

STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

MASTER THESIS WITHIN MARKETING AND STRATEGY

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## MARKETING TO DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE?

- Why the new Digital Identity needs to be analyzed

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### Abstract:

*The development regarding social and digital media has enabled people to socialize and act with new prerequisites. This is an explorative study that focuses on examining what this development has implied for the development of the identity. The Internet implies a whole new set of communication challenges for companies. Without insight of the recipients of communication, it is hard to address these challenges effectively. This study focuses on Internet Dating. It is a qualitative study, with quantitative elements, using the concept of triangulation. The qualitative study is based partly on a focus group with people familiar with the activity of Internet Dating, and partly on depth interviews with experts within the field. The quantitative study consists of a questionnaire. The findings show a shift in the identity: Identity 2.0. The Identity 2.0 is defined by being extrovert, selective and slightly cynical, with a need to search for information and getting involved in the process of brand and product building. The findings also involve a list of present communication challenges, which can only be handled effectively by getting an understating of the Identity 2.0. These challenges are; (1)The conflict between push and pull, (2)The continuous communication and relationship with customers, (3)Maintaining consistency, (4)Consumer urge to become "prosumers", (5)The need for honesty, (6)Maintaining control and (7)Staying relevant and focusing on substance.*

**Keywords:** *Identity, Digital Identity, Identity 2.0, Internet Dating, Online Marketing & Communication, Communication Challenges*

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*“The more I help other to succeed, the more I succeed”*

- Ray Croc

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth”*

– Oscar Wilde

### 1.1 Background

Companies are facing one of the greatest communication challenges of our time. The development of the Internet has implied new conditions that companies must take into consideration. As a marketing channel Internet is the fastest growing medium today and many experts in the field argue that in a couple of years it will exceed TV's role as the largest medial marketing channel. Online word-of-mouth (eWOM), online communities and blogs constitutes the new media landscape. Facebook reports that they have more than 200 million active users and more than 20 million of those update their statuses at least once a day. Twitter, Google, and consumer generated advertising, are all examples of mediums that are getting both academic and medial attention today. At the same time the number of accounts and aliases per person used online is dramatically increasing (Scott, 2009). Given this development, it is rather surprising that little research has been made to explore the recipients of companies' messages. After all, all communication is - or at least should be - directed at someone. How can one craft powerful market communication if the receiver is blurry and undefined? In an article by Marek (1998) it is suggested that the Internet has the potential to revolutionize market research in order to better understand and meet consumers' demand. However, there is little evidence that researchers are taking advantage of this opportunity. Research is still focusing on segmentation based on the attitude towards the media (Barnes et al (2007), a difference between target groups that will be less and less significant. Instead, the emphasis seems to be on recreating old methods rather than thinking about how the Internet might lead to the creation of new methods (Shea and LeBourveau, 2000).

Since the physical world and the digital world differ in their characteristics, it is highly probable that the characteristics of people's identities in the two worlds also differ. In today's digital

society it is hard for the senders of communication to identify the receivers, since it is hard for the receivers to identify themselves. How come no one has attempted to identify the receivers?

Selling online is less about having the latest technology and more about having the best insight into customers. "It's back to tried-and-true principles of marketing," says Keith Tudor, professor of marketing at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, cited in Henricks in Entrepreneurial Magazine 2003. "Look at your customers' wants, needs and motivations." Fortunately for companies struggling with these communication challenges, the authors of this thesis will explore these new grounds. Being in the position of explorers, it might not be possible at this early stage to map this unexplored terrain, but hopefully the thesis will demonstrate the need for a map.

A survey conducted by Jeana Frost of Boston University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented by Epstein in Scientific American Magazine in 2007, suggests that about 20 percent of online daters admit to deception. When asked how many other people are lying, that number jumps to 90 percent. This implies that traditional segmentation on Internet would be based on false grounds. It also leads to the question whether there is something that can be called a digital identity. How is this identity constructed, and how do marketers approach them in the best way. And what is actually the "true" personal identity?

## **1.2 Problem Background**

The authors teamed up with the renowned advertising firm Lowe Brindfors. The CEO, Björn Larsson, suggested a subject that was relevant to Lowe Brindfors in order to better serve their clients. One of the greatest challenges a marketer active in today's dynamic environment faces is the lack of understanding how the Internet users can be defined, and if they must be addressed and handled differently than the consumers in the physical world. In a meeting with the planners Jonas Sjöström and Magnus Wretblad it was suggested that the change of society during the last decade, regarding the explosion of Internet usage, must have had implications not only on a societal level but also on an individual level. What does this development imply for a communication firm such as Lowe Brindfors?

### **1.3 Problem Area**

What does the new digital identity imply for companies communication challenges? Companies must first and foremost understand *if* the identity online differs from the identity in the physical, analog world. One must be able to establish what the essence of the digital identity is, to avoid directing marketing efforts based on parameters that are simply part of an identity experiment. The research made in the field of understanding consumers on the Internet is today mostly limited to the attitude towards the medium, namely the level of trust, Internet usage familiarity etc among users. Developing an e-marketing plan based only on the consumers' attitudes towards the media is an approach that helps rather little with the understanding of the consumers. It is also a method that presumably will diminish in relevance, as the attitude towards the Internet as such is likely to be more and more conform due to the steadily increasing spread of Internet usage. But one should not neglect the possibility that the attitude towards the medium might still, in the year of 2009, affect the way people construct their identity online. Against the background that digital identities might differ from the analog, it is crucial for companies to get an understanding of how these identities are constructed to be able to target and communicate with them correctly. The communication challenges that the characteristics of Internet implies should be addressed with the characteristics of the digital identity in regard.

### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to come to an understanding of what implications the new digital environment has for peoples' identities, and examine how this development of the identity can affect companies' communication challenges.

### **Main problem:**

*What does the new digital environment imply for peoples' identities, and how can this development of the identity affect companies' communication challenges?*

### **1.5 Delimitations**

In this thesis the authors had to make several sacrifices to bring it down to the scope and scale of a master thesis.

The research design consists of a focus group and a questionnaire, combined with depth interviews. The participants used in this study are selected from Internet dating forums. There are several reasons why the authors have chosen to focus their research on Internet dating forums.

The Internet dating forum provides data and information that is highly transparent and accessible for observers. The data can easily be divided and analyzed on demographic parameters. The members of these forums also have a geographical spread. The choice of Internet dating forums also enabled the authors to compare authentic profiles with the same member's answers from the questionnaire. Internet enables its users to be anonymous or/and be extremely outspoken. Based on this, the Internet dating forum is highly interesting, due to varying level of the "real life" identity that members choose to disclose.

The authors also chose to limit the study geographically to Sweden. The Swedish stereotype identity is characterized by being reserved and inhibited. The authors believe that a potential identity change or dual identity will be more obvious when a culture characterized by such values is given the option to be anonymous/use self-disclosure, than to spot such a change or development in a culture defined by values like extrovertedness and immodesty.

Due to the novelty of the topic, a qualitative study was the given main empirical base. This implies that the findings of this thesis can not be seen as conclusive, nor can they be generalized to the population in interest. The authors are well aware of these limitations in using a qualitative study, but have decided to take on the role as explorers as an initial understanding of the topic is needed before any quantitative study can take place (Malhotra, 2004).

## **1.6 Intended knowledge contribution**

The aim of this thesis is to enable marketers and companies to discover and emphasize the concept of digital identity, and to establish priorities for further research. The thesis will facilitate for companies to understand and meet the consumer in an appropriate way in the digital environment. By determining the existence of the digital identity, and defining the concept, companies can in turn benefit from the thesis when deciding its strategic importance for the company's marketing efforts.



As mentioned in the background the current research has mainly focused on the attitudes towards Internet as a medium or channel. By investigating if there is a tendency that peoples' identities change when they are online, the thesis might open up a whole new research area. If the study shows that there is a change in identity, then there is an entire field to be explored to get a better understanding for the consumer in the new digital era. By taking advantage of an increased understanding for the consumer in the digital environment, companies can better optimize their e-marketing efforts. Instead of seeing the Internet as an unmapped field that brings a lot of confusion and challenges, it can instead be seen as an opportunity to reach costumers in a very cost and time efficient way. It might also enable the segmenting of the e-market based on possibly more efficient parameters than traditional demographic variables, and to reach customers when they are conceivably showing their "true colors" or their most passionate selves. None of this is possible with today's research front, due to lack of knowledge of the relationship between the identity online and offline.

## **1.7 Disposition**

In order to give the reader a pleasant experience reading the thesis, the authors have emphasized an intuitive and accessible structure. By doing this, the commercial potential increases significantly. For the thesis to be useable for Lowe Brindfors and their clients, it is necessary that the structure is easy to follow and can be accessed in a short amount of time, considering the opportunity cost of their co-workers and clients.

With this in mind, the authors have divided this paper into five chapters. The next chapter aims at giving the reader a better understanding of the current state of theories regarding Identity Construction, Digital Identity and Internet Marketing, by looking at the most relevant findings. Subsequently, the theories will be narrowed down, and used to form research questions based on the further information needed in order to fulfill the thesis's purpose. Chapter three deals with the methodology used to carry out the surveys in this study, and presents a review of the approach, design of the study, measures, and participants used in the research process. Comments on the reliability and validity will conclude chapter three. The fourth chapter will present the results of the interviews, focus group and questionnaire. To structuralize this, the research questions will be used as headlines. The final chapter will present analysis and discussion of the survey results. Here the most interesting findings will be analyzed by relating

them back to the theories and research questions presented in chapter two. The thesis will be concluded with a discussion of the results, and implications for marketers. Suggestions of further studies within this field will hopefully inspire and emphasize the need for future studies.

## 1.8 Definitions

***The concept of identity:*** Peoples' concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others.

***The concept of digital identity:*** Peoples' concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others in an online environment.

***Market segmentation:*** The process of identifying groups of people who behave in similar ways to each other, but somewhat differently than other groups.

***Consumer typologies:*** The construction of consumer typologies has its roots in clinical psychology, which emphasizes different approaches towards developing "types" of personalities. The objective of such a construction of typologies is, in principle, to divide the totality of all individuals into groups that are: as homogeneous as possible within a group regarding the examined features (minimal internal variance); and as heterogeneous as possible between groups (maximum external variance) (Hair et al., 1995).

***IRL (In real life):*** The physical, analog and face-to-face world.

***Digital media:*** Media mediated through the use of computers or mobile devices.

***Prosumer:*** A contraction between the words *producer* and *consumer*. It refers to the increasing influence and control consumer nowadays can have on product development, marketing, research etc.

***Push vs. Pull marketing:*** In a "pull" marketing strategy the consumer requests the product and "pulls" it through the delivery channel, without any visible impact from the delivering company. In a "push" marketing strategy a marketer is trying to create demand by pushing the product/service towards the consumer.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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*With the purpose of examining the main problem, several areas of theory need to be studied. In the following chapter the authors present the theories that lie as ground for this thesis. These include Identity Theory, Identity Control Theory, theories that concerns identity in a digital world and Online Marketing Theory. Last, the observed need for information will be described, and the research question that will function as structure for the empirical study will be presented.*

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### 2.1 What is the definition of an identity?

*With the aim to understand the identity in the digitalized environment, it is necessary to understand the basic concept and construction of the analog identity. The authors have therefore decided to examine classic psychological and sociological theories concerning the concept of identity.*

The word identity is often used in face-to-face conversations and in books, newspapers and movies. Whether it is about immigrants, youth and gender, or huge global conflicts, terrorism and war – the word identity is usually mentioned more than twice. We also hear of different types of identities – individual identities, collective identities, culture identities and European identities. We talk about lost identities, identity crises, mixed identities and new identities. In all kind of discussions and conversation we hear about identity – but what it really implies is seldom explained (Hammarén & Johansson, 2007).

It is no coincidence that it is hard to find a clear and brief explanation of the concept of identity. The concept is vague and has been and can be explained in various ways and “one right answer” is not known to exist. Most experts in the field have though agreed that there are some social and cultural factors that are more important than others when people develop their identities. These factors are gender, ethnicity, social class and sexuality. (Hirsch, 1982)

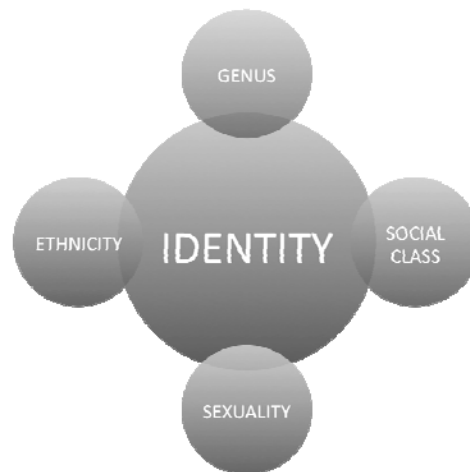


FIGURE 1. The four general identity factors (Hammarén, N & Johansson, T, 2008)

Identity is often used to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. It often refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities (Fearon, 1999).

As one can conclude, identity means something very important for people, but how is it constructed, where does it come from and how should we define it? In the past the concept of identity has been explained either as something we are born with (*essentialism*) or something that is socially constructed (*constructivism*). Today most experts have agreed upon that identity is a combination of these both views. Both peoples' generic genes and the society they live in construct their identities. Thus, identity in its present incarnation has a double sense, and which of the two factors mentioned above that affects a person's identity the most is highly individual and differs a lot among people (Hammarén, & Johansson, 2008).

Hirsch (1982) defines a person's identity as something that separates us from each other and often is used to explain who we are. It is peoples' concept of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others.

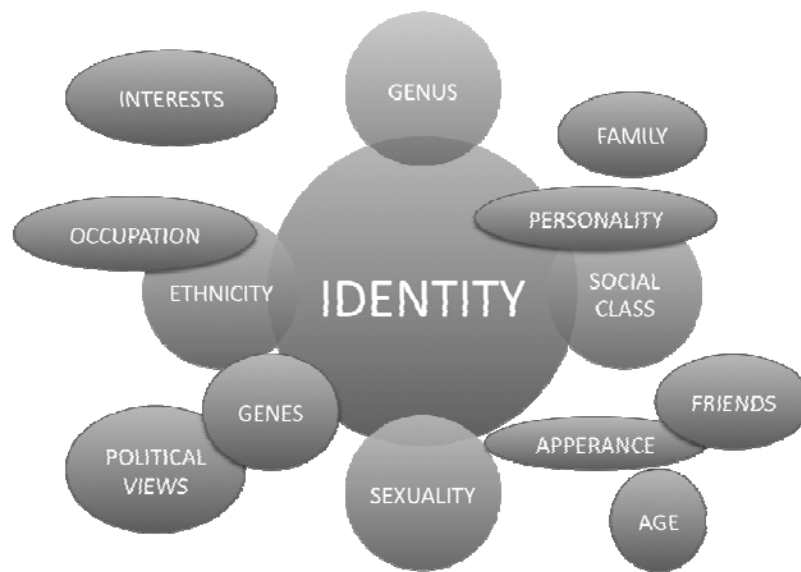


FIGURE 2. Social Identity Theory and its most essential factors

(Visualization of Burke and Reitzes, 1981)

Theorists within the practice of social identity theory, such as McCall and Simmons (1966), Stryker (1968) and Burke and Tully (1977), explain the identity as being several facets, together composing the prism of a person that is referred to as self-concept.

*“Identities are meanings one attributes to oneself in a role, and that others attribute to one”*

*Burke and Reitzes, 1981*

According to this definition an identity has three characteristics; (1) Identities are social products, (2) Identities are self meaning that are formed in particular situations and organized hierarchically to produce the self, and (3) Identities are symbolic and reflexive in character.

Such a sociological identity theory is assumed to be the most suitable explanation of identity for this thesis, due to its assumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society (Stryker, 1980). Based on this, the dynamic in society will reflect on the self and vice versa. The self influences society through the actions of individuals. This is done by to the creation of groups, organizations, networks, and institutions. And equally, society has the power to influence the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the

role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. Since the self forms in social interaction within the context of a complex, organized, differentiated society, Stryker argues that the self too must be complex, organized and differentiated, in other words; the “self reflects society” (Stryker, 1980). This idea comes from the old theory developed by James’ (1890) that states that there are as many different selves as there are different positions that one holds in society and thus different groups who respond to the self. This is where identity enters into the overall self. The overall self is organized into multiple parts, called identities, each of which is tied to aspects of the social structure. One has an identity for each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society (Stryker, 1980).

## **2.2 Can behavior be regarded as a consequence of identity?**

*To be able to draw conclusions of identity change from potential behavior change, the authors must examine if there is a theory that confirms the link between behavior and identity. This will be done by presenting the Identity Control Theory.*

Identity Control Theory (ICT) is a theory that connects the performance of the person to the identity of the same person. In other words, the behavior of a person is a consequence of his or her identity. To control the identity, people tend to adjust their behavior to avoid inconsequence in the image of the self. Burke and Reitzes (1981) determine in their article “*The Link between Identity and Role Performance*” that there is a genuine relationship between behavior/performance and identity, and that performance can be regarded as a consequence of identity. The theory presumes that actors are motivated to perform salient identities by generating behavior that is consistent with those identities. Identity Control Theory suggests that identities motivate actions that sustain the identity. The more central to the self is the identity, the more pronounced should be behavior that reaffirms that identity (Burke and Reitzes, 1991).

*People who see themselves as dominant, for example, when given evidence that they are actually submissive, then act in an even more dominant manner; conversely, submissive people when given evidence that they are dominant, respond with increased submissiveness.*

Swann and Hill, 1982

This theory is supported by Ragnhild Mogren, scientist at the Psychological Department at Stockholm University. She explains that action and identity are in a dialectic relationship with each other. Identities will have an impact on actions, and actions will have an impact on how identities are shaped (Ragnhild Mogren, 2009-04-18).

### 2.3 What is the current definition of digital identity in theory?

*With the intention to push the research front forward, the current theories regarding the identity in a digital world will be presented.*

People tend to visit the Internet with a purpose to fulfill a need. Bachelder, Berry, Matthew, Dimar and Smith (2006) suggests that by determining the need, or motive, a specific person is trying to fulfill, it is possible to come to an understanding of how the person chooses to construct his or her digital identity, and how this identity might differ from the analog identity.

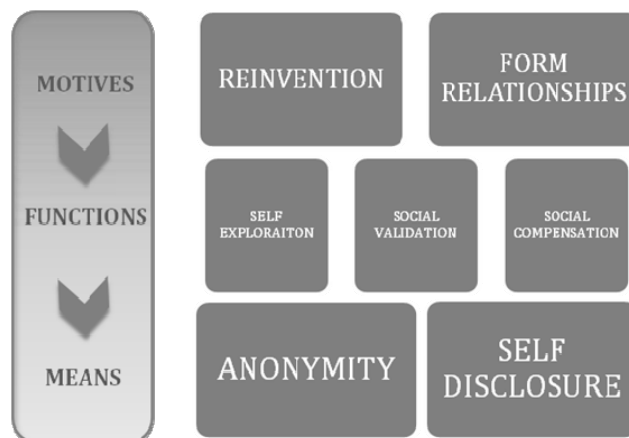


FIGURE 3. Model of motives, functions and means for construction of an online identity.

Visualization of Bachelder et al (2006).

The Internet is perceived as a tool that offers its visitors several certain capabilities that are not available to attain in face-to-face situations. Papacharissi (2002) suggests that one of these capabilities is the ability to continually reinvent themselves through online interactions. Carter (2004) on the other hand determines the capability to form relationships is what motivates users

to use the Internet as a social mean. If these two, reinvention of the self and a new way to form relationships, are considered as needs users are trying to fulfill, or as motives, we can move on to in what way users utilize the characteristics of Internet to fulfill these needs. These ways can be named functions, defined by Bachelder et al (2006) as specific and tangible ways in which identity is constructed through computer mediated communication. A study by Valkenburg, Schouten, & Jochen, (2005) suggests that these three functions are self exploration, social compensation and social validation. These concepts can briefly be described as follows.

### *Self Exploration*

This function is the ability for users to receive reactions on how others view not only their current identity, but also other identities that they may wish to explore (Bachelder et al, 2006).

### *Social Compensation*

This function is the process of seeking social interactions that an individual may not experience in the public domain (Valkenburg et al, 2005). In a few words it can be explained by a shy gothic youngster in a preppy school that feels that he or she does not fit in. Online, he or she can find a safe haven for the development of an identity and feel as though he or she is part of a larger social network. The Internet offers users to experience emotional and social gratification.

### *Social Validation*

This function is the process of getting confirmation from others, either by neglecting to display attributes that are prevalent and sometimes stigmatized, and therefore receiving confirmation on other attributes while not being overshadowed by the stigmatized attribute that might be very obvious in face-to-face communication. An example of this might be physical handicaps. It can also be used to get confirmation on the stigmatized attribute or opinion.

The last step is to determine what means users use to construct their identity online. Bachelder et al (2006) has identified two means; anonymity and self disclosure. The anonymity gives users the ability to decide what and how much information they wish to display. It also enables users to completely try out identities that are very different from their analog identities. A study by Daneback (2006) points out that the anonymity can play different parts based on the intention behind the construction of the identity. The anonymity can lead to both exceptional truthfully presentations, and on the other hand to identities that differ very much from the analog identity,



in order to experiment. Yao and Flanagin (2006) found that the ability to be anonymous can be beneficial to users because they are able to portray a more favorable impression of themselves to other users. A study by Yurchisin, Watchravesringkan, & McCabe, (2005) states that by reducing the presence of reactions and other types of nonverbal communication on the part of the “listener” the user is able to explore different parts of themselves such as “possible” and “hope-for selves” while being anonymous. These parts of an individual’s personality are characteristics that they might not currently possess, but identities with which they would like to experiment so that they can estimate the reactions of others while still being anonymous.

The other mean is that of Self Disclosure. The best way to describe this is to ask the reader to “google” for an intimate illness or symptom. Online communication offers users the ability to reveal personal information on a more intimate level and with more frequency. The Internet has become a safe haven for disclosing and searching for information that they probably would avoid when not being anonymous in real life. Studies show that this mean is very prevalent in the self-construction through internet use. Although self-disclosure does occur in face to face interaction, it seems to occur sooner and with more frequency in an online environment (Bachelder et al, 2006). *“The manner in which and the type of information that is being conveyed between the communication partners is important because the response that comes in the reaction to the disclosure contributes to the construction of one’s self-conceptualization.”* (Bachelder et al, 2006)

## **2.4 Marketing and Communicating on the Internet**

*As a mean to understand the current methods that marketers use in order to handle the online development, the authors will present some basic theories regarding marketing and communicating on the Internet. By doing this, it is possible to spot the reasons for communication challenges that companies face today.*

The Internet has brought many unique benefits to marketing. Lower distribution costs of information and media to a global audience are two of the most salient ones. Internet marketers also have the advantage of measuring, tracing and testing their marketing campaigns easily and inexpensive (Gay, Charlesworth, & Esen, 2007).

According to Mandelli (2005) online marketing, just like offline marketing, is about sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing to customers, mainly through advertising. For online advertising to be effective it has to persuade and inform consumers of the available selection of products and services, which requires the marketer to have various information about consumers at hand (Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002). Through the use of various databases and the location of surfing habits, firms have been able to customize and personalize their marketing strategies towards their customers. By tracking each user's demographics, preferences and online purchases companies are able to gain valuable knowledge of their clients. Several marketing experts claim that the amount of relevant customer information is a critical factor that can determine a company's success from failure (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002).

The Internet provides marketers and consumers with opportunities for much greater interaction and individualization (Kotler, 2006). The exchange process in the age of information has become more and more customer-initiated and customer-controlled. Kotler (2006) proposes that marketers must wait until customers agree to participate in the exchange. Even after marketers enter the exchange process, customers define the rules of engagement and shield themselves if they so choose. Despite these challenges, Internet offers the advantage of *contextual placements*; marketers can buy ads from sites that are related to their offering, as well as place advertising based on contextual keywords from online search engines such as Google. By taking advantage of this, marketers can reach customers when they have actually started the buying process.

Gay et al (2007) have developed a framework called the "Ten Cs for Internet marketers" which focuses on the customer. It highlights that the customer should be the central focus for any marketing driven organisation and that marketing activities must be designed to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction. Having a customer-focused approach is according to Gay et al (2007) the only way for a company to address the greatest challenge that Internet implies – to stand out in the masses of information.



FIGURE 5. The Ten Cs for Internet marketers (Gay et al, 2007)

The Ten Cs provides a useful framework for marketers assessing for the modern digital “marketscape” from both an internal and external perspective. Corporate culture, Consistency, Coordination and Control are the internal factors, and Convenience, Competition, Communications, Creative content and Customization are the external factors affecting customers overall satisfaction.

## 2.5 Information needed

As the theoretical landscape on which this thesis will lay its grounds now are marked out, it is now possible to pinpoint what sort of data is needed to be able to build a theory around what the new digital environment implies for peoples’ identities, and how this development of the identity affect companies’ communication challenges.

The rapid development of the Internet and its impact on our everyday lives has left both the academic and the commercial world behind when it comes to understanding how this development has affected the overall identity of its users.

To understand if there is a difference between the analog and digital identity in practice, it is necessary to examine how people present themselves online, and compare with their presentation in the physical world. This leads us to research question 1.

**Research question 1:**

*Is there a discrepancy between the presentations of people online versus offline?*

To answer the main question, it is of high importance to come to an understanding whether there is such a thing as a digital identity, or if it is simply a shift of *the* identity. To examine whether we are dealing with two separate identities, a digital versus an analog, or if it is actually a *shift* in the identity it is important to answer research question 2.

**Research question 2:**

*Is there a tendency of collective behavior change during the last few years?*

*Has people's behavior offline changed?*

To understand what, if any, implications the developments of the identity/identities have on companies communication challenges it is necessary to answer research question 3.

**Research question 3:**

*What communication challenges do companies meet  
regarding the digital development and in what ways can an understanding of  
the digital identity help companies to meet these challenges?*

### **3. METHOD**

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*In the following chapter the authors present the method that lies as ground for this thesis. It begins with a clarification of the choice of topic and an explanation of the chosen research design and methodology. Thereafter the trustworthiness of this paper will be discussed by addressing the validity and reliability of the researches conducted.*

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#### **3.1 Choice of Topic**

The inspiration to write about digital identity was given the authors from their tutors, Jonas Sjöström and Magnus Wretblad, at the Swedish advertising firm Lowe Brindfors. How digital identity affects companies' marketing efforts is an issue that several employees at Lowe Brindfors have been wondering about but not yet had the opportunity to explore or study. The topic was also further discussed with several marketing experts, as the authors' requirements for their thesis was to research an issue that is highly relevant for today's marketing professionals. These experts are; our tutor and professor at Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) Micael Dahmén, Tom Beckman, project leader and partner at Prime PR and Helena Ehnbohm, CEO of the advertising firm Only People which focuses on the digital marketing environment and former marketing director at match.com Nordic. After an outright literature research that confirmed the absence of prior studies of the concept of the digital identity the authors decided with eager to examine this phenomenon.

#### **3.2 Pre-Study**

As the topic of this thesis was settled, a thorough research of existing literature regarding analog identity, digital identity and online marketing, was thoroughly conducted. In the idea stage several conversations were carried out with Björn Larsson, Jonas Sjöström and Magnus Wretblad at the advertising firm Lowe Brindfors. The purpose of the thesis and suggestions of relevant research were together with the tutor of this thesis, Micael Dahmén, discussed and settled.

#### **3.3 Scientific Approach**

At the beginning of this study the authors had in mind to use a conclusive approach and research design, to enable the findings to be used as input into managerial decision making and to be generalizing. It soon became evident though, that the concept of digital identity and what it implies for companies marketing efforts is an unstudied phenomenon and that the objective and purpose of this thesis had to be to provide insights and an understanding for this issue. Therefore

an exploratory research design has been chosen in order to enable academics and companies to discover and emphasize the concept of digital identity and to establish priorities for further research.

### 3.4 Research Methods

The research methods are applied in consideration of the exploratory research design of this thesis. Malhotra (2004) argues that whenever a new marketing research problem is being addressed, quantitative research must be preceded by appropriate qualitative research. Malhotra (2004) defines *qualitative research* as an unstructured, exploratory research methodology based on small samples that provide insights and understanding of the problem setting, and *quantitative research* as a research methodology that seeks to quantify the data and, typically, applies some form of statistical analysis. As the concept of digital identity is a predominantly unstudied subject, the research methods used in this thesis are first and foremost qualitative. Qualitative research methods can be classified as either direct or indirect. The direct approach is when the purpose of the qualitative research is disclosed to the respondent or obvious, and the indirect approach implies that the research is instead hidden from the respondents (Malhotra, 2004). The approach used in this paper is mainly a direct qualitative research method consisting of depth interviews and focus groups.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the chosen qualitative research methods the authors have used the concept of triangulation. Triangulation is a method-appropriate strategy of founding the credibility of qualitative researches and implies that the results that are given from the method of use (in this case qualitative) are cross-checked against the result of the opposite research method (in this case quantitative). The idea with such a cross-examination is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result (Bryman, & Bell, 2005). Therefore a quantitative research survey has been conducted in this thesis in form of an online questionnaire.

#### 3.4.1 Depth Interviews

Depth interviews, or qualitative interviews as they also are called, are unstructured, direct and personal interviews in which a person is interviewed by a skilled interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic (Malhotra, 2004). The

interview process in depth interviews is flexible and in contradiction to structured interviews the outcome of a qualitative interview is dependent of the respondent's interpretation of the questions.

Bryman & Bell (2005) distinguishes between two types of qualitative interviews techniques; the unstructured one and the semi-structured one. The unstructured interview resembles a common conversation where the interviewer might only ask one question and the respondent is supposed to answer and associate freely, and can change the conversation in any direction he wishes. In a semi-constructed interview the interviewer has a list of several specific topics that will be discussed under the interview in a specific order, but as in an unstructured interview, the respondent is allowed to answer and associate the question as he prefers.

Several semi-constructed interviews have in this research been conducted with marketing experts. The first one was conducted with Tom Beckman, project leader and partner of the renowned marketing firm Prime PR. The second interview was conducted with Helena Ehnbon, former marketing director at match.com Nordic and CEO of the advertising firm Only People, which focuses on the digital marketing environment. As in the case with Tom Beckman, the authors found it highly rewarding to gain an insight in Helena's view about the topic of this thesis. Before the interviews the authors had thoroughly studied how to conduct depth interviews and prepared an interview guide consisting of five broad questions about digital identity (see Appendix A). Both the interview sessions lasted for approximately 1.5 hour and where conducted at the respondents' work offices.

Two semi-constructed email interviews have also been conducted. One was carried out with Steven Overman, founder of the marketing consultant firm Brandism, member of the advertising network Lowe Worldwide, and co-founder of Wired Magazine. As Steven Overman lives and works abroad, a face-to-face interview was not possible to conduct. The second email interview was with Ragnhild Mogren, scientist at Stockholm University (SU) and course director for the course "Digital Socialisation and Virtual Identity" at SU. Due to her busy schedule, the interview was conducted via email. Her expertise was used to support some of the identity theory.

Both the tutors of this thesis, Micael Dahlén at SSE and Jonas Sjöström at Lowe Brindfors, have also been interviewed several times about the thesis' chosen topic and research questions.

### 3.4.2 The Focus Group

A focus group is an interview conducted by a moderator in an unstructured and natural manner with a small group of respondents. The moderator leads the discussion and the main purpose of focus groups is to gain insights by listening to a group of people from the appropriate target market talk about issues of interest to the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The value from the technique lies in the unexpected findings often obtained from a free-flowing group discussion which make focus groups the most important qualitative research procedure (Malhotra, 2004).

The seven participants in the focus group of this thesis all have experience of Internet dating. The focus group interview was conducted at one of the authors' apartment in central Stockholm at 8 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and lasted for 1.5 hour. Light refreshments were served during the session. Both the authors took the role as moderators and had prepared by studying Bryman & Bells guidelines how to plan and conduct focus groups. The authors had prepared an interview guide consisting of six discussion questions concerning Internet dating (for interview guide see Appendix B). The session started with a short presentation of the moderators, the purpose with the thesis, and the purpose with the focus group. Thereafter each member held a short presentation of themselves and about their experience from Internet dating before the first discussion question was given from the moderators.

### 3.4.3 The Questionnaire

A pre-test of the online questionnaire was created by using the free survey service kwiksurveys.com ([www.kwiksurveys.com](http://www.kwiksurveys.com)) and distributed to a small sample of ten respondents online for the purpose of improving the questionnaire by identifying and eliminating potential problems. After some justifications the original questionnaire (see Appendix C), also created at kwiksurveys.com, was distributed via email to members of match.com Sweden. All questions in the survey were marked as mandatory which secured that no questions were missed or skipped. The questionnaire was constructed to be as short as possible to avoid respondent fatigue. Sensitive questions and topics were placed at the end of the questionnaire as the



respondents initial mistrust has been overcome and the risk for unwillingness to answer thereby is minimized (Söderlund, 2005).

As mentioned above the questionnaire was created as a quantitative survey to enable triangulation. Another purpose that the authors had in mind when creating the questionnaire was the possibilities to compare the respondents' questionnaire answers with their profiles at the online dating site they are currently using (e.g. match.com). By doing this, the authors can examine if there is a discrepancy between how they present themselves online versus how they present themselves offline. The questionnaire further investigates if and how people on online dating forums are taking advantage of the anonymity that Internet can entail.

### 3.5 Participants

**Depth Interviews.** The participants in the depth interviews were selected because of their expertise in for this thesis relevant industries. Tom Beckman, Partner at Prime Pr, has a wide experience in the field of marketing and pr, both online and offline. Helena Ehnbohm, co-founder of Only People, has both a solid experience working with Sweden's largest Internet dating forum match.com and a passion for the digital environment. Steven Overman, member of Lowe Worldwide and co-founder of Wired Magazine, was recommended from Jonas Sjöström at Lowe Brindfors for his interest and knowledge about the digital environment and identity. Ragnhild Mogren, scientist at Stockholm University is course director for the course "Digital Socialisation and Virtual Identity", which touches several topics relevant for this thesis.

**Focus Group.** According to Malhotra (2004) a focus group generally consists of six to ten members. Groups fewer than six are unlikely to generate the momentum and group dynamics necessary for a successful session. More than ten members may on the other hand be too crowded and a natural conversation may be hard to establish. Malhotra (2004) further argues that a focus group should be homogenous in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and participants must have an adequate experience with the object or issue being discussed. There were seven people participating in the focus group of this thesis and they all had an experience of online dating. The members of the focus group were recruiting via friends and families. The authors had though no personal connection towards the members and had never met them before, as they did not want personal relationships to affect the focus group session.

**The Questionnaire.** Since the questionnaire was based online, email invitations were sent out to members at match.com Sweden. These members were chosen according a quota sampling technique, which is a two-stage, restricted judgmental sampling. The first stage consists of developing control categories or quotas of population elements and in the second stage sample elements are collected based on convenience and judgment (Bryman, A. & Bell, E. 2005). The quotas applied in this survey include sex and age to portrait the general composition of the population using Internet dating forums.

In total, invitations were sent out to 297 members; of those 41 completed the survey. 21 (51%) of the respondents were female and 20 (49%) were men, all spread between the ages 22 to 52, with a mean of 36 years. 20 (49%) have had or have a partner they met on the dating forum.

### 3.6 Scales and Measures

In the questionnaire the authors have avoided to use open-ended questions that respondents answer in their own words as this increases respondent fatigue and nonresponse (Söderlund, 2005). For the majority of the questions interval scales are used, with numerically equal distances ranging from 1 to 7. All of these responses were done on what is called semantic differential scale with bipolar labels where the respondents were asked to what extent he or she agreed with the statement/question. The semantic differential rating scale is a well-established and popular technique particularly used in market research (Malhotra, 2004).

The study was designed to address several relevant dependent measures; (1) Level of personality change online compared to offline, (2) Level of discrepancy between the respondent's online and offline appearance, (3) The respondent's trust towards other members of the forum.

*Level of discrepancy between the respondent's online and offline appearance* was measured by comparing the respondent's answer in question 8 with the respondent's profile (question 1) at match.com. The questions concerning if the respondent has lied or withheld the truth about a certain things on the dating forum are also used to measure the discrepancy.

*Level of behavior change online compared to offline* was based on Bachelder et al (2006) theories of Internet as a tool for personal reinvention and were measured in question 9 – 13.

According to Identity Control Theory this is a measurement of personality change (Burke and Reitzes, 1981).

*The respondent's trust towards other members of the forum* is measured by asking the respondents in what extent they think others on the forum lie or withhold things. The authors attempt to measure the possibly increased level of skepticism against information one is confronted with online versus offline. This measure also serves another purpose, namely the third-person technique. The third-person technique can be used with questions asking for sensitive information that may cause embarrassment or threaten the respondent's prestige and self-image (Malhotra, 2004).

Questions 2 – 7 are serving as *opening questions*. Opening questions are used to gain the confidence and cooperation of the respondent, and should be simple and nonthreatening (Söderlund, 2005).

### **3.7 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and Validity are estimations of the accuracy and applicability of conducted surveys and are often used as scale evaluations. In simple words, reliability and validity are measures used to describe how well a researcher's data collections and tests have worked (Bryman & Bell, 2005). As there is a distinct difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods, there is also a difference how to measure these methods' validity and reliability.

#### **3.7.1 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the extent the study is free from random errors and therefore gives consistent results from different independent observations. This implies if someone were to conduct the same study, they should end up with similar results (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

##### **3.7.1.1 Qualitative Reliability**

According to Widerberg (2006), qualitative reliability can be measured by evaluating the quality of the equipment used to collect data and by the quality of the researchers. In this paper, all interviews were recorded and afterwards transcribed. The authors used an Olympus S712 recorder, which was bought on behalf of this thesis and provided high quality sound. The

authors, who also conducted the interviews, thoroughly prepared for each of the interviews by writing interview guides and studying interview preparation guidelines.

### 3.7.1.2 Quantitative Reliability

According to Malhotra (2004) there are three ways to test quantitative reliability: (1) test-retest reliability, (2) alternative-forms reliability and (3) internal consistency reliability. The questionnaire of this paper's reliability was estimated by looking at the internal consistency, as it is both the method that is most accepted and least expensive and time consuming. Internal consistency is measured when several items consisting the scale are summarized in order to form a total score for the scale. By using Cronbach's alpha, which is the average of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from different splitting of the scale, the authors have been able to secure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A Cronbach's alpha value above 0,6 has been accepted as satisfactory (see Appendix D) according to general principles (Malhotra, 2004).

### 3.7.2 Validity

Validity is an estimation of if and how well you measure what you intend to measure. It concerns the degree to which an account is accurate or truthful.

#### 3.7.2.1 Qualitative Validity

In qualitative research, validity concerns the degree to which a finding is judged to have been interpreted in a correct way. Qualitative validity can broadly be divided into internal and external validity (Widerberg, 2006).

Internal qualitative validity concerns communicative, interpretive and theoretical validity. Communicative validity estimates how well the researcher communicates how the research process affects the legitimacy of the study. It entails a description of the authors understanding concerning the research, a description of data collection and sample, and a description of the analysis process. Interpretive validity means that the qualitative researcher accurately portrays the meanings given by the participants to what is being studied. This can be done by for example letting the interview participant read through the researcher's documentation of the interview to ensure that there have not been any mistakes and misinterpretations.

As mentioned earlier, this thesis uses the concept of triangulation, a form of cross examination. The idea with such a cross-examination is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result.

As the findings of qualitative studies don't aim to generalize or serve as input to managerial decision making, it is the reader who decides and estimates the external validity of a qualitative study. By examining the research course the researcher has chosen and the findings that they present, the reader can estimate how, for whom, and when the findings can generate value and are relevant (Widerberg, 2006).

### 3.7.2.2 Quantitative Validity

In a quantitative study the researcher may choose to assess content validity, criterion validity or construct validity (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

Content validity, often referred to as face validity, consists of a subjective but systematic evaluation of the representativeness of the content of a scale for the measuring task at hand. The authors have secured this by discussing the measurements with both their tutor and industry experts.

Criterion validity examines whether the measurement scale performs as expected in relation to other variables selected as meaningful criteria. It reflects the success of measures used for prediction or estimation. If there is a high correlation between two or more variables, then there is criterion validity between these variables. In the questionnaire several positive correlations were found when analyzing the data in SPSS. The authors could among others conclude positive correlations between *people who are shy* and *Internet enables personality to be better presented online*. (see Appendix D).

Construct validity is the extent of what construct or characteristics the scale is, in fact, measuring. It estimates in what extent the measurement constructs measure what it is suppose to measure (Widerberg, 2006). To secure construct validity, only measures from established academic sources (Bryman & Bell, 2005, Malhotra, 2005 and Södergren, 2005) were used in the questionnaire.

### **3.8 Instruments and Methods of Analysis**

To analyze the data given from the questionnaire, SPSS 16.0 was used to measure frequencies, correlations and reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha).

The instrument used in the qualitative studies was an Olympus S712 recorder and Malhotra's (2004) interview preparation guidelines.

## 4. RESULTS

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*In this section, the results from the empirical study will be presented. To structuralize this, the research questions from chapter two will serve as headlines.*

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### 4.1 Is there a discrepancy between the presentations of people online versus offline?

Helena Ehnбом, CEO of Onlypeople and former market director of match.com

Ehnбом makes a distinction between the anonymous and the named digital identity. To clarify, the anonymous digital identity is for example in forums such as Familjeliv.se, where users can choose to be anonymous when leaving comments in so called threads. She believes that when a person takes on the anonymous digital identity it can on one hand bring out a lot of information. The anonymity is an important part of the integrity, and a prerequisite for people to share as much information as they actually do online. On the other hand, the anonymity entices people to stay away from the truth. In the case of online dating, people know that it can take a long time before anyone finds out that you are lying and are therefore comfortable manipulating the truth. Ehnбом introduces the concept of the so called named digital identity, I e when the information is easily traceable to the person IRL, for example in blogs. These identities are more honest and transparent. Ehnбом suggests that the named digital identity has become a tool for building ones personal brand; everything written, posted and done wearing the named digital identity is a part of brand building. Due to this, people have a tendency to fortify their ideal self by adjusting posts to suit the brand values one is willing to build into the brand. However, Ehnбом further reasons that the named digital identity does not automatically imply humbleness due to the traceability. It is still more comfortable to express something without the pressure that characterizes a face-to-face interaction. (Helena Ehnбом, 2009-04-30)

Steven Overman, member of Lowe Worldwide and founder of Wired Magazine

Steven Overman believes that there is no such thing as a digital identity. “We are who we are, but digital media allow us to extend ourselves and express ourselves more fully.” When elaborating on whether there are discrepancies online and offline, Overman suggests that, in

many ways, people can be more human online. The broad set of capabilities, the continuous connection to others, and the sense of simultaneous anonymity and intimacy seem to encourage people to share more than what is custom in the physical world. He notes that this is not always positive and points to a phenomenon like teen bullying that can get accentuated and exaggerated online. Overman concludes that digital media turns up the volume on our personalities and traits. He also suggests that online space flattens all hierarchies, that all things and all people are equalized. The power shifts to individuals, and to tribes of shared interest. Those who are the most active, articulate, and opinionated will dominate. It doesn't matter what their title or background is. Anyone can influence others, online, if they want to. There is also the less serious part of it, Overman remarks. Online behaviour is generally playful, active and a culture of makers and re-mixers where nothing is static or inaccessible. (Steven Overman, 2009-05-18)

#### Tom Beckman, Project Leader and Partner at Prime PR

Tom Beckman says that being online is like having three beers; boundaries and limits are being smoothed out and it is easier to show "the real you". He plays with the saying *In vino veritas* (In the wine you find the truth) and coins a saying for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; *In web veritas*. He believes that when people are letting their guard down in the protection of a certain degree of anonymity, what is left is the essence of the being. (Tom Beckman, 2009-04-28).

#### Focus group

In the focus group four main tendencies stood out as prevalent;

- All participants tried to be as honest as possible in their profile and interaction on the Internet dating forum. Since they all claimed that their reason for using Internet dating was to meet someone, the honesty does not come as a surprise.

*"Online, you know what you're looking for and you know that most of these people want the same thing as you do. In real life, you must first of all find out if the person in question even is available."*

Woman, 46 years old



*“My intention is that the profile should represent me  
in real life as much as possible.”*

Man, 27 years old

- Even if they try to be as honest as possible, Internet dating is still considered as a marketing tool, and most of the participants agreed on that they display an ideal self.

*“You show what you want to be seen, and you enhance the positive sides of yourself. After all, you actually market yourself!”*

Woman, 36 years old

*“Internet dating is not the correct forum to ventilate a troubled past.  
There are therapists for these things”*

Man, 52 years old

*“When you want to meet someone, you should focus on what lies ahead instead, and how you want to be in the future”*

Woman, 36 years old

*“I actually played the dog trick online; I posted a picture of my puppy..”*

Man, 52 years old

- The possibility to experiment with how they want to be perceived is something that many of the participants stated that they did.

*“I change my profile slightly depending on the mood I’m in;  
for example: today I don’t want to sound like a bitter housewife”*

Woman, 45 years old

- The vast range of potential dates has enabled for the participants to be quite selective and critical when scanning the supply of daters.

*“When you read the list of demands on some profiles you get faint; - I want a woman who  
likes mountain climbing in the day  
and to dress up nicely in the evening”*

Woman, 46 years old

*“When dating online there are other aspects that determines whether you get interested or  
not. Having a lousy profile picture is like smelling bad in real life”*

Man, 52 years old

*“You want to be the one that finds potential dates. I got a tip from a friend: don’t upload a  
profile picture or you will just get idiotic responses. Instead you go on the lookout for  
interesting profiles and then you send your picture directly to them instead”*

Man, 52 years old

#### Questionnaire and profiles at match.com

A profile belonging to a woman at match.com, 33 years old, states that she “is happy with her situation in life”. Paradoxical, when asked in the questionnaire how her closest friend would rate her satisfaction with her life situation on a scale from one to seven, she responds one.

A tendency of discrepancy between the Internet profile and IRL personality is detected among a majority of the respondents that state that their main reason for using Internet dating is due to the fact that they are shy. Contradictory, the same people have a fondness for starting their presentation in their profile with “I am an outgoing and skittish woman/man”.

Overall it seems to be a common trait for many to present an ideal self. A great part of the respondents (70%) states that they feel more at ease contacting people online, and 55% respond that they are more comfortable with expressing their feelings online. As many as 53% state that they use Internet dating based on a feeling that their personality comes to its right in a better way online. It is only a fraction, 5% specify the ability to experiment with their personality as the main reason for using Internet as their dating forum. Another clear tendency is that of suspicion versus other members. When asked if the respondent ever states a false weight, only 12, 5% admits to doing this. However, when asked how many of the other members that the respondent believes state a false weight, as many as 97, 5% believe that others lie about this. This suspicion

versus other members is consistent through all questions, among almost all respondents. The exception is a small group of respondents who are utterly credulous towards their fellow Internet daters. This group is characterized by being male (75%), in the age of 29-33 (75%), fairly inexperienced having used Internet dating forums for 3 months or less (75%), having a low number of dates and partners in real life (75%). They do not feel more comfortable expressing their feelings or contacting people online, and can be regarded as a group of sincere daters that use Internet dating forums with the main reason being the time efficiency aspect. (Focus Group 2009-05-05)

#### **4.2 Has people's behavior offline changed?**

##### **Is there a tendency of collective behavior change during the last few years?**

###### Tom Beckman, Project Leader and Partner at Prime PR

Beckman talks about a phenomenon which he encounters daily and has spent some time thinking about, namely what he refers to as "the non Swedish is the new Swedish" He says that in a retro perspective of approximately ten years, it was unimaginable that people would voluntarily publish their diaries for the world to see, referring to blogs. He claims that the law of Jante has been abandoned in favor of a more extrovert and attention seeking behavior. Beckman also acknowledges that people have developed an information seeking behavior, and are not comfortable with being told what to like or purchase. He sees a movement towards the need for distorted information in which the people of today can botanize in order to find what suits them. (Tom Beckman, 2009-04-28).

###### Helena Ehnбом, CEO of Only People and former market director of match.com

Ehnбом acknowledges a trend towards diminishing dishonesty in society. She offers an illustrative example of throwing a dinner party and not being able to invite everyone in your circle of friends. Ten years ago it would have been suitable to tell a white lie to the people that are not being invited. However, that is not possible today since someone will always thank the host on Facebook for example. The rapid spread of information entails an increasing awareness in information handling. On the other hand, Ehnбом believes that the society will become more

excusing and forgiving when it comes to minor mistakes, since “everyone” will have less flattering photos and other digital footprints. (Helena Ehnbohm, 2009-04-30)

### Steven Overman, member of Lowe Worldwide and co-founder of Wired Magazine

Overman says that even in cases where someone creates and inhabits a fictitious character - for instance, in immersive gaming environments - that persona quickly becomes integrated into the players “offline” sense of self. Real-world relationships often evolve out of these fantasy environments. He sees this happening with peoples’ behaviour and personality offline, particularly in places like Scandinavia where people historically have been more introvert. As Overman is an American, belonging to a culture characterised by being more loud and outgoing, yet even there, he confirms a lot more sharing, openness, and self-exposure. However, he is not entirely sure this is healthy. He recognises a lot more community activism and involvement on the other hand, which of course is defined as a positive change. Yet again, he states that whatever our humanity is, the digital media turn up the volume on them. If a person is inherently self-centred, this trait becomes even more prominent. He suggests that Swedes are characterized by being internally gregarious, but that the development of digital media lets that part of the personality come out into the open. Overman proceeds by explaining that there are some profound changes in addition to sharing; the access to the rest of the world, a broader context, getting out of the village without ever leaving it, hearing multiple points of view, making things, responding to things - all those things are, according to Overman, “power.” With this definition, the degree of power which people possess today is greater than ever before. He says that power does interesting things to people, suggesting that there is yet another chapter of the identity to explore. Overman also personally believes that people aren’t quite careful enough with what they disclose online, privacy is nonexistent today. But he also believes that a new value system will emerge from the generation that never experienced privacy, that people will learn to excuse some of “*the sillier things - like embarrassing photos*” even though those actions may live forever in their data shadow. (Steven Overman, 2009-05-18)

### Focus group

*“I have noticed that I have become more selective in general (...) There is so much out there, when I find it myself it is more likely to be what I am looking for”*

Woman, 36 years old

*“My confidence rose quite high after getting all that attention online, and I surely believe that I have become more outgoing and confident in real life as well thanks to that.”*

Woman , 46 years old

### **4.3 What communication challenges do companies meet regarding the digital development?**

**In what ways can an understanding of the digital identity help companies to meet these challenges?**

Steven Overman, member of Lowe Worldwide and co-founder of Wired Magazine

Overman says that too many brands believe in old models of communicating. The old model is a tendency to “dress up” a message with creative design and broadcast it widely, and hope that people will be persuaded to believe it and remember it. Now, what brands and companies need to do is be in continuous relationship with their customers. They must have a consistent and charismatic personality. Brands and companies themselves must have a more human identity. They must do the right thing, always. They must be honest and authentic, tell the truth about their products and services or else someone else will. Overman firmly believes that people can see right through marketing tactics, consequently, firms need to really understand their customers and to be truly connected to them. Overman thinks that in a way, business in the digitally-enabled world is simpler, since the opportunity to be close to customers is continuous.

*“Focus on what you do well, make great stuff, and people will discover you, praise you, convince other people to buy you”*

- Steven Overman

He refers to Apple as a successful example. However, the digital media does not eliminate the need to get the personality noticed using more traditional channels, but Overman believes that all the traditional marketing channels do is create awareness and tone.

Overman states that to be successful online it is essential that companies and their marketers understand the dynamics of online behavior, and the characteristics of online space and time. He suggests that the only way to understand these dynamics is to participate in them. The characteristics he refers to is that there is no time latency; online time is immediate time, real time.

*“It’s live, and alive, and thus the relationships companies have with their constituents need to be managed in real time.”*

- Steven Overman

Companies no longer have the luxury of being able to wait to respond to a query, or fail to immediately acknowledge an uprising around a product or service defect.

Overman clarifies that the characteristics of Internet creates enormous opportunities for companies, to gain insights, to co-create and innovate directly with their customers. It helps creating new and relevant value for their businesses and eliminates guesswork. But the online presence of companies is a multidirectional relationship and companies should never, ever push things at people. Those days are over, according to Steven Overman. Nevertheless, if companies provide utility and value, customers will “opt in”, give permission to be contacted. Thus, companies have an unprecedented ability now to listen to and learn from their customers and employees and partners and most importantly not just any customers but the right ones. The most loyal, or influential, or both, and the conversation can be open and accessible. By watching and listening and participating, organizations can determine what to offer and when to offer it. (Steven Overman, 2009-05-18)

Helena Ehnbohm, CEO of Only People and former market director of match.com

Ehnbohm emphasizes the importance for companies of being active and form an understanding for how one’s presence looks in order to meet the consumer online. Today 80% of all Google searches regard brands that have been seen offline. She though auspicates that in five to ten years the first encounter between consumer and brand, the awareness and search, will begin online.

According to Ehnborn the biggest challenge for companies online is that companies have been too slow to change their view of the consumer. She claims that companies still believe that a digital online dialogue with their clients takes more than it gives back. But the digital development implies that consumers no longer accept bad service, they count on being heard and getting response in a whole new way. She speculates that the demands of people are rising faster than companies have the time to adjust, and the winners will be those who adjust the fastest. Another big challenge that Ehnborn notices is that companies no longer can control their brand in the same extent as before. What they can do, is being a “good” brand, which is a combination of advertising and dialogue. There is a need for consistency to stand the challenges that the demanding online consumer imply.

*“The CEO and the customer service must be one with the brand and live the brand values”*

- Helena Ehnborn

Ehnborn gives an example of the flower service Interflora who interfered in a web conversation on a community and sent flowers to a girl who expressed wishes of receiving flowers. She further discusses how the anonymity online creates problems with credibility and acknowledges a trend versus more and more named digital identities. For example, it has been a widely discussed problem with marketing in disguise in forums such as blogs. (Helena Ehnborn, 2009-04-30)

#### Tom Beckman, Project Leader and Partner at Prime PR

Beckman is critical against the present discussion regarding so called social media. He indicates that the discussion is unbalanced and is dominated by a focus on formalia issues. As an example he talks about the hype of Twitter, and web consultants making money on helping companies on how to formulate themselves in these media. Beckman says that consultants like that are actually offering highly unrefined services, and suggests that it is not the media and its formalia that is relevant per se, but the content and context. The need to stay relevant to consumers has increased more than ever. With an increasingly demanding consumer that is not interested in getting tailored information it is necessary to understand how these people behave to be attractive to them. Beckman has coined a concept he calls “From 360 to 365”. With 360 he refers to a marketing concept that emphasizes the importance of being everywhere, in “360 degrees”. As the development of digital media evolves, marketers should instead adopt the rule of 365, which

instead emphasizes the need to stay relevant everyday of the year (thus 365) by looking at what is relevant to your target group right now. It can be thought of as the “topic du jour”. In the era of digital media, it is a mistake to talk about launching a campaign, in the digital era a campaign must be driven and managed in real time. (Tom Beckman, 2009-04-28).

Micael Dahlén, Professor in Marketing and Consumer Behavior at SSE

Dahlén explains that, according to him, the biggest communication challenges due to the digital media and human behavior is the conflict between push and pull. Push strategy is when companies try to “push” the product or service towards the consumer, creating demand by means of heavy advertising etc. A pull strategy, on the other hand, is based on that the consumer requests the product and “pulls” it through the delivery channel. A push strategy traditionally is regarded as more convenient for companies. He explains that in the beginning of Internet companies were convinced that it was an enormous opportunity to reach consumers by push strategy. Internet was regarded as simply a new advertising space. However, this plan backfired as consumers, overloaded with spam and pop-ups on one side and an ocean of available information on the other, started to request a pull strategy. Consumers preferred finding whatever information was relevant to them, and the phenomena of “prosumers” grew stronger. With the creation of social networking sites such as Facebook, companies yet again have spotted the possibility to use a push strategy. Based on the heavy masses of information of each member in such sites, it is a marketer’s wet dream to direct information towards carefully selected segments. Dahlén explains that this is, conversely, not appreciated by consumers. Consumers are still assessing themselves as fully capable of formulating their needs and demands, and search for information themselves. Dahlén believes that companies must take this desire seriously, and carefully take the effects of digital media on personality in consideration.



## 5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

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*In this section the authors will reflect upon the results of the interviews, the focus group and the questionnaire, and relate the findings to relevant theory. The analysis begins with a general discussion about the concept of the digital identity, thus the core function in a theoretical perspective. Thereafter, the consequences for companies' communication challenges are considered regarding the development of peoples' identities. Lastly, recommendations for further studies will be suggested.*

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### **Main problem:**

*What does the new digital environment imply for peoples' identities, and how can this development of the identity affect companies' communication challenges?*

### **5.1 The identity in the digital era**

#### 5.1.1 The new identity in a sociological identity theory and Bachelder et al (2006) perspective

According to sociological identity theory there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society. We therefore have reason to believe that the development of the digital media must have somehow affected the identity, and that the development of the digital media on the other hand must have been influenced by this new identity. The study shows that the identity and the society develop in symbiosis, and when saying society, the digital media is included. The identity of Internet users demands certain characteristics of the Internet, and the development of Internet adjusts to satisfy these needs. Conversely, the characteristics of the Internet enable the development of the identities in a certain way. This study shows that people are more outgoing and more comfortable communicating online. There are also indications that people tend to bring these newfound capabilities into the analogue world and comprise them in their identity. The authors therefore suggests that, in accordance with sociological identity theory, there is no such thing as an analogue versus digital identity, but that a shift in the identity has occurred and, at this moment of writing, is still transforming. This shift is defined by, as Steven Overman chose to put it, whatever our personality is, the digital media turns up the volume on our characteristics. However, these results might be more prevalent in some cultures compared to others but none

the less, all cultures that are heavy users of digital media should most likely observe this development in some extent. The analysis of the questionnaire states that several people use the Internet partly for identity explorative purposes. According to Bachelder et al's (2006) theory of how identities are constructed in digital mediated communication, there are different means and motives that individuals choose to use the Internet for their identity exploration. The study acknowledged two clusters within the world of Internet dating; the first cluster is by the authors called the players and the second the sincere daters.

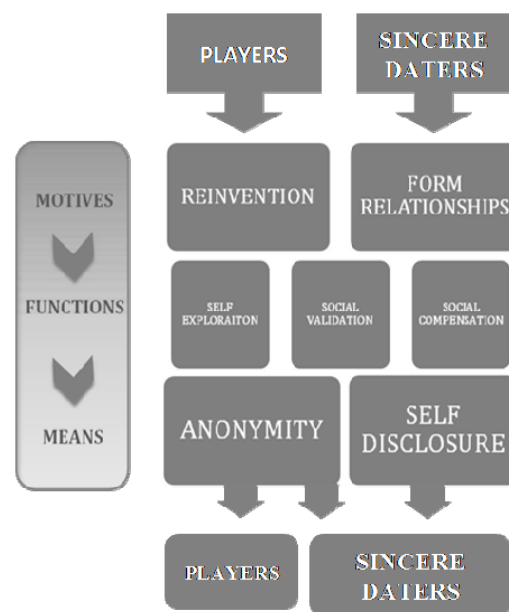


FIGURE 7. Model of motives, functions and means for construction of an online identity in Internet for the clusters Players and Sincere Daters (authors own construction as a modification of Bachelder et al, 2006)

The first cluster, the Players, frequently experiment with their personality, date multiple partners (up to 65 dates!) and often use the anonymity of Internet to lie about physical and psychological attributes. Their motive is reinvention, their function is presumably most self exploration but also self validation and/or social compensation, and their mean is anonymity. The other cluster, the so-called Sincere Daters, is a group that uses Internet dating forums with the motive to form relationships. Their function is social compensation in a large extent, they state in the questionnaire and focus group that they have a small social network. Social validation is presumably also a function relevant for this cluster. Their main mean is self disclosure. However, and very important indeed, is the fact that Internet dating forums offers a certain mix of what

Ehnbom calls named and anonymous identity. Members are using nicknames, such as Summerflower, WildChild\_69 or MrSensible, which is a trace of anonymity. Emails between members are anonymized, sent through servers. Members are not forced to reveal any more information than they feel comfortable with. However, there is the part of a named digital identity, due to the pictures and the fact that the members actually are quite traceable. Ehnbom explained that if she wanted to find out if any of her friends were using the service, she could easily log on to match.com, and narrow down the search in order to find women of a certain age, in a certain city, neighbourhood and so on.

By making the distinction between groups that in first hand use anonymity for identity explorative purposes, and the group that uses self disclosure with the motive of forming relationships, we can go deeper into these two clusters.

The Players is a cluster that can cause errors when segmenting on traditional basis online. The authors will disregard this group since it seems, according to the study, that it is a rather small group. However, it should be taken into consideration and could be more or less prevalent in various digital media and forums.

The Sincere Daters use a mixture of anonymity and self disclosure. This helps them to “turn up the volume” on whatever attribute is significant for their identity. It can be established that what the Sincere Daters do, is present an ideal self. In cyberspace the pretty are gorgeous, the bright are geniuses, and the odd are freaks.

Perhaps as a result of the presentation of the ideal self, in the focus group it became prevalent that the Sincere Daters are quite selective. In the interviews this trait were established as common for people in the online world; due to the heavy masses of information and advertisement, people are not as easy to please as in the offline world. This is in line with what today can be seen overall in the communication society; an enormous increase of information exposure has made people more selective. Below a model is presented, showing how such incorporation can take place. Sincerity is believed to increase due to the rapid sharing of information, between Internet users but also in the offline world. Due to the connectivity between the online and offline world, transparency online will demand transparency offline. As a

consequence, and according to sociological identity theory, this change will be incorporated in the self, in the identity.

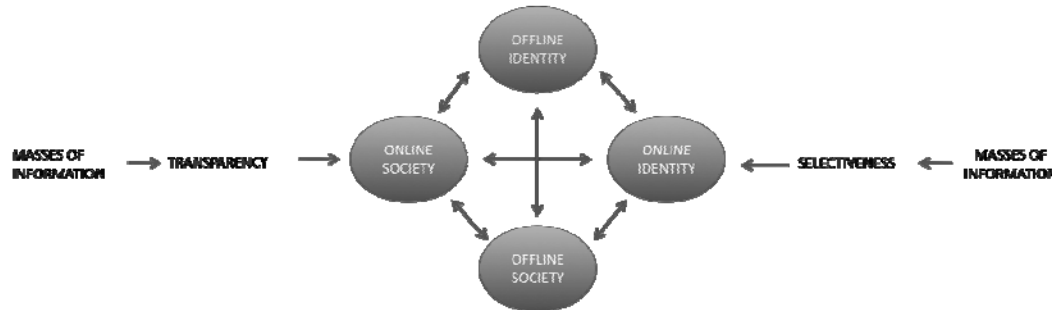


FIGURE 8. Model showing the incorporation of response attributes to Internet characteristics into the network of online/offline society and online/offline identity (authors own construction)

Characteristics of the digital media, such as the enormous masses of information, will bring about what the authors will call response attributes. These are, in this case, transparency and selectiveness. Transparency will enter the online society as a consequence of the specific characteristics of the digital media. This will entail an incorporation of transparency into the online identity – people will lie less. The diminishing amounts of lies will, in turn, affect the offline identity and the offline identities will lie less as well. This will in turn have an effect on the offline society, and so on. There is also the case of selectiveness as a response to the amounts of information supply. The online identity will become more selective as a response and this will be incorporated also in the offline identity. This is however, one of the communication challenges for companies right now. How should they meet this increased selectiveness and transparency for example, when it gets incorporated also in the offline identity and society? Or to put it more accurately, as visualised in Figure 8, when it gets incorporated in the tightly connected network that construct our identity and society.

Perhaps needless to say, the digital environment as well as the characteristics of the identity is dynamic, and should always be reconsidered and managed in real time.

To conclude, the study shows a person who believes that he or she can be more him- or herself when being online. However, it is suggested that this true self is rather an ideal self. The ideal self is also rather selective and suspicious versus information presented to them. This suspicion

calls for transparency and the need to be able to verify information, something that the authors believe will become more dominant in the digital environment. For example, the ability to submit information under what Ehnborn called an anonymized identity, will decrease in favour of the named identity. The vast supply of users and information will however still offer the sense of simultaneous anonymity and intimacy, which seems to encourage people to share more than what is custom in the physical face-to-face world.

### 5.1.2 The new identity in an Identity Control Theory perspective

According to Identity Control Theory (ICT), behaviour – or performance – is regarded as a consequence of a person's identity. To control the identity, people tend to adjust their behavior to avoid inconsequence in the image of the self. ICT connects the performance of the person to the identity of the same person. The interviews showed a pattern of a collective behavioral change. For example Tom Beckman strongly believes in the movement of the non-Swedish becoming the new Swedish, implying how people do things these days that were unimaginable just a few years back due to the externally restrictiveness of the Swedish culture. When looking in retro perspective, it is clear to see a trend that commenced with full exposure (think Big Brother) but that has become incorporated in a manageable way. These days' people write blogs, but they restrict what they write about, carefully managing their personal brand. So, from being a trend of self exposure in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has now become incorporated into people's daily lives as a way of managing personal brands, our ideal self. As Overman suggested, a new value system will be created, and probably already is in some extent, that is more forgiving in its nature when it comes to less important things like embarrassing photos. What Beckman said, that he acknowledges that people have developed an information seeking behavior, is not isolated to the digital world. These behavioral changes that spill over in the physical world as well are, according to ICT, a sign of that the identity has changed. So what can be seen is not a development of two separate identities, but the *shift* in the identity.

### 5.1.3 Conclusions on the development of the identity in the digital era

We have become more cynical, believing we are slightly more special and interesting than before, and we definitely want to find what we are looking for ourselves. We are suspicious, yet

forgiving as long as we are treated with honesty. This is the description of what will hereafter be called the Identity 2.0.

*"I'm selfish, impatient and a little insecure. I make mistakes. I'm out of control and at times hard to handle, but if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best."*

– Marilyn Monroe

## **5.2 The consequences for companies' communication challenges regarding the development of peoples' identities**

Given the general characteristics and demands of Identity 2.0, presented in the section 5.1, the authors will now provide the readers with suggestions of how to confront the previously mentioned communication challenges.

### **5.2.1 Communication Challenge 1: The Conflict between Push and Pull**

Identity 2.0 has a strong belief of being capable to define its need and search for consequent information. Traditional marketing tactics with more aggressive in your face advertising is assumed to be less effective on this new identity. This dilemma is suggested to be solved through the use of sophisticated push strategies that enhance the pull effect. Such a mixture can be composed by placing leads in relevant forums, staying relevant and inviting consumers to participate in the brand development. When using push strategy, the segmenting basis must be very specific and selected on carefully thought through criteria. A job ad for marketing trainee positions on Facebook's right hand panel only posted for marketing students with less than three months to graduation is an example of this.

### 5.2.2 Communication Challenge 2: Continuous Communication

Another communication problem is that the digital media and the constantly connected consumer demand a continuous relationship with companies. Many companies today see this as a great challenge, due to the time investment it brings about. However, it is necessary to address this issue and see it as an opportunity. They must have a consistent and charismatic personality and take on a more human identity. Firms must assure to do the right thing, always, as Overman chose to put it. They must be honest and authentic, tell the truth about their products and services or else critical voices will soon be heard in forums all over the Internet. It is important that companies understand that online there is a never ending discussion going on and companies must interfere in the debate appropriately. By handling this in a meritorious manner, the companies are able to seize the opportunity to turn badwill into goodwill. To get such results, it is suggested that all intervention is handled in the name of the brand; one must not forget that the Identity 2.0 is suspicious and does not appreciate the feeling of being treated like a legally incompetent and they can see right through marketing tactics.

### 5.2.3 Communication Challenge 3: The Problem with Consistency

The trait of selectiveness and cynics is shaping the Identity 2.0. The exposure to oceans of information constitutes an effective gate keeper to everything that does not entirely stand the test of consistency and authenticity. The solution to this challenge is basic but far from simple; offering a solid, good product or service. This should be backed up by consistency in company communication, where communication implies all consumer contact, both direct and indirect. As mentioned, the Identity 2.0 is forgiving in its nature, and will not demand for everyone to be flawless. What is more important is how these flaws are corrected and if they are being treated with honesty and respect regarding possible failures. Customer service must act accordingly with brand values and so must the top management. The products and their design should breathe the brand values, and when mistakes occur, they should be corrected appropriately.

#### 5.2.4 Communication Challenge 4: Consumers wants to be Prosumers

The gregarious feature of Identity 2.0 is confident with taking on the role as a prosumer. The new identity is unsettled with accepting brands with values that are not totally congruent with his or her own values. Due to the digital media's ability to turn up the volume of people's personalities and traits, it is probable that certain traits and values will be so significant and prevalent that it is unlikely that these people will accept the values of a constructed brand. Some years ago brands were used in order to say something about the wearer, these days brands are considered saying less since they are accessible to the masses. Instead consumers co-create brands, loading them with values significant for themselves. The brand becomes you, instead of the reverse. This implies the age of dynamically prosumer constructed brands. However, to control what values is given a brand, it is necessary to practice consistency from the company's side.

#### 5.2.5 Communication Challenge 5: Honesty

The Identity 2.0 is not easily persuaded and is a suspicious kind. As a marketer you can be sure that if there is anything about a certain product or service that is withheld or lied about, the Identity 2.0 can and will find it out. You can also be sure that the new Identity will not keep his dissatisfaction to himself, he or she will also make sure that all friends at Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and a other relevant communities etc will find out. As the Identity 2.0 loves attention you can be sure that he or she will share his or her opinions. Compared to online word-of-mouth (wom), face-to-face wom is like a whisper at a nightclub. Not only does e-wom spread like a nasty flue; it also sets its footprints. A search at Google on a specific product or company can reveal dissatisfactions expressed years ago. To put it in simple words – don not lie about how good your products or services are.

#### 5.2.6 Communication Challenge 6: Maintain Control

The Identity 2.0 is power greedy and wants to be in control. The thought of being a prosumer is, as mentioned above, very appealing for this new identity. To be able to manage this from a marketer's perspective, the solution is to enable more opportunities where the consumers can influence critical decisions and at the same time draw transparent lines where the consumer cannot be a part decision making. By doing this, the marketer can avoid dissatisfied customers



who have been given the illusion to be able to affect everything, and therefore feel that they have been fooled in believing they have an impact.

### 5.2.7 Communication Challenge 7: Relevance and Substance

Identity 2.0 demands and has a need for relevance. This contradicts the current debate of digital media, which has more and more lost focus of the importance of substance and are more focused on the different channel designs. These channels are of course important, but the biggest concern should be dedicated to the relevance and potential of a product/service.

The substance must always be as relevant as possible to the selective Identity 2.0. On the Internet companies are needles in a haystack and must take every effort to stand out, and they must be able to communicate that it gives more than it takes. To understand the target group, it is necessary to do buyer persona research; read the publications your buyers read, read their blogs, interview them, get an understanding of what is relevant to them and how they search for information. Only by doing this, it is possible to get into the head of Identity 2.0 and understand what determines if information will be considered interesting or be dismissed. It is also important to acknowledge the extroverted trait of Identity 2.0 that searches for self fulfillment and self realization. This should be recognized when offers are being constructed.

### 5.2.6 Conclusions on the consequences for companies' communication challenges regarding the development of peoples' identities



FIGURE 9. The Reciprocal Relationship between Communication Challenges and the Identity 2.0  
(authors own construction)

(authors own construction)

Seven major communication challenges, that spring out of the enormous masses of information that exist on Internet, have been discussed with an Identity 2.0 perspective. It stands clear that an understanding for this new identity enables a more goal oriented and sophisticated way to address these challenges. It is also important to emphasize that these challenges are tightly connected and all contain solutions to the other challenges as well as they directly or indirectly cause the other challenges.

### 5.3 Suggestions for further research

As the topic of digital identity is unexplored the opportunities and ways for further research are almost endless. Since the Identity 2.0 and society (here: digital media) are dynamic in their nature, it will still be interesting to investigate them and their co-development during some time to come. There are though some special points of views that the authors would find particularly interesting and which they have thought of during the process of writing this thesis.

- This study has concluded that the digital environment has created a shift in people's identity. Whether this shifted identity is on its way to stabilize, or if the process of shifted identity just has begun is though still unexplored and very relevant.
- Will consumers take over the role as marketers online? Will the consumer's role as "prosumer" today expand in the close future?
- How should a push strategy for the digital media look like not to be rejected by the Identity 2.0?
- Will a time come when online marketing has completely out ruled the traditional, analog marketing channels?
- As the authors have now confirmed that there is a need for research on the subject, a large quantitative study could and should be performed to determine the characteristics of Identity 2.0.

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## **7. APPENDIX**

### **7.1 Appendix A: Interview guide – depth interviews**

- What is your view of an identity?
- What is your view of the digital identity?
- Do you believe that there is a discrepancy between the analogue and the digital identity?
- Do you believe that companies/marketers need to acknowledge that people might present/ behave differently online?
- What do you see as the greatest online challenges marketers have to fight today?

### **7.2 Appendix B: Interview guide – focus group**

- What is the main differences between Internet dating and dating IRL (in real life)? What are the best and worse factors concerning Internet dating?
- Do you think that Internet dating affects people's behavior or personality?
- Are there any differences about how people present themselves online vs offline?
- What do you think is the most common reason for people to choose to date online?

### 7.3 Appendix C: Questions included in the questionnaire

(Original Swedish version)

#### Identitet på Internet

Hej!

Vi är två studenter från Handelshögskolan i Stockholm som skriver vår magisteruppsats inom marknadsföring och strategi nu i vår. Uppsatsen handlar om den nya Digitala Identiteten som växt fram genom Internets framfart och hur denna påverkar företags kommunikationsutmaningar. För att förstå oss på den Digitala Identiteten har vi fokuserat vår studie på Internetdejtningsforum. Det är därför vi ber DIG att fylla i denna enkät (som tar ca 5 min) - vi behöver veta din åsikt och syn på nedanstående påståenden för att göra vår uppsats trovärdig. Var god och svara så ärligt som möjligt och kom ihåg – det finns inga fel eller rätt svar!

Din medverkan är guld värd för oss! TUSEN TACK!

Ps. Enkäten är anonym och kommer endast att användas för uppsatsens syfte och därefter elimineras. Detta inkluderar även ert användarnamn från match.com/spraydate/parship. Användarnamnet kommer INTE att nämnas i uppsatsen, men är av stort värde för oss vid vårt analyserande av data.

Vid frågor eller åsikter angående denna enkät kontakta gärna Bianca Backman eller Julia Ljungberg på mail: [magisteruppsats09@gmail.com](mailto:magisteruppsats09@gmail.com).

1. Vilket är ditt användarnamn och vilket datingforum använder du dig av? (Ex. ungtjej\_79 på match.com) \_\_\_\_\_

(OBS! Du förblir helt anonym i uppsatsen!)

2. Hur gammal är du? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Vilket kön tillhör du?

Kvinna ( )      Man ( )

4. I hur många månader har du använt dig av tjänsterna på det nätdejtingforum som du använder dig av? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Hur många personer av de du träffat på det nätdejtingforum som du använder dig av (ex match.com) har du träffat i verkligheten?

0 ( )

1 – 3 ( )

4 – 6 ( )

7 – 9 ( )

10 – 12 ( )

Fler än 12, vänligen specificera antal \_\_\_\_\_

6. Jag har eller har haft partners som jag träffat på Internet

Ja ( )      Nej ( )

7. Varför väljer du att nätdejta? (markera minst ett och max tre alternativ)

Det är tidseffektivt ( )



Jag är blyg	( )
Har ingen lust att gå ut på krogen och ragga	( )
Jag vill hitta någon utanför mitt sociala nätverk	( )
Mitt sociala nätverk känns för begränsat	( )
Min personlighet kommer fram på ett bättre sätt	( )
Jag kan vara mig själv i större utsträckning på Internet	( )
Jag har dåligt självförtroende gällande mitt utseende	( )
Jag har dåligt självförtroende gällande min personlighet	( )
Jag kan ändra/experimentera med min personlighet	( )
Jag kan ändra/experimentera med mitt utseende	( )
Jag kan ändra/experimentera med min sexualitet	( )
Ingen särskild anledning	( )
Annan anledning, nämligen: _____	
8. Hur skulle din <i>närmaste vän/familjemedlem</i> svara på följande påståenden om dig?	
(Observera att du ska försöka svara så sanningsenligt som möjligt för att vi ska få en förståelse för hur <b>andra</b> uppfattar dig i ditt dagliga liv)	
Är en öppen och social person	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer
Är självsäker	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer
Är nöjd med sin tillvaro och livssituation	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer
Har lätt att träffa en partner	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer
Är blyg	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer
Är nöjd med sitt utseende	
Stämmer inte alls	1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Stämmer

Är nöjd med sin personlighet								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Är nyfiken								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Är spontan								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Gillar äventyr								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Gillar storstäder								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Är sportig								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Är omtänksam								
Stämmer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer inte alls
Röker								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Dricker alkohol								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
Tränar								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
9. Jag känner mig mer bekväm att ta kontakt med någon på Internet än offline								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
10. Jag har lättare att uttrycka mina känslor och åsikter på Internet								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer

11. Vissa personlighetsdrag hos mig som förtydligas/försvagas på Internetdejtningsforum								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
12. Jag har avslöjat/berättat saker om mig själv på Internet som jag ej skulle göra i verkligheten på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Stämmer inte alls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stämmer
13. Vad tror du är det vanligaste folk på nätdejtingforum väljer att ljuga om? Välj minst ett och max tre alternativ.								
Ålder				( )				
Kön				( )				
Vikt				( )				
Övrigt utseende				( )				
Civilstatus				( )				
Personlighet				( )				
Intressen				( )				
Arbete				( )				
Utbildning				( )				
Sexualitet				( )				
Antal tidigare förhållanden/sexpartners				( )				
Etniskt ursprung				( )				
Fysiskt handikapp				( )				
Tror ej att folk ljugar på Internetforum				( )				
14. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha en annan vikt än den du har i verkligheten på Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
15. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du utger sig för att ha en annan vikt än de verkligen på Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
16. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha annorlunda utseende (förutom frågan om vikt) än du har i verkligheten på Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
17. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du utger sig för att se annorlunda ut (förutom frågan om vikt) än de i själva verket gör på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla

18. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha en annan utbildning/utbildningsnivå än den du i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
19. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du utger sig för att ha en annan utbildning /utbildningsnivå än de i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
20. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha andra familjeförhållanden än de du i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
21. Hur många andra tror du utger sig för att ha <b>andra</b> familjeförhållanden än de i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
22. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha en annan ålder än din verkliga på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
23. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du utger sig för att ha en annan ålder än deras verkliga på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
24. Har du någonsin uppgett att du har andra intressen än du i själva verket har ( t ex skidåkning, poesi, matlagning, skogspromenader) på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
25. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du utger sig för att ha andra intressen än de i själva verket har ( t ex skidåkning, poesi, matlagning, skogspromenader) på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
26. Har du någonsin uppgett att du har ett annat yrke eller position än den du har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
27. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du uppger att de har ett annat yrke/position än de i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla
28. Har du någonsin uppgett att du är av annat etniskt ursprung än du i själva verket är på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Aldrig	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alltid
29. Hur många <b>andra</b> tror du uppger att de är av annat etniskt ursprung än de i själva verket är på ett Internetdejtningsforum?								
Ingen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alla

30. Har du någonsin undvikit att uppge om du har ett fysiskt handikapp på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alltid

31. Hur många **andra** tror du undviker att uppge ett eventuellt fysiskt handikapp på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Ingen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alla

32. Har du någonsin uppgett att du har en annan personlighet än den du i själva verket har (t ex alltid glad, ambitiös etc) på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alltid

33. Hur många **andra** tror du uppger sig ha andra personlighetsdrag än de i själva verket har (t ex alltid glad, ambitiös etc) på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Ingen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alla

34. Har du någonsin uppgett att du har en annan civilstatus än den du i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alltid

35. Hur många **andra** tror du utger sig för att ha en annan civilstatus än den de i själva verket har på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Ingen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alla

36. Har du någonsin utgett dig för att ha haft ett annat antal förhållanden/sexpartners än du i själva verket haft på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alltid

37. Hur många **andra** tror du utger sig för att ha haft ett annat antal förhållanden/sexpartners än de i själva verket haft på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Ingen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alla

38. Har du någonsin utgett dig från att vara av motsatt kön på ett Internetdejtningsforum?

Aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alltid

39. Hur många **andra** tror du utger sig för att vara av motsatt kön på Internetdejtningsforum?

Ingen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alla

Det var sista frågan.

Tusen tack för din medverkan!

Nedan kan du fylla i eventuella kommentarer.

\_\_\_\_\_

## 7.4 Appendix D: SPSS Results

### Reliability Tests (Cronbach's Alpha)

Table D1 and D2 shows the internal consistency between questions 9 – 12 in the questionnaire.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,707	5

Table D1

**Item Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Berättat saker på Internet ej IRL	1,4359	,78790	41
Förstärks personlighetsdrag på Internet	1,7179	,94448	41
Sagt saker till någon på Internet, ej IRL	1,8462	1,01407	41
Lättare uttrycka åsikter/känslor Internet	2,0256	1,15820	41
Mer bekväm ta kontakt Internet	2,3333	1,03449	41

Table D2

Table D3 and D4 show the internal consistency between the questionnaire questions concerning withholding the truth/lying on the Internet.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,927	13

Table D3

#### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Utgett sig motsatt kön	16,1538	94,713	,475	,929
Uppgett annan vikt	15,7692	85,866	,606	,924
Uppgett annat utseende	15,7949	76,009	,918	,911
Uppgett annan utbildning	16,0000	87,474	,883	,919
Uppgett andra familjeförhållanden	15,9487	86,260	,855	,918
Uppgett annan ålder	15,8462	88,291	,614	,924
Uppgett andra intressen	15,6923	80,113	,680	,923
Uppgett annat yrke/position	15,9231	86,599	,712	,921
Uppgett annat etniskt utsprung	16,1282	90,115	,906	,922
Undvikit uppge fyshandikapp	16,6154	89,348	,548	,926
Uppgett annan personlighet	15,6410	68,920	,791	,927
Uppgett annan civilstatus	15,8974	84,673	,840	,917
Uppgett annat antal partners	15,6667	78,281	,778	,918

Table D4