is the essential character or nature of something; quantity is the amount. Quality is the what; quantity the how much. Qualitative refers to the meaning, the definition or analogy or model or metaphor characterizing something, while quantitative assumes the meaning and refers to a measure of it...” (Blumberg et al., 2011:144). Qualitative data is related with an interpretive philosophy since researchers need to produce meaning of the subjective and socially constructed meanings communicated by individuals who take part in the study. This indicates that meanings are dependent on individual cognition, thus
peoples’ understanding of the events that occur around them. Consequently, qualitative research depends on social interpretation. Compared to quantitative data, information from qualitative research tends to be more ambiguous, elastic, and complex. Collection of qualitative data results in non-standardized information requiring classification into categories. Furthermore, analysis of qualitative data is conducted through the use of conceptualization. Since words can have several meanings, unclear meanings, and be interpreted differently it is vital to explore and clarify these data with great care. Hence, the quality of qualitative research relies on the interaction between data gathering and data analysis to allow the meanings to be explored and explained. Qualitative data tend to be large in volume and complex in nature. To handle this extensive amount of information it is vital to explore, analyze, synthesize, and transform the data so it can address the research questions (Saunders et al, 2012). The main qualitative method utilized to collect and analyze data in this thesis is through netnographical research.

Netnography

Marketers are recognizing the increasing importance of the internet and of consumers who are active on online communities. Online communities are contexts in which people often participate in dialogues and discussions whose goals include attempts to inform and impact fellow members about products or brands (Kozinets, 2002). The community aspect of blogs occurs through comments on the blog. The interaction takes place between the blog author and blog readers, between blog authors, as well as between different blog readers, who might potentially develop shared relationships (Kozinets, 2010). Netnography is concerned about the textual output of internet–related field work, thus collecting data from online sources such as communities, networks or blogs. According to Kozinets (1997:47), netnography can be defined as “a written account of online cyberculture, informed by the methods of cultural anthropology” where cyber culture can be explained as the culture that is interceded by contemporary computerized communications technology such as the internet. Netnography utilizes the information and data that is publicly available in online networks to for example identify and understand the needs and decision influences of relevant online consumer groups (Kozinets, 2002). This has resulted in the possibility of substantial research of
consumption and cultural activities on the internet. Furthermore, with netnography, researchers are able to make observations of participants or members of different virtual communities or sites within a context that is neither created nor directed by the researcher. Consequently, the researchers can rightfully observe without any invasion of privacy or interference of the activity (Kozinets, 1997) that occurs on the forums, networks, communities, and blogs. This qualitative approach can therefore deliver greater understanding of the virtual space in relation to consumers’ needs and wants, choices, and symbolic meanings, and more (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Moreover, netnography is a suitable method for attempting to analyze communities like blogs where access based on traditional approaches is difficult (Langer & Beckman, 2005). The netnographic method requires that the researchers “live” in the virtual community in the similar way that ethnographers do. One advantage of netnography is that the internet and online communities offers few barriers to collect information and data. The common used ethnographical methods such as participant observation, non-participant observation, and interview are methods that can be utilized in a netnographical study. However, Kozinets suggests that netnography research is “based primarily on the observation of textual discourse” (Xun & Reynolds, 2010:18).

The netnography approach offers several advantages for marketers when it comes to information about consumers. The method offers greater accessibility to a broader group of respondents, greater continuity in research, more economically doable and time-saving than conventional methods. Further, it offers more capacity and flexibility for observation and analysis, and a high reflective quality of online dialogue (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Hence, the method is regarded as less time consuming, potentially less obtrusive, and less costly compared to other research approaches (Kozinets, 2002; Langer & Beckman, 2005). However, it is also important that researchers are aware of the limitations that netnographers can experience such as respondent authenticity and instability of the user base. Additionally, other limitations might be underdeveloped analytical toolkit, potentially poor quality of textual discourse, and ethical sensitivity (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). The blogs examined in this study are defined to in the categories, fashion and daily-life blogs. The four blogs chosen are very popular and recognized, and consist of a lot of information provided by both the bloggers and the readers through posts, dialogue,
and discussions. Kozinets (2002, 2010) suggests the following methodological stages and procedures for netnographic research:

1) *Entrée:* formulation of research questions and identification of appropriate online forums for research to the types of questions that are of interest for the researchers. This stage also involves learning as much as possible about the forums, groups, and the individual participants one are studying.

2) *Data collection, and analysis and interpretation:* direct copy from computer-mediated communications of online community members and observations of the community, and its members, interactions, and meanings. In this stage, the netnographers’ choices of which information and data to save and which to pursue are crucial. This process should be guided by the research questions and available resources such as the ability of community members to express themselves, time, researcher skill etc. The strength of netnography is its special ties to specific online consumer groups and the revelatory depth of their online communications. Hence, interesting and relevant conclusions can be made from a relatively small number of messages, if these messages are considered to include sufficient descriptive richness and are interpreted with substantial analytic depth and insight. The data analysis can be contextualized, codified, or classified.

3) *Research ethics:* Kozinets (2002, 2010) recommends four ethical procedures to follow for marketing researchers utilizing netnography. First, the researcher should fully reveal his or hers presence, affiliations, and intentions to online community members during any study. Second, the researchers should guarantee confidentiality and anonymity to informants and members used in the study. Third, the scholars should pursue and include feedback from the members of the online community being studied. Fourth, the scholars should take a thoughtful position on the private-versus-public medium issue.

4) *Member checks:* presentations of some or all final research report’s findings to the people who have been studied in order to solicit their comments (Kozinets, 2002, 2010).
**Case Study**

A case study approach is defined as “a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 534). In case studies, one or several cases are examined in depth, and a case can be both an object of study and a research design. A case study is characterized collecting substantial information from units or cases over a period of time through detailed and comprehensive data collection. Multiple data sources are used, but common to them is that the sources are time-and location-based (Johannesen et al., 2011).

This thesis has applied a multiple-case study. A multiple case study facilitates comparison of similarities and differences between the similar cases selected. Exploring data in many divergent ways counteracts the chance of biased conclusions when only scrutinizing limited data from one case (Eisenhardt, 1989). The cases chosen for this thesis are the four blogs, Fotballfrue, CamillaPihl, Blondinbella, and Stylebykling. These cases are chosen because they are popular bloggers in their countries, and they have managed to build their own personal brand. By using several cases the authors are hoping to identify similarities in how these bloggers have built up their personal brands, as similarities will strengthen the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Yet, inequalities will also contribute to valuable discussion and results for the research. The cases are chosen to help answer the research questions as it will allow a better understanding of how one can build a personal brand through blogging and become an influencer in the marketplace.

**Semi-structured interview**

Due to a mainly qualitative approach of this study a semi structured interview was conducted with the Norwegian blog expert, Thomas Moen. Semi-structured interviews have two objectives. The first objective is that the researcher wants to have insight in the expert’s perspective on the topic. Second, with a semi structured interview the researchers’ can receive information if the expert interviewed can confirm understandings and knowledge the researchers already possess. The semi-structured interviewed was designed with open-ended questions followed up with probing questions related to our research questions. This allowed the respondent to elaborate on the questions asked and
encouraged him to provide additional information to the research topic (Blumberg et al. 2011). Before starting the interview a small introduction of the research was delivered, and the interviewers were introduced to provide a comfortable and friendly interview setting (Blumberg et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews are often used in case study research (Blumberg et al., 2011). Mr. Moen has worked with several of the most popular bloggers in Norway. Thus, the semi-structured interview with Mr. Moen is of high value and significance to the study because he possesses important and relevant information about blogging that are crucial to answer the research questions.

3.3.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative data is built on meanings derived from numbers and figures (Blumberg et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). However, quantitative information in raw form usually delivers very little meaning to most people. Collection of quantitative data results in numerical and standardized data. Thus, quantitative data need to be processed, analyzed, and interpreted to become useful information. Quantitative analysis methods such as graphs, charts, and statistics allow researchers to manage this, and furthermore help to explore, present, describe and examine similarities, differences, and trends within the collected data (Saunders et al., 2012). Quantitative data are typically collected by operational variables created through questionnaires with fixed questions and given answers and/or intentional manipulations (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2009). In this thesis, a survey is utilized in order to create a more comprehensive analysis, discussion, and answer to the research questions.

Survey

The survey is a method that will provide information about individuals’ motivations for utilizing blogs, and the way peoples’ online community- and culture activities through blogs influence other aspects of their daily lives (Kozinets, 2010). This thesis exploits an online survey with fixed questions and response options to collect data from consumer. The survey aims to receive insight in if and how consumers and trends are being
influenced by the personal brands. By using fixed questions and response options it implies standardization so one can easily identify similarities and variations in the respondents answers (Johannesen et al., 2011). In addition, this method eliminates ambiguity and ensures higher quality of data. Yet, the fixed questions have to be well-designed to ensure the data collected contains consumer insights rather than biased answers (Johannesen et al., 2011). To minimize the risk of receiving biased answers, tests were conducted and the survey was based on literature. The questions were formed on the basis of secondary information and the research questions. The survey was sent out to our network on Facebook and email, where 154 responded. To ensure that we attracted relevant respondents, the survey was shortly introduced and the research aim was presented. Since the study mainly relies on qualitative data the respondent rate is considered to be sufficient. Moreover, this data is used to further enrich the analysis and support or contradict the results from the qualitative research.

4.0 Presentation of the Case Studies

4.1 Caroline Berg Eriksen – Fotballfrue.no

![Figure 4: Screenshot of Fotballfrues’s blog](image)

Ms. Eriksen is a 27 year old Norwegian woman who has for the last couple of years been the most popular blogger in Norway. The blog currently holds first place at blogglisten.no. Furthermore, the blog is found at 1st place in the personal category and 2nd
place in the top list at bloglovin’, at 9.3.1311. Ms. Eriksen is a journalist educated at Norges Kreative Skole. Fotballfrue blogs about categories and topics concerned about daily life happenings, fashion, food, their dogs, training and workout. The blog is registered under a company, which Fotballfrue owns together with her husband. Her husband is the Board leader and manager of the company12. As many other bloggers also have done, Fotballfrue and her husband started an online shop which focused on accessories, called Treasures.no. However, after some time it was closed down13. Furthermore, Ms. Eriksen has published her own book, “Fotballfrue’s Diary - One Year with Norway’s largest blogger” focusing on lifestyle and LCHF-cooking14.

### 4.2 Camilla Pihl – Camillapihl.no

Camilla Pihl can be categorized as a Norwegian fashion blogger. Yet, the blogger also incorporates daily-life events from time to time. Ms. Pihl works full time alongside blogging, working with talents and music together with her fiancé Peter Peters in their company, Friendly Entertainment. In addition, Ms. Pihl works as a part time model. Her blog was established in 2004 and was former called girlfriend.no15. Camilla Pihl’s blog is one of the most popular blog in Norway. The blog is always located at the top list of

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11 [www.blogglisten.no](http://www.blogglisten.no); [http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/1/no](http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/1/no); [http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/0/no](http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/0/no)
12 [http://fotballfrue.no/2013/05/25/siden-sist-fotballfrue-14/](http://fotballfrue.no/2013/05/25/siden-sist-fotballfrue-14/)
14 [http://fotballfrue.no/2012/02/16/fotballfrues-dagbok-cover/](http://fotballfrue.no/2012/02/16/fotballfrues-dagbok-cover/)
blogglisten.no. Moreover, the blog is number seven in the fashion category and can be found at 40th place on the list of Top bloggers in Norway at bloglovin’ per 9.3.13. In 2011 Ms. Pihl won the price “Fashion Blogger of the Year” at the Vixen Blog Award, and in 2012 the blog was crowned as “the Best Blog” at Costume Awards (both hosted in Norway for Norwegian bloggers). Ms. Pihl currently also works as editor of Imintoyou for miinto.no, a web shop for Norwegian brands. In Imintoyou, Norwegian personalities or celebrities are being interviewed about their relationship to clothes, fashion, lifestyle, and music. In addition, Ms. Pihl is the face of miinto.no 2013. Ms. Pihl speaks at various events. Furthermore, Ms. Pihl is also often to be seen at collection-showings for many well-known brands and at fashion shows hosted during for example Oslo-, Stockholm-, and Copenhagen Fashion Week. Recently, Ms. Pihl launched her own jewelry collection in corporation with one of the largest jewelers in Norway, David Andersen.

4.3 ElinKlin – Stylebykling.nowmanifest.com

Ms. Kling is a Swedish woman who now runs one of the world’s largest fashion blogs, StylebyKling. Ms. Kling started her first blog in 2007 and she has won several awards,

\[\text{References}  
\]
both as a blog and as a Web–TV show which was inspired by her blog. She started her career in the fashion industry as a fashion editor for the lifestyle magazine SOLO. Her career continued in the same industry when Ms. Kling became the “front of the fashion department” for one of Sweden’s largest daily newspapers, Expressen. During this period, Sweden’s largest TV network, TV4, hosted the blog. Ms. Kling has also been stylist for the Swedish Idol, and participated and competed in the Swedish version of “Dancing with the Stars”. She is the co-founder of Fashion Networks International, and was the owner of Nowmanifest which is one of the world leading online platforms for fashion. However, this is now sold to Condè Nast. Furthermore, Ms. Kling is currently the fashion director of the magazine, Styleby, which she founded together with Sweden’s largest media powerhouse Bonnier. Ms. Kling was the first to collaborate with H&M, creating her own collection for the brand that was launched in 2011. The same year, Ms. Kling partnered up with Guess by Marciano to create the brand’s first design collaboration. This collection was featured in the large fashion online shop, NET-A-PORTER’S spring 2012 campaign. In 2013, Ms. Kling is the face of Louis Vuitton “Small is beautiful” collection. Ms. Kling’s blog is to be found at sixth place in bloglovin’s fashion category and the blog holds 38th place in the top listing of all blogs in Norway per 3.9.2013.

4.4 Isabella Löwengrip – Blondinbella.se

Figure 7: Screenshot of Blondinbella’s blog

http://styleykling.nowmanifest.com/bio/

http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/2/no; http://www.bloglovin.com/blogs/1/0/no
According to her web page, Isabella Löwengrip runs one of the largest and most popular blogs in Sweden, Blondinbella.se, with about 300,000 unique weekly readers. However, in a TV show in Norway recently it was claimed that Blondinbella’s number of readers has increased to 800,000 unique readers weekly and that 80,000 of these are Norwegian followers. When Ms. Löwengrip was 16 her blog had about half a million followers, and the blog was valued for five million SEK (about 750,000 USD) in 2007. At this point of time, Ms. Löwengrip started her first company, Blondinbella AB and today she owns five companies. In 2008 Blondinbella was the most Googled person in Sweden. For a period, Ms. Löwengrip operated her own web shop but after two years of operations she decided to sell it. Isabella Löwengrip is furthermore the co-founder of one of Sweden’s first and largest blog portals, Spotlife. In addition, Blondinbella has launched her own clothing collection, Classified, which is sold in various stores in Sweden. In the last couple of years she has published two books, and a third book is to be published this fall. In 2010, a career magazine for young women was published in her name, Egoboost Magazine. Ms. Löwengrip provides lectures all around Sweden about entrepreneurship, self-esteem, and social media. Blondinbella is not only a popular blogger in Sweden but also in Norway. The blog is found on 48th place on the top blog list in Norway at Bloglovin’ and holds 11th place in the personal category per 3.9.2013.

5.0 Empirical findings & Analysis

As mentioned earlier it was experienced challenges when it came to achieving contact with the four case studies or popular bloggers in general, as none of the bloggers did reply to any of the inquires initiated by email or directly requests on their blogs. Furthermore, when attempted to reach out to blog readers of the four case bloggers the bloggers did not approve or deleted the comment. This provided some challenges for the
result of the research. In order to overcome these challenges, alternative methods were focused upon and applied to collect relevant and valuable information in answering the research questions at hand. The blog readers was contacted directly through a link or email posted by them-self on the case-study blogs. Beforehand, a comment was posted on the four blogs, where we introduced our-self and the research, and informed the readers about our request of correspondence or communication with followers. In addition we kindly asked if they would contribute in the study by responding to an email interview. The blog readers’ responded positively to the request and 11 email interviews were conducted. It was chosen to primarily contact individuals that in addition to following one or more of the case study blogs also had their own blog. This choice was made to further safeguard that relevant and valuable data were received from the interview objects. Therefore, the data collection and analysis were primarily based on information from online observations, blog posts, blog comments, and email interviews with blog readers, which follow the Netnographic processes outlined in the methodology chapter. The findings are analyzed, discussed, and presented on the basis of the research questions. Since the case studies in this research are Norwegian and Swedish blogs, the blog comments and replies are translated into English to ensure that the readers of this research are able to understand.

General information about the conducted survey is presented to provide basic data about the survey’s scope. The reason for this is that the data received from this survey is mainly applied throughout the analysis and discussion together with other data gathered to answer the research questions. The survey includes 154 respondents, where 69% were female and 31% were men. The largest age groups were respondents between 21 to 25 years old (37%) and 26 to 30 years old (50%). The nationality of the respondents were dominated by Norwegians (77%), however Danish, Swedish, German, and other nationalities are also represented in the survey. 59% of the respondents read blogs, which is found acceptable for the research. This is because the data from the survey is mainly to support or contradict the information and results from the nethnographical research and interviews, and further contribute to the discussion of the findings. Moreover, this percentage is acceptable because the research questions developed for this research demand in-depth analysis of the blog and the bloggers’ choice, communication and brand. The non-blog readers are also believed to provide value to the analysis regarding
brand and influence in terms to identify if the bloggers have a brand outside the blogosphere. The fact that 59% of the respondents read blogs indicates that blogs are becoming a more well-known medium for people today. More specific survey results are presented, analyzed, and discussed later on in this chapter.

This chapter will further be structured in accordance the research questions. Thus, first we will analyze and discuss research question one with its sub questions. Secondly, research question two will be analyzed and discussed.

5.1 RQ1: How to create a personal brand trough blogging that is valuable and positively recognized by consumers and marketers?

5.1.1 Essential elements for self-expression and presentation of content

All the four bloggers observed have incorporated the elementary functions a blog should incorporate. Their blogs have an “about the blogger” section, archive and category selection that provides an overview over former posts and comments, and their entries are strategically located in the midsection. The “about section” where people can retrieve background information about the blogger is important in order to communicate a personal impression to the readers. In addition, all four bloggers have incorporated a search option which allows readers to search on key words, posts, information and etc. Links to the bloggers’ other social media accounts are found at the sidebars. Contact information and RSS feed subscription is also available. Linking to other social media accounts might indicate that the bloggers wish to reach their followers in more than one platform. This can also have a positive impact on their brand as some followers might prefer to receive the information through e.g. FB. The bloggers, except Fotballfrue, have a translation option for not Norwegian – or Swedish speaking readers. Blondinbella and CamillaPihl offer Google Translate of their blog. Even though it can be claimed that Google Translate does not offer a reliable and correct translation in many situations it is considered to be a positive feature to non-Norwegian- and -Swedish speaking readers. By incorporating this function the two bloggers support their international readers in interpreting the information and communication. This is a function that Fotballfrue
should include in her blog layout as observation shows that she has foreign readers\textsuperscript{26}. As Kling blogs in English it is more likely that her blog is understandable to most of her readers\textsuperscript{27}. In general, all four present a lucid, structured, and presentable blog that is easy to read for all consumers (Moen, 2012; Rettberg, 2010; Scoble, 2006). With the development of blogs layout, there has been focus on presenting a fresh appearance to the readers. Therefore, bloggers present themselves with a headline-picture, which is partly contributing to the perception readers’ form of the blogger. Presentation and design are attributes that effect perception of image and brands, and consequently blogs. Hence, all four bloggers have invested in having a blog design, presentation, and outline that are part of their self-expression, and thus creating a professional and skilled picture of themselves to the consumers.

5.1.2 Blogging – means of successful communication of information and brand

When investigating how the different bloggers in this study have created a brand, it is essential to further investigate successful elements and how they are blogging, in a way that can be defined as right. First of all, the bloggers are focusing on sharing content, information, knowledge, and they emphasize on topics that are of personal interest or knowledge. Moreover, and most importantly, they publish content people find interesting and wish to read (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). In e.g. statements from blog readers suggest that Fotballfrue and Ms. Kling are keeping their followers inspired and stimulated by their blogs:

“She are seriously one of the most beautiful people I know! I have read your blog as long as I can remember haha: D. And I never get tired of it! I hope you continue with what you do, you are such an inspiration for so many Caroline ☺ I wish the best for you and your family <3 Big hug <3 “ (Blog observations Fotballfrue, “Shoot for Nelly.com part 1”, comment reader, 7.5.13)

\textsuperscript{26} Netnographical research
\textsuperscript{27} Netnographical research
“Hey there, dear blogger. You do a wonderful job here. Keep on doing it and good luck! Love your posts” (Blog observations, StylebyKling, “Checking in…”, comment reader, 5.30.13)

This is in accordance with Moen’s (2012:15) allegation: “You can have a fresh design and layout with a cool domain but without content people will not visit your blog”. The blog readers receive one or several updates daily28, and the bloggers are thus creating curiosity and ensure revisits to their blogs. Updating frequently indicates that the bloggers are investing time in producing fascinating information and motivating posts to their audience. Updating often also suggests that the bloggers are conducting research and invests in their content to ensure and maintain their credible and trustworthy communication (Scoble & Isreal, 2006). An interview with a blog reader implies exactly this about Fotballfrue:

“Caroline is constantly updating her blog, sometimes two times a day or even when she is on vacation. Furthermore she is creative with her post and one can see that she puts time into her blog posts”29

Fotballfrue posts primarily about training, food, and fashion and outfits but she also incorporate other personal events such as dinner with friends or allow the readers to follow her on vacations. Blondinbella is mainly documenting her life through involving her readers in business, private life, and issues that preoccupy her. Fotballfrue and Blondinbella are therefore categorized as daily-life bloggers. StylebyKling on the other hand does not involve a lot of personal content on her blog but focuses on fashion and work related content, where work also entails fashion. The posts are mainly outfits, inspiration collage from brands or of trends, and documentation of the hottest trends in the market. CamillaPihl is basically blogging on the same premises as Ms. Kling. However CamillaPihl also includes do-it-yourself inspirational posts, tips and creative décor content both for fashion and interior. It is further argued that Ms. Kling and CamillaPihl are more similar in the way that their blog entries consist of smaller amount of text and a picture (s), and often include a link to where people can locate the item or

28 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
29 Appendix 3: Email interviews
inspiration communicated. Whereas Fotballfrue and Blondinbella are more alike as their communication usually involves substantially more text, picture (-s), and links.

Every post from the bloggers involves one or more pictures\textsuperscript{30}. Since pictures can be more visual and describing than text, the bloggers reinforce their information and communication by displaying pictures of outfits, food, mood, or experience (Moen, 2012). The bloggers are often participating in the pictures to create a more personal communication, and to display authenticity. Yet, the four bloggers have their own way of communicating with the audience and thus creating a sense of personal bound with the readers (Moen, 2012). Furthermore, the four bloggers have a narrative-communication style and does not try to sell their information or knowledge to the readers. They try to create conversation and stories around their information by posting personal outfits, linking to where others can buy it, and sharing their experiences and opinions. Hence, their way of communicating and their knowledge are creating a sense of trust and relationship with the readers (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Occasionally, the four bloggers incorporate a question or a request for the readers’ point of view, which is in line with one of Moen’s (2012) advices\textsuperscript{31}. This allows the readers to respond to and share their views of the message, and in turn establish stronger relations between the participants. Consequently, all four bloggers are aware of the importance of their readers in terms of their brand and success (Moen, 2012). In summary, it is claimed that all four bloggers partially experiences blog success due to focusing on elementary and vital elements in creating blogs that are engaging, informative, and trustworthy (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006).

5.1.3 Blogs as an advantageous and effective communication tool

The six key differences between blogs and any other communication channel, publishable, findable, social, viral, syndicateable, and linkable can further explain how a brand through blogging can be valuable to both consumers and marketers (Scoble & Israel, 2006). Blogging is possible any time and any place as long as there is internet and a computer, tablet, or mobile present. Hence, the information is immediately available

\textsuperscript{30} Netnographical research

\textsuperscript{31} Netnographical research
worldwide. All four bloggers publish content daily, at vacations, and during holidays. Thus, consumers are able to find information at all time with the caveat of internet connection. Instant broadcasting enables marketers to reach consumers through the blog at any hour compared to other traditional media. The four bloggers tag their entries with key words and categories such as fashion, food, daily life, make-up, travel, and etc. These key words and categories are creating easy access to information because they are searchable, the information is organized in relevant categories, and it allows consumers to find more information specific to their area of interest. Hence, information or knowledge shared on blogs is therefore personal and easy to find, which is important in a world loaded with data. A comment on Fotballfrue’s blog shows that blogs are being listed as information sources in search engines (Scoble & Israel, 2006), and that consumers are willing to utilize and trust bloggers when searching for information:

“It is the first time I’m visiting your blog and the reason for why I’m here is that I searched for information about the hotel Miramare Beach...” (Blog observation, “Rhodos-mine-tips”, comment reader, 5.22.13)

The social, linkable, and viral aspects of blogs are advantageous in marketing as blogs are one large conversation, and thus information has the potential of spreading faster than traditional mediums due to its large audience and interrelations (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Silverman, 2001; Trusov et al., 2009). The bloggers often find inspiration and tips with other sources, and share their knowledge across blogs. The transfer is usually credited or linked to the original source, which is in accordance to blog customs (Moen, 2012). This viral effect has also been beneficial for the bloggers since sharing and linking enables their information and knowledge to be transferred to other audiences in addition to their followers. Hence, creates brand awareness. Furthermore, social, linkable, and viral opportunities imply that advertisers’ messages might be diffused on the various social media platforms available today. Thus, the organic spread of information is tremendous with the communication options bloggers, consumers, and marketers have to day. Moreover, the regularly updates from all four bloggers are not only contributing to keeping their readers informed and interested, but it also ensures that Google register the activity and boost their ratings. Hence, the four bloggers are becoming more visible in

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32 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
33 Netnographical research
search. Linking and Google might therefore affect and assist bloggers’ brand (Castranovo & Huang, 2012; Rossiter & Percey 1997 in Patra & Datta, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Blondinbella and Fotballfrue have most entries per week. Yet, CamillaPihl and StylebyKling are also frequently publishing posts. Thus, it is reason to believe that the four bloggers are considering choice of information and key words in their posts, and strategically working with search optimization as means to build strong brands online and through blogging.

“Blondinbella is famous in Sweden, so I Google‘ her”

Fotballfrue is the most linked blog in the Norwegian blogosphere per 9.15.13 and Blondinbella is on the top list of most linked blogs in Sweden, which indicates the strong brand they have within blogging and the inspiration others find in their blog. Hence, diffusion of brand is seen to be very effective through blogs, and accordingly bloggers can argue for great communicators of message to consumers. In addition, the viral aspect shows the value of their knowledge and skills, which is vital for attracting potential investors and collaborators. Moreover, the viral effect is argued to provide new opportunities for the four bloggers and nurturing their brand as they are becoming mentioned and discussed in the public sphere such as in social networks, newspapers, and magazines. CamillaPihl is consequently crediting or linking to sources she uses for inspiration or finds interesting. Likewise are StylebyKling, Fotballfrue, and Blondinbella incorporating links when they create inspiration posts or share fashion trends from other brands. These actions communicate that all four bloggers wish to be regarded as serious and respected bloggers who show appreciation to their sources (Moen, 2012). It is argued that comprehensive exploitation of the social, linkable, and viral advantage has supported awareness and knowledge about the four bloggers’ brand.

The four bloggers have incorporated a subscription option for RSS feed on their blogs. This option has value to consumers because it offers real-time notification. Hence, this feature enables the blog readers to continuously follow the information published and

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34 Appendix7: Table: Frequency of blog content, see average posts per week
35 Appendix 4: Email interviews
36 http://bloggurat.net/topplister/blogger/: Based on statistics the last six months and Norwegian blogs that are indexed by Bloggurat; http://www.bloggportalen.se/BlogPortal/view/BlogDetails?id=1389
37 Netnographical research
decreases the chances of missing out on up-dates (Rettberg, 2010). Consequently, bloggers are able to effectively safeguard that new information reaches the audience, and the consumers are saving time in searching for information. Moreover, RSS-feed subscription is argued to positively impact bloggers’ brand image in the consumer’s mind and might in the long run create loyal blog readers.

**Communication of passion and knowledge**

The bloggers are providing information and are writing about personal experiences and opinions regarding subjects, interest, products and services, or adventures they have experienced, or find fascinating or provoking. This is no different from many other bloggers. However, all four emphasizes on providing relevant and valuable information and knowledge that readers seek and request, and are not only showing off with their blog lifestyle. The following examples display this focus. Fotballfrue has created a post where she provides tips on wedding gifts. Fotballfrue believes this is of great value for consumers because it is likely to be invited to a wedding at some point, and many thinks it is difficult to purchase nice wedding gifts. CamillaPihl provides tips on restaurants and places to visit when she is in e.g. Los Angeles or other travel destinations. Ms. Pihl considers this as useful information individuals can find interesting or inspirational when travelling to the mentioned places. Ms. Kling is communicating inside trend spotting information to her audience, and Blondinbella is sharing book reviews. Hence, it is recognized a motivation for providing information that is beneficial and helpful to others (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Moreover, Fotballfrue and Blondinbella are inviting readers to participate in their daily life and big happenings such as wedding and pregnancy, but also career related happenings such as book publishing. The two bloggers are also to a larger extent expressing their opinions and emotions on their blogs compared to StylebyKling and CamillaPihl. However, CamillaPihl and Ms. Kling are seen to invite their readers in events such as fashion shows and collection showings, and are sharing information when launching collections in collaboration with well-known brands, such as with David-

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38 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen 5.14.2013
Andersen and H&M. These actions are in line with their blog focus and brand. They further communicate when they have been the face of the Norwegian shampoo and hair-styling brand Define’s campaign, and the face of one of Louis Vuitton’s campaigns. Thus, the motivations of documenting one’s life events, providing commentary and opinions, and expressing deeply felt emotions are to be found in all four blogs (Nardi et al., 2004).

Building a personal brand through blogging can be argued to not differ much from creating a brand for a product, service or company. The four bloggers have specialized within their category. In example, Ms. Kling has established herself as a woman with “eye-for-trends” and fashion, and not least for creating fashion trends with her style. These skills provided her with opportunities within this industry, which further strengthens her brand as a fashionista, and subsequently her blog. A fashionista is characterized by being dedicated to fashion clothing, more specific unique or high fashion. In addition, a fashionista is often employed in the fashion industry working as a designer, photographer, model, fashion writer, or etc. (http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=fashionista; http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2311130/I-apologize-inventing-word-fashionista-Author-coined-term-20-years-ago-says-sorry-crime-language.html). Fotballfrue is recognized for her diet and lifestyle, and was thereby given the opportunity to publish a book about this subject. Blondinbella has utilized her experience as a young famous blogger and her economic sense to publish books about self-confidence, economy and savings. CamillaPihl has created a jewelry collection due to her creative and fashionable style. Hence, their brands are built on areas of expertise or interest (Montoya, 2002 in Wilson, 2009).

All four bloggers are argued to be leaders of their brands. Observation shows that all four bloggers have various approaches to how they wish to attract readers through displaying knowledge and information. Both Fotballfrue and Blondinbella have chosen to include a lot of personal information together with interests. CamillaPihl and StylebyKling on the other hand rarely share personal information such as including boyfriends, friends, or family. Furthermore, observations demonstrate that the bloggers probably turn down more inquiries than they accept. The bloggers are loyal to their partners and collaborations that are related to the information, knowledge, and
experiences shared on the respective blogs. During the observation period there were few new collaborations presented on the four blogs. Therefore, it is argued that the four bloggers are strong leaders of their brands, and are in control of how they wish to appear and impact their audience (Montoya, 2002; Rampersad, 2008). Consequently, the vital factor of success is that all four bloggers are true to their passion and interest, and are focusing on sharing content and knowledge about chosen subjects. Hence, this devotion to passion and interest is communicating a credible and interesting image that influences others to trust the messages. This might in turn affect readers’ decision or opinion. Thus, the four bloggers are viewed as strong, informative, and knowledgeable sources. This image is important if one is aiming for influencing or inspiring others with a message (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

5.1.4 Creating loyal readers and building relationships

The large number of readers is regarded as a sign of success for the four bloggers. Furthermore, their success can be shown by their loyal readers (Moen, 2012). Loyalty to a blog can be showed by WOM (Hennig-Thurau et.al, 2010). A blog reader revealed that she was introduced to Fotballfrue’s blog by a friend. This shows that the blogger has a positive and strong brand in the person’s mind and is therefore recommending others to read it. Independently of type of entry, the four bloggers receives in general substantial number of comments, including feedback, commendations, and questions. However, the posts that contain a direct question to the followers are often receiving more comments. This demonstrates the close tie and relationship the bloggers have built with their readers. In e.g. Fotballfrue asked for a tip where she could buy items with an owl on for the baby-room. This post received 340 comments where virtually all contained information or links to where she could find owl-products. As one reader comments:

“Haha, just got to say, talk about dedicated readers! I don’t know how many owl-tips I have seen in the comments since the day you asked. Is the room starting to take form in

42 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen 5.14.2013
43 Appendix 3: Email interviews
44 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
45 http://fotballfrue.no/2013/06/27/inspirasjon-vart-barnerrom/
Another example is the compassion readers’ show for the blogger. When Fotballfrue was afraid she got a tick on her leg, the readers provided her with a lot of information about ticks, and comforting and calming comments.

“Ticks are so disgusting. I had to get one off my leg the other day. Eek. A tip for getting them off easier is to take a cotton ball dip into soap. Then take the cotton bud and let it sit on the tick. The tick will come off easily and will be stuck to the cotton bud. This way is less painful and the tick also doesn’t take a big piece of your skin. Hope that helps you.”

CamillaPihl posted a tip on how to fight the flu that she was testing out. The readers did not hesitate to offer other suggestions and wished her a fast recovery;

“Thank you for the tip, Camilla! This is great just now (being sneezing and coughing all weekend). Get well soon <3 and thank you for an inspiring blog. Definitively Scandinavia’s best ☺”

Hence, these comments indicate that blogs work as a platform where not only the blogger is sharing information or understanding but readers contribute to the content by sharing their knowledge, tips and information. In addition, the comments show that readers feel connected to the blogger, and they therefore find it naturally to show their concern for the blogger. Consequently, a blog can therefore be a place where the blogger and the readers learn from each other by seeking feedback and help with daily problem-solving (Razmerita et al., 2009; Yang, 2011). This kind of knowledge sharing can be argued to be beneficial for all parties as it is very accessible and convenient. However, it is important to take notice that all content shared by others are becoming a part of the blogger’s brand. Accordingly, marketers have to take this into consideration when utilizing bloggers in their PR strategy. Readers’ contributing to the content can be both unfavorable and advantageous to the product or company being communicated in blogs. This is also the

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http://fotballfrue.no/2013/06/03/middag-pa-sudost/
http://www.camillapihl.no/2013/09/16/go-away-stupid-flu/#comments
situation for bloggers’ brand. Therefore, providing feedback and responses to comments from readers is very important in order to clarify opinions, avoid misunderstandings, and to be perceived as real. In many cases, readers add experiences or information to the message. Consequently, knowledge is increasing at several levels (Razmerita et al., 2009), and the bloggers’ brand receives engagement. Without feedback and contributions from the readers the bloggers would not achieve the success and the position they have today (Labreque et. al, 2011; Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Moreover, the fact that readers can contribute to advertisers or brands’ messages on blogs is enabling brands to interact with consumers through the blogger and achieve information about customers’ wants and needs. Hence, firms can subtract and obtain valuable information through conversations in the blogosphere. It can also be argued that since all four bloggers have involved readers, they are believed to communicate engaging, respected, and interesting content that is creating a relationship with their readers. Consequently, being a valuable brand in the blogosphere and market.

The casual and personal tone of voice in the communication that occurs on the four blogs indicates a feeling of a mutual relationship between the bloggers and readers (Moen, 2012). Furthermore, the many comments have a writing style that is often recognized in friendships. Blogs posts might start or end with, “dear readers”, “take care”, “god morning beautiful people”, and the bloggers often wish their readers a nice day or a wonderful weekend. These common phrases are often recognized between people who have a relation. When replying to requests, questions, or feedback from readers all four bloggers reply politely and clearly, either in the comment field or by an entry. Moreover, the bloggers are frequently communicating their appreciation and thankfulness to their readers in blog entries. These actions are important and meaningful to the readers. The personal communication style explains the close relationship the bloggers have created with followers, and might be a reason to why consumers feel comfortable and confident in conversing on the blogs (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006) In addition, the readers seem to feel that they contribute and take part in the blogger’s life. This involvement is likely to affect readers’ engagement, and therefore enlighten their dedication and loyalty to the bloggers’ messages. Thus, a positive and credible blog brand might lead relationships with readers that are filled with trust and admiration.

48 Netnographical research
“LOVE your look. So simple. So sophisticated. The shirt is just right – is it the Dix/Karolina one? And if, what size is yours? It seems like the perfect fit! You really taught me that less is more...” (Blog observation: StylebyKling, “Saturday”, comment reader, 6.27.13)

“You are the best dressed woman in Norway without doubt. So I have to ask the expert. We are going to a wedding this summer, and the Friday before the wedding ceremony there is a barbeque. What would you wear on such an occasion? Really hope you can answer” (Blog observation: CamillaPihl, “Min smykkekolleksjon”, comment readers, 6.10.2013)

Having trust and being an ideal to the followers are vital factors that might strengthen the blogger’s brand and credibility. Consequently, if readers have trust and faith in the information produced by the blogger the higher likelihood that consumers find inspiration and valuable information in the blogs (Moen, 2012; Yang, 2011). Hence, it is argued that the four case study bloggers have credibility and trust with the readers.

Self-expressing on blogs has been an efficient and valuable method for the four bloggers to build a personal brand because they have achieved strong awareness in conveying interesting information to others. Furthermore, the bloggers have utilized the interaction with consumers to leave a digital footprint that is considered to be positive and credible (Labreque et al., 2011). The study identified actions and marketing efforts made by the bloggers to build brand -awareness, -recognition, -recall, and create a strong position for their brand and business (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Choosing SMM to establish a brand has proved to be a successful choice for the four bloggers. To engage people, and communicate passion and knowledge can be argued to be the overall goal with blogging, and social media in general. As mentioned previously, relationship building is crucial in terms of creating loyal readers and continued success. All four bloggers invests in listening to their readers by writing about requested themes or products, frequently reply on comments or address commonly asked questions in an entry, show appreciation, and staying true to themselves and interests. Hence, the blogs are displaying a clear picture of what the four bloggers wish to blog about and stand for49.

49 Netnographical research
Thus, it is argued that all four bloggers have created an engaged audience that listens to their messages (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012).

The large reach potential and viral effects blog represents are further supporting brand awareness. In e.g., when Fotballfrue stated that her children will go on a low carb and high fat diet from they are born, or when Blondinbella announced wonderful news about wedding and pregnancy on her blog, the viral and organic diffusion were tremendous. Both entries resulted in large amounts of engagement in terms of comments, shares, and clicks, and headlines in the newspapers and interviews regarding this information. Information that is interesting to the audience can therefore result in awareness and diffusion of brand as blog entries are being shared, linked to, and commented on (Van der Lans et al., 2010). Bloggers’ brand recognition and -recall are created by emphasizing on their passion and qualities, investing in providing valuable information to the audience, displaying knowledge, collaborating with brand that creates more awareness, and participating in events that provides visibility in the market (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). In e.g., CamillaPihl shares a creative element on her blog regularly and shows sources where she finds her own inspiration to her blog readers. Ms. Kling posts outfits and trendy items from fashion brand presentations or up-coming collections. In relation to loyalty, the study has shown that consumers are participating and reading blogs because they find blogs inspiring and means for increasing their knowledge. Hence, the bloggers have loyalty because they display content that is found motivating and fascinating. This is shown by readers’ engagement through being frequently followers, acting on blog messages by answering or asking questions to the bloggers and other followers, adding supplementary information, defending the blogger when criticized, and recommending it to others. The following example portrays loyal readers; one reader criticizes Blondinbella for publishing few posts over a period of time. Two other readers stand up for the blogger by commenting:


51 Appendix 6: Survey; Appendix 2, 3, 4 and 5: Email interviews
“She has (…..) vacation....” (Blog observation, “Nytt halsband”, comment reader, 7.12.13)

“Do you work 365 days a year? Let her have some vacation!” (Blog observation, “Nytt halsband”, comment reader, 7.12.13)

**Interacting with readers to create stronger relations**

Blogging is occurring in a public sphere. Hence, blogs offers a great channel where bloggers can provide essential and important information that is of interest to a large audience. Yet, the publicity aspect is important to handle with caution. A reason for why the bloggers have established a strong brand is their willingness to listen to the audience. Furthermore, because the bloggers have a responsive behavior the blogs have helped them modify criticism or negative perceptions (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Fotballfrue and CamillaPihl reply to approximately 50% of the comments, positive and negative, received on their blogs. Their answers are polite and respectful to criticism, they are grateful and appreciative toward compliments, and thus modify the feedback. Ms. Kling also responds sporadically but her readers seek more dialogue showed by this comment;

“I cannot find them at Bruuns Bazaar!? Perhaps they are from last season or..? But I would love Elin (or her assistant) to make a comment... ” (Blog observations, “New in”, comment reader, 5.23.13)

Blondinbella hardly responds to any of the feedback in her comment field but she argues that she reads them. Occasionally, she addresses commonly asked questions or reacts to feedback by creating a blog entry regarding the issues. It seems that Ms. Kling and Blondinbella have a strong brand despite that they are not that active in conversing with their readers. This might be explained by the fast growing success and popularity their blogs achieved in a short time, and that the readers have continued to follow them. However, since readers are expressing their frustration, Ms. Kling and Blondinbella

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52 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
should take it seriously as it can hurt how the readers’ perceive them and in turn their brand (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Hence, two-ways communication and conversing with the followers are very important to improve and maintain a positive, personal, and credible perception in the readers’ mind.

The bloggers are adding value to their brands and readers by being able to host competitions, invite followers to events so they can meet, and offer discounts of purchases through collaborations with companies. These actions make the followers feel special and appreciated (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Fotballfrue have arranged competitions in cooperation with Jean Paul and Onlineformals.com among other brands that creates buzz around her brand but also to the firms’ brands. Posts like this often “go viral” due to large amounts of comments and shares, and are therefore being diffused organically among consumers (van der Lans et.al, 2010). Both Fotballfrue and Blondinbella offers discount codes in cooperation with Nelly.com and Boozt.com, and display their favorite products to increase the chances for redirecting the consumers to the website. Ms. Kling and CamillaPihl are rarely seen to communicate any competitions or offers. However, CamillaPihl has hosted her own private competitions that have created substantial engagement. By giving readers prizes when hosting competitions or special offers from brands that are consistent with the focus of the blog, the level of satisfaction might increase for the readers’, and thus impact brand loyalty positively (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Subsequently, listening to the readers, being interactive and responsive, and available is vital in creating relationships. Furthermore, a strong relationship with the audience is positively impacting the strong blogging brand, and hence becoming a credible and influential communicator.

5.1.5 Choice of actions impacting brand image

Another factor that is apparent in how the bloggers have created a strong and valuable brand, are bloggers use of brands, organizations, and other commercial firms in their communication. Other well-known brands’ image and perceptions are utilized to transfer positive connotations to the bloggers’ personal brand. In addition, the bloggers clothes,

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54 http://www.camillapihl.no/2013/02/01/har-du-lyst-pa-disse/  
55 Netnographical research
cars, vacation destinations, and the events bloggers are attending are further utilized to create a brand image (Morgan, 2001). In e.g. the brands involved in competitions or reviews are becoming a part of their digital footprint, and thus a part of their brand. This also applies when bloggers post a picture of a product or brand (Schau & Gilly, 2013; Labreque et al., 2011). Ms. Kling is mainly posting pictures and information about high-end fashion or luxury brands, and is blogging from fashion shows where such brands participate. Hence, the perception of StylebyKling wants to project being a fashionista is reinforced by her choice of communication and the collaboration with brands she has decided to partner with. Moreover, Ms. Kling is being invited to fashion shows and have developed clothing lines in cooperation with famous H&M and Guess by Marciano. Thus, consumers might associate Kling with these brands and vice versa, which indicates that personal communication and choice of oWOM has been successful for both brands. Another example is Fotballfrue and her collaboration with e.g. Getinspired.no and Coverbrands.no. Fotballfrue is shown to publish several blog entries regarding products for training, or make-up and hair-styling products. The brands she has decided to front are in line of her self-expression and personal branding as she is very devoted to training and beauty.

Fotballfrue states: “I never recommend products I don’t use myself…….” (Blog observation, “Tips til deg som brud eller bryllupsjøster”, comment blogger, 5.26.13)

These brands are therefore adding value to Fotballfrue’s brand, and these brands further strengthen her credibility within these areas. Fotballfrue receives a lot of questions about training and make-up tips, and thus readers view her as a skillful and trustworthy reference. Consequently, all actions and activities, or products, brands or collaborations bloggers share information about on their blogs is communicating image and affecting bloggers’ appearance and thus becoming a part of their brand (Labreque et al., 2011; Moen, 2013; Schau & Gilly, 2003; Sheperd, 2005). The four bloggers have done a remarkable effort in communicating and linking to brands, knowledge, and information

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56 http://ekformarciano.com/; www.stylebykling.nowmanifest.com
58 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
they want to be associated with or prefer to their brand (Labreque et al., 2011; Schau & Gilly, 2003; Rampersad, 2008). In collaborations with brands the bloggers are also adding value to the cooperative partner by answering questions about their products or services. Hence, bloggers can therefore be viewed as a resource to commercial firm.

**Showing authenticity in every action**

Authenticity is important in building personal brand, and authenticity has to be present in every word, action, and behavior to be perceived as a genuine and credible person (59; Montoya, 2002; Scoble & Israel, 2006; Scott, 2011). Furthermore, it is a key factor when it comes to creating and maintaining a brand through blogging. As CEO of Alacra, Steve Goldstein’s argues; “You are what you publish” (Scott, 2011:73). Hence, the fact that bloggers actually live their life in accordance to their blog and communication is crucial to ensure a truthful and positive image (60; Montoya, 2002 in Wilson, 2009 Scoble & Israel, 2006). Fotballfrue and Blondinbella are documenting large parts of their lives and are including followers in private events such as decease, pregnancy, and weddings. In addition, they communicate daily activities such as breakfast or dinner, an appointment at the dentist, watching TV and etc. The personality aspect of branding is strong in blogging because it is the person behind the blog who readers feel connected and related too.

“Ohh Isabella! You are such an inspiration, I think you are a wonderful human being who is generally happy and beautiful! (…) You are my role model and I hope it goes as well for me as it did for you (though hard roads). Good luck with your baby and your wedding! Hug :)” (Blog observations, “Ett dygn på landet”, comment reader, 6.16.13)

Therefore, it is reason to believe that Fotballfrue and Blondinbella have understood the value and importance of displaying a picture that is somewhat close to the truth. When it comes to Ms. Kling and CamillaPihl it is more difficult to observe and analyze this element since they are not displaying personal information in the same range as Fotballfrue and Blondinbella. However, it is likely to believe that the content and information communicated on their blogs are present in their private lives as well. Ms.

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59 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
60 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
Kling works within the fashion industry and thus her life is concentrated in fashion. CamillaPihl emphasizes on creative and inspirational elements in her blog posts supplemented with fashion entries. It is argued that these factors are likely to be a part of her management and consulting job within the entertainment business since it is considered as a creative industry. Hence, it is claimed that Ms. Kling and CamillaPihl have a private life that are close to and in line with their blog categories and brands, since these two bloggers are considered to be fashion bloggers.

“Whoaaaaaa!!! So chic! You know Elin, the best thing of your blog is... your simple way of outfit but fill full with such a powerful taste! *smooch” (Blog observations, “Saturday”, comment reader, 6.23.13)

Accordingly, the bloggers does not necessarily need to reveal personal information to be perceived as authentic and credible, but it is important that the readers believe in the content communicated (Montoya, 2002 in Wilson). This is in accordance with the results showing that followers find the four bloggers as positive and authentic. They are further demonstrating authenticity by staying true to their passions and interests. In that way it is easier for bloggers to justify content, connect with readers, and attract readers that are genuine interested in ones’ passion, interests, or views (Moen, 2012). Consequently, the four bloggers have become resourceful brands with great knowledge in their field.

5.1.6 Differentiation vital for brand success

Blondinbella shows differentiation by being not afraid to share her opinions and views in a public forum, and is to some extent challenging the fundamental thinking in the Scandinavian cultures. Interviews with blog readers imply that they value individuals who have the courage to speak their mind and create debate:

“Blondinbella has always written about loving yourself and dare to do anything you feel to do, which is rare in Nordic culture”

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61 Nettograpical Research
62 Appendix 2, 3, 4, and 5: Email interviews; Appendix 6: Survey; Nettographical research
“Blondinbella stands up for herself as a young woman, I like her power and self-confidence.”

Furthermore, it is revealed that the other bloggers differentiate in design and fashion, personality, and lifestyle, which is shown by email-interviews with blog readers:

“Elin Kling’s blog reminded me of magazine pages and I haven’t followed a big blogger like her which has the same design.”

“Camilla Pihl is very down-to-earth, positive, answers comments and doesn’t see herself (at least it seems) like a celebrity. Sometimes I believe that the person behind the blog and how that person appears is as important as the content.”

“Footballfrue writes about so many things in her life, and she is showing pictures of everything. I think other bloggers are holding on to some few things to write about, such as fashion, interior, cooking or motherhood. But she writes about it all. We know so much about her.”

Differentiation is further shown by how people dress differently, behaves in different ways, and communicates differently. This is what makes everyone unique. These attributes are also a part of one’s personal brand (Morgan, 2001). Even though this distinguishes individuals from each other and raises awareness, Morgan (2001) claims that it does not bring any attention to the quality of their work and potential future value. However, in the blogging business these types of actions are argued to be of high importance for one’s personal brand as a blogger. Followers are interested in fashion, outfits, the bloggers daily activities and, what the bloggers like to do in their spare time. Thus, these elements are a vital aspect in creating a popular and powerful blog. All four bloggers publish weekly pictures and information about daily outfits, where they have bought clothes or other products, and are documenting their activities during the week. Appearance can therefore be argued to be a critical element of branding success in blogging. Hence, the four bloggers are showing distinctiveness in their categories, and

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63 Appendix 4: Both quotes from email interviews
64 Appendix 2: Email interviews
65 Appendix 5: Email interviews
66 Appendix 3: Email interviews
67 Appendix 2, 3, 4, and 5: Email interviews; Netnographical research
thus becomes unique and valuable brands (Montoya, 2002 in Wilson, 2009). This might also explain why a lot of the most popular bloggers also invest a lot of time and money in training, health and beauty products, styling and nice clothes. However, followers reactions and involvement on the blog in addition to reasons for why consumers read blogs, indicates that they find this kind of information entertaining and fun.\(^{68}\)

### 5.1.7 Are perceptions in line with brand communication

It is important to have knowledge of how consumers or readers perceive the blogger because it affects credibility and the relationship to the audience (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Hence, in terms of building a strong personal brand investigation of consumer perception will provide insight in if the blogger have a recognized brand in the market. Positive associations and perceptions are essential in creating a valuable and strong brand.

The survey provided many different associations describing our four case studies. However, as some of the words were similar in meaning and commonly used by the respondents, these characteristics were united. Associations from the survey were found to be in line with the netnographical data. Aligned with the observation, the survey results describes Blondinbella as a woman that is career focused and emphasizes on creating further career with her blog in addition to other opportunities she is provided. Furthermore, she is perceived as a young, ambitious, and successful woman.\(^{69}\) Blog readers of Blondinbella say:\(^{70}\)

“I perceive her as productive and energetic!”

“I think she is smart and fun.”

Hence, the perceptions of Blondinbella are in line with her requested brand image and communication as she regularly posts information about her business projects, meetings or events, and lectures on topics that are her passion.

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\(^{68}\) Appendix 6: Survey; Netnographical research  
\(^{69}\) Appendix 6: Survey  
\(^{70}\) Appendix 4: Email interviews
She is also characterized as blond. With insight in the blog comments directed to Blondinbella there is an impression that some find her narrow minded, conservative, and self-absorbed. Blondinbella is not afraid to speak her mind. Observations show that she is trying to portray an honest and real picture of her-self on the blog by displaying in e.g. a determined woman with strong opinions. This might be the reason for why some describe her as blonde and narrow mined. However, she has shown that she is able to create debate and discussion in the public space both domestically and internationally. In e.g., when she wrote an entry about children-free café’s, it was featured in the newspapers the next day and she was invited to a TV-show to discuss her opinion. This post received 233 comments regarding this topic where people agreed and disagreed. Another example is when she was featured in VG, one of Norway’s largest newspapers, due to posing naked in her own magazine to set a more healthy focus on accepting women’s natural human body.

The survey confirmed Fotballfrue’s brand and image by perceiving her as a very training and health conscious woman that in addition provides tips about fashion and food. Furthermore, many view her as a “perfect person living in a perfect world”.

“I think that she is true to her title ”Fotballfrue” as she shows her readers the typical life of a sportsman’s wife with all its benefits and commitments. To me she appears like a woman who has found her place / way in this world and is happy with it. She is in a great physical shape and full of energy.”

“I love the way Fotballfrue writes. She updates regularly and writes about training, her daily life and themes that catches me. She is also very beautiful and I love her style. Her blog is perfectly put together and she makes it easy as a reader to follow her and her daily life. I perceive her as an independent, hard-working, beautiful and warm woman with high ambitions and goals, and she works her ass off to get wherever she wants in life.”

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71 Appendix 6: Survey
72 http://blondinbella.se/2013/03/barnskrik-hundhar-jobbsnack/
http://www.vg.no/rampelys/artikkel.php?artid=10065511
73 Appendix 3: Email interviews
74 Appendix 3: Email interviews
Hence, it is argued that Fotballfrue has achieved a successful communication of brand and wished perception. This might be explained by her weekly posts about training or training outfits - or equipment. Furthermore, she has a set day for recipe sharing, and is daily showing her outfits on the blog.

On the other hand, the survey indicates that she is also perceived as superficial and shallow. Fotballfrue has chosen to not share personal things such as arguments with her husband, bad days or information of that sort that she finds too personal to share. Some readers search for that side of Fotballfrue and argue that it is not normal to always be as happy and positive as she is. This perception might be explained by her choice of omit conversing fights with her husband, bad days, or things or situations to complain about. She feels that the blog is not the arena for sharing these kinds of matters. Yet, she assures her readers that these matters are present in her life too. Fotballfrue wants her blog to be a place where people can be motivated and inspired by her positive being and dedication. Fotballfrue have occasionally shared sad and private events that have occurred in her life such as when her husband’s best man died in an accident and when she lost her grandmother.75 Hence, she maintains her focus on the blog but shares other sides of life when she is comfortable with it. These incidents are often considered as very strong experiences, and a blog might therefore function as a place where one can lighten both heart and mind (Nardi et. al., 2004; Razmerita et al., 2009). Other words that are used to describe her blog are motivating, enthusiastic, sweet, and friendly.76 Thus, it is argued that Fotballfrue has managed to create a true and real picture of her-self on the blog (Ramperzad, 2008).

CamillaPihl and StylebyKling are more subject specific blogs and this is confirmed by the associations the respondents’ links to these blogs. CamillaPihl’s blog is for example described as inspiring with elements of fashion and happiness. Moreover, she is found to be stylish, creative, up-to-date, and down-to-earth.77 This is further supported by followers of Ms. Pihl:

“She is professional, welcoming and peaceful somehow. She seems like a very honest personality, and I like that”

75 Netnographical research
76 Appendix 3: Email interviews; Appendix 6: Survey; Netnographical research
77 Appendix 6: Survey
“I find her fashionable, positive and smart”

The only negative connotation found in the survey results of CamillaPihl was boring. This is in correlation with the observation as CamillaPihl hardly receives any negative feedback on the blog or in the media. A reason for this perception might be that she is consistently withholding posts about personal matter. As Ms. Pihl communicates;

“I have made a clear choice of keeping my blog a nice place for inspiration where boyfriend, family and friends are not going to be much included”

However, both her blog readers and the authors of this study believe that her personality shines through in the blog entries published. The blog is e.g. concerned about content regarding trips in relation to her job. In these cases she focuses on displaying pictures of motifs that are of inspiration or includes tips to the readers. Moreover, the blog is found to be focused on fashion tips and inspiration, pictures from fashion shows, and various events. Hence, the communication focus CamillaPihl displays is in accordance with followers’ perception. Consequently, it is argued that she has a strong and valuable brand in the consumers mind (Moen, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006).

The survey results showed a strong perception of Ms. Kling as a fashionista and trendsetter. Furthermore, the respondents in the survey found StylebyKling to be perceived as skillful, professional, innovative, successful, inspiring, and trustworthy. This is consistent with the blog observations, and data retrieved from interviews with readers of Ms. Kling’s blog:

“She is a powerful businesswoman with a great deal of ambition. She does a great job with her brand collaborations and her own fashion magazine. Definitely a woman to look up to”

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78 Appendix 5: Both quotes from email interviews
79 http://www.kjendis.no/2012/07/12/kjendis/god_torsdag/camilla_pihl/mote/peter_peters/22516395/
80 Appendix 5: Email Interview ; Appendix 6: Survey; Netnographical research
81 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
82 Appendix 6: Survey
“I like her clothing aesthetic. I find it similar to mine. I also like that she isn’t trying to wear over-the-top outfits to look “in fashion”. She sticks to what she likes and what works for her.”

One negative association of Ms. Kling is detected in the survey, superficial. Superficial can be related to the frustration observed on her blog. The frustration is regarding a low respondent rate from Ms. Kling as one blog comment shows:

“Stop ignoring us! Please tell us where your sandals are from?” (Blog observations, “New in”, comment reader, 5.20.13)

Of the comments published on Kling’s blog that are not of overwhelming character there are few replies from Ms. Kling. Lately this has improved to a smaller extent as Ms. Kling is found to occasionally respond to her readers. Yet, comments like this might have made Ms. Kling aware of the negative and frustrated readers. The bloggers are strongly aware of their dependence of readers to be an influential and popular blogger in the market. Thus, due the negative feedback and awareness of readers’ importance, Ms. Kling might have started to increase her number of responses. Overall, consumers’ perception of StylebyKling is being a real fashionista, which is in correlation with her self-marketing and creation of brand (Labreque et al., 2011).

It can be argued, that the difference in content and information, and degree of text in the blog entries might be a reason for why Blondinbella and Fotballfrue have more negative perceptions compared to CamillaPihl and StylebyKling. Ms. Pihl and Ms. Kling have a more visual imprint and focus throughout their blog entries than Fotballfrue and Blondinbella. Even though all posts by Blondinbella and Fotballfrue contains one or more pictures, the entries usually also holds more comprehensive amount of text and often personal information. Hence, consumers have more foundation for criticizing Fotballfrue and Blondinbella’s communication. Still, when it comes to perception, the four bloggers’ communication and branding choices are in accordance to the requested

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83 Appendix 2: Both quotes from email interviews
84 Appendix 6: Survey
85 Netnographical Research
image and how consumers view their brand (86; Montoya, 2002 in Wilson; Rampersad, 2008).

5.1.8 Brand awareness in the market

To have awareness, visibility is a necessity (Montoya, 2002 in Wilson). The four bloggers have successfully achieved visibility due to their blogging. They have all been featured in different relevant magazines, interviewed about their blog in newspapers, and have actively participated in events that have created publicity on other blogs or in other mediums. However, it is primarily the viral effect of their blogs and information due to extensive engagement that has provided the four bloggers with publicity and a large audience that implies brand awareness 87. The following analysis will detect if the four bloggers have brand awareness in the market.

In the survey, 91 out of 154 respondents read blogs. The result shows that approximately 50% of the consumers that read blogs recognize all four case studies brands’. These numbers indicates that all of the four blogs have brands that the consumers are acquainted with. However, even more interesting and fascinating in terms of brand-awareness and -recognition is that the people that do not read blogs also have knowledge about the bloggers. 39 people say they know Fotballfrue, 14 people claims to be familiar with CamillaPihl, 11 have knowledge about Blondinbella, and four know StylebyKling. Thus, their brands are also recognized outside the blogosphere and by people who not read blogs. The bloggers’ brand awareness is in addition supported by other results from the survey. When asked to name blogs that they were familiar with in the fashion and daily-life category, 24 respondents listed Fotballfrue, 19 listed CamillaPihl, 12 listed StylebyKling, and four listed Blondinbella. Therefore, it is claimed that the four bloggers also possess brand recall in the consumers mind. Furthermore, their strong brand is also shown as 23 respondents frequently read CamillaPihl blog’s, 20 read Fotballfrue, four read StylebyKling, and two read Blondinbella’s blog 88.

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86 Appendix 1: Interview Moen, 5.14.2013
87 Netnographical Research
88 Appendix 6: Survey
The fact that Camilla Pihl is in a position that provides her with the opportunity of making a living of her name, indicates that she has created a brand for herself (Rettberg, 2010). As she communicates in an interview with an online magazine:

“Ads provide income but the blog has also provided me with opportunities since it has made me a more well-known person. I can make a living of being Camilla Pihl.”

The three other bloggers also hold this position. Blogging is Fotballfrue’s income source, and Ms. Kling and Blondinbella has in the past had blogging as their only income source. Their blogs are currently substantial income sources, but the blogs has opened new doors and business opportunities that they have also invested in. Accordingly, all the bloggers are frequently involved in other projects such as cooperation with various brands, modeling, and campaigns. The four bloggers have created a strong brand in their categories by expressing themselves respectably, producing valuable content, and sharing interesting information to the readers’. This focus has generated a large audience reach, which in turn might result in power and influence for the bloggers that marketers and brands find interesting. It is therefore seen that advertisers and brands match their identity with the four bloggers to reach existing and potential new consumers through their blog (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Rettberg, 2010). However, it is important to further point out that it is equally important that bloggers reflect on how a brand can affect their brand and online reputation.

With regards to further analyzing bloggers’ brand it is valuable to have understanding about how readers have obtained knowledge about the particular blog. This information indicates how strategically the blogger have been in terms of selecting mediums to front and communicate their brand (Montoya, 2002 in Wilson). StylebyKling is argued to have become a strong brand within fashion as followers have discovered her blog and expertise through articles about fashion-style in online magazines such as “WhoWhatWear”, her collaborations with well-known international brands, and an advertisement in Magazine together with Guess by Marciano. Camilla Pihl’s blog was e.g. discovered through WOM and on bloglovin.com. One of Fotballfrue’s readers found the blog through Instagram, WOM, and another discovered the blog because it was the most read on blog.no.

89 [http://www.kjendis.no/2012/07/12/kjendis/god_torsdag/camilla_pihl/mote/peter_peters/22516395/]
90 Netnographical Research
91 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
Blondinbella’s readers have for example detected her blog via her celebrity status and therefore Googled her, or found the blog address in the newspaper. It is therefore claimed that the bloggers are selecting mediums that strengthens their brands but also that the blogosphere and viral diffusion are vital elements that have assisted their awareness in the market. In addition, all the four bloggers have been featured in various online magazines and -newspapers, and various web pages. This publicity indicates that people have relations to these brands and find these bloggers somewhat interesting as editors chose to write articles about them.

5.1.9 RQ1.1: What does a personal brand through blogging provide of value, benefits, and opportunities for bloggers, consumers, and brands?

The largest value of blogging is the network people can build, create relationships with others, and be able to discuss and share information and interest about themes they have passion about (Kaye, 2005). Moreover, it is important to be focused on the value that blogging provides to oneself and others. As Moen argues, if bloggers emphasizes too much on making money on their blog, allows a lot of ads, and do not focus on producing interesting content, blog readers will lose interest and dedication as their main reason for reading blogs is absent. Hence, bloggers are jeopardizing their brand and power of influence if the readers leave. It has become common knowledge that blogs are being utilized by marketers and brands to reach consumers. All the four case studies have ads displayed on their blogs or contain some commercial content. Bloggers have received a lot of attention in the media due to their income levels via creating advertisements in collaboration with firms. The main reason that the four bloggers have the ability to earn substantial amounts of money by blogging is because firms see a potential in their communication to target groups and their influence on followers. Marketers are therefore probably reaching both existing and potential new consumers through the four bloggers’ audiences. Consequently, the large audience the bloggers have is very attractive to marketers (Fu & Chen, 2012; Rettberg, 2012). However, the survey and email interviews

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92 Appendix 2,3,4 and 5: Email interviews
94 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
95 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
revealed that blogs are in many cases utilized to search for information or inspiration\(^{96}\). Thus, bloggers do not necessarily have to remove all commercial posts or content. Yet, it is vital that information communicated is mainly involving the bloggers’ passion and knowledge, and is preserving the readers’ interests. Consequently, since consumers are viewing blogs as a good search option for information, blogs offers great opportunities for firms to communicate information to their target group. Furthermore, a blog attracts group of readers that have similar interests due to the specialization of content, which indicates that marketers will reach relevant consumers with the messages (Huang, 2010; McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987). In addition, the strong relationship bloggers are able to create with their readers is a benefit blogs offer to marketers and brands. The bloggers update often, which means that consumers can subtract new information faster. Hence, with these factors bloggers have great potential in being viewed as credible communicators, and hence impact consumers (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Kaye, 2005).

**A strong blogging brand provide other business opportunities**

The benefit of having an established personal brand through blogging is the career- and commercial opportunities it can provide. Moen exemplifies how blogging created new opportunities for him:

“Due to my blog I have gained many opportunities that have provided me with great experiences, network and substantial income. I have published a book about blogging, and I speak at various events and seminars frequently, and I am currently the CEO of a production company\(^{97}\).”

Blogging generates connections, network and relationships both with blog readers but also with other individuals that can be important for further development, business, and new opportunities. Blogging can also make it easier to start an own business as person has already an audience and a presence in the marketplace\(^{98}\).

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\(^{96}\) Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, Appendix 2,3,4, and 5: Email interviews; Appendix 6: Survey

\(^{97}\) Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013

\(^{98}\) Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
The personal brand all four bloggers have due to blogging has opened up new business opportunities that are unlikely to have been present without their knowledge, success, and awareness in the market\(^99\). The attention and engagement Blondinbella’s blog has created in the market and among consumers are essential factors impacting her attractiveness with investors and brands, and thus primarily reasons for why she has had the opportunity to publish books, and design and produce her own jewelry line. Another example is where H&M chose to work with Ms. Kling\(^100\). Ms. Kling had probably not been offered this opportunity if she could not have proven knowledge and skills within fashion, and demonstrate a positive brand in the blogosphere. This case also describes the possibilities, benefits, and values bloggers provide to brands. With this collaboration H&M was able to utilize Ms. Kling’s brand and her relationship with a large consumer audience that was potential consumers to the company. Furthermore, the success might be explained by the personal and direct communication of the cooperation Ms. Kling conversed on her blog that informed blog readers about H&M’s new collection. The virality of blog entries and interrelations in the blogosphere is beneficial for firms such as H&M in terms of reaching existing and potential new customers that bloggers are connected to (Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Scoble & Israel, 2006). With Fotballfrue and Blondinbella being two of the most linked blogs in the blogosphere\(^101\), they represent opportunities and benefits to companies in terms of diffusing oWOM into the blogosphere. Thus, when other bloggers or blog readers link to e.g. Blondinbella her knowledge and communication are being diffused to other audiences, and might influence new potential followers.

Furthermore, firms could take advantage of the bandwagon effect bloggers produce. Moen\(^102\) narrates about a success story when the clothing brand, OnePice was introduced in Norway, and the blogger Voe reviewed the product and wrote about it on her blog\(^103\). Two weeks later the brand had sold out their stock. Consequently, cooperating with blogs can lead to creative - and designing new commercial activities (Huang et al., 2008). As WOM is considered as more reliable and trustworthy references than commercial content, bloggers serve as valuable and credible communicators of commercial messages due to

\(^{99}\) Netnographical research
\(^{100}\) Netnographical research
\(^{101}\) http://www.bloggportalen.se/BlogPortal/view/MostLinkedBlogs?id=1389; http://bloggurat.net/topplister/blogger/
\(^{102}\) Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
\(^{103}\) http://www.voeblogg.no/2009/09/15/kosedressen-min-kom-i-dag/
the tie and connection bloggers have to the blog readers (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Fiske & Hartley, p.500 in Kotler, 2006; Pihl & Sandstrøm, 2013). This argument is supported with the previous example of the blogger Voe and the brand OnePiece. Without the oWOM communication by Voe and the diffusion of this information, the brand might not have experienced the success of their brand and product in Norway. The bloggers share experiences and opinions, and hence the affective exchange that occurs on blogs is regarded more personal and real. Fotballfrue is observed to receive in average approximately the same amount of comments regardless of type of entry. Thus, the affective exchange of information is important for consumers, and therefore vital for marketers to take advantage of. Additionally, people tend to rely more on personal communication (Henning-Thurau et. al, 2010; Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Silverman, 2001) and this might be a reason for why advertising through the bloggers are so successful.

A source for inspiration and obtaining new knowledge

Blogs serve as inspirational sources and a place where blog readers seek information to keep themselves updated (Huang et al., 2008; Kaye, 2005). As stated above, the bloggers’ personal communication, knowledge distribution, and sharing of experiences, functions as attributes that create trust and thus lead to an option for information search (Huang et al., 2008). Blog readers request tips and recommendations, add follow up questions to reviews, and show their appreciation for valuable information. The study moreover demonstrates this as 20% of the survey respondents believe they receive inspiration, 14% read blogs to receive tips and recommendations, and 14% to keep themselves updated.

Furthermore, blog readers reinforce this motivation:

“Camilla Pihl has many nice pictures, also tips about fashion, food and places to go. She makes me smile .”

104 http://fotballfrue.no/2013/05/30/slik-holder-jeg-leggene-glatte/ ; Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
105 Netnographical research
106 Appendix 6: Survey
107 Appendix 5: Email interview
“I love seeing what Elin Kling wears and where she shops”108.

Blogs are therefore sources where consumers can receive new information, and thus increase their knowledge base. Another element of blogs that provide value to consumers is the entertainment factor (Hsu & Lin, 2008). The survey supports this as 20% of the respondents read blogs for entertainments109. Two blog readers explain why they enjoy reading the particular blogs:

“Right now Blondinbella’s blog is interesting because it happens a lot in her life like weddings, pregnancy, and much work”110.”

“Footballfrue writes about so many things in her life. Not just fashion or training. It’s just like a magazine. And everything is just a little bit to perfect”111.”

Hence, blogs can be substitute for magazines where consumer read stories, acquire new information, and knowledge but also at the same time enable people to connect with others.

5.1.9 RQ1.2: What kind of role or position do bloggers hold in the market?

Influencers

The fact that the bloggers are being featured in various mediums indicates that their brands have become familiar in the consumers’ minds and thus holds a position in the market. Footballfrue and CamillaPihl are featured in e.g. in the Norwegian fashion magazine “Det Nye”112, probably due to their recognition in the blogosphere. Moreover, it might be because the editors believe that these brands have an impact on consumers’ choices. Thus, bloggers are utilized to communicate a message through their brand and blog for the advertisers or marketers. As mentioned earlier, the bloggers have attained new opportunities, among these StylebyKling and Blondinbella113, such as to cooperate

108 Appendix 2: Email interview
109 Appendix 6: Survey
110 Appendix 4: Email interview
111 Appendix 3: Email interview
112 http://footballfrue.no/2012/03/28/backstage-covershoot-for-det-nye/; http://www.camillapihl.no/2012/10/12/pa-forsiden-av-det-nye/
113 Netnographical research
with famous brands, and or establish businesses on their own due to their strong brand. Hence, the bloggers have brands that are achieving stronger positions in the marketplace. This can further be supported by the survey showing that 48% sometimes use blogs as a reference when searching for information, and that 49% occasionally view blogs as a trustworthy source. Bloggers’ position as influencers is further strengthened as 28% of the respondents of the survey are being more convinced or impacted by bloggers tips, ads or reviews for commercial brands versus placed ads by the company. It is therefore argued that bloggers are starting to increase their level of impact and trustfulness in the consumers mind. For marketers this is valuable information to possess when considering placing ads in blogs. This is because people tend to rely more on personal experiences and reviews than commercial ads (Henning-Thurau et. al, 2010; Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Silverman, 2001) and the fact bloggers are having an influential position within a large audience. The close relationship and connection the bloggers have created with their readers are further reinforcing their influence power. One example from one of Fotballfrue’s readers is indeed describing the close ties followers might have to a blogger:

“Ooooh help! I could get married in this dress! It is gorgeous! Congratulations with the pregnancy, Caroline! I knew it ;-) haha. Do you remember I said I had a feeling about it a while ago? © Scary! I almost feel that I have got to know you after some time ;) Since I have read your blog from the start! Ohhh you are fantastic and I am so happy for you! Good luck in the future <3 (Blog observation, “The dress from (tailor) heaven”, comment, reader, 6.21.13)

**Strong brands, experts and role models**

The bloggers have established a brand for themselves and are regarded as influential. Hence, they are carefully selecting and deciding whom they are willing to work with, in terms of advertisements and collaborations. In addition, Mr. Moen argues these personal brands are turning down more inquiries than they accept. He further argues that this

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114 Appendix 6: Survey  
115 Netnographical research
approach will in the long run also provide higher income for the blogger\textsuperscript{116} since they become more exclusive and attractive. This is clearly seen in the blog observation of the four bloggers. The bloggers have through the observation period showed loyalty to their partners and advertisers as a small number of new collaborations have been presented. It is reason to believe that the bloggers continue these partnerships as they are impacting perceptions and are a part of their brands. Expertise is identified as readers are asking for advices and tips, and many are following the bloggers’ recommendations. The fact that the bloggers are providing inspiration and new knowledge about their passions are further implying a position as experts. In addition, famous brands have endorsed the bloggers in creating products in collaboration with them, which implies being skillful. In e.g. Fotballfrue designed two pair of shoes for Nelly.com, and Kling designed a collection together with H&M\textsuperscript{117}. Being a role model is another position the bloggers are considered to have. All four are independent women who have created careers for themselves, are being involved in projects with other famous brands, and develop businesses on their own. Additionally, the four bloggers are role models within their blog categories such as lifestyle and fashion. Readers admire bloggers accomplishments and their experiences\textsuperscript{118}.

**Knowledgeable sources, fashionistas, and trendsetters**

The four bloggers are sharing information about their passions and interests, and they seek new information and knowledge to improve their skills and understanding. Their blogs are therefore working as beneficial platforms to communicate knowledge and experiences (Zerfass & Bogosyan, 2007 in Razmerita et al., 2009). Observation shows that the bloggers utilize their network and contacts, and other sources to receive the most recent trends and new information. In e.g. Ms. Pihl is often to be seen at collection showings by various brands and Fotballfrue is exploiting her personal trainer to provide new and effective training exercises, and spending tremendous time surfing online for fashion styles or products to recommend. Ms. Kling is utilizing her network of people and brands through her job as a Fashion Director in her own magazine. Blondinbella is conveying valuable and beneficial information based on her experiences of establishing

\textsuperscript{116} Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
\textsuperscript{117} Netnographical research
\textsuperscript{118} Netnographical research; Appendix 3: Email interviews
own businesses and cooperation with investors or publishers. Hence, the bloggers enjoy achieving new interesting information about their passion, sharing their knowledge with others, and being connected with both sources of inspiration and the blog readers. Moreover, their blogs enable bloggers to save, categorize, manage new learning, and socialize by initiating feedback and engagement around the topics communicated (Razmertia et al., 2009).

The blogs are considered to be characterized as a PKM tool that assists individuals in transforming pieces of knowledge into organized knowledge transfer. The bloggers achieved this by labeling blog entries into various categories that are searchable and easily accessed by consumers. Thus, the blogs support readers in expanding their knowledge base. Furthermore, since all four blogs receive comments to questions asked in a blog post, and discussions originate due to the information presented, the bloggers are also able to increase their knowledge level. Blogs can therefore be argued to be effective platforms for distribution of knowledge, and increasing collective knowledge. Consequently, engaging in blogs let people better manage their knowledge processes and interaction, collaboration and knowledge with others (Razmerita et al., 2009). The four bloggers utilize their blogs as a PMK tool to build and support individual knowledge. It is argued that bloggers create and transfer knowledge by organizing and communicating their own acquired knowledge to produce greater understanding for the readers. This is accomplished by utilizing experiences, new information, interaction, and network in explaining the content to blog readers or other audiences (Razmerita et al., 2009). In addition, bloggers support readers in achieving new knowledge by sharing personal content such as outfits, tips and recommendations, reviews, and happenings on their blog. Hence, the four bloggers share information that they believe is interesting and valuable. Accordingly, the four bloggers are becoming valuable resources and references to consumers due to their personal and professional knowledge and experiences, which can be transformed into new knowledge for the followers. However, since it is personal experiences and views, individuals have different understandings and different ways of reasoning to that particular information (Rayudu, 2010; Razmerita et al., 2009). All four bloggers are aware of this and are consequently embracing various approaches, different

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119 Netnographical research
120 Netnographical research
opinions, contribution of new information, and accept discussions on their blogs\textsuperscript{121}. Thus, the four blogs are assisting in new knowledge to be created. To have success and influence, the four bloggers are creating a position as knowledgeable sources focusing on increasing both individual and collective learning and knowledge (Razmerita et al., 2009).

5.2 RQ 2: How do bloggers or personal brands influence consumers and trends in the market?

5.2.1 Emphasizing on inspirational and entertaining content

The study of the four blogs has identified reasons and motivations for reading blogs. The results from the survey show that inspiration and entertainment are the greatest motivations for reading blogs\textsuperscript{122}. Furthermore, receiving tips and recommendations, attaining information about interests, and being updated on trends are found to be valuable reasons for reading blogs. This is in accordance with results from former studies (Huang et al., 2008; Kaye, 2005).

Observation of Blondinbella’s blog has provided an impression that her readers’ follow the blog because she is a source of inspiration, especially when it comes to career. One reason for this is that she is a young woman that early built a career, and has been able to create new areas of business. Another explanation to why this is found to be a strong motivation for reading the blog is that Blondinbella publishes weekly information regarding her projects and are including the followers in this experience. As comments from blog readers’ shows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“When I was younger it was because I too was a self-employer just like her, and she inspired me. Today it's just for old times and curiosity. I wonder what she is doing at the moment”}\textsuperscript{123}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{121} Netnographical research
\textsuperscript{122} Appendix 6: Survey
\textsuperscript{123} Appendix 4: Email interviews
“So beautiful! It's so fun to follow you and your career! And Good luck with the wedding and the baby! :) You're amazing!” (Blog observation, “Stolt och lycklig”, comment reader, 8.22.13)

Followers of CamillaPihl are found to read her blogs due to her many tips of inspiration, motivating words, and fashion content. Typical blog posts on her blog contains quote of the day such as “Do more of what makes you happy”, inspiration and tips like “how to create curls on 123”, “flowers for free”124, and fashion related posts where she shows products she has bought or are on her wish list. Her posts usually contain marginal amount of text, however the posts have the necessary information in e.g. links to where one can buy the products or where she has found the inspiration. Hence, Ms. Pihl is believed to communicate her messages more visually. The visual effect and pictures can be argued to be a part of why people read her blog to search for inspiration. Observation and email interviews have discovered that consumers read Ms. Phil’s blog because it offers many valuable tips about fashion, daily-life inspiration, and places to visit. Moreover, people read her blog due to her positive personality and motivational quotes125. This demonstrates that CamillaPihl is a blog where the readers can search for tips and information. Further it shows that consumers pursue information through WOM, and are therefore exploiting bloggers’ knowledge and information, and thus receiving the benefit of their experience (Silverman, 2001).

"Camilla Pihl <3 I am getting so GLAD by reading this blog and at least of you! You are one of the ladies that inspire me a lot, both for daring to take risks at work and seize small opportunities in everyday life! You are so clever and beautiful ... I'm glad there are women like you in Norway! Have a sunny afternoon in Oslo!!” (Blog observation, “Min smykkekolleksjon”, comment reader, 6.10.13)

“I'm a big fan of your blog, and one thing I really like is that you always are/seem so positive and make the best of everything in life! You are a great inspiration” (Blog observation, “As simple as that”, comment reader, 7.1.13)

124 Camillapihl.no
125 Appendix 5: Email interviews
Finding inspiration for fashion is identified to be the main reason for reading Ms. Kling’s blog\textsuperscript{126}. Her readers appreciate following her journey within the fashion – and blog world, hence it appears that they trust Ms. Kling’s opinions and recommendations.

“It’s so awesome watching you grow and grow through this blog. This space is incredible!” (Blog observations, “THE sweater”, comment reader, 5.10.13)

Observing Ms. Kling’s blog further shows that receiving knowledge about fashion and tips are appreciated and it adds value to consumers’ needs or interests. Her outfits create admiration and inspiration that provides extra value to follow the blog. One of Ms. Kling’s readers states she is reading the blog because she loves the style of Scandinavian bloggers, and that Ms. Kling has a great, minimalist style. She also says that she loves seeing what Ms. Kling is wearing and where she shops\textsuperscript{127}. Ms. Kling’s information is primarily communicated through visual expression; pictures with only the most necessary information, such as links to where to buy or where the item is found. Hence, it is argued that her outfits and visual display of items from other brands, is a great motivation for reading the blog. These comments from readers of Ms. Kling’s blog are moreover enlightening the reasons presented above:

“I’ve stopped following Bryan Boy and many more bloggers because they just lost it. You, on the other way still have that something that keeps me reading and watching. Congrats (on having me as a reader- a joke)! Xx” (Blog observations, “THE sweater”, comment reader, 5.10.2013)

“I like her clothing aesthetic. I find it similar to mine. I also like that she isn’t trying to wear over-the-top outfits to look “in fashion.” She sticks to what she likes and what works for her\textsuperscript{128}.”

It is found that Fotballfrue’s readers follow her blog because she is sharing a lot of information and knowledge about her life, big happenings, interests, and personal matters\textsuperscript{129}. Hence, inspiration and entertainment is also discovered to be the main motives.

\textsuperscript{126} Appendix 2: Email interviews; Appendix 6: Survey; Netnographical research
\textsuperscript{127} Appendix 2: Email interview
\textsuperscript{128} Appendix 2: Email interviews
\textsuperscript{129} Appendix 3: Email interviews; Appendix 6: Survey; Netnographical research
for reading her blog. The involvement of personal content might explain these reasons. Her blog is updated frequently, and thus produces curiosity and creates a need for revisiting the blog. Readers also find inspiration in Fotballfrue’s blog, especially regarding training and diet. These comments further describe that inspiration and new knowledge are objectives for why consumers read the blog:

“First of all I will congratulate with the pregnancy. I’ve been reading your blog for years now and I thought it was high time to comment. Your blog has given me very much. Even if your blog is being referred to as a typical pink blog that portray a perfect world, I have to say that you seem to stand out. You write very well reflected, which is the reason to why I still read your blog. Your blog has given me a lot of inspiration, especially with regards to exercise and diet, but also all your posts regarding wedding planning. I have saved all the wedding posts.....” (Blog observation, “Inspiration: The pregnant belly”, comment reader 6.25.2013)

“I love the way she writes. She updates regularly and writes about training, her daily life and themes that catches me”

5.2.2 Being recommended by others – indication of influence

Another factor that has an impact on people reading blogs is blog recommendations. The benefit of having loyal readers is that they will gladly recommend one’s blog to their relations (Moen, 2012). 29% of the respondents in the survey state they have shared or communicated a blog post. This illustrates that some blog readers consider the information communicated by the blogger as valuable for others. This further supported as email interviews revealed that blog entries are being shared. Further it displays the effect of oWOM communication, both original information and messages produced in collaborations with other brands. The information becomes more accessible and diffuses potentially faster, because people share the information to others. The oWOM communication on the four blogs is custom tailored to the blog readers’ interests and needs, and therefore are blog readers paying more attention to the information

130 Appendix 3: both quotes from email interviews
131 Appendix 6: Survey
One of Blondinbella’s readers says that she has recommended her blog to people whom also where young and self-employers\textsuperscript{132}. This shows that the blog readers believe that Blondinbella have knowledge and experience that can help others in e.g. creating their own business. Hence, being an influential and inspiring person. A reader of CamillaPihl has shared her blog as she is believed to have many inspiring tips, including recommendations of places to visit from the destinations she has traveled to\textsuperscript{133}. One of Ms. Kling readers has featured Stylebykling in her weekly round-up of posts called “Links you’ll love”, since she thinks it is worth sharing. Another reader of Ms. Kling narrates that she usually mentions Stylebykling among her favorite blogs because of her style and way of dressing or because of the brands she wears\textsuperscript{134}. A reader of Fotballfrue explains why she has shared one of her blog posts:

\textit{“Some month ago I saw a recipe and thought I could share it with a friend. We both use to cook from time to time and are always looking for new recipes to try out\textsuperscript{135}.”}

Another reader states she shares Fotballfrue’s entries as she regards her as a great role model and finds her blog interesting and fun to read\textsuperscript{136}. The fact that blog readers recommend blogs or entries to others indicates that the information is considered to be credible. Further, it implies that the blog recommended has loyal and dedicated readers, which signals power of influence (Moen, 2012). Because of the recommendations from blog readers, the bloggers are able to reach more consumers with their passions and knowledge, and thus have a greater chance of influencing more people.

\subsection*{5.2.3 Adequately balancing private and commercial content}

Popular bloggers experience being questioned about their intentions and motivations behind the information and recommendation conversed. The questioning might derive from the expansion of advertisement on blogs. People are skeptical to commercial content, yet marketing efforts are effecting individuals’ perceptions and decisions. This indicates that to have success with commercial content, the four bloggers have to create a

\begin{thebibliography}{136}
\bibitem{132} Appendix 4: Email interviews
\bibitem{133} Appendix 5: Email interviews
\bibitem{134} Appendix 2: Email interviews
\bibitem{135} Appendix 3: Email interviews
\bibitem{136} Appendix 3: Email interviews
\end{thebibliography}
mutual relationship by showing trust and credibility in order to influence their readers (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

Blondinbella is a blogger that speaks her mind and communicates honestly to her readers. Blondinbella’s blog contains some advertisement, such as ads, reviews, or sponsored products. She has in average has 1.7 commercial posts per week\(^{137}\). This demonstrates that Blondinbella cannot be viewed as a sell-out, as she is still holding on to her true-self and are not merely posting entries consisting of advertisement for other brands (Scoble & Israel, 2006). The main source of advertisement identified on her blog is ad-links. When she adds a link to for example Nelly.com or Boozt.com, she is communicating a story to her readers of what she has done that day etc., and then she adds a link to where the clothes are from. This way of blogging is in line with tips from the experts where they argue that the bloggers should communicate information blog readers can relate to (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Moen, 2012). Occasionally Blondinbella posts an entry about a sale or a discount she can offer her readers. When Blondinbella has the opportunity to provide a discount, she creates positive association to the commercial advertisement and makes the consumers feel valued and special (Mohammadian & Mohammadreza, 2012). Hence, providing benefits to the readers are being taken advantage of to further impact consumers’ willingness to be influenced. Yet, the fact that Blondinbella is not communicating many commercial posts, and is making a story of the information can explain why her communication is viewed as credible. In addition, this creates a relationship with her readers\(^{138}\).

“I bought her first book, Egoboost. Just because she wrote it! When you constantly read a blog you imagining you know the person behind it and if you like him/her you naturally want to support them\(^{139}\).”

With a personal communication style and strong brand, Blondinbella are increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of the information she communicates. This further supports her in achieving greater influence on her readers (Niederhoffer et. al., 2007). Nevertheless, the feedback she receives on her commercial posts varies. The comments

\(^{137}\) Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
\(^{138}\) Netnographical research
\(^{139}\) Appendix 4: Email interviews
on her blog show that Blondinbella is a great source of inspiration to consumers. Blog readers show their appreciation of receiving tips and are in many cases buying products she has recommended.

"Thanks for the tip. I just clicked home 4 pieces stylish bikinis at great price :-D I never bought anything this spring, and then everything was sold out in the stores but now a whole bunch of nice bikinis will come home to me! Woop!" (Blog observation, “Fina Bikinis”, comment reader, 7.8.13)

“Oh, what a good thing you had the discount code! Then I could get my Jeffrey Cambell at discounted price! Thank you!” (Blog observation, “Nelly 20 procent”, comment reader, 05.31.13)

However, there are a few readers questioning her motivation for providing commercial content and are asking if she communicates some information only to create income:

*How exclusive is this advertisement when it within a few seconds will be up on all the other big blogs?*” (Blog observation, “Nelly 20 procent”, comment reader, 5.31.13)

Hence, when it comes to advertisements Blondinbella has to listen to what type of information the readers want and provide offers that creates a feeling of being valued by the blogger. If the readers do not feel they receive information that are of interest, they might not value it and utilize other inspiration sources.

CamillaPihl is one of the bloggers that produce fewest commercial posts, which can be argued to assist her in creating a relationship with her readers built on trust. She has in average 0.44 commercial posts per week. Ms. Pihl is considered to communicate directly and honestly to her readers. The few times she publishes commercial content it is argued that the readers trust her recommendations because she if found to believe in the products or series herself. CamillaPihl is also creating a story out of the information around the products advertised or recommended (Moen, 2012). An example is where she recommends her favorite self-tanning products to her readers, but she has not added any link or comment to where it can be bought. Instead, she explains and shares her experiences to show why the products are her favorites. Hence, CamillaPihl is focusing

140 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
on influencing her readers through her own experiences. Moreover, the post is ended with a question where she asks the followers about their favorite summer products. Thus, she is following Moen’s (2012) advice to engage in a dialogue with her readers to create a sense of bound and relationship. This initiation to conversation shows that Ms. Pihl appraises readers’ opinions and experiences. At the same time, this post led to questions from the readers where CamillaPihl provided an answer\textsuperscript{141}. Hence, the two-ways communication leads to a more credible and trustworthy image and she becomes a greater source of influence (Niederhoffe et.al, 2007). On the posts that contain product recommendations or commercial content, Ms. Pihl does not receive any skeptical comments. The comments mainly involve readers providing feedback by explicit communicating that they will try the products recommended\textsuperscript{142}. As one reader narrates:

\textit{“She has a good taste I assume, I’ve liked it. Since I am in the PR-business myself, I guess she’s working closely with designers and agency to get things posted on her blog, but nevertheless, if I like it, I buy it\textsuperscript{143}.”}

This comment indicates that the blog reader does not care if the blog has ads because the information is perceived as valuable, and thus appreciated. Moreover, this demonstrates that CamillaPihl have readers that believe in the information she communicates. It is therefore claimed that she has the power to influence her readers (Fiske & Hartley in Kotler, 2006).

Observation shows that Ms. Kling’s blog does not consist of a lot of ads, reviews or sponsored products. However, her posts usually include a link or information to where the item or campaign is from. Ms. Kling have 0,22 entries per week that contains commercial content\textsuperscript{144}. Thus, she is not considered to be a sell-out\textsuperscript{145}. Ms. Kling is continuously holding a read thread through her communication on her blog, namely fashion and trends. Mainly every post has an element of fashion in it\textsuperscript{146}. By staying true to her area of knowledge and interests, and thus being seen as a fashion expert can be argued to create trust with the readers. Moreover, being considered as an expert can

\textsuperscript{141} http://www.camillapihl.no/?s=sos+to+the+rescue
\textsuperscript{142} Netnographical research
\textsuperscript{143} Appendix 3: Email interviews
\textsuperscript{144} Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
\textsuperscript{145} Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
\textsuperscript{146} Netnographical research
explain the strong influence Ms. Kling are able to impose on her readers through her blog entries (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Fiske & Hartley in Kotler, 2006). This can be demonstrated with an explanation to why a reader bought a product Ms. Kling communicated:

“Because I liked it after seeing it on her blog”

Ms. Kling mainly receives positive comments from readers confirming that they want to try or buy the service or product she has written about. However, there are also some comments where it is implied that readers seek more information or question the incentive behind the post:

“Hi Elin you’re involved with Frame Denim in some way aren’t you? It would be interesting to know how?” (Blog observation, “Forever Karlie”, comment reader, 5.14.2013)

“Are you involved with Frame Jeans in any way? How are they in size, compared to Acne?” (Blog observation, “Forever Karlie”, comment reader 5.14.2013)

Hence, Ms. Kling should better communicate when she is cooperating with brands. It is not necessarily negative for the readers that she is advertising for or collaborating with firms, yet it could be that the readers find it cool or inspiring. Though, if she does not replies to these types of questions or share it on her blog it could hurt her credibility and influence power.

In average Fotballfrue posts 17 entries weekly where she publishes in average 6,7 commercial posts. In addition, many posts that involve fashion and outfits contain ad-links. However, when referring to where products are bought she does not receive any payments. She provides links to brands without receiving disbursement to provide further valuable information to the readers because outfits are very popular readings. It is interesting to observe that the blog posts that are pure ads also receive substantial number of comments; 40,7 in average. Thus, this shows that the followers appreciate and enjoy reading commercial posts as well as personal entries. Further, it illustrates that

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147 Appendix 2: Email interviews
148 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
149 Appendix 6: Survey
150 Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
Fotballfrue has great influence on her blog readers, since they also accept and show high involvement in commercial posts. Another reason for why Fotballfrues’ commercial posts are viewed as valuable is that she often produces blog entries that people can relate to such as hair products, training products or products to use when being a bride or wedding guest and etc. As one blog reader narrates:

“*I have bought a straightener that I read about on her blog. And my hairdresser did also recommend that brand*”

When being asked about the commercial posts on her blog, Fotballfrue informs her readers that she is blogging on full time and she is dependent on having an income source that can support her in being a full-time blogger. Hence, she is open about making money on her blog and that these types of blog posts are one way of creating an income source. Her openness can be a reason for why consumers are not producing substantial negative comments regarding this issue and rather accept the advertisements. Furthermore, Fotballfrue states that she enjoys producing these advertisement posts because it is information the readers frequently request. By requesting this type of information, the readers show that they are fond of and find the information communicated interesting and credible. Thus, this shows that Fotballfrue has great influence on her readers’ opinions, choices, and actions (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In this matter, she also argues that she never recommends or communicates advertisement for products or brands that she does not use herself. Fotballfrue’s communication is perceived to have reached the followers as one blog reader who has bought a recommended product by her states:

“*Because I believe that her opinions about the products are genuine and that she wouldn’t recommend something that she wasn’t happy with. I have not regretted any of the products I have bought after reading about them on her blog*”

Fotballfrue’s communication is in line with the fact that bloggers are advised to be authentic (Scoble & Israel, 2006). She is open about this issue and answers her readers when they questions commercial content. Thus, this indicates that she is very much aware

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151 Appendix 3: Email interviews
152 www.fotballfrue.no
153 http://fotballfrue.no/2013/05/26/must-for-deg-som-brud-og-bryllupsgjest/
154 Appendix 3: Email interviews
155 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
about her position in the market. Moreover, she has understood the importance of being honest and real with her readers to become a successful influencer.

A former study performed by Fu & Chen (2012) indicated that 40% of the consumers that read blogs made a purchase due to the information and experience shared. However, the outline or design of the advertisement had an impact on how much influence the post has on various consumers. Hence, it is argued that all four bloggers creates post designs that are perceived as informative and valuable. This also correlates with the survey results that show that 57% of the respondents who are reading blogs has viewed or clicked on recommended links posted by a blogger. In addition, 55% claims they often or sometimes utilize blogs as a search option. Furthermore, bloggers’ ability to influence is supported by the survey results that show that 35% of the respondents have tried or bought a product or service advertised by a blogger. 46% of the respondents that read blogs have tried or bought a product or service advertised by a blogger. It is therefore argued that when the bloggers place the commercial message in context and shares their experiences, the bloggers are perceived to communicate honest opinions. The interaction on the blogs is seen to create ties that are creating trust in the communication, and the four bloggers’ information becomes more relevant and believable (Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Pihl & Sandstrøm, 2013; Scoble & Israel, 2006). Moreover, due to the bloggers personal communication style and being regarded as knowledgeable sources, they are assumed to have a stronger influence than placed ads (Niederhoffer et. al., 2007; Silverman, 2001). Hence, blog readers consider bloggers as trusted sources of oWOM information and that their recommendations are regarded as a reason for purchase (Silverman, 2001). Consequently, it is argued that the bloggers are shown to balance the combination of private and commercial content. In addition, the bloggers are claimed to have a larger impact on consumers than traditional marketing channels (Trusov et. al., 2009).

5.2.4 Influencing through relationships with readers

Tie strength, homophily, and source credibility plays a role in what extent consumers are being influenced (Huang, 2010). When investigating if the bloggers can be regarded as a

156 Appendix 6: Survey
157 Appendix 6: Survey
158 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
trustworthy and influential source, it is necessary to analyze the relationship the bloggers has tied and developed with their readers. All of the bloggers’ entries, regardless category or content, receive much attention and comments. The readers write compliments, show compassion, and transmit tips, experiences, information, opinions, and knowledge. Thus, the readers are considered to be engaged in the blogs and the person behind the blog. Therefore, it is argued that the bloggers have created a relation to their readers. Moreover, their degree of influence power is strengthened. The survey indicates that people reading the four blogs are mainly females between 21-30 years. All of the bloggers observed are between 23-35 years old. As the majority of the blog readers are in the same age group as the bloggers and that the main reasons for reading blogs are inspiration and entertainment, it is reason to believe that the blog readers can relate to the bloggers information. In addition, it is assumed that the readers possess some of the same interests as the bloggers since they keep reading the specific blog. This indicates that the blog readers might have some preexisting similarities with the bloggers. Furthermore, the strong connection the followers have to the four bloggers and the personal imprint on the communication creates a stronger oWOM (Huang, 2010). Thus, the audience is believed to fit the bloggers’ passion and area of knowledge, and moreover might be a reason to why the blog readers are becoming influenced by the four bloggers. The bloggers observed are perceived as experts in their categories, primarily within fashion, career and daily life. Thus, the consumers are more likely to trust the information communicated by the bloggers as they are regarded as knowledgeable and up-to-date sources (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). This is in compliance with the survey results, where 55% of the respondents claim they view bloggers as a trustworthy source. In comparison, 70% of the respondents that read blogs view the bloggers as a trustworthy source. This is in accordance to Eagly & Chaiken (1993) who argues that information communicated by individuals who are regarded as inspiring role models tend to be considered as more credible.

According to the email interviews with blog readers there are different reasons why certain bloggers are able to influence consumers to a larger extent. One of the readers
states that the influence the bloggers have on followers depends on the community they have built, and the trust they gain from their readers. This corresponds with Yang (2011), who argues that it is likely that consumers have faith in and trust information from their virtual community members whom they have developed close social ties with. Hence, it is claimed that if the readers truly believe in bloggers’ information and if they share the bloggers’ opinion, the blogger will be able to influence consumers to try new things and develop new thoughts. This is in accordance with Kotler (2006), which states that the more the bloggers’ experience overlaps the readers’, the more effective the communication is conveyed. Moreover, bloggers might be able to influence their readers because many do not perceive bloggers as celebrities, but rather as real people just like the readers. As one blog reader says:

“Since bloggers are perceived as “real people” with real concerns, they can reach the masses better than a perfect celebrity on a pedestal, people relate to them”

Another reader says that since the blog readers feel like they are a part of the bloggers life, they also feel like they can trust the blogger when they recommend something. The bloggers share their personal experiences and opinions, and thus it is easier for the blog reader to relate to the information communicated. Hence, the influence effect of having someone you know, such as friends and family, recommend something, is stronger than commercial communication (Silverman, 2001).

**Listening and responding to feedback**

Being responsive is considered to be vital for maintaining a positive image and influencing readers. Observation shows that Fotballfrue and CamillaPihl have a good respondent rate. In average, Fotballfrue receives 51 comments to her posts where she provides 21,5 responds in return. Ms. Pihl’s posts generate in average 13,9 comments and she delivers 4,6 replies. With this, they show their followers that they value their opinions and feedback. In addition, by being responsive the bloggers have the

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162 Appendix 2: Email interviews
163 Appendix 3: Email interviews
164 Netnographical research; Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
opportunity to provide additional information and knowledge through answering comments. Replying on comments shows a serious depiction. This is argued to positively affect the bloggers’ image, and influence degree increases. Moreover, this is in accordance with Scoble & Israel (2006) who states that answering comments can be a reason for why their followers are loyal and continue reading their blogs.

Ms. Kling is showed to not reply to comments from readers. However, it was observed that readers requested answers from her. It seems that Miss Kling paid attention to this feedback because she occasionally has provided a reply or two to various comments afterwards. Yet, when receiving 13 comments to each entry in average, Ms. Kling’s respondent rate is defined as absent with 0,08 replies. Hence, due to her continued success and popularity it is claimed that her brand is very strong, and therefore she has maintained her influence power even though her dialog with the readers is lacking. Though, this is an element that might negatively impact her brand in the long run, and thus reduce her popularity and influence.

Blondinbella never answers her readers in the comment field, nevertheless very occasionally she creates a post where she provides answers to chosen questions or comments she has received. This shows that Blondinbella actually reads some of her comments, but that she rather answers them in a new post instead of in the comment field. Observation shows that followers are questioning why she is not responding to any comments or criticizing her regarding this issue. Yet, Blondinbella’s position in the blogosphere is strong. Further, the fact that she is one of the most linked blogs and is on top lists of blogs, both in Sweden and Norway, indicate that the audience finds her information and knowledge interesting and valuable. However, the low respondent rate might lead to Blondinbella losing readers because she is not maintaining her relationship with the readers by engaging in a dialogue on the blog. Hence, the followers can feel that she is not showing them the attention that she should and deserve. This one-way communication might decrease the credibility and trustworthiness of the information communicated by Blondinbella, and furthermore negatively impacts her influence degree.

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165 Netnographical research; Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
167 Netnographical research
169 [www.bloglovin.com](http://www.bloglovin.com); [www.bloggportalen.se](http://www.bloggportalen.se)
(Niederhoffer et. al, 2007). Observation of the four bloggers shows that blog readers are becoming influenced by the bloggers due to providing substantial feedback\textsuperscript{170}. Common responses include positive feedback on products reviewed, and some even illustrates that the readers want to try or buy the product or service. Consequently, the bloggers are argued to be influencers.

\section*{5.2.5 Partners with popular and well-known brands}

Collaborations with other well-known brands or sharing information about own projects are identified to be exploited in influencing the audience. This opportunity is present due factors mentioned in the analysis of the bloggers’ brand, yet it did not shed light on how the bloggers are further displaying influence on consumers and trends. Moreover, how the bloggers are creating their posts and how they are communicating information is also presented. This is included because it is argued to be connected in describing how the bloggers are producing inspiration and thus, influencing the readers.

Blondinbella’s posts often involve substantial amount of text, regardless work-, commercial- or personal related information. The entries have one or more pictures to reinforce the message. However, it is argued that she is influencing her readers by narrating experiences and opinions. Blondinbella is to a large extent involving her readers in her projects, communicating information about the developments, and sharing her experiences and tips to consumers that wish to start a business on their own. Blondinbella has weekly 6,2 work related posts\textsuperscript{171}, which indicates that she focuses on influencing her readers to follow their dreams. However, it can be argued that these types of posts also include commercial content as she tries to influence readers to buy her products. Her entries are filled with substantial information and shows strong passion. Hence, Blondinbella attempts to influence readers by communicating knowledge and experience gained from working on new projects and her personal life. In e.g. she has recently published a book about private economy and how to save money in daily-life

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{170} Netnographical research
  \item \textsuperscript{171} Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content
\end{itemize}
consumption to become an economista\textsuperscript{172}. In relation to this book she has created an entry of tips on how to shop smart by sharing her thumb-rules when going shopping. Therefore, Blondinbella is focusing on creating an acceptance and understanding of her communication by referring to her own experiences. This is argued to provide an authentic perception, and thus positively affect her influence degree. Comments published on the entries regarding Blondinbella’s projects or collaborations display a picture of committed and engaged consumers that are being influenced by her knowledge.

“I’ll definitely buy Economista when it comes out. My personal finances are disastrous with csn-loan and shopping for non-existent money. Yikes” (Blog observation, “Economistas inlaga”, comment reader, 5.15.13)

In blog entries where Blondinbella shows her outfits and refers to brands or ad-links the readers are displaying engagement and interest by adding comments\textsuperscript{173}. Blondinbella is in e.g. providing information about sales at web shops such as Nelly.com and Boozt.com. In these posts she shares which clothes she has bought or that are on her wish list. Hence, outfit posts are inspiration followers show interest in and can therefore be regarded as valuable. Furthermore, this communication is used to impact readers to visit the web shops or brands, or find motivation in Blondinbella’s style.

“There are your pretty ballerinas from? You look so amazing” (Blog observation, “Tärnklännningar”, comment reader, 5.28.13)

“What lovely earrings!! Must have! Is any of your jewelry sold in a shop in Halmstad? Big Hug” (Blog observation, “En till butik”, comment reader, 6.26.13)

As Blondinbella, CamillaPihl is also producing posts related to collaborations with other brands, such as her jewelry collection in cooperation with David-Andersen and being substituting editor of Miinto.no. In these entries she includes links to where people can buy her jewelry or where one can see her Miinto.no favorites. Even though Ms. Pihl is known as a fashion blogger she does not always provide links to her “today’s outfit” posts. However, in her posts she often adds different pictures and the followers can therefore see what she is wearing. Hence, it is argued that she wish to influence

\textsuperscript{172} Economista, title of Blondinbella’s book; \url{http://blondinbella.se/2013/05/economistas-inlaga/}; \url{http://blondinbella.se/page/8/?s=Economista&submit=S%C3%B6k}

\textsuperscript{173} www.blondinbella.se
consumers with her style rather than specific brands or clothes she wears. One reader of CamillaPihl explains why her blog is impacting her:

“I love her style, and sometimes I’ve ended up buying things that I found on her blog”

Moreover, if being asked about information regarding her outfits Ms. Pihl answers or ads a link to the products requested. Thus, she is utilizing partners in influencing readers. Observations demonstrate that readers are committed and engaged to the blogger. Hence, it appears that the readers perceive CamillaPihl as a trustworthy and inspirational source, and further are fond of her recommendations.

"So nice clothes 😊 I fell for the sandals and the shorts 😊 Fun to read your blog, so much nice to see and be inspired by. Have a great day” (Blog observation, “Mine Miinto favoritter”, comment reader, 5.19.13)

“Oh so nice, I want that dress too :) What name is it on the nail polish? Perfect red color :) Thanks for the great inspiration as always :)” (Blog observation, “Red, light blue & gold, comment reader, 5.28.13)

Overall, Ms. Pihl’s posts usually contains marginal amount of text, however the posts includes the necessary information. Hence, she is believed to communicate her messages more visually. It is therefore claimed that Ms. Pihl is focusing more on influencing her readers through visual content such as her pictures. Her pictures are of good quality and are viewed as very inspiring. Her dedicated readers and the acknowledgement in the market are further confirming that CamillaPihl is considered to impact her audience. Her influence is clearly shown by this comment:

“Hi Camilla – We are the owners of the Neurons Not Included Etsy shop. We just wanted to drop by and say THANK YOU for featuring our mugs. We are just a couple of hand-crafters working out of a spare bedroom, and after you featured the mugs your wonderful fans have been ordering them like crazy. It’s been a real boost to our shop, which is just getting off the ground. Again, thank you so much – and thanks to your followers! p.s.

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174 Appendix 5: Email interviews
175 www.camillapihl.no
176 www.blogglisten.no; www.camillapihl.no; Appendix 5: E-mail interviews
We’re still trying to get used to running a global business out of a spare bedroom...”
(Blog observations, “Mrs. Always Right”, 5.30.13)

StylebyKling has mainly entries emphasized on visual impression through outfit pictures or pictures from other sources such as fashion shows, campaigns, and articles from her magazine. The posts have minimal text but are always providing information about the products’ brand. When Ms. Kling is posting about items she wants or has bought the post receives great feedback due to her style or recommendations. This reflects the trust the readers have in her as a fashion expert. Email Interviews with blog readers of Ms. Kling supports this as they admit that her fashion style influences them. In e.g. they narrates that her minimalist, black & white style is very inspirational, and they have learned that simple and stylish can be successful as well. Furthermore, the readers view the brands Ms. Kling is wearing, and claim they always discover new brands and shops on her blog. In addition, the way that Ms. Kling has made it into the business world due to her blog is shown to be inspiring for her readers177. Ms. Kling shares her collaborations with other brands on her blog, such as fronting Net-a-Porter’s campaign178. Moreover, she shares inside information from the industry and is often communicating the latest trends that she acquires from her job as a fashion magazine director. Hence, Ms. Kling is strongly focusing on influencing the readers with her outfits and inside information from the industry.

“LOVE your look. So simple. So sophisticated. The shirt is just right- is it the Dix/Karolina one? And if, what size is yours? It seems like the perfect fit! You really taught me that less is more...” (Blog observation, “Saturday”, comment reader, 6.27.2013)

“Where did you buy your sandals? Looks like everybody wants to know...” (Blog observation, “New in”, comment from reader, 5.20.2013)

Fotballfrue is believed to influence consumers by sharing considerable amount of information regarding her passions and her daily-life. The message is conveyed in a story where she communicates knowledge and tips, and she is like other bloggers supporting the text with pictures. Similarly to Blondinbella, Fotballfrue is impacting her followers by

177 Appendix 2: Email interviews
178 http://www.elin-kling.com/projects/
creating a relationship through sharing personal content and daily-life activities. Since Fotballfrue is creating long stories about her interests and information it explains why her posts contain more text. Fotballfrue tries to inspire, and hence influence consumers and trends with her focus on diet, training, and fashion. Blog readers of Fotballfrue provide insights in how she influences them:

“*She influences me with workout inspiration and good-looking and healthy recipes. It is not to get away from that when she recommends makeup or beauty products that I get a little influenced as well*”

“*Mostly with her food recipes. I do not follow that diet, but I think she is a good cook. Sometimes I look at her workout clothes and face cream*”

Posts regarding Fotballfrue’s passions are often involving personal experiences and opinions. However, she is also publishing entries and information on behalf of partners that concerns the same topics. These collaborations can be argued to strengthen Fotballfrue’s image of being knowledgeable within diet, training and fashion because they have chosen her blog communication channel for their brand and products. The posts that are created in collaboration with brands can therefore be claimed to be utilized by Fotballfrue to influence her readers with her experiences and opinions. The brands she cooperates with are also strong brands within their industry and are likely to positively impact her influence degree. Compelling opportunities such as modeling and designing shoes for Nelly.com, and writing a lifestyle and cooking book are examples of actions that are viewed to further influence consumers and reinforce Fotballfrue’s brand. She is always including references to where items are bought or ad-links that initiates to impact followers with her style, tips, or information. The readers show involvement and engagement through providing feedback on her posts. Fotballfrue is currently number one on blogglisten.no and number two at bloggportalen.se, and is on the top list of most linked blogs. Hence, it can be argued that she is successfully influencing consumers through her knowledge, interests, and communication.

179 Appendix 3: Both quotes from Email interviews
180 www.blogglisten.no; bloggportalen.se; http://bloggurat.net/topplister/blogger/
“Looks like you had a lot of fun and your blog post has inspired me to want to go visit Rhodes too 😊” (Blog observation, “Rhodos: Mine tips”, comment readers, 5.14.13)

“Hey, can you post the recipe on both of the cakes! They both look really delicious:-P. And thanks for a great blog! Love it :-)” (Blog observation, “Rekeaften: Pink for shrimp”, comment reader, 7.11.13)

This presentation of observational data from the four blogs correlates with the survey results that show that 36% of the respondents who are reading blogs claim they become more influenced or convinced by advertisements produced by the blogger versus placed ads. This indicates that the bloggers’ personal communication is regarded as more trustworthy and credible (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Trusov et al. 2009), and they might be able to influence consumers through displaying authentic and original information. The bloggers’ experience and knowledge within the different areas makes them strong communicators, and thus more reliable (Bansal & Voyer, 2000).

5.2.6 Bloggers impact on people and trends

The survey results showed that 15% of the respondents that read blogs believe that bloggers have an impact on consumers’ opinions, choices, and actions. Yet, 48% of the respondents do not share this opinion. These results are in contrast to the netnographical data, which indicates that blog readers are certainly being influenced by the bloggers. The reason for this contradicting data might be that some people that read blogs do not wish to admit being influenced by these individuals. Moreover, it could be that people are not aware of the fact that bloggers are impacting their behavior. Hence, it is believed that there exists a perception that people consider bloggers to influence others, but not necessarily oneself. However, it is reason to believe that there are cases where consumers have tested a product or service a blogger have written about without thinking that the blogger have influenced one to try it. This argument is supported by the survey results where it display that 36% of the blog readers believe that bloggers information

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181 Appendix 6: Survey
182 Appendix 6: Survey
have an impact on them, whereas 37% are neutral and 27% disagree\textsuperscript{183}. Likewise, e-mail interviews with blog readers revealed that they become influenced by in e.g. outfit posts, because these photos show a different side of the products and the pictures also show how it can be worn\textsuperscript{184}. This substantiates that a picture says more than a thousand words (Moen, 2012), and that bloggers are considered to be influencers. Moreover, some of the blog readers state that if a blogger has a great sense of style shows an item or a product, this communication can be very inspirational. Further, the blog reader argues that this creates influence and it becomes convenient to click on the links added\textsuperscript{185}. Hence, if the blog readers have seen something interesting on the blog, the links make it easier for the consumers to click home the products as they are just one click away. Due to the engagement and involvement identified in all four blogs it is reason to assume that the followers consider the information, knowledge, products or services as relevant. Relevant and interesting information might be everything from providing recommendations of daily beauty products to how to “mix & match” pieces in one’s wardrobe to avoid going shopping each season. This is valuable tips because people ask themselves those questions every day. So if bloggers are providing useful answers, people are likely to pay attention to that information. Hence, bloggers’ interests appeal to many consumers. This further correlates with Kotler’s (2006) statement; the more the blogger’s experience-area overlaps the reader’s, the more effective the message is conveyed.

Additionally, the survey provides results that show that bloggers have an impact on people and trends, where 44% of the respondents agree and 25% totally agree. Out of the respondents that are reading blogs, 50% agrees and 32% totally agrees that bloggers have an impact on people and trends\textsuperscript{186}. Thus, there is identified a mutual understanding that bloggers do have an impact on people and trends. Email interviews with blog readers support the survey results by believing that bloggers are very influential sources. Bloggers are considered to be incredibly influential, especially in relation to new trends, receiving new information, or discovering new brands\textsuperscript{187}. According to blog readers, bloggers are influential:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Appendix 6: Survey
  \item Appendix 2, 3, 4, & 5: Email interviews
  \item Appendix 2: Email interviews
  \item Appendix 6: Survey
  \item Appendix 2,3,4, & 5: Email interviews
\end{itemize}
“Because we see them as role models and we feel like we know them because we feel included in their lives. If your friends or family recommend you something you will probably believe them more than if a salesman said the same thing. Since we feel like we are a part of the bloggers life we also feel like we can trust them when/if they recommend something.”

“Mainly because we feel that they are genuine, interesting and that we like them! Bloggers who are genuine and don't turn their opinions according to the wind feels real and we like real.”

This is in line with consumers requesting information from people they know, share a bond with, and trust (Hennig-Thurau et. al., 2010). Therefore, it is argued that the bloggers are a great source of influence. These arguments are being shared by Moen, as he claims that bloggers have gained respect in the different kind of interest fields and genres they represent. Thus, bloggers can possess major impact and power. Further, Moen argues that the bloggers are trendsetters and influencers. The bloggers’ experience and knowledge within the different areas makes them strong communicators, and thus more reliable (Bansal & Voyer, 2000).

In summary, the analysis reveals that creating a valuable brand through blogging is dependent on successfully managing content that is important to the blogger and to the readers. A strong blog brand shows authenticity throughout the actions and communication, it focuses on passion and interests, and delivers inspiration and new knowledge to the audience. Furthermore, a strong blog brand is identified when a blogger can refer to a large audience and loyal readers. Hence, developing and maintaining relations is crucial. Bloggers are perceived to be inspirational and knowledgeable sources, fashionistas, and trendsetters, and role models. All of the mentioned factors allow bloggers to impose influence on their readers. The trusting relationship and influence power is developed by displaying personal information and interacting with followers. Influence is further possible due to displaying commercial content in an authentic and personal way. Also, a vital factor for impacting readers is to provide valuable and

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188 Appendix 3: Email interviews
189 Appendix 4: Email interviews
190 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.13
191 Appendix 1: Interview with Moen 5.14.13
inspiring tips and recommendations. This creates an impression of being knowledgeable and an expert in their blog category that can be utilized by the bloggers to create further business opportunities and career. The table below summarizes and visualizes the key factors that indicate strong blog brands and are utilized by the bloggers in influencing readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key elements</th>
<th>Blondinbella</th>
<th>Camilla Pihl</th>
<th>Stylebykling</th>
<th>Fotballfrue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updating frequently</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal content</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial content</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual focus</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling focus</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passion focused</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding readers</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showing authenticity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration with brands</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Run other businesses</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fulltime blogger</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large audience</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement by readers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interacting with readers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X indicates that a element is strongly present  
X indicates that a element is present at a certain level

Table 2: Key features of the blogs (Inspired by Razmerita et. al., 2009)

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The following section discusses main findings and presents some concluding remarks. Blogs are shown to work as effective means for self-expressing online. However, this study discovered that blogs are even more successful when being able to display knowledge and expertise. It is revealed that bloggers are viewed as role models and a good source for consumers to receive the newest trends. Thus, being up-to-date and providing new information is important to attract new readers and preserving existing
ones. Yet, the competition in the blogosphere is fierce, especially in the fashion- and daily life category. This is why *authenticity and building relationship with readers are found to be vital factors for maintaining a positive and valuable brand.* For individuals who wish to take advantage of blogging in creating a personal brand, they are dependent on expressing a truthful self, and delivering information readers believe in and find interesting.

Other elements that is apparent in creating a personal brand through blogging, is to *deliver inspiration and provide enjoyment to the audience.* This is shown to be in coherence to why consumers read blogs. To exploit blogs for knowledge and inspiration can be related to individuals request for learning. The information bloggers share on their blogs is argued to support individual and collective knowledge. Request for learning is also beneficial for marketers as bloggers’ *oWOM can assist in both brand awareness and contribute in providing new valuable information about their products to the bloggers’ audience.* The enjoyment factor is identified to be related to becoming a part of the bloggers’ lives via receiving insight in daily life activities, big happenings, events, and private life. It is disclosed that socialization and interaction with others are connected with the enjoyment factor. The communication that occurs on blogs is a way of networking. Hence, blogs creates a feeling of belonging. Blogging can therefore create and manage close relationships with consumers. Developing relationships are found to be an advantage bloggers have compared to other traditional communication channels.

The study revealed further that a valuable personal brand is a blogger *who has large audience, is high ranked in blog lists, being frequently linked to, and can demonstrate great engagement on the blog.* In addition, a personal brand that is recognized as positive and valuable in the market is shown to be *invited to collaborate on projects with other well-known brands.*

A successful blogging brand is shown to provide value to consumers by *functioning as a search option, a place to develop new knowledge, and find inspiration.* Blogs categorizes information, it shares personal experiences and knowledge, and bloggers provide the hottest and newest trends due to their network and brand. Blogs are therefore being regarded as more credible and up-to-date information sources than traditional
communication channels. Blogs are further valuable search options because bloggers tend to specialize in their interests that are communicated through this channel.

For bloggers, it was revealed that developing a strong independent brand was of greatest value. Due to blogging the four women can “make a living” out of their brand. Furthermore, the blogs has provided lucrative opportunities both in terms of economic and non-monetary benefits. Hence, with a competitive advantage, and a popular and respected blog, the blogger can develop additional career opportunities based on the blog. Yet, it should be mentioned that blogging is very demanding and the competition is severe. Blogging needs investment in time, research, and creating appealing content to create awareness and recognition by consumers and marketers. For marketers, the study displayed valuable knowledge of the potential bloggers’ have in being effective and credible communicators. The bloggers are not only reaching a large audience, but they are likely to have readers that have interests, wants and needs that overlap the communicator. The research therefore shows that marketers can reach relevant consumers and the communication is likely to be more successful through blogs. Moreover, the personal relationship bloggers can create with the followers is identified to provide an advantage for marketers in having endorsers that are perceived as reliable, honest, and interesting. Consequently, the information is more effectively communicated in this channel compared to traditional marketing channels.

The positions bloggers have in the consumers mind and market is related to the results presented above. Bloggers have an increasing impact on consumers and thus developing a stronger position in the market. Furthermore, the position a blogger can hold in the market is displayed by the commercial content published on blogs. The influence bloggers have is identified to create trends and increasing awareness for other products and brands. It is revealed that bloggers’ interaction with readers by communicating personal experiences, replying on comments, and responding to requests for tips and recommendations are reasons for the ability to impact opinions, choices, and actions. The research also shows that narrating and sharing experiences are factors that increase bloggers’ influence. The message is believed to be more personal and authentic, and consequently more credible. Still, the balance of commercial and personal content is vital for bloggers’ influence power. When bloggers are publishing more commercial than
personal content they are in danger of being considered as sell-outs and might lose credibility. However, the study shows that readers appreciate tips and recommendations when the communication is assumed as truthful and sincere.

The results also showed that the bloggers are believed to have personal preferences for the product or brand they promote, and consequently the communication is likely to be more effective and influential. Accordingly, blogs represent effective oWOM and their endorsements are argued to be a reason for purchase. Thus, blogs are considered to be profitable promoting channels. The study demonstrates that bloggers are influencers, trendsetters and fashionistas. Furthermore, bloggers are believed to be knowledgeable sources, experts and role models for the consumers. Yet, the data shows that bloggers have to be careful in utilizing their position and turning their back on the essence in the blog, namely providing inspiration, knowledge, and enjoyment. If so, the bloggers will lose credibility and readers, which in turn will decrease their influence and attractiveness with partners. The results of this study implies that individuals, independent if one is reading blogs or not, have the impression that bloggers influence consumers opinions, choices, and actions. Overall, this research supports the authors Porter, et al., (2007) in suggesting that marketers should start engaging in blogs like they have done with traditional media.

Definition of a strong personal brand through blogging is therefore argued to be interrelated with all these elements, and thus is very complex. However, it could be debated if this research is in a position to introduce conventions on how to define a good blogger or how to create a personal brand through blogging. Moreover, it could be disputed if this study has the position in concluding what a valuable blogging brand consists of. Respected and relevant theoretical contributions together with significant data have supported the ability of this research to discover certain standards that characterizes a strong personal brand in blogging. Bloggers that have created a personal brand through blogging is fairly new, and this enables the authors to argue that this knowledge are of value for marketers in terms of understanding the blogging profession and its potential.
6.2 Evaluation of the study

During the study the authors have focused on conducting a value-free research through interpreting and analyzing data and information as objectively as possible and safeguarding transparency of the whole process. This is achieved by taking bloggers communication and understanding of information, blog readers’ responses and a blog expert’s opinion into consideration when analyzing and discussing bloggers’ brand and impact in the market. However, it should be mentioned that it is possible that the researchers own views and values are difficult to completely evade, and can have caused some bias to the analysis and discussion of the information. Thus, an entire value-free research is impossible to display. Nevertheless, the authors have emphasized on ensuring a reliable and valid research. Reliability can be explained as whether the outcomes of the study are repeatable. Hence, reliability is the consistency of the measurement of the research questions. Validity refers to if the research method measures what it is supposed to (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011). Email interviews with blog readers and a blog expert were conducted in to receive reliable and relevant data about the four bloggers’ brands. All blog readers received the same interview form and questions. This data collection provided valuable insight in how consumers perceived bloggers, and thus their influence power. Consequently, the respondents hold knowledge about bloggers that is vital to the study. Reliable and valid data was further secured by a survey executed through FB, where it was informed that the study concerned blogging, brand, and influence. It is therefore argued that the survey attracted mainly respondents that have at least some familiarity of blogging or individuals that have knowledge about blogging.

The research can be criticized for relying on information mainly from Norwegian respondents in the survey and to some extent interview objects. The ratio can be explained by the arena chosen to publish the survey. The survey was communicated and shared on the two Norwegian authors’ FB profiles and therefore is it somewhat natural that it attracted most Norwegian respondents. Thus, the results of the survey will be limited to mainly Norwegian blog users and might reflect a tendency in the Norwegian culture only. It is a possibility that the results would be different if the research was carried out with a focus in another culture as the use of the internet and social media in
particular are expected to differ from country to country. It should be mentioned that the authors encouraged FB friends to share the survey with the hope and intention to draw more international respondents. This has resulted in a higher respondent rate to questions regarding the two Norwegian bloggers, CamillaPihl and Fotballfrue. However, the blog expert had insight of bloggers in several markets, among them Sweden and the US, and provided information that was more directed to blogging in general. Moreover, blog observation enabled the researchers to interpret and analyze data from followers from various countries. Another critique that can be presented to the research is that the authors chose to incorporate answers from individuals that do not read blogs in the survey. These data might not be of high relevance and importance for answering the research questions. However, the answers from non-blog readers delivered data that showed that the bloggers’ brands are recognized outside the blog world. It further conveyed insight in how non-blog readers perceived these bloggers.

A third critique to discuss regarding the study is the segmentation of the survey respondents. Once again, publishing the survey on FB profiles might be the reason for why the survey received most respondents in the age groups 21-25 and 26-30 as the researchers have most connections in that age range. Yet, the broad segmentation allowed the authors to investigate and analyze information from a comprehensive group of consumers. This can be beneficial as it shows how bloggers are becoming present in the consumers’ mind and market, how people view and utilize blogs, and if they believe that bloggers have an impact on consumers. Furthermore, the broad segmentation demonstrates that bloggers’ brand and information are being transferred across boarders and are therefore able to reach tremendous numbers of consumers.

It is reason to believe that the research could have provided stronger data in how bloggers are able to influence consumers, if a larger proportion of the survey’s respondents would have been in the age group 16-20 years and maybe as low as 10-15 years. This argument is based on fact that the younger generation is growing up with internet, computers, and smart phones both at home and at school. It is therefore argued that they are more confident and familiar with exploiting the web for information. Furthermore, social media has become a part of their daily-life communication. In addition, since new blog
establishments are mainly created by young individuals\textsuperscript{192} it is reason to believe that they primarily attract a younger audience. Hence, the younger generations are more likely to be familiar with the information and knowledge bloggers represent, and thus are more likely to utilize these options for search and reference for decisions. Moreover, it is therefore assumed that bloggers hold a stronger position in the younger generations’ mind.

Due to the primarily qualitative nature of the data collection and measurement method it is impossible to draw any conclusions or provide any claims about the generalizability of the results of the study. Yet, the intention of this research was to shed light and offer insight in how bloggers’ brand and influence are important means of marketing towards consumers in a digitalized world.

6.3 Suggestions for further studies

This research investigated how individuals have created a personal brand through blogging and how bloggers have influence on consumers and trends. Hence, the study has provided insight in various elements of creating a strong brand through blogging, but the study cannot define or conclude in regards to branding elements that ensures a strong brand in the blogosphere and market. Consequently, further studies on defining a strong blogging brand are recommended. This research has also revealed that consumers believe in the information communicated by the bloggers. However, a more thorough study on how to utilize bloggers as a communication tool in how to create positive effects for firms is necessary. In addition, a study that provides explicit results in various outcomes brands can accomplish by exploiting the bloggers is proposed. Such an investigation is advantageous for companies because it will deliver more concluding information and in-depth knowledge about the benefits and importance of utilizing bloggers as a means of communication tool.

The study displays great indications of bloggers position as a source for information, knowledge, and inspiration in the market; nevertheless the research does not provide conclusive facts regarding this issue. Yet, bloggers are becoming more present in peoples mind and thus there is assumed that bloggers are able to influence consumers’ views and

\textsuperscript{192} Appendix 1: Interview with Moen, 5.14.2013
choices. It is therefore suggested that more in-depth exploration is conducted on factors that show direct impact on consumers. The study indicates that bloggers have influence on consumers’ opinions and choices – however, an investigation on bloggers impact on purchase decision and consumer behavior are valuable for marketers. E.g. it would be beneficial to have knowledge about if and where bloggers are utilized in consumers’ buying-decision-process. A research regarding this might also offer insight to where in the buying process is it most valuable to utilize bloggers as influencers.

As the survey mainly relies on data from people between 21-30 years, conducting a research on younger respondents is recommended. This is based on that new establishments of blogs are completed by primarily younger individuals\(^\text{193}\), and might therefore attract a younger audience. In addition, an investigation of this target group might offer greater understanding of the potential blogs have in transferring knowledge and thus being utilized as a search option. This assumption is built on the hypothesis that this target group is likely to be more familiar with utilizing social media platforms such as blogs, when searching for information. This is because they have a strong presence in their daily lives and utilize the web from an early age. Another argument is that a younger audience can be argued to be influenced more easily and thus bloggers’ might therefore display strong impact on this segment.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview with Thomas Moen (14.05.2013)

We are writing our Master thesis about bloggers, and how they have become so popular and made a personal brand through blogging. We wanted to talk to you because we look at you as an expert in this area, and would like to get to know some of your knowledge within blogging. We will like to ask you several questions around this topic. There are no right or wrong answers, so you can answer freely.

Q: What is your background/experience within social media?
A: I started with social media, it wasn’t called that back then, but I started in 2003/2004. I started my own company, which turned out to be one of the first blogging communities in Norway. Built that up to about 15,000 active bloggers in 2009 and sold it to blogg.no. I also did a lot of consulting to major brands in Norway, in terms of how to start their presence in social media, and also more and more when Facebook grew in 2007 and out in Norway. I have written a book about blogging, published by Cappelen Damm here in Norway and have done about 250 campaigns with bloggers and different brands during the last 4 years.

Q: Do you still work with the bloggers through your new company?
A: A little, just for fun really, and I have a really tight good relationship with most of the bloggers I have been working with through the years. So I help them from time to time. And I also help some brands like Peppes Pizza. So I help them a lot of times during their different campaigns. But it’s not my main focus any more.

Q: What made you start working with blogging?
A: You want the long answer or the short answer. I’m coming from a small village called Hovden with 315 inhabitants, so it’s really, really small. So I grew up with 4 people in my class and 15 people in my whole social tribe. So when the Internet came it opened up for me, I saw a possibility to get to know a lot of new people, different people, people with similar interests to me, but not in my close tribe. And I found that interesting and started to tell everyone about my life, made a website and stuff like that. And suddenly I realized it was also possible for this kind of people, not just me to push out my opinions, but actually get feedback from them. That was a thing I loved about blogging, it wasn’t email or anything like that it was just your thoughts and people’s thought on your thoughts. And actually I created my own little blogging engine way before Wordpress or anything like that, and even before I knew it was called blogging. And it just evolved from there, because I saw that when other people started blogging as well, we had this amazing community of people with their opinions and everyone cared so much about giving feedback and helping each other and building up an audience to talk to. So that’s why I really got started with it. And then I saw a possibility for celebrities to have a
voice, because usually the media belongs to misquote or put some kind of angle on every stunt from celebrities and with giving them their own voice they suddenly have the power taking back from the media. So I started in 2004 to work with Tone Damli Aaberge, Maria Mena and all of these celebrities in Norway, helping them to establish their social presence so they could have their own voice. And that also motivated me to work on with it, because suddenly we were turning things upside down. Suddenly Se og Hør was quoting the blog I helped Tone Damli Aaberge create instead of just putting up some bullshit about things they might have heard somewhere. That motivated me to keep on going exploring this weird blogging thing.

Q: What can you say about blogging in Norway?
A: Blog in Norway is really different from the rest of the world; Sweden and Norway are the only one that has these young girls writing about their everyday life kind of thing. Most blogs outside Norway and Sweden are more like genres or interests like technology, or fashion, or politics and economics and stuff like that. But here in Norway it’s much more about self-expression, like “me meme” all the time, and what their experiencing throughout the day. In Norway an average blogger is about 17, young girl in the middle of their education. Not making a lot of money, not using a lot of money online. If you go to the US it’s a 50 year old man with kids and family, established, writing about technology or politics and stuff like that. It’s a really different kind of world. And the reason for that is, really early on in Sweden first of all we had a couple of young girls that started writing about their lives. And as the symptoms you see in the kind of school back yards and stuff, it’s always the popular girl. Everyone wants to be like the popular girl, so it started like this crazy movement that everyone wanted to blog cause this really popular girl was blogging. And that suddenly spread over to Norway. So in 2006 I think was the first time I started to use the term “rosablogger”, “pink blogger”, which is now a term which is crazy because I just started using it with my friend internally. But we saw that more and more girls where doing this and that made the effect go really fast like a snowball. And then the media started writing about it, and then it created this big wave of bloggers that you couldn’t really control. Everyone wants to express themselves and talk about themselves. And that’s what created this big gap between Norwegian blogging and International blogging. And what we see is that hopefully in the next 2-3 years we will have closed that gap a lot. Because now it has started to be more professional bloggers, If you see the numbers on blogg.no its declining a lot in terms of how many posts and bloggers are actually signing up. And the bloggers that are popular now are getting more and more commercialized, so I think they will lose kind of their street credit and some of them have lost it already. But it is going to be like the moneymaking bloggers and the bloggers that write about their passion. It’s going to be gaps of people and I think that in terms of age and gender it’s going to be really more evened out in the passionate part of it.
Q: Do you think it would be more bloggers in Norway that will write about their interest or their passion, not their everyday life?
A: Yes, I think so and I also think that we are going to see more and more blogs getting popular for people from 25 and up and also in terms of genders it’s going to be more male as well.

Q: Do you think also we can relate that to the followers or the readers? I read some former studies that said that people that read blogs in the states are male, because we would think it would be girls, as it is a lot of Norwegian girls that blog. And they’re in a higher age group, they have higher income, they have often a political or technical background and this kind of things.
A: I think that has mostly to do with the ones that started to blog in the US. If you see every new kind of communication form online starts with these influencers or early adapters first of all. These nerds gather around just playing around with the technologies of it and just seeing how it evolves. If you see Twitter for example, most of the key features of twitter didn’t exist and twitter didn’t invent it. The users invented it for them so the “@reply” for example is created by the users; the hashtag is also created by the users to have a way to gather all their topics their talking about. And the same thing in the blogging thing, the nerds wrote about what nerds are interested in and that kind of grew up for it. But in Norway the nerds didn’t grasp blogging that much before the young pretty girls started it, then created readers upon that again. So I think that readers will always follow the bloggers.

Q: So it’s a lot of young followers in Norwegian and Swedish blogs?
A: Yes. But then again most of the popular bloggers for five years ago are not here and present now, but the ones who are have more adult readers, so we see for example Ulrikke Lund and Ida Wulf, their readers are getting older and older because they’re getting older.
(So they follow the person actually)

Q: Why do you think blogging has become so big?
A: It is a fact that in Norway, one of the most popular magazines is “Se ogHør”. This is a magazine where you read about other people’s life basically. Famous people, pretty people, rumors, and stuff like that, and that is exactly what most of the everyday bloggers are writing about. You have the ability to actually spy on people’s lives. And we, Norwegians guys and girls we like that, we like to spy on our neighbors. So I think that is partly it, and I think also that we love to express ourselves and get the ability to get attention and recognition for who we are, our opinions and what we stand for. So the ability to actually say hello, I’m here, this is my thoughts, this is my feelings and get some kind of feedback on that is a really good feeling that a lot of people here in Norway long for. So I think it is a combination of those two. We love to spy on people and we love to get attention.
Q: What would you say is the largest value of blogging today?
A: For me personally it’s about the networking and still getting to expand your relationship with people, actually getting to know people and get to discuss interesting topics that you have a passionate about. In a professional kind of way you see a lot of bloggers are making money on it and stuff like that. But we also see that if they get too focused on actually making money and stop producing the content that is interesting to their readers they will lose their interest in these kinds of things. But I think that if you look at Norwegians, they are now writing more than they were five or ten years ago, and they are gradually getting better to express themselves. For example I don’t have any education, I finished secondary school, and I just started for myself and I’m able to publish a book, and have been blogging for ten years now. So you get used to expressing yourself and reflect on your thoughts and stuff like that which is really good for young people and for old people. And if you add that to actually getting to know other people in your common interest fields and building relationships with them that is a really cool way of networking. So I think that’s partly why it’s so popular.

Q: What kind of position does bloggers has in the society in your opinion?
A: Right now in Norway I think society is kind of laughing of these young girls. So they kind of have an entertainment kind of stamp on them. It is just fun to read sometimes kind of thing. But some bloggers have a lot of respect in the different kind of interest fields and genres out there. But they don’t have as much political opinions and stuff like that, but in terms of their genres I think they have a lot of power. We’ve seen multiple times bloggers introducing new products to Norway, like OnePiece for example would never been a hit in Norway if it weren’t for Emilie NeringVoe who put it on and two weeks later they sold out their whole stock. So they can still create trends, they are trendsetters and influencers. Diesel ten years ago went around at schoolyards and gave away Diesel pants just to get the movement starting to people using their pants, and the same way brands are using it now to push out products. So I personally for example made Peppe’s Pizza sell 23% more pizza’s to young girls last year, just by getting bloggers to talk about it. So they have a major impact if you use them right. But also I travel around talking to business owners and leaders and they usually laugh of bloggers, but when I tell them that they have 50-60,000 people actually visiting their site without them advertising every day, they get hundreds of comments every day, visiting 3-4 times a day they are starting to figure out that these young girls have understood something really incredible about personal branding and about networking and marketing that most big brands haven’t yet. So in terms of actually seeing bloggers as brands and not as persons brands and marketers can learn a lot of how you can communicate, how you can create communities and how to make strong connections and relationships with the audience these bloggers hold.

Q: Who are the most successful bloggers in Norway at this point of time in your opinion?
A: One of the most influential bloggers right now is not the pink bloggers with their silicon breasts and “botoxed” faces but much more like for example Ulrikke Lund which is a clear fashion expert who actually creates trends and movements and Fotballfrue in terms of also food and health and stuff like that, good or bad but she is. And I would say to some extent Emilie VoeNering who was the most famous one before, she still has a big influence, and most importantly for me she is a good role model for young girls. Most of the other popular girls right now in my personal opinion are not good role models at all. And I think that’s a shame that it has turned out that kind of content and not being a good role model. Also I would say that Sisteplass which is on first place on blog.no now is stirring up things a little bit, and I think she is a clearly influencer in terms of humor and topics she discuss and kind of points out. So I think she is an interesting mix to it all.

Q: Why are they so popular? How have they become so popular?
A: Cause they’re a hitting a niche, they are connecting to the audience in a different kind of way, they are not trying to push or sell anything. They are just talking about their passion and sharing a lot of valuable information/entertainment for the readers. And that’s the way you build a community or audience over time that actually recommends you and talks about you and shares your thoughts.

Q: Do you see any characteristics of those who have done well with blogging?
A: Yeah, in terms of popular bloggers its very clearly young pretty girls with not many opinions at all, but kind of a glamorous life which is the most popular. What I think is interesting is that the influencers are more the blogger who are true to themselves, have a passion and they just stay with that and it’s clearly a red thread through all their content and it’s clear that their living it and not just producing it to make more money.

Q: What are the most important factors to create a long-term popular blog?
A: I think that it’s constantly adding value over time just showing their readers that 1) you care about them, and 2) you’re passionate about the published content.

Q: Are there any bloggers that have created a name for themselves or a personal brand through blogging in Norway? Who are they?
A: Yeah, for example Ulrikke Lund, Fotballfrue and Voe are clearly examples of that.

Q: How has blogging helped them to create a personal brand?
A: It gives them a platform that, look at Facebook, Twitter or Google+ or Instagram. These are not their personal space; it’s just borrowed space from some kind of service. It’s hard to control, it’s hard to constantly fight for attention because we have so many things being thrown at us, chats or ads and other people’s opinions. But a blog is your personal space where you control with the experience, visual images and also all the thoughts and information there. So it’s an easier place to get people’s attention and really get to know them and build a relationship with them and also since people expect that
you constantly update and add things makes people come back. And when people come back you slowly grow your relationship tighter and tighter with them. That’s why commercials is called “reklamera”, repeat, scream out, repeat again. Advertising works that way. The more you see an add the more likely you actually are to by the product. And the same way with blogging, the more you visit them the more the chances are that you come back and keep on getting back as long as you get value each time you visit them the first times. So I think that’s one of the main reasons why blogging is such a good way to build a personal brand.

Q: What have they done differently compared to other popular bloggers?
A: I would say stay through to themselves and wasn’t a sell out

Q: What is the benefit of having a personal brand through blogging?
A: It gives you major opportunities in terms of carrier and commercial opportunities and stuff like that. Let’s take me as an example, uneducated, should probably just be a waiter somewhere or something like that. But I started building my brand in 2003/3004 through the blog and now I am the CEO of a big production company based in Norway and Sweden. I also published a book and do major speaks all over Sweden and Norway and that’s because people have a relationship through me through my blog and my brand. And actually isolated I’m probably the blogger in Norway who have actually made the most money on blogging, cause I didn’t sell advertising or stuff like that. I just sold my services through courses, public speaks and stuff like that. And that gives you major opportunities in terms of actually building a career. And it’s also easier to start your own businesses. For example Ulrikke have this very popular and successful web shop where she sold the clothes she was passionate about and it did really well and that’s because she had an audience and a relationship with this people already before she started selling them stuff and she sold them stuff that was logic to her and them that she would sell. So that also gives like a good connection in terms of building a business.

Q: Why do you think companies choose to use social media and particular bloggers to speak about and review their product or services?
A: Because they’re the future influencers and brands don’t have to buy the audience from all over the place. The can just use the street “cred” and the audience already there from the blogger. It’s a cheaper more effective way of doing marketing.

Q: So you think their becoming influencers by writing more personal about their passion and not through reviews or advertising for companies.
A: Yes, I think that the way you build tight relationships is not talking about brands and stuff, but your passion in your own words. But doing the right campaign with the right brand can also strengthen your relationship. But if you’ll take away all the walls it’s just you and your passion and your opinions about your passion that matters. Everything else is just added on layers on top of it.
Q: What kind of knowledge do you have about the relationship between bloggers and companies that advertise on the blogs? How does that work?
A: That is a long answer and a short answer. But most brands just use the bloggers wrong by just paying ads on their blogs. That works to some extent, it gives higher click through values than on VG for example, but it’s not the bloggers opinions it’s just bought space. So it doesn’t have that much influence on the readers. Brands also sometimes pay bloggers through review or giveaway products, that’s highly more effective but also more costly because you usually pay between five and fifteen thousand each post to a blogger for getting the things reviewed. But we see that the brands that are really using it well are making long terms relationship with the blogger through many years and just do small campaigns during the year can have awareness and instead of just doing massively things just going away. But it’s a big business and it’s a dirty business in terms of many big brands that are actually exploiting young girls as they don’t know business and don’t know what they should charge for the services and stuff like that. But it’s gradually getting better. I fought very hard through many years to get more clear rules and actually educate the bloggers on what kind of rights they had and what things they should think about when their doing kind of commercial things like this. But it’s a big business; it’s a lot of millions getting through the systems every year.

Q: Is it usually companies that contact the bloggers or the other way around?
A: In terms of the really good paid campaigns it’s usually the companies contacting the bloggers. Many bloggers that just started off course are hammering the brands with emails of getting sponsorship and stuff. But the really big ones, for example most of the things I do, most of the companies come to me and ask me to find bloggers who fit their profile and like their product, and then I contact the blogger and kind of manage and take care of the blogger and the brands interest and follow it through the whole campaign. That’s actually the best way to use it, it’s not good to just pay 50 bloggers to write about something. I always have a meeting with the client and the blogger in the same room talking about what we hope to achieve with this thing, what the unique qualities of the product is, what their thoughts and feedback is before we decide to do a campaign or not. And that’s all about the strong relationship I have with the bloggers, but also the bloggers build with brand. Cause they will write better things and put more passionate to it if they have a relationship with the people behind the brand.

Q: So the most influential bloggers in your opinion, do they select the companies that they work for?
A: Yes, they say more no than they say yes. And that actually makes them earn more money as well.
Q: Because that’s also linked to literature that we read about this subject, that it’s important for the bloggers to be authentic, to be real for the consumers. What do you think about this?
A: Yes, without doubts. We as the reader have what I call bullshit detector, so we can easily smell if there’s just paid bullshit. And doing that over time will actually just make you lose readers, and just crash and burn. I have seen that multiple times with bloggers coming up getting a lot offers saying yes to everything. People just get sick of all this stupid kind of commercials and then they just drop off. I would say number one most important thing you as a blogger have is the authenticity and then it’s your passion.

Q: When it comes to consumers or readers, what kind of influence do you think bloggers have on consumer behavior? With regards to buying products the blogger purchase or products they review for various companies?
A: I think they have a big impact. I mentioned OnePiece earlier but a lot of new brands that are coming to Norway use bloggers almost exclusively to build a presence and make consumers buy it and make a position. Consumers now often tend to like to read blogs about their interest life for example fashion and then decide from that what they are actually going to buy. So they are major influencers.

Q: In what degree are bloggers considered to be a reference point or search option when it comes to trends?
A: I think they’re a big option, its maybe the most used source for inspiration in terms of trends and stuff. We also know that the magazines are using bloggers more and more. So magazines about for example fashion trends are using bloggers to write about trends in their magazines. So we also have seen that journalists get a lot of inspiration from the bloggers and then tend to spread out their reviews after that.

Q: We have a question regarding banners, referring to page 64 in your book. You say that banners are sold either via showings, clicks or conversions, and we were wondering if you could explain the difference between clicks and conversions?

A: CPC is the same as cost per click
CPA is the same as cost per action (buy, signup etc.)

Clicks are when people click the banner and visit your site, conversion or action is when they do what you want them to. For example buy your stuff, or signup to your mailing list.

That was all the questions we had. Thank you so much for your time.
Appendix 2: E-mail interviews with blog readers of StylebyKling

- Inge Van Israël – www.fashionenvie.be

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I started my blog during my first exam period at the university in Antwerp, I was looking for something to take my mind of studying once in a while and as I had been reading fashion blogs as well, I simply decided to go for it. I initially wanted to inspire people, even if it were only a few visitors. Things started going quite fast after a few months and I’m eager to continue learning and growing more every day but it’s still all about inspiring people and showing what I like.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: It has basically taught me to not give up and be patient but to work hard for what you want as well.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: I focus on creating content that my readers want to see and that I want to provide. It’s about finding a balance between those 2 things.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: I hope to inspire my readers, network with people in the fashion industry and gain further knowledge about brands and the industry.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: Mainly fashion and personal style blogs.

Q: How did you hear about or find Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: I don’t exactly remember how I heard about her blog, but it’s probably from reading about her in an article or from her collaborations with well-known brands.

Q: Why do you read/follow Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: I love the style of Scandinavian bloggers and she definitely has a great, minimalist style. I love seeing what she wears and where she shops.

Q: How would you describe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: I would describe it as a personal style blog with a minimalist style based on good quality basics.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Elin Kling?
A: I see her as a powerful businesswoman with a great deal of ambition. She does a great job with her brand collaborations and her own fashion magazine. Definitely a woman to look up to.

Q: How does Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” influence you?
A: I often take a look at the brands that she’s wearing. I always discover new brands and shops on her blog.

Q: Have you ever recommended Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” to others?
A: I usually mention her among my favorite blogs, so I must have recommended her to someone, yes.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Mainly because of her style and way of dressing or the brands that she wears.

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Elin Kling has blogged about?
A: Probably, yes.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Because I liked it after seeing it on her blog.

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: I mostly get influenced by outfit posts because those photos show a different side of the item and show how it can be worn.

Q: How is Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” different from other popular blogs?
A: Her style is unique, just like every other fashion blogger’s style.

Q: Why do you believe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” have become some influential?
A: Because people could relate to her style and the items she buys, also because of the great collaborations she has done with brands.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: Decent writing skills, a special style and good-quality photos.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: Time and the will to go on.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: I do think that they can really influence readers. Especially considering new trends to try or new brands to discover.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: It depends on the community they have been able to build and the trust they get from their readers. If your readers truly believe what you’re saying and if they share your opinion, you will be able to influence them or show them things they normally wouldn’t try or do.
Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I started Moi Contre La Vie as a creative outlet. I’ve written stories since I was a child but had never been comfortable sharing my work. My blog was a chance to share my thoughts and opinions with like-minded people.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: It gives me a unique ability to connect with people – I’ve met readers and other bloggers at blogging events, conferences, and fashion week, people from around the world that I never would have met without blogging.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: My goal is to create interesting, relevant pieces – Whether I’m writing about fashion, food, or fitness, my posts address the issues that we face every day – From what to wear to the office to how to stay healthy in today’s fast-paced world, to what you can do to help yourself stay in shape even if you only have a few minutes to spare during the week.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: My goal is to write fulltime and I would love to either make a living writing for my own site or use my blog as a platform to connect with brands or other publications.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: I read a number of fashion blogs, online magazines, and health & fitness blogs.

Q: How did you hear about or find Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: There was a feature on her fantastic style on WhoWhatWear and I fell in love with her site.

Q: Why do you read/follow Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: Yes, I follow her on Twitter.

Q: How would you describe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: Sleek, modern, and stylish.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Elin Kling?
A: As a successful, modern woman who started in blogging and has parlayed that success to other fashion-related pursuits.

Q: How does Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” influence you?
A: Her minimalist, black & white style is very inspirational.

Q: Have you ever recommended Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” to others?
A: Absolutely – I’ve featured her in my weekly round-up of posts called Links You’ll Love.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Worth sharing!

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Elin Kling has blogged about?
A: No.

Q: If yes, why?
A: N/A

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: She has a great sense of style so her outfit posts are always inspirational.

Q: How is Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” different from other popular blogs?
A: I like that she covers everything from home décor to office styling to personal fashion.

Q: Why do you believe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” have become some influential?
A: Miss Kling has gone from a fashion blogger to the front row at fashion shows, features in fashion magazines, and her own collection for Marciano.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: From a monetary standpoint, I supposed influence and success directly translates into sales from her site and affiliate marketing/links/advertising. From a creative standpoint however, I think that an influential blogger is one who motivates their readers to try new things, change their perspective, and shake things up in their own lives. And yes, that can be applied to fashion.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: Hard work, dedication, and consistency. Being able to produce relevant, compelling content day-after-day is the way to win over your readers.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: I think that they can be incredibly influential, that’s precisely why so many brands, stores, and publications are taking advantage of that influence and giving bloggers amazing opportunities like designing collections, being brand ambassadors, hosting events, guest writing etc. Since bloggers are perceived as “real people” with real concerns, they can reach the masses better than a perfect celebrity on a pedestal, people relate to them.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Relevance. If the blog’s topics are interesting and relevant to what’s going on in people’s lives, they’ll continue to read and be influenced. And that can be applied to everything from what beauty products they recommend to how to mix & match pieces in your wardrobe to avoid going shopping each season. It may seem silly, but every single day women, and men, ask themselves those questions, so if someone’s providing useful answers, they’re going to listen.

- Caitlin – caitlinconfidential.com
Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I started blogging as a creative outlet for myself and to report on unique or different things that I was not finding on other blogs or the internet.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: Blogging has brought me much value, especially within the last year. It has opened me up to a community of people who love to discuss similar interests in depth. It also has allowed me to be totally creative, without rules or regulations. I can create pictures or report on anything I choose or that I feel there is a need for.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: I try to create 90 percent totally original content, and 10 percent reporting on fashion or trends. The most fulfilling thing is to create as much content as possible through photographs. So for example, if I am doing a fashion story (i.e. being photographed in an outfit) I want to create a look within a surrounding that is beautiful to look at. I don’t understand other blogs where someone may post a bad quality picture of themselves against a brick wall. What is interesting about that? I try to make my posts have a little more flair.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: I hope to attract regular readers who are interested or enjoy the kind of content I create and topics I discuss. I am currently filming videos to add another layer of media, in the hopes of gaining more readers.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?

Q: How did you hear about or find Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?  
A: I cannot remember specifically where I first heard of Elin Kling’s blog, but I think it may have been through another blog mentioning hers.

Q: Why do you read/follow Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?  
A: I like her clothing aesthetic. I find it similar to mine. I also like that she isn’t trying to wear over-the-top outfits to look “in fashion.” She sticks to what she likes and what works for her.

Q: How would you describe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?  
A: Modern and simple.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Elin Kling?  
A: She seems like somebody who is a hard worker, who enjoys her work.

Q: How does Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” influence you?  
A: I don’t know if I would say it necessarily influences me, she really only posts pictures of clothing items from online or a picture of herself. She doesn’t create a lot of original content. But I would say that I enjoy her modern aesthetic and a glimpse of her life in New York.
Q: Have you ever recommended Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” to others?
A: I don’t think I have.

Q: If yes, why?
A: 

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Elin Kling has blogged about?
A: No, I have not. But I certainly have similar tastes to hers and enjoy the things she posts about.

Q: If yes, why?
A: 

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: There has not been one that has impacted me to buy anything.

Q: How is Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” different from other popular blogs?
A: I don’t know if I have a specific thing to note for why her blog is different. I am a more recent viewer (1 year+). She used to post a lot more of herself and her outfits.

Q: Why do you believe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” have become some influential?
A: I think it is influential because she started blogging at a time where there were not as many bloggers or choices. I think she had some minor celebrity in her home country of Sweden, so it was a good platform for her to reach out to those interested in her.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: I think a successful or influential blog is one that puts out original content that has not be seen before, so when done successfully, people respond to it. People respond to innovative ideas, images, or feelings.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: I think it takes somebody who stays true to their personal style and opinions and is putting out beautiful and unique content that people want to see. Also, I believe the higher quality the visuals the better.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: I think they influence readers a lot. (I explain why below).

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: It (usually) isn’t someone endorsing a product such as a celebrity, it is someone just like you telling their opinion, which the reader can choose to listen to or not. For example, if a fashion blogger takes a picture wearing a great pair of shoes from Zara, readers who like them will go out and buy. If a blogger puts up a picture of their new favorite lipstick, and someone responds to that, they will choose to buy.
Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: To share my sense of style and confidence to be in front of the camera, learn and improve my style from famous bloggers and keep myself up to date with fashion.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: Up-to-date fashion tips and styling and it had built my confidence to be in front of the camera and improved my writing too.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: My pictures. It has to be clear enough to speak for itself.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: Reaching out to more people and make my blog a business.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: Fashion, Beauty and Travel.

Q: How did you hear about or find Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: Advertisement on a magazine – Guess By Marciano.

Q: Why do you read/follow Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: She’s stylish and she had made her blog a successful business.

Q: How would you describe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling”?
A: Simple, chic, stylish and easy to read.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Elin Kling?
A: Chic & stylish.

Q: How does Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” influence you?
A: Simple and stylish can be successful as well. The way she had made it in the business world using her blog has definitely inspired me.

Q: Have you ever recommended Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” to others?
A: No

Q: If yes, why?
A:

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Elin Kling has blogged about?
A: No

Q: If yes, why?
A:
Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A:

Q: How is Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” different from other popular blogs?
A: Her blog reminded me of magazine pages and I haven’t followed a big blogger like her which has the same design.

Q: Why do you believe Elin Kling’s blog, “StylebyKling” have become some influential?
A: Her success in collaboration with bigger brands has definitely influenced many bloggers and readers.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: Collaboration with worldwide brands, many followers and blogging as a full time job.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: Work smart and hard.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: A big blogger like Elin Kling definitely has a great influence on readers. The content and work they do create the desire in readers to buy a product introduced and to the ability to convinced readers.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Because they are famous enough to influence worldwide brands and gain sponsorship and collaborations. Hence, with all the brands backing them up, readers/consumers generally will be exposed to them in many ways like magazines, blog ads, social media and etc.

Appendix 3: E-mail interviews with blog readers of Fotballfrue

- Jessica Von D – opbbyjv@hotmail.com

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: A blog contains things I like a lot which is writing articles and taking photos. I thought a blog about specific aspects of my life, my projects and my experiences could make me visualize what my life currently is about and could make me focus on something new. I like the idea of a portrait of this section of my life.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: At the end of a long day I like having a coffee, sitting at my desk and being left with my thoughts. Blogging gives me some kind of satisfaction. There’s always something to
talk about or to show. I take time to think about new projects, what I could improve on my blog and what post I could write next.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: I always try to be honest with myself and to write posts about what is happening in my life such as my projects, hobbies and personal fashion and lifestyle. I think my blog is still in progress and I have to find out what it is I want to tell about in future. I saw blogs with always the same pose showing outfits the same way. To me that is too monotonous. Thus I prefer to take photos in everyday situations showing me with my personal interests. Of course I use stylistic elements too, for instance taking photos of a specific item or in black and white.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: It would be great to get more feedback from readers whether they like my posts or not. I would like to know what they think about certain topics and posts. Moreover I would like to share information and ideas. I always was a creative person. I took photos since I was 9 years old and I love to draw and designing different things. The internet is a great place to get in contact with like-minded people.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: I read personal blogs about home interior, personal fashion style and cooking. To be up to date I use bloglovin’ to read the blogs I follow which mainly are "Fotballfrue", "Costal Style" and "Style by Kling".

Q: How did you hear about or find Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”? 
A: Last year in December I was browsing through some pics on Instagram and found one with cute white Christmas decoration. On Caroline’s Instagram profile I found her blog link and thought I could stop by.

Q: Why do you read/follow Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,"Fotballfrue”? 
A: I just browse through her photos because I don’t understand Norwegian. But I like to see what’s going on in her life and what she is currently doing, cooking or wearing. Her photos are very nice to look at and as a sports fan I love posts about new workouts and sports goods.

Q: How would you describe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”? 
A: I would say that she improved her blog over the past years very well. The first photos appear spontaneous and include red eyes or even bad light. But nowadays the photos have a consistent style that gives her blog a fresh high key look. Furthermore I think that she is true to her title "Fotballfrue" as she shows her readers the typical life of a sportsman’s wife with all its benefits and commitments.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Caroline Berg Eriksen?
A: To me she appears like a woman who has found her place / way in this world and is happy with it. She is in a great physical shape and full of energy. And I would say that she appreciates her readers as she is constantly giving feedback on their comments.

Q: How does Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” influence you?
A: This question is hard to answer because I can’t say if I like her blog because it fits to my life or if she represents something I want in my life. I would say that her blog keeps me smiling and I like to see her with her husband, family, friends, and in all kinds of daily situations. This is sometimes similar to my life and experiences.

Q: Have you ever recommended Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog, “Fotballfrue” to others?
A: Yes I did. Some month ago I saw a recipe and thought I could share it with a friend. We both use to cook from time to time and are always looking for new recipes to try out.

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Caroline Berg Eriksen has blogged about?
A: No, not so far. She seems to have a high income and for me the products and clothes are unfortunately too expensive.

Q: If yes, why?
A: ---

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: Of course there’s always an influence of a person showing an item. I sometimes click on links, particularly when it’s Zara / H&M / Topshop and so on.

Q: How is Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog, “Fotballfrue” different from other popular blogs?
A: The blogs I know and mainly follow are the above mentioned. Caroline is constantly updating her blog, sometimes two times a day or even when she is on vacation. Furthermore she is creative with her post and one can see that she puts time into her blog posts.

Q: Why do you believe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog, “Fotballfrue” have become some influential?
A: On the one hand I think that she represents a special type of person such as the happy wife in the perfect house, the blonde girl or the sporty type of woman and on the other hand because of the insight look she gives to her readers. Everyone can see her early in the morning (ok, mostly with make-up), doing her household, preparing and having her parties and doing her daily beauty care.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: I would say it’s the personality one reveals on the blog. To show more of oneself is more attractive than every stylish pose may she/he ever be so beautiful.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: First of all it’s time and ideas. It’s useless if one has no time to keep his blog going and otherwise what is it for if one has time but no ideas?! Moreover I think that an influential blog needs the certain something to make the people visit the blog again.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Maybe these bloggers know how to influence their readers or they do it without meaning to. Another indicator is the quantity of comments that make the blog look like an important blog and worth to follow.

- Katrine Haugesten – follows the blog “Fotballfrue”

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: Fashion, interior and “everyday life”.

Q: How did you hear about or find Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?
A: From a friend who went to school with her.

Q: Why do you read/follow Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?
A: Because I am so fascinated about how she live her life. She is so structured and disciplined with everything such as training, cooking, washing and everything else.

Q: How would you describe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?
A: I see it as an “everyday life” blog. She writes about so many things in her life. Not just fashion or training. It’s just like a magazine. And everything is just a little bit to perfect.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Caroline Berg Eriksen?
A: I think she is boring because she always seems to have everything in order. I don’t think she is spontaneous at any time, and I think to not yet have any kids she never sees her girlfriends. She just lives in her house and in her perfect bobble with her lists of “what to do today”.

Q: How does Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” influence you?
A: Mostly with her food recipes. I do not follow that diet, but I think she is a good cook. Sometimes I look at her workout clothes and face cream.

Q: Have you ever recommended Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” to others?
A: Not that I can remember.

Q: If yes, why?
A:

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Caroline Berg Eriksen has blogged about?
A: Yes
Q: If yes, why?
A: I have bought a straightener that I read about on her blog. And my hairdresser did also recommend that brand.
Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: I don’t think there was one special post that convinced me. I do not read the posts where she recommends products.

Q: How is Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog, “Fotballfrue” different from other popular blogs?
A: Because she writes about so many things in her life. And she is showing pictures of everything. I think other bloggers are holding on to some few things to write about, such as fashion, interior, cooking or motherhood. But she writes about it all. We know so much about her.

Q: Why do you believe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog, “Fotballfrue” have become some influential?
A: Because she describes her life so perfect. She has control of everything that so many others don’t. I think very many wants to be like her, and also live after all these lists and get so many things done every day.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: When they inspire and write about different things. Give advice and be first with things.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: You need to have something in your life that regular people don’t.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: Very much! I think very many (and especially young girls) look up to one or more bloggers. They want to be just like them.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Because they have the money and interesting life that common people don’t. We look up to them, and think if I have the same things they have, my life would just as perfect as theirs.

- Therese Arnestad

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I started to blog because I needed a place to document my daily life to my family who doesn’t live nearby and I also needed a place where I could express my thoughts, feelings and meanings.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: Blogging provide me with a lot of value because I get to express myself on a platform where I am in charge. Normally I’m a bit shy and therefore it is easier to have a place where I can write and publish when I have the guts to do it. It is something that I love to do, and it makes me happy when I make blog posts that I am satisfied with.
Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: It depends on what type of post I am making, but mostly I am focusing on great pictures and the text should be easy to read. Lately I have tried to keep the personal level very low on my blog, and perhaps write my posts in a way that my closest friends understand them, but people who don’t know me doesn’t get the real meaning behind my posts.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: There was a time where I wanted my blog to get big and famous, but not anymore, it is too much work for me at the moment. Right now I just want to do it because it is fun, if I can get anyone inspired or anything that is a big enough accomplishment for me.

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: I read a lot of blogs mostly fashion, food or daily life/personal blogs.

Q: How did you hear about or find Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?  
A: I am not sure, probably because she was one of the most read blogs on blogg.no.

Q: Why do you read/follow Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?
A: Because I love the way she writes. She updates regularly and writes about training, her daily life and themes that catches me. She is also very beautiful and I love her style. Her blog is perfectly put together and she makes it easy as a reader to follow her and her daily life.

Q: How would you describe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue”?
A: The blog is perfectly put together, both in design and each post.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Caroline Berg Eriksen?
A: I perceive her as an independent, hard-working, beautiful and warm woman with high ambitions and goals, and she works her ass off to get wherever she wants in life.

Q: How does Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” influence you?
A: She influences me with workout inspiration and good-looking and healthy recipes. It is not to get away from that when she recommends makeup or beauty products that I get a little influenced as well.

Q: Have you ever recommended Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” to others?
Answer: Yes, often.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Because I see her as a great role model and I find her blog interesting and fun to read. Hopefully my friends feel the same.

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Caroline Berg Eriksen has blogged about?
A: Yes, I have.
Q: If yes, why?
A: Because I believe that her opinions about the products are genuine and that she wouldn’t recommend something that she wasn’t happy with. I have not regretted any of the products I have bought after reading about them on her blog.

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: Ole Henriksen’s facial products for instance. I don’t know how and why it had an impact on me, but I felt that the products were relevant for me and when it was such a popular brand I couldn’t help but try.

Q: How is Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” different from other popular blogs?
A: She is a healthy role model with different hobbies. Her posts are catchy for both young and elder women, and therefore she has a broad specter of readers.

Q: Why do you believe Caroline Berg Eriksen’s blog,”Fotballfrue” have become some influential?
A: Because of her journalism background, she knows how to write posts that make the readers want to read them.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: Updates regularly, answer the readers, tidy design, easy-reading posts, catchy themes and make the readers feel included and appreciated.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: It takes a lot. First of all you need readers and to get that you need to write about something that people want to read about, but the theme cannot be overly used so that people are tired of reading about it. You need to be successful to be influential, and it’s hard to be successful. The fact that there is a lot of unknown but really good bloggers out there is stating the fact that it is hard to get successful unless you really work for it.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: Bloggers have a huge influence, more than regular advertising because it comes from a person we feel we can trust.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
Answer: Because we see them as role models and we feel like we know them because we feel included in their lives. If your friends or family recommend you something you will probably believe them more than if a salesman said the same thing. Since we feel like we are a part of the bloggers life we also feel like we can trust them when/if they recommend something.
Appendix 4: E-mail interviews with blog readers of Blondinbella

- Hanna – maltataste.com

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I moved to a new country, and I like to start blogging about Malta

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: Just for fun, I like to share things with family.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: Pictures and a fun text

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: Nothing, it is just for fun

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
Answer: Blondinbella, katrinz.se, paulaus.me

Q: How did you hear about or find Blondinella’s blog?
A: She is famous in Sweden, so I Google’ her.

Q: Why do you read/follow Blondinbella’s blog?
A: She is smart and fun.

Q: How would you describe Blondinbella’s blog?
A: Smart and fun.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger, Blondinbella?
A: Smart and fun.

Q: How does Blondinbella’s Blog influence you?
A: Nothing really, just fun reading on a boring day.

Q: Have you ever recommended Blondinbella’s blog to others?
A: No

Q: If yes, why?
A:

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Blondinbella has blogged about?
A: No

Q: If yes, why?
A:
Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: Never happened

Q: How is Blondinbella’s blog different from other popular blogs?
A: She stands up for herself as a young woman, I like her power and self-confidence.

Q: Why do you believe Blondinbella’s blog have become some popular/influential?
A: She knows exactly what she is doing.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: Funny, pictures, and just goes for it.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: Maybe contact’s or very hard focus.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: Young girl’s maybe, but no not that much really.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Like I say, young girl’s maybe, but most will not be influenced.

• Johanna Källgren – www.frozenfilantrop.se

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: First of all, I love writing! My blog is the best place for me to be creative and on top of that I get directly response from people all over Sweden liking (or not liking) what I write.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: My blog give me so many good things. I practice’s my writing every day. I am the one who decides what is good enough to post and what is not, and I am absolutely free to write about whatever I want. Blogging also gave me the opportunity to get to know people over the internet that I probably wouldn’t get to know IRL.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: A good and interesting headline and that my grammar is correct. I try to write things that I myself would be interested to reed. Finely I try to be personal in my text but not to private.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: My blog is my creative block. For now I want it to grow bigger and give me the opportunity to get to know more interesting people all over the internet. I the future I want it to be part of my business and my own brand (This applies if I become self-employed again. As I have been previously). And if I don't. I'll keep it just for fun.
Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: Just Lifestyles blogs.

Q: How did you hear about or find Blondinella’s blog?
A: I started to read her blog when I was 16 (that’s five years ago) and I found her blog and blog address in the daily newspaper.

Q: Why do you read/follow Blondinbella’s blog?
A: When I was younger it was because I too was a self-employer just like her and she inspired me. Today it's just for old times and curiosity. I wonder what she is doing at the moment.

Q: How would you describe Blondinbella’s blog?
A: She updates a bit too often, which makes the text sometimes a bit meaningless to me. She uses it strictly to promote her projects and that could be fun and interesting (but not after a while). Right now the blog is interesting because it happens a lot in her life like weddings, pregnancy, and much work.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger Blondinbella?
A: I have met her IRL but I course don't know her. I perceive her as productive and energetic! It's hard to say actually.

Q: How does Blondinbella’s Blog influence you?
A: Not so much at all! Or yes, sometimes she makes me upset by her lyrics and sometimes she inspires me (often about work here). But when I was younger I loved and liked everything she said. Probably just because I wanted to do what she did then! She may have a very big impact, but probably most applicable to her younger readers.

Q: Have you ever recommended Blondinbella’s blog to others?
A: Yes, a few. A couple of years ago (today she don't need that :-))

Q: If yes, why?
A: She was and still is an interesting person. I recommended her to people who also were very young and self-employers.

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Blondinbella has blogged about?

Q: If yes, why?
A: Just because she wrote it! When you constantly read a blog you imagining you know the person behind it and if you like him/her you naturally want to support them. For example by buying whatever they sell.

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: It's not one blog post that makes you buy or not buy a product that a blogger sells. It's the whole picture you get. Like I wrote above it’s about imaging you know this person,
believing in them when they say something so good and then wanting to support them.

Q: How is Blondinbella’s blog different from other popular blogs?
A: She is excited because she has done so much even though she is very young. In addition, she has always written about loving yourself and dare to do anything you feel to do, which is rare in Nordic culture.

Q: Why do you believe Blondinbella’s blog have become some popular/influential?
Answer: Because of the reasons I wrote above and because she started at the right time. Blogging wasn't too big in about 7 or 8 years ago and she and a few others were the only bloggers existing here. Her Blogging name also gives her attention I think.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: You have to be personal! You have to give the reader something that only you can give them, a picture of you. You are your own product. And if you want to be a successful blogger you have to be brave and give the reader personal things about you and your life. I also have to be analytical and dig around in your own mind.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
Answer: Keep the blog alive for many years and have specific subjects that you write about. In time you will be some of an expert in this specific subject. People will then listen to you!

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: It depends. I care much more about opinions written by bloggers I like and if I feel that I resemble that person.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Mainly because we feel that they are genuine, interesting and that we like them! Bloggers who are genuine and don't turn their opinions according to the wind feels real and we like real. And as I have written above, we thing we know them after time and in some way we do. And the bloggers we “get to know” and like, we want to support. Like we want to support an IRL friend.
Appendix 5: E-mail interviews with blog readers of CamillaPihl

- Anna Natalia – annasteenberg@live.dk

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: The first blog I read was the Swedish Kissie, and I found the blogger world very exciting, so I started my own blog. Also because I like to take photos, so I would have a place to show them.

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: It's my hobby, so it's kind of giving me some peace, and cozy time. It also feels very nice to get feedback and comments from my readers. It makes me happy :)

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: I mostly focus on that the post looks good, and that it has something to say. And hopefully that it has something that can inspire or entertain readers.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: In my dream world it would be the most awesome thing if I could make a living out of it! I'll give it a try over time :) But in the meantime it's just to get some nice experiences out of it. Such as invites to events which I love, fashion shows, collaboration with companies etc. and helping out with stuff like here :)

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: I like blogs that's about people and their lives. I like to read about food, experiences, thoughts and I like to get inspired by provoking and different things. Blogs with fashion only can be very boring to me, but a mix of everything is good!

Q: How did you hear about or find Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: She was one of the first blogs I started following, so I guess I found her on bloglovin.com, but I honestly don't remember exactly.

Q: Why do you read/follow Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: Because I like her style, her photos and then she is very pretty haha. She's a pretty cool lady :)

Q: How would you describe Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: Professional, welcoming and peaceful somehow. She seems like a very honest personality, and I like that.

Q: How do you perceive the blogger Camilla Pihl?
A: Again she seems like a very honest person and sweet too. To me it seems that her personality shines through on the blog :)

Q: How does Camilla Pihl’s Blog influence you?
A: Her blog reminds me to simply just keep things real! No need to fake it up.
Q: Have you ever recommended Camilla Pihl’s blog to others?
A: I don't think so, not many of my friends are into blogging :)
Q: If yes, why?
A:

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Camilla Pihl has blogged about?
A: Not that I recall no
Q: If yes, why?
A:

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: If a blog post should do that, it might be a vlog or something like that. A video where the reviews a product and gives his or her honest opinion. That might make me buy a product.

Q: How is Camilla Pihl’s blog different from other popular blogs?
A: It's different because her personality shines through, and since no one is alike she is like no one else :)

Q: Why do you believe Camilla Pihl’s blog have become some popular/influential?
A: I could imagine that if she had more videos the readers could get more “in contact” with her.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: First of all that the person behind it has something to say, and has their own way of saying it. Strong personality and passion. Some has it, and some don't.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: That must be kind of the same as the above :) Also it takes persistency and your readers have to depend on you. Also you have to be able to inspire people with something. Blogs are not only about fashion, so it could be just anything!

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: I think that the thought about blogs is that bloggers are honest, so they will say just what they think of a certain product or a service. In Denmark blogs have just started to pop up in the media etc., so here they are mostly talking about fashion. And many bloggers, I believe, have the potential to be fashion icons or trendsetters, such as Angelica Blick. So I think bloggers give the public/their readers an honest opinion and therefore can help them make the right choices.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Because they have something that others can look up to. They inspire and I don't think that it takes much more than that to influence someone :) 

- Ingrid Boge - http://msfashly.com

Q: Why did you start blogging?
A: I love to be inspired, and to inspire. My blog is my little place where I gather information and style-inspiration from my life. I also love to connect with other bloggers that have some of the same interest as me. It’s a place where I am my own editor, and can include whatever I find interesting. Like my own little encyclopedia 😊

Q: What value does blogging provide you with?
A: Tips, information, inspiration, entertainment and also friendship.

Q: What do you focus on when creating blog posts?
A: Nice photos!!
First it was for me to have a place to organize what I find inspiring, now I also try to focus on what my target audience wants to read. I tend not to be too personal, so I choose what I want to include and exclude.

Q: What do you wish to accomplish with your blog?
A: A place where readers enjoy themselves, and can look up things they are looking for. Also, I “second memory” for my inspiring self :) 

Q: What kind of blogs do you regularly read?
A: Mainly fashion and life-style bloggers. But I also have favorites such as interior and creative-bloggers.

Q: How did you hear about or find Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: A friend.

Q: Why do you read/follow Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: She has many nice pictures, also tips about fashion, food and places to go. She makes me smile.

Q: How would you describe Camilla Pihl’s blog?
A: Fashionable, positive and smart.

Q: How do you perceive the person behind the blog?
A: Like the answer above.

Q: How does Camilla Pihl’s Blog influence you?
A: I love her style, and sometimes I’ve ended up buying things that I found on her blog.

Q: Have you ever recommended Camilla Pihl’s blog to others?
A: Yes.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Because she has many tips, also where to go when she is traveling around the world.

Q: Have you ever tried or bought a product or service that Camilla Pihl has blogged about?
A: Yes.

Q: If yes, why?
A: Well, she has a good taste I assume, I’ve liked it. Since I am in the PR-business myself, I guess she’s working closely with designers and agency to get things posted on her blog, but nevertheless, if I like it, I buy it 😊

Q: Describe a blog post that influenced or convinced you to try or buy a product or service? How and why did this communication have an impact on you?
A: Just from a shop she went to in Budapest, where she bought a little belt. I am in Budapest at the moment, and of course I had to stop by to check it out, because I know she has a good taste in style. I ended up buying something from the store myself, BUT it wasn’t as awesome as I thought it would be, but I love getting tips like that anyways.

Q: How is Camilla Pihl’s blog different from other popular blogs?
A: She is very down-to-earth, positive, answers comments and doesn’t see herself (at least it seems) like a celebrity. Sometimes I believe that the person behind the blog and how she appears is as important as the content.

Q: Why do you believe Camilla Pihl’s blog have become some popular/influential?
A: Again, because of her personality, and also how the blog he appears and the content.

Q: In your opinion, what characterizes a successful and influential blog?
A: Be your own self, get inspired by others, but do not copy. Find a niche that’s special for you. Add something (this is hard) to you blog that’s not out there already. Also you can get products on your blog from PR agencies and designers, but be sure to choose something that represents you if you want the blog to be “you”. If people want commercial, it can be a good way to go for people making a living out of it. But for myself, I try to avoid this.

Q: In your opinion, what does it take to create an influential blog?
A: As the answer above.

Q: As a blogger and blog reader, to what extent do you think that bloggers influence blog readers’ opinions and choices?
A: If the reader like your style, I think the also “trust” you in choosing a product or brand for example. Hopefully the readers have their own opinion in what they like, I am sure they do, but also, I am pretty sure they can be easily influenced by bloggers they look up to.

Q: Why do you believe that certain blogs or bloggers are able to influence readers/consumers?
A: Because the readers like them as the person they appear to be.
Appendix 6: Survey results

Summary of survey results, 154 respondents

Gender

- Female: 106
- Male: 48

Age

- 16-20: 4
- 21-25: 56
- 26-30: 78
- 31-40: 14
- 40+: 2

Nationality

- Norwegian: 119
- Swedish: 19
- Danish: 17
- German: 3
- Other: 5

Do you read any blogs?

- Yes: 91
- No: 63

List up to three blogs you read frequently

- Ikke kjent: 16
- Blandt de beste: 4
- Footballrune: 28
- Sande til verden: 61
- Eleven King: 4
How do you perceive Blondinbella
Young 5, Blonde 3, Successful 3, Smart 3, Career 2, Confident 2, Shallow 2, Real woman, Happy, Swedish, Healthy, Ova option, Money, City, Blonde, Intelligent, Nice, Ward, Child, Pat, Ambitious, Ad, Real, Stylish, Mans to be, Natural Beauty, Pat, Ambitious, Hands, Loving, Silly, Uninteresting, Skilled, Personal, Disturbing, Political, Boring, Stupid, "yo-getta", Blond and beautiful, Entrepreneur, Conservative, Honest, Ambitious, Strong options, Business, Positive, Uninteresting, Self absorbed, Native minded, Provocative, Career woman, Compassionate, Determined, Versatile

How do you perceive Camilla FöL
Inspiring 1, Fashion 3, Fashion conscious 2, Interesting information 2, Creative 2, Modell 2, Pretty 2, Good style 2, Influential 2, Updated 2, Down to earth, Happy, Positive, Drivers, Commercial, Nice, Classy and commercial, Mainstream, Crystal, Fashionable, Clothes, Happy, Sweet, friendly, Trivial, Detailed, Variation, Entertaining, Shallow, Inspiring, Classic, Stylish, Cool, Fashion, Happy, Sincere, Cool, Feet on the ground, Good taste, Trendy, Funny, Nice picture, Lifestyle, Sincere, Groove up, Creative and sharp, Not applicable, Lateness overload, Less is more, Clever, Adventurous, Quality, Positive, Happy and fun, Welcoming, Professional, Warm, Life, Love, skilled, Humble, Trendsetter, Nice, Skilled blogger, Unknown, Cool, Inspirational blog, Dedicated, Serious, Real, boring

How do you perceive Elin Kling
Fashion 8, Trendy 4, Fashionable 2, Swedish 2, Successful, Fashionista 2, Big hit 2, Personal style 2, Classic, International, Sincere, Professional, Socialite, Shallow, Inspiring, Trendsetter, Nr 1, Perceptive, Attractive, Stylish, Serious, Different, Hipster, Interested in more than just fashion, Updated on fashion, Very good with fashion, Advertising, Black, dedicated, Updated, Influential, Innovative, Not applicable, Young, Trustworthy, Businesswoman, New York, Simplicity, Good clothing style, skilled

How do you perceive Fotballfrue
Shallow 5, Perfectionist 1, Lowcarb 3, Skinny 3, Perfect 3, Perfect life 2, Perfect world 2, Perfect style 2, Training 2, Sporty 2, Fashion 2, Housewife 2, Inspirational 2, Boring 2, Mainstream 2, Glamour 2, Gift 2, Food, Tips, Wannabe, Running, Baby, Pretty, Superficial, Masochist, Friendly, Motivating, Fashionista, Glossy, Professional, Show off, Cup cake, Wife, Celebrity, Food recipes, Traveling, Fascinating (not so in a good way), Concerned with the looks, Fashionable, Happiness, Famous, Entertaining, Rich, Psychotic, Alternative, Unfashionable, Simple, Health oriented, Fitness conscious, Variation, Good writing skills, Cist next door, Pink, Healthy, Fit, Chauvinist, Influential, Everyday-life, Personal, Sporty, Skinny, Too thin, but seems cute, Materialistic, Self absorbed, Boring, Unknown, Dedicated, Inspirational, Too open about her personal life, Special, Financial, Normal housewife style, Work out wannabe, Good food, Too much pink, fashion conscious, Fascist, Concerned, Fashion junkie 1, Fashion, Fun, Acquaint, Active, Hardworking, Always positive, Provocative, Good food tips 3, Gossip, Interesting fashion tips, Concerned by exercise and diet, Helpful, "Harry"
Why do you read blogs?

- Entertainment: 79%
- Inspiration: 78%
- Interest: 63%
- Tips & Recommendations: 53%
- Updates on trends: 56%
- Bloggers outfits: 20%
- Killing time: 63%
- Other: 22%

Do you communicate or share blogs or blog posts that you find interesting or provoking?

- Yes: 17%
- No: 110
- Sometimes: 27

Do you view bloggers as a trustworthy source?

- Yes, often: 8%
- Yes, sometimes: 75%
- No: 71%

Do you use blogs as reference point of search option when searching for information, recommendations and tips?

- Yes, often: 11%
- Yes, sometimes: 73%
- No: 70%

Do you notice advertisements and commercials when reading blogs?

- No: 24%
- Sometimes: 27%
- No: 30%
What do you think about advertisement on blogs?

- Annoying: 56%
- Unnecessary: 22%
- Indifferent: 24%
- Informative: 15%

Do you get more influenced or convinced by advertisements produced in the blog by the blogger versus placed ads?

- Yes: 43%
- No: 73%
- Don't know: 38%

Do you view recommended links posted by the blogger?

- Yes: 67%
- No: 33%

Have you ever tried or bought any products or services recommended or advertised by a blogger?

- Yes: 53%
- No: 47%

Do you feel that you get influenced by what bloggers are posting?

- Totally disagree: 39
- Disagree: 31
- Neutral: 50
- Agree: 32
- Totally agree: 2
Which one of these bloggers as a thrustworthy are posting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>What do you read from their blogs?</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Entertainment, Tracking, Inspiration, Thoughts on Things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The frequency of reading blogs varies from occasional to few times a week.
| Name     | Gender | Age Range | Frequency of Reading | Inspiration, Interest, Entertainment, Tips & Coaching | Austere, Informative, Annoying, Indifferent | Places where you get suggestions | Places where you have bought or tried | Between people you know or share recommendations | Would you recommend or buy again? | Do you only recommend what you've actually used? |
|----------|--------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------.|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Camilla Pihl | Female | 26-30   | Occasionally          | Entertainment, Inspiration, Tips & Coaching          | Austere, Annoying, Indifferent               | Camilla Pihl                             | None.                           | Yes.                            | Yes, sometimes.                  | No                               | Yes                             |
| Elin Kling  | Female | 26-30   | Occasionally          | Entertainment, Inspiration                          | Austere, Indifferent                        | Elin Kling                               | None.                           | Yes.                            | Yes, sometimes.                  | No                               | No                              |
| Blondinbella Camilla Pihl | Female | 25-30   | Occasionally          | Entertainment, Suggestions                           | Austere, Annoying                           | Blondinbella Camilla Pihl                | None.                           | Yes.                            | Yes, sometimes.                  | No                               | No                              |
| Fotballfrue  | Female | 25-30   | Occasionally          | Entertainment, Suggestions                           | Austere, Annoying                           | Fotballfrue                              | None.                           | Yes.                            | Yes, sometimes.                  | No                               | No                              |
| Fotballfrue  | Female | 25-30   | Occasionally          | Entertainment, Suggestions                           | Austere, Annoying                           | Fotballfrue                              | None.                           | Yes.                            | Yes, sometimes.                  | No                               | No                              |
### Appendix 7: Frequency of blog content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation period: week 19-28</th>
<th>Fotballfrue</th>
<th>CamillaPihl</th>
<th>Blondinbella</th>
<th>StylebyKling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total posts:</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average posts per week</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11,4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average readers’ comments received on total posts:</td>
<td>(8476/166)=51</td>
<td>(1592/114)=13,9</td>
<td>(15393/270)=57</td>
<td>(922/71)=13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average blogger replies to comments on total post:</td>
<td>(3575/166)=21,5</td>
<td>(524/114)=4,6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(6/71)=0,08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total commercial posts:</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average commercial posts per week</td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>0,4</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total comments received on commercial post:</td>
<td>(1223/30)=40,7</td>
<td>(12/4)=3</td>
<td>(547/15)=36,4</td>
<td>(24/2)=6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total personal/fashion posts:</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average personal/ fashion posts per week</td>
<td>13,3</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>19,2</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total comments received on personal/fashion post:</td>
<td>(7119/132)=53,9</td>
<td>(761/89)=8,5</td>
<td>(12481/192)=65</td>
<td>(789/56)=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total work related posts:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average work related posts per week</td>
<td>0,4</td>
<td>2,1</td>
<td>6,3</td>
<td>1,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total comments received on work related posts:</td>
<td>(134/4)=33,5</td>
<td>(295/21)=14</td>
<td>(2365/63)=37,5</td>
<td>(109/13)=8,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

194 The data is retrieved in week 19-28 (gathered each Monday every week) which indicates that more comments or replies might have been added to the posts later on. However, the calculation is only based on the figures that were present at this period of time.
195 The average has been calculated on the basis of the total of 166 posts and not 170 because it was four posts that received between 1000 and 2500 comments and it was primary posts about competitions where the comments include answers and contact information from the blog readers.
196 The average has been calculated on the basis of the total of 166 posts and not 170 because it was four posts that received between 1000 and 2500 comments and it was primary posts about competitions where the comments include answers and contact information from the blog readers.
197 Commercial posts are defined as posts where commercial content is present such as e.g. ads, sponsored products or competitions.
198 The average has been calculated on the basis of 132 posts and 133 because the post received 1414 comments and at point of time of collection of data it was not possible to access all the comments due the high number of comments. The 1414 comments are not included in the calculation either.
199 Does not include replies from blogger on comments from readers.
200 Personal/fashion posts are defined as posts where personal or fashion related information is focused on.
201 The average has been calculated on the basis of 132 posts and 133 because the post received 1414 comments and at point of time of collection of data it was not possible to access all the comments due the high number of comments. The 1414 comments are not included in the calculation either.
202 Work posts are defined as posts where the bloggers converse about own businesses or projects, or other work related information e.g. Styleby Magazine, Friendly Entertainment, jewelry collection, photo shoots, TV-shows.