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Online Representation of the Self – Self-Branding in Four Fitness Blogs

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ABSTRACT

Itsebrändäyksestä on muodostunut tärkeä käsite sosiaalisen median sivustojen käyttäjille, sillä kommunikoinnin lisäksi näiden sivustojen käyttöön liittyy vahvasti ajatus oman identiteetin jakamisesta muiden kanssa. Yksittäiset promootion edistämisen keinot muodostavat yhdessä aktiivisen identiteetin jakamisen kanssa brändin, joten sivustojen käyttäjä kokee itsensä kokonaisvaltaisesti ikään kuin markkinoitavana tuotteena.

Pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastellaan neljän fitness -aiheisiin keskittyvän henkilön blogeja itsebrändäyksen näkökulmasta. Materiaalina käytetyt kirjoittajat ja heidän bloginsa ovat Blair Morrison (*anywherefit*), Davey Wavey (*Daveywaveyfitness*), Jess Underhill (*Fit Chick in the City*) ja Faya Nilsson (*Fitness on Toast*). Julkaisut ovat aikaväliltä 01.01.2013–15.01.2013, ja yhteensä tarkastelussa oli 27 erillistä julkaisua. Sekä tyypillisiä itsebrändäyksen keinoja että fitness -identiteetin rakentamista on tarkasteltu itsebrändäyksen toimintatapojen (erityisesti Trammell & Keshelashvili ja Kortesus) ja sosiaalisesti rakentuneen identiteetin ja vartaloon liittyvien normien kautta (Wright ym.).

Bloggaajat esiintyivät ensisijaisesti ammattilaisina, mikä määritteli vahvimmin heidän identiteettinsä blogeissa. Tärkeimmät itsebrändäyksen keinot olivat fyysisten ominaisuuksien korostaminen ja lukijoiden suora puhuttelu. Wavey esiintyi suosittuna sosiaalisen median gurunä, mutta julkaisuista puuttui lähes kokonaan henkilökohtainen kuvailu. Morrison ja Underhill käyttivät useita promootion edistämisen keinoja ja yhdistivät henkilökohtaiset kokemuksensa blogissa. Nilsson oli blogissaan erityisesti sosiaalisen normin ilmentäjä, sillä hänen huoliteltu ulkonäkönsä oli blogissa vahvasti esillä.

KEYWORDS: self-branding, online communication, blogging, online identity, self-presentation

1 INTRODUCTION

Fitness blogging is a phenomenon that is particularly distinguishable everywhere in the social media today. As the topic is discussed in the CBC News by Jill English (2013), expressions such as “strong is the new skinny”, and “fit is the new thin” have emerged to highlight the message of a more muscular body structure as being closer to ‘the ideal’ one (especially from a woman’s perspective). In this way, the rise of the social media has created a perfect setting for the world of health and exercise to become more popular than ever before. Blogging has created an online environment in which each person is able to get their voice heard – such people, whose opinions would not be otherwise considered in any way in public conversations, as Elina Noppari and Mikko Hautakangas (2012: 57) suggest in their study. Consequently, the special feature of blogging means that it is possible to customize the environment for one’s own needs through a concentration on a topic that feels most suitable, and the best thing is that everything is possible (Kortesuo 2011: 75).

When a blogger focuses on the field of fitness, the concept of self-branding becomes significant: the person presents the flattering aspects of the self through physical qualities. At the same time, this person begins to create a personal brand. Self-branding is visible everywhere on the Internet, since each person who is involved in the social media does practices related to self-branding. The concept includes a set of marketing strategies which can be applied to an individual. Thus, self-branding can be considered both a mindset (in which the person has to be thinking the self as a salable commodity) and a set of promotional strategies (Marwick 2010: 308). Each photo or status update, for example, creates a particular view of the person among the online audience.

Even though mere physical qualities could be attached to fitness, there are at least two different aspects related to the topic. According to English (2013), there is the attitude of “pride in performance”, which means that the focus of fitness is not entirely connected to appearance. An interview with the CrossFit participant Sue Yen reveals the importance of

performance for an athlete: “Physique becomes a side effect of performance goals,” she says. “It allows for a range of healthy bodies because if you can lift this much, then you’re achieving the goal. And it’s a realistic one, as compared to getting someone’s stomach.” (English 2013.) The idea of having some concrete examples (you can lift this much) seems to tie the idea of self-branding even more to fitness blogging. In this case, after all, fitness-related identity is formed by the results a person has been able to accomplish. Thus, the person in question is not only judged by the appearance, but also by achievements that are comparable between other people. The aspect is strictly connected to the definition of fitness in general. According to Uhlenbruck (quoted in Volkwein 1998: XI), fitness is defined as stabilized health that a person has achieved through training, and it includes both physiological and mental abilities. Overall, fitness can be seen as an all-encompassing state of well-being that can be constructed through a person’s appearance, performance, and medical evidence.

Blair Morrison is one of the bloggers chosen for the thesis, the writer of *anywherefit*. One of his posts strongly relates to the idea of fitness as a holistic concept. Furthermore, the post functions as an introductory part for the thesis, since it reveals the significance of fitness for athletes who write a blog. The post titled “Fitness is...” (the 1st of February, 2013) describes explicitly how considering people from the perspective of fitness is such a great tool for the description of a person’s values, character, and even the quality of living. Morrison (1 Feb, 2013) writes: “Fitness is....Manifesto. It’s a statement about who you are, what you’ve done, and where you’re going. Your personality, values, and vision are all encompassed here. How do you respond to adversity? Are you concerned about your long-term welfare?”

Morrison admits that the character of a person does not entirely depend on the fitness aspect, but, at the same time, it can be said to have a great deal of significance. He states how the attitude towards fitness shows “enough of an insight to betray what lies beneath” (FI, 1 Feb, 2013). He also further explains the claim by stating two possible descriptions for

people who do not make an effort to regular exercise: “a) This person doesn’t know that exercise improves his chances of survival, or b) This person knows that exercise improves his chances of survival, but chooses not to do it anyway” (FI, 1 Feb, 2013). Although the post includes expressions that should be regarded as simple statements, made by a single individual only, the point about “the insight into a person”, also discussed by Morrison, is inevitably at the core of the idea of fitness bloggers who present the athletic self in an online environment.

Morrison’s writing further defines fitness, as already discussed (Uhlenbruck quoted in Volkwein 1998: XI), also by supporting the idea of an all-encompassing state:

Luckily, by its nature, fitness is the ultimate reality check. It situates you with respect to your surroundings without bias or restraint. The fact that you can or can’t do something is an undeniable indicator of who you are as an individual, you just need to read the signs. There’s no mistaking success/failure, ability/inability, life/death. False fronts, egotisms, and self-loathing won’t help you lift the bar. They won’t lower your resting heart rate or unclog your arteries. They’re coward’s clothing, nothing more.

In this way, Morrison’s statements about the reality check imply the major opportunities in the form of online communication for people enthusiastic about fitness. As Morrison also mentions egotism in his post, the reverse side of fitness blogging could be considered an issue a blogger needs to beware of: an ability may create egotism. So, overall, it is an extremely important thing to keep in mind while creating a certain image of the self, not only in everyday life but while communicating online, as well.

1.1 The Aim of the Thesis

A particular concentration in the field of fitness implies that the main purpose of blogging is inevitably to present a high-level, physically and mentally capable person, or at least

describe a process of constantly becoming more competent. In the thesis, the analysis is done on the basis of the characteristics of self-promotion that can be distinguished in a social media context. Consequently, these characteristics form ways of creating a personal brand that further construct the online identity already displayed by a blogger, and this is the reason to consider the bloggers through theoretical perspectives of online identity as well. How does self-branding become visible in the blog entries and in what ways does it affect the blogger's disclosure of identity in an online environment? As Kietzmann et al. (2011) depict in the honeycomb of the social media, identity is the center element of social media functionality (the extent to which users reveal themselves). Besides, blogging as a practice needs to be taken into consideration in the thesis, since it is a tool for communication that has specific features in contrast to other social media sites. In this way, both the content in the posts and the overall structure of the blogs are discussed.

The material includes the posts of four different fitness blogs. The writers have different approaches to fitness in the sense that each person is into muscular training and overall fitness but with different practices and perspectives. The criterion is that the blogger is an individual: while browsing through fitness blogs on the Internet, several blogs may have a group of writers, the blog is based by a company or community, or the writer is regarded as a celebrity outside the social media. The selected blogs share the same attitude of presenting fitness as an important part of their lifestyle. In that way, fitness has a special meaning for the bloggers studied in the thesis, when based on a simple fact of their choice of topic for the blog. However, the writers may not be considered celebrities. The information about their identity comes only through the blog, and thus the reader may not recognize the writers outside social media contexts.

The material includes both women and men bloggers. The study attempts to reveal patterns that the fitness bloggers have created through their writing in order to create a self-brand, since self-branding strategies are similar in all social media sites and the bloggers chosen for the thesis share the same choice of topic in their blog. The possible differences between

the writers are taken into account, or more specifically, if the writers do not share all the same features in the formation of the branded self through fitness, the analysis will reveal and further discuss the differences. Nevertheless, the major focus of the analysis is on the content and the structure of each blog: in the thesis, my attempt is not to reveal any possible power relations related to sex and gender, even though both men and women bloggers are discussed. Moreover, all of the bloggers and their posts have a separate section in the analysis, but the interconnecting concepts of identity construction and the branded self are always taken into consideration while analyzing the topic and content of each post.

1.2 The Material

In this section, the four blogs chosen for the thesis are shortly introduced. The description gives an overview of the blogger's background, the topics discussed in the blog, and the possible distinguishing features of the blog that show the perspective to fitness of the writer. The blogs were followed during two weeks' time: the posts were limited to the first couple of weeks of January, 2013, so all of the posts were written 1.1.2013–15.1.2013. The pace of updating varies between the writers already during the relatively short period of time. Altogether, the four blogs contain 27 separate posts that are written during these two weeks.

1.2.1 *anywherefit*

Blair Morrison is a blogger from Northern California, and he writes a blog called *anywherefit*. The blog is available at <http://crossfitmobile.blogspot.fi/>. Morrison has been involved in the world of fitness in more ways than one: one of his achievements is a 7th place in the CrossFit games, (a world-wide event, which tests competitors in challenges that incorporate running, weight lifting, gymnastics, climbing ropes, and other sports of the

kind). As the name of the blog already suggests, the posts may have various different locations, and thus, Morrison writes about exercises that have taken place in many parts of the world.

Morrison presents himself as a professional athlete, who is capable of competing in extreme physical challenges. Thus, he sets high standards for any writer who focuses on the field of fitness and blogging. The section “About Me” also reveals that Morrison has been a math teacher and a personal trainer: while being a professional athlete, he has managed to educate himself as well. Other sections of the blog are “Home”, “Videos”, “Fitness Is...”, “Recovery WOD”, and “AWF Trip Archive”. Morrison has written four posts during the two weeks’ time.

1.2.2 *Daveywaveyfitness*

The second blog analyzed in the thesis is written by a man who is described as “Shirtless gay YouTube sensation and fitness guru by day. Asleep by night.” The description is available on the fanpage of *Facebook* that has 157 944 fans. The blogger is Davey Wavey, who writes a blog titled *Daveywaveyfitness*, which is available at <http://www.daveywaveyfitness.com/>. The informative section about Wavey reveals that the blogger formerly struggled with obesity, especially in childhood. After the struggle, Wavey has learned to respect his body and to take care of his physical condition: “...I have learned that honoring your body is an extension of honoring yourself. I am an AFPA certified personal trainer who uses this blog to share my passion for and knowledge of fitness, exercise, health and nutrition with the world.”

In the “About” section of the blog, he challenges people from different backgrounds to join the journey of fitness with him. He welcomes both beginners and experts, and presents his blog as an online community. The blog has been divided into sections “Home”, “Contact”,

“Ask Davey”, “Exercises”, “Nutrition”, “Tips”, “Weight Loss Tips”, and “YouTube”. Wavey is an interesting blogger to consider especially because of his evident popularity and fame throughout the social media, which is an aspect that is highly connected to self-branding. Thus, Wavey has taken over other social media sites such as *YouTube* and *Twitter* to support the presentation of the self. Wavey has written eight posts in the first two weeks of January, 2013.

1.2.3 *Fit Chick in the City*

Fit Chick in the City is a blog dedicated to athletic lifestyle by Jess Underhill, a woman writer who lives in the New York City (originally from Nashville, TN). The information section about the blogger (<http://fitchickinthecity.com/>) has a quotation at the top of the page from *Shape Magazine*: “Think Carrie Bradshaw but in Nikes instead of Manolos: Fit Chick in the City is a fun blend of running stories and trivia, tips for living healthy in the city, and fun vegan recipes”. In this way, Underhill incorporates many topics related to fitness and the New York City as a place of living. The blog has been divided into sections “Home”, “About”, “Run”, “Improve”, “Train”, “Contact”, and “Disclosure”. She has written seven posts in the time period of the thesis.

Underhill describes herself as a fitness expert. She has worked as a coach for runners, and has over 14 years of different work experience in the field of fitness. In addition, she has a MS degree in Exercise Science and Health Promotion and also, a BS in Business Administration. Underhill has managed to get recognition as a result of writing the blog: for instance, she has been nominated for the best blogger award in 2011 by *Shape Magazine*. Besides defining herself as a fitness expert, Underhill takes advantage of the fact that she lives in New York, and obviously emphasizes the location already in the title of the blog. She specializes in running, but she also covers other topics that include healthy recipes and other workouts.

1.2.4 *Fitness on Toast*

Fitness on Toast is a blog written by Faya Nilsson, a personal trainer from Sweden. Nilsson's blog is available at <http://fitnessontost.com/>. She currently lives in London's West End, and began to write the blog in January, 2013. Nilsson describes how the blog was initially meant to be a place to share healthy recipes and nutritional tips, write workout posts, and discuss 'fitness fashion'. She did not have any previous experience in blogging. The content was directed towards her clients at the beginning, but later she realized the passion for writing. Now the blogger states that the main issue is to share knowledge and experience gained through personal training with all the people who have the same passionate and enthusiastic attitude towards a healthy, athletic lifestyle. The blog has been divided into sections "The Blog!", "Fitness", "Fashion", "Nutrition", "Travels", "As Seen In", "About", "Contact", and "Follow". Similarly to Wavey, Nilsson has written eight posts during the time period of the first two weeks in January, 2013.

According to the front page of *Fitness on Toast*, approximately 17 000 people follow Nilsson's writing. Nilsson has a great number of readers, and since the blogger herself admits that the nature of her writing has changed (due to growing popularity) it becomes significant to analyze her blog especially from the perspective of self-branding to understand how she has managed to become so popular. In addition, the time period for the thesis of the first two weeks of January (2013) is the time when Nilsson started blogging for the first time. The fact makes her writing particularly relevant to consider in the thesis, since it was not a conscious decision for her at the time to create a brand through the blog; blogging used to be a way of being in contact with the clients.

2 BLOGS AS PRESENTATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Blogs were not immediately accessible for everyone when they were first created, since the practice of blogging was gradually developed by IT-professionals. The roots of weblogs can be traced back to the 1990s: web designers created the first systems that functioned as a blog in 1997. These were described as simple web pages with the opportunity to include links with commentary. (Blood quoted in Myers 2009: 16.) The name weblog was given by Jorn Barger the following year. Then in 1999, new software made it easy for all Internet users to produce these sites: blogging became accessible not only among the community of designers and techies, but also among people who felt the desire to use an online diary or communicate in any special interest-based group possible. (Blood & Barger quoted in Myers 2009: 16–17.) At the time when the special interest-based groups were formed, one of the bloggers, Peter Merholz, is said to have transformed the noun “weblog” into a simple sentence “we blog” (Merholz quoted in Myers 2009: 16–17).

2.1 The Definition

A blog can be defined as a content management system (CMS), but this explicit statement does not seem to entirely describe a blog. Thus, it is simply described as a website that has a content of posts or articles in a reversed chronological order. (Holtz & Demopoulos 2006: 1.) As Michael Stefanone and Derek Lackaff state, blogs are a reconfiguration of existing web-based tools: frequently updated web pages that in general contain both current and archived text-based posts. It is also rather easy to form a blog, since the web-based tools enable anyone with access to a computer and the Internet to create and maintain a blog. In addition, very little technical knowledge in relation to today’s growing skills in technology is required. (Stefanone & Lackaff 2009: 969.) Besides, the user may not have the technical knowledge, but the information may be easily accessible for anyone who searches the Internet simply due to the great amount of information.

Some blogs attempt to cover every topic possible from politics to software and may even have several writers, while other bloggers act as individuals and their blogs become the equivalent of personal diaries. Besides, bloggers may choose to concentrate on a specific field of interest. (Holtz & Demopoulos 2006: 7.) The approach of having a specified topic has significance in fitness-related blogs. Nevertheless, while fitness blogs tend to concentrate on issues more strictly related to physical activities, they may also contain both the characteristics of a diary and of a specific field of interest, since it is extremely typical for the bloggers to describe their personal relationship to various physical activities or eating habits, for instance. The idea that the writer concentrates on a specified topic also brings the blogs even closer to the idea of self-promotion that further forms a personal brand: fitness as a topic, and possibly a lifestyle to a person, can be used as a strategy to brand the self. In addition, according to Holtz & Demopoulos (2006: 7), a concentration on a more specific field in a blog is also recommended if the writer feels the need to attract a wider audience or desires to get more attention among potential readers. The focus on personal everyday life in general might be interesting for the closest family and friends of the writer, but in order for the blog to be more attractive and successful, it is more productive to concentrate on a more specific topic (Holtz & Demopoulos 2006: 7). The approach seems to relate to the idea of showing professional qualities and, in that way, the blogger may become more interesting to follow.

Shel Holtz and Ted Demopoulos argue that a blog is said to inherit the author's personality and identity. Some blogs may achieve a higher status, and as a result, they become A-listed. If a blog has this status, it is extremely widely known and considered trustworthy. Tens of thousands of people may read A-listed blogs each day. However, trustworthiness is not only confined to A-list blogs. Similarly to other media, blogs need to earn their trustworthiness. In general, people seem to consider the majority of blogs relatively trustworthy, and in this way, the contents of blogs are regarded as a good source of information while they are contrasted, for instance, to tabloids. (Holtz & Demopoulos 2006: 3–7.) The personal perspective and self-disclosure of a blog seem to affect the level

of trustworthiness among readers: the objective of tabloids to sell the magazines and the objective of bloggers simply to describe the life and the self may form the main reason to consider blogs more reliable sources of information, even if it is relatively easy to tell lies online.

2.1.1 The Blogosphere

All of the blogs worldwide are included in the blogosphere. Thereby, the blogosphere is a term that can be connected to the sense of community that is constantly present in blogging. (Bruns & Jacobs 2006: 5.) Fitness blogs can be categorized as a separate section in the blogosphere that include the whole community of both the writers and even the readers of the blogs.

According to Noppari and Hautakangas (2012: 62), competition in the blogosphere is extremely tough between the writers: interviews among fashion bloggers in Finland proved that bloggers have a special need to update the blog regularly. If the bloggers slow down the pace as writers, the number of readers will drop immediately on their sites. Thus, the communities in the blogosphere may create a tension or extra pressure for the writers. Noppari and Hautakangas continue (2012: 62–63) the topic by stating that web communities are in a constant move. If a blogger does something that the readers experience unpleasant, arrogant, or suspicious, the readers will not continue to follow the writer in question. However, the communities in the blogosphere are described as somewhat wavering anyway. Users tend to move constantly from one blog to another, and they do not have an extremely strict commitment to any specific sites. The phenomenon is also named ‘the culture of clicking’, which describes the easy access to other sites only by a single click. (Noppari & Hautakangas 2012: 62–63.) Consequently, the blogosphere may become both a threat and a helpful tool for a blogger in an attempt to become noted and successful.

2.2 The Structure

All blogs share some of the basic structural elements that distinguish a blog from other websites. Therefore, the structure of the blog mainly follows a certain pattern so that at least 13 different parts can be distinguished: the name of the blog and a short description or introduction at the beginning of the page, navigation, a particular order (the latest posts always appear first on the page), a heading in each post, a permanent link to each post, a possibility to read comments or leave one's own comments after each post, trackbacks, a calendar, a search, an archive, a blockroll (a list of the blogs that the writer currently follows), and feeds. (Allen & Teten 2005: 78.) Nevertheless, all the different parts listed above may not exist in all blogs, (a blockroll, for instance) and in this way, the structure by David Allen and Scott Teten may be regarded as a very traditional one. As Allen and Teten also (2005) state, a blog is meant to reveal the writer's world, and this is the reason to state that the choice to use particular structural elements (that also further determine the overall layout of a blog) in a blog may vary between bloggers.

2.3 The Functional Classification of Social Media Sites

The improvement of Internet connections allowed the blogs to further develop, and gradually they became a group of sites that partly constitute the social media today. Sites that can be considered important in the social media today were updated when the growing availability of high-speed Internet access added to the popularity of the concept: *MySpace* (2003) and *Facebook* (2004), for instance, are social media sites that were also formed from their more primitive versions of the 1990s. There are even more recent inventions to the group of sites, the so-called "virtual worlds". These are "computer-based simulated environments inhabited by three-dimensional avatars". (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 60.) In this way, the trend seems to be that the social media is in a constant progress both by the

development of the existing sites and the formation of new functions for all the online users.

Social media sites form a group of web sites, but their functions are slightly different from one another. It means that the users may share different contents on each site, which further modifies the actual purpose of using these sites. Besides, by defining the function of each site, it is possible to discuss the ways of communication between the users. Kaeplan and Haenlein (2010: 62) have made a classification of the social media that shows the different functions of the sites. They have categorized the sites to reveal the aspects of social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure that imply the major functions of social media sites.

Blogs are mainly based on a simple information exchange that means that the information is given by the blogger towards the audience. While explaining their classification, Kaeplan and Haenlein (2010: 62) state that blogs score lowest with respect to social presence and media richness. It is explained that blogs are mainly text-based and thus only allow for a relatively simple exchange between users. While the communication in the social media is discussed further, content communities such as *YouTube* and social networking sites like *Facebook* tend to focus more on sharing pictures, videos, and other forms of media. Surely, it is possible to share the media in blogs as well, which means that images or videos can become a major part of the blogs, even the most important function. Nevertheless, blogs do not seem to have the same level of interaction in the forms of sharing in comparison to some other social media sites.

On the contrary to social presence and media richness, blogs tend to contain a major focus on self-presentation. Naturally, it is a consequence of the simple exchange of information in blogs. In regard to self-presentation and self-disclosure, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010: 62) state that blogs score higher than collaborative projects. Therefore, self-presentation as a major function of a blog further supports the idea of an identity disclosure connected to the

blogger's construction and maintenance of the social media site. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:62) also argue, it may be concluded that blogs have mainly the self-presentational aspect as the most significant function. Most importantly, it is the reason to consider blogs (out of all other social media sites) specifically from the perspective of self-branding.

2.4 The Functional Building Blocks of Social Media Sites

The functional building blocks serve as a way to discuss the social media and different aspects that should be taken into consideration when analyzing the content of the sites. Kietzman et al. (2011) have introduced the functional building blocks in order to discuss the various points of view which should be considered while taking part in promotional practices online. Altogether, there are seven functional building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. All of them are not constantly present in all social media sites, but they show how to make sense of different levels of the social media and, in this way, they also indicate the practical focus of a person who writes a personal blog. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 243.) The differentiation by Kietzman et al. (2011) has been made especially for the usage of companies that promote their products with the help of the social media. An individual blogger may see the self as a product, and this is why Kietzman's differentiation leads to the idea that the functional building blocks may be applied to the thesis.

The identity block shows the extent to which people reveal their identity in a social media setting. It is partly constructed by simple facts of a person: name, age, gender, profession, and a place of living. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 243.) However, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (quoted in Kietzman et al. 2011: 243), identity is not only defined by these most common facts we may ask about people when meeting them for the first time. As a result, identity may not be defined through mere profession, for instance, as it is possible to search for traces of identity from subjective information like thoughts, feelings, likes, and dislikes.

Therefore, a blogger may consciously or even unconsciously reveal information about their identity by sharing their emotions and opinions to the reader. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 243.) Inevitably, the identity block functions as a relevant tool for a blogger to arouse the interest among potential readers.

The identity block may be a complex one to manage: “Striking a careful balance between sharing identities and protecting privacy is crucial in selecting social media tools; the wrong mix can lead to a lack of accountability among users, encourage cyber-bullying, and pave the way for off-topic and off-color comments” (Kietzman et al. 2011: 244). Thereby, in the social media, there seems to be a constant battle between revealing an extensive amount of information that might become harmful for a person’s privacy and protecting the identity in a cautious manner that could potentially lead to the loss of followers. Obviously, an extensive fame in the social media is impossible to accomplish by a person who is not willing to actually share anything about the self, and that way self-branding is clearly about the courage to throw oneself into the world of online interaction.

While the identity block could be regarded as the most significant one for blogging, the block of conversations and the block of presence are not especially relevant ones while analyzing the system of a blog and its function. As Kietzman et al. (2011: 244) state, blogs are less about staying connected synchronously, unlike other social media sites such as *Facebook*, which tends to contain ‘chats’ between users, for instance. In addition, users cannot see through the blog whether the writer is ‘available’ or not, which is the function of the block of presence. In contrast, blogs often include rather lengthy conversations that are linked back on the blog itself. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 244–245.) Consequently, as the conversational aspect is not regarded as a major function in blogging, the section for reader’s comments in a blog is not analyzed in the thesis. Thus, the blog entries of a blogger serve as the most relevant material for the analysis of ways of self-branding.

In contrast to the blocks of conversations and presence, Kietzman et al. (2011) present that the block of sharing is an important functional element simply because it is highly visible in the blogging world. It shows the extent to which a user exchanges, distributes, and receives different content (Kietzman et al. 2011: 244–245). For a blogger, the block of sharing may be also practically viewed as the main idea and the ultimate goal of blogging.

The block of relationship may be attached to blogging. However, relationships that are created through a blog usually lack a formal arrangement of sharing a certain amount of information at least to the other receiver. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 246.) The contrast becomes visible when comparing a blog to other social media site such as *Facebook*, in which users usually have to become “friends” in order to share information more thoroughly. In that way, the communication is more indirect in blogs. Blogs are not tied around chatting, for instance, and the communication is mainly directed from a blogger towards an audience. Thus, as an overall view on communication, blogging creates communication that cannot be seen as bidirectional as in some other social media sites.

As the sixth functional block Kietzman et al. (2011: 247) talk about reputation, and for the concept of self-branding, this is a particularly significant block to consider. By reputation, Kietzman et al. mean the extent to which users can identify the standing of others (also themselves) in a social media setting. Reputation as an aspect has various meanings on social media platforms. It also includes the potential trustworthiness of a user, and there are different tools (‘mechanical Turks’) that might even automatically create user-generated information to determine the level of trustworthiness. (Kietzman et al. 2011: 247.) In blogs, the readers or followers can be visible for anyone reading the block in a separate section on the site. Overall, Kietzman et al. again focus on the business approach of the block, stating how companies should use this form of reputation for achieving their goals and creating profit. Equally important it is also for a person in an effort to create a personal brand: the growing number of readers ensures more and more attention to the blog.

The last functional block presented (Kietzman et al. 2011: 247) in the social media is the block of groups, which describes the ability of users to form online communities and subcommunities. A socially active network naturally ensures groups of friends, followers, and contacts. In blogging, groups can be connected with a specific field in which a blogger is involved, such as fitness. The functional block of groups again emphasizes a blogger's ability to target the audience more easily. Moreover, the formation of an online group enhances the chances of building a successful personal brand, or at least, increases the level of attention among the readers. Thus, again, when in contrast to a blogger who attempts to write 'everything about everything', it could be more profitable to find a particular field of interest, for instance a topic such as fitness.

3 SELF-BRANDING

Self-branding is a growing phenomenon of the promotion of the self in an online environment. Senft (2013: 346) describes the popularity of the phenomenon by stating that self-branding has exploded to the public sphere. According to Alice Marwick (2010), self-branding is intrinsically linked to the social media, because the web is a platform that allows people to compete with traditional brands that attempt to sell a product or service. Moreover, the rise of the social media parallels the rise of self-branding, and this is the reason why the practice of self-branding is not a coincidence. (Marwick 2010: 319.) As Senft also explains, self-branding is highly linked to the business world, which highlights the promotional aspect of the practice. Self-promotion (which is a term that slightly differs from self-branding since it is used in the business world) is visible in any bookstore today that has a business section: without doubt the section would be partly dedicated to the practice of self-branding. (Senft in Hartley & all 2013: 346.)

Self-branding may be described through self-promotional practices, which confuses the use of the two terms of self-branding and self-promotion. Furthermore, in the context of the business world, the term self-promotion is more likely to be used, which also implies that an individual blogger attempts to do specifically self-branding. Adele Gulfo (2013) also makes a distinction between personal branding and self-promotion: she sees personal branding as a leadership imperative, while a list of accomplishments or an exercise in self-promotion are completely different issues. In this way, self-branding is the major set of practices that includes self-promotional strategies.

A blogger needs to see the self as a product that is promoted with the help of different strategies in order to be successful. Marwick states that self-branding is mainly a set of marketing strategies which can be applied to an individual. The practice may be considered both a mindset (in which the person has to consider the self as a salable commodity) and a set of practices. In addition, McGee points out: “This is congruent with overall self-help

culture, a hugely profitable branch of publishing which advises constant self-improvement as a way to manage anxiety over economic and social uncertainty” (quoted in Marwick 2010: 307). Self-branding encourages individuals to adopt advertising and marketing techniques to create a self-presentation that is strategically designed for a comprehensive online audience. (Marwick 2010: 307.)

An individual blogger has to have a clear understanding of the self. Marwick specifies that successful self-branding begins from a simple exercise of defining the personal brand as an individual. A person needs to recognize the possible features of the self that could be evolved into a personal brand. Obviously, the task requires self-knowledge and especially great understanding of special skills, in other words, self-examination. A person needs to know where to be in life in the future, and how to use the special skills to become more successful. The special skills and goals may fall into any category of ‘having, being and doing’, meaning possessions, qualities, or a level of performance. (Marwick 2010: 307–308.) As becoming a noted person in any field requires the practice of setting specific yet challenging goals, it is also in a key role while focusing on self-branding. For a fitness blogger, the physical qualities and performance have a major role in the personal brand, and that way, for instance a physical challenge presented in a blog (especially a hard one) implies both the professionalism and the determination of an individual.

Marwick (2010: 308–310) explains the process of creating a personal brand in more detail: she talks about ‘practitioners’ who first identify their strengths and then start to use the business strategies of marketing and advertising to target an audience that could be interested in their brand. Marwick states that each person has an individual set of talents, skills, and goals within the discourse of self-branding. A person may become successful if the skills are balanced in the right way. However, there is a distinction, indicated by Marwick that needs to be made between self-branding and the use of brands as identity markers. The reason for the distinction is the fact that self-branding teaches people to view active identity construction as a product, which means that “people define themselves both

through brands and *as* brands”. (Marwick 2010: 312.) It differs from the usage of an Apple laptop, for instance, since owning a product of a particular brand merely implies that a product constructs a particular identity, and not a person him/herself (Marwick 2010: 310). When considering the instance of owning a branded product from the perspective of a fitness blogger, it is evident that the use of sport-equipment brands such as Nike or Adidas would not be enough for an active identity construction which is required in self-branding.

3.1 Why Self-Branding?

Self-branding results from the need to be distinguishable in a social media setting. The social media may be used as a tool for business and goal-oriented practices. According to Gulfo (2013), self-branding has some self-explanatory career-oriented goals behind the practices, which relates closely to the business aspect of self-branding. While Gulfo (2013) further explains her definition of self-branding as a leadership imperative, she states how a personal brand has a life of its own. It is about being true to oneself. Personal brand is visible in various occasions, for example while interacting with other people like colleagues, leaders and stakeholders. The brand contributes to a feature of authentic leadership: the person has to behave in a consistent way. All these different aspects (the vision of the self, special skills, and the things a person considers most important in life) are shown both professionally and personally at the same time. (Gulfo 2013.) A successful blogger may also get into a situation, in which it is required of her/him to act consistently: the blogger may be invited to various events as a result of co-operation with companies that see the potential of the writer in their business.

A successful self-brand may have an impact on a blogger’s life in multiple ways. Joseph Perera (2013: 5) highlights the connection of self-branding with the business world: looking for a job for instance is a hard task to anyone who needs to stand out from a great number of competitive, trained candidates. Similarly, a blogger is able to show more

professionalism through branding, and, in some cases, the attempt is to collaborate with companies in order to make a living through the blog, as well. A successful blog may reach a world-wide online audience, a community of people interested in bloggers' life and everything that they do: in fact, self-branding may create visibility, attention, status, and wealth. (Marwick 2010: 314.) Inevitably, the positive consequences may become so extensive that blogging and self-branding are worth trying, even if a person needs to expose oneself to an online audience that may have similar plans.

3.2 The Practical Means of Self-Branding

The characteristics of self-promotion are issues that can be identified from social media sites. The characteristics define the practical ways of forming a personal brand. According to Korteso, the focus of the blog should be on posts that show professional knowledge, justifiable arguments, conversation openers, and descriptions of current events. Blogging also requires regular updates, which means that a reader should be able to find a new post each day or weekly at the least. Real-time posts are relevant in a constantly changing online environment of the blogosphere. (Korteso 2011: 81–82.) In this way, the only way to maintain the readers' interest is to be visible at all times, but, at the same time, the content must not suffer from the fast pace.

Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) have done research on A-listed (extremely popular) bloggers, and they discuss the basic strategies of online promotion of the self. The strategies include claims about abilities, accomplishments, performance, or qualifications. However, the strategies also go beyond claims of competence: Korteso (2011) also states that self-branding is not equivalent to mere advertisement of the self, not even when the practices are separately discussed. In this way, the mere praise of the blogger's own abilities or the presentation of different products (and their prices in particular) lack the individual voice that would attract the readers. Trammell and Keshelashvili also quote

Jones (2005: 972), who states that people not only want to be seen as competent, but are interested in having their achievements attributed to natural ability. Thus, overall, a person who does self-promotion has to take the role of a professional in a specific field. Besides, a blogger needs to show some talent in the field.

Social media sites are highly connected to each other, and it is important to take advantage of the strategy of networking. Consequently, it is not rare among bloggers to show the audience how the self is active in various different ways: after all, only the active people are able to create visibility and world-wide recognition. The active self is visible through links to websites that may show a proof of partners in cooperation with the blogger. Besides, the blogger shows different interests at the same time by sharing other websites in a blog, which may further attract more readers. In addition, a writer usually shares all kinds of media among the audience: pictures, videos, links to other sites, or other updates he/she has throughout the social media. A blogger may not only attempt to show the active self in the social media: Bortree (quoted in Trammell & Keshelashvili 2005: 972) states that especially teenagers have used linking which is a part an 'ingratiation' strategy. Clearly, the linking strategy implies the call for approval: the writer wants to be seen as a likable person in the social media.

There are a variety of ways to make a blog worth following, but some of the very basic strategies imply that the blog can be considered trustworthy and updated. According to Trammell & Keshelashvili (2005: 974–976), the writer has to share authentic, updated information about the self, and he or she has to post regularly. The topics should be considered relevant today, and regular posts are also a key to interesting topics. The blogger may also present intellectual abilities to other users or use experts to shore up the arguments to show credibility. Obviously, it is important to be able to present a proper source for some of the arguments made in a blog, although the writer's voice plays the major role in a blog.

Self-branding requires the practices of showing some of the great, positive aspects of the self, but, at the same time, the attempt is to avoid egotism. This may mean that a person uses the strategy of comparing ‘the good self’ with ‘the bad others’. However, the blogger may use the strategy of praising others rather criticizing or blaming them to give a reversible positive impression of the self (Trammell and Keshelashvili 2005: 974). As discussed above, a mere presentation of ‘the good self’ may easily lead to the traces of egotism. For a fitness blogger, it is extremely essential to find a balance between the emphasis of desirable physical characteristics (for instance, images or videos) and the presentation of modesty, so that the blogger does not come across as an egocentric person. Moreover, the writer may attempt to show creativity or versatility of the self in the updates. The versatility means that the writer is able to show how he/she is interested in different phenomena in society and is able to discuss these issues. A fitness blogger may also attempt to show creativity by presenting exceptional workouts that indicate the imaginative qualities.

Successful self-branding is also about communicative skills. The use of chatty language (for example while joking and sharing information) tends to bring the audience closer to the writer, since a reader may consider the blogger more approachable. The blogger is also able to communicate effectively with the readers by addressing the audience directly. (Trammell & Keshelashvili (2005: 976.) When a blogger uses suggestions or even commands such as “You should do this!”, the reader may get the feeling that he or she is involved in the writing, even when the writer and the reader do not communicate in a bidirectional way.

A person who does self-branding should be able to arouse a sense of excitement among the audience. A post should begin with a title that contains insightful, concise, and vigorous characteristics. The use of terms belonging to a particular domain of knowledge is actually beside the point. (Kortesuo 2011: 86.) In this way, a short title is the best way to arouse the interest of a reader, and a blogger does not have to use any special terminology, for instance. The blogger may also use the strategy of putting the ‘backstage’ to the front to

give a sense of excitement to the readers. According to Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005: 972), the majority of the content in blogs provides a “behind the scenes” view into the blogger’s “backstage”, which is also a part of the practice of ingratiation. The idea that everyone plays a number of different roles in real-life (as if they were on a stage) was first discussed by Erving Goffman (1990) already in 1959, and now the same strategy is transferred from real-life roles to the practice of blogging. The blogger leaves the roles aside and reveals some ‘backstage’ information about the self to the reader. The attempt is to make a connection with the reader and ‘the real self’ of the blogger in such way that the reader becomes more and more interested of the blogger.

3.3 Micro-celebrity

Micro-celebrity is a rather new form of identity that results from an extended popularity in the social media. A micro-celebrity has reached ‘a higher state’ of self-branding, since the person has a distinguishing way to promote the personal brand online. The person is widely-known, and the fame origins from the content that the person has published in social media sites. According to Senft (quoted in Hartley & al 2013: 346), a micro-celebrity can be defined as “a person who commits to maintain an online identity as if it were a branded good, with the expectation that others do the same.”

The term was originally introduced through ‘camgirls’ in 2001 by Senft. A cam girl is an example of a celebrity, who has been able to become famous by posting things online. Camgirls were women who broadcasted their lives over the Internet by using a variety of ways. They were bloggers who shared images or video, and also used crosslinking strategies. In this way, they were able to present themselves as coherent, branded packages to a number of fans. (Senft quoted in Hartley & al 2013: 346.)

Senft (2013) further explains how the idea of micro-celebrity works. Instances of micro-celebrity practices may be simply found from the ways in which all people use the Internet themselves. A simple thing such as the delete of an unflattering picture of themselves from social media sites such as *Facebook* is part of the micro-celebrity practice, thus also the beginning of self-branding. (Senft quoted in Hartley & all 2013: 346.) It becomes evident that at least to some extent, anyone who uses the social media as a tool for communication is a person who does self-promotional practices at the same time.

4 IDENTITY AND SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED NORMS OF THE FIT BODY

This chapter deals with the socially constructed identity and norms that are connected with the practices of self-branding. In addition, the difference between identity and online identity are introduced. Especially the construction of the norm of the fit body and its effects on the online identity of a fitness blogger are issues that are essential because self-branding requires both the presentation of the role of the fitness professional, a disclosure of the ‘backstage’ that reveals “the real identity”, and the exploitation of the characteristics that connect with the norms of the fit body.

4.1 Identity and Society

Identity is a complicated construct, which consists of both personal and social issues: who we think ourselves to be, how we want other people to perceive us, and how they actually perceive us (Wood & Smith 2005: 52). According to Castells (2009: 6), identity plays an important role in each cultural setting: it is a source of meaning and experience for a person. Calhoun (quoted in Castells 2009: 6) states that no language or culture is able to avoid the distinctions between self and other. At all times, there will be differentiations between ‘we and they’. The identity distinction of a person from others begins from the simplest fact that each person has a name. (Castells 2009: 6.) Castells also (2009) states that the construction of a person’s meaning is always done on the basis of a cultural attribute (or a related set of cultural attributes) which is the most important source for the discovery of identity.

The process of forming a personal brand requires some obvious knowledge of the self. Castells (2009: 6) presents self-knowledge as a construction that cannot be defined as a discovery, since this kind of knowledge is never completely separable from claims to be known in specific ways by other people. In this way, identity construction is attached to

social actors: people would not be able to describe themselves without a comparison to others.

A person active in fitness must be considered through norms that are structured by the institutions and organizations of society. The extent to which the characteristics are able to actually influence people's behavior depends upon "negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organizations" (Castells 2009: 7). Besides, self-definitions are likely to coincide with social roles. Castells (2009) wants to make a clear distinction between a role and an identity: one needs to realize that identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles. That way, identities organize the meaning of a person, while roles organize the functions. (Castells 2009: 7.) Castells gives an example about becoming a father, which could become the most important self-definition from the point of view of the father at that specific moment, so that this person describes himself through fatherhood. (Castells 2009: 7). In relation to the idea, a fitness person may define the self also from a limited perspective: while a fitness blogger may have other roles in life, the blogger constructs a self-brand by defining the self as the fitness professional.

Goffman (1990) presents that social interaction is like a theater, in which all the people are actors on the stage. They constantly play a variety of roles. In contrast, the audience consists of other individuals who observe the role-playing and react to the performances. In social interaction, like in theatrical performances, there is a front region where the actors are on stage in front of an audience. Goffman (1990) also describes that there is a back region, or a back stage, where individuals can be themselves and get rid of their role or identity that are played in front of other people. Goffman's theoretical perspective on social interaction relates to the communication by bloggers. A fitness blogger maintains an online role of a fitness professional, but, at the same time, the blogger creates a personal brand also by "revealing the true identity" that is usually placed on the backstage. In this way, self-branding requires both the maintenance of a role and the disclosure of the identity.

4.2 Online Identity

Andrew Wood and Matthew Smith have introduced several concepts that have significance in the construction of an online identity. A blogger perceives an audience mainly through telepresence and an online performance, which are concepts that are explained in Wood's and Smith's work (2005) about online communication.

4.2.1 The Principle of Telepresence

Wood and Smith state that telepresence is the foundation of the establishment of an online identity. They have quoted Steuer (1992) when they present the definition of the concept: telepresence is "the extent to which one feels present in the mediated environment, rather than in the immediate physical environment". Telepresence is also about the experience to make a connection to others through technology. (Wood & Smith 2005: 54.)

According to Wood and Smith (2005), the realistic sense of a medium depends on the degree of interactivity that the medium is able to present. In this way, the measure of interactivity becomes an important aspect, since it deals with the degree to which a person is able to manipulate the online environment. A person can take advantage of speed, range, or mapping when the goal is to increase the sense of interactivity of a site. Speed deals with the rapidity of a user to manipulate the environment, range is the amount of manipulation, and mapping means the ways of reaction in the virtual environment due to the actions done online. (Wood & Smith 2005: 55.) It is easier for some people to feel connected: these people are able to define personal characteristics through text-only messages that are sent online, for instance, while others are more critical about the content on their computer screen (Wood & Smith 2005: 54). As a result of the concept of telepresence, a blogger should be able to reach for the real-life audience through a digital environment by creating a different stimulus that would give the audience an experience of realism. Even though a

graphically rich and interactive website does not guarantee that the blogger is able to give a realistic experience for every single reader, it is still a great tool for the blogger to arouse the interest of the audience.

4.2.2 Online Identity Performance

Online communication differs from face-to-face interaction. Wood and Smith (2005: 56–60) make a comparison between a real-life identity and an online identity: it is easier to change all the characteristics of a person in an online environment. There is a greater control over identity in the online communication, since a person is not as exposed to the audience as in face-to-face situations, in which the person would constantly communicate through appearance and non-verbal expressions. When people interact face-to-face, they immediately infer qualities of each other's identities based on gender, race, clothing, and gestures. Many of these cues would be simply invisible online. (Wood & Smith 2005: 57–69.)

According to Wood and Smith (2005: 59), people's knowledge of others is based on the disclosure of information that one wishes others to know. This means that anyone is able to take advantage of the possibilities that online communication offers: one may simply leave out the details of their lives that they do not wish the audience to know. For a fitness blogger, the limited disclosure is an opportunity to create a brand of a fitness professional simply by highlighting the athletic features such as a great figure. Nevertheless, this practice in blogging may not be that simple: if this person wants to construct a successful self-brand, it is required that the blogger is able to connect with the audience in multiple ways. In particular, the audience may want information about "the backstage" of the blogger, since it is one of the relevant strategies in connection to self-branding and it simply makes the blogger more intriguing to follow.

4.3 The Discourse of Healthism

According to Davis (1995: 11), the body has been conceptualized as a simple object when it is in fact a complex focus for competing power structures. The discourse of healthism discussed by Jan Wright, Gabrielle O'Flynn, and Doune McDonald (2006: 707) presents an up-to-date view on the socially constructed norm of the fit body. The discourse equates health with a slim body shape that is achieved through exercise, which provides a powerful set of imperatives (Kirk & Colquhoun quoted in Wright et al. 2006: 707). A person with a great figure has the power to state how people should live their lives and even construct their identities. The complexity of the imperative becomes evident because it may have both positive and negative effects. Wright et al. (2006: 708) state that the consequences of such imperatives are extremely problematic and may have adverse effects on people: the negative effects may lead to such things as an obesity epidemic, and the promotion of slimness as the only desirable attribute for both women and men.

The notion of healthism dates back to the 1980s, when Crawford among others (quoted in Wright et al. 2006: 708) discussed the relationship between health and normality in contemporary capitalist societies. Consequently, the body became an object that has to be managed all the time. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) has made a point about the unnatural norm of the body: there is no natural body, since all bodies are culturally or socially constructed. Grosz also highlights that there is no one specific type of body which would construct a norm by which all others are judged. Different body types function as plural models that lead to the definitions of the norms of fitness, health, and beauty. (Grosz 1994: 22.)

Simon Williams and Gillian Bendelow (1998) have discussed how greater value and promotion of the slender body has been created not only by the media, but also by the fashion and fitness industries. These industries have presented a slim body as a metaphor for health, youth, and affluence. An example of the metaphor can be found in the fitness industry, in which sport equipment is marketed through the notion of a person getting in

shape. A great physical condition is further connected with a sense of well-being, an efficient mind, and even overall enhancement of the self. (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 74–75.)

A certain state of mind is always present when there is a discussion about a person who is in a good physical condition: a determined attitude and self-restraint are always attached to physical exercises. Wright et al. (2006: 708) also explain that healthism creates an extremely powerful set of imperatives for individuals by connecting the healthism discourse of a favorable body shape and good health to a discourse that associates slim, youthful, attractive bodies with social and personal identity (Wright et al. 2006: 708). In addition, Susan Bordo (1990: 94–95) presents a well-toned body as a symbol of correct attitude that signifies willpower, energy, control, and the ability to develop the self. In this way, the health discourse begins to signify not only personal characteristics but also a person's identity, and it becomes the most important source for this person's self-definition.

The statements both by Bordo (1990) and Wright et al. (2006) can be directly linked to the self-branding of a fitness blogger, since a social media persona combines the powerful discourses of the body that indicate both health and identity. In this way, a fitness blogger has the possibility to construct an influential brand. As a blogger may achieve a higher status by creating an effective online identity as a result of the health discourse, the blogger may even shape the norm favored by society at the same time.

5 THE BRANDED SELF IN FITNESS BLOGS

In this chapter, the material of the blogs is first discussed from the point of view of the structural elements, which may be regarded as the blogger's first step towards the creation of a personal brand and the differentiation from other blogs. The second part of the analysis discusses the blog posts that the bloggers have written during the chosen time period of the first two weeks of January, 2013. The titles of the posts and the topics are first discussed in the section. The titles serve as a way for the blogger to get attention among online users as Kortessuo (2011: 86) discussed, which makes them especially important elements in the posts. After these issues have been discussed, the posts of each blogger are analyzed through all the strategies connected to self-branding, after which the brands are presented in relation to the identity construction.

5.1 The Structure of the Blogs

The structure of a blog has significance to the blogger, as it is a way to be recognized in the blogosphere. Already the first glance at the blog gives an impression of the blogger's views, identity, interests, and stylistic preferences. Overall, the different structural elements affect the visibility in the blogosphere: if the writer attempts to create a successful personal brand, the basic construction of the blog has to support the actual content, the updates (Kortessuo 2011: 80). According to Allen and Teten (2005: 78), the structure of a blog usually has 13 traditional elements that can be distinguished: the name of the blog and a short description or introduction at the beginning of the page, navigation, a particular order (the latest posts always appear first on the page), a heading in each post, a permanent link to each post, a possibility to read comments or leave one's own comments after each post, trackbacks, a calendar, a search, an archive, a blockroll (a list that shows the blogs the writer currently follows), and feeds. The four blogs of the thesis are described with the help of this traditional structure.

Blair Morrison's blog *anywherefit* (<http://crossfitmobile.blogspot.fi/>) has a traditional structure. The title of the blog is on top of the page, clearly distinguished from other content, and below the title is a short description: "If you're not on the edge, you're just taking up space". The blog is divided into sections "Home", "About Me", "Videos", "Fitness Is...", "Recovery WOD", and "AWF Trip Archive". In addition, the blog has an archive, a search, a list of followers, sponsors, and the most popular posts on the right side of the page. Nevertheless, a blockroll is missing from the page. Morrison does not feel the need to share the blogs he follows himself or simply does not follow any other blogger in particular.

The short description after the title relates to the background image and to the title of the blog: the overall layout can be considered very coherent. The image in the background has a view over a cliff that has people on top of it, photographed from a relatively long distance, so that the people can be seen as very small objects. The name *anywherefit* suggests that Morrison is into traveling, and the image that reminds us of material photographed by a tourist supports the idea of a person who keeps himself fit anywhere he might go. The layout has a metaphorical meaning: in the image, the people are physically on the edge but at the same time the text has connections to fitness and its nature of pushing the limits. Together, the elements in Morrison's blog construct a particular image of him as a blogger: a fitness professional who has an international perspective, and at the same time, a person who provides an insight that suggests what fitness is all about.

Davey Wavey's blog *daveywaveyfitness* (<http://www.daveywaveyfitness.com>) has a slightly different structure that does not completely follow the traditional structure of a blog. Similarly to Morrison, Wavey has the name of the blog on top of the page and below the text: "Honor your body. Honor You." The blog has been divided into sections "Home", "About", "Contact", "Ask Davey", "Exercises", "Nutrition", "Tips", "Weight Loss Tips", and "YouTube". On the right side of the page, Wavey has links to his personal profiles in *Facebook* and *YouTube*. He also includes a link to Davey Wavey Apparel, and has added a

possibility for the readers to sign up and subscribe to his “monthly fitness tips and secrets and get a special free gift today”. On top of the page, Wavey has an image of himself without a shirt, which shows his upper body. Below, the latest articles appear first, and then some of the latest posts in all the different sections. Moreover, at the bottom of the page, Wavey incorporates his accounts to *Instagram* and *Twitter*. As a more traditional aspect, an archive is also placed in this section. Overall, the links to the different social media sites are easily accessible and highly visible for the audience.

The structural aspects of Wavey’s blog present an active, professional fitness person that includes fitness-related topics from a holistic perspective in his blog. The professionalism that Wavey has created is most visible in sections that contain “tips” or “advice” and Wavey’s images of himself that show the athletic figure. The contrast to Morrison is quite blatant: while Morrison does not incorporate other social media sites in the structure or does not present himself so strongly (the contrast in presenting the field of fitness versus presenting the blogger), Wavey seems to use all ways possible to get himself more and more visibility among the audience. In addition, Wavey shows more versatility of topics.

Wavey instantly constructs his popularity in “The About” -section, which is on the front page as a separate block: “Davey Wavey is a YouTube personality and fitness guru with more than 150 million video views in more than 160 countries around the world” (Wavey 2014). When a reader first enters the main page, the text block is one of the most striking elements because of its placement on the top of the front page. The description contains information that highly connects this social media persona to a micro-celebrity: the proof of an extended popularity and the capture of all social media sites of Wavey suggest that he has the potential to reach even a higher status of a self-brand.

Jess Underhill as the writer of *Fit Chick in the City* (<http://fitchickinthecity.com/>) has used a different structure in the blog in comparison to Morrison and Wavey. The blog and its content are in the process of being transferred to her new blog, and as Underhill states, she

is about to “officially re-brand and make her new dreams come true”. As the other blogs, the page has the title on the top and a short description: “Working out the details for living a fit life”. The layout differs especially from Wavey’s blog, since the writer does not present the self very strongly in structurally constructed ways. On the right side the audience can find a search, recent comments and posts, and a subscription to her “8 running essentials”. Nevertheless, Underhill constructs the active self in the social media by linking to her *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *Pinterest* pages. In this way, the blog seems to fall somewhere between *anywherefit* and *daveywaveyfitness* as it has some similar characteristics as the other two: the personal plainness of Morrison and the active self in the social media of Wavey.

Underhill’s blog seems to attract popularity among a particular group of women. At first, the reader gets the impression that Underhill emphasizes the location in her blog for promotional reasons. New York City as a place of living and a healthy lifestyle may not be the obvious combination, since NYC is regarded as one of the business centers of the world. *Fit Chick in the City* as the title of the blog has instant connotations with *Sex and the City*, an American TV series dealing with the single-life of four women in their thirties and forties. The connection is not necessarily made to describe the content of the blog, but the title has a promotional effect. In addition, the blog’s layout features a picture of pink and black colored silhouette of the city in a cartoon-style drawing. Both the image and the name of the blog have a direct connection to chick-lit as a specific genre in literature: according to Stephanie Davis-Kahl (2008: 18), chick-lit is a type of fiction that focuses on the social lives and relationships of women. As a result of the connotations, Underhill targets women who may struggle with their womanhood and relationships in modern societies. Moreover, the layout could imply the wit of the writer, and obviously, it seems to support the idea of the main focus to promote the blog through the writer’s location.

Fitness on Toast (<http://fitnessontoast.com/>) has a distinguishing layout and different structural elements compared to the other three bloggers. The Swedish writer, Faya

Nilsson, relies on the title of the blog on top of the page that features an image of herself lying literally on a piece of toast with a dumbbell held high. The blog has a search, a possibility to follow her updates, links to *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter*, and an “About” -section on the right side of the page. In addition to fitness, she includes separate sections for fashion and nutrition. The most recent post is probably the first thing the reader may notice when he or she enters the front page, or at least the images connected to the updates that are much larger in size when compared to the other writers. The images construct a major, distinguishing part in the blog: against the blank white background they stand out from the page. The first glance suggests a sense of humor or self-irony (lying on a toast), but, at the same time, it signifies self-confidence and the emphasis on appearance. Stylistically, the blog has a simple but showy structure although it is not as flashy as Wavey’s style seems to be.

Fitness on Toast is structurally closer to Wavey’s blog as it presents the self similarly with an image of the self and “About” section already on the front page. In addition, both highlight the number of followers on their page by introducing a fan page on *Facebook* that instantly constructs the popularity of the bloggers as the pages appear to be popular. However, Nilsson presents herself first as a personal trainer, unlike Wavey, who focuses on the aspects of a micro-celebrity. Moreover, Nilsson emphasizes her Scandinavian roots and takes the location (London) into account similarly to Morrison and Underhill in the “About” section.

The structures of these blogs indicate that the writers of *anywherefit* and *Fit chick in the City* focus on presenting fitness in general, and the bloggers of *daveywaveyfitness* and *Fitness on Toast* construct their blogs around personal information. While Morrison and Underhill focus slightly more on fitness in general with a traditional structure, Wavey and Nilsson rely on ways that signify appearance and the active self in the social media. The actual posts together with the structure will give an insight into the construction of the self and the practices of personal branding of the bloggers.

5.2 The Blog Posts

In this section, the blog posts are discussed from the point of view of the strategies of self-branding. All of the bloggers and their self-presentation are discussed separately. The posts may contain a variety of data: in addition to the written part, there may be a video or images included in the posts.

5.2.1 *anywherefit*

Blair Morrison has written four different topics during the chosen time period. The majority of Morrison's titles for his posts are related to the world of CrossFit, and they describe the WOD (Abbreviation for "Workout of the day"): "Stability WOD", and "10 Minute Air Dyne" (January, 2013). One exception is "Go Ride a Bike" (January 6th, 2013) that describes a 15 mile bike ride. As a result of the concentration on a particular sport, the aim of the blogger is to present himself as a CrossFit athlete and most importantly, as a professional in the field. The topics will sound familiar only to a person who does CrossFit, or at least a person who searches for information on the sport. This is why it could be argued that Morrison writes for a particular fitness community, or more specifically, to CrossFit athletes and to a limited audience of competitors.

Morrison writes in an informal style, which is meant to attract the audience. The first post in the year of 2013 is called "Stability WOD". He has a short description at the beginning of the post, which explains a workout done with a couple of his friends on a beach in Aptos, California. The style of writing with appealing adjectives attracts the reader: "some cool overhead drills", "...showing off his brute strength" and "Just because you're sore or away from your voodoo floss doesn't mean you can't do something to progress" (3 Jan, 2013). The quotations are written in slang. In addition, Morrison uses chatty language, which is an obvious characteristic of self-branding. Especially the expressions "voodoo

floss”, “cool”, or “showing off” (3 Jan, 2013) are examples of the informal language in the post which makes the blogger more approachable among the audience.

A major self-branding strategy for Morrison is to be regarded as a fitness professional, but a modest one. The first post also contrasts various characteristics of Morrison, since he wants to be seen as adventurous and playful; on the other hand, he wants to signify determination. He enjoys exercise, which seems to be an essential part of his life and makes him happy. The very first sentence is: “After the CrossFit One World Holiday Invitational last Sunday, I was a little beat up” (3 Jan, 2013). Morrison describes how one of his friends happened to be on the beach for the celebration of New Year and he simply decided to drive to the beach to join him. The relatively modest description continues: “While there we broke out the chains and did some cool overhead drills with a piece of driftwood we found on the sand. Just something light to keep things moving, but it was a ton of fun.” (3 Jan, 2013.) Morrison states that this is not a particularly hard work-out for him but the content of the video and the reassurance give the impression that Morrison is in such a good shape that this is child’s play for him, and in this way, a great physical shape is definitely one of the things he constructs in the post. He also carefully avoids egotism.

The post creates a relaxed atmosphere, which has two significant functions in Morrison’s self-brand. The atmosphere is a way to hide the toughness of the workouts that further constructs the identity of a professional athlete. In addition, Morrison creates a strong sense of telepresence: the post includes a meeting of friends, which signifies everyday-life and feels realistic to the reader. Morrison has added a video to the post so that the audience is also able to get a visual experience of the meeting.

The video of the post is titled “Blair Morrison - Shoulder Stability WOD”, and this could be regarded as the most important element in the post: it presents Morrison’s professionalism, competence, and desirable physical qualities which are evident self-promotional strategies. The video is also an important example of the blogger when he

gives ‘a sneak peek’ to the ‘backstage’ of his life. The video shows an exercise the men put into practice on the sand while holding a very large piece of wood that has two heavy-weight chains hanging from it. The balance and strength of the men are being tested on a difficult surface. Morrison and his friends are able to use their imagination while thinking about exercises. However, at the same time, the workout would be extremely tough for everyone and does not seem like “something light” especially when being “a little beat up” as Morrison describes. Furthermore, the contrast in the video and the rather modest description might turn the whole idea of an unpretentious athlete upside down.

Another point that the audience may consider while reading the post is the equipment and the environment of the exercise. Morrison demonstrates that keeping in shape does not require any fancy equipment or particular setting. He acts as an inspirational person that has a positive attitude towards his active lifestyle. Nevertheless, there is a contrast in the location of a beautiful beach in California and the self-created equipment. The warm, sunny surroundings of the beach are clearly not everyone’s privilege while thinking in a broader, worldwide perspective (after all, Morrison’s blog is called *anywherefit*), although from Morrison’s local perspective, it could act as a self-evident factor for him: as he says, he just “drove out” to the beach to join his friends.

Morrison holds on to the idea of a modest, professional athlete also in his second post by downplaying his exercises that creates the exact opposite impression among the audience. The title of the post is “Go Ride A Bike” (the 6th of January, 2013). The athlete describes the incredible feeling of riding a bike for the first time in a long time, and also recommends the sport to the audience. The authoritative tone of the title does not transfer to the body of the text but Morrison’s way of constructing the identity seems to repeat itself when compared to the first post. Morrison presents the exercise as a way of preparing for a CrossFit event, and furthermore, explains the relatively low level of exertion by writing: “It had been awhile since I've gone for a ride so I was excited for the opportunity, even though 15 miles wasn't a long ride by any stretch”. He even mentions how the ongoing week is

actually a rest week in his training cycle. But, on the contrary, Morrison seems to admit the toughness of the workout when he discusses the bike ride further: “I found myself hoofing it pretty hard up a couple climbs that I hadn't remembered being so arduous. By the time we rolled up to the new gym, our legs were pretty much smoked.” By using the term “smoked”, Morrison wants to highlight the burn in the muscles after the bike ride, but at the same time, remembers to mention the following workout in the gym so that the reader realizes that ‘being smoked’ would not be enough for him. However, the description can be seen as a way to bring the audience closer to the blogger, since even the occasional sport-enthusiasts can actually relate to feelings that Morrison presents by the use of expressions such as ‘being smoked’.

Morrison accentuates the constant progress in life in an effort to fight against dullness in his second post. The overall impression may be concluded in his sentence: “Sometimes a mere change in angle or vantage point can unlock a whole world of visual experience previously unseen” (Jan 6, 2013). In this way, Morrison is able to bring his post into a broader perspective. Even though he practically explains the difference between riding the same route by car and bicycle, he uses this discussion as a basis to the idea that can be attached to any other topic in people’s lives in general. He recommends considering all the things that life has to offer from different perspectives so that a person does not become blind to possibilities.

The following post titled “10 Minute Air Dyne” (the 8th of January, 2013) is an update that does not strictly target the CrossFit audience. The title does not describe the whole content of the post, since this is only a part of Morrison’s workout of the day. Morrison presents Air Dyne which is a piece of equipment that possibly does not sound familiar to everyone. Schwinn is an American brand of exercise equipment, and according to the official website (2014), Air Dyne is an exercise bike that takes advantage of wind resistance. The exponential function means that the harder one pedals, the higher the resistance becomes. Thus, the product is described as a natural way of providing a suitable workout for both a

novice exerciser and a professional athlete. Morrison sees Air Dyne workout as a possibility to present a workout suitable for everyone, or more specifically, regardless of the level of physical condition of person, it is possible to include Air Dyne in a workout.

Morrison's third post has some qualities that remind us of a diary. At the beginning, he makes a simple list of the exercises done during that day, and the reader may instantly see the contents of the post. In addition, the vocabulary and the way of presenting the WOD right at the beginning signify a typical habit of the CrossFit athletes. Although highly attached to CrossFit, the writing also shows that Morrison has a very personal style in the post, since practically all of the posts during these couple of weeks focus on the exercises he has done on that specific day. Morrison transfers each topic into a larger context, which may be regarded as one of his specific features as a blogger. However, this particular post is somewhat more exceptional in this sense, since Morrison describes a great deal of personal aspects in his writing, and mostly, the post is about his overall feelings of the workout.

One of the connections to the first couple of posts is a pride in performance with a moderate approach. Morrison tries to avoid any boasting about his physical performance in the Air Dyne exercise: "... not a huge number (I definitely think 4 miles is possible), but not horrible either". Nevertheless, the last part of the post signifies the construction of a professional athlete: "Tomorrow I'm heading back to Super Training to squat and deadlift at the strongest gym in the west". It becomes clear for the audience again that for instance, the two workout sets in that day are not even close to the "Super Training" sessions. Morrison shows that he is evidently capable of doing more exercise. The mentioning of the strongest gym is a clear statement: Morrison goes to this gym and thus becomes one of the strongest people.

The post on the 10th of January, 2013 is the last one by Morrison during the period studied, and the blogger addresses the post to CrossFit athletes. This particular entry combines a video (posted on *YouTube*) and a written description of the workouts of the day (first one in

the afternoon, the other one in the evening). The written section of the post highlights the special language of CrossFit, which uses a number of abbreviations, terms for special equipment, and names for the training practices: for instance, Morrison explains that his workout of the day is called “Angie”, a particular workout that is put into practice with a partner, and one of the single exercises is called a “GHD situp”. However, some of the separate exercise practices such as “deadlifts” mentioned by Morrison in the post, for instance, would be already familiar for the people who regularly go to the gym, since a majority of the exercises are completed with a barbell and weights that follow some of the basic techniques from gym training.

When in contrast to the use of chatty language which efficiently attracts the audience in the social media, special language by Morrison seems to have its downsides, as well. The constant usage of abbreviations and special language may even create frustration in someone who wants to find out whether CrossFit would be the workout suitable for them, especially people who use English as a foreign language. Furthermore, in the United States it seems to be most common to use abbreviations in communication. As a strategy for Morrison who constructs a personal brand, the use of abbreviations is evidently a way to show professionalism particularly in the context of Crossfit. As the workouts of the day are listed at the beginning of the post, it is possible that especially while considering “the culture of clicking”, the whole contents of the post may be bypassed by a reader who does not understand the workouts. Thus, a potential follower may lose his or her interest in the blog immediately.

The conventional way of writing (the way of being both professional and modest) by Morrison is also present in the post: at first, Morrison describes a somewhat effortless set of workout, and then, he uses the expression “the destroyer of the day” when he refers to the toughest part of the workouts. Morrison writes about the return to “the Super training” session after a week’s break, and introduces the function of “the safety bar” by explaining that the weight splits a little differently in the muscles on the back and neck area than the

weight of a basic barbell: “the safety bar forces you to drive up with your arms more out of the bottom. Tricky enough as is, but then add a box and chains and you're really challenging the nervous system to figure some shit out.” The description constructs the athletic identity through a proof of knowledge about exercises. However, he was able to do only two sets instead of the planned three because of a cramp in the muscles: “Woah mamma is this going to be pain tomorrow”. The utterance about the pain is another example of the humble attitude.

The post includes a video that brands Morrison as a fitness professional. Morrison has not ignored a reader who does not understand some of the terms used in his post, since the video has been dedicated to “the box squats” with the description: “I've attached a video of one of the box squat sets so you can see what I'm talking about. Check it out below.” The duration is only 14 seconds, and the video presents a man, most likely Morrison, who does the exercise by using a safety bar with weights and chains, squats down to a box and literally goes so deep that he is able “to sit” for a second on the box. The video is an effective way of showing the workout, and it also has more functions than a simple demonstration of movement. The video brands the blogger's self, since it reminds us of a personal trainer who teaches the right movements in the gym. In addition, the box squat constitutes an exclusive content for the video, since it is not an average workout method for people in general. In this way, there are many self-promotional strategies that are used through the video. The audience has a notion of the backstage of Morrison's (athletic) life. In addition, the video promotes both pride in performance and appearance. It may even be considered an example of the presentation of intellectual abilities especially through the usage of box, the safety bar, and the chains instead of a basic squat with a barbell and weights.

Morrison seems to constantly remind the reader that although he is getting in a better and better shape all the time, the pain and suffering never ends: this is a strategy to bring the audience closer to the writer. In other words, Morrison does not want to act as a

superhuman and in this way, the audience may relate to him more easily. Morrison states that workouts become even more challenging all the time. There is always a way to add more resistance or create a tougher workout, which is generally one of the major aspects of fitness. By concluding the descriptions of the post, Morrison's style of writing implies exactly the same things. The box squat and its more complex function (in comparison to the basic squat) may have an adverse effect: although Morrison would not be capable of completing all the sets, he is in such a good shape that even more complex and tougher practices are required of him.

In conclusion, Morrison constructs an online identity of a fitness professional. The way in which Morrison includes a manifesto gives him a higher status that marks him as an ultimate fitness guru. The manifesto signifies Morrison's ability to attach his descriptions to a broader perspective, which makes the blog extremely profound as a whole. This also relates to the metaphor created by fitness industry, which connects a good physical condition to an efficient mind and overall enhancement of the self that is discussed by Williams and Bendelow (1998: 74–75). However, both the personal approaches to his workouts and the careful avoidance of egotism (Morrison also admits that the workouts are tough) can be regarded as the practice of revealing the backstage identity. This way, Morrison has managed to combine a variety of self-promotional strategies to the athletic identity, which means an effective formation of the branded self.

5.2.2 Daveywaveyfitness

Davey Wavey's topics cover various fitness-related issues during a relatively short period of time of the two weeks: he raises questions on nutrition, weight loss, gaining muscle, and exercise. The status as a powerful person is visible in the posts that answer questions such as "Can You Build Muscle and Lose Fat at the Same Time?" (4 Jan, 2013). Wavey seems

to regard himself as a professional and also as a person that has all the answers that “the ordinary” people may want to know about topics connected to fitness.

The pace of writing is important for a person who wants to maintain or increase his or her popularity in the social media, and an important aspect in the process of creating a personal brand. During the time period of two weeks at the beginning of the year 2013, Wavey has posted eight different topics altogether. Wavey doubles the number of posts written by Morrison. The comparison implies that Wavey has a great pace of writing and he wants to be a very active social media persona.

The majority of Wavey’s posts have titles that ask a question. Overall, Wavey uses the questions in his titles to imply professionalism: he seems to have all the answers. Only one of the titles does not end with a question mark: “Stop Making Decisions of Someone Who Deserves Less” (1 Jan, 2013). Similarly to Morrison’s post “Go Ride a Bike” (6 Jan, 2013), the title is in imperative, which means that the writer also addresses the audience directly. It could be argued that these titles do not only address the audience, and the imperative in a title is a powerful means of presenting a particular topic. The use of imperative could be viewed from many perspectives: it may be seen as a marker of status (the writer has a higher status than the audience) or his typical, authoritative-like character. But it is not impossible to view the titles as a means of recommendation, either.

The first post titled “Stop Making Decisions of Someone Who Deserves Less” is written on the 1st of January, 2013, and the content is dedicated to the idea of making a fresh start at the beginning of the year, although Wavey does not consider the same thing for himself. Wavey signifies the time for a new mindset and mentality in comparison to the years gone by, but Wavey’s style of writing is extremely general: he does not discuss any personal experiences connected to this issue. While the lack of personal perspective seems to somewhat reduce the effect, there are still some other self-promotional strategies that Wavey uses in the post.

One of the stylistic aspects in the writing is the use of repetition: the expressions “It’s not about” and “It’s about” at the beginning of consecutive sentences for effect suggest that Wavey does not show any traces of hesitation when he discusses the topic. Wavey writes: “It’s not about going to the gym because you hate your body and desperately want to look different. It’s about exercising because you love your body – and you want to honor it with movement and sweat.” The discussion is in line with the description of the blog, since the main message expressed already on the front page by Wavey is “Honor your body”. In addition, the passage shows the use of contrast between the sentences; after Wavey presents ‘a wrong mindset’, he introduces the idea of replacing the attitude with a more positive one which is a stylistic device.

One of the obvious characteristics related to self-branding used by Wavey is addressing the audience directly. In addition to the title that was already discussed, examples such as “...you’re not *supposed* to eat it...”, and “...you want to nourish your body...” can be found throughout the post. Besides, the overall usage of the personal pronoun “you” almost in every sentence is evidently a way to speak to the audience. A picture attached to the post highlights the message even further: “Never settle for less than what you deserve”, which is also the core idea that Wavey presents in the post. Another important characteristic is the real-time topic especially since the post is published on the 1st of January: the post discusses issues that people have a tendency to consider at that specific time of the year. People may decide about losing weight, or someone might want to improve the quality of life by making healthier nutritional decisions.

The second post has many stylistic and structural connections to the previous post although the topic is different. The post by Wavey has been dated already the subsequent day: on the 2nd of January, 2013, Wavey answers the question “Are Energy Chews Good for You?”. The structure of the post is similar to the previous one: first, there is an image that signifies the topic which is followed by Wavey’s writing. The written part constitutes a major part of the post.

While explaining the use of the sport supplements, Wavey is forced to make a distinction between a high-level athlete and the rest of the people who do not need these kinds of products, which is something that might create tension among the audience. Wavey warns about the usage of energy gels and other energy boosts, and states that there is no real function in everyday nutrition. Basically, he says that the only reason to use such products is a competition at an extremely high level. As an example, Wavey mentions “running marathons or biking the Tour de France”. By further explaining the ingredients of the products, he highlights the fact that sugar is “cleverly disguised as organic brown rice syrup, organic dried cane syrup and organic brown rice syrup solids”. In addition, he explains that consumers look at the ingredients and spot individual words like “organic”, which results in a false impression of the product being healthy for everyday consumption. By using a separate paragraph for the expression, Wavey evidently emphasizes the main message of the whole post: “They’re not.”

Wavey’s outspoken mindset may be a conscious decision to construct the personal brand. This is also visible in the distinction between professional athletes and the rest of the people which is made in the post. The distinction becomes even more blatant because of the constant use of imperative. The imperative sentences are consequential, and they are placed at the end of the post: “You must do your homework. Read the label – and know what it means. And don’t judge a product by its cover.” However, Wavey’s thoughts are well argued: he explains the possible misleading names for the ingredients on the label, and he does not attempt to cover all the supplements used by professional athletes (only energy boosts that contain sugar). That way, the reverse side of the possible reaction among the audience may also be a more positive and thankful one for the eye-opening description of these products.

The third post by Wavey (the 4th of January, 2013) constructs the professionalism of the blogger. Wavey answers a reader’s question: “Is it possible to gain muscle while losing fat?”. Wavey begins his answer by presenting a strategy he would use, which focuses on

the two goals one at a time: the first phase is weight loss, and afterwards it would be better to concentrate on muscle building. Wavey presents the strategy as a professional approach to the two goals, and argues that the problematic in doing both at the same time is based on a physiological fact: “In order to lose fat, we know that a calorie deficit is required. That is, fewer calories are taken in than burned. To build muscle, on the other hand, a calorie surplus is required”. In this way, Wavey is able to strengthen his brand by presenting his knowledge on the topic.

After presenting a personal view that could be regarded as the most efficient approach to self-branding, Wavey uses experts to shore up contradictory arguments. The use of the argumentation by experts is also an effective self-promotional strategy. Wavey sets up the arguments about weight loss and muscle-building occurring at the same time by referring to two different studies: one is based on women, called *Regional body composition changes in women after 6 months of periodized physical training* by Nindl et al. (2000), the other focuses on men, titled *Effect of regular physical training on age-associated alteration of body composition in men* by Horber et al. (1996). It is actually a little ironic of Wavey to use the studies as indicators of the opposite view, rather than support personal arguments that were first discussed in the post. Thus, the use of the evident characteristic of self-promotion has an atypical function in the post. Wavey does not feel the need to use the arguments by experts to support personal views. While presenting the professional qualities even more strongly, Wavey claims that his approach is more effective than the one presented through the studies: “It might not be the most efficient process, and it may not produce maximal results, but it happens all the time with typical gym-goers. I hope that helps! Love, Davey Wavey”. The impression left by the last sentences of the post imply that Wavey indirectly suggests for the reader to agree with his personal views; on the other hand, Wavey may also let the readers to decide which option is better for their personal goals.

The third post “Do Overweight People Live Longer?” (the 7th of January, 2013) by Wavey presents an opposite view on the healthy fitness life that challenges the whole position of the fitness guru by questioning the significance of fitness. The blogger presents an interesting idea by explaining some recent findings of overweight (not obese) people living longer than those with “normal” weight. Wavey makes a clear statement in the post: “The study certainly isn’t a free pass to gain some extra weight or to eat an extra scoop of ice cream. Instead, it shows us how complicated the link is between our weight, our health and our longevity”, which is the only argument by Wavey. The post concentrates on quotations from the article *Being Overweight Is Linked to Lower Risk of Mortality – The longest lived among us aren't necessarily those who are of normal weight* by Laura Blue (2013) in *Time Magazine* online. The topic shows that Wavey is confident enough to bring such an issue to the blog, although the guru himself gives advices for a healthier lifestyle.

Wavey takes advantage of the characteristic of self-branding by sharing authentic, up-to-date information in his blog that arouses the interest of the audience. The article by Blue discusses new research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The research practically reviews more than 100 previously published research papers that study the connections between body weight and mortality risk, which include close to three million participants. In this way, the content of the research does not actually present anything new, which is also mentioned by Wavey in his blog. However, the research is published recently in the journal at the time, which makes it worth considering in the blog. Besides, the topic of obesity may create some contradictory reactions in the audience, which is a reason to regard the post as an effective one for arousing interest in the audience.

The fourth post titled “Ready to Lose Weight? 5 Questions to Ask Yourself!” (the 8th of January, 2013) differs greatly from the other posts, since Wavey is not the writer. He gives a chance for a friend to enter his blog: “*Today’s guest post is by Davey Wavey’s good friend and spiritual weight release coach, Diane Petrella. Diane is also one of the contributors to The Davey Wavey Weight Loss Program*”. Although Wavey is not the

actual writer of the post, the content and the fact that Wavey uses another writer are issues worth considering in respect to the formation of his personal brand.

Petrella may have an advantage of being able to do guest-writing in Wavey's blog (a chance to promote herself), but the guest may also have a positive impact on Wavey's personal brand. While it is a typical characteristic of self-promotion to use experts to shore up a blogger's arguments, it is possible to view the writing by a spiritual weight release coach as a similar self-promotional practice. The effect may be even more striking because Petrella is introduced as a very good friend of Wavey. That way, Wavey constructs the self also as a professional. Furthermore, the guest-writing signifies the active self with the help of contacts, which is extremely important in self-promotional practices. As the description at the beginning also shows, the two work together in Wavey's weight loss program: there is a strategy to use contacts to enhance one's business. The content of the post is dedicated to weight-loss, which even further supports the co-operation between the two since the topic is directly related to the program.

Wavey's self-brand also consists of some advice on healthy eating. One of the most common features of Wavey's blog is to use sections for "tips" in the updates. The practice is also present in a post (the 9th of January, 2013), in which Wavey discusses whether white whole wheat bread is healthier than wheat bread. In the last paragraph, Wavey links to one of his previous posts that provides these tips: "When selecting a bread, make sure you read the nutrition label carefully as marketers are notoriously deceptive. For more information, check out my guidelines and tips for buying a healthy bread." In addition, the description by Wavey attempts to show versatility of the self as he gives information on nutrition: he does not only concentrate on muscle building in the blog posts.

The diligent use of linking in the following post (the 11th of January, 2013) can be regarded as one of the practices that support Wavey's personal brand. The post presents the method of pre-exhaustion training, and Wavey seems to use a combination of most of the

characteristics of self-promotion already discussed in his earlier posts. The text incorporates a study conducted by professionals and the promotion of his workout program by using a link at the end of the post. In addition, Wavey addresses the audience by prompting the readers to write comments and personal experiences related to pre-exhaustion method. The original version also includes links (not in function in 2014) to previous posts: the descriptions of other training methods besides pre-exhaustion that concentrate on the effective training of a particular muscle group such as drop sets, negatives, or pyramid sets.

The majority of the content in all of Wavey's posts lacks the personal perspective completely, which is also visible also in the last post titled "Does Whey Protein Make You Lose Weight?" (the 14th of January, 2013). Whey protein is mostly used as a post-workout supplement, but Wavey decides to present another perspective on the function of whey protein by referring to a study by USDA in which obese people had positive effects because of the usage of whey protein supplement. As in all the posts by Wavey, the descriptions do not cover anything from his personal life. In contrast to Morrison's descriptions on the daily life and workouts, for instance, Wavey is strict about keeping his writing to a highly general approach. The positive side is that the writing includes a diverse range of topics connected to fitness.

Overall, Wavey takes advantage of the multiple characteristics of self-branding during these couple of weeks. Although the 'About' -section is dedicated to more personal representation, the posts do not seem to reveal anything from the backstage of Wavey. In contrast to Morrison, Wavey does not describe his personal workouts or does not reveal things from his everyday life. In addition, Wavey has a tendency to rely on facts and the presentation of arguments by different experts. On the contrary, Wavey has a great pace of writing, which is an important aspect of creating a personal brand. The professional approach to fitness is highly similar to Morrison, but, as a whole, Wavey's online identity suffers from the lack of personal perspective in his writing.

Wavey's blog strongly gives evidence to the discourse of healthism discussed by Wright et al. (2006): the status of a professional fitness person provides a powerful set of imperatives, which further makes it possible for the person to state "the ways people should live their lives and construct their identities." Wavey has clearly taken the role of a dominating character that his audience should follow, since he actively addresses his readers by using the imperative in his writing. The authoritative style may also suggest that the blogger considers the self as a possible micro-celebrity, since the notion of the self as a micro-celebrity could be regarded as 'a higher state' of self-branding after a person has formed a distinguishing way to promote a personal brand online as discussed by Senft (quoted in Hartley & al 2013: 346).

5.2.3 *Fit Chick in the City*

Jess Underhill has written a total of seven posts during the two weeks, and in January, 2013, Underhill attempts to address the audience in her first post called "Ignited". Underhill raises questions such as "What ignites you? *Garmin stats? Endorphin highs? Setting a new shiny pr?*" The blogger describes that she is back to blogging from the deserved holiday break, and states further: "One of my goals for 2013 is to spend less time on the internet. I'm guilty of wasting too much time on twitter, facebook and instagram. I vow to spend more time doing more productive things in 2013." For an athlete, it becomes a contradictory practice to sit before the computer and do fitness blogging, since the body is not in a physically active state.

The contrast between blogging and physical exercise is raised by Underhill in her post. By referring to more productive things in the post, it seems that Underhill highlights physical exercise instead of spending time online and presents a conflict between the two practices. As a conclusion, Underhill attempts to show her athletic identity as the most important aspect of the self. Thus, she emphasizes the active self as an athlete, but also refuses to be

viewed as an active person in the social media. It can even be argued that Underhill does not knowingly attempt to form a personal brand or present herself more and more strongly through the blog, and, at the same time, it is undeniable that being passive in the social media may lead to the impression that the person is being active in real life. The fact inversely supports the athletic self of Underhill, which further has a positive impact on her personal brand.

Both the image and the written part of the post support the strategy of presenting “the good self” to the audience. The post includes an image of Underhill and another woman smiling, which is an instance of the so-called “selfie” used throughout the social media. A selfie means that the image is self-taken and may also include other people. The women have their athletic clothes on, and the written part by Underhill reveals that the caption is about an 8-mile run in Central Park with Ashley: “Running without a plan or a garmin in the magical quietness that is winter in Central Park has ignited my love for running. I don’t remember the last time I was in a groove quite like this one.” By using expressions such as “magical quietness” and “ignited”, Underhill appeals to the audience, and in this way, she also takes advantage of the strategy of pride in performance. Not everyone would be able to do an 8-mile run with such a smile on their face, and in this way, it may be concluded that the image functions mainly as the presentation of performance, not the appearance.

Underhill’s self-brand is also constructed with the help of the formation of professionalism. In the following post (the 3rd of January, 2013), she is able to incorporate an upcoming event and highly significant proof of her professionalism in fitness by presenting herself as a coach. The post is practically an advertisement for the audience to join Underhill’s team to train for a marathon. Both beginners and advanced runners are welcomed to join the team lead by Underhill and another coach. The goal is to train for the New Jersey Half/Full Marathon event the following spring. As a whole, the post reminds us of an advertisement, which should be avoided in self-branding. Some examples from the post that signify an advert: “Below are a few details to know before the kick-off event”, “Training with us is

FREE!”, and “Anyone can join us! (even if you’re not training for a half marathon or are training for another spring race)”. Even though there are connections to an advertisement, Underhill effectively constructs the self as a fitness professional by presenting herself as a coach for runners.

Underhill combines both personal and general approaches to fitness in her writing. An example of the combination is the third post titled “Say it, Do it! {firsts}” (6th of January 2013). The personal effect is most visible in the section that shows a list of the workouts Underhill promised to do during the following week:

Here are the workouts I’m committed to this week:

- Monday: easy spin
- Tuesday: speedwork & strength
- Wednesday: off
- Thursday: 5 miles easy
- Friday: strength & soul cycle
- Saturday: 10 miles at easy pace
- Sunday: core & maybe an easy run

Underhill presents a method of “SIDI” which practically means that when a person promises to do particular workouts during the following week and “says them out loud” in a blog, it is easier to stay committed to the plan. Thus, Underhill gives an opportunity for the audience to use the method and acts as an inspiration for the people to exercise as planned during the whole week. The post by Underhill is obviously a good example of self-branding. The blogger does not only address the audience directly but also engages them physically and mentally: she does not only recommend to them to do things in a certain way which may only create resistance among the audience. Underhill challenges the readers to post their own training plan so that she is able to have a look at it, which also signifies the authoritative character of the writer.

The construction of professionalism continues when Underhill makes a statement about the importance of having physically easier training periods, so that the body and mind are able

to focus again on more intensive workouts. In addition to the SIDI, Underhill discusses the issue of having different training periods throughout the year: “Regardless, one’s fitness level shouldn’t be amazing when starting a new training period. If you always train at the same intensity level all the time, you’ll never fully realize your potential. Even the pros have off seasons and down time.” The issue relates to the fact that the body will not be receptive to frequent, routine workouts: the body also needs a change of stimulation to progress.

Underhill uses the characteristic of the opposite view of comparing “the good self” to “bad others”. She discusses January as a training season: “Excitement, hope and ambition lurk around every corner of the gym this time of year” has been contrasted to the more personal view “The first few weeks of training suck in my opinion. The excitement is there, but the fitness level doesn’t quite match the level of excitement.” Underhill puts herself in the position of the beginner in fitness: there is the excitement, but the fact that one must push the limits in a tough workout makes it more difficult to maintain the enthusiastic attitude. It is a strategy that brings her writing closer to the audience: Underhill has times in her life when physical exercise does not only create a positive effect. Besides, she does not attempt to present the self as a person who is physically in an extremely good condition, thus, in other words, she does not act as superior to the audience.

Underhill takes into account the readers who may be beginners in physical exercise. On the 8th of January, 2013, Underhill posts “Soundtrack of My Workout: The Spark of the Resolutioners”. The post also includes a self-taken picture (‘selfie’), photographed through the mirror of a gym, which reveals the whole figure of Underhill. Although the title of the post may be connected to music, the blogger focuses on the new year “resolutioners” who are described as people who always take over the gym at the beginning of the year. Underhill writes that the phenomenon is considered very irritating among year-round athletes: “Many of us year-round exercisers/athletes/fitness enthusiasts/exercise endorphin addicts (whatever it is we call ourselves) easily get annoyed by these people taking up our

space in the our house of sweat”. However, she attempts to turn the issue into a more positive phenomenon by talking about the excited atmosphere created by the new trainers: “... I like the “January Joiners” and all of their resolutions. They add a fresh buzz of excitement to the gym that gets lost at other times of the year.” By praising the “January Joiners”, Underhill evidently takes advantage of the characteristic of comparing ‘the good self’ to ‘bad others’. She simply states that these new people in the gym do not irritate her, but other athletic people usually would find them extremely annoying. The irritation may even get to the point where “January Joiners” may be regarded as people who do not deserve to be in the gym, or at least they are considered ‘the underdogs’ among all-year-round exercisers.

Another self-branding practice in the post is attached to the image of Underhill. In the image, the blogger seems to be alone in the workout studio. In this way, the image does not directly support the main message of being respectful towards “January Joiners”. However, Underhill has a smile on her face, and her figure as a whole is revealed to the audience. The function is not only to present desirable physical characteristics, but the image is also a way to increase the presentation of the athletic self. The reason to argue that the environment of the fitness studio is even more important than the presentation of the body is based on the fact that the background takes over a great deal of space in the image.

Underhill also presents her professionalism by posting a video (the 10th of January, 2013). She discusses her experiences on restrictive physical issues that she has had in the past. The post includes a video on *YouTube* titled “Hip Flexor Stretch for Runners”, in which Underhill is together with her physical therapist and owner of Finish Line Physical Therapy, Michael Conlon. They demonstrate how the traditional hip stretch may be varied to get better results from stretching. The video has been shot in a gym, and the major goal is to give tips especially for runners although the stretches are presented as important for other athletes.

Underhill mainly promotes the services of Finish Line Physical Therapy, and the advertisement does not affect her self-promotional strategies in a negative way. She gives a chance for the audience to win a gift card (valued at \$300): “To Enter: Leave a comment telling me which service you’d most like to try at FLPT and follow me on instagram (if you aren’t already)”. As a result, Underhill manages to present expert advice that is a strategy to construct her self-brand. Furthermore, the blogger shows co-operation with a company that may be regarded as a signifier of a professional athlete, and does not even forget to incorporate her *Instagram* -account to the post by attempting to gather more followers also to this social media site.

The following post titled “Say it, Do it! {1 Week Down, 15 To Go}” (the 13th of January, 2013) is similar to one of the previous posts (6 Jan, 2013) that first presented the SIDI method, since Underhill addresses the audience directly by writing about her experiences about the SIDI. The blogger describes: “I didn’t do every workout on the day I said I would do it this past week, but I did manage to get every workout in”. The description proves that she succeeds in the challenge. Underhill is also able to show consistency in her writing by posting two topics on the SIDI during these two weeks: the consistency may engage more readers and get them to join the method. In addition, Underhill accentuates the physical challenges connected to her workouts: “Tuesday night I did my first speed session since October and it was challenging to say the least. I’m excited to work hard the next few weeks so that I can start feeling strong and fast.” The typical point of view of a professional athlete becomes visible for the audience: excitement about future workouts that are considered extremely difficult and hard.

On January 15th, 2013, Underhill writes about the issue of giving up, which supports the identity of a professional athlete. She starts the post titled “Truth: I Almost Quit” by quoting Vince Lombardi: “It’s not whether you get knocked down; it’s whether you get up.” When she describes the personal approach to the topic, Underhill also talks about the moment after a marathon run when she felt the most that giving up is the only choice: “An

hour after the race, I had the classic “quitter’s syndrome”. The “*I’m never going to do this*” and the “*maybe it’s just not meant to be’s*” were flowing.” The image in the post is contradictory to the description, since it presents six women with smiling faces when they hold a New York City marathon flag. The other image, however, is related to the topic in an interesting way since it has instant connections to Goffman’s (1990) theory on the self-presentation in everyday life: in the image, the text “In the theater of life, you too will have your moment” has been written with a piece of chalk on a road covered with blacktop. Therefore, it may even be stated that the roles people play on the stage everyday are not always equally successful, which is an important aspect to consider from the perspective of a competitive athlete: he or she has to be able to turn a possible disappointment into a positive attitude in order to continue the training seasons. Underhill is able to turn the moment of desperation into a more positive attitude in the end: “I am not a quitter and I will not give up.”

Overall, Underhill shares some similarities especially with Morrison as a blogger, but she is also able to create an online identity by using distinctive features. Both Morrison and Underhill have a more personal approach to the posts: they have listed some of the daily workouts and added a description of their feelings about the exercises. The bloggers also present the self by sharing images and videos, and they have highlighted the social aspect by mentioning friends that have been involved in the workouts. In this way, their self-promotional practices are highly equivalent to each other. However, Underhill also connects with Wavey in the sense of showing the active self throughout the social media. As a distinguishing aspect on blogging, Underhill has a connection to chick-lit, which is a way to target a group of women followers. Furthermore, she manages to engage her readers significantly for instance by introducing the SIDI method. This method may be regarded as one of her strongest strategies in her creation of the personal brand, since it is an instance of using multiple self-promotional strategies at the same time.

5.2.4 *Fitness on Toast*

Faya Nilsson, the blogger of *Fitness on Toast*, has written eight posts during the two weeks (similarly to Wavey). Nilsson has incorporated a diary and a professional approach in her topics: an example from a slightly more personal post is “MY UBER-MUESLI !!!” (the 1st of January, 2013) and a relatively general fitness topic “NATURES PROTEIN...” (the 6th of January, 2013). The majority is based on general information about fitness-related topics. The distinguishing use of caps lock and exclamation marks in the titles is worth noticing, since it may create more visibility and attention among the audience who uses the Internet searches. Nilsson is practically the only one from the four bloggers who takes advantage of this stylistic aspect in her blog. Besides, the titles seem to suggest playfulness, and although the style is quite obtrusive, the titles do not intimidate the reader.

The first post titled “MY UBER-MUESLI !!!” (1 Jan, 2013) creates an impression of a creative and energetic blogger. The post contains a healthy recipe that the readers may want to add to their breakfast, and Nilsson presents the recipe as her own creation. She gives a variety of reasons that support the healthy aspect of the muesli: “This is my idea of a healthy start to any day; tasty custom ‘super-muesli’, overflowing with essential vitamins, minerals, and energy sources for anything the world can throw at you!” There are 9 ingredients altogether, and Nilsson presents the list that includes all the healthy points of view. For instance, the first one in the list: “1) Whole rolled organic porridge oats - complex carbs, slow-release energy throughout the morning”. Both the large image of the muesli and the list of health effects is a powerful means of promoting the recipe.

The combination of images and language reminds us of advertisements. Nilsson tempts the readers to try her recipe with images in which the muesli looks tasteful and, besides, she uses a variety of effective word choices also towards the end of the post:

Each 150g serving of this uber-muesli, excluding milk and blueberries, contains c. 550 good calories for an energetic start to the day, just 4 grams of saturated fat (0

transfats), 45g of carbs (of which only 6g are sugars), 22g of protein, and 10% of your daily iron intake! With added benefits like healthier skin, better circulation and heart function, lower cholesterol, it is surely the best way to start the day! Enjoy x

The post supports her personal brand, since the mix of ingredients is Nilsson's idea: one of the distinguishable self-promotional strategies is to show creative characteristics of the self. Furthermore, as a fitness professional Nilsson has managed to take the nutrition into account, which is regarded as one of the relevant topics in the field of fitness. In this way, the creative self is visible in an essential topic for a fitness blogger.

Nilsson emphasizes the professionalism and her knowledge in the post published on the 3rd of January, 2013. Nilsson's post is titled "ALCOHOL VS. FITNESS...", which covers the topic of alcohol consumption from all points of view that are important in a fit lifestyle: negative impacts on nutrition, exercise, and recovery. Nilsson's construction of the post is extremely similar to the previous one, since it presents facts about calorie intake. The post is also divided into three different sections (the list in the previous post). Furthermore, Nilsson has a tendency to dramatize her points in her presentation by using a bolded font for the effect: It **decreases strength, dehydrates** (damaging to kidneys), **exhausts the body** (impairs liver function, as it metabolises alcohol at the expense of glycogen), **disturbs sleep** (crucial for muscle recovery), **slows down reaction time, disrupts the body's balance...** Nilsson does not present any of her arguments by quoting experts or any other work related to the topic. Nevertheless, she is able to take advantage of the strategy of addressing the audience directly: "...try to avoid the hangover fry-up – you don't need the calories!!!" The utterance also implies the authority of a professional.

In addition to addressing her readers for several times, Nilsson uses the strategy of comparing 'the good self' to 'bad others', although it is done in an indirect manner. Nilsson first discusses red wine as a healthy alcohol drink, if one or two glasses a day are consumed: "make it red wine as a glass or two a day has been shown to decrease the risk of

stroke, heart attack and cancer (elevates good cholesterol, lowers the bad cholesterol, rich in polyphenol antioxidants for cell health)” After she states the good qualities of red wine, Nilsson continues: “But the emphasis is on “one or two glasses, only”! If red wine isn’t your cup of tea (like me)...” Therefore, the writing seems to signify ‘the good self’ (she drinks red wine) in contrast ‘to bad others’ (who may drink too much red wine or may want to drink something else instead).

The post “HIDE UNDER A HAT!!!” (the 4th of January, 2013) also addresses the readers. Nilsson discusses the advantages of wearing a cap and begins the post by asking questions: “No time to shower after a workout? Need to pick up something at the supermarket? Feel like hiding? Caps are cute and perfect for hiding, and I find the block black and white ones are great as they go with everything in my training wardrobe!” In this way, the blogger wants the reader to identify with the situation after an exercise.

A major strategy of the blogger is to present desirable physical characteristics. The post has a number of images of Nilsson wearing a cap and basically ‘hiding’ from the audience; or at least, she is able to avoid eye contact with the camera. That way, there is a dichotomy in the post: Nilsson writes about hiding, but at the same time, she has posted a number of images of herself. Nilsson does not only make statements about the advantages of wearing a cap but she also talks about fitness fashion -related issues: “It’s not a catwalk but you *are* allowed to look good at the gym, and dedicated training gear can be designed to enhance your performance (e.g. oxygenating, breathable fabrics etc.)!” She also finds the aspect of wearing fashionable and functional clothes in the gym as a thing that encourages people to go to the gym more often.

Even though Nilsson presents fitness fashion as a topic that is tightly attached to performance, it is evident that the topic has significance especially in respect to appearance. The images in the post support a stronger sense of the importance of appearance in the gym: she has uploaded eight large images to the post altogether and she is in six of them,

wearing a white sports cap. The images are taken while she is in relaxed positions, and, in this way, she is not active when she presents the cap (and obviously, herself at the same time), which even further signifies the appearance over performance. That way as a whole, the post strongly relates to the theory by Williams and Bendelow (1998), who present both fashion and fitness industries as the main sources in the construction of the norms of the fit body. Furthermore, the blog post serves as a way to argue that the two industries continue to shape the norm while they seem to be highly attached to one another among fitness professionals.

Nilsson shares her knowledge and shows professionalism in the following post (the 6th of January, 2013) that is titled “NATURES PROTEIN...”, since the blogger writes about a nutritional topic. She presents quinoa, and describes it as “...the ultimate ingredient to complement your training regime, and a healthy lifestyle.” The nutritional facts serve as a proof of knowledge: “Quinoa is a seed which provides all 9 essential amino acids (a complete protein – great for veggies), whilst being gluten-free, cholesterol-free, very low sodium, and it’s almost always organic. My favourite part is that it only takes about 10-15 minutes to cook it!” In addition, she manages to address the audience directly and continues to use a style of writing that is similar to the language used in advertisements. She highlights the effortlessness of cooking quinoa: “To cook quinoa, just treat it like rice – cover it with water or vegetable broth and boil until soft, that’s about 10 – 15 minutes”. As a result of the post, Nilsson further proves her knowledge in nutritional issues.

After concentrating on nutrition and fashion, Nilsson covers the topic related to exercise by presenting “skipping”, or in other words, jump rope. The topic gives an opportunity to brand the self effectively. “SKIPPING – NOT JUST FOR GIRLS !!!” is the title of the post by Nilsson on the 8th of January, 2013. Already the beginning of the post includes a variety of self-branding strategies, since it contains an image of Nilsson and the text: “WHY TO SKIP? Skipping (or ‘jump rope’ in America) is a fantastic way to get fit! 20 minutes of intense skipping can burn 4-500 calories, not to mention the thermogenic after-effects that

keep you burning calories all day!” The image is an evident instance of using the strategy of presenting desirable physical qualities, since Nilsson looks healthy, athletic, and happy while jumping rope. As a result, Nilsson is able to combine a variety of her common self-branding strategies in this exercise -related post.

The typical reassurance of Nilsson is present in the post, which brands her as a fitness professional: “It improves footwork, speed, coordination, stamina, agility, and it strengthens the muscles in your legs as well as your abdominal, back, chest, arms and shoulders muscles.” She manages to give a variety of reasons for the audience to practically do as she says. Besides, she is able to reason the exercise both in relation to physical fitness and performance by listing the improvements in both physical condition and appearance. The audience may not instantly think that jump rope would improve the muscles in the upper body, for instance, and in this way, she is able to extend her knowledge by presenting such a detailed post about a single exercise.

In addition to these self-promotional strategies, Nilsson is able to make herself a superior in relation to the readers since she seems to have such an extended amount of information concerning the jump rope. Nilsson has divided the post into four different sections: “WHY TO SKIP?”, “HOW TO SKIP?”, “WHERE TO SKIP?”, and “WHAT ROPE TO GET?” Furthermore, she considers the beginners of jump rope in the section in which she describes the technique, and she seems to regard herself as a more advanced jumper: she lists a variety of jump ropes that are designed for different purposes and even presents a personal favorite.

The following post also reminds us of an advertisement. “GO COCO-NUTS !!!” (the 13th of January, 2013) includes another healthy nutritional topic: “This recipe for my super-nutritious Asian Coconut Broth is meant to prove that Asian food can not only be incredibly full on flavour, but can also be very healthy”. As Nilsson also describes in her own words that the post is meant to prove something for the audience, the style of

representation stays truthful to Nilsson's writing. In connection to advertisements, the post includes images that present delicious food, and, at the same time, Nilsson highlights the healthiness of the food in the written part. She also includes a full recipe in the post.

The last two posts in the time period studied may be the most important ones for Nilsson's presentation of desirable physical characteristics. Both posts include a variety of images of the blogger, and the topics show the active self in respect to physical condition which is another extremely relevant aspect shown in the posts. The first one of the two is titled "FEELING STRETCHED ????" (the 12th of January, 2013) and as the title already suggests, the topic is stretching. Nilsson begins the post by giving reasons for stretching. At the same time, she accentuates the importance in relation to other physical exercises with examples such as an improvement in flexibility and a reduced risk of injury. Nilsson does not explain the actual stretches, but she has a variety of images that show all the stretches that are recommended for the audience: "Stretch safe, here are some pics of me having a stretch! Faya x". All of the images are black and white, large in size, and they present Nilsson as a neat and stylish athletic woman.

It may be argued that the last post of Nilsson is the most significant one of the eight posts, since it contains an extensive use of all the strategies of self-branding that have already been discussed in her previous posts. The post is titled "DOES MY TUM LOOK BIG IN THIS ????" (the 15th of January, 2013). The active athletic self is most visible both in the images and the description of the workout in the post. The first element is an image of Nilsson working out the abdominals, followed by a text: "Ab workout by the pond at Regent's Park – throw on a hoodie, no excuses and no membership required!" For the first time, Nilsson also presents the attitude of "no excuses" which is typically present in the world of fitness. In addition, she emphasizes the importance of appearance in the post: "There are of course health benefits to training the abdominal area (reduces risk of lower back pain, promotes improved posture etc.), but when it comes to 'abs', health seems secondary to cosmetics!" In this way, there is a direct connection to the structurally

constructed norms of the fit body: a flat stomach which is gained through exercise. For the first time in the time period, Nilsson also admits that the health benefits are not always considered the most relevant issue: “Exercises can improve the shape and bulk of the muscles, but they won’t show unless the fat layer goes first. To do that, above all, engage and work the transversus abdominal...” In all of the previous posts, Nilsson has a tendency to list the health factors, and although they are also found in this post, she has drastically limited the habit of making lists.

Nilsson is able to use multiple different strategies in the post. She presents the importance of ‘giving it all’ with this exercise, which brings her closer to the role of a personal trainer: “Maximum effort for each exercise to failure, then move on to the next – when completed all of the below, go for a light jog (increase calorie burn). That is one set. Repeat x 3 or until you give up!” That way the blogger also addresses the audience directly. In addition, she presents desirable physical characteristics by posting nine flattering images of the self when she does the exercises for her abdominals. The images also imply professionalism, since they show that the blogger is in a great shape.

As a general aspect, Nilsson shares the creativity of the self with Morrison. Nilsson presents the recipes as her own creation, whereas Morrison focuses on the exceptionally fulfilled workouts. When in contrast to all of the bloggers, Nilsson has been able to cover most versatile topics during the two weeks: nutrition, sport fashion, multiple exercises (stretching, skipping, and the abdominals -workout). She has a tendency to dramatize the facts in her writing, and in this way, she addresses her readers most strongly through the posts, although the characteristic is visible in all of the blogs. The professionalism of Nilsson is also a significant element in her blog: above all, the blogger presents herself as a personal trainer. In addition, Nilsson uses large images that show the desirable physical characteristics. The images can be said to have the most significance to the content when in contrast to all of the bloggers.

Nilsson is one of the most significant bloggers to consider from the perspective of the socially constructed norm of the fit body, since the blogger strongly connects with the norm in multiple ways. As the norm partly has its origins in the fashion industry, Nilsson is an instance of a person who participates in the construction of the norm: the posts contain a variety of large images that present a slim and athletic body, fashionable clothes, stylish appearance, and flawless face. Although one of the major functions is to show the pride in performance, the images also clearly reveal the pride in appearance.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In the thesis, four fitness blogs were analyzed from the perspective of the strategies of self-branding. The blogs discussed in the thesis were *anywherefit* (Blair Morrison), *Daveywaveyfitness* (Davey Wavey) *Fit Chick in the City* (Jess Underhill), and *Fitness on Toast* (Faya Nilsson). The posts were limited to the first couple of weeks of January, 2013, and there were 27 separate posts altogether written during the time period. While a self-brand is formed through both the practical self-promotional strategies and typical characteristics of online representation, it is required that the blogger considers the self, the identity, as a part of the brand. In this way, the theoretical perspectives presented were highly connected to socially constructed identity and, as fitness bloggers the writers inevitably became involved in the norms of the fit body.

A blog belongs to the group of sites that forms the social media, and the reason to consider blogs from the perspective of self-branding is explained through the different aspects of social media sites: self-disclosure is one of the most important features in blogs when in comparison to other social media sites, which is relevant in the formation of a personal brand. In addition, blogging as a practice was defined, so that both the structure and the content were included in the online representation.

When the structures of the four blogs were analyzed, both the personal information and the approach to fitness in general were discussed. The elements that constructed the blogs for these four writers presented similarities between *anywherefit* and *Fit chick in the City* and, on the other hand, between *Daveywaveyfitness* and *Fitness on Toast*. The bloggers Morrison (*anywherefit*) and Underhill (*Fit chick in the city*) focused slightly more on fitness in general by using a simple structure for the blog, while Wavey (*Daveywaveyfitness*) and Nilsson (*Fitness on Toast*) relied more on issues connected to appearance and the representation of the active self in the social media. Nevertheless, all of the writers highlighted the professional approach to fitness and blogging in different ways.

The posts that were written during the limited time period and the structure constructed the analysis on the practices of personal branding. While the time period was extremely limited and it is possible to make further research by choosing a longer period of time, the analysis showed both some similar patterns of self-branding and also some different perspectives towards fitness blogging. In general, the blogs showed that the practice of blogging enables various different possibilities to take advantage of the strategies of self-branding.

The most important aspect similar to all of the blogs was the presentation of the self as a fitness professional. It signifies Castells' (2009: 7) argument on an identity factor that becomes at least momentarily the most important self-definition. In the context of fitness blogs, the writers may highlight the athletic self even more than they would if they would be "on the stage of real life" as Goffman (1990) visualized. All of the writers, although specified in a particular field of fitness, created an impression of an individual who has an extensive knowledge of fitness: Nilsson is a personal trainer, Wavey is presented as a fitness guru, Underhill is a coach for marathon runners, and Morrison is a successful CrossFit athlete and a personal trainer. All of the writers showed the physically active self. The sections that included "tips" especially in Wavey's, Nilsson's, and Underhill's blogs were also a way to present the self as a fitness professional.

The analysis of posts also showed some other similarities and contrasts between the blogs. Each blogger used the strategy of addressing the audience directly in various contexts, which may imply the attitude connected to athletes: training involves hard work and an authoritative voice of a coach. Besides the resemblance to structural aspects, Underhill and Morrison shared some other self-branding strategies. The majority of the content in the posts provided a "behind the scenes" view into the blogger's "backstage", which is a part of the practice of ingratiation. Both also described daily workouts, which gave a sense of a diary. Morrison, however, managed to bring his ideas always into a broader perspective by using a style that contained 'a manifesto'. In connection to the personal aspect, Wavey especially had a more distant voice in the posts although the front page and the layout may

be considered more personal. The structurally different pair of Underhill and Wavey used experts to give more authenticity to their arguments. In Wavey's case, it was contradictory that some of the facts by the experts actually supported the opposite view.

The characteristic of presenting desirable physical qualities was present in all of the blogs. Wavey used images of himself only in the front page of his blog, but all the other writers included images of themselves in the posts. Morrison and Underhill both had a video in which they demonstrated their exercises. In this way, the two bloggers had a tendency to mainly show the pride in performance, since they have connected the videos and the images to these particular workouts. Nilsson also posted images about the abdominals workout, but, in contrast, she also included images for instance when she presents sports fashion. That is the reason to argue that Nilsson is most strongly involved in the socially constructed norm that has its origins both in the fashion and the fitness industry. She gives the most stylish and neat impression with her images that reveal the slim and athletic body. In addition, they are larger in size than the other bloggers' images.

Underhill highlighted her fitness professionalism, but she is also able to bring herself closer to the audience and fitness beginners by talking about issues she has experienced in the world of fitness, such as giving up. She managed not only to address the audience but also to engage them with the SIDI method, which is one of her strongest strategies in the posts. She was able to put the self in the position of others by presenting positive view on beginners, which may increase her popularity as a blogger.

Wavey's blog constructed fame throughout the social media. Wavey may want to consider the self as a possible micro-celebrity, since the notion of the self as a micro-celebrity could be regarded as 'a higher state' of self-branding after a person has formed a distinguishing way to promote a personal brand online. Wavey has clearly taken the role of a dominating character that his audience should follow, since he uses the authoritative voice constantly in his writing. Furthermore, Wavey's blog has a connection to the discourse of healthism

discussed by Wright et al. (2006): the status of a professional fitness person provides a powerful set of imperatives, and Wavey clearly took advantage of the status.

Morrison could be stated to have an effective formation of the branded self. He has managed to combine both a variety of self-promotional strategies to the athletic identity, which is also revealed through the strategy of “putting the backstage to the front”. Most importantly, Morrison managed to present his ideas in a broader perspective that constructed a profound image of him as a fitness professional, and it further marks him as a person who does a manifesto. Morrison is able to show that fitness is an all-encompassing state of well-being, which is at the core of the idea of fitness bloggers who present the athletic self in an online environment.

The personal brands that are constructed by these four bloggers signify a phenomenon: the discourse of healthism has been extended to fitness blogging. While it is discussed in the thesis that the discourse has partly taken over the fashion and the fitness industries (Williams & Bendelow 1998), fitness has also become a promotional phenomenon in the social media today. Fitness blogging gives an opportunity for anyone to brand the self as a professional, and, in this way, there is a chance to become a successful persona through the social media. Besides, it becomes essential for a fitness professional to be able to promote a fit body in an online environment as it is a way to reach for a large number of potential followers.

Although an online identity performance offers a way to limit the disclosure of information so that the audience is not able to know all the details of a social media person (as discussed by Wood & Smith 2005: 59), an effective use of various self-promotional strategies may create an extremely convincing online identity and character. As a result of self-branding, anyone is able to take advantage of the possibilities that online communication offers: one may simply leave out the details of their lives that they do not wish the audience to know and focus on the construction of the self as a professional.

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