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# Marketing fads and fashions
# – exploring digital marketing practices and emerging
# organisational fields

## Christofer Pihl

# Marketing fads and fashions

**Abstract**

The use of social media such as blogs has grown remarkably in Sweden during recent years. The largest segment of blogs consists of fashion blogs, i.e. blogs that focus on fashion brands, fashion products and fashion e-commerce. Using a netnographic approach, the purpose of this thesis is to analyse the emergence of the fashion blogging phenomenon, and how commercial actors operate in the realm of the fashion blogger. Drawing upon a systemic perspective on fashion, new institutional theory is used in order to study how institutional entrepreneurship can be applied as a way of studying changes within the fashion system. Here, the research question consists of answering how prosumption activities can become involved in the creation of institutionalised fields and create opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship? The thesis illustrates how consumers, by using new technology, have become able to create distribution channels for communicating fashion information which in many ways competes with traditional fashion journalism. Through the practice of blogging, bloggers take part in the construction of fashion by influencing the diffusion of new trends throughout the fashion system. It shows how consumers are able, by engaging in prosumption activities, to exert a high degree of influence and act as institutional entrepreneurs. Here, it can be argued that the social practices created by influential fashion bloggers have provided the key element from which the value creation processes of the organisational field take their point of departure. Consumers and prosumers have thus played a pivotal role in creating new channels for fashion marketing.

**Keywords:** Social media, fashion, marketing practices, institutional entrepreneurship

**Author: Christofer Pihl**
**Language: English**
**No. of pages: 125**
**Licentiate Thesis 2011**

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# Acknowledgements

this thesis. Thank you all your help and for your friendship.

Besides my colleagues I have also had the privilege of being surrounded by a loving family and good friends who have listened, given their support, and encouraged me during this process. Two of you have, to my delight, chosen a carrier in academia and have thus been especially present during this journey. Evelina Wahlqvist; your positive attitude and your creativity have provided me with a dear friendship and have made this period both entertaining and a colourful experience. Christian Sandström, I will always be grateful for your thoughtfulness and big brother-like kindness. I am looking forward to a long friendship, but also to continuing to work with both of you in the future.

Finally, one particular person whom I hold especially dear stepped into my life during the period of writing this thesis. Because of you, this journey became a thrilling adventure which provided me with new perspectives. Alexandra; thank you for your loving support. I will always carry it with me in my heart.

Gothenburg, August 2011

Christofer Pihl

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# 1. Introduction

During recent years, the use of social media has grown remarkably in Sweden. One of the channels becoming especially popular is the blog. Since the emergence of the practice of blogging in the Swedish context, the biggest segment in the blogosphere is the fashion blog (Bloggportalen, 2011). These blogs present personal and private stories about the everyday life of the blogger, with a particular focus on fashion brands, fashion products, and fashion e-commerce. Much attention has been given to this phenomenon both on the web and in the popular press, but its development has not always been regarded as unproblamtic.

In March 2008, a number of articles were published reporting that the Swedish Consumer Agency had decided to start an investigation (e.g. Eriksson, 2008; Ullberg, 2008; Schori and Rislund, 2008). What was unique about this particular investigation was the fact that it was to focus on the practices of bloggers, and especially fashion bloggers. The reason for the agency's interest was that several bloggers had previously expressed having accepted payment in exchange for writing about particular brands and products within the framework of their editorial material. One spokesperson for the Swedish Consumer Agency, Mattias Grundström, claimed that the border between advertising and editorial material had, in some cases, become hard to identify. Thus, the bloggers might have been in breach of Swedish marketing law, which states that all advertising should be formulated and presented in such a manner that it is clearly visible that it is an advertisement, as well as which actors are responsible for it. The investigation, however, was dropped since it could not be proven that this conduct had actually been the practice of the bloggers (Lundquist, 2008).

About two years later, in April 2010, the Swedish Tax Agency also decided to start an investigation (e.g. Svenska Dagbladet, 2010). This time, attention was focused on the bloggers themselves since they, from the perspective of the Tax Agency, had been engaged in business activities that may have generated taxable income. Thus, the Agency decided to conduct an audit of a number of fashion bloggers' tax returns in order to investigate whether or not these had been properly drawn up. Here, one particular aspect concerned the taxation of fringe benefits. The Agency had reason to believe that several of the bloggers being audited had been given products by producers who wanted these bloggers to write about their brands

and products on their blogs. If this were to be proven, the bloggers would then be taxed for fringe benefits on the basis of the market value of the products they had reviewed. In this case, the bloggers stated that they had indeed received products; products often distributed by PR agencies on behalf of their clients. However, they disagreed with the Swedish Tax Agency's standpoint due to the fact that they, in the majority of cases, were in receipt of products which, from their point of view, were worthless, unusable, and primarily unsolicited. Consequently, three of the bloggers decided to write an article in response to this criticism.

"When we, during several years, have created a loyal audience, generated credibility among our readers that makes them want to look like us, dress like us, go where we travel, drink what we drink, eat what we eat, bake what we bake etc.. Shall we then pay for it? [...] We do not write about products because we make money out of it."[1] (Zytomierska, Löwengrip and Nilsson, 2010).

These examples provide insights into how market-leading fashion bloggers have attracted attention through their blogging practices. However, it also raises questions regarding the relationship between bloggers and commercial actors. Before the rise of social media, and especially blogs, the available marketing channels accessible to advertisers primarily concerned professional actors within traditional media. However, during recent years, groups of talented consumers have increasingly started dominating the realm of the digital media channels, which particularly seems to be the case in relation to the world of fashion. Consumers who occupy themselves writing about fashion in blogs have, in some cases, become so popular that they can be regarded as competitors to traditional fashion journalism. One strong indication of this development can be identified through several of the popular fashion bloggers, during the time between the two investigations, generating larger audiences than a number of their competitors active in traditional media.

Even though the contemporary fashion blogosphere as we know it today emerged in 2005, one of the very first examples was operational as early as in 2003 (Soxbo, 2010). Two librarians sharing a common interest in fashion, with a little bit of help from a friend, started

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[1] Original Swedish text: "När vi under flera år arbetat upp en trogen besökarskara, byggt upp en trovärdighet hos dem so m gör att de vill se ut som oss, klä sig som oss, resa dit vi reser, dricka det vi dricker, äta det vi äter, baka det vi bakar osv. Då ska vi pröjsa för det? […] Vi skriver inte om produkter för att vi tjänar pengar på det."

blogging and, in doing so, can be considered to be the early pioneers who perhaps laid the foundations for other early adopters within the Swedish context. What distinguished these two librarians, however, in contrast to their followers, was an attitude towards exploring commercial values. In this context, the market-leading fashion bloggers of today seem to have identified commercial values which they seek to explore and find ways of utilizing. One indication of this development is the interest shown by both the Swedish Consumer Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency.

In this thesis, this phenomenon will be studied in order to find answers regarding how marketing practices associated with new technology have emerged; in doing so, offering an understanding of the changing nature of marketing practices within the fashion industry. In this chapter, there will be an introduction to the phenomenon of fashion blogging within the Swedish context. Following this introduction, a theoretical perspective will be offered concerning fashion and how processes of diffusion have been conceptualised. That is followed by how contemporary conceptualisations of fashion can be understood in relation to the more general concepts of the prosumer and prosumption. In the last part of this chapter, the purpose and disposition of this study are presented.

## 1.1 The Swedish fashion blogosphere - a contemporary account

During the years since the breakthrough of the blogosphere in 2005, its development has been remarkably strong. One way of understanding this development concerns the number of readers the largest fashion blogs have attracted. In August 2009, over 60 Swedish fashion blogs generated more than 10,000 visits per week (Bloggportalen, 2009). Meanwhile, ten of these bloggers generated over 100,000 visits per week, entailing that they had a larger number of readers than 87 Swedish local newspapers in terms of the newspaper's individual reach. This figure was calculated using weekly reach statistics for 2009 presented by the Swedish Media Publishers' Association (2010).

It also seems to be the case that the number of fashion blogs reaching a significant number of readers is increasing. About one and a half years later, in February 2011, the number of fashion blogs generating more than 10,000 visits per week had increased to over 90 (Bloggportalen, 2011). In addition, the number of fashion blogs generating over 100,000 visits per week has nearly doubled, amounting to 19.

This development has been confirmed by Swedish organisation the Internet Infrastructure Foundation, which studies changes in Internet usage in the Swedish population. In their annual report for 2010, they estimate that around 8 percent of Sweden's Internet users had written blogs, corresponding to approximately 500,000 people. What was quite interesting was the fact that one segment of Internet users in particular dominated the world of blogging, namely young girls and young women. Of young girls aged between 12 and 15, 50 percent either wrote or had written blogs, while 93 percent had read them. Of young women aged between 16 and 25, 64 percent reported writing or having written blogs, while 78 percent had read them. The report concluded that 'blogging has become part of young women's Internet culture' (Findahl, 2011:46).

As regards how widespread blogging is, indications that emerging entrepreneurial consumers have started taking command of the world of digital media can be identified, and this seems to be the case particularly within the fashion blogosphere. One indication of this development is the fact that many market-leading fashion bloggers have started running their blogs through their own registered companies. In August 2009, eleven such cases could be identified, which might suggest that corporatisation is taking place among the most popular fashion bloggers. This provides one of the main reasons for the increased interest shown in the blogosphere by the Swedish Consumer Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency. However, it also raises questions about how the three bloggers expressed themselves in the article written in response to criticism from the Swedish Tax Agency, as presented in the previous section.

For some of the popular fashion bloggers, the practice of blogging has changed direction from a local practice within the Swedish context to an international venture. One example of how this current development can be identified is the starting up of the website Nowmanifest.com. It was founded by popular Swedish blogger Elin Kling with the aim of becoming an international portal for market-leading fashion bloggers. Besides Elin Kling's blog, the internationally-recognised fashion bloggers Bryan Grey Yambao and Rumi Neely have also chosen to become part of the venture (Djerf, 2011). Thus, this example illustrates how the Swedish fashion blogging phenomenon can be understood in an international context where Swedish fashion bloggers might have become a driving force in the internationalisation of the practice of blogging about fashion.

Even though attention has focused on how this phenomenon has impacted on the media landscape, and especially on young people's media consumption patterns, the impact of the phenomenon on marketing practices hitherto is rather unknown. The prevalence of this phenomenon and the entrepreneurial developments that can be discerned raise a number of questions regarding digital marketing practices and our understanding of the fashion industry. One of the central aspects of the content being published in these blogs concerns the focal point of fashion. In order to fit the phenomenon into a suitable context, the next section will provide an introduction to the field of fashion research.

## 1.2    The concept of fashion

One of the most central questions within the field of fashion research is: What is fashion? Throughout history, the word fashion has had different connotations; its meanings have changed in order to suit the social customs and clothing habits of different, consecutive social structures (Brenninkmeyer, 1963). Several answers to the question of what constitutes fashion have been offered; four of the most seminal works have been presented by Veblen (1899), Simmel (1904), Blumer (1969), and Bourdieu (1984).

In the classical study by Veblen (1899), the notions of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste were presented. The underlying reason for consuming fashion and clothing, which were understood as symbols of social position and status, was that the consumption of fashion revealed the wealth of the wearer and whether or not he/she needed to engage in physical labour. Thus, fashion was highly related to social class. Compared to other forms of material consumption, "expenditure on dress has the advantage over most other methods, that our apparel is always in evidence and affords an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at the first glance" (1899:61).

In a similar way to Veblen, Simmel (1904) argued that fashion was a product of class distinction, elaborating the concept of fashion in terms of focusing attention on how people desire to imitate and differentiate themselves from others (see also Tarde, 1903). In terms of imitation and differentiation, Simmel viewed one of the main results of fashion as uniting those of a certain social class and segregating them from others. Furthermore, Simmel understood fashion as based on the adoption of a social set, which demanded mutual imitation from its members. The consequence of conceptualising fashion in that manner was that

members of a particular social set were thus released from individual responsibility concerning fashion. This was one of the points that Simmel emphasised, i.e. that individual members could not be held accountable or responsible "ethical and aesthetic – as well as of the possibility of producing within these limits individual accentuation and original shading of the elements of fashion" (Simmel, 1904:558).

In relation to the conceptualisation of fashion offered by Simmel, Blumer (1969) also took the point of departure in the idea that fashion functions as class differentiation and how the diffusion of fashion up to that point had been understood from this perspective. In a similar rhetorical manner to Veblen (1899), Blumer presented how fashion had been conceptualised in terms of being highly connected to how the elite class tried to distinguish and set itself apart in different ways by using observable marks such as distinctive forms of dress. Members of the immediately subjacent classes who strived to belong to, or who identified with the elite class, adopted the marks of the elite class in order to fulfil this objective. In the same manner, the next immediately subjacent class in turn copied these marks in order to strive towards being identified with the elite class.

In other words, earlier conceptualisations of fashion tried to describe how fashion functioned within a class pyramid where distinguishing insignias, such as forms of dress, filtered down. The result of this process was that the elite class lost the marks differentiating their identity; as a result, new marks needed to be created which, in a constantly repeating cycle, were then copied by the classes below.

However, in contrast to similarities to how Veblen (1899) presented the role of fashion, Blumer (1969) argued that the description presented by Veblen (1899), and Simmel in particular (1904), was no longer sufficient, or possible, to apply to contemporary society. The main argument consisted of the fashion of this period having diversified into different fields because of its stronger emphasis on modernity. Therefore, in order to explain how fashion diffused, the notion of fashion as differentiating between classes was replaced by the idea of collective selection. The idea of collective selection treated the fashion mechanism as a response to the desire to be in fashion, to keep oneself abreast of what was considered to have good standing, and to express new taste - and thus not as a "response to a need of class differentiation and class emulation" (Blumer, 1969:282).

Thus, people who followed fashion and who were not members of the higher or elite classes did so because it was the fashion and thus not for reasons relating to the desire to belong to a higher class. Therefore, the reason why fashions died out was explained in terms of being due to the death of fashion providing and paving the way for a "new model more consonant with developing taste" (ibid: 282).

In 1984, Bourdieu analyzed the production of *haute couture* in order to understand what constitutes the field of cultural production in general. Within these fields, constituted by "objective relations among individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes" (Bourdieu, 1984:133), established actors adopted conservation strategies while new actors adopted subversion strategies. The struggle between these two groups of actors functioned as the driving force in the field; the actors who struggle for dominance cause the field to transform and to perpetually restructure. This line of reasoning was in keeping with the description of fashion presented by Bourdieu in terms of "fashion [being] the latest fashion, the latest difference" (ibid). Furthermore, Bourdieu argued that the structure of the field remained stable because:

"[...] the precondition for entry to the field is recognition of the values at stake and therefore recognition of the limits not to be exceeded on pain of being excluded from the game. It follows that the internal struggle can only lead to partial revolutions that can destroy the hierarchy but not the game itself". (Bourdieu, 1984:134*)*

In addition to the description of how the field of fashion functioned, attention also focused on how aesthetic ideas and values were socially constructed by means of analyzing processes of creation, production, institutions, and organizations. From this perspective, a work of art was a process requiring the collaboration of more than one actor operating through certain social institutions. Therefore, fashion was understood to have a social base, to be social in character and to exist in a social context (Kawamura, 2005).

Thus, the four seminal works stressed the relationship between fashion, society and social characteristics particularly in terms of class in relation to the aspect of diffusion. The same fundamental issues have also been discussed in other works on the role of fashion. One example that reflects these aspects well can be found in the metaphor that fashion functions as a mirror of society. In this metaphor, the relationship between society and fashion is described

in terms of clothing representing and mirroring the collective attitudes and the corresponding interests of a community, and in terms of adapting itself to the continuous change in cultural values (Brenninkmeyer, 1963:112). From this perspective, fashion was able to emerge as a result of individual choice, but this result always had a deeper social significance which the individual was seldom aware of.

The power relationship that social aspects and society exerted over fashion has even been argued to manifest itself in terms of "fashion [being] the victim of social progress" (Vertés, 1944:89, in Brenninkmeyer, 1963:112). This way of viewing fashion deprived it of a role, and made it a passive phenomenon trapped in society's control.

In postmodern culture, social class became less emphasised and trickle down diffusion diminished in the conceptualisations existing in fashion theory. Instead of considering fashion as a process emanating from the higher classes and diffusing downwards, style differentiation did not to any extensive degree distinguish social class; instead a high degree of inter-class and intra-class mobility was argued to have emerged (Kawamura, 2005). From this perspective, the importance of one's self-image and identity became one of the central aspects of the conceptualising of fashion. Consumption increasingly became understood as a form of role-play whereby consumers sought to project conceptions of their identity that were constantly evolving. In this perspective, this way of conceptualising the role of fashion has several similarities with the idea of collective selection as introduced by Blumer (1969).

In relation to identity and class, Crane (2000) argued that class fashion had shifted towards consumer fashion. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fashion designers produced clothing styles that aimed to express the social position of the wearer, similar to how Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904) describe the role of fashion in relation to class. Thus, class fashion needed a centralised system of creation and production in which a high level of consensus existed between designers. However, fashion was no longer originating exclusively from fashion capitals such as Paris or London, or even from the fashion industry itself during the late twentieth century. As thousands of organisations around the world were producing a variety of choices for consumers, in addition to the emergence of electronic media with enormous audience penetration and postmodern imagery, these developments were important factors that had to be taken into consideration in order to understand how the diffusion processes of fashion were changing. In contrast to class fashion, Crane (2000) argued that:

"In consumer fashion, which has replaced class fashion, there is much more stylistic diversity and much less consensus about what is "in fashion" at a particular time. Instead of being orientated towards the tastes of social elites, consumer fashion incorporates tastes and concerns of social groups at all social class levels. A single fashion genre, haute couture, has been replaced by three major categories of styles, each with its own genres: luxury fashion design, industrial fashion, and street styles." (Crane, 2000:134-135)

The emphasised role of society and social characteristics, however, remained much the same within more contemporary conceptualisations of fashion, which reflected well in how Crane (2000) described the defragmentation of fashion. Crane also argued that the consumption of cultural goods, e.g. clothing which, during a particular period of time, is understood to be fashionable, played an increasingly important role in the construction of individual identities. In this context, and in relation to previous understandings of the role of class, Crane suggested that the emulation of superior classes, as well as the meeting of material needs, functioned in a secondary way in this process.

These ideas, i.e. that the number and variety of lifestyles in contemporary society had liberated the individual and enabled choices regarding how to create a meaningful self-identity, were also discussed by Giddens (1991). In relation to him, it could be argued that the concept of what constituted fashion during the 1990s had shifted to become more dynamic and open to interpretation, from a consumer perspective, in comparison to the classical notions offered by Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904). In this context, the contributions offered by Blumer (1969) and Bourdieu (1984) played an important role in terms of how they influenced later conceptualisations.

Another aspect of fashion receiving attention in the context of what fashion is concerned fashion in relation to its material aspects in terms of clothing. One way of understanding these two elements is that fashion provided clothing with extra added value, but that the additional elements only existed in people's imaginations and beliefs (Kawamura, 2005). This suggested that conceptualisation was based on how Flinkelstein (1996) described how consumers thought they were obtaining these added values when consuming and buying items that were considered to be fashionable.

A similar yet different perspective was offered by Bell (1947) who argued instead that fashion was the essential virtue of a garment and, without that, its intrinsic value could barely be perceived. In relation to both Kawamura and Flinkelstien, proponents of this perspective argued that fashion and clothing were inseparable; nevertheless, the two components were still treated separately. In this context, some authors have argued that a division of fashion and clothing could even be ethnocentric (e.g. Breward, 2004; Craik, 1994). This issue could be regarded, however, as having been dealt with in a more independent manner than the discussion concerning the general aspects of what fashion consists of.

Thus, individual consumers' freedom to neglect, at least to some degree, aspects relating to social class has been one important development leading to what has been described as the democratisation of fashion. From this perspective, i.e. of fashion as a building block for constructing an individual self-identity and role-play, the development of the fashion blogosphere paves the way for a number of complex issues relating to understanding the changing nature of fashion, but in particular the future of fashion marketing. In order to further approach these issues, this thesis will use the definition presented by Kawamura which treats fashion as "a system of institutions, that produce the concept as well as the phenomenon/ practice of fashion" (2005:1). In the next section, the system wherein fashion is diffused, as well as how diffusion processes have been conceptualised, will be further addressed.

## 1.3    Diffusion processes in the fashion system

In relation to the question of what fashion is, another key issue within fashion theory relates to how fashion is spread in terms of diffusion processes, i.e. processes that diffuse fashion ideas among actors within the fashion system. One central aspect of diffusion processes has been argued to be the problematic nature of studying it systematically, due to the geographical dispersion of the fashion system, the number of actors involved, and the increasing number and variety of products (Crane, 1999).

One generic conceptualisation of how to understand the process of diffusion is that it is characterised as the acceptance, over time, of a specific item, e.g. an idea or practice, by individuals, groups or other adopting units, linked to specific channels of communication, to a social structure, and to a given system of values or culture (Katz, Levin and Hamilton

1963:240). One of the seminal diffusion models that followed this conceptualisation was presented by Rogers (1962). In this model, diffusion was understood as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (ibid:5). In the process of diffusion, five key adopter categories based on the members of a certain social system were classified as: (1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority and (5) laggards, who all played important roles in the process (ibid:37).

In relation to this conceptualisation, two other ways of conceptualising the diffusion of fashion, which have become important from a historical perspective, both focused on the role of social class and status. First, the top-down or trickle down model that can be traced back to Simmel (1904) described how fashion or new styles were adopted by upper-class elites and subsequently diffused to the middle classes and finally to the working classes. Second, the bottom-up model, which was basically the opposite of the first model, illustrates how fashion can also be diffused from lower-status groups and subsequently adopted by higher-status groups (Field, 1970). The first model relates to how Western societies were characterised up until the 1960s. In contrast, the bottom-up model, during the 1960s, explained how the role of young people in particular had changed by that time and had started to exert a greater degree of influence on fashion which became important in terms of understanding the general development of the fashion phenomenon (Crane, 1999). Here, the idea of collective selection, which emphasises the wish to be in fashion as discussed by Blumer (1969), exhibits similarities to the idea of the bottom-up model.

Another factor contributing to the emergence of this model related to the decentralisation of the fashion system occurring while the second model was being introduced. Previously, Paris was the international capital and centralised centre of the fashion system, which began to change during the late 1960s when clothes began to be selected on the basis of personal taste, rather than conformity with rules set by fashion authorities (ibid.).

However, just as the first model of fashion diffusion was criticised when the second model emerged, both models' applicability to contemporary society has been called into question. Crane (1999:23) stated that both the trickle-down and bottom-up models were no longer useful on the basis of four main arguments: (1) the process of diffusion seems to consist of many relatively short trajectories, where certain styles diffuse up or down in particular

segments; (2) the status of the fashion adopter has been revised in terms of the fact that consumers are less likely to imitate but to instead select styles on the basis of their own perceptions of their identities and lifestyles; (3) the process of diffusion is less an interpersonal process; instead, major corporations operating on global markets play a key role in terms of their goals and strategies affecting the nature of fashion innovation and the process of innovation; (4) the impact generated by media and popular culture industries is seen in the context of fashion innovation and diffusion, where opinion leaders function almost entirely in these contexts.

In relation to the arguments expressed by Crane (1999), Kawamura (2005) emphasises the importance of technology for explaining the high rate at which fashion information is disseminated from various sources through multiple media. In addition to the structural changes in Western society, and decentralisation of the fashion system, consumers of today "(i)nstead of looking for fashionable items of the season in Paris, consumers look elsewhere, and sometimes youth cultures create their own styles with their own definitions of fashion. I would call this another type of fashion system" (Kawamura, 2005:99-100). One way of understanding how contemporary diffusion processes in this context have been illustrated is use of the term trickle-around.

In relation to how models that explain how fashion diffuses have been conceptualised, another important aspect of fashion theory concerns the issue relating to the system in which fashion is diffused. One way of understanding the *fashion system* in which the value of fashion is created has been presented by Kawamura (2005:1) who treated fashion "as a system of institutions, that produces the concept as well as the phenomenon/practice of fashion". Kawamura defines institution as "social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated, are sanctioned and maintained by social norms, and have a major significance in the social structure" (2005: p. 107). Based on the perspective that fashion is socially constructed, the need for participation in the system became crucial due to the value of fashion arising when consensus can be achieved between the actors operating within the system. However, according to Kawamura, the participants who control access to distribution channels within the system become particularly influential.

Among a number of fashion theorists, there is consensus concerning the systemic perspective and conceptualisation on fashion that is characterized by an internal logic of regular and

systematic change (Entwistle, 2000). It has also been argued that fashion should be considered to be a complex system and not just a cultural phenomenon; instead, including aspects of manufacturing, technology, marketing and retail (Leopold, 1992). Both Leopold (1992), and later Entwistle (2000), based on Ash and Wright (1988) and Willis and Midgley (1973), emphasised that an approach which combined technology, politics, economics, social contexts, communities and individuals was yet to emerge due to the fact that most fashion literature focused its attention either on supply or consumption.

Within fashion research in the Scandinavian context, the systemic perspective of understanding fashion has been embraced. Gradén and Petersson McIntyre (2009), even though they argue that fashion and the material aspect of clothes cannot be separated, regard fashion to be the result of ideas in our consciousness that are created on the basis of a number of institutions expressed and articulated in terms of clothes. In the perspective of fashion as a system, this means that the diffusion of material objects as clothes enables the diffusion of fashion due to its embeddedness.

Within the fashion system, gatekeepers who control distribution channels, e.g. fashion journalists, play an important role in the creation of fashion (Kawamura 2005). One way of understanding the role of fashion journalism, in terms of fashion periodicals, is that these, in most cases, have generated trust in and acceptance by a large proportion of the audience they serve. For this reason, the items being reported are regarded as being accepted as superior and thus the magazine is considered to be an important source of valuable information for its readers.

However, if fashion information in contemporary society emanates from various sources and the institutionalised system in which fashion exists is decentralising, this may suggest that the role of traditional gatekeepers, e.g. fashion journalists, may be subjected to a higher degree of competition from emerging actors who embrace digital technology as the result of lowered entry barriers. In this context, maybe the actual users of fashion, too, e.g. the fashion consumers themselves, may exert competitive pressure on existing gatekeepers because they, by means of digital technology, have been provided the possibility of creating highly-effective distribution channels.

Because of the strong indications of this development, one central issue in relation to diffusion models and conceptualisations of how the fashion system is constructed concerns the boundary between supply and the consumer. As the introduction to this chapter indicated, it is not clear whether or not the fashion bloggers, who seem to be undergoing the process of corporatisation, should be regarded as consumers or producers. Following the call by Leopold (1992), and later Entwistle (2000), who argued that attention reaching beyond supply and consumption within the fashion system was needed; one way of understanding the role of fashion consumers in contemporary society is using the concept of the prosumer and in particular how this concept has been understood within the field of marketing research.

## 1.4    Marketing and the rise of the prosumer

During recent decades, the fashion industry has been facing several issues relating to understanding changing consumer behaviours in relation to a decentralised fashion system and the rise of digital technology. Within the field of marketing research, these structural developments within Western society have received vast attention from a more general perspective, which has gone beyond the borders of the fashion industry (e.g. Verhoef et al., 2010; Webster, 1992).

Here, one important conceptual shift has been to direct attention away from product-centric organizations towards customer-centric ones (Verhoef et al., 2010). One of the seminal works which influenced this shift was provided by Webster (1992:14) who stated that "(t)he business will be defined by its customers, not its products or factories or offices". Thus, new conceptualisations of marketing were needed which focused on how to position the firm between vendor and customer within the value chain. The key aspect bringing success was to understand customer relationships, which were regarded as the future key strategic resource of the business.

In order to create insights into how to handle this shift, one of the research fields that emerged focused its attention on the concept of customer relationship management. A recent development in that field is the concept of customer engagement which aims to explain how to manage consumer behaviour (Verhoef et al., 2010).

However, these attempts to handle issues relating to the changing nature of business-customer relations, and thus develop suitable marketing practices, has not widely focused attention on the issue of how the boundary between producer and consumer in contemporary society is becoming increasingly blurred. This development can be regarded to be one of the most characteristic aspects of the digital era, which is also important when it comes to understanding how to change marketing practices in a suitable manner. Instead, the same dichotomy, i.e. consumer and producer, remains highly influential within the field of consumer relationship management research and the emerging customer engagement literature.

One concept that is useful when it comes to understanding the changing nature of marketing practices relating to the rise of digital media, and the blurring boundary between consumer and producer, is the concept of the *prosumer* which was coined by Toffler (1980, see also Toffler 1970). Here, the core arguments proposed by Toffler were that the consumers of tomorrow would to an increasing extent be producing for their own consumption, instead of producing for a market. New as a concept, the first form of prosumption nevertheless took place during the age of agriculture when people only produced for their own consumption. Toffler (1980) termed this era the first wave. This, however, rapidly changed during the industrial age. The industrial revolution gave birth to what is today known as producer and consumer – as well as the strong distinction between the two. This period was labelled the second wave by Toffler. During this period the prosumer, i.e. a person producing for his/her own use, was made invisible to varying degrees by economists.

In our time, which Toffler described in terms of the third wave, the border that separates producer from consumer was predicted to become increasingly blurred. The producer's relationship with the consumer, and vice versa, was thus going to be altered. Toffler divided the market for production for personal consumption, i.e. prosumption, and production for the market into two sectors, which he named sectors A and B. Sector A consisted of the prosumer side of the economy, where people produced for personal consumption. Within sector B, products and services were produced with the purpose of selling them on a market. During the first wave, sector A was dominant due to the fact that people largely produced for their own consumption and were therefore engaged in prosumption. During the second wave, however, this dramatically shifted due to industrialisation, leading to a tremendous increase in the production for markets, or sector B. During the third wave, however, Toffler argued that the

degree of production in sector A, the prosumption sector of the economy, would increase in relation to sector B.

Within the field of marketing research, one of the first scholars who studied the possible consequences of this development was Kotler (1986). Since the third wave was characterised by de-industrialisation, de-massification and de-marketisation, there ought to be consequences for marketing practices and marketing research. Kotler summed up Toffler's conceptualisation of the prosumer, which is presented in Table 1. The forces that would lead to more prosumption were described by Kotler as; the rising cost of labour, structural unemployment, the demand for higher quality goods and services, the development of new technologies enabling people to take part in designing customised goods, and a general increase in education and thus the desire for self-actualisation. However, counteracting forces that would restrain prosumption were also identified in terms of threatened stakeholder groups, e.g. specialist professionals, producers of certain goods and services, and trade unions. These groups might take protectionist measures to slow down the prosumer trend in order to protect their interests.

| | Thesis | Antithesis | Synthesis |
|---|---|---|---|
| | First Wave | Second Wave | Third Wave |
| Dominant Institution | Agriculture | Industry (factory) | Home |
| Mix of prosumers and consumers | Many prosumers (Sector A is large) Few consumers (Sector B is small) | Few prosumers (Sector A is small) Many consumers (Sector B is large) | More prosumers (Sector A gets larger) Fewer consumers (Sector B gets smaller) |
| Dominant processes | Self-production | Industrialization Marketization | De-industrialization De-marketization De- massification |
| Norm | Survival | Efficiency (as producers) Indulgence (as consumers) | Individuation |
| Social nexus | Kinship and friendship; tribe | Contracts and transactions; workplace | Family and friends; neighbourhood |

Table 1. Chart summarising Toffler's main ideas. Source: Kotler (1986:513)

Hence, in order to further understand prosumers and prosumption, Kotler argued that certain groups of prosumers should be carefully studied. Furthermore, prosumers should be understood as emerging market segments. It should not be the aim of marketers to protect the exchange system. Neither did Kotler believe in the total demise of the exchange system; individuals would act as prosumers in some cases while acting as consumers in others.

One further development of the concept of the prosumer was presented by Tapscott (1996), who stressed how digital technology, the widespread use of the Internet, and the transition to the digital era were offering new possibilities and simultaneously changing the conditions for prosumption. Tapscott's (1996) point of departure concerning prosumption was the notion that the gap between consumer and producer was blurring in the new economy. Mass production was being replaced by mass customisation and producers thus had to be able to make products satisfying the tastes and requirements of individual consumers.

During recent years, the concept of the prosumer and prosumption has often received attention in the context of research focusing its attention on digital technology. Bandulet and Morasch (2005) discussed prosumption behaviour within e-commerce, problematising issues such as asymmetric information and price discrimination. Driscoll (2009) described the case of the securities industry where paper-based investor disclosure was being replaced by e-consent and e-delivery in the growing use of the Internet by investors – a development which paved the way for greater personalisation of the services offered. Lee and Shin (2010) touched upon how the growth of user created content (UCC) had been fuelled by the rise of the prosumer in the context of the Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) setting, which was an issue that Zeng and Strauss (2008) also discussed with a focus on hybrid peer-to-peer technological solutions. Stock (2007) mentioned prosumers in relation to science communication in a Web 2.0 services context, e.g. how folksonomies develop. Ribiere and Tuggle (2010) connected Web 2.0 and Enterprise 2.0 technologies to knowledge management when discussing the critical role that can be played by customers in innovation processes. The prosumption concept has also been mentioned in the area of relationship marketing (Tzokas and Saren, 2004). Additionally, new forms of prosumer collaboration have been touched upon by Bradshaw and Brown (2008) as one of the new developments that ought to have impact on marketing and consumer research.

In terms of more specific aspects of digital technology, social media is a field where scholars have increasingly applied the prosumption concept. Pascu et al. (2008) recognised how the roles of producers and consumers had not only begun to blur, but also to merge. In social media, the user is a supplier of content. Furthermore, the user supports, or even provides, the distribution of content and services. Moreover, the user also plays an essential role in finding, selecting and filtering the relevant content and services (through, for instance, search engine ranking, wikis, tagging, taste-sharing, information sharing, and feedback and reputation systems). Here, Pascu et al. (2008; p.39) stated that "This idea of the prosumer is of course not new, as coined by Alvin Toffler in 1980 [...] What is different however, is that now, the idea is becoming reality". It has also been argued that the prosumption activities which are possible to identify within the context of social media can, perhaps, be understood in terms of being more extensive than previously argued, while Rizer and Jurgenson (2010: 31) suggested that "what we see with digital prosumption online is the emergence of what may be a new form of capitalism".

In relation to the conceptualisation of prosumer and prosumption, one issue consists of understanding whether or not fashion blogger practices can be understood as forms of prosumption activity and what role such activities can play in relation to emerging marketing practices. Here, one of the more obvious prosumption activities which can be identified consists of how fashion bloggers produce and document their own styles by combining different fashion products and creating their own unique combinations. However, these combinations and this style production, which according to Toffler (1980) and Kotler (1986) can be understood as prosumption activities, are subsequently posted publicly thus enabling the generation of effects related to diffusion within the fashion system. Thus, the role of prosumption activities within the borderland between production and consumption becomes an issue which, from my perspective, should not be studied as an isolated activity; rather, these activities should be studied from a systemic perspective in order to understand their possible effects on diffusion, and more importantly, on the fashion system itself

Taking a point of departure in the fashion blogging phenomenon, the contemporary conceptualisations found in fashion theory offer a useful perspective for analysing how the role of fashion materialises when consumers enter a digital context. Here, the suggested shift away from class fashion towards consumer fashion, which emphasises the role of the consumer's individual identity and image, provides an interesting approach to the

decentralisation of the fashion system, something which has been argued to provide consumers with increased possibilities of engaging in identity and image creation.

However, one of the central aspects relates to diffusion processes within the fashion system and how the practice of blogging about fashion can be understood from this point of view. If we regard fashion blogs as a distribution channel, in terms of a technical platform from where bloggers can provide their readers and other bloggers with what they find attractive and fashionable, this development may have given rise to implications for the power balance between consumers and other actors operating within the fashion system. Following this line of reasoning, bloggers could be regarded to be an emerging competitor to fashion journalism and fashion periodicals in particular. On the basis of the call by Leopold (1992) and Entwistle (2000) concerning the need for an expanded perspective on the fashion system going beyond supply and consumption, the blurring border between producer and consumer in the context of digital technology which characterises the fashion blogging phenomenon provides an excellent opportunity to answer this call.

## 1.5   Purpose

In this study, the actors involved in fashion blogging are viewed as prosumers. Prosumption activities manifesting themselves in the fashion blogosphere are studied in order to provide insights into how new digital marketing practices emerge. Thus, from the systemic perspective on fashion, the role of both the consumer and the prosumer within the fashion system is a key issue in this study.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyse the emergence of the fashion blogging phenomenon, as well as how commercial actors operate in the realm of the fashion blogger. Here, emerging marketing practices in the fashion blogosphere will be analysed in order to identify the implications for how the fashion system can be understood.

## 1.6   Disposition

In the *next chapter*, selected concepts within new institutional theory are presented taking their point of departure in the systemic perspective on fashion. In *Chapter three*, the used methods together which methical considerations are presented which accounts for how this

study has been carried out. In *Chapter four*, the mapped value network in which the studied fashion bloggers operate is presented, together with an account of how groups of key stakeholders have emerged in this context. *Chapter five* presents the studied fashion bloggers with a particular emphasis on their characteristics, the content they produce in terms of blog posts, and how private and commercial contexts can be identified within this material. In *Chapter six,* the commonly-used practices of fashion bloggers are presented, combined with an analysis of how commercial actors enter the realm of the blog through these practices. In the final chapter, *Chapter seven,* the implications for fashion theory and new institutional theory are discussed, and the conclusions of this study are then presented.

# 2. Theoretical framework

Within the field of fashion theory, consensus can be found among a number of fashion theorists who advocate a systemic approach to fashion (Entwistle, 2000). From this perspective, fashion is argued to have a social base and to consist of a system of social institutions that produce the concept, phenomenon and practice of fashion (Kawamura, 2005). Thus, fashion should be viewed as the result of ideas in our consciousnesses which are created on the basis of a number of institutions which are expressed and articulated in terms of clothes (Gradén and Petersson McIntyre, 2009). Vast amount of attention has been paid to how fashion diffuses, and to how diffusion processes have changed due to structural developments such as the decentralisation of fashion (Crane, 1999). Here, the way in which social institutions and practices change provides a way of theoretically explaining the changing nature of diffusion processes. However, the changing nature of the fashion industry, due to digital technology, may not only have implications for how fashion diffuses, but also for the system itself.

In relation to the fashion blogging phenomenon, conceptualisations emphasizing the role of institutions and practices in the production of fashion enable the study of how such constructs can be identified within the phenomenon and how these relate to and create implications for our theoretical understanding of the fashion system. Here, the state of the fashion blogging phenomenon suggests that several institutions and practices exist which offer the possibility of studying the phenomenon from the point of view of a systemic perspective on fashion in line with Entwistle (2000) and Kawamura (2005).

Here, the theoretical field of new institutional theory within organisational theory provides an analytic framework for addressing how systemic changes could have occurred. When taking the historical developments of the field of new institutional theory into account, a number of common traits vis-à-vis fashion theory are possible to discern. In particular, these can be found among Scandinavian contributions (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; Sahlin-Andersson 1996) relating to Tarde (1903) and, in some respects, to Simmel (1904). One of the key similarities within the two literature streams is the emphasised role of institutions. Within fashion theory, institutions have been used in order to explain the phenomenon of fashion. In new institutional theory, institutions have been argued to function as central to both

organisations and organisational fields. From the perspective of the phenomenon, the new institutional perspective offers an expanded opportunity to study the phenomenon at the field level in order to understand systemic implications by means of merging and combining selected concepts found in new institutional theory with conceptualisations found in fashion theory.

In the following sections, a selected number of the key conceptualisations found in new institutional theory will be presented in order to further analyse the common characteristics of the two literature streams. Based on this discussion, the last section of this chapter will present how a theoretical framework that merges fashion theory and new institutional theory can be constructed in order to address systemic changes to the fashion system in the context of the fashion blogging phenomenon.

## 2.1    The concept of institutions

One of the key elements within institutional theory is the concept of *institutions* in terms of what constitutes this and how it can be defined. The concept of institutions has been used in different ways in social science, and it has had different connotations in organisational theory. One of the early works dealing with how to understand the notion of institutions was presented by Chapin (1928, cited in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009:13-14) who defines institutions in the following manner:

"Man is not only a tool-making animal; he is an institution-making animal. [...] In order to give body to the idea or concept of social institution, let us consider some of its characteristics. First, a social institution arises out of and as a result of repeated groupings of interacting human individuals in response to elemental needs or drives (sex, hunger, and fear). Second, common reciprocating attitudes and conventionalized behaviour patterns develop out of the process of interaction (affection, loyalty, cooperation, domination, and subordination). Third, cultural objects (traits) that embody symbolic values in material substances are invented or fabricated and become the cue stimuli to behavior conditioned to them (the idol, cross, ring, and flag are charged with emotional and sentimental meaning). Fourth, cultural objects (traits) that embody utilitarian values in material substances are invented or fabricated and becomes the means of satisfying creature wants for warmth, shelter, etc. (buildings, and furniture). Fifth, preserved in oral or written language, externally stored and handed down

from one generation to the next, there is description and specification of the patterns of interrelationship among these elemental drives, attitudes, symbolic cultural traits, and utilitarian culture traits." (Chapin 1928:44-48, cited in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009:13-14).

This definition of institutions sought to explain how institutions are created and emerge. Another perspective on how institutions are created was offered by Berger and Luckmann (1966). By using the concepts of habitualisation and typification, they explained that "institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (ibid: 72). This notion was rather similar to the definition presented by Chaplin (1928, cited in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009:13-14), but one significant difference was that the underlying driving forces for man were excluded.

Within new institutionalism, whose emergence has been closely associated with the seminal book presented by Powell and DiMaggio (1991), several definitions have been presented which have influenced the contemporary way of understanding institutions from the institutional perspective. One of the more influential definitions presented during this period was offered by Jeppersson (1991), who explained the role of institutions in the following manner:

"Institutions represent a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property; institutionalization denotes the process of such attainment. By order or pattern, I refer, as conventional, to standardized interaction sequences. An institution is then a social pattern that reveals a particular reproduction process. When departures from the pattern are counteracted in a regulated fashion, by repetitive activated, social constructed, controls – that is by some set of rewards and sanctions – we refer to a pattern as institutionalized. Put another way, institutions are those social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating social processes". (Jeppersson 1991:145)

March and Olsen (2006) used the same emphasis on rules, arguing that institutions consisted of a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, which were embedded in structures of "meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and explanations of individuals and changing external circumstances" (March and Olsen 2006:4, see also March and Olsen 1989, 1995). In relation to the perspective offered by March and Olsen, the way

Holm (1995) viewed institutions had a strong resemblance in terms of that institutions should be seen as nested systems. Within nested systems, a distinction was needed between actions that were guided by institutional order and actions focusing on creating new institutions or changing old ones.

In relation to these perspectives on institutions, the definition presented by Kawamura (2005) relating to what fashion is constituted by took its point of departure in social practices, emphasising the importance of institutions for social structure in a similar manner to March and Olson (2006). By focusing on the importance of social practices in the context of institution, this perspective also implies that changes to social practices can both change existing institutions and create new forms (Kawamura 2005:107). Thus, even though the definitions found in institutional theory and fashion theory have been formulated in different ways, the intrinsic meaning can be argued to be relatively similar.

## 2.2     Organisational fields and isomorphism

In relation to the conceptualisations of institutions and how these can be understood from the perspective of social practices, new institutional theory has focused its attention on explaining how organisations act within *organisational field*s. One of the seminal works on this issue was presented by DiMaggio and Powell (1983:148), who defined organisational fields as "those organizations that in the aggregate constitute a recognised area of institutional life". Here, the reason for conceptualising organisational fields instead of environments has been argued by Bloodgood and Morro (2000:208) to be that "environmental characteristics that are usually thought to have generalized effects for all firms in an environment can be more accurately identified in an organizational field". When organisational fields emerged, DiMaggio (1983:150) argued that this process consisted of an ongoing process of structuration in which five components were included: (1) increased interaction among organisations within a field, (2) increased exchange of information among organisations within a field, (3) a structure of domination emerges, (4) a pattern of coalition emerges, and (5) organisations develop a collective awareness of the field of which they are a part.

Within an organisational field, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argued that the reason why organisations become similar is related to three types of *isomorphism*: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism was described in terms of pressures which can be both

formal and informal and which can be brought to bear upon organisations by other organisations upon which these are dependent. Furthermore, cultural expectations within society can also apply this form of pressure. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) expanded the notion of coercive isomorphism by describing how government intervention could have an effect on how the organisations within an organisational field operated; however, legitimised rules and structures constructed without government involvement could also have the same effect.

Compared to coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism is not derived from authority. Instead, organisations imitate each other in order to decrease uncertainty. This occurs mainly because of three reasons: organisational technologies being poorly understood, goals being ambiguous, and the environment creating symbolic uncertainty. When one of these situations occurs within a organisational field, mimetic behaviour offers organisations a way of decreasing the costs associated with the notion of problematic search, introduced by Cyert and March (1963). However, the modelled organisation may not be aware of other organisations adopting similar practices, but "merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organisation may use" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:151). Furthermore, organisations tend to model themselves on organisations within the same organisational field that are perceived to be more legitimate or successful.

The third and final form is normative isomorphism which is strongly connected to professionalization. Based on Larson (1977) and Collins (1979), DiMaggio and Powell (1983: p. 152) described professionalization "as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control 'the production of producers', and to establish a cognitive base and legitimating for their occupational autonomy". Like organisations, professions are also subject to coercive and mimetic pressures. In addition, professions are also strongly related to the degree of professional power assigned by the state.

In relation to the three forms of isomorphism, one of the main issues relates to whether or not the same types of isomorphism may be applicable to prosumers within a digital context. If this were to be the case, and if Kotler's (1986) prediction that prosumers would develop into a segment of their own, then perhaps prosumers could be argued to be capable of engaging in the creation of organisational fields and, in doing so, changing their role and influence within the fashion system.

## 2.3    Institutional entrepreneurship

Within institutionalised organisational fields, where both organisations and established institutions exist, the question of how institutional change comes about has received vast attention. One rapidly growing body of literature addresses the notion of *institutional entrepreneurship* (Hardy and Maguire, 2008), which represents one way in which changes in institutional environments have been conceptualised. The concept of institutional entrepreneurship refers to the "activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones" (Maguire et al., 2004:657). In relation to institutional entrepreneurship, institutional entrepreneurs have been defined as "those actors to whom the responsibility for new or changed institutions is attributed" (Hardy and Maguire, 2008:198).

The growing body of literature has thus far presented numerous views on how institutional entrepreneurship can materialise in different settings.  Pacheco et al. (2010) illustrated that research on institutional entrepreneurship had evolved into two separate streams, one driven by institutional theory and the other by institutional economics. These two streams were argued to have been relatively isolated from each other. In their review, institutional entrepreneurs, both from the perspective of institutional theory and institutional economics, were understood as "innovators or agents of change who promote new institutional arrangements" (ibid:981). Similar to Tracey et al. (2010), who argued that research was needed in order to understand how new organisational forms are created from the perspective of institutional entrepreneurship, Pacheco et al. (2010) suggested that attention was needed within a number of subfields, e.g. the social legitimacy of institutional entrepreneurship, mechanisms for institutional entrepreneurship, and power relationships within organisational fields.

One of the reasons for the growth in the literature addressing institutional entrepreneurship is the call for institutional theorists to bridge "old" and "new" institutionalism. Here, there has been a particular focus on issues concerning agency, power and interests into the institutional analysis of institutional fields (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). In this context, the issue concerning agency has especially been debated. From the perspective of seminal works which were presented during the early years of new institutional theory, the emphasis on institutional contexts often regarded agency as embedded within the institutional field (Powell and

DiMaggio, 1991; Holm 1995). Here, it became unclear how actors could envision and champion new practices if agency was embedded into the field, thereby subjecting actors to regulative, normative and cognitive pressures (Hardy and Maguire, 2008).

In this context, another issue concerned which actors were most likely to act as institutional entrepreneurs. Actors who were on the periphery, and thus less embedded in existing institutional arrangements, have been argued to be more likely to materialise ideas into objectives due to the assumption that they have more to gain from change (Leblebici et al., 1991). In addition, they may also be less aware of institutional norms and practices (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). One problem, however, is that these actors might simultaneously have less power and resources to engage in the realisation of their objectives (Maguire, 2007).

Meanwhile, empirical studies (e.g. Sherer and Lee, 2002; Roa et al., 2003) have illustrated how dominant actors in mature fields can initiate institutional change and in doing so act as institutional entrepreneurs. Thus, these studies illustrate that organisations highly embedded in organisational fields may not be as deprived of agency and the ability to alter institutional structures as previously suggested.

The development of both institutional entrepreneurship and institutional entrepreneurs can be traced back to the work of DiMaggio (1988: 14) who stated that "new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly". Based on the contribution made by DiMaggio (1988), several types of actors that have acted as institutional entrepreneurs have been studied, e.g. individuals, organisations, professions, networks, associations, and social movements (Hardy and Maguire, 2008).

Based on a review presented by Hardy and Maguire (2008), three aspects which have been studied in particular within the borders of the field are: (1) the state of organisational fields in which actors operate, (2) how meanings among actors are diffused, (3) and the relationship between actors. From the perspective of the state of organisational fields, opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship may vary depending on whether the field is emerging, mature and stable, or in crisis (Fligstein, 1997). In this context, emerging fields have been argued to offer, in particular, considerable opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship (Maguire et al., 2004). The main reason has been expressed in terms of being related to the lack of institutionalized practices. This situation may result in fluid relationships, conflicting values

and the absence of norms. In turn, these aspects bring problems that actors may wish to solve, whereby institutional entrepreneurship provides the key process for dealing with such situations. When considerable advantages can be identified, actors benefitting from a certain structural arrangement will tend to be more likely to act as institutional entrepreneurs. In this context, Munir (2005) argued that the ways in which events and changes are interpreted and given meaning constitute one of the key aspects of the process of institutional entrepreneurship.

This approach to understanding change takes its point of departure in interpretive struggles that draw on social constructionist assumptions (Berger and Luckman, 1967). Here, change and institutional entrepreneurship have been conceptualised as ongoing and complex struggles over meaning among the actors taking part in an organisational field. There has been particular emphasis on processes of translation (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996) and discourse (Phillips and Malhotra, 2008). From these perspectives, institutions are created and formed as meanings are shared and taken for granted (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). Actors are viewed as carriers of the institutional meanings associated with practices, whereby all actors are understood as active interpreters of practices in which meaning is constantly being negotiated. In this context, institutional entrepreneurship "is seen to emerge from novel interpretations and ensuing struggles over meaning, although is also recognizes that, because meanings of existing practices are supported by existing logics, myths and discourses, they may not be easily displaced" (ibid: 205).

From the perspective of change as a collective process, the inter-actor relationship has developed into yet another key theme. Thus, institutional entrepreneurship and change are understood, from this perspective, as the result of collective action, which often entails new relationships being created between actors, e.g. collaborations and alliances, as a result of this process (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). In this context, entrepreneurs have been argued to adopt and apply different sets of skills in order to create new collaborative forms within organisational fields.

Fligstein (1997: 398) extended the notion of institutional entrepreneurship by arguing that the actions of actors within organisational fields should be viewed "as the outcome of the types of social skill that institutional entrepreneurs possess and how that skill translates into institutional arrangements that produce organisational fields". Furthermore, social skill was

defined as "the ability to motivate cooperation in other actors by providing those actors with common meanings and identities in which actions can be undertaken and justified'.

Therefore, skills should be understood in terms of being applied in different ways across organisational fields as the fields took form, became stable, or transformed. This way of viewing social skills has been criticised for being too simplistic, with further elements of skills needing to be identified (e.g. Pinch et al. 1996; Pinch 2008). Furthermore, the discussion has been argued to move on to how and under what circumstances different components of skills could be explicated.

Another perspective with close similarities to the work of Fligstein (1997) was offered by Roa et al. (2000), using political processes as its point of departure and describing how new forms of organisation could be constructed in which social movements had a significant role. In this context, institutional entrepreneurs and activists were considered to be important inasmuch as they were "framing new practices, mobilizing resources (including constituencies), and garnering legitimacy for new forms" (ibid: 276). In relation to the issue of how new organisational forms emerge, Tracey et al. (2010) suggested that this was done via a process of bridging institutional entrepreneurship, whereby entrepreneurs combine aspects of established institutional logics.

From the perspective of relationships between actors, the position of an actor may also affect how institutional entrepreneurship materialises. From this perspective, the subject positions (Maguire et al., 2001) and the social positions (Battilana, 2006) from which actors can operate have been studied. In terms of subject positions, these have been explained as constituting the legitimized identities that are available within a particular field (Oakes et al., 1998). The concept of organisational fields has, according to this view, been understood as "structured systems of social positions within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over resources, stakes and access" (ibid:260). Here, power is understood in terms of being embedded within the framework of subject positions that allow actors to exercise power within and upon a particular field. Subject positions may provide legitimacy vis-à-vis diverse stakeholders, enabling actors occupying such positions to bridge stakeholder in ways which facilitate access to dispersed resources (Maguire et al., 2004). This has also been described as "boundary bridging" by Greenwood and Suddaby (2006), illustrating how actors operating within several organisational fields are able to be exposed to alternative practices. From this perspective,

actors occupying dominant positions in mature fields have been regarded to be able to act as institutional entrepreneurs, too. Thus, this perspective is in line with the empirical studies presented by Sherer and Lee (2002) and Roa et al., (2003) illustrating the same point.

From the perspective of social position, Battliana (2006) described this as being connected to the individual level, which enabled individuals to act as institutional entrepreneurs despite institutional pressures. Here, social position was suggested to be highly related to actors' perceptions of how they could influence the field which they are a part of. However, in this view, the actor was also considered to be affected by the status of both the organisation and the social groups that the individual belonged to (ibid: 661).

## 2.4    Merging fashion theory and new institutional theory

As illustrated in this chapter, fashion theory which applies a systemic perspective to fashion has a number of common determinants in relation to new institutional theory. This can in particular be identified by the shared interest in institutions. Based on how the key concept of institutions has developed in the two literature streams, the formulated definitions' intrinsic meaning can be argued to have been highly similar. In this context, one shared characteristic of the contemporary conceptualisations of institutions is the emphasised role of social practices. Social practices have been argued not only contain institutions, but also to provide a key as regards how organisational fields emerge, change, and transform. From this perspective, how social practices emerge and materialise may result in the creation of new institutions within both new and existing organisational fields. However, from the perspective of contemporary fashion theory, which emphasises the widespread nature of postmodern imagery and a playful attitude towards one's self-identity (e.g. Giddens, 1991; Crane, 2000; Kawamura, 2005), the role of institutions in the emergent organisational field can be regarded to be a complex matter, and perhaps particularly within the world of fashion.

Based on the aim of exploring emerging marketing practices within the fashion blogging phenomenon, the shared interest in institutions within the two literature streams provides the possibility of combining and merging key conceptualisations within new institutional theory and fashion theory. The main interest of integrating an institutional framework within the systemic conceptualisation of fashion is approaching the issue of institutional entrepreneurship. By integrating perspectives on institutional entrepreneurship, the

phenomenon's possible implications for the fashion system can be studied on the actor level. However, the conceptualisation of organisational fields allows and provides the ability to approach the empirical field on the field level as well.

In Chapter one, several indications were presented regarding how fashion bloggers seem to explore and utilize entrepreneurial opportunities. From the perspective of bloggers as prosumers, these actors might represent a group that acts as institutional entrepreneurs by creating distribution channels for the purposes of communicating personal reflections about their everyday lives but, more importantly, also engaging in market communication regarding fashion products and brands. If such practices are possible to identify, this would entail several implications for contemporary understanding of the fashion system and the role of prosumers in the emergence of organisational fields, not to mention how prosumers can act as institutional entrepreneurs. On the basis of this discussion, the research question is:

How can prosumption activities become involved in the creation of institutionalised fields and create opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship?

# 3. Method

My initial contact with the field of study was during the autumn of 2009. During this period, time was spent on understanding this industry's transition into the digital world. Here, several developments were found which could be interesting to investigate from a marketing perspective. One of them involved focusing attention on how fashion companies handle the transition from selling fashion in-store to selling it increasingly via online solutions (e.g. Radón, 2010).

However, during this period, interest in another development had increased significantly, namely the rise of the fashion blogger. These fashion bloggers, who primarily consisted of young girls writing about fashion, were to a relatively large extent being covered by Sweden's media. Numerous articles dedicated to explaining and illustrating this phenomenon were being published. It was not just the newspapers that were interested in this development, TV stations were also inviting the bloggers to become a part of the public sphere. In other words, the bloggers were taking a further step into the world of traditional media. In retrospect, this was one of the reasons why the phenomenon caught my eye.

After spending some time on further exploring the blogosphere, which emphasised fashion and how it had been described from different perspectives within the Swedish and international contexts, several ways of approaching the field of study were identified. One question that became increasingly relevant concerned whether or not, and to what extent, fashion producers had started getting interested in how to enter the realm of the fashion blogger. If examples of collaboration were identifiable, this would enable a number of interesting perspectives in terms of how the study could be developed.

However, one of the problems was that neither the producers nor the bloggers had any strong incentive to disclose whether or not they were working with each other professionally. In addition, the market-leading fashion bloggers had been subjected to audits by the Swedish Consumer Agency and later on the Swedish Tax Agency. Thus, the possibilities of obtaining access to trustworthy data by directly contacting producers and bloggers were at this stage considered to be relatively problematic.

During this period, I studied methods included in the field of netnography, content analysis, and social network analysis. Using a combination of these methods enabled three main aspects of the fashion blogosphere to be studied: practices, commercial contexts, and different forms of relationships between fashion bloggers and commercial actors. The combination of these methods resulted in an approach that provided a useful way of creating, in a rather extensive manner, a basis for analysing the phenomenon.

This study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, market-leading fashion bloggers were studied using netnography, content analysis, and social network analysis. In the second stage, the value network in which the studied fashion bloggers were operating was mapped in order to identify groups of stakeholders participating within the emergent organisational field. In the following sections, methodological discussions in the literature of these methods will be addressed in relation to the chosen approach applied within the framework of this study.

## 3.1    Netnography, content analysis, and social network analysis

In order to study the emerging digital practices in the fashion blogosphere, an approach emphasising behaviour and actions was needed. In this context, the method of netnography provided a way of analysing practices existing in the content of fashion blogs which also facilitated the exploration of how private and commercial contexts were used.

One of the scholars closely associated with the introduction of the netnographic approach is Kozinets (1997; 1998; 2002) who, during the late 1990s, suggested how it could be used in order to conduct ethnographical research online. One of the main usages of this method is studying consumer behaviour of cultures and communities on the web, especially within marketing research (Kozinets, 2002). Netnography allows the researcher to observe or participate in consumer discussions on public websites. As the name netnography suggests, this approach is closely related to the methods of ethnography that can be traced back to techniques used in cultural anthropology (Kozinet, 1998).

Even though web-based communication, ever since its emergence, has been undergoing rapid development in terms of how audio, images and video services have changed the way Internet users communicate with each other, the written word is still the most fundamental articulation of digital communication (Berg, 2011). This has consequences for how social interaction

between users occurs in terms of how the conditions for self-representation in the world of digital media significantly differ from offline life. Berg (2001) described the difference in terms of the digital world providing users with the ability, prior to taking action, of examining, reflecting, manipulating, and trying different actions before choosing the most suitable alternative. If an action, after it has been taken, does not seem appropriate from the user's perspective, it will often be possible to undo it before it has generated any social response. Therefore, digital communication requires the individual user to make active choices, regarding self-representation, which might not be the case to the same extent in offline life.

Early explorations of digital communities focused on understanding these aspects of the web, which, from a rather visionary stance, addressed issues regarding how affinity and anonymity could be understood (e.g. Turkle, 1997). However, the contemporary state of the web suggests that the Internet users of today are willing, to an increasing extent, to share information with each other about themselves, what they do, and what parts of the web they visit. Thus, it has been suggested that the dividing up of offline and online life has become problematic due to the fact that the border is increasingly becoming blurred (Berg, 2011; Kozinets, 2010). In order to provide a holistic understanding, Baym (2006) has suggested that offline contexts always influence online ones, and that online expectations and situations feed back into the offline experience. From this perspective, Berg (2011) has argued that the main factor when approaching digital communication was understanding experimental self-representation online, and focusing attention in particular on written communication.

Following Berg (2011), this method of netnography provided the possibility of studying the practices of fashion bloggers by putting the same emphasis on written communication. However, written communication in the context of the blogosphere could be studied by focusing attention on the blog content produced by fashion bloggers, but also from a broader community perspective. In terms of blogs, the community aspects have been suggested to occur through the use of comments on blogs where interaction takes place between (1) the author and his/her readers, (2) the author and other blog authors, and just between (3) the readers themselves who potentially form communal relationships (Kozinets, 2010; Rettberg, 2008). Thus, blogs have been understood as an asynchronous type of communication whereby text is dominant even though other forms of digital communication, e.g. images and video, are commonly mixed together.

In relation to the lack of incentive to disclose information about commercial collaboration, from the bloggers' and commercial actors' points of view, the focus on written communication provided a way of understanding commercial practices without approaching these actors with explicit questions regarding how collaborations might have taken shape. In this context, this sensitive nature, however, gave rise to yet another issue relating to whether to participate or not in the communities of fashion bloggers.

One of the most important discussions within the field of netnography relates to this issue, i.e. whether a participative or observational approach should be applied when conducting field work. Kozinets (2010) argued that the core of netnography, which distinguishes it from gathering and coding qualitative online data, was the use of a participative approach in terms of netnography being an adaption of "participant-observational ethnographic procedures" (Kozinets, 2006:135). Based on this definition, one of the commonly-used procedures for conducting netnography has been presented in terms of five different steps that need to be taken into consideration (Kozinets, 2002:6-16).

Using the suggested procedures presented by Kozinets (2002), participation in the studied communities became a fundamental condition. However, participating in the communities of market-leading fashion bloggers could give rise to a problematic situation concerning the sensitive nature of commercial collaborations. Other scholars (Langer and Beckman, 2005; Beaven and Laws, 2007) have suggested, however, how a more observationally-oriented netnographic approach could be applied.

Langer and Beckman (2005) suggested how netnography could be used to conduct covert research on sensitive research topics, e.g. studying digital communication between consumers regarding cosmetic surgery. First and foremost, they suggested that the procedures presented by Kozinets (2002), in particular aspects related to ethics, needed to be revised. They also argued that the possibility of integrating related methods, e.g. content analysis, needed to be emphasised due to the collected data, in the majority of cases, taking its point of departure in written communication. Here, quantitatively- and qualitatively-oriented results of content analysis should not be regarded to be mutually exclusive, but should instead be seen as a way of providing a more detailed description of the studied communities.

Relating to the aspect of member check, Langer and Beckman (2005), in their empirical work, experienced great difficulties in recruiting informants within a digital community of interest. Therefore, they decided not to inform the members of their presence and no member check was conducted. From their perspective, it would not have been possible to obtain access to a rich empirical material without taking this measure. Thus, this made a covert approach necessary. Their main argument regarding why this approach corresponded to and satisfied ethical standards was the application of the perspective of research ethics existing within media and communication studies where content analysis is widely-used and accepted. By comparing the chosen community with how studies of newspaper readers' letters had been conducted, they found the procedure of informing and asking the authors for permission to use the material an unusual practice (ibid: 197). Another argument was that the disclosure of their presence would weaken the aspect of unobtrusiveness and that it would endanger the whole project if the members opposed the project or engaged in "the spiral of silence" (see, for instance, Noelle-Neuman, 1984).

Based on the revision suggested by Langer and Beckman (2005), Beaven and Laws (2007) argued that one of the main reasons for not disclosing their presence or asking the community members for their consent related to the lack of consensus regarding the public or private nature of communities, which still needed to emerge. Their main argument was the increased normalisation of digital communication since Kozinets' (2002) introduction of procedures for conducting netnography. Here, they argued that digital communities should be considered to have a public nature, thus making consent unnecessary when approaching public posting. In addition, the members of the community that Beaven and Laws (2007) used as their empirical point of departure had the possibility of revealing information about their identity, e.g. gender, age, occupation and geographical location, or to continue to be anonymous.

Based on these arguments, they implemented a revised sequential procedure that consisted of: (1) identifying a data set, (2) a period of immersion in the material in order to become familiar with it, (3) conducting a qualitative textual analysis in order to develop a narrative, (4) conducting the quantitative analysis of posts to determine typologies and the orientation of the community, and (5) conducting an extreme case analysis in order to identify the boundaries of the discussion within the community.

Other examples of studies using an observational approach in netnography have focused on website connectedness (Maulana and Eckhardt, 2007), digital communities focusing on the object of the car (Hewer and Brownlie, 2007), and activities related to user-innovation in sports footwear (Füller et al., 2006). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the field of netnography has not achieved consensus in this issue. As expressed by Kozinets (2010:75), there is a spectrum of participative and observational fieldwork approaches which, in this context, are regularly negotiated.

When approaching the communities of market-leading fashion bloggers, several similarities may be found which relate to the arguments presented by Langer and Backman (2005) and Beaven and Laws (2007). In the majority of cases, the fashion bloggers exhibited a relatively high tendency to reveal information about their identity and to present personal and private accounts of their everyday lives. Thus, the revised procedures presented by Beaven and Laws (2007) were chosen because they offered a more suitable approach to analysing commercial contexts and practices without risking provoking changes within the communities.

However, in relation to the focus on social practices, the commercial contexts existing among the produced content of the fashion bloggers demanded a more systematic approach in order to be able to map how bloggers and commercial actors interacted. Thus, the methods of social network analysis and content analysis were integrated in order to enable a richer analysis of these relationships.

In contrast to how content analysis has been discussed within the context of netnography, social network analysis has not encountered the same critique. Instead, these two methods have been argued to be relatively interrelated. Kozinets (2010:53-55) argued that social network analysis could function as a point of departure in terms of positioning a network within the boundaries of its scope. Furthermore, it could facilitate the identification of appropriate nodes, e.g. individual members, activities, messages, and groups. Another aspect is that it can be helpful when determining what kind of network relations are of interest to map and analyse.

Social network analysis offers many possibilities in terms of understanding how actors form networks with different purposes and goals. However, this method of approaching the field of study also featured several common denominators vis-à-vis the proposed procedures for

content analysis. In relation to how Knoke and Yang (2008) described the way in which decisions regarding sampling units, relational forms and content, and level of analysis needed to be defined prior to data collection, the sequential steps for applying content analysis, as presented by Silverman (2006:159), have several similarities, see Table 2.

| **Doing quantitative content analysis** |
| --- |
| 1 Select particular texts relevant to your research problem. |
| 2 Sample text if there are too many to analyze completely. |
| 3 Construct a coding frame (categorization scheme) that fits both the theoretical considerations and the materials. |
| 4 Pilot and revise the coding frame and explicitly define the coding rules. |
| 5 Test the reliability of codes, and sensitize coders to ambiguities. |
| 6 Code all materials in the sample, and establish the overall reliability of the process. |
| 7 Set up a data file for the purpose of statistical analysis. |
| 8 Write a codebook including (a) the rationale of the coding frame; (b) the frequency distribution of all codes; and (c) the reliability of the coding process. |

Table 2. Sequential steps for quantitative content analysis. Source: Silverman 2006: 159. (Adapted from Bauer 2000: 149; Marvasti, 2004:94).

Thus, the first stage of this study was conducted using the specified requirements and procedures for applying social network analysis (Knoke and Yang, 2008) and content analysis (Silverman, 2006:159), combined with the procedures for conducting observational netnography presented by Beaven and Laws (2007). However, the procedures presented by Kozinets (2010) were also used during the initial stages of this study. In the following sections, the implementation of this approach will be further described.

## 3.2   Sampling fashion bloggers

Following Kozinets (2010: 89), the first step consisted of identifying a number of communities, in terms of blogs, whose relevance was evaluated on the basis of six aspects: (1) their relevance from the perspective of the formulated purpose and research question, (2) being active in terms of recent and regular updates, (3) showing a high degree of interaction between participants, (4) having reached a substantial degree of communication, (5) being

heterogeneous in terms having a number of different participants, and (6) providing a data-rich, detailed, and descriptively-rich material.

Using these suggested aspects, an initial exploration of the fashion blogosphere was conducted. When approaching the relatively large number of blogs that the blog phenomenon has given rise to, two additional criteria were formulated based on the purpose of the study. The sampled blogs needed to focus on fashion and be influential within the blogosphere, in this case being translated into their numbers of readers who functioned as a proxy for influence.

In order to identity blogs that fulfilled these criteria, a handful of blog ranking and blog listing services were explored. These services operate using the same basic principles. First and foremost, these services offer bloggers different types of statistical tools for measuring blog visits. The process of connecting a blog to these listing services consists of three steps. In the first step, bloggers wishing to gain access to the statistical tools on offer need to register their blogs on the website of the blog ranking services. Here, information about the name of the blog, who owns and writes it, when it was started, and which topics are discussed there are entered in a registration form. Once this is completed, the second step consists of the blogger gaining access to an individual code that he/she needs to integrate into the index page of the blog in order to get the statistical services to function. In the third and final step, the blog service software starts compiling data.

When these services were being explored, in the autumn of 2009, one of them dominated the market for this type of service. The blog ranking portal *Bloggportalen* (the Blog Portal) was attracting a significantly larger amount of bloggers than its competitors. Another thing that distinguished this portal was its ownership and operation by the same company that operates one of Sweden's largest newspapers, *Aftonbladet*. Thus, this blog ranking service was chosen as a point of departure when sampling individual bloggers. Two important aspects that need to be highlighted in the process of registering a blog on these portals, as well as the chosen one, concerns the independently measured data and active participating from the blogger's perspective. The first aspect, concerning independently-measured data that the blog ranking services offer and post publicly, enabled the identification of market-leading bloggers. The main argument for choosing to study market-leading blogs, instead of medium- or small-sized ones in terms of numbers of readers, was that this group of bloggers had been operating

within the blogosphere for a longer period of time. Therefore, this group was assumed to have had better opportunities for generating knowledge and experience of commercial values, and how these could be appropriated.

The second aspect related to the individual bloggers who chose to use these services having themselves defined what they were blogging about. This enables the listing of blogs that specialise in fashion. Using the listing services for fashion blogs, the hundred most visited fashion blogs could be identified. When studying the list, it became obvious that some of the fashion blogs were being operated by several bloggers, or in some cases more similar to web magazines. When it was identified that this was indeed the case, where it was problematic to identify who was operating the blog and whether or not these websites could be considered to actually match the definition of blogs used in this study[2], they were excluded.

This resulted in a list consisting of 62 fashion blogs chosen on the grounds that the number of visits per week they received exceeded 10,000. In order to understand the fundamental aspects of these blogs, they were reviewed on the basis of: (1) who owned and operated the individual blog, (2) what technical platforms they were using, (3) whether or not the blog was being operated through a registered company, and (4) whether or not collaborations between the sampled blogs could be identified.

## 3.3    Defining a time period

Before engaging in data collection, the issue of defining a time period to study remained. Two main alternatives were developed. The first alternative consisted of reviewing a number of months per year on the sampled fashion blogs, in order to collect data of a more longitudinal nature. The second alternative was to review 2009. However, because some of the sampled blogs had been started relatively recently, the first delimitation became problematic due to comparability issues.

Thus, the second way of delimiting the time period was chosen, consisting of reviewing all blog posts on the sampled blogs during 2009. Applying this approach enabled monthly time

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[2] The definition used by this study is; "Web logs, or blogs, are modified web sites maintained by individuals in which posts such as comments, description of events, or other material like graphics or video are listed in a reverse chronological sequence" (based on Blood 2002; Herring et al., 2004; Shen and Chiou 2009). Furthermore, the aspect that "blogs are often personal and associated with a high degree of personal creativity and ownership entailed in its production" (Gunter 2009) is also used as a point of departure.

series analysis of the collected data. Furthermore, because of the indications of rapid development of the fashion blogosphere, another argument for choosing this period was that it would enable the collection of data capable of providing richer indications of the contemporary development of the fashion blog phenomenon.

## 3.4    Defining level of analysis and variables

Within the framework of the content analysis procedures (Silverman, 2006:159), the following stage consisted of defining the level of analysis in terms of what types of data and measurements would be focused upon. Three measurements were developed, which were all constructed in order to analyse what the sampled fashion bloggers primarily produce online, namely blog posts.

The first variable focused on the use of private and commercial contexts within individual blog posts. This variable was constructed in such a way that it could adopt three mutually exclusive values: (1) posts that contained only a private context that did not refer to fashion companies or e-commerce businesses, (2) posts that contained a private context and references to fashion companies and e-commerce businesses, and (3) posts containing a commercial context in terms of references to fashion brands or e-commerce businesses, but no private context. The reason for defining the variable in this manner was to enable the translation of private and commercial contexts found in blogs posts into three categories: (1) private posts, (2) posts referring to brands or products, and (3) advertisement posts. Applying these constructs enabled the study to give an account of the level of commercial contexts.

Due to the study being delimited vis-à-vis the field of fashion bloggers, a further possible delimitation concerned the types of brands, products, and e-commerce businesses to integrate into the review. Here, the actors selected for study were restricted to fashion companies and e-commerce businesses specialising in fashion. Thus, the fashion companies featured in this study were defined as "companies specialising in apparel, shoes, or accessories". E-commerce businesses were defined as "web shops specialising in fashion products in terms of apparel, shoes, or accessories".

In relation to the first variable, the second variable focused on how fashion bloggers referred to fashion companies and e-commerce businesses specialising in fashion products. When a

blog post contained a reference, the name of the fashion company and/or e-commerce business was registered together with the number of times references were made.

In contrast to the first two variables, which were constructed in order to explore commercial contexts and one-way relations between the sampled fashion bloggers and fashion brands and e-commerce businesses, the third variable aimed to analyse relations between individual fashion bloggers. Blog posts that consisted of a reference to another fashion blog included in the sample were reviewed using a variable that could adopt three values based on the feelings expressed about the mentioned blog: (1) positive, (2) neutral, or (3) negative. By using this variable, relations between the individual fashion bloggers included in the sample could be systematically analyzed in order to find indications of collaborations and competitive behaviour.

## 3.5    Defining type of relational form

Within the framework of social network analysis, the issue regarding relational forms and content was the final important stage prior to data collection. Knoke and Kuklinski (1982:15-16, see also Knoke & Yang, 2008) suggested and identified how different types of network relations, in terms of their content, have been used in order to study, map, and analyse networks. Five of them were identified as suitable for approaching the field of study, and they are defined and described in the following manner:

- Communication relations. Linkages between actors are channels by which messages may be transmitted from one actor to another in a system (e.g. Marshall 1971; Lin 1975; Rogers and Kincaid 1981).
- Sentiment relations. How actors within a network expresses feelings of affection, admiration, deference, loathing or hostility towards each other (e.g. Hunter 1979; Hallinan 1974; Sampson 1969).
- Boundary penetration relations. The ties between actors consist of constituent subcomponents held in common (e.g. Levine 1972; Allen 1974).
- Transaction relations. Actors exchange control over physical or symbolic media, e.g. in gift giving or economic sales and purchases (e.g. Burt et al. 1980; Laumann et al. 1978).

- Instrumental relations. Actors contact one another in efforts to secure valuable goods, services, or information, such as a job, an abortion, political advice, recruitment to a social movement (e.g. Granovetter, 1974; Boissevain 1974).

By using the described types of relations as a point of departure, a structure concerning how the sampled fashion bloggers could be approached was developed which used the first three network relations in order to find indications of whether or not the remaining two relational types could be identified. More precisely, communication relations, sentiment relations, and boundary penetration relations could be applied in two ways. Firstly, they could be used in order to study how the sampled fashion bloggers interact with fashion brands and e-commerce businesses specialising in fashion products. Secondly, these relational types could also be used in order to study how the sampled fashion bloggers interact with each other. However, when studying fashion bloggers' relations with fashion brands and e-commerce businesses, it would only be possible to study one-way relations, in terms of fashion bloggers' relations with the commercial actors. When studying fashion bloggers' relations with each other, however, two-way relations would be possible.

## 3.6 Conducting a pilot study and proceeding to data collection

In order to see whether the constructed variables and the chosen relational forms functioned as expected, or whether they needed to be revised, a pilot study was conducted in September 2009. Five fashion blogs were studied, whereby three months were reviewed during 2009 on each blog on the basis of the three variables described above. This review was conducted by reading and coding the selected material manually. The pilot study gave clear indications of two important aspects which needed to be dealt with before engaging in future data collection.

The first aspect concerned abbreviations of fashion brands found in a number of reviewed blog posts. It showed the need for a clearer definition of how fashion bloggers referred to fashion brands and e-commerce businesses. In cases where it was evident which fashion brand or e-commerce business was intended, e.g. the abbreviation LV for Louis Vuitton, the reference was registered. When different types of nicknames were used in the studied blogs, which did not in an explicit manner refer to a particular brand, the reference was not registered. This was done using the argument that only references clearly referring to a certain brand or product could enable the generation of commercial value.

The second aspect concerned the amount of time needed to review each month's worth of blog posts. It became obvious that, unfortunately, the amount of time needed to review the sampled 62 blogs did not exist, forcing the sampled number of blogs to be reduced to 20 blogs. The remaining group consisted of the 20 largest blogs in terms of their numbers of readers. The reduction was made using the principal argument that the same procedure used within the framework of the pilot study could be used, i.e. reading and coding the material manually.

Between November 2009 and February 2010, a review was conducted of all the blog posts published during 2009 on the sampled blogs. The review was conducted with the help of coding schemes designed in Excel, whereby each individual blog was given a separate file. Here, all the individual blog posts were assigned a registration number based on the individual blogs, sorted by month. The review of the constructed variables was also conducted using the individual coding scheme. In parallel with the use of coding schemes, Word documents for each individual fashion blog were also used in order to copy material, in terms of blog posts, that was of particular interest in line with the netnographic approach. During the data collection period, two of the sampled blogs suffered from technical difficulties, entailing that their blog post archive was deleted. Thus, the sample was reduced to 18 blogs.

## 3.7    Identifying key stakeholders in an emerging organisational field

During the first part of this study, the applied method focused on the sampled market-leading fashion bloggers. Once this review had been completed, indications were found that the studied fashion bloggers were part of an emerging organisational field with an associated value network. In order to further understand how the sampled fashion bloggers operated, and to explore commercial values within this context, the next stage was developed into analysing the possible emergence of a organisational field which these bloggers might be a part of.

Based on the conducted review, three categories of key stakeholders were identified whom the studied fashion blogs mentioned and wrote about: (1) other fashion blogs, (2) blog platforms, and (3) advertisement companies. Thus, the review of the fashion blogs paved the way for the possibility of collecting further data which would enable the mapping and analysis of these actors as well.

## 3.8    Approaching blog platforms and advertisement companies

In order to identify the number of individual actors within the key stakeholder categories, consisting of blog platforms and advertisement companies, further data was collected by studying the identified individual actors separately using their websites, annual reports, and press articles as the point of departure.

Once fundamental information and descriptive data about the individual key actors had been identified, interviews were conducted with nine individual actors. These individual actors were chosen because they seemed to consist of dominant and peripheral actors within the organisational field. The interviews were conducted in May and June 2010 and in May 2011 with representatives from different key stakeholders groups, but primarily with representatives within the stakeholder group of blog platforms.

The reason for focusing on actors within the group of blog platforms was the assumption that they functioned as the link between fashion bloggers and advertisement companies, something which might possibly create insights not only into their own operations but also into the other key stakeholder groups. Another important argument was that they were assumed to work closest to the studied fashion bloggers, something which would enable the study to generate data concerning the level of entrepreneurial behaviour the studied fashion bloggers demonstrated from the blog platform representatives' perspective. The interviews focused on three aspects: (1) the individual actors' activities and operations (2), their role within the blog value network, and (3) their relations with other actors. The interviews were conducted using a combination of semi-structured and open-ended approaches with the help of an interview guide. Due to the geographical spread of the individual actors, the interviews were conducted by telephone. During the interviews, a snowballing technique was implemented in terms of the interviewed actors being asked to mention other active actors within the value network.

In order to validate data acquired via the interviews and to further map the different groups of key stakeholders, additional secondary data was used, e.g. annual reports, individual actors' websites, and articles published in the press. Using secondary data, a number of additional actors within the different stakeholder groups were identified.

## 3.9    Analysing the collected data

Once data collection had been completed, the process of analysing the data initially focused on the studied fashion bloggers. Here, individual characteristics were mapped in order to find groups exhibiting similarities with each other. Once a number of fashion blogger groups had been identified on the basis of their fundamental characteristics, the data relating to commercial contexts, fashion brands, and e-commerce business was then analysed. Here, content analysis was applied in order to understand how commercial contexts were used among the studied blogs.

During the data collection phase, Excel was used to code the individual blog posts on the basis of the three variables being applied. Once data collection had been completed, the dataset from the individual fashion bloggers was compiled and imported into the statistics program SPSS. SPSS was used in order to perform descriptive and univariate statistical analyses on the basis of both the individual blogs and the accumulated sample. In parallel with statistical analysis using SPSS, social network analysis was also applied using Ucinet in order to analyse as well as illustrate the key findings concerning relational forms in terms of sociograms.

Once the first analysis, focusing on market-leading fashion bloggers, had been carried out, the second stage consisted of analysing the collected data material on the basis of whether or not actors possibly could be a part of an emerging organisational field and value network. Once this analysis had been completed, the data collected from the review was used as the point of departure when collecting further data via interviews with representatives of the different actors within the stakeholder groups of blog platforms and advertisement companies. The interviews were transcribed in part with the aim of securing an account of all network relations. Here, secondary data concerning these stakeholders was also incorporated into the analysis in order to facilitate the contextualisation and identification of the value network. The material was sorted into the constructed categories of key stakeholders, with the main purpose of mapping network relations between individual actors. Once the value network had been completely mapped out, the analysis continued with a focus on the individual stakeholder groups.

Once these two sequential stages had been carried out, the last stage consisted of analysing the commonly-used practices exhibited by the fashion bloggers. Here, data collected via the review and combined with interview material functioned as the point of departure when contextualising the identified practices. By analysing the data captured through the use of individual Word documents for each fashion blog, commonly-used practices were mapped individually but, more importantly, in relation to the identified blog groups.

## 3.10   Validity and reliability

When reviewing the chosen methods, two aspects need to be taken into account: validity and reliability. In terms of validity, Hammersely (1990:57, cited in Silverman, 2006:289) argued that this term refers to "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers". One approach which is commonly used in order to secure a high level of validity is using triangulation in terms of multiple methods (Silverman, 2006). As discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, this study was conducted using two stages.

In the content published by market-leading fashion bloggers, multiple methods were employed in order to analyse the data material from different standpoints. Findings generated through the first stage were subsequently assessed and compared with data generated during the second stage of this study, focusing on identifying key stakeholders within the blogosphere. During the second stage, multiple methods were also employed in order to evaluate whether or not the obtained findings, from using different methods and sources of data, corresponded to similar conclusions.

In relation to validity, reliability has been argued to refer "to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (Hammersely, 1992:67, cited in Silverman, 2006:282). Thus, the term refers to the possibility of replicating a conducted study. In the content review published by market-leading fashion bloggers, suggested procedures for conducting observational netnography (Beaven and Laws, 2007), content analysis (Silverman, 2006:159), and social network analysis (Knoke and Yang, 2008) were adhered to. Moreover, data was collected using a code scheme which was tested in a pilot study prior to the main review. Here, obstacles were identified and addressed in order to secure a high level of reliability.

When engaging in the identification of the key stakeholders, an interview guide was used; interviews were recorded and partly transcribed in order to secure the documentation of the relations between the actors in the organisational field. Thus, measures have been employed for maintaining a high level of reliability via the data collection process.

# 4. The emergence of an organisational field

One of the entrepreneurs who gained an interest in the practice of blogging early on was Ronald Karlsson. Because of this interest, Karlsson began to explore the market for technical platforms for starting and operating blogs during the spring of 2004[3]. In this context, blogging had received some attention due to the American presidential election of 2004, when blogs were used to publish and uncover political scandals. Even though, in Karlsson's perspective, these events had little effect on the popularity of blogging in Scandinavia, they were, nevertheless, one reason for him to reflect on how technical obstacles, from the user's perspective, could be overcome in order to make it easier to start blogging. On the international market, a number of technical blog platforms were in existence at that point, but the first platform intended for the Swedish market had yet to be launched. Thus, in September 2004, the blog platform Blogg.se was launched as a result of an initiative by a Norwegian company, Petrograd AS, which had developed a technical solution previously launched in Norway.



Figure 1. Snapshot of *Blogg.se*, the first blog platform developed for the Swedish market. This snapshot is from 24 November 2005. Source: Internet Archive (2011).

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[3] Karlsson, R. *Development of blogg.se.* [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 15th June 2010.

About six years later, this particular blog platform had become the market-leading blog service on the Swedish market. In June 2010, around 600,000 – 700,000 blog accounts had been registered. More interestingly, the number of active blog accounts being updated on a weekly basis amounted to around 200,000.

From Karlsson's perspective, one of the reasons why blogging about fashion had become popular could be traced back to what the early adopters of blogging first began to write about. According to Karlsson, around 300 blogs were in operation during September 2004, when their blog platform was launched. There were indications that the trend of blogging started among college students in the area around Uppsala, later spreading to the nearby capital Stockholm. During this period, a number of influential bloggers from the relatively small but nonetheless growing blog community particularly wrote about topics related to fashion. Due to the interactive nature of blogs, these bloggers may have exerted an influence and inspired others to blog about fashion.

Even though Blogg.se was the first actor to operate within the Swedish blogosphere, providing a technical solution for registering and operating blogs, it was soon followed by other actors sharing the same interest in the blog phenomenon. These actors played an important part in the story of how Sweden's blogosphere emerged, also offering explanations regarding its current state. Up to this point, much attention has focused on the field of fashion. In the coming sections, the scope will be widened in order to describe the rise of the Swedish blogosphere, from these actors' perspectives, in order to illustrate the emergence of the organisational field in which they operate. This is done in order to provide a point of reference regarding the social institutions and practices exhibited by fashion bloggers, which will be analysed in Chapters five and six.

## 4.1    Blog platforms – overcoming technical obstacles from the perspective of the user

Since the launch of the first blog platform onto the Swedish market, *Blogg.se*, several competitors offering similar services have emerged. The general characteristic of these services was the aim of providing user-friendly platforms for starting and operating blogs. On the Swedish market, a total of 27 active Swedish companies providing blog platforms have been identified within the framework of this study.

Within this group of actors, it is possible to distinguish three different categories of companies: (1) companies that have specialised in providing blog platforms, (2) companies in the IT sector that have explored the possibilities of expanding their businesses or developing their technological knowledge by developing blog platforms, and (3) traditional media companies that have integrated blog platforms into their websites. The next three sections are devoted to further describing the characteristics of these categories of actor and presenting the underlying reasons as to why some of them emerged.

### 4.1.1  Companies specialising in providing blog platforms

The first group of actors consists of three companies which all have specialised in providing blog platforms: Blogg Esse AB (Blogg.se), Tjejsajten AB (Devote.se), and the Swedish Blog Network AB (Bloggplatsen.se). They are currently market-leading in terms of the number of users they have attracted. In total, they have generated between 720,000 and 820,000 registered blog accounts up until June 2010; they thus constitute a relatively large share of the total Swedish blogosphere. Their representatives estimate that around 25 percent of their registered blog accounts are active on their platforms. The definition of an active blog varies from respondent to respondent, but its primary sense is that active blogs are updated by the users at regular time intervals. The combined turnover of two of the companies amounted to around SEK 8.9 million in 2010. No public information regarding turnover is available as yet regarding the third company. They have been in operation since 2004, 2006, and 2007, respectively.

Blogg Esse AB operates the first blog platform developed for the Swedish market; it was briefly discussed in the introduction section of this chapter. After the launch of their blog platform in September 2004, they experienced a rapid growth in registered blog accounts during the autumn of 2006[4]. For this reason, it was necessary to raise new capital and thus contact was established with two venture capital companies and two media companies.

This resulted in the company Aller Media acquiring the majority of the shares in Blogg Esse AB at the end of March 2007 (Blogg Esse AB, 2007). In contrast to Blogg Esse AB, which first began as a sole proprietorship and then started operating as a limited company in April

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[4] Karlsson, R. *Development of blogg.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 15th June 2010.

2006, Aller Media was founded in 1898 and had a turnover of around SEK 1.6 billion during 2010. In other words, a large company which was operating in the sector of traditional media acquired a relatively small, but nonetheless growing, business that was exploring commercial opportunities in the world of digital media.

Before Aller Media acquired its majority shareholding, it had previously bought the well-visited Swedish web community Spray which at that time had a functioning sales organisation. Thus, under the ownership of Aller Media, Blogg Esse AB started to cooperate with Spray's sales organisation in order to sell advertising space on blogs registered at Blogg.se. During the summer of 2009, Aller Media decided to sell its recently acquired shares in Spray. This resulted in Blogg Esse AB deciding to change its contracted sales organisation to the Wyatt Media Group. In relation to the previous sales organisation, the Wyatt Media Group also had a relatively strong position on the Swedish media market. Similar to Aller Media, who owned the Swedish online community Spray for a time, the Wyatt Media Group previously operated one of the biggest online communities on the Swedish market, Lunarstorm, which can be described as a Swedish predecessor to Facebook and which was mostly targeted at teenagers. In this context, the main source of revenue consisted of income generated by selling banner adverts on the blog platform.

However, it is not only through conventional banner advertising that Blogg Esse AB has identified sources of revenue. Through a collaboration with the newly-founded video service *Videofy Me*, advertising integrated into videos functions as a additional stream of revenue for both Blogg Esse AB and for the bloggers themselves. Due to this collaboration, a rapid decrease in YouTube usage has been observed within the framework of Blogg.se.

Karlsson estimated that around 30 bloggers are paid by Blogg Esse AB, but plans to expand that number were under way. Of these bloggers, several have their own registered firms through which they conduct their blogging activities. However, around 30 bloggers have left the blog platform for other platforms, or have started working independently with other technical solutions.

The second company specialising in offering a technical solution for blogging is Tjejsajten AB. It was founded in January 2007 and began when two IT entrepreneurs decided to register three websites, the first focusing on holidays, the second on young men, and the third on

young women[5]. The initial aim was to explore whether or not these three sites could generate traffic and interest from Swedish internet users. After a short period of time, the website targeting young women gained a relatively large amount of attention. During the initial phase, the site was designed more or less as a web community. Within the framework of this community, one of the services offered was a blog service. It quickly became popular and, for that reason, the community was transformed into more of a blog platform, which was named Devote.se. Thus, similar to Blogg.se, Devote.se was not started as a result of a user initiative, but more as an entrepreneurial attempt to explore what Swedish Internet users demanded and the possible commercial values which could potentially be utilized. Figure 2 shows a snapshot of the current layout of the platform.



Figure 2. Snapshot of *Devote.se*. The snapshot is from 2 May 2011. Source: Devote.se (2011).

What happened when Devote.se developed into a blog platform was that the previous community form had generally started becoming more specialised, according to Staffan Ekberg, CEO of Tjejsajten AB. Instead of providing users with several different services, the need to specialise in particular services, e.g. blogging, had become the general trend on Sweden's Internet market.

By June 2010, 80,000 blogs had been registered via Devote.se, with an estimated 50,000 being regarded as active. One of the aspects distinguishing Devote.se is that it has a clear target group consisting of young women aged between 16 and 29 (Tjejsajten AB, 2009). Thus, its aim is to provide a high degree of market penetration among its target group. This

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[5] Ekberg, S. *Development of devote.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 20th August 2010.

segmentation strategy was chosen due to this group of Internet users consisting of users who have shown a high degree of curiosity as regards the practice of blogging.

In August 2010, Tjejsajten AB terminated its contract with its previous sales partner, instead choosing to hire its own sales team in order to sell advertising space in-house. One of the reasons for this was to get closer to its customers, i.e. companies who want to use blogs as a marketing channel. In this context, Ekberg argues that a shift seems to be occurring within the blogosphere as regards whether PR agencies or media agencies should be responsible for creating attention on behalf of their clients within the blogosphere.

Previously, the responsibility for contacting bloggers and managing relations with the blogosphere had been assigned to PR agencies by the marketing departments of Swedish advertisers. However, as the audiences of individual blogs increased significantly, this responsibility seems to have partly shifted towards media agencies who are primarily responsible for dividing companies' marketing budgets between different marketing channels. Here, segmentation of the blogosphere is a development that makes it easier for media agencies to approach the emerging marketing channels that blogs and blog platforms consist of, according to Ekberg. In terms of what the bloggers write about, around 50 percent of the active bloggers on Devote.se have chosen to describe themselves as focused on fashion. Up to this point, Tjejsajten AB was collaborating with around 30 bloggers, of which a dozen are being focused on in particular. In this context, collaborations consist of agreements which are exclusive to these bloggers, giving them benefits such as mentorships that do not apply to other bloggers registered via the blog platform.

The third company that has specialised in providing blog services is Swedish Blog Network AB. Its blog platform, Bloggplatsen.se, was started in 2006, being run until November 2010 as a sole proprietorship[6]. This blog platform had generated around 40,000 registered blogs up until June 2010. The founder, Fredrik Sundin, explains that he previously worked with the development of web services and that the blog platform was one of many projects that were successful. Swedish Blog Network AB has also chosen to contract a sales partner in order to create revenues, the Wyatt Media Group, i.e. the same organisation that Blogg Esse AB chose to contract.

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[6] Sundin, F. *Development of bloggplatsen.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 18th August 2010.

In the context of creating revenues, Sundin says that contracting sales partners is more lucrative than using affiliate networks that provide advertisements and pay commission generated through these ads. Thus, Swedish Blog Network AB has attempted to increase its share of revenues generated through its sales partner due to the monetary return being significantly higher. Up to this point, however, most advertisements are still being distributed via affiliate networks.

Several similarities can be found with regard to how the three blog platforms began their operations. All three companies are managed by people who were active within the Swedish IT sector prior to Sweden's blog phenomenon taking shape. They see themselves as niche specialists in terms of their main focus being blogs and the blogosphere. Their business ideas are similar in terms of creating and selling advertising space to advertisers who wish to communicate with consumers participating in the blogosphere.

Besides the fact that they have combined a large amount of active blogs and thus created effects related to economies of scale and critical mass, they have over the years on Sweden's blog market, in some respects, changed their revenue model. All three have used contracted sales partners in order to generate revenues from banner advertising, but they have also utilized affiliation networks. Today, two of the studied companies use contracted advertising companies while the third manages its advertising sales in-house. Furthermore, they have also created ways of generating revenues from their users, e.g. offering blog accounts free of advertising, starting web shops, and providing mobile services.

Yet another important characteristic is that these companies have attracted the attention of other actors with longer experience, both in terms of traditional media companies, e.g. Aller Media, and IT companies previously operating on the digital media market, e.g. the Wyatt Media Group. Thus, this group of companies is exhibiting several entrepreneurial traits in terms of how it has identified a demand for a particular service, i.e. blogging, created ways of facilitating the process of starting to blog, and, most importantly from an entrepreneurial perspective, created ways of utilizing the commercial opportunities emerging as a result of this development.

### 4.1.2 Exploratory platforms

The second group of companies providing blog platforms is primarily engaged in providing other forms of products and services within Sweden's IT sector. Here, the blog platforms often function as a minor part of their overall business activities. When the blog phenomenon started gaining attention in Sweden, these companies, in a similar manner to the actors specialising in technical solutions for blogging, started to explore whether or not they could identify commercial opportunities by providing Internet users with blog platforms. Unlike the companies specialising in providing blog platforms, these companies have not been dependent to the same extent on how their blog platforms developed. Perhaps this offers one explanation as to why these actors have not enjoyed the same growth rate as the specialised blog platforms. Instead, they describe the blog platforms in many cases as more or less managing themselves and that resources invested in further developing the blog platforms are relatively limited. Even though this is the case, these companies' blog platforms have still experienced an inflow of newly-registered blog accounts.

In total, 18 companies within this category were identified. In the majority of cases, the estimated revenues these blog platforms generate constitute only a fraction of the total revenues generated by the company's primary business areas. The revenues are generated by means of collaborations with advertising companies, particularly in the form of affiliate networks. Some of the studied blog platforms also provide premium blog accounts that are free of advertising and function as an additional revenue stream. Four of these companies are Glacialis HB, Jari Viirelä sole proprietorship, Pineberry AB, and Internetservice i Fjärås AB.

Glacialis HB started developing its blog platform, Bloggis.se, in 2004. It was founded by six friends who were working with the technical platform in their spare time[7]. They met when studying engineering. One of the founders, Jon Hollström, said that he was working for an IT company in London while they were starting to develop Bloggis.se. At that time, the potential revenues from banner advertising were potentially much higher than current rates. They had started noticing international developments in blogging and, because of that, they decided to create their own platform in order to explore the commercial possibilities this might bring. However, when they launched their blog platform in around 2005, the rates for banner advertising were starting to fall, according to Hollström. Nevertheless, they decided to keep

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[7] Hollström, J. *Development of bloggis.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 15th June 2010.

their blog platform online even though it was not creating any substantial revenues. Hollström said that they had only worked with affiliate marketing to create revenues. By June 2010, they had attracted around 9,000 registered blog accounts.

In 2005, Jari Viirelä, through his sole proprietorship, started the blog platform Bloggsite.se[8]. His background is the IT sector, and he also operates a web agency specialising in e-commerce solutions. By June 2010, around 3,000-4,000 blogs had been registered. Of the total number of registered blogs, an estimated ten percent are regarded to be active. In order to finance the cost of operating his blog platform, affiliate networks are used. However, the created revenues have thus far been unable to cover costs. In some cases, clients of the web agency have chosen to advertise through this blog platform. What Virrelä has experienced is that the blog platform has been used for purposes related to search engine optimisation instead of its real purpose. In such cases, blogs are registered through the links that are posted in order to generate a higher Google page ranking score for a particular site where products or services are on offer. In this context, Virrelä said that advertising and PR agencies had also contacted him to discuss how the blog platform could be used for these purposes. However, this type of collaboration has never been initiated.

Pineberry AB started its blog platform, Bloggproffs.se, in April 2008 and had generated around 30,000 registered blogs by June 2010[9]. One of the founders, Michael Wahlgren, estimates that around five to ten percent of the registered blogs are active. Instead of developing a technical solution, it was decided to use the open source platform Wordpress. What distinguishes Bloggproffs.se is that it has chosen not to integrate any form of advertising and thus no revenues are generated by the platform. One of the reasons for this is that they wanted the blog platform to grow before deciding whether or not to explore possible ways of creating revenue streams. Furthermore, the blog platform is regarded to be a minor project that is being run parallel with their main business areas and is thus not regarded to be a high-priority activity.

Since 2004, Internetservice i Fjärås AB provides web services focusing on web hosting[10]. Due

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[8] Viirelä, J. *Development of bloggsite.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 19th August 2010.
[9] Wahlgren, M. *Development of bloggproffs.se*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 18th August 2010.
[10] Olsson, R. *Development of bloggo.nu*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 18th August 2010.

to its customers expressing a desire for blog services, it decided to develop a blog platform at the end of 2009. This resulted in Bloggo.nu being launched during 2010. Since then, it has been experiencing a steady inflow of blog registrations amounting to a couple of thousand per month, according to Robert Olsson, CEO of Internetservice i Fjärås AB. An estimated proportion of around 15-20 percent of the registered accounts is considered to be active. The main aim is to provide a free service, which is also free of advertising. However, the possibility of upgrading blog accounts to a premium version has been integrated. The minority of the registered blogs have chosen to upgrade their accounts. In addition, users are also able to integrate affiliate networks into the framework of their accounts, provided by Blogg.nu, if they so wish. Thus far, generated revenues constitute a fraction of the total revenues generated by their main business activities.

Thus, a shared characteristic of these blog platforms is that they are managed by people who are interested in web solutions and have the necessary technical competence to develop this type of infrastructure. Furthermore, the majority of them can be described as start-up projects operated by committed people who have not shown the same interest in applying commercial approaches as the representatives of the specialist platforms. Instead, the blog platforms are regarded as a way of developing knowledge and experience of IT related services, where the commercial possibilities have not been the main reasons for developing these platforms.

### 4.1.3   Traditional media companies integrating blog platforms

The third group of blog platforms is operated by traditional media companies. These companies, as well as other categories of companies operating blog platforms, have identified the fact that blogs can have a significant impact on traffic flows on different websites. However, unlike other actors operating within the blogosphere, traditional media companies have great experience and knowledge of how to sell advertising space.

The traditional media companies operating blog platforms, which all have websites where they sell advertising space, have identified that blogs can provide increased traffic which in turn can lead to synergy effects and effects relating to economies of scale. By developing blog platforms that were integrated with the companies' news websites, an increased amount of advertising space could be made available. In this context, advertising packages were, in most cases, designed to enable advertisers to directly target the users taking part in these blog

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platforms. The identified blog platforms within this category consist of six platforms which are all operated by the Swedish newspapers. One of these actors, Aftonbladet, provides one of the earliest examples of how blog platforms can be integrated into existing infrastructure, and in the context of providing news services online.

In 2004, a start was made on exploring how a blog platform could be integrated into a news site[11]. This started when Aftonbladet decided to acquire an externally-developed technical system for registering and operating blogs. Once the technical platform had been bought, the system was integrated into the framework of Aftonbladet's website and, after about a year, it was being operated in-house, according to Göran Fröjd, editor of Aftonbladet Blogg. During 2009, the system was redesigned in order to make it more user-friendly. One of the main reasons for this was that it would be easier for journalists to write in this format. In this context, and due to current developments in the blogosphere, Aftonbladet Blogg chose to focus more attention on how the competitiveness of editorial blogs could be strengthened. From initially offering a blog platform targeted at its readers, the editorial aspects were thereby emphasised and focused upon. Here, the rate of development among its competitors was regarded to be one of the contributing reasons for this change in priority.

By April 2011, around 40,000 – 50,000 blog accounts had been registered through this blog platform. Even though it was one of the first actors exploring the blog phenomenon in the Swedish context, it did not direct resources early on in the process towards developing advertising packages based on its blog platform and categories of blogs. Instead of integrating advertising sales in-house, it chose to use a contracted external sales partner to create revenues.

However, the blog platform had another important purpose which consisted of enabling readers to take part in the news discussion by commenting on, criticising, or analysing news streams. Fröjd emphasises that the core business for Aftonbladet does not consist of providing blog services, but primarily of sourcing readers for its news website. Whether readers are sourced through Aftonbladet's own blog platform or via competitors' platforms is thus regarded to be a minor issue, in this perspective.

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[11] Fröjd, G. *Development of Aftonbladet Blogg*. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 5th May 2011.

## 4.2 Advertising companies – enabling the utilisation of commercial values in the blogosphere

Before the blog phenomenon emerged in Sweden, a number of actors were engaged in collecting advertising space from different Internet websites and selling it to advertisers. However, as a result of the blog phenomenon, both existing and new actors started to focus their attention on how blogs could be integrated into their business activities. On the Swedish market, a total of 26 active advertising companies specialising in online marketing, and in particular affiliate marketing, were identified. The majority of the identified advertising companies started up relatively recently, while 19 of them have been registered since 2005. Even though most of these companies target all types of web pages that are willing to provide advertising space, 12 of them mention or emphasize blogs as one type of website that they particularly focus on. These 12 companies had a combined turnover of SEK 63.5 million during 2009.

The majority of these companies manage affiliate networks and use different approaches to integrating blogs. Nine of them allow anyone with their own blog to join their network and to start publishing advertisements on their blogs. Meanwhile, 3 companies have created a number of requirements, e.g. a minimum number of readers, that bloggers need to meet in order to join their affiliate networks. In some cases, the advertising companies also provide blogs with traditional advertisements which are not to the same extent, e.g. compared to affiliate marketing, connected with the performance of the blogs. Instead, the advertiser pays a fixed rate to advertise on a specific number of blogs.

One of the advertising companies exhibiting a high level of growth is Tailsweep AB. This company has chosen to focus almost exclusively on blogs, using this approach as a way of positioning itself in relation to its competitors. Tailsweep AB's story began when three people started exploring the commercial opportunities which the blogosphere might be able to provide. One of the founders, Michael Swärdh, previously worked with developing a blog platform for the Swedish web community *Passagen*, owned by the media company Eniro[12]. As a way of learning more about blogging, he himself started to blog in 2005. His blog focused on technology, was written in English, and quickly became popular in terms of

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[12] Svärdh, M. Development of Tailsweep AB. [Interview] Conducted by telephone with Pihl, C. on 6th May 2011.

attracting thousands of readers per day. At one point, his blog was in the world top 20 of blogs focusing on technology. Swärdh started to reflect on how his blog might be able to create revenues on the basis of the large number of readers finding their way to his blog. Early on during the process, he realised the value that he would be able to create, through his blog, for the companies and brands that he wrote about.

However, he had not encountered a system or infrastructure which could easily be integrated into his blogging activities. The systems which existed consisted of affiliate networks. However, in his perspective, more could be done on this market. Meanwhile, a number of fashion bloggers were exhibiting a remarkable development which interested Swärdh even more. When young women, over a short period of time, were able to create large readerships and, in some respects, become competitors of forms of traditional media, then similar business models financing the world of traditional media might be able to apply to the world of digital media, and especially social media.

As many other actors were engaging in the exploration of the blogosphere at that time, the initial idea behind Tailsweep AB was that it would be a minor project that Swärdh and his colleagues could work on during their spare time. However, when the service was launched in 2007, interest in it was overwhelming. Consequently, they decided to quit their existing jobs in order to invest their time and resources in the new venture. Relatively quickly, a number of bloggers contracted Tailsweep AB. These contracts consisted of Tailsweep becoming responsible for managing sales of the advertising space provided by the bloggers. Thus, the main idea, from the perspective of Tailsweep AB, was to set up contracts with established bloggers who had created a strong identify and large readerships on the web.

During the initial phase, Tailsweep AB exclusively targeted media agencies responsible for divide advertisers' media budgets for advertising campaigns. Several of its initial clients showing an interest in the blogosphere were fashion companies such as H&M, Kappahl, Gina Tricot and Lindex. Because of that, it started to develop advertising packages directed at different industries, e.g. one package focused on fashion. Up to this point, it had developed 19 advertising packages, with a turnover amounting to around SEK 18 million in 2009. Even though the majority of its customers represent media agencies, advertisers have also shown an interest, representing around 20 percent of Tailsweep AB's total number of clients in April 2011.

Besides Tailsweep AB and actors offering affiliate networks, another 2 advertising companies distinguish themselves in terms of their activities in the blogosphere and their exploration of new ways of working with blogs. The largest advertising company, in terms of turnover, Hi-Media Sales AB, manages a number of blog platforms while simultaneously offering advertisers advertising space. This can be described as a way of becoming vertically integrated within the value network of the blogosphere and bears similarities to how one of the blog platforms had started managing its advertising sales in-house. The second example consists of a company which, in fact, is engaged in what could be described as offering product placement on blogs since it offers bloggers payment to write posts about specific products and services.

As already described, the majority of the identified blog platforms have engaged in collaborations with advertising companies in terms of affiliate networks or traditional advertising in order to increase their revenues. Furthermore, affiliate networks are more widespread in terms of the number of blog platforms using these services. Basically, it seems to be a matter of size since the blog platforms that represent a relatively large share of the blogosphere obviously have greater possibilities of contracting sales organisations and thus acquiring advertisers that are willing to invest in larger campaigns. When a blog platform reaches a critical mass of active blogs, but has generated, more importantly, a number of highly popular bloggers, it will be more profitable to contract an advertising company in order to sell advertising instead of relying purely on affiliate networks.

## 4.3    The emergence of a blog value network

One way of understanding the interplay and contractual relationships between bloggers, blog platforms, and advertising companies is to illustrate the value network that has emerged as a result of developments within the Swedish blogosphere, see Figure 3. In this value network, the group of actors closest to the consumers are the bloggers. Once bloggers have successfully created an online identity, and a large audience, they can generate revenues on the basis of their blogging activities via a blog platform or by contracting an advertisement company focusing on blogs.
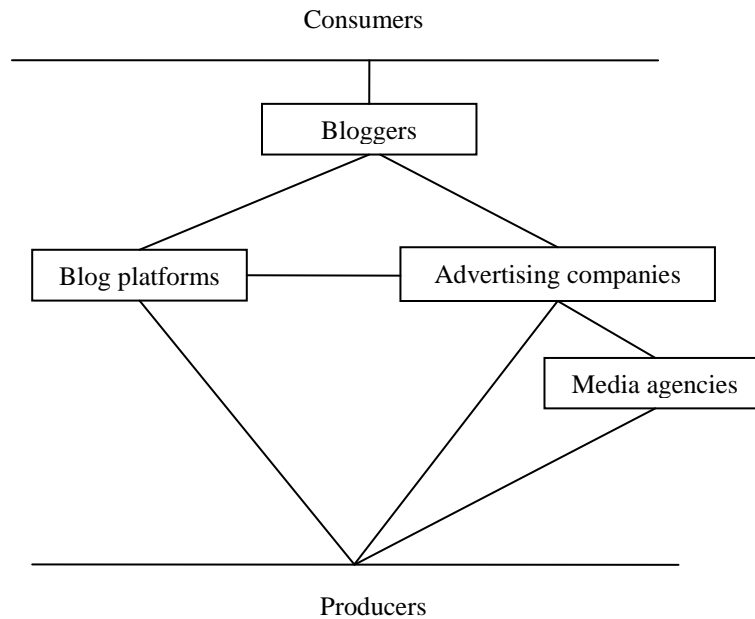
Figure 3. Identified value network associated with blogging.

Meanwhile, advertising companies are also contracted, in some cases, by blog platforms. As indicated by Ekberg, CEO of Tjejsajten AB, and Swärdh, CEO of Tailsweep AB, one of the shifts that seems to have occurred is that media agencies responsible for divide advertisers' media budgets, have increasingly started to become yet another group of actors integrated into the blog value network.

## 4.4    Analysing the emergence of the organisational field

This chapter has illustrated the emergence of the blogging phenomenon and how commercial actors have entered the realm of the blogosphere. As shown in the previous sections, several actors, e.g. Blogg Esse AB, Glacialis HB and Aftonbladet, started to explore, relatively early on, the potential that the emerging international interest in blogging might bring with it within the framework of the Swedish market. Here, by offering technical solutions for blogging, early pioneers enabled Internet users to overcome technical obstacles. These technical solutions provide one of the main reasons behind the subsequently widespread use of blogging practices. Thus, by bridging technical obstacles, this development facilitated the use of blogs from the user's perspective, and probably also accelerated their development.

The main characteristic of the studied blog platforms is that they have provided Internet users with the possibility of blogging via standardised technical systems. Thus, they have lowered

the entry barriers from the user's perspective. Furthermore, a key aspect is that many of the entrepreneurs who engaged in exploring the commercial potential had a technical background either due to previously working in the IT sector or due to their education. From this perspective, it is possible to argue that the world of the blog platform is characterised by being a highly technical environment wherein knowledge about how to develop effective and user-friendly systems is needed. Here, the need to maintain effective and efficient control of the produced systems seems to be yet another key aspect relating to the process of registering, operating, and analysing blogs.

However, by applying their technical knowledge, the entrepreneurs developing blog platforms have also widened their perspectives to understand how other technical platforms, besides their own blog platforms, could be integrated into their operations in order to create commercial opportunities. One of the main reasons why these actors started exploring this market was that they had understood how existing actors, e.g. affiliate networks, could be used in order to generate revenues. Thus, by combining their knowledge of how platforms could be developed and maintained with an understanding of how primarily affiliate networks' business models could be integrated into these platforms, a value network emerged between the user, blog platform, advertising company, and advertiser. Later on, 3 of these actors would go further in their search for revenue streams and knowledge development concerning traditional advertising.

Thus, the actors have been, and still are, engaged in a process of structuration (DiMaggio, 1983) which has resulted in the formation of a new organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). As the field has developed, actors have increased their levels of interaction; in doing so, collaborations and structures have emerged, of which the value network provides one illustration. By engaging in these activities, several actors started competing with established forms of digital services for communication, e.g. communities. Over time, this has resulted in the emergence of an organisational field which distinguishes itself by taking its point of departure in the practice of blogging. In doing so, a collective awareness of the boundaries of the organisational field has emerged among the actors.

From the perspective of the blog platforms, this group of actors emerged as a result of international interest in the practice of blogging. Thus, they can be regarded as a new group of actors operating within the IT sector. However, they started to operate within an existing

institutional setting provided by actors, such as affiliate networks, who had been operating prior to the emergence of the blog phenomenon. Here, it can be argued that the group of existing actors exerted a form of coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) on the emerging group, in terms of how existing technical systems, which affiliate networks were operating through, restricting how the blog platforms' revenue models were initially constructed.

However, due to the successful development of blog platforms, this form of coercive isomorphism might have changed direction. Here, one indication of such a development is the fact that affiliate networks have shifted their emphasis towards including blogs as a group of websites at which they are targeting their services. However, as a result of the emerging actors providing blog platforms for Internet users, new advertising companies and affiliate networks have emerged and perhaps also accelerated a change in the conduct of the existing actors. From this perspective, it is possible to argue that existing affiliate networks, emerging blog platforms, and emerging advertising companies have exerted coercive pressures on each other in sequential steps, creating, through this process, a new institutional field. Just as the technical structure played a role in terms of how existing affiliate networks were able to restrict how the blog platforms' revenue models were initially designed, the introduction of a new technical structure offers an explanation as to why these sequential steps seem to have occurred.

Here, both blog platforms and emerging advertising companies focusing on blogs can be considered to have acted as institutional entrepreneurs (Maguire et al., 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2008). Here, the main reason is that they have created and are promoting new institutional arrangements (Pacheco et al., 2010) throughout the structuration process of the organisational field. As a result, the power relationships between the actors in the field (Tracey et al., 2010) have changed.

Another way of understanding this development is whether or not these groups of actors can be understood to be located on the periphery (Leblebici et al., 1991; Hardy and Maguire, 2008) of the organisational field, or rather as dominant actors (Sherer and Lee, 2002; Roa et al., 2003). From this perspective, I would suggest that blog platforms in their initial form should be regarded as actors operating on the periphery during the emergence of the organisational field, while affiliate networks, in contrast, can be understood as dominant

actors. As illustrated however, development of the field shows how this power relationship in this particular organisational setting has changed in terms of blog platforms increasingly becoming actors occupying a more central position within the organisational field. This illustrates how the institutional analysis of organisational fields emerging in a digital context can be characterised by rapid changes, which can make the borders between analytic constructs hard to identify.

Even though the actors addressed in this chapter have taken control of, and utilized, the technology enabling the emergence of this organisational field, they have only provided a technical structure which, to an increasing extent, has become institutionalised. When shifting the perspective to the social structure, however, the rise of social institutions among the users of this technology is an issue that neither the developers of the blog platforms nor the advertising companies have, to the same extent, taken part in creating.

Here, a perspective focusing attention on the technical environments of the blogosphere does not provide sufficient answers as regards how digital marketing practices have emerged due to the developments presented thus far. Therefore, in order to explore the rise of the social institutions and practices (e.g. March and Olsen, 2006; Kawamura, 2005) which manifest emerging marketing practices in the part of the blogosphere that focuses on fashion, the realm of the fashion blogger needs to be further explored. In the next two chapters, this issue will be the centre of attention in relation to the technological aspects presented up to this point.

# 5 The emergence of the fashion blogosphere

During the years since the first blogs emerged, several fashion bloggers have generated large readerships. One of the things distinguishing these market-leading bloggers is that they have successfully adopted new technology associated with writing blogs. From the perspective of the technical environment of the blogosphere, entrepreneurial initiatives by blog platforms and advertising companies provide an explanation for the developments that have taken place. Their initiatives have accelerated the growth rate of the blogosphere by lowering entry barriers, accounting for the widespread phenomenon of blogging. Even though the technological environment of the blogosphere offers a useful perspective for analysing the general developments in the organisational field, and how it emerged, a perspective bringing attention to social institutions (March and Olsen, 2006; Kawamura 2005) needs to be applied in order to comprehend how the emerging digital communication channel, which blogs represent, is used and how the practices of fashion bloggers manifest themselves.

As market-leading blogs successfully generate large audiences, the value that blogs can create for brands, products and services has received increased attention from market departments responsible for brand and market communication. Here, the best indication is how blog platforms, and especially advertising companies, have successfully been able to attract increased interest from advertisers. As a result of this development, a number of market-leading fashion bloggers have increasingly become professionals, to varying degrees, in the sense that they have started to generate revenues for themselves on the basis of their blogging activities. In this context, the blogs seems to have transformed itself from private use, e.g. writing personal stories about events in daily life, into a marketing channel.

Here, the content that market-leading fashion bloggers produce is key to understanding the effects that commercial attention being paid to the blogosphere has generated. One particular aspect concerns the degree of commercial contexts being integrated into blogs by referring to brands, products, and e-commerce. In addition, by studying the fashion bloggers' produced content, indications of how bloggers collaborate, or compete, with each other can provide indications of entrepreneurial traits that may be found among market-leading fashion bloggers.

One of the market-leading bloggers providing a good example of the awareness among fashion bloggers concerning the commercial values emerging as a result of the rise of the blogosphere is Isabella Löwengrip. She started her blog "Blondinbella" in January 2005. Due to the popularity of her blog, which generated a large amount of attention both on the web and in traditional media, she decided to start a company, Blondinbella AB, through which she has been managing her blog since October 2007.

A couple of months later, in May 2008, yet another company was registered and given the name Spotlife AB. One of the main purposes of this company was to create a network of bloggers, in contrast to the blog platforms presented in the previous chapter, which would adopt an exclusive approach towards bloggers who could be potential participants in the network. Before this company was founded, Löwengrip used the blog platform operated by Blogg Esse AB. Thus, Spotlife AB became a competitor of both Blogg Esse AB and other blog platforms operating within the blogosphere. Along with Blogg Esse AB and the other two specialist platforms, blog network Spotlife AB also chose to contract a sales partner. Thus, a contract was entered into with Tailsweep AB. Another important consequence of this development was that Löwengrip and her colleges thus assumed control of one of the stages of the value network.

In addition to the previously registered companies, an e-commerce company named Bellme AB was also registered in July 2008. In February 2009, the company Classified AB was registered through which Löwengrip has launched her own fashion collection. In April 2010, Löwengrip Invest AB, which works with publishing and lecturing, was founded and this will provide the sectors of advertising and marketing with venture capital. The latest addition is Egoboost Magazine AB, which publishes a magazine under the same name. This company was registered in April 2011.

Thus, Löwengrip provides the best example of how a blogger who adopted new technology early on has gone from starting a blog to developing a number of businesses. The fundamental aspect of her businesses is its focal point based on her blogging activities. In 2010, the combined turnover for her companies was around SEK 7.7 million.

As may be self explanatory, many of the commercial activities that Löwengrip is involved in are explicitly commercial. Within the framework of her blog however, the commercial context is not so explicitly articulated. Here, Löwengrip's private life is primarily portrayed. However, Löwengrip is not alone among the market-leading bloggers when it comes to exploring commercial values.

In the following sections, the scope will be widened to include market-leading bloggers focusing on fashion as well as how social institutions (March and Olsen, 2006; Kawamura 2005) have emerged in this context. Here, the key issues consist of analysing how the content produced by market-leading bloggers contains social institutions and how commercial actors become embedded. Also, whether or not indications of collaborative or competitive behaviours can be found between bloggers will be analysed. By illustrating how these aspects materialise on fashion blogs, the final section will discuss these issues relative to the presented findings and the emergent organisational field presented in the previous chapter.

## 5.1    Presenting the fashion bloggers

The group of market-leading fashion bloggers which has been studied within the framework of this thesis consists of 18 people who were sampled on the basis of their number of visits per week during August 2009. For the individual blogs, the number of visits constitutes a long tail (see Andersson, 2006), whereby the 3 largest blogs have a relatively large readership compared to the remaining sample where the differences between individual blogs further down the curve rapidly decreases, see Figure 4.
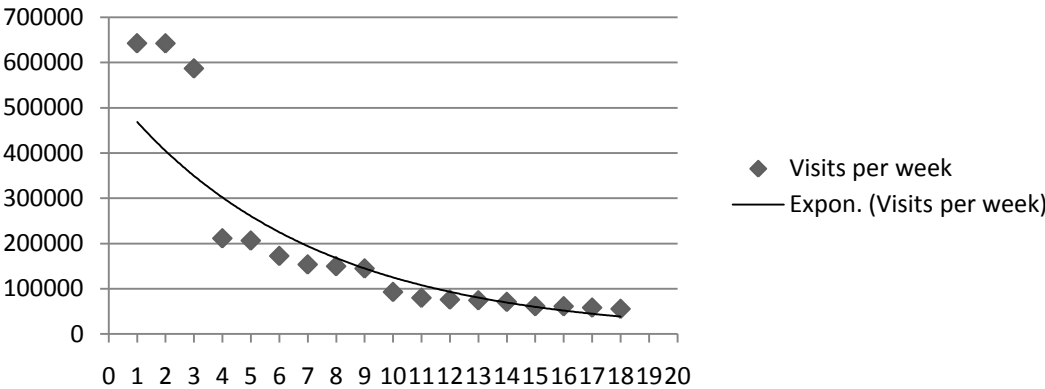


Figure 4. Visits per week for the individual blogs. Source: Bloggportalen (2009).

In relation to the blog platforms operating on the Swedish market, 13 fashion bloggers operate via these technical platforms. Seven fashion bloggers operate via specialist platforms, where the majority can be found at Blogg.se. Six fashion bloggers write their blogs via traditional media platforms. In 4 of these cases, the fashion bloggers' collaborations with traditional media platforms go beyond the technical solution. Instead, they are employed by traditional media companies also responsible for engaging in the production of traditional media content.

Three of the bloggers operate via the blog network Spotlife AB, which has applied an exclusive approach whereby bloggers need to create an online identity and an audience before they can join the network. The remaining 2 fashion bloggers have chosen to blog using neither a blog platform nor a blog network, but to operate independently instead.

In terms of the fundamental characteristics of these fashion bloggers, a number of descriptive data is presented in Table 3. In terms of age, the youngest fashion blogger is 16 and the oldest is 36. The median age is 22. Furthermore, two of the bloggers are male, amounting to a proportion of around 10 percent. Eleven of the bloggers have registered companies which, in the majority of cases, are sole proprietorships. Thus, it is problematic to access data concerning their turnover and the structure of their business-related activities. Nevertheless, in almost all cases, the blogs function as their primary business area.

| ID | Age | Gender | Operating time (months) | Registered companies | Employed by traditional media firms |
|----|-----|--------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 19 | Female | 60 | Yes | No |
| 2 | 18 | Female | 48 | Yes | No |
| 3 | 18 | Female | 36 | No | No |
| 4 | 19 | Male | 22 | No | No |
| 5 | 22 | Female | 36 | No | No |
| 6 | 18 | Female | 24 | Yes | No |
| 7 | 27 | Female | 24 | Yes | Yes |
| 8 | 15 | Female | 24 | No | No |
| 9 | 31 | Female | 24 | Yes | No |
| 10 | 30 | Female | 22 | Yes | Yes |
| 11 | 36 | Female | 24 | Yes | No |
| 12 | 25 | Male | 24 | Yes | No |
| 13 | 16 | Female | 48 | No | No |
| 14 | 25 | Female | 60 | Yes | No |
| 15 | 35 | Female | 24 | Yes | No |
| 16 | 29 | Female | 60 | No | Yes |
| 17 | 20 | Female | 36 | Yes | No |
| 18 | 27 | Female | 48 | No | Yes |

Table 3. Characteristics of the sampled fashion bloggers.

The studied fashion bloggers' geographical distribution is illustrated in Figure 5. As the figure indicates, there is a large concentration around Stockholm. A total of 4 fashion bloggers reside outside of Stockholm, illustrating that there is a cluster of market-leading bloggers established in the capital, where some of these bloggers not only interact via the web but also in real life.
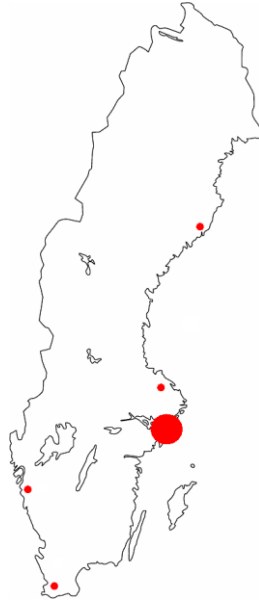


Figure 5. Geographical distribution.

Based on the characteristics presented, it is possible to discern 4 categories of fashion blogger. The first group consists of entrepreneurial bloggers (EB), who display entrepreneurial traits. They have chosen to operate their blogs via registered companies. This group consists of 5 bloggers. For them, these blogs function as a platform for creating business opportunities. One example of this is that, during 2009, 2 of the entrepreneurial bloggers launched their own fashion collections and engaged in collaborations with Swedish fashion brands. The entrepreneurial bloggers are aged between 18 and 25, consisting of 4 women and 1 man. Furthermore, their blogs have functioned as departure points when starting their careers, which today reach beyond the boundaries of their blogs.

The second group consist of bloggers who are relatively young, who have generated large readerships, but who have not so far started up firms or utilized commercial values in the same manner as the previous group. Thus, they can be described as amateur bloggers (ABs) from this perspective. The group consists of 6 bloggers aged between 16 and 22, where three of them are under 18. One of the amateur bloggers is male. Instead of starting their own

businesses, this group collaborates with blog platforms which provide them with advertisements that function as one of their main revenue streams. Compared with entrepreneurial bloggers, who have explored other revenue streams than offering advertising space on their blogs, amateur bloggers have not adopted, to the same extent, a differentiated strategy for generating income.

Traditional media companies publishing newspapers and magazines and broadcasting TV channels have, in some cases, employed fashion bloggers representing the third group identified. This group of fashion experts (FEs) is associated with the production of traditional media within the framework of their employment and consists of bloggers who are all women aged between 27 and 30. In addition to their prominent role on the Internet, and in Sweden's fashion blogosphere, they are also prominent figures in Swedish fashion media. In total, this group consists of 4 bloggers.

The fourth and final group consists of 3 bloggers aged between 31 and 36. Before starting their blogs, they were celebrities and prominent public figures already, which is one of the main explanations as to why they relatively quickly generated large readerships. Celebrity bloggers (CBs) in particular differ from EBs and ABs due to their main commercial activities not widely taking their point of departure in their blogs, but from outside of the blogosphere.

## 5.2   Characteristics of the produced blog content

In order to analyse the extent to which private and commercial contexts could be found in the content which the different categories of fashion blogger produced, all blog content published during 2009 on the 18 blogs was studied using content analysis. This review includes a total number of 24,708 blog posts. The first aspect studied was the use of 3 different types of blog posts: private posts, posts referring to brands and products, and advertising posts. Private posts are defined as posts that do not contain any references to fashion brands or e-commerce businesses focusing on fashion. Blog posts referring to brands or products are defined as posts which contain commercial references to fashion brands and e-commerce businesses but which simultaneously include a private context. Advertising posts are defined as posts that do not contain a private context, only references to fashion brands or e-commerce businesses. Using the term advertising posts implies that this type of post is created through commercial collaboration even if this is not necessarily the case. In relation to how fashion photography in

the context of advertising is traditionally constructed, the studied blog posts represent a highly similar approach. Thus, this provides the main reason as to why this type of blog post is termed in this manner. In Table 4, the usages of these 3 types of blog posts are presented, broken down by category of fashion blogger, during 2009.

As illustrated in this table, the proportion of private posts for the total sample represents a significant majority, amounting to around three quarters. However, the table also shows that the combined number of blogs posts using a commercial context amounts to 22.3 percent of all published posts, entailing that around one post in four mentions fashion brands and/or e-commerce businesses focusing on fashion.

| Fashion blog category | Private posts | | Posts referring to brands or products | | Advertisement posts | | Total posts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 4,424 | 75.6% | 1,190 | 20.3% | 235 | 4.0% | 5,849 |
| Amateur bloggers | 9,626 | 91.3% | 761 | 7.2% | 161 | 1.5% | 10,548 |
| Fashion experts | 2,587 | 48.2% | 2,491 | 46.4% | 289 | 5.4% | 5,367 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 2,545 | 86.4% | 358 | 12.2% | 41 | 1.4% | 2,944 |
| Total sample | 19,182 | 77.6% | 4,800 | 19.4% | 726 | 2.9% | 24,708 |

Table 4. Frequency and proportion of private posts, posts referring to brands or products, and advertising posts during 2009.

In Table 5, the monthly usage of the 3 types of blog posts is presented, broken down by blog category. Compared to the annual usage, the average monthly figures provide a better overview of the number of blog posts the fashion blog groups produce. Similar to the previous table, it is possible to discern that usage may significantly differ between the groups of bloggers. From the perspective of total posts, amateur bloggers show the highest number of total monthly posts, while the celebrity bloggers write approximately half that number. Meanwhile, both groups show the highest number of private posts.

| Blog category | Private posts | | Posts referring to brands or products | | Advertising posts | | Total posts | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 80.44 | 37.15 | 21.64 | 17.28 | 4.27 | 6.59 | 106.35 | 46.75 |
| Amateur bloggers | 133.69 | 87.72 | 10.57 | 6.18 | 2.24 | 2.26 | 146.50 | 89.14 |
| Fashion Experts | 53.90 | 13.16 | 51.90 | 33.48 | 6.02 | 7.23 | 111.81 | 33.48 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 70.69 | 26.56 | 9.94 | 6.84 | 1.14 | 2.36 | 81.78 | 28.09 |
| Total sample | 90.91 | 64.44 | 22.75 | 24.94 | 3.44 | 5.35 | 117.10 | 64.63 |

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation for private posts, product placement posts, advertising posts, and total posts broken down by category during the average month.

In terms of commercial contexts, the FEs include brands and products to the greatest extent. This result was expected due to these bloggers consisting of people who are also engaged in the production of traditional media content that focuses on fashion. Thus, their professional journalistic role includes writing and reporting on news and trends within the fashion industry. However, the EB group exhibits a higher degree of commercial content than both the ABs and the CBs. Thus, this illustrates that this group has a higher tendency to integrate brands and products into the blog posts which they produce. This finding indicates that entrepreneurial traits and behaviours, e.g. operating blogs via registered companies, may have exerted an effect on the degree of commercial content that they chose to publish on their blogs.

In order to identify whether or not these differences are significant, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted followed by a *post hoc* test using Tukey procedures on the basis of the monthly number of posts. The reason for choosing this test was the possibility of identifying significant differences between the individual groups. Analysing monthly numbers of posts instead of annual numbers provides a better overview, in terms of how the readers of the blogs perceive variations, assuming that the minority of the blog readers follow the blogs on an annual basis. Table 6 presents the significant findings identified by *post hoc* tests shown in percent. The proportion of total posts shows the categories' significant differences compared to the total post average. The 3 remaining post categories' significant differences are calculated in relation to the number of total posts. As Table 6 shows, the discussed differences are significant. By converting the proportions into frequencies, the difference between EBs and ABs, in terms of posts referring to brands and products, amounts to 11 posts during the average month. FEs post between 29 and 42 more blog posts referring to brands and products than the other fashion blog categories. In terms of advertising posts, the FEs post between 4 and 5 more posts during the average month than the other fashion blog categories.

| Comparisons | Mean difference | Std. Error | CI | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| **Total posts** | | | | |
| AB vs. EB | 40.1%** | 10.9% | 5.9% | 74.4% |
| AB vs. FE | 34.7%* | 11.3% | 5.4% | 64.0% |
| AB vs. CB | 64.7%** | 12.4% | 17.4% | 112.0% |
| | | | | |
| **Private posts** | | | | |
| EB vs. FE | 26.7%*** | 2.3% | 17.7% | 35.4% |
| AB vs. EB | 10.9%*** | 2.1% | 2.0% | 18.1% |
| AB vs. FE | 36.6%*** | 2.2% | 28.3% | 45.0% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CB vs. EB | 8.7%** | 2.5% | 0.1% | 16.6% |
| CB vs. FE | 35.3%*** | 2.6% | 25.4% | 45.2% |
| **Posts referring to brands or products** | | | | |
| EB vs. AB | 9%*** | 2.3% | 0.4% | 17.6% |
| FE vs. EB | 23.3%*** | 2.5% | 13.8% | 32.8% |
| FE vs. AB | 32.3%*** | 2.3% | 23.4% | 41.3% |
| FE vs. CB | 29.8%*** | 2.8% | 19.2% | 40.4% |
| **Advertising posts** | | | | |
| FE vs. EB | 3.3%** | 1.0% | 0.2% | 6.4% |
| FE vs. AB | 4.3%*** | 0.9% | 0.8% | 7.8% |
| FE vs. CB | 5.5%*** | 1.1% | 1.3% | 9.6% |

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 6. Significant differences between types of blog posts identified by a *post hoc* test (Tukey), shown in percent.

Due to the review including a period of 12 months, it is possible to use the time variable to analyse whether or not seasonal differences in the usage of the 3 types of blogs posts can be identified. In Figure 6, the significantly higher number of private posts published by ABs illustrates how this group distinguishes itself in terms of its relatively high usage of private contexts. It also seems possible to argue that an increase in the usage of private posts in this group may be identifiable, even though the trend towards the end of the year is diminishing.
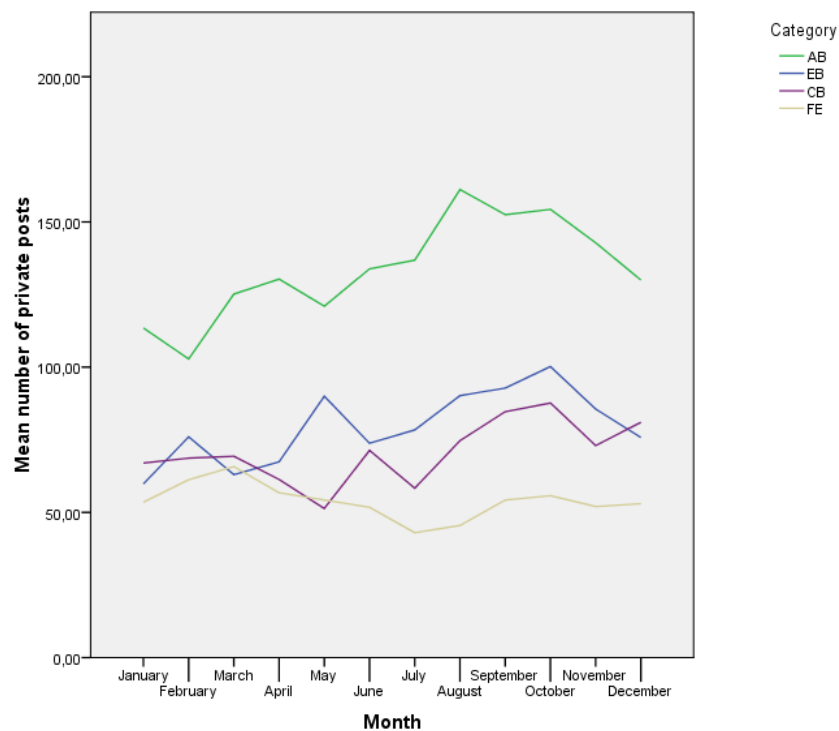


Figure 6. Time series of the monthly number of private posts published during 2009.

In Figure 7, the usage of posts referring to brands or products is illustrated. In a similar fashion, compared to how amateur bloggers use private contexts, FEs' usage of commercial contexts, in terms of referring to brands and products, is an interesting aspect in this figure. FEs' usage of this type of post seems to decrease during weeks commonly used for holidays, i.e. during Christmas and before, during, and after July.

Another interesting finding is that the usage of posts referring to brands or products seems to increase in the EB group. This development can indicate two things: the first indication may be related to the fact that the EBs, to an increasing extent, have been able to successfully attract the attention of actors wanting to be exposed via their blogs; the second indication may be that this is the result of investment in the blogosphere having increased due to a rising turnover in advertising companies providing an entry into the blogosphere for companies wishing to use blogs to market brands and products.
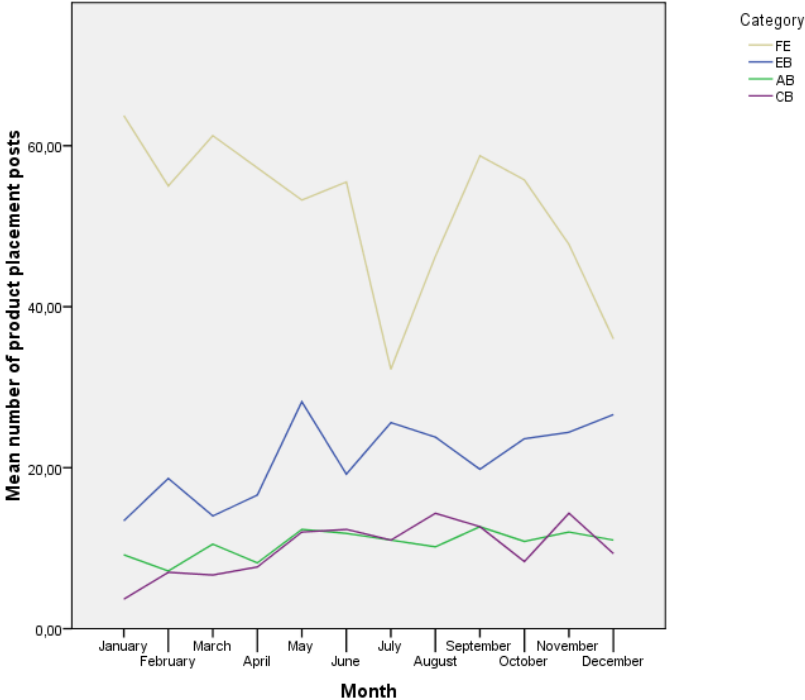


Figure 7. Time series of the number of product placement posts published monthly during 2009.

In Figure 8, a more dispersed picture is presented where the differences between groups are less obvious. What is possible to distinguish, however, is that the usage of advertising posts is relatively common especially among FEs and EBs even though it is hard to identify seasonal differences.
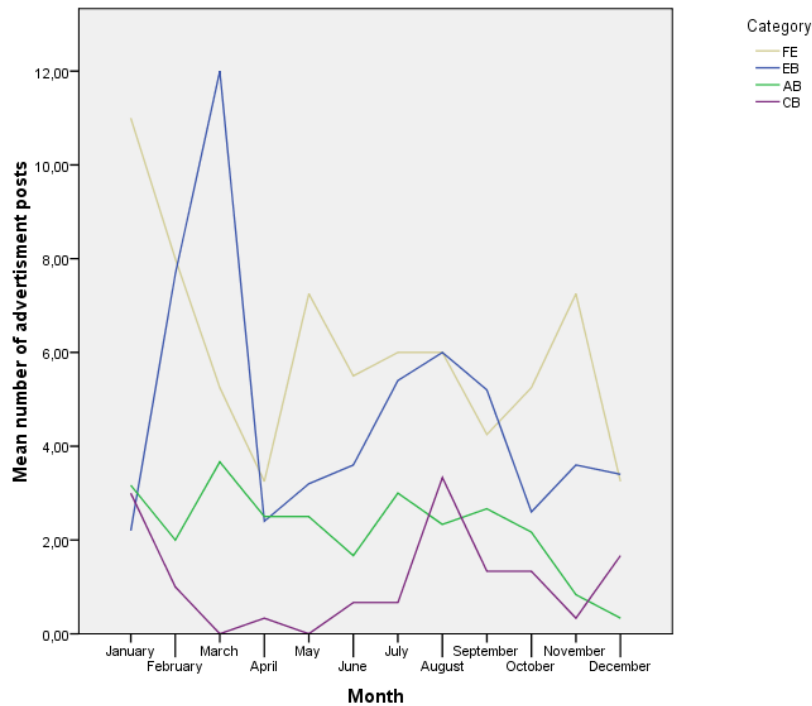
Figure 8.Time series of the number of advertising posts published monthly during 2009.

The second aspect of the conducted content analysis aimed to map the frequency of references to fashion brands and e-commerce businesses focusing on fashion. In Table 7, frequency and proportion of fashion brand references, e-commerce references, and total references are presented broken down by blog category for 2009. As indicated in the review of the 3 types of blog posts, this table confirms the relatively high level of commercial content and provides an additional perspective on the usage of commercial contexts. Of the total number of references, totalling 16,755, around 58 percent were posted by the FE group. This result was expected due to the obligations integrated into the professional role of fashion journalist. However, as the previously presented findings regarding EBs indicate, not only are they responsible for a greater proportion of posts referring to brands and products, they also mention brands to a greater extent than ABs and CBs.

| | Fashion brand references | | E-commerce references | | Total references |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 3,559 | 90.5% | 373 | 9.5% | 3,932 |
| Amateur bloggers | 1,581 | 79.9% | 397 | 20.1% | 1,978 |
| Fashion experts | 9,820 | 99.1% | 86 | 0.9% | 9,906 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 931 | 99.1% | 8 | 0.9% | 939 |
| Total sample | 15,891 | 94.8% | 864 | 5.2% | 16,755 |

Table 7. Frequency and proportion of fashion brand references, e-commerce references, and total references for 2009.

Another finding which did not appear in the first aspect of the content analysis is that the groups of EBs and ABs refer to e-commerce business on a relatively similar level. In terms of numbers of references, these two groups are relatively equal; however, when analysing the proportion of total references, the AB group refers to e-commerce twice as much. Consequently, this finding can indicate two things: first, it can provide an indication of the fact that ABs, even though they have not exhibited the same degree of entrepreneurial traits, have started to explore how they might commercially be able to collaborate with actors in the e-commerce sector; second, it can indicate that actors in the e-commerce sector have approached both the EB and AB groups. However, it is also possible that both things may have occurred simultaneously. Nevertheless, references to e-commerce actors compared to references to fashion brands represent a clearer commercial ambition from the bloggers' perspective.

| | Fashion brand references | | E-commerce references | | Total references | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 64.71 | 58.04 | 6.78 | 7.86 | 71.49 | 61.41 |
| Amateur bloggers | 21.96 | 13.77 | 5.51 | 7.46 | 27.47 | 16.64 |
| Fashion experts | 204.58 | 197.38 | 1.79 | 2.02 | 206.38 | 197.71 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 25.86 | 20.97 | 0.22 | 0.54 | 26.08 | 21.15 |
| Total sample | 75.31 | 122.34 | 4.09 | 6.49 | 79.41 | 122.47 |

Table 8. Mean and standard deviation of fashion brand references and references to e-commerce broken down by category during an average month.

In Table 8, the annual number of references is broken down during an average month. Here, an overview of the number of references posted per month provides an overview of the degree of commercial references that the different categories of blogs produce. When study the number of references during an average month, the differences become clearer, especially in terms of how FEs and EBs distinguish themselves in relation to the findings presented in Table 7.

By combining the two perspectives used in the review, it is possible to calculate the average number of references per average commercial blog post, which are presented in Table 9. Here, the average number of references to fashion brands and e-commerce is combined as commercial references and the usage of blog posts referring to brands and products and advertising blog posts is combined as commercial posts. Compared to the relatively large differences identified when analysing the number of annual and monthly commercial blog

posts, as well as the number of commercial references, the differences between blog categories decrease when analysing the average number of references per commercial post. In this context, the difference varies relatively little between the blog categories. From the blog reader's perspective, it may be harder, from this perspective, to perceive any differences between the blog categories. However, due to the variation in terms of commercial posts, this provides a counter argument as to why the opposite may be the case.

| | Commercial references | Commercial posts | Number of references per commercial post |
|---|---|---|---|
| | M | M | M |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 71.49 | 25.91 | 2.76 |
| Amateur bloggers | 27.47 | 12.81 | 2.14 |
| Fashion experts | 206.38 | 57.92 | 3.56 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 26.08 | 11.08 | 2.35 |
| Total sample | 79.41 | 26.19 | 3.03 |

Table 9. Commercial references, commercial posts, and numbers of references per commercial posts broken down by category during an average month.

When studying the number of references to fashion brands and e-commerce, another aspect relates to the variation that the fashion blog categories exhibit in terms of whether or not a small number of brands and e-commerce businesses are referred to. In Table 10, the variation in references to fashion brands and e-commerce is presented for 2009 broken down by blog category. From this perspective, the variation in fashion brands referred to illustrate that FEs, within the framework of their blogs, will most likely approach the world of fashion in the same manner that their professional journalistic role would expect them to do.

The EBs exhibit a relatively higher level of fashion brand variance similar to the CBs which may be related to the fact that this group of bloggers is older, has greater access to brands that are more expensive, and thus exhibits a more diversified brand repertoire. In the case of the EBs, however, this finding may also be related to the entrepreneurial initiative that these bloggers displayed, thus attracting more attention from actors wishing to be integrated into the blog content production. In the case of the ABs, these display, in relation to the previously presented findings regarding their tendency to refer to e-commerce actors, a higher level of variation. This could suggest that they, in fact, have attracted a higher level of attention from e-commerce actors, or that they themselves have actively approached them.

|  | Fashion brand variance | | E-commerce variance | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | M | SD | M | SD |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 87.20 | 49.73 | 8.40 | 4.77 |
| Amateur bloggers | 45.67 | 6.95 | 12.33 | 8.16 |
| Fashion experts | 206.00 | 76.10 | 9.75 | 2.99 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 84.33 | 50.74 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| Total sample | 99.28 | 75.48 | 8.94 | 6.31 |

Table 10. Mean and standard deviation of fashion brand and e-commerce variance during 2009 broken down by blog category.

When breaking down fashion brand and e-commerce variance during an average month, this provides yet another perspective on how the variance differs between the blog categories, see Table 11. In this context, these findings demonstrate that the variance in fashion brands and e-commerce referred to on a monthly basis in some sense decreases the number of actors that are exposed from the perspective of blog readers, which the previous findings might have indicated.

|  | Fashion brand variance | | E-commerce variance | | Total variance | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Entrepreneurial bloggers | 21.93 | 14.03 | 2.15 | 1.74 | 24.07 | 15.12 |
| Amateur bloggers | 9.22 | 4.21 | 2.17 | 2.26 | 11.39 | 5.17 |
| Fashion experts | 50.63 | 24.9 | 1.29 | 1.22 | 51.92 | 25.27 |
| Celebrity bloggers | 15.5 | 11.12 | 0.19 | 0.47 | 15.69 | 11.26 |
| Total sample | 23.02 | 21.57 | 1.63 | 1.85 | 24.65 | 21.82 |

Table 11. Mean and standard deviation of fashion brand and e-commerce variance during an average month broken down by blog category.

This could suggest that the EB, AB and CB groups are relatively restrictive in terms of which brands they choose to refer to during a month. The same finding can be applied to how EBs and ABs refer to e-commerce actors. However, it should be pointed out in the context of this discussion that the degree of fashion brand references among the FEs, in particular, and the the EBs may, from the reader's point of view, generate the perception of a relatively diversified brand repertoire.

In order to identify whether or not the discussed differences between blog categories relating to commercial references are significant, a one-way ANOVA, followed by a *post hoc* test using Tukey procedures, was conducted on the basis of the monthly figures presented up to this point, see Table 12. The findings presented in the table show that the majority of differences are significant at $P < 0.001$.

| | | | CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Comparisons** | **Mean difference** | **Std. Error** | **Lower Bound** | **Upper Bound** |
| **Fashion brand references** | | | | |
| FE vs. EB | 185.7%*** | 26.0% | 86.2% | 285.3% |
| FE vs. AB | 242.5%*** | 24.6% | 148.6% | 336.4% |
| FE vs. CB | 237.3%*** | 29.1% | 126.2% | 348.4% |
| | | | | |
| **Fashion brand variance** | | | | |
| EB vs. AB | 55.9%*** | 11.5% | 11.2% | 99.2% |
| FE vs. EB | 124.6%*** | 12.7% | 76.1% | 173.2% |
| FE vs. AB | 179.8%*** | 12.0% | 134.0% | 225.6% |
| FE vs. CB | 152.6%*** | 14.2% | 98.4% | 206.7% |
| | | | | |
| **E-commerce references** | | | | |
| EB vs. FE | 121.9%*** | 29.0% | 10.9% | 232.8% |
| EB vs. CB | 160.2%*** | 31.5% | 39.8% | 280.6% |
| AB vs. FE | 90.9%** | 27.4% | 4.6% | 177.2% |
| AB vs. CB | 129.2%*** | 30.0% | 14.6% | 243.9% |
| | | | | |
| **E-commerce variance** | | | | |
| EB vs. CB | 120.0%*** | 22.5% | 34.0% | 206.0% |
| AB vs. FE | 53.8%* | 19.6% | 3.2% | 104.5% |
| AB vs. CB | 121.3%*** | 21.4% | 39.5% | 203.2% |
| FE vs. CB | 67.5%* | 23.1% | 7.6% | 127.4% |
| | | | | |
| **Total references** | | | | |
| FE vs. EB | 169.9%*** | 24.9% | 74.7% | 265.7% |
| FE vs. AB | 225.3%*** | 23.5% | 135.5% | 315.1% |
| FE vs. CB | 227.0%*** | 27.8% | 120.8% | 333.3% |
| | | | | |
| **Total variance** | | | | |
| EB vs. AB | 51.5%*** | 11.1% | 8.9% | 94.0% |
| FE vs. EB | 113.0%*** | 12.3% | 66.0% | 159.9% |
| FE vs. AB | 164.4%*** | 11.6% | 120.0% | 208.7% |
| FE vs. CB | 146.9%*** | 13.7% | 94.5% | 199.4% |

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 12. Identified differences between blog categories found using post hoc test (Tukey) broken down by percent.

In relation to the discussion regarding fashion brand variance, the total number of fashion brands identified within the sample is 791. Of these, a total of 32 received over 100 references from the studied fashion bloggers during 2009, see Table 13. The amount of references to these brands is 8,616, representing 58 percent of the total number of references.

| ID | Fashion brand | Number of references | ID | Fashion Brand | Number of references |
|----|---------------|----------------------|----|---------------|----------------------|
| 1 | H&M | 1,265 | 17 | Bik Bok | 172 |
| 2 | Acne | 923 | 18 | Dagmar | 172 |
| 3 | Topshop | 610 | 19 | Filippa K | 151 |
| 4 | Zara | 546 | 20 | Lindex | 146 |
| 5 | Gina Tricot | 487 | 21 | Chloé | 131 |
| 6 | Chanel | 414 | 22 | Gucci | 125 |
| 7 | Alexander Wang | 404 | 23 | Sonia Rykiel | 123 |
| 8 | Whyred | 356 | 24 | Weekday | 116 |
| 9 | Converce | 245 | 25 | Dolce & Gabanna | 114 |
| 10 | Balenciaga | 236 | 26 | Forever 21 | 114 |
| 11 | YSL | 227 | 27 | Rodebjer | 109 |
| 12 | Hermes | 209 | 28 | Miu Miu | 105 |
| 13 | Lanvin | 184 | 29 | Dinsko | 102 |
| 14 | Marc Jacobs | 179 | 30 | Jimmy Choo | 102 |
| 15 | Monki | 175 | 31 | Helmut Lang | 101 |
| 16 | American Apparel | 173 | 32 | Balmain | 100 |

Table 13. Fashion brands with the highest numbers of references during 2009.

When analysing the number to references to e-commerce actors, 15 actors received more than 10 references during 2009, see Table 14. The references to these actors total 676, representing 78 percent of the total number. Of these actors 13 are Swedish, with a combined estimated total turnover of SEK 148.5 million during 2009. In 4 cases, explicit formulations can be found on these actors' websites stating that they are seeking to collaborate with bloggers. In an additional 3 cases, information regarding how bloggers can become part of the actors' affiliate networks is presented; here, one of them also offers discounted products to bloggers who write about them. Meanwhile, 2 actors do not explicitly offer forms of collaboration, instead using one of the studied fashion bloggers in their own marketing. In the first case, this manifests itself through copied pictures being posted on the fashion blogger's blog, pictures which in turn have been published on the e-commerce actor's website wherein the blogger is wearing particular garments provided by the e-commerce actor. In the second case, the fashion blogger has agreed to be a part of an advertising campaign for this particular e-commerce actor.

| ID | E-commerce actor | Number of references |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bellme.se | 122 |
| 2 | Nelly.se | 100 |
| 3 | asos.com | 85 |
| 4 | chicy.se | 79 |
| 5 | Melba.se | 56 |
| 6 | Bubbleroom.se | 35 |
| 7 | Net-a-porter.com | 32 |
| 8 | Modekungen.se | 31 |
| 9 | stylebystars.com | 31 |
| 10 | Chique.se | 26 |
| 11 | MissGreta.se | 19 |
| 12 | Skotrend.se | 19 |
| 13 | Brandos.se | 18 |
| 14 | Tintinstyle.se | 13 |
| 15 | Bagsandfashion.com | 10 |

Table 14. E-commerce actors with the highest numbers of references during 2009.

In contrast to how the studied fashion bloggers' posts refer to fashion brands, it is easier to argue, within the context of references to e-commerce actors, that this illustrates commercial collaborations between bloggers and e-commerce actors. Thus, it is possible to argue that not only individual blogs in the EB group, but also blogs in the AB group exhibit signs of entrepreneurial traits due their having identified the potential source of revenue that these types of collaborations can generate.

## 5.3    Fashion bloggers interactions with each other in the blogosphere

As shown in the previous section, the four identified groups of fashion bloggers exhibit a number of significant characteristics in terms of the content that they chose to publish. In order to analyse whether or not it is possible to identify further similarities between these groups, the interaction patterns, in terms of the references that fashion bloggers posted to each other during 2009, were reviewed in order to gain insight into whether or not tendencies towards collaborations or competitive behaviour could be identifiable. In Figure 9, the studied fashion bloggers' mentioning of and referring to each other in positive terms is shown in the form of a sociogram. Before this review was conducted, positive references were defined as expressing a positive attitude towards another blogger, e.g. admiration, extending a complement, or urging readers to read another blogger's blog. As the sociogram illustrates, a number of bloggers exhibit a high degree of centrality within the network, i.e. a greater degree of opportunity to influence and be influenced by others. Meanwhile, it is possible to identify a number of relatively strong ties between a number of bloggers, represented by thicker lines

between the nodes. Due to the fact that the sociogram is grouped according to category of blogger, it illustrates that connectivity is greater between the groups of EBs and ABs from the perspective of positive references. Thus, this would suggest that a greater degree of collaboration between these actors can be discerned. In this context, 3 bloggers in these 2 blog categories distinguish themselves in terms of exhibiting a relatively high degree of connectivity compared to the whole group.
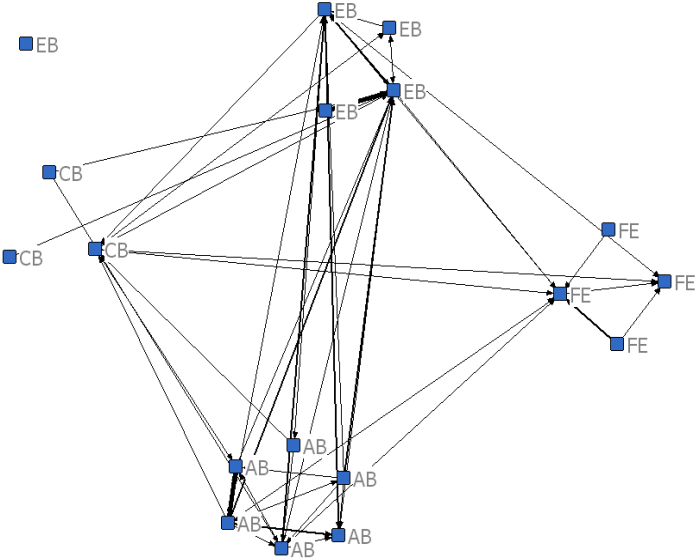


Figure 9. Sociogram illustrating how the studied fashion blogs refer to each other in positive terms.

Figure 10 shows fashion bloggers' mentioning of and referring to each other in neutral terms during 2009. Here, neutral terms were defined as references which contained neither positive emotional expressions nor negative ones towards other bloggers. Similar to the previous figure, this sociogram illustrates the fact that a relatively high degree of connectivity between ABs and EBs can be identified. However, it also reveals a higher degree of connectivity between FEs and EBs. The number of individual bloggers exhibiting a relatively high degree of connectivity increases to 6, consisting of 2 EBs, 2 ABs, and 1 FE. Here, it is possible to ascertain that the same actors exhibiting relatively strong ties in terms of positive terms also exhibit relatively strong ties when writing about each other in neutral ways. Thus, this provides yet another indication of collaborations among these actors.
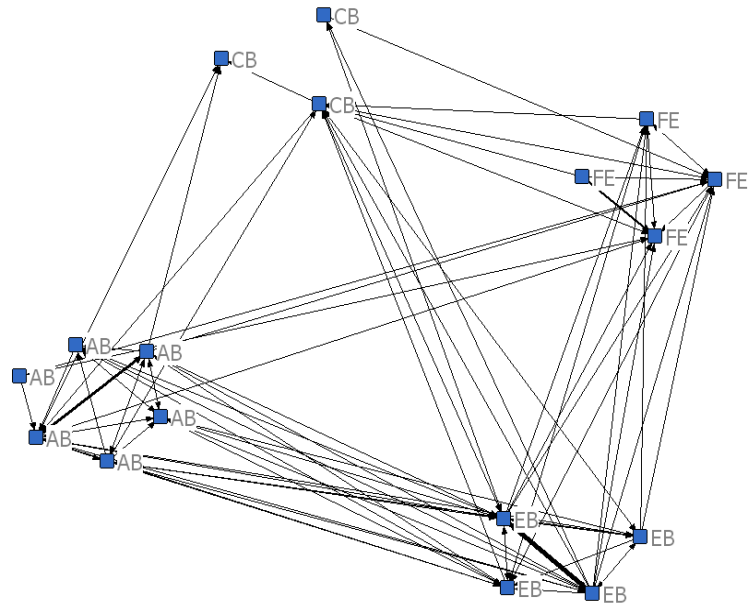
Figure 10. Sociogram illustrating how the studied fashion blogs refer to each other in neutral terms.

Figure 11 shows the mentions and references of a negative character between the bloggers. In this context, negative terms were defined as explicitly expressing negative emotions such as scepticism, contempt or disrespect. In this context, not all bloggers conduct themselves this way as 5 bloggers have neither written nor received any negative references.
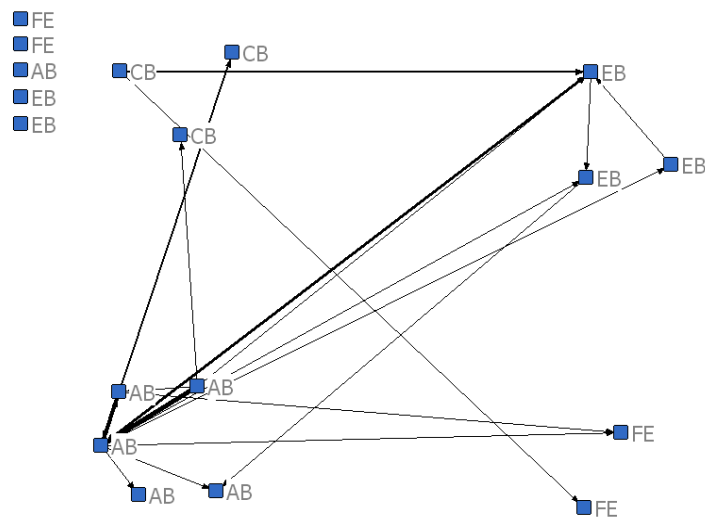


Figure 11. Sociogram showing how the studied fashion blogs refer to each other in negative terms.

For the remaining group of bloggers who do, however, conduct themselves like this, the sociogram shows a rather diffuse picture. A higher degree of connectivity can be found between the EB and AB groups. When studying the individual bloggers' degree of connectivity, two actors in the AB group distinguished themselves in terms of taking part in this activity in particular. Thus, it can be concluded that this behaviour, even though it is not as widespread as the positive and neutral references, does occur among the bloggers. In relation to the issue of collaborations, it is more problematic in this context to argue that the findings provide strong indications of behaviours related to competitiveness due to the nature of these references, which often consist of personal insults.

## 5.4    Analysing the presence of brands and products in the realm of the fashion blogosphere

This chapter has illustrated the widespread nature of social institutions (March and Olsen, 2006; Kawamura 2005) which market-leading fashion bloggers take part in, and how commercial actors become embedded in these. The private nature of blogs in general is, however, one of the key aspects also characterising the market-leading fashion blogger group. The majority of blog posts are dedicated to describing the private and personal lives of the bloggers. Here, stories from their lives are publicly posted, often in a rather private and personal manner. However, the content of the market-leading fashion bloggers simultaneously exhibits a high level of commercial contexts in terms of references to fashion brands and e-commerce actors specialising in providing fashion. Thus, in relation to the introduction to this chapter, where the entrepreneurial behaviour of one of the market-leading bloggers was described, the presented findings raise several questions regarding the private and commercial nature of the market-leading bloggers.

In the majority of cases, especially among actors in the EB and AB groups, the bloggers started out as private individuals. When their readerships increased, entrepreneurial actors, in the shape of companies operating blog platforms and advertising companies linking advertisers to the available advertising space on blogs, understood how new business models could be created within a highly technical environment in order to utilize the emerging commercial values of the blogosphere. In this process of structuration (DiMaggio, 1983), a number of the bloggers realised how they themselves would be able to work

entrepreneurially. In relation to the partly sequential development of the blogosphere described in the previous chapter, it is possible to argue that several of the market-leading bloggers have gone from being private individuals, or consumers of fashion, to acting as entrepreneurs whose point of departure is their blogs.

Here, the previously-discussed transition which the blog platform group has undergone, from initially being actors on the periphery (Leblebici et al., 1991; Hardy and Maguire, 2008) to becoming dominant actors (Sherer and Lee, 2002; Roa et al., 2003) within the organisational field, seems to have shared characteristics with the development of the fashion bloggers. The main difference, however, is that the bloggers, in my perspective, are to be understood as a dominant group of actors right from the start of the organisational field's emergence due to its key position. Throughout the ongoing process of structuration (DiMaggio, 1983), the bloggers have had a subject position (Oakes et al., 1998; Maguire et al., 2001) within the field and value network which is categorised by its closeness to the consumer. However, this dominant position might not have been understood by the bloggers themselves; rather, these actors seem to have undergone a process of understanding and of becoming self-aware regarding their position. This can also be understood as a way of identifying available subject positions (Oakes et al., 1998; Maguire et al., 2001) within the field through its emergence and development. In other words, they illustrate how dominant actors operating within an emergent organisational field can be under coercive pressure (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) from actors who initially, at least to some degree, are located on the periphery of the organisational field. Here, coercive pressure has primarily related to the technical structures offered by blog platforms and advertising companies. Thus, this development illustrates how the border between periphery and dominant actors can develop into a complex process, to some degree contrasting previous studies discussing these issues with the point of departure in institutional entrepreneurship (Leblebici et al., 1991; Sherer and Lee, 2002; Roa et al., 2003; Hardy and Maguire, 2008).

Here, one of the most obvious examples of how bloggers realised potential sources of revenue, and thus their key position, relates to how representatives of blog portals and advertising companies express their commercial collaboration with bloggers. In addition, references to e-commerce should be seen in relation to the explicit formulations of e-commerce actors regarding collaborations, affiliate networks, discounts, and how bloggers, in certain cases, have been integrated into these actors' market communications. In this context,

e-commerce actors have enabled bloggers to act, in a sense, as their own sales teams and may thus contributed to the process of understanding the key position within the organisational field.

One key finding is that the presence of fashion brands seems to have increased in 2009 among the EB group. This finding suggests that these bloggers have accumulated more knowledge and experience on how to approach these actors. However, it may also indicate that intermediaries, in terms of advertising companies, have become more successful in attracting investments intended for market communication efforts. Whether these indications are, in fact, the case, or if these developments have had a combined effect on the commercial content of popular blogs, is an issue which is hard to give a clear answer to. However, in relation to the fact that several of the bloggers have decided to start their own companies, via which they operate their blogs, strengthens the possibility of such a development. Nevertheless, the blogs function as marketing channels regardless of whether commercial collaborations have, in fact, been created due to the way in which brands and products are exposed.

Here, it is important to emphasise that the fashion bloggers not should be understood as a passive group of actors trying to understand their position within the organisational field and the value network. Instead, several bloggers represent behaviours and traits that are closely associated with institutional entrepreneurship, often in a similar manner to what has previously been discussed from the perspective of blog platforms. In the self-awareness process of the key position which fashion bloggers hold within the organisational field, they have created and promoted new institutional arrangements (Pacheco et al., 2010), changed the power relationship within the field (Tracey et al., 2010), and acted, in doing so, as institutional entrepreneurs (Maguire et al, 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2008).

Another important finding relates to the variance of fashion brands referred to by EBs and ABs. Here, one of the leading advertising companies targeting the blogosphere expressed that fashion brands represented one of the first sectors showing an interest in using the blogosphere as a part of its marketing activities. In this context, 2 of the mentioned fashion brands, H&M and Gina Tricot, both with substantial marketing budgets combined with a high degree of activity on the Swedish market, can be found at the top of the most mentioned brands. This suggests that these actors have not only been able to market their brands and products through conventional advertising, but also within the framework of the content that

fashion bloggers produce. This strengthens the argument that several of the market-leading fashion bloggers can no longer be considered to be private individuals; instead, they should be understood as entrepreneurial actors who have realised the value of their blogging practices as well as appropriate these values.

Here, aspects relating to collaboration and competition are another way of approaching the changing nature of the blogosphere, which to a large extent is a result of fashion bloggers acting as institutional entrepreneurs (Maguire et al, 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2008). In relation to how bloggers refer to each other in positive and neutral terms, signs of collaborations between a number of bloggers can be identified within the blog categories. This finding should be located in the context of how one of the studied fashion bloggers left one of the specialised blog platforms in order to start a blog network which a number of bloggers then decided to join. Here, the sociograms show that this new collaboration not only took place from the perspective of the technical platforms, but is also possible to identify due to the way in which these actors refer to each other via their blogs. One way of explaining this development is through the use of social position (Battliana, 2006), due to individual actors, despite institutional pressures, successfully changing the field by means of engaging in institutional entrepreneurship. Thus, the presented findings illustrate the way in which the content that bloggers produce and publish can be understood in relation to the emergent organisational field analysed in the previous chapter. However, in order to understand how mentions and references to fashion brands and e-commerce actors manifest themselves, practices relating to the production of blog posts that integrate commercial content need to be analysed further. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on how a number of such practices have materialised within the fashion blogosphere.

# 6 Practices of market-leading fashion bloggers

In the previous chapter, characteristics of market-leading fashion blogs were presented in combination with an analysis of how products, brands, and e-commerce are integrated into social institutions. Furthermore, how these findings can be understood in relation to the emergent organisational field was also discussed. However, up to this point, the presented findings say little of the practices which fashion bloggers use in order to attract and communicate with their readers or how brands and products are integrated into this process. Analysing how practices have materialised among market-leading fashion bloggers will provide a more holistic understanding of emergent marketing practices in relation to the social institutions and the emergent organisational field presented in the two previous chapters.

Even though several market-leading fashion bloggers have attracted large readerships, many of them maintain a fairly close relationship with their readers. This manifests itself in bloggers writing in a somewhat personal manner, providing readers with the impression that the bloggers are writing for them directly. However, another important aspect concerns how fashion bloggers interact with their readers by commenting on reader comments or by posting blog posts based on reader feedback. In this context, cases where blog readers are urged to get involved in the production of blog content not only involve a private and personal context but also a commercial one into which brands and products are integrated. One of the studied provides a series of blog posts putting this into practice.

Fashion blogger: "These Balmain-inspired heels (*shoes*, author's remark) from Zara were released in a limited number of pairs and sold out in a second. I've been trying to win them all week on eBay but someone outbid me right at the end so another, lucky girl got them. Did anyone manage to get hold of a pair of 37s or 38s, and wants to sell them? They cost around a thousand kronor but I can pay more on top. If so, contact me at (*email address*, author's remark)... Gotta have 'em! *Desperate*"[13]

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[13] Original Swedish text: "Balmain-inspirerade klackarna ovan från ZARA släpptes i ett få antal exemplar och såldes slut på 1 sek. Jag har försökt buda hem dem från Tradera hela veckan men någon bjöd över i sista sekund så det blev någon annan lycklig tjej som fick dem. Finns det någon som hann få tag på ett par 37or eller 38or som har lust att sälja dem? De kostade runt tusenlappen men jag kan ge mer än det. Kontakta mig isåfall på… Måste ha dem! *desperat*"

This blog post was published at around 9 pm on a Sunday in 2009. Three days later, over 300 comments had been posted regarding this specific blog post. Many of the readers expressed admiration for the blogger's sense of style. In addition, around 40 of the posted comments contained tips about where to find this particular pair of shoes. Some readers living outside of Sweden posted tips about where to find them in other places around the world, besides the Swedish market. The next day, the fashion bloggers published a new post.

Fashion blogger: "Have a nice day dear readers! And thanks to everyone who emailed tips about the shoes from Zara, you're so incredibly helpful... Soon, a pair will be on its way home to me!"[14]

In the comments about this post, the readers congratulate the blogger on finding the shoes and some of them also ask if someone could help them to find another pair. A number of the comments contained suggestions about where another pair could be found. Four days later, the blogger published a third post.

Fashion blogger: "I'm also meeting up with a girl in Slussen (district in downtown Stockholm, author's remark) who is going to sell her Balmain-inspired heels (from Zara) to me. * Overjoyed * ... All you readers around the world who offered to go and buy them for me and then send them to me are really, really cute. But of course, the easiest thing was to buy them from a girl living here in Stockholm. Thanks anyway! Now I have to put a bit of effort into my lesson ... See ya! ♥"[15]

Later the same day, a fourth and final post was published with the header "Lovers", containing 3 pictures of the newly-purchased shoes together with the words – "now they're mine!"[16]. Like the other posts, it quickly was followed by comments from the readers expressing their admiration and extending their congratulations.

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[14] Original Swedish text: "Ha en fin dag kära läsare! Och tack alla ni som mailat om Zara-skorna, ni är så otroligt hjälpsamma.. Snart är ett par på väg hem till mig!"

[15] Original Swedish text: "Ska även möta upp en tjej i Slussen som ska sälja sina Balmain-inspirerade klackar (från Zara) till mig. *överlycklig* .. Ni läsare runt om i världen som erbjöd er att gå och köpa dem till mig och sedan skicka upp dem är verkligen jättegulliga, men det blev såklart lättast att köpa dem av en tjej som bor här i Stockholm. Tack iallafall! Nu måste jag koncentrera mig lite på lektionen… Vi hörs! ♥"

[16] Original Swedish text: "Nu är de mina!".

Figure 12. Images published in connection with the search for a pair of shoes.

This example illustrates how one fashion blogger writes about fashion brands and fashion products in a highly personal and private context. It also shows how this particular blogger has chosen to involve her readers, and how her readers involved themselves, in this case, in the content that the fashion blogger produced.

Due to the group of fashion bloggers being a relatively heterogonous, it is possible to find several individual practices among the studied blogs. However, three practices are commonly used by the majority of the bloggers. The first practice is use of the so called *outfit of the day*, where garments, accessories, and shoes are presented together with a list of which brands are being worn on one particular day. The second practice concerns *question time*, when blog readers get the opportunity to post questions about whatever is on their mind, questions which are then answered by the bloggers. The third practice consists of competitions where blog readers are encouraged by fashion bloggers to compete to win prizes of different kinds. In the following sections, these 3 practices will be further described and analysed.

## 6.1    Publishing the outfit of the day –providing fashion advice on brands and products

The first commonly-used practices that can be found in the content produced by market-leading bloggers consists of publishing the "outfit of the day". This practice consists of presenting the garments, shoes, and accessories that the bloggers are wearing on a certain day. These posts are not published on a daily basis by the studied bloggers, but this is still a recurrent practice. In the majority of cases, the outfit of the day is presented in accordance with the definition of advertising posts used, i.e. blog post that contain no private contexts, only references to brands, products, or e-commerce actors. From this perspective, 726

examples of outfit of the day can be identified among the 24,708 blog posts. However, several cases where private contexts are integrated into this practice can also be found. The practice is materialised by combining photos and text. The function of the published photos is to present the combination of garments, shoes, and accessories being worn on a particular day. Meanwhile, the function of the text is to present the brand behind certain products. One example of this practice can be found on one of the fashion blogs belonging to the FE group, in a post published in July 2009.



Figure 13. Example of outfit of the day.

Fashion blogger: "I nabbed the shirt from MQ before going on holiday, the camisole from AA, the cap from Hattbaren, and I believe I bought the shoes at Rizzo, if I remember correctly."[17]

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[17] Original Swedish text: "Kjolen haffade jag på MQ innan semestern, linne från AA, keps från Hattbaren, skorna tror jag att jag köpte på Rizzo om jag inte minns fel."

Among the feedback from her readers, the published comments in the vast majority of cases consisted of expressing admiration for the chosen outfit, while one comment was; "the shoes are more than words can express". In 2 cases, the readers asked where some of the products could be bought and discussed where similar products to the ones included in this outfit of the day could be found. Thus, from the reader's perspective, the practice of outfit of the day provides inspiration, help, and guidance regarding fashion. The fashion blogger plays the role of accompany his/her readers into the world of fashion through the practice of posting the outfit of the day, helping them to acquire knowledge and perspectives on trends, as well as what is fashionable at a certain time.

In order to construct an outfit of the day, the technical interface for publishing blog posts is fundamental. However, another piece of technical equipment also plays an important role in the creation of this practice, namely the camera. By studying blog posts published by the fashion bloggers on the role of the camera, it is possible to identify the fact that this role goes beyond the purely functional aspects of taking pictures. One example can be found in a series of blog posts that was published when one of the fashion blogger was searching for a new camera.

Fashion blogger: "No shopping today either, and by now I've been almost everywhere. Something that I'm going to do tomorrow morning, however, is to buy this camera which is much cheaper here than at home. A Panasonic GF1. I really need a new camera, even perhaps even a tiny bit more than I need another pair of shoes. I've been looking at a number of different models, but now I'm thinking of buying this one, if it isn't too big ... For all Canon G11 fans, I can tell you that the G12 is about to hit the stores in a few weeks."[18]

In this blog post, the blogger has virtually decided to buy a certain model but is still, in a paradoxical manner, rather confused regarding which model to buy. However, based on a number of comments posted by her readers, another post concerning the role of the camera was published a couple of days later.

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[18] Original Swedish text: "NÄ-Ä HÖRRNI, ingen shopping idag heller och nu har jag varit runt nästan precis överallt. Något jag ska sikta in mig på i morgon dock är denna kameran som är betydligt billigare här än hemma. En Panasonic GF1. Behöver verkligen en ny kamera, till och med kanske pytte-lite mer än vad jag behöver ett par till skor. Har velat bland ett antal olika, men nu tror jag banne mig jag slår till på denna, om den inte är för stor.. För alla Canon G11-fans så kan jag meddela att G12 är på väg in, i butik om några veckor. "

Fashion blogger: "Thanks for all your comments, I'll sit down and go through them at once. I feel raring to go, especially today when I have these two new technical gadgets. The camera is, oddly enough, my best friend, erm …, after some favourite garments and my computer of course. It's easy to say that it's an extremely important tool of course. Right now I'm sitting at home with Blog Camera number one from Canon, but not the G11 - the G12, which has just been launched in Sweden. Together with my Panasonic GF1, I think this'll give me what I need. Will try both for a short period to see which one suits me best!"[19]

As indicated in the first blog post, the role of the camera in the second blog post is explicitly articulated as being of fundamental importance to her as a professional tool. Without it, the embodiedness and materialisation of fashion is not possible in relation to the practice of creating the outfit of the day. The object of the camera is described in close proximity to the materialisation of fashion, which is illustrated by the blogger in both cases referring to the camera in the same context as fashion in terms shoes and the blogger's favourite garments.

Another aspect of the role of the camera concerns its use. In yet another blog post, the blogger writes that she needs to be more diligent with her camera, due to only managing to take two pictures on a particular day. In one instance, the memory card containing the pictures intended to be published as the outfit of the day was at her best friend's office - locked in. In this situation, the blogger expressed her anxieties concerning the fact that no fashionable inspiration was going to be distributed in digital form through her blog and to her readers. However, when the blogger found another memory card, she wrote the following words.

Fashion blogger: "Today, I found the memory card for the camera. It's been playing a little game of hide and seek for the last 10 days. On it, I also found unpublished outfits, like this one. So I'm celebrating with a real outfit of the day party on the blog."[20]

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[19] Original Swedish text: "TACK SNÄLLA RARA ni för alla kommentarer, ska bums sätta mig ner och gå igenom dom, kul! Känner mig taggad, speciellt idag när jag har dessa två nya teknikprylarna. Kameran är inte helt otippat min bästa vän, ah, efter vissa favoritplagg och min dator. Hur som kan man verkligen säga att den är ett extremt viktigt verktyg så klart. Just nu sitter jag här hemma med The Blogkameran nummer ett Canon, men inte G11:an utan G12, som precis har landat i Sverige. Efter en ganska bra research, måste jag ändå säga, så är den och Panasonic GF1 de som jag tror ger mig det jag behöver och lite där till. Ska prova båda under en kortare period för att se vilken som passar mig bäst!"

[20] Original Swedish text: "NÄMEN! IDAG HITTADE jag mitt minneskort till kameran. Det har ju lekt lite kurragömma senaste 10 dagarna. På det hittade jag även opublicerade outfits, som denna. Så, jag firar med en riktig dagens-fest i bloggen."

Thus, this provides an illustrative example of how the fashion bloggers often feel about the importance of the camera, something which enables the construction of practices such as outfit of the day. In this context, it also becomes fundamental to enabling the integration of fashion brands and fashion products. Thus, not only does the role of writing blogs become important from this perspective, e.g. aspects related to storytelling and writing in an appealing manner, which is appreciated by the blog readers, the process of taking, editing and publishing pictures also becomes an essential part of both the practice of creating the outfit of the day as well as the general practice of fashion blogging. Here, the fashion bloggers are seldom alone in the construction of this practice due to it often integrating other people who take the pictures.

## 6.2   Question time – engaging blog readers in the production of content

In contrast to the practice of posting the outfit of the day, another commonly used practice, which is less hierarchical in its expression, is the use of question times. This practice is especially common among the EB and AB groups, and consists of the opportunity for readers to ask the bloggers about whatever is on their minds. Usually, question times are announced via a blog post encouraging readers to post their questions as comments on that particular post. When enough questions have been posted, the blogger publishes yet another blog post containing the answer to a selected number of questions. In this context, the majority of questions relate to events in the private lives of the fashion bloggers. Thus, the questions are often personal due to the fact that they are centred on the life of the blogger. Here is an example from an EB.

Blog reader: "Where are you going this summer?"[21] Fashion blogger: "Several places! After my trip to New York, I'll visit London and Paris to shop and party. Then I'll spend one or two weeks in Crete, and I'd like to go to Italy too. It's going to be a wonderful summer ... Nothing can stop me!"[22]

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[21] Original Swedish text: "Vart ska du resa under sommaren?"
[22] Original Swedish text: "Det blir en hel del ställen! Efter New York nu blir det London och Paris – shopping-/partyresor. Sen blir det även en eller två veckor på Kreta, vill gärna åka till Italien också. Det kommer bli en helt underbar sommar… Ingenting kan stoppa mig!"

However, some of the posted questions are more personal than this example. A number of questions balance on the border between being personal and exposing the private life and inner feelings of the blogger. The following example of how this can take expression is from one of the blogs in the EB group.

Blog reader: "Do you meet your dad at all? Are you in touch with him much?[23] Fashion blogger: "I see my dad a few times a year. I wish that we were more in touch. I always get soft-hearted when I see fathers who have coffee with their daughters, go shopping with them, call them when they are sad, hug them and act like dads. Movies about father-daughter relationships are the saddest thing I know."[24]

However, even though many questions are very personal, they do not always concern the lives of the bloggers, but the lives of the readers. Here, the bloggers can be described as mentors, role models, or the friends of their readers. One example of how this manifests itself can be found on the same blog that the previous example was taken from.

Blog reader: "What do you do when you're so afraid of the world and life and the future and everything that you can't breathe?"[25] Fashion blogger: "I cry. And then I call my mom and she says something sensible about life not being what you want it to be if you don't take chances. And when you're brave you take things on, then you need to cope because otherwise you just sit at home in regret as everyone else is living life instead of you."[26]

One of the ABs discusses the problematic nature of exposing one's private life. In contrast to how many of the fashion bloggers regards this issue, exposing one's private life is expressed to be an aspect which this particular blogger do not experience to be troublesome.

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[23] Original Swedish text: "Träffar du din pappa nåt? har du mycket kontakt med honom?"
[24] Original Swedish text: "Jag träffar min pappa ett par gånger om året. jag önskar att vår kontakt vore bättre. jag blir alltid helt svag i hjärtat av pappor som fikar med sina döttrar, shoppar med dem, ringer när de är ledsna, kramar dem och är liksom som pappor. filmer som handlar om fader-dotter-relationer är det sorgsnaste jag vet."
[25] Original Swedish text: *"Vad gör du när du är så rädd för världen och livet och framtiden och allting att du inte kan andas?"*
[26] Original Swedish text: *"Jag gråter. Och sedan ringer jag min mamma och så säger hon något klokt om att livet inte blir till någonting om man inte vågar och när man är modig så blåser det och det måste man orka för annars sitter man bara hemma och ångrar sig och så lever alla andra livet istället för en själv.*

Blog reader: "How do you cope? With everything needing to be so perfect and beautiful?"[27]

Fashion blogger: "This is probably what distinguishes me from all the other major bloggers. I'm certainly not someone who wants to refine the truth and pretend that everything is perfect. Most of you know if I feel bad, and I wouldn't have a problem writing it. And do you remember when I wrote in my blog that I'd been kicked out of my home? How many others would've dared to do that in front of 30,000 readers?"[28]

In this context, where bloggers act as mentors or role models, questions concerning how to become a popular blogger can also be found. Here, fashion bloggers offer instructions and guidelines on how their readers can follow in their footsteps. One such example comes from one of the ABs, where she describes, in a blog post, how her readers can start to earn money on their blogging activities:

Fashion blogger: "It happens quite a lot that people email me and ask if I make any money from blogging. Many also ask 'what do you do in order to succeed'... Now I'll tell you the little I know! I do not make big money from blogging. It's probably because I'm not that interested in the whole 'thing'. But I still have a few great tips to offer you! [...] Sign up and try out these websites. Maybe you'll find something that could make you rich! :) Update: Well, you have to be 18 to register. But you can ask mom or dad to do it!"[29]

A number of bloggers are also relatively candid when discussing how they themselves create revenues on the basis of their blogging activities. There are several blog posts where the bloggers account for their commercial activity. Two examples of this come from one of the ABs who describes what his revenue stream consists of.

Blog reader: "How do you make money from blogging?"[30] Fashion blogger: "The only way I

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[27] Original Swedish text: Hur orkar du? Att allt ska verka så perfekt och fint?"

[28] Original Swedish text: "Detta är nog det som skiljer mig från alla andra storbloggare. Jag är verkligen inte någon som vill förfina sanningen och låtsas att allt är perfekt. De flesta av er vet att om jag mår dåligt, så skulle jag inte ha problem att skriva ut det. Och minns ni när jag skrev i bloggen att jag blivit utslängd hemifrån? Hur många andra skulle vågat det liksom inför 30.000 läsare?"

[29] Original Swedish text: "Det händer ganska ofta att folk skickar mail till mig, och frågar om jag tjänar pengar på att blogga. Många frågar också "hur man kan göra för att lyckas med det".. Jag ska nu berätta om det lilla jag vet! Själv tjänar jag inga stora pengar på bloggandet. Det beror nog mest på att jag inte har intresserat mig så mycket för själva "grejen". Men jag har ändå ett par fina tips att bjuda på! [...] Registrera er och testa dessa sidor. Kanske ni hittar något som kan göra er rik! :) Uppdatering: Ja man måste vara 18 för att registrera sig. Men man kan ju säga till sin mamma eller pappa att göra det!"

[30] Original Swedish text: "Hur tjänar man pengar på sin blogg?"

do that is via the advertising that you see on the right side of my blog, and via video posts. Some of the advertisements give me a certain amount each time someone clicks on them and some of them give me money for each week / month when they are published on the blog. You can also sell blog posts but I always say no, because what I do is sell advertising space on the blog, not blog posts. It's my blog and no one else's."[31]

Blog reader: "How much do you earn each month from the blog?"[32] Fashion blogger: "Video posts: approximately SEK 5,000-7,000 / month. Advertising: approximately SEK 5,000 / month. Giveaways: approximately SEK 3,000 / month".[33]

However, not all bloggers are interested in revealing their incomes. One example of how this attitude is expressed relates to the incomes of bloggers sometimes being regarded as exaggerated and not perceived as trustworthy by the readers. One of the fashion bloggers describes the problematic nature of this issue in a blog post. Here, she chose to include a payment specification from her contracted advertising company, Tailsweep AB, which amounted to around SEK 150,000 during one period.

Blog reader: "How much do you earn from your blog?"[34] Fashion blogger: The reason why I never answer this question is because it varies from month to month. It's clearly dependent on the season, when most advertising campaigns occur. But another reason why I don't usually answer that question is because I did so once and was not believed. Some said that I lied, so I chose to resist answering whether this is how it should be. I also saw that when another blogger answered this question, she got comments like 'Why are you lying?' etc. I don't really believe that people understand how much money you can earn on a blog with a readership of tens of thousands a day. If I'm lucky, it might look like this some months."[35]

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[31] Original Swedish text: "Det enda settet jag gör det på är genom den reklam som ni själva ser på höger sida om bloggen och mina videoinlägg. Vissa av reklamerna ger mig en viss summa varje gång någon klickar och vissa av dom ger mig penger per vecka/månad de ligger uppe här i bloggen. Man kan även sälja inlägg men det tackar jag alltid nej för det jag gör är att sälja annonsplatser på bloggen, och inte inlägg. Det är min blogg och ingen annans."

[32] Original Swedish text: "Hur mycket tjänar du varje månad på bloggen?"

[33] Original Swedish text: "Videoinläggen: Ca. 5.000-7.000 kronor / månad. Annonser: Ca. 5.000 varje månad / månad. Gratisprodukter: Ca. 3.000 varje månad / månad."

[34] Original Swedish text: "Hur mycket tjänar du på bloggen?"

[35] Original Swedish text: "Anledningen till varför jag aldrig svarar på det är för att det varierar rätt mycket varje månad. Det beror helt klart på säsongen, när det är mest annonskampanjer och så. Men en till anledning varför jag inte brukar svara på det är för att jag en gång gjorde det men blev inte trodd. Några påstod att jag ljög, så jag valde att låta bli i fortsättningen om det ändå ska vara så. Såg även att när en annan bloggerska svarade på det så fick hon kommentarer som "Varför ljuger du?" osv. Jag tror inte riktigt att folk förstår hur mycket pengar man

Företag: ███████
Att: Kenza Zouiten
Er referens ███████

**Avslutade kampanjer**

| Kampanj | Sajt | Annonsvisningar | CPM (SEK) | Ersättning (SEK) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Swedbank Jul.375x250.2008.v51-52-960 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| Nokia E71 (mode).375x250.2008.v49-52-907 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| Sony Ericsson- Amanda Jensen 2.468x120.2008.v50-51-957 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| Eniro Vinter.375x250.2008.v49-52-880 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| Wedins Accent Höst.375x250.2008.v48-51-698 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| H&M Comme des Garcons.425x600.2008.v46-752 | KENZAS blogg | | | |
| | | | | 119 692 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Moms: | 29 923 SEK |
| Att fakturera: | 149 615 SEK |

Figure 14. Image showing a fashion blogger's revenues generated by advertising.

Thus, it is possible to ascertain that the majority of the posted questions concern the personal, private, and professional lives of the bloggers. In terms of fashion advice, however, and in relation to the practice of outfit of the day, a considerable proportion of the posted questions relate to fashion trends, fashion brands, and fashion products. Two examples of how this advice is materialized, within the practice of question time, come from two of the ABs.

Blog reader: "What clothes and shoes are you going for this spring and summer?"[36] Fashion blogger: "Denim jacket, floral tunics, denim shorts, gladiator sandals, shoulder bags and nice stuff like that![37]"

Blog reader: "What's your favourite store?"[38] Fashion blogger: "If we're talking clothes, I don't really know actually, most of them are OK I think. Gina, Monki, H&M, Åhlens, Topshop, Zara. It depends on what you're looking for :)"[39]

What can be discerned here is that the brands and products which the bloggers are writing about are often accessible to their readers vis-à-vis price range. This can be identified in particular among the ABs. This group of bloggers consists of young people who have probably attracted readerships of their own age. Thus, when ABs write about products and brands, which often involve the fashion chains, they are providing fashion advice which, from the readership's perspective, is affordable and relevant.

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kan tjäna på en blogg med flera tiotals tusen läsare om dagen. *Har jag tur så kan det se ut såhär vissa månader."*
[36] Original Swedish text: "Vad ska du satsa på för kläder/skor nu i vår och sommar?"
[37] Original Swedish text: "Jeansjacka, blommiga tunikor, jeansshorts, gladiatorsandaler, axelremsväskor och sånt fint!"
[38] Original Swedish text: "Vilken är din favorit butik?"
[39] Original Swedish text: "Om vi pratar kläder så vet jag faktikt inte, de flesta funkar bra tycker jag. Gina, monki, h&m, åhlens, topshop, zara. Lite beroende på vad man är ute efter."

In the context of posting fashion advice and integrating brands and products into the process, two of the bloggers have also engaged in design collaborations and started their own fashion brands. One example of how the bloggers use their blogs as marketing channels for their own products comes from one of the EBs.

Blog reader: **"**I found your blog a few days ago and I wonder what 'Jofama by Kenza' is? Is this your brand? Where can I find it?[40] Fashion blogger: "How nice to see you here! I can tell you a little about my collaboration with Jofama. One year ago, I was contacted by Jofama, which is the largest leather supplier in Sweden, you'll find their leather jackets everywhere! They had read my blog and thought I had good taste and they thought that a collaboration would be fun. We got to work and I designed a leather jacket for them (which became Jofama by Kenza). The jacket was launched in spring 2009 in a number of different colours and we had an INCREDIBLY good response. They sold like hot cakes and it feels so darn cool to walk around town and see the girls (I've even seen a few guys!) walking around wearing my nice leather jacket with 'Kenza' embroidered on the neck."[41]

Thus, the practice of question time is a relatively heterogeneous process in terms of the many aspects it consists of. A number of similar characteristics can be found within this practice. The blog readers are offered the opportunity to post questions which are then processed in a selective manner by the fashion bloggers. However, critical as well as very private questions are often answered by many of the fashion bloggers, illustrating how the practice of blogging generally provides good conditions for creating strong relationships between the blogger and the reader. The personal and private context that the answers, in particular, are published in shows how blog readers are integrated into the production process of the blog, but also into the private lives of the bloggers. From the perspective of commercial contexts, the fashion bloggers not only enter into the world of fashion by using outfit of the day, they also enter into it via the practice of question time. Here, the readers have the opportunity to take the initiative in terms of integrating brands and products. This manifests itself in how the readers

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[40] Original Swedish text: "Jag hittade till din blogg för några dagar sedan och undrar vad "Jofama by Kenza" är? Är det ditt märke? Vart kan man hitta det?"

[41] Original Swedish text: "Jag kan berätta lite allmänt om mitt samarbete med Jofama. För 1 år sedan blev jag kontaktad av Jofama som är Sveriges största skinnleverantör, deras skinnjackor hittar man överallt! De hade iallafall läst min blogg och tyckte att jag hade bra smak och tyckte att ett samarbete skulle bli roligt.Vi satte igång och jobbade och jag designade en skinnjacka för dem (vilket blev Jofama by Kenza). Jackan släpptes våren 2009 i ett par olika färger och vi fick OTROLIGT bra respons. Den sålde som smör och det kändes så himla coolt att gå på stan och se tjejer (har till och med sett ett par killar med den!) gå runt med min snygga skinnjacka med "KENZA" broderat i nacken."

ask for advice about the coming fashion season, or how they ask which brands will carry the most fashionable items. Another interesting finding is the relational creating aspects of this practice, whereas 2 of the bloggers chose to integrate their own fashion brands into this process. Thus, commercial values related to brand and market communication are not only created for external actors, e.g. fashion producers, but also for the bloggers themselves.

## 6.3    Competitions – exposing brands and engaging blog readers

The third commonly-used practice is competitions. In the majority of cases, competitions are announced via blog posts where instructions, prices, and deadlines are presented. In this context, the readers are urged to compete in order to win, primarily, products and gift cards. This practice provides yet another aspect of how commercial content is integrated into the production of blog content. One example of how competitions are materialised in blogs comes from one of the ABs.



Figure 15. Photo published in connection to the announcement of with a competition.

Fashion blogger: "Dudes! Do you feel like competing? Of course you do. Compete for a garment from SEVEN YEARS APART now that all the new stuff for spring has arrived and they're offering a 30 percent discount on all the goods in the shop from Friday to Sunday. In order to compete, select a garment you'd like to have delivered to your letterbox. Tell us what you've chosen in a comment together with your email address (!).Tell us something else that's fun to increase your chances of winning. You've got until Sunday.[42]

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[42] Original Swedish text: "Dudes! Känner ni för att tävla lite? Såklart ni vill. Tävla om ett valfritt plagg från SEVENYEARSAPART nu när alla vårnyheter kommit in och de dragit igång 30% på alla varor i shopen fredag

This post was published on an evening during March 2009. Five days later, this post had received 344 comments. Of the replies, the vast majority consisted of comments which were written in accordance with the instructions. Thus, these kinds of competitions provide a way for bloggers to integrate their readers into the production process of their blogs in a similar manner to the practice of question time.

However, the practice of arranging competitions makes it easy for commercial actors to step into blog content in a similar manner to the practice of outfit of the day. This process often includes the aspect of the blogger urging his/her readers to compete which, from the perspective of the commercial actors, means that they are integrated and become, at least to a certain extent, a part of the relationship between the blogger and the reader.

## 6.4    Analysing emergent practices

This chapter has illustrated how three commonly-used marketing practices materialise on market-leading fashion blogs and in the borderland between fashion consumer and fashion producer. One of the fundamental aspects of the conduct of fashion bloggers is that they themselves have had control over the content that they publish. Thus, they have had control over how institutions, and more importantly social practices, have been created and maintained within the context of the fashion blogosphere.

In the seminal work of Chapin (1928, cited in Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009:13-14), man was described as an institution-making animal. In the digital setting of this emergent organisational field, I would argue the fashion bloggers have played the role of the creators of institutions and practices that have generated social patterns, standardized interaction sequences (Jeppersson, 1991), a collection of rules and organised practices (March and Olson, 2006) embodying new marketing practices. What is also possible to discern is that these actors seem to experiment and exhibit a playfulness in their blogging practices resembling the distinction made by Holm (1995), who argued that actions could be guided by institutional order but could also create and change existing institutions. According to Kawamura (2005), who argued that fashion should be understood as a system of institutions that produce the concept and the phenomenon / practice of fashion, these institution-creators give rise to

till söndag. För att vara med och tävla väljer du ut ett valfritt plagg du skulle vilja få hem på brevlådan. Berätta vad du valt här i en kommentar tillsammans med din mailadress (!). Och berätta samtidigt gärna nåt annat kul för att öka din vinstchans. Ni har till söndag på er."

implications for both the phenomenon and the practice of fashion, but more importantly, the fashion system itself through the materialisation and emergence of these marketing practices.

These practices represent conduct that distinguishes and identifies the group of individuals participating in the fashion blogosphere. One of the central aspects pervading these social practices is that they are of a highly private and personal nature while simultaneously integrated into commercial contexts. Here, I would argue that these practices not only constitute emerging institutions, with implications for the fashion system, but also, and more importantly, they consist of the fundamental condition enabling fashion bloggers to engage in institutional entrepreneurship (Maguire et al., 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2008) within this organisational field.

One of the fashion bloggers' main aims consists of developing and maintaining large readerships. In doing so, they create one of the fundamental values of the organisational field, which is also the essential precondition for its existence. Here, the studied fashion bloggers show several ways regarding how this can be done. The practice of posting the outfit of the day provides readers with inspiration and style tips regarding how they can express themselves in terms of fashion. This practice is not, however, as inclusive as the practice of question time. By using this practice as well, the blogger provides the reader with updates about his/her daily life; however, more importantly, this lets the reader enter the private life of the blogger. It also provides the reader with a reason to revisit the blog, in order to see whether or not the blogger has answered his/her questions or not. The practice of holding competitions provides yet another way of engaging readers in the production of blog content in a rather entertaining manner. Here too, an incentive to visit the blogger's site is once again created by using this practice.

When shifting the perspective to how these practices can be understood on the basis of the relationship between the fashion bloggers and commercial actors, the private and personal contexts are key, in several aspects, to integrating brands and products into the content of the blogs. When the practice of outfit of the day is materialised, the bloggers themselves act as branded models due to publishing images of themselves wearing different combinations of products, and combining photos with texts informing about which brand is being worn on one particular day.

This conduct represents one of the social practices particularly creating value from the commercial actor's perspective, especially fashion producers. Here, the value to the commercial actors, when compared to traditional advertising practices, is key due to the models not only exposing products to the consumers, which are often included in the commercial actors' target groups, but also in having created and maintained a close relationship with this particular group of consumers.

Thus, from the commercial actor's perspective, the practice of outfit of the day provides an opportunity for brand and market communication whereby aspects related to trustworthiness and influence could probably be better compared to traditionally-used advertising practices. The practice of holding competitions also provides commercial actors with a way of integrating into a personal and private context, even though this practice may be perceived to be more explicitly commercial. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, it provides a possibility for commercial actors to expose their brands and products to the consumer, who in many cases to a relatively great extent, chooses to participate in this interactive practice as well.

In sum, entrepreneurial actors from the IT sector understood how the technical infrastructure could be developed in order to make it easy for Internet users to engage in the practice of blogging, thus creating commercial values. However, the bloggers alone have more or less created the institutional practices enabling the creation and the appropriation of commercial values. By combining findings related to the emergence of the organisational field, social institutions, and commonly-used practices, the next chapter will address the theoretical implications of the analysed developments within the fashion blogging phenomenon.

# 7 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to analyse the emergence of the fashion blogging phenomenon, and how commercial actors operate within the realm of the fashion blogger. Here, attention was to be directed towards emerging marketing practices existing within the fashion blogosphere, and its implications regarding how the fashion system can be understood. This was conducted by applying a theoretical framework that took its point of departure in fashion theory, the concept of the prosumer, and key conceptualisations existing in new institutional theory.

Within the field of fashion theory, there is consensus between fashion theorists fashion should be from a systemic perspective (Entwistle, 2000). Here, fashion has been argued to consist of a complex system where actors who control access to distribution channels within the system become particularly influential (Kawamura, 2005). Meanwhile, Rizer and Jurgenson (2010) have argued that digital prosumption online consists of what may be a new form of capitalism, thus increasing the need to study expressions of prosumption activities. The fashion blogging phenomenon was assumed to provide a rich environment of prosumers and prosumption activities which would thus be able to potentially give rise to implications for the contemporary understanding of the fashion system and how fashion diffuses through emerging marketing practices. Key concepts within institutional theory were integrated in order to, from the theoretical point of departure, focus attention on how emergent organisational fields, social institutions, and institutional entrepreneurship could explain the changing nature of the fashion system. Based on the discussion regarding developments within these fields, the research question was formulated as follows:

Can prosumption activities become involved in the creation of institutionalised fields and create opportunities for institutional entrepreneurship?

Based on the empirical findings, the rise of the fashion blogosphere provides several theoretical implications regarding how the fashion system can be understood and how organisational fields and institutional entrepreneurship can emerge as a result of prosumption activities. These implications will be discussed further in the following sections.

## 7.1 The rise of prosumer fashion

When fashion is seen as a system (e.g. Entwistle, 2000; Kawamura, 2005; Gradén and Petersson McIntyre, 2009), professional actors such as designers and fashion journalists have been argued to maintain a key position. In the context of such a conceptualisation, the role of the consumer has been integrated by arguing that fashion is a socially-constructed process whose value arises when consensus can be achieved between actors (Kawamura, 2005).

The empirical findings of this study illustrate how consumers, by engaging in the practice of blogging, add new aspects to the understanding of fashion as a socially-constructed process. Using new technology has enabled consumers to create distribution channels for communicating fashion information and fashion advice which, to a great extent, can be argued to compete with traditional fashion journalism. In doing so, they not only take part in the construction of fashion but also appear to become increasingly influential in terms of how ideas regarding what is fashionable are spread within the fashion system.

Here, the empirical findings also illustrate that the studied fashion bloggers have been transformed from consumers into prosumers. As elaborated upon in Chapter one, the concept of prosumption (e.g. Toffler, 1980; Kotler, 1986; Tapscott, 1996) offers a better description of the processes in which the fashion bloggers take part than defining the fashion bloggers as consumers or producers. Here, one of the main prosumption activities consists of independently producing unique combinations of garments, shoes and accessories which are not only consumed by the bloggers themselves, but also documented using a practice highly resembling that of writing diaries. However, due to new technology, the public posting of this practice has enabled the diffusion of this documentation and has thus enabled it to become a part of the fashion system highly resembling the role of fashion journalism. By engaging in the different social practices surrounding blogging, which have emerged within the realm of the fashion blogosphere, the fashion bloggers produce fashion advice for the consumers, a process which takes place in the borderland between the fashion consumer and the fashion producer.

In relation to the shift towards consumer fashion presented by Crane (2000), the empirical findings illustrate a number of similar characteristics. Fashion bloggers exhibit a relatively high degree of stylistic diversity, incorporating the tastes and concerns of the different social

groups often connected with their audiences due to having become integrated into the process of producing blog content. However, the conceptualisation of consumer fashion suggested by Crane (2000), in relation to the high degree of prosumption activities that the fashion bloggers exhibit, suggests that the fashion system may have been transformed in such a manner that the conceptualisation of consumer fashion, though not to the same extent as previously, is possible to apply. Here, I would suggest that the empirical findings illustrate yet another shift, namely the rise of prosumer fashion.

In contrast to consumer fashion, the shift towards prosumer fashion has been enabled and facilitated, in the studied case, by the adoption of technology enabling the consumer to engage in the creation of distribution channels in the context of the fashion system. One of the digital expressions of this development can be found in particular within the boundaries of the blogs. By engaging in the practice of blogging, consumers have been given the opportunity to participate in prosumption activities, while several have also succeeded in generating large readerships; in doing so, becoming competitors of traditional fashion journalism. Besides the similarities to consumer fashion discussed above, the adoption of new technology has enabled actors who started out as consumers to further entering the fashion system but, more importantly, to also become part of an emergent organisational field and be incorporated into a value network. Here, the reason why they have attracted the attention of commercial actors and traditionally influential actors within the fashion system is new ways of applying technology which have enabled them to become influential. In this context, the prosumers' engagement in the practice of blogging becomes a distribution channel where social institutions and marketing practices have emerged which, in turn, exert an influence not only on the consumer, but also on traditionally influential actors within the fashion system.

## 7.2    The role of prosumers in emergent organisational fields

In order to understand the rise of prosumer fashion, the groups of actors that have played important roles in the structuration process (DiMaggio, 1983) of the emergent organisational field need to be included. Blog platforms and advertising companies were, in several respects, the first actors who understood how access to the practice of blogging could be facilitated from the consumer's perspective, and thus how commercial values could be generated. The creation of technical platforms for blogging is one of the main reasons why an organisational field centred on the practice of blogging emerged in the first place. Here, the part of the

organisational field where these actors operate is highly characterised by its technical environment, which is especially the case in relation to blog platforms due to their key processes consisting of the controlling of technical systems where they are rewarded for effective and efficient control. In relation to how advertising companies have emerged or repositioned themselves in order to focus their activities on the practice of blogging, similar aspects can be found. Here, the key processes consist of understanding how technical scripts can be constructed in order to integrate advertising into the technical system of the blog platform and the individual blogger's technical solutions.

However, the social practices that have emerged within the blogosphere have been the result the interactions of the users themselves, namely the fashion bloggers. Here, one aspect needs to be emphasised. While the technical systems of the blogosphere have been created as a result of initiatives by entrepreneurs previously active within the IT sector, the social institutions, and the practices of the fashion blogosphere, have to a high degree been left to the users of the technology to create. The main value-creating process of this field can be found through these social institutions and practices. In other words, by engaging in practices consisting of prosumption activities, the users of the technology enable the rise of an organisational field. Without prosumption activities, the field would thus not have been able to be created.

The empirical findings illustrate the complex interactions that have taken place between these groups of actors. This study has illustrated that conducting an institutional analysis of emerging organisational fields in a digital setting, where different social institutions and practices develop, in a sense, independently, includes the need to address individual groups of actors in order to provide a holistic understanding of different phenomena. In the context of the fashion blogosphere, understanding of how the organisational field has emerged, and how traditionally influential actors within the fashion system have approached it in order to take part in the creation of a value network for the purposes of brand and market communication, has enabled not only an explanation of the different aspects of the institutional characteristics of this field, but also, more importantly, how value is created and appropriated.

## 7.3   Marketing practices and institutional entrepreneurship

Within both fashion theory and new institutional theory, the concept of institutions is defined and applied in a rather similar manner, whereas the importance of social practices has been emphasised in relation to organisational fields (e.g. March and Olsson, 2006) and the fashion system (Kawamura, 2005). Here, this study has illustrated that a particular focus on institutions and social practices provides a useful approach to explaining the emerging phenomena within social media. Among the practices that exist regarding the content produced by fashion bloggers, one finding is especially important. Among these practices, the importance of personal and private contexts is key and integrates commercial actors in terms of brands and products. This creates value not only from the readers' perspective, in terms of fashion advice, but also as regards fashion producers in terms of brands and market communication. These practices can thus be regarded to be the value-creating processes which, in relation to prosumer fashion, enable bloggers to enter into the influential realm of the fashion system.

In relation to how institutional entrepreneurship (e.g. Maguire et al., 2004; Hardy and Maguire, 2008) has been studied, the actor groups representing blog platforms and advertising companies have, in several ways, acted as institutional entrepreneurs. Due to their emergence, the practice of blogging has spread faster and wider than if consumers had been forced to take the technical issues into their own hands. By developing technical platforms for starting and operating blogs, these actors have contributed to the emergence of an organisational field which, in some respects, has emerged from the IT sector and, in particular, the field focusing on developing web communities. When shifting the focus towards advertising companies, a number of actors chose to pay considerable attention to the practice of blogging and, in doing so, contributed to the emergence of this field, in addition to changing the existing actors' operations.

However, within the literature addressing issues related to institutional entrepreneurship, consumers' or prosumers' participation in organisational fields has seldom received much attention. Instead, producers or professional actors have focused on understanding how organisational fields change due to the entrepreneurial initiatives of these actors. Here, a need to understand institutional entrepreneurship and its consequences for power relationships has also been emphasised as an important issue to study in this context (e.g. Pachesco et al., 2010;

Tracey et al., 2010).

From the perspective of the empirical findings, it becomes evident that the consumers and the prosumers, in particular, can exert an influence on the structuration of organisational fields and also affect how fields change. Within the framework of this study, it is possible to argue that the social practices created by influential fashion bloggers have provided the key element from where the value of the organisational field is created. In doing so, the roles of the consumers and prosumers in this context have functioned as central the story of how the field emerged. From the perspective of how the different social practices integrating commercial contexts create commercial values, the fashion bloggers or prosumers themselves can be regarded as having acted as institutional entrepreneurs in the context of the fashion system. Relating to the power relationship between the actors in the fashion system, it is possible, furthermore, to argue that both the power and the influence of the consumers, and more importantly the prosumers, have increased in relation to actors who have traditionally been assigned a high degree of influence from this perspective.

## 7.4  Directions for future research

This study has sought to expand and improve existing understanding of prosumers in the context of fashion theory and new institutional theory by focusing attention on the fashion system, emergent organisational fields, and institutional entrepreneurship. Based on this work, two directions for future research can be identified.

The first approach concerns how the digital practices that have emerged within the blogosphere can be understood in an offline setting. Here, the meeting of fashion consumer and fashion producer in a retail environment can be of particular interest to study. When moving the netnographic approach used in this study into the realm of the offline world, an ethnographic approach in a retail environment could provide an understanding of how influential actors within the fashion blogosphere affect the practices existing in retail environments. Here, the study of how consumers searching for fashionable garments in retail environments, based on information provided by blogs, can provide insights into the degree of influence that bloggers exert on fashion consumption. How do consumers interact with fashion retailers on the basis of the information offered by fashion bloggers? When shifting the focus towards fashion retailers, practices which facilitate the encounter with consumers

who participate in the blogosphere could also provide insights into how to handle the influence of this phenomenon on consumption practices relating to fashion.

The second approach focuses attention on how fashion brand mangers handle implications which the fashion blog phenomenon has given rise to. Based on the empirical findings, it is possible to discern a development whereby the fashion brand manager's control over the brand diminishes. Instead, fashion bloggers implementing a private and personal approach to their readers take control of the relationship with the consumers. Here, the brand enters a realm which primarily consists of a strong relationship between the fashion blogger and the fashion blog reader, in contrast to a relationship between the brand and the fashion consumer. Thus, this development might involve several changing conditions as regards how to implement brand and market communication, something which needs to be addressed in order to facilitate future marketing practices from the producer's perspective.

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