Authors
Erik Alenvret
Poyan Khoshnevis

Supervisor
Benjamin Julien Hartmann

What is Private and what is Public?

- A Qualitative Study of Social media and Individuals' Privacy

Abstract

Digitalization, namely social media, has become a big part of many individuals' everyday life worldwide. Further, with the possibility to always stay connected to the Internet through digitised devices, is it still possible for individuals to preserve parts of their lives privately? In this thesis, we use a qualitative focus group method to analyse the individual's identity in a public, private and work life based perspective. We investigate how public and private is defined by using traditional sociological theories combined with Consumer Culture Theory. By linking these theories with the modern phenomenon of digitalization and social media, we explore and illustrate the boundaries between work, private and public life.

Our empirical results show that the powerful tools of digitalization have made it difficult to distinguish the boundary between private and public. Moreover, we conclude that everything that has been uploaded on the Internet, instantly becomes public content. These findings highlight the importance of knowing your audience in the contemporary digitised society, in order to minimize the risk of presenting inappropriate content. In addition, this outcome and analysis can be used by marketers to create value for businesses due to a better understanding of individuals' lives and reflections.

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1.0 Introduction

In mid-October 2017, the #metoo hashtag suddenly began to appear on social media. The message began in the United States when the actress Alyssa Milano called on women who had been sexually violated to spread the message, simply via the hashtag on social media (Sayej, 2017). This message took the world by storm, something that was discussed at workplaces, at the dinner table and among friends. Suddenly, private events that nobody knew had taken place were suddenly made public. In the light of this, successful celebrities in Sweden and abroad got fired from their jobs, got family problems and private lives had consequences (Nöjesguiden, 2017). One of the powerful products of digitalization, namely social media, was the key to this occurrence.

The phenomenon of social media could be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In addition to this, the social media tools have changed and revolutionized the life of individuals, but also corporations, in a significant manner (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). However, it is not surprising that social media has become an essential part of our lives, even if it is impressive. The social media revolution that we are experiencing now in the 21st century goes back to the roots of Internet. Internet began as a collection of newsgroups where people could read and post messages in various categories, which later also was developed into real discussion tools. The main purpose of these platforms was to allow individuals to share content with each other, similar as the different social media platforms in today's modern society (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, social media as a tool has become a very important source of consumer information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001). At the same time, Internet access has increased significantly across the world.

The marketing trend of digitalization can be defined in the way that integration of digital technologies is implied into every day's life (Businessdictionary, 2017). According to Porter and Heppelman (2014), digitalization offers opportunities for new functionality, higher reliability, greater efficiency, and optimization possibilities that exponentially increases the value that companies deliver to customers. We consider marketers' need to understand the social dimensions of digitalization, hence, this research will provide an understanding of customers and individuals, which can be used by marketers to create value for people and

businesses. Additionally, there are lack of studies linking sociological theories to the increasing phenomenon of digitalization.

In recent years, the internet has become available to people all over the world. In Sweden, 80% of the population have a smart phone today, which makes internet access more flexible, even when on the move. In the light of this, the usage of social media has increased as well and it has become more frequent in everyday life (Soi, 2017). In addition to this, the Internet has created a lot of opportunities seen from a marketing perspective with its possibility to communicate directly to a broad network. However, with great power comes great responsibility and challenges arises considering how fast a private person can reach out on a public scale through the Internet. With this in mind, it becomes important to be aware of to *whom* you share *what* on public platforms.

We use traditional sociological theories and link them to the modern phenomenon of digitalization and consumer behaviour. Goffman's (1959) theories of social interaction highlights how individuals interact with each other and how individuals in these situations act on certain roles and situations. Although Goffman (1959) explains that this social interaction requires an interaction face-to-face we consider, along with several researchers (Bateman et al., 2011; Youngs, 2009) that his concepts and theories can contribute to a greater understanding even for the virtual communication. In the light of this, we imagine Goffman's (1959) theories of self-presentation also can give us a better understanding of consumers' behaviour and attitudes on digital platforms.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

In this thesis, we explore the perception of the boundaries between public, private and work life of students in Sweden. Furthermore, we investigate if digitalization, more specifically the usage of social media, affect these boundaries and make them stronger or blurrier. By conducting a qualitative focus group study, we observe how individuals in an identity shifting stage of life act in different environments such as in their private life and work life but also on public social media platforms. In addition to this, the purpose of the interview with the focus group is also to illustrate the participants' thoughts about the subject and let them discuss the private life versus the public life and how these two are related to their work life. We consider an increased understanding of this subject necessary since it touches areas which can affect life and career opportunities. A lack of knowledge in what is private versus what is

public can cause a great risk of misbehaviours on public platforms. Considering this, the main purpose of this thesis is to illustrate how individuals in an identity shifting stage in life reflect about the boundaries between public, private and working life. To get an insight in this issue, the population in this study will consist of tertiary students in Sweden. Concentrating our empirical analysis to the behaviour restricted to students in Sweden, we assume that our findings probably will not reflect on how it looks on a global scale, but give us an insight in how individuals who are in a life stage of shifting identities reflect in this issue. Moreover, since we both are students who are active on social media platforms, and who are close to getting into our professional work life, this is a scope of interest of our study.

Furthermore, we compare our empirical data to previous studies within the area and analyse if social media has changed the issue over the years. In the light of this, this thesis will provide answer to mainly three research questions:

- *How are the concepts public and private defined?*
- *How is the identity of work life associated to public and private?*
- *How has the impact of social media affected the boundaries between work, private and public life?*

The empirical data we collect from the focus group is analysed and compared to Goffman's (1959) theories regarding how individuals interact with others. However, since his theories are based on face-to-face interaction, we consider it interesting to compare these in a contemporary perspective with social media as an intermediary. In a research conducted by Valkenburg et al. (2005) they conclude that people in different ages tend to care more about how popular they look like on social media. For instance, youths at younger ages was more interested in experimenting with their identities online. By contributing to this study, our thesis explores tertiary students who also are shifting identities from a more undisturbed private identity to a more professional one. Furthermore, Meyrowitz (1985) explains in his study that the distinction between what is private and public do not need to be face-to-face. In addition to this, in a research conducted by Zheleva and Getoor (2009), their work shows that private information easily can be leaked on the Internet. We wanted to contribute to these studies and investigate how our focus group reflect on the issue of having private conversations on social media or in public.

We find that digitalization has made it difficult to distinguish the boundary between private and public. Thus, our findings highlight the importance of understanding the power of digitalization and how being aware of the potential spread on social media is extremely important to minimize the risk of publishing inappropriate content on the Internet. Moreover, our empirical analysis concludes that everything uploaded on the Internet, instantly becomes public content, no matter how private the forum tends to be. We explain the fact how social media can be a powerful tool in identity projects, to change an individual's personal image. We find out how important it is to have knowledge in this subject to being able to manage the expressions given on the Internet. Also, to control how these expressions reflects the wanted outcome of self-presentation.

Firstly, this thesis provides a brief literature review including previous studies that are related to our study. Secondly, a theoretical framework is presented with Goffman's sociological theories behind the presentation of self and different identities, and its relationship to consumer behaviour, as the main framework in use. Thirdly, a presentation of the methodology and the strategies used to gather the empirical data for this study is provided. Moreover, the findings and analysis for this study is provided and lastly, a discussion followed by a brief conclusion, emphasizing our outcome and how this can be used for further studies.

2.0 Literature Review

There are many studies that touch upon the area of how our identities differ in different environments. For instance, previous studies have shown that individuals can act in a specific manner to get confirmation from the surroundings and to fit into the community. In the light of this, consumers are considered as identity seekers which reflect how they act in different situations trying to fit into their desired community, this also applies to an individual's behaviour on the Internet. In Sihvonen's (2015) study she examined how younger individuals use media and the online world as a tool in an identity project and how identities are constructed multi-dimensional. In her study, she uses several theories within consumer behaviour explaining how identity formation is a process of being and becoming. In our study, we contribute to Sihvonen's (2015) research in connection to Consumer Culture Theory to deepen our understanding in the subject and investigate how this transition between identities is based on consumer identity projects.

Moreover, Schlenker et al. (1990) conducted a research about the subject of self-presentation and the "real me". Their study investigated if people with high self-confidence were more likely to use a greedy behaviour in public, to seek approval from the community, while the opposite instead tend to act more passive, to avoid dissatisfaction. They found out that people with high self-confidence were more satisfied as the social winnings increased. On the other hand, individuals with low confidence were more fearful. This result might be true; however, we suppose these results may vary when people are socializing online and offline.

Another study conducted by Valkenburg et al. (2005) emphasizes that people in different ages, because of identity shifts, tend to care more about how popular they look on social media platforms. On an online based survey research with 900 participants between the age 9-18, the conclusion was that the participants at the younger age was more dependent of experimenting with their identities online. A few aspects including was the attempt to explore themselves, to see people's reactions and to overcome shyness. Further, they explain this as younger college students are shifting identity, they might also deal with social issues more than older people. This would clarify why these users may be more concerned with Facebook popularity. We wanted to contribute to this study, analysing tertiary students who also are in an era where they are shifting identities from a more relaxed private identity to a more professional one, entering professional employments.

Furthermore, Meyrowitz (1985) presented a study where he took the idea about interaction between individuals from Goffman's (1959) theories, that will be described in detail in the upcoming section, into a mediated perspective. In this study, Meyrowitz (1985) meant that the distinction between what is private and what is public is not necessary physical. Further, the face-to-face interaction that was presented by Goffman are becoming outdated thanks to digitized products that blurs the boundaries between these two regions. Moreover, this study is from the mid-eighties and considering the constant increased pace of the technological evolution since then, our study will get into a deeper analysis of this subject in today's society, from a social media perspective. Nevertheless, the outcome and analysis of Meyrowitz's (1985) study will support us to understand and clarify the explanations for our outcome. In addition to Meyrowitz's (1985) mediated perspective of Goffman's (1959) theories, Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) state how a social media public is similar to an actual crowd. However, the authors highlight how the classic distinction between the crowd and the public is blurred on social media. In other words, Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016)

mean that because of the possibility to spread published content on social media, it is hard to keep track on who will see and take part of it. We decided to contribute to the literature regarding social media and connect it to the theory of personal interaction by Goffman (1959). We believe this will give us a better understanding of how individuals make choices on social media.

In a research conducted by Zheleva and Getoor (2009), their work shows that private information easily and significantly can be leaked to publicity. In addition, they underline that individuals in a friendship network who are concerned about their privacy, should consider about the groups they join. Furthermore, this could be related to having private conversations on for example, *Facebook Messenger*, and how digital messages easily can be spread through a print screen, which can affect one's brand whether negatively or positively. To contribute with the study made by Zheleva and Getoor (2009) we want to investigate how the focus group see on the issue of having private conversations on social media, whether if it is with friends, colleagues, family or familiars.

Lastly, we did not find many studies that highlight the area of student's in the workforce, and how they act and identify themselves in different environments. We suppose this is an interesting research to conduct among tertiary students in Sweden to get a contemporary perspective, where social media platforms are dominating as a big part of people's lives. We decided to contribute to the literature regarding how people tend to change identities in real life and put it into a digitalization perspective, more specifically how people tend to act on social media. Additionally, we believe an increased understanding of this subject is important since it let us observe areas which can affect both private life and work life.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Sociological Theory of Goffman

The main conceptual framework, which our study is based on, is presented by Erving Goffman (1922-1982) and involves how individuals interact with each other. The dramaturgical perspective that Goffman presented is restricted to face-to-face interaction where, at least, two individuals physically meet in front of each other. In addition, when two or more individuals are in the presence of each other, they are starting to express themselves in one way or another.

3.1.1 Expressions Given and Expressions Given Off

This type of mutual expressiveness is divided by Goffman into *expressions given* and *expressions given off*. Firstly, expressions given are mostly intended expressions, that involves verbal communication or in the author's words "verbal symbols or their substitutes" (Goffman, 1959). Furthermore, expressions given off includes the actions that each individual does which allows others to distinguish an acknowledgment factor and create their own opinion about the individual. The later type of expressiveness is, according to Goffman (1959), less controllable. Thus, it embraces non-verbal communication and is more of a theatrical kind of expression based on gestures and facial expressions such as physical appearance and movement. Nevertheless, even if expressions given off might be less controllable than expressions given, they can still be both intended and unintended.

Regardless if an individual's expression is given or given off, they frequently present their own self. While presenting their own self, the strive for everyone is to be accepted by their surroundings. In the light of this, when two individuals are in each other's presence, they simultaneously start to analyse the situation and the individual in front, and at the same time interpret how the observant analyse their own self (Goffman, 1959). Individuals make these types of analyses of interactions since they want their social life to flow smoothly and avoid interferences. Hence, they tend to adapt to their surroundings and prepare the social roles that are required for different situations. In the light of this, Goffman mean that these types of simultaneous analyses are a way to reproduce and maintain social order through social interaction.

3.1.2 Front Stage and Backstage

Goffman's dramaturgical perspective and the presentation of self continues with a distinction between, what he calls, *front stage* and *backstage*, also mentioned as front region and back region. Goffman means that there is a difference in how individuals present their self in the front region versus the back region. Similarly, to a theatre experience, "*Performers appear in the front and back regions; the audience appears only in the front region; and the outsiders are excluded from both regions*" (Goffman 1959, p 90). Individuals who act on the front stage and takes on either an established social role or a new one, should be aware of their present audience to avoid giving the wrong impressions. Goffman refer the ones who observe and co-participate the one at the front stage as *the audience*, who only appear in the front region. If an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience more than

once, it is likely that a social relationship arises (Goffman, 1959). In the light of this, an individual can, according to Goffman, play a part adapted to a specific audience to create social relationships. The third part, the outsiders, is mentioned as not welcomed in the front and backstage interaction. However, the outsiders can be welcomed during different situations in other circumstances. Goffman explain the outsider like an unknown individual who still is present and observant without interacting with the other. Hence, it becomes important for the individuals at the front stage to act professional in front of the outsiders as well. Goffman explains this with a business-related scenario where colleagues call each other by nicknames in a more relaxed office environment. However, when an outsider come to visit their office, they must act professional and call each other by their full names or work titles to give the third part a valuable impression, even if they do not interact to the outsider directly (Goffman, 1959).

This distinction that Goffman present between front stage and backstage can be compared to everyday life and what is considered as public or private. The front stage is the public region where individuals socialize and interact to others. This is where individuals can perform by playing a role to express their own self in the way that they want to be perceived. Furthermore, the backstage arena is where individuals can relax and step out of their roleplay and just be themselves, in a private environment without audience. While being in the back region, individuals can rehearse and practice different performances to be prepared for the next time they interact with an audience. In addition, being backstage in everyday life is everyone's private stage, for instance family time or being home alone.

3.1.3 Impression Management

The main issue in Goffman's theory is for the individuals to keep their front stage performance solid. In the light of this, he means that the performer need to keep the audience separated to avoid showing the wrong crowd, or even an outsider, a performance that is not adapted to the specific situation. While describing this, Goffman talks in terms of front region control and the importance of awareness of the regulation between the different regions (Goffman, 1959). The solution to this issue, and the key in Goffman's theory, is described as impression management. Goffman describes impression management as attributes and techniques required for an individual to successfully stage a character (Goffman, 1959). As mentioned earlier, individuals put on an act at the front stage where they try to control the impressions the audience have for them. Further, it is not always possible for the performers

to control how they are expressed since incidents can always occur, for instance perform the wrong role for an unmatched audience can be perceived as inappropriate. Hence, to prevent the occurrence of incidents and the embarrassment consequent upon them, it is important for the participants in the interaction to possess the attributes of impressions management and express these attributes to control the performance (Goffman, 1959). There are several types of techniques regarding impressions management. Goffman present defensive attributes and practices necessary to possess to prevent incidents to occur and minimize the risk of exposing the back region for an unwelcome audience or outsider. The defensive attributes are presented under three headings: *dramaturgical loyalty, dramaturgical discipline* and *dramaturgical circumspection*.

Firstly, dramaturgical loyalty is about, as a team, maintain a strong solidarity and perform each show as a unit. Further, when teammates stay loyal and act in the same way, in accordance to certain moral obligations, they can keep distance to the audience and prevent to imperil the performance. In addition to this, during a performance, the team-members must be united in their action to prevent exploitation of their presence in the front region (Goffman, 1959).

Furthermore, to succeed with a performance, both on an individual level and as a team, discipline is required. Goffman mentioned that "*it is crucial for the maintenance of a team's performance that each member of a team possesses dramaturgical discipline, and exercise it in presenting his or her own part*" (Goffman, 1959, p 137). It is important that each performer have a presence of mind and self-control so they remember his or her part to avoid unintended gestures that might jeopardize the performance.

Lastly, both loyalty and discipline are necessary attributes that are required for each team-mate to possess for each performance to be sustained. For that reason, dramaturgical circumspection emphasizes the importance of choosing the right team-members. In addition to this, Goffman highlights the importance of choosing the right audience as well, to prefer an open-minded audience that will minimize the risk for unforeseen troubles to arise during the performance (Goffman, 1959).

3.2 Consumer Culture Theory

The idea of self-presentation touch upon how individuals behave in certain ways to present different performances for various audiences. Hence, there are similarities between the theories of self-presentation and consumer behaviour. In an article written by Arnould and Thompson (2005) the authors provide a research of what they call consumer culture theory, further referred to as CCT. However, the theory presented is not a grand theory with nomothetic claims. Rather, it refers to a family of theoretical perspectives within the relation between the marketplace, consumer actions and cultural aspects. More specifically, this theory explains how consumers make choices and behave from social and cultural perspectives. In wide-ranging terms, CCT provides with great consumer behaviour knowledge by illuminating sociocultural processes and structures related to four different areas, *consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the socio-historic patterning of consumption* and *mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies.*

The first of the four domains touch the area of consumer identity projects. Arnould and Thompson (2005) uses the theory to explore how individuals are identity seekers and act in a planned way to be appreciated in a preferred community. Consumer culture theorists have turned attention to the relationship between consumers' identity projects and the structuring influence of the marketplace. Moreover, since the marketplace has become a supreme source of symbolic resources, individuals are able to, through their consumption, construct narratives of their identities to present themselves in different ways. Schau and Gilly (2003) also state how individuals easily can use strategies to create fake identities on the Internet.

Further, the study of marketplace cultures addresses that, in contrast of traditional views of individuals as culture bearers, consumers are culture producers. The authors highlight studies that touch upon the importance of localized culture within the market and how social status is gained through displays of localized cultural capital, in contrast to classic sociological consumption norms (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This type of CCT research also addresses how consumers can create cultural marketplaces by forging feelings of social solidarity, in the pursuit of common consumption interests.

In the third domain, the socio-historic patterning of consumption, the authors address how consumption is influenced by institutional and social structures, more specifically how consumers are conceived as enactors of social roles, such as class, ethnicity and gender. Furthermore, this domain touch upon what a consumer society is and how it is sustained. Lastly, the fourth domain touch upon how consumers, as interpretive agents, seek to form a lifestyle that defy dominant norms (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In addition, as CCT is divided into four different domains, the common denominator, that also is connected to the idea of self-presentation, is how individuals connect their identities to their consumption.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

To conduct this study, a qualitative methodology has been used. There are several reasons why a qualitative method was preferred and used in this research. Firstly, the necessary data was unavailable and not sufficient to implement and use for this study (Holme & Solvang, 1997). A qualitative method was also appropriate, as the purpose and research questions in this thesis did not aim to explain any predictive and general answers (Patel and Davidson, 2011). Moreover, according to Patel and Davidson (2011), the aim of a qualitative research is to find a deeper understanding of a subject, in which one intends to investigate. In contrast to quantitative methods, which uses statistical and quantifiable results collected from for example surveys, a qualitative method uses case studies and deep interviews. Furthermore, qualitative strategies are often criticized for having lower replicability and reliability than quantitative research. In the light of this, qualitative methodologies are efficient to get an insight of a subject, which, however, does not necessarily need to reflect reality (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Focus Group

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), focus group is a group interview which means that several people are interviewed at the same time about the same issue and topic. This strategy is a combination of focused interviews and group interviews. Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956) describe focused interviews as an interview focusing on open questions to touch a specific subject to let the respondents describe their opinions without being ruled. Moreover, the demarcated area is the subject that the researchers are interested in getting a deeper view of. This technique is used effectively to deepen within a subject area, where interest is in how

individuals handle issues like group members. In a traditional group interview, several different issues are discussed, and therefore we consider the focus group interview to be the most effective strategy for obtaining respondents' views on the subject. The focus is therefore on how individuals respond to each other's opinions, and by analysing the group's views we get an insight of how reality looks in the population of interest (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Furthermore, even if open questions were essential in the focus group interview, a structure was necessary to make it as efficient as possible. Due to a limited time horizon of one hour, it was important for us to get as much information as possible, thus, we designed possible questions in detail to prevent silence. One example of an initial open question designed and asked was: *How do you think the difference between what is considered as private and public is affected by digitalization?* Additionally, this was followed with a prepared follow up question due to silence: *How you think this has changed in recent years due to increased use of social media?* Yet, focus was still on the responders' opinions, and we did not want to control them and affect their answers.

There is a great potential in this strategy that provides many benefits, as participants' perspectives and approaches arise in a manner that otherwise does not occur when they are interviewed individually. This is the result of the discussion created in the group, which allows the participants to broaden their views and put them in a critical perspective (Patel and Davidson, 2011). Finally, we decided to have this focus group interview anonymous to not limit ourselves to the answers. Some questions might be sensitive such as work-situations and thus, we saw it as important to make the individuals feel self-confident and willing to respond the questions with no inducement to lie (Kanso, 2000). In addition to the fact that we have conducted a qualitative study, the result is subjective and cannot therefore generalize, but give an insight of how it looks in this specific area.

4.2.2 Selection of the Population

A few questions were also taken into consideration prior to picking the individuals. By taking these questions into consideration, we wanted to reflect and think in a critical manner to get as good result as possible. We sent out four questions to individuals, making sure that their background and profile was interesting and matched for our study. To be a potential candidate in the focus group study, following four questions below required the answer *yes*.

- *Are you a student on tertiary level?*
- *Do you have a part time job besides your studies?*
- *Do you see yourself as an active social media user?*
- *Do you have Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat?*

The first question touches the main area of our population of interest, *students.* Moreover, the second question regarding part time job, was important since we want to investigate the students' different identities when it comes to different situations, where the work environment differs from private environment. The last two questions touch the area of digitalization and social media. If not being an active social media user, we do not see the candidates as optimal for our study. The combination of these two questions emphasizes if the individual actively has a new identity on social media platforms. Furthermore, the choice of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat was because these are the large, growing platforms in Sweden. For instance, Twitter is larger in the US, and not as large in the Nordic countries (Statista, 2016). Hence, we decided to limit our selection to this manner.

4.2.3 Description of Population

The focus target group of this research is tertiary students who currently studies and who has a part-time job besides. By examining the students' thoughts within the area of private and public, it helped us understand how the theories of self-presentation is applied in the contemporary society. In addition, this study only intended to investigate the thoughts of the individuals in the focus group and connect them to our theoretical framework, in order to draw a conclusion that generates an insight how different situations might be handled in private and public.

Our focus group consisted of six tertiary students from University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology between the ages of 22 and 27 years old. This population of interest is a group in terms of different identities. Thus, we saw this as an opportunity to interview individuals who must switch identities in their private life, student life but also in their professional career life. It was essential to be a university student, but also to have a *professional* part-time job besides of the studies. We defined *professional* part-time job as being employed in a large firm with at least 1000 employees, and all the firms were listed on the Swedish Stock Exchange. We saw this as important since it would let us analyse the student's different identities and attitudes as firm representatives in a more efficient manner. Furthermore, we suppose this could be a good proxy of target groups who are in a life stage

of changing identities. Finally, all our individuals answered that they were active on social media. Nevertheless, to confirm this statement, we asked them initially and individually, but also analysed their Instagram and Facebook profiles. For instance, we analysed the amount of posts on Instagram, where 150 posts published was a minimum requirement. In addition to this, we analysed their Facebook profiles by counting public profile pictures where an amount of *three* was minimum. Moreover, we required the individual to have their job title published in their profile, but also name of university and at least *four* public posts published in 2017. As mentioned in a study conducted by Zywica and Danowski (2008) they found out that popular users assumed they would most often change their profile picture, new jobs and new interests to look popular and active on Facebook. Schlenker (1980) use the attractive self-presentation style and touches the area of impressions management. This netnographic strategy supported us to choose relevant individuals for our focus group.

Nevertheless, during the interview session, we decided to not define what social media is. After discussing the advantages and disadvantages, we decided not to do this in the end, to not affect the opinions and reasoning of the interviewees. If, on the other hand, we had defined social media and limited the definition to only some platforms, we saw this as a strategy to delimitate the individual's' answers. In the light of this strategy, this would probably give us as open and honest answers as possible in our data material.

4.3 Limitations

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), as in all strategies, there are limitations in this choice of strategy as well. For example, in a focus group method you can get huge amounts of data that can be difficult to analyse. The recordings from the focus group interview can also be difficult to interpret, making it difficult to transcribe. Another limitation is that it can be difficult to get individuals to attend, as time can be seen as money. Therefore, we choose to offer compensation to everyone for their effort, to motivate people to participate, as it is the focus group that made our study possible.

Further, some individuals may think it is hard to talk in groups and can be silent because of shyness. Krueger (1998) explains that it is the group leader's task to emphasize that all opinions are important by being active listeners and give encouraging comments during the session in order to motivate the participants in the group and increase the confidence. Madriz (2000) also describes that focus groups may sometimes be inappropriate as there may be

concerns among participants to tell about sensitive subjects, such as privacy and work life. In such situations, qualitative individual interviews can be rewarding. Thus, the question below was discussed to make sure we would retrieve all the data needed for our analysis.

- *What is the limitation of the focus group study? Do we have to complement this with another method strategy?*

Azzara (2010) explains that focus groups have benefits when trying to engage individuals in the decision process. In addition to this, individual interviews take longer time to accomplish than focus groups and are harder and more time-consuming to analyse. Furthermore, the author emphasizes that small groups with maximum 8 people were suggested as alternative for generating ideas and allowing deep answers. Also, sensitive issues may be explored better than in individual interviews, because respondents engage when discussing their issue with others in the same situation. Nonetheless, this could vary and be the opposite, depending on the personalities in the focus group.

We were satisfied with the data retrieved from the focus group interview and hence, we found it enough with this method strategy, without complementing with qualitative individual interviews. However, as also described by various authors, such as Bryman and Bell (2011) and Patel and Davidson (2011), we noticed that some people's voice dominated in the discussion. This could be an issue and a limitation in the data gathering process, since all individuals' opinions were useful and necessary for the analysis. By having this knowledge prior to the interview session, we were prepared to use different strategies to let everyone speak, such as asking targeted questions to more silent individuals. Finally, considering the fact that this is a qualitative and subjective study, this research only give us an insight of how it looks in this specific area.

5.0 Findings and Analysis

In the following section, our interviewees will be referred to with alias names to preserve their involvement anonymously; *Adam, Julia, Paul, Jim, Anna* and *Daniel*.

5.1 Private and Public

In this part, we wanted to explore what the individuals in the focus group considered to be *public* and *private* in their life. We wanted to hear specific examples from the individuals to get more understanding and a better opinion. For instance, we asked questions about what they considered to describe the concepts private and public, but attempted by specific cases to make them think deeper. One concrete example of a follow-up question was "If you are with your friends in town, do you consider it as private?". We noticed directly that they got a thinker and that the answer suddenly did not get as obvious as before.

Jim began with a brief explanation of his thoughts regarding this issue:

> "What happens behind closed doors I think is private, kind of what I do at home. When I hang out with my family in my apartment, that's private. If I step outside my door I consider it publicly. However, when I am with my friends in town; both yes and no. It's private because I'm with people who are close to me. At the same time, you are in a public place where others see one, thus, it becomes public as well."

At first, *Jim* explained the different situations, whether it is private or public, very concrete and it sounded very simple. But as he continued, the simplicity about the subject started to vanish and became more and more complex. The private definition that *Jim* described goes hand in hand with the back region in Goffman's theory about self-presentation as well as the public definition that *Jim* highlighted, described a clear connection to the front region in Goffman's theory. However, *Jim* mentioned how a private conversation or meeting in a public place suddenly becomes difficult to demarcate into one of the two categories. According to this, it seems hard for an individual to divide, in a controlled manner, what situation that is considered as private or public. Hence, the impression management and how forming adapted performances that Goffman (1959) mention is necessary for different types of audiences, tend to be difficult to practice in every situation considering how hard it can be to understand when a social establishment is private or public.

Furthermore, *Adam* continued explaining:

> "Should you go to maximum limits, private is yourself and public is everyone else, when you are not yourself. Being with family and friends is concerned as private but it also depends on how close friends you are. Therefore, I would also say that it is to some extent public when you are with friends. As Jim said, as soon as you go outside the apartment, it is public when others see one."

Once again, the focus group with the voice of *Adam* touch upon the area around the front and back region, where being with family and friends is the private part, explained as the back region in theory and as soon as an outsider part can see and hear one another, it is considered as public, the front region. Moreover, *Daniel* and *Anna* began a short discussion concluding and highlighting the issue like this:

> "I'm thinking of all environments where I can't control what others hear or see, as I'm in public. When I can control who takes part of what I do, it's private." (Daniel)

> "When you can be completely yourself without considering about what you say or do, it's my private life. In other words, what the public does not see or can judge me." (Anna)

Considering these opinions regarding public and private, we noticed that all respondents in the focus group specifically had one opinion in common, they all defined private as situations where they can control who is watching or listening and where they are able to just be themselves. Moreover, it seems like they need to have the power to control their surroundings to define a situation or conversation as private. In addition, their definition of what is considered as public is, when people outside of their private community see and hear them, totally independent whether they are with their family and friends or not. In addition, contrary to what was considered as private, when they no longer can control who takes part in a social establishment. Considering this, a social establishment is, explained by Goffman (1959), any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a kind of activity. Further, Goffman (1959) stresses the importance of understanding each social establishment to be able to manage impression management. However, even if the thoughts from the focus group about the subject of private and public seemed to be easy to define in theory, the problem that was discussed was about the difficulty of limiting the private part in practice. In the light of this, Goffman (1959) present the theory of self-presentation in front and back region in a theatrical perspective, where the observers are mentioned as an audience who watch a performance. In

theory, these types of performances are developed and prepared behind closed doors, in the back region, before appearing for an intended audience in the front region.

According to the focus group, the problem about the subject seemed to be to distinguish the two categories from one situation to another. Hence, the theory of Goffman (1959) seems to be hard to apply in practice in the contemporary society. However, the impression management and how individuals present themselves in different ways depending on the surroundings is still very much up to date and, based on the answers we received from the focus group, very accurate in the sociological behaviour of individuals.

As the discussion continued about the difficulty to distinguish the boundaries between what is private and public in certain situations, a common denominator was mentioned: namely social media. Further, this is explained by *Anna*:

> "The problem in the contemporary society is that we are always connected to the Internet and thus we will be seen and heard even if we do not think about it. For example, if I am strolling around town and talk on the phone with my mother. We are having a private conversation, but since I'm moving in a public area and people that walk by me might hear what I say, can I still consider that phone call as private? This also applies to what I do and post on social media, situations and actions that might have been private a few years ago are now becoming available for a public audience."

In the light of this, *Anna* mentioned an example of talking on the phone in a public place, thus she cannot control the situation of whom or who will hear what she is saying. The importance of what *Anna* mentioned is what the consumer society looks like today, and how that makes it even harder for individuals to manage their impression management. Hence, the self-presentation by Goffman is based on face-to-face interaction and derived from the late 1950's, the theory is not always easy to apply in a social establishment today. Further, the digitized society as today in 2017 is a much more complex social culture where social establishments may occur face-to-face, on the phone and viral through the Internet. The audience that is explained by Goffman (1959) tend to be in a much larger scale today and it can be harder to foreseen who is watching. Hence, it is important for everyone to have different performances prepared for sudden social establishments that might occur as soon as he or she moves in a public area, and while using public platforms online as well.

5.2 The Phenomenon of Digitalization

This category includes the interviewees answers and reasoning about various issues that deal with social media in relation to what is considered as private and public. We go deeper into their thoughts about what is public on social media and in that case, how the products of digitalization have simplified to publish material that previously tend to be more private. At first, their thoughts were similar where they pointed out that they could chose, even at social media platforms, for whom and who they published something. In the light of this, they mentioned that depending on which platform they posted something it would differ if the content became public or private. *Daniel* started out with this explanation:

> "Considering this issue, most of the social media platforms that we use today have the option to make your profile private and in that way, keep an eye on whoever sees your content. On Instagram for instance, some people have more than one account with the main idea of keeping their main account private to show their private content for family and closer friends, and the other ones' public with different content that is open to the entire community."

This explanation from *Daniel*, how some individuals tend to have more than one account on Instagram is a way to adapt the content depending on what community it is published for. In addition, as Goffman (1959) explained his theory of self-presentation he mentioned impression management as an important tool to being able to satisfy the audience. In the case above, the possibilities created by having several accounts are that the individual becomes able to manage their self-presentation in different ways, one self for the private community and a different, maybe less accurate, self-presentation for a public audience. The dramaturgical sociological theory of Goffman (1959) examines how individuals applies masks for their surroundings to show positive self-concept and desired impressions for an audience. At the beginning of the discussion, this seemed to be simple to practice, adapting different accounts for different communities, according to the focus group. Nevertheless, as the discussion went on, it becomes clear that the Internet does not protect private information and content, no matter how hard someone try to keep it in the back region.

Furthermore, *Jim* continued with an opinion that clearly state how hard it is to stay private on social media:

> "As soon as you post something on the internet, it becomes public in my opinion. Even if the motive itself is private and supposed to be published for a private community, it's still uploaded on the world-wide web and therefore available for more eyes than you first imagined. It is incredibly easy to share and spread something online and for instance, considering an Instagram post, it's just for one of my followers to take a print screen and just like that, they have the power to share my picture how they want to. With this said, I think that what we consider to be private still becomes public once it gets uploaded and with a lack of knowledge in this subject, we have some kind of false security with this issue."

This became a game changer in how the respondents looked at the subject and it was clear how everyone got a thinker about how private they can be on the Internet. In the case of having a private account, and thus have the belief that the uploaded content will remain private is easy to connect to the issue that Goffman (1959) explained about the importance of knowing who is watching in the back region. As mentioned earlier, Goffman (1959) advocates the importance of front region control and the importance of awareness of the regulation between front stage and backstage. Further, to have control and avoid showing the crowd not adapted and undesired content, it is important to keep the audience separated between what is private and public on social media. Moreover, a lack of knowledge in this subject tend to lead to false security within what content stay private on the Internet. The CCT about consumer behaviour also touch upon the subject. Arnould and Thompson (2005) highlight the importance of cultural and social message that consumption can emphasize. Considering the interviewees thoughts regarding the level of publicity on social media, it becomes important to understand how consumption on social media is received by the community. In addition to this, Zheleva and Getoor (2009) also explain in their article how important it is to be aware of the ways in which a third part can attack a social network to get a hand on the users' private attributes. The authors also highlight this false security with social establishments on the Internet. Further, Zheleva and Getoor (2009) examine how easy it is for a third part to join a friendship network, in line with the thoughts from the focus group how published content can be spread online without the publisher's knowledge.

Paul continued the discussion with his thoughts:

> "I consider it to be a tough limit between what is private and public, even if my account would be set to be private. For me, it's hard to keep track of all the individuals who follows me and thus see my content. At this moment, I do have my account open and therefore I tend to be careful and adapt my content when publishing something since I know about the risks and consequences that inappropriate content might bring out."

In this case, because of the difficulty to keep track on who or whom will see his content on social media, *Paul* has chosen to stay completely public on social media. The importance that he mentioned, is that he is aware of the risks and consequences that inappropriate content may occur. Hence, he considered himself to be very selective and adapt the published content which leads back to impression management and the theory by Goffman (1959). In the light of this, with the awareness of full insight on social media, *Paul* tends to place his virtual life in the front region and excludes his privacy altogether. Nevertheless, *Paul* mentioned the difficulty to distinguish the boundary between what is private and public, thus content from the back region can still be shown in the front region, but then it will be selective content that he considered to be ready to become published for the entire community. Once again, the focus group touches the area around how private content becomes public on social media, the underlined importance is to understand and accept that their community will have full insight once a post has been published. *Julia* joined the discussion and adds:

> "I agree with Paul and Jim, I think that everything that is posted on social media becomes public, no matter what content or how private your account is set to be. For me, what is defined as public is what is there for everyone to see and thus when publishing something on the internet it instantly becomes public in my opinion."

As the discussion went on about how social media transform all private content to something public, the focus group seems to understand the risks and consequences that might occur when sharing private content on the Internet. Considering impression management, *Paul* mentioned that the selection, when publishing on social media, is important but also to manage and adapt the content to the public audience. Hence, social media becomes a window where everything that is published or written, will reflect the publisher. Further, these thoughts were something that the whole focus group agreed on and they all considered themselves to be very careful and selective in their actions on social media.

Later, *Jim* finished the question about privacy and publicity in relation to social media:

> "Another thought that hit me is how everything that is uploaded on the Internet is there to stay, even if you erase a post later it's likely that it's still in cyberspace. Just a while ago, I read an article about this. It said that if you publish something on the Internet and it stays uploaded for at least two minutes, it is there to stay even if you erase it later. It will never disappear."

This quote from *Jim* is a clear statement that sums up the thoughts from the focus group, there is no such thing as private life on social media. They all agreed that published posts will become and stay public as soon as they have been uploaded. In addition to the questions about what is considered as private and public on social media, we asked the focus group what their thoughts were about specific actions on the Internet. Not only posting something on your own, but instead what and who they follow, what pictures they tend to like and so on. We wanted to hear their thoughts about if and how their behaviour on social media might differ since others have insight in what they do but also how an individual's personality can be reflected of their online behaviour. *Anna* started explaining with:

> "Personally, I definitely think that people notice what individuals in their community follows and likes. In the light of this, I believe it's important to have this in mind when you're exploring different social medias. For instance, if I see someone in my own community like pictures with inappropriate motives on a regular basis, then I judge the person immediately after his or her behaviour. Personally, I have begun to think about what I like and who I follow on Instagram and other social media platforms, just because of this judgemental feeling I get when I see others behave in a way that's not accustomed to the norms."

As *Anna* explained, it is not only the things that an individual post or publish on its own on social media that reflects his or her personality, but also each action made in the form of likes, who he or her follow and which communities the individual interact with that shape the opinion that other possess about the individual. Furthermore, if an individual has a lack of knowledge of whom or who inspect its action on social media, the risk of getting judged in an unwanted way may occur. This is connected to what Goffman (1959) explained as *expressions given* and *expressions given off*, for instance, how *Anna* consider herself to be aware of how her actions on social media leaves a track, she intends to be selective in her choices of what to like and who to follow on social media to express a reflection of herself based on conscious choices. Hence, this is an example of how the expressions given off can

be used in an intended way to minimize the risk of create a negative reflection, from a social community, of an individual's actions. Considering that our interviewees tend to be selective in their actions on social media, it seems that they are aware of how all consumption of social media generates a reflection of their identity. As Arnould and Thompson (2005) state, consumers are influenced by social structures on the way to create and sustain social establishments. Thus, our interviewees mean that being selective of all actions on social media is a way to control what is being shown for the publicity, but also to create social communities online. Further, by publishing selective posts and being restrictive with inappropriate actions on social media, individuals can satisfy their desired community and stronger the connection with the group.

In addition to this, when posting pictures on public social media platforms, for instance on Instagram, the individual can always choose what motive they want to post, but how it is expressed by others is something that cannot be controlled or foreseen. Further, regarding expressions given according to the social media platform Instagram, the caption of each post is the concrete communication and harder to express in different ways. Nevertheless, there is still a challenge regarding the caption because even in text, words can be perceived in the wrong way if the content is blurry.

Further on, *Paul* agreed with the thoughts from *Anna* and added his own thoughts with a different angle:

> "I agree in how your activity on social media reflect yourself, but I consider it to be a way to show your community a different version of yourself. Especially if you're not pleasant about your personal brand in general, social media can be a way to try to change the image others have of yourself. I also think this varies depending on which stage you are in your life, but also which age."

Paul underlines the power of social media and how it can be used as a tool to change the way people look at you. Further, he highlights the significance of which stage you are in life when it comes to social media behaviour. This can be linked to the study made by Valkenburg et al. (2005) which emphasizes that people in different ages, because of identity shifts, tend to care more about confirmation and how they look on social media platforms. The whole group now started to agree that one's behaviour on social media does influence how others saw the individual, and how social media can be used to change an already existing image of an

individual as well. In other words, what the individuals in the focus group explained is how social media is used to actively stage a successful character, instead of *successfully staging a character* as in Goffman's (1959) terminology about performing in the front region. Meaning, that Goffman's (1959) theory is applicable within the impression management and how individuals tend to present different selves, adapted to different audiences. Nevertheless, by staging a successful character, instead of staging an already existing character, an individual can select the most interesting parts to its presentation of self, to express a more positive image. This kind of self-presentation and how individuals can use the resources of social media to change their identity is related to CCT, as staging a successful character can be used as a parallel to understand how consumption in the marketplace can make individuals able to control their reflected self. This strategy is described in the study by Schau and Gilly (2003) where they present how consumers are able to create fake identities on social media. Furthermore, the authors show how consumers use digital social platforms to create multiple cyber self-presentations, without necessarily losing the idea of an integrated self. However, by creating different identities on the Internet it is most likely that the face-to-face presentation that the audience will meet might be affected as well.

The discussion continues with their thoughts about why they share content on social media platforms. *Adam* began by claiming that basically everything, regarding posting on social media, is about getting confirmation and positive response from their surroundings:

> "When publishing posts on social media, the main reason for me is to get confirmation from others in the form of likes and hopefully positive comments. However, I still represent myself and everything that I post is out there for my community to analyse and connect to my personal image. Further, this is connected to my actions on social media as well, if I only like pictures of half-naked girls on Instagram I'm sure that many will judge me in some way because of my behaviour."

It is clear, that the main goal with social media is to achieve feedback and confirmation, to please everyone's inner ego. However, as *Adam* mentioned, an underlying factor is still how an individual present oneself on a public platform, a presentation that is affected and reflected of all actions on social media. This strive for positive feedback and need of confirmation tend to be related to consumer behaviour, and the hope of fitting into an individual's desired consumer society.

As mentioned earlier, CCT (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) explores how individuals are identity seekers and behave in an intended way to be welcomed in a desired community. This phenomenon is accurate in the world of social media as well, thus sharing pleasant experiences and interesting content on social media will create value for the individual in the eyes of the person's community. In addition to this, individuals can control how they want to be perceived as well, by being selective and choosing adapted content to share in order to reach out to the specific consumer society they seek.

5.3 Work Life in Relation to Privacy and Publicity

In this section, the focus group were asked questions regarding an individual's work life and how it stands in relation to what has been defined as privacy and publicity. We considered it valuable for our research to get a deeper understanding how their work identity affects their everyday life. Furthermore, we wondered how each one of them, as representative for their employers, act in general and how they position their work identity in relation to their private life and public life. *Paul* began with an explanation about when the work life switches to private life, by laughing and saying that this is the case at 17:00, when you finish the job for the day:

> "(...)I am just kidding, of course this is not the case in reality. When you finish the job at 17.00 you do not go over to privacy automatically. For instance, you can still answer mail and calls outside office hours. You are still also a representative of your firm."

According to this, *Paul* does highlight the lack of simplicity that leaving work should mean the instant transition from work to privacy. However, the interesting part in *Pauls'* quotation is how he only mentioned the transition to privacy after work hours, something that can be interpreted as a lack of understanding of the responsibility as a representative of his employer, something that is still mentioned by *Paul* without discussing whether it should be taken into consideration into his private life or public life.

With this in mind, *Anna* joined the discussion with an interesting description of how abuse of responsibility can adversely affect an employer and the company brand:

> "In my old job, we were quite controlling as we had employees who gladly wrote their opinions on social media, especially in Facebook groups. Many commented the job and wrote negative opinions that destroyed the company's image. We were active and looked up people when I worked as team leader. We could not say that they were not allowed to do it since the work is work and private is private but we called them not to do it. We felt that you could first get to the management if you wanted to see a change. To conclude, I would definitely say that digitalization and social media have created new opportunities to spread messages and therefore it is more important today to be loyal not only face to face at the office, but also in your private, social media life"

With *Anna's* concrete example on how her former colleagues mistreated their responsibility against their employer, it seems like an individual's work identity should be considered as both private and public. Moreover, the importance of when or where it should be considered in each of the two categories, lies in the way an individual chooses to represent the company. A negative approach should be dealt with behind closed doors, in the back region, as long as the individual is still a part of the company and representative for the company brand. However, it may occur situations when a worker and an employer go separate ways when they do not agree with each other, hence the former employee no longer have the same responsibility to represent the company, the same goes with the former employer in its choices about referring to the former employee in the future. In the light of this, in cases like that, it is up to each of the two parts what perception they want to share from their previous working relationship. Furthermore, a positive approach is more than welcomed to be shown in the front region. For instance, talking positive about the leadership in a company in public areas or online forums tends to generate added value for the company, and strengthen the brand. Also, how a work title can be a social status in an individual's social community, it can become an important part of the self-presentation to mention the title itself when talking about work. In relation to CCT, how consumption can be led by class and other social status variables, talking about work can be a way to achieve approval from members of a consumption community with high social status (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Goffman (1959) mentioned dramaturgical loyalty and the importance of picking the right actors to form a team for each performance. Further, the author underline the importance that

each team-mate should rely on the good conduct and behaviour of his or her fellows. If not each one of the team members stick to the planned performance, the risk of showing the wrong content in the front stage may occur. In other words, this can explain the relationship in a company between the employer and its employees. If the company policy is to keep work related projects private, it is important that each one of the employees to relate to it and cooperate to maintain good team cohesion. In addition to this, the challenge for recruits is to be selective in their recruitment process to employ loyal prospects. With this in mind, the importance of being *loyal* to the company and show *discipline* when representing an employer goes hand in hand with the dramaturgical loyalty presented by Goffman (1959).

Furthermore, we thought it would be interesting to find out if the focus group saw this as a new phenomenon, hence, we opened a discussion and asked about their thoughts of this has been more common in lately. *Paul* continued and connected the thoughts to what *Anna* described earlier regarding talking about private life in public areas:

> "As Anna mentioned earlier about talking about private life on the phone in public, I think that also applies when talking about the job in public. It is important to think of what you say to your friends on the phone if you talk about the employer, both positive and negative things."

This quotation by *Paul* finished the subject within work life and the importance of knowing which stages everyone enters, as a representative for its employer. As mentioned earlier, thanks to the digitised society as today, it tends to be hard to maintain private content into the privacy category. Considering this, *Paul* highlighted the importance of being aware of who is listening when talking about work in public stages. Further, this applies to the online world as well, the importance of being very selective with the words while talking about a work-related subject on social forums and on public platforms. In addition to this, the reasoning about being careful while talking about work goes hand in hand with the selectiveness that was described earlier of the focus group, when they explained how every action made on the Internet is, or at least can become, published and spread for entire communities.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to investigate how social media has been a contributing factor to the fact that the boundaries between private and public have become difficult to distinguish. Furthermore, the purpose was achieved by answering our research questions: How are the concepts public and private defined? How is the identity of work life associated to public and private? How has the impact of social media affected the boundaries between work, private and public life? By answering these three questions, we explore and illustrate how individuals in an identity-shifting stage of life act in different environments. We use Goffman's (1959) established sociological theory and combine them with the phenomenon of digitalization, but also consumer culture theory, to understand digitalization and behaviour on social media better. Moreover, to gain a greater understanding of individuals' lives and reflections, this outcome and analysis can be used by marketers to create value for businesses. We have managed to give an insight in how problematic it can be for consumers to differentiate between what is considered as private and public.

As mentioned, it can be challenging for consumers to distinguish what is considered as private and public. However, the problem does not seem to be to define the two categories, but instead how difficult it is to control the observing surrounding in the society today. In addition to this, only the situations where an individual can have total control of who will observe what is expressed, is considered as private. Everything else, no matter the privacy level of the content, is considered as public. In addition, the same mind-set applies to an individual's work identity. With the following responsibility as a representative of a company, it becomes very important to have control over all situations you are facing before sharing work related information or expressing opinions about your employer. Taken together, also explained in *figure 1* below, our findings suggest that the new trend of digitalization that dominates society has made the distinction between private and public increasingly difficult and important. With this stated, we found out how hard it is to keep private content behind closed doors, since the Internet is a public forum. This can, in the light of digitalization and the dominance and growth of social media platforms, contribute to mandatory lectures in social media in the curriculum in the school system. In addition, we suppose our findings shows the importance of having knowledge of the power of social media. To conclude, an increased understanding of the powerful product of digitalization, social media, is essential to increase everyone's opportunities not only in private life, but also in work life and public life.
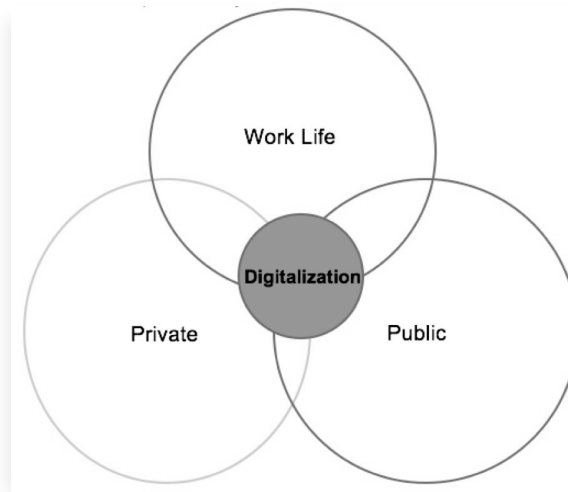
Figure 1: A brief conclusion of today's complex integration. The figure shows that the power of digitalization has blurred the boundaries between the categories. (Figure designed by the authors)

It would be interesting to carry out a similar study but at a broader scale with a larger empirical basis, more specifically with more interviews. As Bryman and Bell (2015) explains, all individuals are unique and different. By only using a focus group as strategy, all possible opinions probably are not shown, as some people might have difficulty in speaking in front of a group because of shyness. Nevertheless, we still agree that the size of the focus group, six individuals, still is optimal to get as qualitative answers and reflections as possible. In the light of not increasing the size of the focus group, we would instead suggest completing the study with qualitative, individual interviews. As mentioned before, it is worth to point out that the outcome of this study only gives an insight of how individuals in an identity shift era reflects about this issue. In addition, completing with a larger sample of interviews, the results of the focus group and the individual interviews still might not differ but would give a more general result. We also consider that it could be valuable to look at how employers, recruiters and managers are considering about social media in relation to public and working life. By comparing these results, we would be able to compare the outcomes and draw conclusions which could be meaningful to understand the population better.

Although this research will not directly lead to increased sales for any company, it will give an increased understanding in consumer behaviour, which we consider as the basis for marketing; to be able to understand marketing trends and the consumer behaviour that underpins the trends. Nevertheless, the idea about self-presentation is applicable from a

business perspective as well. Advertising campaigns and other marketing processes can be seen as a parallel to an individual's self-presentation since these processes will be a presentation of new products or services for a company, and thus an identity of the company itself. As the initial *#metoo* campaign showed the world, it is remarkably easy to spread messages and marketing campaigns through Internet and its tools. The opportunities to reach out to a global market is huge but this also poses risks, as even a slip tends to get a large and rapid spread and adversely affect a company. One company related example is what happened to H&M in the beginning of 2018, where they made a huge mistake during an advertising campaign for one of the company's new clothing collection. The advertising consisted of a shirt with the logo "Coolest Monkey in The Jungle" that probably did not seem to be that controversial at first. However, the mistake they made was that the model who wear the shirt has an Afro-American origin which led to that accusations of racist messages began to storm against the clothing retailer. In addition to this, several celebrities all over the world showed their dissatisfaction with the campaign and many strong statements about H&M as a company were spread on social media. For instance, the famous basketball player LeBron James, who has over 30 million followers on his Instagram account, published a post where he stated how wrong this was handled by H&M (CNBC, 2018). Considering this, the idea of self-presentation in an adapted way for an audience is important for company's marketing strategies as well. With this is mind, the result of this thesis can be used for further studies strictly from a business perspective with marketing strategy as the mayor subject.

Finally, we suggest that the same strategy as used in this thesis, could be used to analyse a firm's specific target group to get a deeper understanding of a specific segment. By using a focus group strategy, a firm will understand their ideal consumers in a more efficient manner. In the light of this, marketing directors can create promotions which attracts positive attention and hence, increase a firms' market share.

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