

Utrecht University

Master Thesis

# The Stories of Our Lives

Online identity performance  
and construction on  
Snapchat

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## Abstract

The relatively new social media application Snapchat allows users to take pictures and videos of themselves that disappear after a short set of time. Compared to other popular social platforms, this ephemerality makes Snapchat an interesting new player on the field of social media. In this thesis, an investigation on how online identities are constructed on Snapchat is performed through interviews with a sample of users. Attention is paid to Snapchat's unique affordances and design, as well as previous research on identity performance and ephemerality on Snapchat. In the interviews, it is found that users perform different identities for different curated audiences. This makes Snapchat a new phenomenon introducing a more mundane, day-to-day form of communication, as well as a platform where people hold true to more traditional social media values.

## Introduction and research question

Snapchat is a relatively new player on the field of social media. The application was founded in 2011<sup>1</sup> by Stanford students and has quickly risen to popularity, now being the 17<sup>th</sup> most used social platform, currently counting 255 million users (April 2018).<sup>2</sup> Snapchat has distinguished itself by being one of the first applications to make use of a "story", a part of the profile on which pictures and videos can be uploaded that will only be shown chronologically and for the limited time of 24 hours. Currently, social media platforms that previously only allowed static posts that would stay on the profile forever have now also adopted the "story" format, examples being Facebook and Instagram.

Snapchat has distinguished itself through these stories, but also through the platform's high focus on ephemerality. This means that the pictures, videos and chats sent through Snapchat automatically disappear after a short, previously established time. These two main design features have made Snapchat a different platform than social media that only (or until recently) allows static posts and updates.

Another important aspect of Snapchat is that it can be solely used on a mobile device. By only allowing updates from a device that easily fits into a pocket or bag underlines the ability to take photos and videos from any location the user might find themselves. Snapchat facilitates a sharing practice that is both in-the-moment and momentary, which Bayer et al compare to the practice of "context sharing", an idea found through research by Bentley and Metcalf.<sup>34</sup> This is the idea of sharing one's context with others, such as where they are or what they are doing while using the app. The focus in the application lies on sharing every day moments instead of posting highlights every so often, like other social media platforms suggest. By sharing different content than is posted on other social media, this could also mean that there is a difference in the way online identities are constructed and built on Snapchat.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Molloy, "Who Owns Snapchat And When Was It Created?", *The Telegraph*, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/owns-snapchat-created/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Most Popular Social Networks Worldwide As Of April 2018, Ranked By Number Of Active Users (In Millions)", *Statista*, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph B. Bayer et al., "Sharing The Small Moments: Ephemeral Social Interaction On Snapchat", *Information, Communication & Society* 19, no. 7 (2015): 956-977, doi:10.1080/1369118X.2015.1084349.

<sup>4</sup> Frank R. Bentley and Crysta J. Metcalf, "Location And Activity Sharing In Everyday Mobile Communication", *ACM Digital Library*, 2008, <http://dl.acm.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/citation.cfm?id=1358702>.

This relatively new and different social media platform has sparked the interest of scholars. To research how Snapchat fits into the broad spectrum of social media, this thesis will look at Snapchat's unique affordances and how users perform their online identities on the app. These findings will be able to better help understand how Snapchat distinguishes itself from other social media and give some insight into online identity construction on social media platforms in general. To perform this research, a survey will be sent to a sample of Snapchat users asking quantitative and qualitative questions about the use and the content shared on Snapchat.

To guide the research, the research question "how does the use of Snapchat by a sample of Snapchat users to create an online image of themselves reflect on online identity performance on social media" will be a red thread throughout this thesis.

To help answer this question, there are two sub questions helping to gradually compose an answer.

The first sub question, "what perceivable affordances can be used to create an image?" will be used to find an answer to what affordances Snapchat has built into its design to allow users to perform their identity. The findings of this question will help shape the online survey as it will be more clear about what features of Snapchat to ask the sample of users.

The second sub question, "how does a sample of Snapchat users experience performing their online identity through Snapchat?" will make use of the online survey to ask qualitative questions to Snapchat users on the reason they use Snapchat, the content they share, the audience they perform for and the value of affordances.

Analysing Snapchat's affordances and qualitative survey data combined will together provide information on the use of Snapchat, that can then be embedded in previous research on online identity performance on social media. When this is done successfully, an answer to the research question will have been found.

## Academic relevance

In a previous research by Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin, it was found that identities constructed in an online social environment that correspond with offline identities often differ from identities in an anonymous online environment.<sup>5</sup> This entails that identities on for example Facebook are constructed differently, because the people the users are friends with on the platform are often also acquaintances in their offline lives. They recognise a form of social control, where users feel obliged to make their online identity correspondent with their already known offline identities. This research recognises an interesting phenomenon of online identity construction on social media and a correlation between offline and online identities, and a framework this thesis will be further grounded in.

However, Stoycheff et al<sup>6</sup> discuss how recently, the social media studies have shown a clear preference towards studying Facebook. They have acknowledged that in 2014 over 60% of all research was on Facebook, even though more (younger) users are finding themselves drawn to other social media like Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat. In their investigation,

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<sup>5</sup> Shanyang Zhao, Sherri Grasmuck and Jason Martin, "Identity Construction On Facebook: Digital Empowerment In Anchored Relationships", *Computers In Human Behaviour* 24, no. 5 (2008): 1816-1836, doi:10.1016/j.chb.2008.02.012.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Stoycheff et al., "What Have We Learned About Social Media By Studying Facebook? A Decade In Review", *New Media & Society* 19, no. 6 (2017): 968–980, doi:10.1177/1461444817695745.

studies featuring newer brands as Snapchat were completely absent. Even though previous researches on Snapchat do exist, they often surround a subject Snapchat has become notorious for: sexting (Nicole Poltash, 2013<sup>7</sup>; Utz et al, 2015<sup>8</sup>). Other researches focus on socio-technical aspects of the application, such as the ephemerality of messages (Soffer, 2016)<sup>9</sup> or the interaction between Snapchat users (Bayer et al, 2015).<sup>10</sup> No studies on how online identities are constructed on Snapchat could be found.

A lacuna or shortage in previous research is a reason to look into a subject, but does not necessarily validate the importance of an investigation. This research will therefore seek to contribute to an overarching research field of how identities are constructed on online social media. Qualitative insights through interviews with Snapchat users might help shed a bit more light on how Snapchat users and social media users in general try to portray their offline identities online. Even though it is impossible to measure statistical facts, qualitative data can be added to the debate on how the user shapes themselves on social media and how much social media shapes the user. Thereby, the research adds to a larger discourse on the development of social media. As the research question is answered, it reflects back on previous research on online identity construction on social media and the correlation between offline and online identities. Earlier theories on the use of Snapchat and ephemeral messaging such as the debate on creating an "ideal self" online versus the idea that ephemeral messaging allows for more mundane and less staged communication will be tested through this thesis. Findings will also contribute to the discourse around front stage and back stage performance, which can possibly take new shapes through Snapchat.

In general, social media are fast-developing concepts that scholars must continuously try to understand, research and try to fit into a larger discourse of online media. Having accumulated more than 191 million daily users, it cannot be denied that Snapchat is considered a relevant social network in current times.<sup>11</sup> Because of its high focus on mobility, the daily sharing of content, and ephemerality, it could be argued that Snapchat as a social application differs remarkably from other static social media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Looking at the bigger picture of the development of social media, Snapchat may have introduced a new format for social media and this thesis might help lay a part of the foundation for future research.

## Theoretical framework

### Online and offline identities

With the rise of the use of social media and the conflict between offline and online environments, research surrounding the correlation between offline and online identities has also increased. Digital expressions of the self are becoming increasingly more important as people use online social media more and more to stay in touch with others. For most popular social media allow the construction of an online profile and the sharing of content, a struggle

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<sup>7</sup> Nicole A. Poltash, "Snapchat And Sexting: A Snapshot Of Baring Your Bare Essentials", *Richmond Journal Of Law And Technology* 19, no. 4 (2013), [http://scholarship.richmond.edu/jolt/vol19/iss4/3?utm\\_source=scholarship.richmond.edu%2Fjolt%2Fvo119%2Fiss4%2F3&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](http://scholarship.richmond.edu/jolt/vol19/iss4/3?utm_source=scholarship.richmond.edu%2Fjolt%2Fvo119%2Fiss4%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

<sup>8</sup> Sonja Utz, Nicolle Muscanell and Cameran Khalid, "Snapchat Elicits More Jealousy Than Facebook: A Comparison Of Snapchat And Facebook Use", *Cyberpsychology, Behavior And Social Networking* 18, no. 3 (2015), doi:10.1089/cyber.2014.0479.

<sup>9</sup> Oren Soffer, "The Oral Paradigm And Snapchat", *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 3 (2016), doi:10.1177/2056305116666306.

<sup>10</sup> Bayer et al, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> "Number Of Daily Active Snapchat Users From 1St Quarter 2014 To 1St Quarter 2018 (In Millions)", *Statista*, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/545967/snapchat-app-dau/>.

between the online presentation of the offline will always exist. Mendelson & Papacharissi have found that scholars tend to agree that through images, status updates, profiles, friend lists, visible conversations, tastes and interests, and comments that appear within their profile, social media participants present a highly curated version of themselves.<sup>12</sup> Considering this concept, it would mean that Snapchat users actively put a lot of thoughts into their presentation on the medium. Schwarz & Halegoua discuss that this online version is often incomplete, as it is constructed by many small, recorded actions at the coffee shop, the bar, the park, or the movie theatre, and that is often experienced by the audience as an aggregated representation.<sup>13</sup> Because Snapchat allows to share short updates more frequently throughout the day, this concept could perhaps also be considered to be true. However, Schwarz & Halegoua find that not every offline action is shared on social media, but the content shared online is carefully chosen by the user. This complements the previous findings of Mendelson and Papacharissi, and once again underlines the possibility of Snapchat users consciously creating their online identities. Wiszniewski and Coyne's article adds to this that an online identity can be seen as an 'ideal self', a mask created especially for the social sphere. The online identity would therefore not be a representation of an offline identity but a wholly new constructed identity in itself.<sup>14</sup> However, Shapiro places a critical note with the idea that users fully construct their own identity online. She considers the online platform through which the identity is performed equally important as it serves as an intermediary between the offline and online self.<sup>15</sup> Social media are designed by a specific developer, and consequentially, users of the social medium are subject to the design and affordances of the platform. The user will always have to perform their online identity through the means which the app provides. This concept will be of relevance considering the affordances of Snapchat, through which Snapchat allows an identity to be performed.

### Content and identity performance

To understand how an identity is performed online, it is important to focus on what the user is posting and sharing. By looking at the content shared on social media, or in this case Snapchat, a lot can be learned about how a user would like to portray himself to others. In the case of Snapchat, a common theme that is recognised in previous research is that of ephemerality. Snapchat forces the deletion of content after a pre-set time period, which according to many scholars, allows for a more carefree sharing of pictures and text. Through interviews, Xu et al have found that Snapchat had allowed for the prevalence of mundane communication with close contacts and the reduction in self-consciousness in such communication.<sup>16</sup> In other words, users are more inclined to "let their guard down", but less inclined to share information or 'deep' kinds of relationship talk. In contradiction with previously mentioned theories by Mendelsson & Papacharissi and Wiszniewski & Coyne, Xu

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<sup>12</sup> Andrew L. Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, "Look At Us: Collective Narcissism In College Student Facebook Photo Galleries", in *The Networked Self: Identity, Community And Culture On Social Network Sites* (Illinois: Routledge, 2010), [https://zizi.people.uic.edu/Site/Research\\_files/Look%20at%20meAMZP.pdf](https://zizi.people.uic.edu/Site/Research_files/Look%20at%20meAMZP.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Raz Schwartz and Germaine R. Halegoua, "The Spatial Self: Location-Based Identity Performance On Social Media", *New Media & Society* 17, no. 10 (2014), doi:10.1177/1461444814531364.

<sup>14</sup> Dorian Wiszniewski and Richard Coyne, "Mask And Identity: The Hermeneutics Of Self Construction In The Information Age", in *Building Virtual Communities: Learning And Change In Cyberspace*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191-214.

<sup>15</sup> Eve Shapiro, *Gender Circuits: Bodies And Identities In A Technological Age*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Bin Xu et al., "Automatic Archiving Versus Default Deletion: What Snapchat Tells Us About Ephemerality In Design", in *The 19Th ACM Conference* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/c/6136/files/2013/12/Xu-et-al-2016-Automatic-Archiving-1kzfn2z.pdf>.

et al argue that this highly curated online identity is less prevalent on Snapchat. This is interesting, as the upcoming research will shed a bit more light into how both of these concepts apply to Snapchat. Goffman's 'front stage/back stage' metaphor is used to explain this behaviour between an offline "back stage" identity and an online "front stage" one. In this theory, Goffman notices a difference in how identity is performed when a person is behaving for an audience (online) or when they are in a less controlled environment where they can let their guard down (offline).<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to see how this concept plays out on a platform such as Snapchat, where the audience can be controlled.

Therefore, the audience for which the identity is performed is of importance. Marwick and boyd discuss how online, and in particular on social media, users often have to imagine their audience to decide how to perform themselves online.<sup>18</sup> This imagined audience is necessary to be able to for example, choose the language in which they perform themselves. However, on social media, this audience might be constructed from multiple, different audiences. A user might have their family as friends on Facebook, as well as their friends from growing up, friends they know through school and their colleagues from work, all of which they would likely speak to in a different way if they were talking one-on-one. This can lead to what Marwick and boyd refer to as a "context collapse", where several different audiences are flattened into one, for which presenting a singular identity seems impossible. Looking back at Snapchat, a highly curated online identity would then come with a highly curated audience to perform this identity for. Even in the case of a more mundane communication with close friends, it is important that an audience is constructed for which a Snapchat user feels comfortable enough to let their guard down.

Amidst this debate on identity performance on social media, and recognising previous findings and theories that are applicable to this particular research, the investigation on how a sample of Snapchat users use the app to perform their identity online will hopefully discover new ideas and themes or be able to test existing theories. Therefore, after the results of the first two sub questions are found, there will be reflected back on the in this section discussed debate to hopefully add if only a tiny bit of helpful content to the discourse around identity performance on social media.

## Method

To help answer the research question, there will first be focused on the two sub questions, will help structure the debate into more easily answering the research question at hand.

### Affordance analysis

The first sub question directs towards the perceivable affordances that a Snapchat user can use to construct their identity. Bucher & Helmond explain the concept of affordance as a key term for understanding and analysing social media interfaces and the relations between technology and its users.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, this research will first focus on the affordances of Snapchat to better understand the interface of the app and how users are able to use it.

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<sup>17</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation Of Self In Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

<sup>18</sup> Alice E. Marwick and danah boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, And The Imagined Audience", *New Media & Society* 13, no. 1 (2010): 114-133, doi:10.1177/1461444810365313.

<sup>19</sup> T Bucher and A Helmond, "The Affordances Of Social Media Platforms", in *The SAGE Handbook Of Social Media* (Sage Publications, 2018), 233-253, [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/9115828/BucherHelmond\\_SocialMediaAffordances\\_preprint.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/9115828/BucherHelmond_SocialMediaAffordances_preprint.pdf).

Affordances are explained by Donald Norman as “the perceived and actual properties of the things, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used”.<sup>20</sup> He suggests that certain objects can be designed to suggest or determine use through “perceived affordances”. These are the affordances that through cultural conventions steer or encourage the user towards an action. This research will focus on perceived affordances, as they are the affordances that the user will recognise and use as tools for their identity construction.

Bucher and Helmond specify the concept of affordance towards using social media. They find that employing the concept of affordance to study social media requires explicating how affordances are used and the work they might do. They recognise that analysing affordances on social media doesn’t require focus on a particular technology, but on communicative practices or social affordances that certain features afford. Relevant to this study is what they refer to as “social affordances” (the way affordances shape social structure and social relations) and “communicative affordances” (how mobile devices afford or alter communicative practices). Then, with certain features affording certain actions, it is also realised that at the same time features afford certain constraints.

It is recognised that Snapchat may have hidden algorithmic affordances, but the analysis that will help answer the first sub question will focus on the features and affordances that are possible for the user to see. Focus will lie on the features on Snapchat that help shape communicative and social practices and through which a user is able to perform their identity or build an online image. This includes analysing the ability to send pictures on Snapchat, the option to build a Snapchat story, the ways users can add and find friends, but also the more content-aimed feature of face and Snap filters that afford a picture or video to be altered. Analysing these features, the affordances (and perhaps constraints) that are found will tell more about how a Snapchat user is able to perform their identity on the platform. This information will then be put to use not only to understand identity construction on Snapchat better, but also to be able to more specifically put together a survey that will help answering the second sub question.

### Survey on a sample of Snapchat users

The second sub question will be answered through an online survey with a sample of Snapchat users. Through the affordance analysis, users can now be asked how they use and value these affordances in the process of portraying themselves online. In a similar research, Bayer et al have found that in-depth qualitative data obtained through interviews help shape and make more sense of data that consists solely of observations, numbers and facts.<sup>21</sup> Because it is impossible to observe how users experience the construction of their own online identity, questions on how the app is used will help shed more light on how an identity on Snapchat is constructed. Though the outcome of this survey can definitely add new observations and data to the debate around online identity construction on social media, it is recognised that survey data is subjective. The interviewed subjects are human and likely not always are of their behaviour on social media, nor always willing to answer questions truthfully due to social conventions. We must accept that the data obtained is not conclusive, but an insight into how a sample of Snapchat users might experience their identity construction.

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<sup>20</sup> Don Norman, *The Design Of Everyday Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Bayer et al, 2015.



The survey has been structured into four different categories. These categories include questions on the use of Snapchat, the content and contact on Snapchat, the experience of affordances on Snapchat and the experience of Snapchat in general.

### The use of Snapchat

This set of questions focuses on the use of the Snapchat application. It included questions about how often the app was opened and used, and for what reasons the app was used every time it was opened. These answers will show how the sample of Snapchat users might divide their time on the application and how frequently content is shared or read.

### The content & contact on Snapchat

This set of questions considers the content that is shared through Snapchat. Also, questions on the audience that receives what particular content are asked. There is a difference made between “personal Snaps” that can be sent to particular people and “public Snaps” that are added to a user’s Snapchat Story and can be viewed by the user’s entire friend list.

Questions on who users have included in their friend list are also asked. These answers will show how users perceive their audience, how it is constructed and for who certain content is performed.

### Perceived affordances on Snapchat

In the affordance analysis answering the first sub question, several affordances will have been found. The questions focus on how often the Snapchat users use these particular affordances, and how they are valued by the users. These answers will reveal how certain affordances might be considered more important to users and which are, according to the users, employed while building their online identity.

### Experiencing Snapchat

In the last section of the survey, Snapchat users are asked to agree to a certain extent with statements on how they perceive their own identity construction and performance on the app. Questions are also asked on how users perceive others to use the application. These answers will be highly subjective, but through qualitative responds it might be able to recognise common themes in how a sample of users think about their own performance on the app.

The answers on these questions will be analysed and there will be looked for certain themes to be recognised throughout. These themes on the identity performance on Snapchat will then be considered reflecting back on the debate around online identity performance on social media.

## Analysis

### Affordance analysis

The affordance analysis was performed on Snapchat’s design in December 2016. Since then, small stylistic features of the design have been changed, as well as Snapchat having added several new features to affect the potential for self-representation on the platform. All the features and affordances discussed throughout this research still apply. However, a few features have been added since then that are worth mentioning briefly. The first of these is the Bitmoji, an app with which a Snapchat user can create a personal cartoon avatar to represent themselves on Snapchat. This Bitmoji is shown as their icon next to sent or received Snaps, in chat windows or when presenting their location on a map. This allows to explain a second feature that has been added, which is a location service that shows a user’s and their friends’ live location through their Bitmoji on a map. Another contribution has been made to the face filters that users can apply to their pictures or videos in the form of

Snappables. These augmented reality face filters let users play games with their friends, using their facial expressions as controls for the game. All of these features were not yet available when this analysis was performed, but are certainly interesting to consider for future research.

Every online medium has been designed with affordances that a user must translate their actions through. This analysis will help better understand what affordances are at the user's hand when they are shaping their identity on Snapchat. The features that have been chosen for this affordance analysis were affordances that users could employ to construct an online identity or modify the content they were putting out. This corpus has been chosen specifically because these are the affordances that are deemed relevant for this research on online identity performance.

### Content sharing versus content viewing

Snapchat is a mobile application that can be downloaded and installed on iOS and Android. According to their own website, they “contribute to human progress by empowering people to express themselves, live in the moment, learn about the world and have fun together.”<sup>22</sup> As of the first quarter of 2018, Snapchat has 191 million daily users sharing and watching more than 10 billion mobile videos per day.<sup>23</sup>

Snapchat distinguishes itself from other apps by laying the focus on recording photos and videos in real-time. The Snapchat application, when opened, opens directly to the camera screen. It takes no other steps for a user to be able to take a photo or video, but they are directly invited to create and share content instead of watching other content first. This design choice is rather unique, as most popular social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter all show other content on their opening page and ask the user to first take one or more steps to be able to upload their own content. Sharing a photo from the second the app is opened can take as little as five seconds. This correlation between creating and sharing content and watching content is questioned in the survey by asking how often users post their own content and how often other content is viewed.

The implementation of a Snapchat Story further allows users to share content with an audience. This Story allows a user to upload as many pictures or videos as they want, as often as they want. Notable about these Stories are that all the content is displayed in chronological order, with a timestamp attached. The user is able to click through these pictures and videos, or wait until the short amount of time they are shown (usually a few seconds) has passed and the next photo or video is shown. However, these stories can be viewed as often as liked within the time period of 24 hours. Here, a difference can be observed between “public Snaps” that are sent to the story, viewable by the entire friend list and available for 24 hours, and “private Snaps”, that can be sent to particular people and viewed only one time after which it self-deletes.

### Displaying Stories and Snaps

When displaying the Stories and private Snaps to the user, Snapchat handles a chronological display of both updates Stories and received Snaps. In a list of Stories, the Story that was most recently updated will show at the top, followed by the one that was most recently updated after that. Snapchat will automatically display the Stories following after the one that was clicked, until the user chooses to exit watching Snapchat Stories or they reach

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<sup>22</sup> "Snap Inc", *Snap*, 2018, <https://www.snap.com/en-GB/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Snapchat - Statistics & Facts", *Statista*, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/topics/2882/snapchat/>.

the end of all available Stories. Snapchat does not typify or add value between user connections like on some social media, more “relevant” content is shown before new content.

Received private Snaps are shown in a similar way, Snapchat listing the last received Snap at the top of the page. A private Snap is also treated with more privacy by the design, as there are no visual clues to the Snap shown by Snapchat as they are with a Story. A small circle announcing the Story will give a tiny circular overview of the content of the first Snap that is yet to be viewed in the Story. A private Snap does not allow this peek inside, and will first have to be opened before the viewer may see the content. Once the content is viewed for a short amount (the particular amount of time set by the one who sent the Snap), the Snap disappears forever.

In the survey, questions are included about how the user experiences the fast disappearing of messages and if in their opinion they feel more inclined to share certain types of content easier or faster. They are also asked how they favour the ephemerality on Snapchat in general.

### Audience

Combining formats seen in other social media, Snapchat has adopted a friend/follower combination where the user can choose who can see their Stories and who can send them Snaps. Snapchat’s settings allow the user to decide whether they want their Story publicly available to anyone (granted they would have the user’s username) or only available to people that they have personally decided to add or accept to their friend list. Having their profile set to public, this entails that they can have a large amount of “followers” who can watch their Stories when uploaded. If choosing that only friends can see a Story, we can better speak of a friend system where the user has to add friends first before they can view their content.

The same settings can be chosen for private Snaps. Either Snaps can be received from any other person, or only from people that have been added to the user’s friend list. This could be considered comparable to either sending Tweets out to the world and letting anyone respond to them, or posting and sharing exclusively with friends.

In the survey, questions are asked about how and why users choose their audience, and how they perceive a difference in audiences for private Snaps and public Snaps.

### Filters and time stamps

After or during making content, Snapchat allows users to modify their photos and videos with filters provided by the app. During the recording of a video or the taking of a photo, a user can apply face filters to themselves or others, which differ from funny masks (such as giving the user dog- or cat-like features) to enhancing the user’s features, where for example the skin is smoothed out and the eyes made to look bigger and brighter. After recording, the user can add a filter to the photo or video, making the colours brighter or in black and white. Users can also add stamps that will show the current time, the current speed at which the user is going, the current temperature or the location the user is currently at.

In the survey, questions are asked on how and when these filters are applied by the sample of Snapchat users. It is asked how these filters are valued in general, as well as if the users have experienced employing these filters to purposefully modify the content they were putting forward.

### Liveness

In the survey, attention will be paid to how users make use of these different affordances, for

these are all possible ways through which their identity can be performed.

Through the analysis, an emphasis that Snapchat puts on storytelling and liveness cannot go unnoticed. Throughout the app, a focus on favouring the new over the old, applying real-time filters and encouraging the user to continuously update through a Snapchat Story can be seen. Liveness is explained by Jane Feuer as an idea that gives a viewer the sense that they are connected live to the event happening in front of them.<sup>24</sup> This idea of liveness comes connected to a strong social ideology, where viewers often believe that everything they see is in fact how the events are taking place, even if this may not be the case. This social ideology Snapchat possibly endorses could be of importance to the construction of online identities. However, Philip Auslander criticises that a live event is always shaped through the medium that is used to broadcast the live event.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Snapchat this can be considered true, as Snapchat affords modifying filters that can alter the original content. In the survey, there are questions included on how the users experience liveness and authenticity on Snapchat.

The ephemerality of the messages is also of relevance, contributing to the importance of liveness on the app. Similar to conversations in real life, Snaps and Stories disappear after a short amount of time and are impossible to retrieve. Stories have to be watched in a certain time span to be able to be viewed at all, and private Snaps might lose their relevance if not watched shortly after the photo or video is sent. In the survey, it is considered how this ephemerality is valued over uploading static content.

It is also considered how Snapchat's affordances at the same time limit certain actions. For example, Snapchat only allows videos of ten seconds or less. As a result, it is impossible for the user to go in-depth on a topic as they only have ten seconds to express themselves. The ephemerality of the messages is another example which affords, but also restricts: if the user isn't paying attention, if they are slow readers, if the photo isn't clear, or for multiple other reasons, the disappearing of a Snap within seconds can lead to misunderstandings or frustration. It is important to also acknowledge the type of content that Snapchat users aren't able to share, as the affordances that Snapchat has incorporated in their design does not make it easy or does not allow them to.

### A survey on Snapchat

In the previous section, Snapchat's affordances were analysed to build a better understanding of the tools with which a user could construct their identity online. To get a qualitative view on a sample of Snapchat user's performance on the app, an online survey was set up with questions inspired by the previous findings in the affordance analysis. This survey will help retrieve more information on the use of Snapchat and the construction of an online identity on this particular social medium. The survey has been structured into four different categories. These categories include questions on the use of Snapchat, the content shared on Snapchat and the contact with other Snapchat users, the experience of Snapchat's affordances and the experience of the use of Snapchat in general.

The Snapchat survey was filled out by 123 people. Even though no requirements for age or location were given for filling out the survey, 90% of the respondents are between 16 and 25 years old. This is considered slightly out of line with the current age demographic for

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<sup>24</sup> Jane Feuer, "The Concept Of Live Television: Ontology As Ideology", in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—An Anthology*, 1st ed. (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance In A Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

Snapchat, which implies that 60% of the current users are under 25.<sup>26</sup> There is a good chance that this average age of respondents is also due to the fact that this survey was mainly shared with people in my personal contact circle, and therefore mostly reached other students and peers. However, it is still true that this age group also represents the general largest age group on Snapchat.

In the survey responses, several themes are recognised. These themes will be discussed individually and finally help answer the second sub question and with that, the research question.

### The use of Snapchat

A theme that is recognised throughout the survey answers are the motivations of users to use Snapchat. It seems that overall, Snapchat use is associated with a fun and every day use. For this question, the users were asked why they were using Snapchat. *"It's a fun way of communicating with friends and it's a trend so why not?" (Female, 16-20)* is suggested by a girl who considers communication with her friends the most important reason for using Snapchat. *"Communicating with people and keeping up to date" (Male, 21-25)* is also mentioned, implying that this user doesn't only use Snapchat for communication but also to check up on what other people are doing. This ability to check up on people's lives seems a common theme. *"Being able to see what people around me are doing/what's keeping them busy" (Female, 21-25)* is mentioned. One user admits *"Because my friends use it a lot and I like to keep up with what's happening in their life. I actually don't like the app." (Female, 16-20)*, recognising that even though she dislikes the application, for her it is an important medium to stay in touch with friends. However, someone else favours the app over other for communication: *"To feel connected without the pressure of things like Facebook and instagram which are all about popularity." (Female, 16-20)* This cuts into a theme of the type of content that is shared on Snapchat, which will be discussed later in the survey analysis.

Overall, it can be noticed that users value Snapchat as means of communication, but also as a way of staying informed of what friends are every day. This isn't a positive experience for everyone: *"To see the wonderful life of my friends, then compare to myself. In the end I just feel jealous with them."* This observation is underlined by the fact that over 70% of the respondents admit to using the app daily, and 44% send Snaps every day.

When asked about her reasons for using the app, one respondent said the following: *"To share pictures or thoughts of things I encountered that day and I find worth sharing on Snapchat but not on any other social media. I dont find it important enough for that I think." (Female, 16-20)* Here, there is a clear distinction made between Snapchat and "other" social media. Apparently, this user considers Snapchat a medium on which certain content can be shared that is not suitable for others. Others tend to agree with her, some of them even considering the photos they share not important enough to store them. *"For fun and sending photos easily without them cluttering up the storage space on your phone" (Female, 16-20)* one girl admits that her photos aren't worth saving. *"To send pictures that don't need saving on your phone" (Female, 21-25)* one girl tends to agree, and another respondent contributes: *"To quickly share moments with friends without having to take pictures and wasting storage space" (Male, 16-20)*. It appears that a sample of the respondents enjoy the ability to take pictures, but don't think this type of communication important enough to save it to their phones or camera rolls. To gather more information on the photos and videos that users

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<sup>26</sup> Christina Newberry, "Top Snapchat Demographics That Matter To Social Media Marketers", *Hootsuite*, 2016, <https://blog.hootsuite.com/snapchat-demographics/>.

share on their Snapchat, the next section of the survey asked questions about the content the users shared.

### The content on Snapchat

When asking about the type of content that was shared through the respondents' Snaps, a theme could be noticed in a clear distinction made between the content shared through private Snaps and public Snaps. The private Snaps include the photos and videos that were sent to specific people in a user's friend list of which users can decide per person who gets to see particular content and who doesn't. The public Snaps are the photos and videos shared to a user's story, which, depending on their settings, can be viewed by their entire friend list or anyone who has added them as a friend.

From the survey results, it can be observed that there is a difference in the identity that is constructed through private Snaps and through public Snaps. Whereas through private Snaps, "funny things", "ugly selfies" or "doing something boring" are commonly shared, in public Snaps the focus is on "doing something special," "showing an event I'm at" and "showing people or friends I'm with". Sensitive content such as nude pictures or content where the sender is under the influence of alcohol or drugs is also more likely to be sent through private Snaps than posted on public Stories. "*Making ugly faces for friends*" (Female, 21-25) was actually one of the reasons put forward by a girl as a reason why to use Snapchat. Someone else said "*It is amusing to make embarrassing photos of your friends and put them online for a limited time*" (Female, 21-25), making it noticeable that these users employ Snapchat in particular not to look good, but make fun of themselves or others.

When asked if there was any content that the users might send in a private Snap, but wouldn't post in a Snapchat Story, the results came up clearly distinguished. More than half of the respondents wouldn't post "ugly selfies" to their Snapchat Story. Other popular answers that came up were "doing something boring", "photos or videos where I'm under the influence of alcohol or drugs" and "nude pictures". One user explains this difference in sending content in her case: "*This depends on whether I want to only send something to a certain group of people and not all my Snapchat contacts*" (Female, 21-25). Here, she opens up the division between private Snaps ("a certain group of people") and public Snaps ("all my Snapchat contacts"). To gather more information on how these groups differ and how users choose to perform what identity for who, the next set of questions discuss the private and public audiences of Snapchat users.

### The audience on Snapchat

When asked about the public or private settings on their profile, almost 80% of the respondents acknowledged that they had altered their settings so that only their friends could send them Snaps and only people that they had added on their friend list could see their Snapchat Story. This setting gives them full control over their own audience, not only allowing them to send private Snaps to whoever they want to, but being able to know exactly who can watch their Snapchat Story and who doesn't. Diving deeper into understanding how users make up their friend list, a surprising theme hooked back into the findings of the first research question. As found there, a lot of users do not just get on Snapchat to perform their identity for others, but are also interested in keeping up with the lives of others.

This wish to stay connected to others became again clear when asking users how they make up their friend list, or if they ever refrained from adding certain people to their friend list. There was a large amount of positive responses, claiming that this sample of users tend to curate their own audience by managing their friend list effectively. However, there could be an interesting theme recognised in reasons for not adding other users to a friend list.

This theme is recognised in users that discuss not wanting certain people to see their content, thus reflecting their audience back on themselves. When asked if she ever refrained from adding someone as a friend, this girl said: *“Sometimes, because i’m scared they don’t like me or think it’s stupid”* (Female, 16-20). *“Yes because I may not necessarily want them to see what I’m up to”* (Female, 16-20) another girl admitted. However for different reasons, these girls have actively chosen not to add certain people because of some content they might post that might have other people think of them in a certain way. It seems that in these cases, the identity that is performed on Snapchat is not restrained by the audience for which the users are performing, but it is the other way around – the audience is restrained because of the identity that is performed. *“I will avoid adding some people if I don’t want them to be able to see my story (some family members, for example)”* (Female, 21-25) one girl admits, giving an example of how she has chosen what audience to perform for. It seems that in her case, parts of her online identity are unsuitable for her family to see. Another girl gives an even more specific example: *“Yes, my dad. When he tried snapchat (he deleted it after one day already) I didn’t want him in my contacts because my story is just for my friends and this isn’t interesting for him to see”* (Female, 16-20). This respondent clearly sets a boundary between two different audiences, one being her father, and one being her group of friends, the first apparently interested in seeing different content than the second.

A clear avoidance of the context collapse as coined by Marwick and boyd can be seen here.<sup>27</sup> The user is making a decision in which audience to perform for and which content is most suitable for that audience. Her father obviously hasn’t made the cut, and can be seen as one of the “other” audiences that, when put together, could result in a context collapse in which the user wouldn’t know how to perform her identity anymore. Several examples of this avoidance of the context collapse can be spotted throughout the respondents. *“Yes. Sometimes you don’t want people to see parts of your personal live”* (Female, 16-20) admits to steering away from some people who content she shares might be too personal for. *“Yes, because some people are friends, but I don’t feel comfortable enough with them to share my snaps with them”* (Female, 16-20) another girl responds, apparently seeing multiple audiences to perform for in the people she is friends with.

*“Because I might know them but I might not be interested in their snaps/don’t want them to see mine”* (Female, 21-25) one user does not only find it important who sees her Snaps, but it also concerned with the content she will be sent in return. This was another common response, such as *“Yes, if I do not like them or am not interested in their life through Snapchat”* (Female, 16-20) or even *“Because they were either spamming me, or sending me photos I didn’t want to see from them like nudes”* (Female, 16-20). However these responses are interesting to see how these particular users have decided to shape their friend list, these choices do not reflect on how the audience for which their identity is performed for is constructed and is therefore deemed irrelevant for this research.

### **Authentic performances**

Having looked at the audience the users claim to perform for, an interesting connection between the supplied affordances and identity performance is noticed. Even though the users have full control of their audience, almost half of the respondents admits to using Snapchat filters to make themselves look better. When asked how affordances were overall valued, the highest scoring affordance was that of face filters. These filters were also mentioned as a reason to use Snapchat, such as: *“To see what other people are doing. And the fun filters”* (Female, 16-20) or *“I enjoy the filters and sending snaps to friends”* (Female, 16-20). Even though the face filters cannot immediately imply that the photos or videos that

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<sup>27</sup> Marwick & boyd, 2010.

are being sent are unauthentic, more than half of the respondents admit into putting thought into how a Snap will make them look, and more than 30% say that their post Snaps to their Story that will make them seem more fun or interesting. Comparing this information with earlier findings of the users performing a different identity through private Snaps than through their public Stories, it could be considered that this sample of users send their more mundane and day-to-day content through private Snaps to an audience of their choosing, and only show a better or more interesting version on their public Stories. In these examples, it seems that there are two different types of identity performance: one of which is privately performed for a select amount of people, and a less personal one, that is publicly performed through the Snapchat Story.

Interestingly enough, when asked how authenticity on Snapchat relates to other popular social media such as Facebook or Instagram, more than 60% believes that Snaps are in fact more authentic than content shared on the other platforms. This inclination towards more personal content shows throughout the research (users sharing ugly selfies or “boring” content, users admitting to communicating with friends about their day-to-day lives, users updating Snapchat frequently, users telling they share photos not worthy for their camera roll or “non important stuff”), this seems to be only the case when the respondents are sending private Snaps. More than half of the users admit that the self-deleting of private Snaps makes them more inclined to send personal or intimate content to other users.

When it comes to Snapchat Stories, it can be recognised that the sample of Snapchat users that took the survey still filter their content to show a “better” version of themselves, even as most of them have already carefully curated their audience to who may see their content or not. Next to users admitting they post content that will make them seem more fun or interesting, almost 70% believes that other users definitely think about this when performing their identity online. Interesting, as users also still believe that content on Snapchat is more authentic than that on other social media. Noticing this conflict between personal and public throughout the analysis, it may have to be acknowledged that for this sample of users, the different affordances on Snapchat allow for different identity performances.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, a research on how Snapchat’s affordances allowed the use of Snapchat to create an online image was performed. Through this research, it was attempted to find how a sample of Snapchat users use the platform to create an online image of themselves. To get more information to answer this question, two sub questions have guided the analysis on Snapchat. These focused on the perceivable affordances of Snapchat and the qualitative feedback of Snapchat users on the construction of their online identity. Overall, this research would reflect back on previous findings to see how the newly obtained information would fit into the debate around identity performance.

### Day-to-day performance

The first section of the research focused on the analysis of Snapchat’s perceived affordances. Jane Feuer described the ideology of liveness as an idea that gives viewers the sense that they are connected live to the event happening in front of them.<sup>28</sup> The event in this case, can be understood as the lives of friends or accounts a Snapchat user follows. This ideology can be found in the affordances and design of Snapchat, such as the promotion of frequently updating through Stories, creating and posting content in real-time, chronological storytelling, the use of time- and location filters and favouring new content over old content.

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<sup>28</sup> Feuer, 2017.



The affordance of ephemeral messaging is also of importance, contributing to that feeling of liveness and authenticity as if the user were in a face-to-face conversation and the content disappears as quickly as it is consumed. Combining these findings with the feedback a sample of users have given on recognising more authenticity on Snapchat than other social media, a theme surrounding a more mundane and day-to-day type of communication can be recognised, as found in the research by Xu et al.<sup>29</sup> This way of exchanging photos and videos could tie the users into the ideology of liveness even more, as they are made to believe through Snapchat's focus on narrative that they are experiencing someone's day as it is happening. In that way, Shapiro is also correct in recognising the medium is an intermediary between an offline and an online self.<sup>30</sup> The offline self is bound to the strong focus on liveness Snapchat puts forward through its affordances, and the user is therefore for example restricted from posting older pictures or in-depth content. The online self can never be as authentic as the user might wish to portray themselves, since they are bound to follow within the application's design.

### Public performance

Interestingly enough, there was a clear distinction perceived between the private Snaps a user sent and the public Stories they displayed to their entire friend list. This aligns with the findings of Mendelson & Papacharissi, who believe that a construction of identity online is highly curated by the user.<sup>31</sup> This shows as users report to not only actively make a difference in content shared in private or public, but also in carefully choosing an audience to perform for. Wiszniewski and Coyne's theory is then tested, as they believe an online identity is a "mask" created for the social sphere, whether in this research it seems it is not so much a mask as it is a selective process.<sup>32</sup> These findings line up better with Schwarz and Halegoua, who see the online identity as several different parts of someone, calling it an aggregated representation.<sup>33</sup> The decision of what parts in this aggregation to show is often, as made clear in the survey, based on the curated audience. Conclusively, Snapchat's affordance to how an audience can be composed seems to be of importance to the construction of identity on the app.

### Front stage and back stage audience

Referring back to Goffman's theory on an offline back stage performance and an online front stage performance, it seems that both types can be observed to be performed on Snapchat.<sup>34</sup> Unlike on other social media, the user is afforded the opportunity to both disclose personal and public information about themselves. To avoid what Marwick and Boyd call the "context collapse", a difference between a "back stage audience" (who receive the private Snaps) and a "front stage audience" is created by the users. There is a strong correlation between the identity performance and the audience for which it is performed.

Throughout this research, other popular social media such as Instagram (August 2016), Facebook (January 2017) and WhatsApp (February 2017) have adopted and incorporated their own version of the Snapchat story, calling them respectively Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories and WhatsApp Status. An important difference that can be noticed is that the audiences for these stories seem to be the same as the general audience these users have gathered on each social media platform. Snapchat is therefore still unique in proposing a social media platform that allows for a combination of identity performances. However,

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<sup>29</sup> Xu et al, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Shapiro, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Mendelsson & Papacharissi, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Wiszniewski & Coyne, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Goffman, 1988.

through the incorporation of the Story format, it can be discussed that a shift towards performing a narrative identity instead of a static and less frequent updated one can be observed. Even though a narrative identity might seem more authentic through its frequent updates, this research has shown that previously found themes on curating an online identity to look better to others is still relevant to this they. It can therefore be concluded that Snapchat may have offered a new approach to identity performance, there is still also being held true to some of the values that have been established on other social media before.

### Future research

It is perhaps too soon to acknowledge a shift in online identity construction altogether, but something can certainly be said for the rise in popularity of ephemerality and narrative identity. It is a subject that would definitely be interesting to explore further, however, and the same goes for a lot of concepts mentioned throughout the research. For one, investigation on comparable media that now provide the same service can look into how certain platforms provide different experiences. This could possibly explain more about why this shift is taking place and what both platforms and users hope to gain from it. This phenomenon also has different angles it can be looked at through, such as a more technical angle focusing on the applications itself, or a more communicative and social angle that focuses on the use and motivations of the consumers.

Looking at this particular research on Snapchat, there are a few subjects that could be explored to improve the relevance of the study. The participants of the survey could be expanded to give a more realistic representation of Snapchat users that aren't found primarily in my personal circle. This would logically also give more input to the survey, possibly making it easier to draw conclusions. More questions could be added, diving deeper into the why certain content is only shared with friends and how these decisions for an active identity construction is made. A case study would also be interesting for a further research, where actual Snapchat users stories could be observed or asked to keep track of their sharing history. This would lead to even more qualitative data on which theories and observations can be built.

The concept of the private and public identity is also an interesting notion that could be looked further into when expanding or continuing this research. Especially on the social media that have recently adapted the Stories affordance, a comparison with Snapchat (that also offers personal messaging) and other media (that do not) could be made. Differences or resemblances could show whether users shape their identities through a medium or the medium that they use influences how their identity is shaped.

Besides these particular topics to be explored, it is also important to note that social media is always developing and growing, making the way in how people are displaying themselves online ever-changing. Snapchat's interface has been updated since this research was performed in December 2016, and it could for that reason alone be considered worthy of continuous research in the first place. To keep gathered data and theories actual, it is crucial to stay critical of observances and keep testing established findings.

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# Appendix 1

This appendix includes a full list of the questions asked in the survey.

*What is your age?*  
(open answer)

*What is your gender?*  
(open answer)

*What country are you from?*  
(open answer)

*How often do you use Snapchat (open the application, whether to check Stories, send Snaps or talk to friends)?*  
(Daily/Every few days/Every week/Every two weeks/Every month/Almost never)

*How often do you send Snaps (personal or to your story)?*  
(Daily/Every few days/Every week/Every two weeks/Every month/Almost never)

*What kind of people do you have in your contact list (for sending Snaps to or following)? If some of these boxes overlap, please tick both.*  
(Close friends/Friends/Family/People from work/People from school/Celebrities/People from an organization or a club I'm part of/People I've met online/Other: open answer)

*What is the main reason you use Snapchat?*  
(open answer)

*What kind of content do you or have you shared on Snapchat through a personal Snap?*  
(Selfies when I look good/'Ugly' selfies/Something I think is funny/What I'm doing, if it's something special/What I'm doing, if it's something boring or ordinary/An event I'm at/Pictures of my food/Pictures of my pets/Something I think is beautiful/Friends or people I'm with/Selfies or videos where I'm under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs/Nude pictures/Legally questionable activities/Nothing/Other: open answer)

*What kind of content do you or have you shared on Snapchat on your Snapchat story?*  
(Selfies when I look good/'Ugly' selfies/Something I think is funny/What I'm doing, if it's something special/What I'm doing, if it's something boring or ordinary/An event I'm at/Pictures of my food/Pictures of my pets/Something I think is beautiful/Friends or people I'm with/Selfies or videos where I'm under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs/Nude pictures/Legally questionable activities/Nothing/Other: open answer)

*How often do you send personal Snaps?*  
(Daily/Every few days/Every week/Every two weeks/Every month/Almost never)

*How often do you submit a Snap to your Snapchat story?*  
(Daily/Every few days/Every week/Every two weeks/Every month/Almost never)

*Who can contact you on Snapchat?*  
(Only my friends can send me Snaps and see my story/Only my friends can send me Snaps, but everyone can see my story/Everyone can send me Snaps, but only my friends can see my story/Everyone can send me Snaps and see my story)

*Do you ever refrain from adding people you know as your friend? Why or why not?*  
(open answer)

*Do you ever check who's watched your Snapchat story?*  
(Yes, always/Yes, often/Sometimes/Almost never/Never/I don't post Snapchat Stories)

*Do you watch other people's Snapchat Stories?*  
(Yes, all of them/No, only my close friend's stories/Other: open answer)

*Do you watch Snapchat stories posted by celebrities? If so, can you give an example of the celebrities you usually watch (are they active in music, sports, movies, TV, politics, beauty, lifestyle, etc)?*  
(open answer)

*How often do you watch Snapchat stories?*  
(Daily/Every few days/Every week/Every two weeks/Every month/Almost never/Never)

*Is there content you would share in a personal Snap but not on your Snapchat story?*  
(Selfies when I look good/'Ugly' selfies/Something I think is funny/What I'm doing, if it's something special/What I'm doing, if it's something boring or ordinary/An event I'm at/Pictures of my food/Pictures of my pets/Something I think is beautiful/Friends or people I'm with/Selfies or videos where I'm under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs/Nude pictures/Legally questionable activities/Nothing/Other: open answer)

*Do you ever use Snapchat filters to make yourself look better?*  
(Yes, in personal Snaps/Yes, on Snapchat Stories/Yes, on both/No, never)

*Do you ever use surroundings filters (location, speed, temperature, etc)?*  
(Yes, in personal Snaps/Yes, on Snapchat Stories/Yes, on both/No, never)

Next, we will list a few of Snapchat's properties. Please use a rating scale of 1-5 to tell us how much you enjoy or use these features.

- Ephemeral messaging (Snaps and text disappearing after seconds)
- Snapchat appearance filters (masks)
- Snapchat surroundings filters
- Snapchat Stories

In this part of the survey, we will ask you some questions on how you use Snapchat Stories socially. We will give you some statements that you can show how much you agree with.

- Because Snaps are uploaded frequently and in real time, they are more authentic than posts on Facebook or Instagram.
- I feel like I miss out on important things if I don't watch Stories on Snapchat.
- I feel like I might not be updating enough if I don't frequently post to my Snapchat story.
- Snapchat is an important way for me to keep in touch with friends or family.
- Snapchat is an important way for me to show people what I'm doing.
- It is more important to me who watches my Story than how many people watch my story.

- When posting Snaps, I think about what my contacts would like to see.
- When posting Snaps, I think about how a Snap will make me look.
- I post Snaps to my story that will make me seem more fun or interesting.
- I think other people post Snaps to their story that will make them seem more fun or interesting.
- I feel like sharing my life with my contacts often, even if I'm not doing anything special.
- I feel more safe to share personal or intimate Snaps because they self-delete.
- The self-deleting function of Snapchat influences the kind of content I share.
- Having to post Snaps in real-time makes me take out Snapchat to take a picture more often.
- Snapchat makes me feel like I'm always up to date with what my friends are doing.

# Plagiarism Rules Awareness Statement

## **Fraud and Plagiarism**

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity. The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. The following is a detailed explanation of what is considered to be fraud and plagiarism, with a few concrete examples. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list! If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study programme's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study programme.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarising. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopaedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes; • copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopaedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;
- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;



- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer for feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations. The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. Each individual is responsible for their own behaviour. Utrecht University assumes that each student or staff member knows what fraud and plagiarism entail. For its part, Utrecht University works to ensure that students are informed of the principles of scientific practice, which are taught as early as possible in the curriculum, and that students are informed of the institution's criteria for fraud and plagiarism, so that every student knows which norms they must abide by.

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above.

Name: Vera Lubbers

Student number: 3865398

Date: 20-06-2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vera Lubbers', written over a horizontal line.