

# **My self-published book is finished. Now what?**

How self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage with their audiences.



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## **1. Introduction**

Publishing a book has traditionally been seen as a standardized process with intermediaries playing a key role as an agent/encourager, publisher, printer, distributor and retailer (Bavertock & Seinitz, 2013b). However, the arrival of the Internet has given a new possibility to authors: self-publishing. Self-publishing is a new trend in the publishing market (Carolan & Evain, 2013). Self-publishing refers to the whole process of publishing a book without any involvement of intermediaries like publishing houses, professional editors or third parties (Poynter, 1979). Hence, with self-publishing, authors completely control the production process of a book, including creating a cover page, determining a price, choosing a printed version or an electronic book format, finding an appropriate platform for distribution and marketing their book. In 2008, the increasing number of self-published books, for the first time, passed the number of books published traditionally. Now, they count for eighty percent of all new published books (Carolan & Evain, 2013). Instead of relying on the traditional ways of publishing a book, authors thus increasingly decide (for various reasons) to do it themselves. And this is changing the market radically.

The Internet revolution - that transformed the music industry as well – arrived to book publishing and reversed the power relationship between publishers and writers. According to Bavertock and Seinitz (2013b) the number of books published in the United States of America increased from 328,259 titles in 2010 to 347,178 in 2011 because of the growth of the self-publishing market. Approximately 20,000 more book titles have been published during this period. Several factors have contributed to the self-publishing market expansion. One of these factors was the reduced level of services provided by publishing houses. “Publishers have been offering reduced levels of service while placing increased obligations on authors to become involved in the management and dissemination of work” (Bavertock & Seinitz, 2013b, p.211). Moreover, the creation of new technologies such as self-publishing platforms and the emergence of associated supporting services coaching and advising authors have spread an understanding that book content can be shared in other ways. Because of the expansion of the self-publishing market, channels such as a publishing house or a need for financial resources, can no longer keep someone from writing a book.

Analyzing this new trend is relevant for academic study because a completely new market has been created and, more importantly, consolidated.

Taking into account the growing relevance of self-publishing, it comes as a surprise that not a lot of literature can be found on the topic. Some previous research on self-publishing motivations has been done, answering questions such as: who are the self-publishers? (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013b) and what satisfactions do self-publishing authors gain from the process? (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013a). The concept of book self-publishing has also been investigated: the self-publishing phenomenon and libraries (Dilevko & Dali, 2006). However, the results of these studies were mainly based on quantitative research with a broad set of data. Although this is very useful, this master thesis is focused on qualitative research in order to get more information about self-publishing authors and their activity on social media. In most cases, research on social media is not considering different usage of different social media platforms. Usually, Facebook and Twitter are researched, but there are many more social media platforms and they might be used for a different purpose.

Because of the gap in the literature about individual self-publishers and their presence on different social media platforms, this master thesis proposes an analysis of the way that self-publishing authors are using different social media platforms to engage with audiences and to bring them to read their books or to get to know more about them. This research has societal relevance. It can be helpful to self-publishing authors looking for ways to professionalize their strategy to engage with their audiences. The empirical results of this research can help them to create such a strategy. Self-publishing authors do not have a publisher who can do this for them.

The main research question of this master thesis is:

**“To what extent do self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage their audiences?”**

An important focus point in this master thesis is if the same message is spread differently through social networking sites by self-publishing authors. For example, if they are using multiple social networking sites, is the message spread on a blog the same as on Facebook and Twitter? Are they using any specific social media platform to attract reader’s reviews and build up a network? How are they positioning

themselves on social media platforms to engage potential readers? Hence, the research question is divided in the three following sub-questions:

Sub RQ A: To what extent do self-publishing authors use social media to reach an audience?

Sub RQ B: Which social media platforms do self-publishing authors use and how do they use them?

Sub RQ C: How do self-publishing authors engage with their (possible) audiences on social media?

The first sub-question is related to time management of the self-publishing author. As self-publishing authors are responsible for their promotional activities as well, it is relevant to know how they manage their time between writing and reaching an audience on social media. The second question is about different social media platforms. Where do self-publishing authors engage with an audience? Know-how about how to use different platforms strategically says something about the level of understanding and use of different social media platforms for online engagement by self-publishing authors. While the first sub-question addresses the ‘when’ of engagement, the last sub-question is about ‘how’ the engagement takes place through social media platforms with possible audiences.

In order to answer the research question, this thesis contains 4 sections (excluding the introduction). In chapter 2, the theoretical framework, studies on the appearance of self-publishers, use of social media, types of social media and marketing strategies, such as the 80/20 Rule and the 90-9-1 Principle, are reviewed to explain the basic concepts of this master thesis. Special attention is given to the concepts of web 2.0 developments, user-generated content, social networking sites, the classification of social media and the uses and gratifications theory. Chapter 3 includes the method used for this research. The method section contains a step-by-step explanation of how the research has been done. The results section gives an overview of the most relevant results from the qualitative interviews, divided between the concepts of engagement, audiences and social media platforms. Finally, the last chapter includes an answer to the research question and concludes the strength and limitations of this thesis. It also includes suggestions for further research.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework is an overview of the existing theories around concepts used in this research. The research question of this thesis consists of several components that need to be addressed in the theoretical framework. Firstly, the concepts about self-publishing and self-publishing authors are explained. One of the components of the research question is the concepts related to different social media platforms, which is explained in chapter 2.2. It explains the concepts of Web 2.0 and user-generated content. In continuation, this part addresses the use of social media and types of social media, of which the most relevant for this thesis are social networking sites, blogs, collaborative projects and content communities.

The second component of the research question is about how self-publishing authors use social media platform to engage. Several theories related to this part of the research question are explained. First of all, the uses and gratifications theory helps to understand how one chooses a particular social media platform. Secondly, the most important theories on marketing strategies related to this thesis are discussed. The 80/20 Rule is useful to look at the time spent by self-publishing authors to engage on social media. Also, the 90-9-1 Principle is important to understand the differences between different audiences of a self-publishing author. This principle distinguishes heavy contributors, intermittent contributors and lurkers as audiences. The theoretical framework leads to a conclusion.

### **2.1 Self-publishing**

This chapter introduces the rise of self-publishing. It explains the main features of self-publishing compared to traditional publishing. Secondly, it introduces the self-publishing authors. Finally, it explains the market of infinite choice of self-publishing.

#### **2.1.1 Self-publishing versus traditional publishing**

In the traditional publishing, printed books are the final product. Readers can buy them through the publisher's website or in bookstores. The publishing house is in charge of the marketing mix: product, pricing, place and promotion (McCarthy, 1990). Self-publishing authors, on the other hand, most often use a publicly available

online platform to upload their book, which format can be read on e-readers, tablets, mobile phones and computers. According to Anderson (2007), new and unthinkable businesses can appear if people would have an infinite choice and could find anything they wanted. A good example is the book market in store compared to those online. “Barnes & Noble found that the bottom 1.2 million titles represent just 1.7 percent of its in-store sales, but a full 10 percent of its online (bn.com) sales” (Anderson, 2007, p.130). According to the CEO of Barnes & Noble, Steve Riggio, self-publishing, in particular, was one of the causes that books sales increased 20 percent in 2005 compared to 2004. Also, according to Brynjolfsson, Hu and Smith, (2006) 30 to 40 percent of internet book sales are books that would normally not be for sale in traditional book stores. Also, they found that internet sales of less popular book titles account for more than one billion dollars annually. Hence, this is an upcoming market. In the years to come, the concept of a published book will change, as self-published books will become part of it (Anderson, 2007).

The figure below presents a flow chart of the publishing market of both traditional and self-publishing. In the traditional publishing, publisher’s websites and/or bookstores are principal actors. The self-publishing market looks differently. Self-publishing authors publish their books on online platforms, such as Kindle Direct Publishing from Amazon.com, which enables them to publish their books directly to Kindle devices and Kindle Apps. Print-on-demand is an available option for self-publishing authors and books are printed and shipped upon purchase order (see Figure 2).



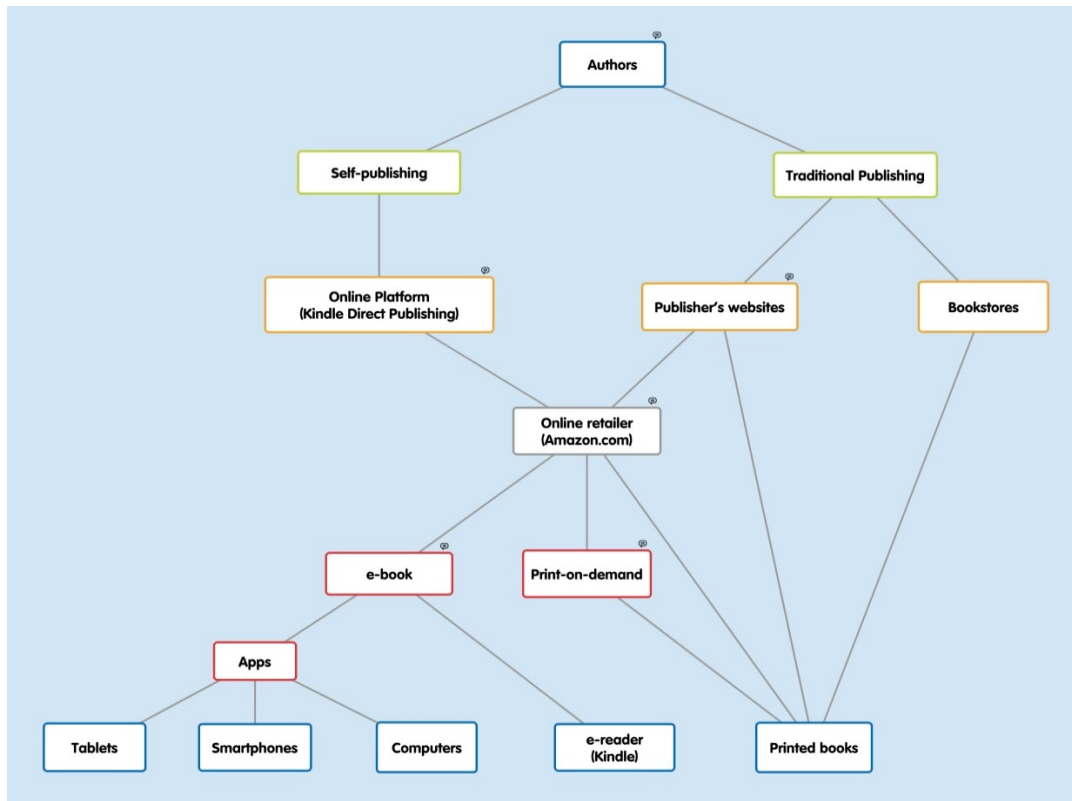


Figure 2. Publishing market flow chart.

Technology plays a fundamental role for authors to self-publish. The Kindle, produced by Amazon.com, is an example of a leading e-reader available in the market. According to the website ‘Publisher Weekly’ (<http://www.publishersweekly.com>), more than half of e-book users had one of Amazon’s popular Kindle devices”. Application software (apps) installed on tablets, smartphones and computers are also part of the e-reading market. E-books can be sold directly to readers through the Internet, eliminating traditional bookstores from the process. Printing-on-demand is an optimized and low-cost model suitable to self-publishing authors and available to sell paper books for readers accustomed with a printed book. Traditional books ordered via printing-on-demand are delivered to the address provided by the consumer. Last but not least, promotion through social media platforms, is an effective and low-cost way to make authors feel in control of the whole process using digital media.

With the manufacturing of e-readers devices, companies also launched platforms as a strategy to increase the number of e-books in the market and, therefore, increase the demand for e-readers as well. Through these platforms, authors can become self-publishers by publishing their books uploading the content and setting

the price on the platforms website. The self-published book becomes available to be purchased by potential readers online and the customers. The customers furthermore have the opportunity to review the book, which is important for the further promotion of self-publishing authors. Launched in the late 2007, the Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) from Amazon.com is the most popular platform that enables self-publishing authors to convert their written content, in general a Microsoft Word document, in an e-book. The possibility of outstanding visibility of a self-publishing author on the website of a renowned company such as Amazon.com, is also an attractive way to self-publishing writers to opt out of the traditional publishing marketing model.

### 2.1.2 Self-publishing authors

Baverstock and Seinitz (2013b) conducted a survey research among 120 self-publishing authors in the United Kingdom in order to define the characteristics of self-publishers. In this survey, authors were questioned about their previous publishing experience, motivations for self-publishing and their knowledge level about legal aspects of publishing.

The results of the survey show that the group of self-publishing authors is diverse: the authors are between 20 and 80 years old, live in both urban and rural environments and have any political preference. However, 82 percent of respondents were aged between 41-70 years old. Females were between 40 and 50 years old and male self-publishers were slightly older, between 50 and 60 years old. Furthermore, 65 percent of the respondents were female.

Another finding of the research was that approximately three quarters of the respondents had a university degree, as Baverstock and Steinitz state: “Self-publishing authors are highly educated, often well informed about the publishing process and generally very positive about the self-publishing experience” (Baverstock & Seinitz, 2013b, p.211). Self-publishing is not just for those authors that could not find a traditional publisher: although 27 percent were new authors without any other publication than just their first self-published book, 31 percent were already veterans in both self and traditional publishing, with 24 percent of the sample group having self-published more than five books and 37 percent with two or four titles already self-published.

Carolan and Evain (2013) define three categories of self-publishing authors: “the big fish in the big pond”, “the big fish in the small pond” and “the small fish in the big pond”.

#### The big fish in the big pond

The first category is composed of successful authors that have used traditional publishing channels, but are now in charge of the marketing and distribution process themselves, or authors that have self-published their books as author-entrepreneur. They are also heavily involved in the marketing and distribution process and control the publishing process. An example included in this category is the author John Grisham, who studied the secrets behind best sellers. For his first novel, *A Time to Kill*, he printed 1000 copies and started a three-month cross-state promotion tour where he built up a network. For his second novel, as he was already well known in the market, he attracted Hollywood interest to transform his book into a movie. Grisham actively participated in the promotion of his book, but it was not self-published though. Another example is Joanne Kathleen Rowling, who in 2011 launched the interactive ‘Pottermore platform’ supporting the release of her Harry Potter e-book. In this case the author became an author-entrepreneur engaging on a different marketing platform beyond social media.

#### The Big Fish in the Small Pond

In the second category of self-publishing, authors manage to control their presence as author-entrepreneurs in niche markets, for instance, self-esteem, spirituals or cooking books. Niche markets are exemplary for a long tail model and seem fit for self-publishers. It is easier to market a book and engage readers if the book is targeted at a specific audience. An example of this is James Redfield and his self-published book *The Celestine Prophecy*. Self-publishing a book about new age spirituality, James Redfield sold more than one hundred thousand copies before signing a contract with Warner Books. After that, his book sold millions of copies and was translated into more than thirty-four languages.

Books in niche markets are easier to promote because most self-publishers in this category write specialist books that do not appeal to traditional publishers who are focussed on selling their books in a mass-market. Marketing effort to a specific audience is easier to manage. Word of mouth through interconnected communities

(e.g. social media) is essential to this niche of book promotion. This category should be interesting to be analyzed in this master thesis as social media can play a key role between the communication of the self-publishing author and its niche audience. Self-publishing authors in this category should have a deep knowledge about the subject area of the book and ensure that the language that they are using to engage on social media with their readers is appropriate and correct.

### The Small Fish in the Big Pond

In general, this is the category in which most of self-publishing authors are situated, self-publishing their books as e-book format and print-on-demand. Authors in this category write books for a mass-market. Most of self-publishing authors have not the same capacity for negotiation as Rowling and Redfield cited in the last two categories. According to Carolan and Evain (2013) a small fish could even be changed into plankton, or even amoebae, because of the huge size of the market comparing with the number of self-publishing authors. As most of self-publishing authors assume to maintain a low profile (Carolan & Evain, 2013) it is important for them to engage with their audiences and potential readers. Social media, as a low cost and effective promotional tool, offer different platforms for engagement. This master thesis will mainly focus on the self-publishing authors represented by the small fish, plankton or amoebae and how they are surviving in the big pond according Carolan and Evain (2013). An example of a self-publishing author in this category is Talli Roland. She has just self-published her third novel entitled *The Pollyanna Plan*. She worked hard to build a relationship with her readers through her blog, Twitter and Facebook account, interacting with her followers every day (Roland, 2013).

Self-publishing authors can have their freedom to write about any topic they want and do not have to pay special attention to marketing purposes, but the risk of being a small fish and not being considered in the publishing market exists. Here is where social media play a key role in the process. The survey of Baverstock and Steinitz (2013b) also points out something relevant to the topic of this master thesis, which is the way self-publishing authors engage with their audiences on social media platforms. According the survey, 88 percent of self-publishing authors have undertaken marketing activities when self-publishing and most of the authors realized that it took much more time than they had expected. Notwithstanding, online media

have often been used by self-publishing authors (see Figure 3) (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013b).

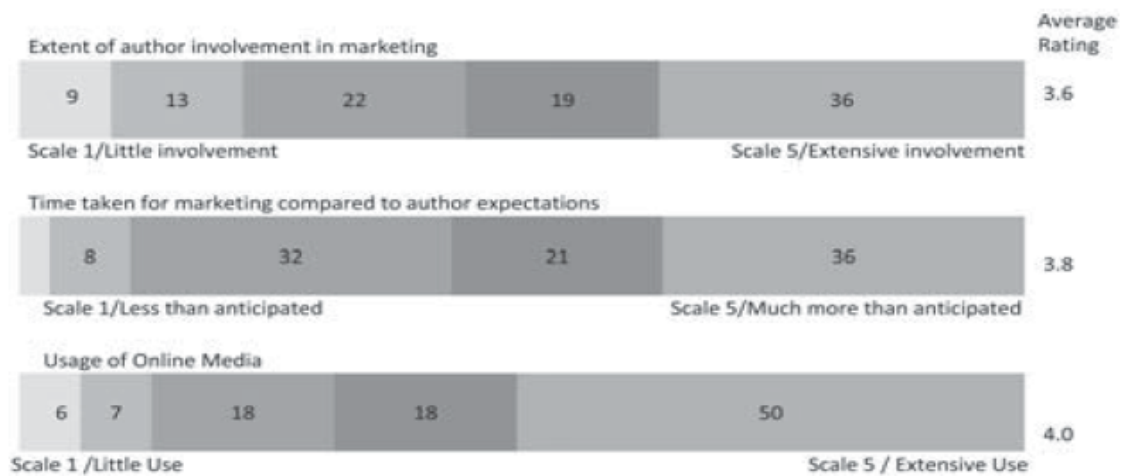


Figure 3. Author's assessment of involvement, time taken and usage of online media in marketing, % of sample (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013b)

Observing an average rating of 4.0 in the 'Usage of Online Media' from Scale 1/Little Use up to Scale 5/Extensive Use, self-publishing authors have made an extensive usage of online media promoting their books (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013b). The research shows that roughly 80 percent of self-publishing authors are considering online media to promote their books to its audiences. Related to this, Web 2.0 technologies enable self-publishing authors to interact and communicate through social media platforms with their audiences creating user-generated content.

Several reasons motivate authors to self-publish their books. One of the reasons that make self-publishing attractive is that the costs and risks are low (Kular, 2005). According the numbers of the survey of Baverstock and Steinitz (2013b), an average of 25 percent of the self-publishing authors spent under 600 euros and have finished the process within an average of seven months. Previous research on motivations has also shown that other motivations such as self-realization, the control over all the parts of the process, a strong feeling of satisfaction with the product created and an improvement of their incomes can all be a reason for authors to start self-publishing practices (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2013b). Hence, certainly not all motivations are 'financial'. Participation in every part of the process, starting with the book content, editing, production, distribution, marketing and a final say on the timeframe and in

every aspect of the book's writing contributed to authors become self-publishers (Baverstock & Seinitz, 2013b).

### 2.1.3 A market of infinite choice

The amount of self-published books has increased significantly and has prolonged the 'long tail' of books. In the book *The Long Tail*, Anderson's long tail describes a market of infinite choice. The book's name is meant as an analogy of a curve that never reaches a zero value and has an infinite choice (see Figure 1). Anderson (2007, p.126) argues that "powerlaws are a family of curves that you can find practically anywhere you look, from biology to book sales". Applying this theory to the book market, we can see that the rise of the self-published books has made the tail of books even longer. Traditionally, publishers focussed on 'hits' or bestsellers. Publishers wanted to publish books that would reach the largest possible audience – primarily because of economies of scale and limited shelf space (Greco, 1997). The self-publishing trend has exponentially affected the long tail in book production. Many more books are published, and all these books can theoretically reach their own niche market. Altogether, self-published books present a significant portion of the book publishing market. Of course, there is still a certain amount of books that reaches a mass audience. However, there is also an immense amount of books that reaches a small audience. It is up to the authors themselves to find their own audience. Hence, with the arrival of self-publishing authors to the book market, the tail of book production became much longer. Because of this, self-publishing authors are a relevant phenomenon for this research.

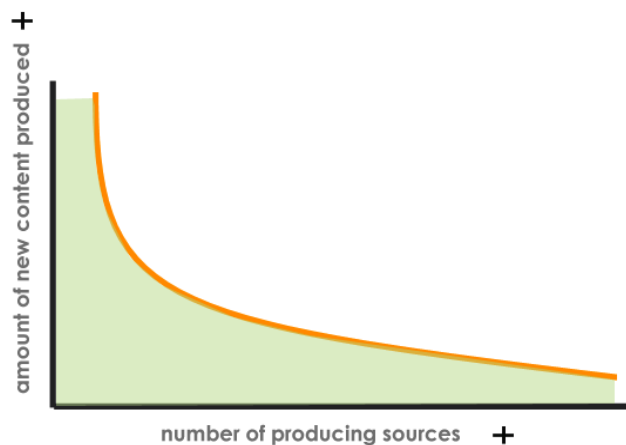


Figure 1: Example of a long tail curve chart.

According to Anderson (2007), there is always an infinite choice when three conditions are observed, which are variety, inequality and network effects. ‘Variety’ refers to a large number of things, like the word suggests. ‘Inequality’, refers to a difference within choice from factors such as product lines and prices. Lastly, ‘network effects’ refer to the influence of reputation. Reputation can say something about quality. Applying the concepts of Anderson to self-publishing, we can observe that there is an infinite choice in the self-publishing market, because variety, inequality and network effects are observed. Firstly, books have been increasingly self-published with the arrival of Internet (variety). Secondly, a niche market of self-publishing has been consolidated, with differences in pricing and genre (inequality). Finally, the communication of self-publishing authors turned feasible with Web 2.0 (network effects). Networking effects can occur with communication between self-publishing authors and their audiences. Altogether, with the presence of variety, inequality and network effects, self-published books never reach a zero value and are an example of a long tail. Moreover, they have prolonged the tail of books, that so far only consisted out of traditionally published books.

## **2.2. Web 2.0 developments**

There are two terms that are often related to the definition of social media: Web 2.0 and user-generated content. DiNucci (1999) coined the term Web 2.0 but it has achieved its popularity six years later, in 2005, when Tim O’Reilly hosted the Web 2.0 summit defining a second generation of a web user interaction and design between end-users and software developers through a platform utilizing the World Wide Web (O’Reilly, 2009). The first generation of internet businesses used the internet as a simple way to provide information. The Web 2.0 generation represents a movement to the internet as an interactive platform that enables users to collaborate, develop, share and operate simultaneously on the web. While the beginning of the internet was characterized with static web pages, personal websites, encyclopedias online and merely online content publishing, Web 2.0 incorporated strong social components into these applications turning them into blogs, wikis and collaborative projects. Important Web 2.0 developments include web-based communities, hosting services and applications like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Wikipedia (Cormode & Krishnamurty, 2008). Web 2.0 portrays a new way of interactivity, social networking,

collaboration and sharing that became possible through the internet. That is to say, in a platform, individuals were not just creating and publishing content and applications but continuously modifying it in a participatory collaborative fashion (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Despite the fact that there was no technological update of the World Wide Web, the development of some functionalities changed it into a second generation of the World Wide Web with possibilities for interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, Adobe Flash now allows animations and streams of web pages for more interactivity. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is now used to publish and update content more effectively. Also, AJAX (Asynchronous Java Script), is now used to update webpages without interfering on it. Altogether, steps were made towards a World Wide Web with more possibilities for interaction. These steps contributed to the development of social media platforms. With all these developments, web sites started to encourage users to generate content through a profile uploading text, pictures and videos along with the possibility of comments, tags, ratings and reviews. Hence, although no new World Wide Web was created, the characteristics and usage changed significantly.

### 2.2.1 Self-publishing and Web 2.0 developments

Self-publishing authors are in charge of the marketing mix themselves. Internet is the place where self-publishing authors can engage, promote their work and reach an audience. Social media play an important role in the promotion of the self-publishing process “The book becomes not the product of value but the advertisement for the product of value- the authors themselves” (Anderson, 2007, p.76). The rise of the social media has changed the playing-field of making connections with audiences and promote products (Smith, 2011). According Mata and Quesada (2013, p.57), “Web 2.0 allows the exchange of information between users through websites. Its applications are made for people and by the people”. Therefore, Web 2.0 services can be used as a marketing tool, for instance, to offer a service for free on social media.

Self-publishing authors, when uploading their books online, benefit from Web 2.0 websites. Kindle Direct Publishing is a platform developed by Amazon.com that enables self-publishing authors to directly upload their book content in the Amazon.com retailer website. Once the self-published book is ready to be purchased online, it can be rated from one to five stars and available for customer’s reviews. This interaction, where customers are able to write a comment about a self-published



book on Amazon.com and qualify it according their impressions, characterizes the term Web 2.0 in a communication between self-publishing authors and their audiences.

Self-promotion on blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and many others platforms helps self-publishing authors to reach their audiences. By establishing and maintaining social relationships on these social media websites, authors can consequently generate an interest in their book and try to convince potential readers eventually to buy or download it. This activity is related to e-commerce, which is clearly different than the purpose of online social networks (Mata & Quesada, 2013).

According to Mata and Quesada (2013), self-publishing authors use self-promotion in social media as an e-commerce marketing tool. The presence on social media is related to the intention of promoting themselves and their books. Social media, defined as “collaborative online applications and technologies that enable participation, connectivity, user-generated content, sharing of information and collaboration amongst a community of users” (Henderson & Bowleys, 2010, p. 239), made it easier for writers to promote their books and engage audiences as part of the process of self-publishing. Authors must have a presence in social media to entertain readers. According Mc Quail (2005, p. 96) “the value of media entertainment is attributed to the ability to satisfy user’s needs for escapism, enjoyment, emotional release, and anxiety relief”.

On social media, enabled by web 2.0 technologies, readers can connect with self-publishing authors. Hence, unlike with traditional media, on social media platforms we can find a vast amount of different kinds of information about the book, the author and the audience (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2014). Not only can we find information about the message of the author to the readers (one-way communication), we can also see interaction between the readers and between readers and authors (both ways). According to self-publishing author Talli Roland in an interview to The Guardian newspaper, social media nowadays is important for both authors, traditional or self-published (Roland, 2013). Moreover, it has to be used in a proper way. Getting attention on social media with disturbing messages such as “buy my book!” is definitely not the best way to engage with readers (Roland, 2013, p. 4). A lot of work must be done to build relationships through a blog, Facebook and Twitter. Interacting

must be done on a daily basis. It should be fun and a way to meet new people and chat with readers that have read her book.

“Social media channels facilitate consumer-to-consumer communication and accelerate communication among consumers” (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008, p.45). Against this backdrop, studying the behavior of self-publishing authors on social media is a relevant topic.

This master thesis analyzes the online interaction between self-publishing authors and their audiences on social media. When a self-publishing author finishes writing a book, he or she uploads it on a platform such as Amazon KDP. Then, a new process of interaction, communication and persuasion begins. The self-publishing author has to make a connection with potential readers through Web 2.0 services. This master thesis investigates which social media platform suits best for each kind of engagement that a self-publishing author wants with its readers, using the possibilities of Web 2.0. In a practical way, everything from engaging with audiences on blogs, online forums, social media applications, to promoting user and generated content as online reviews about the self-publishing book, is included in this research. According Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) social media is “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation of exchange of user-generated content”.

### **2.3 User-generated content**

User-generated content can be defined as a sum of all ways that people use social media. “Sites such as social networking sites, blogs and online communities share the characteristic that any user can be a producer of the content consumed on the site” (Baumer, Sueyoshi, & Tomlinson, 2011). This term achieved its popularity in 2005, describing all media content publicly available and generated by end-users. While Web 2.0 is providing the ideological and technological foundation for social media, user-generated content is a broad term related to all content that is created on social media by the users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

There are basically three requirements to classify user-generated content according the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007). Firstly, it must be publicly published on a website or in a social network website with access for a restricted group of people. Content exchanged by email or instant messages is

thus not included. Secondly, user-generated content requires a creative effort. Copying a newspaper article and posting it on a personal blog without modifying any part of the content, for instance, is not valid. Finally, user-generated content must be created outside a professional environment. For example, content that has been created with a commercial appeal is also excluded of being user-generated content.

Ever since the creation of the definition of user-generated content in the early 1980s, the technological, economic and social context has changed continuously. These changes include broadband availability and hardware capacity for the technological dimension. For the economic dimension, it relates to the rise of tools for creation of user-generated content. Finally, the appearance of a generation called the ‘digital natives’, who know how to work with digital devices because they grew up with them, affected the social dimension (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The technological, economic and social developments are important for self-publishing authors. The technologic dimension could be that self-publishing authors have a portable computer with a huge storage capacity and a wireless broadband internet connection to generate content engaging with their audiences anywhere. Moreover, smartphones enable self-publishing authors to be connected on the internet and engage with their audiences at any time. Secondly, for the economic dimension, self-publishing authors can be promoting their books on relatively new social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Also, they can use retailer websites, such as Amazon.com, that created tools for user’s reviews and have the possibility to share these on social media. This is perceived as an evolution of user-generated content. On the retailer’s website, users can rate and review self-publishing books for a large audience with the same interests and spread their thoughts to their network on social media. Finally, within the social dimension, the self-publishing author’s promotional activity depends uniquely and exclusively on the self-publishing authors themselves. Know-how about online engagement is necessary, such as how to use and manage social media platforms. Moreover, self-publishing authors have to know how to appropriately engage with audiences, using many social media platforms, according to the purposes that each platform was created for. That is to say, suppose that a new social media platform has been developed and self-publishing authors perceive that potential readers have just started to use it. The presence on this new platform and the technological knowledge to manage it properly is, therefore, necessary. The digital natives have less ‘technological’ difficulties and can easily adapt themselves to these

new platforms. This could be applied, for instance, using new emerged social media platforms that appeared after popular platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. For example, Instagram and Pinterest which both have a specific usage. One is about pictures and the latter related to images.

Considering all the definitions of Web 2.0, user-generated content and the evolutions that have occurred since their creation, the use of social media now plays an active role in self-publishing online engagement.

## **2.4 Use of social media**

Over the last years, social media have become an integral part of the marketing mix. As shown by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2014), the use of social media by brands contributed positively to the brand equity and brand attitude, which again have a positive effect on purchase intention. Self-publishing authors are not selling their books in bookstores, therefore social media are an effective tool to promote the self-published book online to arouse reader's purchase or download intention.

One of the purposes of social networks is to support and create human connections through social media (Mata & Quesada, 2013). An interesting perspective of social media related with self-publishing is the different ways of possible communication. Not only can self-publishing authors communicate with readers, readers can talk to the self-publishing authors as well. Readers can also talk to other readers. According Duan, Gu, and Whinston (2008) social media channels facilitate consumer-to-consumer communication and accelerate communication among consumers. Therefore, one of the most important things is social networking: "Social networking through online media can be understood as a variety of digital sources of information that are created, initiated, circulated, and consumed by internet users as a way to educate one another about products, brands, services, personalities and issues" (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013, p,117). Social media platforms, and especially social networking sites, have changed marketing forever. Social media is now part of all of them. This is why social media gets a lot of attention. Thus, self-publishing authors having a presence on social media such as a blog, a Facebook page and a Twitter account is critical for visibility.

In 1995, corporate web pages and e-commerce started with companies such as Amazon.com and eBay bursting a dot.com bubble 6 years later. This event is comparable to the creation of social media websites to what the World Wide Web was initially created for: a platform that allows information between users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that social media are not just ‘old wine in new bottles’ because enhanced technical advances have been made since the launch of the World Wide Web enabling users to communicate in a virtual context extremely different than in the beginning of the creation of the internet. However, what is particularly interesting is that this was exactly what the internet was created for, but it just came up with the appearing of social media.

For self-publishing authors, social media are an inexpensive way to promote a book. Connecting with their readers and building a relationship with them through social media is a low and effective cost model. Moreover, through social media self-publishing authors can meet other self-publishing authors as well. It is important to consider that if other self-publishing authors are using social media, one does not want to be left out. Maintaining a presence on social media is a feeling of being part of the *Zeitgeist*. “Growing discussion of self-publishing in the media may lead self-publishing authors to feel they are part of a wider trend” (Bavertock & Steinitz, 2013a, p.278).

There are many types of social media platforms. And as a trend, new platforms are being developed every day. Self-publishing authors must be comfortable to choose platforms that suit best with their promoting goals. One of the purposes of this master thesis is to understand how self-publishing authors are positioning themselves on social media platforms. How are they engaging with their audiences through social media? Are they using different social media platforms for what the platform is meant for? Are they present on Facebook rather than Twitter, for instance, because Facebook suits better with the self-publishing author’s personal preferences? Or are they analyzing and considering their readers profiles and then positioning themselves on social media accordingly? The use of social media is related to the diverse types of social media that follow in the next section.

## **2.5 Types of social media**

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) (see Figure 4) there are 6 different types of

Social Media: Collaborative projects, Blogs, Content Communities, Social Networking Sites, Virtual Game Worlds and Virtual Social Worlds.

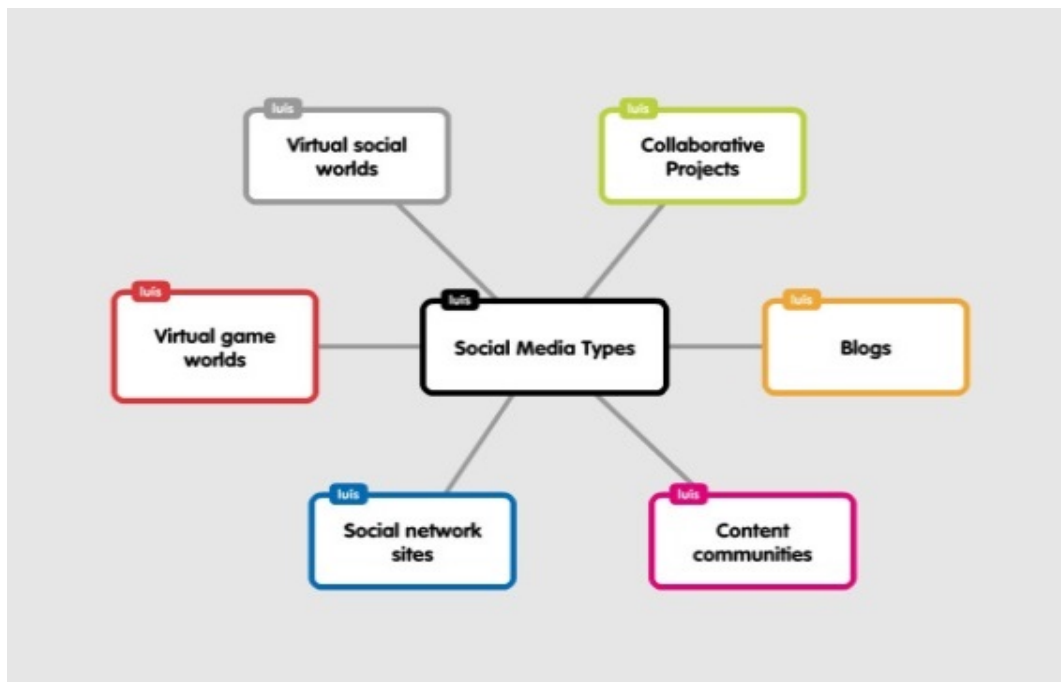


Figure 4: Social media types (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

### 2.5.1 Collaborative projects

Collaborative projects might be the best example of jointed user-generated content. Collaborative projects are possible because of the cooperation of a community to create online content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Within collaborative projects, two categories are observed: wikis, which websites allow users to add, change or remove text-based content and social bookmarking services, which enables users collecting, rating and ‘tagging’ media content or internet links. Examples for these categories are the online encyclopedia Wikipedia where users are feeding the website collectively obtaining an outcome better than any other could achieve individually. Even though some information written on Wikipedia may actually not be true it is ‘believed’ to be true for most of its users. Delicious is an example of a social bookmarking web service where users can store, share and discover bookmarks from web documents. In tune with the reading marketing, Goodreads is a ‘social cataloging’ website that enables users to make a list of preferred books, commenting and rating their reading experiences or even adding the desire to read a specific book in a collaborative social network project as well.

### 2.5.2 Blogs

Representing the earliest form of social media and usually presenting content in a reverse date-stamped chronological order web page (OECD, 2007), blogs are special types of websites that can be presented in many types of variations. They are known for high self-presentation/self-disclosure in the social process, the same way as social networking sites do (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Blogs can be a personal diary to describe the author's life and experiences about any topic or a summarized webpage with information about any specific content area. In general, one person is managing the blog and it allows interaction with others through the addition of comments. Blogs started with text entries and have increased its format lately. An interesting example to be mentioned is Book Blogs. A website which has a section called 'self-published book reviews', encouraging self-publishing authors to post information about their self-published books when looking for reviewers. A discussion forum is available to both self-publishing authors and readers as well. Self-publishing authors can use it to promote their self-published books in the Book Blogs website while readers are advised to review the self-published book respectfully and with helpful reviews for other users.

One focus of this master thesis is an analysis of how self-publishing authors are using social media platforms for online engagement. Blogs are relevant to be considered because self-publishing authors can create a blog about the self-published book and post entries in other blogs as well. Moreover, creating a blog related to the topic of the self-published book can help to engage audiences and gain online visibility attracting, thus, potential readers building a network.

### 2.5.3 Content communities

Through content communities, users are sharing media content with other users. This is the main objective of content communities that exist in an extensive variety of media types, including photos (Flickr), videos (Youtube) and power-point presentations (Slideshare). An example of books sharing is the website BookCrossing allowing roughly 750,000 users from over 130 different countries to share books. The primary idea of this content community is to transform the whole world in an online library. Users download a label on BookCrossing website with a BCID (Book Crossing Identification Number). After printing the BCID, they label the book and share it with someone else, even a stranger. The person that receives the book inserts

the BCID on BookCrossing website and the owner can follow the book's itinerary. This is an interesting content community to share printed books. However, the self-publishing activity is mainly based on e-books that are protected with copyrights terms regarding commercial purposes. Nevertheless, Amazon.com enables Kindle books sharing through users with a Kindle device or app installed. It allows to lend or borrow a book for 14 days from other user registered on Amazon.com website.

#### 2.5.4 Social networking sites

“Social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other. These personal profiles can include any type of information, including photos, video, audio files, and blogs” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc are example of most used social network sites that self-publishing authors can use to engage their audience and potential readers.

Facebook is the most relevant social network site to be analyzed on this master thesis. This online social network application was founded in 2004. Four years later, in 2008, it registered more than 175 million users. This number of people connected through social media was more than double the population of Germany (80 million) and slightly less than the population of Brazil (190 million). Social networking sites are important to self-publishing engagement because 75 percent of internet users in the second quarter of 2008 were actively using social networks, reading blogs or reviewing shops sites. These numbers represent a drastic rise of 56 percent compared to 2007 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Gjoka, Kurant, Butts and Markopoulou (2011), in 2010, Facebook counted more than 500 million members. In the same period, the top five social networking sites Facebook, QQ, Myspace, Orkut and Twitter surpassed 1 billion users. The population of social networking sites users is approaching 30 percent of the world population and it is more than 80 percent of the world's internet users.

An interesting on line community themed around reading and writing is Wattpad. Defined as one of the most active social sites on the e-literature community according website Mashable (<http://mashable.com/2013/09/30/wattpad/>). It allows writers to upload the content of their work, build and engage fans receiving instant feedback about their writing. Readers can like, follow, comment, interact and even



create new chapters from original text placing this platform as collaborative project community as well.

This master thesis is focus on the self-publishing engagement on social networking sites and, moreover, which social media platform self-publishing authors choose to engage with their audiences. This category is perceived as the most important to be analyzed regarding self-publishing authors engagement on different types of social media.

#### 2.5.5 Virtual game worlds

Virtual game worlds is the first group of a virtual world type of social media in which users can use avatars and interact with others as they would in real life. Playing online games, users are behaving according rules to a massively multiplayer context. World of WarCraft is a popular example of a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG). Consoles such as Microsoft's X-Box and Sony's Playstation allow that players all around the world can play games simultaneously on the internet as well.

This type of social media platform related with the self-publishing author's engagement is not expected to be included in the analysis of this master thesis, although, activity about virtual game worlds might appear during the analysis of qualitative data.

#### 2.5.6 Virtual social worlds

The second group of virtual worlds is the virtual social world. This last type of social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), allows users to have a virtual behavior life apparently as the same as their real one. Users through avatars, on a three-dimension virtual environment, interact with others users online. Online behavior can be like mirrors of user's real habits enabling to users to choose of unlimited range of self-presentation strategies. Second life is an example of this type of virtual social world as an application that users can have the same feeling and situations as in real life, like walk, talk with others or just see the sunset at beach for example. Moreover, this type of social media allows users to generate content creating virtual furniture or clothes and selling in virtual coins too. This type of social media, as virtual game worlds, is not expected to be associated with self-publishing engagement on social media. However, it depends of the results of data analysis process.

## 2.6 Classification of social media

In order to classify all popular types of social media, as for instance, Wikipedia, Blogs, Youtube, Facebook, Second Life and many others, a classification scheme was developed based on theories in the field of media research, such as social presence and media richness, and theories about social process, such as self-presentation and self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The first concept related to media research, social presence, refers to the degree of contact that can take place between two or more users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Media richness, the second concept related to media research, is similar to social presence, but focus on the amount of information that can be shared during a specific period of time, leading to more certainty for the users (Kaplan & Heanlein, 2010). For example, while one social network site enables to post a short message with a reduced 140 characters limit, like Twitter, it could be useful posting a link to another platform such as the self-publishing author's blog for example. The first classification between social media platforms can be made based on social presence and media richness.

As for theories about social process, the first concept, self-presentation, refers to how much control one wants to have about her or his impression on other people (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Both personal identity and the wish to influence others play a role for self-presentation. According to the social process of online identity, one of the desires of people when creating a personal webpage or a social media profile is the wish to have a presence on the cyberspace (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Self-disclosure, the second concept for social process, is related to self-presentation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). That is to say, how much does someone reveal about him or herself? A person can control its self-disclosure by deciding what to share or not, but it can also happen unconsciously. Social media platforms can be classified on these two dimensions as well. For example, a blog has a high score on self-disclosure.

The concepts for media research and social process to classify a social media platform are relevant for self-publishing authors. Self-publishing authors, when they self-published their book, can ask themselves: and now what? The wish to create an online identity is related with the perceived need for online engagement. Self-disclosure, is done consciously or unconsciously about revelation of personal information on social media (feelings, thoughts, likes, dislikes) consistently with the

image that one would like to give or to persuade people perceptions and intentions.

One point of analysis of this master thesis is to investigate how self-publishing authors are engaging with their audiences on social media platforms. This engagement could be more effective, perceiving self-disclosure from audiences through a like or a comment on a post of the self-publishing author on Facebook, for example, that was created with the intention to engage and to persuade the perception of the audiences. Consistently engaging this way on social media, can help self-publishing authors to increase the intentions of potential readers to eventually buy or download their self-published book. This is illustrated in the ‘influencing to gain rewards’ in the social media classification scheme as a consequence from creating a personal webpage or social media profile (see Figure 5).

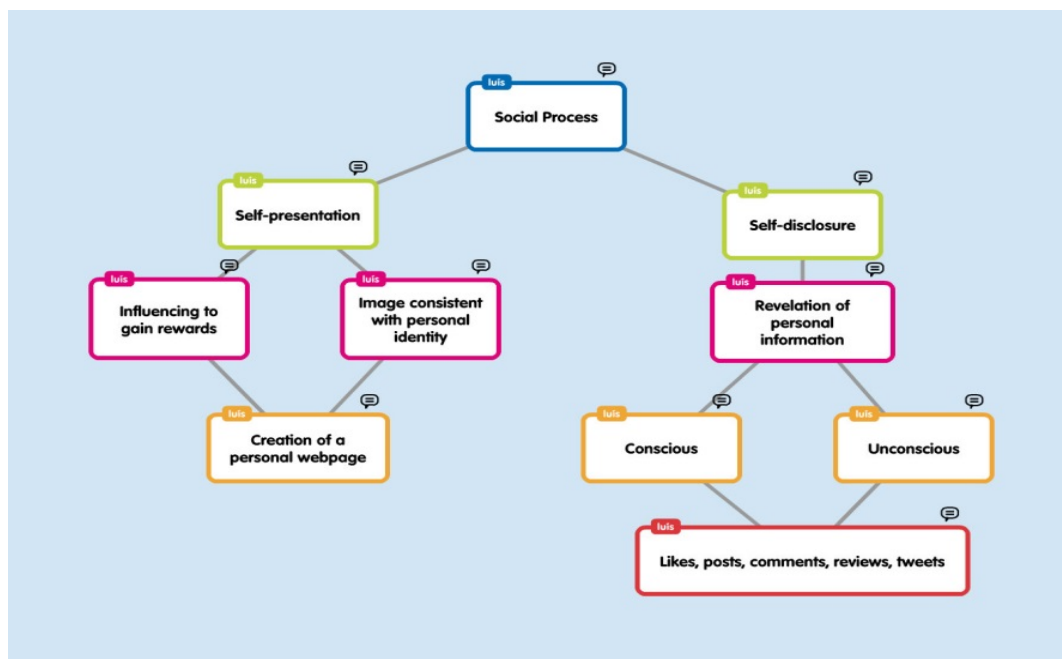


Figure 5: Social media classification scheme (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 62) “a second classification can be made based on the degree of self-disclosure it requires and the type of self-presentation it allows”. Self-publishing authors who position themselves in not just one, but in multiples social media platforms, increase the information about them or the self-published book on social media. Moreover, feeding multiples social media platforms with information regarding the self-published book could increase audiences to follow, like or even access multiple times the blog of the self-publishing

author (Vaynechuck, 2013). This is related to the social media platforms self-publishing authors are interested in to use for online engagement. Considering Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media classification, self-publishing authors when engaging on social media, should analyze their audience’s reactions regarding posts, comments or shares that indicate which type of content best affects readers perceptions and leads to the desired engagement. Audience’s intention to eventually buy or download for free the self-published book could flourish after a proper social media engagement.

Visualizing Figure 6, regarding self-presentation and self-disclosure, collaborative projects scored lower than blogs. A blogger can give much more tailored information about himself on a blog than on a collaborative project such as Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia written by different users. In the same way, social networking sites allow more self-disclosure than content communities, obtaining a higher score than the latter. Finally, virtual social worlds are scored in a higher position than virtual game worlds because it requires more self-disclosure from the user, whereas users in the game world behave in a determined way, for instance, a battle in a fiction galaxy.

Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Figure 6: Self presentation/Self-disclosure social media table (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Self-publishing book engagement is suitable to engage in all different social media classifications. An author could create a blog (a personal or another related with the self-published book) to engage readers and potential readers. In different other blogs, the self-publishing author can be active posting comments with the intention to promote its self-published book. In collaborative projects, the self-publishing author can create a page on Wikipedia about himself and another one for the book as well. On social networking sites, the self-publishing author can be active in many and different platforms positioning himself accordingly. On content communities, a trailer from the self-publishing book can be created the same way as

for movies. Moreover, by creating a channel on Youtube, it is possible to cluster all videos related to the book, interviews from the authors, videos of readers related to the self-published book as well. Finally, virtual social worlds and games could be adapted to the self-published book, as is the case of author J. K. Rowling and its website Pottermore.com dedicated to experience the stories of Harry Potter in a virtual online world. Even though J. K. Rowling is not a self-publishing author, she uses the Pottermore.com website to engage the readers disclosing unknown parts of the book in an interactive participating reading that is suitable to self-publishing authors as well.

## **2.7 Uses and gratifications theory**

The uses and gratifications, also referred to as the needs and gratifications theory, states that audiences are not passive and its principle elements includes people's psychological and social needs as well as how media can gratify needs and motives to communicate (Rubin, 2009). The uses and gratifications theory is used to understand why people choose certain media platforms or services (Severin & Tankard, 1997). It analyses what audiences do with media instead of a range of other theories that mainly focus on the other way around: what media do with people. The uses and gratifications theory focuses not only on 'why' someone chooses a media platform interactivity to satisfy needs, but also 'how' an individual makes the decision considering motivations and behaviors (Kaye & Johnson, 2004). Desire for information, emotional, connection and status are audience's needs that multiple media compete to get attention (Tan, 1985).

The uses and gratifications theory has provided one of the most relevant perspectives to explain psychological and behavior dimensions involving mediated communications (Lin, 1996; Ruggiero, 2000). According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), uses and gratification theory states that behavior for media users are goal-directed and they are pro-active in media. Moreover, they select appropriate media to gratify their needs because they are aware of their needs. This theory was designed in the 70s/80s, when traditional media such as radio, television and newspaper, were most used.

However, recent research has been conducted on new media as well (Flanagin, 2005; LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001; Leung, 2001). "Interactivity on the Internet

allows consumers to actively participate in the persuasion process by controlling the advertising messages, amount of information, and order of presentation at any time, according to their needs and preferences” (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, p. 59).

According to Ko, Cho, and Roberts (2013), there are two dimensions on interactivity: human-message and human-human interaction. The first one, human-message interaction, is basically a form of interaction used for traditional media. The user has many choices but does not have control of the message. On the other hand, with human-human interaction in interactive media, users have many choices and control on the message. Users can interact with the message and provide feedback. In tune with it, several research on social network sites have shown that users tend to use a range of different, but integrated, social media platforms together rather than using only one social media platform to communicate (Baym, Zhang, & Lin, 2004).

### 2.7.1 User-generated media

Shao (2008) argues that user-generated media become extremely popular with individuals using different and integrated social media platforms producing their own contents for self-expression and self-actualization. Consuming, participating and producing are ways that individuals deal with user-generated media. Readers when following a self-publishing author on social media can just watch the posts about the self-publishing author but never actually make an interaction. Participating, involves another type of interaction as user-to-user and user-to-content. This way, users can add books to their preferred book’s list on Facebook, ranking and commenting about it on Amazon, for example, and add it to a ‘wish list’ on Goodreads sharing it with friends. Producing is related to reviewing a book of a self-publishing author about another self-publishing author in a personal blog or community, for example.

According to Shao (2008), people may participate interacting with the content as with other users as well and user-generated media are collaborating for social interaction and community development. This usually happens when people “rate the content, save to their favorites, share with others, post comments, etc” (Shao, 2008, p. 12). According to this theory, self-publishing authors can build up a community supporting themselves. Not just a reader review could be profitable for the promotion of the book, but the support through a community of others self-publishing authors as well. This way, readers and supporters are full filling their needs about self-expression and self-actualization in a social network online interaction. Nevertheless, self-

publishing authors can control the perception that others have from them in a process of manipulated self-expression when interacting on social media (Dominick, 1999).

## **2.8 Marketing strategies**

Besides the concepts about social media platforms, this thesis addresses how self-publishing authors go about engaging with an audience. The 80/20 Rule helps to understand how self-publishing authors divide their time between writing and engaging on social media. This is important to understand how professional self-publishing authors are regarding their online engagement activities. Secondly, the 90-9-1 Principle is a framework to classify social media users. By seeing a difference between heavy contributors, intermittent contributors and lurkers, self-publishing authors can strategically address these groups of audiences.

### 2.8.1 80/20 Rule

According to Anderson (2007), the 80/20 Rule was first studied by an Italian polymath named Vilfredo Pareto. In 1897, applying mathematics concepts, he calculated that 20 percent of the population of England owned 80 percent of the wealth. Applying this outcome to others countries, he discovered that the ratio remained the same. Later, in 1949, George Zipf applied this same principle in words. Few words were used often and most were seldom used. This is a predictable relationship with Pareto's wealthy assumption, named Zipf's law (Anderson, 2007). Nowadays, the concept is also known as 'Pareto Principle'. According to Dunford, Su, Tamang and Wintour (2014) in a study with Forbes list of 2012 revealed that 20 percent of the richest people of the world own 56,72 percent of the money. The same study analyzed the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2011. It was discovered that 20 percent of the richest countries in the world have 91,62 percent of the total amount of money. It is important to state that the 80/20 Rule does not need to have this exact proportion. It could be 80/20, 90/10 or even 70/30.

Nowadays, the Pareto-Principle is still applied in real life situations other than what the Pareto-Principle was designed for. The principle is used for studies about sales, assuming that 20 percent of the created products account for 80 percent of the sales. It is also applied in other situations: 80 percent of the revenue comes from 20 percent of

the costumers, 20 percent of the products yield comes from 80 percent of the sales and 20 percent of society holds 80 percent of its wealth (Dunford et al, 2014).

As explained in chapter 2.1, the rise of the internet has prolonged the tail of niche products, enabling them to achieve a bigger part of the sales (Anderson, 2007). Of course, an actual store has a lower number of available products than an online shop, with many other products costumers were not aware of when their only option was going to a store. With the Long Tail as a reference, Brynjolfsson, Hu, and Simester (2011) show that the 80/20 Rule of product sales is outdated because of the online possibilities. They found that niche markets account for “a larger percentage of products sold in an internet order than a catalog order” (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Simester, 2011, pag. 4).

Self-publishing authors, when promoting on social media can have a connection with the 80/20 Rule. Dedicating 80 percent of their time networking through social media things related to the book and 20 percent of their time writing (Morrison, 2012a). However, others self-publishing authors are taking the 80/20 Rule even further, stating that when using social media you should use 80 percent of your time talking about things beside your book and 20 percent dedicating to sell it (Morrison, 2012b) (see Figure 7). According Morrison (2012b), this strategy is used to justify that readers are human beings and they use social media websites not to buy, but to develop relationships (Morrison, 2012a).

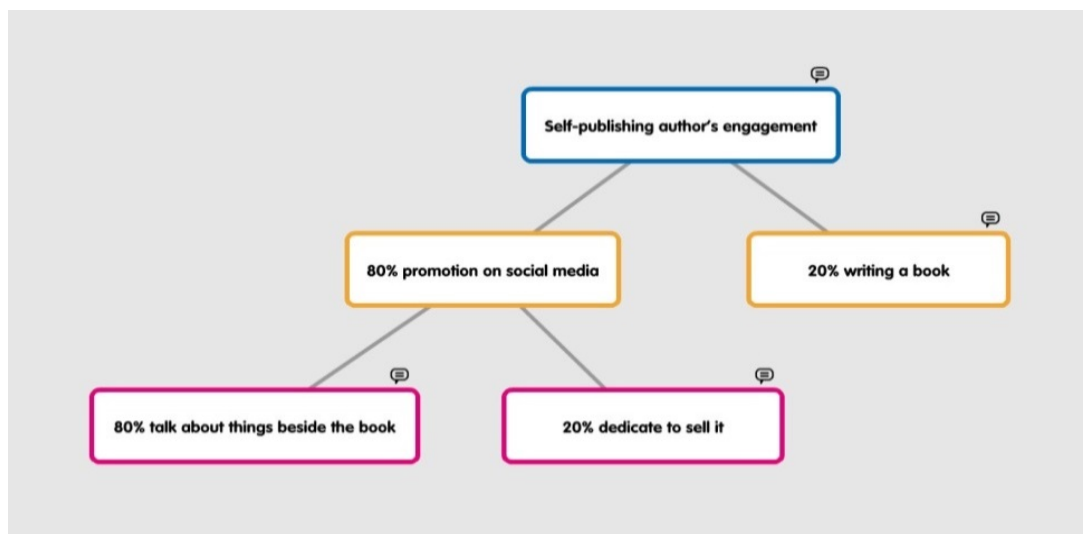


Figure 7: 80/20 Rule on self-publishing engagement



In conclusion, it is of particular importance to analyze how self-publishing authors are promoting their books on social media because it is almost as important as the quality of the book itself. The amount of time given to promote the self-published book on social media and the way self-publishing authors approach to its audiences is a strategy to engagement related to the 80/20 Rule. In sum, positioning on social media properly, self-publishing authors have the possibility to better engage audiences and consequently attract potential readers interested on buying or even download the self-published book for free.

### 2.8.2 90-9-1 Principle

Wagman (2010) states that use of social media is characterized by reading, surfing, looking up or simply lurking on the Internet. Therefore, in tune with the 80/20 Rule, another rule that has been incorporated in the cyber-culture and the digital marketing with important investigation of the network online engagement is the 1 Percent rule or the 90-9-1 Principle. This principle states that 90 percent of online actors are observing but actually not participating on the Internet, 9 percent are rarely contributing with some participation and 1 percent of the actors are active and creating the vast majority of new content. These 90 percent, 9 percent and 1 percent are also known as Lurkers, Contributors and Creators respectively” (Mierlo, 2014) (see Figure 8).

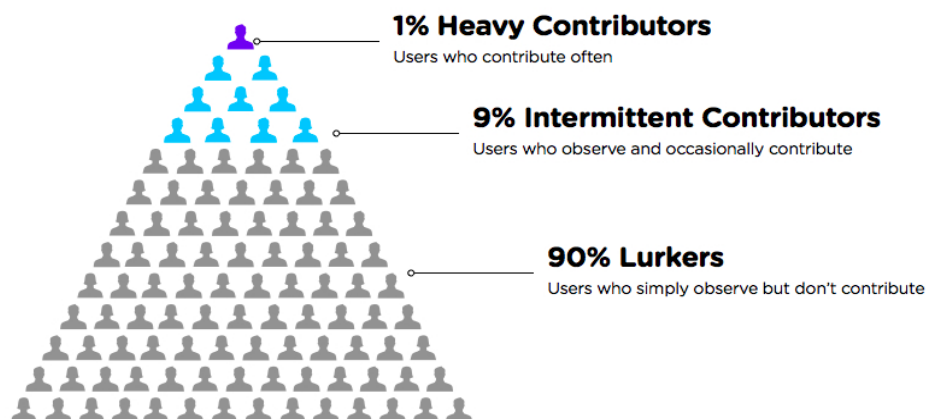


Figure 8: 90-9-1 Principle (Mierlo, 2014)

Lurkers login to social media platforms, look at the content and logoff. They do not comment, post, review or even interact online. In fact, they do not contribute to the social media engagement desired by self-publishing authors. The 9 percent are passive contributors. They briefly comment something, demonstrating their agreement 'liking' or sharing a post. Actually, they give little contribution to the social media engagement because they most observe and occasionally contribute spreading the message. Finally, the 1 percent is highly active on the online community. They are opinion leaders who are blogging, creating content, uploading pictures, videos and commenting about any content. The 1 percent of heavy contributors are helpful to the self-publishing author. Self-publishing authors should aim to reach out to these heavy contributors, while the other 9 and 90 percent are observing, or even interfering, in their engagement. Hence, self-publishing authors should focus on heavy contributors without forgetting to pay attention to the other two categories to make a consistent engagement with their audiences. Self-publishing authors should consider the 90-9-1 Principle and be aware of its struggles to effectively engaging on social media. Very few people are contributing from a content generation online perspective. They are the minority of 1 percent of users that actually can contribute to spread the vast majority of the content on the internet. The other 9 percent simply edit it or slightly modify this content, maybe just giving a 'like' in a post on Facebook and nothing more. The 90 percent just view the content without any kind of contribution and this is a vast number of users on the Internet indeed. An online community blog states that the 90-9-1 Rule for online engagement is better represented as 70-20-10 as the presence of users on social media and social media platforms have dramatically increased over the last years. (<http://info.socious.com/bid/40350/Is-the-90-9-1-Rule-for-Online-Community-Engagement-Dead-Data>). The increasing number of heavy contributors, leading to a 70-20-10 Principle, can be in favour of the self-publishing author, as more proactive engagement can take place.

According to Hoffman (2012) the 1 percent has a higher 'social capital' than the other 90 and 9 percent. "Social capital refers to the resources that flow to an individual from the network of his or her relationships" (Hoffman, 2012, p.195). Hence, social capital is developed through relationships and interactions. The internet, structured by networks, can be a valuable tool for building social capital (Pruijt, 2002).

Self-publishing authors, when engaging and targeting their audiences online, should aim the 1 percent of users within the 90-9-1 Rule. According to this theory, very few people are actually contributing to a content generation perspective on the online community. Most of the users are passive. However, according to the uses and gratifications theory, users really know what they want when using social media (Rubin, 2009). While users are scrolling down their Facebook newsfeed or tweets for instance, just the most highlighted, creative and impressive posts will really catch the attention of the audience and consequently evoke an action to get to know more about the self-publishing author or book. Hence, using different social media platforms, self-publishing authors increase the probability to make at least a lurker become an intermittent contributor through social media engagement. Notwithstanding, lurkers are not less important to self-publishing authors, these 90 percent of users are at least consuming content, the self-published book in this case, and this passive contribution is relevant for the 'social capital'. Although the lurker does not react on the message of the self-publishing author on social media, the lurker can mention it during a lunch with a friend or with a colleague at work building personal relationships (McQuail, 1972). Unlike lurkers, contributors and creators, as part of the other 9 percent and 1 percent of the users respectively, can be pro-active, generating and sharing content related to the self-published book on social media. However, is anyone actually listening to them? Are they adding any value to build 'social capital'? It is slightly disconcerting, as self-publishing authors might need the feedback loop from passive users as well to let its audiences know that users are really talking about their self-published book on the online community.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This master thesis employs an approach to understand to what extent self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage with their audiences online. The experiences of self-publishing authors with promoting their books on social networking sites will expand our understanding about social media engagement on different platforms. Since the creation of Web 2.0, different types of social media have been developed increasing and changing the engagement between content creators and users online perceptions and needs. The message posted and the way of engagement can vary from one social media platform to another. Twitter, for

example, is a social networking site that enables one to post a short message with a reduced 140 characters limit. Still, in this short message, it is possible to include a link, redirecting to another platform, such as the self-publishing author's blog. On the other hand, another social network site dedicated to books with the function to review them, like Goodreads, could enable the self-publishing author to build a trustworthy network community. It is relevant to analyze how self-publishing authors are positioning themselves on each social media platform.

This master thesis researches, through interviews with self-publishing authors, if there is a relation between the theoretical framework and how self-publishing authors engage with their audiences on social media. Theories cited on the previous theoretical background section of this master thesis, like the 80/20 Rule, the 90-9-1 Principle and the uses and gratifications theory, helped to design the interview questions and interpret answers given by self-publishing authors about social media engagement through different social media platforms. For example, to test if self-publishing authors follow the 80/20 Rule, they were asked how much time they spend on writing and how much time they spend on engaging. Also, they were asked about the topics of their postings on social media and if they used different social networking sites differently. Hence, by obtaining this information from the self-publishing authors and comparing them with the theory framework, the research question can be answered.

### **3. Method**

This section presents the methodology of this master thesis. 3.1 explains the choice of method for this research, which is qualitative interviews. 3.2 reflects on the sampling technique, which is purposive sampling. Chapter 3.3 presents the size of the data sets used for this thesis. All transcripts of the interviews can be found in Appendix C. 3.5 goes through the step-by-step operationalisation of the research. The method of analysis is addressed in chapter 3.6 and finally, the validity and reliability issue is discussed in chapter 3.7.

#### **3.1 Choice of Method**

An important fact that has to be considered when choosing a method for this master thesis is that self-publishing is relatively new field of research. Besides some literature focussing on who self-publishers are (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013b) and what satisfaction they gain from the process of self-publishing (Baverstock & Steinitz, 2013a), the use of social media by self-publishers to engage with their audiences is something new. The only reliable way to understand more about how self-publishers engage with their audiences on different social media platforms is to collect information from the self-publishing authors themselves by interviews. Nevertheless, primarily to formulating a research question, a lot of desk-research was done on the self-publishing market, as can be read in the introduction of this thesis.

The process of collecting data elected for this master thesis will be based on qualitative research. This thesis uses a combination of two methods of qualitative analysis. Scientists within qualitative research are increasingly using a combination of methodological approaches (Lal, Suto, & Ungar, 2012). First of all, this thesis uses a narrative analysis approach (Boje, 2001), as the results will be based on the narrative of self-publishing authors themselves. It relies on qualitative interviews to obtain data, because self-publishing is a very new topic that needs an exploratory research. A statistical analysis, which is needed to find reason and motivations, is not the purpose of analysis of this master thesis. A qualitative investigation provides a large number of opportunities for information when conducting the interviews. A standardized open-ended interview has been chosen as the format of qualitative interview

collection that allows self-publishing authors to express their experiences and point of view about their online engagement. In terms of the wording of the question, the standardized open-ended interview is deeply formulated. All self-publishing authors interviewed have been asked the same questionnaire with worded questions and the possibility of open-ended responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The second method used for this analysis is the grounded theory approach. The intent of the grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory that relates to a particular situation. This situation could be one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The grounded theory approach collects data before formulating a hypothesis. Instead of testing a hypothesis by collecting data, this thesis answers a research question by interpreting the data derived from the qualitative interviews. Then, it formulates a hypothesis on how self-publishing authors use different social media platforms. Hence, this is a reversed situation in which the hypothesis is formulated in the conclusion of the thesis. This method was chosen for the same reason as the decision to use qualitative interviews. Very little research has been done on self-publishing authors and the way they engage on social media platforms. Therefore, it makes more sense for this research to work on formulating a hypothesis than to test a hypothesis that cannot be based on previous research.

Within the combination of the narrative and grounded theory analysis, a thematic analysis was chosen to structure the results of the qualitative interviews. The concepts of the theoretical framework will be used to cluster data and further analyse similarities and differences. This will lead to a conclusion in chapter 4.4.

### **3.2 Sampling**

The sample strategy used to select interviewees for this research is purposive sampling. This is a non-probability sampling technique that relies on the judgement of the researcher to select interviewees (Tongco, 2007). For this research, 10 interviews were conducted. As the research is based on a small amount of interviewees, a pre-selection was done to choose the interviewees. Self-publishing authors were selected from the website ‘Independent Author Network’ (<http://www.independentauthornetwork.com>). This community created on December 2010 consists of roughly 1000 self-publishing authors networking and actively

promoting their presence on social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Goodreads, Google+, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest.

All interviewees have self-published their books in English. Hence, the self-publishing authors active on the 'Independent Author Network' are known for networking and promoting their books on social media networking sites. This is helpful to ensure that the interviews allow this research to draw conclusions, as the research questions is related to social media activity to promote books. In that sense, the ability to finally be able to answer the research question was not left to probability. Altogether, the group of interviewees was not selected to represent a population, but to answer the research question. As the Independent Author Network is a relevant network in the self-publishing world, this should not cause a bias to the research. For the interviews, a diverse group of self-publishing authors were interviewed. Of the interviewees 6 were male and 4 were female. All interviewees were between 35 and 60 years old. Most interviewees were American (8), followed by Irish (1) and Dutch (1).

### **3.3 Size of data sets**

Approximately 30 self-publishing authors that met the criteria were contacted through the Independent Authors Network website. Of all self-publishing authors contacted, 10 were available for an interview (see Appendix A). The interviews were introduced in different ways. Self-publishing authors (4) that could not be reached personally were interviewed through Skype. Audio from the interviews was recorded. One self-publishing author was interviewed face-to face. This interview was recorded in a smartphone. The method used to report Skype and face-to-face interviews was verbatim transcription. Finally, 5 interviewees have sent written responses from the interview questions (see Appendix B) by email. In this case, no recording and transcriptions were required.

### **3.4 Transcripts**

Transcribed verbatim of all recorded interviews and copies from interviews received by email are included in the Appendix section of this master thesis (see Appendix C).

### 3.5 Operationalisation

The questionnaire was designed to be able to answer the research question: to what extent do self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage their audiences? And the three sub-research questions A, B and C:

A. To what extent do self-publishing authors use social media to reach an audience?

B. Which social media platforms do self-publishing authors use and how do they use them?

C. How do self-publishing authors engage with their (possible) audiences on social media?

The research question and sub-questions of this master thesis consists of four concepts: self-publishing authors, social media platforms, engagement and audiences. The four concepts can be measured by using variables. The following model (see Figure 10) illustrates how the concepts were formulated into variables and how these variables were measured by interview questions. The interview questions are related to the theoretical framework, to be able to answer the sub-research questions and finally, the research question.

The first concept, self-publishing authors, is the only concept that is not analysed, because it is not the focus of the research question. “Who are the self-publishers” (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2013b) has previously been studied and is not a topic in this master thesis. However, some information is provided in the introduction section (1.2). The second concept, social media platforms, is measured by variables as described in chapter 2.1 (Web 2.0 developments), 2.2 (User-generated content), 2.3 (Use of social media), 2.4 (Types of social media) and 2.5 (Classification of social media) and 2.6 (Uses and gratifications theory). The concept of ‘engagement’ is measured by time spent by the self-publishing author to engage with audiences, the purpose of the engagement (to sell, to establish a relationship) and the topic chosen to engage with audiences. These variables are derived from chapter 2.7 (Marketing strategies). Finally, the concept ‘audiences’ is measured by variables derived from the 90-9-1 Principle, as explained in chapter 2.7 (Marketing strategies).



Concept	Variables	Instrument	Measurement	Theoretical framework
Self-publishing authors	Gender, nationality	Demographic information	Ask interviewees about nationality and sex.	-
Social media platforms	Social network sites, blogs, collaborative Projects, content communities	Interview questions	Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?	Uses and gratifications
			Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?	User-generated media
			Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?	User-generated media and uses and gratifications
Engagement	Time spent, topic, purpose	Interview questions	How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?	General question
			Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?	80/20 Rule
			Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?	80/20 Rule
			Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?	Uses and gratifications
Audiences	Lurkers, intermittent contributors, heavy contributors	Interview questions	Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?	90-9-1 Principle
			Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?	90-9-1 Principle

Figure 10. Operationalisation model

### **3.6 Methods of analysis**

When analysing the transcription of the qualitative interviews, the most interesting sentences of the responses were highlighted. The highlighted sentences and its comments were placed in a separate document. This relates to the narrative analysis approach, because the thesis uses the exact stories of the interviewees. A spreadsheet was created to cluster all relevant information by theme, in concordance with the thematic analysis explained in chapter 3.1 (see Appendix D). This was done to be able to develop thoughts about the way self-publishing authors engagement follow or vary from the theories in the theoretical framework.

In continuation, the result section was divided in different themes, in accordance with the different contents used for this master thesis. For each theme, comparisons were made with the theoretical framework. The following themes were created:

- Social media platforms (most frequently used platforms)
- Engagement (time used to engage on social media, writing/engaging ratio, using social media platforms differently for engagement, topics chosen to engage)
- Audiences (different types of audiences)

These three themes relate to the sub-questions. Social media platforms relates to sub-question B. Engagement relates to sub-question A, B and C. Finally, audiences relate to sub-question C. The results chapter ends with a concluding section. After analysing the results and combining them with the theoretical framework, the research question can be answered in the conclusion chapter and hypotheses for further research can be formulated, following the grounded theory approach. These hypotheses can be found in the conclusion section (see chapter 5.3)

### **3.7 Validity and reliability**

Skype interviews (4) were recorded with Call Recorder software from Ecamm Network. Face-to face interview (1) was recorded in a smartphone using the application Smart Voice Recorder. The rest of interviews (5) were received by email. Audacity 2.0.5 was used to elaborate the verbatim transcription of recorded interviews. During the recording of interviews a neutral stance by the interviewer was

adopted to do not leverage the response of the interviewee. In all interviews, the interviewer attentively listened the interviewee and followed the questionnaire without interrupt the interviewee. When the interviewee finished each response, without any time limit previously established, the interviewer followed to the next question.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter explained the method used for this master thesis research. Because the way self-publishing authors engage on different social media platforms is a relatively new field of research, this research relies on the narratives of the self-publishing authors collected through qualitative interviews. 10 interviewees were selected through purposive sampling. A thematic analysis was applied to the results of the interviews. The results are presented in the next section. A hypothesis about the extent self-publishing authors engage with audiences on different social media platforms will be formulated in the conclusion section, following the grounded theory analysis. Using a combination of methodological approaches, this thesis will give us first insights on the topic and a valuable basis for further research.

## **4. Results**

The results section presents the findings of the qualitative interviews and interprets the results of the research in relation to the research question and the theoretical framework. The results section is structured by three themes: social media platforms, engagement and audiences.

### **4.1 Social media platforms**

The concept of social media platforms focuses on how self-publishing authors use different social media platforms and why. It addresses the most frequently used social media platforms and how self-publishing authors use these platforms differently.

#### **4.1.1 Most frequently used social media platforms**

According to the interviews responses, social media platforms were clustered in a top 5 of most frequently used platforms:

1. Twitter (5 out of 10 stated this platform as most frequently used)
2. Facebook (3 out of 10 stated this platform as most frequently used)
3. Goodreads (1 out of 10 stated this platform as most frequently used)
4. Wordpress (1 out of 10 stated this platform as most frequently used)
5. Blog/ Blogger/ Mobileread / Instagram/ Tumblr/ Google+/ Pinterest (these platforms have not been mentioned as most frequently used platform)

According to the analysis of the interviews, Twitter is the most frequently used social media platform by the interviewed self-publishing authors, followed by Facebook. Twitter is used by 9 out of 10 interviewed self-publishing authors, followed by Facebook, used by 7 out of 10 self-publishing authors. 5 out of 10 interviewed self-publishing authors use Goodreads.

Self-publishing authors frequently mentioned that before, they would have indicated Facebook as most frequently used platforms. However, self-publishing authors said that they are shifting towards other platforms like Twitter as most

frequently used platform. One of the reasons given to explain that self-publishing authors are moving away from Facebook is because of the introduction of its advertisement payment policy. Jen Minkman responded: *“Number two is Facebook, it used to be a really powerful tool but ever since they changed the way they display advertisement is being kind of odd, really, it doesn’t work anymore, if you pay to boost your post, it hardly ever gets to the people actually liking it”*. In some cases, the interviewed self-publishing authors are not willing to pay Facebook for engagement with their audiences and they are moving away from it. An ordinary post without payment on Facebook, does not get them as many ‘likes’ compared to when Facebook launched this platform. It is one of the reasons for some self-publishing authors to migrate to Twitter. However, Russell Blake, with 1.196 ‘likes’ on Facebook and more than 17.000 ‘followers’ on Twitter still prefers Facebook to communicate with his audience because of the character limitation of Twitter: *“It used to be Twitter number one. But Twitter has also stopped being particularly useful because nobody pays any attention. So, Facebook has more a conversation feel given it doesn’t have a 140 characters limitation so, I would say that Facebook is the most important platform”*. Goodreads was ranked as the first platform by Jen Minkman *“Number one is definitely Goodreads, which is a book platform, reader platform. I am registered as an author there. I check my reviews regularly. I try to engage with my audience in different ways on that platform and that works really well. I am also approaching bloggers who might be interested in read my work”*. Goodreads was ranked as the second most used platform by Tom Lichtenberg and Ken Mooney and as the third platform of Frank Marsh. One of the purposes of Jen Minkman to use this platform is self-disclosure about her readings preferences, such as books and favourite authors. Last but not least, Wordpress was the most used platform by Tom Lichtenberg: *“Wordpress especially because that’s where my blog is hosted and that’s where my readers and fellow writers come in contact with me”*. On the other hand, all other nine self-publishing authors interviewed did not mention their blog as one of the most used social media platforms, with the exception of Russell Blake who mentioned his blog being the third most used social media platform. His blog gets between 300 and 500 visitors a day and he receives between 20 and 50 comments on one blog post. Hence, blogs can be very interactive.

Given the results of the interviews conducted for this research, with 9 out of 10 self-publishing authors using Twitter, this is likely to apply to a broader range of

self-publishing authors as well. Twitter is gaining popularity over Facebook. Facebook, however, is still likely to be used as a second most popular platform, as 7 out of 10 interviewees use this platform to engage with audiences. Half of the interviewed self-publishers use Goodreads, indicating that this is a popular social media platform for self-publishing authors in general. This does not come as a surprise, as this platform targets self-publishing authors and their readers. Goodreads is a niche community targeting authors and readers rather than a mass-networking platform such as Facebook and Twitter.

Another conclusion that was drawn from the interviews is that all self-publishing authors use at least two different social media platforms. Of course, the interviewees were selected based on social media usage. However, it indicates that there is a high probability that other self-publishing authors who are active on social media are using at least two different social media platforms. On top of that, within the interviewed group of self-publishers, seven used more than two platforms, which could be representative for other self-publishing authors, who use social media, not included in this research.

All social media platforms are different. Using multiples social media platforms with information about themselves or the self-published book could encourage audiences to ‘follow’, ‘like’ or even access their blogs multiples times. The interviewed self-publishing authors understand that different social media platforms are unique and they can be used differently. They use different social media platforms to reach their audiences. More about this is presented in chapter 4.2.3.

## **4.2 Engagement**

This section shows and reflects upon the results related to the concept of engagement. It explains the results related to the time spent engaging with social media, the ratio between writing and engaging activities, how self-publishing authors engage with different social media platforms and the topics chosen to engage on social media.

#### 4.2.1 Time used to engage on social media

##### a) Time spent for engagement per day

Four self-publishing authors (Noyek, David Hulegaard, Jen Minkman and A.R. Silverberry) responded that they spend around one hour daily engaging in different social media platforms. Belinda Frisch responded that she spends about two hours a day on social media between writing sessions. Ken Mooney and Tom Lichtenberg answered that they spent less than one hour a day. Frank Marsh and Russell Blake responded without mentioning any specific time in hours per day. Frank Marsh dedicates more time on social media than writing a book itself, around 70/75 percent of his time is dedicated to working online whereas Blake devotes 20 percent of his time engaging on social media compared to the writing activity. Megan Karasch did not specify her answer: *“Not nearly enough”*. Hence, with a few outliers, the self-publishing authors interviewed for this study spend approximately one hour a day to engage on social media.

##### b) Engagement activity approaching a publishing date

The interviewed self-publishing authors showed an increased activity on social media engagement during important events. It is noticed that when the publishing launch date of the book approaches, their activity increases. According to Megan Karasch *“when something of note happens, for example when my books were released or I won a screenplay contest, I was very active in promoting these achievements. At other times, I’m not as active”*. Social media engagement tends to increase when a new book is launched, especially when the publication date approaches. More engagement on social media is perceived when self-publishing authors are ready to publish a new book because they have to build an interest for it. This active period is intercalated with the writing period where social media activity could be less intense as the focus of the author is on the book development. Jen Minkman said: *“when I am just working on a book and I don’t have any, definite publishing date yet, I don’t engage a lot. I do post stuff every once in a while on Facebook and I tweet, but the real engagement with the audience comes when the publication day approaches”*. However, Jen Minkman uploads the status of the plot on social media while still writing a new book increasing her engagement on social media during the writing period too. She updates her ‘writing status’ of the next novel on social networking site Goodreads: *“Every*

*time I write a few chapters, I update my status: guys, you know, this person did that, or oh! It is going to be very exciting right now! So people can follow up the process”*. This way, she posts things on social media that are happening in the books while writing, by catching the audience’s curiosity about the new release and increasing her time on social media engagement while writing the book as well. This behaviour fits the model of Ko, Cho and Roberts (2013), arguing that one can control the message, the amount, time and order of information according to their needs.

#### 4.2.2 Writing/engaging ratio

Four self-publishing authors cited the 80/20 Rule (or close proportions related to it, such as 90/10 or 75/25) when asked about the percentage of the time dedicated to writing related to time used to engage on social media. Megan Karasch said that *“it’s probably an 80/20 split, maybe even 90/10”*. Belinda Frisch responded: *“20 percent of my day is a conservative estimate. Some days are higher. I try to keep 75-80 percent of my day dedicated to writing-related activities”*. Jen Minkman, in tune with Megan Karasch and Belinda Frisch agreed: *“I try to keep the 80/20, where 80 is the writing and 20 is the engagement”*, just like Russell Blake, who said: *“80 percent of my time is spent writing and plotting and 20 percent of it is spent on Facebook, Twitter, blogging. Yes, it is 80/20. 20 percent of my time is spent on marketing via social media and doing non-writing related tasks and 80 percent of my time is spent writing”*. Others self-publishing authors, such as Tom Lichtenberg, assumed a close proportional of 75/25 percent without mentioning the 80/20 Rule. Peter Adler (writing as A.R. Silverberry) said: *“I’d say the proportion is 3-4 hours writing, one hour social media”*. Seven self-publishing authors spent between 20 and 25 percent to engage and 75/80 percent to writing. There is enough evidence to conclude that an 80/20 rule can be applied to the interviewed self-publishing authors for this research. 2 out of 10 did not specify and 1 had a 95/5 ratio. The convincing evidence, for the 80/20 Rule among these self-publishing authors, is an indication this will also be the case for other self-publishing authors not included in this research.

But the 80/20 Rule is not applied as proposed by Morrison (2012). All authors have considered writing as the main occupation of their time compared to the time dedicated to social media engagement. This is the opposite of Morrison’s statement (2012a), with 80 percent of the self-publishing authors’ time dedicated to engagement and 20 percent of their time to writing. Sometimes the proportion could vary when



self-publishing authors are searching new ways to promote on social media, getting to use new platforms or when the publishing date is approaching, responded Jen Minkman: *“It does get the 50/50 at times when you are trying to find new ways to promote yourself”*. Russell Blake, a self-publishing author with many titles of books self-published (more than 40) and one of the most influential self-publishing authors interviewed, used to engage as 75/25 Rule. According to him, once a self-publishing author gets enough visibility online exposure, doing an additional promotion activity doesn't actually affect the sales of the books: *“It used to be 75/25 I used to do more marketing than I do now but once you get enough books out there and you have enough visibility, you do additional 5 or 10 percent and that doesn't really change your sales, so, it's a point of diminishing returns”*.

#### 4.2.3 Using social media platforms differently

The majority of self-publishing authors interviewed (8 out of 10) are engaging differently on different social networking sites. Similar messages can be presented on social networking sites in a way that suits the platform.

Belinda Frisch: *“Twitter is character limited and hashtag-heavy. I had to learn to work with that format for optimal tweeting. A message there might read: 4.7 stars for this thrilling murder mystery. 'FATAL REACTION' a Top 100 #medicalthriller #romanticsuspense #IANI whereas a Facebook post will be longer and contain a picture/link”*. Self-publishing authors tailor their approach according to the purpose of each social network site. Like Noyek said: *“I post different things to different sites because the responses are generally different depending on which platform I am using”*. On Twitter, she posts a message directly to a writer's opinion, but to engage with her readers she prefers to use Facebook: *“Twitter of course you want to be short, straight to the point. I use hashtags for discovery. I would generally use Twitter for a writer's input, also for my readers as well. But I am also like to connect to Facebook for my readers”*.

Messages on Twitter could be more conversational and succinct because of the character limitation. Hence, it can be catchy with a link re-directing to a post on a blog where there is more engagement going on. Tom Lichtenberg said: *“Wordpress blog contains a lot more detail about what I am doing whereas Twitter usually has just some catchy phrases or some funny topic, much more superficial. Goodreads seems to be a place with more personal interactions”*. Goodreads can be more

personal, disclosing preferences for books and authors. Blogging is a free format and Google+ has its similarities with Facebook (picture integration within the post). Frank Marsh tailors his approach according to the social networking site he is using: *“I only have a hundred and forty characters to work on Twitter, obviously, I have to be a little bit succinct. Now as far as Wordpress’s concern, obviously it is a free form thing, so you can write as much as you want. Facebook you’re really not limited when you’re posting things. So, I mean, you kind of have to tailor making your approach for whatever site you’re using. So, for instance, I have to be much more brief on Twitter”*.

One self-publishing author was on the fence when asked if he is spreading a message on social networking sites differently. David Hulegaard stated that Twitter is more conversational whereas on Facebook he is trying to establish a ‘brand voice’: *“On Twitter, I’m far more conversational, meaning I tweet more and talk about a variety of topics. On Facebook, I’m a little more buttoned-down. I have very specific messages I want to get out. This is actually something I’m trying to work on right now, which is establishing my “brand voice” on Facebook. I’m very comfortable on Twitter, but it’s a different environment than Facebook”*. Ken Mooney also uses social media platforms differently: *“Twitter is short and text-based; Tumblr is image/video based. Both get similar messages, but the way you present that message is very different. For example, I’ve found that text-based posts are ignored on Tumblr, but more likely to be shared on Facebook. And a combination of image+text seems to work best on Facebook”*.

According to Shao (2008), individuals using different and integrated social media platforms expressing self-expression and self-actualization became extremely popular. Self-publishing authors are, therefore, engaging on social networking sites differently. Self-publishing authors can control the perception of their audience by engaging differently on different social media platforms. Interviewed self-publishers tailor their approach according to the audience and according to the characteristics of each social networking site. Hence, the responses of the interviewed self-publishing authors confirm Shao’s findings. 9 out of 10 self-publishing authors interviewed for this research tailor their approach to different social media platforms. Therefore, a broader range of self-publishing authors is expected to show the same behaviour.

#### 4.2.4 Topics to engage on social media

In general, all authors use social media platforms with the intention to build up a relationship with their audience, with the ultimate goal of selling books. However, they approach it differently. Some authors prefer not to explicitly mention that they are selling a book. Others are more open about this in social media postings. In general, the vast majority of the engagement on social media platforms is not just about the book itself, but about other topics. The majority of self-publishing authors in this research, seven in total, try to engage on social media without just talking about their books. They preferably use other topics than the book, as they do not want to be perceived as ‘sellers’, and rather build a relationship with their audiences.

An example of the last situation is Russell Blake, who said: *“I would say other topics are about 90 percent. And the reason is because people don’t like being sold things and any time you start talking about your own book or your product you come across trying to sell it, and it comes off as desperate”*. He also remarked that posts related to the book increases when the releasing date of a new book approaches, similarly to the writing and the engagement activity, as explained in 4.1.1. In tune with Russell Blake, Tom Lichtenberg said that his ratio was *“Probably more like ten to one not the book to the book. I try to do not just be talking about my book all the time. That’s really boring when people do that”*. Megan Karasch said that when she released her books *“the overwhelming majority of my posts were about them. I posted reviews, media coverage, and messages just announcing the book’s existence. My book, Chaperones, is turning one next month so I will certainly send out many tweets trying to bring attention back to it. Otherwise, I tweet about anything and everything from my favorite NHL team and TV shows, to an embarrassing moment I had that day”*. David Hulegaard shared a similar behaviour: *“It’s tough to give a percentage only because it varies so much. If I’m about to publish a new book, the percentage goes up, but I make sure to not only talk about the book. I think that if you only talk about your books, you sound more like a marketer than a person”*. In total, four self-publishing authors mentioned that posts related to the book increases when they are on sales promotion and on a publishing date period. As this was not directly asked to the self-publishing authors, it is possible that other interviewed authors show the same behaviour, but this cannot be confirmed in this research.

A noteworthy point that came forward in the interviews is that most of the self-publishing authors interviewed for this research do not like to explicitly sell their

books on social media, but they can advise their readers and potential readers by posting about a discount promotion. They really avoid the idea of selling the book on social media in general. *“Time and time again you get the advice from other authors don’t always talk about your books because that is going to scare people off, because it is going to get old. Yes, you can keep talking about just the book, so what I try is when I have a promotion going on, for example, if I have one of my books on discount I post about it”* responded Jen Minkman. Self-publishing authors are spreading their message on social media rather with the purpose to engage with an audience and not to sell their books. Tom Lichtenberg took it even further and said: *“More to engage because I give away my books generally, I don’t sell”*. A smaller number of self-publishing authors Megan Karasch, Belinda Frisch and Jen Minkman (3 out of 10) responded “both”, assuming that they use social media with the explicit intention to sell the self-published books too. The other seven self-publishing authors interviewed prefer not to talk about the book. Noyek said: *“Definitely to engage with an audience”* and David Huleggard responded: *“You will rarely see me saying something as blatant as: buy this now!”*

Some self-publishing authors choose topics differently depending on the social networks site. The interview with Belinda Frisch showed that she uses the 80/20 Rule, depending on the social media site: *“Twitter - Probably 80 percent of my Twitter posts are directly related to my books. Facebook - 20 percent of my posts are book related. G+ - 80 percent are book-related (reviews, links, etc) as I do very little socializing there. I’d say the other 20 percent refer to my blog. Goodreads - 20 percent book related is probably being generous. I mostly report on my reading there and do not really self-promote”*. She mentioned that she uses the 80/20 Rule but not at the same way on different social media sites. Posts on Twitter and Google+ are predominantly 80 percent related with the book, whereas on Facebook and Goodreads 80 percent of posts are related to her personal life, her blog or her preference of books.

Self-publishing authors more often use social media platforms for self-disclosure and self-presentation than to speak about their books directly. They avoid to be perceived as vendors by their audiences and they truly believe in human-to-human interactions while engaging, in accordance with Ko, Cho and Roberts (2013). However, after asking the authors about their last postings, it turned out that most of the postings were related to their self-published book.

When self-publishing authors were asked to explain their last three postings on social media, responses with different intentions of achievement were perceived. Posts about promotions with the intention to increase traffic on their page and to sell the book were observed as well. For example, Tom Lichtenberg's last posting was about: *"how to help write what you know, and how it is related to what I am working on right now. I guess the motives behind this are to engage with fellow writers and readers about the subject and also to get more interest in my current book"*. Frank Marsh was taking advantage of coming Easter period, promoting his self-published book as a present to be given between the audience: *"Get that great read for Easter week! Still looking for something to put on your Easter basket? Any novel only a dollar ninety-nine now!"* When asked about her last posting, Megan Karasch responded: *"It was purely self-promotion. The more positive reviews I let people know about, the more they may tell their friends about my book"*. Moreover she emphasized, *"Engaging an audience can stem from posting articles in which people might have interest as well as posting original thoughts and ideas people find entertaining. It's a crucial form of advertising in this day and age, and everyone looking to self-promote must use it"*. Despite of the vast majority of self-publishing authors in this research who assumed to engage on social media without just talking about their books, Belinda Frisch last post at the moment of the interview was a link with the intention to lead the audience directly to the purchase page: *"It was solely a selling link. The goal was to drive people to the Amazon page for that book in the hopes of them buying it while it's available at a reduced price. The tweet was to promote a sale"*. Jen Minkman showed the same intention on Goodreads. Goodreads, as a social networking site specific for books, is perceived as a platform where self-publishing author's posts are related with self-expression rather than with selling purposes. Updating this platform with favourite authors and books is a process of manipulated self-expression when interacting on social media (Dominick, 1999; Jones & Pitman, 1982). Nevertheless, this platform is used to update the audience about the next self-published book while still in the writing process. Jen Minkman answered: *"On Goodreads, the latest thing I post was late this afternoon because I finished writing the book. I added it to my Goodreads currently reading list, so I added my own book and every time I wrote a few chapters I put status update like: Guys! This person did that, or oh! It's gonna be very exciting right now! So people can follow up the process"*. Finally, Ken Mooney's described his last posting as: *"I have a new book*

*releasing and have reached out to a number of acquaintances to see if they would be interested in reviewing”*. The post he referred to on Twitter, from May, 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 was: *“Evening crowd. Looking for reviewers and bloggers for The Hades Contract when it drops 13<sup>th</sup> June. Sign up here”*.

Surprisingly, just one self-publishing author interviewed for this master thesis, Peter Adler (writing as A. R. Silverberry), answered that one of his last three posts on social media was related to his personal life: *“One was a share about the results of a health test I had. It was human, and I knew people would respond and interact with me, deepening connections”*. Even though self-publishing author can express self-disclosure with the revelation of personal information, consciously or unconsciously (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) they are not likely to associate social media engagement with their private lives. The majority of self-publishing authors interviewed intend to engage on social media like a writer of a self-published book. According to Katz, Blumer and Guerevitch (1974) behaviour of media users is goal directed. Moreover, they select appropriate media to gratify their needs because they are aware of their needs. Self-publishing authors do not engage with their audience with their private lives because they are aware of their needs. According to the uses and gratification theory, they are engaging on social media to promote their books and attract potential readers.

In summary, posts were perceived with different intentions. The majority of self-publishing authors are manipulating self-expression to achieve different audiences when interacting on social media. But there is a discrepancy between the answer given by the interviewed self-publisher about the topic of their postings and the topic of their latest postings.

#### 4.2.5 Using social media for engagement

7 out of 10 interviewed self-publishing authors are focused on getting more potential readers, interactions, creating a discussion and therefore a community of people with interest in their self-published books.

Frank Marsh said that he aims at *“reaching people and actually creating a discussion, creating a community of people around something that I wrote. Where, those people, they come back to me and they want to talk about it, they want engagement and a conversation about it.”* In tune with it, Ken Mooney said: *“My hope is that the personal touch will make them more likely to enjoy the book and/or tell their friends”*.

This finding fits within the uses and gratifications theory framework and specifically corresponds to Shao (2008) who argues that individuals use user-generated media for social interaction with others, achieving social connections and online community development. Accordingly, David Hulegaard spoke about a post directed to a specific community: *“Since I write Sci-Fi, a lot of my audience is also into video games, so I feel very comfortable engaging”*. According to Lin (1996) and Ruggiero (2000), the uses and gratifications theory has provided a perspective to explain psychological and behaviour dimensions involving mediated communications. The self-publishing author is aware about a niche audience, in this case people interested in video games, which is related to the topic of his self-published book. Thus, he is attracting potential readers with similar interests of this community with his self-published book on social media engagement.

In summary, self-publishing authors spend approximately one hour a day to engage on social media. When the publishing date of the book is approaching, their activity increases. As most of the self-publishing authors spent between 20 and 25 percent to engage and 75-80 percent to write, the 80/20 Rule can be observed. Self-publishing authors try to control the perception of their audiences by engaging differently on different social media platforms. Interviewed self-publishers tailor their approach according the audience and according the characteristics of each social networking site. In general, all authors use social media platforms with the intention to build a relationship with their audience, with the ultimate goal of selling the book. However, their approach to do that is different. Some are more direct, but most tend to avoid talking about the book. 7 out of 10 interviewed self-publishing authors are focused on getting more potential readers, interactions, creating a discussion and therefore a community of people with interest in their self-published books.

### **4.3 Audiences**

This section shows and reflects upon the results related to the concept of audiences. It develops upon the different kinds of audiences, distinguishing between very proactive audiences and passive audiences, as explained in chapter 2.7.2.

Most of the self-publishing authors (8 out of 10) responded that their audiences read and reply to their posts on social media. Re-tweeting was the most common way of

reaction used by the audience mentioned by 6 self-publishing authors. As Noyek mentioned: *“On Twitter they just simply reply, if it is a question they simply reply and respond to the question. There are some of them that ask me a question and I am happy to keep on a conversation with as well”*. However, their audiences reply differently on different platforms. According to Belinda Frisch, her audience does not often comment on her blog, but does comment on Facebook posts: *“It varies by platform. Retweeting or a quick note (and the rare DM-direct message) comes across Twitter. G+ uses a +1 feature and I’m likely to get a comment and +1 on posts there. Facebook comments are very common. Blog comments a little less so”*. On the other hand, Russell Blake responded that blogs are predominantly used by his audience: *“Facebook, you go back and forth sometimes by private messages, sometimes comments to a posting. My blog receives a lot of hits, between 300 and 500 visitors a day. I’ll see anywhere from 20 to 50 responses to a blog post, on Twitter is very immediate, you go back and forward so, there’s a fairly higher degree of response and interaction”*.

Having 8 out of 10 interviewees saying that their audiences read and reply to their postings, the assumption can be made that a broader group of self-publishing authors observed the same behaviour of their audiences. However, the interviewees confirmed a discrepancy between passive audiences and active audiences.

#### 4.3.1 Heavy contributors

The interviewed self-publishing authors build relationships with influential bloggers and key supporters giving them their self-published books to be reviewed. *“Indie authors live and die by reviews and rankings”* responded Belinda Frisch in her interview. Numbers of reviews are extremely important and most of the times the interviewed self-publishing authors are looking for the right person, like a blogger for instance, to have their self-published book reviewed by someone with a large network. It increases the reach of their self-published book to a broader audience. This group of opinion leaders is defined as ‘heavy contributors’ within the 90-9-1 Principle. A core group of users, followers, fans and even others self-publishing authors are contributing to spread their message on social media as well. Tom Lichtenberg said: *“I have a core group of followers or fans or, whatever you call them, that they do that a lot so, they are very helpful in that way”*. Accordingly, Megan Karasch said: *“My friends and a small network of authors I’ve met help me*



*spread the word more than anyone else*". And David Hulegaard argued that: *"Anyone with a product to sell is always on the lookout for 'influencers'. These are the people that love what you do, and want others to know about you. If you're smart, you'll go out of your way to treat those people well and let them know that you're appreciative of their support. I, myself, have only a handful of these special people, but I do my best to take care of them (...) with their help, my message gets amplified, and that exposes my work to potential new readers"*.

Some interviewed self-publishing authors call them as 'street team' that are most likely to spread a messages about them on the internet. They use a hashtag, for instance, when posting their messages on Twitter. Belinda Frisch reported that she has *"an unofficial 'street team' of folks who are most likely to spread my message. There's the Independent Author Network folks on Twitter (and it is definitely a reciprocal arrangement) as well as a core group of fans and close-knit group of other indies on Facebook that I definitely notice help spread the word"*.

The basic activities of these opinion leaders are retweeting on Twitter, re-blogging on Wordpress, recommending on Goodreads and sharing on Facebook about price promotions and releases of new books. This core supporters help to spread the word of mouth about the self-publishing author in their network. Most of times these were friends of the self-publishing authors. This was noticed through Frank Marsh's response: *"Yes I have many of my followers and people who have liked my page on Facebook and even friends on my private Facebook page, my personal page, not the author page obviously, but the personal page. Even friends on net have really helped with the advertising aspect of it re-tweeting on Twitter re-blogging it on Wordpress and recommending it to friends on Goodreads and sharing a post on Facebook of my author page when I am out to sale on the book like it's only a buck, ninety-nine now well, I see six, seven people that spread back the other word-of-mouth in their own social network"*.

One interviewed self-publishing author commented that he treats a heavy contributor not like a friend but still 'friendly' because they are aware of the potential reach of the heavy contributor maintaining these relationships. Ken Mooney said that *"people that I've made that personal connection with: while I wouldn't call them friends, I would be friendly with them. We share jokes, we discuss films or comics or movies. They are the ones who are most excited to hear about a new book, and will tell their friends"*. Ken Mooney also observed that only 1 or 2 percent of the audience

actually responds to a message. This confirms the thought of the 90-9-1 Principle of Mierlo (2014), with 1 percent being the heavy contributors. He mentioned something close to the 90-9-1 Principle in his response: *“I’ve found that “engagement” is a bit of a holy grail: there are people who will respond to social media posts, but I think these are in the minority, and probably around 1-2%. I don’t think that’s a low figure, as I know from other online marketing/advertising experience that’s what to expect from other brands”*.

One notable observation is the existence of a small network of self-publishing authors supporting themselves reciprocally. They review each other’s book and receive gratifications for doing so. Jen Minkman mentioned: *“when people do it for you, I like to do that for them as well”*. Peter Adler (writing as A.R. Silverberry) confirmed this by saying: *“I know who my core supporters are. I reward them by supporting them back”*. In a post from Noyek, she mentioned the self-published book of another author within their supportive community: *“I tweeted another author’s information, as for as their book, is being a showcase I definitely wanted. Just to spread awareness about other authors”*. Hence, self-publishing authors might belong to the heavy contributor group of other self-publishing author in their network.

In summary, the interviewed self-publishers focus on their heavy contributors and are conscious about their dependence on them. The heavy contributors are necessary to reach a larger audience of people who are not active, but might buy the book in the end. Russell Blake, in his interview, responded: *“there are a core of readers who are so enthusiastic about the work that they viewed as their allocation to go out and tell the world about how great your books are. And that’s what you want. It’s a very small percentage but they are very local percentage. They are out there possible plus sizing your work”*. Hence, a small amount of readers can create a high social capital (Hoffman, 2012).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

First of all, self-publishing authors are dedicating a significant part of their time to social media engagement comparing with the writing activity. They engage with their audiences on social media on a daily basis, but this is a minor part when compared to the amount of time they use writing their books. The extent of their online engagement can increase according to the publishing date, when writing activity is

less intense. Therefore, the time dedicated to engage on social media can vary between these periods. Next, the most used social media platforms by self-publishing authors are social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Even though all self-publishing authors have a blog presence, they are predominantly engaging on Twitter followed by Facebook, whereas Goodreads is most used as a community development for self-publishing authors with more detailed information about themselves and their books.

Self-publishing authors tailor the message spread online according to the features of each social media platform. A succinct post on Twitter can have a link embedded redirecting audiences to access their blog. It can happen when self-publishing authors are promoting their books on Twitter redirecting, through a link, to a Goodreads website as well. Therefore, they can increase their extent of engagement combining different social media platforms and social networking sites.

Interactions with the audience are different with each self-publishing author. Twitter is perceived as a platform with more conversational interaction through immediately responses of the audience. However, it is a limited interaction, a deep discussion is not possible because of its character limitations. In blogs, they can establish more profound discussions with their audiences, but it is not as often visited as their social networking sites. On Facebook, a more conversational engagement with focus on a dialogue with the audience was perceived rather than using it as a marketing channel. In general, posts with pictures and links on Facebook were noticed as most successful between self-publishing authors.

Self-publishing authors when engaging on social media are not aiming to just talk about their book. However, when they were asked about their last three postings, the majority of self-publishing authors responded that all messages on social media were related to the book activity. Posts about their personal lives can be spread on social media but it was not mentioned by the majority of the interviewed self-publishing authors. This is contradictory, because they do not assume that they are on social media to predominantly promote their books. However, the vast majority of their posts were related to the book.

Self-publishers strategically strengthen relationships with influential bloggers and key supporters to get their books reviewed and ranked on retailer's websites and social networking sites as Goodreads for example. These core supporters are helping to propagate their messages on social media in order to building up a community.

This is a reciprocal on line activity as self-publishing authors are reviewing and rating books from each other on social media increasing to spread their message to a big audience supported by users, such as influential bloggers and others self-publishing authors giving more credibility to the reviews and ratings.

## **5. Conclusion and discussion**

The purpose of this research was to explore to what extent self-publishing authors are using different social media platforms to engage with their audiences. This research relied on theories such as Web 2.0 developments, uses and gratifications, uses, types and classifications of social media and marketing strategies, such as the 80/20 Rule and 90-9-1 Principle to elaborate an exploratory interview. The interviews targeted ten self-publishing authors who are active on social media. They were asked about various aspects of online engagement with their audiences and how it relates to the promotion of the self-published book. In this conclusion and discussion of the findings, results will be put into context in order to answer the research question and sub-questions that guided this research. The relevance and implications and limitations of this study will also be discussed. Finally, suggestion for further research will be made.

### **5.1 Overview of conclusions**

Starting with a solid framework for understanding the self-publishing market and the complexity of social media, this research sought to explore how self-publishing authors are engaging online with their audiences. By drawing a connection between the classification of social media, uses and gratification theory and marketing strategies, a context of a research about online engagement used by self-publishing authors started to take form.

Surprisingly, previous research had not been done on self-publishing online engagement. The self-publishing activity has been analysed from the perspective of motivations and satisfactions of the self-publishing author only. Elaborating a research about self-publishing authors' interactions with their audiences, an alignment with some theories collected to build up the theoretical framework started to be perceived during the interviews.

The research question of this research was: "To what extent do self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage with their audiences? This section formulates an answer to this research question by answering the three sub-questions.

### 5.1.1 To what extent do self-publishing authors use social media to reach an audience?

The results showed that most of the self-publishing authors are engaging approximately one hour of their time on social media per day. This activity increases at times when the publishing date approaches. Overall, the findings of this research were that self-publishing authors dedicate most of their time to write a book rather than to engage on social media. Based on ten interviews, a substantiation of the 80/20 Rule was perceived with 75 percent of their time dedicated to write the self-published book and the other 25 percent dedicated to engage with an audience. Of course, this result is based on ten interviews, but it is a useful indication that can be used for further research. Remarkably, in the beginning of some interviews, when self-publishing authors were asked about the time dedicated to write the book and the time dedicated to online engagement, the 80/20 Rule was mentioned without even having commented it to them.

### 5.1.2 Which social media platforms do self-publishing authors use and how do they use them?

The results of this research indicated that Twitter is the most used social networking site followed by Facebook and Goodreads. Self-publishing authors engage differently on social networking sites. Similar messages can be presented on social networking sites very different from each other. They tailor their approach according to the purpose of each social networking site. Messages on Twitter can be more conversational, succinct and limited due to of 140 characters restriction. Hence, Twitter can be catchier than a Facebook post, with a link re-directing to a blog, creating an additional opportunity to engage with the audience. Goodreads, as the third social networking site most used by the interviewed self-publishing authors, can be more personal, disclosing the self-publishing author preferences of books and others authors to the audience. Social networking sites and blogs are the most common types of social media platforms used by self-publishing authors. These two types of social media are classified with high self-presentation and self-disclosure according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). The results confirmed that self-publishing authors are using these types of social media, such as Goodreads for instance, to disclose their personal preferences to the audiences, such as books and preferred authors.

Self-publishing authors often mentioned that social networking sites are being used more than blogs. Self-publishing authors indicated that Twitter is the most used social networking site by them even though the message/posting has its limits. Moreover, Twitter surpassed Facebook as the most used social networking site by self-publishing authors to engage on social media. Despite the fact that Facebook is the biggest social networking site, self-publishing authors are migrating to Twitter because of various reasons. The interviews revealed that one of them clearly is Facebook changing its advertising policies. Results disclosed that the engagement reach of Facebook changed compared with the launching of this social networking site in 2004. Implemented payment policies to achieve more 'likes' on pages caused a migration of self-publishing author to other social networking sites such as Twitter and Goodreads, a more specific social networking site cited as the third most used by self-publishing authors during the interviews.

The interviewed self-publishing authors were aware of the different characteristics of social media platforms and were also able to argue why they use a certain platform. Audiences respond differently on each social media platform, and the interviewed self-publishers try to follow this behaviour by using different social media platforms differently. The responses of the interviewed self-publishing authors in this research support the conclusions of Baym, Zhang and Lin (2004) and Shao (2008), arguing that users tend to use a range of different, but integrated, social media platforms.

### 5.1.3 How do self-publishing authors engage with their (possible) audiences on social media?

Another point of discussion stems from the results regarding the topic used for self-publishing authors to engage on social media. The interviewed self-publishers expressed that they prefer not to just talk about their book as a topic to engage on social media platforms. Roughly, a 90/10 Rule is perceived, with 90 being other topics than the book. It was also concluded that self-publishers increase their messages about their book when the publishing date approaches. In general, they avoid to be perceived as vendors and focus on a more personal human-human interactions, in accordance with Ko, Cho and Roberts (2013). An important remark that should be made is that although the self-publishing authors claim to not mainly talk about their book, it turned out that most of their last postings were about the

book. This puts the 90/10 Rule that was indicated by the self-publishing authors into question. Also, none of the self-publishing authors gave an example of a posting related to their personal lives. Again, it cannot be concluded that self-publishing authors do not talk about their personal life. To do so, further research is necessary.

An interesting point of observation was the use of expressions during the interviews, such as ‘opinion leaders’, as a reference to readers who are enthusiastic about the work of the self-publishing authors and are ‘going out to tell’ the message. This shows a similarity with the concept of the ‘heavy contributors’ or core supporters of the 90-9-1 Principle from the theoretical background. These heavy users are perceived as those users who are active and are often contributing to spread the majority of the content on the internet. In some cases, the core supporters of the self-publishing authors include other self-publishing authors, as mentioned by several interviewees. By building up a community, they help each one other by reviewing and rating books on blogs and on retailers websites to increase the self-publishing author’s and or the book’s popularity. Core supporters also help the self-publishing author by re-tweeting their messages and sharing their Facebook posts. These core supporters are helping to spread the word of mouth in their own social network.

In reviewing these answers given by the interviewees, a relation can be made with the 90-9-1 Principle. Self-publishers openly rely on the ‘heavy contributors’, who are proactive and can reach a broader audience. The exact ratio of 90-9-1 cannot be confirmed by the answers of the interviewed self-publishers. However, the self-publishers’ awareness about the categories of online actors and focus on heavy contributors was proven among the interviewees. This is an indication that can be tested for similar results if a broader research would be done.

Another relevant point of perception is that audiences respond differently to each social media platform. Therefore, their engagement on social media platforms is different as well. Self-publishing authors can control the perception of the audience engaging in different ways according to each social media platform. On Twitter, a limited interaction is perceived, using hashtags that are straight to the point and succinct, with the option to redirect to a blog that has a more detailed and broader discussion. On Facebook, a post can contain a picture, much more text and links. Thus, this is a different approach to engagement with audiences. The message spread on social media is tailored to fit different social media platform’s purposes. In Figure



11 the list of the top 5 most cited social media platforms by self-publishing authors interviewed for this research with the characterization of the message is provided.

Social media platform	Characterization of the message according to self-publishing authors.
Twitter	Limited interaction, use of hashtags, straight to the point, succinct.
Facebook	Post can contain a picture, much more text and links.
Goodreads	More personal, disclosing the self-publishing author preferences of books and others favorite authors.
Worldpress	Similar to blogs with the possibility to host the self-publishing author's blog and contact with other self-publishing authors.
Blog	More detailed information and possibility to have a broader discussion.

Figure 11. List of the top 5 social media platforms and characterization of the message.

## 5.2 Relevance & implications

Self-publishing authors are perfectly aware of different features of social media platforms. They have a strategy in mind, which includes using different platforms for different purposes and focus on creating a community of heavy contributors. They spend a relevant part of their time engaging with audiences and strategically choose their topics. Altogether, these findings show that the interviewed self-publishing authors have an advanced understanding and use of various social media platforms. This underlines the fact that in further research, researchers should be aware that social media are not similar. Facebook is not the same as Twitter. This can have implications on the way people use these platforms.

With the interviewed self-publishers of this research as a reference, it seems that the self-publishing industry has taken over certain tasks that are normally done by a publisher, like the promotion of the book. Moreover, they focus on creating human-to-human interactions from author to reader. This is something a publishing house is unable to offer to their readers. Therefore, this research is highly relevant. Even though the self-publishing industry is a relevant threat for the traditional value-chain of the publishing industry, little research has been done on this topic. However, the

results implicate that they might want to know more about their competitors. A new market has been created and consolidated.

### **5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research**

This research is the first step taken to analyse the extent in which self-publishing authors engage with their audience on social media. No such research has previously been done. Thus, this thesis has an exploratory nature and adds value to the existing research on self-publishing authors. However, the number of 10 interviewed self-publishing authors brings along certain limitations. To confirm the conclusions that were drawn in this research, a broader group of self-publishing authors should be interviewed.

#### 5.3.1 Hypotheses for further research

As explained in the method section of this master thesis, the grounded theory approach was used for this research, given that very little research had been done on self-publishing authors and how they engage on social media. Therefore, this research was focused on formulating hypotheses rather than to test a hypothesis that is not based on previous research. The conclusions of this research helped to design the following hypotheses for further research:

*H1. A 75/25 Rule is used by self-publishing authors for writing and engaging on social media.*

Self-publishing authors of this research dedicate approximately one hour per day to engage on social media on a daily basis. Their activity increases when the publishing date arrives. The hypothesis is derived from the 80/20 Rule.

*H2. Social media platforms with a high score on self-disclosure are the most commonly used by self-publishing authors. These are social networking sites and blogs.*

The most used social media platforms are Twitter, Facebook and Goodreads, followed by Wordpress and blogs. Because of the fast pace of social media development, the hypothesis cannot include a specific social media platform, unless the research will be done in the timeframe of one year. New social media platforms might be created in

the meantime. However, it can be tested if self-publishing authors prefer social media platforms with a high score on self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

*H3. Self-publishing authors know the characteristics and possibilities of different social media platforms and tend to use a range of different, but integrated, social media platforms to engage with their audiences.*

Self-publishing authors strategically tailor their message according to different social media platforms (Baym, Zhang & Lin, 2004).

*H4. Self-publishing authors are aware of different audiences and rely heavily contributors.*

Self-publishing authors strategically communicate with different types of audiences. They distinguish a small group of 'heavy contributors', in accordance with the 90-9-1 Principle of Mierlo (2014), without following the exact proportions.

Based on these hypotheses, several conceptual models can be designed for further research. Independent variables can be the self-publishing authors, social-media platforms, and different audiences. Dependent variables can be the writing/engaging ratio, platform's score on self-disclosure, awareness of the features of different social media platforms and amount of heavy contributors. To test the variables, a larger dataset of self-publishing authors is required to support a more quantitative research. As little research has been done on this topic, collecting data and performing quantitative research is needed to close the literature gap.

### 5.3.2 Other suggestions for further research

No hypothesis was created for the topics chosen to engage on social media. To reach a hypothesis for the chosen topic, a content analysis of the messages is necessary, but was not included in this research. This thesis relied on answers given by the self-publishing authors. One of the conclusions was that the self-publishing authors use a 90/10 ratio for talking about other things than the book (90) and talking about the book (10) on social media. However, when the interviewees were asked to mention some of their last postings, almost all of them were about the book. Therefore, the conclusion of the 90/10 ratio based on the answers of the interviewees may not be trustworthy. More research should be done to confirm this ratio, such as a content

analysis of postings on the most popular social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Goodreads and blogs). This can be researched by using 'social media platforms' as an independent variable and 'topic chosen' as a dependent variable.

With regard to hypothesis 4, it should be added that although a relation can be observed between the 'opinion leaders' and 'core supporters' mentioned by the self-publishing authors and the 90-9-1 Principle, this research is too limited to conclude the exact comparison. Hence, more research could also be done to measure the proportions of different audiences.

Also, the nationalities included in this research. If more nationalities had been included, for example, Chinese self-publishers, the results may have been different, as they have different perceptions and sometimes access to different platforms. Moreover, something that could have biased the research was the variation in the amount of online followers on Twitter, likes on Facebook and fans on Goodreads. Someone with a low number of followers, likes and fans could show a different behaviour on social media platforms. However, a smaller number of followers, likes and fans do not necessarily mean a less effective audience.

Finally, more research could be done combining traditional and social media for engagement. Social media enhancing traditional media, or one supporting another, would result in an interesting analysis. For example, a self-publishing author can give an interview on the radio or in a magazine and talk about it on social media.

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## **Appendix A**

### Interview schedule

1. Tom Lichtenberg

Interviewed via Skype on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014 8:00pm / 11:00am (PDT)

2. Frank Marsh

Interviewed via Skype on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 1:30am / 7:30pm (EST)

3. Noyek

Interviewed via Skype on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 11:30pm / 5:30 pm (EST)

4. Megan Karasch

Questionnaire received via email on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014

5. Belinda Frisch

Questionnaire received via email on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014

6. Ken Mooney

Questionnaire received via email on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014

7. David Hulegaard

Questionnaire received via email on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014

8. Jen Minkman

Interviewed face-to-face in the Hague on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014

9. Russell Blake

Interviewed via Skype on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014 7:00 pm / 11:00 am (UTC)

10. Peter Adler (writing as A. R. Silverberry)

Questionnaire received via email on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014

## **Appendix B**

### Questionnaire

- 1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?
- 2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?
- 3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?
- 4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?
- 5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?
- 6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?
- 7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?
- 8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?
- 9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

## **Appendix C**

### Verbatim transcription of interviews

‘Followers’ on Twitter and ‘likes’ on Facebook from all interviewees checked on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2014

#### **1. Tom Lichtenberg**

Male, American, 56 years old

Followers on Twitter: 58

Likes on Facebook: 49

My personal perception about the interview: as my first interview I was a bit nervous and my voice asking the questions looked like a robot. The interviewee apparently was in a comfort place at his house with the windows opened so I could listen birds tweeting during the interview. Possibly a radio or television was turned on because I could listen some external noise as well. One thing that happens when you are interviewing via Skype and, furthermore recording, is the difficulty to notice when the interviewee has stopped to talk and you should continue to the next question. There is a moment that both can talk together as well. This might happen due connection flaw (possible lack of Internet signal) from one or both parts. As it was my first interview, on the third question I laugh back to the interviewee’s laugh, what I should not have done and I will consider this mistake in further interviews.

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms (blogs, social network sites)?

Huh, probably about, huh, hum. Maybe five hours a week. Maybe. [I was expecting that he would say more, but he did not].

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Yes, huh. Number one would be Wordpress, for me. Huh, number two would be Goodreads. Huh, number three Mobileread and the number four Twitter. [I have interrupted him saying and]. Those are all the ones I think so. Ya. [I have interrupted him again saying and, ok, why]. Well, Wordpress specialy because, huh, that's where my, my blog is hosted and that's where my readers and fellow writers come in contact with me. [Pause]. Huh, Goodreads is because that's where I get the most, huh, feedback from readers in terms of reviews and ratings and the, and, conversations huh with those I don't know regularly. Hum, Mobilefar [I personally do not know this], Mobileread because it's a very well populate with people chatting about self-publishing indie authors. And the, Twitter because it's the most fun, I like Twitter [small laugh].

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

[Whispering] Huh, well, let's see, I probably spend, [noise] probably 4 to 1 social media it's a writing thing, I would say. And I write fast (*long laugh and I laugh as well*). [Whispering]. So I don't write all the time. So, I don't, I am not someone who writes everyday for an hour or something. I, I just write when I have something, and you write, right? So, in between times I spend a lot more on social media.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

Huh, [some noise from apparently a radio turned on] yeah, probably more 10 to 1 not the book to the book, huh [he seems to hesitate]. Mostly replying about, huh, writing in general, self-publishing in general or just other, other topics that come up. So, I try do not, not, to just be talking about my book all the time. That, that's really boring when, they, when people do that [short pause]. So, we like to comment about things we all have in common or things we are interested in.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Hum, well yes. I think on, on, Wordpress a have a lot more, a more detail about what I am tacking and what I am doing whereas Twitter is usually just do some catch phrases or some funny, funny topic, you know, much more superficial. Hum, in Goodreads seems to be more some personal interaction with the individual lecture communicating with [birds twitting on the background].

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Huh, more to engage because, huh, I, I give away my books generally, I don't sells. I am not, I am not up trying to make money from it but to get more readers and to get more interact, in general.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Yes, yes well, this is, I have a, I guess a core group of, huh, of, huh, followers or, or fans or whatever you call them that they do that a lot so, they are very helpful in that way.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Usually comments on the Wordpress blog at most way, that's the most common way. [pause]. Sometimes replying the tweet.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

Let's see, my lasts three postings were [thinking] on a topic of writing what you know about [birds tweeting] cause that's a, you know, one of those things writers always told to write what you know. So, it's a, writing about that, and about how you can help the write that you know, and how it is related to my current book, huh, that I am

working on right now and the, huh, I guess the motive of behind of this is the top [unclear] of fellow writers and, and, readers about that subject and also to get the most interested in my current [unknown voice saying that I am working on].

## **2. Frank Marsh**

Male, American

Followers on Twitter: 773

Likes on Facebook: 180

My personal perception about the interview was that the interviewee most of times talked to fast. I hardly understood some worlds because of it. I struggle during the verbatim transcription of the interview. One interesting point of relevance is that Frank Marsh has president Barack Obama as a follower on Twitter. As my second interview I was more relaxed. Before start to record the interview I asked the interviewee if he would mind to turn off both cameras to avoid any kind of connection problem during the recording. Without a camera I have a steady neutral stance from my side during the interviewee response, hence no visual feedback from my side contributed to an accurate interview.

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

Well [coughing], when I decided to self-publish I, I, I kind of decided that a good way to, to pitch the book was to really build up a presence on social media, so, living up to the launch of it, last April, hum, I would say that I spent after write and done the formatting and the cover and that kind of thing. I would say that, you know, the line in sure of getting it ready, will will spend probably seventy, seventy five percent of my time working on line [coughing]. Just to build up web sites, build up blogs, build a Twitter presence, build up a Facebook presence, hum, Goodreads, hum, what kind of thing a couple of [he talks very fast as he was thinking] Google Adwords, places like that where I can really draw up interest for it. So, the lead up to when I spent a lot of time on social media, really, just kind of building my social media base. Huh,



creativity Facebook author page, huh, creativity Twitter accounts hum, and really just kind of marketing in that way.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Certainly, hum, I would say that the first and foremost would probably be, huh, Facebook, Twitter and Goodreads followed closely directly by Wordpress, I actually host a blog on Wordpress, huh, where I advertise the books and where to buy and that kind of thing. Hum, along with, you know, updates on the writing of the second book and that kind of thing [voice of a children]. Huh, so I would say that, yeah, that's my one year old, I apologise, [he apologises for his child, laughs], hum, I would say that, that probably Facebook, Twitter and Goodreads would be number one, hum, followed directly by, you know, Googleplus and Wordpress and I am trying to think a couple of others ones that I've used [he thinks talking], hum, the a little, the a little bit on Pinterest, huh, [his child is knocking something in the room] yeah, those will be the main that I am focus on.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

Well, again, there was more engagement on social media when I was first getting ready to publish the book just because I have to build up an interest for, hum, so I would say that nowadays, without a launch coming up like I am working on a second book in a series but without a launch coming up [voices from his child], hum, I would say that I probably spend about seventy five percent of my time writing and twenty five percent of my time promoting it.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

That's actually very interesting you've brought that up, because hum, as actually [unclear] I will try to, to working into the second book. Hum, just because I had so

much great success with social media platforms when I launched the book, that, I actually try the kind of, because the book is a science fiction book, I actually try to work a little bit of a, you know, looking back on social media into that, you know, there are references to it, as something that once upon a time existed, that is a way to people to be connected with other people, a, a way to market services, that kind of thing. So, hum, I don't know. Did I answer the question or no? [I respond certainly].

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Well, I mean, I only have a hundred and forty characters to work on Twitter, obviously, so I have to hardly be a little bit succinct. Hum, now as far as Wordpresses concern, you know obviously is a free form thing, so you can write as much as you want. Facebook you're really not limited when you're posting things [coughing]. So, I mean, you kind of have to, to, to tailor make your approach for whatever site you're using. So, for instance, I have to be much more brief on Twitter, huh, as I can't really be too clever as just, you know, this book is available for sell here [tsc] or you know, maybe I am quoting review on Twitter or something like that, hum, whereas on Wordpress I can get a write [write] of an entire blog entry about, you know, the process of collecting my first reviews on the book and how exciting it was to actually see people buying and enjoying it. So, I mean, I think that it really all kind depends on a platform, hum, and the limitations of the platform. Would be a good way to describe it.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

More sort to engage with an audience than to sell the book. Hum, one of the things that I've already said [children crying] about writing, Luis, for me was that it was never about powers and senses. Hum, for me writing was about to reaching people and actually creating a discussion, creating a community of people around something that I wrote. Hum, where, those people, you know, they come back to me and they want to talk about it, they want engagement and a conversation about it. Hum, a pro [unclear] funny a little history, your way. Regarding social media, when I first launch

the book, you know, obviously I had friends who buy it and I had family who buy it and I had people here or better to the word-of-mouth. But, [tsc] one of the things that I didn't expect was that the book was actually gaining a following in Panama, a city in Panama. Hum, and, that was a group down there, I forget the name of the top of my head, they are still around, they are like a Facebook group and there is like twenty-five or third people on it and that is all about software machines and that kind of thing. And I, I noticed a lot that, that, that I was getting a lot of exposure on their website and I used to joke that, you know, I now have a fan club in Panama city, which is great, I mean, I've actually talked to a couple of those people directly and, huh, they all been very, very, terrific about they, you know, how much they liked the book, how how provocative they though it was, so, huh, you know, social media yielded [unclear] social media, what was kind of interesting.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Yes I have many of my followers and people who have liked to my page on Facebook and even, you know, friends on my private Facebook page, my personal page, not the author page obviously, but the personal page. Hum, even friends on net ha have really helped with the advertising aspect of it, hum, re-tweeting on Twitter re-blogging it on Wordpress and, you know, recommending it to friends on Goodreads and, you know, sharing a post on Facebook of of my author page when I am out to sale on the book like it's only a buck, ninety-nine now well, you know I see six, seven people, you know, spread back the other word-of-mouth in their own social network which is really great because that's a, you know, ten, fifteen years ago you'd never have got them, but now you have this this this huge global network of people that, you know, the next thing you know, a book which you would self-published ten years ago which you only make, you know, only is get scene about a hundred people in the United States will now be seen for a thousand people or more worldwide, as just a start. It's really, it's really pretty amazing.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

They do, hum, sometimes, some, a lot of the time, they they will agree or they will they will reject the [unclear] sense of it. Hum, you know, I've seen a lot of people come back and say trust me this is a really good book you have to read it, hum, or, you know, I've actually been engaged in debates on line about different aspects of the book as well I think that a, you know, that's a healthy thing, hum, somebody once told me a long time ago when I start to talking about doing this thing, you need to have a tough skin, huh, you need to be able to accept criticism and you need to be able to engage yourself in debates and I, I truly believe that the one of the ways that that that I grow. And one of the greatest things about social networking, is that, you know, somebody will debate you and they will question you, whether they are doing in a hundred forty characters or they are doing it on a blog post. They will do it. And I think that's a wonderful thing because that's how we grow, is people, as to, you know, find out what other people think of, of we are doing.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

Well, I think the last one that I did was actually over Easter weekend and and all of was was a post on Facebook and Twitter, hum, just pretty much, you know, still looking for that, read, you know, get that great read for Easter week, hum, you know, still looking for something to put on your Easter basket, you know, any [unclear] novel, only a dollar ninety-nine now, I participating on my retailers, a get your copy today, and then I did like a, a little like third dollar buzz [unclear] on Facebook actually to get it out to more people. Hum, I did like a buzz on Twitter and that kind of thing to get it out of more people in you get so more nice traffic that way, hum, so that was the last one that I did and, before that, I actually post something, hum, I re-post to something that it break from a friend of mine, he is also a writer. Hum, so, if you are looking for somebody else to talk to like, I certainly can give you a name he probably will be very, very, very helpful. Hum, he, he actually, hum, he's, he's my great, help to me from get the message out and getting the word of a book out. I actually thank him for, hum, he he recommend it to a friend of his he does a lot [unclear] on newspaper and they did a write up on the book on there, so, that was one right that I team [unclear] for that and the one previous that I was just probably, hum, a blog post just about my, my progress on my second book where am I at, hum, a lot

of people have been asking me, they like tip they wanna read more, when is the second book coming, and than I just recently actually start working on actively again, so, huh, was more so, blog to just tell the people that that that follow me and, that, that, you know, have read it, is that's the second book is coming I am working on it. Hum, don't don't loos up [unclear] and it will be a long stude [unclear] enough, hum, so it's a gear [unclear] it's a bribe in the lastry [unclear], but I do.

### **3. Novek**

Female, American

Followers on Twitter: 484

Likes on Facebook: 250

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

Well, hum, I use maybe around an hour a day, because I don't wanna get tensed [unclear], hum, as definitely Twitter is, is one of those social media platforms that can definitely you will, you end up, come up from, huh, you know hum ok, I'm just gonna do it for third minutes to...you end up been on Twitter for two hours almost, you know, just interacting, you know, which is awesome but also at the same time, you know, you have to definitely manage that time.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Ok, I use [thinking] Twitter, Facebook and Instagram the most. Hum, Twitter is the one that I use the most often and one of the reasons is, because with the, with Twitter, it seems to be a, hum, a bigger audience as well as, hum, it is easier to engage, not only can you start a conversation with someone else can have possibly already started it, started a conversation, and you just can jump right in it. Hum, you, you are more easier to be dis, hum to be discovered by hashtags. Also, I use Twitter so much more because my Instagram actually is connected to Twitter, so, as I post in Instagram it posts to Twitter in addition to my Twitter post.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

Well, hum, [thinking] one thing that I did discover that I had to do, hum, been at Twitter was social media self stick up so much of my time was to began using, hum, a social media, a social media scheduling app which I use is Hootsuite. And I've gained more write in a confidential [unclear] since I began using it.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

Generally when I am posting on Twitter it does have relate to my book very, very roughly [unclear] thing, relate to the topics. Hum, most of the time I am, supposing that something that I am just can help any writer, you know what it is, asking for an opinion on what is the best write that have been giving, because, hum, other authors, are, you know, how do you, you, you develop your settings or how do you fletch up your characters but very rarely what I actually ask a question as related suit the actual topic of the book.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Yes, I, I, I'm, I post different, hum, I post different things to different sites because the response are generally different depending on which, which platform I am using. Twitter of course you one be short, sweet to the point, hum, I use hashtags, you know, for this covery [unclear], hum, when it comes to appealence [unclear], when it comes to like a writer's appealence [unclear] are, huh, a writer's entry [unclear] I would generally use Twitter, if I am, also for my readers as well, but I am also like to connect through Facebook for my readers. Hum, example, oh, like I said on Twiter, I would, you know, tweet something such as, how do you was one, was one, thing that you do to fletch up [unclear] your character, just to make your character, hum, seem reliable. And on Facebook, that's where maybe I'll share like, hum, more so

inspirational stuff, or, got humor, or, sh, share other write, other books or whatever case may be.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Definitely to engage with an audience, huh, I just try to not caught in hole [unclear], you know, I have to sell, I have o sell. But, to, more sort to, to just, you know, to engage with an audience, to to get to know them as just I hope that they will like to get to know me as well and I just feel like ebam [unclear], if they have a likeability to me as an author them, you know, they will definitely support my work, but the primary, primary purpose for it, engagement.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Yes, hum, Twitter probably is the most active when it comes to, hum, you know, just to, to employ the contribution as what re-tweets, hum, the participation, whatever you know as for as the engagement period, Twitter is the, the, the most effective for me.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

On Twiter, hum, they just simply reply and you know, let me know, if, if is a question they simply reply, and ask the question and even there are some of them that ask me a question and I am happy to keep on a conversation with me, hum, as well. On Facebook, not so often, it is kind of depends of what information, hum, is and has been posted as to how they actually respond.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

On Twiter, I think I posted a picture because it linked from my Instagram, but it actually was a picture of a, of a, it was weed [unclear], there was a road aside, nature

and the little weeds [unclear] they grow in the shape of a heart and I just thought that it was a very beautiful picture and I wanted to share that. Aham, and also I tweeted, hum, another author's information as for as their book, you know, is been a showcase I definitely wanted, you know, just to spread awareness about other authors. On Facebook, it was just a love inspirational post, keep come in the right a novel, you know, I just feel like been one has an history of been in charge [unclear] of this one for imagination what is an actual history of life affairs of the whatever the case may be, you know, get you history down and get your history shared.

#### **4. Megan Karasch**

Female, American

Followers on Twitter: 648

Likes on Facebook: 164

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

Honestly, not nearly enough. When something of note happens, for example when my books were released or I won a screenplay contest, I was very active in promoting these achievements. At other times, I'm not as active. I'm not using my author Facebook page much anymore because, with Facebook's formula changes, the outreach isn't what it once was. I post several things a week on Twitter but am trying to increase that. I'm late to the party on Instagram, but I will use that platform soon, too.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Definitely Twitter. As noted above, Facebook is just not what it used to be. I can reach many more people with Twitter than Facebook. When I post anything about my books, on Facebook I reach mostly people I know (and they've heard enough about my books!). On Twitter, I get a broader audience and am able to spread the word more effectively.



3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

It's probably an 80/20 split, maybe even 90/10. I write all the time – before work, after, on weekends. And when I'm not writing, I'm at my "day job" which isn't writing (yet) and maintaining a social life; therefore, fitting effective social media campaigns between all that is challenging. I am working on being better at it though, because it's a necessary and valuable part of self-promotion.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

When I released my books, the overwhelming majority of my posts were about them. I posted reviews, media coverage, and messages just announcing the book's existence. My book, *Chaperones*, is turning one next month so I will certainly send out many tweets trying to bring attention back to it. Otherwise, I tweet about anything and everything from my favorite NHL team and TV shows, to an embarrassing moment I had that day.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

So right now, I really only use Twitter but yes, I do use FB and Twitter differently. Facebook was really just for book posts and related author articles. On Twitter and my personal Facebook page, I'll post anything.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Both. Being generally active and charming with an audience will help sell books. If people like you, they'll buy what you're selling.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Sure. My friends and a small network of authors I've met help me spread the word more than anyone else. Most people follow so many Twitter accounts that, in order to be seen, you need re-tweets. One tweet nowadays is rarely going to be seen.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Sometimes. For example, I recently posted about a screenwriting contest I won, and I had wonderful response to that both on Twitter and on my personal Facebook page. The response was in re-tweets, favorites, FB sharing and congratulations posts.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

I assume you mean Facebook, here? My last three postings on my author Facebook page were: 1. an influential author donating a large sum of money to independent bookstores; 2. a favorable review of my book, Chaperones; and 3. a satirical article about how difficult it is to be a writer.

The point of postings is to remind your audience that you're still out there and you want to have a relationship with them. I posted the first one because I think it's important to remind people about the influence of independent bookstores and that they're still a viable option for book lovers, as well as to highlight the author that made such a generous gift. Number two, was purely self-promotion. The more positive reviews I let people know about, the more they may tell their friends about my book. Number three was merely fun reading.

Engaging an audience can stem from posting articles in which people might have interest as well as posting original thoughts and ideas people find entertaining. It's a crucial form of advertising in this day and age, and everyone looking to self-promote must use it.

## **5. Belinda Frisch**

Female, American

Followers on Twitter: 4.253

Likes on Facebook: 812

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

I write full-time so I dedicate a cumulative two hours a day in between writing session to social media.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

In order of most to least used: Twitter, Facebook, Blogger, G+, and Goodreads.

Twitter is my go-to. I have over 4,000 followers and can engage them easily with short messages about new blog posts, sales, book teasers, etc. As part of the Independent Author Network, I get more retweets than I get “shares” or “likes” on any of the other platforms. We use the tag #IAN1 to promote each other whenever we can. Also, Hootsuite is an effective way to preschedule posts for when I’m busy and can’t get to the site personally.

I use Facebook because it is one of the most popular social media site and all my friends and family are there. There are great groups and pages, however, I find I don’t use it for promotion as much as I once did because of the pay features and poor performance (most people don’t see posts, even when they’re subscribed to an author’s page). My organic reach is limited by the new format.

Blogger isn’t necessarily ‘social media’, but is where I tend to talk the most about things readers might enjoy. Unlimited characters and the fact that it’s an eye-catching format has me blogging regularly. Also, since Blogger is tied to G+, I get more feedback and hits there than on Facebook.

G+ is growing and offers great hangout features and communities. Unlike with Facebook, when I do promotion there, I don’t end up spamming my friends’ walls with repeat posts. I like that the communities have sub-groups dedicated to promotion/book chat rather than having nothing but promotion (which Facebook was starting to become cluttered with until everyone realized it didn’t translate to sales.

Goodreads is more of an extension of my reading habits than it is a social media platform, but I go there for the enjoyment of books. It’s my least ‘commercial’

interaction and where you're most likely to find me talking about what I'm reading rather than writing.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

20% of my day is a conservative estimate. Some days are higher. I try to keep 75-80% of my day dedicated to writing-related activities (writing, outlining, editing, cover design, etc.)

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

I try not to focus solely on my books, but that I probably do so more than I know. Depending on the social media site, the division of post topics varies.

Twitter - Probably 80% of my Twitter posts are directly related to my books. I schedule these posts through Hootsuite solely for the purpose of referral to Amazon and other retailers.

Facebook - 20% of my posts are book related. The other 80% relates either to my blog or me personally (depending on the page). My author page relates to my blog, upcoming releases, and reviews. My personal page is almost entirely for my entertainment and to network with other authors.

G+ - 80% are book-related (reviews, links, etc) as I do very little socializing there. I'd say the other 20% refer to my blog.

Goodreads - 20% book related is probably being generous. I mostly report on my reading there and do not really self-promote (other than Goodreads giveaways of new release books).

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Definitely. Twitter is character limited and hashtag-heavy. I had to learn to work with that format for optimal tweeting. A message there might read:

4.7 stars for this thrilling murder mystery. "FATAL REACTION" a Top 100

[#medicalthriller](#) [#romanticsuspense](#)

[http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00GO4P8EY/ref=cm\\_sw\\_r\\_tw\\_dp\\_hOSztl1TW972S](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00GO4P8EY/ref=cm_sw_r_tw_dp_hOSztl1TW972S)

... [#IAN1](#)

Whereas a Facebook post will be longer and contain a picture/link

ENT has "Better Left Buried" on their list of bargains of the day. This one's a steal at 99 cents and about to go off sale (May 17th). If you're a fan of YA mysteries with a haunting twist, don't miss this one.



G+ more closely resembles FB posting.

Goodreads updates are character-limited like Twitter.

Blogging is free format.

I try to include pictures and links wherever possible.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Both, though I'd say these are one in the same for an indie author. Engaging with your audience IS the road to selling books, the end goal. Indie authors live and die by reviews and rankings. Sales equal continued ability to sustain life as a writer.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Absolutely. I have an unofficial “street team” of folks who are most likely to spread my message. As I touched on above, there’s the Independent Author Network folks on Twitter (and it is definitely a reciprocal arrangement) as well as a core group of fans and close-knit group of other indies on Facebook that I definitely notice help spread the word.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Yes, and again, it varies by platform. Retweeting or a quick note (and the rare DM-direct message) come across Twitter. G+ uses a +1 feature and I’m likely to get a comment and +1 on posts there. Facebook comments are very common. Blog comments a little less so. On really rare occasion someone will seek me out via e-mail.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

One is screen captured above. I posted that ENT was promoting my book as a way to drive traffic to that post a) to thank ENT for their promotion and b) to hopefully encourage sales for my newest release.

The second post I made today was to link my blog to my Facebook author page for the purpose of engaging my audience. I posted about summertime, what I do, and asked others to share their favorite summertime activities, links, recipes, etc.

The third was a tweet of my most recent novel, *Better Left Buried*, that was solely a selling link. The goal was to drive people to the Amazon page for that book in the hopes of them buying it while it’s available at a reduced price. The tweet was to promote a sale.

## **6. Ken Mooney**

Male, Irish

Followers on Twitter: 1.151

Likes on Facebook: 271

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

On average, probably 15-30 minutes a day, though it's not dedicated time. I use social media as an individual first, not an author, so only a small portion of my time is spent purposely engaging with an audience.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

I've toyed with a lot of them; Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, Goodreads. I use Twitter the most because of its short quick ability to reach people and have them respond in a similar fashion. They all have different purposes, but I'd say a ranking goes Twitter, Goodreads, Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

I'd say 95% writing and 5% engagement. Although I will often have social media open in the background while writing and will refer back to it every few moments.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

I use Twitter as an individual, so will talk about all things there. Most other posts are abstractly related to the subject. I might post an image or a video that inspires me or

sets off my imagination. In that case, they might not be related to the topic of this book, but other books.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Twitter is short and text-based; Tumblr is image/video based. Both get similar messages, but the way you present that message is very different. For example, I've found that text-based posts are ignored on Tumblr, but more likely to be shared on Facebook. And a combination of image+text seems to work best on Facebook.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

No. I'd prefer people to engage with me as an individual than work on the hard sell. My hope is that the personal touch will make them more likely to enjoy the book and/or tell their friends.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

People that I've made that personal connection with: while I wouldn't call them friends, I would be friendly with them. We share jokes, we discuss films or comics or movies. They are the ones who are most excited to hear about a new book, and will tell their friends.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

I've found that "engagement" is a bit of a holy grail: there are people who will respond to social media posts, but I think these are in the minority, and probably around 1-2%. I don't think that's a low figure, as I know from other online marketing/advertising experience that's what to expect from other brands.



9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

I have a new book (The Hades Contract) releasing June 13th and have reached out to a number of acquaintances to see if they would be interested in reviewing. Most of my recent posts have been discussing this and/or raising information about it.

## **7. David Hulegaard**

Male, American

Followers on Twitter: 8.722

Likes on Facebook: 57

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

I am Twitter several times a day. Even if I'm not tweeting, I'm checking in to see if anyone is attempting to engage with me. I'd say a good hour or so per day is normal. My Facebook page is very new, so I don't have a big audience. I check it at least once per day.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

I have accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. I use Twitter the most because it's where I started, so my audience is the biggest and most engaging. Second would be Facebook, although with its new algorithm, it's very hard to reach the people that "Like" my page without paying, which I refuse to do. Last would be Instagram, but to be honest, I haven't found an effective way to use it yet, so I don't focus much time on it. I suppose it's a much better platform for people once they've been established and already have a presence.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

For me personally, it's more important that I dedicate as much time to writing as I can. If I allow myself to get too caught up in engagement, I won't get any work done. So, I have very specific "check-in" times during the day: when I wake up, lunch time, and bed time. Not that I don't still login in-between, but those are the points that I dedicate the most time to social media.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

It's tough to give a percentage only because it varies so much. If I'm about to publish a new book, the percentage goes up, but I make sure to not *only* talk about the book. I think that if you only talk about your books, you sound more like a marketer than a person. Sure, I talk about my books, but I also try to be entertaining. I make jokes. I talk about TV shows I'm watching. I post pictures of my dog. I try to let people know, yeah, I'd love for you to buy my books, but if you're taking the time to follow me on social media, I want you to have fun. If people feel like all you're trying to do is sell them something, they'll abandon you quickly.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Yes and no. On Twitter, I'm far more conversational, meaning I tweet more and talk about a variety of topics. On Facebook, I'm a little more buttoned-down. I have very specific messages I want to get out. This is actually something I'm trying to work on right now, which is establishing my "brand voice" on Facebook. I'm very comfortable on Twitter, but it's a different environment than Facebook. Compelling images are key for successful FB posts, but when you're an author, you don't normally have a bunch of visual assets. I'm trying to mix it up a bit and make my Facebook page feel more natural and less robotic, but since my fan base is so small, it's hard to tell if it's working. Fingers crossed, I suppose. J

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Primarily, I'm trying to engage with an audience. If they check out my books as part of that, then cool. I never try to shovel my books down anyone's throat, but rather talk about it all matter-of-factly. I post pictures of the book cover, or the title page, or talk about word counts, but you'll rarely see me saying something as blatant as, "buy this now." I think most people are turned off by advertisements on social media. That's not why we're there, right? We want to be informed, but not sold to. That's how I approach social media for my books: I'll inform you, but a book store will sell you.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Anyone with a product to sell is always on the lookout for "influencers." These are the people that love what you do, and want others to know about you. If you're smart, you'll go out of your way to treat those people well and let them know that you're appreciative of their support. I, myself, have only a handful of these special people, but I do my best to take care of them. There are so many authors out there they can support, and I am honored to be one of them. With their help, my message gets amplified, and that exposes my work to potential new readers.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

My posts are hit-and-miss. I find that people aren't as interested in reading my blogs as much as they are in engaging with my humor. You might think, "can you just make your blogs funnier?" I certainly do put humor into my blogs, but it's still a matter of capturing enough interest from a social media post to get people to click the link. The challenge is attention spans. In today's world of social media, news feeds/time lines are so jumbled with competing messages that you literally have less than ten seconds to grab someone's attention. This has sparked certain outlets to do things like, "You won't believe what happens next!" or "36 pictures of cats that will melt your heart." I'm not saying these are bad tactics, but they're not for me. The problem is, they work. So, am I shooting myself in the foot by not jumping on the bandwagon? Maybe, but I have to stay true to my "brand voice," and that's not it.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

Post 1: I posted a joke in reference to the video game *Kingdom Hearts*. Since I write Sci-Fi, a lot of my audience is also into video games, so I feel very comfortable engaging. My goal was to get other *Kingdom Hearts* fans to join in the discussion and hopefully get a laugh out of it.

Post 2: I posted a link to a new blog I'd written. I participated in a blog hop intended to educate readers about my writing process. Rather than sell books, it was more of a resource to share my process with other writers.

Post 3: I posted an image of two of my books side-by-side and announced the release date for the third book in the trilogy. This was pretty straight-forward, and my goal was to get people excited about the upcoming release date. Here's hoping they'll come back to buy it!

## **8. Jen Minkman**

Female, Dutch, 35 years old

Followers on Twitter: 1.690

Likes on Facebook: 3.393

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

Huh... how many our a week you mean? [I respond yes, or a day]. Hum, it depends on where I am, huh, in the publishing track. When I am just working on a book and I don't have any, huh, definite publishing date yet, I don't do a lot. I do post stuff every once in a while on Facebook and I tweet, hum, but the real engagement with the audience becomes when the publication day approaches, so, I organize in the ways [unclear], I post on my blog, I [unclear] link that on Twitter, on Facebook, huh, I approach people who have reviewed my books before, huh, through social media and I try to, you know, attract new readers by, huh, doing cross promotion with other authors. For example, next month I am going to be in a group of a lot of young

[unclear] authors on Facebook, one of them has organized getting everybody together and then we'll all do something in a particular time slot that she, she gave to us. So, I think the, the, the power of social media is also in [unclear] together making it very social not just doing everything by your self. I think I spent on average about a day, like an hour everyday, but I tend to go over board with that when I [unclear] have a bit lunch, hum, in the works and it's more like [unclear] [laughing] thing, I know I shouldn't but that's the way I [unclear].

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Yeah, huh, number one is definitely Goodreads, which is a book platform, reader platform. I am registered as an author there. Hum, I check my reviews regularly and I try to engage my audience by doing [unclear] ways on that platform that works really well and also approaching bloggers who might be interested in read my work. Number two is Facebook, it used to be a really powerful tool but ever since they changed the way they display advertisement is being kind of odd [unclear], really, it doesn't work anymore, if you pay to boost your, huh, post, it hardly ever gets to the people actually like or page cause I have like, I don't know, three thousands five hundred followers on Facebook and, huh, some of those I, I gained organically and some of those clicked on my page because their friends like me. But nowadays when I post something on there and I don't boost it, about twenty five people see it, out of third five amount [unclear]. When I pay for it, it gets to about thousand but most of those people are actually friends of my page to start with [unclear]. Which are friends of friends of friends, or they are on Philippine click farms, I don't know, it just don't work anymore, it is, it's quite sad. I do post on Facebook, but I do it, just to some people see that my page is in that. So I think Twitter is going to replace Facebook very soon in terms of social media engagement, you know, in my case, anyway.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

Hum, I try to keep the 80/20, where 80 is the writing [laughing] and 20 is the engagement [keep on laughing]. Huh, it does get the 50/50 at times when you are

trying to find new ways to, to, you know, to promote yourself. Hum, I am trying to get back to the 80/20 situation and I do that by outsourcing, hum, my social media activities to somebody who actually knows a lot more about it. She does keep me updated about what she is doing, but I think at this point it is impossible for me to do everything myself. I have books that are in Dutch, English, German, French, huh, also Portuguese, Italian and Spanish as a recent development and I am trying to tackle to those markets myself, so, I am currently leaving the English channel promotion box to, huh, somebody I hired, just to get a little bit of work load off my shoulders. Ideally 80 percent writing and 20 percent marketing.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

Hum, well, that's an interesting one because time and time again you get the advice from other authors don't always talk about your books because that is going to scare people off, because is gonna get, you know, old [laughing]. Ye, you can' keep talking about just the book, so what I try is when I have a promotion going on, for example, if I, huh, have one my books on discount I post about it, I also post about other author's books in a similar ziombra [unclear], but they have a promotion going on a new release, so, it is not just about my work it is also about other people's work. Hum, recently I had a blog post about Austria, cause I went to Austria on a one year trip, and I visited Salzburg where, huh, I, I actually lived in 1999 as part of my exchange and one of my book is set in that city. So, what I did was, I visited all the places that are prominently featured in the book and I made a photo collage and then I posted it on Facebook, blog, etc. So, people who read the book could see where it all happened, so it is related to my book but I am not trying to sell it, I just really wanna show people what it looks like, so there's that, I do that. And sometimes I just post random stuff, you know, stuff there's on my mind, hum, stuff that I feel like writing about, hum, it's always related to me being an author though, oh yeah, and I also posted picture of my wedding last year [laughing] and people actually really like that. They all clicked 'like', you know, they were like, oh is, it's nice to see an author getting more personal, you know, shouldn't go too far, but that's like, you know, major events in your life so, you can rather [unclear] share that, and they like that.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Hum, well, Twitter has the limit of 140 characters so, that's more difficult, I do design tweets sometimes, to get like a hook to get people to click on the link and then the link often leads to a post I've done on a blog where actually I told more, my own blog, I have in Dutch and I have it in English, hum, on Facebook, I don't have that limitation because you can make a post as long as you want, hum, I do try to, hum, spice a Facebook post by posting photo or links, so there's something visual going on and it is not just text.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Hum, both really, it depends of the kind of stuff I post, hum, it used to be more focused on engaging with my audience but I predominantly used Facebook for that, and now that my post are hardly ever seen by anyone is kind of discouraging cause you don't really know how to get people interacted, they don't see your messages on the first place. So, I guess whatever I post now is [pause] predominantly focused on my work itself and I should change that, again, I'm trying to do, you know, the blog posting about my recent trip I'm trying to do that. And, hum, kijk, you know, automatically the goal of having that social media going on is, so people will find your books unhidden [unclear] cause ideally the people who follow you on your page over debradge [unclear] your books on the first place, you know, otherwise why did they start following you? So, [pause]. What was the question again? I'm kind of going off attention here, I'm sorry [laughing] [I said no problem. I repeat her the question]. Ah, yeah, now, hum, I, I think I got straight now, Facebook is predominantly, I use that predominantly to engage with my audience because it's pretty existing on it, likers [unclear], who actually 'like' your page, hum, on Twitter I also have followers but I know that when people follow others they also see your message in the Twitter feed, I don't know exactly how it works, to be honest, I am not a twitter bove [unclear], so I do post lots of links to huh, reviews of my book there, is a different way of engaging people instead of saying. Buy this book! It's cool! [Laughing]. You

link back to people actually wrote about your book and how could they thought it was, so that works better. And on Goodreads I predominantly feature my books, so people will stumble upon them and, and starting buying it. I don't really engage with my audience on Goodreads like, hey how are you doing? I do, I do chat with people though, you know, sometimes we never click with the blogger or somebody who read your book, you just start up a conversation and then you kind of become online friends. But I don't, I am not on Goodreads with the purpose of doing that specifically, but when it happens it is really cool though. [I answered: And which platforms do you start this conversation? Or you most use to, to start this conversation?] Mostly, mostly on Goodreads, [I say, Goodreads] because you can send messages to people and sometimes when, you know, you send a blogger a friendly message saying. Hey! Would you like to read my book? This is it. I will give you a free digital copy to review if you want. And they are like: Oh! That is interesting. You are from Holand. I've been there, bla, bla, bla, bla. [she imitates other person] and you start talking. And it's really nice, you know? I've made some really good friends online, that I actually intend to visit when I go back to the US, on Hawai [unclear], I know a feel people there who really enjoy my books, now, I wish meet up for coffee when I am actually there, you know, it could be nice. So there's that. But, I don't think I do that with the goal of making friends, doesn't work that way for me, it is spontaneous.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Hum, hum, yeah, there are some people who always re-tweet and share my messages because they really like my work. And I appreciate that. I was thank them, like hey, thanks for the re-tweet, or thanks for share my message and I try to help them out, you know, if, if, if they are writers. Sometimes they are just readers who happens that really like my books, hum, yeah, my messages get re-shared by people and that way you know, branches out, and hopefully will attract new readers or people will just, I think, I don't know, I mean, you studied this, right? But, isn't true that people have to see I thought at least eight times before they decide to buy it? Or something like that? Once never does the trick, you know, they have to, have seen at least three or four



times worthy. Oh yeah! That writer! I've seen her before. Let's try some of her books! Click! You know. [Laughing]. And, it hardly ever happens, hum, tsc, that people see your book and instantly think, I'm gonna buy this, unless this is an impulse buy, this is like a 99 cents promo, that is not much actually, what can go wrong if you only have to spend 1 dollar, that's how I buy books too. Oh! That looks interesting! [Laughing]. And I hardly ever really get to the main instantly cause I have like this pile of books that I need to read or want to read. Hum, but I think, sharing messages with your fans, and they come from a different writer is always, you know, also kind of common can you forward it, you know that, you like it, when people do it for you and I like to that for them as well.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Ah, yeah, well, you know, there's the a role [unclear] I post stuff that people don't necessary have to respond to cause I am just putting out there as a given: Hey! Look to my pictures. And I am not asking them to, to respond to it. But, I know a lot of bloggers nowadays do that on Facebook cause they know it is going to increase their engagement rate and it's gonna increase your stats. It's, it's a way to tricky your audience into reacting. If I post a message like: Would you ever read a book, huh that, you know, where the main character is a total dick-head? Would you actually start reading that book? Or would you say in advance no, I am not interested in reading that and than you hope people are gonna actually respond to that so you get loads of comments and Facebook things [she imitates a man] hey! This chick is hot! You know [laughing] They gonna boost your post! I don't know. She probably look into that as well, but I don't, huh, I don't do that. I don't think that I am looking for that when I am posting something I just hope people will appreciate it. It's like putting out a book really! My posts are like books. You know, you put out a book and don't expect to respond to it cause it's just there for them to enjoy and that's how my posts are like too. I post a pretty picture of where I am and I just tell them: Hey! Look! I am in the [unclear] street. Look at this wonderful walk I did today. And I am not asking them to tell me, what is, what did you do today? You know, I am just telling them, hey, look at this, it was pretty cool. And, so, it's, it's kind of a one way street but it's always nice when people respond. I am not trying to lul [unclear] of the map away, not really.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

Huh, that's a trick one [coughing]. Ok, I am gonna break you down, huh, from platform to platform. It's the easiest thing. Hum, on Goodreads the latest thing I post it was late this afternoon, before I met you, because I finished writing the book, Hum, I was reading, I was writing astheories [unclear] first to books and penal [unclear] for a while and I'm, hum, I added it to my Goodreads currently reading list, because they don't have a currently writing list on Facebook, so I added my own book and every time I wrote a few chapters I put status update like: Huh guys, you know, it's here is end, this person did that, or oh! it's gonna be very exciting right now so people can follow up the process and right before I came here, hum, I wrote the last page of the book, and I wrapped it up at 60 thousand words and I posted on Goodreads saying: Guys! I am done! [Excited] It's done! All I have to do now is translate from Dutch to English and then I will send out the review copies to everybody who applied for one and people actually respond to that they like those posts [imitating a reader] Oh! I am so excited, you know, cause I really want to let them know. I'm done. Because they have been following me for a couple of months now, I think, [I said OK]. Yeah, the purpose of that one is to inform people and to give the book more the buzz, you know, thinking, people are actually waiting for this, huh, people have written me emails saying: Hey! Did you send the book out already? Did I miss it? [Laughing]. And I am like, no! I am still writing [laughing and I laugh too] cause a bit behind schedule I'm sorry and also. That's how, huh, how I told everybody. Then, the last thing that I post on Facebook was [thinking] two things on the English blog or English page I posted the thing I told you about, the photo collage about Salzburg cause one of my books is, you know, takes place there. And my Dutch page I posted a link to an entrepreneur context, because the new publisher I signed up with [she is a self-publishing author outside USA and recently has been giving a contract to publish in the Netherlands] is actually participating in the context for new entrepreneurs and she wants everybody to vote to her company and, of course, I voted because she represents me and I try to get as many of my followers to vote her too because they all like yamerdoll [unclear] books. So, the purpose of that post was to get her more votes so she would win the context and she gets twelve thousand euros or something to spend on promoting my

colleague's books and mine. And then, the last that I post on Twitter, hum, that was actually my, huh, my side kick [laughing] she keeps posting links to reviews of my books regularly and the purpose of that is to make people curious about my books and not to sell them specifically because the, the links don't point to the Amazon by page or they link to the Goodreads with your page so people would start adding my books to their wish read list and maybe buy it, or you know, just to get interested. [I said so, in this order, Goodreads, Facebook and Twitter]. Ya.

## **9. Russell Blake**

Male, American

Followers on Twitter: 17.000

Likes on Facebook: 1.196

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

I devote about 20 percent of time. So 80 percent of my time is spent writing and plotting and 20 percent of it is spent on Facebook, Twitter, blogging, doing interviews, etc.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Yeah, I would say Facebook number one, huh, and then Twitter number two and my blog number three. It used to be Twitter number one. But Twitter stop being particularly useful because it's, it's, nobody pays any attention. So, Facebook has more a conversation feel because it doesn't have a 140 characters limitation so, I would say it's the most important, hum, platform and than of course my blog is not really that interactive but, hum, it allows me to, offer my thoughts whatever they are every, every week.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

Yes, it is 80/20. 20 percent of my time is spent on marketing via social media and doing non-writing related tasks and 80 percent of my time is spent writing. Yes, it used to be 75/25 I used to do more marketing than I do now but once you get enough books out there and you have enough visibility, hum, do you additional 5 or 10 percent doesn't really change your sales, so, it's a point of diminishing returns.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

I would say other topics are about 90 percent. And the reason is because people don't like being sold things and any time you start talking about your own book or your product you come across is trying to sell, and it comes of as desperate. So, I found that readers tend to want to engage with you as a human being as a person and if you are interesting and relevant, hum, they will then look at buying or trying one of your books, just see if you are as interesting in your novel as you are when you are engaging with them. So, I, I don't recommend at all, huh, techniques of, of spending, spending readers by a social media with: Buy my book! Or, you know: I got another five star review! It's like. Ya, who cares?

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

Sure, on Twitter I will typically limit my interactions now to, huh, basically announcing when I have a new blog, or if have some sort of a limited time price promotion that I think readers would be interested in, but at all I use Twitter for. On Facebook it's more conversational, it's, it's more, you know, here is what I am doing, here it's what I am thinking. You know, I, I saw this the other day, I read this, you know, last week you might be interested, so it's more of a dialogue rather than a marketing channel.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

Well, to engage with an audience. I don't think you can sell and I don't think you can get people to buy your book, buy, hum, obviously trying to get them to buy your book. I think that's a mistaken impression and it is very naive. I think that, hum, I found that readers respond much better to genuine interaction rather than a, a vendor customer interaction. So, I, I try to avoid the I am selling something I want you to buy it type of message because it is obvious and people don't respond well to it.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

Ja, of course, and, and, huh, the interesting thing about that is that, you know, all think all authors say the same thing they would have a dedicated core of readers who are so enthusiastic about the work that they viewing as their, hum, you know, allocation to, to go out and and tell all the world about how, how great your books are. And that's what you want. It's a very small percentage but they are very local percentage. And they are out there possible plus sizing your work. So, I see that buzz on Twitter as well as on Facebook. [I ask him: Do you think that this small percentage is something related to that theory 90-9-1?]. I am sorry, could you repeat that? [There's a theory about the 90-9-1, that 90 are the lurkers, and 9 percent, huh, they are, hum, just, maybe doing some like on your comment, they are not spreading the message]. I think that are opinion leaders, people who, who are vocal and for whatever reason are interested in making their opinions and, and preferences none [unclear] and I think that most simply, you know, take that in, they, they, do the web as an entertainment so, you know, they are reading what other people say. I know that's how I do it.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Ja, huh, of course they do, hum, in Facebook, you know, you go back and forward sometimes by a private messages, sometimes by a, a comments to a posting, hum, my blog receives a lot of hits, between 300 and 500 visitors a day. Hum, and, you know, I'll see anywhere from 20 to 50 responses to a blog post, hum, and of course, you know, on Twitter is very immediate, you know, you go back and forward so, there's a fairly higher degree of, of, response and interaction, but again I think it's because I am

not trying to sell anything. So, people are willing to have a discussion if you are actually having a discussion and everything is it, huh, at simile [unclear] day of attempt to market up something.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

Well, I mean, I think that's the point, I, it's not [laughing] there's, there's no attempt to achieve anything. Hum, let me take a look at Facebook and see what the last, last three were. There's a price special on one of my books it's running a couple of days, hum, the next one is indicating that I got a new blog discussing cover arts and then, what's the one after that? [asking himself] the one after that was re-tweeting, hum, a friend of mine short story collection. So, if you look at those three as a microcosm of my communications. One says, hey, if you are interested in this book, it's, you don't need to pay as much today. Hum, the second is this is why I changed the cover of this series four times, this is my reasoning behind it, which is directed more to arts authors and then the other one is simply, hum, you know, these are great histories with a talented author.

### **10. Peter Adler (writing as A. R. Silverberry)**

Male, American

Followers on Twitter: 4.415

Likes on Facebook: 532

1) How much time do you dedicate to engage with your audience on different social media platforms?

It varies, but on average, an hour, spread over the whole day.

2) Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?

Facebook and Twitter. I use these mostly because they're the ones I'm most familiar with, have the most followers, and are the most fun to be on. I have to draw the line somewhere as to how much time I want to spend on social media. If I add others, it stops being fun, and becomes a time drain.

3) Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?

Again, it varies. When I'm in the thick of a novel, my social media time will shrink. It obviously increases when I'm marketing something new. I'd say the proportion is 3-4 hours writing, one hour social media. But that writing figure can go up to 6-7 hours.

4) Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book and other topics?

I try to keep the messages about my book down so people don't feel all I want to do is sell them something. We're at a big party. I'm socializing.

5) Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?

I don't spread messages per se. Most of my followers are other indie authors. I try to give them content that's useful for them. For example, a link to a blog post I wrote called Unblocking Writer's Block got a nice response and lots of retweets.

6) Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book or rather to engage with an audience?

The latter.

7) Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your

message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?

I know who my core supporters are. I reward them by supporting them back.

8) Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how do they do that?

Sometimes, if it's something useful, wise, or funny. They'll respond on social media and also comment on blog posts. Occasionally, I'll get a direct message via FB, Twitter, or email.

9) Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?

One was a share about the results of a health test I had. It was human, and I knew people would respond and interact with me, deepening connections. Another was to support a charitable cause one of my followers started. I wanted to help spread the word. The third was a response to a reader posting quotes from my last book. Believe me, it's rare for someone to do that, completely unsolicited from me, so I expressed gratitude.



# Appendix D

## Spreadsheet of interview analysis

*To what extent do self-publishing authors use different social media platforms to engage their audiences?*											
Question/Author	Tom Lichtenberg	Frank Marsh	Noyek	Megan Karasch	Belinda Frisch	Ken Mooney	David Hulegaard	Jen Minkman	Russell Blake	A.R. Silverberry	Overall conclusion
How much time do you dedicate to engage your audience on different social media?	5 hours a week	70-75%	1 hour a day	Not nearly enough	2 hours a day	15-30 min a day	1 hour a day	1 hour a day	20% of the time	1 hour a day	Most authors spent 1 hour at least engaging every day
Can you give an indication of the percentage of the time you use to write and the percentage you use to engage on social media?	75% writing/25% engaging	75% writing/25% engaging	Use of Hootsuite	80/20 or 90/10 (writing/engaging)	75%-80% writing	95% writing/5% engagement	Dedicate as much time as possible writing	80/20 (writing/engaging)	80/20 (writing/engaging)	3-4hrs writing/1h engaging	80/20 Rule (writing/engaging) is basically used for all actors
Are the messages used to engage on social networking sites related to the topic of your book? Can you give a percentage of the division between the book/beside the book?	90% talking about thing beside the book/10% related to the book	100% related to the book	Rarely a post suit the actual topic of the book	Majority of posts are related to the book when release date is approaching	Twitter: 80%, Facebook: 20%, Google+: Goodreads: 20% whereas other topics are about the blog or personal	In general posts are not related to the topic of the book. His posts can be engaging, people related to the topic of the book.	Percentage goes up if it is about his posts that if you try to sell while abandon on social media.	Avoids the idea to just talk about the book on social media. Posts are related to the book when promotion or a new release. In general posts are related to the book.	90% other topics. While engaging basically is talking things beside the book. Believes in human-human interaction without selling intention.	Try to keep the messages related to the book down.	80/20 Rule (talk about things beside the book/sell the book) is used. All authors do not just post about the topic of their self-published book. Exception of Frank Marsh.
Is your message spread on social media with the purpose to sell your book rather to engage with an audience?	More to engage with an audience.	More to engage with a audience than to sell the book.	Definitely to engage with an audience.	Both.	Absolutely. "Street team" of folks to spread the message. Indie authors from the independent Author Network as well. Core group of fans and close-knit group on Facebook	Engage with an audience. No sells message.	Engage with an audience.	Both.	To engage with an audience. He does not think the trying to make people buy them.	Engage with an audience.	Message spread on social media to sell the book. Use of social media related with the 90-9-1 Principle.
Do you perceive if there are specific users that contribute to spreading your message on social media? For example, sharing it on Facebook or re-tweeting it on Twitter?	Core group of followers or fans. They are very helpful in that way.	Yes. People that spread the word of mouth in their own social network.	Yes. They are basically on Twitter.	Sure. Friends and small network of authors.	Yes. It varies by platform. Authors are quick note or direct message. Google+: +1 comments and posts. Facebook comments are common. Blog comments are less common. 1-2%.	People that are not friends, but they are excited to hear about a new book and tell their friends.	Yes, they are "in the know" and take care of them because the message is amplified and exposes the work to potential new readers.	Yes. There are always people that share the posts because they like the books.	Yes. Core of readers. It's a very small percentage but they are very local percentage.	Yes. Core supporter and I reward them supporting them back.	Perception on Heavy Contributors (1% from 90-9-1 Principle.
Does your audience read and reply on your postings and how they do that?	Yes. Usually re-replying the tweet.	Yes. Engaging in debates on line.	Yes. On Twitter replying to a question or answering something. Not so often depends on the message.	Sometimes. Re-sharing and congratulations posts.	Facebook comments are common. Blog comments are less common. 1-2%.	Yes. There are people who will respond to a social media post. The minority are probably around the blog.	Yes. There's a way to 'tricky' your audience into reacting. Making them respond to your post. Twitter is post increasing comment rate and start with higher responses and interaction.	Yes. Facebook: private messages, comments to a posting. In the blog 20 to 50 responses to a post. Twitter is post increasing comment rate and start with higher responses and interaction.	Yes. Facebook: private messages, comments to a posting. In the blog 20 to 50 responses to a post. Twitter is post increasing comment rate and start with higher responses and interaction.	Social network sites and blogs. Occasionally private message and direct messages on Twitter.	Perception of 'Intermittent Contributors' (9% from the 90-9-1 Principle in different social media platforms.
Which social media platforms do you use most and why? Can you rank the platforms you use most?	1. Wordpress 2. Goodreads 3. Mobileread 4. Twitter	1. Facebook 2. Twitter 3. Goodreads 4. Wordpress 5. Google+ 6. Pinterest	1. Twitter 2. Facebook 3. Instagram	1. Twitter 2. Facebook 3. Blogger 4. Google+ 5. Goodreads	1. Twitter 2. Facebook 3. Blogger 4. Google+ 5. Goodreads	1. Twitter 2. Facebook 3. Tumblr 4. Pinterest	1. Twitter 2. Facebook 3. Instagram	1. Goodreads 2. Facebook	1. Facebook 2. Twitter 3. Blog	1. Facebook 2. Twitter	Twitter in the first place followed by Facebook. Goodreads as a platform to collaborate with social interaction and community development.

## Spreadsheet of interview analysis (2)

Question/Author	Related to theory	Tom Lichtenberg	Frank Marsh	Noyek	Megan Karasch	Belinda Frisch	Ken Mooney	David Hulegaard	Jen Minkman	Russell Blake	A.R. Silverberry	Overall conclusion
		Twitter is more superficial and the promotion is directed with catchy phrases whereas Goodreads is more personal. Maybe there are more lurkers (90% of the 90-9-1 Principle on Twitter and more 'Heavy Contributors' (1%) on Goodreads? This is an interesting point	He tailors his approach to whatever site he is using. Succinct on Twitter while Wordpress is more writing free. It depends on the platform and its limitations	Yes because the response is different according to each platform. Twitter is short and straight to the point. Use of hashtags to get the message to other authors. Use of Facebook to engage with readers.	Used to use Facebook and Twitter differently. Now only using Twitter. Facebook posts were related to author articles and book posts	Definitely. Twitter is character limited and hashtag heavy. Google+ more closely resembles Facebook posts with pictures and links. Goodreads updates are character limited as Twitter. Blogging is free format.	Twitter is short and text-based. Tumblr is image/video based. Both get similar messages but the way you present that messages is very different. Text-based posts are ignored on Tumblr whereas likely to be shared on Facebook. Compelling images are key for successful Facebook posts.	Yes and no. Twitter more conversational. On Facebook more buttoned-down with specific messages to get out. He is trying to establish his "brand voice" on Facebook. Posts on Facebook with pictures and links instead of just screenshots.	Twitter is very limited. Post on Twitter trying to get a hook on the link redirecting to a post on a blog where there is more engagement. Posts on Facebook with pictures and links instead of just screenshots.	Limit interaction on Twitter. Announcement of a new blog entry or limited time price promotion. Facebook is more conversational. Is more a dialogue rather than a marketing channel.	No. Most of my followers are indie authors. He recently posted a link on Twitter for a blog post engaging with nice responses and lots of re-tweets from indie authors.	Audiences respond differently in each social media platform. Therefore, engagement is different as well. Self-publishing authors can control their perception by the audience engaging in different social media platforms differently.
Do you spread the message on social network sites differently? Can you give an example?	User generated-media and uses and gratification point	Post on a blog related with a topic about writing what you know about' to others follow writers.	Post on Twitter and Facebook about a great read for Easter. He tries to make a buzz on Facebook and Twitter to get more traffic. He is supported by a friend 'to get the word of a book out'.	On Twitter a picture linked on Instagram and a tweet related to other author to spread awareness about other authors. Love inspirational post on Facebook.	Last three posts on Facebook: 1. An influential author donating a large sum of money to independent bookstores. 2. A favorable review of my book. 3. A satirical article about how difficult is to be a writer.	1. Post on Facebook about ENT was promoting her book as a way to drive traffic to that post. 2. Post to link the blog with Facebook encouraging the audience to share summer activities. 3. Tweet related with the most recent book with the goal to drive potential readers to Amazon. The tweet was to promote a sale.	Post asking acquaintances to review the book. All other posts related to discuss or raise information about it.	Post 1. Related to a video game. As a Sci-Fi writer the intention was to create a discussion among gamers fans. 2. A link book publishing. 2. Facebook: Photo collage about her book and Facebook: 1. Price promotion of one of the books. 2. Discussion about cover arts directed to arts authors. Twitter started. 3. Re-tweet of a friend's great history collection from a fellow self-publishing author.	There's no attempt to achieve anything Facebook: 1. Price promotion of one of the books. 2. Support of a charitable cause that a follower started. 3. Express of gratitude about a post of a reader that quoted from the last book.	1. Personal post about a health result test. 2. Support of a charitable cause that a follower started. 3. Express of gratitude about a post of a reader that quoted from the last book.	Posts with different intentions of achievement. Self-publishing authors are manipulating self-expression to achieve different audiences when interacting on social media	
Can you explain your last three postings? Why did you post them? What did you want to achieve?	User generated-media and uses and gratification point	Post on a blog related with a topic about writing what you know about' to others follow writers.	Post on Twitter and Facebook about a great read for Easter. He tries to make a buzz on Facebook and Twitter to get more traffic. He is supported by a friend 'to get the word of a book out'.	On Twitter a picture linked on Instagram and a tweet related to other author to spread awareness about other authors. Love inspirational post on Facebook.	Last three posts on Facebook: 1. An influential author donating a large sum of money to independent bookstores. 2. A favorable review of my book. 3. A satirical article about how difficult is to be a writer.	1. Post on Facebook about ENT was promoting her book as a way to drive traffic to that post. 2. Post to link the blog with Facebook encouraging the audience to share summer activities. 3. Tweet related with the most recent book with the goal to drive potential readers to Amazon. The tweet was to promote a sale.	Post asking acquaintances to review the book. All other posts related to discuss or raise information about it.	Post 1. Related to a video game. As a Sci-Fi writer the intention was to create a discussion among gamers fans. 2. A link book publishing. 2. Facebook: Photo collage about her book and Facebook: 1. Price promotion of one of the books. 2. Discussion about cover arts directed to arts authors. Twitter started. 3. Re-tweet of a friend's great history collection from a fellow self-publishing author.	There's no attempt to achieve anything Facebook: 1. Price promotion of one of the books. 2. Support of a charitable cause that a follower started. 3. Express of gratitude about a post of a reader that quoted from the last book.	1. Personal post about a health result test. 2. Support of a charitable cause that a follower started. 3. Express of gratitude about a post of a reader that quoted from the last book.	Posts with different intentions of achievement. Self-publishing authors are manipulating self-expression to achieve different audiences when interacting on social media	