“Norwegian microcelebrity on Instagram”

Identifying and analysing the practices of Norwegian microcelebrities on Instagram.

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Abstract

This study identifies and analyses the practices of seven of the most successful Norwegian microcelebrities on Instagram. While current research on this topic has been based in America, Singapore and Great Britain, this study aims to understand how these practices are applied in the Nordic region and specifically in Norway. A qualitative content analysis of 343 Instagram posts was conducted. Through the construction and analysis of three main categories, namely self – representation, communication and promotion, this study confirms and nuances the practices that have been identified in previous research. It also introduces and analyses some practices that haven’t been explored to date. In particular, microcelebrities blur our understanding of their roles. Are they ordinary people who publish moments of their every-day lives, or professional actors? I explore how the practitioners portray themselves as celebrities by emulating the visual iconography of celebrity culture (Marwick, 2015, p139). I also analyse how their professionalism is revealed through the monetization of some of their practices and confirmed by their representation by public relations’ agents.
Preface

This thesis has given me the chance to explore a phenomenon I personally consider very interesting. Since not many researchers have investigated the subject area, I gained the opportunity to contribute to current knowledge and discover new information on the phenomenon. At the same time, this thesis has been one of the biggest challenges of my life and I would not have made it without the help of my support group.

First I feel I could have never completed this thesis without the precious help, advice, recommendations, explanations and instructions from my supervisor, Niamh Ni Bhroin. While our formal relationship began in January 2017, we have been in contact since the fall semester 2016 in order to develop the research proposal. Since then, Niamh has been replied to my multiple stressful emails almost immediately, with the patience to explain to me in detail, everything that I needed to know. She has been supporting me psychologically through the whole process with kind words; and she has generally shown great dedication, interest and excitement towards this thesis. I believe that she is an exemplary supervisor and I am so grateful that I was able to work with her.

Next I want to thank my friend Line, who helped me in improving the language of this thesis. Simultaneously through her observations, she has helped me develop this thesis in a meaningful way. Most of all, I want to thank Line for her compassion, support and kindness.

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1 Introduction

According to Statista, an online portal that provides access to statistics and metrics from over 22,500 studies, the number of social network users in 2018 is estimated to reach 2,62 billion (2018). People use social media in order to socialize, entertain, inform or express themselves. Using their free time, they increase their network or compare products and services that are represented on social media by their producers. Among those that use social media in order to satisfy their personal needs, are companies that invest resources in order to represent themselves on social media; in fact, there is an increasing number of people who manage to use social media in a way, that can change their social status and financial condition. Despite those individuals that manage to become famous and benefit financially by exposing a specific talent or skill of theirs; many social media users achieve such a success by applying self-representation practices (Marwick, 2015)

Media articles on the web refer to these types of people, using different titles depending on the platforms in which they seem to be most active, for instance: YouTubers from Youtube, Bloggers on blogs, Instafamous from users of Instagram. Yet, when searching for this new Internet and social media phenomenon through academic databases; I came across the definition of microcelebrity. According to Senft, a senior lecturer of the Department of Media, Music, Communications & Cultural Studies at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia; who first coined the term back in 2001, microcelebrity is (...) “the commitment to deploying and maintaining one’s online identity as if it were a branded good, with the expectation that others do the same”. As the phenomenon kept developing, various academics have contributed with their research to gain a better understanding and definition. In this study I perceive and use the term of microcelebrity according to the definition of Alice Marwick, a social media and academic researcher from the University of North Carolina; who, influenced by Senft’s work describes microcelebrity as:

a mind-set and a collection of self-presentation practices endemic in social media, in which users strategically formulate a profile, reach out to followers, and reveal personal information to increase attention and thus improve their online status (Marwick, 2015).

While most academics use the term of microcelebrity in order to describe a variety of practices applied in social media; in this study I have operationalized the term as in the research of Mavroudis
and Milne (2016), according to which microcelebrity refers to both the practitioners and the practice itself.

Through a literature review, researchers refer to microcelebrity practitioners as bloggers (Jerslev, 2016), “Camgirls” (Senft, 2008) celebrities (Marwick & boyd, 2011) and Instafamous (2015). Inspired by the research of Mavroudis and Milne, who refer to the practitioners of microcelebrity as microcelebrities; and Abidin who by conceptualizing highly followed microcelebrities, refers to them as influencers, this introduces their ability to monetize their content through advertorials (2015a). As such, I use the term of microcelebrities in order to refer to practitioners that apply self-representation practices on social media while at the same time they monetize part of their content.

While current literature has been examining the cases of American, Singaporean and British practitioners; this research as a part of a Master in Nordic Media, focuses on practices that have been applied from practitioners within the Nordic region and specifically, Norway.

In the next section, I will present work from different researchers and academics that contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon; and simultaneously helped me personally, to build a concrete theoretical foundation for the current study.

1.1 Microcelebrity Research: a literature review

Here, I aim to present an overview of how the phenomenon of the microcelebrity has been researched, analyzed and explained by academics around the world. Since the phenomenon hasn’t been investigated enough; I aimed to create a theoretical foundation through the work of researchers that have been dedicated to the investigation of the phenomenon in many of their works (Senft, Marwick, boyd, Abidin). At the same time, I used academic works that approached the investigation and analysis of specific elements or practices that would help me better understand the phenomenon and reflect my findings (Jerslev, Mavroudis & Milne). After a short description of each work, I will include a section that summarizes the current knowledge on the phenomenon and reveals potential gaps within it. Then, I will present my research topic and research as an effort to contribute to the gap in research.
1.1.1 Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks

Theresa Senft coined the term of microcelebrity while she was exploring the phenomenon of *Camgirls: women who broadcasted themselves on the Web for the general public, while trying to cultivate a measure of celebrity in the process* (2008, p. 1). Based on Camgirls that through time developed into online identities on social media, she argues (2008, p.1), that she conducted an ethnographic and critical study with focus on the political aspect that these online practices could serve. In her study, she examines “Camgirls” as a representation of the personal, as political, in an online world that is constructed by people’s prejudices regarding: “(…) publicity, commodity, epistemology, pornography, and social capital” (2008, p. 115).

Through interviews, performance analysis between camgirls and their audience, in addition to her personal experiences as a practitioner, she managed to shed light into this early edition of the phenomenon of microcelebrity and describe some of the ways that these personas operate. Senft supports that the web cannot create big-scale celebrities on its own, but it encourages the construction of what she calls “microcelebrity” (2008, p.26).

She defines “microcelebrity”: (…) as a new style of online performance that involves people ‘amping up’ their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites” (2008, p.25). She also argues that these web personalities differ from celebrities, since their fame depends on the relationships that they have built with the audience “rather than an enforced separation from them” (2008, p.26).

When it comes to the ways through which these personas aim to ‘amp up’ their popularity; Senft refers to a number of values and practices that characterized their activities. She argues that *Camgirls* can invoke, at any time, their authenticity and realism, (2008, pp. 15-16) in an attempt to separate themselves from ordinary celebrities. At the same time, they emphasize their uniqueness since they belong to the small number of women who broadcast their lives online (2008, p.26). Their activities required expensive equipment and internet access for that time; something that soon led them to charge their audience through subscriptions, in order to balance or achieve an added benefit to their expenses (2008, pp.18-20). In relation to their personal feelings and opinions of the practitioners towards their practice; Senft explains that the interest of a certain number of followers, make the
practitioner feel obliged that he/she has to create something worthy in exchange for the audience’s interest and loyalty (2008, p.9).

Through the work of Senft, I have presented a definition of the phenomenon of microcelebrity from the scholar who first coined it as a term. In addition, I familiarised myself with some of the ways and practices through which these personas aim to increase their popularity, giving me an idea about the potential findings in this study.

### 1.1.2 To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter

A few years later, the academics and social media researchers, Alice Marwick and Danah boyd, published a study through which they examine the use of Twitter by celebrities (2011). In their study, they argue that social media has introduced new ways of practicing “celebrity” and it is similar to the microcelebrity, as ordinary people apply a variety of practices in order to gain popularity; celebrities adopt similar techniques in order to maintain their fan base and positive image (2011, p. 140). The two scholars define microcelebrity as mentioned earlier, as a variety of practices that aim to present a carefully curated product in order to be consumed by an audience that function as a fan base (2011, pp. 140).

Through a qualitative content analysis of several posts from 20 celebrities’ Twitter accounts, they found a number of practices that famous people apply on Twitter. Even though the study focuses on famous people of a bigger scale, as Marwick and boyd correctly predicted, some of the practices adopted by celebrities match the practices that have been identified as microcelebrity practices from other researchers (Senft 2008, Mavroudis & Milne 2016, Abidin, 2015).

Marwick and boyd chose to shed light on five different aspects that influence these online activities: intimacy, affiliation, authenticity and sincerity; and public acknowledgment. They firstly emphasize the element of public acknowledgment according to which celebrity status is maintained (…) through mutual recognition of power differentials by fan and practitioner (2011, pp. 140). At the same time, they aim for a sense of intimacy (2011, pp. 147-9) between themselves and their fans; and they invoke their authenticity and sincerity (pp. 149-150) by sharing with their audience snap shots of their everyday lives while maintaining accounts that they personally manage.
Although they aim to differ from ordinary people and their fan base, they simultaneously aim to create a common base with their followers by using specific elements and symbols. They provide an example of a young hip-hop singer who communicates on Twitter through a language that his young hip-hop fans understand and appreciate (2011, p. 147).

At the same study, Marwick and boyd examine three specific case studies in order to analyse the dynamics of relationships between celebrities; between celebrities and their fans and between celebrities and intermediaries. They highlight the chance of real, direct interaction between a celebrity and a fan since the introduction of social media (2011, pp. 150-151). They give examples of how celebrities can communicate with each other on Twitter through public messages in order to invoke their authenticity by publishing what seems to be private information (2011, pp.151-3); and at the conclusion, they refer to celebrities’ intermediaries as aiming to be interactive with both celebrities and ordinary people or fans (2011, pp. 153-4).

As a result of this study, I am able to gain an understanding of how celebrities communicate and what kind of relationships they aim to have with their audience through their online activities. Since Marwick and boyd characterized these practices as similar to those microcelebrities apply, I hope that this study will help me to analyse these practices once they are identified through the sample.

1.1.3 Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy

Marwick, in more recent research (2015) aimed to examine the phenomenon of the microcelebrity by a textual and visual analysis of personas with more than 10,000 followers. Here, the focus is on the ways that they practice and experience celebrity and tabloid culture.

She refers to the microcelebrity on Instagram as Instafame and she introduces a very important aspect for the phenomenon. She argues that successful (highly followed) practitioners: *often reproduce conventional status hierarchies of luxury, celebrity, and popularity that depend on the ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture* (2015, p139).

Marwick compares microcelebrity with the marketing term of “aspirational consumption” according to which cheap products are marked as luxurious brands and purchased in an attempt to “evoke the aura of an unattainable brand” (Welch, 2002 as cited in Marwick, 2016, p.156). She argues that in the same way microcelebrities then manage to gain fame by portraying themselves as celebrities.
Through three different cases, she presents a number of practices through which microcelebrities aim to gain the attention of the audience. She firstly refers to the practice of publishing continuous photos, consisting mainly of selfies’, leads to a certain extent of fame; even though the microcelebrity doesn’t aim for any interaction with the audience. Then she discusses a category of cases that Crystal Abidin will name later on in this section: as proximate celebrity. According to these cases, that consist as a condition of entry to the status of microcelebrity and furthermore, the celebrity; an anonymous person manages to gain popularity because of his/her relationship with a celebrity and they capture this through his/her social media profile (2015, p.152). Marwick argues that by examining the case of Rihanna’s best friend, Leandra Goodridge; that the existence of the audience is acknowledged; and the persona aims to respond to the audience’s inputs and generally, interact with it. In this last case, she presents the element of luxury in the microcelebrity and how the representation of a wealthy persona, with a passion for fashion brands, can change someone’s online status (2015, pp. 153-5). She also supports that while social media has given ordinary people the chance to approach a level of fame; the ones who actually achieve fame are the ones who are able to imitate a celebrity’s lifestyle and practices (2015, p.139).

In this study, Marwick presents through different cases, some of the practices or elements that play an important role in the creation of microcelebrity practices. Namely, she refers to: the constant updates of photos and selfies; actual interactions between microcelebrities and the audience; the portraying of a luxurious lifestyle and a passion towards fashion. Since this study parallels mine, by analysing the visual (photos and videos) and textual (captions) of microcelebrities on Instagram; it is highly relevant in supporting my arguments. However, this study examines only three microcelebrities and a limited number of practices, it neglects the variety of other practices that I will uncover through this research.

1.1.4 Communicative Intimacies: Influencers and Perceived Interconnectedness

Crystal Abidin, an anthropologist, ethnographer and media scholar from the University of Western Australia; examines a type of highly followed microcelebrity who manages to monetize their content through advertorials, she refers to them using the marketing term, influencers (2015). The fact that she has been professionally occupied within the industry and has already interacted with some of these personas, since the introduction of the phenomenon; gave her the opportunity to shed light onto the practice as perceived and explained by the practitioners themselves. Through a mixed research
method, combined by participants’ observations, personal interviews and archival research on traditional media and the influencers’ platforms, she reveals important aspects of the phenomenon. Based on female Singaporean lifestyle microcelebrities that she refers to as “influencers”, she argues that these practitioners do not acknowledge their followers as fans, which is in disagreement with other research. For instance, Marwick’s and boyd’s argument is that the (...) audience is viewed as a fan base (...) (2011, p 140).

Contrary to ordinary celebrities, influencers encourage what Abidin refers to as reciprocal intimacy, whereby they interact and respond to the audience in an effort to show appreciation for their interest and support (2015). In another practice, that she refers to as disclosive intimacy; she explains the ways through which influencers aim to create a sense of intimacy with the audience by sharing moments of their lives and information that looks private or backstage. At the same time, she refers to commercial intimacy as a variety of practices that aim to attract and engage the followers, while they are motivated by underlying commercial interests (Abidin & Thompson 2012: 472 as cited in Abidin, 2015). Singaporean influencers specifically, seem to encourage a type of offline intimacy or interactive intimacy in addition to the online one; by participating in events where they can meet their followers in person.

Concluding, Abidin compares the phenomenon of parasocial interaction with the relationship between influencers and followers that she contextualizes as perceived interconnectedness. She supports that this type of relationship is more democratic, interactive and sustained by both influencers and their followers. In this study, Abidin has a focus and in-depth analysis of the relationships between microcelebrities and their audience; and the different types of intimacy that those relationships can be characterized as. Based on this research, I can garner a better understand of the type of intimate relationship that the microcelebrities of my study, aim for.

1.1.5 In the Time of the Microcelebrity: Celebritification and the Youtuber Zoella

Anne Jerslev, a professor at the Department of Media and Communication from the University of Copenhagen; in one of her latest works (2016), aims to identify the changes within the celebrity culture that are caused by the massive expansion of the internet and social media platforms. Through a literature review on the definition of celebritification, she provides the reader with an overview of how the process of becoming a celebrity has been defined by academics globally in the past; in order
to compare it with *celebritification* nowadays. In order to identify how *celebritification* is achieved and practiced through social media, she uses the case of famous British vlogger, Zoella. By observing and analysing some of her blog posts, Jerslev presents four main elements through which celebritification is applied: *accessibility, presence, intimacy* and *authenticity* (p. 5235). She argues that contrary to ordinary celebrities, who aim to maintain a certain distance from their fans in order to highlight their uniqueness; Zoella represents herself as an ordinary, imperfect girl who shares similar worries and problems with her followers (p5243). Her main practices consists of continually updating (p. 5233); invoking her realism and authenticity by publishing content that seems spontaneous and unprocessed (p5243); encouraging a sense of intimacy by sharing not only happy moments but moments in which she feels weak and insecure (p.5243); and lastly, but by no means least, she seems to acknowledge the presence of an audience, which she addresses in order to share advice and tips, show them appreciation and affection or to invite them to take part in different competitions. While Zoella describes her activities as something the she loves doing (p. 5234), in some cases she admits to her audience that maintaining such an online status puts her under a lot of pressure (p.5244). To conclude, Jerslev manages through this work to describe how microcelebrity is practiced with a focus on self-representation practices and the relationship that a practitioner encourages to maintain with his/her audience. Through her work I am able to gain a better understanding of how the Norwegian microcelebrities practices compare and parallel other studies.

### 1.1.6 Researching microcelebrity: Methods, access and labour

Jonathan Mavroudis, a Ph. D. candidate with a focus on microcelebrity and social media from Swinburne University of Australia; and Esther Milne, an associate professor within the Department of Media and Communication of the same university; conducted research through which they aim to describe how the practice of microcelebrity, is experienced by its practitioners (2016). Through a qualitative, visual ethnographic approach and semi-structured interviews on young male microcelebrities from Los Angeles, they aim to shed light into an aspect of the phenomenon that hasn’t been sufficiently investigated yet; partly because these personas proved to be quite inaccessible (2016, p.1). The fact that one of the researchers (Mavroudis) had reached a level of microcelebrity himself, with over 25.000 followers, played an important role in this study, since microcelebrities felt like they could open-up to someone with a similar experience (para. 31).
Through their literature review, they refer to Crystal Abidin’s work (2015) that examines the different ways through which a person can approach microcelebrification: *diffuse* and *systematic*. With systematic microcelebrification, she refers to the personas that have managed to approach their status through the application of specific practices such as, by promoting brands or participating in traditional media shows (as cited in Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p.2). With diffuse microcelebritification she refers to the personas who reached their status without the application of such practices; through for example, a certain event or by their relationship with a celebrity (Abidin, 2015 as cited in Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p2).

Throughout the interviews, microcelebrities admit that their self-representation practices are the result of long hours of carefully curating different types of content, in order to present to their followers, a fine product to be consumed (2016, p.3). They reveal that their practices often cause a feeling of obligation to constantly update certain types of content, that makes the practice feel more like labour than a hobby (2016, pp. 7-9). As other researchers have stressed until now, microcelebrities feel that they owe their followers, to publish the kind of content that they are asking for, as a way to show appreciation to their loyalty and interest (2016, p. 7). Through this research, Mavroudis and Milne managed through Mavroudis’ online status, to access microcelebrities and shed light into the practitioners’ personal opinions and experience about the practice. As a result, this study can reflect on the aspects of curation and obligation evident in the posts of the microcelebrities.

1.1.7 Summary of Literature review

Through these academic works, one gains a better understanding on the phenomenon of microcelebrity. Microcelebrities seem to represent themselves as authentic (Senft 2011; Marwick and boyd 2011; Abidin 2015; Jerslev 2016) by exposing their private moments and information; while in some cases through personal interviews they admit that their representation on social media is carefully curated and far from their reality of their everyday life (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016). Most researchers in this review, have focused on the relationship of the practitioners with their followers, and determined that it is characterised by intimacy and interaction (Marwick and boyd 2011; Abidin 2015; Jerslev 2016), motivated by a sense of obligation (Senft 2016; Jerslev 2016, Mavroudis & Milne 2016) to show appreciation to their supporters. Other practices and aspects that have been revealed through these academic pieces are: luxury as an element that characterises a number of self-
representation practices (Marwick, 2015); the use of high-tech expensive equipment (Senft, 2011) and the conditions of entry towards a microcelebrity status (Marwick, 2015; Abidin 2015).

While reflecting on the understanding of the phenomenon through these academic works, I was able to get familiar with microcelebrity aspects, practices and their meanings; but I was still not able to get a clear picture of how their online content looks. At the same time, I felt that only a small part of their practices have been identified and analysed. Therefore, I decided through a content analysis of a relatively large number of Instagram posts to present a more holistic view of their practices; by identifying new ones and contributing to the analysis of the ones that have already been examined.

Additionally, in order to examine the phenomenon within a Nordic context, in agreement with my educational program with the title: Master in Nordic Media; I will investigate the case of seven large-scale Norwegian microcelebrities as found and confirmed by article(s) on A text retriever. I chose to focus on Norwegian microcelebrities and not on other nations of the Nordic region, because the examination of this type of content indicates a certain degree of understanding and knowledge of the practitioners’ language; and Norwegian is the language I understand best within the Nordic region. At the same time, to my knowledge, a relevant research based on Norwegian microcelebrities, or generally on practitioners within the Nordic region, has yet to be conducted; and therefore I have the privilege to introduce how the phenomenon has been adopted within the Nordic region and identify potential differences from microcelebrities of other nationalities.

Here, I will introduce information on Norway that will help the reader understand the status of the country where the practitioners are located. Norway is located in northern Europe, nestled between the arctic, Russia, Sweden and Denmark to the south. It has a population of roughly 5.2 million people despite its 358,203km² size (Statistics Norway, 2017) and ranks as one of the world's wealthiest countries, as the fourth highest per capita income in the world (Holter, 2017). Norway maintains a Nordic social welfare model with universal health care and social security benefits. It boasts the world's fastest mobile download speed (McKetta, 2017) and based on a study by Statista on traffic information in Norway (2017), 85% of the Norwegian population is using social media. Of these users, Facebook is the most popular, followed by Pinterest and Twitter. A survey discovered that 50% of social media users use Instagram, the application used in this study (Statista, 2017).
At this point, I present my research question and how I aim to contribute to the gaps within the current literature on the phenomenon.

1.2 Research question

With this study, I aim to investigate the phenomenon of microcelebrity within a Nordic context and to contribute to the current literature by identifying and analysing the ways that such practices have been adopted and applied from some of the most successful Norwegian practitioners. As Abidin states, there are a number of ordinary internet and social media users that manage to attract great numbers of followers by exposing moments of their personal lives; while at the same time they get the chance to monetize their activities by “integrating advertorials” (2015). Through the identification and analyzing of these activities or practices, I aim to approach an understanding about the factors that lead a person to gain fame or even benefit financially. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, this study can approach this issue only partly. The fame and the ability of some of the practitioners to monetize their content could be the result of activities and happenings that occur in different digital but offline platforms and channels, as well.

Again, although the ways through which these people manage to change their online status and transform their activities into a form of employment are quite difficult and complicated to reveal; I suggest that by identifying and analyzing the microcelebrity practices of practitioners that are already established and successful, one can approach an understanding about the factors that can contribute to this success. However, through this study, I aim to contribute to the identification and analysis of such practices and only partly approach an explanation behind the success of some of its practitioners.

In order to be able to observe and analyze their content in depth, I decided to focus on activities that occur on Instagram; combined with additional background research on other platforms like Facebook, blogs, websites, online articles and traditional media. As I soon realized while overviewing the content of samples on different platforms, Instagram consists as one of the more active platforms, followed by blogs. Since I wanted to focus on identifying as many practices as possible rather than analysing and focusing on linguistic elements in long texts that are usually posted on blogs, I chose to work with posts on Instagram. Therefore, the research question of this study is:

**How do top Norwegian microcelebrities apply their practices on Instagram?**
In order to answer this question, I examine seven cases of some of the most successful Norwegian microcelebrities as identified in an article of a Norwegian newspaper. While the sample wasn’t referred to as microcelebrities in the article, I argue that it is a compatible sample because after a small review of their social media activities, I confirmed that the practitioners apply microcelebrity practices and monetize part of their content through promotional posts.

I considered seven cases of established, successful microcelebrities as sufficient scope to identify new practices and confirm the ones that have already been identified, since other scholars have been able to contribute to the knowledge on the phenomenon by examining three (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016; Marwick, 2015), or even one case (Jerslev, 2016). At the same time, I noticed that while working with each case, I was coming up with new categories or different practices, therefore the sample was again, sufficient for the investigation of the microcelebrity phenomenon.

The sample consists of 343 Instagram posts that include photos, videos, captions and bios. I chose to apply a qualitative content analysis through which I get the chance to analyse the data in depth while at the same time I can be flexible enough to adjust potential categories according to the nature of the data. With the help of the statistical program IBM SPSS, I coded, categorized and analysed the findings of this research in a way that I am able to present to the reader a number of identifiable microcelebrity practices and the different ways that these practices are presented to the audience.

Before I present to the reader a map of the structure of this thesis, I have included a description of Instagram in order to describe how it functions as a social media platform and refer to its affordances and technical characteristics. Furthermore, I briefly introduce the Norwegian context in relation to social media and its status as a country, as a comparison to other nations.

1.3 Instagram

Instagram is an internet application that requires the possession of a computer or an iOS or Android mobile device plus access to the internet. It operates completely as a mobile application and limitedly as a website, since a user of the website version cannot upload photos. The medium encourages the uploading of videos and photos, the editing or alteration of them through filters and different tools
and furthermore, the possibility of sharing content with an online community according to a range of different privacy settings.

The profile of each user is presented as a photo or video collection with a short (maximum 150 characters) description on the top, known as a “bio”. Everybody (on a public profile) and the people who have been permitted to follow a certain account (on a private one), can have access to the number of its posts, followers and following accounts. The relationship and connection between users on Instagram is perceived as less personal and indirect than on Facebook for example where two connected contacts would be called friends; Marwick would identify therefore, the dynamics in creating a fan base as one that can attract many followers without spending time to accept friend requests or the obligation of any kind of interaction with them (2015, pp143). A user can see a review of the uploaded content of the profiles he follows by choosing the “home” icon, or also come across unknown profiles, that appear in ones’ feed through different algorithms.

By limiting the uploaded content to videos or photos with the possibility of adding small texts as captions, the medium emphasizes visual self-representation where a (...) user’s photos (...) are (...) the central form of identity expression (2015, pp144). The user gets access to a variety of filters and templates that will help make their photos better quality or even look as if a professional took them. Like Twitter, Instagram encourages the use of hashtags (#) that can lead to many likes and new followers if they are used strategically (Titlow 2012 as cited in Marwick 2015). A hashtag links the content with other users and provides a subject title for which to search for similar content.

Marwick has argued among others, that the internet is developing into a visual medium (2105, p.138) where people prefer more photos and videos and to read less long texts and descriptions. Therefore, I thought that it would be interesting to identify microcelebrity practices as they are visually represented, on a medium that mainly focuses on this type of content while the text is limited to 2,200 characters.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Here, in the first chapter, after a short introduction to the phenomenon for examination, I present a relevant literature review from academics that have studied and analysed the microcelebrity. Having presented my research topic and question, I accommodate
for the gaps within the existing literature to a certain extent. In the second chapter, I aim to create a theoretical foundation through the use of different academic sources, in order to approach an understanding of the phenomenon of microcelebrity; so I can use this foundation for reflecting on my findings. In the third chapter, I present qualitative content analysis as this thesis’ main research method; while at the same time I discuss the research’ quality by taking in account reliability, validity, generalizability and ethics. In the fourth chapter, after I have coded and categorized my findings, I present and analyse the microcelebrity practices I came across through the sample of 338 Instagram posts. Finally, the last chapter consists of the conclusion of this work, answering my research question and exploring its weakness and suggestions for future research.
2 Theory

In this chapter I will present the relevant theory and concepts that helped me to investigate the phenomenon of microcelebrity. Beginning with the work of the media professor, Nick Couldry, I will argue that the research on the phenomenon of microcelebrity consists not only as an investigation of a media phenomenon, but a social phenomenon as well. By examining the practices that take place on a social media platform, one is able to understand how these activities influence the lives of the practitioners. Since Marwick, one of the most dedicated researchers on the phenomenon, argues that microcelebrities imitate the activities and lifestyles of ordinary celebrities (2015, p. 139); I will first give an introduction to celebrity as a practice; and then explain how the internet and social media have introduced new ways of practicing celebrity not only for traditional practitioners, such as Hollywood stars and well-known singers; but for ordinary social media users as well. Then, I will present a collection of definitions of microcelebrity; and refer to different aspects of the phenomenon as described and revealed by the researchers that have been investigating it. Specifically, in this chapter I will focus: on the conditions of entry towards a status of microcelebrity; on the practitioners’ representation of celebrity’s lifestyle; on their promotion practices; their feeling of obligation towards a demanding audience and the perception of the practice as a labour; and finally on the values of Intimacy, Realism and Authenticity that they aim to invoke for themselves.

2.1 Media as a social practice

Since their invention, people have been engaging with media products whether it is for their entertainment, information, education, communication or so on. With the expansion of the internet and smart phones especially within the developed countries, media products have been more accessible than ever before and people seem to use them almost constantly. This new intense media consumption has changed people’s everyday lives and routines dramatically. People use media while simultaneously walking, training, eating, traveling, talking on the phone, relaxing at home, working or even sleeping. The penetration of media at almost every single social occasion and the way that media products shape people’s lives and habits, led the media and sociology professor Nick Couldry to introduce a social approach to researching media. In his book ‘Media, Society, World’, Couldry aims to examine the relationship between media and social life and contribute to the general knowledge behind questions like: how does media influence people’s everyday lives or habits? How do people use media and why? How do media innovations change peoples’ lives? (2012).
Couldry argues that Sociology and Media should always be investigated in parallel since these two aspects of human life have been interacting and influencing each other since the invention of the first forms of media. According to Couldry, sociology examines people’s habits or “regularities of action” (2012, p33) in order to draw general and in-depth knowledge about the human nature and the society. Peoples' everyday lives and hobbies are significantly influenced by media products. Namely, people watch TV, communicate through message applications, like Whatsapp, build a resume on Linkedin, find their way to their destination through google maps, listen to music on Spotify and so forth. With or without realising it, we consume media regardless of where we are and the occasion.

By examining these exact media activities as practices, one can get valuable information about people's lives. Couldry supports this idea; by looking closely at the ways people use and interact with media, we can gain a better understanding and analyse a variety of human needs such as communication, interaction or identity creation (p. 34). The different ways each person chooses to use media products can reveal valuable information to a detailed observer, not only about the media usage itself, but about the personal life of the person using them.

Another argument towards a more social approach for media, supports language as a form of communication that plays a central role in most media activities, but also as a practice as well (Couldry, 2002). The foundation of Couldry’s argument is based on Wittgenstein’s definition of language as “action in world or form of life” (Wittgenstein 1952 as cited in Couldry, 2012, p.3). According to this argument, language is not just a way to express one’s self and communicate with others. It is a tool that people use to satisfy their needs and achieve things they wish. This perception can shed light on the intentions of a message sender, the environment and conditions under which the message was sent and the receiver, at the same time.

Couldry supports that the need to examine media through a social approach is emerging more than ever, as we enter the digital, Internet era. He states that the capability of new media to store large amounts of information, changed the important media practices dramatically, as the practice becomes a case of *showing and being showed* (2012, pp 47), when profiles, bios and information can be seen permanently as an online history. He further explains that in the past, news was diffused through story-telling or word of mouth; therefore, it was something that could easily be forgotten and
inaccessible. Nowadays, media innovations have allowed a big part of the global population to be able to eyewitness facts through online streaming, or by tracking content that is saved on different platforms.

This new possibility of archiving played a significant role in the creation of online representations as we know them today; namely, social media accounts (Couldry, 2012). People felt encouraged to expose their private lives and share their feelings, habits or thoughts and to express themselves and sustain a public presence. In comparison with offline meetings, or conversations in forums and chats where conversations and content could be selectively remembered or subconsciously forgotten; Couldry states that content on social media is saved on the platforms and therefore one can go back at any time and search past conversations and facts. Users seem to construct online identities that will represent themselves online as a social curriculum vitae (2012, pp50).

Overall, Couldry’s arguments are relevant to a social approach while researching and studying media. Couldry supports that since the consumption and manipulation of media consists a regular human practice, a social approach could offer the potential researcher great insight into the two fields through the investigation of the relationships and dynamics between them. He also argues that language, as a main form of communication through media, consists as an active or open-ended practice (2012, p 34) rather than just a passive expression. By exploring language as an instrument one can ascertain a user’s intent, we can draw accurate conclusions about behaviours, purposes, lifestyles and purposes behind the messenger, the sender and receiver. As such, I will investigate the phenomenon of microcelebrity inspired by Nick Couldry’s approach according to which, a media phenomenon consists as a social phenomenon as well.

Scholars and academics around the world have been studying the wide and complex subject of media through different approaches and theories, depending on the scope and intentions of their research. Scholars that have been investigating the phenomenon of microcelebrity have focused on different elements, such as, language; methods or experience of the practice as labour; the way they tend to represent themselves; their perceptions towards their social media activities; the values that the practitioners invoke for themselves etc. In this study, I aim to observe the Instagram content of a number of Norwegian microcelebrities in order to establish their main practices, not as described or perceived by the personas themselves; but as viewed and observed through their online activities.
I argue that by analysing the online activities and practices of microcelebrities, one gets access to familiarize him/her self with a part of the practitioners’ personal lives, habits, feelings, preferences etc. By observing, categorizing and analysing the practices of certain microcelebrities on Instagram, I assume that I will become familiar with both how these practices are exploited and presented in front of the viewers; while at the same time, I will able to draw on the meanings and conclusions on what these practices reveal about the practitioners and their inner feelings, thoughts and motivations. As relevant research reveals, microcelebrities around the world (as I will further describe in the next sections); manage through their online activities: to gain fame and monetize their content through promotional posts. The fact that a person can significantly change his/ her life through these online media practices, confirms the necessity of approaching the phenomenon as a social phenomenon as well.

Before I begin to describe the different aspects of the phenomenon of microcelebrity as given by relevant researchers around the world, I will include a short chronology about the term of celebrity and I will discuss how the internet and social media has been influencing and changing it as a practice and status.

2.2 Traditional celebrity

According to Anne Jerslev, a celebrity is defined as a “distinct social position marked by an exclusive and privileged distance to the mundane and ordinary” (pp 5236). People who achieve this status are usually occupied in the film industry or theatre, music, writing, art, sports, politics or media industry. Celebrities have always attracted interest from the public, whether they are idolized by it or used as a negative gossip topic. As Joshua Gamson, a sociology and media scholar based in San Francisco, states: (...) the value of celebrity inheres in his or her capacity to attract and mobilize attention, which is then typically attached to other products (a television show, a magazine cover, a record album) or sold for cash directly to people making those other products (2011, pp 1062).

Traditional celebrities are often hired from media programs that are willing to pay generously in order to benefit from their fame and capability to attract the interest of an audience. Jerslev refers to one theory according to which the moments when people begin to be perceived as a celebrities are identified at that exact point; when the media become interested and aim to reveal details of their
personal-private life, rather than their public role (Turner, 2004, p8; Turner, Bonner, & Marshall, 2000 as cited in Jerslev, pp5236). The public enjoy getting information about their personalities, lifestyle, plans, relationships, and so forth. With such information, the audience is able to relate and “fantasize” about an extraordinary life such as that of the celebrities’. They then have the opportunity to imitate elements from their lifestyle, construct their identity accordingly or just enter a social discussion (as cited in Gamson 2011, pp 1062).

Economic challenges and changes within the film and media industry around the 1980s, for instance the increasing costs of productions or the intense competition for advertising revenue between the different channels (Collins 96 as cited in Gamson, 2011, p. 1064), led to the creation and broadcast of shows that didn’t need writers and famous actors; but ordinary people willing to expose their everyday lives (2011, 1064). Gamson described the process of making these reality shows as when media organizations (…) “take civilians often with no special abilities or achievements, and, by filming them, make celebrities “out of nothing, bypassing what we might think of as the conventional condition of entry (specialized training, or a history of performance for instance) (2011, 1064).

Reality shows made celebrification possible for ordinary people without great talent or skills. The media professor Nick Couldry defines celebrification as “the process through which the ordinary (outside the media) acquires a media form” (as cited in Jerslev, 2016, p. 5237). Participants in reality shows become famous after just a few days of their show being screened, to crowded audiences who enthusiastically watch or even support them through votes. Reality shows contributed in changing the perception of celebrity “as a distinct and exclusive phenomenon defined by distance and scarcity (2016, p.237); by introducing “stars” and “celebrities” made in front of the audience, by ordinary people.

Another characteristic of the twentieth century type of celebrity, consists of people who are famous for less than obvious reasons beyond a great achievement or talent. Wealthy people who became famous by exposing their extravagant lifestyle through the media, like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, are characteristic examples of this type of celebrity. These celebrities do not end up on different media programs without effort or promotion. As Gamson explains, people who became famous from not having achieved something in particular, “they have been made so, artificially produced for mass consumption by a team of investors, publicists, makeup artists, magazine publishers, and the like; they are factory products” (2011 pp 1063).
However, other types of celebrities are more often than not represented and curated by public relations and communication institutions. For years, communication and media agencies have been a necessity for most people that aim to become famous (Jerslev, 2016,p. 5235). The support of such institutions helps them firstly, become well-known to the audience and then, to further maintain and increase that “exclusive and privileged distanced” image. It is an important ingredient behind the celebrity practice and culture.

Jerslev concludes with the fact that the invention of the internet and social media platforms have affected and changed the celebrity culture. They have introduced new ways to reach the celebrity status, new types of celebrities and different ways of promotion, communication and engaging with the audience. In turn, the following section explores how the celebrity culture is developing and changing since the internet era arrived.

2.3 Celebrity in the Internet era

As a rule, access and the ability to feature in traditional media has been limited, even for those willing to participate in reality shows, yet, social media has been accessible for most people living in developed countries. Anyone with an internet connection, a computer or a third generation mobile device (such as an android or iphone), can at any time create, upload and share content with a number of users he/she is connected with. A big number of individuals and commercial organizations have been exploring the affordances of social media and their use as a tool through which they can benefit.

Traditional celebrities, for example, use social media to promote their work and engage with their fans; and as one would guess, on every social media platform, they score as the most popular accounts. The research of Marwick and boyd on microcelebrity practices of celebrities on twitter shows that in fact celebrities (2011) seem to have adopted the new, internet era quite enthusiastically. By typing the names of celebrities, for instance singers, actors, models, athletes, media personas and so forth, one comes across profiles with enormous numbers of followers and a quite big collection of their photos, videos, news, opinions and even moments from their personal lives. It seems that social media has been beneficial to celebrities by obtaining an added chance to promote themselves and their work through their personal profiles and engage with the audience in a whole new way. Through these platforms, celebrities get the chance to know more about their audience as well. Here, they tend to show their admiration, loyalty or at times also negative feelings towards them. The communication
on social media between celebrities and their followers is partly indirect since most of the time, celebrities address the audience as a whole and rarely decide to spend time replying privately to each of their followers (through messages or comments) (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5239). Yet there are examples of famous personas that aim to actually reach their fans and respond to their followers’ comments. Marwick and boyd (2011) refer to Mariah Carey as an example of a celebrity that takes time to interact with her fans and followers on twitter.

Beyond the traditional celebrity uses of social media, there is an array of ordinary people that manage, through different approaches to appeal to a couple of thousands or even millions subscribers. Gamson describes the celebrity culture after the expansion of the internet, as increasingly populated by unexceptional people who have become famous and by stars who have been made ordinary (2011, p. 1062). Graeme Turner emphasizes the change that occurs to the celebrity process, and defines “celebrification” in the Internet era as a familiar mode of cyber-self-representation (as cited in Jerslev, 2016, pp 5236).

However, gaining followers is not as simple as purely having access to a computer connected to the internet. As a result, not everybody that owns a social media account becomes a celebrity. Yet, the “wb has (…) generated a sort of bottom-up, do-it-yourself celebrity production process that is partly autonomous from its predecessors” (Turner as cited in Gamson 2011, 1065). There are many people that have managed to gain extraordinary numbers of followers, for example the Swedish gamer-comedian Pewdiepie, who has around 60 million followers on Youtube and the English vlogger Zoella with 11 million followers on Instagram. Although academic research has not proven how these young people achieved such a level of fame or if they are managed to do through media and communication companies; it seems that their success is a result of a variety of practices and the exposure of moments of their personal lives. Through Jerslev’s work, “Zoella” she describes her activities as something that she enjoys doing or something that comes naturally to her. By such descriptions one gets the idea that microcelebrities become famous by just expressing themselves online, without the help of media and communication agencies like in the case of traditional media.

As a result, many scholars have been studying the phenomenon of internet-made celebrities or microcelebrities in order to understand their practices, the way they communicate and encourage engagement, plus their perception behind their online identity. Marwick supports the significance of those practices by writing: In the broadcast era, celebrity was something a person was; in the internet
era, microcelebrity is something people do. (...) Celebrity thus becomes a continuum of practices that can be performed by anyone with a mobile screen, tablet, or laptop (Marwick, 2015, pp140).

The following section will focus on defining microcelebrities, their characteristics, perceptions and practices, as understood and revealed by scholars who investigated the phenomenon.

2.4 Microcelebrity

As mentioned in the literature review, Theresa Senft coined the term of micro-celebrity back in 2008 while she was studying the phenomenon of Camgirls. Through her work she released some valuable assets around the phenomenon, such as some of the reasons that these girls decided to expose themselves on the web, also their practices, their relationship with the audience and their routines. These women would argue that they differ from TV celebrities by invoking, in any way, their sense of authenticity and reality (pp. 15-32). At the same time, they would try to point out their uniqueness and differences from ordinary people (Joni Dean as cited in Senft, 2008, p. 26) so they would warrant the attention and interest of their audience. In other words, camgirls were perceived as “a product to be consumed” rather than what was originally simply a member of an online community or forum.

The phenomenon of camgirls and camboys that started with women and men broadcasting themselves on the web, didn’t take long to develop as new practices that spread to other social networks. Senft states that camgirls served as beta testers for the investigation of the further development and expansion of the phenomenon (of microcelebrity) to social network platforms on a global level (2008, p.8). In her study, she focused mainly on three techniques: the generation of celebrity, building of self as a brand and engagement in a specific form of emotional labour (2008, p.8).

In a more recent study, Senft defined microcelebrity as “the commitment to deploying and maintaining one’s online identity as if it were a branded good, with the expectation that others do the same” (2013, p.1) Alice Marwick, an important researcher for the investigation of the phenomenon, inspired by Senft’s and her own work, describes microcelebrity as:

"a mind-set and a collection of self-presentation practices endemic in social media, in which users strategically formulate a profile, reach out to followers, and reveal personal information to increase attention and thus improve their online status (Senft, 2013 as cited in Marwick 2015, p. 138)"
Another researcher that has contributed significantly to the understanding of the phenomenon, Crystal Abidin, conceptualizes internet microcelebrities as *Influencers* by highlighting their ability to monetize their content through promotional posts and advertorials. She then defines these practitioners as:

> Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetise their following by integrating “advertorials” into their blog or social media posts (Abidin, 2015, p.1)

### 2.5 Conditions of entry

Through a literature review focused on microcelebrities, I came across different types of microcelebrities. I will begin this listing, by referring to Crystal Abidin, who through her research on Singaporean female influencers, describes the different types of microcelebrities when it comes to how they manage to reach their status and become popular on social media.

Abidin presents two different types of “geneses of microcelebrification”: *the systematic* and *the diffuse* (2015 as cited in Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p.2). According to the systematic, a microcelebrity adopts a similar practice to those that the ordinary celebrities exercise, such as promoting a commercial product or appearing in different traditional media programs and shows. On the other hand, *diffuse celebrification* is used to describe the cases where a person becomes attractive and interesting to audiences before or without applying microcelebrity techniques and practices. Diffuse celebrification can occur: a) when the content presented by a microcelebrity reaches big numbers of readers *organically* and not as a result of the person’s effort to become famous; and b) by *proximate celebrity* (*Abidin 2015, as cited in* Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p.2), when a person becomes famous from relating to an already famous person, like Leandra Goodbridge as a friend of Rihanna or Alli Simpson as the sister of Cody Simpson (Marwick 2015, pp 151). And lastly, by c) *controversy* where somebody gains popularity from an unfortunate event such as sex tapes or the stories of disastrous plastic surgeries (*Abidin, 2015 as cited in* Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p.2).

Marwick also looks at the different ways through which microcelebrities reach fame and identifies two different types of microcelebrities, the *ascribed* and *achieved*. She argues that people who became famous by playing main roles in content that is not created by them, such as paparazzi shots,
memes or viral videos, belong to the category of *ascribed microcelebrity*. To give an example of that, I refer to a young employee of a store in America, who became famous after a young girl, a customer of that store, published a photo of him on Twitter with the hashtag #Alexfromtarget since she thought that he looked cute. Soon Alex managed to attract 600,000 followers without any effort, by content created from another person (Kaufman, 2014). On the other hand, those who gained fame through careful *self–representation strategies* would belong to the *achieved microcelebrity* category (2013, p. 116).

Having described the different ways in which an ordinary user can reach fame and microcelebrity status (according to Crystal Abidin and Marwick), we talk about *achieved microcelebrities* when they reach their status through *systematic celebrification*; and *ascribed microcelebrities* when they gain fame through *diffuse celebrification*, namely, forced or inspired by external actors without the personas’ awareness. Both academics focus on the intentions and the existence of microcelebrities and not of the plan or a series of practices and activities that aim to lead to such a status. This thesis will therefore delve into this new ground of study on microcelebrities.

### 2.6 Adopting a celebrity lifestyle

After distinguishing the different types of microcelebrities according to the elements that helped them reach their status, Marwick argues that while many users apply microcelebrity practices, many of the successful ones seem to share a similar phenomenon of practice. The practice of imitation of a celebrity’s lifestyle:

*Instafame demonstrates that while micro-celebrity is widely practiced, those successful at gaining attention often reproduce conventional status hierarchies of luxury, celebrity, and popularity that depend on the ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture* (2015, p 139).

With a quick review on Instagram, one can come across many ordinary people, unknown on traditional media but who are massively followed on a social media platform, who portray an exciting, extraordinary and unique lifestyle. One could therefore argue that a certain high financial status consists as another condition of entry in order for one to become a microcelebrity. This exact
fact raises questions about the universality of microcelebrity as a practice. Is the practice only affordable to wealthy people?

In another work, Marwick uses the phrase: *emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture* (2015, p.139) in order to emphasize the ability of these people to present themselves like celebrities even if they are not (yet!). Here, she explains how this affects the followers’ and viewers’ perceptions by comparing the microcelebrity practice with the marketing phenomenon of aspirational consumption:

*Microcelebrity entails a dramatic twist on aspirational consumption—the practice in which cheaper “entry-level” luxury goods marketed by brands like Chanel and Gucci are bought in an effort to evoke the aura of an unattainable brand (Welch 2002)—namely, aspirational production: microcelebrities creating content that portrays them in a high-status light, simulating the attention given to celebrities* (Marwick 2013 as cited in Marwick 2015, pp 156).

Accordingly, it seems that people become celebrities by making the audience think that they are celebrities. How do they obtain this practically? Partly, by presenting themselves as living a unique, luxurious life as the lives of famous Hollywood stars or super star athletes. Such as by, posing next to swimming pools, drinking champagne, traveling to exotic and distant destinations or appearing on fashion and media shows. As stated earlier, in the past, wealthy people like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian have managed to become celebrities by exposing their luxurious lives on traditional media, without practicing a specific occupation or showing a certain talent. Therefore, we see that self-representation through luxurious and extravagant elements consists as a practice that manages to attract the public’s interest, regardless of whether the person is already famous because of a specific skill or accomplishment. Marwick refers also to the incident when an anonymous Tumblr user asked the blog’s proprietor what is Cayla Friesz famous for? The proprietor replied that Cayla “is Instagram famous”. In other words, as Marwick stated it, she is “famous for being famous”. The accomplishment of this group of people is exactly their ability to attract the interest of numerous followers or viewers (Marwick, 2015, pp. 149).

In the previous section, I have described one of the main practices of microcelebrities: the process of exposing and presenting themselves as celebrities with the help of luxurious and extravagant elements. At the same time, while aiming to show their unique lifestyle’s assets to the audience, they
often feel the need to reassure viewers that their content consists as a pure, authentic and sincere representation of their real selves and lifestyles. In the following section, we will see how they actually invoke their authenticity and realism as perceived by scholars studying the phenomenon.

2.7 Realism- Authenticity

Research on microcelebrity has often focused on the Authenticity and Realism that microcelebrities tend to invoke for themselves. These two elements consist as important ingredients for the practitioners, who are expected from their fans to share moments of their personal lives. As Marwick states, social media and specifically Instagram, as a platform that affords a constant mobile use, encourages the publication of more authentic and truthful content in comparison with for instance, blog posts that might be rarer and carefully created (Marwick, 2015, p.157). Additionally, microcelebrities often publish longer or shorter texts to complement their images, to ensure that what the audience sees is a spontaneous representation of their real lives.

In Senft’s work, a famous Camgirl called Jennifer Ringley, in an interview she gave to ABC News, claimed that she aimed to give people a sense of realism by showing how ordinary people are in comparison with the strict curated representation of celebrities on traditional media (2008, pp16). Ringley supported the statement and agreed that she experienced the Camgirl practices, as a simple representation of their everyday life as an ordinary person. At the same time, Camgirls would claim their realism by emphasizing their difference from mainstream celebrities, while they would underline their uniqueness as women that broadcast their lives online (Senft, 2008, pp. 26). So on the one hand, they are ordinary people different from celebrities; and on the other hand, they differ from ordinary people since their broadcasted lives attract the attention of a significant number of viewers.

A few years later, one of the most popular British female micro-celebrities known as Zoella, would describe her success, as a natural process of her doing what she really enjoys without aiming for a certain number of followers or privileges (Jerslev, 2016, p.5234). She invokes her authenticity and realism by also: not cutting out small mistakes that might occur to her content; sharing difficult and very personal moments of her life and by often highlighting that she is just an amateur and not an expert when giving tips and advice. However, by viewing the carefully curated content she published, combined by the way she addresses her audience in a friendly manner, it makes it hard for one to believe that she has reached such a big number of followers without focusing on how to attract them.
Some twitter microcelebrities, in an earlier study, declared that their published content was a result of their need to truly express themselves; only the idea of performing to favor an audience, made them feeling uncomfortable. These twitter users, invoked their authenticity as their main motivation in order to create content online (Marwick and boyd, 2010).

2.8 Inauthenticity

In Mavroudis and Milne’s study, Mavroudis aimed to achieve a level of microcelebrity status himself. This was in order to get insight into the phenomenon by personally experiencing it and then, in order to access and gain the trust of other microcelebrities. Using himself and other male microcelebrities from Los Angeles as a sample, he categorically argued, that microcelebrities’ online representation differed significantly from these people’s everyday lives. Some of the participants in this study described their online activity on personal profiles as careful, time-consuming processes in order to create a product that people will enjoy and consume (2016, pp. 7-8). By comparing themselves with a product for public consumption or as a carefully crafted identity, these microcelebrities intended to separate their social media practices from what they really are, offline.

To sum up, realism and authenticity are defining characteristics and practices of microcelebrities. While some highlight the purity of their intentions to express their real selves without focusing on the benefits that come with the fame; others reveal that their online identity is a result of detailed work, rather than a display of who they really are. Some even experience and perceive the practice of microcelebrity as labour. They invest time, to create a product that they can sell to both followers and potential brands that would like to promote products through their social media profiles. In the following section, I will present the baclground on microcelebrities who perceive their status as labour, in order to better understand their intentions, struggles and feelings behind their status.

2.9 Feeling of obligation and labour

During her research on Camgirls, Senft decided to become Camgirl herself, to investigate the phenomenon with the insight of a practitioner. While she started gaining the interest of a number of viewers, she felt obliged to create content that would entertain and be worthy of their time (2008). She correlated this sense of obligation with what Arlie Hochschild termed as “emotional labour”.

Hochschild recognized the dramatic elements of some occupations like that of flight attendants, where a passenger is the audience, the work environment is the stage and the worker is an actor playing a specific role in order to satisfy the audience’s needs and expectations (as cited in Senft, 2008). At this point it is easy to understand how the presence of an audience can influence the actors’, camgirls’ or microcelebrities’ performance and practices, as people tend to adjust their behaviour depending on different occasions.

To give an example of how microcelebrity is perceived as a labour, Senft refers to the case of “Vera Little”: a Canadian stripper and art student that became partly disabled from breast implants during her camgirl activities. “Vera Little” decided to expose herself in front of a live camera in order to promote her work as a stripper (before she became partly disabled) while later on she functioned as an artistic persona with modified appearance. Accordingly, the audience of “Vera Little” was divided to a) people that were curious about her website and b) people that perceived her performance as another type of body modification. Senft explains that “Vera Little” was being consumed as a product, that would automatically characterize her viewers as participants of a counterculture movement (2008, pp50). “Vera little” noticed an increasing part of her viewers demanded sexual content from her and that they were actually more willing to pay and support her page than the those who were interested in the artistic aspect of her content. The demands of the audience were pushing her to follow different directions than what she had intended and it didn’t take long until this led her to quit her activities and start a new website that was dedicated to her art and ways of working.

In their study on the microcelebrity phenomenon, Mavroudis and Milne conducted interviews, in order to understand and reveal to the public, valuable information about how these public personas perceive their status, activities and fan base (2016). Some of the participants confirm the feeling of obligation to give something back to the audience, in exchange for their viewership, engagement or interaction. Aaron Rhodes, one of the interviewees stated:

(…) I mean I have 230.000 people who want to see what I’m doing, so it’s like you let them down if you don’t post anything. Especially if they know you’re on that trip and they don’t see anything from it… it’s like you owe it to them in a way.

Another participant of the same interviews seemed to relate to the case of “Vera little” since he expresses frustration when his fans show bigger interest and engagement in his “shirtless selfies” than
his art (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016, p.7). The famous blogger and microcelebrity “Zoella” through the work of Anne Jerslev, also reveals her feelings of obligation and the pressure she is under in order to create attractive and interesting content that answers to the wishes of her audience (2016, p.5244).

Going back to Mavroudis & Milne, the participants of the study explain that their practices are more consistent with a type of labour than a hobby; even though the two researchers recognize the fact that the microcelebrities of the study have managed to monetize part of their activities through promotion and advertorials; they define this kind of a labour as an immaterial one (2016, p.7) that consists of self-promotion activities with the increase in fame as the main purpose. Senft referred to the same activities of creating an online attractiveness for their public identities as a “form of emotional labour” (2008, p.8). In the next section, I will approach a popular practice within microcelebrity that confirms its perception as a type of labour.

2.10 Promotion

A practice that confirms both the status of the microcelebrity and justifies the perception of it as labour or as an actual job, is the practice of promotion. With focus on this practice, scholars and those referred to as microcelebrities or influencers, focus their ability to promote products and services in order to influence the audience to purchase them. According to Crystal Abdin:

> Everyday, ordinary internet users who accumulate a relatively large following in blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in “digital” and “physical” spaces, and monetize their following by integrating “advertorials” into their blog or social media posts and making physical appearances at events (2015, pp1).

Advertising or promotion through social media, are quite new practices and therefore it is not quite clear to both the practitioners and the public how to properly create or identify them. According to research that was conducted at the end of 2017 from The Consumer Authority in Norway: “four out of five commercial posts published by Norway’s most popular influencers either lacked labeling or were labeled inadequately”. In order to control these promotional activities, governments around the world have created regulations and laws that apply specifically to advertising on social media. The consumer Authority in Norway known as Forbrukertilsynet have created a detailed guide for 2018,
when it comes to how users should label their promotional posts on social media accounts. According to this guide, any kind of content that promotes a brand, product or service, for which the owner of a social media account is getting paid or enjoying benefits from, should be identifiable by the declaration of advertising, sponsorship etc.

In this study, the new guide for advertising on social media will be taken into account when it comes to classifying which posts are promotional and which are not. The fact that the majority of influencers in Norway failed to sufficiently state the sponsorship behind their post in 2017, predicts how this classification can be problematic or unrealistic. Having clarified this microcelebrity practice, I will refer to another practice/value of the microcelebrity that has been observed and analysed from many of the scholars that are looking into the same phenomenon, namely, intimacy.

2.11 Intimacy

A quite common topic between researchers of the microcelebrity phenomenon, intimacy, has to do with the relationships and the “distance” between the practitioner and their audience. While many scholars are interested in writing about the different ways through which microcelebrities aim to create intimacy and interact with their audience; (Jerslev 2016, Senft 2008; Marwick and boyd 2011) they also highlight the falsity of the familiarity and proximity of this relationship.

As already mentioned, there are a number of big-scale celebrity names that are known for responding to some of the comments and messages posted on their social media accounts. Senft argues that fame within the web is based on relations that a persona has built with the audience “rather than an enforced separation from them” (2008, pp 26).

Social media is perceived as more personal and intimate media compared to traditional media, chatrooms or forums, since mostly they are created and curated by the owner of the account (boyd & Ellison, 2008, pp219). Marshall points out the exact proximity and intimacy of celebrity practices on social media as narrowing the gap between traditional celebrities and fans or followers (as cited in Jerslev 2016, pp 5235). The perception of social media as a more interactive medium combined by the proximity and authenticity that some microcelebrities invoke for themselves, create a fruitful environment for more intimate relationships.”
Marwick and boyd aim to distinguish these type of relationships from the type of relationship that in most cases develops between celebrities and their fans, known as “parasocial interaction” (2011). Horton and Wohl described a “parasocial interaction” as the type of relationship according to which a person develops emotions, feelings and interest towards a media persona (predominantly); yet the persona doesn’t acknowledge that person’s existence (1956, as cited in Marwick, 2015). Marwick and boyd, while investigating the microcelebrity practices of celebrities on Twitter argued that: “Social media transforms the parasocial into the potentially social and increase the emotional ties between celebrity and fan” (2011 as cited in Marwick, 2015, p.139). In their study, celebrities aimed for a sense of intimacy with their audience by revealing moments of their private and personal lives (2011). In more recent research, Marwick refers to some microcelebrities and celebrities that seem to interact with a small part of the audience in order to create a sense of intimacy and accessibility (2015). Additionally, since responding to all fans’ messages would take too much time and effort from these personas, they try to maintain an intimate type of relationship with the audience by addressing and thanking it as a whole (2015, p.152).

Crystal Abidin in one of her recent studies focuses on the different types of intimacy that can develop between Singaporean female microcelebrities and their audience; while at the same time she distinguishes this kind of relationship she contextualizes as perceived Interconnectedness from “parasocial interactions”. Through her study, she identifies four different types of intimacy depending on the ways it is encouraged or the motivations of the practitioners. She refers to: a) “reciprocal intimacy” in order to describe a type of relationship in which a microcelebrity dedicates time and effort in order to respond and answer the audience’s comments, messages etc; b) “disclosive intimacy” when microcelebrities share their personal information and moments of their private lives, in order to create a sense of intimacy; “commercial intimacy” when microcelebrities attempt to benefit from their relationships with their audience from for example: their emotional support or feedback; and c) to “Interactive Intimacy” according to which microcelebrities invite their audience to see and meet them in offline events they take part in. Finally, Abidin argues that the relationship between microcelebrities and their audience, contextualizes as perceived Interconnectedness is interactive and democratic and therefore differs significantly from parasocial interactions.

Anne Jerslev also describes and analyses the ways through which the microcelebrity and blogger Zoella, encourages a sense of intimacy. She refers to the ways the blogger uses specific discourse
elements like the personal pronoun, in order to create a more familiar and intimate atmosphere; as well as gratitude messages, questions and requests that directly address her fans or friends, as she often refers to them (2016, p. 5242). She further supports that microcelebrity practices have influenced the relationships between celebrities and fans as well, in a way that “celebrity is no longer an exclusive phenomenon defined by distance in space and scarcity in time” (2016, p. 5246).

Through these different studies, microcelebrities seem to apply a number of different practices in order to create a sense of intimacy and present themselves as friendly and accessible to a certain degree. This type of relationship has been characterised as more intimate and direct than the “parasocial interactions” (Abidin, 2016; Marwick & boyd, 2011) between celebrities and fans, before the social media era. On the other hand, Mavroudis and Milne highlight the inaccessibility of microcelebrities that seem to only respond to other microcelebrities (2016, p.5). Marwick (2015) and Jerslev (2016) refers to the efforts of microcelebrities towards more intimate relationships, by recognising that the actual direct interactions are limited; and they are replaced by “warm” messages that address the audience as a whole.

The extent or inconsistency of the level of intimacy, proximity and accessibility between microcelebrities and fans, can often create misunderstandings, expectations or even disappointments. A very characteristic example of such a case is the incident between Cayla Friesz, a young microcelebrity and an anonymous follower. The follower wrote a long text complaining about how Cayla doesn’t spend enough time interacting or giving something back to her followers, in exchange for their enthusiastic dedication and support (as cited in Marwick 2015, 149). The complexity of this new type of relationship between microcelebrities and their online fans could consist as an interesting topic for future research since it is yet to be researched by scholars in the field.

To sum up, in this section, I approached and analysed microcelebrity practices that aim to obtain intimacy between the practitioners and their audience. While scholars argue that this relationship is a different one, a more intimate and interactive one than the relationship of ordinary celebrities and their fans; they seem at the same time to recognise the limitations of this partly “intimate” relationships. This study doesn’t investigate the relationship between microcelebrities and their audience, since the audience’s inputs are not included in the sample; but through this section, I will be able to identify practices that aim towards this sense of intimacy that other researchers have identified.
3 Methodology

According to Deborah Gabriel, Professor of Media and Communication from Bournemouth University, the term ‘methodology’ refers to a researcher’s defense of the use of specific tools when conducting research (2011). As such, this chapter, explores the chosen methods for the investigation of the phenomenon of the microcelebrity; as well as the justification and defense of those choices.

After a short introduction, a presentation of the main research techniques of the study will be described and qualitative content analysis is presented as the research tool that emerged from a quantitative method. In turn, I will defend the reasons why I decided to conduct this research in this way. The chapter will continue with the description of the processes of sampling, the choice of a single social medium, data collection and how pilot research was conducted. By the end of the chapter, I defend the research’s quality and respect to the ethical guidelines and regulations according to the institutions for research in Norway.

3.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of the microcelebrity has been approached and explored by numerous academics worldwide. Yet, their primary interest focused on: their ways of communication and use of linguistics (Page R., 2012); their relationship with the audience (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Marwick 2015; Senft 2008), the ways through which the practitioners perform as celebrities (Jerslev, 2016, Marwick, 2015); the practitioners’ personal experience of the practice (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016) and microcelebrity’s conditions of entry (Abidin , 2015).

This research has significantly contributed to building an understanding around the phenomenon of the microcelebrity by focusing on these different aspects; namely, that some of their practices have been identified and analysed. The necessity of in depth analyses specific elements has led to a deep understanding of some of the aspects surrounding the phenomenon, while other aspects are yet to be investigated. While one can now comprehend, for example, the relationship between microcelebrity practitioners and the audience or the ways through which they communicate through social media; it is not yet clear what the main practices of these social media personas are. For instance, what kind of content would a viewer or a follower come across on such a profile? As a result, this research aims to delve into new territory and identify, analyse and present, microcelebrity practices as observed and
viewed from practitioners within Norway. The specification of the Norwegian region allows for a more thorough focus within the given scope of this thesis and the Master’s focus.

In order to shed light on a variety of different practices of microcelebrities, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of Instagram posts; observed, coded and categorized into different elements. This study focuses on microcelebrity practitioners that fit the overall category rather than other types that are characterized by a precise theme (like comedy or video games). Within this chapter, I present the methods used and defend their appropriateness by explaining the reasons behind each decision, beginning with the research technique.

3.2 Content analysis

This thesis applies a qualitative content analysis since it aims to investigate a phenomenon in depth rather than solely relying on quantitative measuring, or categorizing and presenting the frequency of particular elements. I refer to content analysis as a technique that applies to both qualitative and quantitative research. After giving some background information about the technique, its history and use, I will explain the decision behind choosing the qualitative approach in order to examine the phenomenon of the microcelebrity. According to Professor of Media from Cleveland State University Kimberly, A. Neuendorf:

“Content analysis may be briefly defined as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (2002, p.1)

While a message can be any type of communication such as texts, recorded verbal conversations, films, advertising spots, pictures, linguistic elements etc. The technique was developed in order for social and media phenomena to be explored objectively, independent from the researcher’s perceptions and opinions. The method became widely popular during the beginning of the twentieth century, due to an increased interest towards media effects; like the exploration of the Nazi’s propaganda (Schreier M., 2014) and the analysis of communication in movies (Macnamara, J. 2005).

Not long after the publication of the first handbook of content analysis from Berelson in 1952, Kracauer, a German media and sociologist expert emphasized the complexity of some messages and the need for a method that would explore the underlying meanings behind them, instead of just counting the frequencies of specific elements (as cited in Schreier 2014, p.2). Kracauer therefore
introduced a research technique that wouldn’t aim to measure or present the frequency of certain aspects of a phenomenon; but its goal would be to investigate the phenomenon and the meanings around it in depth. Since then, researchers divide content analysis into qualitative and quantitative, depending on their approach for investigation of a phenomenon.

Although both methods require the systematic description of messages, through detailed and exclusive coding, only qualitative content analysis can be used when the researcher wants to gather in-depth data and export the meanings that are hidden behind the messages (2004, pp.5-6). Schreier points out that there is a difference between the methods when it comes to presenting the findings as well, she argues that through quantitative content analysis, a researcher is simply collecting the data and hasn’t analysed and interpreted it yet. On the other hand, through qualitative content analysis, a researcher has collected and prepared all the main parts of the actual analysis of the data (2014, p.16).

3.2.1 Qualitative content analysis

Through qualitative content analysis, the researcher aims to code, list and categorize the data in order to be able to interpret the messages and draw conclusions in relation to their meaning in to specific fields or to the society and the world generally (Schreier, 2004). A classic example for the application of a qualitative content analysis is Shannon’s analysis of a cartoon that appeared in a newspaper with the name Little Orphan Annie (as cited in Schreier, 2004). After Shannon and another coder investigated the content of the cartoon for two years; they coded and categorized the content in relation to a number of values that were promoted and neglected as underlying messages. According to her categorization, elements like orphans or hard working people were valued positively while lazy people or anything relevant to the Soviet Union were evaluated negatively (Shannon, 1954 as cited in Schreier). The use of qualitative content analysis in this case proved to be a significant method to analyse content in the context and meaning of its time.

While still thinking about the right method that would help me investigate the phenomenon of microcelebrity and answer my research question, I was considering a mixed method combined by qualitative and quantitative content analysis. While working with the actual data, I realized that the frequency of certain elements and practices didn’t really contribute to the answer of my research question. What I intended to explore, were the different practices and how they were presented to the
audience on Instagram. Therefore, I decided to move away from quantitative descriptions of the data collected and focus on analyzing these practices and their meanings.

In order to apply this research technique to the data relevant to microcelebrities, I reviewed the content several times, in order to predict potential categories or the next phases of the process. In order for the content to be analysed, each single post has been coded as a single case. Through the codification I came up with a system through which, one can understand both who the post belongs to; as well as, the time when the post was published. To give an example of how this appears on an IBM SPSS file (see figure 1 in Appendix A), the case with the number 51 would correspond to the most recent post published by the first persona (and number 1 corresponds to the oldest post). After the posts were coded as single cases, I started predicting categories that would divide the variables into different subcategories. For example, Format, Content, Product, Caption, Intimacy, Fashion, Luxury, Beauty, Traveling, Party, Shopping, Brands and Partners (see figure 2,3 in Appendix A). In the category format for instance, the posts are divided according to the format of the post. In this category, a post will be coded as 1 if the post consists of a photo, 2 if it shows a video and 3 if it is just the bio of the Instagram account (see figure in Appendix A). While the coding and categorizations were adjusted and edited several times during the processing and analysis of the data, a significant part was already predicted from the early stages of data processing.

According to Schreier, qualitative content analysis is characterized by its ability to reduce the volume of the data, by its flexibility and systematization (2014, p.2). In the next paragraphs I will argue that my method was characterized by those 3 main factors.

In order to manipulate the data collected, I had to code every single element that I perceived as relevant to my topic and research question and create categories in a way that were clear and exhaustive. Through this process, I had to change the categories many times since different elements could overlap in two different categories or I would figure out that there was a need for the creation of a new category in order to properly divide the different aspects and elements. While for instance, I had divided the category of promotion into three main categories: paid promotion, voluntary promotion and promotion of own work; I found out that some of the posts revealed a combination of two or even all three different types of promotion. Therefore, I made sure to include three extra
subcategories with all the possible combinations of promotion, for example: voluntary promotion and paid promotion, etc.

To code my data and categorize it in a systematic way, I decided to use the program IBM SPSS Statistics that allows for the storage and archiving of big sets of data. In addition, to avoid misunderstandings and confusion in regard to the categories and their complexity, I created detailed lists of elements that would automatically lead me to a specific category and code. Elements in Instagram posts that included, for example: champagne bottles, diamonds and swimming pools were categorized in the category of Luxury. In fact, some of these lists will be presented as tables in the analysis chapter. After testing out my codification and categorization through the pilot research and later, by others reviewing them, I can argue that I worked systematically.

After the data was coded and categorized, there was a need to map the meanings between the different categories and subcategories. To give an example, elements like holidays in exotic destinations, swimming pools, jewelry and champagne consist according to my perception of elements of a luxurious lifestyle and therefore they could be analysed together. Through this reductive process, a researcher makes decisions behind the connection of each element in order to present the findings in a consistent and meaningful way (Schreier, 2004).

Schreier stresses the flexibility of the coding process in qualitative content analysis. She states that the codification and categorization of data depends on related theories but mainly on the nature of the data itself (2004, p.2). A researcher therefore can be guided through associated concepts and theories but he/she has the freedom to adjust the categories and codes in a way that represents and suits the collected data (2014, p.3). Since not all practices I came across in the data, have been explored and analysed by other academics, I created a list of categories inspired by the nature of the data and its meanings. To give an example, while the category that investigates the way the practitioners address the audience was predicted and inspired from relevant studies (Marwick & boyd 2010, Jerslev A. 2016); categories that aimed to distinctively emphasize, for instance, beauty adjustments as forms of self-representation, were created due to being inspired by the data. These have therefore not been expressed through a literature review but adhered to Schreier’s flexibility in relation to qualitative content analysis.
This study’s focus is to investigate in depth the microcelebrity practices of a sample of Norwegian practitioners as observed and analysed through their Instagram posts. While a quantitative approach could contribute significantly to the understanding around these practices, for example, by measuring their frequency; due to time limitations I decided to prioritize the focus on identifying and analysing the practices of different practitioners and the meaning behind them; as this is a research domain that has not been analysed before. Given more time and scope, the quantitative study of Instagram frequency would be valuable, however not integral to the results of the research question, at hand.

### 3.3 Sample

To test and identify whether there was a compatible sample for this study, I used, with access through the University of Oslo a database that functions as an archive for Norwegian press: Atext Retriever database. My approach was to type in potential key-words and phrases that would reveal actual names and information about microcelebrity practitioners, such as; microcelebrity, famous on social media (kjendis på sosial media), Instafame and social media celebrity. Since little to no data was present through these keywords, it became clear that even though the phenomenon attracts the interest of more and more academics and researchers; the press wasn’t familiar with the term of microcelebrity as yet. Additionally, the fact that I have been searching for an English language term in Norwegian newspapers could also be one of the reasons why the database didn’t show me relevant results.

Since most practitioners maintain personal blogs, I began by searching for relevant blogs until I found articles with Norway’s top bloggers through the key-word toppbloggerne (top bloggers). Outside this specific article, the same names appear multiple times in different articles, confirming partly the practitioners’ establishment and level of success. After a short review of the online content published on different platforms by these personas, the microcelebrity status was confirmed. As mentioned in the introduction, I consider the sample of this study as compatible to microcelebrities, since in agreement to Marwick’s definition (2015) their content consists of self-representation practices on social media. At the same time, in agreement to Abidin’s definition on microcelebrities who she conceptualizes as influencers, the practitioners manage to monetize their content through advertorials (2016).
The practitioners’ status as microcelebrities was also justified by their massive following (Abidin, 2016) and their likes on social media accounts. At this point, it is important to emphasize that not all bloggers are microcelebrities. These bloggers can be considered as microcelebrities since their content consists of (...) self-presentation practices that (...) reach out to followers, and reveal personal information to increase attention and thus improve their online status (as cited in Marwick, 2015) in comparison with blogs that do not focus on the representation and promotion of their owners. In this case, a blog consists as another channel for these microcelebrities, to publish through creative ways, and more extensive posts than what is afforded on social media applications.

During the phase of data collection, I contacted the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), and was informed that the sample and the way in which it is treated and presented had to change in order to agree to the regulations and ethical guidelines on research in Norway. As such, in the next section, I will explain the reasons behind the anonymization of the data, as well as, why the number of microcelebrities was decreased from the original nine to seven.

3.4 Data Collection

I had concluded that a sample of 9 microcelebrities was sufficient since as I have already mentioned, researchers have managed to investigate the same phenomenon with smaller samples; plus I wasn’t coming up with new categories or new aspects of the phenomenon after I reviewed half of the sample. Later on, I had to further narrow down their content in order for it to be manageable in relation to the time and scope limitations. By narrowing down the sample, I would get the chance to look more closely at their practices and analyse the meanings around them as well.

This brings me to my sampling procedures when it comes to the number of posts and the ways through which I observed and worked with them. When it comes to the number of posts that I would need to conduct this research, I needed to keep in mind the time and scope limitations. I suggested to examine around 450 posts with the flexibility to increase the number if I came across new categories during the process. I aimed to examine 51 posts from each persona except for one, whom only had 37 uploaded posts on her /his Instagram profile at that time when the data was collected. From these 51 posts from each practitioner, 50 were ordinary uploads of photos or videos; while one of them also consisted of the profile picture combined with the “bio” as a caption. The sample is therefore limited
to the bios, videos or photos uploaded, plus the captions. It does not take into account comments from third parties.

Keeping in mind that an analysis can be generalizable to a certain degree if “the units (…) have (…) equal chance to be selected” (Neuendorf, 2002, p.83) I chose a simple random sampling by using a random number generator that I found on the internet titled ‘Randomizer.org’.

After counting and allocating a number to each persona’s posts, I set the randomizer to process 2 different sets of random numbers. The 2nd set would be an emergency set in case there was a need for more posts in the research. The first set of numbers were arithmetically sorted for two reasons: firstly, in order for it to be easier to find the next post after counting from the previous one; and secondly, so that a smaller number would reveal an older post and a bigger number would correspond to a more recent one. Since these types of Instagram accounts are continuously being updated with more posts or deleting older ones, I considered the last posts as those that appeared on July 5, 2017.

Here is an example of a set of numbers from a profile that consist of 1904 posts:

1 Set of 50 Unique Numbers
Range: From 1 to 1,904 – Sorted from Least to Greatest

Set #1
25, 83, 98, 101, 140, 214, 243, 248, 294, 308, 310, 414, 463, 575, 587, 710, 734, 800, 825, 875, 994, 1008, 1030, 1037, 1038, 1093, 1106, 1183, 1184, 1208, 1228, 1231, 1271, 1292, 1361, 1376, 1421, 1434, 1439, 1451, 1462, 1531, 1535, 1644, 1712, 1834, 1843, 1854, 1901, 1903

Here, 1904 is the most recent one, or the one that appears first, after their bio on that exact date. With the random numbers given, I found the posts that corresponded to each number and created an archive of posts divided by blogger, using Microsoft Office Word documents. By doing this I could at any time go and look at the posts again without having to once again count down from the first post ever published. Plus, I could still access the posts in case they had been deleted.
3.5 Ethical guidelines and regulations

An important factor for a researcher to keep in mind, and to guarantee throughout the process, is the research’s ethics. No matter how important the goals and wishes of a study, the researcher is obliged to follow established guidelines that guarantee the integrity and inviolability of any participants or third parties involved in the research (Etikkom, 2016). Since my research takes place in Norway and concerns Norwegian microcelebrities I had to make sure that all the procedures take into account the relevant law and regulations surrounding research in Norway. Therefore, I consulted the guidelines from the Norwegian “National Research Ethical Committee for Social Science and Humanities” (NESH), 2014, regarding research on the internet; and the regulation of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) about projects that process personal data.

From the beginning of the study, there have been concerns about accessing and gaining consent from the investigated microcelebrities. If you are to consider their level of fame and exposure, which is not only their personal social media accounts, but also present on traditional media programs (like TV shows) and articles dedicated to them; then this contributes to the notion that these microcelebrities act like public personas and their content can be considered to be in the public domain. According to point 8 of NESH’s Guidelines, a researcher can use content from an open forum without the necessity of getting the parties’ consent (Ethical Guidelines for Internet Research, 2014). In turn, we are working with open and ‘public’ profiles that contain over a hundred thousand followers, I therefore considered these open profiles as open forums and as such, I didn’t need to get the consent of the subjects of the research. Yet, in the same guidelines, as I looked more closely, NESH emphasizes the complexity and difficulty of defining what is public and what is private on the internet. To give an example of this confusion, the guidelines argue that some people publish content on the internet without acknowledging the publicity of such an act (2014, p.4). The realization of such a confusion, after I had already collected and started analysing the data, was maybe the biggest issue and problem that this study faced. To clarify, I contacted the The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), by email and notified them of the topic and purpose of the study. In this correspondence I informed them that I had already collected the data and I asked them if I would need to obtain the consent of the parties that were examined. NSD found the fact that my project hadn’t been earlier reported, unfortunate; and advised me to get the participants consent or to anonymize the data.
As a result of this, I reached out to all nine participants through emails, informing them about the topic, goals and purpose of the research; their role in it and the ways with which I was going to use their content (see figure 6 Appendix A). Ultimately, I kindly requested their consent. From the 9 microcelebrities contacted, I only received a response from the public relations’ manager representing two of the microcelebrities. The manager informed me that they are not willing to participate in the research in any way since they are trying to keep their content as private as possible. Despite being followed by thousands of followers and their participation in traditional media programs, according to NESH guidelines and NSD, their rights remain and ultimately, they are in charge of their own content and control of who can use them and for what reasons. Therefore, I firstly excluded the two women who didn’t want to participate in this study and decided to anonymize the remaining data after NSD’s instructions. According to the email from NSD (see figure 7 on Appendix A), the collecting and maintaining of information on microcelebrities on my personal computer, was against the regulations on the protection of personal data and it had to be deleted. After I deleted all the content that had been saved in different archives, I proceeded to anonymize the data and all information regarding the microcelebrities. I did this to the point that nothing would lead directly to them or make them identifiable. The anonymization didn’t cause serious problems to the research, since I could still have access to (most of) the material through their public Instagram accounts. Yet, now I could not present the analysis and presentation of the findings, using a screenshot of a photo or a video post. As an alternative strategy I will aim to support my arguments by describing the posts and still protecting the anonymity of the public personas.

At this point I would like to emphasize the importance of carefully reading the laws, regulations and ethical guidelines of both institutions; and the necessity of taking a test to figure out if a project needed to be notified to NSD. Especially when it comes to research on the internet and new internet phenomena such as microcelebrity, the early contact and communication with NSD, before even the research has begun, is strongly recommended.

Having explained how the sampling procedures were conducted and the reasons behind the alteration of the sample and the ways that it is presented in this research, I will now go on to explaining my decision to focus on Instagram from the variety of social media available.
3.6 Instagram

After having concluded to specify Norwegian microcelebrity practitioners, the sample had to be further narrowed down to, firstly, a particular number of posts and secondly, a single medium in order for it to be manageable within the time limitations and to analyse the practices in depth. Through a quick overview of the published content of the practitioners on different platforms, namely; Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, websites and content published on internet editions of traditional media; I noticed that the same content, sometimes slightly varied was published and shared on many different platforms. If a practitioner, for example, had recently purchased a car, she/he would post a photo of it and a few words on Instagram and Facebook, perhaps a video on Youtube and a long text combined with a photo on her/his personal blog. This fact, in combination with the time and scope limitations led by this study, made the conclusion to focus on content published on only one platform, valid.

Practical issues, for example due to my language skills in Norwegian, led me to decide not to focus on blogs or videos that may contain long text or speech in the Norwegian language. At the same time, I did not want to focus exclusively on discourse elements of practitioners, as many scholars have already been interested in this discussion up until now (Marwick and boyd 2011; Senft 2008; Jerslev 2016). In turn, the focus should be on the combinations of shorter discourse elements and the representation of those through images or short videos. By focusing on shorter posts, one gets the chance to explore a wider set of data and reveal more practices rather than investigate in depth a smaller number of practices.

Having chosen to use a photo/video-based media with little text, my next question was which of the two popular media platforms; Instagram or Facebook, was most viable? Having compared the activity on Facebook and Instagram, I observed that the bloggers managed to get more followers, likes and comments on Instagram therefore, I considered this as the optimum medium. In turn, Facebook seemed to function mainly as a place to share links from an external post, for example a link to a post published on their blog. While, at the same time the posts published on Facebook were not as enthusiastically engaging with the audience, compared to on Instagram. As a result, I decided to focus on microcelebrity practices as they appear and develop exclusively on Instagram. For the most part, Instagram seems to function as their main channel in combination with their blogs or websites. From these Instagram accounts, the data consists of photos or videos and their captions plus the general description of their profile, known as their bio. Since the focus is on the microcelebrities’ practices
and not on the viewers’ or followers’ opinions, behaviors etc., the comments and interactions from 3rd actors will not be considered in this study.

3.7 Pilot research

In order to try out the research methods, identify potential errors in advance and to develop techniques to work with the actual data, I conducted a pilot research. With a sample of the most recent 9 Instagram posts that appeared from June 27, 2017 before 12:30pm, I chose 3 random personas from the chosen sample. I began to work on the data, by starting to code the different elements and create categories. Since it was during the summer period, most of the posts were around the same theme-topic: summer, swimming costumes, swimming pools and so forth. The sample could not be generalized by any means since it was also published and created in the same short period, as such, the pilot research was not affected from the uniformity of the posts, since the goal was to think and design effective methods in which I could examine the content and not the content itself. What I tried to achieve through this process was to create a prototype of the final method when it comes to technical parts. This included questions like; how to code each unit, what types of variables are there, what should I name them, and how to create exclusive categories.

After a short manipulation of the data within IBM SPSS, I came up with potential categories for my main research, including: Format, Content, Product, Caption, Intimacy, Fashion, Luxury, Beauty, Traveling, Party, Shopping, Brands and Partners (see 1.1 appendix). I noticed then that for some variables (categories) it was very easy to choose a value (subcategories). Through the category format for instance, the different posts could be divided according to if they consist of a video, a photo or a bio. For other variables though, like beauty and fashion, finding the right value for each post was quite challenging. Do these microcelebrities promote fashion elements or beauty related products or services? Which exact elements reveal a promotion and what is just a representation of their everyday routines?

It was then understood that in order to categorize some posts, I would have to agree on specific factors that would automatically reveal the right category or value for them. As a result, I made lists of elements that would always lead one to a specific category; for example, champagne and diamonds would always mean luxury.
After these steps, I felt confident in my concrete plan to start working with a real sample. I understood that while I would have to work with a larger set of data, I would probably come up with more categories and many changes along the way. Therefore, I maintained a diary in order to keep track of the decisions behind each adjustment and change. The pilot research did indeed function as a prototype and gave me many ideas about practical issues, challenges and potential solutions.

3.8 Processing and analysis of data

According to Holme and Solvang (1996), different forms of communication, such as texts or Instagram posts, as is the case in this thesis, contain representations of various phenomena. By collecting content, coding it and categorizing such content, a researcher can contribute to a better and more holistic understanding of the phenomenon for investigation.

The collection of data and its’ analysis have been developing in parallel. Through the data collection, I had the opportunity to see all the bloggers’ posts that helped me shape impressions and ideas about what consists as a practice and how is it presented through their profiles. I decided then, to maintain a thesis diary, and write down notes and observations that would help with writing the analysis chapter. After an overview of the 343 Instagram posts, I created a map of different repeated themes or elements such as: luxury brands, human relations, animals, food, promotion and more categories that will be presented in details in the analysis chapter. The names and the level of specification of these categories had to change many times until they could be exclusive, so that each post could belong to only one of the variable’s value. With the help of IBM Statistics, I managed to systemically work with the data in order to be able to present to the reader a variety of microcelebrity practices.

3.9 Research Quality

A research’ quality is traditionally defined by its level of validity and reliability and generalizability. Although these factors are more commonly used in quantitative methods, they are still important to qualitative research (Østbye et al., 2007) that aims to investigate a phenomenon through a more scientific approach. When it comes to content analysis, another measurement that needs to be taken into consideration is “the fine distinction” between the categories that is known within the academic world as 'precision' (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 113). In the following sections I will argue and explain my research’s qualities when it comes to validity, generalizability, precision and reliability.
3.9.1 Reliability

According to Neuendorf, reliability is achieved in a project when a measuring process produces the same results every time it is being tested, by simultaneously taking into account the high chance of errors that can occur (2002, p111-2). Østbye et al. argue that in order to achieve a level of reliability, one should consider testing the researches’ design through the practices of reproducibility and intersubjectivity (2007). Researchers and academics tend to test their research quality by altering some key features and/or repeating them. For example, some choose to apply the research on a different sample of the population while some others recruit other researchers in order to repeat the processes. Through this testing, they can identify possible errors and face the efficiency of the tools, method, and analytical process chosen. A research that is characterized by a low degree of reliability will not be able to answer the research question accurately or shed light into the examining phenomenon. A researcher that wishes to investigate phenomenon scientifically and contribute to its better explanation, should strive for the slightest possible degree of errors and uncertainties.

In turn, I will describe the ways through which I aimed to guarantee a decent level of reliability for this project. To begin with, I described exactly how I came across the sample. Even though the names of the participants in the research are anonymous in respect to NSD regulations and NESH’s ethical guidelines, I argue that anyone can find a comparable sample if they type in the key-words I used (toppblogerne, blogger, kjendis etc) and search for results between the years 2013 and 2018 in the database of Atext Retriever.

At the same time, all microcelebrities reviewed before deciding on the sample; maintain public/open accounts, open to anyone with an Instagram account. Accessing, therefore relevant content, would not be an issue for anyone that would like to attempt the chosen measuring procedure. On the other hand though, while six of the seven microcelebrities studied, have left their old posts, not deleting the posts that were randomly included in this study; one of the participants has updated their Instagram account continuously over the last 6 months, deleting all older posts and publishing new ones. In order to be able to reach the deleted content of this microcelebrity, I maintained an archive of descriptions of their posts as viewed at the time that data was being “collected” in order to be able to remember this data when I need to present it in the analysis chapter.
The fact that the majority of the participants don’t change the content of their Instagram accounts (they just keep uploading new posts) is another factor that guarantees the reliability of the method. The fact that one of the participants does update their profile though, threatens the reliability of the method on this participant. Since, the future content of that specific Instagram account could reveal quite different practices than those found during my data collection. Having archived their data, there was no other way to work towards reliability in this matter. In this research, the holistic update and change of one of the Instagram accounts influenced only one of the categories that had to do with the microcelebrities’ early posts.

When it comes to the coding and categorization of the data, reliability was ensured almost automatically. While some categories were obvious when categorizing if a post belonged to a certain value or another; some others were dependent on the researcher’s subjectivity. To give an example: Is a post that I consider promoting a sexy appearance or culture; perceived the same way by others? By sampling and testing categories with two random people from different educational backgrounds, I understood that in order to make the categories as exclusive as possible, I needed to come up with detailed descriptions of what each category meant and what it doesn’t mean (see Appendix A1 and A2.) These descriptions were not decided or completed from the beginning of the analysis. It has been a linear process through which elements were included and excluded until there were not new subcategories or confusions about where each post should belong.

Through all these processes, and particularly the lists that one can see in the analysis chapter, I argue that my research procedures are reliable to a significant and measurable extent. If someone aims to test the quality of my measuring tools, he/she will find exhaustive descriptions of categories and their values that will lead him/her to quite similar findings, all the while considering the chance of errors. Despite my specific data being anonymised and aggregated, it is possible to reproduce the study using a search of keywords and identifying a sample. The study therefore meets the reliability factor.

3.9.2 Validity

Another important factor when it comes to a research’s quality concerns is validity. Do the measuring procedures manage to measure what was first desired? Were the procedures efficiently designed in order to be able to answer the research question(s)? According to Neuendorf, validity plays a
significant role when measuring the quality of a research, since it reveals how well one achieves the ability to identify the intended concepts through the process (2002, p. 12).

There are many different ways to measure the validity of a study. Some of them are applied almost automatically by the research. Through face validity for example, the researcher aims to test his/her methods by trying to be as objective as possible and question his/her decisions; or by showing the measurements to others without revealing the purpose of the research and then, expect them to understand it (Neuendorf 2002, p.115). In conjunction with data manipulation, I sought out the advice or the confirmation of three other people (my supervisor included) in order to confirm that I was actually creating measuring tools that would answer my research question.

While it was challenging to identify and conclude on what could constitute a practice; once they were identified it was quite easy to distinguish them from each other through the IBM SPSS statistics.

Starting with the sample, I chose to examine some of the biggest Norwegian microcelebrities in an effort to be able to describe how the practice was applied within the Nordic region and more specifically, in Norway. I aimed to choose a random sample of their posts, sorted from the oldest to the most recent, in order to avoid specific time tendencies, to have a more holistic view of their content, to be able to observe their development and to compare practices from the early stages to after they have reached a certain level of fame, as the number of their followers reveal.

Through the data collection I came across all the published Instagram posts of my sample, several times (approximately 3000 posts per persona) and therefore I am confident that I have managed to describe and present the main practices without overlooking an important practice.

At the same time, the coding, categorization and decisions on what constitutes a microcelebrity practice, are highly affected by of the researcher’s subjectivity. Inevitably, this can be seen as the greatest weakness of this research. Despite efforts to limit one’s own subjectivity it becomes unavoidable when each human being comes with their own set of values, meanings and interpretations. However, I did assign other people to check the clarity, exhaustiveness and effectiveness of my measuring tools, and they were challenged by the nature of the complex phenomena of a sexy culture, promotions, shopping culture and so forth. While I consider, for example, a photo that contains a shopping bag with a brand on it, a practice of promoting shopping; another person could argue that the photo is just illustrating a person that has been shopping without
calling it promotion. Even though I recognise the possibility of different interpretations from other researcher’s viewpoints, it still creates a low degree of validity for my research. Having consulted the research from scholars that investigate the phenomenon of microcelebrity (as presented in the theory chapter) I argue that I have managed to approach the phenomenon thoroughly for investigation and answer my research question adequately.

3.9.3 Precision

Neuendorf defines precision analysis as the extent or “fineness of distinction made between categories or levels of a measure” (2002, p.113). As previously stated, guaranteeing a high degree of precision for this research was a matter of great importance. The current categories had to change many times in order to be precise and exclusive. The process of concluding categories has been a linear one, influenced by decisions strongly affected by my predictions and my perception on what could consist as the practices of the microcelebrity. The categories have been widened or more exclusive, depending on my perception of how important a specific element or theme is when appearing on an Instagram post. By the end, I have managed to create detailed descriptions of what each category means, so that a potential reader can avoid misunderstandings, confusions and nevertheless confirm the level of this research’s quality.

Despite all intentions and efforts, in qualitative studies, as with all ways of measuring the quality of a research, we can purely promise a decent level of precision and not a level of precession that is universally agreed and confirmed.

3.9.4 Generalizability

Many researchers are interested in studying and analysing a small sample, to draw conclusions about the wider population from which the sample came from. Through content analysis, the findings can be generalised to a population, once the sample is randomly chosen (Neuendorf 2002, p. 83). The sample in the case of this paper, was not randomly chosen but purposively. With my decision to examine the practices of some of the top microcelebrities from Norway, I can not generalize my findings on a statistical basis and describe the practices that one would identify from the investigation of different scale microcelebrities or from microcelebrities of different nationalities. However, I can argue that I manage to describe popular practices by practitioners, in part acknowledged by other
scholars in the past that have been investigating practitioners of different sizes and different nationalities.

3.9.5 Theoretical and methodological reflections

By conducting qualitative research, I aimed to get insight into the ways through which these young women apply their microcelebrity practices on Instagram. I was interested in examining this aspect of the phenomenon and analysing it to a certain degree rather than just measuring frequencies through a quantitative approach.

These seven microcelebrities have been chosen as some of the biggest Norwegian microcelebrities and each of them, have more than 100,000 followers. In the microcelebrity literature, researchers have been referring to people with around 10,000 (Marwick & boyd, 2015) or 25,000 followers (Mavroudis& Milne, 2016) as microcelebrities. While the findings of this research can be relevant for microcelebrities around the world with around 100,000 followers; they might not be representative for different size microcelebrities. At the same time, there is a chance that I have significantly influenced the findings of this research, since qualitative research is unavoidably characterized by subjectivity.

If I had the chance to know in advance, everything I know now; I would have read the NESH’s Ethical guidelines for Internet Research more carefully and would have notified the Norwegian Centre for Research Data before I began to collect any data. By reading Nesh Guidelines, I considered the Instagram profiles of microcelebrities as public forums, since they are publicly open and available to any Instagram user. With a more careful reading I would have understood that any research that includes persona data should always be secured by the participants free and informed consent (NESH point 9, 2014).

By misunderstanding the guidelines and regulations, I spent almost two months and many hours work daily making an archive of the posts that consisted of the sample. I went through almost 25,000 Instagram posts and carefully counted them in order to find the posts that corresponded to the random numbers of the online platform 'randomizer'. After taking a screenshot of each post and its caption, I created nine different archives saved on nine different word documents. After reading more carefully the guidelines and regulations, I notified my project to NSD and I was informed that it contained personal data. After I tried to get the consent from the microcelebrities of the study, I had to narrow
down the cases to seven, since the communication agent of two of the personas, denied me consent to
use their data in any way, as such I deleted all the archives that contained personal data. Since the rest
of the personas didn’t respond to my request, I kept working with their data; but this time I had to
anonymize and aggregate it according to NSD regulations, in order to not negatively impact their
autonomy or inviolability.

The misunderstanding over the ethical guidelines and regulation, consisted the biggest challenge and
problem of this thesis. I had to delete an archive for which I had spent a lot of time on plus it caused
me a lot of stress to find out that I needed the participant's consent at a research stage when the
analysis was almost done. As I guessed and read through the work of Mavroudis and Milne (2916)
microcelebrities of this size are quite inaccessible and I doubted that I would get a response or their
consent.

Finally, I had to significantly change a big part of this study in order for the first identifiable personas
to appear in this paper as anonymous. In addition, because of the necessity of the data’s
anonymization, in a study in which I investigate and analyse visual content, I am not allowed to show
these pictures to the reader. Even though I aim to giver the reader an idea about the examined content
by describing it, I consider this as a weakness of this study; although at the same time, I support that it
was the only possible way I could work with such content without the participants’ consent.
4 Analysis and findings: Practices of Microcelebrities

Having explained in detail the methods with which I worked with the data, at this point, I will present the practices of microcelebrities identified after having examined the Instagram posts. I will also aim to present and emphasize the correlation between my findings and the microcelebrity literature, as portrayed in the theory chapter. As mentioned, the project had to be defined by anonymity, as a result I am not allowed to show the reader the exact content I worked with; instead I describe it in ways that maintain the anonymity and guarantee the protection of personal data of the people involved in the study.

The analysis chapter will be divided into five main sections that correspond to three major microcelebrity practices, microcelebrity in a Norwegian context and a section with an introduction to the sample.

1. Microcelebrities: an introduction to the sample.
2. Microcelebrity in Norwegian context
3. Self-representation practices
4. Communication practices
5. Promotion practices

Each major category consists of subcategories that correspond to specific practices as identified and perceived through the processes of data collection and analysing. In the next sections, I explain to the reader, in detail, the categories I discovered while also describing the exact elements of the examined content that led me to such decisions and conclusions.
4.1 Microcelebrities: an introduction to the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MC1</th>
<th>MC2</th>
<th>MC3</th>
<th>MC4</th>
<th>MC5</th>
<th>MC6</th>
<th>MC7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion, comedy</td>
<td>Lifestyle, fashion, motherhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Microcelebrities, their main topics and professions

With the table above, I aim to present the microcelebrities of this study by giving the reader some background information about them. In the first row, I refer to their main topic as perceived by working with their content, while in the second row their occupations or careers are listed, as they invoke them through their blogs, Instagram bios or Instagram posts.

Although the sampling procedures were not aimed at examining similar cases, but towards established microcelebrities; the sample units share many similarities. All seven microcelebrities were women and they publish content that could be categorized into the theme of lifestyle. These young women seem to continuously share with the public, moments from their everyday lives. They publish photographs and videos of their meals, the places they visit, the rooms in their homes, their children and families, their training activities and so forth. The lifestyle of all seven microcelebrities seemed characterized by luxury, wealth and comfort.

While all the microcelebrities create content around the topics of lifestyle and fashion, it should be noted that two of them, MC6 and MC7 are a bit different than the rest of the sample, when it comes to their main theme or topic. Although they share an interest in fashion, beauty and a luxurious lifestyle (as the rest of the personas), their content could be categorized into two categories that differentiate them thematically from the rest of the practitioners. Namely, MC6’s content is characterized by the element of comedy, while a big percentage of MC7’s posts are about motherhood. This type of
specialization of the two personas’ profiles didn’t significantly change the findings of this study. Even though they publish content around a specific theme and topic, they seem to apply their microcelebrity practices in a similar way, in line with the rest of the practitioners.

A strategy that all microcelebrities in this study share is the representation of themselves as celebrities. This observation fits one of the definitions of microcelebrities by Marwick according to which their fame (...) *depends on their ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture* (2015, pp. 139). The ways through which these personas represent themselves on their Instagram profiles, seem to parallel how celebrities are portrayed, rather than ordinary people. The fact that they always look well-groomed, they often travel to exotic destinations or to big cities around the world, they wear clothes and accessories from expensive fashion brands or they appear at exclusive events accompanied by other celebrities. These factors all contribute to the perception of these personas as celebrities. The microcelebrities in this study, don’t just imitate the ways through which celebrities expose themselves online as Marwick suggests (2015), but they seem to function as such when they are featured in media shows and programs broadcasted through traditional media or since they are represented by public relations agencies. This will be further explained in the next sections.

With the identification and analyses of a number of practices evaluated throughout the posts of all seven microcelebrities, I intend to shed light into the ways through which microcelebrities create and maintain their massive following. I acknowledge though, that by analysing the Instagram activities of these microcelebrities, I do not account for the variety of actions and practices that can take place offline or on other online platforms. Therefore, this study can not reveal with accuracy of the exact practices or facts that transformed these personas from ordinary users to successful microcelebrity practitioners, attracting the interest of hundreds of thousand followers; in fact, it would be quite difficult if possible at all, to measure the impact of each online or offline activity. I suggest though that with the identification and analysis of activities and practices, one can approach an understanding about why and how these people manage to become famous. In the next section, I will refer to the focus of this study in cases within a Norwegian context.
4.2 Microcelebrity in a Norwegian context

This study aimed to investigate Norwegian microcelebrities based on theory that has been created by research on American, British and Singaporean microcelebrities. The current theory on the phenomenon helped me understand the ways through which microcelebrities communicate; the relationship they aim to create and maintain with their followers; their feelings behind their activities, and the possibility for them to monetize these activities. However, there has not yet been, to my knowledge, a study that aimed to identify as many microcelebrity practices as possible by content analysis of their online activities. At the same time, relevant research on Norwegian influencers or microcelebrity practitioners has not been undertaken. This study therefore aims to contribute to the knowledge about the phenomenon of microcelebrities and how it is adopted by Norwegian practitioners.

Throughout this chapter, I have aimed to identify and analyse the elements of microcelebrity practices inspired by the relevant theory on the phenomenon; but from also evaluating the frequent and common techniques that make these personas differ from ordinary social media users. The fact that research based on Norwegian microcelebrities resulted in practices that haven’t been identified and analysed by other researchers, like facial expressions and beauty adjustments; does not determine that these elements are exclusive characteristics of Norwegian practitioners. These new practices are simply initially analysed in this text because of the gaps within the current literature on the microcelebrity phenomenon.

In the following table, the different elements and practices of the sample are shown to differ significantly from the content of practitioners of other nationalities.
To begin with, the majority of the captions, consist of texts and hashtags written in the Norwegian language. At the same time, they embrace Norwegian traditions and celebrate the culture. For instance, MC4 posts a photo of herself in the traditional Norwegian dress (named a *bunad*) while she is on her way to attend a traditional Norwegian religious event where teenagers are welcomed to adult life, known as “konfirmasjon” or confirmation. In another post, MC1 reveals that she is participating in a traditional celebration for high-school students in their senior year, known as *russ*. Here, she posts a photo of her uniform’s hat with her initials written on it. Furthermore, microcelebrities pose with their skis, embracing the country’s national sport and tradition, or visit museums and events based on Norwegian history and culture. They celebrate different kinds of Norwegian traditional celebrations; or they reveal their love for different places in Norway they visit. At the same time, amongst the international brands that many promote, they buy or consume products that are well known within Norway or Scandinavia.

With these types of practices, microcelebrities manage to connect with their Norwegian audience by sharing common traditions, habits, language and lifestyle. At the same time, they manage to create positive connotations towards them, since they appear to respect and embrace their nationality and culture. With the identification and analyses of elements that are relevant to the persona’s nationality, I am in a position to present microcelebrity practices that has yet to be examined by other researchers. As such, I can only assume that microcelebrities from other countries and origins expose their nationality though specific techniques and practices of their countries, as well.
4.3 Self-representation

Marwick defines the practice of self-representation as a “a mind-set and a collection of self-presentation practices endemic in social media (...)” (2015). Through working, evaluating and analysing the data, it has been obvious that these personas take great care of their content before publishing it. Their posts are characterised by a high quality, which reveals a significant level of curating and editing. With a focus on microcelebrity and fame on Instagram, Marwick argues that the people who have achieved the status of a microcelebrity and gain fame, tend to represent themselves as real celebrities by imitating the lifestyle and practices of ordinary ones (2015, pp 139). If one were to ask me to explain what I found as the main practice of microcelebrities; I would confirm Marwick’s argument and support that most microcelebrities tend to portray themselves as celebrities. While this argument can represent a big percentage of the microcelebrity practitioners, the phenomenon is much more complex and can not be described by one phrase and one practice. In the following sections, I illustrate the self-representation techniques of the microcelebrities studied by dividing them into four main subcategories: Posing, Professionalism, Fashion and Luxury.

4.3.1 Posing

Since the emergence of social media, more and more people have improved their skills when it comes to posing in front of a camera or a smart-phone. Since there is a lot of activity on online platforms, people take care of the ways through which they expose themselves on social media. The microcelebrities of this study, seem to understand the importance of posing in specific ways that flatter their physical bodies and highlight their beauty. By posing in front of a camera using well-studied postures, they manage to stand out and relate themselves to celebrities, models, Hollywood stars and the like. Before giving examples of how microcelebrities set their bodies in specific positions in order to look good on their posts, I will focus on how they aim to look good through specific facial expressions.

Facial expressions

Within posts where microcelebrities smile on camera, like most people do when someone is taking a photograph of them; there are a large number of posts in which microcelebrities use specific facial expressions in order to increase the dramatic, sensual or artistic element of the photograph.
Microcelebrities often aim to highlight their lips by making them look bigger and well-shaped. Some use a facial expression that is widely known in Internet culture as duck-face, this is where people squeeze their lips together and forward in order for them to look bigger. MC1, in one of her posts, appears in a photo that shows the bottom of her nose down to her breast. In this portrait photograph she squeezes her lips together in order for them to look bigger and juicier while she wears a revealing shirt where one can see a big part of her breasts and a small part of her bra. Through these elements one can suppose, that the person in the photo aims to create a profile of a sensual, sexy woman.

In another post, MC4 is posing in a quite similar way. Although this time, the whole face is visible and the eyes are looking straight into the camera lens; the persona wears a quite revealing top while she leaves her lips slightly open in order to create a mysterious and a sexy atmosphere around her. In other posts, microcelebrities highlight their eyes. MC3, in one of her publications, poses in a black and white photo showing the left side of her profile to the camera while she gazes away, straight down onto the floor. With such a pose, she manages to look emotional, thoughtful and generally she increases the dramatic element of the photo and post. She does this by highlighting the intensity of the location of her eyes.

All seven microcelebrities have posted photographs of themselves gazing away from the camera in something that looks like an attempt to imitate professional, artistic photographs or paparazzi photos; when the person has an abstract look because he/she is not aware of the paparazzi’s existence. Marwick refers to the same technique while she argues that microcelebrities pretend that they are photographed by paparazzi even though the actual photographer can be their friends or boyfriends (2015, p.156). MC2, in one of her many posts promoting her clothing line, poses in a photo that shows her from her knees and up to her head. In this post, she smiles and gazes to her right side insinuating that she is not aware of the camera’s existence.

**Body postures**

Apart from facial expressions, a large amount of posts, aim to show the microcelebrities’ whole body or specific body parts in the post. There are photos that focus on different body parts like: breasts, hips, legs, arms, fingers, toes, neck or showing the whole body from a distance. While all of the personas maintain ideal body types of this time and place, they seem to have invested energy in finding out the right poses that compliment and positively highlight their body features. For example,
they turn their back to the camera when they wear a dress that leaves the back naked; they lift or bend their legs in ways that make them look longer or fitter; or they stick out their hips and breasts in order to show a more sensual or curvy side of them. Even when they appear in photos wearing revealing outfits or swimming costumes, they make sure that they reveal body parts that are shown in a flattering way. To give an example of this, MC7 in one of her posts, is lying down by a swimming pool wearing a bikini. As she lies down, she poses in a way that her back is lifted from the ground arched in order to emphasize the curve between her hips and back. At the same time, one of her legs stretches until her foot is curved while the other one is bended. By making these adjustments she manages to pose in a way where she looks fit, tall and thin. In another post, for a Scandinavian brand, MC3 is wearing a short jumpsuit and posing with her legs wide apart, making her look fit and tall. At the same time, she is gazing away from the camera, while her hands are crossed under her breasts, gripping the opposite arm.

Meanwhile, MC6 aims for a friendlier and more authentic image, through her observable natural and spontaneous-looking postures. As it has been presented through the first chapter and literature review, microcelebrities apply different techniques in order to invoke their authenticity. “Zoella” for example tends to publish posts that contain minor mistakes or in other cases she even shares with the public unfortunate moments of her life, in order to show them that she is real and authentic and not another celebrity that looks and feels gorgeous all the time (2016, pp. 5241-4). In an attempt to emphasize the element of authenticity, MC6 shows the audience that she is an ordinary woman with the same worries and insecurities as the audience. For example, in one of her posts, she reveals to her followers with a humouristic attitude that under her dress, she is wearing shapewear. Showing two photos next to each other, reminiscent of before and after photos, she shows the audience how they can achieve the same result by wearing this type of underwear that manages to control, shape and hide the extra weight and create a flat belly.

To summarize, the majority of posts examined show that practitioners have practiced how to pose in front of a camera and they do it in a way that reminds one, of professional photo-shoots for ordinary celebrities. Microcelebrities seem to aim for artistic and dramatic content that encourages audience admiration and confirms their uniqueness and fame. Amongst these types of posts, there are a few posts through which microcelebrities look more natural and spontaneous; but they are mainly among their early posts and they are generally a minority; with the exception of the case of MC6 who, as
mentioned, differs significantly in this manner from the rest of the sample. In the next section, I will further explore how microcelebrities curate their posts in a professional way and present indicators that disclose actual cooperation with other professionals.

4.3.2 Professionalism

As stated in the theory chapter, some microcelebrities perceive their practice on social media as an actual job rather than a hobby or something that merely occupies their free time. Except when in a monetizing aspect, (that I will present analytically in the Promotion section), the content and their appearances are often curated so well that they appear to be done by professionals. The high quality of their photos and videos, their skilled make-up and hairstyles combined by the reference to their public relations agents, indicate that their activities consist as a profession for them rather than a hobby. To confirm their level of professionalism, they often tag or refer to other professionals that participated in the creation of the content or they show their audience their exclusive skills and knowledge or special equipment. Therefore, I will divide the elements that indicate their professionalism into three main sections: equipment, beauty interventions and public relations.

Equipment

The high resolution of the photos and videos that are published on the Instagram accounts of the examined personas, indicate the possession of expensive, high-technology cameras and smart-phones. In many cases the personas publish posts in which they show their cameras and phones in order to confirm their luxurious lifestyle and the necessity for them to own high-end equipment since it is a part of what do they do for a living. In a one of her posts, MC7 is smiling next to her partner who takes the photo of them in front of a mirror; by taking a photograph in front of a mirror, the viewers can see the whole figures of the two people posing, plus the camera from which the photo is taken. The camera’s quality and price is assumed by both its famous brand and the large length of the lens as well. In a few other posts of hers, the same camera appears, perhaps accidentally, in the photo since the device happens to be next to the photo’s subject. In another post, MC4 has taken a photo of her office and focused on her expensive and stylish camera and laptop. One can determine these product's high quality through the identifiable brands and models.

Among the high-resolution photos and videos, there are several publications within the Instagram posts that reveal the participation or cooperation of a professional photographer. Microcelebrities
embrace these types of cooperations by tagging or revealing the actual names or Instagram names of the photographer. MC1 publishes a collage of four versions of the same photo using different filters. Here, she poses wearing a swimming costume and simultaneously extending her breasts and hips. On the caption of the photo, there is a tag of an Instagram account that leads to a professional photographer where one can find relevant published content and information on their bio. In other posts, although the photographer is not tagged or referred to anywhere in the caption, the quality of the photo and background information, reveals the reason behind a photo-shoot and hence, indicates the existence of a professional photographer. MC3, in one of her posts, poses sitting on a table between a variety of flowers. She reveals that the photo is a part of a photo-shoot for the account of a Scandinavian clothing brand and it is not a promotional post, created by her. The fact that the post is a part of the official photo-shoot for a famous clothing brand indicates that the photo is taken by a professional photographer.

These types of content mostly stand out due to their quality and features and can contribute to the perception of these young women as celebrities. The viewer is encouraged to correlate their content to celebrity photos in magazines, TV shows or fashion events. While there are many posts where the existence of a professional photographer is revealed or indicated, the majority of the photos and videos seem to be taken from the persona herself or from a person within her environment. The microcelebrities of this study appear to have developed great skills when it comes to photography, to the point that their content resembles that of a professional. In the next section, I will describe another area where microcelebrities seem to develop a significant expertise.

**Beauty adjustments**

On social media, people tend to expose their good moments rather than the unfortunate representations of themselves, as for example, a bad-hair day. The examined personas though, seem to have a whole team behind them that take care of their appearance. Their make-up implies knowledge, skills and time spent on its application. Their long nails are always well maintained and manicured. They all seem to wear eye-lash extensions while some also wear hair extensions; while others manage to have a tan during the snowy winter months of Norway (MC1,MC3,MC5,MC6). To give some examples of these adjustments, MC6 used to often publish photos of her long nails that are painted with different colours and patterns. The quality of the work on these nails, reveal that they are made by somebody who works professionally as a nail artist. In turn, MC1 shows the audience a
package that contains long fake hair that is captioned as ‘new hair’. In another post, MC4 is gazing at the camera, with a dramatic look, through extra long eye-lashes; she confirms the existence of eye-lash extension by thanking the beauty salon that applied them.

At times, the microcelebrities refer to the professional that applied their beauty products, in the same sense as they do with the photographers. But in this case, the professional result consists in the majority of posts and is not just because of a special occasion or event. Their flawless appearance indicates a wealth, of a class of people who are able to spend a lot of their free time and resources to look their bests. As one of the participants in Mavroudis & Milne’s study argued, microcelebrities are working in order to present a fine-curated product to satisfy the needs of the audience (2016). Throughout all their posts, the microcelebrities aim to portray themselves as beautiful, well-groomed women with knowledge of beauty trends and good skills in making themselves look good.

Public relations

Another indicator of the professionalism of the microcelebrities in this study is their reference to communication, public relations agents or branding companies working in order to represent and arrange different matters for them. While only one of the microcelebrities, namely, MC1 refers to her contact person by giving a link of her/his email on her bio; it became clear when contacting the individuals for consent that most are represented by companies. In order to request their consent, I was led to other media platforms that helped me to contact them and to get a bigger picture of their activities. By following the links that lead to their personal websites, as given in their bios, I understood that these websites include more personas and are not purely designed for the single microcelebrity. As such, they are created and maintained by public relation professionals. This became clear by undertaking further internet research, where the name of the websites revealed that the majority of personas are represented by communication agencies that work for several influencers as these organizations refer to them. For instance, I discovered that MC 2,3,5 belong to the same internet-based fashion agency. While MC 1,4,6, are all represented by another big company that manages influencers in Sweden and Norway. Yet, one of the microcelebrities, MC7, doesn’t reveal a name of an agent or a company that manages her content online. At the same time, her website consists of only her personal content and it is not a platform with several practitioners, as in the other cases. So, with the exception of this one case, the seven cases of microcelebrities prove that they are primarily represented by communication agencies, similarly to ordinary celebrities. This fact
contributes to the perception of them as celebrities and carries the element of professionalism that characterizes the majority of their microcelebrity practices.

4.3.3 Fashion

While the sample wasn’t aimed at consisting of microcelebrities specialized in fashion, many of the posts of the microcelebrities studied, seem to be designed in order to show and emphasize styling assets like accessories and clothing. This includes; full body photos of practitioners wearing classy, chic, hipster, sexy or funky outfits; photos of specific assets like a bag, a pair of shoes, jewellery or pieces of clothing; fashion magazines; fashion brands linked, tagged or just shown in a photo; or photos of them with eccentric hairstyles, make-up and outfits at fashion shows or at fashion parties.

The following table includes all the different elements considered as indicators for practices related to Fashion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fashion brands</th>
<th>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion magazines</td>
<td>MC3, MC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion shows</td>
<td>MC2, MC3,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionable, eccentric outfits or make up, accessories</td>
<td>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping bags from fashion brands</td>
<td>MC1, MC5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions that describe or refer to their outfits</td>
<td>MC2, MC3, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole body photos that aim to show outfits</td>
<td>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Fashion indicators

These elements are indicators that all seven microcelebrities studied, share a passion and interest in promoting fashion. To illustrate these practices, I will describe some of the microcelebrities posts that contain fashion as the main topic.

MC2, in one of her early posts, posts a collage of three photos of herself with the same outfit but from a different angle each time. Through these three photos, she aims to make sure, that the viewers can
observe all the details of her outfit and accessories. From the caption of the post, one can be led to her personal website where there is further relevant information on the outfit. In another post, MC1 posts a photo of a Chanel handbag. Beside the handbag is the paper shopping bag that contains the word: Chanel in large lettering and font. MC5, in a post where she appears in a casual but chic outfit, holds a Norwegian fashion magazine in order to indicate to her audience that she has an interest, expertise and dedication to fashion.

Some of the microcelebrities, including MC2, declare themselves as fashion editors; others present themselves as designers, while five of the seven maintain Fashion blogs and websites with fashion tips and advice. While MC6 and MC7 seem to maintain profiles specialized in topics other than fashion, one can observe an interest and respect to fashion from within the different elements, such as, a famous and luxurious bag from Luis Vuitton is shown by MC6 and MC7 shows representations of eccentric outfits.

The young women studied, seem to understand and exploit their role as influencers (Abidin, 2016) especially when it comes to fashion and beauty. In many of the posts, they pose in ways that highlight their clothes, shoes, jewellery and accessories; they give the audience tips about outfits, hairstyling, make-up and general beauty topics. Since Instagram doesn’t allow for long text, they often provide links to their personal blogs, where they can be more analytical and talk in detail about fashion. MC1, in one of posts, asks her followers if they want to know how she managed to create the day’s look, meanwhile she provides a link of a video where she is putting on make-up much like a skilled make-up artist. Microcelebrities often tend to publish photos of outfits or specific pieces of an outfit combined with captions that reveal their “addiction”, “love”, “crush” or “enthusiasm” for it and/or some practical information about it; like where one can find it, the brand name and so on. To give an example of this, MC4 expresses her love for a jacket that she shows the audience by taking a selfie in front of a mirror, while at the same time she tags her personal website’s link where people can find more information about it.

Fashion is an important element when it comes to the microcelebrities in this research and the ways through which they choose to represent themselves as fashion icons, fashion influencers, and fashion enthusiasts. Fashion consists as a main topic of interest for them and that is visible through most of their posts. It is not only something they are interested in or something that characterises their
lifestyle. For some of them, fashion is what they do for a living combined with their microcelebrity activities. As mentioned, six of the seven microcelebrities state a relevant fashion occupation on their bio or one discovers this by coming across several posts where they reveal their cooperation with fashion brands or promote their own products through their profiles. MC3 in a full body photo, reminiscent of a professional model’s photo, shows her outfit while she reveals the brand name through hashtagging a famous Norwegian fashion brand. On another post, MC2 appears at a party of a big Scandinavian fashion brand where she is performing as an icon, this can be determined through the title of the party and relevant hashtags.

These last practices fit perfectly with the definition of influencers by Crystal Abidin, according to which internet users get to (...) monetize their following (...) by promoting brands through their platforms or by appearing in various events (Abidin, 2015, p.1). The fact that many posts are marked by hashtags and words like advertising and promotion reveals that these personas do monetize their content. Their posts manage to engage a large following despite the narrow focus and interest in fashion; in turn, companies get the opportunity to cooperate with them and promote their product and services. What’s more, practices related to fashion indicate that microcelebrity activities consist as a type of labour for its participants. As stated in the theory chapter, through the personal interviews of male microcelebrities from Mavroudis and Milne (2016) or from the case of Vera little as investigated by Senft (2008); microcelebrities experience their online practices as their main, or part-time work rather than a hobby or a form of socializing. Within this current research, one cannot gather the practitioners’ ideas, opinions or experience of their microcelebrity practices; but a variety of factors seem to fit the characterization of it as a form of labour. The high-end skilled make-up and hairstyling, the eccentric and unique clothes-styling and the carefully adjusted postures, reveal processes that demand the investment of time, money and effort. What really confirms the perception of the activities as labour, is their representation from communication and public relations’ agencies and their monetization through promotional and advertising activities; as such, this last practice will be described later on in this chapter.

To sum up, practices relevant to fashion seem to play an important role in the activities of the microcelebrities studied. They have knowledge about fashion, they give fashion tips and advice, they write about fashion and last, but not least, they work in the fashion business. Their interest in fashion and their access to products by famous fashion brands supports an image of a person who gets to lead
a celebrity’s lifestyle much like that of the celebrity. The next section will focus on the exact elements, through which microcelebrities show their luxurious lifestyle.

4.3.4 Luxury

Marwick argues that microcelebrities publish content where they appear as people with a luxurious lifestyle and a high-status. She explains that they manage to do so by imitating the practices of ordinary celebrities (2015). This consists as one of the most interesting observations of this study, where there are many reasons to locate ‘luxury’. To begin with, representing a luxurious life is an element that characterizes the majority of the posts of all microcelebrities studied in this research. Whether it is a bottle of champagne, a trip to an exotic destination, jewellery or items from luxurious fashion brands; all seven microcelebrities seem to adopt to a wealthy, luxurious lifestyle in their posts, that separates them from ordinary social media users. By presenting such a lifestyle, they aim to create an exclusive and privileged distance to a certain degree, similar to the one that separates celebrities and the public (Jerslev, 2016, p. 5236). Therefore, by showing such a lifestyle they achieve a confirmation of their uniqueness and difference from the majority of people.

The term luxurious lifestyle can be perceived and described quite differently depending on different financial status, education or cultural background. Therefore, I define which exact elements will be considered as luxury in this study within the following table:

<p>| Holidays in exotic places/long distance trips. | MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC7 |
| Moving and living in expensive metropolis, eg. New York and Paris | MC2, MC3, MC5 |
| Buying houses or holiday houses | MC7 |
| Champagne | MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC7 |
| Accessories and clothes from luxurious brands like Luis Vuitton, Channel etc. | MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7 |
| Exclusive interior design | MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC7 |
| Swimming pools | MC4, MC5, MC7 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewellery, diamonds</th>
<th>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expensive cars, gadgets, equipment</td>
<td>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red carpet, Fashion shows</td>
<td>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in Media shows and programs</td>
<td>MC1, MC2, MC3, MC4, MC5, MC6, MC7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Luxury indicators

At this point, I will give some examples of how these elements have been used and portrayed by the microcelebrities of this study. MC6, in a post where she explains to her followers that she is on her way to the airport; gazes away from the camera and drags a small suitcase with one hand. On her other arm, she carries a bag with a pattern that reveals the luxury fashion brand it comes from. In another post, MC7 presents a picture of the luxury house she has just purchased. The fact that she can afford to buy a holiday house at quite a young age is luxurious but also since this holiday house is placed in a famous summer destination, far from Norway. Some of the practitioners, such as MC2,3,5, seem to be able to live or travel in expensive metropolis; through captions or their bio, they let their followers know where they currently live or where are they going to travel. MC5, in a series of posts, enthusiastically shows her audience her new upper-class neighbourhood in one of the world’s biggest cities, as well as, her new training studio and photos of her together with friends getting ready to party in the city. MC3 has taken a photo of her well-manicured hand, holding a full champagne glass while in the background one can see a great view of Paris. MC2 in different thematic posts, often adds accessories and different assets from luxurious brands in order to highlight the element of luxury and fashion. In a post where she reveals to followers that she has to travel (again!) she shows a photo of her passport in a case from a famous luxurious brand, combined with her bag and phone-case that also come from different luxurious brands.

After coming across all these elements of luxury, one might consider a certain financial status as a condition of entry to the status of microcelebrity. Although the financial status of the microcelebrities that were examined in this research is unknown; through different types of posts, they portray themselves to the audience as wealthy people that live a glamorous life. The elements of luxury seem to increase as one gets to see their most recent posts. The older posts, from six of the seven microcelebrities, consist of more spontaneous and less professional or less curated content, where the
appearance of luxurious elements is significantly rarer than in most of the recent posts. Although one can not answer such a question or determine if the fame came first, it seems that the elements of luxury are attached to the fame. By comparing the older posts where most microcelebrities seemed considerably anonymous, where the number of likes reveal a standard following much like everyday users (between 20-300 likes on posts, compared to over 7.000 likes on their most recent posts) one can understand how important the element of luxury is to the microcelebrities current practice. This is particularly evident when the element of luxury increases as the microcelebrity status is being reached.

Showing and presenting a luxurious lifestyle to the audience, seems like an important factor to strengthen and establish their status as celebrities and they don’t hesitate to do so.

4.4 Communication practices

In this section I focus on the captions of the examined posts and the meanings that they carry. In some cases, the captions aim to describe the visual content of the post; other captions consist only of an emoji or an abstract thought, with no clear meaning or relation to what one sees in the post. Through many of the captions, microcelebrities seem aware of their audience which they address for different reasons and purposes. At this point, I would like to emphasize the fact that the captions of the studied posts will be described rather than given word-for-word in order to again, guarantee the anonymity of the participants of this research.

4.4.1 Descriptive captions

As most social media users, microcelebrities’ posts are mostly accompanied by captions that give the viewer information about the reason behind the photo, the place where the photo was taken, their feelings, their relationship with the other people in the photo and so on. MC1 uses the word *breakfast* as a caption in a photo where she is captured enjoying a variety of different types of food outdoors, surrounded by a beautiful garden. MC6, in a photo where she is smiling looking at another person, introduces him/her to the audience and reveals her feelings about him/her and the reasons behind their meeting. In many posts, especially in relevant fashion ones, microcelebrities pose wearing different outfits while through the captions they present to the audience the different assets and reveal information about them. MC4, in a post of a selfie in front of a mirror that captures her whole figure and outfit, explains through the caption what kind of style this outfit represents, as well as, informing
her followers that it consists as part of her new clothing-line collection. Predominantly, these kind of captions serve the purpose of simply explaining to the audience what they see in the post. Even though these types of captions don’t seem to directly address the audience, in many cases they seem to encourage a feeling of proximity and familiarity between microcelebrities and the audience; since through them the audience gets familiar with moments of the microcelebrities’ personal lives.

4.4.2 Abstract thoughts, quotes, emoji

On the other hand, some posts are combined by captions that are independent from the nature of the content. The caption could consist purely of an emoji, a quote from a famous persona such as a writer or an actor, or an enigmatic phrase containing a hidden meaning. All seven microcelebrities have published posts with just an emoji or a combination of more than one, as a caption. With the use of an emoji, they can show their moods and feelings without the use of words, in a form of communication that has been massively adopted by the internet and telecommunication users in the last years. For example, MC1 has taken a selfie of herself wearing make-up and eyelash extensions that highlight her eyes while she purses her lips in the 'duckface' shape. The background is cloudy and as a caption for this post, she has chosen the lipstick emoji in order to invite her followers to pay attention to her make-up and femininity. In another post, MC7 poses in front of a white wall, holding her revealing dress and hair in a way that the breeze won't move them. As a caption for this post, she chose an emoji of three little stars that let the follower wonder at the meaning or if there is any meaning at all.

MC3, in an attempt to express her thoughts, quite often uses famous quotes or enigmatic phrases in order to describe her posts. In a post where her hair looks quite messy and with big volume, she writes an enigmatic phrase as she compares herself to a lion. In another post, MC1 posts a photo of herself sitting on the floor next to a palm tree in a pot that is on wheels. Here, she states 'Have you not heard that a rolling palm is the new black'? These types of captions create a kind of mysterious atmosphere about these enigmatic women that seem to express themselves in unique and secretive ways. This mysterious atmosphere could contribute to creating or maintaining the gap between these famous women and their audience.

4.4.3 Addressing the audience

Celebrities tend to address the audience of a program they participate in and specifically their fans in order to thank them, show appreciation, request their understanding or contribution etc. Social media
has given celebrities and microcelebrities the chance to approach their fans in new ways and share
with them (in many cases) moments and events in their private lives (Jerslev, 2016). The audience
seems to respond with glorious comments and likes, with the hope that they can approach the people
whom they enthusiastically admire (Marwick, 2015). The popularity of such personas encourage
impressive numbers of people willing to communicate with them, as a result, it would take a
significant amount of time for anyone to read all these messages and comments, let alone, reply.
Therefore, in many cases, fans do not receive a direct answer from their favourite personas (Jerslev,
2016). As mentioned in the theory chapter, the relationship between a famous person and his/her fans
has been described by the sociologists Horton and Wohl (1956) as a parasocial interaction. According
to this kind of relationship, while a fan admires, appreciates and has different feelings towards a
famous persona; the famous persona is not even aware of the feelings or the people themselves.
However, Marwick and boyd support that social media has the potential to transform this one-
 sided interaction to a more personal relationship (2011). Other scholars have also been referring to the
interactions between celebrities or microcelebrities and their audience (Marwick 2015; Abidin 2015).
This study though, does not aim to examine these types of relationships; but the ways through which
microcelebrities encourage the audience’s reactions.

In her study, Anne Jerslev, has been interested in studying and exploring the ways through which the
famous British microcelebrity “Zoella” address her audience and encourages its response and loyalty
by referring to her followers with the personal pronoun, calling them friends etc. (2016, p.5242).
Some of the microcelebrities of this study address the audience more often than others; but all seven
have referred to their audience or viewers through different ways and for different reasons. The
captions have played the main role in the examination of this practice since it is the main way through
which Instagram users can express themselves with actual words. At this point, I will remind the
reader again that I do not examine the interactions between microcelebrities and the audience, since I
have not included the comments in the sample; but instead I focus on the ways that microcelebrities
address the audience and encourage the audience’s contribution to create a sense of an “interactive”,
proximate relationship. From the total amount of captions, I created three different categories that
describe the different ways and reasons for which the microcelebrities address their audience: To
show appreciation and affection towards an audience that supports them; and finally, to invite them
to take action or to ask them questions.
Appreciation – Affection

Some of the microcelebrities in this study express their appreciation and affection for their audience by thanking them and sending wishes to them. It seems that some of them recognise the important role that their fans play when it comes to their status and success and show gratitude and sympathetic feelings toward them. Behind these positive expressions there is usually some kind of trigger, for instance, an award that has been given as a result of the audience’s votes, a specific number of followers or likes reached, or an official celebration like Christmas or New Years. They seem to also address the audience through random posts as well, as a part of what looks like an effort to maintain a positive and more personal relationship with them.

The microcelebrities of this study seem aware of the audience’s presence and they don’t hesitate to address them for different reasons and matters. MC1, in a post where she shows the audience a photo of two awards given to her, is warmly thanking the audience through the caption, accompanied by two heart emojis. In this post, she addresses her followers and especially the ones who voted for her to be awarded. Beyond appreciation expressions towards the audience, microcelebrities show affection to their followers by wishing different sentiments depending on the occasion. MC7 wishes for all her followers and viewers to enjoy the celebration of St. Hans, meanwhile she is showing how she is celebrating that day with her family in front of a fire, as the tradition suggests. In another post, MC5 posts wishes for a good Monday while showing a photo of a bouquet of flowers in a well-designed room. What’s more, MC5, in an attempt to show affection to her followers and fans, addresses them as dear followers combined by emoji hearts while making an announcement about her future plans.

Invitation to take action

The majority of captions alongside the posts, consist of invitations for the audience to take some type of action. Most of the time, the caption invites the audience to read the extended version of an Instagram post by using a link given to visit the microcelebrities’ personal blogs. These captions are usually combined with a few words that trigger the audience to follow the blog. Through different posts MC7 publishes information about a house she has just bought and in some posts later, she reveals a photo of the same house, but with a caption with the name of an island where it is located, a popular summer holiday destination for Scandinavian people. In this post she promises to reveal more information through her blog by inviting her followers to find a link of her blog in her bio. In another
post, where MC3 is sitting down on the street and looking at the camera in a dramatic way, she promises her followers a secret by just visiting her blog. In a few cases, microcelebrities invite the audience to attend an offline event where the audience will get the chance to meet them in person. MC1, in one of her posts, where she appears wearing a casual outfit outside on a street, invites followers living in the city she is visiting, to come and meet her in person. Those interested could find more information about when and where they could meet her by again, reading her last post on her blog. In another post, MC4 reveals the time and the place where people can come to meet her and contribute to her charity event. All the while she poses in front of a mirror wearing the clothes that were designed by her, for this occasion.

**Question to the audience**

In many posts, the microcelebrities ask the audience’s opinion, ideas, recommendations or even more personal questions about them or their lifestyles. To some, these questions may seem rhetoric since many microcelebrities (and ordinary celebrities) are known for not spending the time to read, reply or get into a long dialogue with their followers. Despite whether or not these questions are intended to be answered, the microcelebrities of this study, seem to understand that the question is a tool that encourages interaction, and hence, apply it. MC1, in a black and white post where she sits next to a beautiful plant, asks the audience if they have heard about a specific new trend; while MC7 asks the audience in several posts if they like specific products she is promoting as much as she does. To give an example, in a post where she holds a baby smiling at the camera, she asks the audience if they too love the product for babies that she refers to in the caption. These questions do not only give an idea about a two-way communication act; but they strengthen the relationship between the microcelebrity and their audience. At the same time, the audience’s response can contribute to expand their visibility outside their circle of followers through Instagram algorithms that show users related to them or popular accounts on Search.

### 4.5 Promotion

The term promotion, or specifically sales promotion, refers to a variety of marketing efforts where the purpose is to introduce a product or a service to the wider audience, in order to create a positive image of a brand and encourage its sales (Armstrong et al., 2017, p.420). Promotion practices can take very different forms and therefore, they are not always easy to identify. In this research, I conceptualize the term in order to refer to the different practices that intentionally or not, can help the sales of specific
products or services; plus the practices through which microcelebrities attempt to support their own work.

Promotion is one of the most interesting microcelebrity practices since it gives microcelebrities the opportunity to monetize their content (Abidin, 2016). A large amount of posts consist of products that are being promoted through various ways and for different reasons. Some products are promoted due to an arrangement with a brand that sponsors the microcelebrity for this exact reason. This type of promotion is hence referred to as paid promotion. This promotion is supposed to be easily identifiable in Norway, since these kinds of posts should be marked by words like: advertising, promotion, commercial. This is in order to agree to the relevant regulations and laws regarding marketing. Yet, in some cases, products are promoted by being showed to hundred thousands of followers, without any indicators in the captions that reveals it as paid advertising.

Outside of these two types of promotion, microcelebrities promote their own work and material through directing their followers to watch their activities on other platforms, traditional media or offline events. One could argue that the creation and maintaining of a social media profile consists of a type of promotion as well. For instance, people choose the photos, occasions, music and texts that they want to share with their online- friends in order to shape a representation, and in most cases a positive image, of themselves. The microcelebrities of this study promote products for which they are paid for, and also adopt different practices that have been known within the celebrity culture as self-promotion or self-branding. They do so by associating with other celebrities and benefiting from their fame; by appearing and starring in different media shows or events; by relating themselves to big fashion brands and of course, by exposing their work through different platforms as one can read more analytically in the next sections.

Promotion has been one of the most challenging categories of this study, since it has been quite unclear when an activity consists or aims to promote a product or not. Is it promotion, for example, when a logo of a brand appears on a photo? Should I consider the posts as promotion only when photos reveal that they have been paid to promote products or services? Except for the posts that are distinguished by relevant words or hashtags in the caption, a large number of brands appear on their accounts organically, for instance when they publish photos of eating chocolate, visiting a restaurant, going to a museum or buying clothes. There are no indicators of whether their intentions are to show
the name of a company or a product, but exposing a brand to a vast number of viewers could function as promotion, even if they never planned or intended it.

While working with more and more posts, I kept changing the category and the values that they could contain, until I concluded on the following table which shows what is perceived and examined as promotion in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid Promotion</th>
<th>Voluntary Promotion</th>
<th>Promotion of own work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When it is marked by relevant words: advertising, ad, promotion etc.</td>
<td>There is an identifiable brand but the post is not marked by relevant promotional words.</td>
<td>When they promote their own work and content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Categories of Promotion

Accordingly, the practice has been divided into three different types, plus the potential combination of types that can occur in the same post (for example when there is an indicator of paid advertising but at the same time there is a link to the microcelebrity’s blog or website). In the next section I will describe these different types of promotion by referring to relevant examples.

4.5.1 Paid promotion

Paid promotion is beneficial to microcelebrities for two main reasons. Firstly, it automatically transforms the microcelebrity practices from a hobby, to an actual labour since the practitioners are getting paid for their activities. Mavroudis & Milne (2016) and Senft (2008), as mentioned in the theory chapter, have examined how the practitioners consider their microcelebrities’ practices as a type of labour. According to them, microcelebrities feel forced by the demands of the audience to spend their time and effort, in order to create something that will please their followers. The camgirl, “Vera Little” examined by Senft, felt obligated by the audience supporting her channel through paid subscriptions, to create the kind of content they were interested in. Since social media is free of charge for private individuals, followers can only support their favourite microcelebrities by following, liking, commenting or sharing their content. Once a vast number of followers is reached, brands are willing to invest significant amounts of money in microcelebrities that can promote their product through their channels. Except for the monetizing of their online content, paid promotion
contributes to confirming the status of microcelebriti, since companies choose to work and invest in them.

The examples of paid promotion through the examined posts are plentiful. Six of the seven personas that still maintain their old/first posts, show that promotional posts increase as time went by. There were no examples of paid promotions in the first 10 examined posts, while there were quite many in the latest posts. In one of the posts, MC7 appears next to her daughter drinking a very popular Norwegian soft drink, while she explains to her followers how they can participate in a competition organized by the producers of that brand of drink. The post is marked by the word *advertising* through a hashtag. In another post, MC5 publishes a photo of ice-cream packages with a caption telling her followers that she will stay in to eat ice cream with girlfriends. The post is again marked with the hashtag *advertising* between other hashtags. Furthermore, MC2 sits on white stairs, wearing her training/sport clothes. Next to her, there is a bottle of a famous Norwegian protein drink that she explains is how she starts her day, before her work-out. As the others, she reveals to the audience that this post is promotional by a relevant hashtag.

While these young women are paid by different brands to promote products and services, they often find creative ways to do so, so that it seems that they actually like or use these products themselves and hence, they recommended it to others. It is often hard for a viewer, to know if the content showing a certain product is a result of paid promotion or not. As mentioned in the theory chapter, according to the Consumer Authority in Norway, four out of five promotional posts that were published from the top Norwegian influencers in 2017, were not labelled and marked properly by words or hashtags that reveal the monetizing of these activities (Forbrukertilsynet, 2018). Yet, as stated, in order to identify and classify the paid activities from other types of promotional posts, I considered paid promotion as only posts that were marked by words like *advertising, promotion, commercial* etc.

However, there were a number of unlabelled posts where one could identify famous brands. These unlabelled posts that contain identifiable brands and products, combined with the fact that the majority of Norwegian top influencers (Forbrukertilsynet, 2018) fail to properly mark promotional posts for which they have been paid for, made it quite challenging to divide and categorize the different promotional posts. Even though in this study, only the marked posts will be considered as
paid ones, there is a big possibility that unlabelled promotional posts could be paid, that haven’t been labelled according to the regulations of the Consumer Authority in Norway.

### 4.5.2 Voluntary promotion

This category and section, includes all posts that contain identifiable products, services and brands that they are not labelled as promotional posts as requested by the Consumer Authority in Norway. As stated, there are a number of posts through which microcelebrities capture brands or other identifiable elements, like shopping bags from certain stores or packages, without revealing the reason or their intention behind such posts. MC1 and MC5, publish photos of their favourite bags designed from Chanel. The two posts are similar to each other since both bags come from the same fashion brand and are photographed besides the paper shopping bag with the logo of the brand. It seems that these two personas want their followers to correlate these big fashion products with themselves, as a part of their general luxurious lifestyle and genuine interest in fashion. Depending on the different roles that each microcelebrity aims to play, they associate themselves with relevant products and brands. MC5, in another post, posts photos of healthy food packages, healthy green smoothies or photos of her after training. This is in an attempt to show her followers her healthy lifestyle and interest in fitness. On the other hand, MC6 chooses sometimes to correlate herself with famous Norwegian chocolate and candy brands. In one of her posts, she is showing an almost empty package of an easily identifiable chocolate product. In the caption she indicates a time duration (for example 19:45- 19:46) in order to highlight that it took only one minute for her to almost eat the whole package. Through this kind of post, MC6 portrays herself in contrast to a lot the famous, that are on a strict diet, whereas she enjoys delicious and unhealthy snacks. Whether intended or not, MC6 is voluntarily promoting this chocolate brand.

In a few cases, microcelebrities intend to recommend certain products to their followers, even though they haven’t been paid for their promotion. For instance, MC1 shows her followers her favourite interior design shop by taking a photo of the inside of the shop, and clearly states that the post is not promotional, rather that she just intends to give some decorating tips and advice. Furthermore, MC2 in one of her early posts, shares with her followers a guide of her favourite clothing stores in New York. She promotes voluntarily these stores by posting a photo of them and their actual names, in order to give shopping advice to the audience.
Despite the intentions of the microcelebrities, these posts have the potential to function as promotional posts, since brands are being showed from famous people to audiences of similar sizes to the ones of traditional media programs. With countries around the world (including Norway) introducing strict regulations and penalties (Forbrukertilsynet, 2018) for individuals who don’t properly mark their promotional posts on social media, one would expect that in the future it will be easier for an observer or viewer to understand if there is an intention of promotion behind each post or not.

4.5.3 Promotion of own work

Despite the fact that microcelebrities are not equally active on all the different platforms they use, it seems that the same content is being posted on different platforms simultaneously and most of the time, the posts contain a link that leads the followers to read the extended post on their blogs. This was discovered through background research on other platforms. Yet, since this study is focused on Instagram posts, I will refer to the Instagram posts that lead the followers to view the different kinds of content on other platforms, traditional media or even offline events, as a result of self-promotional techniques. For instance, MC7, with a post of of her looking surprised with her mouth and eyes wide open; she recommends her followers to find the reasons behind this reaction by reading the last post on her blog. MC 2,3,4 and 5 often publish photos of outfits and accessories for which the followers can find more information on by visiting their websites or again, blogs.

Most of the microcelebrities in this study seem to have been participating in different media shows and programs. For instance, MC6 published a photo of her posing next to MC5 and MC1 at an event dedicated to a media show that they participate in; as one would assume from hashtags with the name of this show. Also, MC3 reveals to her followers, through a photo where she is dressed casually and enjoys a snack, that she will be featuring in a show that can be watched on a famous Norwegian television channel. On this same channel, viewers can come across an advertising spot of MC2’s clothing line that she proudly indicates through the caption the times in which it is aired on the show. Through the random posts that were used as a sample for this research, there was no indication that MC4 and MC7 revealed their participation in media shows; although by googling their names when confirming their status, it was clear that MC7 has been starring in media shows too.
Beyond when promoting their work on other platforms, websites or traditional media channels, microcelebrities also invite their followers to attend or watch them attending various offline events. To exemplify, MC4 invites her fans and followers to attend a philanthropic event she organizes with a big fashion brand in Norway, while MC2 shows a photo of herself attending an event of an online fashion store for which she is working as a fashion icon and influencer, as revealed through hashtags.

To summarize, microcelebrities seem to create a net of different platforms through which they promote their work, in order to reach a wider audience. Through their Instagram posts, they refer to their traditional media shows’ appearances, to content that is broadcasted on their blogs, websites or other platforms, like YouTube and Spotify; and lastly, to offline events they attend. All of these activities are promoting their own work and contributing to their ongoing status as a micro-celebrity.
5 Conclusion

This study aimed to shed light into the phenomenon of microcelebrity by identifying and analyzing
the practices that established Norwegian practitioners apply on Instagram. These practitioners manage
through self-representation practices to attract big numbers of followers while they also achieve to
benefit financially by integrating promotional posts or advertorials (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016).

While many researchers have been interested in investigating such cases and they have managed to
reveal valuable information about the ways that these personas communicate (Marwick & boyd,
2011; Jerslev, 2016; Marwick, 2015), their relationships with their audience (Abidin 2015a, Marwick,
2015), their perception towards their activities (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016) and specific elements that
they often integrate into their practices; there are still plenty of gaps within the microcelebrity
literature. As such, it is hard for one to understand, what does this practice or activity of
microcelebrities actually consist of?

In turn, this study accounts for some of the gaps within the current literature by presenting a more
holistic view of microcelebrity practices. Instead of focusing on specific practices or elements, this
study aimed to identify as many practices as possible and to analyse them in a way that the reader can
gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Although it is not the main focus of this study and the
phenomenon is characterised by high complexity, by identifying and analysing these activities and
practices, I suggest that the reader can approach an understanding about some of the reasons behind
these practitioners’ success when it comes to their fame and the possibility to monetize their content.

With this research I have managed to contribute to the knowledge on the phenomenon: a) by
introducing practices that haven’t been investigated thoroughly by other researchers; for instance their
postures, beauty adjustments and voluntary promotions; b) by confirming and contributing to the
knowledge about practices that have been identified from other researchers; for instance practices of
addressing the audience (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Marwick, 2015; Jerslev, 2016) or practices that
indicate a luxurious lifestyle (Marwick, 2015) ; and c) by presenting how the practice has been
adopted by Norwegian microcelebrities when most of the current literature is based on American,
Singaporean and British practitioners. At the same, through the identification and analysis of specific
practices, I have stressed the issue of the blurred lines between professionalism and the perception of
the practice as ordinary people who spontaneously publish their personal lives on social media. While the current literature presents microcelebrities as people who become famous and successful independently (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016) or partly independently (Turner as cited in Gamson 2011, p. 1065); this research presents microcelebrity as a professional practice of people who get the chance to get paid for some of their activities while they are represented from public relations and communications agencies, just like celebrities.

While in the beginning of this study I was considering a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, soon I decided that I wanted to examine these practices in depth rather than measure their frequency. In order to work systematically, while at the same time I could be flexible (Schreier, 2014) to divide different elements into categories inspired from the nature of the data; and analyse them in depth, I conducted a qualitative content analysis. The sample consisted of 343 Instagram posts of seven big-scale female Norwegian microcelebrities that were found on AtextRetriever. In the next section I will summarize the findings of this research revealed through the processing and analysing of the data.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Through this research I came across practices not discussed in relevant literature, for instance beauty adjustments and voluntary promotions; I argue that this is purely because the phenomenon has yet to be investigated thoroughly enough; rather than because Norwegian microcelebrities seem to operate significantly differently than practitioners of other countries. In fact, the microcelebrity of this study seem to operate as the microcelebrities that have been studied and presented within the literature review. They monetize their content; they address the audience and they encourage a certain level of intimacy within it; they spend a lot of time and effort to create their content and they invoke their realism by, for instance posting photos of themselves without make up. In comparison with the American male microcelebrities that have been investigated in the work of Mavroudis and Milne (2016) that seem to manage their profiles by themselves; six of the seven microcelebrities of this study are represented by communication and public relations agents.

While the microcelebrity practices of practitioners of different nationalities seem to be mostly the same; there are a number of posts that reveal the nationality of the practitioners and they address
followers of the same nationality. The microcelebrities of this study take photos of their traditional
dress (bunad); they send well wishes to enjoy the celebration of midsummer; they write captions in
the Norwegian language; they promote Nordic brands (amongst others) and they take photos of
themselves visiting beautiful landscapes of their country, Norway. Through these practices, they aim
to better connect with their Norwegian followers; and portray themselves as people who respect and
embrace their nationality and culture.

Beyond the Norwegian context, the analysis resulted in three main categories of findings that I will
now conclude.

5.1.1 Self-representation
The category of self-representation consisted of four subcategories: Posing, Professionalism, Fashion
and Luxury. The microcelebrities of this study seem to take great care of their appearance before they
publish content of themselves on Instagram. Their well-studied and highly-curated postures reveal
people who spend time and effort in order to represent themselves as their best possible edition.
Through the identification, description and analysis of the ways that microcelebrities pose in front of
the camera, I have managed to reveal an important microcelebrity practice that has yet to be analysed
by other researchers, to my knowledge. The ways that the microcelebrities of this study pose in front
of the camera, reminds the viewer of visual representations of celebrities and strengthen Marwick's
statement according to which the success of microcelebrities often depends on their ability to imitate
a celebrity’s lifestyle and practices (2015, p.139).

Beyond the carefully planned ways to pose in front of a camera, microcelebrities show their level of
professionalism and dedication towards their microcelebrity practices by owning relevant professional
equipment; by cooperating with professionals or by presenting content that looks like it is created by
professionals. All the cases of this study, have published photographs or videos that are characterised
by high quality and resolution. In some cases, a photo is taken by a professional who is also tagged in
the post; or they take the photos and videos themselves at their own expensive, or high-tech cameras
and smart phones actually appear in some of the posts. Revealing their expensive equipment or
content created from professional photographers contributes among other aspects, to the image they
want to create for themselves as wealthy people living a celebrity lifestyle.
In the early stages of research on microcelebrity, Senft (2008) described the necessity for high-tech equipment in order for “Camgirls” to be able to broadcast themselves through the internet. Even though technological improvements have made it easier for people now to own a high-resolution camera or a smart-phone and internet access, microcelebrities seem to stand out for their devices, characterized by their design, high-technology and price. They therefore, often use their equipment as the subject of a photo in order to show their wealthy and luxurious lifestyle, as they do through different practices throughout their posts. At the same time, these types of practices, indicate that expensive, high-tech, professional equipment could consist as a condition of entry for microcelebrities.

Another area where microcelebrities seem to act like experts and professionals is related to beauty interventions. Within the majority of the posts, microcelebrities appear well-groomed like typical celebrities who have a team of professionals working in order to make them look good. In a few cases, the professional-looking result is actually done by professional make-up artists or hairdressers and they are tagged or referred to in the posts. In most cases though, it appears that microcelebrities have developed these skills themselves and as a result, they often share beauty tips and advice with the audience as a kind of expert.

Beauty adjustments consists as a practice that no other researcher has looked into. Through the analysis of this practice, one gets an idea about how the practitioners look on their posts. They portray themselves as a fine, well-curated product as both researches Marwick & boyd, (2011) and Mavroudis & Milne, (2016) concur. Their well-groomed appearance indicates again, that they are wealthy people who have the necessary resources to sustain such an appearance. In disagreement with Crystal Abidin (2015) that describe Singaporean microcelebrities as humble people that don’t even recognise their followers as fans; I argue that the practice of always looking well-groomed through beauty adjustments reveals a certain level of wealth; and as a result can function as a way for microcelebrities to correlate to celebrities and differ from ordinary people.

The strongest indicator of the professional aspect of the microcelebrity practice, came to my understanding when I tried to contact the practitioners in order to obtain their consent. While the microcelebrities in the research of Mavroudis & Milne (2016) seem to work independently, without public relations managers; by searching for information on how to contact the microcelebrities of this
study through their websites, blogs and Instagram accounts, I found that six of the seven microcelebrities are represented by communication and public relations’ agencies; while one of them appears to work independently. Another interesting fact, is that these six microcelebrities were managed by just two different agencies. While they aim to represent themselves as authentic and real, the fact that they cooperate with these types of companies, create several questions about which parts of the content is created by the personas themselves; and which parts are influenced by the agencies’ strategies and decisions. While a follower gets the idea that these are the personal profiles of women who share moments of their everyday lives with the audience; these profiles seem to operate as highly curated products (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016; Marwick & boyd, 2016) from commercial communication and public relations’ agencies. At the same time, the fact that they cooperate with these agencies functions as a confirmation of their microcelebrity status or even creates questions such as: Are this level of practitioners’ celebrities or microcelebrities? The boundaries between these two levels of fame, has yet to be investigated and it can in turn, consist as an interesting topic for future research.

Another element that plays a significant role on how the microcelebrities of this study aim to represent themselves, is the element of fashion. Even though the sample didn’t aim to consist of personas focused on fashion, six of the seven microcelebrities state that they work within fashion, whether they are designers, editors or influencers. In addition to that, they aim to create for themselves an image of a fashion lover, expert or icon; they promote fashion products; they cooperate with fashion brands; appear in offline fashion shows and post photos of products from expensive fashion brands in order to highlight their good financial status and correlate themselves with these important fashion names. As in the case of the beauty adjustments, fashion appears to be an important factor for big-scale microcelebrities who seem to function as experts by giving the audience advice and ideas about outfit combinations and styling. Additionally, practices related to fashion have been referred to in a smaller extent by Marwick (2015) when she describes how three different scale microcelebrities portray themselves as fashion icons or enthusiasts. In this study though, as already explained, fashion is not just a hobby or an interest for the microcelebrities; but in most cases, it is related to what they do for a living. This is another confirmation of the professionalism that characterises the practices of the sample of this study. These women share their outfits and fashion tips in order to inspire and advise their audience; as a result their Instagram profiles seem to function as channels in order to promote their work and support their career.
Another element that has already been mentioned through the different self-representation practices; and has already been identified by Marwick (2015), is the element of luxury. These microcelebrities aim to portray themselves as wealthy people who enjoy a luxurious, wealthy lifestyle. They own expensive gadgets, houses and cars; they move around the world within the most expensive big and glamorous cities; they have holidays in long-distance exotic destinations; they appear in several offline or media shows are ordinary celebrities do; they own bags, shoes and clothes from expensive fashion brands and they pose in front of a camera while drinking champagne or swimming in swimming pools.

Although, Marwick argues, that microcelebrities’ popularity depends on their ability to imitate the visual iconography of celebrities; she doesn’t go into detail and give examples of what this visual iconography can consist of. In this study, I suggest through the analysis of practices that the examined cases portray themselves inspired from the visual iconography of celebrities. At the same time, while microcelebrities throughout the literature review appear as people that share moments of their personal lives on social media (Marwick, 2015; Jerslev, 2016, Mavroudis & Milne, 2016), by illustrating a wealthy, luxurious lifestyle they aim to confirm their status as microcelebrities and differentiate themselves from ordinary people.

### 5.1.1 Communication

Through the captions of their posts, microcelebrities communicate with the audience in different ways and for different reasons. Many of the posts are captioned by descriptions that reveal to the viewer relevant information about the subject of the photo or the video, for instance a presentation of who is in the picture, their feelings, where the photo is taken from etc. In other posts, the caption can consist of an abstract thought, or a quote of a famous persona or emoji. Through these kind of captions that don’t seem to be connected with the content that has been posted, they aim to attract the interest of the viewers, who might need to go through more posts in order to get to know them better. In other cases, they describe their publications by communicating in a quite popular way within the internet and telecommunication culture, by using an emoji.

All microcelebrities of this study seem to be aware of the audience’s existence and address it in order: to show appreciation and affection, to invite them to take action and in order to encourage some type
of interaction with questions. In her research, Jerslev (2016) describes “Zoella” as a practitioner that constantly addresses her audience in order to build a familiar, friendly relationship with them. Marwick (2015) refers to both practitioners that address their audience and interact with them and to one of them that doesn’t respond back or show any attention to her followers. Abidin describes these exact practices as attempts towards an impression of intimacy (2015). The way that Abidin phrases it, as an impression of intimacy indicates the complexity of these practices. All in all, the microcelebrities seem to encourage a sense or an impression of intimacy rather than friendly, direct relationships with the audience.

Through the sample of this study, I came across only one example of directly addressing the audience with phrases like dear followers. However, microcelebrities aim to show their appreciation and affection towards their followers by thanking them and mainly sending them wishes for upcoming celebrations or wishes for a good week, happy new year etc. In other posts, the captions consist of a question toward the audience in order to encourage their followers’ response. However, in most captions, microcelebrities invite their followers to read their blogs, visit their websites, take part in competitions, try products and recipes and generally, take some type of action.

While some researchers present microcelebrities as social media users that aim to have a more interactive and close relationship with their audience compared to the relationships between celebrities and the audience (Abidin, 2015a, Jerslev, 2016); and despite the fact that the actual interactions between microcelebrities and their followers were not taken into consideration in this study; I do not perceive the ways through which these practitioners address the audience, as inviting actual interactions and personal communication. In disagreement with Abidin and Jerslev, I suggest that the ways that the sample of this study aim to address the audience, doesn’t invite interaction; but appears ti be more like one-way communication between celebrities and their fans.

5.1.2 Promotion

One of the most important microcelebrity practices, since it gives the opportunity for practitioners to monetize their content, is promotion. Companies and brands choose to invest in highly followed profiles in order to promote their products by taking advantage of their audiences. A promotional post almost automatically confirms that the social media user has reached a big number of followers and a status as a microcelebriy. In fact, Jerslev refers to a theory according to which a person is perceived as
a celebrity the moment when the media are interested in his/her personal life (Turner, 2004, p8; Turner, Bonner, & Marshall, 2000 as cited in Jerslev, pp5236). Building on Abidin’s definition of high profile microcelebrities that she calls influencers (2015a), I suggest promotional posts or advertorials are indicators that confirm a status of microcelebrity.

Through the posts, different products and services are promoted, in turn, one is able to understand that the purpose behind the practitioners’ activities are commercial and professional. As a result, what might look to a follower as a personal profile seems to operate as a channel that among other things, intends to advertise and promote products. The promotion practices confirm the perception of some practitioners about their practices, as an actual form of labour or a job (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016).

In several posts, microcelebrities take a photo of themselves next to a product for which they write some information and comments on the caption, in order to positively present it to the audience. They tend to describe the product as if they really like it and therefore they feel like recommending it to the audience; while at the same time, legally forced by the regulations of Consumer Authority in Norway; they reveal the purpose of such posts through hashtags or words like advertising, promotion etc.

All seven microcelebrities of this study, embrace the practice of promotion not only in order to monetize their activities but in order to promote their own content and work that is published on other platforms or traditional media. In these kind of posts, they aim to encourage the curiosity and interest of the audience by revealing some information and promising more to followers that will follow a link, participate at an event or set their TVs to a specific channel, at a specific time. By promoting their work simultaneously on several platforms, microcelebrities aim to keep their audience interested and ideally increase the number of their followers and fans. Microcelebrities seem to use social media among other reasons, as a tool to promote their own work. Therefore at this point, I argue that this is another indicator of the aspect of professionalism behind their activities and practices.

Promotion, although it consists as a very common practice among microcelebrities, hasn’t been identified or analyzed by many researchers that are interested in the phenomenon. Abidin (2015a) refers to the ability of such practitioners to monetize their content without explaining or analyzing how this happens through the different posts. Furthermore, in another work, Abidin refers to
promotional posts while she is examining a variety of selfies yet without analysing them in depth (2015b)

The category of promotion, despite being one of the most interesting ones, has been one of the most complicated ones, as well. While it easy for one to identify the paid promotion and the promotion of their own work, it was not clear what is the purpose of posts that contained a package or a logo of an identifiable brand. When it was unclear whether or not a brand was advertised as a promotion or advertorial, I decided to refer to this practice as volunteered promotion since products and services are being promoted on thousands of followers even if the intention of the practitioner was different. Marwick has slightly touched on this practice by referring to a practitioner that presents his impressive collections of luxurious brands’ products on Instagram (2015). Through this research though, there was not only luxurious products but a variety of brands for example consumer goods that one can find in a convenience store. This practice highlights again the issue about microcelebrities and their ability to properly mark the posts for which they get paid for; while at the same time it raises questions about which brands they choose to appear in their posts and for what reasons.

Finally, despite the challenges of this study in relation to anonymity and lack of imagery, I argue that in the first chapter I manage to build a strong theoretical framework through of the phenomenon of microcelebrity. Through this framework I got the chance to reflect on my findings, compare them with findings of other researchers and support my arguments. While there are potential areas for further research or clarification, particularly surrounding paid and voluntary promotion, all in all, microcelebrity practicies are based around self-representational practices within fashion that mimic a celebrity 'unattainable' lifestyle. At the same time, by comparing my findings with the current knowledge on the phenomenon as presented through the literature review, I was able to identify aspects of the phenomenon that haven’t been investigated and analyzed before, like their facial expressions and beauty interventions. Furthermore, by choosing a qualitative approach I was flexible and could approach a number of practices as I evaluated and perceived them. I answer my research question not by presenting generalizable tendencies but by contributing to the knowledge on microcelebrity practices and how have they been applied from established practitioners within Norway.
5.2 Recommendations for future research

This thesis and the fact that it confirms some of the relevant theories, also reveals to the reader unknown aspects of the phenomenon of microcelebrity, this therefore demonstrates that there is a need for more research. This study presents microcelebrity practices as overviewed on Instagram. During a background research on other platforms, I noticed that their practices on other platforms where significantly different. Although their Instagram profiles consisted of publications of single photos or videos, captioned by short texts; their blog posts consisted of long texts and multiple photos of the occasion. It would be interesting to see, what kind of practices would be identified through research based on other platforms, for instance Facebook, twitter, YouTube but mainly on their blogs where they seem to be very analytical and express themselves thoroughly. How different would a similar sample portray themselves through their blogs? Do microcelebrities aim to create a more intimate relationship with their audience through their blogs by sharing their inner thoughts, feelings and ideas? A comparative study could reveal important information about the two different platforms and how they have been used by microcelebrities.

Through this study, I noticed without being able to confirm so significantly, since it was out of the scope of this study; that there was a correlation between the number of likes and content that looks professional or highly curated. To further explain, the early posts from six of the seven practitioners managed to get much fewer likes compared to their most recent ones. However, I cannot assume whether the fame has encouraged more professional looking content and therefore more followers and likes. The first posts are characterised as less curated and more spontaneous. It would be interesting therefore, to scientifically investigate this correlation and further explore the number of likes that influence the quality and professional look of the posts and the opposite.

Another part of this study that left me with several questions was the representation of microcelebrities from communication and public relations agencies. It would be interesting through interviews of both parties to investigate this type of relationship in order to understand what part of the content is influenced by such institutions and which parts are decided and created independently by the practitioner. However, I predict that such research would be hard to conduct since one of the communication agents responded to my request for consent, by stating that they are trying to keep their clients (microcelebrities) information as private as possible.
Finally, during this study I have often wondered about the boundaries between microcelebrities and celebrities. One can argue that the number of followers is an indicator for whether a user is a microcelebrity or a celebrity. For example, the microcelebrities of this study have more than 100,000 followers on Instagram, while celebrities like Justin Bieber or Rihanna have more than 60,000,000 followers each. On the other hand, a YouTube vlogger known by the nickname PewDiePie has more than 60,000,000 subscribers on his YouTube channel. Does he belong to the category of a microcelebrity? Is he a celebrity instead? Or neither? Another observer could argue that the fact that a microcelebrity participates in traditional media shows and programs determines his/her transition from a microcelebrity to a celebrity. Therefore, future research that aimed exclusively to define and divide microcelebrities and celebrities would be very important for the better understanding of a phenomenon that is characterised by high complexity entry.
Bibliography


Appendix A

A1: Example of codification
**A2: Categories**

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<th>Width</th>
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<th>Label</th>
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<td>Promotion</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Is there product...</td>
<td>{1,00, produ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Does the post r...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Does this post ...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do they show h...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Are there Elem...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicsphere</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Content that rev...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexy</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>{1,00, interi...</td>
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<td>Luxury</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
</tr>
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<td>Brands</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>{1,00, yes}...</td>
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<td>Makeup</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Does this post ...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes t...</td>
</tr>
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</table>
A3 : Categories (rest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Clause 1</th>
<th>Clause 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hairstyling</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>{1,00, professional...}</td>
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<td>Nails</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Does this post ...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattoo</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Is there content ...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Elements that r...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giveaways</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do they offer gift ...</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Partners</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platforms</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Animals</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>{1,00, yes}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A4: example of subcategories or values on variable view of the category format.
A5: example of subcategories or values on data view of the category format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

B1: NSD's first evaluation of the project (part 1)

Vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 31

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 16.01.2018 for prosjektet:

58417 Identifying and exploring practices of microcelebrities in Instagram
Behandlingsansvarlig Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Niamh Ni Bhroin
Student Eirini Soilemetzidou

Vurdering
Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er meldepliktig og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av personopplysningsloven § 31. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjekttopplaget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling
Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:
• opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
• vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
• eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Vi forutsetter at du ikke innhenter sensitive personopplysninger.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet
Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke endringer du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet
Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til
B2: NSD's first evaluation of the project (part 2)

egne prosjekter i Meldingsarkivet.

**VI tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektsslutt**

Ved prosjektsslutt 31.05.2019 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av

personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Lasse André Raa

Kontaktperson: Lasse André Raa tlf: 55 58 20 59 / Lasse.Raa@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Eirini Soilemetzidou, eirinis@student.media.uio.no
B3: NSD's first evaluation of the project (part 3)

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 58417

INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE
Du/dere har opplyst i meldeskjema at utvalget vil motta skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet, og samtykke skriftlig til å delta. Vår vurdering er at informasjonsskrivet til utvalget er godt utformet.

Personvernombudet forutsetter at det innhentes samtykke fra alle som kan gjenkjennes på bilder som inngår i datamaterialet.

DATASIKKERHET
Personvernombudet forutsetter at du/dere behandler alle data i tråd med Universitetet i Oslo sine retningslinjer for datahåndtering og informasjonssikkerhet.

PUBLISERING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER
Du/dere har opplyst i meldeskjema at personopplysninger publiseres. Personvernombudet har lagt til grunn at du/dere innhenter samtykke fra den enkelte informanten til publiseringen. Vi anbefaler at hver enkelt informant får anledning til å lese og godkjenne sine opplysninger før publisering.

Personvernombudet beriker at dersom det forekommer tredjepersoner på bildene, må det også innhentes samtykke fra disse.

PROJEKTSLUTT
Prosjektslutt er oppgit til 31.05.2019. Det fremgår av meldeskjema/informasjonsskriv at du/dere vil anonymisere datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt. Anonymisering innebærer vanligvis å:
- slette direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som navn, fødselsnummer, koblingsnøkkel
- slette eller omskrive/gruppere direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som bosted/arbeidssted, alder, kjønn

For en utdypende beskrivelse av anonymisering av personopplysninger, se Datatilsynets veileder: https://www.datatilsynet.no/globalassets/global/regelverk-skjema/veiledere/anonymisering-veileder-041115.pdf
Request for participation in research project
"Identifying and exploring practices of microcelebrities in Instagram"

Background and Purpose
This project is undertaken as part of a master's degree in Nordic Media Studies at the University of Oslo. The research identifies and explores the practices of the biggest Norwegian microcelebrities in Instagram. Practices include self-presentation and communication, multi-platform interaction, promotion, and addressing an audience.

The sample has been selected on the basis of an article written by [insert author] and published in [insert journal]. This article identified the most successful bloggers in Norway. All of the bloggers identified in this article who have Instagram accounts have been invited to participate in the study.

What does participation in the project imply?
Participation in the project implies providing the researcher with consent to download and analyse a sample of the participant’s public posts on the Instagram platform. No active participation is required on the part of the participants. No data will be gathered about the participants from other sources apart from the Instagram platform.

What will happen to the information about you?
All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the student and the supervisor will have access to the data. All data will be stored on the student’s and the supervisor’s computers which are protected by password in accordance with the University of Oslo’s regulations.

As part of the project, the researcher would like permission to copy some of the images into the final thesis in order to support the arguments that she will make. The intention is therefore that the participants will be recognizable in the final publication. The publication of specific images and or personally identifiable data in the final thesis will be agreed in advance with the participants.

The project is scheduled for completion by May 2019. All data, apart from that published in the thesis, will be deleted at that point.

Voluntary participation
It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Eirini Soilemetzidou, Nordic Media Masters Student, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway (eirinis@student.media.uio.no) or Niamh Ni Bhróin, Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo (n.n.bhroin@media.uio.no).

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Please confirm by replying to the email through which you received this information, that you are you are willing to participate in the project.
B5: NSD's final evaluation

Niamh Úa Bhrión
Postboks 1083 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Date: 05.03.2017 Ref: 58417 LAR/LR

CONFIRMATION

Evaluation of project
Referring to our letter dated February 9, 2018, the Data Protection Official for Research at NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data found that the processing of personal data in relation to the project “Identifying and exploring practices of microcelebrities in Instagram” is in accordance with the Norwegian Personal Data Act. This evaluation was made based on the original project design cf. notification form of January 16, 2018, which based the use of personal data on consent.

Re-evaluation after changes in project design
Due to changes in the project design, the Data Protection Official made a new evaluation of the project. The changes imply that no individuals will be identifiable in the data material or in the publication. Referring to our letter dated February 13, 2018, we found that the project will not treat personal information by electronic means or establish a manual registry containing sensitive personal data. The project thus falls outside of the regulations of the Personal Data Act.

Terms
The Data Protection Official understands that data collection in the project started before the project was notified, and that this data material contained data which may identify individuals. We regard this as unfortunate, as projects using personal data should be notified at least 30 days before the project starts. We presuppose that collected data are deleted or anonymised as soon as possible, cf. email dated February 12, 2018 from the daily responsible for the project.

Sincerely,

Marianne Hegseth Myhren

Lasse André Raa

NSD – Norsk senter for forskingsdata AS
Frode Hæringa gate 29
NO-5007 Bergen, NORWAY
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
nsd@nsd.no
Org. nr. 985 321 884