



**UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG**  
**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW**

Master Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

## **Is Your Facebook Identity in Line with Beloved Betty, Anxious Ann or Critical Catharina?**

A study of consumers' creation of a Facebook identity through Facebook usage  
and its implication for social media marketing

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Master Degree Project No. 2014:101  
Graduate School

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Firstly, this study aims to understand and analyze patterns in the 25-30 years old female consumers' creation of a Facebook identity. Secondly, this study aims to present implications concerning social media marketing with the help of the results related to the first aim. In order to get a collective understanding of the consumers' behavior on Facebook, the usage of the platform was discussed in three focus groups. By applying theories of McCracken (1986) and Giddens (1991) from the CCT perspective in combination with theories of Shibutani (1955), Berger (1963) and Goffman (1959) from the Symbolic Interactionism perspective, the consumer usage of Facebook that creates a Facebook identity can be categorized into three ideal types, named after their overall approach towards Facebook usage; Beloved Betty, Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina. The ideal types were defined by the differences in consumer usage related to four found themes; Post, Activity, Friends and Visibility.*

## **KEY WORDS**

**Social Media Marketing \* Identity Creation \* Facebook Usage \* Consumer Culture Theory \* Symbolic Interactionism**

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*"On Facebook I know that I judge and create opinions of my Facebook friend based on what posts they publish and like... and then all of a sudden I realize that my friends probably do the same thing with me..."*  
(Female Consumer, 26 years old)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010 p. 61). These Internet-based applications (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010) are platforms that can be

compared to marketplaces where consumers and companies meet and interact (Ström 2010). Depending on their primary function, the social media platforms can be classified into categories such as *Publish, Photo Sharing, Microblogging, Video* and *Social Networking* (Safko 2010). Social media has initiated a new era in the world of Internet where the power structure in

corporate information flow has changed, where the consumer, and not the companies, once again rules the Internet world (Kaplan & Haenlein 2012) and where the corporate communication has been democratized (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

The three most common social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (eBizMBA 2014). While Twitter is a micro-blog where you add tweets with 140 characters (Lacy 2011), LinkedIn is the world's greatest network for business contacts and inquiries (LinkedIn Inc 2014). Facebook, on the other hand, is the social network to connect and stay in touch with your friends and family and interact with companies (Safko 2010). Facebook has 1,2 billions of users (Olsson 2014) and if Facebook is compared to countries, the online social media platform is ranked on third place after China and India when it comes to largest population (Talic 2014). With its 10th years anniversary (Talic 2014) Facebook has become the most commonly used online social network among adults and the amount of users constantly increase (Lenhart et al. 2010).

From the companies' perspective, previous studies reveal that there are several indications for companies to join social media platforms. First, more frequently, consumers use different social networks in their information gathering processes preceding buying decisions (Lempert 2006; Vollmer & Precourt 2008) and find these information sources more trustworthy than company-sponsored information published through traditional elements of the promotion mix (Foux 2006). Second, there is a tendency that consumers move away from traditional sources of advertisement, such as radio, television and newspaper (Rashtchy et al. 2007; Vollmer & Precourt 2008). Third, in contrast to traditional communication tools, social media provides a forum where companies, through a profile, can stay in direct contact with employees, competitors and end-consumers. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Petersson 2014). Fourth, companies can use social networking sites for several marketing purposes such as

creating brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001), conducting marketing research (Kozinets 2002), building a company's reputation and for increasing sales (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Ever since the usage of the Web 2.0 exploded in the beginning of the century, social media marketing has become an important task for managers to handle (Kaplan & Haenlein 2012; Mangold & Faulds 2009; Keitzmann et al. 2011). However, as social media is built on the idea and concept of users generating and publishing the content on the platforms, these communication channels differ from the traditional marketing channels (Mangold & Faulds 2009). The power of the content is not in the managers' hands, instead the power is in the hands of the individual consumer (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

From the consumers' perspective, previous consumer studies of the social media platform Facebook concern individuals' usage of Facebook (Pempek et al. 2009), consumers' presentation of themselves (Walther et al. 2008; Hollenbeck & Kaikathi 2012) and consumers' identity creation (Hum et al. 2011; Zhao et al. 2008). Pempek et al. (2009) conclude that individuals use Facebook mostly for social interaction, where they rather observe the posted content than actually post information themselves. Moreover, regarding consumers' presentation of themselves, Walther et al. (2008) discuss that the attractiveness of a Facebook user's friends affects the user's own attractiveness. Hollenbeck & Kaikathi (2012) discuss that consumers use brands to present both the actual and the ideal selves and conclude that most people edit themselves in some way, thus the ideal self is expressed to a greater extent. Concerning the consumer identity, previous studies show that Facebook users' identity constructed by their profile pictures was one identity where the consumers were inactive, appropriate, posed and alone (Hum et al. 2011). Furthermore, when consumers create their online identities, the Facebook users are realistic and honest but tend to stretch the truth a bit in order to create an online identity that is socially more

desirable and therefore better than their offline self (Zhao et al. 2008). However, the offline and online identity cannot be separated (Zhao et al. 2008).

From the literature studies, it is evident that positive reasons for companies to engage in social media marketing (Lempert 2006; Vollmer & Precourt 2008; Foux 2006; Rashtchy et al. 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Petersson 2014; Muniz & O'Guinn 2001; Kozinets 2002; Kietzmann et al. 2011) are already vastly outlined. However, the literature studies reveal that social media marketing from the companies' perspective are mostly outlining what companies should do and how they should behave on the platform based on the characteristics of the social media platform (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011; Mangold & Faulds 2009), thus leaving a gap for the companies' understanding of the powerful consumers and their usage. Consumers' identity creation on social media platforms, on the other hand, is in previous literature investigated to a great extent (Zhao et al. 2008; Hollenbeck & Kaikathi 2012; Hum et al. 2011). However, the literature studies reveal that there is a gap in the description of the consumers' usage of the platform and the creation of a Facebook identity that follows the usage. By mapping consumers' usage of Facebook that creates an identity on the platform, companies may gain valuable understandings of the consumer and in that way create a more efficient social media marketing strategy.

In order to contribute with new knowledge to the outlined gap, this study has two related aims. The first aim is to understand and analyze patterns in the consumers' creation of a Facebook identity whereas the second aim is to present implications of these results concerning social media marketing. The following research question is outlined to guide the work and fulfill the aims: *How do female consumers create a Facebook identity through the usage of the platform?* In this study, the female consumers will be in the age 25-30 years old and Facebook users.

Facebook is a platform where consumers frequently visualize themselves and others through the publication of posts, such as pictures, status updates and comments. In this study, the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) perspective is applied since researchers of the perspective view that consumers create an identity through the visualization of consumed products filled with cultural meanings. Furthermore, an essential characteristic of Facebook is that the platform is also a forum where the published posts are viewed by a group of friends. This essential characteristic is by the researchers perceived to be lacking in the CCT perspective and therefore this study also takes influences from the Symbolic Interactionism perspective that concerns social interaction and its effect on individuals' behavior.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Within marketing, identity is a widely discussed concept where CCT presents one perspective of consumer identity. CCT is a family of theories in the marketing field that concerns consumer behavior, the marketplace and cultural meanings (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Holt 2002). Furthermore, social interaction, the outlined essential characteristic of Facebook, is widely discussed in previous research outside the marketing field. One perspective that discusses this concept is the Symbolic Interactionism perspective, collected from the social psychological field. Hereinafter follows a presentation of relevant previous research in the two perspectives respectively, as well as of social media marketing. Thereafter, selected applied theories that constitute the leading researchers and their work are presented.

### *Consumer Culture Theory and Identity Projects*

Central in CCT is the market-made commodities and the desire-inducing marketing symbols based and reproduced by the consumers' free choice. How consumers use these market-generated materials in the creation of the self is also central in the CCT area, where McCracken

(1986) and Belk (1988) have made the initial work. Through consumption, the images and qualities of products are transferred to the consumer, hence identity is a self-image resulting from the condensations and displacements of product images (McCracken 1986; Belk 1988; Mick et al. 2004; Thompson & Hirschman 1995). McCracken (1986) argues that goods are medium for non-linguistic self-communication in the social world and he has outlined a theory of how cultural meaning is transferred from the culturally constituted world onto the consumer. However, as the technology has developed the channels of meaning transfer have expanded, thus new theories have emerged. Schau and Gilly (2003) made an early contribution to the CCT field concerning self-presentation on the Web and stress that the communication of cultural meaning through consumer goods has become expanded, more complex and thereby more complicated as the Web has emerged with its digital images and increased communication options (Schau & Gilly 2003). Through the investigation of how consumers digitally associate themselves with symbols, signs, places and material objects Schau and Gilly (2003) show how consumers construct their identities. Even though the essence of Schau and Gilly's (2003) study is still relevant, the separation of online and offline identity has been questioned due to the evolution of new networking sites, such as Facebook, which, according to Zhao et al. (2008), is based on anchored relationships. Therefore, Zhao et al. (2008) provide a study where they investigate identity construction on Facebook and show that due to the nonymous online environment, Facebook users are realistic and honest but tend to stretch the truth a bit in order to create an identity that is socially more desirable and therefore better than their real offline self (Zhao et. al 2008). Zhao et al. (2008) conclude that the online and offline identity cannot be separated and the social world includes both the online and the offline world, where people need to coordinate their behaviors in the two different worlds.

Common for Schau and Gilly (2003) and Zhao et al. (2008) is that they take the perspective of Goffman (1959), whose theory is central in the Symbolic Interactionism perspective. The theory views identity creation as a staged performance that is created, reaffirmed and changed in the interaction with others (Goffman 1959). As described by Charon (1995), Mead, the founder of the Symbolic Interactionism perspective, discusses the dimension of the self and its relation to symbols. The self, where identity is an important part, is widely discussed by researchers in the Symbolic Interactionism perspective (Charon 1995). A well-applied definition of the self-concept is outlined by Rosenberg who defines the concept as the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg 1979 p. 7). In addition, Charon (1995) describes that the general thoughts in the perspective is that an individual announce his or her thoughts of his/her social object in words and actions.

### ***Social Media Marketing***

In previous research the concept social media has been widely discussed. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a part of the Web 2.0 where the sum of all the usage of social media is defined as user-generated content (UGC). Saffo (2010) expands this view by dividing the concept into social and media, where *social* refers to the human instinctual need of interaction and *media* refers to the different channels through which these social interactions are made.

Kozinets' (2002) research of online communities and how they advantageously can be used for marketing purposes can be seen as an early contribution to social media marketing. Kozinets (2002) argues that online marketing research is a fast, simple and less expensive tool for gathering information about consumer groups compared to offline marketing research. By listening to the consumers' dialogue in the online communities, the marketer can through rigorous and ethical methods, for instance netnography, collect and interpret

information of symbols, meanings and consumer patterns (Kozinets 2002). The rapid growth of social media in the 21st century has created a demand of literature of how to use the platforms, which is shown in previous research. Several researchers (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Kietzmann et al. 2011) present general advices, recommendations and methods in how to increase a company's influence of the on-going dialogue on these democratized channels, hence how to use the platforms for marketing purposes. Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue, in line with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Kietzmann et al. (2011), that managers are not able to control these on-going conversations on social media, they are solely able to influence the discussions in line with the goals of their organization. In their research, Mangold and Faulds (2009) outline nine methods that potentially can create positive word-of-mouth, increase the customer's engagement and empowerment, create a buzz when the company is branding, create emotional connections in order to increase sales and create network platforms for the brand. However, previous research does not solely show the positive aspects of using social media for marketing purposes. Sarabdeen (2014) argues that with all the opportunities that social media brings come risks such as legal risks. For instance, consumers' privacy can be violated when companies collect consumers' personal preferences and buying behaviors, and use this information to target the users with

promotional activities. Another legal risk is that companies can receive liabilities when claiming deceptive or false advertisement (Sarabdeen 2014).

**Theoretical Framework**

In this study, applied theories from the CCT perspective are theories of McCracken (1986) and Giddens (1991). McCracken (1986) outlines how cultural meanings from the culturally constituted world are transferred into consumer goods, which through different rituals are transferred onto the consumers when consuming a good. McCracken (1986) divides the rituals into four different rituals: possession, exchange, grooming and divestment. These instruments of transferred cultural meaning clearly show how actions containing symbols and signs create a consumer's identity. The central theory in CCT perspective outlined by McCracken (1986) is chosen to analyze symbols, signs and cultural meanings that are anticipated to be found in a platform that is built on user-generated content. Giddens (1991), on the other hand, defines identity as a story that a person constantly writes and rewrites about him or her self. In this way, identity is an endless project based on choices and the translation of them into a life-story, a narrative (Giddens 1991). In this reflexive and constantly on-going life-project where consumption is the main tool, the consumers have no choice but to choose even though they do not know what choice is correct (Giddens 1991). As social media

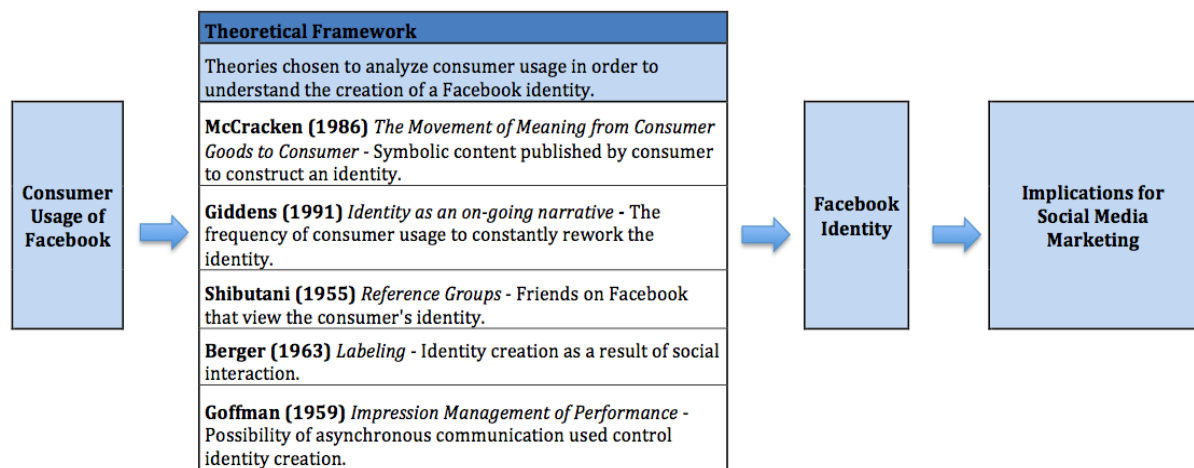


Figure 1. Analysis Model.



contains of user-generated content where the content is continuously modified by all users, Giddens' (1991) theory is applied in order to analyze the frequency of publishing, a characteristic of the social media platform Facebook.

In this study, theories from the Symbolic Interactionism perspective supplement the theories from the CCT perspective in order to analyze the view of and the opinions of others. Thus, theories of Berger (1963), Shibutani (1955) and Goffman (1959) are applied theories from the Symbolic Interactionism perspective. Berger (1963) argues that all the actions an individual takes toward his or her self and especially actions defining whom the self is, takes place in the interaction with others. In the interaction with the reference group, labels are given to an individual, which the individual use when the individual comes to label him-/herself (Berger 1963). Thus, the labels or the names define who the individual is in relation to the reference group he/she interacts with (Berger 1963). Shibutani's (1955) theory is in line with Berger (1963) and defines the reference groups as social groups with which an individual shares perspectives. The perspectives of different reference groups are held in mind when interacting and communicating with different social worlds. A reference group is a product of communication, thereby dynamic in character and defined through interaction. Our modern mass society constitutes of a multitude of social worlds and each individual has its own unique combination of reference groups (Shibutani 1955). Since the context of Facebook makes a consumer's identity creation process to take place in the interaction with others, the theories of Berger (1963) and Shibutani (1955) are relevant for this study. Goffman (1959) presents a dramaturgical theory to describe an individual's presentation of the self by comparing it to a performance that takes place on stage in front of an audience. The self is thereby a product of a dramatic interaction between the individual and the audience (Goffman 1959). The consumer's goal is to present a certain sense of the self,

a performance, that is accepted by the audience. Since people generally want to present an idealized picture of them they use methods, such as concealing to hide unfavorable things about themselves, highlighting to show the favorable end product of a process and dismiss disruptions (Goffman 1959). All methods that intend to control the audience and the own performance Goffman (1959) calls impression management. In this study, the theory of Goffman (1959) is relevant to apply since the context of Facebook and the essential element of the platform are to publish user-generated content that is visible for your Facebook friends.

Necessary to bear in mind when applying the chosen theories is that all five theories are created in an offline context, thus the theories are not intended to analyze data collected from an online social media platform like Facebook. However, since the ideas of identity and social interaction on Facebook are judged to be in line with the fundamental ideas originally developed in another context, the theories are judged to be relevant for this study. In order to answer this study's research question, an analysis model has been constructed with the applied theories (see *1. Analysis Model*). The analysis model will guide the analysis of the empirical data in the *Results* and the discussion of the implications in the *Discussion*.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions of concepts will hereinafter be used throughout this study. *Reference Group* is defined as a consumers' Facebook Friends, as an entity. The reference group in this study can consist of several social groups or one alone. *Social Group* is one part of a consumer's reference group for instance a consumers' colleagues or a consumer's closest friends. *Facebook Identity* refers to the identity a consumer creates through their usage of Facebook.

### **METHOD**

This qualitative study aims to understand and analyze patterns in the consumers'

creation of a Facebook identity and present the implications of these results through the method focus groups. Focus group is a research method where data is gathered about a chosen topic through group interaction (Morgan 1996; Wibeck 2010). Discussions in focus groups are used to find constructions of shared cultural understandings, narratives of everyday life as well as discoveries of what drives a certain behavior (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008; Lewis-Beck et. al 2004). As other qualitative methods, focus groups give the possibility to make discoveries instead of draw general, statistic grounded conclusions (Wibeck 2010).

The choice of using focus groups is based on the advantages of the method's features, described by Morgan (1996) and Wibeck (2010), and the correlation these features have with the intention of this study. According to Morgan (1996), interactive group discussions concerning experiences, interpretations and thoughts become richer in a focus group compared to interviews. Further, Wibeck (2010) emphasizes that the group interaction in focus groups creates beneficial possibilities for the understanding of people's underlying values about a discussed topic. However, a problem that can arise during a focus group discussion is the gathering of all the diverse perspectives existing in the group, since not all individuals dare to speak when the individual's perspective does not align with the rest of the group members' perspective (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). To prevent such an undesirable situation the researchers in this study worked for the creation of an open-minded and permitting attitude during the focus group discussions.

In this study three focus groups were conducted in order to obtain rich and diverse empirical data. The focus groups consisted of five, six and four participants and lasted for one hour, one hour and five minutes and one hour and fifteen minutes, respectively. The participants were selected by convenience sampling based on three characteristics. These characteristics are in line with the limitations of this study:

female, at the age 25-30 and Facebook user. This assumes that homogeneity in regard to age together with shared common experiences and interests are in favor when getting the participants to open up and share personal information (Wibeck 2010). The chosen consumer group is defined in the study as a consumer segment, a segment that is interesting to study due to the fact that these young adults, along with teenagers, are the most frequent users of social media, where Facebook is the most commonly used media (Lenhart et al. 2010).

Moreover, one of the researchers took the role as a moderator in order to achieve rich group interaction where the underlying patterns of consumers' creation of a Facebook identity were discovered. As the research team consisted of two students, the other researcher took the role as the assistant, as the doubling of ears and eyes increase the reliability of the study. Both the moderator and the assistant shared the characteristics with the participants, which can have a positive effect of the outcome since the participants feel more secure and relaxed during such circumstances (Wibeck 2010). Concerning the validity of the study the moderator simply facilitated the discussions and did not share personal experiences in order to not bias the data (Wibeck 2010). The topic of the focus group was presented as a discussion concerning behavior on Facebook, in other words the creation of a Facebook identity was left out, this in order to not influence and limit the participants' expressions. Instead the actual behavior and use of Facebook were discussed. Due to the omission of the concept Facebook identity, ethical issues rise, however the vague introduction was argued necessary according to the researchers due to the chosen inductive approach. The introduction was followed by a discussion based on a semi-structured interview guide, which provides an open approach where the researcher did not impose her perspective of the phenomenon (Wibeck 2010; Quinlan 2011). Areas that were discussed during the focus groups were "a typical day on Facebook", "Facebook friends and their influence on Facebook



usage”, “certain experiences that have affected and changed Facebook usage” and “usage recommendations to a new user”. During the focus group discussions all participants participated, however on different levels. The moderator sometimes encouraged more silent participants to contribute to the discussion, although with respect to differences in personal openness. For instance, a few times the researcher pursued the discussion by asking; “Is this something everyone agree on our is someone of another opinion?”. In this way, the moderator encouraged a complex discussion and indicated that all opinions were sought.

During the focus groups, the assistant was responsible for filming and audio-recording the focus group discussions. The focus groups discussions were put into print in order to increase the validity of the analysis. The transcriptions were performed directly afterwards the implementation of the focus group to preserve as much details as possible. Details as pauses and laughter were included into the transcriptions since it has significant importance for the understanding of the discussions (Wibeck 2010). The transcriptions were thereafter sent to the participants for confirmation in order to increase the validity of the study (Quinlan 2011). All participants were offered anonymity, however, due to the design of the focus groups, a limited confidential control can be offered even though this was asked of the participants (Wibeck 2010).

Through content analysis a systematic examination of themes and patterns in the focus group discussions was accomplished (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). As the purpose with content analysis is to inspect all empirical data for discovering recurrent themes, words and discourses, the transcriptions were read through several times (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). During the content analysis process, it was evident that the focus group discussion enabled the consumers to identify both their own and others’ behavior by putting it in contrast and in line with other consumers’ usage.

Thereby, the collected data did not only consist of the individuals’ articulated individual behavior, but also their view of others’ behavior. Thus, the content analysis led to the discovery of common and exceptional viewpoints, which further were developed into themes and patterns of consumer usage. The four discovered themes were: Post, Activity, Friends and Visibility. When the themes had been discovered through the content analysis, theories from the CCT perspective as well as the Symbolic Interactionism perspective were collected in order to analyze how the usage of consumers create an identity on Facebook. A model for analysis (see *Figure 1. Analysis Model*) built on the two related aims of this study was set up, including the chosen theoretical framework, with the intention to structure the findings and guide the reader.

The discovered consumer usage patterns, on the other hand, contributed to the construction of three consumer groups with more or less similar characteristics that were converted into three ideal types. Ideal type is a sociological concept used as a tool to describe and explain a social phenomenon. By using ideal types, the participants in this study could be categorized as one of the three ideal types, without having all the described characteristics (Weber 1978). In this way the ideal types represent the collective opinions and thoughts visible in the three focus groups. The three ideal types are named due to the consumer groups’ overall approach to Facebook usage: Beloved Betty, Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina. Quotations from the focus groups discussions are used as empirical data that are set against the applied theories in order to analyze the data and present the analysis in the *Results*.

## RESULTS

The first aim of this study is to understand and analyze patterns in the consumers’ creation of a Facebook identity, which will be outlined hereinafter with the help of four themes and three constructed ideal types.

The ideal types' Facebook usage is summated in *Figure 2. Facebook usage*.

**Posts**

The first discovered theme, named Posts, refers to the consumers' publication of pictures, status updates, comments and likes, hence all the publications of posts on Facebook. When analyzing the transcriptions from the focus groups, it is evident that female Facebook consumers have different attitudes towards Facebook and thereby differ in what they publish. It was further evident that the published posts of the Facebook consumers were not only published by themselves but also by their Facebook friends.

Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty spontaneously publish posts, such as pictures, status updates, comments and likes on their Facebook profile with no further reflection and do not put so much

thought behind the publication of posts. A consumer categorized as Beloved Betty expresses the easy-going and simple relation to the publication of posts on Facebook accordingly;

*"But it feels like some people think a lot before they like things on Facebook, but I usually don't give a damn about it and of course I don't like Sverige Demokraterna because I don't support them. If I want to like ICA's profile it is not such a big deal. Things I want to like are not a problem that I like."* (Consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, 25 years old)

Furthermore, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty publish both negative posts, such as diseases and feelings of depression, and positive posts, such as relationship updates and accomplishments. Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty describe that the publication of posts enable them to get support from their Facebook friends in both positive and negative situations. Even though consumers categorized as Beloved

Facebook Usage				
	Post	Activity	Friends	Visibility
<b>Beloved Betty</b>	Publish positive and negative posts. Like to be tagged by friends.	Frequent publishing of posts.	Reference group consist of a wide range of social groups due to the usage of the add function. Do not use the delete function.	Use settings to control the visibility. Do not use the block function.
<b>Anxious Ann</b>	Restrictively publish only positive posts. Neutral approach towards being tagged by a friend.	Infrequent publishing of posts.	Reference group consist of a selection of social groups due to the selective usage of the add function and the sometimes used delete function.	Use settings and the block function to control the visibility.
<b>Critical Catharina</b>	Very restrictively publish solely positive posts. Negative approach towards being tagged by a friend.	Very infrequent publishing of posts.	Reference group consist of few social groups due to the very restrictive usage of the add function and the usage of the delete function.	Widely use settings and the block function to control the visibility.

*Figure 2. Facebook Usage.*

Betty publish posts freely, they prefer to be tagged in pictures or status updates or be checked in at different locations by their friends over publish posts of themselves. A consumer categorized as Beloved Betty describes:

*"It becomes an ego-thing if I post a picture of myself and especially if I look good in that picture. If I post a selfie I just want to show that I look good on that picture. But if a Friend accidentally takes a picture of me and posts it, I am portrayed as a more cool person..."*

*(Consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, 25 years old)*

Consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, solely publish positive posts, such as relationship updates and accomplishments. The consumers categorized as Anxious Ann publish as little information as possible on Facebook, since they are well aware of the fact that their Facebook friends see and judge them from their profile. Two consumers categorized as Anxious Ann tell:

*"About, profile pictures... you don't post a picture of yourself where you are ugly, you would never do that, and perhaps you are a bit careful with posting too many status updates or expressing too radical opinions..." (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 26 years old)*

*"- It is obvious that if you have a profile, you have pictures there so in that way it is obvious that you have an identity on Facebook and that people judge you from what they see...therefore I publish as little information as possible..." (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 27 years old)*

Furthermore, consumers categorized as Anxious Ann have both a positive and a negative attitude towards being tagged in friends' pictures, status updates and check-ins. They find it positive to be tagged in pictures or check-ins as long as they can control the tags so that they do not end up in, what they judge as, a wrong context.

Consumers categorized as Critical Catharina extremely rarely publish posts on Facebook and when it happens, the posts always have a positive message. A consumer categorized as Critical Catharina expresses:

*"I never post anything, the only time it could possibly happen is when something*

*really really fun happens... but it is very rarely that I think that "Oh, this I want everyone to know..." so therefore I'm very private. Nowadays, I only use Facebook to be able to have a social life... Therefore I sometimes use the event and group function." (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 28 years old)*

Furthermore, when it comes to being tagged in friends' pictures or check-ins, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina are also very critical and negative since they are afraid of the misinterpretations that can occur of a still photo or the written language that is taken out of its context. Two consumers categorized as Critical Catharina tell:

*"But the worst thing is that I don't have control of where my face is shown. I know that I don't publish any posts. But I cannot control what my friends and acquaintances do." (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 29 years old)*

*"But you can end up in completely different photo albums, for instance in my album I have pictures of a girl that look down in her cleavage and it looks completely weird... and I can be this girl in someone else's photo album." (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 27 years)*

When female consumers create their identities through the publication of posts, it is evident that McCracken's (1986) theory of cultural meaning transfer can be used to analyze the empirical data. However, only two out of the four instruments of the meaning transfer rituals outlined by McCracken (1986) are found to be used; the possession rituals and the exchange rituals.

In this study, McCracken's (1986) possession ritual is adjusted to the Facebook context and seen as the consumer's publication of posts containing symbols, signs and cultural meaning, hence the Facebook user's usage of published pictures, status updates and comments to show bought goods. Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty spontaneously publish a wide range of positive and negative posts with no further reflection, and thereby use the possession rituals, referred to McCracken (1986), in a quite uncomplicated way. Consumers categorized as Anxious

Ann, on the other hand, use the possession rituals, referred to McCracken (1986), by solely publish selective positive posts due to an expressed anxiousness of being seen in the wrong context or in the wrong way. They put more thought behind what they do or do not publish and in that way consumers categorized as Anxious Ann are very conscious when creating a Facebook identity. Consumers categorized as Critical Catharina, on the other hand, use the possession rituals, referred to McCracken (1986), in their identity creation process on Facebook even more restrictively compared to consumers categorized as Anxious Ann and in opposition to consumers categorized as Beloved Betty. The consumers categorized as Critical Catharina are afraid of losing control over their created identity and the solution to this fear is that consumers categorized as Critical Catharina very rarely publish posts with the intention to give away as little information as possible.

The second instrument of the meaning transfer rituals found to be used by consumers when creating a Facebook identity is McCracken's (1986) exchange rituals. Adjusted to the Facebook context, this ritual of gift-giving is translated into the possibility of being tagged by friends in pictures, status updates and check-ins. Consumers' categorized as Beloved Betty positive approach towards exchange rituals, referred to McCracken (1986), symbolizes that they somewhat want to create socially desirable Facebook identities. This characteristic of creating a socially desirable identity can be found in the consumers' categorized as Anxious Ann identity creation too. However, once again this comes with the anxiousness of being seen in the wrong context or in the wrong way. Consumers categorized as Critical Catharina, on the other hand, almost always refuse to be tagged in friends' pictures and check-ins, referred to McCracken's (1986) exchange rituals. Consequently, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty find it positive to not be in total control of the writing of their own Facebook identities whereas consumers categorized as Anxious Ann and

Critical Catharina find the lack of control of the writing of their own Facebook identities as a threat. It is clear that consumers categorized as Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina feel the need to control the possibility of being tagged in pictures and check-ins.

To sum up, the outlined differences in the usage of the possession rituals and the exchange rituals among the consumers categorized into the three ideal types, create differences in the creation of the Facebook identities. The consumers' publication of a variety of symbols and content in their published posts create a Facebook identity that is more multifaceted than a consumer that solely publish a selection of positive posts or a consumer that barely publish anything at all.

### **Activity**

The second discovered theme was the Activity theme, referring to the Facebook consumers' frequency of publishing posts. When analyzing the transcriptions from the focus groups, it is evident that the publication of posts differs among the three ideal types from very frequent to very infrequent.

Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty publish posts frequently and describe that they are often the first one to like and comment their friends' posts. A consumer categorized as Beloved Betty tells:

*"I'm on Facebook very often. I'm always the first one to like and comment things. (Laughter)." (Consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, 25 years old)*

Consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, are more restrictive in their activity compared to consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, hence they publish posts more infrequently. They describe a perceived decrease in the publication of posts by their Facebook friends and thereby conclude that each published post, by themselves or by their friends, is more visible and gets more attention than before the decrease of activity. One of the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann problematizes as follows;



*"Since most users are very passive, not so much posts are published anymore and therefore I consider... 'Should I post this now?', because if I post a status update now it will be on top of my profile for perhaps three months." (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 27 years old)*

Consumers categorized as Critical Catharina are even more restrictive in their activity compared to consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, and extremely rarely publish any photos, status updates, comments or likes. The consumers categorized as Critical Catharina want to interact with Facebook as little as possible and only sign in when achieving notifications from selected friends. A consumer categorized as Critical Catharina strongly expresses:

*"For me Facebook is a necessary evil." (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 27 years)*

The frequency of the published posts can be referred to the rework and the rewriting of a consumer's ongoing narrative, hence referring to the theory of Giddens (1991). The consumer has to be active and constantly update her profile by publishing posts or alternatively her Facebook friends have to publish posts of her in order to write her narrative (Giddens 1991).

Due to their frequent publication of posts, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty are seen to use Facebook to constantly update their ongoing narrative, referred to the theory of Giddens (1991), and thereby frequently rework their identity through photos, status updates, comments and likes. Consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, infrequently rework their narrative, referred to Giddens' (1991) theory, due to their anxiousness of how their Facebook friends might see and judge them in combination with a perceived decrease of activity among their Facebook friends. The publication process for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann becomes even more anxious due to the fact that previous status updates, photos and likes will make a greater part of their profile and will be in focus on their profile for a much longer time, a consequence of the

posts not being reworked in the same speed as for the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty. Consequently every published post weighs heavier and makes a greater part of the consumers' categorized as Anxious Ann Facebook identities. The fact that the consumers' categorized as Anxious Ann old and historical published posts will make a greater part of their Facebook profile, results in the fact that their history becomes more present compared to the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, thus letting the history take a greater part of their creation of a Facebook identity, referred to the theory of Giddens (1991).

In line with consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina hold their Facebook friends' opinions in mind when publishing posts. Moreover, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina also have a negative attitude towards the Facebook platform in itself, which also results in a very infrequent publication of posts. Due to the fact that consumers categorized as Critical Catharina very rarely publish any posts on Facebook, they rewrite their ongoing narrative very restrictively, referred to Giddens' theory (1991), and thereby create an uninformative Facebook identity. Just as in the case for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, the old and historical published posts will take a great part in their creation of a Facebook identity, however for consumer categorized as Critical Catharina this is taken to a higher level than in the case of Anxious Ann.

To sum up, the differences in activity, hence the publication of posts among the three ideal types, affect the consumers' creation of a Facebook identity. A frequent publication on Facebook implies an up-to-date Facebook identity. Whereas, a very infrequent publication implies a Facebook identity that is hard to define where each post weighs heavier and in addition the past becomes more present in the creation of a Facebook identity.



### **Friends**

The third discovered theme was the Friends theme, which refers to the activities that change a consumer's amount of Facebook friends, in other words the add function and the delete function on Facebook. When analyzing the transcriptions of the three focus groups, it is evident that the amount of Facebook friends is important for the consumers' usage and the creation of a Facebook identity and that female Facebook consumers use the add function and the delete function to adjust the amount of friends, but do that in somewhat different ways.

Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty adjust their amount of friends solely with the add friends function. In the beginning of their usage of Facebook, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty were not concerned about whom they added. However over time they have become more selective when adding friends. Consumers' categorized as Beloved Betty Facebook friends consist of a wide range of people such as close friends, superficial friends, colleagues, classmates and random people they have just met once. A consumer categorized as Beloved Betty tells:

*"There was a time when you wanted as many friends on Facebook as possible, I think it was in the beginning of my Facebook-time, and then it could be a completely random person who added me and I was like 'Okay, why not?!' and now afterwards I think 'But why?' "* (Consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, 25 years old)

Consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, control the amount of friends by restrictively adding and sometimes deleting friends. However, for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, it is hard to ignore friend requests and to delete people. The actions come with a lot of anxiousness and therefore the actions vary with occurrence within the group of consumers. Some of the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann are brave enough to delete friends, while others solve the situation by using the block function to hide their profiles for certain friends, which is further discussed under the theme

*Visibility.* The anxiousness is derived from an expressed feeling of the fear of creating enemies. A consumer categorized as Anxious Ann tells:

*"I have actually deleted some of my friends, it sounds horrible but I feel, with some of my old classmates from high school, that I don't have any contact with them anymore and I don't want to meet them at a reunion either. I don't understand why I should have them as friends on Facebook and I could not say no when they added me after high school... but that was then... today it feels like... 'Delete!'... and if I get friend requests from people that I don't know I just do not answer and ignore the request... it might sound horrible but I don't understand why they should be able to see my profile if I won't meet them again."* (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 26 years)

Even consumers categorized as Anxious Ann describe a decrease in adding and increase in deleting people, in line with consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, and nowadays consumers categorized as Anxious Ann prefer their Facebook friends to solely constitute of their closest friends. Therefore, friend requests from superficial friends, old classmates and colleagues are more commonly being ignored or being deleted. However, due to the anxiousness that comes with the deleting, the consumers' categorized as Anxious Ann Facebook friends still consist of superficial friends, old classmates and colleagues, but it is changing. In line with consumer categorized as Anxious Ann and Beloved Betty, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina use the add function and the delete function to adjust their amount of Facebook friends. The difference, however, lies in the fact that consumers categorized as Critical Catharina do not hesitate to refuse to add friends, such as colleagues and superficial friends, at the same time as they more freely delete friends that have become obsolete. The Facebook friends of consumers categorized as Critical Catharina solely consist of their closest friends. Two consumers categorized as Critical Catharina tell:

*"I have LinkedIn for my professional network and therefore I have no colleagues on Facebook... if I work with them I do not add them as friends on Facebook."* (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 26 years old)

*“Recently I made a cleanup of my Facebook friends and I deleted a lot of people that I felt were just acquaintances nowadays.” (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 27 years old)*

The constant change of the amount of Facebook friends through the delete function and the add function are analyzed with the help of the theories of Berger (1963) and Shibutani (1955). A consumer's Facebook friends is defined as the reference group, which consist of different social groups such as colleagues, old classmates and superficial acquaintances, referred to the theories of Shibutani (1955). The perspectives of the different social groups are what to come to label the consumer (Berger 1963). When analyzing the transcriptions of the focus groups it is evident that the consumers use the delete and the add functions differently. The difference between the consumers belonging to the three ideal types lies in the view of the reference group's interaction. Consumers that are characterized as Beloved Betty view the reference group's interactions as support while consumers classified as Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina express a feeling of being judged and labeled when discussing the reference group.

The fact that consumers' categorized as Beloved Betty reference group consist of a wide range of people results in the fact that consumers categorized as Beloved Betty are being labeled by consumers from a wide range of social groups with different perspectives, referred to the theory of Shibutani (1955) and Berger (1963). Due to the uncomplicated relationship to possession rituals, discussed under the theme *Post*, being labeled by consumers from a wide range of social groups is not a problematic issue for consumers categorized as Beloved Betty. However, when analyzing the transcriptions of the focus groups, it is evident that for consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, the reference group has quite recently gone from being not so important to becoming more and more important. Thus, it has become more important for them to decide

who is included in their reference group and thereby participating in the identity creation process by labeling them. This can be referred to the theory of Berger (1963) that argues; how the reference group labels an individual, is how the individual comes to label herself. For consumers categorized as Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina, on the other hand, the reference group has been of great importance for quite a long time. By restrictively adding and deleting friends, consumers categorized as Anxious Ann control their reference groups, referred to the theory of Shibutani (1955). Consumers categorized as Anxious Ann do not want the perspective of the social groups superficial friends, old classmates and colleagues to label them, and thereby be included in their creation of a Facebook identity. This is a very important issue for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann. However, common among the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann is that adding and deleting friends comes with a lot of thought and anxiousness since they do not want to make enemies that create troublesome consequences. Herein lies the difference between the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina, since consumers categorized as Critical Catharina without any further angst both delete and refuse to add certain friends into their reference group, whose perspectives they do not want to be judged by, which is referred to the theories of Shibutani (1955) and Berger (1963). By deleting and refusing people that they are not comfortable with having in their reference group, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina clearly take control over who is being able to judge and label them. The fact that consumers' categorized as Critical Catharina solely have their closest friends in their reference groups show that they solely want the perspective of their closest friends when creating a Facebook identity, referred to the theory of Shibutani (1955) and Berger (1963).

To sum up, it is evident that the difference in usage of the add function and the delete function on Facebook among the consumers of the three ideal types affect the creation of

a Facebook identity. A greater and more complex structure of the reference group implies that the consumer becomes labeled by several social groups' perspectives, however, the reference group's relevance for the consumers' usage differs among the consumer groups.

### **Visibility**

The fourth theme that was discovered was the Visibility theme. When analyzing the transcriptions of the focus groups, it was evident that regardless of the ideal type, the consumers' visibility for their Facebook friends is of great importance for their creation of a Facebook identity. The settings and the block function become tools used in order to choose what to post, what others post of you as well as for whom the posts are visible. In this way, the settings and the block functions become tools used to control the consumers' visibility. However, in what ways the visibility is controlled through the settings and the block varies between the three ideal types.

Consumers categorized as Beloved Betty solely use the settings, and use them restrictively to control their visibility. Since consumers categorized as Beloved Betty were early Facebook users they have always felt that they are in control of the published posts of and by them. Moreover, they do not feel the need of blocking friends. A consumer categorized as Beloved Betty explains:

*"I have never felt that type of... stress is not the right word... but you see that type of anxiety... but perhaps it is because I signed up on Facebook before all my friends did so I have always had the control..." (Consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, 25 years old)*

The consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, use the settings and the block function frequently and for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, the functions are of great importance. Two consumers categorized as Anxious Ann explain:

*"I have deleted all of my colleagues, or I have not deleted them, I have blocked them so they cannot see me. They don't even know that I exist on Facebook. Cause I feel like there is a violation in your private sphere... I*

*cannot be myself when they are watching." (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 26 years old)*

*"But that is why I have added the setting that requires me to control everything that my friends post of me... perhaps I don't want everyone to know what I do." (Consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, 26 years old)*

The consumers categorized as Critical Catharina, just as the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, solely use settings to control their visibility. The block function is not used by consumers categorized as Critical Catharina due to the fact that they prefer to delete obsolete people than first adding them and then blocking them, however they divide their Facebook friends into friends and acquaintances through settings, which enables the publication of posts to different group of friends. A consumer categorized as Critical Catharina explains:

*"I almost never publish any posts and if I publish anything I choose to publish it to my closest friends... I have divided all of my Facebook friends into friends and acquaintances." (Consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, 26 years old)*

The Visibility theme is analyzed with the help of Goffman's (1959) theory, which argues that an individual creates a performance of the self and control this performance with methods of impression management. In this study the performer is seen as the consumer on Facebook, whereas the audience is defined as the consumer's reference group. The arena for the performance is obviously Facebook and the methods used to control the consumers' performances and to correct and affect the audience's picture of the actor are the settings and the block function, which are seen as impression management referring to the theory of Goffman (1959).

In contrast to the overall easy-going relationship to Facebook, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty use the settings to control their performances and their audiences' impression of their identities, referred to Goffman's (1959) theory. In this way, it becomes clear that consumers categorized as Beloved Betty

also show a consideration of the audiences' impression of them, just as the consumers categorized as the other two ideal types. However, it seems like the settings is enough to satisfy the control of the creation of a Facebook identity. Therefore, the settings are important tools for consumers categorized as Beloved Betty in their identity creation process but not as important as they are for the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann. For consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, the settings are mainly used to control the posts published of them by their friends. The posts the consumers' categorized as Anxious Ann friends publish of them on Facebook can be seen as disruptions of the consumers' performances, referred to the theory of Goffman (1959), where the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann use the settings to control and manage their performance on Facebook. Furthermore, the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann also use the block function to control their performance and their reference group's impression, a control that can be made in an unnoticed way. By using the block function, the anxious consumers categorized as Anxious Ann can keep their Facebook friends and protect their content without letting their friends notice that, thus escaping the troublesome consequences of creating enemies, arising from the deletion of friends and the ignorance of friend requests. The consumers' categorized as Critical Catharina usage of settings is in line with the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty and Anxious Ann but is more important and therefore used to a much greater extent. The settings enable consumers categorized as Critical Catharina to divide people into friends and acquaintances and thereby allowing a selection of their friends in their audiences to see their performances, thus controlling their audiences' impression of them, referred to the theory of Goffman (1959). It is evident that with the help of strict settings, consumers categorized as Critical Catharina want to nearly demolish the presentation of themselves and also the disruptive posts that friends may publish of them, which can be referred to Goffman's theory (1959). In this way, it is evident that

consumers categorized as Critical Catharina use Facebook in order to create an identity that does not give any impressions away. The fact that consumers categorized as Critical Catharina frequently use the delete function, outlined in the *Reference Group* theme, makes the block function irrelevant for them since they rather delete obsolete friends than first adding them and then blocking them, as seen in the usage of consumers categorized as Anxious Ann.

The fact that everything that is published on Facebook stays on Facebook extends Goffman's (1959) theory of performance and impression management. Since the posts that the consumers categorized into any of the three ideal types publish will stay on Facebook permanently, the published posts will not only work as material for the consumers' performance the time they are published but will also work as material for their performance as long as they are visible there. In this way, when performing and controlling their performances and their audience's impression of them, the consumers categorized into any of the three ideal types can not only focus on the present audience and its impression of them but must also focus on the future audience and its impression of them. Put in other words the consumers categorized into any of the three ideal types are not only controlling the impression of today's friends but also the impression of tomorrow's friends. This problem affects all the three ideal types but is most relevant for consumers categorized as Anxious Ann since they are very anxious of the audience's impression of them.

To sum up, the differences in the usage of settings and block function, defined in this theme as visibility, affect the consumers' creation of a Facebook identity. The more the settings and the block function are used, the more control the consumer gain over the creation of the Facebook identity.

## DISCUSSION

The second aim of this study is to present implications of the results concerning social media marketing. Through the analysis of the empirical data in *Results*, insights into



the consumers' creation of a Facebook identity were gained. In this chapter, however, these results are discussed from a managerial perspective and the discussion outlines both the possibilities and the challenges that can arise for a company when engaging in social media marketing. *Figure 3. Analysis Model including findings* summates the findings of this study, hence the results and implications.

Given the findings in the *Results*, it was evident that consumers create a Facebook identity through their usage of the social media platform. Furthermore, the findings showed that the consumers in this study could be categorized into three ideal types depending on their different approaches in usage of Facebook, which was reflected in the creation of a Facebook identity. With the help of the found differences in usage among the three ideal types, visible in the four outlined themes, social media marketing possibilities and challenges can be discussed and presented. As the intention with this study is to not draw general conclusion, the three ideal types can simply be viewed as an indicator to the fact that consumers in a segment, which in this study is female consumers in the age 25-30 years, might have several approaches towards Facebook usage, which may affect the success of a company's social media marketing strategy. By mapping a company's target consumers, a manager can adjust the company's social media marketing strategy towards each consumer group, in this study seen as ideal types, draw benefits from their different usage as

well as understand which consumer group to put effort in approaching on social media.

**Post**

The findings in the *Results* showed that consumers approached the publication of posts differently. To what extent the consumers published posts depended on the consumer's consideration of which symbols the posts contained and in what context the posts were published. As this study's three outlined consumer groups were approaching the publication of posts in three ways, managers can favorably adapt and direct their communication on Facebook to each consumer group in order to achieve a more efficient social media marketing strategy and a greater spread. Implications for managers are that the consumers' different approaches of the publication of posts effect the word-of-mouth of a company.

Considering the *Results* of this study, a consumer categorized as Beloved Betty published posts freely without giving so much thought behind and may therefore possibly publish posts related to a company if the consumer feels like the information or the communication contain symbols and signs that are in line with her values and beliefs. However, since consumers categorized as Anxious Ann were very selective in their publication of posts and solely published positive posts, information about a company and its communication, on the other hand, need to support the consumers' created selective positive identity. Put in other words, in order to get

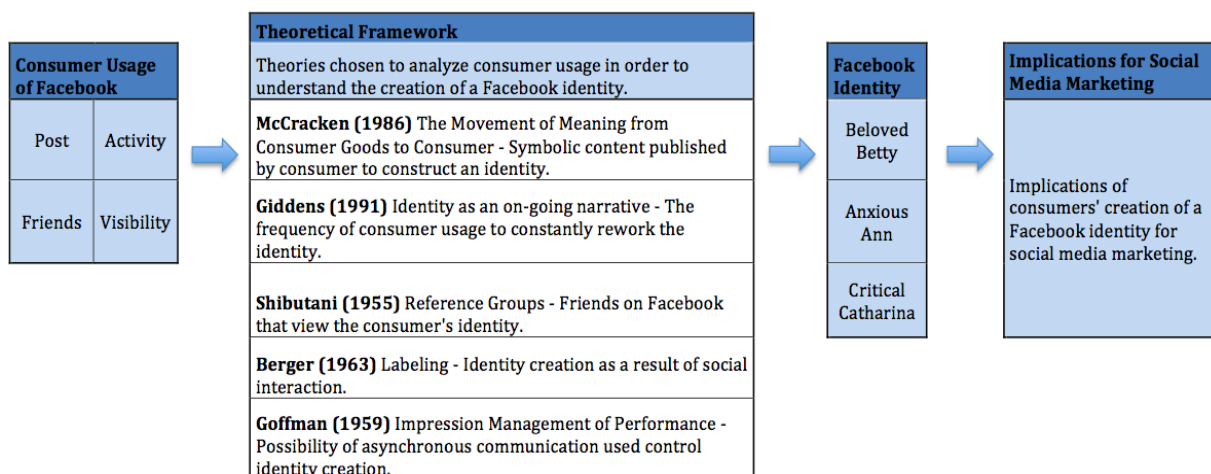


Figure 3. Analysis Model including findings.



information about a company or its communication to be published by a consumer categorized as Anxious Ann, the content and symbols of the posts need to support the consumer's created selective positive identity. However, for a company, it is nearly impossible to get its information and communication published by a consumer categorized as Critical Catharina since the findings showed that they were very restrictive in what they published.

It is evident that through the consumers' publication of posts, positive word-of-mouth can be spread, which is outlined in previous research by Mangold & Faulds (2009). However, the possibility of achieving word-of-mouth depends on whether or not the consumers want the content of the published posts to define who they are. In this way, the companies' information and communication may gain a greater possibility to be published and spread if the content of a post includes symbols that contribute to a consumer's Facebook identity in a positive way. For instance, if a company creates an event where the sales help people in poverty, this post would probably be published since it symbolizes that the consumer is engaged in defending poverty. Referring to the findings in the *Results*, both consumers categorized as Beloved Betty and Anxious Ann would possibly publish such a post.

Furthermore, Facebook does not only create an opportunity for positive word-of-mouth but also opens up for the risk of spreading negative word-of-mouth of a company. As the findings in the *Results* showed, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty published both positive and negative posts, which creates a great risk for spreading negative word-of-mouth of a company. In addition to this, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty were seen having large reference groups, thus had many Facebook friends who could receive the negative word-of-mouth. The problematic situation gets even more problematic when considering Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who states that a company is unable to control the published content of them on

this platform. Consequently, it is evident that companies have to be aware of this challenge and problematic situation in order to try to prevent negative word-of-mouth. Since the findings in the *Results* showed that there was only one consumer group that possibly would publish a negative post, the companies must build a social media marketing strategy that takes the consumers' categorized as Beloved Betty Facebook usage into consideration.

### **Activity**

As the *Results* showed that the frequency of publishing posts differed between the consumers categorized into any of the three ideal types, the possibility for a company to spread information of the company and its communication with the help of a consumer differs. Considering the differences in the frequency of the publication of posts, the companies are challenged to produce different types of posts that suit the publication frequency of different types of consumers. The frequency of publishing posts is further connected to the visit on the platform. This finding illuminates that a company is not able to interact with all consumers through Facebook, even though the consumers are having an account, while other consumers are more easily reached through this channel. This implies that a company has to consider which channels to use in their marketing communication.

The findings in the *Results* showed that the frequency of activity affected the visibility of the published posts. As previously outlined in the discussion, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty are more likely to publish a post related to a company. Furthermore, as the findings in the *Results* showed that the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty frequently published posts, the published post will be quickly replaced by another post. In this way, the frequency of publishing may not only be seen as a possibility for a company but also as a challenge since the published posts will quickly be replaced and not in focus for such a long time. If consumers categorized as Anxious Ann, on the other hand, publish a post related to a company, there would be a

greater chance that the post would be in focus for a longer time since the findings showed that the consumer group published posts infrequently. Hence, a company needs to consider the different consumer groups and their usage frequency when deciding which marketing and communication actions to take. Meaning, when a company is approaching a consumer categorized as Anxious Ann sustainable posts or likes where the content is valid for a longer time is advantageous since they will be in focus for a longer time, whereas consumers categorized as Beloved Betty are beneficially approached with short-term campaign offers and temporary discounts since the posts were seen being replaced more quickly. This can be related to the potential buzz of a social media marketing strategy outlined by Mangold and Faulds (2009). However, according to this study, the possibility of creating a buzz is dependent on the frequent publication of posts among consumers of the three ideal types. Hence, consumers categorized as Beloved Betty are more likely to create a temporary buzz whereas the consumers categorized as Anxious Ann are more likely to create a sustainable positive word-of-mouth.

Since consumers categorized as Critical Catharina saw Facebook as a necessary evil and only visited the platform when they were receiving notifications from their friends, the frequency of visits on the platform were restrictive and thereby the possibility for a company to interact with the consumers is limited. However, the possibility of interaction with consumers categorized as Beloved Betty is high due to their frequent activity on the platform. With this in mind, the companies must consider which channels to use in their marketing communication since the possibility for interaction differs. The company must complement its social media marketing strategy with other platforms or other marketing channels if the targeted consumers belong to the ideal type Critical Catharina. For the consumers categorized as Beloved Betty, on the other hand, Facebook may still be a wise marketing channel to use.

In this way, the risk of forgetting and overlooking some consumers are minimized by the company and the lesson for managers to learn is that Facebook is simply not the right forum for targeting consumers categorized as Critical Catharina. This questions the recommendations and general advices, outlined by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) and Kietzmann et al. (2011), with the intention to influence the ongoing social media dialogue for marketing purposes. The success of social media marketing is not solely depending on how to approach the consumers, it is also about the company's target consumers' activity of visiting Facebook. In other words, this implies that the success of social media marketing is not only about the company's performance on Facebook, it is also about the consumers' usage of the platform and their accessibility on it.

### **Friends**

Considering the findings in the *Results*, it was evident that consumers had different strategies towards adding and deleting friends. Consumers had Facebook friends, or as named in this study, a reference group consisting of different types of social groups. This implies that depending on whom is publishing a post related to your company, you will reach different types of reference groups in sizes and structures. Implications of these findings for managers are related to the possibility of affecting a consumer's information-gathering process in the buying decision process.

Considering the findings in the *Results*, the company will get publicity and be seen by a large group of people, consisting of a wide range of social groups when information of a company or its communication are published by a consumer categorized as Beloved Betty. In contrast, when information of a company or its communication are being published by a consumer categorized as Anxious Ann or Critical Catharina, the company will, on the other hand, be seen by a smaller group of people consisting of solely a few social groups. Though, to get the information of a company and its communication published

in front of a large reference group might be seen as both a possibility and a challenge by managers and their companies.

When getting the information of a company and its communication published by a consumer with a large reference group, as in the case of a consumer categorized as Beloved Betty, the message will naturally reach out to many consumers. However, due to the potential superficial connection the Facebook friends might have to the publisher, the message may have less impact compared to a message published by a consumer categorized as Critical Catharina, who was shown to only include her closest friends in her reference group. This can be referred to the positive word-of-mouth, which Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue is a possible successful outcome of social media marketing. According to this study, the positive word-of-mouth may have a greater spread if the information of a company and its communication are published by a consumer categorized as Beloved Betty due to her frequent presence as well as her great historical adding of friends. However, the word-of-mouth may have a greater impact on the reference group if the information of a company and its communication are published by a consumer categorized as Anxious Ann or Critical Catharina since those consumers were seen having closer relationships to their Facebook friends in their smaller reference groups. According to this, the different conditions for spreading published content, seen as word-of-mouth, differs due to the consumers' size and structure of reference group. Hence this can be seen as an extension of the discussion of Mangold and Faulds (2009).

Word-of-mouth might affect a consumer in its information gathering process preceding a buying-decision. Depending on the company's business, the company may consider which type of consumer group they are trying to approach and affect in the consumers' information gathering process. Meaning, if a company produces capital-intensive goods that rarely is bought, for instance a car, the consumers are assumed

to more likely trust the recommendations of a close friend that selectively publish posts of a certain company than a superficial friend that constantly publish posts of any company. However, if a company is selling fast moving consumer goods, for instance products produced by a fashion store, the message is rather exposed to as many consumers as possible whereas the relevance of who is publishing the content is of less importance in the information gathering process. In this way, the relevance of getting information about a company published in front of a large group with potentially superficial connections or getting the information published in front of a small reference group with closer connections depends on the company's business.

### **Visibility**

In order to control the published post's visibility, consumers were seen using settings and the block function. The findings in the *Results* showed that these functions worked as a way to manage a performance, or as defined in this study the Facebook identity. However, the perceived need for controlling the performance differed among the consumers. This may give implications for managers since they may not be able to find information about consumers if they do not get access to the consumers' Facebook profiles.

The intention with this study is to gain knowledge of the consumers' usage of Facebook that create a Facebook identity, and the study is therefore not investigating the consumers' approach towards companies on Facebook. However, when it comes to the settings, the formation of the function is in a way that can affect companies too. Since the user is enabled to choose for whom her profile is visible, the companies may not be able to see the consumer's profile. As all consumers regardless ideal type use the settings, the marketing research that companies advantageously can use Facebook for, previously outlined by Kozinet (2002), is limited. This, on the other hand prevent companies to step over a fine line between

marketing research and privacy violence of consumers, previously outlined by Sarabdeen (2014). The challenge for a company that wants to conduct marketing research on Facebook, is to build the kind of relationships with the consumers that attract the consumers to freely interact with the company and discuss its products and brand with other consumers. Such a relationship could enable the companies to participate in the consumers' dialogue and thereby achieve customer preferences and user feedback. The construction of a network platform, previously outlined by Mangold and Faulds (2009), may be a way to bypass the limitations of marketing research that settings create. However, the negative attitude towards Facebook, as seen among consumers categorized as Critical Catharina in this study, challenge the companies in such a work and may force them to complement this marketing research with additional tools.

### ***Summary of the Discussion***

To sum up the discussion, it is necessary for the companies to find out if their consumers or potential consumers are on Facebook and how they, through their usage, create a Facebook identity. When parts of a consumer segment are seen, as in this study defined as the found ideal types Beloved Betty, Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina, different strategies must be worked out in order to suit all consumers' usage in the segment and in extension create an efficient social media marketing strategy to reach the company's overall goal.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study had two related aims, where the first aim was to understand and analyze patterns in the consumers' creation of a Facebook identity and the second aim was to present the implications of these results concerning social media marketing. The guiding research question throughout this study was the following: *How do female consumers create a Facebook identity through the usage of the platform?* In this study, it is evident that consumers in the segment female 25-30 years old may use

Facebook in three different ways to create a Facebook identity, represented by the three ideal types Beloved Betty, Anxious Ann and Critical Catharina. The differences in usage between the ideal types and the common patterns of usage within each ideal type are shown in the publication of *posts*, the frequency of *activity*, the amount of *friends* and the *visibility* for their friends, hence the four outlined themes. These results were used in order to present implications, where this study emphasized both the possibilities and the challenges companies and managers can encounter when creating an efficient social media marketing strategy.

### ***Future research***

Future researchers may be interested in conducting the same study for male Facebook users instead in order to investigate whether or not there is a gender issue involved in the usage of Facebook and the creation of a Facebook identity. It may furthermore be interesting to apply the same study in a different age group, hence a different consumer segment, in order to understand if age is a parameter that affects the usage of Facebook and the creation of a Facebook identity. By conducting the two suggested studies, additional relevant implications will be found, which will enhance the creation of an efficient social media marketing strategy. Since this study solely investigated patterns of usage on Facebook and the creation of a Facebook identity, suggested is that other social media platforms, such as Instagram and LinkedIn, may lie as a foundation for future research and thereby contribute with insights into whether or not consumers adapt the same behavior on all platforms. Relevant for companies and managers will be to achieve an understanding of how they should act in order to categorize their consumers into one of the three ideal types, which open up for another interesting topic for future research.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to acknowledge our participants in the focus groups for their sharing of personal thoughts, which have

been essential thoughts on which this study relies on. We would like to thank our supervisor Peter Zackariasson for his engagement and support throughout this process. A great thank is also given to our opponents; Cecilia Solér, Catharina Arnbart and Karolina Nilsson Bird, whose discussion and constructive feedback were an invaluable contribution to the writing process. Last but not least, we would like to thank our families and friends for their never-ending support.

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