“Selfies, dolls and film stars”

- a cross-cultural study on how young women in India and Sweden experience the use of digital images for self-presentation on social network sites

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Abstract

Title: Selfies, dolls and film stars - a cross-cultural study on how young women in India and Sweden experience the use of digital images for self-presentation on social network sites

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Purpose: The main purpose of this cross-cultural study was to explore the thoughts and experiences of young women in Sweden and India on how they use digital images for self-presentation on social network sites (SNS) and to understand the influence of surrounding social structures and cultural values. Research questions to be answered were; how do young women in Sweden and India experience the use of digital self-presentation through images on SNS? In what ways do surrounding social structures and values influence which images young women in Sweden and India choose to share on SNS? Does digital self-presentation on SNS give the women a feeling of liberty; in the sense that they can present themselves in any way they wish?

Method/Material: The research method used in this study was a qualitative content analysis based on a semi-structured interview with eight women in the age of 18-22 in Uppsala, Sweden and Varkala, India.

Main results: The study indicates that social structures, cultural values and traditions play a significant role for the way young women in Sweden and India use digital self-presentation on SNS. The result also includes critical voices and objections from the young women towards the structures and traditions of society. Finally, there are notable differences between how women and men present themselves online. These differences reflect the traditional values of how men and women should present themselves in society. There are differences between how young women in Sweden and India present themselves online, where Indian women use agents whereas Swedish women use selfies.

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1. Introduction

When internet was introduced in the beginning of the nineties there were huge expectations among experts, politicians, businessmen and journalists about what the world of the wide web would be able to achieve. Internet, the opinion-leaders said, would open up the borders between countries and cultures, increase the economic wealth and make way for democracy and freedom of speech. With the new digital opportunities, there would be major positive economical, political and social changes. Cultures would mix and opinions exchange. The geographical borders that previously had divided people from different countries would be eliminated thanks to digital communication in the cyber world. Furthermore, the power of local authorities and repressive norms of traditional societies would dissolve and eventually vanish (Curran, 2012). In other words: The Internet would make the world a better place to live in. In his book *Misunderstanding the internet*, James Curran argues that internet has not lived up to these expectations and calls for a “reality check”. Curran demands empirical facts for evaluating if the world has really become a better place with digitalization and online communication (Curran et al., 2012, s. 3.).

One way of looking into how reality matches the notion that internet has made the world better is to explore how life online has affected social, cultural or political changes on a society level. For example, if freedom of speech has increased with the entrance of internet in a certain country, in terms of how dissidents, journalists and opponents express themselves online. Another way is to study the theme on an individual level. Do users on social network sites, e.g. Facebook, experience a greater freedom when it comes to expressing and presenting themselves online as compared to offline?

This study will look into how internet has influenced society on an individual level. The purpose of the study is to explore digital self-presentation through images on social network sites (hereafter SNS). The objects of the study are young women in Sweden and India, aged 18-22. The goal of the study is to find out if young women, in two different countries but from the same layer of society, have managed to become more liberated in the sense that they feel that they can express themselves online and through the images they want.
1.1 Background

A quick search on the hash tag "selfie" on Instagram, gives almost 77 million hits, a number that indicates how widely-spread this media-phenomenon is. To post selfies on blogs or social network sites has become a common way to present one-self online in the Western world today. The digital self-portrait that is taken through the inbuilt camera in a mobile phone occurs all over the world but is primarily a result of mass-media influences in the West. Politicians like Barack Obama and television celebrities like Kim Kardashian display themselves through selfies, although most of the digital self-portraits online today exhibit ordinary peoples’ everyday life. Selfies are usually associated with young people presenting themselves on social media and the phenomenon is more common among young women than young men (Dagens Nyheter, Se på mig, 2013-09-15, p.8-11). In the January issue of the Indian weekly magazine The Week, the phenomenon selfie was given ten pages under the heading "An eye for an I - the world of the Indian selfie" (The week, 2014-01-19, p. 52-63). The same amount of attention was given the selfie in the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter's Sunday supplement in September last year. The section "Se på mig" is trying to explore what the selfie really is an expression for. In the articles the authors discuss both the nature and the consequences of the selfie. Is online self-presentation through selfies a result of our need for validation and a search for attention or is it liberating people in the sense that they are given the opportunity to gain control over how their “selves” are presented online?

In her YouTube video The selfie revolution, Laci Green, a 23-year old American video-blogger suggests that posting selfies gives women an opportunity to define themselves instead of having other people defining them. She states that the selfie can improve a women’s self-esteem if only she dares to challenge the idea of beauty. Women should start to post complementary images when not smiling or looking attractive. (Green, 2014). Swedish columnist Hanna Hellquist is, on the other hand, criticising the selfies for reproducing the standard images of women. According to Hellquist, it doesn’t matter if western women of today have been given the tool to define themselves - they still do it in the same smiling, good-looking manners as before. In other words, when women use the new digital technology they continue to reproduce the standard norm of what it

Even though taking and posting selfies is a global phenomenon, not everyone present themselves through digital self-portraits. Although the Indian magazine *The Week* (mentioned above) suggests that selfies is a common thing in India – it is not representative for all Indian women. Kim & Papacharissi conclude that cultural background and values influence self-presentation online, when comparing how American and Korean actors present themselves through personal homepages. In this study, the Korean actors were more likely to use agents, such as cartoon images and media heroes to express themselves online, rather than presenting themselves through a selfie (Kim & Papacharissi, 2013). The US participants used more personal-related and non-manipulated photos. The result shows that cultural differences in self-presentation do exist on internet and that the social structures of a society might affect the way individuals present themselves online. It also shows that selfies are not as common in Korea as it is in the US.

Curran indeed concludes; “internet can provide a space for the expression of individual identity – even in collectivist societies” (Curran et al. 2012, p. 58). Japan is an example of a country where young people can create their own spaces and digital worlds with the help of their mobile phones. The use of smartphones makes it easier to communicate through texting and e-mailing. Above all, it enables young people in Japan to express their individuality through for example ring tones, functions and colours of the phone. In this sense internet and digital media increase the “personalized individualization” as well as the freedom among young people in a country that holds a very collectivist culture. However, the communal identities in collective cultures remain strong and have a considerable impact of the use of internet, according to Curran (Curran et al., 2012). Natalie Fenton suggests that although the “self” has gained more power through for example social media, there are other factors than technology that influence the way we express ourselves online. It is not the technological capacity that decides our activities online – it is the socio-structural context. Social structures in terms of values, traditions and cultural codes play a significant role in the way users of internet and social media express and display themselves (Curran et al. 2012, p. 136)
When it comes to more individualistic countries, research has proven that certain values and norms of society have affected the way people use internet and social media. In the article *He posted, she posted: Gender differences in self-disclosure on social network sites*, J.B. Bond suggests that females tend to use social network sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, to self-disclose relationships with others, such as friends and family. Males, on the other hand, tend to self-disclose more about sports and amusement (Bond, 2009). According to the researcher, these gender differences online reflect the offline codes of conduct for men and women. In offline communication women display more personal, relationship-orientated information than men. Bond’s study indicates that the gender differences that appear offline continue to appear online.

More research is needed on how young women use digital images for self-presentation. Many researchers of today focus on the effects and consequences of posting selfies, but few have paid attention to the thoughts, processes and attitudes among the users themselves. More research is also needed to explore how a modern western media phenomenon like the selfie, is used, or not used, in non-western countries. One way of exploring if, and how, cultural values and social structures affect the way individuals present themselves online is to make interviews with the users themselves.

1.2 Purpose and research questions
The main purpose of this cross-cultural study is to explore the thoughts and experiences of young women in Sweden and India on how they use digital images for self-presentation and to understand how surrounding social structures and cultural values influence the way they use images on SNS.

**Research questions**
- How do young women in Sweden and India experience the use of digital self-presentation through images on SNS?
- In what ways do surrounding social structures and cultural values influence what images young women in Sweden and India choose to share on SNS?
- Do young women consider the possibility to post digital images on SNS as liberating in the sense that they feel they can present themselves in any way they wish?
1.3 Limitations

Since the time allotted for the study is short it’s coverage of the two countries, Sweden and India is likewise limited. Only eight women have been interviewed for this study, four in Uppsala and four in Varkala. The reason for this relatively small number of respondents is related to the amount of time given for the project and due to the fact that the study only holds a single writer. Due to the limitation of sampling size and the distance between the two settings, the result is not representative for the whole of Sweden or India. It should rather be seen as an introduction into how young women in two similar cities, but in two different countries, discuss and reflect on digital self-presentation and the selfie-phenomena. A comparative study within India, e.g. between different socioeconomic groups or between males and females, would be interesting in the future. In this study, however, the comparison was defined between young women in Uppsala and Varkala only.

Although this study explores young women’s experiences of digital self-presentation through images on SNS, no particular photos have been analysed according to a specific analytical framework or model. However, the profile and cover photos of the respondents’ Facebook profiles was included in the study, but only as a background to the reflections made by the respondents. The respondent’s profile and cover photos have only been used as a reference during the analysis. It would have been interesting to apply a structured analysis of the pictures but this was not possible within the scope of this thesis.

1.4 Disposition

To analyse the way digital SNS-based self-presentation works, it is necessary to understand some central concepts concerning the use of images online. Therefore a description of key concepts will be presented, followed by a section where the main theories related to the study are presented. What ideas and thoughts in previous research are relevant for exploring the way young women of today present themselves through images on SNS? The Theory chapter will be followed by a section on Methods and materials where the study design is presented along with a critical discussion of the study’s methodological limitations. The questions of reliability and validity are also
discussed under this chapter, as well as ethical considerations. The result of the study is presented in two sections. The Swedish result will be presented first, followed by the Indian result. In the chapter Analysis, the Swedish and the Indian result are analysed in the light of the current theories – each country’s result was analysed separately. In the concluding chapter, Discussion, some of the results are debated against the initial purpose of the study together with suggestions for future research.

1.5 Central concepts and literary review

1.5.1 Digital self-presentation

The research on digital self-presentation has been going on for some time. In the mid-nineties researchers mainly focused on identity constructions in anonymous online-environments such as dating sites and virtual chat rooms, simply because these types of sites were the most common at the time. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin conclude that many individuals in anonymous online-environment tend to create identities completely different from their off-line identities (Zhao, Grasmuck, Martin, 2008). In the anonymous cyber groups and chat-rooms, internet provide individuals with an opportunity to become someone completely different - similar to the role an actor perform in a theatre play.

"In other words, the disembodied and anonymous online environment makes it possible for people to reinvent themselves through the production of new identities. For example, in the online world, a man can pretend to be a woman, a nerd to be a star athlete, and an introvert to be an extrovert" (Zhao, Grasmuck, Martin, Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships, 2008, p.4).

This phenomenon, that a person’s identity online differs from his/hers identity offline is known as digital dualism (http://www.techopedia.com/definition/29046/digital-dualism). In the beginning of the 21th century researchers started to investigate nonymous (as opposed to anonymous) digital platforms such as Facebook and MySpace. The idea of digital dualism was then questioned. Many researchers today emphasize that the offline – and the online self-presentation on nonymous SNS - are quite similar. The digital self-presentation we use on Facebook, reflects who we are in real life, although we tend to polish the surface to create a “hoped for self” rather then “another self” (Mehdizadeh, 2010, p. 358). Although this study does not intend to compare the self-presentation between anonymous and nonymous online environments, the research is
nevertheless relevant for the understanding of young women’s’ digital self-presentation on SNS.

SNS such as Facebook, provides us with tools for creating a designed online profile. Through the profiles, users are free to display information about themselves, as well as images via a profile and a cover picture. Many questions remain regarding how individuals in different countries and cultures choose these digital photos to present themselves online. How do they choose them and how do their choices correspond to the social structures and values of the surrounding society? Do for example women experience that SNS, as a tool for self-presentation, is more liberating than self-presentation offline? Like Kim & Papacharissi suggests, Rui & Stefanone concludes that the way we present ourselves online, differ between cultures. In their study Strategic Self-presentation online: A cross-cultural study, they compare how Singaporean and American SNS users update their profiles with texts and photos (Rui & Stefanone, 2012). Their result shows that Singaporean users tend to upload more photos than the Americans. On the other hand, the Singaporeans share their photos for friends and family in a way to maintain different types of relationships in a way that the Americans don’t.

1.4.2 Selfie

The mobile phone’s built-in camera mirror-function is the tool for the selfie. A selfie-photographer can reflect oneself in his or her image but can also gain confirmation in the form of comments and "likes" from followers or friends. Although selfies are a modern media phenomenon in the sense that technology has made it possible to quickly take and display self-portraits online, it is not new in the sense of taking photographic self-portraits. Often referred to, as one of the first selfies is a picture taken in 1839 by a man named Robert Cornelius. He was an amateur photographer and took the photo himself. Apparently, he opened the lens, ran to a chair in front of the camera, sat there for two minutes and then went back to the camera and closed the lens. (http://publicdomainreview.org/collections/robert-cornelius-self-portrait-the-first-ever-selfie-1839/).

The definition of the selfie, according to the Oxford dictionaries is “A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded
to a social media website”. The definition of selfies is however constantly changing – and so is the research. Research of today lacks proofs about the effects of taking and displaying selfies on SNS. Something that has been argued by both opinion leaders and researchers is that using selfies for digital self-presentation is an expression of narcissism. Mehdizadeh concludes in her study Self-Presentation 2.0: Narcissism and Self-Esteem on Facebook that people, who take selfies and share them on Facebook, are more narcissistic than others (Mehdizadeh, 2010). This idea, that people who take and post selfies are more narcissistic than others, has however been questioned by other researchers. Sociology professor Gail Davis, at Wheelock College, Boston, USA suggests that selfies should be viewed as a desire to be seen, rather than an expression for narcissism. Davis makes a connection between the way young women disclose themselves through selfies and the demand from society that they should appear sexy and beautiful (Dagens Nyheter, 2013.09.15).

Another approach in previous research is that the users of SNS sites post selfies for one’s own self. The reason is then not narcissistic but more about a willingness to keep track of oneself and to keep the photos as a kind of memory. Michele M. Strano argues that digital self-presentation through selfies on for example Facebook, is initiated by the individuals as a help to remember how one’s looks change over time (Strano, 2008).
2. Theory
This study is an interaction between different theoretical perspectives and the result that emerged when analysing the data. The empirical data, collected in the form of interviews and images, represents the basis for the study. The material has eventually been observed in the light of the chosen theories. The theories deal with the concepts of social reconstruction, self-presentation and tradition in relation to media. Unfortunately, there are not so many new theories about the phenomena selfie. Today there are only a few cross-cultural studies about digital self-presentation through images on social media. The recent literature that has been written, e.g. about self-presentation on Facebook, is presented in the chapter Central concepts and literary review. Some of the theories presented below are not the most recent ones. On the other hand they are still valid, since the thoughts about self-presentation, identity and social reproduction still holds today.

2.1 Self presentation
In The Presentation of Self in Everyday life, Erving Goffman, as early as 1959, suggests that we, in our daily life together with others, create an image of our self to give the right impression. In interaction with others, we constantly try to adjust our looks and postures to suit a particular situation (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation is our way of shaping a personal facade in order to generate a desired impression on others. This facade, or mask, is something we put on to meet the expectations of our audiences. According to Goffman, self-presentation is the interaction between oneself and the audience – it is the way in which we design our self-identities.

Goffman argues that all our social activities take place on two stages, or in two different regions. He speaks of the back region and the front region. In the back region, we prepare for our performances and constantly shape our façade. The front region is where the actual performance takes place. This is where we meet our “audiences” in the form of other people in our every day life. The access to the back region is controlled to prevent the audience from peeking behind the scenes. In other words, when we “present ourselves”, we make a clear line toward what is open for public view – and what is not. Furthermore, Goffman suggests that there is a silent agreement on how to act between
the individual and his or hers audience. This agreement is based on the idea that in our acting on stage there are agreements and there are contradictions. We, as actors, should strive to emphasise the unspoken agreements between the audience and us. At the same time we should try to smooth out the contradictions (Goffman, 1959). In the interaction with others, or as Goffman puts it; in our performances on stage, we constantly try to prevent disorders in our acting. Such disorders might be gestures, lapses or scenes that contradict the definition of the maintained situation. These disorders can discredit us in the sense that we loose control over the situation and fail to act as the audience expect us to act. According to Goffman, the interaction with others is crucial for the way we behave and act in our every-day life. We invest our selves in the identification with a certain role or in a certain group. We are eager not to appear as someone who breaks the rules in a social interaction. It is essential for all individuals to create a personality, which doesn’t interfere with the expectations from the group. The expectations of the group are equal to the norms of the surrounding social units, like friends and family. These expectations and norms of social units are often referred to as social structures.

2.2 Structuralism and social reproduction

Sociologist Anthony Giddens writes that social forces determine our interaction with others. The way we behave is not only based on random acts and individual intentions. Similar to Goffman, Giddens state that we are in fact very dependent on surrounding social rules and norms of society. However, individuals may challenge these social structures. This means that not only expectations and norms form our social life, but also individual acts of people. Giddens speaks of a micro and a macro structure that together construct the nature of society:

“Human agency (micro level activity) and social structure (macro level forces) continuously feed into each other. The social structure is reproduced through repetition of acts by individual people (and therefore can change)” (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 102).

This theory indicates that even though social norms do exists and affects us, we always have the power to change and challenge these norms with individual acts. According to Giddens, we are surrounded by a social structure in terms of traditions, established
codes and values, but these structures can be changed or challenged if people start to ignore them or replace them with something different.

In the book *Media, Gender and identity*, David Gauntlett, refers to Giddens, when discussing the relationship between social structures and individual acts. Gauntlett raises the question why we as individuals care about this social framework if it stops us from acting as we please? He finds the answer in Giddens explanation.

“People have a faith in the coherence of everyday life, which is developed very early in life – when we have to put absolute trust in our carers – and sustained by our ordinary interactions with others.” (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 103).

According to Gauntlett, we fail to act individually, because of a faith in the coherence of everyday life. This faith is sprung from a connection and reliance to our carers in early-life. It is because of this “faith” that it is so hard for some people to accept when, for example, men act in a manner which is not the general sense of how men “should behave”. The faith, which we carry deep inside of us, is very hard to ignore and to change. It affects the way we act and behave in our future life (Gauntlett, 2008).

Gauntlett states an example when he points to the fact that some men get disturbed when other men act in a feminine manner. It is a reaction towards a behaviour, which challenges the everyday understanding of how things should be in society. When someone is challenging the norm that we as individuals have invested a lot of emotions and faith in, it feels uncomfortable and we react negatively. At the same time, Gauntlett emphasizes that there are always individuals in a society that don’t mind at all if a man acts effeminate or if a woman acts in a way that, according to the social structures, is not suitable for a woman.

2.3 Tradition, media and identity

In his book, *The Media and Modernity*, J.B. Thompson discusses tradition and media in a modern society (Thompson, 1995). Although Thompsons assumptions primarily are based on media before the entrance of digitalization, he still pinpoints some interesting thoughts that are relevant when investigating how the structures of self-presentation works in our digitalized mediated society. His theories are also relevant when exploring
the thoughts and understandings among young women in India – a country that when it comes to digitalization and information technology is very modern, but when it comes to religious beliefs and collective control, is very traditional.

When communication through media enters a traditional society, people begin to discover places, both real and imagined, outside their own physical world. The traditional face-to-face communication is challenged by the media in the sense that new values are presented and exposed to people. With new inputs from the outer world through media people start to distance themselves from the traditional values and patterns. Values and patterns that normally have been mediated by local authorities and through face-to-face communication. In this process, people start to shape their own identity based on new ways and means, mediated through the media. This is a development that Thompson agrees with and finds logic but he doesn’t agree with the notion that tradition disappears with the entry of a modern, mediated society, which has been stated by several theories about modernity in the 1950-and 1960s. In these theories, researchers like for example Daniel Lerner, claim that there is a dichotomy between tradition and modernity. Opposite to these theories, Thompson argues that traditions survive through continuous face-to-face communication and that this verbal transmission of values and norms should not be understated. The medialization of society has instead of eliminating traditions, given them new life, according to Thompson. “All though traditions were dragged up with its root, it doesn’t mean that they died due to lack of nutrition” (Thomson, 1995, p.233).

When it comes to tradition and identity, Thompson suggests that there are two forces shaping ones identity, namely self-identity and collective identity (Thompson, 1995). Self-identity is the image that people have about themselves as individuals, including certain characters and capacities. The collective identity is the idea that people have of themselves as a being part of a social group - the feeling of belonging in a group with it’s own history and meaning. According to Thompson, both the self-identity and the collective identity are formed in the social context. A persons’ identity can simply not start from nothing – it is shaped out of values, opinions and behaviours from the past. These thoughts about identity are similar to Gidden’s ideas about social reproduction.
2.4 Individual and collective cultures

Markus & Kitayama claim that people from different cultures have different ways of constructing their selves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The authors take Asia and America as an example. They state that *interdependent* self-constructions are more common in Asia, while *independent* self-construction is more common in America. This means that connection to and interaction with other people is very important in Asian countries, while independence and an awareness of ones individual self and uniqueness is more common in America.

American culture neither assumes nor values an overt connectedness among individuals. In contrast, individuals seek to maintain their independence from others by attending to the self and by discovering and expressing their unique inner attributes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.1).

In his book *Cultures consequences*, Geert Hofstede gives an example on how the meaning of a word can pinpoint the difference between an individual and a collective culture with an example from China (Hofstede, 2001). In China the word for “man” includes, not only the self, but also the person’s intimate cultural and social surroundings (Hofstede 2001, p. 211). He also refers to Marcus & Kitayama when suggesting that Asian countries score “considerably lower on individualism to those of the Western world”.

According to Hofstede, the attitude towards individualism in China had a renaissance with Mao Zedong and the communistic era. For Mao individualism was evil and connected with selfishness. However, the collective traditions in China has not only to do with communism – the ideas about the importance of connecting to others in society goes hand in hand with historical and religious traditions. Collectivism in for example Asian countries, Hofstede argues, is not about discrediting the individual; it is simply a belief that individuals are better off if maintaining the group’s well being. It is also an attitude that affects all layers of society, from how people define “man” or the self, to how they act in society. The example from China shows relevance for a study that explores the use of digital self-presentation in India, which is also an Asian country with a tradition of collective culture.
3. Methods and materials

3.1 Research method

The research approach used in this study is abductive and the research method was qualitative. Similar to the inductive research method, the empirical material stands above any specific theories. This means that it was the empirical data, in terms of the interviews with the eight respondents that were the base of the study. Although no fixed theory was used initially, certain theories and theoretical frameworks has made up the background of the study. During the analysis of the interviews, theories have surfaced and finally been added to the study. This abductive research method is a creative and flexible method, where the study takes place between the emerging results from the empirical material and the previous research and relevant theories (Schrøder et al. 2003). Abductive research approach is neither inductive, where no theories at all are used during the analysis, nor deductive, where a fixed theory and hypothesis represents the base for the study.

Since the purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and understandings among young women in Sweden and India on how they use digital images for self-presentation on SNS, the method semi-structured interview was chosen as the method in the field. When exploring thoughts and attitudes among individuals, a qualitative method is preferable. The aim of the study was not to measure; it was to interpret and understand the answers from the respondents. Qualitative interviews give the respondents the opportunity to express themselves freely and without the stress and influence from others, which can be the case when using the focus group method. The method for analysing the data used in this study is qualitative content analysis. The interviews were transcribed into text and then analysed according to this specific model (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003)

3.2 Selection of participants

The respondents were selected according to similar background factors. All the respondents attended college (India) or senior high school (Sweden) at the time of the interviews. They all planed to continue studying or working in the field that they were studying. The respondents all lived together with a father and a mother and one to three siblings. The Indian respondents had only one sibling each and their father was working
while their mother was a housewife. All of the Indian respondents lived in a house, two of the Swedish respondents lived in houses while two of them lived in flats. Two of the Indian respondents had been abroad while all the Swedish respondents had been abroad or travelled regularly (supplement 1).

Although there are differences between Sweden and India in general, and Uppsala and Varkala specifically, the respondents had homogeneous backgrounds. This was an important aspect when choosing the participants. The Indian respondents attended the economic programme at Sre Narayana college in Varkala. All of the Swedish respondents attended the civil science programme, the economy programme or the natural sciences programme at Lundellska skolan in Uppsala. A number of women in Uppsala were asked to participate in the study and then four were chosen due to their similar background. In Varkala, the teachers of the English department at Sre Narayana college, helped to choose the respondents. Here, the ability to speak English was a strong factor when the respondents were chosen. The background factors were not initially mentioned when choosing the Indian respondents, but turned out to fit in well between the Indian respondents as well as in relation to the Swedish. However, this was more a question of luck than a methodological strategy. Therefore the selection of participants in India should be considered as more of a convenient sampling.

3.3 Study setting and data collection
The city of Uppsala, Sweden and the city of Varkala, India, are equally big with approximately 200 000 inhabitants. Lundellska skolan in Uppsala is one of the largest senior high schools in Uppsala and Sre Narayana college in Varkala is one of the largest collages in Varkala. Lundellska skolan is a senior high school for students aged 16-19 years old and offers programmes including social sciences, natural sciences, nursing and economic sciences. Sre Narayana college is a college for students aged 18-22 years and offers mainly programmes with economic programmes.

It is worth mentioning that the state of Kerala is one of the most developed states in India when it comes to standards of living. Kerala has the lowest rate of infant mortality and the highest number of educated women. The expectancy age in Kerala is the highest in the country and so is the percentage of girls that attend school.
In a cross-cultural study where the chosen countries in many ways might differ, these background facts on Kerala were especially important when choosing the city of Varkala as a setting for this study.

The semi-structured interviews were performed and recorded in November and December 2013 in Varkala, India and in Uppsala, Sweden. The respondents in the interviews were female students, in the age of 18-22. Due to the time and volume of the study, only eight respondents were interviewed in total, four in Sweden and four in India. The interviews were set in a closed room in which the respondents were alone with the interviewer. The length of the interviews was approximately 25 minutes per respondent. In Uppsala, two of the interviews were performed at Lundellska skolan and two at Blåsenhus, Uppsala University. In Varkala, all four interviews were performed in a classroom of Sre Narayana college. The interviews were recorded on an IPhone 4s and then transcribed into text that was printed for analysis. All of the Indian respondents spoke English so no interpreter was needed. The Swedish interviews were done in Swedish and the Indian in English.

From the research questions an interview guide with open-ended questions was created. The same interview guide was used in both the Indian and the Swedish interviews and divided into three themes; 1) My own images 2) Others images and 3) How other people perceive me through my images. The guide included questions probing the respondent's thoughts on different types of images, the importance of other people's opinions and the experiences of the phenomenon selfie (supplement 2).

3.4 Social network sites used in the study

The American student Mark Zuckerberg launched the social network site Facebook in 2004. Initially, Facebook was primarily used among college students in the United States. Today the site has turned into much more than just a digital platform for students, in December 2013 Facebook counted 1.2 billion monthly active users all over the world and 81 per cent of the daily active users were outside the US and Canada (https://newsroom.fb.com/key-Facts). The SNS Instagram would have been more appropriate for the study if there were only Swedish respondents, since this platform is
more used by the Swedish women for posting images at the moment (according to the Swedish respondents). However, Facebook was chosen since both the Swedish and the Indian women used and had a profile – and cover photo on the site.

3.5 Model for analysis

After the interviews were done and recorded, they were transcribed into text and printed. The text was then analysed using qualitative content analysis as described by Graneheim & Lundman. According to this model, the full text was first divided into meaning units. Only those parts of the text that corresponded to the purpose were used to construct meaning units. Out of these units, codes were identified (Figure 1). The codes were then sorted into categories from which a number of sub-themes were constructed. Moving from categories to themes was accomplished by using abstraction. Using categories is a way to sort the manifest content of the material. Themes, on the other hand, are the red threads through one or several categories. The themes are derived from a more abstract level of the material than the categories. Two to five sub-themes made out the final themes. These main themes and the sub-themes formed the result of the study.

When working with this model, the meaning units and codes were first constructed. After the whole text was coded, categories were created. From these categories one to five sub-themes emerged, which finally formed five main themes. The Swedish and the Indian data were treated as two different domains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Meaning unit</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub theme</th>
<th>Main theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SR1: I chose the profile picture because...it was natural. I prefer a natural look.</td>
<td>Prefer a natural look</td>
<td>Natural profile picture</td>
<td>The character of the profile picture</td>
<td>Natural look</td>
<td>Natural and healthy, smiling and social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1

At the point were the result appeared out of the main themes, the themes from the interview guide were removed from the study. This was done to avoid confusion on the
concept theme and because the initial themes in the interview guide no longer filled a purpose for the study.

3.6 Ethical considerations

All the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, that their participation was free and that they at any time could withdraw from participation. If any respondent wanted to withdraw from the study, they had the right to do so by contacting the author who would then destroy all the material connected to that respondent. The respondents were informed that they at any time had the right to take part of the material of the study. All the participants recorded interviews and transcribed texts were stored in a secure place with access only by the author. The respondents were also informed that their answers and interviews would not be used for any other purpose than completing the current study. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, in which the mentioned rights were expressed. All the respondents agreed to the fact that their profile – and cover photos were attached to the study.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Regardless if a quantitative or qualitative method is used, the researcher needs to evaluate the validity and reliability of the study. Validity measures that we really examine what we are supposed to examine and reliability measures the accuracy of the data collection (Esaiasson et al., 2012).

3.7.1 Validity

The traditional positivist view that validity means: ”You measure what you think you measure” needs to be evaluated when working with qualitative studies. In the book, The qualitative research interview, Kvale & Brinkman suggest that qualitative research indeed can lead to valid scientific knowledge if only the definition of validity is defined as “A method that explores what it was intended to explore” (Kvale, Brinkman, 2009, p. 264). In the light of this definition, the validity of this qualitative study can be discussed. In a deductive research approach, the consistency between the theoretical framework and the operational measurement tools is evaluated when testing the validity. Since there is no main theory on which this study is based, the validity instead needs to
evaluate the consistency between 1) the purpose and the research questions and 2) the method used in the study and the result of the study. The operational tool (method) used in the study was eight semi-structured interviews and a qualitative content analysis. The purpose of the study was to explore the thoughts and experiences of young women in Sweden and India on how they are using digital self-presentation through images on SNS. To use interviews suited the study best, since the purpose was to explore thoughts and reflections of young women.

Another thing that needs to be mentioned, when discussing validity is the risk of making systematic errors, if using deficient methods and measuring tools (Esaiasson et al., 2007, p.65). In this study one such error could be that the respondents are not completely honest when they answer the questions. Perhaps their “actual use” of images in self-presentation is in fact their “perceived use”. When using interviews, the respondents might feel uncomfortable or even ashamed when reflecting on how they are really using their images. On the other hand, "the perceived" use of images is what my study intended to explore. It was the women’s reflections, not “facts” that was meant to be examined.

3.7.2 Reliability

To be able to judge whether the results of a study can be trusted, there must be a discussion on reliability. According to Kvale & Brinkman (2013), reliability in research is about whether the results of a study can be reproduced in the future by other researchers or not. Esaiasson addresses the lack of reliability that can be caused by random and careless mistakes during data collection. Careless mistakes could involve sloppy notes or temporary misunderstandings of the answers during the interview (Esaiasson et al., 2007). In this study, reliability primarily concerns if the respondents might change their answers during the interview or if they would give different answers to another, future interviewer. Also the interviewer’s reliability can be questioned, e.g. when it comes to leading questions or questions that is affected by values. To avoid leading questions, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions. A number of follow-up questions were added to the interview guide as a support for the interviewer to drive discussions forward if necessary. The interview started with a short session that was not recorded for privacy reasons. It included an introduction about the study and
some small talk about every-day topics, to make the respondents at ease before entering the interview. Furthermore, the reliability of this study concerns language problems during the interviews in India. Considering that the interviews were held in English, and the fact that the Indian girls had a strong accent, mistakes could easily occur during the interviews. However, misunderstandings regarding hearing or interpreting the answers might as well appear during the Swedish interviews, or any interviews for that matter. To avoid this kind of mistakes, a lot of attention was paid to ask the respondents to repeat their answers, in case the interviewer didn’t hear or grasp the meaning. For example questions like “You mean that…?” or “What do you mean by that?” was continuously asked during all interviews by the interviewer. Similarly, the interviewer made sure that the respondent comprehended the questions. If not, the question was repeated or explained further.

When using interviews as a method, the problem of transcribing recorded interviews should be taking into consideration. Kvale & Brinkman gives an example of how two different persons transcribed the same interview – and got two different texts (Kvale & Brinkman, 2013). This indicates that the interpreting of the data collection can differ, depending on who is doing it. The recorded interviews of this study were transcribed with the above-mentioned example in mind.
4. Result

At the end of the analysis a number of themes emerged, each of them made up of two to five sub-themes (Figure 2 and 3). The Swedish and the Indian results will be provided in two different chapters. Under each theme and sub-theme follows a short explanation for clarification. A selection of quotes from the interviews that appeared essential for the different themes will be presented in each section for illustration. The analysis of the themes and subthemes based on the research questions and according to the theoretical framework will be done in the chapter Analysis.

4.1 Swedish result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
<th>Sub themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1. Individual power over the image</td>
<td>Like a memory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual and unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right to choose images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Presenting a happy and healthy life</td>
<td>Importance of smiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No sad images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A natural look in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social and healthy lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning the selfie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The impact of the audience</td>
<td>The importance of comments and likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Admitting the urge for confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Gender still matters</td>
<td>Attractive girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Careless boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Objections of inequality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1 Individual power over the image

All of the Swedish respondents used a photo of their own face on their Facebook profile picture (supplement 3). All of them also regularly updated new selfies on SNS, either in the form of a new profile picture or as an ordinary post. According to the Swedish respondents, selfies are the most common photos among young women on SNS at the moment.

**Sub-themes:** a) like a memory b) individual and unique c) right to choose images
A) Like a memory

Although most of the Swedish respondents said that the reason why they – or their friends – post a selfie is for some sort of confirmation, two of them were posting selfies for their own sake, like a memory.

“I post pictures of myself, for my own sake.” I can then go back in time...maybe I have erased the photos in my mobile but then I'll still have them on Facebook. It’s not that I strive for "Oh, I really want a lot of likes on this picture" it's more that I think it’s good as...some kind of memory" (SR2)

B) Individual and unique

Two of the Swedish respondents expressed the importance of sharing images that were true to their own personalities and uniqueness. In their reflections about their images, they wanted to make clear that they as individuals were unique and that they wanted to stand out and do what felt best for them. They also compared themselves to other SNS users when stating that they displayed their selfies differently than others:

I show pictures in my own way. Not in the same way as others...I’m more the kind of person who wants to be the way I am. I don’t want to copy anyone (SR1)

Sometimes thoughts like this can occur: “How will people react on this image?” But then I think: “But I don’t want that to affect my life, or how I act. So...now I try to do the things that feels best for me to do (SR3)

I'm pretty much, like... well, I’m very...personal. In a way not so many people are....on social media I mean. (SR4)

C) Right to choose the image

Several of the respondents claimed that choosing and posting selfies is a way to gain power over the image. The action of posting a selfie were, according to the respondents, a way to control the way they defined themselves online - as a sort of counterbalance for all the photos that other people take of them and post on SNS.

I guess it has something to do with all the images that others spread of you...pictures that you don't take yourself. You get some sort of power to counterbalance that through taking nice pictures/.../It's like a way to control how you appear online (SR3).
I rarely post images that others have taken of me…that can turn out to be kind of awkward...People are usually not allowed to post pictures of me (SR4).

4.1.2 Presenting a happy and healthy life
All the Swedish respondents said that they wanted their selfies to give a happy, light-hearted impression and they all smiled on their profile pictures (supplement 3). The result also showed that all the Swedish respondents, except for one, wouldn’t post sad pictures or pictures showing them in a bad mood. A wish to appear natural or to post pictures of oneself in nature was also common. All of the respondents said that, apart from selfies, images of healthy food together with friends were the most common picture on SNS at the time of the interviews.

Sub-themes: a) the importance of smiling b) a natural look in nature c) pictures that express a social lifestyle together with healthy food.

A) The importance of smiling
To look happy or to give a happy impression seemed to be the most important thing when posting any type of images online according to the respondents.

Most of the time, I like taking photos of my smile (SR1)

If it’s a photo of myself...like a selfie...then I usually want to smile/... /I rarely post a photo of myself where I don’t smile” (SR2)

On my profile picture, I look happy and calm. And, yes, I feel like a calm and positive person. That’s how I want others to perceive me (SR3)

B) No sad pictures
When reflecting on what images they would never post, the majority of the respondents said that they didn't post sad pictures. The reason for this varied. Two of the respondents said that they rather talked to a friend in real life instead of displaying a sad mood online. Another one said she wouldn’t do it because it’s a “cheap” way of getting confirmation.

If I would feel sad, it’s better that I call my friend...than exposing it on social media’ (SR2)
If I would post a picture of myself when being depressed, then it’s as if: “you just posted this picture for some sort of confirmation” And I don’t want it to be like that so…I don’t do it (SR3)

One of the respondents, SR4, differed from the rest on this theme. According to her, posting a picture when being sad or mellow was easier then to express the same feelings in real life. This was the only respondent who had a cover picture that expressed sadness (supplement 3).

When I feel depressed, I don’t show it in real life. I mean, I usually don’t show it when I’m around people or when I am with my friends, so…and because of that it becomes like some kind of...relief...To get it out somehow (SR4)

C) A natural look in nature
Three out of four cover photos showed the respondent in some sort of nature environment and all the respondents performed in a natural way on their profile picture, meaning that they used a moderate amount of make-up and disclosed a “natural look” (supplement 3). One of the respondents expressed dislike towards pictures where girls use too much make-up:

I chose the profile picture because I think it was... natural. I like that it isn't so exaggerated. Like...some girls tend to put lots of make-up on, but... I like to look natural”. (SR1)

I think that, even if it looks like if I care a lot about my looks on my profile picture, it doesn't look like if I have removed myself from nature and is trying to be urban or have the latest labels or anything. (SR3)

D) Social and healthy lifestyle
The fourth sub-theme concerns pictures that express a social and healthy lifestyle. This was something that the respondents said was a strong trend on SNS at the moment. Pictures that showed healthy food could be a photo taken at home, displaying a plate with salad or fruits. The most common picture though, according to the respondents, was that of a group of girls in a restaurant with a healthy brunch plate in front of them.

Breakfast pics! Very much like: "Here I am, eating a wonderful brunch with my wonderful friends and...life is wonderful! (SR2)
I think that the most popular thing right now is this thing with showing how healthy you’re eating ...
People post pictures with a bowl of cottage cheese and fruits and things like that... It's just that you can't see the chocolate-bar that is accidentally placed outside the picture... (SR4)

**E) Questioning the selfie**

Although all of the respondents regularly posted selfies, they at the same time questioned the habit.

In fact I think it is a very strange thing to do. I mean, why would you...spread...your looks? Who needs to know how you look like, except for the people you hang out with? And they...the people you hang out with, they think you are nice regardless how you look. (SR3)

**4.1.3 The impact of the audience**

Even though some of the respondents made clear that they posted pictures for their own sake, the result showed that comments and likes were an important motive of posting selfies and other images on SNS.

**A) The importance of comments and likes**

The Swedish respondents said that it meant a lot to get comments and likes on their selfies. Getting feedback on their selfies was considered to be an important reason for posting them.

You want confirmation from others that you look nice. Or good. (SR3)

You do get happy if you get a comment like, "Oh, you look cute” or “That's such a nice haircut”. But, on the other hand, it's not like I...delete the picture if I don’t get enough likes... (SR2)

**B) Admitting the urge for confirmation**

The respondents expressed an urge for getting feedback and admitted a concern for not getting enough comments or likes on their selfies:

When I was fifteen or so and posted a picture...and then I maybe got only two likes... then I deleted it (laughter). I can honestly admit that it has happened several times this year as well (SR4)
A part of me can of course feel: "Why post a picture if I don’t get any likes?" and "Oops, this picture didn’t get any likes at all, what to do now?" But then I tell myself that...that’s a risk I have to take...I’m not gonna post a picture just to get likes – I post because I do believe that there might be people out there who are actually interested in my daily life (SR3)

4.1.4 Gender still matters
All of the respondents expressed that they felt a difference in how young women and young men are using images and present themselves online. They all reflected on that girls seem to care more about their looks than boys. They also had the feeling that boys didn’t care so much about how they are perceived, or at least that the boys pretend that they don’t care. Two of the respondents blamed this difference on the society and expressed an urge for a change.

Sub-themes: a) Attractive girls b) Careless boys c) Objections of inequality

A) Attractive girls
All the respondents said that they thought it was important that they looked good on their own selfies as well as on images that other people posted. They also stressed that girls in common pay a lot of attention to how they look and appear to other people, online as well as offline.

Girls are definitely focusing more on their looks/.../there is this idea that girls always have to be so...perfect and good (SR4)

The most common selfie among girls is probably the one taken in the bathroom when they have fixed themselves and think that: “Now I look good” (SR3)

B) Careless boys
Unlike girls, boys don’t not pay as much attention to their looks, according to the respondents. On the contrary, the respondents had a feeling that boys seem to focus on displaying an image of carelessness and indifference to how they look.

Guys, well...they post pictures when they just hang out in the living room and happen to take a picture, just like that. Girls are more arranged with perfect clothes...on parties for example...while guys are more like: "Hey, I take a picture when I feel like it” (SR1)
Guys, they seem to post pictures of gatherings with friends. Like...“Here we are, drinking beer, what a fabulous Friday” It’s not like they are arranging a...picture from a brunch, they are just not doing that. I guess guys post more spontaneous pictures. Girls, they pay more attention to what they post (SR2)

**C) Objections of inequality**

When discussing the differences between men’s and women’s digital self-presentation, two of the respondents expressed objections towards women’s’ habit of only posting “beautiful” selfies. They expressed a wish for a change and blamed the differences between how men and women present themselves on society:

That’s what makes the whole thing so sad... That there is so much focus on girls looks...that one should appear in an attractive way. I think it destroys a lot, that it even exists makeup for us and electric hair straighteners and...tights that pull in your stomach...just because all these things exist; we feel that we must use them (SR4)

To just allow nice pictures to circulate gives a distorted picture of reality, while a mixture of nice and ugly pictures is more truthful - the vast majority have both nice and ugly angles, expressions and days. To have the courage to look ugly on the images and thereby expose oneself to be judged from the public indicates self-esteem, self-awareness and integrity. It’s like if saying – through the images - ”This is me, deal with it. (SR3)
4.2 Indian result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
<th>Sub themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1. Presenting through agents</td>
<td>Film stars, dolls and flowers Smiling and looking good Small and cute Group photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Collective power over the image</td>
<td>Control from family and male friends and fear of misuse Correcting after feedback An individual voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Gender matters</td>
<td>Visible boys Lack of freedom for girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

4.2.1 Presentation through agents

None of the Indian respondents used a photo of their own face as their public profile picture on Facebook (supplement 3). Instead they used agents in form of film stars, dolls or younger siblings. Three of them had private profiles, which means that they had customized their account, so that only close friends could see the full profile. In these cases, the respondents sometimes did post selfies. To smile and mediate a happy impression was important to the Indian respondents – either on their selfies in their customized profiles or through posted images on their wall. Two of the respondents said they liked to post pictures of small and cute things, for example dolls or younger siblings. Group photos of friends and families are very popular among the Indian respondents.

Sub-themes: a) Film stars, dolls and flowers b) Smiling and looking good c) Small and cute d) Group photos

A) Film stars, dolls and flowers

Two of the respondents used actresses as their profile picture and all of the respondents said that female film stars and flowers are the most common profile pictures among their friends. One of the respondents had a doll as a profile picture and one had a photo of her eight-year old sister.
Girls, they generally post actresses, any Indian actresses or some nature or flowers. (IR2)

**B) Smiling and looking good**

The respondents stated that it was important to post images that mediate happiness through smiling, either if it’s a selfie on the customized profile or if it is a doll or actress on the public profile:

Smiling is very important! I think smiling is the best thing a person can have, right. It can capture the attraction of others (IR1)

Another respondent reflected about what is important for girls:

Girls want to look good, boys they don’t care so much (IR3)

**C) Small and cute images**

To post cute, small and innocent things was popular among young women in India, according to the respondents. This was illustrated when looking at the respondents profile and cover pictures where one was of a doll and one of a eight-year old sibling (supplement 3). IR1 about why she chose a doll as a profile picture:

I think it is so cute! That cuteness attracts me.

This is how IR2 explained why she had her eight-year-old sister as her profile picture:

She’s a little bit cute (small laugh). And she is small. She is only eight.

IR3 about her posting images of her cousin’s baby and her puppy:

My cousin has a son now, a small baby, his photo I use to put. And sometimes I put my puppy’s photo too. I have a small puppy and it’s very cute (IR3)
D) Group photos

Group photos of friends and family members were common pictures to post, according to the Indian respondents and to their profile/cover photos (supplement 3). It was not a problem to show one’s own face, if standing together in a group.

There was a get together party with my old friends. We posted photos from there when we were in a group – I liked it very much (IR2)

For my cover photo I usually choose pictures about friendship. I love putting that kind of pictures! (IR1)

4.2.2 Collective control over the image

Among the Indian respondents, the opinions of family and (male) friends were crucial, when it came to choosing and posting images. According to the respondents, married women could without problems post selfies – with the permission of their husband, but not unmarried girls. The respondents said that the reason why they didn’t post selfies was because they were afraid that unknown people might download their photos and misuse them.

Sub-themes: a) Control from family and male friends and fear of misuse b) Correcting after feedback d) An individual voice

A) Control from family and male friends and fear of misuse

All of the respondents expressed a wish to put selfies on their public profile but at the same time they say that it was not possible because they feared that someone would download the pictures and misuse them (in a sexual way). All of them said that their family members told them not to post selfies and that their families or male friends at school sometimes told them to take away a photo that they had posted. According to the respondents this was because their families and male classmates cared for them and their safety.

I like to put, you know (a selfie, authors comment)! Many foreign people they put, because they are not afraid. I also wish, but you know here, there are a lot of problems, so I don’t put. Sometimes I wish...because some of the photos I feel like I look beautiful (smile) and I’m getting comments: “ah, you
look good”. But then my cousins are shouting at me so I delete it.
(IR3)

If I put my own picture (selfie, authors comment), my friend use to say, I mean boy friends, boys here say: “You better remove your picture from Facebook”, it may cause any problems. So. I feel nervous, and I remove the picture.
(IR1)

Girls, when we take photo, they normally say: “Don’t put on Facebook”. Because, that means, it’s always a risky process. That’s the reason.
(IR2)

Of course I prefer to put my picture (selfie, authors comment), but many of my friends have told that it’s not safe to upload our pictures...in Facebook, so now I’m uploading some actresses.
(IR4)

B) The importance of feedback

All the Indian respondents said that they cared a lot about getting comments and likes on their posted pictures. This was true for both comments on selfies in the customized profile and on ordinary images that the respondents posted on their wall.

Yes, of course I want comments and likes (laugh). That’s the main reason with posting photos (IR2)

I want comments a lot. For that, only, I post pictures. (IR3)

The respondents tended to withdraw an image if their male friends or relatives told them to. They also expressed a great respect towards other people’s opinions on their images and didn’t post an image that they felt wasn’t appreciated by their friends and family:

If it is a bad comment, I use to ask them “why you said so”. And, they use to tell me “that picture is not good” and they tell their own opinion and I understand – or try to understand - what the problem is and then I might delete it (IR1)

C) An individual voice

One of the respondents emphasized the importance of expressing one’s own views and personality through the images. According to her, having a profile picture of a doll was a
better way to express her own views and opinions then for example through the image of a film star. She also stated that her own personality and views were important when choosing and posting images:

I don’t like to post pictures of film actress, I prefer to post dolls, because I think it exhibits more of my views. I just want to convey that I have my own personality and my own views and I don’t want anyone to interfere with that” (IR1).

4.2.3. Gender matters

All the respondents stated that digital self-presentation differed a lot between men and women. For the women it was not possible to post selfies, for the men it was not a problem. The respondents blamed these inequalities on the lack of freedom for women in the Keralan society.

Subthemes: A) Visible boys C) Lack of freedom for girls

A) Visible boys

According to the Indian respondents, boys could post selfies and present themselves freely, online as well as offline. It didn’t matter if the men were married or not, nor did they need to create “customized profiles” like the girls. The respondents also suggested that boys didn’t seem to care so much about looks but were instead more eager to show that they were enjoying themselves.

Boys, they generally put their real photos, their selfie. (IR2)

Boys, I think they wont bother about looking good. They just want to show how they are enjoying themselves (IR1)

B) Lack of freedom

The result also showed that the Indian respondents expressed that they were not free in the sense that they couldn’t choose what images they wanted to post. According to the respondents, the lack of freedom was because the rules of society:
In Kerala there are lots of restrictions. What to do, and what not to do. I would like to live in a free world. But it’s not possible here. (IR2)

In Kerala, we, the girls, don’t have so much freedom, right…. so, that’s the problem….This problem is very….what do you say. We are afraid.

(IR3)

“‘You can’t put a picture of a boy and a girl together – here, it’s not possible” (IR2)
5. Analysis

The empirical result of the study will now be analysed in the light of the theoretical framework that was presented in the chapter 2; Theory. The purpose of the analysis is to understand patterns and tendencies of the result and how they might answer the initial purpose and research questions. The analysis will be divided into chapters named after the different theories. The main themes of the result will be discussed under each theory and the Swedish and the Indian result will be analysed in two different sections.

5.1 Analysis of the Swedish result

5.1.1 Structuralism and social reproduction

Gidden’s theories about structuralism and social reproduction turn out to have relevance when looking into the Swedish result. Giddens suggests that we inherit a “faith” from our carers about how people should behave in society. This faith effect the way we act in our future social life. This can be transferred to the theme *Presenting a happy and healthy life*. To present a light-hearted expression, especially as a young woman, can be seen as a social structure or “faith” that women reproduce in a society. In this context, it is also worth mentioning that three out of four of the Swedish respondents expressed a negative attitude towards displaying “sad” images online. This could be read as a moral code of society – to appear happy and not sad. The result could however also be seen as an unwillingness to disclose parts of life, which are somehow sensitive and private, such as a depressed mood or “dark feelings”.

The subtheme *A natural look in nature* can, together with the wish to appear happy, be seen as a value in the Swedish society that affects the way young women choose to present themselves. To post images that represent a healthy lifestyle might be considered a trend in society, rather than a social structure. This “trend” however, is based on the idealized image of women as slim, fit and healthy, something that the respondents expressed under the theme *Gender still matters*. The fixation on being fit and slim can be seen as a social reproduction, which apparently has not vanished with the entrance of the internet or social media – rather the opposite.
Another example of social reproduction through our “faith” is the theme *Gender still matters* where the sub-themes *Attractive girls* and *Careless boys* indicate that young women are more eager to appear attractive while young men do not seem to care so much about their looks, when captured in an image online. The sub-theme *Objections of inequality* show that the respondents expressed an objection towards the norms that “demands” women to appear beautiful or “sexy”. This can be connected to Gidden’s ideas that moral codes and established ways can be changed through “human agency” when people start to ignore them or reproduce them differently. One of the respondents actually said she had posted selfies that challenged the norm of looking attractive and happy:

And sometimes I feel like challenging myself and then I post a picture where I’m not looking happy or attractive. It’s like a way to turn against the norm and see what happens (SR3)

Furthermore, the sub-theme *Objections of inequality* can be seen as an example of how human agency sometimes do contribute to a change of habits and attitudes in society. With this said, one should remember that the over-all picture, according to the result, is that the young women in general posted images and selfies which represent the traditional values of how a young Swedish woman should look and behave – natural, healthy, attractive and happy. According to the result, objections to these values should be considered an exception, rather than a pattern.

However, the Swedish respondents expressed thoughts about the selfie as a phenomenon, sometimes with a critical tone, which was shown in the sub-themes *Questioning the selfie* and *Objections of inequality*. It is clear that although the women did post selfies, and that they were anxious to appear happy and attractive, they also held a wish to act differently, in an alternative way, which was shown in the sub-theme *Individual and unique*. These reflections can be seen as an awareness of the norms and traditions of the society – and as a willingness to challenge them as described by Giddens.
5.1.2 Self presentation through the eyes of the audience

Regarding Goffman’s theory of self-presentation, there are also some interesting aspects to be found in the Swedish result. The theme *The impact of the audience* show that confirmation and feedback from other people through comments and likes is very important. The result indicates that “likes” and “comments” are strong reasons to post images and selfies at all. In other words; the impact of the audience is big. Just like Goffman suggests, self-presentation is about the interaction between oneself and the audience. The sub-theme *Admitting the urge for confirmation* illustrates these ideas – that in our digital self-presentation, or in our acting online, we constantly try to shape a façade in order to generate a desired impression and meet the expectations of others. This pattern, to act in a manner that is expected from us by the audience, seems to be present also in digital self-presentation.

The themes *Presenting a happy and healthy life*, and *Gender still matters* can be associated to Goffman’s ideas of self-presentation. It indicates that the “façade” of young Swedish women is created according to a certain pattern, namely that of appearing happy, healthy and attractive. It also indicates that the young women keep this façade in order, according to the social norms of society, to fit in and to live up to the expectations of society. Goffman speaks of an agreement between the individual “actor” and its audience, where we, as actors strive to maintain the unspoken agreements (norms, values) and to work against the contradictions (things that interfere with the unspoken agreements). To post sad, ugly or angry images can be seen as such contradictions that need to be worked against. The sub-theme *No sad images* shows that the parts of life that are not connected with a happy, healthy and attractive life are not to be shown. In the digital self-presentation the young Swedish women might have the choice to post whatever images they like, but at the same time they tend to present the ones that apply with the standard norms: To appear healthy and attractive and definitely not sad. Just like Goffman conclude, the result shows that there is a front region and a back region on the digital stage where the young women present their every-day life. In the front region they put their happy, healthy and attractive sides. This is the façade that the audience get to see and are allowed to take part of. In the back section, on the other hand, the women store the images that are not for public view, such as the sad images for example.
However, there are – as already mentioned – objections among the young women towards this pattern of just presenting advantageous images.

5.1.3 Individual and collective identity

When applying the theories about individual and collective identity by Markus & Kitayama and Hofstede we can see some correlations. The theme The impact of the audience do in a way relate to the collective, in the sense that the respondents desire comments and likes and care about other people’s views. Two out of four respondents have a cover picture of themselves together with friends (supplement 3). However, none of the Swedish respondents express any fear of posting a selfie – or have any problems with posting their faces or bodies through images on Facebook. This is apparent under the theme Individual power over the image. Furthermore, their attitude when posting selfies is associated with an individual identity, through the sub-themes Like a memory, Individual and unique and Right to choose images. Two of the respondents say that they post selfies to somehow state their own uniqueness and personality. In this way they indicate that they are independent and eager to display their own values and opinions, regardless what the attitudes from the society are. Like Markus & Kitayama suggest, in individual cultures, there is a desire to maintain independence from others and to discover and express unique inner attributes. The tendency to post selfies for one’s own sake, like a memory, was found in the Swedish results. This also indicates an individualistic approach, rather then a collective.

Although there are tendencies in the Swedish result that the digital self-presentation is affected by the surrounding individualistic culture, it doesn't mean that the audience or other people’s views are not important. As mentioned, when discussing Goffman’s theories of self-presentation, the collective play a significant role even for the Swedish women. It’s just that the impact of the audience and the influences of others is not outspoken. This comes clear under the theme Individual power over the image and the associated sub-themes. That the collective indirectly affect the Swedish women is illustrated under the themes The impact of the audience and Presenting a happy and healthy life.
5.2 Analysis of the Indian result

5.2.1 Individual and collective culture

All though the Indian respondents at some point had posted selfies, it was only left on their wall for a couple of hours. According to the theme *Presenting through agents*, none of the women had a selfie as a profile picture or posted selfies in their public profiles. This result is associated to Kim & Papacharissi’s study where it was shown that Korean respondents, opposite to Americans, were more likely to use agents, such as cartoon images and media heroes to express themselves online, rather than through a selfie. In this study, the same pattern can be identified.

According to the theme *Collective control over the image* and the associated sub-theme *Fear of misuse*, the Indian women avoided posting selfies because they feared some kind of misuse. The theme *Control from family and male friends*, illustrates that the fear is mediated through the women’s family, friends and (male) relatives. All of the Indian respondents expressed a deep respect towards their nearest circle of friends and family. None of the women questioned the intent of the warnings given by their relatives. This is similar to the ideas about how people in individual and collective cultures act – online, as well as offline. According to Markus & Kitayama, the emphasis among people in collective cultures is to attend to others. To fit in and maintain harmony and interdependence with them is crucial. The fact that the Indian women act as the collective tells them illustrates that their identities are clearly part of a collective. This may also be associated to Hofstede’s ideas about collective and individual cultures. In a collective society, prioritizing the group’s well being is looked upon as something, which is also advantageous for the individual. Applied on the Indian results this makes sense. Under the sub-theme *Control from family and male friends*, the women expressed a wish to post selfies but didn’t do it because of the opinions of family and relatives. Even though the respondents believed that the attitudes against selfies from the group had to do with concern for them, it is nevertheless an indication on that the will of the collective is stronger than the will of the individual. In the Swedish result the respondents never considered not posting a selfie because someone told them not to. On the other hand, the Swedish respondents didn’t express any fear of misuse.

The theory of collective identity was also found under the sub-theme *Correcting after*
feedback, when the Indian respondents reflected on how they reacted to comments and likes. Similarly to the Swedish respondents, the Indian women said that they were happy when their images got positive feedback and confirmation from others. For the Indian respondents it was necessary to respect the views of family and friends, in the sense that they corrected or even deleted images, if their friends and family had any objections against them. Consequently, the digital self-presentation was, for the Indian women, not just a way to get individual confirmation, but also a way to sync with the audience. This exhibits a pattern, which corresponds to the theory of individual and collective cultures.

5.2.2 Self-presentation through the eyes of the audience

In the light of Goffman’s theory about self-presentation, the Indian result exhibits some interesting things. Fist of all, the theme Collective power over the image show that the impact of other people’s opinions is very important. We can apply this on Goffman’s metaphor that we as individuals perform on a stage, when we present ourselves in front of others in our daily life. Like actors, the Indian women try to adjust themselves and their performance, so that it will fit in with and please the audience. This is illustrated through the theme Presenting through agents. When the women – against their own will – failed to take and post selfies, they abstained because it is expected of them. For them, it was impossible to turn against the will of their audience, which in this case consisted of their family and male friends. If, and when, they posted selfies, one could say that the women challenged the norm. Goffman doesn’t speak in terms of challenging, but instead calls it disorders. Disorders are the mistakes we make when we don’t live up to the expectations of the audiences. Instead of failures, we strive to maintain an agreement and mutual understanding between the audience and us. That is why the Indian women corrected the images after feedback or even deleted their photos after objections from the audience. It seems like an expected behaviour to use agents for digital self-presentation among young women in India. And the young women are loyal to these expectations when using flower, dolls and film stars instead of selfies.

Another aspect that appeared out of the result is the sub-theme Small and cute. This theme shows that it is common among young, unmarried women in Kerala to be associated with small and cute poses or images. For example, one of the respondents used a little doll as a profile picture and another one had a photo of her eight-year-old
sister. Goffman speaks of values and norms in society that affect how we act, that we invest ourselves in the identification with a certain role, in a certain group. To appear small, cute and “childish” might be a role that unmarried women in India take on, because it is expected of them. It might be related to the idea that before getting married, the woman is still a child. This could explain the Small and cute sub-theme. It is simply the way young, unmarried women in Kerala present themselves through digital images on SNS. According to the result, married women use selfies as a profile pictures – with the permission of their husband. This pattern is interesting when comparing it to Goffman’s thoughts on the front and the back stage. The fact that the young women didn’t show their face, indicate that they “hide” their female looks “backstage” until they are married. At that point they are free to enter the front stage, to throw off their masks and show them selves as grown up women. In the meantime they use digital self-presentation through agents in the forms of small and cute images.

5.2.3 Tradition, Media and identity
Thompson’s theories about traditions and media turned out to have relevance for the Indian results. All though the Indian respondents used internet and digital communication through for example Facebook, traditional values still played a significant role in how they presented themselves online. This is primarily illustrated through the theme Presenting through agents. As mentioned above, the women did not show their faces on their public profiles. This indicates that the traditions of the Indian society, in terms of not exposing yourself if you are a woman, continue to survive online. Even though digitalization and internet is integrated in the society, the traditions still exist, just like Thompson argues.

The theme Gender matters indicates the differences between how young women and young men use digital self-presentation in Kerala today. The result shows that young men do post selfies but young women don’t. As mentioned above, the young women want to post selfies, but don’t dare to. There are apparently different social rules between men and women when it comes to displaying one’s face or identity online. The tradition that men can show their face and move around freely in society is clearly visible on Facebook. The tradition that someone else is controlling what the Indian women do or how they appear is still a reality on SNS. As Thompson argues, instead of
eliminating traditions, the medialization of society has given the traditions new life – they survive through new channels and find new forms.

5.2.4 Structuralism and social reproduction

Similarly the theme Gender matters, corresponds to Gidden’s thoughts on structuralism and social reconstruction. Like in the Swedish result, it is clear that the moral codes about how men and women should appear, still live on in the Indian society. First of all in the sense that men can display selfies on their official Facebook-pages, while women cannot, illustrated under the sub-themes Visible boys. Secondly, the sub-themes Smiling and looking good, shows that women care more about their looks than men and that “girls just want to look good, boys they don’t care so much”. This is equal for both the Swedish and the Indian results. This pattern illustrates that the perception of women caring more about their looks than men should be considered a cross-cultural one. The Indian result also indicates that men prefer to “enjoy themselves, rather then care about their looks”. This is interesting in the light of the thoughts of J Bond - that men to a greater extent display images online, featuring amusement and sports.

Gidden’s thoughts on human agency as an ability for change can be seen in the Indian result as well. All of the Indian respondents wanted to display their face and post selfies, but they felt that they couldn’t because of the social structures. Even though none of the respondent’s actually challenged the norm in the sense that they posted selfies, they expressed an admiration for Indian girls who did. Under the sub-theme Lack of freedom for girls, they explained that they wanted a change and objected to the Indian – or Keralan - society. The women sometimes posted a selfie for a couple of hours, but then took it away. This is a way to challenge the norm and at the same time manage to defend the action. According to the respondents the risk is very small that someone will download the image and misuse it during that short period of time. In one specific case, the respondent’s male relatives would tell her to delete the image before she deletes it herself. This follows the pattern of being controlled by family and male friends.
6. Discussion

In this final chapter the purpose, research questions, methodological processes and main results of the study will be summed up. The results and conclusions will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of the study. Finally follows a section where some of the most important results of the study are discussed in relation to previous studies and potential future research.

6.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts among young women in Sweden and India on how they are using digital self-presentation through images on social network sites. The ambition of the study was to look into the relationship between these thoughts and the surrounding social structures of society. Through interviews with young women in Varkala, India and Uppsala, Sweden a result was obtained. The interviews were transcribed into text and analysed with a qualitative content analysis. A specific model for analysis was used and the final result was divided into themes for each country. These themes were then analysed in the light of the theoretical framework and presented under the chapter Analysis.

The main themes of the Swedish result were; Individual power over the image, Presenting a happy and healthy life, The impact of the audience and Gender still matters. The main themes of the Indian result were; Presenting through agents, Collective control over the image and Gender matters. When it comes to the fist research question; How do young women in Sweden and India experience the use of digital self-presentation through images on SNS?, the result indicates that Swedish women to a greater extent use selfies for digital self-presentation, while Indian girls use agents in the shape of film stars, flowers and dolls. Further the result shows that Swedish women have individual control over their images all though the importance of other peoples' opinions in the form of comments and likes is big. One can conclude that other peoples' opinions has an impact on how Swedish women use selfies and images online but at the same time the women feel that they have the power over their own images. The Indian women expressed a fear of misuse if posting selfies on their public profile. This fear was mediated through their family and male friends who were in control over what images
the women posted. Here, the women expressed that they did not have any individual control over their images – instead they were controlled by the collective.

Furthermore, the result indicates that both Swedish and Indian young women of today experience a notable difference in the way young men and young women use images for digital self-presentation. This corresponds to the second research question; **In what ways do surrounding social structures and cultural norms influence what images young women in Sweden and India choose to share on SNS?** According to the result, Swedish, as well as Indian women care a lot about their looks and to arrange nice pictures, while men care more about posting images of when they were enjoying themselves. In general, men don’t seem to care so much about their looks or the setting of the image, according to the result. The biggest difference between men and women in the Indian result was that men without fear posted selfies while the women didn’t, which can be read as a social structure or norm. Both the Swedish and the Indian women thought that looking attractive and happy was important among women when using digital self-presentation through images on Facebook. This can also be read as a social structure – that women should be more accurate with how they look than men. The Swedish women expressed that looking healthy on the images was a strong trend at the moment and the Indian women expressed a predilection for images that gave a small and cute impression. This illustrates how values and norms of society affect the digital self-presentation through images on SNS.

The third research question was; **Do young women consider the possibility to post digital images on SNS liberating in the sense that they feel that they can present themselves in any way they wish?** According to the result, the Swedish women experienced a great amount of freedom when posting images on SNS – at least if we compare to the freedom of the Indian women. The Swedish women expressed no fear for misuse or did not feel that they were “controlled” in the sense that their family or male friends had the power over what images they posted. On the other hand, the Swedish women did raise objections towards the gender differences online and blamed it on the society. When it came to gender roles and social expectations of how women should behave and “perform” the women did not feel very liberated. The Indian women did definitely not consider the possibility to post images online liberating. Here, the social
structures and traditions of society have survived the internet-era. Indian women do not feel more liberated because of the access to the digitalized world.

6.2 Final discussion

It is remarkable that the use of agents and the fear of misuse were not mentioned at all in the ten pages article on selfies in the Indian magazine The Week. In this article the selfie was discussed as if all Indian women and girls use selfies – which contradicts the result in this study. Although this study is only based on interviews with four women in the city of Varkala, they likely represent many women in the same age and area. The respondents attended college and came from an upper-middle socio-economical background. They were familiar with both digitalization and the use of SNS. This indicates that this group cannot be rejected in the discussion about the use of selfies and digital self-presentation in India. The fact that The Week didn’t mention the use of agents and fear of misuse in their article can be seen as an unwillingness to accept that Indian women still can’t or don’t have the power to expose themselves freely in society - offline or online. Just because young women in big cities, like Bangalore or Mumbai use selfies, it doesn’t mean that all Indian women do, like the article in The Week suggested. The result of this study indicates that women in the city of Varkala – who study at college and have plans to travel and work in the future – do not dare to show their own face as a profile photo on their Facebook profile. This result is important when exploring democratic and global aspects of digital media and communication studies.

The research by Kim & Papacharissi and Rui & Stefanone show some interesting results concerning the differences between how users from western and non-western countries display themselves on personal homepages and SNS. However, these results are not exploring the attitudes, reflections or thoughts of the users. Previous research about self-presentation online, learn what the differences are, but not so much about why the differences appear and how the users themselves perceive them.

The fact that the Indian respondents didn’t expose their face on their profile picture because they feared misuse, as well as reactions from their families, show that they are not free. The traditions of the society in Kerala have not disappeared just because of the
entrance of digitalization, internet and SNS like Facebook. The women in Varkala use the same digital platforms and technology as the women in Sweden but the traditions in terms of cultural values and norms tell them not to show their faces online. Similarly, the Swedish social structures and values continue to affect the way young women present themselves online. Swedish women seem to feel that they can display their face online without fear of misuse or reactions from family or male friends. However, social structures in terms of cultural norms affect the way young Swedish women use digital self-presentation. Like in the Indian result, the Swedish women say they usually perform in an attractive way, preferably smiling. The Swedish women also discussed the healthy food trend and the importance among young Swedish women to look natural and fit. This is an example of how offline norms and structures of a society are reflected through images online. The result also indicates that western women act according to certain values and norms of the society. Many times they do it all though they don’t want to – just like the Indian girls fail to post selfies, because of the surrounding norms and values. This is interesting in the light of James Curran’s thoughts on the great impact of the internet. According to Curran, the world has not become a better world, in the sense that we as individuals haven’t gained more liberation. Even though internet has provided young women with social media and SNS, the social structures of their cultures and societies prevents them from sharing and posting images in the way they wish.

Both Swedish and Indian young women object to the norms and structures that form gender differences between men and women. The Swedish women in this study sometimes challenged the norm, one of them through posting selfies, when not looking like the standard norm of beauty and one when looking sad or mellow. There are norms and structures in society that reproduce online as well as offline, but at the same time there are critical voices and objections. These voices of “Human agency” deserve extra attention and should be evolved further in the field of Media and communication studies. And isn’t this exactly what the video blogger Laci Green calls for in her YouTube video The Selfie Revolution? Green encourages young women to challenge the idea of beauty, she is talking about a revolution in the sense that young women should start to define themselves on their own terms and not according to traditional repressing structures. “The revolution” is not necessarily about posting “ugly” selfies, it is about posting and sharing both beautiful and ugly, both happy and sad images. Only then will
the digital self-presentation online correspond to the whole spectrum of being a human. Like SR3 puts it:

To just allow nice pictures to circulate gives a distorted picture of reality, while a mixture of nice and ugly pictures is more truthful - the vast majority have both nice and ugly angles, expressions and days. To have the courage to look ugly on the images and thereby expose oneself to be judged from the public indicates self-esteem, self-awareness and integrity. It’s like if saying – through the images - "This is me, deal with it. (SR3)

This reflection is interesting in the light of digital dualism, the notion that one’s online identity differs from one's offline identity. When choosing only happy, beautiful and nice images and angles, only one side of the truth is exposed. The result suggests that Swedish women’s online identity on Facebook pretty much correspond to their offline identity, just like previous researcher have suggested when it comes to nonymous SNS. However, the result also point at something else – a trend on Facebook to display images, which only mediate the happy, beautiful, and healthy parts of one’s identity. In this sense, digital dualism do exist even on a nonymous SNS like Facebook. The following quote illustrates digital dualism in the form of a chocolate-bar that is placed outside the image:

People post pictures with a bowl of cottage cheese and fruits and things like that… It's just that you can't see the chocolate-bar that is accidentally placed outside the picture… (SR4)

The tendency among young Swedish women to appear beautiful, healthy and happy corresponds to the initial reflections of Hellquist on the selfie phenomenon. Hellquist concludes that despite the new digital tool that is now in the hands of the majority of all Swedish young women, the women themselves don't break the pattern of how women have been exposed through history. They continue to present themselves as happy, attractive and healthy. And the pattern lives on.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

One limitation of this study would be the relatively small number of respondents that were interviewed. As mentioned before, this was due to the limited amount of time and the fact that the study only holds one author. Future research on a greater population
would provide a broader insight into how Swedish and Indian women present themselves online through digital images. The fact that all the respondents in both Sweden and India attended college and came from a certain socio-economical layer of society should also be taken into consideration. This means that the result is not representative for all young women in Sweden and India, as mentioned above. Therefore the result of this study cannot be generalized on other socio-economic groups in the Swedish and Indian society.

Another limitation is the sampling of the Indian respondents, which needs to be referred to as a convenient sampling. Even though the Indian respondents' background happened to be quite similar to each other, this was not taken into consideration when choosing the respondents. With more time and resources a larger population of respondents could have been interviewed and more attention paid to the way the respondents were chosen.

The users of SNS in Sweden and India are very well aware of the different ways of presenting oneself on for example Facebook. The Indian women were familiar with the selfie phenomenon and had thoughts and reflections about it. They were aware of the fact that they themselves didn't or couldn't make use of it. The result shows that both the Swedish and the Indian women were acquainted with the debate on the selfie-phenomenon in media and had many thoughts about medias and society's impact on their lives. These reflections and thoughts should be explored further in the field of Media- and communication studies. Instead of focusing on weather taking and posting selfies is narcissistic or not, researchers should also pay attention to the thoughts and reflections of the users. Through interviews or focus groups, more knowledge can be acquired on how young people use and relate to posting images on SNS.

In this study, no specific gender theory was included. Instead a theoretical framework, consisting of ideas about structuralism, traditions and individual/collective cultures was applied. This could have been done differently. For example some recognized theories on the way men and women are presented online could have been included in the study. Further research could explore how young women (and men) use images for self-
presentation online, based on feminist or gender theories. The usage of images on SNS would then be explored from another perspective.

6.4 Conclusion
This cross-cultural study adds evidence on how young women use digital self-presentation through images on SNS. The result indicates that social structures affect the way young women of today display themselves online. We can conclude that culture and tradition play a significant role for the way individuals use self-presentation on SNS in different cultures and countries. In Sweden, the traditional beauty ideal of looking natural, healthy and happy seems to affect the way women present themselves on internet. In India, the traditional opinions of how men and women should be presented in society seem to be reproduced on SNS and on social media. The result also includes critical voices and objections from young women towards the structures and traditions of society. The Swedish women questioned the norm of always displaying happy and beautiful images. The Indian women called for a change in their society when expressing that they didn’t feel free but afraid. Finally, this study exhibits that the world has not necessarily become a better place to live in with the entrance of the internet and that young women have not been liberated through the use of digital self-presentation on SNS.
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8. Supplements

8.1 Supplement 1 – Socio-economic background of the respondents

S= Sweden. I= India, R= Respondent

SR1
Age: 18
Occupation: Student at Lundellska skolan, Uppsala, social science programme.
Parents occupation: Mother: Pharmacist, Father: Sociologist.
Type of housing: Flat in Uppsala
Travel habits: Regular all over the world for vacation.
Plans for the future: Continue to study, psychologist, speech pathologist
Siblings: None

SR2
Age: 18
Occupation: Student at Lundellska skolan, Uppsala, economy programme.
Parents occupation: Mother: Nurse Father: Accountant
Type of housing: Flat in Uppsala
Travel habits: Regularly all over the world for vacation.
Plans for the future: Maybe teacher
Siblings: Two brothers

SR3
Age: 18
Occupation: Student at Lundellska skolan, Uppsala, natural science programme.
Parents occupation: Mother and father foresters
Type of housing: House in Uppsala
Travel habits: A lot in Sweden but not so much abroad
Plans for the future: Work that includes environmental or equality issues. Author, communicator
Siblings: Two sisters and a brother
SR4
Age: 18
Occupation: Student at Lundellska skolan, Uppsala, social science programme.
Parents occupation: Mother: Gardener Father: Carpenter
Type of housing: House outside Uppsala
Travel habits: Not so much
Plans for the future: Not yet decided. Interested in photography and arts
Siblings: Four brothers

IR1
Age: 20
Occupation: Student at Sree Narayana College, economy programme
Parents occupation: Father: Lawyer, Mother: Housewife
Type of housing: House outside Varkala
Travel habits: Has not been abroad
Plans for the future: Wants to be a lecturer at university
Siblings: One sister

IR2
Age: 20
Occupation: Student at Sree Narayana College, economy programme
Parents occupation: Father: Businessman, Mother: Housewife
Type of living: House outside Varkala
Travel housing: Has lived and studied in Saudi Arabia
Plans for the future: Economy, bank clerk
Siblings: One sister

IR3
Age: 21
Occupation: Student at Sree Narayana College, economy programme
Parents occupation: Father: Truck driver in Dubai, Mother: Housewife
Type of living: House outside Varkala
**Travel housing:** Have lived for three years in Dubai with family

**Plans for the future:** Accountant, want to move abroad

**Siblings:** One brother

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**IR4**

**Age:** 21

**Occupation:** Student at Sree Narayana College, economy programme

**Parents occupation:** Father: Businessman, Mother: Housewife

**Type of housing:** House outside Varkala.

**Travel habits:** Has never been abroad but father travels sometimes (Singapore for example)

**Plans for the future:** Accountant or other occupation in economy.

**Siblings:** One sister
8.2 Supplement 2 – Interview guide

Initial orientation

To make the respondents feel relaxed and safe with participating in the interview, I initially try to create a good contact by listening attentively. For clarification, I will briefly tell the respondents about the purpose of the interview. I will ask one more time if they feel convenient with the tape recorder and if they have any questions before the interview starts.

Questions:

1. Tema – Dina egna bilder
   1.1. Kan du berätta om hur du använder SNS en vanlig dag?
   1.2. Hur ofta lägger du upp/delar bilder på SNS?
   1.3 Finns det någon typ av bild som du aldrig skulle lägga upp? Försök förklara varför inte.

2. Tema – Andras bilder
   2.1. Nu har du ju pratat om hur du delar bilder på SNS. Men hur är det med dina väninnor? Kan du berätta lite om vilka bilder de lägger upp?
   2.2. Kan du berätta eller visa vad dina väninnor lagt upp för bilder i dag/den senaste veckan?
   2.3 Vilken typ av bilder lägger killar upp?

3. Tema - Hur andra uppfattar dig genom de bilder du delar
   3.1. Vad tror du att andra får för bild av dig när de ser dina bilder?

Uppföljande frågor

1. Tema – Den egna bilden
   1.1 Berätta om din profilbild och din omslagsbild. Varför har du lagt upp just de här bilderna?
   1.2 Brukar du ta bilder på dig själv och delar dem på SNS?
   1.3 Kan du berätta lite mer om det? Hur tänkte du när du valde din profilbild till exempel?
   1.4 Finns det några speciella situationer som du gillar att fotografera och lägga upp?

2. Tema – Andras bilder
   2.1 Varför tror du att din väninna har lagt upp den här bilden till exempel?
   2.2 Vilka situationer tycker du oftast att dina väninnor fotograferar? Vad tycker du om det?
   2.3 Försök beskriv hur dina väninnor ser ut på sina bilder?
   2.4 Vilken är den vanligaste bilden på Facebook bland A) tjejer och B) killar?

3. Tema – Hur andra uppfattar dig genom de bilder du delar
   3.1 Varför tror du det? (Följdfråga på 3.1)
   3.2 Hur viktigt är det vad andra tycker om dina bilder? Varför
8.3 Supplement 3 – Profile and cover photos

Profile pictures

S = Sweden, I = India

R = Respondent
Cover pictures

S = Sweden, I = India
R= Respondent

SR1

SR2

SR3
Respondent IR2 does not have a cover picture